



March-April 2017, Issue 72  
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## ~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

2/503 Sky Soldiers prepare to load choppers at Bien Hoa Airbase on 1 Jan 66, to commence Operation Marauder  
(Photo by LTC George Dexter, Bn Cmdr, 2/503d)



"January 1 – 8, 1966. SOUTH VIETNAM, GROUND WAR: Phase II of General Westmoreland's strategy of attrition begins as Brigadier General Williamson's 173d Airborne Brigade, located in III Corps Tactical Zone, begins with a series of spoiling attacks and launches Operation Marauder, an air assault on the Viet Cong's 506th Local Force Battalion operating in Hau Nghai Province, northwest of Saigon. General Westmoreland's orders to Brigadier General Williamson are to '*locate and destroy the enemy unit and establish a measure of control over the hostile area near the river.*' As part of Operation Marauder, US Army Lieutenant Colonel Dexter's 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, helicopters into Landing Zone Whiskey (\*) near Bao Trai, and just 1km (0.6 miles) from the east bank of the Vam Co Dong River. Communist infantry open fire on the American helicopters as they touch down in the landing zone. The entire battalion lands safely and the American forces attack the enemy, who shortly thereafter pulls back from the battlefield towards the river with Lieutenant Colonel Dexter's troops in hot pursuit." [The Vietnam War Day by Day, Leo Daugherty] See Colonel Dexter's Report beginning Page 42.

(\*) Should read "Landing Zone Wine". Ed





# We Dedicate this Issue of Our Newsletter in Memory of the Men of the 173d Airborne Brigade & Attached Units We Lost 50 Years Ago in the Months of March & April 1967



***"We owe these men our lives, and the lives of our children, and their children.  
And as long as a Sky Soldier walks this earth....we will honor and remember them."***

A fellow 173d paratrooper



**Steven Jack Adams, 18  
PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

(Virtual Wall states A/2/503)

*"Steve was a triathlon, track star, football running back that set awesome records in Ohio, and a great basketball player. Most people do not know about his poems but Steven had an awesome writing ability, and a great personality to create close friends. Never forgotten, love,"* **Brother Mike**



**Charles Byron Alandt, 19  
PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"I was closer to your sister's age but I remember you well. I can remember my mom telling us you'd been killed like it was yesterday. It seemed impossible that a boy I'd grown up with could be taken this way. You brought the war home to us in a very real way and I've thought of you every year since on Memorial Day. I honor you and wish you peace."* **Andrea Weidig Lawrence**



**Charles C. Anderson, Jr., 27  
CPT, A/3/319, 3/22/67**

*"CPT Charles Calder Anderson, Jr. was an alumnus of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY. He was one of 335 men from West Point who*

*died or are MIA in Southeast Asia/Indochina during the period October, 1957 – September, 1972. 'Well done; Be thou at peace.'" KR*



**Ivy Thomas Anderson, 33, SSG, A/4/503, 3/26/67**

*"Dear Staff Sergeant Anderson, please, someone post his photo! Thank you for your service as an Airborne qualified grunt. Today is Labor Day – what better day to thank those of you who made celebrating possible – rest in peace."* **Lucy Conte Micik Benny**

**Lionel S. Anthony, 21, PFC, C/2/503, 3/4/67**

*"Thank you PFC Anthony for your courage in a dangerous place."* **A Grateful Vietnam Vet**

**William John Ashton, PTE, 6RAR, 4/3/67**

**Peter John Badcoe, VC, MAJ, AATTV (RAINF), 4/7/67**

**Gerald E. 'Doc' Bartram, 19  
PVT, B/4/503, 3/9/67**

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

*"My mind is flooded with memories of our childhood together. It pains me that you never had the opportunity of knowing your nieces and nephews. I still don't understand why we have to have wars where we have to lose our beloved ones. For me still this is like the first day we were told...how do you ever get past something like this. I miss you so much."* **L. Halfen**

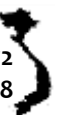


**Charles Herman Bennett, 22  
PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"I Miss You Dad. He is my father."* **Tyrone Wright**



(continued....)





**Kit Blackwelder, 19**  
**PFC, A/1/503, 4/22/67**

**Final Mission of U.S. Army helicopter**  
**UH-1D tail number 65-09957**

*"The aircraft was on an Admin 173rd lift when the engine failed due to fuel starvation. The instrumentation reported 100 lbs. of fuel when the fuel pressure started fluctuating. The aircraft crashed in a cemetery near highway 1 at Long Binh, hitting some tombstones and burning. The accident killed two crewmen, 1LT Paul L. Stimpson and gunner SP4 James R. Adams. Four passengers also lost their lives in the crash: SP4 Timothy C. Patterson, CPL Otto R. Ensslin, PFC Howard S. Dominiak, and PFC Kit Blackwelder. Two other crewmen and two passengers survived, all injured in the wreck. [Taken from [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org)]"*



**Dennis Hampton Bracewell, PTE, 6RAR, 3/30/67**

**Clyde Joseph Caires, 19**  
**PFC, A/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"My first cousin, my best friend. You will never be forgotten. It's been 45 years since you left us but I remember you like it was yesterday. We all lost something in that war, but you lost your life. God bless you Clyde."*

**Rod Moura**



**Welborn A. Callahan, Jr., 23**  
**1LT, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Bill Callahan was my mother's first cousin and named for his father. Although his name was Welborn, they called him Bill, just like his father. He was his parents only son and had one sister who never married. I know his parents were heartbroken when they received the news that Bill Jr. had been killed. I can only imagine having a son near the same age what that must be like. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen."* **Mozelle Cole**



**Douglas Joe Carpenter, 20, PFC, C/2/503, 3/25/67**

*"Douglas Joseph Carpenter was my uncle, he died when I was 6 years old, but I do remember him and liked him very much. Thank you for your service to us, you are not forgotten."* **Eddie Landreth**

**Raymond Senter Cassidy, 19**  
**SP4, B/2/503, 4/24/67**

*"Ray and I were friends in Junior High School. So many years have passed by, but I often think of Ray and the laughs we shared so long ago. May God bless you Ray and all the others who lost their lives much too early."*

**Barbara Kross Arabio**



**Russell James Copeman, PTE, 3 SAS SQN, 4/10/67**



**George Tollovar Cox, 27, SGT, B/2/503, 3/25/67**  
(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"As a fellow paratrooper who served with the 173rd 'Herd' Brigade in RVN, I join with all our brothers in offering appreciation and regrets for your sacrifice. May you rest in peace and never be forgotten."* **Mike Switzer**

**Bennie Lee Cross, 23, SGT, D/4/503, 3/7/67**

*"I was just a little girl when we lost you. I am now a 56 year old woman, and I so understand what a sacrifice you made! I remember your zest for life, dear uncle. How you laughed and threw us up in the air whenever you came to see us! I remember how you would pull your car over to jump out and dance to 'Barefootin'! You were so special to us! Thank you for the ultimate sacrifice you made to protect us all. I know you are smiling and dancing in heaven!"* **Beverly Bland**

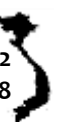
**Kenneth Arthur Cullen, 22**  
**2LT, A/2/503, 4/9/67**

*"2nd Lt. Cullen's final resting place is in Sec. #87, Lot #1, Greenwood Cemetery, Bay County, Florida. May every American be grateful for the sacrifice that he made for our country."*

**Arnold M. Huskins**



(continued....)



**Paul William Curran, 19**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Paul's Dad, William aka Billie Curran and my Dad, John aka Jackie Martin, grew up together in Dorchester, MA from childhood... They both served during WW2... Like Paul I served as an Infantryman with 1/12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division 68-69... Our family visited every summer when I was a kid and Paul and I would hang out together playing ball and getting to know one another... He was a good guy, always was and always will be... From time to time I think of him and miss him... I have a stencil with his name I made on my first visit to the Wall... It is framed with my other brothers in arms I had the honor to serve with that gave all... Paul Curran is Not Forgotten... Ever..."* **Rob Martin**



**James Elliott Dewey, 20**  
**CPL, 173d Eng., 4/4/67**

(Virtual Wall states E/17th Cav)

*"James is buried at Cedar Hill Cem, Franklin, WV. His obit says his unit was LRRP, TRP E, 17 CAV, 173 ABN."*

**Robert Sage**



**Terrence Glade Dixon, 21**  
**CPL, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

*"I think of you often and the friendship we shared in Viet Nam. I will always remember you and the awful rainy night you were killed. It was a privilege to know you and serve with you. You were a true American hero and I miss you to this day."* **Gerald (Jerry) Hutson**



**Howard S. Dominiak, 20, PFC, A/1/503, 4/24/67**

*"Howard perished with others during the crash of UH-1D tail number 65-09957."* **Ed**



**Michael John Drake, 18**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Michael is buried at Evergreen Cemetery, Sanford, Seminole County, FL. BSM PH"*

**Robert Sage**



**David Alan Drown, 18**  
**SP4, A/4/503, 3/27/67**

(Virtual Wall states C/4/503)

*"David has not been forgotten. He has sacrificed his young life and his bright future, so that we can embrace the freedom that is America. God bless you David."* **Richard Cumberland**



**Michael Leo Ebald, 22**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

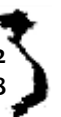
*"'Mickey' Ebald had a great fastball, a wonderful smile and an endless number of girlfriends, a sister recalled. He would rush outside at the first sign of spring and play baseball even if snow was still on the ground. Ebald pitched for the Venango Midgets, Jules E. Mastbaum High School and the Pepsi-Cola team in the Pennel League. He attended Mastbaum and Spring Garden Institute before he put his mechanical skills to work at a truck manufacturing firm. Ebald was a member of the Nativity BVM Roman Catholic Church, Belgrade Street and Allegheny Avenue. He and his brother, Daniel, enlisted in the Army together in May 1966. Michael wanted to become a Green Beret, but had to settle for being a light weapons infantryman. He was sent to Viet Nam, where he participated in the first parachute jump of the war. He and many of the men in his platoon were killed on March 3, 1967, when his unit, part of Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, was ambushed by a large enemy force. In addition to his brother, the private first class was survived by his mother, another brother and three sisters."* **Jim McIlhenney**



[Photo and article were taken from the *Philadelphia Daily News* of October 26, 1987. The special supplement entitled, 'SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTY,' was published in conjunction with the dedication of the Philadelphia Viet Nam Memorial].



*continued....)*







**Neil Robert Ellsworth, 19**

**PFC, HHC/1/503, 4/13/67**

***A soldier's tree***

**Memorial to man killed in Vietnam**

(excerpt)

By Priyanka Dayal

Worcester (MA) Telegram and Gazette

*"(NORTHBORO — It's not the brightest Christmas tree in Worcester County, but for many people here, it's the most special.*

*The 32-foot Fraser fir that stands in the center of town, at the busy junction of Routes 20 and 135, was planted in memory of Army Pfc. Neil R. Ellsworth, a Northboro native who died fighting in Vietnam 42 years ago. He was the first man Northboro lost in that war. He was 19.*

*He left a wife, who gave birth to a son soon after his death and named the boy for his father. Mr. Ellsworth also left a large family.*

*Much of the family still lives in town, and every December, family members and residents gather at a ceremony to watch the tree light up.*

*The original tree was planted by the Northboro Lions Club in 1968. It grew tall for decades before it became damaged and diseased and had to be removed in 2003. A new, healthy tree was planted in its place.*

*'There's not much in the center of town, and I think the tree is a focal point,' said Maureen A. Sargent, Neil Ellsworth's sister and the oldest of six siblings. 'People think it's just a tree. They don't realize it was planted for my brother.'....*

*Mrs. Sargent, who lives in Northboro, has one adult son. When he was growing up, she said, 'We told him that he had an uncle that was killed in Vietnam and that he was a hero. (My son) knew that Memorial Day is a big day in my family. It's probably one of those days that's even more close to our hearts than Christmas.'...*

*Mr. Ellsworth, who was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, died in April 1967, less than two months after arriving in Vietnam. He was covering his platoon in a firefight in a dense jungle near Minh Thang. His alertness in the fight helped to save lives, and he posthumously was awarded several medals."*

**Otto Robert Ensslin, 21**

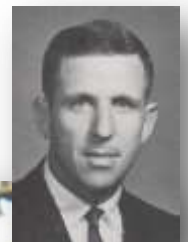
**CPL, A/1/503, 4/22/67**

**Newspaper excerpt:** *"A Waukesha paratrooper, S-4 Otto R. Ensslin, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Otto Ensslin, was killed in Vietnam on his 21st birthday Saturday. He died when the helicopter he was riding in crashed and burned while his unit was returning from a combat mission."*



**James Larry Evans, 25**

**1LT, A/3/319, 3/22/67**



**Photo of Larry with French photo journalist Catherine Leroy prior to combat jump on 22 February 1967.**

*"To the Parents of 1LT Larry Evans, I discovered The Virtual Wall on Memorial Day, 2000 and the profile on Larry. To my dismay, there were no postings about Larry and yesterday, Memorial Day, 2001, I see there are still no postings about Larry. Please allow me the honor to post a few remarks about your son. I met Larry in a class at Florence State College in 1963. Larry and I were a couple of years older than most of the class; my first name is Larry and I did not know that James was Larry's first name until last year. I guess the name Larry opened the door between us and we became friends. I was only in my 2nd semester and one of my classes was Basic ROTC; Larry was in Advanced ROTC, I think; he was focused in his studies, while I was just putting my nose in the books. Larry was a good friend from 1963 through 1965, when he graduated; I graduated in June, 1966. I think Larry was well liked by all that knew him; I know that I will never forget him and the ultimate sacrifice he made for his country. Respectfully,"*

**Larry W. Lawler**



(continued....)



**James William Evans, 19**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/25/67**

*"It is a sad time when countries fight... It is even more sad, when a family member is lost in a war. I am a friend of your brother Robert. He mentioned you, and I could see he was so very proud of you. I was there also, so I know even better than some, what you went through. My tears are sad and honor for your service. You, James William Evans are a true American hero. I salute you!"*

**Don Lamb**



**Freddie Lynn Friar, 22**  
**PFC, B/4/503, 3/9/67**

*"Freddie was really physically strong, outdoorsman, loved fried chicken, had a dark blue 2-door 57 Chevy, extremely witty and jolly, very loving, outgoing, hard working, always laughing and smiling. Dearly loved his family- he has a son named Fred Friar- Arkansas. His parents were grief stricken over his death and his father Willie Friar passed away about 6 months later from a broken heart. When he found out Freddie was MIA HE WAS distraught, he wasn't getting to eat, Freddie loved to eat. He was a good man and loved his family."*

**Rick Mosley (he was my uncle)**



**Willis Lee Furney, 20**  
**SGT, B/4/503, 3/9/67**

*"A few years ago I did a rubbing of Willis' name for his sister, who is in my church, and now I'm posting his photo for his family."*

**Dennis Henderson**



**Melvin Clyde Gaines, 28**  
**SSG, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"With respect, and the best salute a civilian can muster for you, Sir."*

**Curt Carter**



Photo submitted by Brendan Schneider



**Henry Hwey Gamble, 22, CPL, B/4/503, 4/7/67**

*"Henry is buried at Evergreen Cemetery, West Palm Beach, FL. PH"*



**Pedro I. "Doc" Garcia, 19**  
**SGT, HHC/2/503, 3/25/67**

*"Pete Garcia is my uncle, my mom's youngest brother. As a family we are very proud of you and I always tell your story and the legend that you are. Rest easy Tio!"*

**Roel Rene Gutierrez**



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

**Earl Stanley Garrison, 18**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"You were gentle, quiet and kind. Sitting next to each other, we giggled in Mrs. Coombs 3rd grade class when she 'inspected' our nails! When you joined up before high school graduation, I feared for your safe return, rightfully so. Our class dedicated the BHS 1967 yearbook to you. It was the least we could do - so frustrated that you were gone. I will never forget you or the sacrifice you made in the name of freedom."*

**Sheri Testa**



**Ross Allen Gaston, 22, PFC, B/4/503, 4/7/67**

*"Ross is buried at Shadow Lawn Memorial Park, Birmingham, AL. PH"*

*(continued....)*







**David Lewis Glasscock, 22**  
**SP4, A/4/503, 3/29/67**

*"David was my oldest brother.*

*I still miss him to this day. His middle name is actually spelled Louis, after one of his grandfathers."*

**His brother**



**Richard H. Goheen, 20**  
**SP4, 173d Eng., 4/15/67**

*"Richard is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery, Evansville, Vanderburgh County, IN. ARCOM PH"*



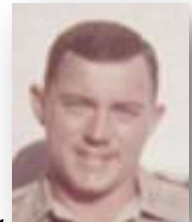
**Moses Green, 21, SP4, "Doc", HHC/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Moses served with my brother Charles Alandt. My brother was killed in action the same day. Both heroes."*

**Albert Marshall Guyer, 24**  
**1LT, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"I had the honor of serving with Marshall for 6 months, from June to December, 1965. The occasion of our service was that we were both attending Infantry Officers Candidate School, Fort Benning, Ga. The platoons were set up alphabetically. Since both of our last names began with the same letter we went thru the six months basically shoulder to shoulder.*



*There were a lot of things about him that made him unique but the two that stand out for me after all of these years were these. OCS was a physical grind, the likes of which I had never experienced before. Marshall was in the best physical condition that I had ever seen of another soldier. At the end of the day I would have done a couple of hundred pushups and could hardly move my arms. Marshall was not fazed at all. It was no sweat to him.*

*The second thing about him that I remember was he never stopped smiling. We could be having the worst of days and when you looked at him he was smiling. It used to piss off the T.A.C. officers all of the time, especially in the evening when his smiling would get him a ton of extra pushups. Didn't faze him in the least.*

*I was proud to consider him my friend and would have followed him into any combat. He was truly a good soldier and a good man. From a fellow officer,"*  
**John J. Glover**



Photo submitted by Boyd Glasscock

***"Just a young cowboy whose life  
had just began,  
When one day a letter came that  
would lead him to Viet-Nam.  
He didn't shrink, he didn't run,  
For those people he had scorn,  
That's why I believe he  
volunteered for the Airborne.  
To be one of the best for this  
Nation and freedoms to defend,  
That was his way – he was  
Someone on whom you could  
depend.***

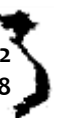
***He fought his fight - he lived what he believed –  
he gave his all,  
and now we only have some old photos and his name  
on a Wall.  
Of this nation I am not so proud - it turned its back on  
these men,  
through protest and dissent it lost its will to win."***  
*~ From his brother ~*

**Arthur A. "Doc", Gleason, 18**  
**PVT, HHC/2/503, 4/9/67**

*"Uncle Tony, Your courage will  
always be with me." Edward S. Angotti*



(continued....)



**Dwight Lee Hackworth, 18**

**PFC, A/1/503, 3/4/67**

*"Dwight is buried at Ft. Sam Houston Nat Cem, San Antonio, TX."*



**Dwight, at an earlier, more peaceful, quieter time.**

Photo submitted by Charles A. Calderon, Sr.

**Peter Richard Hart, PTE, 6RAR, 3/29/67**

**Rockwell Selden Herron, 19**

**PFC, C/2/503, 3/25/67**

*"I remember you as if it were yesterday. You, the tall, handsome blonde guy with the tan build. I looked up to you in awe. Seeing you ride your motorcycle up my street in the summer. Funny, I could hear you coming and knew it was you. Although I was just a little kid then, I can still see you on that motorcycle with your curly blond good looks. Such a waste that you left us way too early and now with a young son of my own I can only imagine the pain your mom felt when we all learned of your death. After all, this was Haworth, our little town where everyone knew everyone, even if not by name. Our class trip to Washington, DC in eighth grade, we stopped to see your grave. So sad to see your metal marker with your name. Not even time to get you a real marker. Watching the bulldozer continue to dig more graves for those who would come after you. I will never forget you 'Rocky'."* **Judy Perrotta**



**Douglas C. Holland, 23**

**SP4, HHC/Bde, 4/9/67**

*"I write this today, March 24, 2007, your birthday. In 16 more days you will have been gone 40 years. It makes me very sad to think of all of the good things you did not get to accomplish in those 40 years. Your energy, spirit and determination would had taken you to the top of whatever mountain you chose to climb. Sadly, your story has been repeated a million times over in our county's history. You are in the best of company. Your friend,"* **Joe Renner**

(Above) "AP Wirephoto appeared with same article that appeared in the *Stars and Stripes* on April 15, 1967.

**Caption:** Spec.4 Douglas Holland, 23, of Anita, La., combat photographer for the 173rd Airborne Brigade, shouldered machine gun and ammunition a few days before he was killed during battle in War Zone C. Holland who had only 21 days left to go in Vietnam, asked to go on one last combat assault."



**William Henry Holthoff, 21**

**SP4, 173d Eng./67th Radar, 3/21/67**

*"God rest your soul Bill, thank you for your service to this country. You are always remembered as a friend and a loving family man."* **Thomas G. Bell**



**John Henry James, 23**

**SP4, A/4/503, 3/26/67**

*"Dad this life has not been the same because I never really had a chance to get to know you. I have heard so many stories about you from your cousins. They love and miss you so much. Many say that I remind them of you. Love you. 4 ever and always."* **Vee**



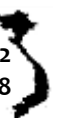
**James Kelly Keith, III, 18**

**PFC, B/4/503, 3/7/67**

*"Jimmy was killed in a parachute jump during Operation Junction City. He was 18 years old. The son of Wilma Hydas."* **Unsigned**



(continued....)





