

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

**WE TRY  
HARDER!**

**2/503d**  
**VIETNAM**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *newsletter*



November-December 2017, Issue 76  
Contact: [rto173@att.net](mailto:rto173@att.net)

See all issues to date at 503rd Heritage Battalion website:  
[http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)

## ~ 173d Photo of the Month ~



Father Roy Peters conducts services for Sky Soldiers at Dak To in the jungle battlefield of Vietnam before next assault up Hill 875, in November 1967. See more about Fr Peters on Pages 45-47.

Photo courtesy of June Peters





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



*"It is, in a way, an odd thing to honor those who died in defense of our country, in defense of us, in wars far away. The imagination plays a trick. We see these soldiers in our mind as old and wise. We see them as something like the Founding Fathers, grave and gray haired. But most of them were boys when they died, and they gave up two lives -- the one they were living and the one they would have lived. When they died, they gave up their chance to be husbands and fathers and grandfathers. They gave up their chance to be revered old men. They gave up everything for our country, for us. And all we can do is remember."*

Commander in Chief Ronald Reagan, at dedication of  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC

## Clarence Mattue Adams, 25

SSG, A/3/503, 12/30/67

*"Thank you Staff Sergeant Adams for your devotion, leadership, and courage."*  
**A Grateful Vietnam Vet**



## Michael Edward Adams, 19

SGT, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Mike: Even though it's been 39 years, I remember you just like when we talked on the hill. You were in B Co, and I was in A Co, but we both loved to talk smack when the companies logged together. I remember you every November buddy. Airborne friends never forget each other. You're always with me. Now your God's RTO!"* **Ed Perkins, A/2/503**



## Dan S. Allen, III, 20

SGT, C/1/503, 11/12/67

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)

*"Love you. This is my dad I miss him every day of my life so I honor you on this Memorial Day twenty sixteen. Love you always."* **Unsigned**



## Norman George Allen

PTE, 7RAR, 11/10/67

*"Norman George Allen was born in Rose Bay, NSW, Australia, on the 24th April 1946. He was a National Serviceman from the Australian state of New South Wales. He served as a rifleman in the 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, from 14th August 1967 until his death on the 10th November 1967. He was killed in action in Phuoc Tuy Province from a claymore mine explosion on the 10th November 1967."*



## Louis George Washi Arnold, 19

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states A/4/503)

*"Buddy. Thanks for being there."* **Jerry**

## John Robert Arrington, 19

PFC, A/3/503, 12/27/67

*"PFC John Robert Arrington won 170 trophies in go-kart racing since his 12th birthday. He also was on the Columbus High School state championship swimming team and organized a band while in high school. He volunteered for the Army at age 17, upon graduation from Columbus High in 1966. Arrington arrived in Vietnam in September 1967 and served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He was one of 12 Americans killed when his brigade made a helicopter landing in a jungle of coastal lowlands near Tuy Hoa. The fight with communist guerrillas lasted nine hours before the guerrillas retreated. Arrington died of a gunshot wound Dec. 27, 1967."* **Arnold M. Huskins**



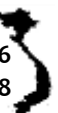
## John Andrew Barnes, III, 22

PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67

*"John Barnes was my machine gunner in the third platoon. John had volunteered to join a line company if he could be a machine gunner. John had already served his tour, with an engineer company. John could have been home, but for whatever reason he didn't go home when he could have. John gave his life so others could live. I always remember John on any occasion that calls for remembering those brave Veterans. John you were the bravest man that I personally knew, I will never forget you. Airborne, All the Way."* **Don Martindale, C/1/503d Inf 173d Abn**



(continued....)





~ Medal of Honor ~

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Private First Class John Andrew Barnes, III (ASN: 21336509), United States Army, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, in action against enemy aggressor forces at Dak To, Republic of Vietnam, on 12 November 1967. Private First Class Barnes was serving as a grenadier when his unit was attacked by a North Vietnamese force, estimated to be a battalion. Upon seeing the crew of a machinegun team killed, Private First Class Barnes, without hesitation, dashed through the bullet swept area, manned the machinegun, and killed nine enemy soldiers as they assaulted his position. While pausing just long enough to retrieve more ammunition, Private First Class Barnes observed an enemy grenade thrown into the midst of some severely wounded personnel close to his position. Realizing that the grenade could further injure or kill the majority of the wounded personnel, he sacrificed his life by throwing himself directly onto the hand grenade as it exploded. Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his own safety, and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, he averted a probable loss of life and injury to the wounded members of his unit. Private First Class Barnes' extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity at the cost of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



**John Henry Barnes, 20**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67  
(Virtual Wall states B/1/503)

*"To my brother-in-law John. I never got the chance to meet you, but I heard a lot of stories about you from your siblings. And I've met your son Rick, who is a great guy. I know someday I'll meet you and get to give you a hug, and thank you for fighting for all of our freedom. I know you're with your dad now, telling war stories together. Until we meet someday, your sister in law."* **Patty**



**Carl Ray Barnhart, 18**

PFC, A/3/319, 11/25/67

*"Carl: A day doesn't go by that we don't think of you. Wish we would have had more time and used the time we had more wisely. Looking forward to seeing you in glory! Miss you! To Sherry, Ms. Barnhart, Doug and any surviving members of the 173rd, 503rd 2 battalion . . . would love to hear from you and hear your stories. Blessings!"* **David Barnhart**



**Luis Barreto, Jr., 20**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/10/67

*"We remember. Luis is buried at Municipal Cemetery in Carolina, PR."*  
**Robert Sage**



**Gregory Charles Bauer, 19**

PVT, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Each time I hear Bruce sing 'the Wall' I think of Greg. I did not know him well but coming from a small town school, we all knew, or knew of, each other. Greg hung around with a few of the school tough guys like Ernie Godel and the older Karker boy, but he was an easy going, friendly guy. I was 12 years old, at the swimming hole at Fox Creek in Schoharie, NY, sitting on a picnic table talking to Greg, which was cool since he was quite a bit older than me, and he gave me a smoke. The next time I heard about Greg was when he was killed. There was no school announcement like there was for Kit Sigman, the first boy killed from our town, and the only one of the many Vietnam KIA's the school bothered to announce. I visited the Wall in Washington for the first time for the dedication by President Reagan. When I found Greg on the Wall it gave me chills, choked me up...and still does even at 62 years old."* **Neill Kennedy**



**Douglas Bruce Baum, "Doc", 20**

SGT, A/2/503, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

*"I was maybe 5 years old and second to the youngest of the kids on the block. Everyone was in the Baum's pool that day except for me. Nervously walking up to the front door of their house, hearing all the splashes, and the joy in my many friends' voices echoing off the walls from the backyard pool I looked eye level at the doorknob and knocked...."*



(continued....)



...Doug came to the door. All of eleven, he towered above me as I asked in a high pitched question of doubt, 'Doug, is it OK if I go swimming too?' He grinned as he picked me up and held me high above his head. Looking up into my face he didn't say much because he was never a guy of many words, but that tender glance, widening smile, and the solid, generous yes still lingers in my memory, and I am 60 now. I will be in the neighborhood again one day Doug. My time will come like yours did. On that day you'll hear another knock and I know you'll open up and invite me in again. Love you Dougie. Always will." **Richard Burgess**

**Ronald John Bell**

PTE, 2RAR, 11/30/67

"We remember you cobbler. Rest easy with your fellow warriors my brother." **2/503 Sky Soldier**



**Bruce Martin Benzing, 24**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"I miss you so much. I am so proud you served our country. I have missed you so much. I always wonder what life would have been like as we matured in our adult lives. Dana and I miss you so much. You are our hero! It is hard to believe it has been 40 years. Your sister," **Linda-Joyce Copperhead Parker**



**James Craig Berry, 19**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"You'll not be forgotten. I grew up in Royal Oak, MI with Craig (he didn't go by James). I came back from Nam in Oct.67, his being killed a month later still hurts so bad to this day. Craig will not be forgotten, I have told my Sons about Craig & my Grand Kids. Craig is our Hero." **Bruce**



**Neal Ira Best, 19**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/20/67

Newspaper obituary 1967

IN MEMORIAM

NEAL BEST, JR.

Oct. 7, 1948 – Nov. 20, 1967

"He spoke with actions rather than words. He was quiet yet could be heard from behind a smile. He was respected as a fellow student as well as a friend. He died so very young -- yet bravely fell for the freedom of his country."



**David Brooks Betchel, 20**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"Salute to a fallen soldiers. You gave your life for your country and for this we salute you." **Tom Reece**



**Robert John Bickel, 19**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/6/67

"I still remember our friendship before the battle on hill 823. You are not forgotten. Fellow squad member," **Terry Burghduff**



**Robert Graham Birse**

LT, 4 FD Regt, 12/10/67

"4th Field regiment - Lieutenant. Robert Graham Birse, 33 from Turramurra NSW. Birse died of grenade wounds at Phuoc Tuy on 10th December 1967."



**Roy James Blackwell, Jr., 20**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

"I dropped by to let you know I have not forgotten you Roy! It has been long since I last saw you on that hill near Dak To 45 years ago. It has been even longer than that since we served together in B Company 2nd Battalion 8th Calvary. I'll be listening for your name to be read next month at 173rd Memorial at Ft Benning during the 50th Anniversary celebration."

**Tom Mauritz**



Roy Mom Dad Brother Brian

(continued....)





**Robert Tildon Bly, 20**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"I remember your death and burial. I was dating your twin brother. I remember your mom at Sacred Heart. I will never forget your selflessness. You will remain alive."* **Cathy Spieker Smith**

**Charles George Bowersmith, 19**

PFC, A/4/503, 11/6/67

*"To a friend and fellow Sky Soldier. George it was 49 years ago today that you were killed in The Battle of Dak To, RVN. You and all the Sky Soldiers who gave their lives are always in my thoughts. You were a friend and fellow Sky Soldier in A Co. 4th Bn. 503rd Inf. 173rd Airborne Brigade [Sep] 1967...Rest In Peace Sky Soldier..."* **Ray Thomas**

**Harvey Lee Brown, III, 21**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"We remember. Harvey is buried at Jefferson Barracks Nat Cem."*

**Robert Sage****David Elvin Bunker, 21**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"For Dave from an Army friend. I knew Dave at Fort Gordon, Georgia where we were in AIT together. We had only known each other for a short time but became good friends. He went on to airborne and I didn't. We ran into each other in Vietnam at Long Binh. We wrote each other a number of times and thought about going on R&R together, but when my last letter came back I knew I had lost a good friend. I now have 4 sons, one of which is a Marine and in Iraq right now. I am finding out what our parents must have gone through. Bless you Dave."*

**Jack Bradford****Donald Ray Burgess, 20**

PFC, B/3/319, 12/13/67

*"Donald always had a sweet smile on his face and loved by all of us. He was way too young to leave us. I think of you often Donald. Love to you,"* **Maralana**

**David Frank Burney, 19**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/6/67

*"My Mom. Please know you left this world the year I was born!! My mom never let you go unknown!! I wish I met you but I will always feel as I did!! Maybe not a Burney by name but by blood I am <3 Rest In Peace!!! She Loved You!!!! So do I ... my son looks like you in so many ways <3."*

**Capt. L. Cristelli****Richard Thomas Busenlehner, 21**

1LT, A/3/319, 11/20/67

*"My Brother. I think of you most nearly every day and will forever be in my heart. On this Memorial Day, I not only remember you, thank you for the freedom I have, that you died for, but also pray for others that have experienced the same as I. But most of all asked that those fighting for my freedom now come back to their families and home. Thank you Lord for the people in this world like my brother and also my Grandson, who ships out to Marine Boot Camp July 29th. Love you Richard and always will."*

**Mark Busenlehner****Joaquin Palacios Cabrera, 35**

SSG, B/4/503, 11/6/67

*"Dear Dad, I was only eight when you went to war. Not knowing why, nor understanding the meaning, only knowing that people around me were scared, and I was scared too, but not knowing why. My last memory of you is at the airport the day of your departure. The words you said to me will stay with me forever."*

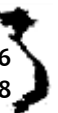
*For years I never said goodbye, nor came to terms with not having you in my life. I never saw your body, and was only told it was you that was being laid to rest. I always thought that someone had made a mistake and that you would knock on our door, and return. It was not until I was in my early teens when I realized that you would never come home."*

*I often wonder where I would be if you had survived. Perhaps a slightly different person, in a different place, with a different outlook on life, but I will never know."*

*I am proud of you for your belief, your strength, your courage. You truly are a hero to me...."*



(continued....)



.... I think of you when hurdles in my own life are presented, and the bravery you had, allows me to find my own courage to overcome. Know that you are still in my life each and every day I breathe.

Mom kept her promise to you and dedicated her life to raising the six of us. Never dated, nor remarried, devoted only to us. I think you were the love of her life and that she knew there was no other. I often wonder what her loneliness was like.

I am grown now, our family has expanded somewhat, you have thirteen beautiful grandchildren now. I wish you were here to see.

I am proud of you, and hope you are proud of me too. This is not goodbye, but simply words expressing my love for you. With Love and Admiration, Your Son,"  
**Joaquin**

### **Manfred Francis Camarote, 21**

SGT, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"My love, Jimmy. It's been more than 40 years since I last saw your smile and felt your touch. I still miss them. I have known other love, and other loss, but they have not affected me as your love and loss did. My heart, and the world, are poorer for your absence." **Rosemary Camarote Horstman**



### **Ernesto Soliz Cantu, "Doc", 20**

SP4, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67

"Tu Primo. I have never forgotten you primo, and never will. As a former Marine I also served, and was in combat in Viet-Nam. I was there. I know. I'm proud of you primo." **Juan Antonio Solis**



### **Samuel Lee Carmichael, 19**

PFC, A/1/503, 11/18/67

"Thank you very much for giving the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for freedom. You have served at a young age and I really appreciate that, being 18 years old myself. You have given the ultimate sacrifice for your country and this is greatly appreciated. Thank you." **Adam Nagrocki**

### **William Lloyd Cates, 34**

MSG, B/4/503, 11/23/67

"We remember. Bill is buried at Ft Benning, GA." **Robert Sage**



### **Nathaniel Chatman, 22**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"We remember. Nathaniel is buried at Allegheny Cemetery in Pittsburg, PA."

**Robert Sage**



### **Mario Alvarez Cisneros, 18**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/19/67

"My Uncle. Mario was my Uncle and my Mom's baby brother. I remember that beautiful August summer day when Uncle Mario stopped at our house to say good bye to my Mom before he left to Vietnam. My Uncle looked so handsome and proud. I remember my Mom was very worried and sad that her baby brother was leaving to go serve his country that he loved. She prayed for him and when she got the news that he was killed the day after my 10th birthday she was devastated. We will always remember and never forget you Uncle". **Rose Molina**



### **William Anderson Collins, 38**

SFC, D/4/503, 11/18/67

"Friendly fire. First Sergeant (Top) William Collins was an excellent example of the definition for a paratrooper and the airborne spirit. I only knew this man for three months while in-country but he possessed the leadership qualities that made him an outstanding combat NCO. Top Collins made it possible for some of us (D Co., 4/503rd 173rd Abn Brg) to survive the Battle of Dak To in the central highlands on November 18, 1967. Friendly fire (artillery rounds) exploded on D Company's position killing several men – including Top Collins. Shrapnel mortally wounded Top Collins and he died within minutes after the rounds hit our position – every man that was able to continue after this incident felt there was a void which nobody could fill...First Sergeant William Collins, I salute you!! Airborne – All The Way." **Nick Martinez**



### **Gary Robert Cooper, 21**

SP4, HHC/2/503, 11/19/67

(Virtual Wall states 173d Eng)

"Friend. Time has passed yet I still think of you. So long my friend."

**Unsigned**



(continued....)



**Linwood Calvin Corbett, 22**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/6/67

*"We remember. Linwood is buried at New AME Zion Church Cemetery, Atkinson, Pender County, NC."*

**Robert Sage****Thomas Louis Corbett, 21**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/20/67

*"I think of you often. Tommy, you were a few years older than me as teens but I remember you around town. I was in Viet Nam in '67-68 and when I returned, my Mom told me you had been killed. She didn't want me to know it while I was still there. What she nor I didn't know was that you were killed just a few miles from me that afternoon. God bless you Tommy."*

**John Schmidt****Harold Eugene Couch, 20**

SGT, C/1/503, 11/12/67

*"Salute to a Fellow Tar Heel Veteran. You gave your life for your country and for this we Salute You."*

**Jim & Tom Reece****Horace W. Cowdrick, Jr., 19**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"Loving Brother. You have been gone many years, but never forgotten. You were one of the many who wanted to go, to fight for our country and the people of Vietnam. We are all very proud of you. Mom and Dad are now gone as well, and I hope they are with you now. Love, your Brother David."*

**David A. Cowdrick****Michael Andrew Crabtree, 28**

CPT, D/4/503, 11/18/67

*"For Dad. I miss my father daily and wish he could be here, but I know he's always watching and always near. Love Christine."*

**Christine Crabtree-Stegeman**

*"Born to Andrew F. and Helen H. Crabtree, 1939, United States Military Academy, Class of 1962, 82nd Airborne, 1963-1965, 2nd Bn, 327th Infantry, 1966, Company Commander, Delta 4/503rd Infantry, 1967. REMEMBERED"*

**Charles Richard Crews, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Born Charles Richard Crews, Rickey was a lifelong resident of the area. He lived at Kingsley Lake when he attended Bradford High School [Senior Class Photograph used above] and was a member of the state championship football team. A member of the Kingsley Lake Baptist Church, he still has family and many friends in the area. The award of the Bronze Star for Valor was announced in the Bradford County Telegraph."*

**~ Bronze Star w/V ~**

**For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force, Private First Class Crews distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 20 November 1967 in the Republic of Vietnam. On that day, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry was on a search and destroy mission when attacked by an enemy force. Pfc. Crews, when contact was made, ran forward and engaged the enemy despite the heavy volume of incoming automatic weapons, grenade, and mortar fire. He moved from position to position placing fire, encouraging his fellow soldiers and aiding the wounded. He continued to place a heavy fire on the enemy until he was hit and mortally wounded. Pfc. Crews' outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.**

**Hubert Croom, 24**

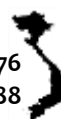
PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67

*"In loving memory. I am proud of you Hubert. The price of war is more than some of the people of our country are willing to acknowledge. You paid the ultimate. Thank you for my freedom."*

**David L. Clark, CMSGT, USAF, Ret.****Jack Lee Croxdale, II, 18**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"This photo of Jack Croxdale is taken from the Glendale (Arizona) High School annual for 1965, his Junior year. From a schoolmate and Vietnam vet."*

**Frank C. Paden***(continued....)*



**Billy Ray Cubit, 18**

PFC, C/4/503, 11/22/67

*"We remember. Billy is buried at Burr Oak Cemetery, Alsip, IL. PH"***Robert Sage****Brian Thomas Cullen**

PTE, 7RAR, 11/27/67

*"Always remembered. You were far too young to leave us but you will never be forgotten as your memory lives on. Lest we forget." Fitz Simmons***Mark James Cullen, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 12/8/67

(Virtual Wall states B/3/503)

*"We remember. Mark is buried at Woodlawn Nat Cem." Robert Sage***Bruce Wayne Cunningham, 19**

SP4, 173d Eng, 11/20/67

*"Dear Bruce. That day on Hill 875 was tragic for so many. Denver still cries for our loss as well as the worlds'. That hill and war took the best this country had. God bless you and your comrades." Kenny Hurst***John D'Agostino, 21**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Hi John. Lost touch with your Brother Frank. When I got back from VN I use to visit your parents. They had a large oil painting of you in your jump gear. I would feel terrible after I left the house. It's been a long time but those of us that came back will never forget." J. Nigro***Larry Aime D'Entremont, 19**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Anyone out there know him? If you knew Larry or served with him in Vietnam, I'd like to know more details about what happened to him. I'm his cousin and we used to play games as children on our great Aunt Gussie's lawn in Kittery Point, Maine." Becky (Phillips) Francis (posted 11/8/02, no contact info)***Robert Harry Darling, 27**

1LT, B/4/503, 11/6/67

*"1LT Robert H. Darling was the leader of 3rd Platoon, B Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry. SP4 James L. Ellis Jr. was his RTO (radio telephone operator). On November 6, 1967, B Company, 4-503rd, was combat assaulted atop of Hill 823 in the jungles of Dak To Province to accompany their sister companies who were already deployed nearby. Fourth Battalion was attempting to locate elements of the NVA's 66th Regiment which had infiltrated from Cambodia. An NVA force had been on Hill 823 before B Company's arrival, however, they were smashed by preparatory artillery fire on the hilltop before the assault. The shattered force abandoned the peak, leaving behind broken rifle stocks and rucksacks. While B Company was establishing defensive positions on the hill, 1LT Darling instructed PFC Clarence A. Miller Jr. and SP4 Louis C. Miller (they were unrelated) to set up an observation post 100 meters down the western slope to provide an early warning along one of the likely avenues of approach. As the two Millers moved down the hillside, an enemy ambush killed them with a violent fusillade of small arms fire delivered at close range. Darling, SP4 Ellis, and three other riflemen raced downhill to the post. They too were ambushed by a platoon-size enemy force which caught them before they covered half the distance to their objective. The lieutenant, Ellis, and two others were killed. One of the would-be rescuers, although seriously wounded, was able to crawl back to his platoon." [Taken from coffeltdatabase.org ]*

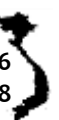
**Bob with his bride, Sandy****Benjamin David De Herrera, 19**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"On November 19, 1967, radio operator SP4 Jack L. Croxdale II, and squad leaders PFC Benjamin D. De Herrera and SGT Donald landoli were members of Company C, 503rd Infantry on a Search and Destroy mission in South Vietnam. At 1435 hours, Companies A, C and D, all part of the 503rd Infantry, were in heavy contact with an unknown sized North Vietnamese force and were surrounded. During the operation, SGT landoli was wounded and was seen in the Company C command post area, along with SP4 Croxdale and PFC De Herrera...."*



(continued....)





....At 1850 hours, a U.S. Marine bomber dropped a 500 pound bomb which hit the command post area in error, resulting in additional casualties. No remains were recovered that day because of intense enemy activity. The following day, a search of the area was conducted. The remains of Croxdale, De Herrera and landoli were identified and tagged. However, only the remains of De Herrera and Croxdale were reported to have been placed on a helicopter enroute to Dak To. Following the attack, a 3-day search of the battle area was conducted without success in locating landoli. However, as of January 4, 1968, the U.S. Army Mortuary at Than San Nhut, South Vietnam, had not processed or identified any remains of De Herrera, Croxdale or landoli, and the location of those remains is unknown. Croxdale, De Herrera, and landoli died the day their command post received fire and are listed among the dead. They are also listed among the missing because no remains have been returned to their families for burial."