**Charles F. Kennedy, 32**  
**SGT, D/4/503, 3/7/67**

*"Sgt. Kennedy, we sure had our time sharing smokes and a few cold ones. There isn't a day that I don't think about you and the others. I still can see you as you were ordering us to get on line and return fire and where to fire at. Always remembering your fire team leader."*

**Juan M. Herrera**



**Harold Benton King, 19**  
**SP4, A/2/503, 4/9/67**

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Thank you for all those who remembered my late husband...I grew up in a military family. The families of those who served and who now serve will always hold a special place in my heart.....p.s. Harold's son also appreciates your thoughts. Jean (King) Livingston*



**Russell Alan Leffler, 20**  
**SP4, B/1/503, 4/16/67**

*"Thank you Spec. 4 Leffler for your leadership and courage."*

**A Grateful Vietnam Vet**



**Felix F.F. Leyva-Parra-Frias, 19**  
**PFC, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"Felix F F Leyva-Parra-Frias - I remember we 2nd plt. going to help 3rd Plt. Found your body in the lead and the body of LT and his radioman. We secure your bodies and carry everyone back to base camp. You and everyone will not be forgotten. There is a 173rd Memorial at FT. Benning, Georgia." Jaime Castillo*



**Richard Edward Lloyd, PTE, 5RAR, 4/3/67**

**Barry Arthur Logan, SIG, 552 SIG, 4/6/67**

**Ronald Wayne Lyerly, 20**  
**PFC, A/4/503, 3/6/67**

*"We Remember. Ronald is buried at Salisbury National Cemetery. PH"*

**Robert Sage**



**Robert L. Matthews, 23, SP4, A/3/319, 3/22/67**

*"Robert is buried at Brandontown Cemetery in Huntsville, AL. PH" Robert Sage*

**Malcolm Bruce McQualter, MAJ, 5RAR, 3/5/67**



**Don Leslie Michael, 19**  
**SP4, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

*"Thinking of you on this day and the sacrifice you made so long ago, so far away. You are not forgotten, thank you for giving all. Know that there are many who appreciate all you did and all you fought for. Rest in peace."*

**Rhonda**



**MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION**  
**DON LESLIE MICHAEL**

**For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. SP4 Michael, U.S. Army, distinguished himself while serving with Company C. SP4 Michael was part of a platoon which was moving through an area of suspected enemy activity. While the rest of the platoon stopped to provide security, the squad to which SP4 Michael was assigned moved forward to investigate signs of recent**



**enemy activity. After moving approximately 125 meters, the squad encountered a single Viet Cong soldier. When he was fired upon by the squad's machine gunner, other Viet Cong opened fire with automatic weapons from a well-concealed bunker to the squad's right front. The volume of enemy fire was so withering as to pin down the entire squad and halt all forward movement. Realizing the gravity of the situation, SP4 Michael exposed himself to throw 2 grenades, but failed to eliminate the enemy position. From his position on the left flank, SP4 Michael maneuvered forward with 2 more grenades until he was within 20 meters of the enemy bunkers, when he again exposed himself to throw 2 grenades, which failed to detonate. Undaunted, SP4 Michael made his way back to the friendly positions to obtain more grenades. With 2 grenades in hand, he again started his perilous move towards the enemy bunker, which by this time was under intense artillery fire from friendly positions. As he neared the bunker, an enemy soldier attacked him from a concealed position...**

*(continued....)*



...SP4 Michael killed him with his rifle and, in spite of the enemy fire and the exploding artillery rounds, was successful in destroying the enemy positions. SP4 Michael took up pursuit of the remnants of the retreating enemy. When his comrades reached SP4 Michael, he had been mortally wounded. His inspiring display of determination and courage saved the lives of many of his comrades and successfully eliminated a destructive enemy force. SP4 Michael's actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect the utmost credit upon himself and the U.S. Army.

**Jerry Robert Miller, 19**  
**CPL, B/4/503, 4/7/67**

*"I enjoy life and all its freedoms thanks to all veterans and their sacrifices. My hero is my Papa, Jerry Robert Miller. He served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He was K.I.A. 7 April 67 in Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam. It is the 40th anniversary of his death day this year. I honor my Papa yesterday, today, and forever. I think about your life that was too short, and what you would have done and the memories that we never had a chance to make. I know some day in Heaven we will have our time and get to play some baseball (our passion). My American flags fly for you, Papa. As the saying goes Duty, Honor, Country. Papa, you did all and gave all. You are my hero! A proud son,"* **Jerry Robert Miller, Jr.**



**Stephen Michael Minick, 19**  
**SGT, A/4/503, 3/26/67**

*"I Will Always Love You Stephen. I remember our last night together we went Christmas Caroling with our church, how cold it was and you gave me your army jacket because I was shivering. You walked me home and we talked. We knew we may never see each other again, I was brave for you Stephen, not wanting to be. You held me so securely and we kiss for our last time, but I still remember how it felt and the promise we made that night to remember how much we loved. I could not come here till now 36 year later to say I Love You Stephen, always have, and always will be your girl. Rest In Peace My Love."* **Nancy Lung**



**Douglas Eugene Moore, 24**  
**SGT, C/2/503, 3/25/67**

*"To My Father. I only wish I could've known you, before you were lost. But, as so many others, you were defending your country, trying to hold on to your families, and stay alive. Your brother has helped me get to know you, but I'll always wonder. You will always be loved and missed. YOUR SON."* **Michael Papson**



**Higinio Ovalle Oviedo, 22**  
**PFC, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

*"I served in the same Platoon as Higinio Oviedo, but later. As I understand it, SP4 Oviedo died trying to reach SP4 Don Michael after Michael had been hit."* **Wayne Walker**



**Thomas Patterson, 20, SGT, B/4/503, 4/7/67**

*"I remember your sacrifice. Thinking of you and your family."* **Jerry Jr.**

**Timothy C. Patterson, 22**  
**SGT, A/1/503, 4/22/67**

*"Sergeant Timothy Coleman Patterson was killed in the crash of a helicopter on which he was a passenger. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. Sergeant Patterson's father, an Air Force officer, was stationed in Vietnam at the time of the son's death. Sergeant Patterson was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery."* **Michael Robert Patterson**

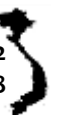


**Randall Lawrence Perry, 20**  
**SP4, B/3/319, 3/23/67**

*"My Best Buddy in Basic. Randy, I was shocked to find your name on 'The Wall'. I still have the pictures of us horsing around at the Patton Museum at Ft. Knox in '65. I will never forget you, or any of my other fallen brothers."* **Bill Rambow**



(continued....)





**John J. Rabideau, 18**  
**PFC, A/1/503, 4/11/67**

*"John, I remember you every day. How could I forget you, the good times we shared and your sacrifice? It seems like only yesterday that a group of us walked the railroad tracks to and from school. I also recall the 'fun' we all had in the neighborhood doing 'whatever'. Who would have ever thought that The Moving Wall, with your name on it, would one day come to Easthampton and be placed on the soccer field that you played so many games on? (You were good!) I visited The Moving Wall 5 times, each time talking to you and recalling you playing on that soccer field. I smiled and yes, also shed tears. The times you spent playing on that field were some of the best days of your ever-too-short life. You are my hero, John. You were taken from us much too soon, much too soon. With love," Pat*



**Charles Ray, 33, SSG, A/1/503, 4/11/67**

*"To a very special man and dad that I never had the pleasure of knowing. I've heard so many wonderful stories about him from family as well as friends. I know if he was still alive, I would cherish our father and daughter relationship. But in his place I found the perfect man who loves me unconditionally. I will also one day be able to dance with my father again. The only memories I have is of old pictures he took while on active duty. After all these years I sometimes find myself talking to him as if he was actually here. I would get caught in a particular situation and say 'Now daddy, what would you do/say about this?'. He has a few offspring from his daughter of whom he would be proud."*

**Tonya R. Ray**

**Norman A. Renfro, 24**  
**PVT, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

(Virtual Wall states A/2/503)

*"I wish I could have known him. I never even got to call him dad. I have always been so proud of him. I know he has always watched over me. I would love to hear from guys who knew my Dad. Love," Rosie*



*"Norman was my loving big brother. I barely knew him but what memories I do have are ones of pride. One of my fondest memories of Norman was the day he surprised me by showing up at my grammar school all dressed up in his uniform. I wanted all the kids to see my big brother. I was so proud of him. He died for his belief in doing what was right in Vietnam. He died doing the only thing he ever wanted to do and*

*that was being a soldier. He will always be close to my heart. Love," "Little Sister" Debbie*

**Angel Perfir Saez-Ramirez, 32, SSG, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"We remember. Angel is buried at Ft. Benning Post Cemetery." Robert Sage*

**Kerry Patrick Rinkin, 2LT, 5RAR, 4/7/67**

**Donald Ray Sanders, 20**  
**PFC, B/1/503, 3/25/67**

*"Donny and I met in basic training at Ft. Ord, CA in June 66. We became good friends. We both went through Leader Prep Course, AIT at Ft. Gordon, GA, and Jump School at Ft. Benning. He was a fine man and a great friend, well liked by all who knew him. Next month will mark fifty years since his death. Miss you, Donny. I think I bought the last round, so you owe me one." James Callaway*



**Peter John Schutz, 19, SP4, A/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Dear Peter, You died with my brother that terrible day in March. I have a picture of you and Norman and your other buddies at the base camp in Vietnam. You are standing behind and above Norman in the picture. I found your name on the Wall in D.C. this weekend, you and Norman are next to each other there too, one above, one below. It makes me so sad to see your sweet young face in those pictures and to know you never got to live a full life. You are not forgotten. Love, Norman Renfro's little sister," Debbie*

**James Arthur Skiles, 22**  
**PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

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

*(Thomas Campbell, circa 1888)*

**From a cousin**

*"I met the man who risked His life trying to get to Jimmy. Sgt Frank Boswell was His platoon leader. He was wounded trying to get to Jimmy. He was with Jimmy when He died. He has been in touch with Jimmy's sister."*

**Andrew Dale Sandro, USMC**



*(continued....)*





**John Raymond Stalter, 19  
SGT, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"My Brother. Born: 7/6/47 San Diego, CA to Joseph R. Stalter and*

*Beatrice G. Stalter. Brothers: Chuck Stalter and Larry Stalter. Grew up in Pico Rivera, CA and graduated from El Rancho High School in 1965 where he lettered in football and wrestling. His passion was surfing and he brought this attitude and life style to Vietnam. John was only 5'8" but never backed down from a fight. He was fearless. John joined the Army in 1966 in the buddy program with a classmate, Richard Whiting (KIA 1966). Both men went to jump school and assigned to airborne units in Vietnam. John was assigned to 173rd Airborne, Company C, 2nd Brigade, 503rd Infantry. His unit was in the middle of all of the terror and action. Their primary duty was to hunt down the enemy and destroy them. John started as a tunnel rat, having to go down into enemy tunnels and kill anything moving. John was also a participant in the only combat parachute jump made in Vietnam on February 22, 1967. On March 3, 1967 John was leading his squad and got caught in an ambush. As he instructed his men to retreat, John moved forward and took fire from the enemy. For his actions John was awarded the Bronze Star (with a "V" for valor), Purple Heart and some medals from the country of Vietnam. John had only two weeks left in his tour when he was killed. From our high school we had over 25 young men give their life in Vietnam. Included were Richard Whiting, Sam Favata, Jimmy Andrews, Ray Desmond, Jesse Chavez, Tim Nunnally and others. All of the families of these heroes formed a 'new' family and we continue to try to keep in contact."* **Chuck Stalter**



**Selvester Joe Vasques, 19, SGT, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Never forgotten. Forever remembered"*

**Bill Nelson**

**Herbert Wilson, Jr., 19, PFC, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"Remembering an American Hero."* **Curt Carter**

**John B. Woble, 30, PVT, 173d Eng., 4/1/67**

*"John, although we never met, I just want you to know you are not forgotten. You gave the ultimate sacrifice, your life for what you believed in. Sleep well and thank you."* **Dave Kruger**

**Sources:**

**173d Abn Bde Casualty List**

**Australian Casualty List:**

<http://www.hq1atf.org/ozcas1.htm>

**New Zealander's suffered no KIA during the months of March & April 1967**

**~ A Note From The Virtual Wall ~**

**"The 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, lost 20 men as the result of an action east of Kontum on 03 March 1967. The action began when a platoon from Charlie Company was ambushed and continued when additional forces were inserted to recover the trapped men. Nineteen were killed in the action; one died the following day of wounds received."**

**See Tom Abramam's tribute to his men and friends of Charlie Company on Pages 14-17. Ed**

**John Maxwell Stone, T/W02, AATTV, 4/10/67**

**Lawrence Strack, 18, PVT, C/2/503, 3/3/67**

*"To my Big Brother. Thinking of you this memorial day and always. It seems at many times this just happened yesterday. You are missed very much and thought of every single day. You live on in my heart and my two daughters hearts, Sam and Ari. Love little bro,"*  
**Gil**

**Robert Thompson, Jr., 23  
PFC, C/4/503, 4/8/67**

(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"We remember. Robert is buried at Los Angeles Nat Cem."* **Robert Sage**





## The Power of Simple Words

*From Our Daily Bread*

*Author: Randy Kilgore*

Raucous laughter marked the guests in my father's hospital room: Two old truck drivers, one former country/western singer, one craftsman, two women from neighboring farms, and me.

"...and then he got up and busted the bottle over my head," the craftsman said, finishing his story about a bar fight.

The room bursts into laughter at the now humorous memory. Dad, struggled for breath as his laughing fought with his cancer for the air in his lungs, puffs out a reminder to everybody that "*Randy is a preacher, so you all need to watch what you say*". Everything got quiet for about two seconds, then the whole room exploded as this news makes them laugh harder and louder.

Suddenly, about 40 minutes into this visit, the craftsman clears his throat, turns to my dad, and gets serious. "*No more drinking and bar fights for me, Howard. Those days are behind me. Now I have a different reason to live. I want to tell you about my Savior.*"

He then proceeded to do just that, over my father's surprisingly mild protests. If there's a sweeter, gentler way to present the gospel message, I've never heard it. My dad listened and watched, and some years later believed in Jesus too.

It was a simple testimony from an old friend living a simple life, reminding me again that simple isn't naïve or stupid; it's direct and unpretentious. Just like Jesus. And salvation!

***Go and make disciples of all nations.***

*(Matthew 28:19)*

Rich Whipple  
Chaplain (Certified)  
(A sinner saved by God's Grace)  
Cell: 734-751-2992  
[rekjwhipple@yahoo.com](mailto:rekjwhipple@yahoo.com)  
HHC/2/503rd Infantry  
173d Airborne Brigade  
1968-69



## Finding my Captain from Nam

I arrived in Vietnam on May 16, 1968 and was assigned to the 173d, 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry which was located at LZ English, near Bong Son. I reported to Captain Jim Dyer, who was the head officer for all of the signal corps for the battalion. My primary duties was to be a radio relay commo guy, being the middle guy that would relay messages between LZ English and the battalion's companies, usually at a FSB or ARVN compound.



L-R: Jim & Rich

In September I was promoted to Sgt. E-5, and in November myself and another 05C (Radio Teletype) friend received orders that we were being transferred to the 1st Cavalry, 227th Aviation Battalion, as they were in need of 05C's. Obviously, leaving my friends behind, losing six months of jump pay (\$330.) being in a "leg" unit, and having to start over again making friends, I was not a happy trooper.

So leaving the Army in May of 1969, I went back to civilian life, and would refresh my memory of my tour by looking at the color slides I had taken and attempting to come up with where I was at the time of the picture. I tracked down about four of us that were together with the Herd, and finally sought to find our captain. Knowing he was a West Point grad, I found him on their website, with his middle initial and where his home was located. I used the "White Pages" app and found that he lived in Florida.

My wife and I were planning a month long tour in Florida in February, so I phoned the number that was listed for him and left a message. He phoned me back a few days later, and remembered me mainly because I was a buck sergeant under him, and most of the E-5's under him were Spec 5. So Jim invited me to look him up, and we had a fantastic time, and the wives got along as well (that usually makes a difference).

I asked Jim about who was in charge of the Herd then, as well as the 2nd Batt. Jim threw out these names: Commander of the Brigade was Colonel Franklin, LTC Harnish (Commander of the 2nd Batt), another name was LTC Anthony Herbert, LTC John Nicholson, S3 was Major Harry Skeins, and an XO who was Major Hank?.

Jim left the military and went to work at the Pentagon to his retirement, and was the first of his classmates to reach O-7 (General level), and finished as an O-8. He lives in a gated community where a third of the homeowners have a hanger attached to their homes, and he flew both my wife and myself up in his plane. He's in great health, and said I was the first enlisted man under him who had gotten in touch with him. I plan on visiting him again in another couple of years! **Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503d, '68**



# Remembering my men and friends of “Charlie” Company

By LT Tom Abraham

Platoon Leader, C/2/503



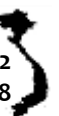
**C/2/503 Platoon Leaders on or about January 1967. L-R: Lt. Welborn Callahan (KIA), 3d Platoon; Lt. Thomas Abraham, Weapons Platoon (81mm); Lt. Al Guyer (KIA), 2d Platoon; Lt. Phil Hayden, 1st Platoon.**

**M**y first assignment was the LT of the 3d Platoon. I arrived in August 1966. LT Guyer arrived soon after I did as did LT Hayden. LT Callahan arrived in January 1967. One of the first things I did was ask my men to write me a letter telling me about themselves so I could get to know them. I also told them about me.

I had an opportunity to take R&R to Hawaii at Christmas in 1966, and met my fiancé' there. We only had one major contact with the enemy up until that time. On my way out of the field to leave for Hawaii we drew .50cal fire and that was a rush but no casualties.

When LT Callahan arrived he took my platoon, 3d platoon, as I was senior and moved to the mortar platoon. In early February I was moved up to Battalion to lead the 4.2 mortar platoon -- just in time to plan for THE JUMP.

*(continued....)*







**The late LTC Bob Sigholtz (COL Ret), addresses his men of the 2/503 prior to combat jump in February 1967.**

(Photo provided by Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503)

Sometime in January or February LT Hayden was hit very badly and was med-evac'd. Preparation for THE JUMP was limited to 4 or 5 officers, and I was included. The S-4, who always stayed in the base camp while I went to the field told me he would make the jump and I would stay behind. LTC Robert Sigholtz, our Bn CO, would have none of that. The starched fatigues S-4 would wear his starched clothes while Abraham went with the Battalion. I didn't know whether to be honored or scared.

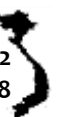
They had planned a jump the previous year and found talk of it in the local bars; combat jump wings being sold, and an aerial recon discovered machine gun bunkers all around the drop zone, and the jump was postponed until February '67. Security was tight this

time and the jump occurred without a hitch. Our mission was S&D and try to find a POW camp.

The jump occurred on February 22, my fiancé's birthday. I told her to watch the news. We patrolled that area for a week with no sign of the enemy.

Then, on March 3, we got horrific news. Third platoon, my old platoon, was caught in an ambush. My heart raced while we waited for the news. LT Callahan, whose father was the Command Sergeant Major at Fort Benning, was KIA along with what seemed like half of the platoon.

*(continued....)*



The platoon was crippled and needed a new platoon leader and new recruits. LT Guyer told me he thought the Colonel would pick him and he didn't feel good about it. He felt he was now senior and wanted to follow my path to battalion. He had that unmistakable look on his face. Some battle weary soldiers know what I mean. I went to the Colonel and offered to take over my old platoon, but LTC Sigholtz denied my request. He wanted me with the 4.2mm mortar platoon. He sent LT Guyer.

One month later, on April 8, 1967, 3d Platoon again got caught in an ambush. The KIA's were brought in and I loaded each on the helicopter, including LT Guyer and what seemed like the other half of the platoon. Hardened soldiers cried as they loaded LT Guyer on the helicopter. I would save my tears for much later. (Officers have to be strong in front of their men). It was hard.

### KIA, THE MEN OF 3D PLATOON I KNEW

**Lt. Albert M. Guyer** was my hooch mate. We became very close. We both played college football, and Al was a small college All-American. He was in great shape and kept a set of tension springs in the hooch to keep his arms and chest strong. We both were engaged to beautiful women and we talked about them a lot. I had to help him write some of his letters, as he seemed to want the help. Al was from Kansas and his fiancé was living in Louisiana -- Missy Stewart. How can I remember that 55 years later and not even having it written down? I tried to find her when I went back and was stationed at Ft Polk, but no luck. Al was a great soldier and a great friend. 4/8/67.



**Lt. Welborn A. Callahan** was a great guy as well but I knew less about him other than what I mentioned above. He grew up mostly at Ft. Benning and was no stranger to the Army. It never leaves my mind that two of my replacements and most of my platoon were lost within two months of my moving on. 3/3/67.



**PFC Steven Jack (John) Adams** was a rifle Team Leader, was born in Stanton, Tennessee and was very proud to serve his country and planned to stay Airborne until his service time was up in 1968. He had planned to continue his education. 3/3/67.



**PFC Charles Byron Alandt** was a Grenadier from Detroit, Michigan, born on New Year's Eve, 1948. He told me he volunteered for Airborne and Vietnam, which he later thought was a big mistake but decided that while he was there he would do his *"best because I feel it's my duty."* He was looking forward to going home to live with his brother in California and to attend college. 3/3/67.



**PFC Lionel S. Anthony** was an AR man, which suited his muscular frame well. He was a happy young man and was proud to serve, and, like others, looking forward to getting home and getting on with his life. 3/4/67.

**SSG Melvin Clyde Gaines**, one of my best squad leaders. He was a good soldier and a good leader. He had time in country before my arrival and I learned from him. He took care of his men and I relied on him. 3/3/67.



(continued....)





**SGT Pedro “Doc” Garcia** was another one that I relied on heavily. He kept me straight and he was always a happy person with a good sense of humor. He was with me at HHC, 4.2mm mortars. Very good man. 3/25/67.



**PFC James Arthur Skiles** was a machine gunner (AR) from New Jersey and had hoped to go back to college when his service to his country was up. His passion was singing in a group and hoped to pick that up again back home. 3/3/67.