[Taken from pownetwork.org] (See report Pages 77-88)

**Aldon James Dedeaux, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/12/67

"We remember. Aldon is buried at St Stevens Cemetery in Delishe, MS."

**Robert Sage**



**Robert Paul Degen, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"Bob, it's been 34 years now, and not one has gone by without me thinking of you often. I always wonder why I got to enjoy birthdays, children, holidays. It seems like yesterday when we sat around your house one night waiting to go in and listening to Johnny Cash on the stereo, the last day I saw you, July 31, 1967. Remember, my son was born the night before and we went swimming on the Sandy River. You made all the kids laugh by diving off the rocks like a frog. I'm still searching for a reason why. Maybe it will never come, but I will never forget Bob. You were here a short time but made such a lasting memory. You will always be loved." **Bill Whiting** (deceased April 13, 2006)



**Casimiro Dianda, 20**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

"We remember. Casimiro is buried at Desert Lawn Memorial Park, in Yuma, AZ." **Robert Sage**



**Rufus John Dowdy, 19**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/6/67

"Remembering Rufus. Company A Tenth Battalion, Second Training Brigade, Fort Bragg, NC. Rufus and I were in Basic Training together in 1966. Thank you for the ultimate sacrifice you gave our country. May you forever Rest in Peace."

**Robert Brinkley**



**Dewain V. Dubb, 20**

PFC, C/4/503, 11/6/67

"We remember. Dewain is buried at Woodlawn Cem, Bellingham, WA."

**Robert Sage**



**John Michael Dunbar, 18**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"You are still missed by your family, especially your Uncle John. We love you, John Michael." **Sandy Crisp**



**Gregory Lynn Dunn, 18**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"Remembering my friend. I Remember Greg for all of the good times we had together in the Nam. I can still see that smile and him talking about Calif. I miss you Greg, we had some good times together. Your memories will live on."

**Waldren Cook**



**Joseph Francis Dyer, Jr., "Doc", 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

"Gone but never forgotten. Lil Joe you never ever left my heart nor my mind in all of these years. I have been to the memorial wall and took my son so that he would know who you were and what you sacrificed for us all. Each generation has been told about you and the fun we shared as kids when I came to visit. When you gave up your life for someone else I was angry. I was also a teenager and didn't understand. I am a woman now and I fully understand your sacrifice. I Love and Miss You and sometimes, I still cry. Your Cousin Pat from DC." **Patricia Chinn**



(continued....)



**Richard Nelson Eddy, 20**

**SP4, A/3/503, 12/27/67**

*"We remember. Richard is buried at Mt Olivet Cemetery in Kenmore, NY."*

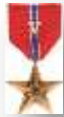
**Robert Sage**



**Barry Edmond Fallon**

**PTE, 7RAR, 11/10/67**

*"Private Barry Edmond Fallon, 31 Sydney NSW. Fallon was killed when Viet Cong detonated a Claymore mine in Phuoc Tuy 10th November 1967."*



**Michael Le Roy Ellis, 21**

**SP4, A/2/503, 11/16/67**

*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13 KJV Specialist Four Ellis distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 19 November 1967. On this day, on a search and destroy mission, contact was made with a well-fortified enemy force. With the initial burst of enemy fire Specialist Ellis ran forward and engaged the enemy despite the intense enemy fire. Specialist Ellis continuously moved from position to position to place accurate fire against the enemy positions....(excerpts from Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device citation). From his sister," Sheri (Ellis) Anderson*



**James Cabell Farley, "Doc", 19**

**PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67**

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"I remember my cousin, Jimmy.*

*Jimmy, I was 15 years old when you came to see us on the last days of your leave before going to that horrible place. I remember I said I was afraid for you and you rubbed me on the head and said, 'Don't worry about me Ronny, I once lived in Kansas City'. Jimmy, you were my hero when I was a little boy, You still are. I think of you almost every day. You were truly loved by all who knew you." Ronny Whirley*



**~ Final Mission of PFC James C. Farley ~**

**"In late October 1967, American intelligence sources indicated North Vietnamese forces were building up in the Central Highlands province of Kontum, in the vicinity of Dak To. MACV issued orders for U.S. forces to meet this threat. During the ensuing engagement Hill 875 would be the most costly terrain feature taken by U.S. servicemen in the Vietnam War. On November 19, 1967, 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Infantry Division began their assault on Hill 875. First Lieutenant O'Leary, commander of Delta Company, moved up closer toward his point team and could see to his front the effects of the artillery and bombing from the previous night. The top of the thick jungle canopy had huge holes blown through it that let sunlight reach the forest floor. Below the tree tops the forest floor was covered in shattered and gnarled debris of bamboo, vines, and smaller splintered trees. Making his way over the debris 1LT O'Leary saw his point man, SP4 Kenneth J. Jacobson, climb over a fallen tree and turn around to his slack man motioning to his nose. O'Leary stiffened knowing Jacobson was signaling he smelled the enemy. The point man slowly lowered his hand and began to turn around when shots rang out. Jacobson pitched backwards, hit by three rounds in the chest. The air immediately filled with screams and bursts of return fire from the stunned point squad. Not knowing where the killer was hidden, the vengeful paratroopers emptied their M-16s wildly into the trees and debris....**

*(continued....)*

**James Lee Ellis, Jr., 20**

**SP4, B/4/503, 11/6/67**

*"Miss that smile El!!! I knew you seemed like you loved that PRC-25, it seemed like it was part of his anatomy.....YOU carried & used it very, very, well.... Co B 4th Batt 173d Abn Bde (Sep)... They laid You and Lt Darling right next to my position; and I watched YOU the rest of the day and nite till they came to get YOU AND THE REST OF OUR BROTHERS WHO DIED THAT DAY; 6 November 1967....Love You El." Gregory J. Jackson*

**Lamont George Epps, 23**

**PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67**

*"We remember. Lamont is buried at Galilee Baptist Church Cemetery, Branchville, Southampton County, VA."*

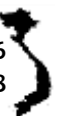
**Robert Sage**



**Armando Leo Escareno, 19**

**PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67**

*"I will never forget you. I remember just before you left to Vietnam. You were so full of life. I'll never forget that night you danced the night away and how much you loved to dance. You and Lupe were best of friends and how you two were taken from us at such a young age. I will never forget you. You were my first love. I will always love you AKA MANDO CANE." Christina*





....The platoon medic ran forward toward the fallen soldier. The aidman, PFC James C. Farley, had just knelt by his comrade when he was knocked violently backwards. Shot in the head by automatic weapons fire, Farley died instantly. Delta Company had found the enemy on Hill 875." [Taken from www.dtic.mil]

### **Charles Favroth, 24**

SGT, C/1/503, 11/12/67  
(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)

*"We remember. Charles is buried at New Light Baptist Church Cemetery in Grosse Tete, LA."*

**Robert Sage**

### **Michael William Ference, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"A good man. Mike was a friendly easy going guy. The type that was always welcome with any group. I pray that Mike's new home is with the father in heaven."*

**Mike Fearon**



### **Robert Samuel Ferrulla, 24**

PFC, HHC/2/503, 11/13/67  
(Virtual Wall states B/2/503)

*"Dear Robert, to honor your memory and the sacrifice you made for our country I want to make sure your photo will be displayed on your birthday each and every year when the Education Center is completed, so it is with great pride and humility that I post this remembrance and picture of you. You are not forgotten and remain in the hearts of many all these years later. You have been designated to be one of God's special angels, along with the love of my life, who also sacrificed his life during this war 45 years ago. God Bless You, Robert, for being who you were and for all you did--we live in freedom to this day thanks to heroes like you."*

**Carol (Cipriani) Haberchak**



### **Francis John Fewquandie**

PTE, 2RAR, 12/4/67

*"Private Francis John Fewquandie 23 Mackay QLD. Fewquandie was shot accidentally while on sentry duty, Phuoc Tuy, 7.40am 4th December 1967."*



### **Le Roy Edward Fladry, 21**

SGT, C/4/503, 11/23/67

*"Leroy is the Uncle I never got to meet. He died when My mother was still just a little child,"*

**Keri**



### **Angel Ramo Flores-Jimenez, 20**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67  
(Virtual Wall states B/4/503)

*"We remember. Angel is buried at Juncos Municipal Cemetery in Juncos, PR."*

**Robert Sage**

### **James William Flynt, III, 21**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"What a hitter! Jimmy could hit a baseball so far! One day he hit a ball that hit the roof of the gym, which must have been 500 feet away. The ball bounced over the gym and against the wall of the high school. For a kid, that was about as good as it gets!"*

**David Canine**



### **Daniel William Foster, 20**

SP4, C/1/503, 11/12/67  
(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

*"To my beloved brother. Danny, even though you are not here with me you will always be in my heart. I know that you are in heaven and when I get there I will see you. I love and miss you very much. Love your sister."*

**Linda**



**Dan, far right, with his buddies.**

(continued....)



**James Carl Frederick, 26**

SFC, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Sky Soldier honored. On behalf of myself and our band of paratrooper brothers who served in Vietnam with the 173rd 'Herd' Brigade, let me offer our admiration and regrets for your complete sacrifice. May you rest in peace and never be forgotten."* **Mike Switzer**

**Michael David Fuller, 19**

PVT, A/3/503, 12/27/67

*"There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of you. I wonder what your life would have been had you come home to us. I was so proud of the man that you became and the courage that you had to go fight for our country. I know you are in heaven and Dad is by your side and one day I will be there with you. With all my love, Patty."* **Patty (Fuller) Glenn**

**Troy Alexander Galyan, 20**

SP4, A/3/319, 11/20/67

*"We remember. Troy is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Concord, NC."* **Robert Sage**

**Juan Manuel Garcia, 18**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"My idol. This is my Tio and I never met him but I have lived my life by what my father has told me about him. Now I am in the army as an 11B and all I can do is hope that I can be a fraction of a soldier that Johnny and Arthur were."* **Francisco Garcia**

**Raymond Garcia, Jr., 21**

PFC, A/1/503, 11/18/67

*"Raymond and I attended grade school together in San Diego at St. Charles Academy. Of course to me he was 'peanuts', which was his nickname. When I found out of his death, I was greatly saddened and have often thought of him from time to time. He had the greatest smile. That's what I'll always remember him by. In my own personal opinion, in war no one wins."* **Catherine Bolger Brann**

**Gerald Lee George, Jr., 18**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"We remember. Gerald is buried at Evergreen Cem, Colorado Spings, CO."* **Robert Sage**

**Ronald Gilmore, 19**

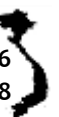
SGT, C/3/503, 11/27/67

*"Thanksgiving Day in the year 1967 a young man died in the South China Sea off the coast of Tuy Hoa. He died trying to reach me while I struggled in the heavy surf. I washed up on the beach and was grabbed by a friend. As I lay on my back I saw a helicopter dropping a line to a young man in the water. A wave came up and swallowed the boy as he reached out for the line. No one ever saw him again. The next day in the hospital the company sergeant refused to tell me who it was. I imagine they made up their own story of his death. But I know differently. I'm indebted to your effort Ronald Gilmore. Your life lost will not be in vain."*

**James Thomas Caldwell**

*"Sorry we could not reach you. I was on the beach that afternoon and was made aware of the rescue attempt only when I saw the helicopter. You were so close, but the waves were impossible to swim against. I have thought about that day often and only recently was able to find out who it was that did not make it home."* **Dan Hertlein**

(continued....)





**Michael Jay Gladden, 20**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/20/67

*"The last time I saw Mike before he departed for Vietnam was in the summer of 1967. He was home on leave and he came by where I worked. He was dressed in khakis, complete with his jump boots, airborne patches and wings, his infantry designations. We met later and partook of a few beers. I was getting ready to go into the Army at the time, I reported in September, 1967. I remember telling Mike to take care of himself. He just laughed and we shook hands as we departed. I had just reported to AIT at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, when I heard of Mike's death. I was shook, it was beginning to get really scary, suddenly I was losing way too many friends in Vietnam. Mike was killed on Hill 875 at Dak To. A few years ago I saw the History Channel series on that infamous battle. It was a slaughter. I knew that Mike was initially reported MIA and as I read about the battle, I wondered just exactly what happened to him. He was reported to have died from multiple fragmentation wounds. I often wonder if he was among those that may have perished in the friendly fire episode when a U.S. bomb was dropped into the area where the casualties were being treated. One of those was a Catholic Chaplain who received the Medal of Honor posthumously. I took a picture of Mike's name at the Wall. I had talked with his sister about giving it to her. Before I could get it to her, Mike's dad died. I thought it was too weird. Mike would have been 56, he never had the chance to live a full life, have kids, a career and a home. When I was compiling this, I found a strange irony, Mike had the same birthday as a classmate of his who also died in Vietnam 14 months earlier, Bobby L. Eaton, USMC. Both graduated in the Permian High School Class of 1965, both were friends of mine, and both are remembered on the Permian Basin Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. According to Mike's sister, he was awarded a Bronze Star with "V" device at the Battle of Dak To that took his life."* **Billy M. Brown**



**Proud troopers of 1st Platoon, B/4/503**  
**"1 Plt We Are Harder"**

**Herbert Hoover Gray, 21**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Veterans Day. Beloved Brother you will always be remembered and loved. Your Sister,"* **Shirley**

**Dennis Greenwald, 18**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. Dennis is buried at Machpelah Cemetery in Ferndale, Mich."* **Robert Sage**

**Francis David Greenwood, 19**

PFC, A/3/503, 12/27/67

(Virtual Wall states C/3/503)

*"Thank you for your sacrifice of your life, and your service to our country David. We still talk about you to this day. You came home to your dad's funeral, and knew you probably wouldn't be coming home again, but went back to Vietnam anyway. We salute you cousin."* **Brenda Eilers**

**Prelow Grissette, 21**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/19/67

*"I would have loved to have known you. Prelow Grissette was one of my father's younger brothers and he died at such a young age. I never got a chance to meet him because he passed away before I was born. I have seen pictures of him, and a very handsome and strong man he was...I am proud that he was my uncle."* **Denise McCarter**

**Wiley Guerrero, 19**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67

(Virtual Wall states A/2/503)

*"For many young men coming of age in 1960s East Austin, the road to service for country led from the classrooms and playing fields at Johnston High School to the jungles of Vietnam. Some never came back. Young men like Wiley Guerrero, a physically imposing mischief-prone athlete with, charisma to burn. 'Everybody (at Johnston) knew him — simple as that,' said Louis Cuevas, his brother-in-law. In 1966, when he was 18, Guerrero enlisted in the Army and was assigned as a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Brigade...."*



(continued....)



....The next year he was killed in action in South Vietnam, leaving behind his wife, Janie, his 2-month-old son, David, and 2-year-old daughter, Terry Ann. By unofficial — and some say incomplete — counts, Guerrero was one of at least 17 young men who attended Johnston and who died in Vietnam..."

**Arnold M. Huskins**



**George Bruce Gunn, 18**

PFC, D/1/503, 11/11/67

*"When I was just a little girl, I used to look through my grandmother's photo albums. She had one that was full of poems, and your poem, "Hello, God," was one of those. I still am touched by it today.*

*It makes me think about such a young man as yourself gone too soon, but thankfully resting in Heaven now, and it makes me remember my grandmother. Maybe you've met her in your new eternal home."* **D. Struss**

## HELLO, GOD

"Look, God, I have never spoken to You; But now I want to say, how do You do. You see, God, they told me You didn't exist and like a fool, I believed all of this.

Last night from a shell-hole I saw Your sky... I figured right then, they had told me a lie. Had I taken the time to see the things You made I'd known they weren't calling a spade a spade.

I wonder, God, if You'd shake my hand? Somehow, I feel that You will understand. Funny....I had to come to this hellish place before I had the time to see Your face.

Well, I guess there isn't much more to say but I'm sure glad, God, I met you today. I guess the zero hour will soon be here, But I'm not afraid since I know You're near.



The signal...well, God...I'll have to go I like you lots...This I want You to know. Look, now this will be a horrible fight who knows... I may come to Your house tonight.

Though I wasn't friendly with You before I wonder, God...if You'd wait at Your door? Look...I'm crying — me — shedding tears I wish I'd known You these many years.

Well, I will have to go now, God...goodby. Strange — since I've met You...I'm not afraid to die."

**By Pfc. George Dunn**

*"This poem was received by his parents one week before he was killed in action on Nov. 10, 1967."*

**William Thomas Hagerty, "Doc" 21**



SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Our brother had a very dry sense of humor. He was unaffected by popular fashion and as a boy he chose to wear granny glasses. He was an individual.*



*When he was 16 he bought his little sisters dresses to wear to kindergarten. He bought his mother a winter coat and a floor polisher. He was generous and aware of others' needs.*

*In high school he became so popular. His hair got thick and curly and he hit hard as a football half-back, making almost all his tackles. He had a girlfriend Ora, and many good friends. He always had a job caddyng and working for his father at the REA (Railway Express Agency).*

*Bill joined the Army while attending Wentworth institution Boston, continuing to work at Man Power (Show up and work for the day).*

*Billy never started a fight, but never backed down from one, even chasing an armed robber in Boston. Bill ended up at Boston City Hospital, lucky to just be injured.*

*Bill was a medic with the 173rd ABN BDE, HHC 2503rd INF. He received a bronze star for valor. Killed on Hill 875.*

*Bill is missed by his sisters and brother and parents. His girlfriend Micheleen and his good friends. A football award trophy still exists in his memory at the Maratha's Vineyard High School, managed by his brother, Bob, also a football great."* **Jean Francis**

*(continued....)*





**Bruce Hall, 19**

SP4, A/3/503, 12/27/67

*"Bruce moved to Midland, Texas from Hobbs, New Mexico where he was born when he was a year old. He attended Midland schools and had completed his junior year at Midland High when he dropped out of high school to enter the Army in October 1965. He trained in infantry and completed jump school. Before he departed for Vietnam, he was a member of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He volunteered for Vietnam and then broke his arm in a jeep accident and after healing and a 30 day leave home, he departed for Vietnam October 3, 1967. When he arrived he was immediately thrown into heavy fighting with the 503rd Infantry Regiment. He went through the Battle of Dak To which was most of the month of November 1967. Two days after Christmas 1967, he was being air lifted into a hot LZ near Tuy Hoa. He was shot to death shortly after hitting the ground..."* **Billy M. Brown**

**Clarence Hall, 19**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Pawpaw's memory: My grandfather doesn't like to talk about the war much, but this is the only name that he has ever mentioned. Papaw worked in a hospital in Vietnam during the war. Clarence was brought in, wounded badly. The doctors determined there was nothing they could do, and said 'Push this one in the hall, he's not going to make it.' A tear rolled down his face. Papaw couldn't leave him, and he stayed with him in the hallway, holding his hand until his time came. This man gave the ultimate sacrifice for his country, and I'd like to believe that, in his last moments, the presence of one man who cared eased his suffering. If he could do that, in the middle of hell, we should all strive to do the same to all servicemen in our comfortable lives."* **Unsigned**

**Paul George Hamilton, Jr., 21**

PFC, B/3/319, 12/13/67

(Virtual Wall states C/3/319)

*"He still lives. Paul G. Hamilton, Jr. was my biological father. He never had the opportunity to meet me because he was killed while my mother was pregnant. However, even though we were never given the opportunity to meet, I feel that I know him through all of the kind words that family and friends have told me about him through the years. May God bless him and*



*all of the people that gave their lives for this wonderful country."* **Jon Paul Smith**

**La Francis Hardiman, 19**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"Remembering my friend. After all of these years I have not forgotten you my friend. I can still see that big smile of yours. I remember all the good times all of us had together. Miss you ol buddy."* **Waldren Cook**

**Abraham Lincoln Hardy, 25**

CPT, C/1/503, 11/12/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

*"A dedicated leader. I served with Abe in the 1st Battalion and got to know him through occasional conversations over time, mostly between missions in the field. He always treated me and others with respect and was a very dedicated leader. Those of us who knew him were emotionally devastated when we learned of his death. The Army lost a fine officer and our nation lost a patriot who dearly loved his country and served it and the cause of freedom with honor and integrity."*

**Dennis Hupp****Noel Stuart Harald**

PTE, 7RAR, 11/10/67

*"Private Noel Stuart Harald 30 Yeppoon QLD. He died at 3 Field Hospital Saigon 11th October 1967 of gunshot wounds received 6am September 30 when the vehicle he was in was ambushed at the Dat Do East checkpoint Phuoc Tuy."*

**John William Hartman, 20**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/30/67

*"We remember. John is buried at in Long Beach, CA."* **Robert Sage**

**Bobby Gene Hastings, 34**

PSGT, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Bobby G. Hastings was the first Vietnam War casualty from*

*Trumann, Poinsett County, Arkansas... He was a veteran of 17 years service in the Army, the holder of two Purple Hearts, one while serving in Korea, and the Bronze Star, he was serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade when he gave his life. He was 34 and left behind his wife and two young boys. Two brothers and one sister... Thank you, Bobby G. Hastings."* **Barbara Adams**



(continued....)



**Norman Victor G. Hawker**

PTE, 7RAR, 11/27/67

*"Norman Victor Hawker (known affectionately as 'Porky'). Norman a farm boy from his family's wheat & sheep farm at Lillimur (near Kaniva) in Victoria's Wimmera District in Australia was called up for National Service on July 13th 1966. Norman & I were the only two country boys in our hut at Recruit Training in Puckapunyal, Victoria....In a fierce battle with the NVA (North Vietnamese Forces) on 27th November 1967 Norman sadly was Killed in Action."*

**Stan Middleton****William Allen Hawthorne, 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. William is buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Eureka, KS."*

**Robert Sage****Moses Hegler, Jr., 19**

PFC, A/3/503, 12/27/67

(Virtual Wall states C/3/503)

*"We remember. Mose is buried at Plateau Cemetery in Mobile, AL."*

**Robert Sage****Malcolm Austin Henderson**

WO2, AATTV (RAAOC), 12/16/67

*"Warrant Officer 2 Malcolm Austin Henderson, 36 Perth WA. He was killed in an ambush in Phuoc Tuy on the morning of 16th December 1967. Buried Karrakatta Cemetery WA."*

**Mark Richard Hering, 20**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"I still remember. The long walks to school at NT High with you Vern and I. May the 60's be remembered for the good and bad. SEMPER FI."*

**Edward S. Diak****William Donald Herst, Jr., "Doc", 24**

SP4, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67

*"To the uncle I never knew, gone but never forgotten. Rest in peace."*

**H.W.****Aaron Kamala Hervas, 22**

SP5, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Remembering your birthday. I remember your 16th birthday so well. I baked that awful cake and sang 'your*



*pretty brown eyes, your wavy hair....' as I was walking into your house with it. Oh to go back to those carefree days again. You were a very special person to me then and now you are my hero. You gave your life for us and I have never forgotten you for that sacrifice. We shall meet again one day my friend."*

**Mary Gordon-Smith****Zan Hess, 19**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"Another Memorial Day. Here we both are, about to turn 69 in June. I still celebrate our birthdays together. Mike Nale who was wounded same day, died two weeks ago. Missing you but always in my heart. Bravo Bulls. B/2/503 1967."*

**Paul Richards****Vanester Lamar Hester, "Doc", 22**

SP5, B/2/503, 11/13/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"I miss you my friend. I served with Doc, that's what we called him. He was our medic – we were good friends. I will always remember Doc. Rest in peace, Doc, you served well, you put your life above others. God bless."*

**Waldren Cook****William Cecil Hinkle, 20**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/21/67

*"We remember. William is buried at Jefferson Barracks Nat Cem."*

**Robert Sage**

**"FAMILY OF BRONZE STAR MEDAL WINNER, Army Pfc William C. Hinkle, 20, a Green Beret and paratrooper, killed in action Nov. 21, 1967, on Hill 875 at Dak To, Vietnam, receive the accompanying Citation from Lt. Col. David V. Fox, Granite City Army Depot deputy commander. Attending the recent ceremony were the serviceman's mother, Mrs. Helen Hinkle, his two brothers, Dennis and Charles, and his father, Deneen L. Hinkle, all of Royal Route One. Pfc Hinkle was previously awarded the Purple Heart Medal."**

(continued....)





**Ted Delane Holliman, Jr., 19**

CPL, A/3/503, 12/27/67

"I lived beside Ted when I was young and I remember Ted very well. He loved my father Tracy Lucas and I was only 12 when Ted got killed in Nam and I remember going to his funeral and as a kid I can remember his young wife that so broken hearted and his funeral and his young wife and how she was broken has left a mark on me I will never forget. Ted was truly a good young man and my father loved him so." **Robert Lucas**



"I knew your Father as a little boy in Paterson from the firehouse he worked. He contacted me in my 40's and we became great friends. He loved you with all his heart. Donald and I served in the same unit different years. I think I reminded him of you, same age etc... Donald you will never be forgotten." **Len**

**Thomas Pate Huddleston, 21**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

"Our hometown hero. You will never be forgotten. Memories of our teenage years still make me smile. Mike Watson was killed right after you but I guess you know that. The two of you are probably still making everyone laugh. When I visit Newnan I visit you and Mike and memories flood my mind and heart. You were always a good friend and big brother sort of guy, a true hero to all of us who knew you. Thank you Tommy!!!!" **Sandra Jordan Vaughn**

**Alan John Impelithere, 20**

PFC, 173d Eng, 11/23/67

"You will never be forgotten, 40 years have passed but those who were with you remember. Those of us who were with you in the 173'd Eng Co. will not forget." **Tom Kent**

**Kenneth James Jacobson, 20**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

"Thinking of you. You were always so humble and quiet and gentle in your surroundings." **Phil Hall**

**~ Final Mission of SP4 Kenneth J. Jacobson ~**

"In late October 1967, American intelligence sources indicated North Vietnamese forces were building up in the Central Highlands province of Kontum, in the vicinity of Dak To. MACV issued orders for U.S. forces to meet this threat. During the ensuing engagement Hill 875 would be the most costly terrain feature taken by U.S. servicemen in the Vietnam War. On November 19, 1967, 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Infantry Division began their assault on Hill 875. First Lieutenant O'Leary, commander of Delta Company, moved up closer toward his point team and could see to his front the effects of the artillery and bombing from the previous night. The top of the thick jungle canopy had huge holes blown through it that let sunlight reach the forest floor. Below the tree tops the forest floor was covered in shattered and gnarled debris of bamboo, vines, and smaller splintered trees. Making his way over the debris 1LT O'Leary saw his point man, SP4 Kenneth J. Jacobson, climb over a fallen tree and turn around to his slack man motioning to his nose. O'Leary stiffened knowing Jacobson was signaling he smelled the enemy. The point man slowly lowered his hand and began to turn around when shots rang out. Jacobson pitched backwards, hit by three rounds in the chest. The air immediately filled with screams and bursts of return fire from the stunned point squad....

(continued....)

**Maurice John Hutchison**

CPL, 1 FD SQN, 11/16/67

"Sapper Temp Corporal Maurice John Hutchison 28 Brisbane QLD. He was killed by a mine exploding while clearing the minefield in Phuoc Tuy the morning of 16th November 1967. Buried Pinnaroo Cemetery QLD."

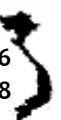
**Francis Arthur Hyland**

PTE, 2RAR, 12/1/67

"Private. Francis Arthur Hyland 22 Wynyard TAS. Hyland died at 36 US Evacuation Hospital Vung Tau on 1st December 1967 from wounds he received from an enemy mine in Phuoc Tuy the previous day. Buried Wynyard Cemetery TAS."

**Donald Iandoli, 21**

SGT, C/2/503, 11/19/67



....Not knowing where the killer was hidden, the vengeful paratroopers emptied their M-16s wildly into the trees and debris. The platoon medic ran forward toward the fallen soldier. The aidman, PFC James C. Farley, had just knelt by his comrade when he was knocked violently backwards. Shot in the head by automatic weapons fire, Farley died instantly. Delta Company had found the enemy on Hill 875."

[Taken from www.dtic.mil]

**James Earl Jenkins, 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/12/67

"Still remembered. 34 years Bro, at Dak To you gave it all, your still with me every day. The trio is all. Airborne!! (Chicken-Man) James Raybernardo



**Milford Jones, 21**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

"I will never forget you last time I saw you was November 11 1967, rest in peace my brother." Genaro Lanausse



**Ray Morgan Keith Jones, 20**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"Thank you, Keith. I remember the good time the BCHS guys had riding in your red Jeep and the string we used on the wipers. We all remember receiving the news and remember the day Ray escorted you home. Thank you for your service, friendship and sacrifice." Rick Storey



**Sherman Lawrence Jones, 20**

PFC, C/4/503, 11/6/67

"My dear friend, Sherman. I met Sherman at New Stanton High School. He was kind, loving, humble and very thoughtful. I remember it was Christmas and Sherman came to see me. He gave me a gold mirror, comb and brush set. I kept that set for years. That day we went to a party at my aunt's house. That was so nice. Its 48 years later and I still remember this gentle, caring MAN. My thoughts toward Sherman will always be good!" Mary B. Cummings (Mary Edwards in high school)



**Emory Lee Jorgensen, 20**

SP4, D/4/503, 11/6/67

"He was my brother. We called him 'Sonny'. My Brother, Army Spec. 4th Class Emory Jorgensen had four siblings, a brother and three sisters. He was the



second oldest. We lived in a small logging town in Oregon until Sonny was 9 years old, at which time we moved to Salt Lake City. As we grew up, we went to the lake a lot. Sonny was an outdoor person. He loved to fish, hunt, swim and water ski. When he went to Vietnam, he sent money home for Mom to put in the bank so he could go to school and become a Forest Ranger after his stint in the Army. We were all devastated on November 6, 1967 when we were notified that he would never be a forest ranger as he planned. Love your sister Sharon."

Janna Hoehn for Sharon Wakefield

**John Michael Kapeluck, 21**

SP4, C/1/503, 11/8/67

"Fellow RTO's. We 'Humped' those PRC 25 radios over too many muddy 'klicks' together, to not remember. I will never forget the day that they brought you back up the hill, nor the feeling of loss."

Chuck Clutter



**Harold James Kaufman, 26**

CPT, C/2/503, 11/20/67

"My friend. Harold Kaufman and I attended Valley Forge Military Academy and graduated in 1959. Just before the graduation parade, Harold carved his initials on my breast plate and I have kept that breast plate as a remembrance of him since 1959. So sad."

Bill Muros



**Jerry Conrad Kelley, 21**

SP4, C/1/503, 11/12/67

"My Herd Brother. I was one of the wounded that Jerry Kelley saved by covering me while I crawled back to the perimeter the company had established behind us. I was the point man and Jerry was just a couple guys behind me when we were ambushed. His assistant gunner, Parsons, was killed and 4 of us were wounded. Jerry was not wounded at the time and told us to get back to the company and he would cover us. I tried to get him to come along with us but he would not come. He was too busy firing his M-60 at the enemy. Jerry was giving the enemy more that they wanted and he became a huge target for them. I wish he would have pulled back with the rest of us. To this day I still think of Jerry often. He was one of America's best."

John Rolfe

(continued....)





### Barry Walter Kelly

PTE, 6RAR, 12/6/67

*"Private Barry Walter Kelly 20*

*Wynyard Tas. Kelly died of wounds from a New Zealand Army drop short in Phuoc Tuy on 6th February 1967. Buried Cornelian Bay Cemetery TAS."*



### Glenn Dirk Kerns, 19

PFC, B/2/503, 11/11/67

*"I miss my brother. I still miss you my brother. So many years have passed but the void is still felt in our family. You were so young when you died. I feel like we missed out on so much without you. But one day I know we will meet again. I am proud of you for your service and sacrifice you gave to our country. You will never be forgotten, your memory is alive in our family. PS...you are going to have your first grandson in July. I know you would be so proud. Love, your sister,"* **Linda Kerns Locklear (Tib\_)**



### Michael James Kiley, 26

CPT, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Virtute et Valore. Captain Michael James Kiley was killed in action leading his company against a battalion of North Vietnamese Regulars at the Battle of Dak To on 19 November 1967. On his second combat tour in Vietnam, he commanded Company A, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry. His first tour was with 2d Bn, 8th Cavalry from 1965-1966. He is remembered with love and pride by his mother and two brothers, both combat veterans."*



**Major Kevin F. Kiley, USMC**

*~ Silver Star Citation ~*

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Captain (Infantry) Michael James Kiley (ASN: OF-101525), United States Army, for gallantry in action. Captain Kiley distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 12 November 1967 while serving as company commander with Company A, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) in the Republic of Vietnam. When the lead elements of his company made contact with a well dug-in enemy, Captain Kiley immediately moved forward and began issuing orders and deploying his company. He moved from position to position, exposing himself to intense automatic weapons, grenade and mortar fire to make

a personal estimate of the situation while giving encouragement to each of his men. Captain Kiley personally led his company forward in a vicious assault against the enemy. For nearly three hours, he continually exposed himself to the withering enemy fire by moving from position to position while directing his men's fire and giving them encouragement. His calmness under enemy fire helped his company to establish a good offensive and defensive posture and encouraged his men to their utmost efforts. Captain Kiley's display of courage in the face of intense enemy fire, complete calmness, professionalism and leadership were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on himself, his unit and the United States Army.



### Richard Nelson Kimball, Jr., 24

PFC, D/2/503, 11/23/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"I would just like to recognize my uncle and all the other soldiers who have fought to defend our freedom. My mother is 5 years younger than "Kim" so I never had the honor to meet him. I have heard so much about him and I had to laugh reading the remembrance from Mr Kon - my mom would always tell me how 'wild' her brother was. It is a shame that he and others had to die so young and it is important that everyone in this country never forget what it means to be free and that the only reason we are able to live this way is because of people like my uncle. He is missed by us all, even those who never had the privilege of meeting him. My mother still cannot listen to 'Taps' without crying. Maybe one day all our paths will cross again. We love you Uncle 'Kim'. Love, Melissa (Karen's daughter) PS - Take care of Grandma Kimball for us!"*  
**Melissa Bennett**



### Dan Thomas Klindt, 19

PFC, A/3/503, 12/27/67

(Virtual Wall states C/3/503)

*"A heavy mist accompanied by a soft rain falls on me this fall evening as I search the wall for his name. How ironic this misty weather, just like a day on the Oregon coast. His young life snuffed out before it had hardly begun. I wonder about all of the others. What they were like...this fallen army. I can only speak personally about Dan for he was the only one I knew...."*



*(continued....)*



....So perhaps you would like to know about Dan. I remember the winter of 1948 when Dan was born at the Dalles, Oregon. His mother and father moved into a little one room house right after his birth and things were so rough for them. But when Dan was born, it was the happiest day of their lives. His mother almost died giving birth but this made Dan even dearer to her. I never got to see Dan until the fall of that year when we took US 101 from California to Oregon. We stopped at small cabins with wood stoves with pine trees surrounding them. The pines smelled like heaven must smell...so fresh and clean. We arrived in the Dalles to find this beautiful baby boy. I remember that fall so vividly, for it was the first time I met Dan and the first time I saw Oregon. It was the most wonderful fall for the orchards were overflowing with beautiful fruits. The women in the family were all paring fruit. The smell of peaches in huge pots cooking on Dan's grandmother's stove in preparation for canning filled the air. The smell in that kitchen that day has forever remained in my heart. But too quickly our visit came to an end and we were on our way back home. Life went on with Dan's parents working harder and harder to get by. His father drove big semis over the roads of Oregon and worked whenever he could on the house. His mother, working hard at home also took a job in the canneries. We wrote back and forth. I went back to visit after John, Dan's brother was born, I might add against the doctor's wishes, but I didn't stay long. Work got scarce in the Dalles and Dan's parents moved to Brownsmead, Oregon and that is where I was to see Dan again. He was probably 6 and John 5 when I arrived to see them sitting on the plank leading to their houseboat, fishing. They looked like two little angels. Their fishing poles dangling in the water. This is the sight that lies in my mind's eye. Soon Dan was to take me inside and show me his new house. There was a countertop made with wood from everywhere and Dan made sure that I saw it's beauty. I was quite excited for I had never been on a houseboat before. Dan loved living on the river and I knew the free living feeling he felt. After I spent a few days on the houseboat, I felt it too. The houseboat was so much bigger than their little house had been, with plenty of room for everyone. I remember Dan's mom making spaghetti dinner while Dan read books to his little brother. They were such sweet young boys and so loyal to each other, and they remained so until Dan's death. Those two little boys so full of love for everyone. They had such respect for life. When he grew older Dan fished and trapped to make money. He was just a down to earth country boy who loved life, loved swimming in the John Day River, who loved to pick berries with his brother and cousins. Yes, Dan was just an all American

boy next door. He worked on the docks for a year after school and then joined the Army. Not because he had to, for he was a volunteer who believed in this country that we all love. He felt honored to be a part of the 173rd Airborne. He loved the men in his unit and from the letters and calls his mother has received...they loved him too. The greatest thing about Dan was that he was an honorable man. When all the chips are on the table...what else counts but honor, respect and the love of God. I'm so sorry that years passed and I didn't see Dan, for I was busy, regretfully living my own life. But I do thank God for letting me know Dan Thomas Klindt and I feel honored that he was my nephew."

**Peggy G. Ryan (Dan's Aunt)**

**Gerald Klossek, 21**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/21/67

(Virtual Wall states C/4/503)

"We remember. Gerald is buried at Beverly Nat Cem." Robert Sage



**Irville J. Knox, "Doc", 21**

PFC, A/3/503, 12/27/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/3/503)

"My brother. Looking for anyone who knew my brother, Knox, James Irville. I would love to see pictures of him. I was only (?) when he was killed."

**Glenda Flippin, [much2much2@gmail.com](mailto:much2much2@gmail.com)**

(Posted 7/6/17)



**Jeffrey Wayne Koonce, 20**

SGT, C/2/503, 11/19/67

"We remember. Jeff is buried at Rosedale Memorial in Linden, NJ."

**Robert Sage**

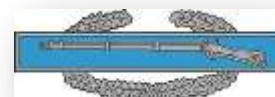


**Roger Allen Kros, 18**

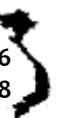
PVT, HHC/2/503, 11/19/67

"We remember. Roger is buried at Holland Cem, Jasper Co, IN."

**Robert Sage**



(continued....)





**Robert C. La Vallee, Jr., 20**

PFC, HHC/2/503, 11/19/67

*"A friend. I was a friend and carried a radio for Bob when I first got in country. He taught me a lot. He was a good person."* **Jim Babson**

**Richard Francis Laird, 20**

PFC, 173d Eng., 11/6/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

*"A True Story. My brother 'Dickie' graduated from Alexander Central High School in June of 1965. In June of 1966 he enlisted in the U. S. Army. After basic and all those good things he was deployed to Vietnam. He had been state side until April or May before going to Vietnam. After he had served 1 year over there as a mechanic kind of a guy, fixing tanks, jeeps and anything that ran I guess he was approached by the service to offer him a deal. If Dickie decided to sign on for another 6 months in Vietnam they would change his release date from June of 1968 to January of 1968. Dickie decided he would take the offer. (This is the best part), he was offered \$1,000.00 or 30 day leave, he took the 30 days. During the time he had with the family we did lots of things together. He taught me how to drive a standard shift in a 1957 Chevy. Dickie also taught me several other things like riding a horse, pitching horse shoes, (without the horse) and the most fun was trying to crack a bullwhip which by the way I never could do. We lived in Batavia in a neighborhood with 14 kids in 3 different houses, lots of kids & lots of fun. Almost every morning Dickie would go to the neighbor's house and ask to borrow the skateboard. He would spend hours going up and down the driveway practicing all kinds of tricks. He was very talented on ice skates and roller skates. It was fun just to watch him. We crammed a lot of good times into those 30 -40 days that he was home. When it was time for him to go to the airport to go back our Mom & Dad would not go so our sister Nancy & I took him. One of the last things that he said to our Mom before leaving was, 'just think Mom, when I come home I will be a man and able to vote as on November 12, 1967 he would have been 21. Unfortunately we lost him on November 6, 1967, just 6 days before his 21st birthday, tough one for our Mom to handle. So you see coming home for the 30 days meant more to him than money and probably any amount of money would not have kept him away from his family. Respectfully submitted; His loving sister,"* **Patty (Laird) Eaton**

**Weston Joseph Langley, 19**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"A good man, always right beside me. He was my RTO."* **RNBILL**

**Peter J. Lantz, 24**

1LT, C/2/503, 11/23/67

*"From an old friend. I remember you, Pete. You were stationed at Fort Hood as was my husband, Lt. Fletcher Moran. Your wife and I were friends. She sent me a picture of your child, who was born when you were gone. She sent a telegram telling me of your death - I still have it. I went to the wall and took a picture of your name, cried and remembered like it was yesterday, what it was to be in that situation. I will never forget and always thought it a great honor to have known you and Dagmar. Such a wonderful person you were. Do you remember Newsweek magazine and the way they followed us round taking pictures - The Vietnam war and America Life - wasn't that the title - I will never forget any of it. God Bless. Fletch is up there now, he died February 1st of this year...Maybe you guys will run into each other."* **Jane Moran**

**Roy Ronald Lee, 20**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/21/67

(Virtual Wall states A/4/503)

*"November 21, 2014 marked 47 years since Ronald's death on the battlefield in Vietnam; his first cousin and I went to his grave and the photo of his marker was taken on our visit. We have heard that his commanding officer visited his grave last year and may try to go each year on this date; through a chance encounter with this man in Dunn, NC, the story was told about Ronald going after a sniper who had them pinned down and he was immediately hit. He had said he would go after the sniper because his commanding officer's wife was expecting a baby. We feel that, even if he could have known the outcome, he would still have gone because he would have rather that it be him to be hit than for it to be the father of the expected child. If this man or anyone who knew Ronald reads this posting, we would appreciate if you could contact us."* **Linda Seale**

[Irmseale@yahoo.com](mailto:Irmseale@yahoo.com) (Posted 12/1/14)



(continued....)



**Witold John Leszczynski, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Witold 'Vito' Leszczynski, the best friend I ever had.*

*We met in 1962 when my parents moved us to East 19th Street in Brooklyn and were best of friends for the next 5 years. We had so many firsts together in our young lives, too numerous to mention. Vito was so proud of enlisting in the Army. He was a hero to many of us in the neighborhood. He would have been my best man at my wedding and my daughter's godfather had he survived, that's how close we were. I will never forget him and hope to meet up with him up there when my days here are through. From a friend,"*

**Richard "richie" Adam**

**Robert William Lindgren, 20**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/21/67

*"We remember. Robert is buried at Crystal Lake Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn. PH"* **Robert Sage**



**Carlos James Lozada, 21**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Sky Soldier. Carlos, I have had the honor to meet your family*

*at our reunions, met your nephew Carlos (namesake) who is a member of NYPD. I am retired from NYPD. You must be very proud of them. Your name and actions will forever be remembered in our reunions. I am proud to have served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. (A Co 1/503) 67-68 from Bien-Hoa to Dak-To. Rest in Peace my Brother."*

**Jose Gonzalez**

**~ Medal of Honor ~**

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Private First Class Carlos James Lozada (ASN: 51611285), United States Army, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a machine gunner with 1st Platoon, Company A, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, in action against enemy aggressor forces at Hill 875, in the battle of Dak To, Kontum Province, Republic of Vietnam, on 20 November 1967. Private First Class Lozada was part of a four-man early warning outpost, located 35 meters from his company's lines. At 1400 hours a North Vietnamese Army company rapidly approached the outpost along a well-defined trail. Private First Class Lozada alerted his comrades and commenced firing at the enemy who were within ten meters of the outpost. His heavy and



accurate machinegun fire killed at least 20 North Vietnamese soldiers and completely disrupted their initial attack. Private First Class Lozada remained in an exposed position and continued to pour deadly fire upon the enemy despite the urgent pleas of his comrades to withdraw. The enemy continued their assault, attempting to envelop the outpost. At the same time enemy forces launched a heavy attack on the forward west flank of Company A with the intent to cut them off from their battalion. Company A was given the order to withdraw. Private First Class Lozada apparently realized that if he abandoned his position there would be nothing to hold back the surging North Vietnamese soldiers and that the entire company withdrawal would be jeopardized. He called for his comrades to move back and that he would stay and provide cover for them. He made this decision realizing that the enemy was converging on three sides of his position and only meters away, and a delay in withdrawal meant almost certain death. Private First Class Lozada continued to deliver a heavy, accurate volume of suppressive fire against the enemy until he was mortally wounded and had to be carried during the withdrawal. His heroic deed served as an example and an inspiration to his comrades throughout the ensuing four-day battle. Private First Class Lozada's actions are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**Roger Dale Mabe, 19**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states B/4/503)

*"We remember. Roger is buried at Arlington Nat Cem."* **Robert Sage**



**Douglas Graham Magruder, 24**

1LT, A/3/319, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states B/3/319)

*"Friend & Fellow AAU Swimmer.*

*Hello Doug! Here's to you on Memorial Day & all the fun (& work) we had while awaiting our swimming events. Always will remember your enthusiasm for our goofy card games. Our love goes out to your wife Shelly (my sister cheerleader), your child & brothers. We are at one in their pain as we lost our youngest, a Marine, in 2005 & have started a bagpipng scholarship in his name. You two watch out for each other! Aye,"* **Alexis (Lexie Jo) Malcolm Grisinger Kehm & Chuck Kehm**



*(continued....)*







**Roland Will Manuel, 26**

SSG, B/4/503, 11/21/67

*"We remember. Roland is buried at Rose Hill Cemetery in Gastonia, NC. BSM PH."* **Robert Sage**



**THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
March 22, 1983**

Dear Mr. Manuel:

I was deeply moved when I read the story about you in the Asbury Park Press. The story was about a dream and how that dream came true. You longed to come to Washington to see your son's name inscribed in the granite of the new Vietnam Memorial – your son, Marine Sergeant Roland Manuel, Jr., who answered his country's call and gave his life fighting in a noble cause.