**SP4 Moses “Doc” Green** was a medic in the 3d platoon. He was another great paratrooper. Kept me on my toes, refused to let me make a mistake, and I learned a lot from him. Everyone knew and loved him. 3/3/67.

**SGT Douglas Eugene Moore**, an outstanding squad leader who was a good leader to his men and a good teacher for his platoon leader. He had a good military mind and was war experienced in Vietnam. A new LT would be smart to listen rather than dictate, and I did. He was married and left an infant child. 3/25/67.



**SGT John Raymond Stalter** was a Pfc rifleman when I arrived. He was from Pico, CA and spent most of his time surfing. In school he played football and wrestled and placed in two AAU wrestling tournaments. He was looking forward to leaving RVN, but then who wasn't? He wanted to go to college. 3/3/67.



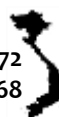
These recollections are from my memory and written notes from over 50 years ago. The men of C/2/503 were among the best. I volunteered for the 173d Airborne because I had heard what a good outfit it was. I wasn't disappointed one bit. The men who fell were all good, young men. They gave their lives to serve their country. It saddens all of us to reflect on their loss.

When I left Vietnam in August 1967, the Bn CO wanted me to stay to enhance my career. I would have commanded “Charlie” Company, my old company. I couldn't. I was getting married in a week. Less than 3 months later Charlie Company and the 2d Batt was surrounded at Dak To where they sustained heavy casualties. I was lucky again. ###

## THEY CALLED US “CHARGIN’ CHARLIES”



**Charlie Company hooches along perimeter at Camp Zinn.**  
(Cropped from photo by Col. George Dexter, Bn CO, '64-'66)





# 173d Airborne Brigade Association



~ Candidates for President of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association ~

## TERRY AUBREY

*"Leadership you can count on"*

- VP since 2012
- Revitalized Sky Soldier Store
- Secured logo trademarks
- Designed and developed 50th Anniversary 'challenge' coins



## WAMBI COOK

*"Proven leadership for the future"*

### Goals:

If elected, I will immediately apply for an IRS Group Exemption Number to provide blanket IRS Tax Exempt status for all Chapters. This will allow the individual Chapters to solicit monies, goods and services, a business strategy that has been long overdue.

I will carry on the challenge to bring the Association into the 21st century by making it more viable and relevant to the growing number of second generation Sky Soldiers without sacrificing the continued objectives of the Viet Nam era first generation.

I will vigorously strive to ease the way the new troopers are transitioned into civilian life thus opening a faster track for association recruitment.

I will encourage the second generation to take hold of the mantle of leadership within the Association. This will ensure our rightful legacy of distinction among the elite warriors of the past 50+ years.

The Gold Star component of the Association demands strong leadership. I will ensure competent persons assume this vital post.

Give full support to both the Memorial and Foundation elements.

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"The Spring 2017 issue of the *Sky Soldier* magazine should contain an official ballot that can be completed by Members and mailed by US mail to Chapter 30 who will count the ballots. When the Spring 2017 issue is published, online voting instructions will be emailed to all Members who have a valid email address and are current on their annual membership dues or hold a lifetime membership."



## ELDON MEADE

*"Experience that Matters"*

Former President of four Chapters:

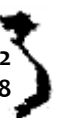
- Chapter 3, Ft. Benning, GA,
- Chapter 20, United Desert, AZ,
- Chapter 25, Thunderbird, Phoenix AZ,
- Chapter 8, of the Inland Northwest WA.

### - Agenda -

1. —Establish supportive membership team for advising chapters for retention and recruitment.
2. —Establish a network of Certified Veteran Service Officers supporting our personnel.
3. —Establish a network of family support for transitioning 173d personnel into local areas.



*Airborne....All The Way!*







Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin with Commander-in-Chief Donald Trump (web photo)

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

I am grateful to President Trump and to Members of Congress for entrusting me with the privilege of serving Veterans and the dedicated employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs as your Secretary. It is my highest professional honor.

Together, we'll ensure our Nation's obligation to provide care and benefits to those *"who shall have borne the battle"* and fulfill our institutional I-CARE Values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence.

That obligation and those values are sacred to me, first, as an American - a beneficiary of the service and sacrifices of Veterans and their families who defend our uniquely American freedoms and opportunities. They're also sacred to me because my father served the Nation as an Army psychiatrist, and both my grandfathers were Army Veterans. My paternal grandfather served as Chief Pharmacist at the VA hospital in Madison, Wisconsin, and as a young doctor, I trained in VA hospitals. So, serving the Nation and serving Veterans is a family tradition.

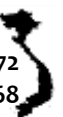
It was a privilege to serve as VA's Under Secretary for Health over the past year and a half. Now, I look forward to continuing our collective efforts across the Department and our country to deliver the care and services our Veterans need and deserve. Among many critical efforts already underway, we will continue building on significant progress increasing access for Veterans, preventing suicide, addressing unique needs of women Veterans, supporting Veterans' families and caregivers, continuing to drive down the disability backlog and Veteran homelessness, and pursuing necessary legislation to reform the outdated appeals process and for other critical legislative priorities.

With the support of the President, Congress, Veterans, their service organizations, and the American people, we - the dedicated employees of VA - will continue to fulfill President Lincoln's promise.

There is no nobler mission. There is no higher calling for any American. I am humbled and proud to serve with you.

**David J. Shulkin, M.D.**

[Sent in by CCVVA Chapter 972. Photo added]



## Combat Notes



LTC Bob Carmichael

# OPERATION NEW LIFE

**Major Robert B. Carmichael, USA and  
Lieutenant Richard E. Eckert, USA  
Former members of the 2nd Battalion  
(Abn), 503d Infantry**



COL Dick Eckert

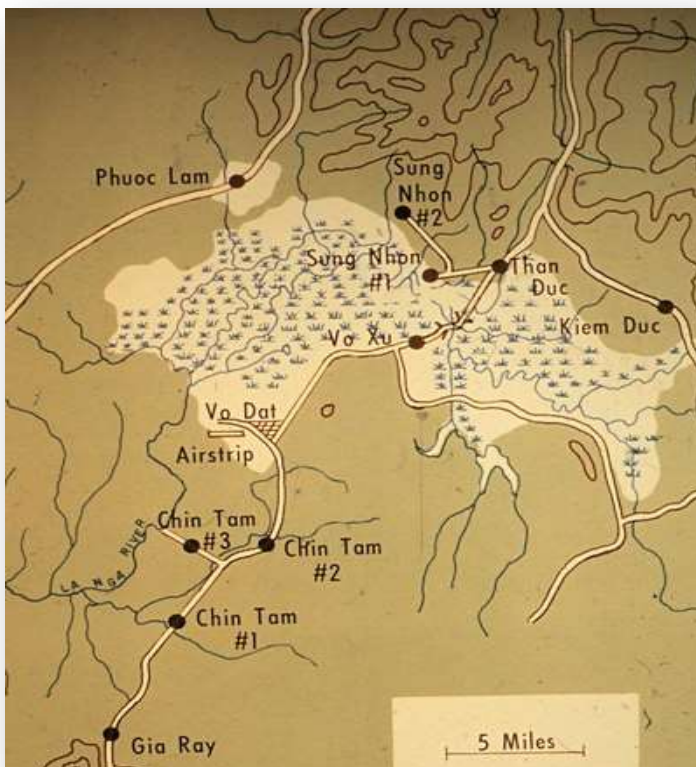
**O**NE OF THE striking characteristics of the war in Vietnam, which is different in so many respects from those fought in both the immediate and distant past, is the dynamic individual activity of the units up through brigade level. By the nature of the terrain and the enemy, the massive operations of division-sized units as were seen in Europe during the Second World War have been limited – indeed, almost eliminated. In place of these massive operations has emerged the independent maneuvering of separate brigades, with battalions actively hunting the enemy on their own and with company-sized patrols probing deep into hostile territory.

The activities of the separate brigades have actually been conducted as entire campaigns in themselves, existing almost independently of any other unit activity. Operation NEW LIFE, for instance, was a good deal more than simply a military operation. Conducted by the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), it was a whole campaign unto itself, a swing and traverse in both scope and in depth. At bottom, in fact, it was not only a military effort with a wide sweep, but it was also a true counter insurgent effort. It was conducted to overcome the overt resistance of the Viet Cong, understand and counter the psychological poisons spread in the minds of the people, and then remove the social irritants – the Viet Cong cadre – who were forcing the people to take arms against Allied soldiers.

Prior to launching Operation NEW LIFE, no effort of such magnitude had ever been made in Vietnam. Earlier efforts on the part of the Brigade saw it hunting of the enemy, hitting him, extracting suddenly, and then moving on to other missions. But there had not been, up to the advent of Operation NEW LIFE, an operation of sufficient duration to allow exercising the complete arsenal of weapons available to a US unit in countering the psycho-sociological aspects of the counter-insurgency problem.

The mission of the Brigade was to seize and secure a large, inhabited, fertile valley to the north and east of Vo Dat in the Binh Tuy Province. The valley contained over 28 square kilometers of rice paddies, all of which were ripe for harvest, and the Brigade had the task of ensuring that the Viet Cong did not get the crop. The crucial area of the operation, where the Viet Cong held dominant sway, fell into the tactical area of responsibility of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry.

*(continued....)*



Map of Vo Dat and surrounding area.





The Brigade's organizational make-up for the operation is shown in Figure 1, and included an augmentation of two Infantry battalions and a 155 battery from the 1st Infantry Division – the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry; the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry; and B Battery, 1st Battalion, 6th Artillery.

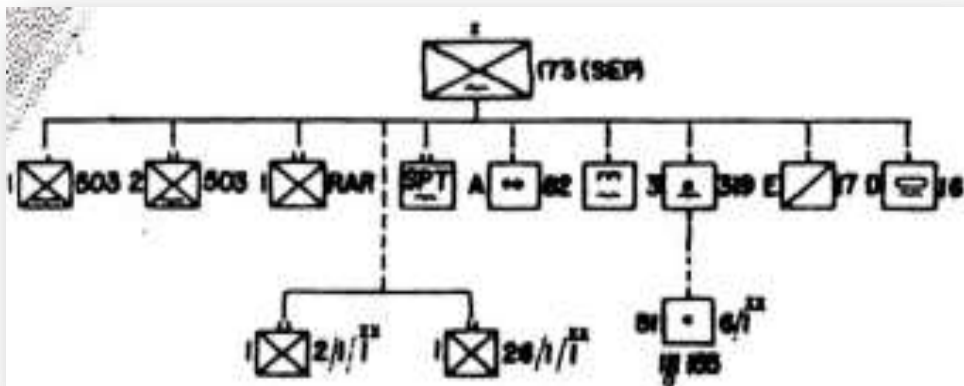


Figure 1

There were three key terrain features in the area of operations: an air strip at Vo Dat, interprovincial Route 3, and the inhabited village areas (Figure 2). One North Vietnamese Regiment and three main line battalions were reported operating in the hills to the north of the La Nga River; one Viet Cong regiment was reported 10 kilometers south of Vo Dat; and up to one battalion of local guerrillas was organized – and positively known to be living and operating – in the combat hamlets of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry's area of interest. These hamlets contained extensive anti-airborne obstacles, individual positions, and crew-served weapons emplacements.



Figure 2

It is important to consider inhabited areas in the plan for any counterinsurgency operations, for these areas provide three supports to the guerrilla – food, military intelligence, and a source for human contact. Through a program of fear, the Viet Cong had secured an area in which they could flourish abundantly; in consequence, the Brigade not only had to defeat the Viet Cong militarily, it also had to win the approval of the people by counteracting the effects of communist propaganda.

The original battle plan called for the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 503d Infantry to conduct a parachute assault on two drop zones north of the La Nga River on 25 November 1965. But, when local vendors in the Bien Hoa area began trying to sell American parachute wings to the troops, it became apparent that the plan had been compromised. The Brigade commander wisely allowed this to pass as deception, and on 21 November, four days prior to the commencement of the original battle plan and with a minimum of notice, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1/RAR) conducted heliborne assaults on the Vo Dat airstrip; concurrently with this maneuver, the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry moved out to link up by motor convoy from the south.



L/Cpl Les McDonald and Cpl (Jock) A H Fotheringham KIA December 17, 1965, during Operation NEW LIFE.

(1RAR Association photo)

(continued....)



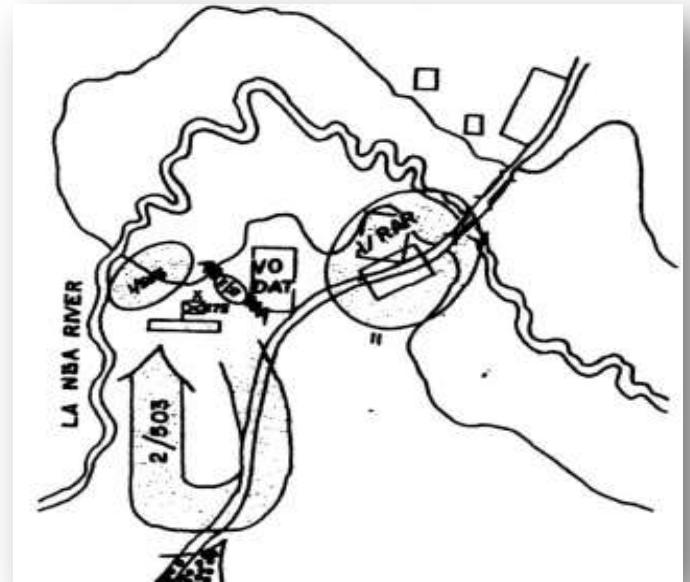


**The chow line in Vo Dat, Thanksgiving Day 1965.**  
(Photo by Bob Stokes)

The four day jump in plans caught the Viet Cong by surprise. In fact, roads were only half-cut by fresh ditches, while automatic and individual weapons positions, though started, were left unfinished. Such findings indicated that the Viet Cong were unable to adapt to rapid changes, being incapable of bending with the malleable imperatives of war. But the assault of 21 November on Vo Dat gave more than an indication of the enemy's inflexibility. As a lesson directed to the military tactician, it showed that the principle of mass is as critical in a counterinsurgency operation as it is in conventional war.

The lesson is simply explained. The distance from the staging area in Bien Hoa to Vo Dat required about a 30-minute flight. Using conventional turn arounds, this would mean that an hour would be required between each lift hitting the landing zone. But since the Brigade had only 40 UH1D helicopters, each able to lift seven troopers, no more than 280 paratroops could be lifted into the objective area per hour. To overcome this limitation, the Brigade commander pre-positioned half of a battalion at Xuan Loc, about half the distance between Bien Hoa and Vo Dat. This tactic enabled the combat elements of one complete battalion to be on the objective area within 30 minutes. The operation unfolded in this manner without incident, and by the end of D Day the airhead was secured and the logistics build-up began. Sorties into the airhead, carried out by transport aircraft, built up and maintained a constant, five-day level of supply into the operational area.

The next seven days were spent in securing the vital interprovincial route to Gia Ra in the south and in patrolling aggressively to expand the Brigade's sphere of influence in and around Vo Dat. The 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry swept and cleared to the west; the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, after clearing to the south, looped back along the La Nga River to Vo Dat; the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry and 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, moving overland, linked up with the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry and kept the interprovincial route open; and the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, clearing to the east and the northeast, secured Vo Zu and the vital portion of the rice bowl area to the south of La Nga River (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**



**Troopers bathing in Vo Dat in December '65.**  
(Photo by Bob Stokes)

(continued....)





By the eighth day of the operation, on 29 November, the Brigade was ready to begin the task of clearing the northern half of the rice bowl, which was in the hands of the Viet Cong. The areas of responsibility for this operation had been assigned (Figure 4), but to ensure the success of the whole operation, it was necessary that the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry wrest control of its area from the Viet Cong.

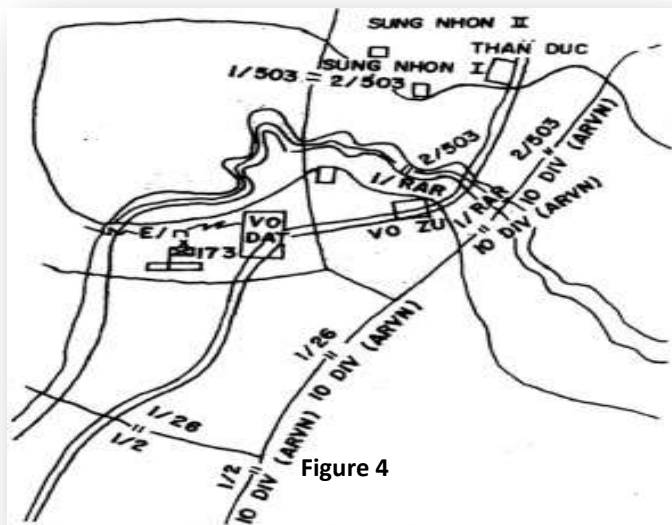


Figure 4

The first phase of the Battalion's operation began on 1 December when Task Force Bravo, composed of Company B and one platoon from Company A, mounted 22 armored personnel carriers and drive a wedge of armor through and around the key southern village of Than Duc (Figure 5). After swimming the La Nga River behind the support of a rolling artillery barrage from the 105mm Howitzers of the 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, the armored elements approaches the village from the south and west. Enemy resistance was shattered under the savage pounding of the artillery, which itself was complemented by support from aircraft. Responding to these ferocious bombardments, the Viet Cong fled into the hills in disorganized bands.



2/503 fording the La Nga River. (Photo by George Dexter)

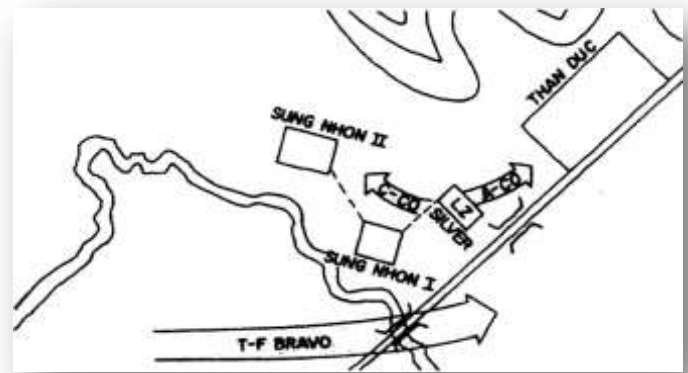


Figure 5

The use of air and artillery support presented a complicating factor in the operation, for there was always the chance that innocent civilians, mixed among the Viet Cong, would be injured; but fortunately, through the professional competence of the forward air controllers and the artillery forward observers, the civilians in the village were unharmed – only the Viet Cong, who offered resistance by manning positions, were brought under the support fires.

Four hours after the armored assault, the remaining elements of the Battalion landed in a helicopter assault at LZ SILVER. Company C drove at once to the northwest, cutting off Than Duc village from Sung Nhon and taking up a blocking position to thwart any counterattack. This move was also designed to cut off the remaining Viet Cong force which might be trying to escape from the south to the north. Company A then drove northwest to reinforce Company B (Figure 6).

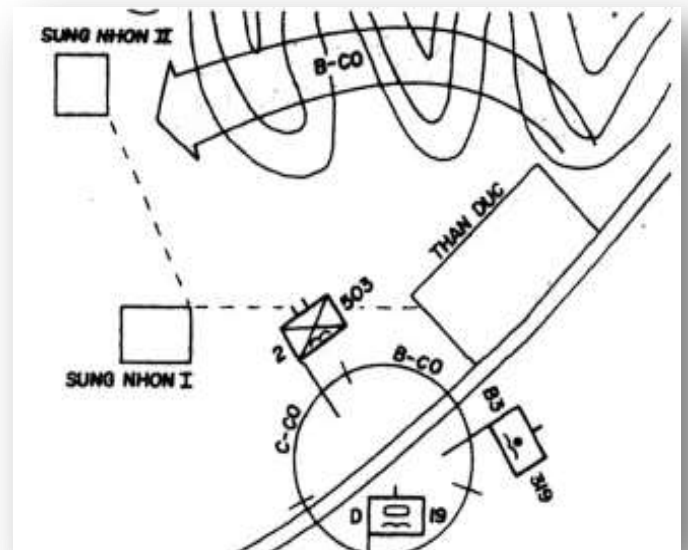


Figure 6

(continued....)



Only seven and a half hours after the armored assault began, at 1430 hours, all organized Viet Cong resistance had been smashed. The village areas were searched methodically, with all military-age males taken into custody and evacuated to Vo Dat, where they would be interrogated by the district chief. To clarify Allied policy, leaflets and interpreters explained for what reasons the Americans were there and what was expected of the citizens to assure their safety.

The next phase of the operation began on 2 December. Under the directions of the battalion commander, the artillery liaison officer and the air liaison officer teamed up to develop a coordinated fire plan which utilized all the artillery and air support available to the Brigade. The indirect-fire weapons organic to the battalion, including the 81mm mortars, the 4.2-inch mortars, and the 106mm Recoilless rifles, complemented this support plan by providing close-in, defensive fires. The effects of such a combined support plan were devastating.

### **Lucrative targets**

Any area which study or intelligence indicated was a lucrative target came under the sudden devastation of the weapons. Hundreds of rounds of supporting fires, coming from as many as 18x105 howitzers, 4x155 howitzers, and 4x4.2 mortars in a TOT, could cover large sections of a 1,000-meter grid square. But in bringing these fires to bear on the enemy, care was exercised not to establish a pattern, thus making no place a temporary sanctuary for the enemy at any time.

It was not long before the results of these fires became known. Occasionally, a Viet Cong soldier would stumble helplessly into the base camp from the mountains; patrols would find fresh grave sites and blood stains in the jungle; and, one of the ralliers from the local Viet Cong unit reported that artillery and air support had killed over 40 Viet Cong in a company while they were attempting to hide in the hills. Most of the ralliers admitted a greater fear of the artillery and mortar fires than of the fires from aircraft, explaining that while the artillery and mortar rounds came in without warning, the airplanes could be spotted and hence partially eluded before they could release their ordnance. But certainly one of the greatest values of the supporting aircraft was their ability to strike at an area masked from other kinds of fire support.

But as artillery, air support and mortars were used effectively against the enemy, other large pieces of equipment were also brought into play, including the armored personnel carriers. In addition to giving the battalion its added shock action on the initial assault,

the carriers permitted patrols and rifle elements to maneuver quickly across rice paddies; ran interference for the Infantry forces as the latter swept through jungle area; and served as an undeniable show of force to the villagers.

With the area secured, the 2d Battalion was ready to begin the third phase of the operation on 5 December. In this phase, the local government was brought forth as an influence, with the local district chief introduced into the areas formerly controlled by the Viet Cong. The district chief – an exceptionally able man – immediately assembled all the villagers in each of the hamlets and explained exactly what was taking place, why it was taking place, and to where they were going to be moved. Assisting with loud speaker systems and providing MEDCAP teams, the Brigade's Civil Affairs section enhanced the chief's persuasiveness.



**2/503 medical officer Doc Carter treating villagers at Vo Dat.**

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

*(continued....)*





The MEDCAP teams, together with the medical personnel of the Battalion, were quick to win the friendship and approval of the villagers, giving daily medical treatment and advice to the sick, injured, and needy. These humane efforts did much to break down the images, originally painted by the Viet Cong, of US barbarity and cruelty. In fact, with GI's sharing their food with village children and with allied medical personnel treating the sick, it was not difficult to counter the influence of the Viet Cong propaganda sessions.



**Dick Eckert sharing his C-rations with children in Vietnam.**

### Mass evacuation



**Evacuation of villagers and their belongings.**

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

When the villagers thoroughly understood the district chief's desire to help them, they accepted the program and the mass evacuation was begun. The Battalion's only role was to provide security against Viet Cong ambushes and to assist with transportation. In fact, the local police and popular forces from Vo Dat performed the important task of enforcing the district

chief's policies. In all, it took 12 days to clear the area of the more than 5000 Vietnamese citizens, a task which also included the relocation of household goods and livestock.

The effects of this mass exodus became apparent immediately. As word of the district chief's message spread through the villages and to the Viet Cong, leaflets and broadcasts continually emphasized that the guerrillas should surrender and depart with their families. To remain in the mountains, they were told, would mean certain death. Consequently, after the evacuation got started, the local guerrillas did begin coming in from the hills, surrendering themselves and their weapons to the district chief. It was interesting to note that when several Viet Cong did surrender, they always did so to the district chief, thus not having to confront the Allied soldiers who had beaten them and, in this way, managing to save face.



**2/503 Battalion Executive Officer, Major Bob Carmichael with Viet Cong suspect in October '65.**

(Photo by George Dexter)

*(continued....)*



The final phase of the operation, again under the control of the district chief, commenced on 13 December. As in the previous phase, the Battalion was given the duty of protecting the people. Civilian teams were organized in Vo Dat to harvest the rice, then were moved north to Than Duc and Sung Nhon I to conduct the harvest. But the artillery and air strikes continued to punch at those enemy who chose not to surrender; patrols carefully picked and combed their way through the valleys; and psychological broadcast and leaflet operations were cast like large nets over the countryside. In response to these and other operations designed to subdue them, the Viet Cong continued to surrender themselves to the district chief.



**Organizing villagers for the rice harvest.**



**Villager thrashing rice at Vo Dat.**  
(Above two photos by George Dexter)

The results of the operation were significant. In all, 11 Viet Cong bodies were counted, with evidence of large numbers killed or wounded by the air and artillery strikes; there were 47 enemy captured, with 41 others surrendering voluntarily; also, 23 weapons were seized, and over 70 tons of rice and three tons of salt were found and evacuated for distribution to needy families; and, finally, the tarnished American image was polished and the source of the tarnish removed from the operational area.

The less tangible achievements, though not immediately evident, were just as remarkable. It was demonstrated, for example, that insurgency can be countered successfully if all aspects of a problem are attacked with vigor and intelligence. The Viet Cong can be denied his jungle hideout, and he can be compelled, through military force and psychological persuasion, to give up his fight against the government. He must be assured that he will not suffer dishonor, and be convinced that the Allied forces are in Vietnam to free his country from oppression, hunger, and disease.

#### **LTC Robert B. "Bob" Carmichael**

served as Executive Officer and Battalion Commander of the 2/503d Inf., and Battalion Commander of the 3/22, 25th Inf., in RVN. Bob passed away August 29, 2016.



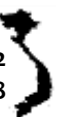
#### **COL Richard "Dick" Eckert, M.D.,**

served with Bravo Company, 2/503d, and a second tour of duty with the 25th Inf., in RVN. Dick passed away May 12, 2010.



**Note:** This report, including "Figures" shown, was provided by Bob Carmichael. It originally appeared in the Jan-Feb 1967 issue of *Infantry* magazine. Photos added. Ed

####





# Company Commander's Tribute to His Friend

My friend **Ernest Asbury** died a few weeks ago in his bunker in Joshua Tree, California...his bride Marjorie was at the store. Sergeant Asbury died of a broken heart...a heart minced by years and years of recall...of years and years of wondering why the hell he ever walked up Hill 875...of years and years of asking himself how he could have gotten so far from his family...so far from his home.



An intelligent man, a man steeped in the patriotic nature of America, this veteran became ensconced in a desert outback to find peace with his Marjorie and his horses. Both seemed to know when torment was afoot. He wore his boots constantly...the boots with the extended rear heel to accept his spurs with the large rowels.

**Sergeant Asbury** was a squad leader in Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion. He was a respectable, well respected paratrooper until one day in the mountains...actually the episode lasted several days...until one day he contracted a screaming case of the galloping habdabs.

Bent over a low branch, with his ass rigged for volleying fire, this once-fine soldier could, with the proper hip rotation, write his name on a screen door at ten paces...disgusted with this display of lunacy, his squad and his platoon stripped him of his Christian name.

Bednarski, Thompson, Fish, Harmon, Riggs, France, Zacccone, Schreiber, Waddell, Diggs, Baez, Derosé, Marsh and a host of other notables declared, and then toasted Sergeant Asbury's new handle..... **"Nasty"**.

I did get to see Nasty this past June when seven of us got together in the woods of Georgia. Our Company Commander was there...Captain Joe Jellison...Joe made General after being shot to pieces on his second tour. I must say, I did not think the Army was smart enough to promote such a good man.

Nasty and Joe talked for hours on end...day and night. They skipped the memorial dedication in order to continue their reunion.

I'm thankful I got to see Nasty one last time and say hello and goodbye.

This past week Tommy Thompson sent me a copy of some lingerings Nasty was struggling with, and below I have typed them word for word.

## Notes on Narrowness

"I walked tonight on an endless cold silver road, with my head cocked to the side and back watching the clear white-etched stars. It was cold with the air giving a remembrance of the afternoon sun.

I drifted with that road hoping the feeling would never stop."

## 875

"The air was clear and cold that early morning somewhere between midnight and dawn.

I dreaded dawn with a fascination. That night they had dropped bombs on us and I for some reason was chosen to live. About half the battalion was gone. The other three in the knee-deep hole behind the tree were alive also. A funny kind of touchable feeling is in the air. A prayer that you can feel, *'Thank you God for sparing me and taking someone else and if the choice comes again please take my buddy next to me and spare me again.'*

The numbness begins to set in at dawn. The first shock of seeing, the blood guts and disgust. Then happily identifying those still alive. Boredom and looking to see how once were men died. A leg here boot on the foot, knife gone but scabbard still tied onto the thigh. A foot-and-a-half of back bone protruding from the back where the head was pulled off...no sign of the head and the shoulders not touched.

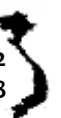
The guys you tried to help that night but you knew would die before first light...had. Lifeless staring eyes. What had they seen before the man behind them left? The pall of death is over everything. Is pall a color feeling or odor? Whichever, it is floating in the air clutching at you with dripping sweet fingers calling you because among the dead you are the minority.

There is still fighting but that is an anti-climax. Go away I want to go home. In this stock-pen, slaughter-house, restaurant (yes some of the choice cuts toward the top of the hill are already cooked) you are starting to go numb. I'm envious of you. Lucky, lucky dead, the waiting is over. I am still waiting for someone to kill me. They will, I'll never get off this hill alive.

Yes war is a very personal thing when you are concerned. We made it together. People live with one another, but they are dead alone. So personal, so final."

Copyright: Earnest Asbury, 2010

For Sergeant Ernest Asbury... also known as Nasty...  
may he rest easy. Gary Prisk, C/D/2/503rd



# WILLIAM BERNARD STABLER, 76

Electrician  
B/2/503



**WINTER HAVEN** -- William Bernard Stabler, age 76, passed away Thursday, February 23, 2017. He was born November 6, 1940 in Forest Home, AL, the son of William Stabler and Mattie Jo Little Stabler. He was a veteran of the US Army, 173rd Airborne Division serving during Vietnam. He was an Electrician with Yates Electric. He graduated from Winter Haven High School in 1959.

Mr. Stabler loved fishing, hunting, and spending time with his grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Marilyn Robertson Stabler, daughters: Heather Bolick (Todd) and Brandy Coffee (Dustin), grandchildren: Chelsea, Madison, Carly, Cassidy, Hunter, Tate and Austyn, sisters: Shirley Boutwell (Leroy) and Mary Tapscott.

A gathering of family and friends was held Monday, February 27, 2017, with memorial services both at Ott-Laughlin Funeral Home, Winter Haven.

*Rest Easy Bravo Bull*



~ Grandson of a Sky Soldier ~



My grandson jumping from Blackhawk at Camp Dawson, West Virginia. He is a member of the 19th S.F. Green Berets. AATW!

**Ron "Ropes" Rice**  
C/1/503, 173d LRRP

## 19th Special Forces Group



### Readiness Enhancement Company

Is a Detachment of the 1st Battalion of the 19th Special Forces Group. We are located at Camp W.G. Williams, Utah. Our primary mission is to ensure that all candidates for Special Forces training meet all prerequisites and are screened and tested in both physical and military tasks required to ensure the success of each student prior to attending the Selection and Assessment phase (SFAS) of the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFOC).





# PARACHUTE POST

**VOL. II. NO. 297 NOVEMBER 12, '70**

## WORLD NEWS

"IG – All individuals currently assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade are authorized to wear three unit awards. These awards are worn on a temporary basis while assigned to the 173d unless an individual qualifies for it permanently. If an individual does not qualify for the award permanently, at his next duty station he must remove the award.

In order to wear one of the unit awards on a permanent basis, an individual must have been assigned to the 173d for 30 consecutive days during the period of the award.

The awards are worn on khaki or green uniform in the following sequence above the right pocket."



PUC

MUC

CG W/Palm

## RIGHT POCKET

"The **Presidential Unit Citation** was awarded for the Battle of Dak To, November 1967; and only personnel assigned to the Brigade during the battle may wear the award permanently.

The **Meritorious Unit Citation** was awarded for the period of 2 May 1965 through 31 May 1967. It may be worn on a permanent basis by individuals assigned to the 173d for 30 consecutive days during the period of the award.

The **Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm (Gold)** was recently awarded for the period of 5 May 1965 through September 1970. It may be worn permanently by those individuals who completed 30 consecutive days with the 173d during that period. Those individuals who qualify to wear the award permanently will have their records annotated in pencil until the DA General Orders are published and then the annotation will be made permanent."

*"Parachute Post is an authorized daily publication of the 173d Abn. Bde."*

[Article sent in by Thomas Ayers, Col. (Ret), A/2/503]

(Ribbon images added)

# VIETNAM VETERAN

I was in a LAND called "VIETNAM",  
From HOME so far away.  
I thought I was SERVING my COUNTRY,  
While some men turned away.  
I have LIVED with PERSECUTION  
For doing what they say was RIGHT.  
I was among the "MEN OF MEN",  
The MEN that went to FIGHT.  
In the wake of all I've seen,  
I retreat inside MYSELF,  
To reinforce the walls of SOLITUDE,  
To PROTECT GOD'S given WEALTH.  
And in this WORLD the BLUES  
Are shadowed only by the GRAYS;  
And the SILENCE of the NIGHT  
Is much LOUDER than the DAYS.  
Yes, I'm a "VIETNAM VETERAN"  
With MEMORIES that won't go away.  
My SOUL still ROAMS in VIETNAM,  
While LIFE passes by, "DAY after DAY."

Jimmy D. Shields  
Brian W. Hill

[Sent in by a Sky Soldier]

## ~ A Vietnam Veteran ~



Les Fuller, A/2/503



On March 16, 1966, the entire 2/503d was at grave risk of being overrun by enemy forces three times our size, at LZ Zulu-Zulu in the jungle of the "D" Zone during Operation Silver City. If not for the exceptional courage, devotion to one another, and great personal sacrifice of life and limb, our entire battalion could well have been totally destroyed. One of our men, among many, who sacrificed greatly and who has been confined to a wheelchair since that date, is Willie Monroe of Alpha Company. These pages are dedicated to Willie, to whom we send our best wishes to him and his family. Ed

Orlando, Florida  
22 May 1984

Mr. Willie C. Monroe  
Bladenboro, N.C.

Dear Willie:

I am glad that after all these years someone has been able to fill in some of the blank spots in your memories of service in the Republic of South Vietnam. (But if anyone could it would be hard-charging George Farris).

As George said, Gus Vendetti and I were both in A/2/503 on that fateful day of March 16, 1966 – a day that I am sure none of us will ever forget. When I came back from "the Nam" back to "the World" I started to try to educate myself in a manner that would be a little more appropriate for stateside service and one of the courses that I took was ENGLISH COMPOSITION. When called upon to document in prose an experience that had a lasting effect on me I sat down and wrote the enclosed (following pages, Ed) document entitled "16 March 1966".

As you can see I was graded A- which wasn't too bad for one of my first college courses but needed some improvement. I was going to retype it but decided that I would send you a copy of the original. If you have a problem reading this please tell me and I'll retype it.

I am sending some other documents that you might be interested in also: a copy of GO #40 dated 21 September 1967, Headquarters, Department of the Army that as you can see authorizes you to wear the Presidential Unit Citation; also I am enclosing a copy of General Orders #422 dated 27 September 1966, Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) that concern the fight for landing zone ZULU ZULU that you and I took part in on 16 March 1966.

Please don't think that I am sending you this to impress you, but I thought that both Lt. Boykin's and my citation might remind you of what occurred that day.

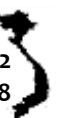
PLEASE WRITE IF I CAN CLARIFY ANYTHING, and see you in Washington in 1985.

WILLIAM C. VOSE  
CPT  
AUS, RET.

Enclosures

cc: GEN J.R. DEANE, Jr.  
MAJ A. Vendetti  
SFO G.P. Farris

(continued....)





**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**Office of the Adjutant General**  
**Washington, DC 20314**

**OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF**  
**MILITARY SERVICE**  
**Of Willie Calvin Monroe**

The records show that Willie Calvin Monroe was born on 3 September 1945 at Baltimore, Maryland. He enlisted in the United States Army on 14 December 1964. He served with Company A, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry in the Republic of Vietnam. As a result of hostile fire while on active duty, on 16 March 1966, Private Monroe sustained an injury to the head. He was retired from active military service in the grade of Private First Class on 24 June 1966 by reason of physical disability rated at 100%.

Private Monroe is authorized the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device, Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Combat Service Stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Device (1960), Parachutist Badge, Expert Badge with Machine Gun Bar, the Sharpshooter Badge with Rifle Bar, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation Badge.

This official statement furnished 4 April 1984.

**ROBERT M. JOYCE**  
Major General, USA  
The Adjutant General



Dust Off at LZ Zulu Zulu, Operation Silver City in the "D" Zone Jungle, 16 Mar 66. (Photo by Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503)

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**Headquarters United States Army**  
**Vietnam**  
**APO San Francisco, DC 96307**

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 4820

20 July 1966

**AWARD OF THE BRONZE**  
**STAR MEDAL FOR HEROISM**



1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

**MONROE, WILLIE C.** RA148XXXXX,  
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS E3 United States Army,  
Co. A, 2d Bn (Abn), 503d Inf. 173d Abn Bde (Sep)  
APO 96250

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device

Date action: 16 March 1966

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Private First Class Monroe distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 16 March 1966 while serving as a rifleman during a combat mission in the Republic of Vietnam. After his battalion perimeter was attacked by a large Viet Cong force, a platoon was soon in need of reinforcement. With complete disregard for his safety, Private First Class Monroe moved out of his foxhole and ran through intense hostile fire to the aid of the platoon. While exposed to the intense hostile fire in an effort to close with the Viet Cong, Private First Class Monroe received a serious head injury and was forced to be evacuated. Through his courage and determination, he contributed immeasurably to the defeat of the Viet Cong Force. Private First Class Monroe's personal bravery 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

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

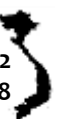
**RICHARD J. SEITZ**, Brigadier General, US Army  
Chief of Staff

[Sent in by Bill Vose, CPT, A/HHC/2/503]



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Mar-Apr 2017 – Issue 72

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51 years ago this month....

# ***I DON'T THINK YOU ARE GOING TO MAKE IT KID*** (Originally "16 March 1966")

By Capt. Bill Vose  
A/HHC/2/503, '66/'67

Six days after I entered the Republic of South Vietnam, and 16 hours and 20 minutes after I was thrust into the most forward area of the 173d Airborne Brigade in War Zone "D", I became involved in the largest ground defensive action up to that time for the 2/503: The Battle for Landing Zone "ZULU-ZULU", during Operation Silver City on 16 Mar 66.

In the early hours of 10 March my Flying Tiger Airlines 707 touched down at Tan Son Nhut Airbase, Saigon, RVN. After many hours of in-processing, changing into a set of what would become all-too-familiar Jungle Fatigues, and a long, sleepless and fear-filled night, the 11th of March arrived.

I and a group of five other green replacement officers loaded-up on a ¾ ton truck to take us to the Base Camp of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Enroute I recalled not long before having read about Sky Soldiers of "A" Co. of the 2d Battalion suffering severe losses during a battle on 26 February, during Operation Phoenix, and thought to myself, *"I bet that's where I'm going"*. They called themselves **"No DEROS Alpha"**, and soon I would be one of their newest Sky Soldiers.

The days passed slowly, but finally the time came to join my unit. About 1300 in the afternoon of 15 March, I loaded on a CH47 and took off for the Forward Area, somewhere in War Zone "D", the VC stronghold north of Phouc Vinh. After various changes of choppers I finally arrived in Landing Zone Zulu-Zulu, around 1500. Amusingly, one of my first Huey rides was in the same chopper used to carry Playmate of the Year Jo Collins, marked with a large Playboy Bunny on each side.

I was sent to the field, by the way, only to "observe". I was familiarized with the area and the tactical situation. After digging my prone shelter for the night I found that an OCS classmate (Maj. Gus Vendetti) of mine was a Platoon Leader in "A" Co. With a guide, I went down to his position to say hello. My stay was short due to the coming darkness, so I made my way back to the Battalion Command Post prepared for the jungle night. All around me were the calls of strange birds and the movements of what I thought were strange animals.

About 0100 a short 102 round, supposedly from the 1st Division Artillery, landed square in the middle of the LZ, killing one man right off, blowing the legs off one and wounding another; and the rest of the night I lay by my shelter wondering if I would see the light of day.



Alpha Company returns to Zulu-Zulu. Maj. Gus Vendetti (L) and Capt. Bill Vose in 2005.

The sharp rays of sunlight broke through the thick double canopy jungle and the battalion became alive like a colony of ants. I was just finishing shaving in my helmet when through the trees I saw a chopper coming into the LZ carrying hot "A's" for breakfast. As it descended to about tree top level I heard the deep chugging sound of a HMG. At first I thought it was test firing, but when the chopper dropped out of the sky like a rock and crashed into the trees I knew that something other than animals had been crawling around the perimeter that night.

From all around me came the sounds of LMG fire, HMG fire, the explosive *"crump"* of hand grenades with a deafening sound, followed seconds later with the answering death-giving sound of 600 M-16's and 22 M-60 MG's. There was little to time reflect on why I joined the Army, volunteered to become a paratrooper, and later graduating from OCS to become an Army Officer. This personal introduction to war would require the utmost of me and every man at this surrounded landing zone.

(continued....)





After 32 minutes the calls started coming back from the line companies for more ammo. Grabbing two of the command RTO's, Lew Smith and Lee Braggs, we started gathering ammo and grenades from the headquarters personnel, and then started forward for "A" Company. After 5 minutes of running and dodging through the jungle, we distributed the critically needed ammo to troopers engaged in the battle along the line. At one point, Smitty and I, bellies pressed to the ground, were retrieving boxes of ammo dropped from resupply choppers when we heard a whispering voice say, "Hey, what you guys doing out there?" Out there?! Dragging ammo boxes, we quickly found our way back to the 2d Platoon where my buddy was PL.



**RTO Lee Braggs  
HHC/2/503**

Approximately 5 minutes later I received a call on the radio to police up all items of VC equipment and weapons and send them back to the Company CP. I sent my PS and 2 men about doing that and then received another call with orders to take a small patrol to engage and destroy a 12.7mm HMG that was wreaking havoc on the right flank of the company. I set out with the two men, making our way through the bodies of 45 to 50 VC that lay in front of my position. On the other side of the clearing I saw a BAR lying on the ground with no body or anything around.