When your neighbors and fellow citizens learned about your dream they pitched in and helped make it come true. It is that spirit in the hearts of Americans which makes this country great – sharing and helping one another honoring those who have made sacrifices for their country.

And we must all thank Eleanor O'Sullivan, the gifted reporter who helped your dream come true.

Your son's name is not just inscribed in stone, it is inscribed forever in the hearts of a grateful nation. His sacrifice – and yours – make us humble. May that thought comfort you and may God bless you always!

Sincerely, **RONALD REAGAN**



**Francis Leroy Maples, 20**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"Memories of '65. On this Memorial Day 1999 I was thinking of you. Poncho is what we called you because we could talk to you in Spanish. You were a rare bird back then in high school, a gringo who could speak Spanish. You're gone but not forgotten. Your friend,"* **Tury Vega**



**Larry Martin, 19**

SGT, D/1/503, 11/11/67

*"A Courageous Leader. He was a dedicated soldier and a brave leader who made the supreme sacrifice for freedom. In fact, he was the bravest, most selfless person I have ever known. I still mourn the loss of this fine man. I am EXTREMELY proud to have served with him. His family and friends can be justly proud of him not only for the courage he showed in battle but also for the fine person that he was."* **Dennis Hupp**



### ~ Distinguished Service Cross ~

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Larry Martin, Sergeant, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company D, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. Sergeant Martin distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 11 November 1967 while serving as squad leader of an airborne infantry company during the battle at Dak To. His squad was serving as point element for the company as it attempted to join a battalion. As Sergeant Martin quickly led his squad to join the beleaguered company, withering machine gun fire wounded two of his men. He dashed to aid the injured troops and was hit himself, but he ignored his wound and carried one man to the relative safety of the defensive perimeter. After integrating his troops with the main force, he fought furiously to repel repeated fierce assaults by the North Vietnamese soldiers. He was wounded a second time by a mortar air burst, but he continued to refuse aid and moved among the bullet-swept positions to direct the fires of his men. When the order to counterattack came, he led his squad in an assault up the enemy-controlled hill. He was again wounded by an exploding enemy rocket, but he fearlessly continued his advance on a hostile machine gun position. In the face of ravaging enemy hand grenades and machine gun fire, he unhesitatingly assaulted the gun emplacement and suppressed its fire while one of his men destroyed the position with a grenade. He was mortally wounded while gallantly leading his men in the heat of battle. His fearless and courageous actions inspired his men to defeat the North Vietnamese forces and reach their objective. Sergeant Martin's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



(continued....)



**Edwin J. Martinez-Mercado, 20**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/11/67



"On November 11, 1967, PFC Edwin Martinez-Mercado, PFC Gary Shaw, PVT John Stuckey and SP4 Robert Staton were all members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade on a search and destroy mission in Kontum Province, South Vietnam, when the unit engaged an enemy force. Following the battle, the three were judged to have been killed in action, and were left on the battlefield for later recovery. A few days later, the area was searched for casualties, but their bodies could not be found. The three members of the 173rd killed on November 11, 1967 are listed with honor among the missing because no remains were found."

[Taken from pownetwork.org]

**Richard Floyd Mason, 19**

B/4/503, 11/23/67

"Richard Mason, a Boyhood Friend.

Richard was a poor boy from a small cotton mill town. He loved the outdoors and enjoyed hunting and fishing. He was a genuine person, no 'airs' about him.

Richard left school before graduation to serve his country as a Paratrooper in the United States Army. I remember the day I learned of his death. I was in my dorm room at college during my freshman year. The story in the hometown newspaper hit hard. A friend was gone. God bless you, Richard."

Sion H. Harrington, III

**George Michael Mattingly, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

"George: I remember you from school. I remember your smile. I'd heard we had lost you in Viet Nam. I visited the Wall and found your name and did a name rubbing. Rest in peace friend."

Tina Hastings Durell

**Thomas Curtis Mays, 20**

SGT, A/4/503, 11/25/67

"Curt. You have never been forgotten my brother."

Joe Bernstein

**Michael Raye McCord, 18**

SP4, B/3/319, 12/13/67

"We remember. Michael is buried at Carmi Garden of Memories in Carmi, IL. PH." Robert Sage

**Richard Dale McGhee, 20**

CPL, D/4/503, 11/18/67

"Richard was my uncle, and though I never met him, I've always heard about him, how he enjoyed being an airborne mortarman. He also lived to hunt and spent more time in the mountains of West Virginia than he probably spent indoors. Used to write home to my dad and my uncle James telling them to take care of his dog. Most I gathered from family stories was that he was a rather quiet person. When he got done with jump school, he came home and showed his brothers and sisters how they had to land by jumping off of the roof of their home." Tom Canterbury

**William Othello McKoy, 22**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"Thank you dad for serving our country. Never got to see you, but I do have this picture of you. I love you and may you R.I.P." Purvis Moore

**Vernon Means, 22**

SGT, B/2/503, 11/13/67

"I never met you, but I am proud to say Vernon is one of the brave men of my family, who sacrificed in the highest honors in which one could sacrifice. All that I've learned from his sacrifice is now, and forever, part of my being. So may we honor those by building and not destroying, so all may learn from all who are on the wall and what they gave."

Gregory Pique

**Raymond Wil Michalopoulos, 21**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/21/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

"Raymond, I would like to thank you for serving our country and giving your life in the war. You were only 21 years old when you enlisted in the army. Before then you worked for your uncle at the Homestead Baking Co. in East Providence...."



(continued....)





....You also graduated from Shea High School, which has an excellent football team which defeated my school's football team this very year in the Super Bowl, my school being Burrillville High School. In closing I would once again like to thank you for serving our country and I am very proud of you." **Nicholas A.**

### **Dewey A. Midgett**

PVT, 335th AHC, 11/25/67

"On the afternoon of November 25, 1967, PVT Dewey A. Midgett was given pass privileges with instructions to return to his unit at Phu Hiep by 1700 hours the same day. PVT Midgett did not return to his unit at the specified time, and has not been seen since. Unconfirmed information indicated that Midgett was in the vicinity of the beach, coordinates CQ 412381, Phu Hiep on the afternoon in question. A report was filed with the military police and the CID at Phu Hiep on November 26, 1967. Further, a check was made with graves registration and the 91st Evacuation Hospital at Phu Hiep. All agencies had negative information. Midgett was administratively presumed dead on February 4, 1980. PVT Midgett's records have changed over the years. At times, he was presumed dead, and at other times he was classified Absent Without Leave (AWOL). Then, by 1983, his name again appeared on lists of missing. Intelligence reports have been received on PVT Midgett that he was at one time living openly in South Vietnam. Most records indicated that Midgett was on the way to the beach on a pass. Some reports said that he was captured by the Viet Cong and had been sighted several times, both as a prisoner and living freely. His family did not know what to think, whether he was a legitimate prisoner or abandoned his unit."

[Narrative taken from pownetwork.org]



### **Clarence Alvie Miller, Jr., 26**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/6/67

"Never forgotten. Rest in peace with the warriors." (Photo credit, his son) **Brian Miller**



### **Ivan Dean Miller, Jr., 19**

PFC, B/1/503, 12/10/67

"Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Miller, 3916 Knoll Road, have been informed of the death on Sunday of their son, Pfc. Ivan Miller, Jr., serving in Vietnam. Pfc. Miller, 19, reportedly was accidentally killed by allied mortar fire while on duty in the Dak To region. He was a member of the 173rd Airborne Infantry and had served in Vietnam since August. A graduate of Elmhurst



High School, he was a member of Anthony Wayne First Church of God. Survivors, besides his parents, are a brother, Stephen, at home; two sisters, Cynthia and Rene, both at home...." **Local newspaper**

"Dean, we were just becoming friends. I still think about that day when you were taken from us...so sad. I pray for your spirit. You will live on in my memory always. **Jeff Nordahl**

### **Louis Charles Miller, 18**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/6/67

#### **~ Final Mission of**

#### **SP4 Louis C. Miller ~**

"PFC Clarence A. Miller Jr. and SP4 Louis C. Miller were infantrymen serving with B Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry. On November 6, 1967, B Company, 4-503rd, was combat assaulted atop of Hill 823 in the jungles of Dak To Province to accompany their sister companies who were already deployed nearby. Fourth Battalion was attempting to locate elements of the NVA's 66th Regiment which had infiltrated from Laos. An NVA force had been on Hill 823 before B Company's arrival, however, they were smashed by preparatory artillery fire on the hilltop before the assault. The shattered force abandoned the peak, leaving behind broken rifle stocks and rucksacks. While B Company was establishing defensive positions on the hill, PFC Miller and SP4 Miller (they were unrelated) were instructed to set up an observation post 100 meters down the western slope to provide an early warning along one of the likely avenues of approach. As the two Millers moved down the hillside, an enemy ambush of platoon size caught them from their right before they covered half the distance to their objective. Both paratroopers were fatally wounded when they were struck by a violent fusillade of small arms fire delivered at close range. [Taken from coffeltdatabase.org]



### **Michael James Minor, 18**

CPL, A/3/503, 12/27/67

"My hero long before Vietnam. Mike was almost ten years older than me, and so he was my big brother hero for as long as I can remember. He once saved me from choking on a penny I had swallowed when 4 and a half, by quickly grabbing my ankles and shaking me upside down until it popped out - I still remember that moment of breathing after not being able to..."



(continued....)



*Silly memory, perhaps, but it is how I think of him, the big brother who always took care of me and loved me. He was so young! My own children are now almost twice the age he was when he was KIA (just 18); hard to imagine as a parent. Thank you, Michael, for your life was short but your impact was huge!"*

**Elaine Minor Hiatt**

**Barry John Moore**

T/WO2, 1 FD SQN, 11/16/67

*"Temp WO2 Barry John (Pod) Moore 30 Bellingan NSW. Moore died on 16th November 1967, as he cleared a mine field in Song Hai, Phuoc Tuy."*



**Charles Henry Morris, Jr., 20**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)

*"We remember. Charles is buried at Roselawn Memorial Gardens in Princeton, WV. PH."* **Robert Sage**



**Robert L. Morris, 19**

SGT, B/2/503, 12/2/67

*"We remember. Robert is buried at Greenlawn Cemetery in Columbus, OH. PH,"* **Robert Sage**

**Wayne Paul Murray, 20**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"We remember. Wayne is buried at Riverside Cemetery in Norwood, NY. PH."* **Robert Sage**



**Tracy Henry Murrey, 25**

1LT, C/4/503, 11/20/67

*"Tracy was my roommate in college and he was the best friend I have ever had in my life. When we graduated I went in the Navy and he was drafted in the Army. Tracy wanted to be the best so that must have been why he went to all of the advanced training schools in the Army. It was ironic that when Tracy was killed I was in the Mekong Delta assigned to the mobile riverine force. This is the first time I actually found out how much of a hero Tracy really was. Thank you for sharing this experience with me."* **Ted Olzack**



**~ Distinguished Service Cross ~**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to First Lieutenant (Infantry) Tracy Henry Murrey (ASN: 0-5331649), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations

involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). First Lieutenant Murrey distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 20 November 1967 while serving as platoon leader of an airborne infantry unit during a search and destroy mission on Hill 875 at Dak To. A sister company had been pinned down by fierce enemy rocket, mortar and automatic weapons fire while assaulting the heavily fortified hill and Lieutenant Murrey fearlessly led his platoon through a curtain of fire to strengthen the right flank of the beleaguered force. Repeatedly exposing himself to the withering barrage, he positioned his men and directed a deadly fusillade against the enemy bunkers. He quickly determined the location of the heaviest fire and led his men in an aggressive assault on the hill. Inspiring his men by his calmness and determination in the face of the murderous enemy fire, he succeeded in leading his force across seventy-five meters of open ground toward the Viet Cong trenches before he was forced to momentarily withdraw under overwhelming hostile firepower. Quickly regrouping his forces, he led another fierce assault which swept to within fifteen feet of the enemy positions. He then hurled two hand grenades inside the nearest bunker. Other North Vietnamese soldiers, in nearby fortifications, saw his devastating attack and concentrated their fire on him. He was mortally wounded while gallantly leading his men in the heat of battle. First Lieutenant Murrey's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**"A Chosen Few, The Herd"**

*Only a chosen few of my generation could  
Understand why the skeleton in my closet  
Rattles in my deepest sleep.*

*Who are you to judge us, for you have not  
Followed our trail, walked the point at night  
Or heard the fire, Hell and screams of a single  
Night. For we are the chosen few of "The Herd"  
Who have touched the gates of Hell, seen the shadow  
Of death and at times, are damned for surviving...*

by PFC A.M. Eyster, Co B 1/503rd, 173rd Abn



*continued....)*





**Richard Vaughn Myers, 20**

SP4, 39th Scout Dog Plt, 11/13/67

*"Bearcat. I remember you as a friend, unpretentious, strong and gentle. You are with God."* **Morris Farnum**

**Josh Cain Noah, 23**

SGT, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Hey Josh. I last saw you in uniform at Bobb Meyers. I remember you making it clear that day, you were Airborne, therefore, you did not wear bus driver cap. We spent a lot of time playing and generally 'raising hell' as we grew up in Battiest/Pickens area. I think of your mom's biscuits often, especially when I'm heading to Oklahoma. She had that special knack for cooking 'real Choctaw food'. I can see her, in my mind's eye, her bending over a cook pot that time we spent couple of weeks in Texas looking for work. That stew was really good! Rest in Peace, cousin!"*

**Bob Baker****James William Nothern, Jr., 20**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Never known, but never forgotten. To an uncle that I never had the fortune of meeting, you may be gone but the commitment and honor that you defined for your country, your brothers-in-arms, and your family will never be forgotten."* **Joshua Thorn**

**Wallace Lee Ogea, 22**

SGT, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Art class, BHS. Remembering our funny conversations in art, even after all these years...how strong you always seemed to be! I've thought about you a lot over the years...you and Buddy Welch and the others. I still miss you. P.S. It really wasn't nice to laugh so hard at my 'self-portrait'! Love always, Kay."* **Kay McKinney**

**Andrew John Orosz, 21**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"It's been 34 years since you passed. Although our time together in the Army was short I felt you were closer to me than my family. I think of you often and smile at the fun we had in Charlie 2/503. God bless you, until we meet again."* **Lou**

**John Manuel Ortiz, 21**PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67  
(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"My Uncle on Memorial Day 2014. Thank you for your service. ..I can't imagine the guts it took...you truly are a hero...god bless u... love your nephew,"*  
**Dan**

**Benny Ray Owens, 20**

SGT, A/3/503, 12/27/67

*"We remember. Ben is buried at Oakland Cemetery in Lyon Co, KY. PH"*  
**Robert Sage**

**Kenneth Grant Owens, 18**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/22/67

*"We remember. PFC Kenneth G. Owens is resting at Woodlawn Memorial Park, Orange County, Gotha, FL."* **Robert Sage**

**Robert Edward Paciorek, 20**SP4, B/2/503, 11/20/67  
(Virtual Wall states B/4/503)

*"To my brother, you have been gone almost 45 years and we still miss you and love you."* **Pat**

**Thelbert G. Page, 20**

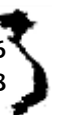
SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HQ, 42nd Arty, 4th Inf)

*"My cousin, though we never met I am happy to call you family. I recently learned of you and decided I needed to find you. I am thankful and honored to be able to call you family. You are gone but not forgotten. We love you!!"* **Danielle**

**Joseph Pannell, 20**PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67  
(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"I remember my uncle, Joseph, reading stories to us at our grandmother's house. I remember his kindness and patience. We love you, Joseph, and will always remember you. Thank you for your sacrifice. Dolly"* **Lori Anderson-Musgrave**

*continued....)*

**Ronald Allen Parson, 23**

PFC, C/1/503, 12/24/67

*"We remember. Ronald is buried at First Parish Cemetery in York, Maine. PH"*  
**Robert Sage**

**James Robert Patterson, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. James is buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Orlando, FL. PH"*  
**Robert Sage**

**Roy Charles Payne, Jr., 20**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"You were my wood shop partner in HS. We joked that someday we would share the same fox hole. RIP MY OLD FRIEND."*  
**Andy Godina**

**Noel Charles Pettitt**

PTE, 2RAR, 11/27/67

*"Private Noel Charles Pettitt 21 Mildura VIC. Wounded from a mine explosion on 27th November 1967. He died of his wounds the same day in 8 Fld Ambulance Vung Tau. Buried Merbein Cem. VIC."*

**Arnold Pinn, 23**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

*"God bless you, Arnold Pinn. In your short-lived life you made the ultimate sacrifice. You are remembered by all Pinn's, and related families, as a true family hero!"*  
**Lionel Pinn, Jr.**

**Memorial Day 2006**

*"I just got off the telephone with a Vietnam Veteran, Sgt George Lantz of Arlington, Washington. He called to share his personal story with me about the final hours he spent with my cousin PFC Arnold Pinn. It was November 20, 1967, (Hill 875) Sgt Lantz and his RTO Burnake were heading up a trail near Kontum, Vietnam when they stumbled onto PFC Arnold Pinn and another unknown soldier. The two had dug a foxhole about '6 foot high and the width of three men'. Sgt Lantz liked the location of the foxhole and decided to join the two men in order to 'keep an eye on the trail in both directions.' Even though they spent about 12 hours together in that foxhole there was no small talk about families back home. 'There were mortars flying all around us we did not have time to do anything but get*

*ready for the next wave of mortars and think about staying alive.'*

*Sgt Lantz was serving as a forward scout for A Co, 4th Bn, 503rd Infantry. He noted that he remembered Arnold as a young baby-faced man; he saw D Company, 2 Bn, 503rd Infantry badge and E4 ranking on his shoulder along with his name 'Pinn'. Sgt Lantz noted that they decided to run shifts. Two men would stay on guard duty while the other two slept. At some point it was decided that the foxhole needed some cover so Sgt Lantz and PFC Pinn volunteered to go and get some 'bamboo to use as cover for the foxhole.' Both men had a machete and their weapon in hand. According to Sgt Lantz they had only gotten 'about 20 yards away from the foxhole' when they heard the distinctive 'thump' of mortar shots and then they heard the other two men in the foxhole yelling 'In-coming!' Lantz and Pinn immediately turned and headed back to the foxhole, when they dove in they both tossed their machetes aside and landed on top of the other two men in the hole. Within a couple of minutes a mortar went off 'just on the edge of the foxhole'. When the dust had cleared Sgt Lantz had taken a piece of shrapnel in his leg. He looked around the foxhole and found PFC Pinn covered in blood. It was apparent that he had been hit a lot worse. 'He had several shrapnel wounds on his upper chest area.' According to Lantz they did try to revive him but he was dead. Lantz noted that Arnold 'did not make a sound.' Sgt Lantz is positive that by him and PFC Pinn diving into the foxhole and landing on top of the two other men, they saved their lives. Both men on bottom had no injuries. RTO Burnake was killed in an ambush later on and the other man was never identified. Sgt Lantz was transported to a military hospital to recover. He was wounded once again before he left Vietnam in 1968. Sgt Lantz is now in a wheelchair suffering from cancer of his spine, which has paralyzed him. He is certain it was from the exposure to Agent Orange. 'My uniforms were soaked with the stuff.' He also noted that 'friendly fire' was responsible for a lot of US deaths. When they (US) dropped the big bomb in there it landed right on top of us.*

*I asked him why he picked Memorial Day to call, he noted that his son had found my name as a point-of-contact on The Virtual Wall and thought that his Dad would like to talk to someone in the family. It has been over 40 years but he wanted to share those last moments with someone from Arnold's family in hopes of bringing some closure and some peace. The Pinn family thanks you and salutes you, Sgt. George Lantz. From a cousin,"*  
**Lionel Pinn, Jr.**

(continued....)







**John Lewis Ponting, 31**

SFC, B/4/503, 11/22/67

*"SSG Ponting was the*

*Commandant of our ROTC unit at Broad Ripple High school in Indianapolis, in 1965 and 1966. I graduated in 1966. I remember SSG Ponting as a fine leader whom I respected very much. I am sure SFC Ponting died a hero, saving lives."* **Darrell D. Bowman**



~ Silver Star ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Sergeant First Class John Lewis Ponting (ASN: RA-17396173), United States Army, for gallantry in action. Sergeant First Class Ponting distinguished himself by heroism on 21 November 1967, while engaged in military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. During the battle for hill 875, Sergeant Ponting was serving as platoon sergeant of the 1st Platoon, Company B, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). While assaulting the hill, Sergeant Ponting's platoon became pinned down by heavy mortar, rocket and automatic weapons fire. Due to its exposed location, an enemy sniper was able to deliver very accurate fire into the platoon command post group, which killed the platoon radio telephone operator. In complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Ponting personally led a fire

team around to the flank of his platoon and destroyed the sniper. This action enabled the remainder of the assault element to continue its attack. Soon the whole assault element was pinned down by heavy automatic weapons fire which was inflicting many casualties. As his platoon medic had already been killed, Sergeant Ponting continuously exposed himself to administer aid to his wounded comrades. While performing these duties, Sergeant Ponting was critically wounded by an enemy grenade and evacuated. He later died from his wounds. His valorous actions and untiring efforts undoubtedly prevented his platoon from bogging down in the assault and helped save the lives of many of his fallen comrades. Sergeant Ponting's extraordinary personal heroism was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**Steven Reed Powell, 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

## ***Father grieves every day for son killed in Vietnam***

*By Susan Elzey, May 29, 2010* [GoDanRiver.com](http://GoDanRiver.com)

*Basil Powell is a sharp 88-year-old...And every day of his life, for almost 43 years, he has lived with the pain of losing a son in Vietnam.*

*"Steve died on Nov. 20, 1967," Powell said last week. "The date comes readily." Steven Reed Powell was the oldest of four sons of Basil and May Jo Powell when he joined the Army in 1966 and became a paratrooper at the age of 19.*

*"He went to Vietnam in April of 1967," Powell said. "He wasn't really scared to go, but he did have some anxiety. When he finished jump training and they were calling out names of those who were going to Vietnam, he said he could hear his heart thumping."*

*He had the opportunity to sign up for officer's candidate school and not go, but he chose to go.*

*After being home for a two-week leave before shipping out, his parents took him to the Danville airport with no fanfare, no other soldiers leaving.*

*"We waited about 40 minutes for the plane to come in," Powell said. "My wife teared up, but he didn't have any tears, although I could tell he was anxious. We had a prayer that he wouldn't have to take a life and that his life wouldn't be taken.*

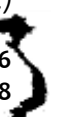
*"And then he was gone."*

*(continued....)*



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Nov.-Dec. 2017 – Issue 76

Page 29 of 88





**This photo of Steve says a lot about the trooper.**

### **Hill 875**

*The Powells heard from their son at least weekly and knew the specific battles in which he was involved.*

*The week he was killed, they watched the fight for Hill 875 during the Battle of Dak To play out on the evening news, knowing their son was there.*

*"The battle lasted for five days, and when the battle was over, I was anxious to hear from him because I knew he had been in danger," Powell said. "We went a whole week without hearing from him — from Monday to Saturday — and we went to church on Sunday, thinking all was OK."*

*"But when we came around the corner from church, a Marine officer was standing in front of the house, and we knew the news was bad ... At least he didn't hesitate, and as soon as he knew who I was, he said immediately, 'Your son has been killed.'"*

*"There were some bad moments there."*

*It took about a week for Steve's body to reach home by train from Dover, Del.*

*"We were not able to view the body, but later I asked someone how he died, Jim Fitzroy, and he just pointed to his chest three times," Powell said. "Steve had been hit three times in the chest with an assault rifle."*

### **Finding out the details**

*Powell later met up with Fitzroy in 1993 when an article in the Danville Register & Bee listed the 25 soldiers whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. The article related that a man named Jim Fitzroy was seeking family members for Steve Powell and listed a contact phone number.*

*Powell contacted him and spent two days visiting him in New Jersey and learning about the last days of his son's life.*

*Fitzroy wrote a poem about Steve's death, relating how he died trying to make it to the top of a hill "made slick with blood" while trying to carry a wounded friend to safety.*

*Powell found out that the fighting was so bad that Steve's body laid on the hill for four days before it could be retrieved. Fitzroy was the one who put Steve's body in the body bag.*

### **A time of grief**

*Fitzroy's poem is one of the mementoes Powell keeps in a notebook about Steve. A china cabinet in his dining room holds other memories, such as the two Purple Hearts awarded to Steve, his baseball cap and other items of childhood and his combat boots Powell had bronzed, which sit beside his baseball cleats.*

*"I can't think of any days that go by that I don't remember Steve's death," Powell said. "The first Christmas, I didn't even want to get out of bed ... but I did. You have to get up and do the things you don't want to do."*

*Powell said he thinks his wife, who died in 1981, handled it better than he did.*

*"She got things together and went back to school to become a schoolteacher. I couldn't have done that in the frame of mind I was in," he said. "I found out the pain of grief and sorrow can be as excruciating as physical pain."*

*Looking back, Powell feels mostly anger about the Vietnam War, quoting a general who said, "In war, sometimes old men make stupid decisions and young men have to die."*

*"I can't think of a thing we gained in Vietnam," he said.*

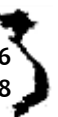
### **Changed forever**

*His son's death changed his life forever. Early on, he realized how fragile life is and became more protective of his family. He said he and his wife tried not to deprive their other sons, who were 17, 15 and 9, of the attention they needed, but knows they were affected by the death of their older brother also.*

*"I was a mail carrier, and most of that time you are alone. I shed a lot of tears that next year," he said. "Many times I have wondered where Steve would have worked, whether he would have been a college student and whether he would have had children."*

*"I think of the good times he would surely have had but didn't experience because of what happened."*

*(continued....)*





*He said that prayer and faith got his family through the experience, and he is sure one day after this life, he will see his son again.*

*Powell has by choice not been to see the Memorial Wall, preferring to keep his grief private. He has seen the half-size replica both times it has been in Danville, and regularly visits Danville's Veterans Memorial where his son has a brick.*

*He finds that comforting because, he said, "At least they aren't forgotten."*

*For himself, he still feels pain and frustration that people often don't even try to understand or seem to recognize his pain and sacrifice.*

*"Maybe I expect more than I should, but people who I know have no remembrance of what I've been through or my son," he said humbly.*

*Perhaps now they do.*

**[One can imagine this same story written over 58,000 times. Ed]**

### **James E. Raffensperger, Jr., 20**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"We remember. James is buried at Pine Hill Cemetery, Saylor Township, IA. PH."* **Robert Sage**



### **Walter Donald Ray, 20**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Together in high school and army. I'm sorry that I survived and you and Teddy didn't. Our lives were touched by the kindness of friends. Belmont, Bragg and Nam, I never forget."* **Paul MacAuley**



### **David Richard Reynolds, 18**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/21/67

*"To my big brother and hero. It's going on 45 years since you went to fight for your country and Family - There has not been a day that goes by that I have not missed you - We are hoping that someday the Army will find and return your remains to us - we need to have you home!"* **Deborah**



### **Leonard Jeffrey Richards, 24**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states B/4/503)

*"Dear Leonard. Thank you for your ultimate sacrifice. You will never be forgotten. May you rest in peace forever. My brother, Lonnie Floyd was also KIA and he served with the 173RD also. I'll think of you when I visit The Wall for Memorial Day. Bless your heart."*

**Brenda Floyd Underwood**



### **Olis Ray Rigby, "Doc", 19**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/21/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"Miss you Ray. A high school friend forever in my memory. Thank you for your sacrifice. I made it home."*

**Bob Wonnell**



### **Charles Franklin Riley, 25**

PFC, D/1/503, 11/11/67

(Virtual Wall states A/1/503)

*"To my father. I'm proud of you. I wish I would have had more time with you."*

**Unsigned**



### **Thomas Jay Riley, 19**

SP4, A/1/503, 11/18/67

*"Tom, we were high school friends, you were so cute and I was so shy. I remember how you always sat behind me in every class and pulled my long hair out. I, like everyone who knew you, miss you still. I know you are in a better place but I sure wish you were still here with us. Thank you for everything you did for your country. You were such a young man and loved by so many. Your high school friend,"* **Gloria Miller Namie**



### **Jeffrey C. Rivett, PTE, 2RAR**

11/27/67

*"Private Jeffrey Clive Rivett 24 Murraybridge SA. An enemy mine killed him in Phuoc Tuy on 27th November 1967. Buried Murray Bridge Cemetery SA."*



(continued....)



**Arthur James Robertson**

T/TWO2, AATTV (RAINF), 12/5/67

*"Temp WO2 Arthur James Enlisted as Roberts. From Shepparton VIC. Five days after contracting Malaria, he was admitted 17 US Field Hospital where he died on 1st December 1967."*

**Charles Harvey Robinson, 20**

CPL, A/2/503, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states D/4/503)

*"Memorial Day. Thinking of you on Memorial Day my friend and fellow Sky Soldier. Rest In Peace..D/4/503rd 173rd Airborne Brigade 1967."* **Ray Thomas**

**Gary Doyle Roerink, 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/23/67

*"Thank you my friend. I remember you as a friend and buddy. Now I must remember you as a veteran and a Hero. That is the easy part. Remembering that you are gone from us; now THAT'S the hard part. Thank you bud."* **Glenn Brookshear**

**Robert Lee Ross, 20**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"He's from Waterproof, LA, near Ashland, Hedgeland, and Goldman. Small towns mean little to most, but for Robert Lee Ross, 11B, it was home and so far away from Kontum Province Vietnam. A prayer for Robert Lee that on this Nov. 13 the pain of this date in 1967 has passed as the years. To the other two men from Waterproof who died in Vietnam and all who keep the silent watch with Robert on Panel 29E, rest. The years pass slowly when the sorrow never leaves."* **Unsigned**

**William Allen Ross, 21**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/19/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"We remember. William is buried at Park Hill Cemetery in Columbus, GA. BSM PH."* **Robert Sage**

**Leroy Alphas Rost, 19**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"To my uncle that I never met. Hello Leroy, wish I could of met you but wish you were here because a big part of dad is missing without you. Being that my birthday past and the same month/day that you passed away I always remember you. Always remember that my dad Robert Livingston misses and loves you."*

**Roy Livingston****Jesse Sanchez, 24**

SP4, A/3/319, 11/20/67

*"I will miss you always. I will think of you often, I will pray for you quietly and I will love you forever. I miss you always. You were my first love. I know that Carmen is with you now. I think of you both.....And that '59 Impala! I will always love you."*  
**Carol**

**Robert James Sanders, 19**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Tribute to my cousin. Bobbie Sanders was my grandfather, John Calhoun's nephew. I was in high school when Bobbie was killed but the entire family attended his funeral. It was a very sad day. There was no military honor guard and taps was played on a record player. Not worthy of a hero. It broke the heart of his parents, his sister and grandmother's hearts. It broke my grandfather's heart as well. I might have met Bobbie but I can't even remember but I remember his father and grandmother very well. I appreciate his sacrifice and wish I had had the opportunity to know him."* **Patricia A. Voss (Blastic)**



*"Robert J. Sanders, W. Fisher Avenue, Olney - Sanders wanted to become a paratrooper and joined the Army in September 1965 after graduating from Olney High School. The 19-year-specialist four, a rifleman and automatic weapons specialist, was sent to Vietnam and was assigned to Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade..., Sanders died on November 19, 1967, while dragging wounded comrades to safety when his unit came under heavy fire. A box of dinnerware Sanders had bought in Thailand for his family as a Christmas gift arrived home four days after his death. Sanders was survived by his parents and a sister."*

**The Philadelphia Daily News****Richard Alan Scheiber, 25**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"We remember. Richard is buried at Mt Calvary Cemetery, Huntington, IN. His military stone says CO B, 503 INF, 173 ABN PH."* **Robert Sage**



(continued....)





### Gary Ralph Schwellenbach, "Doc", 19



CPL, A/3/503, 12/27/67  
(Virtual Wall states HHC/3/503)

*"To my brother, a life too short too fast. I think of you and your soulmates often. May you all find*

*peace on the other side. Thank you for your sacrifice. I wish we would have had more time. Love always, your little sister Gay Anne (Chico, CA) P.S. Larry K. Keller you too!!!"*



#### ~ Distinguished Service Cross ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to Private First Class Gary Ralph Schwellenbach (ASN: RA-18907134), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving as a platoon Aidman with Company A, 3d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. On 27 December 1967, during a heliborne assault into an enemy held landing zone, Corporal Schwellenbach's unit was taken under heavy enemy automatic weapons and sniper fire. Although seriously wounded shortly after arriving on the landing zone, Corporal Schwellenbach continued to aid the wounded. With complete disregard for his own safety, he moved among the wounded in the open area of the landing zone which was receiving the most intense enemy fire. Moving his comrades to cover he was wounded a second time. Refusing medical aid for himself, he continued his mission. He received a third and fatal wound while administering aid to a wounded man. The actions of Corporal Schwellenbach saved the lives of many wounded troopers and his indomitable spirit encouraged all who witnessed his acts. Corporal Schwellenbach's conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism and intrepidity, at the cost of his life, are in the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect the utmost credit upon himself and the armed forces of his country.



### Edward Anthony Scully, 22

SP4, 173d Eng, 11/13/67

*"We remember. Edward is buried at Oscott Cemetery, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, England. SS BSM PH."* Robert Sage

#### ~ Silver Star ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended

by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Specialist Fourth Class Edward Anthony Scully (ASN: US-51620855), United States Army, for gallantry in action. Specialist Four Scully distinguished himself on 13 November 1967 while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade as a demolitions man on a combat operation in the Republic of Vietnam. When Company B came under intense automatic weapons, grenade and small arms fire, Specialist Scully, could have fulfilled his mission without excessive exposure. However, when contact was made, he rushed to the point through an intense hail of incoming fire and carried the wounded to the rear. Returning again to the front and exposing himself to the incoming automatic weapons and grenade fire, with complete disregard for his own personal safety, he began to place a heavy volume of fire upon the enemy to cover the withdrawal of the wounded. When his ammunition was expended Specialist Scully threw down his weapons and picked up another wounded man to carry back with him, at which time he was himself hit and mortally wounded. Specialist Scully's personal bravery, courage 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.

### Ronald Seiler

T/WO2, AATTV (RAINF), 12/16/67

*"Temp WO2 Ronald Seiler 28 Berrigan NSW. Seiler was travelling in a Jeep in Phuoc Tuy early on the morning of 16th December 1967 when the vehicle, which was carrying a crew of six, was ambushed by the enemy at close range, and all were killed. Buried Rookwood Military Cemetery NSW."*



### James Dudley Shafer, 25

SGT, B/4/503, 11/6/67

*"Gone from our lives but still alive in our hearts." Jean and sons Jeffery & Jim*



#### ~ Final Mission of

#### SGT James D. Shafer ~

SGT James D. Shafer was an infantry-man serving with 2nd Platoon, D Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry. On November 6, 1967, Companies A, C, and D (4-503rd) had been marching for four days through the jungles of the Central Highlands in Dak To Province....

(continued....)



....attempting to locate elements of the NVA's 66th Regiment which had infiltrated from Cambodia. D Company was instructed to move up on to a ridge named Ngok Kom Leat. Tensions rose as the column of paratroopers arrived on the knoll as evidence of recent enemy activity was detected. As the Company conducted a sweep of the ridge, they were met by enemy automatic weapons fire. D Company formed up into an oval-shaped defensive position astride a knob on the ridge and directed air strikes on the suspected enemy positions. SGT Shafer, the leader of 2nd Squad, defended a portion of the Company's perimeter. Suddenly, fifteen to twenty enemy soldiers dashed from their jungle concealment and rushed 2nd Squad, firing their AK-47's on full automatic. Shafer was fatally wounded in the attack, and two other paratroopers were wounded. However, they were able to blunt the assault and keep the perimeter intact. [Taken from coffeltdatabase.org]

(173d list of KIA states B/4/503)

### Valdez Sharp, 20

PFC, HHC/1/503, 11/22/67

*"We remember. Valdez is buried at Hillcrest Cemetery in McLean, TX. PH"*

Robert Sage



### Gary Francis Shaw, 19

PFC, A/3/319, 11/11/67

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



*As Long As We Live, You Will Live, As Long As We Live, You Will Be Remembered, As Long As We Live, You Will Be Loved. ~ M.A.C.V. ~*

### ~ Distinguished Service Cross ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to Private First Class Gary Francis Shaw (ASN: RA-11703347), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force

in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Private First Class Shaw distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 11 November 1967 as radio operator of an airborne infantry company conducting a search and destroy mission near Dak To. The unit was moving down a ridgeline covered with thick bamboo when it was savagely attacked by a North Vietnamese battalion firing mortars, rockets and automatic weapons. Heavy casualties were suffered by the lead platoon, and Private Shaw immediately volunteered to go to the aid of his wounded comrades. Braving withering enemy fire, he raced from one clump of bamboo to another as he advanced seventy-five meters down the hill to where the stricken paratroopers lay. With bullets striking all around him, he began to pull the wounded from the killing zone and carry them up the hill to safety. He saw one casualty fall in an exposed area while attempting to crawl from the ambush site unassisted. Ignoring exploding mortars and grenades, Private Shaw moved to the man and dragged him to the company's defensive perimeter. He then returned to the base of the ridge and killed at least six of the assaulting North Vietnamese with fierce rifle fire as other members of his unit rescued the remaining wounded. He was instantly killed while gallantly covering their withdrawal. Private First Class Shaw's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

The Distinguished Service Cross is the second highest military award that can be earned by a member of the United States Army (and previously, the United States Army Air Forces and the Air Force) for extreme gallantry and risk of life in actual combat with an armed enemy force. Actions that merit the Distinguished Service Cross must be of such a high degree that they are above those required for all other U.S. combat decorations but do not meet the criteria for the Medal of Honor. The Distinguished Service Cross is equivalent to the Navy Cross (Navy and Marine Corps), the Air Force Cross (Air Force), and the Coast Guard Cross (Coast Guard).

The Distinguished Service Cross was first awarded during World War I. In addition, a number of awards were made for actions before WWI. In many cases, these were to soldiers who had received a Certificate of Merit for gallantry which, at the time, was the only other honor for gallantry the Army could award, or recommend a Medal of Honor.



*(continued....)*







## **Jerome Charles Shomaker, 25**

1LT, A/3/319, 11/20/67

*"Jerry and I went through Jump School together, the Special Forces Officers Course, and then got separated. He went to the 6th SFG and I went to the 3d SFG but we kept in touch and often went sky diving together at the Center SPC. Jerry went off to Vietnam before me and, sadly, got killed. I lucked out and ended up as an Infantry Company Commander several months later, which is what probably kept me alive. I still have the Airborne School 'Yearbook' with a black border around Jerry's picture. He was my friend."*

**John J. Murphy, Class 15-66**



### **Communist Hand Weapons**

**"DAK TO, S. VIETNAM.** Army Lt. Jerome Shomaker of Newport Beach, Calif., holds three types of weapons, made either in Vietnam or Red China, that were left behind by Communist troopers following a battle with a U.S. paratroop company in the Vietnam Central Highland near here June 22...."

### **When We Speak Of War**

"When we speak of war in the jungle of Vietnam's II CORPS we speak of days of exhausting humping through triple canopies of vegetation and negotiating bamboo thickets so dense one has to crawl under the masses. Just the physical part of getting from one point to another on a map drains one both physically and mentally. There are no pretty little "battle formations"

that were practiced at Fort Benning. It is every man moves himself, his weapons and rucksack from point "A" to Point "B."

As the above occurs—the Artillery Forward Observer must know at all times exactly where the company of infantry with him is in the jungle. This was before GPS—ask any FO from Vietnam, if they had a GPS system, would it have made a difference and every one of them will tell you they could have won the war by themselves IF they knew where they were at in the jungle!

I write the above because how Lt. Jerry Shomaker and more than 40 other paratroopers died was no one's fault. A lot of extreme guilt has been carried by some for many years but as one grows old the; "wouldda, shouldda and couldas" tend to dissipate.

The Battle for Hill 875 was exactly that—a battle. The paratroopers from 2/503 were attacking—up hill, in a jungle and against fortified positions that had taken direct hits from 500 pound bombs and still functioned.

Some would like to think a leader during times like that calmly looks over his terrain and maps and casually makes decisions. In reality—it doesn't work that way—each infantryman owns a few feet of jungle surrounding him. He rarely actually sees the enemy in the jungle, each leader is forced to make decisions based on best guesses; where his lines are, where the enemy is and where the enemy might be.

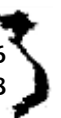
Lt. Jerry Shoemaker was an FO with 2/503 and died with Lt. Richie Busenlehner when his battalion was surrounded by a huge mass of NVA soldiers on November 20, 1967. Both FOs were part of the 3/319th Field Artillery battalion. I was the battalion intelligence officer—also a lieutenant. I did not know Shoemaker as well as Busenlehner. Shoemaker graduated ahead of us in OCS (Class 15-66) and was with the 6th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg when I was with the 7th SFG at Fort Bragg—Busenlehner and I were in OCS Class 18-66. All three of us were at Dak-To during the 'battle' that lasted from June 1967 until the end of November 1967.

Here is a website that has an official After Action Report of the portion of the battle Lt. Shoemaker died in" <http://home.att.net/~lzlma/hil875a.htm>

The above are only words, they do not reflect the terror, hope, suffering and camaraderie that took place there—but rest assured; Shoemaker and Busenlehner set the standard for all forward observers to follow."

**Donald E. Zlotnik, Maj. (Ret), Special Forces**

*(continued....)*



**Jack Henry Shoop, Jr., 19**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/19/67

*"I am from Johnstown, PA. I met Jack when he came to the 173rd.**We were both from PA and quickly bonded as friends. I was with him when he was killed. A fine and outstanding young man who gave his life for his country in a senseless politicians war. And yes, it was a war, not a conflict as it is referred to today. Not a day goes by that I don't remember him."* **Bob Gerber****~ Final Mission of SP4 Jack Henry Shoop, Jr. ~**

**"On November 19, 1967, the 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day. The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The assault bogged down when a main enemy bunker system was encountered. When the enemy began firing mortar rounds on the American position, the Weapons Platoon ran for their gear and formed a perimeter. As the mortar fire increased, SP4 Jack H. Shoop Jr. and another soldier ran back onto the landing zone and attempted to initiate counter mortar fire. While in the process, Shoop was hit and killed by small arms fire."** [Taken from patriotfiles.com]

**Willie James Simmons, 19**

SGT, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"A friend for always. I'll never forget you Simmons. We were stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C. We were in the same Co., the same platoon for over 18 months. Were a part of the 82nd. Abn. Div., A. Co. 1st.-325inf. I carried him to Baltimore, my home town on a weekend pass. He and another friend from Chicago attended a stage show at the famous Royal theater. We became close friends. When we arrived in Vietnam we planned on going on R and R together. I was in the 4th Batt, A Co. Simmons was in 2nd Batt, B Co. We were together for a short time at the replacement Co. when first arriving in country. Never saw you again buddy. I went to your Battalion looking for you to go on R and R together and that's when I found out what had happened to you. I'll never forget you. Your buddie B-more. We were members of the 173rd Abn. Brdg."* **James Murrill**

**Donald Eugene Smith, 27**

1LT, D/2/503, 11/19/67

(Virtual Wall states C/2/503)

*"Not for fame or reward, not for place or for rank, but in simple obedience to duty, as they understood it."*

Confederate Memorial, Arlington Nat/ Cemetery

**~ Final Mission of 1LT Donald E. Smith ~**

**"On November 19, 1967, 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Infantry Division began their assault on Hill 875. Artillery and air support was used to soften up the entrenched enemy positions. At 1300 hours an F-100 fighter-bomber dropped two 500 lb. bombs on the forward slope being attacked by C Company. When the F-100 pulled up and banked right, Captain Kaufman stood and waved his men forward. Both companies advanced only fifteen meters when again the NVA machineguns began their deadly chatter. 1LT Donald E. Smith, 3rd Platoon Leader of Charlie Company spotted a machine gun position and led a squad forward to take it out. Moving along a depression, an unseen enemy supporting machine gunner caught the lieutenant and attacking squad in flanking enfilade fire. Bullets cut down 1LT Smith and two of his men."** [Taken from www.dtic.mil]

**Jesse E. Smith, 23**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/21/67

(Virtual Wall states C/4/503)

*"We remember. Jesse is buried at Southview Cemetery in Augusta, GA. PH."* **Robert Sage**

**John William Smith, 21**

PFC, A/4/503, 11/20/67

*"John 'Smitty' Smith. My Father was your best friend. To this day he cherishes the last letter you ever wrote to him before you died. He has shared his memories of your friendship and your heroism with all of us (his children). We have your pictures in our photo albums so I will always be able to put the face of a wonderful friend and hero in my memory and share your story with my children and they will share with their children. I never met you as you died before I was born, but I feel like I know who you are! Thank you Smitty for the huge sacrifice you made to save others' lives and thank you for being a part of my Father's life that can never be taken away!"*

**Kelley S. Johnson (Boomer)**

(continued....)