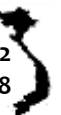
**Freddie at the ready. A/2/503's Freddie Parks in the boonies.**



**In 2005, Capt. Bill Vose (L) and RTO Lew Smith once again stand together on LZ Zulu-Zulu in the "D" Zone jungle of Vietnam.**

Now, I had not had that much experience, but I knew that the VC did not usually leave weapons behind without some sort of reason. I told my men to "hold it", and as I did, one of them took one more step and detonated a booby trap that flipped him completely over, and OUT -- a second later from our right front, the HMG opened-up casting death and destruction all about. Small trees, 3 or 4 inches in diameter, began falling from the impact of the projectiles. I looked up my left at (Freddie) Park, the second man; he had hit the ground so fast that he landed on his back, and as I watched, he got hit NINE times by that MG then just lay there....

*(continued....)*



I started returning fire with my M-16 and pistol, but it seems all that did was anger the gunner and attract his attention to me. As he directs its baseball-like missiles at me, I heard them whoosh over my head then they started to get lower, beginning to kick-up dirt in front of me. While turning my left side to reload, I saw the rounds coming, taking shovelfuls of dirt with them. Then I felt something warm in my right leg, then in my right side, then my right arm, and then I felt sick!

I crawled over to Parks, and seeing that he was still alive, I grabbed him by the shirt and dragged him and myself by leaps and bounds to the "safety" of my 5 man line. After about 20 minutes of trying to stop the bleeding and to patch up the 17cm hole in my leg, my PS decided that I had to be evacuated.



**Dust Off at LZ Zulu-Zulu, 16 Mar 66.**  
(Photo by RTO Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503)

After a 30 minute nightmare of crawling and being dragged through the still incoming fire and the thick jungle, I made it to the LZ. Approximately 10 minutes later I rose speedily out of the jungle in a lifesaving MEDIVAC chopper. I said to myself, *"Kid, if every day's going to be like this, I don't think you're going to make it."*

**Note:** Bill would be recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic actions at Zulu-Zulu that day, but an officer in the rear down-graded his award to a Bronze Star w/V devise, and was heard to say, *"We don't need 2LT's out there playing John Wayne"*. Freddie Parks would be awarded the Silver Star for taking out the machine gun nest thus saving lives of his fellow soldiers.

Bill would survive his tour in Vietnam with the 2/503, only to lose an eye during a freak accident at an army base in the U.S. He would retire as Chief, Assistant State Attorney, in Orlando, FL,



## A Peace Treaty with Yourself

By Chuck Dean / Vet 2 Vet



**Sky Soldier**  
**Chuck Dean**

**I**t was at the suggestion of my VA PTSD counselor that I took their mindfulness class, I'm glad I did.

Being sort of a Type "A" person, it's not easy for me to settle down and relax; the class proved to be just what I needed. It provided me with some interesting tools to get along better with some lingering issues from the Vietnam War.

We male veterans tend to be driven toward a destination not ever aware of the journey. I know, I know, it may sound like a cliché to say that the journey IS the destination, but it's true.

Speaking from experience I know about being edgy, distracted, easily rattled, scattered, overwhelmed and stressed out. Like many other veterans, I can become tense in a relaxed environment for no apparent reason and overreact to bangs and sudden noises.

So how did this mindfulness class help me? It showed me how to get into the moment and away from dwelling on the past – or future.

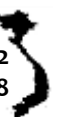
I recommend it highly. So in keeping with helping veterans better their lives with this column, here are a couple of suggestions that can be useful in the de-stressing department.

First of all, learning how to practice the art of being in "present time" - it's good to know that you can do it anywhere. You don't need a beach in Hawaii to escape your problems. Simply close your eyes and clear away the thoughts. It's not easy at first – this is why taking a class is a good thing.

Another important aspect is exercise. Just five minutes on a rowing machine can get rid of tons of stress. It can also reduce aggressive tendencies that get us into trouble by thinking, *"I wanna knock the hell out of something."*

Most VA centers offer mindfulness classes. Since they are comprised of other vets it makes it even better. Good luck – and peace to you.

Chuck Dean served as an Army paratrooper in Vietnam and through that experience was led to address the many transitional issues veterans struggle with. In 2008 he was the recipient of the prestigious Hirsch Foundation Leadership Award for his writing and work in support of veterans and their families. He is the author of several important books for veterans. All can be found on Amazon at: <http://www.amazon.com/author/chuckdeanbooks>





## ***Letter from President Johnson to Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, February 8, 1967***

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Vietnam can be brought to an end. That conflict has already taken a heavy toll-in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you.

We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results. . . .

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the U.S. Government, provided that we ceased "unconditionally" and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last day, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position. With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Viet-Nam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Viet-Nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I

believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Viet-Nam. If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effect at the end of the New Year, or Tet, holidays. The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the Government of South Viet-Nam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Tet truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred. They could meet in some other country such as Burma. You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Viet-Nam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

**Lyndon B. Johnson**



**President Lyndon Johnson, 1967**



# **PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH'S REPLY TO PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S LETTER**

February 15, 1967

To His Excellency Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson, President,  
United States of America.

Your Excellency:

On February 10, 1967, I received your message.  
Here is my response.

Viet-Nam is situated thousands of miles from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But, contrary to the commitments made by its representative at the Geneva Conference of 1954, the United States Government has constantly intervened in Viet-Nam, it has launched and intensified the war of aggression in South Viet-Nam for the purpose of prolonging the division of Viet-Nam and of transforming South Viet-Nam into an American neo-colony and an American military base. For more than two years now, the American Government, with its military aviation and its navy, has been waging war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, an independent and sovereign country.

The United States Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against humanity. In South Viet-Nam a half-million American soldiers and soldiers from the satellite countries have resorted to the most inhumane arms and the most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, chemicals, and poison gases in order to massacre our fellow countrymen, destroy the crops, and wipe out the villages. In North Viet-Nam thousands of American planes have rained down hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying cities, villages, mills, roads, bridges, dikes, dams and even churches, pagodas, hospitals, and schools. In your message you appear to deplore the suffering and the destruction in Viet-Nam. Permit me to ask you: Who perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It was the American soldiers and the soldiers of the satellite countries. The United States Government is entirely responsible for the extremely grave situation in Viet-Nam. . . .

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, liberty, and peace. But in the face of the American aggression they have risen up as one man, without fearing the sacrifices and the privations. They are determined to continue their resistance until they have won real independence and liberty and true peace. Our just cause enjoys the approval and the powerful

support of peoples throughout the world and of large segments of the American people.

The United States Government provoked the war of aggression in Viet-Nam. It must cease that aggression, it is the only road leading to the re-establishment of peace. The United States Government must halt definitively and unconditionally the bombings and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, withdraw from South Viet-Nam all American troops and all troops from the satellite countries, recognize the National Front of the Liberation of South Viet-Nam and let the Vietnamese people settle their problems themselves. Such is the basic content of the four-point position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, such is the statement of the essential principles and essential arrangements of the Geneva agreements of 1954 on Viet-Nam. It is the basis for a correct political solution of the Vietnamese problem.

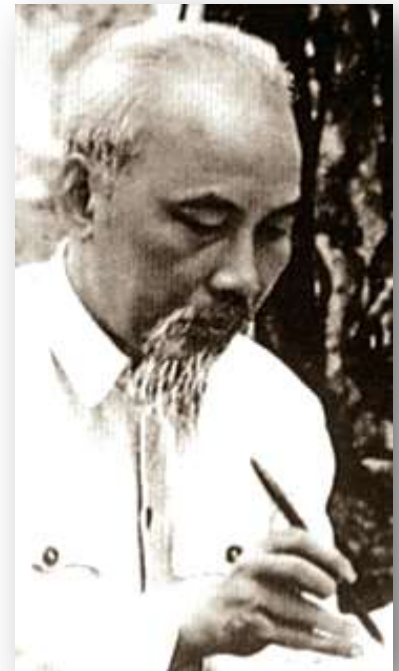
In your message you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States. If the United States Government really wants talks, it must first halt unconditionally the bombings and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. It is only after the unconditional halting of the American bombings and of all other American acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam that the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States could begin talks and discuss questions affecting the two parties.

The Vietnamese people will never give way to force, it will never accept conversation under the clear threat of bombs.

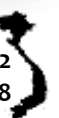
Our cause is absolutely just. It is desirable that the Government of the United States act in conformity to reason.

Sincerely,

**Ho Chi Minh**



President Ho Chi Minh, 1967



# A Red Cross Man on Corregidor

***"The boats will land you on Black Beach. You will cross 100 to 200 yards of mined beach and climb Malinta Hill. The only reason you will not reach the top will be because you are dead or incapable of putting one foot ahead of the other. There will be no retreat as the boats will leave immediately."***

These, essentially, were the words of Lt. Col. Edward M. Postlethwait, CO of the 3rd Battalion reinforced of the 34th Infantry Regiment, as he briefed K Company on the coming take-back of the fortress Corregidor.



For this operation we were part of Col. George M. Jones "Rock Force" which included his own 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment and totaled some 4560 men. Col. Postlethwait added that army intelligence said we would face from 850 to 925 of the enemy, mostly service troops. This estimate may well have been the worst of the war, as we totaled around 6,000 Japs, mostly dead in the final counting.

I was the Red Cross Director assigned to the 34th Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. We had recently completed over 75 days of combat on Leyte and 3 days in Zig-Zag Pass, on Bataan. I normally operated a canteen in Regimental Headquarters Company and one in each Battalion. For this Corregidor operation I simply reorganized my regular 3rd Battalion canteen on a skeleton basis to satisfy tight loading requirements. My assistant, "Griff" Griffiths, accompanied me, and my other assistant, PFC "Betts" Bettinger remained behind to keep my other canteens operating.

Shortage of supplies was a problem as previous campaigns had exhausted them. I had sufficient Red Cross comfort supplies but lacked critical supplies of coffee making materials and cigarettes. Normal Red Cross sources had dried up. Army was no better. Seabees was the answer, with a trade of coca-cola syrup (on Red Cross account) for needed coffee supplies.

A visit to ships at anchor in Subic Bay, with a good story and Red Cross money secured me nine cases of cigarettes and a prize, a case of chewing tobacco. Soldiers in perimeter foxholes can chew when they can't light up cigarettes at night.



After loading our supplies on an LCT (landing craft tank) at Subic Bay on the afternoon of February 15th, 1945, we headed southward, turned into Manila Bay and anchored around midnite some 2 or 3 miles south of Black Beach on Corregidor. Rumor had it that Jap "Shinyo" (suicide) motorboats, each loaded with a ton of high explosives, would issue forth at night from water level caves on western Corregidor in search of victims like ourselves. This rumor was true, as the quiet, dark night was suddenly torn apart by a fiery explosion, perhaps a mile away. A moment of quiet was followed by a rising crescendo of cries for help.

In spite of his blackout orders our captain slipped his cable, turned on his searchlight and headed for the disaster. Instantly, radio orders flashed in, *"Put out your searchlight or we'll shoot it out."* No choice and the captain complied. However, we did help a bit, operating in total darkness. Hearing nearby calls I swam out and made rescues of three wounded men. The first man, I recall, said *"Thank God you came. I prayed you would."* He had a broken arm and leg.

Sunrise brought us a front seat for a continuation of the softening-up of the Rock. B-24, B-25 and A-20 bombers from nearby Nichols and Carter Fields plastered everything in sight. Later reports were to claim Corregidor as the heaviest bombed spot (3128 tons of bombs) in the Pacific. Then light cruisers and destroyers of task force 77.3 moved in, shelling Jap held caves and resistance points at point blank range. Spectacular waves of rockets erupted ashore. P-47's, armed with high explosives and napalm (jellied gasoline) made surface existence ashore seemingly impossible.

*(continued....)*





Then came a parade of our C-47 troop transports, some 51 planes in two columns, from Mindoro, to deliver their human cargoes and supplies. Postage stamp jump sites (parade ground and golf course on Topside), were usable in the 25 mph wind only by dropping half a stick (6 or 7 chutes) at minimum altitudes of 300 to 500 feet. What a sight, a veritable deluge of colored chutes - red, blue and green for supplies and white and camouflage for personnel. A few chutes failed to open.

The first wave of landings started at 8:32 AM and were completed by 9:40 AM, putting the 3rd Battalion of the 503rd on Topside.

Around 8:30 our LSMs (landing ship mediums), carrying personnel, left nearby Mariveles (Bataan), formed into 5 assault waves, rounded the west end of Corregidor and headed for 200 yard Black Beach, at 3 minute intervals. Our first wave landed at 10:28 AM, meeting light enemy fire. However, a heavily mined beach claimed victims of personnel, jeeps, tanks and other vehicles. Our first wave closely followed a lifting curtain of naval gunfire up Malinta Hill, with following waves attracting stronger enemy fire.

Now our 6th wave moved in. Our LCT was loaded with vital supplies, including some 50 tons of mortar shells, 50 drums of gasoline, 2 ambulances and assorted personnel, an accident looking for a place to happen. We caught hell. Twice we pulled out, because of intense enemy fire, but made it the 3rd try. Foolishly, I had my head up watching this fascinating show. A sideward glance showed two parachutes hanging on Corregidor cliffs and a navy rescue boat patrolling nearby. A tattoo of enemy fire rang the side of our LCT, holing it many times. Our captain was critically injured and our helmsman killed as we headed in. Abruptly we beached, the ramp slammed down and nobody moved. The beachmaster strode up, yelling the proverbial

***"Come on, you guys,  
get moving!  
You want to live forever?"***

I had a reputation for serving coffee to the troops within an hour on several beachheads, and Corregidor was no exception. I was the only guy moving above the beach as I filled the 32 gallon GI can with water, fired up the immersion heater, and dumped in 6 pounds of coffee. At the call *"Coffee's ready!"* several men came out of foxholes, cups in hand. Too many of them and it attracted enemy fire. After that it was one man at a time, crawling up, getting his coffee and cigarettes and returning to his hole. Succeeding GI cans of new coffee were brewed by adding 2 pounds of new coffee to the original grounds. Real character, that brew.

That evening Griff and I stacked our supplies alongside a knocked-out ammo truck just above high water mark, then started digging in. Some guy yelled *"Hey Red Cross, you better join us. The perimeter is up here!"* Good advice and we followed it. Damn rumor had it that Jap suicide swimmers would leave water level caves, swim out, then come in with the tide. This happened. Bare naked, armed with a TNT block belt with battery and switch and wearing the divided toe shoes, they came in trying to blow up the nearby ammunition dump and the portable water tanks. A heavy nearby explosion knocked Griff and me around in our foxholes. No sleep that nite.

Daylight showed 27 Jap bodies along the waterline near us, all big guys. They were Royal Marines. The nearby explosion had been caused by a Jap setting himself off under the knocked out ammo truck, and scattering my Red Cross supplies. The explosion had driven small bits of Jap flesh and bone into the very pores of the immersion heater. I had to scrub it several times with coral sand to make it usable again. Precious single cigarettes were examined closely and the unperforated ones smoked. A dozen times that day soldiers came up, their eyes widening as they recognized me and exclaimed, *"Hey Red Cross, we heard you were dead!"*

Our Red Cross canteen had the only hot coffee and cigarettes available on the beach. A loading snafu, the day before, had resulted in all company kitchens being left at Mariveles, on Bataan.

Plans changed and First Battalion of the 503d came in amphibiously about 2 PM that second day. Anticipating a hostile beach, they charged out of the LSMs, only to receive a ribald greeting of *"Hit the dirt"* and *"This is a rough beach"*. Then some dumb officer yelled, *"Line up!"*

Expecting trouble, two steps and a belly slide put me on the bottom of my foxhole as Jap machine gun fire broke out. Three more guys piled in on top of me. As firing eased two left me for better shelter. The remaining man was cursing, steadily and in a heartfelt fashion. I felt dampness, turned my head and discovered him to be naked, wet and mad. He hesitated, caught a breath, then said, *"...and to think I could have joined the Navy."* He had been taking a salt water bath at the waterline when firing started. This incident resulted in seven casualties.

*(continued....)*



The principal enemy on the beach was the vicious swarms of flies. We found the Japs had no established toilets. Later, in preparation for MacArthur's visit the island was twice DDT'd. Results, nearly an inch of dead flies everywhere. Realizing that K and L companies couldn't visit us, I borrowed a packboard and packed a case of cigarettes up Malinta Hill. As I approached the CP (command post) something hit my helmet and struck halfway through. I had me a souvenir from our Navy shelling of nearby Jap strong points. My cigarettes and I were most welcome. I visited nearby Searchlight Cave, dispensed cigarettes and stayed that night. Lipstick and other feminine accouterments indicated the Japs had not been lonely there. The following nite the Japs attacked, killing all our men within.

The following night the enemy tried to blow the top off of Malinta Hill, to kill our troops up there and hoping to escape eastward from the east portal of Malinta in the confusion. Long tongues of flame and smoke darted from the cracks and crevices. Death hovers above us on the beach as rocks and debris showered down. Griff out ran it down the beach and my salvation was the shelter of a nearby tank overhang. Weeks later in the cleanup of the tunnels, several hundred Jap bodies showed how badly the Jap engineers had miscalculated.

The ninth day was a combined cleanup, by the 503d and our 3d Battalion, of the area eastward from Malinta Hill. I had backpacked additional cigarettes up the hill that morning. Someone yelled and I looked around to see a Jap soldier a few feet away, struggling to pull the stuck pin from a hand grenade. I dove behind a rock and someone else polished him off with a .45.

Shortly after I saw a figure at cliffs edge, observing battle progress below. Someone said he was Col. Jones, CO of our Rock Force operation. I joined him and he described the action below as it developed.



We saw one of our mounts stop on the north road, swivel its gun and fire into a cave mouth. Almost a dozen Japs boiled out, beating on our mount with sabres and homemade spears. Our mount machine gunner wiped them out in seconds. In another incident

we saw flamethrower personnel burn three Jap soldiers from a rocky pocket. They perished aflame, almost instantly.

That was our last day on Corregidor as we shipped out that night for Subic Bay and Mindoro for R&R (rest and recreation). Unfortunately for me, five of the next six weeks were spent in a hospital recovering from hepatitis.

A few words on two items of Red Cross policy seem to be in order here. First, Red Cross policy is that Field Directors do not bear arms. However, I did, carrying a carbine and a .45 caliber automatic pistol (I held an expert rating in its use). I was often in front line combat situations and these weapons saved my life on several occasions. Second, it will be noted that I have said nothing about soldier welfare situations in which the Field Director is the expediter in situations affecting the soldier, his family and the military. This function is important in the continental United States and in noncombat situations abroad. However, under combat conditions disturbing information is withheld from the soldier. An emotional situation might cost him his life. Accordingly, my military welfare activity was nil on Corregidor.

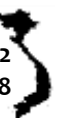
#### **Weldon B. Hester**

**Field Director, American Red Cross  
34th Regiment, 24th Infantry Division**

**This account was written by Weldon B. Hester, Field Director, American Red Cross. Mr. Hester was assigned to the 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, and they were justifiably proud of him. History, like coffee, is well served by those who take the time to preserve great moments as they occur, even if at the time the circumstances did not seem to justify it. Since the war, there has been criticism of the American Red Cross direct aid to combat soldiers, because such aid was said 'to detract from the neutrality of the Red Cross.'**

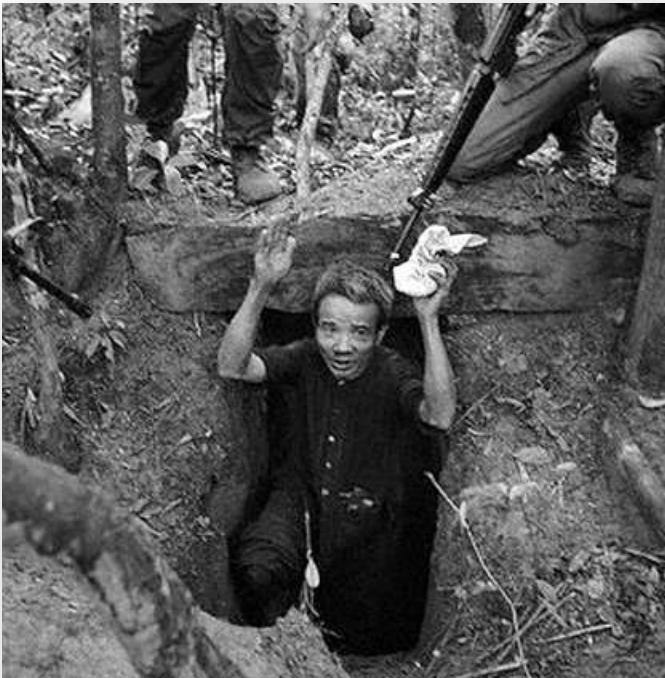
**Anyone who fought in the Pacific soon learned that theoretical concepts of neutrality meant little, for the Japanese fighting man killed everybody, no questions asked. Anyone who was in the vicinity of combat unarmed would have to be considered a foolish person, and Weldon Hester was no fool. In such circumstances, the 34th Infantry was indeed fortunate to have a Red Cross field director who risked his life in serving them. In so many units the field directors served their unit from their headquarters. To have a director who back packed cigarettes up to the front line companies is above the normal expectations.**

[Reprinted courtesy of the 503rd PRCT Heritage Bn website]



## We called him Charlie....

And we also called him zipper-head, slant-eyes, gook, Indian; he was a bad guy, a sonofabitch, and any other derogatory descriptive we might conjure up to express our disdain for him...and her; after all, they were the reason we found ourselves in the hell hole which was combat in Vietnam. They were the reason for our fear, and they were the bastards who killed and maimed our buddies; they were the ones on whom we sought revenge, and took revenge. Many decades later during a meeting with a former enemy soldier in Ho Chi Minh City, our *Saigon*, he told me they called us "*the big noses*", a rather benign nickname for people they clearly viewed as invaders.