**Lewis Benjamin Smith, 20**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Think of you often. Miss you buddy. Tim Daley"***Ervin Spain, 32**

SP4, C/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"This is the granddaughter you never met again. Thank you for serving and risking your life, so I may live. I've decided that I will keep your last name Spain in remembrance of you. Tandra Spain is my name. It is a beautiful last name. Just thinking of you."***James Ronald Speller, 18**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/19/67

(Virtual Wall states A/2/503)

*"My father's best friend. I never knew Ronnie Speller but I have heard my father Allen Rodgers speak of this man my entire life. I remember being a child we took a trip to Washington DC so Dad could find Ronnie's name on the Wall and as tears rolled down my father's face I remember his saying, 'I told you I'd see you again soon.' That was the first time I saw my dad cry! Love and Respect to you sir!" Unsigned***~ Final Mission of PFC James R. Speller ~**

"On November 19, 1967, the 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day. The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The assault bogged down when a main enemy bunker system was encountered. The CO ordered his men to form a perimeter defense and sent out a squad to set up an observation post (OP) 30-40 meters back along the trail that the Companies had moved down earlier. When the OP came under attack by a column of NVA, several members of the 1st Platoon, including PFC James R. Speller, dashed forward to aid the OP's who were rapidly being pinned down by the advancing NVA. In the process, Speller was killed by the heavy NVA fire."

[Taken from patriotfiles.com]

**Harry Herbert Spencer, 19**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Hill 875. Harry, it has been 48 years since you were killed on Hill 875 while you were serving with C/2/503 173d Airborne Bde. I was in A/4/503 on the hill. We were in AIT and Jump school together and got to Vietnam the same time. You went to 2nd Bn. and I went to 4th Bn. I think of you and all the friends who died in Vietnam every day. God Bless you my friend. Rest In Peace. 173d Abn Bde Sky Soldiers." Ray Thomas***Vernon Patrick Sprinkle, 19**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/13/67

*"Didn't listen to you, Vern. We fought we competed I loved to watch him run play round ball baseball and he was so so cool...the ladies loved him...miss you big brother...everyday...thanks for warning me about Nam...sorry I didn't listen, always had to do what you did...Dave." David T. Sprinkle/Drops***Robert Milton Staton, Jr., 19**

SP4, 173d Eng., 11/11/67

*"In remembrance of a fine soldier whose name shall live forever more." Clay Marston.***~ Final Mission of SP4 Robert M. Staton, Jr. ~**

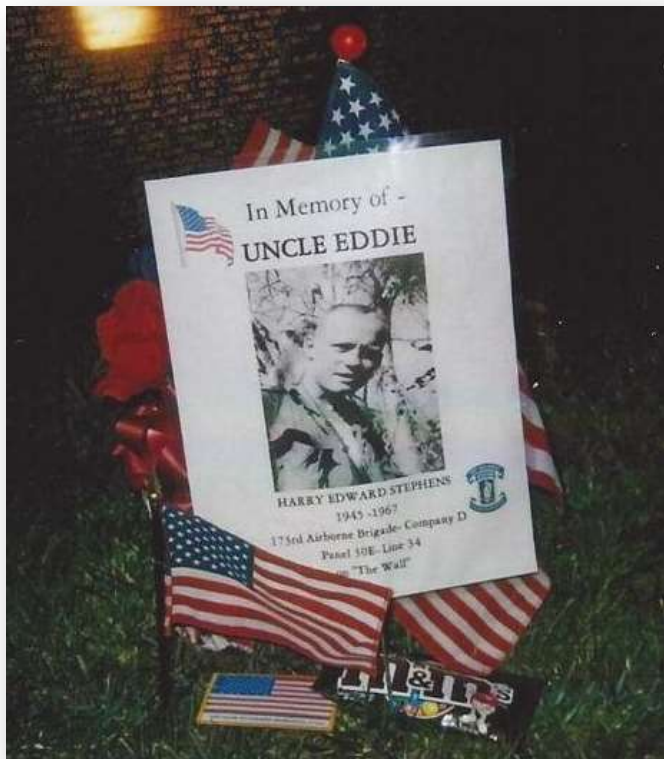
"On November 11, 1967, PFC Edwin Martinez-Mercado, PFC Gary F. Shaw, PVT John S. Stuckey Jr. and SP4 Robert M. Staton Jr. were all members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade on a search and destroy mission in Kontum Province, South Vietnam, when the unit engaged an enemy force. Following the battle, the three were judged to have been killed in action, and were left on the battlefield for later recovery. A few days later, the area was searched for casualties, but their bodies could not be found. The three members of the 173rd killed on November 11, 1967 are listed with honor among the missing because no remains were found." [Taken from pownetwork.org]

(continued....)



## Harry Edward Stephens, 22

SP4, D/2/503, 11/19/67



*"We called him 'Skinny Eddie' because he was just that - skinny as a weed. Eddie was one of the guys in my dad's Scout Troop when we lived in Virginia. We had some great times and more fun than you could believe possible. In 1967 while eating dinner we got the call about Eddie getting killed in Nam. My Dad left the table and sat on the front porch and cried, one of the few times I saw him cry. His only words were 'It's just not fair ... Eddie was so young.' No one ever talked about it again and Dad remained a strong supporter of the war. 'Only The Good Die Young' would fit so many of the Vietnam War dead and Eddie was one of them. From a boyhood friend," Charles W. Echols*

## Edrick Kenneth Stevens, 19

PFC, C/4/503, 11/6/67

*"Photo: Edrick and his son Chad."*

*"Always remembered. I remember the night you left for Vietnam and the conversation we had as we shook hands for the very last time. How could you have known? I think of you often and miss your friendship. Thank you for asking me to be your best man at your wedding. I've met your son, and Ed, you would be proud. I'm so very proud of you and your service to this country." Ed Riley*



## Frank Edward Stokes, 20

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"IN LOVING MEMORY. Gone but not forgotten. I will always love you. You are truly missed." Angelina S. Lee (Sister)*



### ~ Final Mission of PFC Frank Edward Stokes ~

**"The Battle of Dak To was a series of major engagements of the Vietnam War that took place between November 3 to 22, 1967, in Kon Tum Province, in the Central Highlands of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Dak To lies on a flat valley floor, surrounded by waves of ridgelines that rise into peaks (some as high as 4,000 feet) that stretch westward and southwestward towards the tri-border region where South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia meet. One of those peaks was Hill 875. On November 19, 1967, the 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day. The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The assault bogged down when a main enemy bunker system was encountered. The CO ordered his men to form a perimeter defense. The NVA attacked their position, approaching on a large well-traveled trail that was very well constructed, including steps cut into the side of the hill. They smashed into the west flank of the 2nd Platoon near the front, cutting them off from the rest of their Company around the landing zone. SP5 Aaron K. Hervas was leading the 2nd Platoon when the NVA opened up with a heavy volume of fire. He spun firing, hitting several NVA before he was felled with a bullet through the head. PFC Frank E. Stokes and PVT Ernesto Villarreal were killed in the same action. PFC Bruce M. Benzing and PFC Sexton were pinned down by enemy fire. SP4 Orendorf and some others moved down and were able to get Sexton out. However, PFC Benzing, after killing 5-10 NVA from behind a tree, was himself killed." [Taken from patriotfiles.com]**



*(continued....)*





**Richard Arlan Stone, 23**

SGT, D/4/503, 11/6/67

*"I remember reading about Richard's death in the Palo Alto Times. We both attended 8th grade together at Jordan Junior High school. We kept in contact with each other during high school. He had the greatest hot rod. I remember him driving it over to my house in Atherton and I was so jealous. That was the neatest car. Every once in a while I think of Dick Stone. You died too young. You were a very nice guy and friend."* **Mike Nichols**

**Robert Thomas Szymanski, 23**

SGT, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"I Love You, Brother Dear! It's been 44 years since you were killed in Dak To: November 20, 1967. Dam Hill 875. Miss You! Love Your Sister,"* **Marlene**

**Ernest Ray Taylor, Jr., "Doc", 21**

SP5, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. Ernest is buried at Arms Cemetery in Shelbourne Falls, MA. PH."* **Robert Sage**

**Leonard Alan Thomas, 20**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/12/67

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)

*"Cousin Leonard. My mom told me when I was a baby, & you were in high school; you babysat me, changed my diapers (smile). Shortly after high school you joined the Army. I don't remember you, but I know you from family stories & from searching online. I read about your actions & your actions that earned you the Silver Star. So young, so courageous. Your mom never got over losing you. Never. I now have a son the same age as you were when you died. Thank you Leonard for your bravery, your courageous action, & your sacrifice. You will Never be forgotten. I have told my son about you & your bravery. Some gave all."*

**Bridgett Barberena**

~ Silver Star ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Private First Class Leonard Alan Thomas (ASN: RA-11810443), United States Army, for gallantry in action. Private First Class Thomas distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 12 November 1967 at Dak To, Republic of Vietnam, while serving as a member of Company D (Provisional), 1st Battalion (Airborne),

503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Private Thomas assumed the duties of machine gunner when the regular gunner was seriously wounded during an enemy attack. He immediately delivered a steady volume of accurate fire into the attacking enemy force and inflicted severe losses in their ranks, fifteen by later body count. During one of the savage attacks, Private Thomas was wounded but remained at his position and contributed greatly to the enemy's defeat. As Companies C and D moved their perimeter up a steep slope to more defensible ground, the North Vietnamese regrouped and launched a brutal assault on the battle weary paratroopers. With a heavy barrage of rockets, mortars and automatic weapons fire falling around him, Private Thomas continued his drive up the hill. Again he was wounded, but he continued until he reached the top of the incline. By this time, Company C of the 4th Battalion was attempting to reinforce Companies C and D, but was receiving heavy sniper fire. Private Thomas' platoon leader led him to a point from which he could place effective fire on the trees where the snipers were concealed. Private Thomas immediately sprayed the trees, killing two of the enemy snipers and enabling the reinforcing company to reach the two embattled companies. It was shortly after this that an exploding mortar round mortally wounded Private Thomas and silenced his machine gun. Private Thomas' inspirational display of heroism and dauntless courage were in the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**Nathaniel Thompson, 19**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/20/67

**"TWO ST. LOUISANS KILLED IN VIETNAM"**

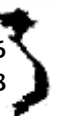
*"Army Pfc. Nathaniel Thompson and Lemuel T. Williams, specialist fourth class, both of St. Louis, have been killed in action in Vietnam, the Department of Defense reported today."*

*Thompson, 19 years old, was the son of Mrs. Willie L. Thompson....He was killed in combat near Dak To. He attended McKinley High School before enlisting about two years ago. He was sent to Vietnam last June.*

*Williams was the son of Mrs. Leonara C. Williams.... Survivors could not be reached."* **Local newspaper**



(continued....)



**Richard W. Thompson, 26**

1LT, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"Can it really be 50 years? You and me, Buck. 1962, 2 am when you dropped me off at my dorm after closing that bar (Roadhouse? Hammy's?, I've forgotten). You were taking the test for USMA in a few hours. Not sure how you did it considering that we had exceeded our libation quota; but then you were not the typical 20 year old. Then it's 1967, and VN. Thought about you for 50 years and will so continue to do so until I see you on the other side. Brothers forever, my dear friend."* **Mike Leonard, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret)**

**Ignacio Torres, Jr., 22**

SGT, C/1/503, 11/18/67

*"We remember. Ignacio is buried at Catholic Cemetery in Laredo, TX. PH."*

**Robert Sage****DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO**

**9 DEC 1967**

**Mr. and Mrs. Ignacio Torres  
Laredo, Texas**

**Dear Mr. and Mrs. Torres:**

The officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade join me in extending our deepest and most sincere sympathy in the loss of your son, Sergeant Ignacio Torres Jr., who was killed in action in the Republic of Vietnam.

As Americans you are aware of the courage and conviction with which the American soldier faces battle, and I can assure you that your son fought for his country's principles with a willingness and determination that earned him the profound respect of his fellow troopers. It is our earnest hope that your loss will not be in vain and that some day peace will be achieved in the Republic of Vietnam.

Nothing I say can possibly alleviate your great personal loss, but be assured that the Sky Soldiers here, who knew your son, share intimately in your grief.

Sincerely,  
**L. E. SCHWEITER**  
BG, USA  
Commanding

**Barry Tregear**

GNR, 4 FD Regt, 11/5/67

*"Gunner Barry Tregear 29 Sydney NSW. He died of wounds during an action in Phuoc Tuy on 5th November 1967. Buried Rookwood Military Cemetery NSW."*

**Arthur Turner, Jr., 20**

SGT, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states A/4/503)

*"When I was sent to my company in Dak To, Viet Nam in August 1967, Sgt. Arthur Turner was a squad leader in the 2nd platoon of A Co. 4th Bn. 503rd Inf. 173rd Abn. Bde. [Sep]. I was assigned to the 2nd platoon and remember Sgt. Turner as been easy going and made friends with him. We were in the battle of Ngok Kom Leat in Dak To on Nov. 6, 1967. We were both on Hill 875 in Dak To where Sgt. Arthur Turner was killed by a mortar round in the early morning of Nov. 20, 1967. He was one of the finest Sgts. that I served under."*

**Melvin Ray****Lester Tyler, 23**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. Lester is buried at Calvary AME CH Cemetery in Orangeburg Co, SC. PH."* **Robert Sage**

**Ernesto Villarreal, 19**

PVT, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Hi bud, YOU sure left us early. I wish I could have said goodbye to you but you know where I was. I still miss the good times we had in the back yard at your house...you stay in my thoughts daily also in my prayers. Thanks for being my friend and buddy ...this is Ron."* **Ron Poniatowski**

**~ Final Mission of PVT Ernesto Villarreal ~**

*"On November 19, 1967, the 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day. The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The assault bogged down when a main enemy bunker system was encountered. The CO ordered his men to form a perimeter defense...."*

*(continued....)*



....The NVA attacked their position, approaching on a large well-traveled trail that was very well constructed, including steps cut into the side of the hill. They smashed into the west flank of the 2nd Platoon near the front, cutting them off from the rest of their Company around the landing zone. SP5 Aaron K. Hervas was leading the 2nd Platoon when the NVA opened up with a heavy volume of fire. He spun firing, hitting several NVA before he was felled with a bullet through the head. PFC Frank E. Stokes and PVT Ernesto Villarreal were killed in the same action. PFC Bruce M. Benzing and PFC Sexton were pinned down by enemy fire. SP4 Orendorf and some others moved down and were able to get Sexton out. However, PFC Benzing, after killing 5-10 NVA from behind a tree, was himself killed." [Taken from patriotfiles.com]

**Thomas Joe Wade, 24**

PFC, B/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states B/4/503)

"Tom Wade and I were drafted in February 1967. I met Tom at Ft. Polk, LA, in basic training. We were sent to Ft. Gordan, GA for airborne infantry A.I.T. We went to Ft. Benning, GA, for Jump School. We were both sent to Viet Nam in August 1967. Tom was assigned to B Co, 4th Bn, 503rd Inf and I was assigned to A Co, 4th Bn, 503rd Inf. We were both on Hill 875 in Dak To in November 1967. Tom was killed by a mortar round in the early morning of November 20, 1967, while trying to take Hill 875. My son, Melvin Wade Thomas, who is a Texas State Trooper, is named after Thomas Joe Wade." **Melvin Ray "Sweeney" Thomas**



**Richard Walker, Jr., 19**

PFC, D/2/503, 11/19/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

"Memories fade, pain subsides, but the bond of brothers is eternal. Your Brother." **David M. Dingle**



**Rudolph Nathinal Ward, "Doc", 22**

PFC, HHC/2/503, 11/19/67

"All I can remember is that he was a great Uncle to me and my Brothers and Sisters. He always was happy and full of life. The last time we saw him is when he came to visit during my sister's Pajama party and it was a good time for her and all of the girls there. It's a good memory I will always have of him. I also remember it was one of the longest funeral processions I had ever seen. I didn't attend the funeral because I was afraid. I guess I didn't really understand but I didn't like all of the sadness. I will always remember him as a great Uncle." **Linwood Ward (Nephew)**

**Leonard Bernard Washington, Jr., 20**

PFC, A/2/503, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states A/1/503)

"We remember. Leonard is buried at Burr Oak Cemetery, Alsip, Cook County, IL." **Robert Sage**

**Wilmer Watson, 24**

PFC, C/2/503, 11/30/67

"We remember. Wilmer is buried at St Emanuel Cemetery in Camden, AL. PH." **Robert Sage**



**Charles Joseph Watters, 40**

MAJ, A/Adm Spt, 11/19/67

Medal of Honor recipient

"This comment is 38 years late.

You died at the same time - in the same place as my brother. One of you would have been helping the other. My brother, Michael LeRoy Ellis, was killed in action on Hill 875, 19 November 1967. He turned 21 August 20, 1967. He was coming home December 1967. He did come home in December but not the way we expected. You and he died for our freedom and I thank you for that. It was documented that Mike was enjoying relative safety from the enemy but he repeatedly left that safety to try to retrieve his fallen comrades. One of these excursions was his last on this earth. I can only hope that those he saved honored his and your courage by continuing to love and protect this great country that you protected, fought for and ultimately died to preserve. Thank you, Charles Joseph Watters, and thank your family. From a fellow American," **Sheri Ellis Anderson**



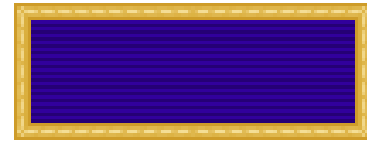
**~ Medal of Honor ~**

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Major (Chaplain) Charles Joseph Watters (ASN: 0-3139624), United States Army (Reserve), for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company A, 173d Support Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade, in action against enemy aggressor forces in an assault on Hill 875, Dak To, Kontum Province, Republic of Vietnam, on 19 November 1967. Chaplain Watters was moving with one of the companies when it engaged a heavily armed enemy battalion....

(continued....)



....As the battle raged and the casualties mounted, Chaplain Watters, with complete disregard for his safety, rushed forward to the line of contact. Unarmed and completely exposed, he moved among, as well as in front of the advancing troops, giving aid to the wounded, assisting in their evacuation, giving words of encouragement, and administering the last rites to the dying. When a wounded paratrooper was standing in shock in front of the assaulting forces, Chaplain Watters ran forward, picked the man up on his shoulders and carried him to safety. As the troopers battled to the first enemy entrenchment, Chaplain Watters ran through the intense enemy fire to the front of the entrenchment to aid a fallen comrade. A short time later, the paratroopers pulled back in preparation for a second assault. Chaplain Watters exposed himself to both friendly and enemy fire between the two forces in order to recover two wounded soldiers. Later, when the battalion was forced to pull back into a perimeter, Chaplain Watters noticed that several wounded soldiers were lying outside the newly formed perimeter. Without hesitation and ignoring attempts to restrain him, Chaplain Watters left the perimeter three times in the face of small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire to carry and to assist the injured troopers to safety. Satisfied that all of the wounded were inside the perimeter, he began aiding the medics--applying field bandages to open wounds, obtaining and serving food and water, giving spiritual and mental strength and comfort. During his ministering, he moved out to the perimeter from position to position redistributing food and water, and tending to the needs of his men. Chaplain Watters was giving aid to the wounded when he himself was mortally wounded. Chaplain Watters' unyielding perseverance and selfless devotion to his comrades was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army.



**Earl Kennon Webb, "Doc", 27**

SP4, B/4/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

*"You are still here today. Even though I never met you I love you. I feel as if I know you. You are still seen today in your brothers, your nephews & great-nephews. The artist in you still lives. The love in your heart still lives. We play as you played, even though I never met you, I miss you."* **Cherise Lockett**



#### ~ Silver Star ~

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Specialist Fourth Class Earl Kennon Webb (ASN: RA-18539104), United States Army, for gallantry in action. Specialist Fourth Class Webb distinguished himself by heroism in close and heavy combat with an armed hostile force on 20 November 1967 during the battle on Hill 875, Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company D, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Specialist Webb was attached to the company as a Platoon Aidman when it came under heavy mortar, rocket and automatic weapons fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, he moved about the battlefield giving aid and comfort to his wounded comrades. Specialist Webb kept many of the severely wounded from dying by sitting by their side and administering aid until they could be extracted. He was fatally wounded during an enemy mortar attack after having refused to leave the side of his seriously wounded comrades. Specialist Webb's professional skills and untiring efforts saved numerous lives and assisted greatly in the accomplishment of the mission. Specialist Webb's unselfish and valorous actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Medical Corps and the United States Army.

(continued....)





**Merrel P. Whittington, "Doc" 31**

SP4, B/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

*"We remember. Merrel is buried at Mission City Memorial Park, Santa Clara, Santa Clara County, CA."* **Robert Sage**



*honor to the memory of my brother I want to offer my condolences to his family and loved ones. Please know that their bravery and heroism will be held in my heart for all time and I will pass this down through the generations so that we never forget."*

**Margaret Sprinkle****Lemuel Taylor Williams, 20**

SP4, D/2/503, 11/20/67

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

*"We remember. Lemuel is buried at Jefferson Barracks Nat Cem."*

**Robert Sage**

[See newspaper report under tribute to Pfc. Nathaniel Thompson]

**Remer Garth Williams, 31**

SSGT, C/2/503, 11/19/67

*"We remember. Remer is buried at Bethany Baptist Cemetery in Kenly, NC. PH."* **Robert Sage**

**Harry Conrad Wilson, II, 20**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/18/67

(Virtual Wall states 173d Eng)

*"My Brother. FOR BUDDY. Whoever sees this, let it be known. I was the last person to be with Buddy (Harry C) the moment he died. I promise YOU I looked after his body until HE was properly taken home to Mrs. Edna & Mr. RC. He was my best friend, we shared that year (1967) together. Hello Nancy 'HE LOVED YOU'. I talked to his MOM in 1986. I was spared for whatever reason, and for whatever reason he wasn't. (BUDDY LIVES FOREVER)." **Brent Johnson***

**John Roby Wolf, 22**

PFC, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67

*"Thanks John. My name is John Berry. I was 10 ft away from John when he died. It is my honor to have called him my friend. I grew up in Kansas but planned to live in Washington after the army. John would tell me about Wash. He was the one I went to see when I went to the wall a few years back. He is the one that I can remember and represents all of my fallen herd brothers, to me on a personal level. To those who go to Jimi Hendrix grave to see a man who gave us a lot, turn around and walk 50 ft, and say thanks to a man who gave us his all."* **John Berry**



(continued....)

**Doc, during training with his buddies.****Charles Edwards Willbanks, 20**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/22/67

*"After graduation Eddie received a draft notice and 'to make the best of it', and in a spirit of adventure joined the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The 'regular' Army would never have done for Eddie.*

*As proud as I would have been to have served my country in the Army, Eddie wanted something special. The 173rd Airborne is an elite group of men who pride themselves on their ability to jump out of airplanes and 'live on nothing'. 'Sky Soldiers', as they are called, wear sky blue scarves and tuck their pants in their boots to let the world know they are 173rd. They jump at 150 mph, 'just above treetops' and hit the ground fighting like cats. Nobody ever fit this mold better than Eddie Willbanks..." **David Morgan***

**Larry Keith Williams, 20**

PFC, C/1/503, 11/13/67

*"Honor to fallen hero. My brother, Vernon Sprinkle, PFC, was killed serving alongside this brave young man. As an*



**John Wesley Wooten, 24**

SSG, C/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. John is buried at Greenwood Mem Park, Beckley, WV. BSM PH."* Robert Sage

**James R. Worrell, Jr. 20**

PFC, B/4/503, 11/23/67

*"A Brother In Arms, A Brother In Spirit. In the war we were always side by side, as we were the day you left us for a place where there is no war. I too should have gone that day but I remain here to remember. You my brother will never be forgotten by this war brother, true brother in spirit. Rest easy my brother, I will see you again, this time in peace."*

**Jerry "Rocky" Stone****Willie Alfred Wright, 29**

CPL, C/4/503, 11/6/67

*"We remember. Willie is buried at City Cemetery in Freeport, IL. ARCOM PH."* Robert Sage

**Ronald Wayne Young, 26**

SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

*"We remember. Ronald is buried at Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery, Sand Springs, Tulsa County, OK. PH."*

**Robert Sage**

**Note:** Many of our men were recipients of valor awards for their bravery during combat. Many, if not all, of the Bronze Star awards shown here were likely for valor although available records do not reflect that. Also, many of the fallen troopers listed here are likely to have received awards for bravery during combat actions although available records do not reflect that as well. Ed

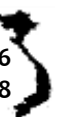


***"What a cruel thing is war: to separate and destroy families and friends, and mar the purest joys and happiness God has granted us in this world; to fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors, and to devastate the fair face of this beautiful world."***

~ Robert E. Lee, in letter to his wife, 1864



Our good buddy and friend, Jerry "Rocky" Stone, B/4/503, atop Hill 875 after the battle. Sadly, and as he promised, on December 8, 2014, Rocky would join his dear friend Jim, in eternal peace.





# 'I'd Preached Hell But Never Saw It Before'

**HILL 875, Vietnam (/P)** The chaplain stood on Hill 875 Thursday and said: *"You ask me what there is to be thankful for on this day. I am thankful that these men here are alive and that we have accomplished our mission."*

The chaplain is Maj. Roy Peters of Sacramento, Calif. A Roman Catholic, he is the chaplain for the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He came to Hill 875, southwest of Dak To, after the chaplain of the brigade's 2nd Battalion, Charles J. Watters, had been killed in action on the hill.



**Father Roy Peters, Pastor of Saint Patrick Parish, Weaverville, 1958-1961**

Photo courtesy of June Peters, sister of Fr Roy

Chaplain Peters was at the front when the paratroopers made four attacks on the hill. He was there when they took it Thanksgiving Day.

*"I have always preached a lot about hell," he said, "but I had never seen it until these last three days."*

The men made clear how they felt about Chaplain Peters.

Spec. 5 Lynn Morse, a medic, from Middletown, N.Y., told him: *"You're lucky to be alive after what you have done."*

Then turning to a newsman, Morse said: *"You can't say enough about that man. He is an inspiration to all of us, Catholic, Protestant or whatever."*

The chaplain, a tall, slender, graying man, said, *"Part of the hell here has been getting out the wounded and dead, trying to do what you can for them."*

He sang Mass on the slope of Hill 875 immediately before the final attack. Three soldiers were taking Communion when North Vietnamese mortars opened up. The three men hit the ground on their bellies, but the chaplain moved forward and gave them Communion anyway.



**G.I. RECEIVES HOLY COMMUNION  
... Never slackening grip on weapon**

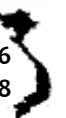
Chaplain Peters said he had given the last rites to more men than he could remember.

This was part of Thanksgiving Day on Hill 875. But Chaplain Peters looked back to the man whose post he had taken there. During the day, the paratroopers found equipment that had belonged to Fathers Watters. One of them found his chalice and brought it to Chaplain Peters.

*"If you want to talk about men," the chaplain said, "there was a real hero."*

Source:

*Orlando Sentinel*, Friday, Nov. 24, 1967



# Sky Soldier Extraordinaire

## *Monsignor Roy Victor Peters*

Native son of Sacramento, Priest of the Diocese of Sacramento

Chaplain and Colonel in the United States Army

Pastor Emeritus of Saint Joseph Parish, Sacramento

August 30, 1924 -- July 2, 2006



### **FATHER PETERS BECOMES A U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN**

After fourteen years as a priest in the diocese, Father Peters left Sacramento on January 8, 1962, to become a chaplain in the United States Army for a three-year stint. That three-year stint as an Army chaplain became an exciting life-long career for him.

In a rare holiday leave in December 1981, to visit his mother Ellen and sisters Marge and June, Father Peters was interviewed by Valerie Christiansen, associate editor of the *Catholic Herald*. Valerie began her article by saying, "Father Peters was an expansive, outgoing person with an easy manner and ready smile." He quickly opened up to share his experiences as a priest in an unusual apostolate. The following section comes, in part, from that interview.

### **THE LIFE OF ANY ARMY CHAPLAIN**

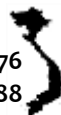
During his 19 years in the Army in 1981, Father Peters served draftees and conscientious objectors, qualified as a paratrooper, did two tours of combat duty in Vietnam, was decorated several times, spent 6 months with the Green Berets (Special Forces), served as pastor of the Pentagon, arranged funerals at Arlington National Cemetery, ministered in a Veterans' Administration hospital, served as commandant of the Army's chaplain school and held the rank of colonel since 1974.

Father Peters was also one of two official Army representatives -- together with two representatives each from the Navy, Air Force, and Veterans' Administration -- to the Military Ordinariate, the non-territorial diocese which embraces Catholics in all branches of the armed services, and chairman of the military priests' senate, the Advisory Council to Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York who was bishop of the Military Ordinariate of the United States.

### **IN THE MILITARY, THERE IS NO WAY TO GET IN A RUT**

Father Peters describes his life as a military chaplain as "a very interesting experience," offering great variety and great opportunity "to be what I want to be." Chaplain personnel are reassigned every three years and hold during their careers a number of different kinds of jobs in the field, in hospitals, and at various bases and installations in the U.S. and around the world. "There's no way you can get in a rut," he says, flashing a warm grin. No 'ruts' -- just all the responsibility and challenge that a man can handle, right from the start.

*(continued....)*





In 1964, at the age of 39, he was sent through paratrooper training at Fort Benning, Georgia and then assigned as chaplain to the 101st Airborne Division, the famous "Screaming Eagles" of D-Day, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. His work at Fort Campbell entailed providing Catholic coverage for three to four thousand Catholic military personnel and their families, plus organizing Protestant and Jewish services by bringing in chaplains of those faiths assigned to other units – *"pluralism in action,"* he calls it. *"Ecumenism, as sanctioned by Vatican II, is not anything new for us."*

It took him seven weeks, slightly over the usual four, to become qualified *"to jump out of airplanes"* as a paratrooper together with young soldiers half his age. *"Finally I made it,"* he said, again with a smile. Father Peters made 120 parachute jumps during his decorated career, but he broke his neck in his final jump while training in Kentucky.

### OKINAWA AND THAILAND

From 1965 to 1967, Father Peters was stationed in Okinawa and Thailand, spending six months as chaplain to the Special Forces (Green Beret) unit there. As the only chaplain at this location, his duties included getting missionary Protestant clergy to provide services for the Protestants under his jurisdiction and even Buddhist priests for the indigenous people. Arrangements relating to marriages and family problems were also part of his responsibility.

There followed a year (1967-68) with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a combat unit in Vietnam's Central Highlands, celebrating Masses, anointing the wounded, sick, and dying, hearing confessions, writing letters to parents, and helping men cope with "Dear John" letters from fickle sweethearts. That was the year of the Tet Offensive. *"I thought the war had come to its end,"* Father Peters reflects. *"We really mopped up."*

He returned to Fort Ord in 1968 and spent the next year in charge of young Catholics being drafted to go to Vietnam.

### SECOND TOUR IN VIETNAM

For his second tour in the combat zone (1969-70), Father Peters was divisional chaplain to the 22,000 men of the 25th Division, with 21 other chaplains – two Catholics and 19 Protestants – under him and access to a Jewish rabbi in Saigon. With these assistants, he was pastor over a 40-mile-long corridor along the Cambodian border.

### A HIGHLY DECORATED ARMY CHAPLAIN

*"It was my job to make sure all the units were covered, to provide transportation for all the chaplains, and to care for the Catholic troops in one-third of this*

*area,"* he related. During these combat tours, Father Peters became the recipient of many military decorations for valorous duty, including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with five Oak Leaf Clusters and 3V awards, the Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, an Air Medal with First Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart, the Vietnamese Medal of Gallantry with Palm, the Presidential Unit Citation, and the Distinguished Unit Citation.



**Fr Peters in Pleiku**

Photo courtesy of June Peters

### DEATH COMES TO MONSIGNOR PETERS

Monsignor Roy became ill and was confined at Queen's Hospital, Sparks Matsunga Center for the Aging, at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu. On Sunday, July 2, 2006, shortly before 4 pm, Monsignor Peters slowly and silently slipped away and returned to God. His two sisters from Sacramento, Marge and June, were by Roy's side when he breathed his last breath.

***"Thank you, Monsignor Roy, for all you have given to those who came to you for help. You turned no one away but always encouraged people with a word of wisdom and a smile on your face to move forward with hope and trust in God.***

***May you now abide in the joy and peace of God's loving presence.***

***ROY, REST NOW IN PEACE!"***

The entire tribute to Fr Peters can read at:

[https://www.scd.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/Vol\\_5\\_No\\_12\\_Peters\\_Msgs\\_Roy\\_Vpdf.pdf](https://www.scd.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/Vol_5_No_12_Peters_Msgs_Roy_Vpdf.pdf)



# Sky Soldiers Helping Sky Soldiers

## 173d Airborne Brigade Association *call for donations for the* 173d Airborne Brigade Association Foundation *Hurricane Harvey Sky Soldier Support Fund*

This is a call for all Sky Soldiers, their families and fellow citizens for support.

The fund has been established to assist Sky Soldiers, their families and Sky Soldier Gold Star families who have experienced losses from Hurricane Harvey and need assistance.

*If you are one of the Hurricane Harvey victims, our hearts and prayers go out to you,*

*This drive is to generate funds to extend direct support to those of you in need.*

Application for support forms available as a PDF file you may download at:

<https://theherdfoundation.com/Applications-for-Hurricane-Harvey-Sky-Soldier-Support-Fund>

Your donation is tax deductible, The 173d Airborne Brigade Association Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. Information on donations to the Hurricane Harvey Sky Soldier Support Fund and its distributions will be provided through weekly reports posted on the 173d Airborne Brigade Association and the 173d Airborne Brigade Association Foundation website at:

<https://theherdfoundation.com/Donations-Received-&-Distributed-Report>

Guidelines/procedures to manage the Hurricane Harvey Sky Soldier Support Fund will be posted on the same website:

<https://theherdfoundation.com/Guidelines-for-Hurricane-Harvey-Sky-Soldier-Support-Fund>

**Donations can be made by credit card or mailing a check**

*Questions? - Please write to  
[vicepresident@theherdfoundation.com](mailto:vicepresident@theherdfoundation.com)*

**To donate by credit card, please go to:**

<https://theherdfoundation.com/Hurricane-Harvey-Sky-Soldier-Support-Fund>

**To donate by check:**

Please make your check payable to the "**173d Abn Bde Association Foundation**", in the memo area write HHSkySoldierSF or "Hurricane Harvey Sky Soldier Support Fund"

**and mail it to this address**

**HH Sky Soldier SF  
C/O Jerry L Cooper CPA  
4004 Sheffield Avenue  
Muskogee, OK 74403-8557**



Coast Guard Air Station Houston responds to search and rescue requests after Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas, Aug. 27, 2017. The Coast Guard is working closely with all local and state emergency operation centers and has established incident command posts to manage Coast Guard storm operations.

(Petty Officer 3rd Class Johanna Strickland/US Coast Guard)



**We hope some of the donations go  
to Sky Soldier families in**

**Puerto Rico. Ed**



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Nov.-Dec. 2017 – Issue 76

Page 48 of 88



# 101st Coming to the Aid of Fellow Americans....



## Look of Relief

Soldiers hand boxes of food and bottled water to residents of Jayuga, Puerto Rico, Oct. 5, 2017. The soldiers are assigned to the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division which is conducting medical evacuation and relief efforts following Hurricane Maria.

(Army photo by Staff Sgt. Pablo N. Piedra)



## Commander In Chief Coming to the Aid of Fellow Americans.

*"They had these beautiful, soft towels, very good towels. And I came in and there was a crowd of a lot of people, and they were screaming and they were loving everything," Trump said.*

*"I was having fun, they were having fun. They said, 'throw 'em to me! Throw 'em to me Mr. President!'" Trump said, before pantomiming shooting a basketball in the same way he tossed the paper towels.*

Leader of the Free World



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Nov.-Dec. 2017 – Issue 76  
Page 49 of 88



# A HILL WON

Hill 875, Vietnam (/P) The enemy's final resistance along the fortified ridge line Thursday was light. Only a squad remained of the North Vietnamese companies that had held Hill 875 through nearly five days of bitter battle.

**COMMUNIST MORTARS** on a parallel ridge opened fire on paratroopers of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade as they moved up with a yelp and a holler in the final attack.

But the paratroopers quickly overran the ridge line, the last enemy holding on the hill that proved to be the most costly objective in the war.

## ***Seasaw Battle Kills 102 GIs***

Officers said 102 Americans had been killed and 172 wounded in the seesaw struggle that started last Sunday for control of the strategic height 14 miles southwest of Dak To and about four miles from the ill-defined frontier of Cambodia.

Enemy dead left on the field were estimated at 120.

**IT WAS 300 YARDS** to the top through a spaghetti of jungle growth pitched together by air strikes. Wednesday the paratroopers were mortared as they removed their dead from earlier fighting and shelling. Planes bombed the crest above them all day.

At 11 a.m. Thanksgiving Day Bravo and Charlie Companies of the 4th Battalion were strung out along a narrow trail leading into the collapsed jungle. They were ready to jump off.

*"Take care of yourself, Dick,"* one paratrooper said to another.

## ***Bravo In Lead, Men Jog Forward***

*"See you at the top,"* a third said.

Bravo went first. The first squad sprinted forward into the tangle and started maneuvering. Behind them a mortar team carrying their tubes and ammunition, moved out on a dead run cut right like halfbacks to set up their weapons and cover the company.

**THE PARATROOPERS** sounded like rooters at a prize fight. Carrying heavy packs, they stumbled at times and fell over the fallen trees. Then they rose and jogged forward.

Flame-thrower men and machine gunners came next.

*"Keep an eye on the bunkers,"* somebody yelled.



Paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade fighting and re-fighting their way to the summit of Hill 875. (web photo)

**THE LEAD MEN** threw grenades.

The Communists had webbed the crest with sturdy bunkers and chest-high trenches that virtually withstood the nearly continuous air strikes.

The action moved on.

*"SGT. BROWN, I want your people spread out,"* an officer yelled.

*"Medic!"*

(continued....)





### **Unidentified Shell**

#### **Falls On 3 Men**

*"Where in hell is the machine gun?"*

The North Vietnamese mortar shells fell among the paratroopers and walking wounded trickled back downhill.

**ONE SAID:** *"I'm no good. 'I've been hit."*

*"Quiet down, you're okay,"* one of his buddies said.

Three paratroopers were 40 yards from the top. One carried a flame thrower.

**EITHER A SHORT** U.S. artillery shell or a Communist mortar round fell among the three men. No one was sure. The flame-thrower man exploded in a spiral of reddish orange flame. All three were killed.

Seconds later another private moved forward, heard an explosion and said: *"Is that incoming?"*

The rifleman next to him answered, *"I don't care about the past, I'm worried about now."*

#### **High Noon Brings Securing Of Hill**

The paratroopers moved over the top. As they consolidated their defenses they were mortared once more, heavily.

The hill was secured at noon.

**SIX AMERICANS** were dead, and eight more were wounded in the attack. It had seemed anti-climactic.

Of the few North Vietnamese who had stayed to the last, most evidently escaped down the hill. Only one fresh enemy body was found. Estimates of the original detachment had ranged from 200 to 500 men.

*"All I had in mind was to get on top of this damn thing and take care of it,"* said Spec. 4 David Norfleet, Salisbury, Md. *"We had to get it before it got the rest of us."*

SGT. WILLIE Freeman of Lyons, Ga., said: *"We had it in our minds to take this thing. I guess we accomplished our mission."*

It was the end of an ordeal.

#### **'I Hate To See Kids Like That'**

Two days before, dead and wounded clogged the trail waiting for helicopters. A major said: *"We were mortared one time, and the wounded didn't even move. They didn't run for cover. I hate to see these kids like that."*

Before the attack Thursday, a company commander who was to trail Bravo and Charlie told his platoon leaders:

**"THAT'S THE PLAN.** *Now you all go see your friends and wish them good luck and pray that we get out of this thing alive."*

The 2nd Battalion, said by one of its officers to be the hardest-hit unit of its size in Vietnam, was removed by helicopters at sunset. Three of the battalion's four companies had been on the hill. Of about 350 men five days before, only 97 had come through unhit.

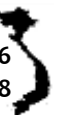
#### **'Thankful These Men Are Alive'**

The brigade's Roman Catholic Chaplain, Maj. Roy Peters of Sacramento, Calif., said: *"You ask me what there is to be thankful for on this day. I am thankful that these men here are alive and that we have accomplished our mission."*



Paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade capture Hill 875 only to abandon it within days, allowing the North Vietnamese to reclaim the terrain they had lost and for which the Sky Soldiers had paid a dear price.

(web photos purported to be from Hill 875 added)



# Deputy Secretary Shanahan Hosts Vietnam War Commemoration

By Jim Garamone

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

10/17/2017



Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan says new generations of Americans need to know of the grit and courage of America's Vietnam veterans. Shanahan spoke at the Pentagon's Vietnam War Commemoration.

(DoD photo by Jim Garamone)

## Deputy Secretary Shanahan Hosts Vietnam War Commemoration

WASHINGTON, Oct. 17, 2017 — Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan welcomed the directors of The Vietnam War documentary to the Pentagon today and spoke directly to Vietnam vets as the Defense Department continued its commemoration of the Vietnam War.

Shanahan thanked directors Ken Burns and Lynn Novick for capturing the stories and histories and sparking a national conversation on the war. The Burns and Novick documentary and the DoD commemoration share the emphasis on the human cost of Vietnam, Shanahan said. *"As the years go by, we risk losing touch with the most important aspect of that time or any time: The people -- the Americans who put on a uniform,*

*answered the call and sacrificed for our country,"* he said.

The commemoration event featured about 20 minutes of the Vietnam documentary -- showing a battle of the **173rd Airborne Brigade** in South Vietnam, bombing raids in North Vietnam and peace protestors marching on the Pentagon. The documentary tried to include all viewpoints and voices from all sides.

*"One of the great strengths of our country is not just our ability to compromise, but our ability to look at ourselves and be critical of what we are doing,"* Burns said in a short question-and-answer period following the film. All of us are the beneficiaries of that generation of Vietnam soldiers who came out of that. We learned one lesson from the war: We are not going to blame the warriors again, and that is a really good lesson."

### Developing the Next Generation

Shanahan noted that the Vietnam generation raised today's generation of military leaders. In that way, their protection of our country extends beyond their own years in uniform to the present day, the deputy secretary said. *"We're here to say thank you to these good and faithful servants and to their families."*

Shanahan said those who served in Vietnam were men and women of quiet courage and patriotism, men of grit and determination who rendered superior service in uniform and later as civilians in their communities."

The deputy secretary is the son of Vietnam veteran Mike Shanahan, who served in the U.S. Army. *"He returned home and continued his selfless service to his fellow Americans with another 25 years in law enforcement,"* Shanahan said. *"Growing up, my understanding of the war came from my Dad, his friends and the few stories they would share."*

New generations need to know of the courage the Vietnam generation showed in Southeast Asia, Shanahan said. New generations need to understand the trials endured and sacrifices Vietnam vets made. Shanahan spoke for the department and all its service members telling the Vietnam vets in the standing-room-only audience that today's military looks up to them.

*"We in the Department of Defense are proud of you,"* he said. *"On behalf of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and everyone on the Pentagon: Thank you."*

(Follow Jim Garamone on Twitter: [@GaramoneDODNews](https://twitter.com/GaramoneDODNews))





# Everything Happens to Company B

By TOM TIEDE  
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.

CHINH TAMS, Viet Nam – (NEA) – By midafternoon the temperature had boiled to more than 100 degrees and a man could not touch the barrel of his rifle without wincing.

Faces were pink and stinging. Eyes squinted into slits under the pyrotechnic sun. Insects landing on bare arms would be washed away in sweat.

But nobody complained, out loud anyway. This was routine by now. Another mission. Another patrol. Another aching journey in the jungle.

How many had there been for Bravo Company now? Three dozen, four dozen? At least that many times under fire.

Who counts any more?



2/503 Bravo Bulls on patrol, circa '65/'66.

**One hundred and fifty or sixty Purple Hearts in six months' combat. Scores dead, dozens wounded. Lt. Zen (Zinn), Pfc. Olive, Hary the Hooker, Sgt. Howard...**

Who counts any more?

"Damn!" somebody grimaced.

"What is it?"

"Ants."

"Red ants?"

**"Yeah, a slug of 'em in the tree. I walked right into it."**

"Tough"

"Need any help?"

"Forget it."

It used to be a man would howl with the ants on him. No more. They bite but so what? At least they take the mind off the headache or the thirst or the relentless, inflammatory heat.