**Charlie** (web photo)

When an old Sky Soldier friend (C/2/503, '67/'68) visited Vietnam two years ago, he met one of these so called "Charlie's" who he had fought against in the rice paddies and jungles of the "C" & "D" Zones. The trooper felt compelled to apologize for what America did to his people and country, and for his personal participation in the war. His old adversary responded by saying, "*There is no need to apologize, we were both just kids fighting a war old men created for reasons we will never understand or rationalize. You Americans were only here for ten years while other invaders were here for generations. At least Mr. Clinton had the courage to try and make it right for the people still suffering from America's participation.*"

The two old soldiers then hugged with tears streaming down their faces and pledged to do what they could to never allow old men to send other people's children to fight and die in places they themselves would never go.

They were people of slight-stature, mostly small in comparison to your average American G.I., and they spoke a kind of sing-song language using words which made no sense to us, even that very sound becoming a new source for us to ridicule and disparage – a sound many vets have difficulty hearing to this day. And their food for many of us, was inedible, their living conditions repugnant – *my god, will someone get these people a bathroom?!!*

But upon arriving that land in 1965, we had yet to form such negative feelings and develop our odious opinions about our adversaries, *and* the locals we were told who were the reason for our presence....then, we were liberators; we were what we joined up to be....to be like our fathers and uncles who fought in Europe and the Pacific; we were the new Doughboys and Yanks bearing flags, banners and goodwill, proudly displaying our unit patches, prepared to win the day, to save the world like our dads had done before, with visions of marching down 5th Avenue under tons of confetti thrown by grateful citizens of our country. We were American soldiers, *paratroopers* goddammit, and nothing but glory and acclaim awaited us, we were dropping onto Corregidor...until we met Charlie.

He, and his sister combatants, were often adorned in black pajamas, often wearing sandals carved out of used, forgotten and thinly worn auto tires, their helmets made out of straw, their weapons a mishmash of armaments which should have long before been consigned to the gun heap of historical relics. They were the enemy, we were told that, and we were trained to believe what we were told; they were farmers, doctors, teachers, sons, daughters and clerks and mechanics....in a way, they were like us, they were everything until they became soldiers.



**They were the French Resistance in WWII.**

(web photo)

(continued....)





But in 1965, whether we came over from Okinawa with the Brigade, or as individual replacements, it didn't take long for many of us to revise our thinking from being liberators to survivors; generally, the first combat mission changed one's views on such important issues.

Initially, the kids were fun and entertaining, the girls were charming and beautiful in their Ao dai dresses strolling along the boulevards of Bien Hoa and Saigon sheltered by their conical hats in the burning sun and godawful heat of Southeast Asia. But soon, candy for the kids was replaced with kicks to their shins, and we would sexually use their women, many too young, girls fresh from the countryside whose parents had heard of the riches awaiting them from the Americans in the countless new bars and brothels of their cities. The well-healed liberators had arrived and took ownership of local towns, economies, and lives.



**A Vietnamese girl who was walking along the street in Bien Hoa, in 1966. I didn't know her, but I've known her face for over 50 years.** (Photo by Smitty)

The Viet Cong were wily little buggers, smiling and waving at G.I.'s humping through their villages and rice paddies, only later to strike at those same soldiers, striking them then running away, oft times not staying long enough to engage in battle, only to cause death and damage, then take their leave. Vietnam, for your average ground combat soldier in those days, was sometimes frustrating, most always consumed with days and nights of fear...and the bad guys knew this.

Yes, our mission, we were told, was to halt the scourge of communism in that region of the world, lest it become prevalent along the Wharf of San Francisco. We were skilled in the technique of drop and cover and playing soldier in the backyard, and now we were trained well in the art of killing and methods to confront that evil waiting for us on the battlefields of RVN.

*"Kill! Kill! Kill!"* we'd scream during training just like they taught us. We knew little about the country and the farmers and villagers and mechanics awaiting our arrival....the ARVN knew, the French knew.

*"We could have won that war if they let us!"* is a common refrain by many vets of that vintage, and, no doubt, they are right. But, what the cost? We know the cost. America, Japan and Germany, and too many other countries learned that cost.

Sneaky little devils they were, the Viet Cong, hiding in tunnels, oft times under huge ant hills in the jungle as we strolled by in search of their lair, and yes, *filming* us. Popping out unexpectedly, taking a single shot or more to wound and kill just one or two of us to slow our progress, to amplify our fear, then disappearing forever before we bombed the hell out of the area. They were the French guerrillas and we were the hated Boche.

*"Burn everything! Don't leave anything behind which those Dinks can use against us!"* And in large burn pits that's what we'd do before moving out on the next day's journey into perpetual hell. We knew the smallest item, a C-ration can, a P-38, a spent cartridge, anything made of metal would be rejuvenated, refitted and turned into a projectile to later be sent our way in rapid fire, or a booby trap to sever limbs and puncture organs. They played the deadly game of war by their own rules, not ours; we played by the rules of WWII and Korea, but never really finding the *front*.

And today, a half century later for many of us, a Viet Cong who was fortunate enough to have survived is once again called farmer, doctor, teacher, clerk or mechanic, but to us, well, we called him Charlie.

**Lew "Smitty" Smith, HHC/2/503, '65/'66**



**Downtown Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) today, bustling as usual. Where my current 173d Airborne ball cap was made.**



Following is the final installment in a series of reports by our former battalion commander, George E. Dexter, Col. (Ret), detailing activities of the 2/503 leading up to and during our time in Vietnam through early 1966, when he was severely wounded in combat which forced him to relinquish his command. Please see Issues 69, 70 and 71 of our newsletter for the previous historical reports by the commander. Our special thanks to Col. Dexter. Ed

# 2D BATTALION 503D AIRBORNE INFANTRY IN SOUTH VIETNAM JANUARY – FEBRUARY 1966

By George E. Dexter, Col., Army Inf (Abn), (Ret)  
2/503d Bn Cmdr, '64-'66



LTC George Dexter, 2 Jan 66, in the Mekong Delta during Operation Marauder.

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



1 Jan 66. The 'Snake Pit' at Bien Hoa Airbase. (L) "C" Co. Commander, Capt. Fred Henschell, and HHC Communications Officer, Capt. Tom Goodwin, prepare men for liftoff to commence Operation Marauder. (Photo by George Dexter)

On January 1st the brigade moved--some by helicopter but mostly by truck convoy -- to Bao Trai (also named Khiem Cuong), the capital of Hau Nghai Province, where the brigade set up its CP and the artillery battalion emplaced its guns to support the operation.

(continued....)







**1 Jan 66, the 'Snake Pit' at Bien Hoa Airbase. L-R, Bn CO's RTO, PFC Conley, along with PFC Love, Sp4 April and Capt. Goodbold getting ready to load chopper. (Photo by George Dexter)**

That afternoon 1/503 was inserted into its operational area on the far side (southwest) of the Vam Co Dong River, some eight kilometers southwest of Bao Trai, and the Aussies were inserted into theirs on the near side of the river, northeast of 1/503. By nightfall neither battalion had made contact with the VC.

The next morning, January 2d, 2/503 was scheduled to conduct a helicopter assault into an LZ some seven kilometers south of Bao Trai and from there move two kilometers southwest to the river. For this operation we would be short two rifle platoons from C Company which had been attached to the brigade "Tank Company" (D Company, 16 Armor) as a brigade reserve. Actually, D/16 Armor was the company of Armored Personnel Carriers we had used to cross the river in Operation New Life. I was promised that if I needed it, I could ask Brigade to release the Tank Company to my command.



**2/503 staging area at Bao Trai, 1 Jan 66, Operation Marauder. (Photo by Jerry Bethke, MG (Ret))**

(continued....)







**2/503 Battalion Executive Officer, Major Bob Carmichael and his RTO, Lew "Smitty" Smith, ready to board their chopper at Bao Trai airstrip on 2 Jan 66. Theirs would be one of two helicopters hit by enemy fire during the initial aerial assault. It was reported a trooper was killed on the other chopper as it attempted to land in the rice paddies.** (U.S. Army photo)

On the afternoon of January 1st the Tank Company Commander and I made a helicopter reconnaissance along the route from Bao Trai to the LZ for the next day's action and over the LZ which was code named "Wine". The ground around Bao Trai was dry, but the closer we got to the LZ the wetter it became, and I began to have doubts that the APC's could get to the LZ without bogging down. The Tank Company commander assured me that it could be done.

***The next day we fought the biggest battle of my tour in Vietnam as commander of the 2/503.***

In my previous descriptions of operations in Vietnam I have had to rely on my memory, which after over 40 years probably contained many errors. However, for the battle of January 2, 1966, I have written sources, including a copy of the battalion operations order for the operation, a description of the battle that I wrote up about three years after the battle for possible use by the Infantry School, and an article published in the February 1999 issue of *Vietnam* magazine written by Tom Faley, S-3 Air during the battle. So the following is probably a fairly accurate description of what actually happened.

I have attached sketch maps showing the brigade and battalion areas of operations and the plans of deployment of the brigade and 2/503. As you can see, LZ Wine was quite large, about 1,000 meters long by 500 meters wide. On the sketch map the topographical features from 5 to 6 and 7 to 8 were dikes, while that from 4 to 8 was a canal about ten feet wide and three feet deep.



**Sketch Map of Area in vicinity of LZ Wine**



**In 2001, a group of troopers of the 1/503 and 2/503 returned to Vietnam where they visited LZ Wine, the battle site of Operation Marauder from 2 Jan 66. They took this photo of that same landing zone 35 years later, stating: "Today, the LZ is beautiful, peaceful, and quiet". Ed**

*(continued....)*





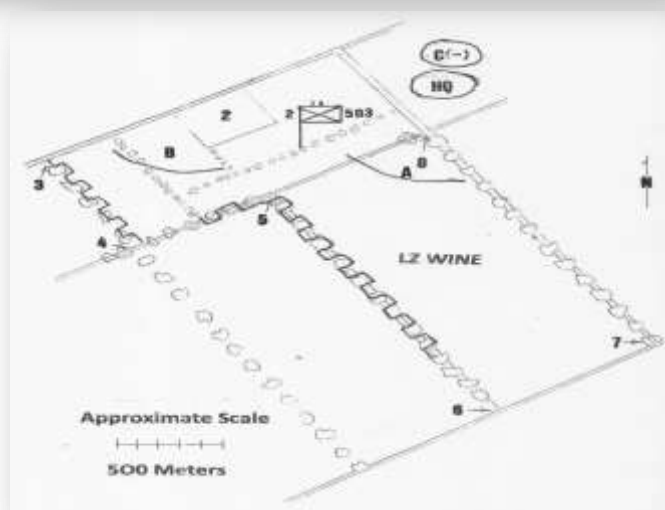
### The battles ensue on the morning of 2 Jan 66.

(Photo by George Dexter)

We were scheduled to land on LZ Wine beginning at 0900. Beginning at 0800 tactical aircraft began bombing and strafing the dikes around the LZ until about 0845 when the aircraft departed and artillery pounded the dikes for another ten minutes. Then helicopter gunships began a reconnaissance by fire. They flew down LZ Wine on a final check and received heavy fire from the dike between Points 5 and 6. The helicopter battalion commander decided to land the troops at Point 1 at the north point of the sketch map. Whereas LZ Wine was under several inches of water, Point 1 was higher and dry. I concurred in this decision.

B Company landed first at about nine o'clock and took up positions to protect the LZ while the remainder of the battalion came in. When the battalion was completely landed I directed A and B Companies to jump off to seize the dike from which the fire was coming. C Company, with only one rifle platoon, was to be the battalion reserve.

As B Company jumped off it came under intense fire from positions around Point 5, which was later found to be a concrete bunker. They were pinned down. A Company crossed the canal around Point 8 hoping to outflank the position at Point 5, but they soon received heavy fire from along the dike between Points 5 & 6. With no concealment in the field but low grass, A Company dropped to the ground, and both companies found themselves pinned down in the muck. The situation at around 1030 is shown on the following sketch map.



**Situation 1030 Sketch Map**

At this I contacted Brigade and asked that they release to my command the Tank Company along with the attached troops from C Company. It was my hope that the APC's could move around the left flank of A Company, cross LZ Wine rapidly and get a lodgement on the dike between Points 5 & 6 from which they could roll up the enemy's positions. Brigade agreed, and I contacted the Tank Company Commander by radio and directed him to join me as soon as feasible; this was around noon. It was my hope that they would be in position to commence the attack around three o'clock. In the meantime we pounded the enemy positions with artillery and air strikes. One of these air strikes apparently destroyed the bunker at Point 5.

*(continued....)*







**2/503 troopers look on as airstrikes pound the enemy positions along the edge of the rice paddies.**

(Photo by George Dexter)

During this time, two very unfortunate incidents occurred. The air strikes were being controlled by an airborne Forward Air Controller, an Air Force pilot flying a light liaison aircraft who was in radio contact with us on the ground. His aircraft was struck by an artillery shell from a concentration fired by the brigade artillery in support of our troops. The artillery round exploded and the plane crashed, killing the pilot.



**The remnants of the FAC "Bird Dog" aircraft of the USAF. The pilot would later be identified as Capt. Hal Halbower of Anthony, Kansas (photo inset).**

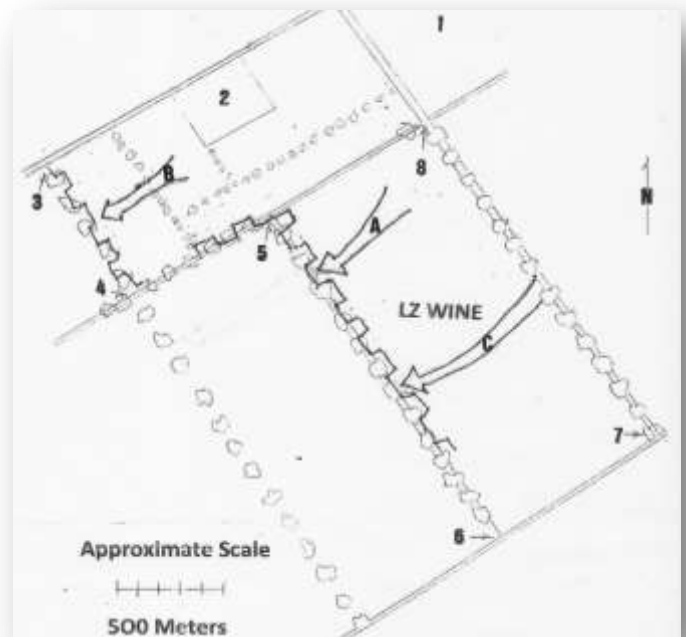
In the other incident an Air Force plane on a bombing run in support of B Company dropped its bomb too soon, and it landed right in the middle of a B Company platoon, killing several men and wounding others. Ever since World War II, the Army and the Air Force had

been trying to improve the system of coordination of fires to prevent incidents like these, but they were still happening. We would have another incident the next day.

The Tank Company managed to get within about two kilometers of our position when my prediction came true. Every single APC bogged down in the mud! I directed the Tank company commander to release its two platoons of Infantry and the C Company Commander to have them move cross country to join him and his other platoon behind the dike from Points 7 to 8. We would then launch a coordinated attack with all three companies abreast, B Company on the right, A Company in the middle and C Company on the left, to seize Dike 5 to 6. Since the C Company troops from the APC's would be moving cross country through the muck to get to where we were I knew it would take some time to get into position for the attack, but I hoped we could jump off by 1600.

Throughout the day helicopters were coming in at Point 1, bringing ammunition and water and flying out casualties. One chopper brought in a load of reporters who spread around the area trying to find someone to talk to. One was overheard dictating his last will and testament to his hand-held recorder.

As it was, the attack did not get off until around 1700. With artillery and mortars striking the enemy dike, we made slow progress through the muck and grass. The break came around 1730....



**Attack 1700**

(continued....)



....A fire team from A Company led by the Platoon Sergeant got onto the dike. From there they were able to work their way along the dike, knocking out position after position and helping other troops to get on the dike.



**2/503 troopers begin assault along the dike-line.**  
(Photo by Jerry Bethke)

The enemy decided to withdraw. They pulled back through the open rice field behind them to the next dike line, and in the process our artillery caught them in the open, inflicting heavy casualties.



**2/503 watch airburst during airstrike on 2 Jan 66, as the enemy troops continue to suffer the onslaught.**

(Photo by Jerry Bethke)

All three companies had seized their objectives on dike 5-6 by 1800. They took up positions for the night, which had a full moon. The troops were exhausted, and throughout the night men kept rolling off the dike into the water in their sleep!

We suffered heavy casualties that day—15 killed and 61 wounded, with the heaviest load falling on B Company. Among the wounded was Captain Carmen Cavezza, commander of A Company, who was shot in the stomach during the crossing of the field. He turned over command of the company to his Executive Officer, 1st Lt Lynn Lancaster, who remained in command throughout the remainder of the Operation.



**Carmen Cavezza**  
**LTG (Ret)**

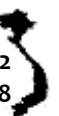
## **2/503 Troopers KIA During the Battles of 2 Jan 66**

**Timothy Wayne Aikey, 19, SGT, B/2/503**  
**Ruben Cleveland Alston, 19, SP4, HHC/2/503**  
**Wallace Edwin Baker, 35, SSG, B/2/503**  
**Noel Michael Bartolf, 23, PFC, B/2/503**  
**Jack Denton Bixby, 20, PFC, B/2/503**  
**George Eddie Geoghagen, 19, SP4, C/2/503**  
**Johnny H. Leake, 22, PFC, B/2/503**  
**Gary Franklin Lewis, 18, SP4, B/2/503**  
**Gerald "Doc" Levy, 20, SP5, B/2/503**  
**Walter Edwin McIntire, Jr., 22, PFC, B/2/503**  
**Elliott Lynn Merkle, 18, PVT, B/2/503**  
**Jerry Wayne Morton, 31, SGT, B/2/503**  
**Larry Joseph Nadeau, 18, PVT, HHC/2/503**  
**Robert George Smith, 20, PFC, A/2/503**  
**Juvencio Torres-Acevedo, 24, PFC, B/2/503**

Source: 173d Abn Bde List of KIA

The next morning we counted 98 enemy dead on the dikes and in the field beyond. We also found what was apparently an enemy battalion command post that had been hit by artillery fire. Here we recovered many documents that revealed we had been fighting the 267 Main Force Battalion. The intelligence we received before the fight indicated that this unit was probably in the area. This was a first--accurate intelligence!

*(continued....)*



After policing up the battlefield and issuing ammunition, water and rations we resumed the attack against negligible opposition southwest to the river. Just as we jumped off another friendly fire incident occurred.

Each of our rifle companies was receiving direct fire support from an artillery battery back in Bao Trai. In the case of C Company, this battery was the New Zealand unit, which normally supported the Aussies. Shortly after the attack started, an artillery round landed right in the middle of the C Company Command Group killing four troops, including the company medic, and wounding another seven, including the company commander, Captain Fred Henschell, and the Vietnamese interpreter with the company, Nguyen Phuc. This type of incident does not increase the infantryman's trust in his artillery, and the artillery always conducts a very thorough investigation. In this particular case it was later revealed that there was an error in the calculation of some characteristic of the atmosphere (humidity I believe) which resulted in an incorrect amount of propellant used in that round.



**Scout/Interpreter Phuc**  
(Photo by Smitty)

**"Morton, medic Jerry Levy, Pfc George Geoghagan and Sergeant Johnny Graham were crouched near each other behind a paddy dike. Levy, Geoghagan and Graham were making small talk, and Graham had just tossed Geoghagan a pack of cigarettes. Suddenly, Graham heard a loud 'Woomp!' and was thrown into the rice paddy. Two short artillery rounds had landed in the midst of C Company. When Graham looked up, he saw Morton apparently dead from concussion and Geoghagan dead from head wounds. Geoghagan had just joined the unit the day before as a new replacement. Graham remembered that Geoghagan had said that he was married and was from Georgia. Levy was bleeding profusely in the groin area and had part of one leg blown off. Seven other troopers in the company were also wounded, including the company commander, Captain Fred Henschell, Graham himself and Specialist Reid."**

("Foray Into the Mekong Delta", by Tom Faley, *Vietnam Magazine*)

In an Infantry unit there is always the possibility that key people can become casualties and must be replaced immediately, and I tried to anticipate this. We had received Captain Tom Faley as a replacement captain a month or two previously, and I felt he would make a good company commander. I assigned him to the job of S-3 Air, an assistant to the S-3 who planned and coordinated Air Force and helicopter support for the battalion. I did this because he would always be with the S-3 in the field and the S-3 would always be near me. When I received word that Fred Henschell had been wounded, I felt that there would be some demoralization in C Company. I turned to Tom and told him, *"Go take Command of C Company!"* He did and proved to be an outstanding company commander.



**Capt. Tom Faley, CO C/2/503, with his RTO, Sgt. Wilson, call in airstrike on operation in February '66**

We pushed to the river, crossing many canals in the process. We arrived in midafternoon and set up a perimeter defense in some abandoned cane and rice fields with dikes and trees. Shortly after we arrived a helicopter landed and out stepped General Williamson, the 173d Airborne Brigade Commander, with General Westmoreland, the top US military commander in South Vietnam. Westy was apparently delighted with the battle that we had fought the day before and wanted to talk with some of the troops involved. He stayed around twenty minutes wandering around and talking to the men who were in the process of digging in, then hopped back into his chopper and was off.



(continued....)







**One of a number of canals we crossed during the operation.**

After Westy and Williamson had taken off, I felt I needed a bath. I had been sweating, lying in muddy fields and crossing muddy canals for two days and was filthy. I had called for a commanders' meeting in about an hour, so I had time. I always carried a clean set of jungle fatigues, undershorts and socks in my rucksack. (We didn't use undershirts. We found that they just held the sweat against the body and caused heat rash).

I removed the plastic liner from my steel helmet, filled it with water and carried it by the chin strap along with the clean clothes, soap and a towel out into the middle of a nearby abandoned sugar cane field. The field still had several cane stalks standing in it, and I felt it would provide some privacy. I took off the clothes and laid the clean and dirty sets on the ground, then proceeded to wet my body down with water from the helmet preparatory to soaping up. What I did not know and should have was that a helicopter landing pad had been set up right next to the cane field. As I was merrily soaping up a helicopter came in, not 20 feet over my head, and proceeded to land. The downdraft flattened all the cane stalks and picked up all my clothes, dirty and clean, and flung them all over the field. So there I was, buck naked, running all over the field trying to find my clothes. I'm sure the troops got a big kick out of it.

The next day and a half we pushed along the river toward the northwest but made no contact with the VC. We then turned inland following a canal to the northeast for a few kilometers until we reached an abandoned village, where we set up a perimeter defense and sent out patrols for a couple of days. Apparently the village had been a VC base camp, and

we uncovered considerable VC munitions which we sent back to Brigade Headquarters by helicopter.

On January 7th, choppers picked us up and flew us back to Bao Trai where we cleaned up, had a good meal and prepared to jump off on a new operation the next day. Operation Marauder was over.

That evening I got a call from General Williamson inviting me to dinner at the Province Chief's home. I begged off, pleading that I had too much to do preparing for the new operation. As it turned out, General Williamson and the other officers who attended the dinner had bad cases of diarrhea for the next several days!



**Battalion Commander LTC George Dexter on-the-horn during Operation Marauder, while his faithful RTO, Tom Conley, looks on.** (Photo from George Dexter collection)



**Just some of the captured enemy material from those early days in January.** (Photo by George Dexter)

*(continued....)*



## Operation Crimp



**Abandoned sign in the Ho Bo Woods.**

(Photo by George Dexter)

Operation Crimp opened on the 8th of January, 1966, about 20 kilometers north of Saigon in Binh Duong Province in an area west of the Saigon River known as the Hobo Woods. Its objective was to find the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), which was believed to be the Communist Headquarters controlling operations in the Southern part of South Vietnam. This was a big operation. All three of the 173d battalions were put in about a kilometer west of the river, with the 2d Battalion on the right. A brigade of the 1st Infantry Division went in to our south. As a result a rather large stretch of abandoned villages west of the river was being searched.

The 2d Battalion was lifted in on the afternoon of the 8th to a field several hundred meters to the west of our objective for the day, which was a deserted village a couple of hundred meters inland from the river. We swept the village through open fields without contact and set up for the night.



**2/503 advances toward objective during Opn Crimp.**

(Photo by George Dexter)

Sometime within the next 24 hours someone in the battalion discovered that we were sitting on top of a network of tunnels. It turned out that the brigade had landed right on top of where COSVN had been, but someone had told them we were coming. The Aussies landed on the biggest part of it and had some small fire fights, but by and large the VC got away. The Aussies made a systematic and massive search of the tunnel complex in their area and recovered a trove of intelligence documents. Included was a detailed listing of the entire Communist infrastructure in Saigon—names, addresses and their positions in the organization. An enlisted Vietnamese-language specialist in the 1/RAR intelligence section, Lex McCauley, subsequently wrote a book, *Blue Lanyard, Red Banner*, about the operation and the intelligence they uncovered. He claims that with that information the South Vietnamese police should have been able to round up quite a bit of the VC apparatus in the city and significantly weaken it. But nothing was ever done. He feels that the South Vietnamese government, particularly the military and the police, were thoroughly infiltrated by Communists who were able to prevent any action from being taken.

(continued....)







**Fr McCullagh and RTO Conley in cemetery in the Hobo Woods.** (Photo by George Dexter)

The tunnel complex in the 2/503 area was not as extensive as in the Aussie area, but we did uncover some documents to add to the trove.

About the second day we were in that position George Eyester, a West Point classmate and Army Brat friend of mine who commanded the battalion of the 1st Infantry Division next to our battalion flew over to coordinate and shoot the bull. He left after about half an hour. I learned the next day that he was killed by enemy sniper fire when he landed back at his battalion area.

About the third day I received instructions from Brigade Headquarters that B Company was to return to Bien Hoa. The *Playboy* Bunny had completed her swing through South Vietnam visiting American military units and was to return to the US. The publicity people wanted one more encounter between her and B Company. This provided an opportunity to



**G.I. Jo**

take care of a problem we had been trying to solve since arriving in the area. The people who had been living in the area before we arrived had left behind a lot of livestock when they fled--mostly water buffalo--which were wandering around the area. The Vietnamese civil authorities wanted them rounded up and taken to the province capital, Cu Chi, which also happened to be the Brigade Headquarters site. I don't know if there were any cattle wranglers in B Company, but if you are an infantryman you are expected to do any job assigned, no excuse! So B Company got the job. They rounded up the water buffalo and other stray animals and headed off toward Cu Chi, about four kilometers away. It was slow going and they did receive some sniper fire along the way, but they got there, turned over the animals and loaded on choppers to fly to Bien Hoa.

On January 14th the brigade moved back to Bien Hoa.

*(continued....)*





In early February I took a week's leave for R&R in Thailand together with Captain Dan Buttolph, Headquarters Company Commander. We stayed at a hotel in Bangkok and visited many temples in the city and a floating market on the river through the city and even took a trip out into the countryside to see the bridge on the River Kwai—the real one that was the subject of the movie of that name. It was in no way like the bridge in the movie, which was shown as being in a jungle and quite high. It was in flat open agricultural land and only about ten feet above the water.



**Capt. Dan**

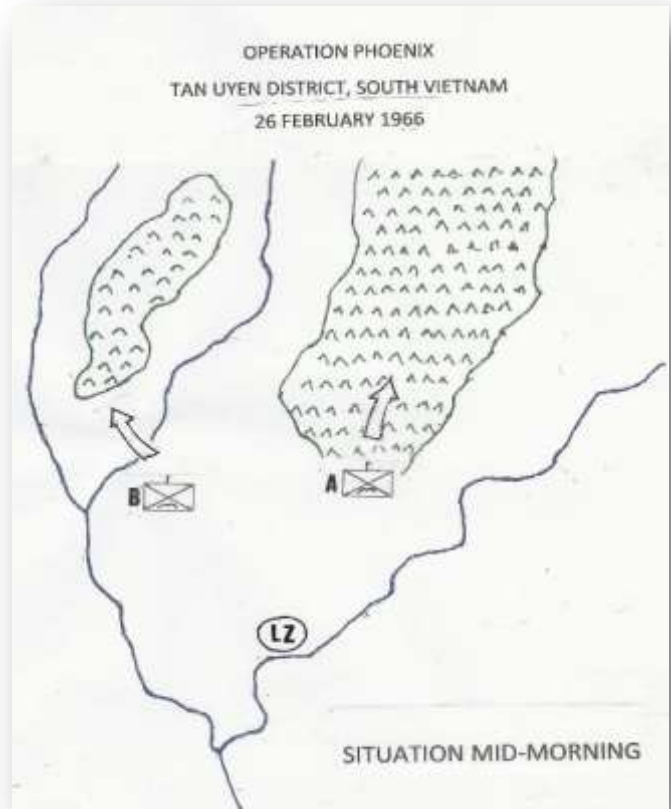
One night we went to a kick boxing event, the first I had ever seen or even heard of such a sport. Another night we went to a movie, The Sound of Music, which had just been released. It was in English, with Thai subtitles. We did some shopping and shipped the items back to the States. We came back refreshed.

By this time the brigade had been in Vietnam for close to ten months. We had lost a lot of men as casualties or for other reasons and they had been replaced, but still more than half the brigade was made up of people who had come over from Okinawa in May of 1965. The standard tour of duty for troops in Vietnam was 12 months. The brigade had begun working on a plan to phase people back home to the US and bring in replacements over a period of two or three months. They had to come up with a system that was considered fair by the vast majority of the men, and the details were kept pretty secret until they could be worked out.

On February 25th I got a call after supper from brigade directing me to report to the Brigade CP immediately. There I received an order for the 2d Battalion to conduct an airmobile operation into an area across the bow of the Dong Nai River west of Bien Hoa Air Base. I don't remember what the specific mission was other than the usual search and destroy mission. The area was patches of jungle surrounded by grassy fields cut by small streams. The operation was code named "Phoenix".

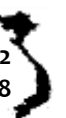
Since the battalion was operating alone, I was provided a command and control helicopter. At this stage of the war in South Vietnam the enemy did not have effective anti-aircraft weapons, so basically a

commander in a C&C chopper flew in circles around the area of operations trying to see what could be seen and maintaining good radio contact with his subordinate commander. From time to time the helicopter had to fly back to some place to be refueled. In such cases I usually asked to be set down with one of the rifle companies until the chopper came back.

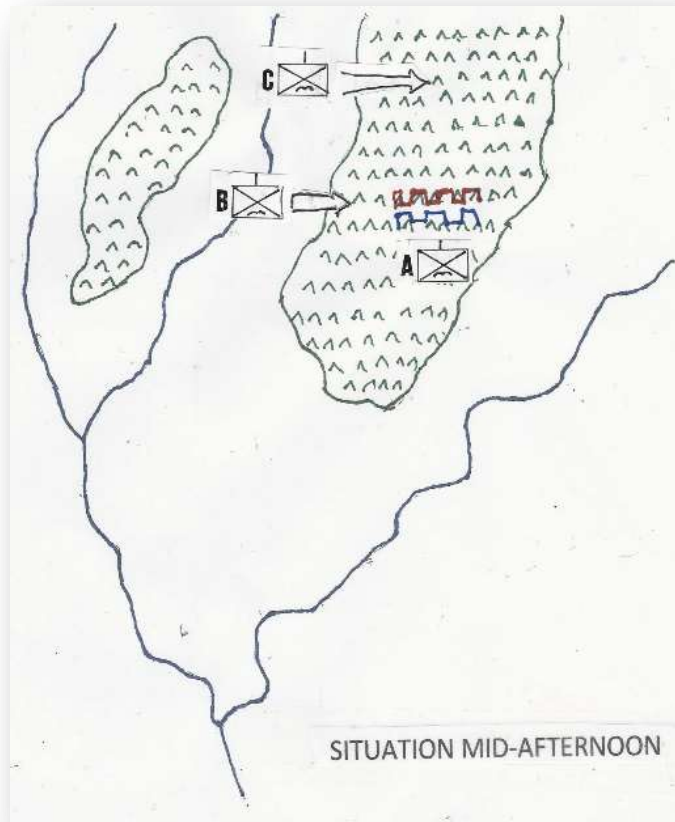


On this day A and B Companies were landed on the same LZ, with A Company landing first in mid-morning and moving north into a patch of jungle. As soon as A Company had cleared the LZ, B Company landed and moved out to the northwest toward another patch of jungle. C Company was held in reserve back at Camp Zinn. In midafternoon A Company encountered a well fortified and well concealed enemy force in heavy jungle and suffered heavy casualties. They were too close to the enemy to bring in artillery and air support, so they pulled back about 100 yards, but the enemy followed, apparently using a new tactic designed to reduce the effectiveness of our superior firepower. A standoff occurred.

*(continued....)*



I directed B Company to move due east, which should bring them into the flank of the enemy in contact with A Company. I also directed C Company back at Bien Hoa to load up on the helicopters and land on an LZ in a clearing north of B Company and move east into a position to trap any VC trying to escape from A and B companies.



It was now up to B Company to come to the rescue of A Company. About that time my chopper ran low on fuel. B Company was crossing a clearing, and I asked the chopper pilot to leave me with them while the chopper refueled. I joined the company as it advanced across the clearing and came under fire from the tree line ahead. The Company Commander called for an airstrike on the tree line, and while this was going on, my chopper returned. The Air Force aircraft were coming in one at a time firing at the tree line when we took off.

A Huey helicopter has sliding doors on both sides, similar to those in a van. In combat the doors were left open, leaving a space about six feet wide. On each side a door gunner occupied a seat facing outward, next to the trailing edge of the opening. He operated a .50 caliber machine gun on a flexible mount bolted to the floor of the chopper. In a Command and Control helicopter the ground commander sat in a "Jump Seat," a seat facing out at the leading edge of the right door, right behind the copilot's seat. Under my helmet I wore

a radio headset with earphones and a microphone. This was plugged into a console mounted on the inside of the fuselage of the aircraft above my head. This allowed me to switch to the Battalion Command Net, the Brigade Command Net or the pilot as I needed. In my case I always brought along with me on the chopper my two radio operators with their radios. They monitored their nets while I was talking on another net and informed me of any messages on their nets. In addition I always brought the Artillery Liaison Officer and his radio operator on the C&C chopper so I could call for artillery support if need.

As we were taking off from B Company and had reached our altitude of about 100 feet I felt a sting in my left forearm. I looked down and saw that blood was flowing from the forearm. I had obviously been hit by a round fired from the ground. It didn't hurt very much, in fact it was rather numb, but I knew it would need medical attention. Since I was sitting right behind the copilot, I leaned over, tapped him on the shoulder and showed him the forearm with the blood coming out. The chopper turned and headed toward the field hospital at Long Binh, a few miles east of Bien Hoa. If you have to get shot, get shot in a helicopter! We got there in about 15 minutes. During the flight, I called my Executive Officer, Major Bob Carmichael, on the radio and told him that I had been wounded and was headed for the hospital and that he was in command of the battalion. Also, during the flight the door gunner gave me a shot of morphine. This was an assigned extra duty of door gunners during flights in combat zones.

After the chopper landed at the hospital I unbuckled and tried to stand up. This is the first time I realized that I had also been hit in the left leg. Apparently at the time I was hit I was sitting facing out with my forearms on my thighs, leaning slightly forward, and with a map case folded and on top of my left thigh. The bullet coming upward passed through my left thigh lacerating an artery and shattering the thighbone, then passed through the map case and my left forearm, breaking both bones and severing the ulnar nerve. It finally lodged in the roof of the helicopter where someone later dug it out. I still have the map that was in the map case. Since it was folded often, it has many holes.

*(continued....)*





I was carried out of the chopper and laid on a stretcher, where medics proceeded to cut off my uniform. A clerk came over and started to ask for information, including my home address and next of kin. I had to tell him how to spell Albuquerque. Also a Catholic Chaplain who had previously been with the 173d came by and administered the last rites. It was probably around five o'clock in the afternoon.

I woke up around 2:00 o'clock in the morning of the next day in a ward made up of three quonset huts forming a T. It was filled with wounded soldiers. The first thing I did was to look down to see if I still had two legs. I did! I was very thirsty but not in too much pain. I called a nurse passing by and asked for some water, but she would not give it to me yet.

I learned later that in the battle that day 15 men in the battalion were killed and 73 wounded, the highest one day toll for the entire time I commanded the battalion in combat. All of those killed and all but six of the wounded were from A Company. Included among the wounded were all five of A Company's lieutenants.

After I was wounded Bob Carmichael got the battalion together for a perimeter defense that night and evacuated all the wounded. For the next two days they combed the nearby woods but had no further contacts.

I remained in the field hospital for two more days and had lots of visitors. On the afternoon of the first day a Red Cross girl came by and I dictated a letter to my wife, Katy, telling her what had happened to me and that soon I would be evacuated back to an Army hospital in the United States for recuperation, though I did not yet know which hospital or when. The Red Cross girl typed it up, had me sign it and got it off in the mail. On the third day I was taken back to the Operating Room, given an anesthetic and placed in a Spika cast for the trip back to the USA. The cast covered me from my shoulders to my left knee. It was fairly comfortable. I was then taken to Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon and flown to the Philippines as the first leg of my journey home.

####



**Camp Zinn, named in honor of Ronald Zinn, KIA.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)



# Additional Photos from Operations Marauder, Crimp & Phoenix



**Battalion Command Group following battles on 2 Jan 66.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)



**The battle site of 2 Jan 66, Operation Marauder.**  
(Photo taken in 2001)



**2/503 troopers fording stream on 3 Jan 66.**



**Charlie Company troopers, Operation Marauder.**



**Right foreground SGM Mish. Trailing RTO in water PFC  
Lew "Smitty" Smith; others unknown.** (Photo by George Dexter)

(continued...)







**Unnamed SP4 RTO on radio in the rice paddies of Opn Marauder.**  
(Photo by Jerry Bethke)



**L-R: Sgt. Brinkle, LTC George Dexter and Capt. Tom Faley display captured Viet Cong communist flag.** (From George Dexter)



**Loading up for movement to Bao Trai airstrip, 1 Jan 66.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)



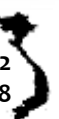
**Recon cross creek under VC sniper fire.** (Jerry Bethke)



**LZ Wine during prep fires.** (Photo by George Dexter)



**Troops inspect captured weapons.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)



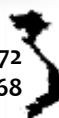




**Dust Off of our wounded during Opn Marauder, 2 Jan 66.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)



**Crossing yet another canal during Opn Marauder.**  
(Photo by George Dexter)







Field Marshall Montgomery with his liaison team during WWII. Major Ed Prisk at ease in back row second from the left.

# Remembering The Major & Monty's Walkers

By Gary Prisk  
C/D/2/503

**T**his story does not cover the 2nd Battalion. It is a story about my father, Omaha Beach, Field Marshal Montgomery and working for the British from Normandy to the Concentration Camp at Bergen-Belsen.

Referred to by Omar Bradley as "*Monty's Walkers*," eight men, Majors all, landed in Normandy charged as liaison officers responsible for tracking the progress and status of the invasion forces. Two were Americans... Major Edward Prisk and Major John Frary...two were Canadians and four were Brits.

My father, Major Prisk, was charged with the 1st Infantry Division and the 29th Infantry Division and their collateral units. He kept penciled notes in his breast pocket during this period, charged with slogging along with the units each day and returning to Montgomery's location as he could to give the information to Montgomery eye-to-eye.

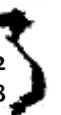
The Major credited his survival on the landing to his LST getting stuck in the sand and his jeep sinking in a tidal pool.

Some fourteen liaison officers worked in this capacity through the European Campaigns. Shot down in a small plane in a remote area of France, Major Prisk had the opportunity to meet members of the French Resistance and spend three days tied to a chair in a warehouse basement while the fighters confirmed his identity.

Additionally, he and his driver, PFC Francis Joseph Murphy of Boston, left Bastogne one day before it was enveloped because there wasn't any hot chow.

As an aside, Murphy filled out his enlistment papers declaring that he drove a milk truck. He left out the part about the milk truck being pulled by a horse. A British female signals sergeant was assigned to teach him how to drive. The Major made him stand for a short-arm inspection.

(continued....)



Below are the hand written notes for casualties 0001-2400 hours 11 June. Listed by officer and enlisted, by killed, missing and wounded. *Note there are no entries for the 1st Infantry Division.* Listed after the 11 June totals are the totals to date for all three categories, again by officers and enlisted. POW totals are also listed for the day and in total for the Omaha Beach Sector.

Officer	Enlisted	Killed	Missing	Wounded
764	1053	281	1072	92
29	519	385	210	40
110	30	15	73	535
828	2105	1147	1130	506
Total		118	40	104
Total		144	216	

The pencil entries gradually peter-out at D+14 (June 20, 1944) and I assume a more uniform sequence of information was established by that time.

This next picture was taken after the battle of Arnhem near the town of Eindhoven, Holland. Major Prisk is seated on the left during a briefing Montgomery routinely conducted prior to dispatching his liaison team to the forward units. The American officers are in steel pots...the Canadians are in garrison caps... the Brits are in berets and one overseas cap... two of the Brits pictured here were killed in action.



John Poston, the Brit in the center of the picture was killed two days after the war by a German Werewolf Team operating in Northern Germany. These are the same men sitting for a photo for the *London Daily News*. Seated left to right are Major Sweeney, Major Hardin, Montgomery, Major Earle, Major Howarth, Major Sharpe, The Major, Major Poston, and Major Frary.

The above photo was taken just a few days before the snow began to fall in December 1944. The Battle of the Bulge was just around the corner.

For all you boys who worship the "Officer Efficiency Report" and the glory they left on your microfiche, below is the sum-total of Major Prisk's efficiency report for landing on Omaha Beach and surviving the balance of the European Campaigns.



It reads:

#### Major E.R. Prisk. (C-330527) U.S. Army

Major Prisk served with me as one of my Liaison Officers at H.Q. 21st Army Group from 17th May 1944 to 3rd July 1945. During this time, the efficiency with which he carried out his duties was of the highest order.

(signed) Montgomery of Alamein

20 June 1946 Field Marshal,  
Chief of the Imperial General Staff

This one-paragraph, two-sentence tribute stood front and center in my father's den. Note, it took two years to get this tribute into the Major's personnel file.

The Major died in July of 1967 at the YMCA after a boxing workout...he had been the 1932 West Coast Collegiate Welter Weight Champion from Washington State University.

Gary Prisk, C/D 2/503rd





**From the Photo Collection of the late Col. Richard E. “Dick” Eckert, M.D.  
Bravo Company, 2/503, RVN  
~ Thanks to his son, David ~**



**Dick getting a haircut**



**Bravo Company on Patrol**



**B/2/503 Mortars**



**Bravo on patrol, 1965**



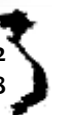
**A buddy chowing down in the field**



**Dick's hooch at Camp Zinn**



**A Bravo Bull**





## VA National Cemeteries Now Offering Pre- Need Eligibility Determinations

**WASHINGTON** – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program, upon request, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery.

“MyVA is about looking at VA from the Veterans’ perspective and then doing everything we can to make the Veteran Experience effective and seamless,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “This new program reaffirms our commitment to providing a lifetime of benefits and services for Veterans and their families.”

Interest individuals may submit VA Form 40-10097, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, if readily available, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to [Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov](mailto:Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov); or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. VA will save determination and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements in the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers’ lots in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans buried in private or other cemeteries, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state and private cemeteries.

Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery, opening/closing of the grave, a grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a government-furnished headstone or marker or niche cover, all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a burial flag and may be eligible for a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the Internet at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov), or by calling VA regional offices at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

Sent in by:



[www.calvet.ca.gov](http://www.calvet.ca.gov).



(web photo)







## INCOMING!



### ~ Vietnam Service Medal '65 ~

Could you please send this out.

About 15 years ago while in DC at the Vietnam Memorial and the three soldiers statue, I purchased from a Kiosk a ceramic Vietnam Service Medal with the year "65" attached to the medal. I have been looking for this medal and cannot find it. If anyone sees or knows where this medal can be found please let me know. It's the standard size medal, which I had on my cap.

Thanks,

**Ken Redding**  
[kenthebowler@aol.com](mailto:kenthebowler@aol.com)  
173d Airborne Brigade  
HHC 2/503rd Airborne  
Okinawa 1963-1965  
Viet Vet 1965-1966

**Reply:** Is this it Ken? If so, it's available online at [www.vetfriends.com/catalog/search-results.cfm?searchfor=Vietnam&sortby=medals](http://www.vetfriends.com/catalog/search-results.cfm?searchfor=Vietnam&sortby=medals) for about \$30. Ed

"The Vietnam Service Medal (VSM) was awarded to all servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces serving in Vietnam and its contiguous waters or airspace thereover, after 3 July 1965 through 28 March 1973. Servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, or airspace thereover, during the same period and serving in direct support of operations in Vietnam are also eligible for the award."

1965



### The Three Vietnam Vet Soldiers Memorial Near The Wall in Washington, D.C.



(web photo)

### ~ Newsletter Submissions ~

Due to a computer failure most submissions to our newsletter received over the past two months were lost. If you don't see in this issue what you sent in, please resend for inclusion in an upcoming edition. Thanks! Ed

Please send submissions to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

### ~ Elite Forces, Chapter VI ~

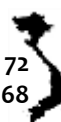
In December, the Elite Forces, Chapter VI, held its meeting at Joe Parra's Restaurant in Chicago. It's a Mexican Restaurant with a decor to match. Only, this isn't Mexico, not even Southern Illinois. It is Chicago and that is about three inches of snow on the ground behind the green palm! Plus, it was COLD (note the jackets).

But, it won't be cold in August. In fact, it will be a beautiful, warm day on August 13, 2017, when we are inviting you to join us in a special 50th and 10th Commemorative of our Sky Soldiers from Illinois Killed in Action in 1967 and 2007. Join us at 10:30 am, Sunday, August 13, 2017, at the Grave Site of Sky Soldier Michael R. Blanchfield, All Saints Cemetery, in Des Plaines, IL. A luncheon will be available after the Ceremony. Questions - call or contact Bob Getz at 630-777-8574 - [rgetz173@yahoo.com](mailto:rgetz173@yahoo.com) or Takie Mandakas at 773-782-5822 - [takieman@yahoo.com](mailto:takieman@yahoo.com)



Seated – L-R: Joe Parra, David Roy Goddard, Benito Garcia, Jose Palacios. Standing – L-R: Bob Getz, Robert Toribio, Takie Mandakas, Bill Johnson

[Sent in by Bob Getz, Task Force CO, 2/503]



# ~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind 2017 ~



**3rd Brigade LRRP, 101st Airborne Division Reunion**, March 15-18, 2017, Fort Benning, GA. Contact: Dr. Rick Shoup Phn: 978-505-3253 or 978-371-7108 Eml: rfs.concord@gmail.com



**1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Association 2017 Reunion**, May 2-5, 2017, Hampton Inn and Suites, Phenix City, AL. Contact: Web: [www.ichiban1.org/html/reunion.htm](http://www.ichiban1.org/html/reunion.htm)

**Firebase Airborne Reunion**, May 12-14, 2017, Nashville, TN. Contact: <http://beardedarmenian.wix.com/fsbairborne>

"**Firebase Airborne** was a U.S. Army firebase located west of Huế overlooking the A Shau Valley in central Vietnam. Airborne was constructed on 8 May 1969 by the 101st Airborne Division approximately 42 km west of Huế and 5 km east of Route 547 which ran along the floor of the A Shau Valley as part of Operation Apache Snow. The base was occupied by elements of the 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 11th Artillery and 2nd Battalion, 319th Artillery when it was attacked by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) 6th Regiment and K-12 Sapper Battalion at 3:30am on 13 May 1969, resulting in 13 U.S. and 32 PAVN killed."



**173d Airborne Association 2017 Reunion**, Hosted by Chapter 18, May 17-20, 2017, Oklahoma City, OK. Contact: Web: [Skysoldier.net](http://Skysoldier.net)



**4/503rd, 173d Airborne Brigade** will have a Reunion Dinner on Friday May 19, 2017, Renaissance Hotel during the 173d Airborne Reunion in Oklahoma City. Contact: Peyton Ligon Eml: [pligon3392@aol.com](mailto:pligon3392@aol.com) Phn: 205-746-5586



**Delta Co., 2nd Bn, 8th Cavalry (Airborne), 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 2017 D.C. Reunion**, May 17-21, 2017 Crowne Plaza Dulles Airport. Contact: Angry Skipper Association, Inc. Web: [www.angriskypperassociation.org](http://www.angriskypperassociation.org)



**118th Military Police Company (Airborne) Association**, June 2-4, 2017, Fort Bragg, NC. Contact: Web: [www.118thmpcoabnassn.com/home.html](http://www.118thmpcoabnassn.com/home.html)



**Casper Aviation Platoon Reunion**, June 19-22, Nashville, TN. Contact Web: [www.casperplatoon.com/Reunion2017.htm](http://www.casperplatoon.com/Reunion2017.htm)



**173d Airborne Reunion in Vicenza, Italy**, July 4-8, 2017, hosted by Chapter 173. Contact: Web: [Skysoldier.net](http://Skysoldier.net)



**2017 National Convention, The 100th Anniversary of the formation of the 82nd All American Division**, Orlando Chapter, August 9-13, 2017, Rosen Center, Orlando, FL. Contact: Web: [www.paratrooperdz.com/2017-conventionregistration/2017reg](http://www.paratrooperdz.com/2017-conventionregistration/2017reg)



**503rd PRCT Association, WWII National Reunion**, September 13-17, 2017, Killeen, Texas. Contact: Rick Miller, Reunion Host, [treasurer@503rdprct.org](mailto:treasurer@503rdprct.org)



**2/501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Abn Reunion** is being planned to celebrate our departure to South Vietnam 50 years ago. December 13, 2017, Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, NC.



**11th Airborne Division Association Reunion**, to be held in Boulder, CO. Dates to be named.



**187th ARCT "Rakkasan's Reunion"**, September 2017, Boulder, CO. Contact: [www.rakkasan.net/reunion.html](http://www.rakkasan.net/reunion.html)



**B/2/501st Reunion 2017**, Great Falls, MT. Dates to be determined. Contact: Web: <http://b2501airborne.com/reunion.htm>



**509th Parachute Infantry Association Reunionn 2017**, Shreveport, LA. Contact Web: <http://509thgeronimo.org/reunions/freunions.html>

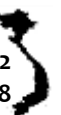
## NOTE:

If you are aware of any upcoming "Airborne" or attached unit reunions, please send complete details to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) for inclusion in our newsletter.

*Airborne....All The Way!*



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# 173d Airborne Brigade Association

2017 Oklahoma Reunion  
May 17, 2017 to May 21, 2017  
Oklahoma City, OK



This is the **1st Installment** highlighting attractions in the Oklahoma City area that 2017 Oklahoma Reunion Attendees must put on their bucket list of "Things to See" when attending our Reunion. I will be highlighting a different attraction weekly until our 2017 Oklahoma Reunion starting Wednesday May 17, 2017.

Even if you have already registered, you need to be aware of these attraction details so you don't miss them during your stay. Or even if you are not planning on attending, perhaps it will give you an idea on a future visit to Oklahoma City.

The Oklahoma City attraction highlighted today is:

## BRICKTOWN



Once a busy warehouse district, Bricktown is Oklahoma City's hottest entertainment and dining area, with numerous restaurants, nightclubs and shopping available. Other attractions include the Bricktown Ballpark, home to the Oklahoma Dodgers Triple AAA baseball team, a Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World store, 16-screen Movie Theater, horse-drawn carriage rides, the Spirit of Oklahoma Trolley, and water taxi boat tours on the Bricktown Canal.

The Bricktown Entertainment District is a popular area for foot traffic and is abuzz with energy into the night on a daily basis. Hail a pedicab or enjoy a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride through the district and downtown Oklahoma City. Catch a baseball game, a movie, a great meal, or an Oklahoma City Thunder NBA basketball game all within walking distance of each other. Take a cruise on the Oklahoma River or enjoy a boat tour of the Bricktown Canal.

Bricktown brims with public art including sculptures, murals and even performance art. In celebration of the historic land run of 1889 and in conjunction with the 100th Anniversary of statehood, renowned sculptor Paul Moore created a dramatic reenactment of the land run that opened Oklahoma for settlement. Moore's sculptures commemorate the spirit and determination of those men and women who rode in Oklahoma's five land runs. The work of art will be one of the world's largest bronze sculptures stretching a total of 365 feet. The pieces will include 45 people, 24 horses and riders, two covered wagons, a buggy, a buckboard, sulky, dog, rabbit and cannon.

This attraction is within 5 blocks walking distance from the Sheraton and Renaissance Hotels. **Free** bus rides to this attraction are also available on the Downtown Discovery downtown bus system that runs every 15 minutes from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM Wednesday to Saturday and stops right in front of our hotels.

On the Downtown Discovery map, our hotels are located at **Bus Stop #Q** which is at the intersection of Broadway and Sheridan Avenues.

This attraction's Bus Stops are shown on the Downtown Discovery map as **Bus Stops #I, J, K, L, M, N, O and P.**

## PLEASE MAKE YOUR REUNION AND REGISTRATION & HOTEL ROOM RESERVATIONS TODAY!!!

For Reunion information Registration, Hotels, Activities, Names of Registrants, Local Attractions and Bus Tour to Fort Sill ("Home of the Artillery") visit:

<https://www.skysoldier.net/2017-Oklahoma-Reunion-Information>

*See you in Oklahoma City!*

Thanks!

**Jerry L. Cooper CPA**

**Webmaster and Assistant Treasurer for 173d Airborne Brigade Association**

**2017 Oklahoma Reunion Assistant Coordinator**

**Mobile 918-348-1060. [jerrylcooper@suddenlink.net](mailto:jerrylcooper@suddenlink.net)**



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# 173d Airborne Brigade 2017 Italy Reunion Information

**Chapter 173** is looking forward to hosting the "Sky Soldier Festa Italiana" in Vicenza, Italy from Tuesday July 4, 2017 thru Saturday July 10, 2017.

The 2017 Italy Reunion will be a little different than others in that the registration fee is only \$99.00 per person instead of the \$173.00 per person. This is restricting several things that have always been done. We will not be having a "goodie" bag when you sign in. The purpose is to lower the registration fee to encourage larger attendance. In the past, a lot of members complained that they didn't want a t-shirt or a challenge coin or a coffee mug or a baseball cap, etc., so we have made those items optional for those that would like to purchase them in addition to the basic \$99.00 reg. fee.

You are all invited to come celebrate the 100th Birthday of the 173rd Infantry Brigade. We will also be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of the Slopes, Dak To, and Junction City. 2017 also marks the 10th year anniversary of The Herd's deployment into AO N2KL, Afghanistan. The celebration will take place in Vicenza, Italy at the Vergilius Business Resort and Spa and on Caserma Del Din, home to nearly 3500 Sky Soldiers.

Vicenza is a city in northeastern Italy. It is in the Veneto region at the northern base of the Monte Berico, where it straddles the Bacchiglione River. Vicenza is approximately 37 miles west of Venice and 120 miles east of Milan. Vicenza is a thriving and cosmopolitan city, with a rich history and culture, many museums, art galleries, piazzas, villas, churches and elegant Renaissance palazzi. With the Palladian Villas of the Veneto in the surrounding area, and his renowned Teatro Olimpico (Olympic Theatre), the "City of Palladio" has been enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1994.

**Spaced-Available (Space-A) Travel** is a privilege that may offer substantial savings for your leisure travel plans: [www.amc.af.mil/Home/AMC-Travel-Site/](http://www.amc.af.mil/Home/AMC-Travel-Site/)  
REMINDER TO ALL SPACE-A TRAVELERS: Please be aware that travelers must to be prepared to cover commercial travel expenses if Space-A flights are changed or become unavailable. Per DODI 4515.13, Section 4, Paragraph 4.1.a, Reservations; there is no guarantee of transportation, and reservations will not be accepted or made for any space-available traveler.

The DoD is not obligated to continue an individual's travel or return the individual to the point of origin or any other point. Travelers should have sufficient personal funds to pay for commercial transportation, lodging, and other expenses if space-available transportation is not available. ALL ASSOCIATED EXPENSES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRAVELER.

**More information at:**

[www.skysoldier.net/2017-Italy-Reunion-Information](http://www.skysoldier.net/2017-Italy-Reunion-Information)



City of Palladio

## Benvenuto Airborne!



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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**COMPANY A 2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 503D INFANTRY**  
**APO San Francisco 96250**

AVBE\_BBA

SUBJECT: Company Roster

1 November 1970

Name/Platoon/Rank

AHOL, William, Medic  
ALVARDO, Calistro, R, E4  
ARMSTRONG, Jesse, 1, E3  
AYERS, Thomas C., HQ, 1LT  
BARNES, Walter, SD, E4  
BAYSE, John C., Wpns, E4  
BEAR\*, Everett A., Wpns, E3  
BEVINS, Arthur J., 2, E5  
BLACK, Vernard, 1, E3  
BLACKMAN, Larry E., HQ, SP4  
BLACKWELL, Allen, SD, E4  
BLEVINS, Joseph A., 3, E4  
BOOTH, Richard A., HQ, E4  
BOUSKA, Donald A., CP, E3  
BRISCOE, Carl, Jr., Wpns, E6  
CAMPBELL, Kenneth A., 3, E4  
CARROLL, Robert A., HQ, E5  
CASTLEBERAY, Raymond, Medic  
COON, Stephen M., 2, e3  
COONEY, Dennis M., 1, E5  
DICKENSON, John R., E5  
DILLION, Joseph W., 3, E4  
DIXON, Gary, 2, E2  
DOCKERY, Willard E., HQ, 1SG  
FAVORS, II, A., Stag 1, E3  
FLOYD, Bob T., HQ, E4  
FRAZIER, Edward, 3, E6  
FROEDDEN, Kenneth, 3, E5  
GEORGE, Richard, Recon, SGT  
GORE, James, Medic  
GRIFFITH, Benjamin H., 2, E5  
GRUPALAK, William, Medic  
GUZMAN, Richard D., 3, E3  
HARBIN, JR., Walter C., 3, E3  
HARJO, Amos, Jr., 1, E5  
HILL, John W., Wpns, E4  
HODGES, Eric W., 1, E2  
HUGHES, Edward, Wpns, E3  
HUMPHREY, Arnold W., HQ, E5  
JAVIER, William P., CP, E3  
JENKINS, Carl E., Jr., 1, E5  
JOHNSON, Levern, 1, E5  
JONES, Terry L., 3, E3  
JONES, William P., 3, E3  
KEMPHER, Larry L., CP, E3  
LARSON, Wayne D., E1  
LEE, Clifford N., 2, E3  
LEEMAN, Kenneth B., 2, E3

Name/Platoon/Rank

LUCIANO, Espedito, 2, E3  
MATTHEWS, Charles D., Stag I, E5  
MATTISON, Robert D., SD, E5  
McADAMS, Danny E., 3, E4  
McCUBBINS, Richard K., HQ, E6  
McLAURIN, John W., 3, E5  
McNULTY, Thomas, R, E4  
MEEHAN, John A., 1, 1LT  
PARKER, James M., 3, E5  
PASSMORE, William R., R, E3  
PETERSON, Kevin L., 3, E3  
POMPA, JR., Arthur, Wpns, E3  
PONCE DE LEON, Victor, 1, E4  
PRESTON, Dennis, Wpns, E5  
PREVETTE, Ralph J., 2, PSG  
PRICE, McKinley, 3, E3  
PRIVE, Robert E., Wpns, E3  
RAMIREZ, Jose J., HQ, E6  
RICHARDSON, Garland, 2, E5  
RICHARDSON, James K., Wpns, SP4  
ROBERSON, Edward C. Wpns, E5  
ROBERTS, Willie T., 2, E4  
RODRIGUEZ, Alex, R, E3  
ROONEY, Peter, Stag 3, E4  
RYAN, William W., Jr., CP, CPT  
SALAZAR, JR., Ellis, Stag 1, E4  
SAUER, William F., 2, E5  
SCHIESL, Eldon D., Stag 2, E5  
SIGLER, Jeffery, 1, E3  
SMITH, JR., Arthur F., Wpns, E4  
SOURJOHN, Floyd D., 2, E5  
STEFFEN, David V., S-3, E5  
STOFFLET, Richard D., SD, E4  
SULLIVAN, Danny G., R, E5  
TESSLER, Joseph R., 2, E4  
TOENJES, Brian L., Wpns, E3  
VALENCIA, David G., Wpns, E3  
VALLEY, George A., 2, E3  
WADE, Charles, Medic  
WEBB, Donald D., SD, E5  
YATES, Jackie D., HQ, E4  
ZBUCKI, Wladyslaw J., E6

\*unsure of spelling

[Sent in by Thomas Ayers, Col. (Ret), A/2/503]





## Farewell to Troopers of the 173d Abn & 503rd PRCT



### **John R. Chaney, Jr.**

July 2, 1925 - January 20, 2017  
173d Abn Bde, also WWII Battle  
of the Bulge

### **Ronald W. Grencik**

February 2017  
173d Abn Bde

### **Ralph A. Criscito**

December 20, 1948 – February 17, 2017  
173d Abn Bde

### **Mitchell Robert Ruble**

December 4, 1950 – February 18, 2017  
173d Abn Bde

### **Raymond Ignacio Sepulveda**



August 03, 1951 –  
February 21, 2017  
173d Abn Bde 1970-73

### **Cameron Lee Thompson**



October 11, 1924 –  
January 25, 2017  
503rd PRCT  
Jumped onto Corregidor

### **Norman Grady Walker Jr.**

December 30, 1928 - February 28, 2017  
173d Abn Bde

### **Stanley G. Bonta, Col. (Ret)**

Ret. Colonel Stanley G. Bonta, 81, of Florence passed away Wednesday, December 28, 2016 at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Edgewood.

Stan had a distinguished career in the United States Army and proudly served his country in two tours of combat in Vietnam. Throughout his career, he earned numerous medals of valor including the Legion of Merit with one OLC, the Bronze Star Medal with three OLC, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with a Silver Star and numerous other awards and commendations.



He began his career as a graduate ROTC student from Eastern Kentucky University. Stan was also a graduate of the Naval War College and the Army War College. He commanded the 2/503rd in the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, was the Commander, Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia and the Brigade Commander, Old Guard, 3rd Infantry Regiment (Old Guard) Commander at Fort Myer, Virginia.

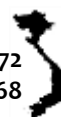
Following his distinguished military career, Stan worked for JTM Food Group, Harrison, Ohio for 15 years. He was instrumental in creating their Military Food Service Division which proudly serves our military troops today.

Stan was a Kentucky Colonel and a member of the Elvin E. Helms Masonic Lodge #926, Petersburg and he was a 60 year member of the Mason Lodge.

Survivors include his sons, Steve (Bridget) Bonta of Carmel, IN, Scott (Kathryn) Bonta of Florence and Stan (Colleen) Bonta of Woodbridge, Virginia; sister, Frances Justice of Florence; nephew, Stan Justice of Union; eight grandchildren; and three great grandchildren.

Services, with full military honors, are being scheduled for Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia for the Spring of 2017.

***Rest Easy With  
The Warriors***





# 173d Airborne Association Membership Application Form

PLEASE PRINT AND FILL-OUT THIS APPLICATION

Mail Application and Payments to;

Please **circle** the appropriate boxes below

Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill  
97 Earle Street  
Norwood, MA 02062-1504

Make checks payable to:  
173d Airborne Brigade Assn

New	Renewal	Change of Address, <i>Change of Chapter</i>	
<b>Annual Membership</b>			
<b>Ends on 31 December of each year - \$ 24.00</b>			
<b>Regular *</b>		<b>Associate</b>	
Sky Soldier	Veteran	Gold Star	Spouse of deceased Sky Soldier
<b>Life Membership \$ 173.00</b>			
<b>Regular *</b>		<b>Gold Star (Parent or Spouse)</b>	

*\*Regular Membership open to those assigned or attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade*

Please print current or updated information below:

Service Number (B446349): \_\_\_\_\_  
(Use first Letter of last name and last 6 of service number)

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State or AE: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

173d Service Dates (02/2003-02/2005): \_\_\_\_\_

Unit while with the 173d: (A-1-503rd or Co A/Support BN): \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Affiliated to: (4, 18, At Large): \_\_\_\_\_ Send Magazine: [ ] U.S Mail or [ ] Via Email

Gold Star Relationship (Wife, Mother)(PFC Mike Smith 11-08-67): \_\_\_\_\_

My Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

After we receive your payment (\$ 24.00 or \$ 173.00), please allow two weeks for processing.

Please make check payable to:  
173d Airborne Brigade Assn.

Mail Application & Check to:  
Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill  
97 Earle Street, Norwood, MA 02062-1504



*Herzlichen Gluewchwunsch zum Geburtstag  
to Reggie Smith, enthusiast of Sky Soldiers  
everywhere, seen here with Smitty (Sofia).*