Ants and spiders with three-inch legs and ground crabs. Trees with two-inch nail-sharp spines. Unseen things scurrying through the black jungle floor. Much grime and heat.

All, by now, only routine for B Company, Second Bn., the 503rd.

"Whenever there's a dirty job to do," a guy mumbles.

"What'd you say, Mac?"

"Never mind."

**Three hours on the move already today. Tripping, slashing through the maze. How many hours altogether after seven months of combat? How many pounds of flesh melted? How many bullets fired and hand grenades thrown? How many times feeling sick and not sleeping?**

"Look out!" somebody yelled.

A clump of bushes trembled and a squealing grunt split the silence.

"V.C.," a man said and hit the ground.

Rifles swung around, men moved to cover and hearts stopped.

"For cripes sakes," sighed a sergeant.

"What is it?"

"A deer?"

"It nearly knocked me over."

"Well, I'll be damned."

The patrol smiled, then chuckled and then laughed aloud. It would be a good story to tell back at camp. A stinking deer. Ha!

They'd joke about how the Sarge refrained from shooting it and would probably receive a merit badge from the Boy Scouts.

Nobody, of course, would admit being frightened himself.

Source: *Casper-Star-Tribune*, January 7, 1966

[Sent in by Mike Carver, B/2/503]

(Photo from Jim Robinson, B/2/503, added)



# INCOMING!



## ~ A Hippie with a Warrior's Heart ~

Raised on the beaches of Santa Barbara, the son of a paratrooper who served with the 82nd Airborne Division during World War II, **Harvey Knapp** was a young man who yearned to be a paratrooper. If he could have worn a swim suit and sandals in Vietnam he would have.

A man gifted with an uncommon sense of his surroundings, his wry chuckle and ease of movement masked an intensity derived from personal courage. And yet, he never shed his surf board, or his disdain for anyone who might order him about. Humor was the foundation for the core of Sergeant Harvey Knapp.



Harvey's 1947 Chevy pick-up sat in front of the small chapel, his surf board strapped to the top. Harvey left these reminders to the son of a high school friend. Some fifty worshipers filled the small nave. A flag-draped coffin, a wreath featuring the 173d Airborne insignia, a wreath from the AmVets Post #3, a shadow box featuring Harvey's military service, and flowers from family and friends set the stage for our farewell. Representing Harvey's comrades, Micheal Cosmo, Bud Mattingly, Art Marquess, Steve Carey, Russell Walter, Tommy Thompson, Jim Bednarski, Harold Riggs, and Bob Mathews, all veterans of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne....Concepcion "Zulu" Zarazua, Jr., Gena Eichenberg, and I traveled to Santa Barbara to say our goodbyes to Harv, our life-long friend.

His shadow box told his story. Three bronze stars... two purple hearts... an air medal... and more importantly, a Combat Infantry Badge... Sergeant Harvey Knapp was a warrior to the end.

A picture taken but weeks before he died shows a proud man. One who refused morphine in the final stages of his passing, standing as tall as he was able, proud to be part of the 173d Airborne Brigade. "Get Fat if You Can," Harvey.

A well-decorated E-8, a combat medic from more recent times, stood erect as taps was played. Alone, as most had drifted away, Zulu, Gena and I gathered at the casket, raised our shot of Jack Daniels, tapped Harvey's casket and said goodbye.

**Gary Prisk, CO C/D/2/503 RVN**

## ~ The Hammer & The Ranger ~

I could sit in a room with a couple men like Hammer Jackson (C/2/503) all day long listening and learning from their military experiences. Roy



Lombardo (CO B/2/503) **The Hammer** **Ranger Roy** comes to mind as well.

That man, Roy, has a memory like an elephant and I'm amazed how he recalls the smallest details of events that took place over 50 years ago.

**Ed Kearney**  
**B/2/503**

## ~ Faces on the Wall ~

Work continues on the Faces on the Wall project and we are down to needing only 186 pictures for our Brigade fallen and 67 for 2nd Battalion (see Issue 74 of our newsletter for complete list. Ed)

Better news, we are missing pictures for only three fallen from the Battle of the Slopes (listed below).

Would appreciate it if you could make a pitch for these three in our next Newsletter. Bite-size projects seem to gain more traction than larger lists.

### **Stephen Allen Kelly, A/2/503**

Atlanta, GA  
Jun 27, 1947 - Jun 22, 1967

### **Charlie Lewis Walker, A/2/503**

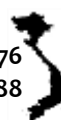
Munford, AL  
Jan 30, 1947 - Jun 22, 1967

### **James Walter Sanford, A/2/503**

Orangeburg, SC  
Apr 23, 1947 - Jun 22, 1967

**Ken Smith, Col (Ret)**  
[kvsmit173@gmail.com](mailto:kvsmit173@gmail.com)

**Note: Please email photos to Ken.**





## GIs, Encircled By Reds, Suffer Heavy Losses

SAIGON (AP) – North Vietnamese regulars surrounded a U.S. paratrooper battalion on a hill near the Cambodian border in South Vietnam's central highlands today and with heavy ground assaults and mortar attacks apparently inflicted heavy casualties. An American relief force reached the scene at dusk.

The battalion of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade was cut off for 24 hours before the reinforcements arrived to break the Communist attack and bring out dead and wounded. Heavy enemy ground fire kept rescue helicopters away.

Associated Press correspondent John Lengel reported from Dak To, about 15 miles from the fighting, the heavy Communist fire set off a huge explosion inside the U.S. perimeter, possibly causing heavy casualties. It could not be determined immediately what caused the blast.

The fighting, perhaps the most vicious yet in the highlands campaign, came as U.S. planes bombed the Hanoi-Haiphong area for the fifth straight day on Sunday. The attacks included blows against the fifth and sixth targets to come off the Pentagon's restricted list in four days. They are a cement plant and a barge yard near Hanoi.

The U.S. Command announced the loss of four planes bringing the total number of losses over the North to 749 aircraft. The four planes carried six crewmen, all of whom are missing.

The belief grew among U.S. commanders that the Communists around Dak To are trying to do what they achieved earlier this year just below the demilitarized zone – draw large American forces away from thickly populated areas and pin them down in the sparsely settled mountains.

About 6,000 Americans and 4,000 South Vietnamese are at Dak To and in the jungled hills and peaks surrounding it. They oppose an enemy force estimated at 6,000-8,000 North Vietnamese.

In the fighting 14 miles northwest of Dak To, 40 paratroopers were killed Sunday.

Lengel reported no casualty figures were available at Dak To for today's fighting.

The action began Sunday when two companies of the 173rd Brigade came under heavy fire from North Vietnamese deep in bunker positions on Hill 875. A third U.S. company holding in the rear came under intense machine gun and small arms fire.



**"The Bethpage Educational Foundation is an organization that seeks to provide meaningful assistance to the educational program in the Bethpage Schools. We support programs for students, teachers, and parents. We are a non-profit with a charter recognized by New York State and the Internal Revenue Service...The Bethpage Hall of Fame is a project undertaken by the Bethpage Educational Foundation to recognize the accomplishments of alumni and staff...The Induction Ceremony is always on BHS Homecoming Weekend."**

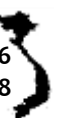


**Congratulations to our very own 173d Airborne Brigade surgeon (RVN), Colonel Timothy Cloonan (Ret), on being named to the Bethpage Educational Foundation's Hall of Fame, 2017.**



***Doc Tim, of Bethpage High School, Class of 1958.***

***All The Way, Doc!***



# U.S., Vietnamese Service Members Share Humanitarian Aid, Medical Knowledge

By Air Force 1st Lt. Kellie Rizer  
Pacific Air Forces



Army Maj. Lewis Long, an entomologist with Army Public Health Command Pacific, Camp Zama, Japan, shows mosquitoes caught in an ultraviolet light trap to a group of vector-borne disease control professionals from Vietnam's Quang Nam province during a medical knowledge exchange that's part of Operation Pacific Angel 17-2 in Tam Ky, Vietnam, Sept 6, 2017. Now entering its tenth year, the operation ensures that the region's militaries are prepared to work together to address humanitarian crises.

(Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Kellie Rizer)

**TAM KY, Vietnam, Sept. 12, 2017** — American and Vietnamese military members, along with several nongovernmental organizations, recently came together in Vietnam to attend seminars lead by subject matter experts who shared their knowledge on medical expertise and humanitarian assistance.

The Vietnam seminars are part of **Operation Pacific Angel 17-2**, also known as **PACANGEL**, which itself is one of a series of recurring civil-military missions hosted by U.S. Pacific Command consisting of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities, including medical health services outreach, engineering assistance programs and subject matter expert exchanges.

Held in Vietnam from Sept. 10-18, U.S. and Vietnamese military members have the opportunity to work in partnership with local organizations providing humanitarian assistance to the residents of Vietnam's Tam Ky in Quang Nam province...

## Variety of Medical Topics

The exchanges took place at medical facilities in Tam Ky and the Vietnam Air Defense Air Force Search and Rescue Center in and covered a variety of medical specialties including control and prevention of vector-borne diseases, emergency maternal and fetal care, medical aspects of water survival and management of metabolic syndromes.

Army Maj. Lewis Long, director of bio surveillance and entomology with Public Health Command Pacific at Camp Zama, Japan, worked with his Vietnamese counterparts, vector-borne disease control professionals, to capture and test local mosquitoes for the presence of malaria, dengue fever and other mosquito-spread diseases and pathogens.

*"We demonstrated how the U.S. military conducts mosquito surveillance and methods for collecting mosquitoes for testing of mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue [fever]," Long said. "By focusing our training on the mosquito and not a specific pathogen or disease, we can do a better job controlling everything from dengue [fever] to Zika to other related viruses found worldwide."*

*"I'm an officer, but also a doctor," said Lt Col Nguyễn Thề Nghĩa, deputy chief of Internal Medicine at the Aviation Medical Institute. "My focus is in infectious diseases and there's [currently] an outbreak of dengue fever in Vietnam, so this topic is quite important and has provided useful information to apply to my practice. I hope that this program can continue to develop a good friendship with the U.S. and help improve care facilities in both Vietnam and in the [Army] healthcare system."*

## Many Participants

Many participants traveled from the far edges of Quang Nam province, as far as 90 miles to Tam Ky, to attend the symposium focused on techniques for managing complicated labor and deliveries. PACANGELs have built positive relations through interactions such as these for the last decade in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia, Laos, Tonga, Nepal and Papua New Guinea.

Read entire article at:

[www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/130763](http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/130763)





## TWO RETURN FROM VIETNAM

# “We Can Win The War . . . The People Are The Problem”

*“The battle can be won, but whether the people can is another story.”*

Such was the feeling of two returning combat paratroopers from the war in Vietnam in an interview last week by a member of the *Farmington News* staff.

Sgt. Mike Carver and Sgt. Jerry Highland were visiting in Farmington as guests of Carver’s uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wright. The two soldiers – with only three months service left – were on their way to Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Sgt. Carver grew up in Farmington where his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Carver lived for several years. They now make their home in Anchorage, Alaska, where the senior Mr. Carver is employed with an industrial firm.

Sgt. Highland, a former college student at Columbia Basin Junior College in Pasco, Washington, is a resident of Spokane. The two soldiers, both trained at Fort Benning, Ga. Before going to Okinawa where they spent 16 months. Their Brigade left the calm of Okinawa for the “hell” of Vietnam on May 5, 1965 and the two paratroopers were in the war-torn rice paddies for nearly 12 months.



Pictured after a snack breakfast and interview are, from the left Sgt. Jerry Highland and on the right Sgt. Mike Carver.

### Attached To 173rd Airborne

Sgts. Carver and Highland were attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade and were members of the same platoon in Company B. Although paratroopers, the two never did jump in actual combat, although they did take three “pay” jumps. These “pay” jumps were later waived by the Army. Australian and New Zealander troops are also stationed at Bien Hoa.

Sgt. Carver said that they were involved in considerable ground warfare around their base which was located at Bien Hoa, about 15 miles north of Saigon. He commented that one of the major rolls of the American soldiers was to (be) a *“better guerilla than the Viet Cong guerillas.”*

Carver was injured on two occasions, but neither were serious. One was a shrapnel wound, and the other was a wound from a grenade fragment. He said that their camp was on alert at all times, but it was personally never molested.

Poor living standards, are very obvious in the country, according to Sgt. Highland. He said that the warm, monsoon season was just beginning and this would certainly add to the already low conditions in the villages.

Technically soldiers are given what is commonly termed “R&R’s” every 90 days, but the two had taken one seven day trip to Bangkok, Thailand while in Vietnam. They both spoke very highly of the modern city and of its natural and material beauty.

### Response To Demonstrations

Asked about the soldiers response to the many demonstrations against the war which have been reported in the United States, both Sgt. Carver and Highland said that the troops paid very little attention to them.

The demonstrations were sometimes discussed, but it was the general feeling that the demonstrators simply did not understand the situation of influx of world communism.

Sgt. Highland did say that he felt the demonstrations added ammunition to the propaganda \*\*\*\* of the Communists.

Both flew back, but a day apart, and will soon be closing out a four-year Army enlistment. Like any good soldier, when asked just how long they were actually in South Vietnam, Sgt. Carver said, *“exactly 11 months and two days.”*

The two young men, may have been boys just a few years ago, but there is little questions about their manhood today!

Source: *Farmington News*  
[Sent in by Mike Carver, B/2/503]



# Face of Defense: Soldier Puts Training to Work to Save Woman's Life

By Army Sgt. David Vermilyea, 173rd Airborne Brigade

VICENZA, Italy, Sept. 21, 2017 — Monte Berico, a steep hill situated in the heart of Vicenza, houses an elegant historic church that attracts numerous local residents and tourists because of the grand cityscape view it offers. For 173rd Airborne Brigade soldiers, the hill signifies the destination for a refreshing, yet arduous, run through scenic Vicenza during physical training.



**Army Sgt. Kyle Martin Rogers, an unmanned aircraft systems repairer from Delta Company, 54th Brigade Engineering Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, Vicenza, Italy, inspects his unit's equipment, Sept. 8 2017.**  
(Army photo by Sgt. David Vermilyea)

But after Army Sgt. Kyle Martin Rogers, an unmanned aircraft systems repairer from Delta Company, 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, completed that run Aug. 31, he went above and beyond the call of duty by saving a local Italian woman's life.

Rogers prepared for the 5.5 mile run as usual, stretching his limbs and joints and priming his brain for endurance. The task was called the "Danger Run," named after the company moniker -- an event akin to a scavenger hunt in which the participants run to various locations and complete specific tasks at each one. Once given the nod that they completed the mission, they continued to the next destination.

After Rogers and his team successfully completed all the events, they reached the city's train station, which functions as one of the route's pivotal milestones because it precedes the challenging incline. He ascended until he surmounted the hill, where his vehicle was staged for his return to base.

Once he finished congratulating his fellow soldiers for their hard work, he hopped into his car and started down the hill. It was near the same train station he passed moments before that he stopped at a crosswalk, letting an Italian lady cross the street. She took a few steps into the crosswalk, then unexpectedly collapsed on the unforgiving asphalt in what later proved to be an epileptic seizure. Foam collected on both sides of her mouth, and her body convulsed violently as onlookers watched the scene unfold.

*"No one reacted," Rogers said. "They moved slowly, and everyone looked confused."*

## Providing First Aid

Rogers got out of his vehicle to administer first aid. He sprinted to the woman and shifted her purse up to her head to act as a pillow. He rolled her onto her side in the recovery position to clear her airway, allowing the woman to breathe.

*"I cleared her throat because she was convulsing at the mouth," Rogers said. "I used the purse because her head was bouncing on the ground, and I stabilized her until the Italian police showed up as well as a San Bortolo nurse. Within 10 to 15 minutes, the paramedics showed up."*

Emergency medical services took over from there. They gathered blood samples, inserted an intravenous line and placed the woman on a stretcher. She regained consciousness as she was being transferred to the ambulance that transported her to the hospital.

## Lifesaving Experience

This was not the first or second, or even third time Rogers had helped to save someone's life. His service in his prior unit, 3rd Special Forces Group, included extensive medical training that has proven to be valuable ever since.

*"I've saved someone's life downrange," Rogers said. "I've helped with a couple motorcycle accidents back in Fayetteville [North Carolina], so I've just been able to react to stuff before."*

Rogers' platoon leader, Army 1st Lt. Carlos Omar Flores, said Rogers' ability to react properly should come as no surprise.

*"Our soldiers are all trained, and when put in that scenario, the training will kick in and their quick reaction will save lives," Flores said.*

Source:





# The Passing of MG John Cleland (92)

All,

I am sad to pass the news that my father, MG John Cleland passed away this morning (October 25, 2017). He was an outstanding Soldier and I know a good friend to all of you. All of us Cleland's were very proud of him.

My Mother is weathering this pretty well and we are glad that my niece Amanda and my sister Robin are there with her at this time.

We do not have much news yet on Services but there will be a service in the near future at Prince of Peace Anglican Church. We anticipate the burial service to take place at Arlington but a lot of coordination is still needed. I will try to keep all informed on Services.

Please remember my Dad in your prayers.

Gary Cleland

## Update on MG John Cleland's Services

I first met General Cleland at the 173rd Memorial Dedication at the National Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning. He and his wife were standing on the curb in front of the Museum. I asked him if he would like a ride somewhere and he smiled and said he would certainly appreciate one.

He went back into the Museum and cancelled his call for a taxi. When they got in the car he commented that he didn't want to interfere with our plans and he asked us to continue with what we were planning on doing and that he would not mind just accompanying us so as not to interfere.

I told him that we were just headed to the Class VI store while enroute to the



Camp Hood, TX  
1943



2nd Lt. 1944



Jump School  
1944



Philippines 1945



Japan 1945



Japan 1946

motel. He smiled a big smile and said he wouldn't mind going by the Class VI also. (Class VI for those who have been out of the Army for a while is the Army liquor store).

A few years later, during my quest to have 3rd Batt bring our Guidons to the Skysoldier Reunions and was having some difficulty finding a Delta Company Guidon Bearer, he volunteered to purchase the Delta Company Guidon. He said, "Where Rock Troopers gather they will have their Guidons." He presented that Guidon to the 3rd Batt at the next Skysoldier Reunion, commenting that he was the one who presented the original Delta Company Guidon in their first formation.

Given his position on our Guidons, I ask that any of our Florida Area Skysoldiers give some consideration to bringing some 3rd Batt colors and/or Guidons to his Service. With the permission of his family of course. . . He loved the 3rd Batt...

All the Way!

*Mason*

Mason Branstetter

Nov/D/3/503 Apr-Jun 70

TOC Dty O/HHC/3/503 Jun-Oct 70

CO/E/3/503 Oct 70-Apr 71



Korea 1950



Vietnam 1962



Vietnam 1967



Cambodia 1973



Germany 1976



Germany 1977



The General in retirement

Rest easy with your warriors, General. All The Way Sir!



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Nov.-Dec. 2017 – Issue 76

Page 59 of 88



## VA selects providers for low cost dental insurance program

September 28, 2017

VA announced today that it has selected Delta Dental of California and MetLife to once again offer private dental insurance plans as part of the **VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)**.

The program was extended until Dec. 31, 2021, by the VA Dental Insurance Reauthorization Act of 2016.

*"It is important to provide this care to eligible Veterans, especially those who need lower-cost insurance,"* said VA secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin.

*"VADIP underscores our commitment to support America's Veterans and their family members."*

Veterans enrolled in the VA health-care system and beneficiaries of the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA) can enroll in the program beginning Nov. 15, 2017, for coverage to start Dec. 1, 2017.

VADIP offers eligible individuals the opportunity to purchase discounted dental insurance coverage, including diagnostic services, preventive services, endodontic and other restorative services, surgical services and emergency services.

Individuals who enroll in one of the dental insurance plans will pay the entire premium in addition to the full cost of any copayments. Enrollment is voluntary and does not affect eligibility for VA outpatient dental services and treatment.

The plans are available to eligible individuals in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Delta Dental and MetLife previously offered insurance plans as part of the three-year VADIP pilot program. Coverage under the VADIP pilot began Jan. 1, 2013, and more than 115,000 Veterans and CHAMPVA beneficiaries enrolled in the program before it expired in January 2017. Individuals who enrolled in a plan during the pilot period must select and enroll in one of the new plans offered by Delta Dental or MetLife. While the insurance providers will remain the same, plan options, fees and other factors may have changed from those offered during the pilot.

For more information, visit

[www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vadip/](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vadip/)

or call 877-222-VETS (8387)

## Four Special Forces Troopers KIA in Niger, October 4

**Yes, they knew what they signed up for.  
They signed up to liberate the oppressed.**



29

39

35

25

*Rest easy with the warriors airborne brothers.*

## A Commander In Chief's letter to the grieving mother of soldiers killed during war, which remains apropos to this day:

*"I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save.*

*I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom. Yours, very sincerely and respectfully", Abraham Lincoln*



# Face of Defense: Marines React, Save Lives During Las Vegas Tragedy

By Marine Corps Sgt. David Bickel, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing



Marine Corps Sgt. Michael Vura, left, and Marine Corps Cpl. Austin Cox, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron 303 helicopter mechanics, assisted in victim evacuation and casualty care following the mass casualty attack in Las Vegas, Nevada, Oct. 1, 2017.

(Marine Corps photo by Sgt. David Bickel)

**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., Oct. 18, 2017 —**

**T**wo Marine Corps helicopter mechanics who assisted in victim evacuation and casualty care at an Oct. 1 Las Vegas concert that became a mass-casualty attack recalled their experience recently. Sgt. Michael Vura and Cpl. Austin Cox, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron 303, were attending the concert, heard the shots and took action.

*"Myself and Sergeant Vura headed to the concession area of the festival, which is toward the back of the concert area," Cox said. "We heard the initial shots and didn't know if it was the speakers making noise or actual gunfire. ... Then the shots went off again, and we knew there was a threat."*

After identifying which side of the stage was targeted, both Marines ran toward the gunfire and started assisting in the evacuation of the crowd.

*"People were trying to get out of the area but were trapped in by crowd-control barricades," Vura recalled. "We positioned ourselves in between the stage and the barricades and started assisting people in climbing the barricade and running for cover."*

## Evacuating the Injured

In the process of assisting victims trying to find cover, the Marines came across several people who had been shot. They evacuated the injured victims while applying pressure and using makeshift tourniquets when needed.

*"We came across a man that was hit in the chest," Vura said. "We moved some stuff out from under the stage and told his significant other to maintain pressure on the wound until rescue personnel could assist. As we turned to walk away, we found a girl that had a gunshot wound to her neck," Cox said. "We immediately pulled her over the barricade and started applying pressure to her neck. There was more blood coming from another wound, and we found that she had been hit in the back as well."*

At this point, Vura and Cox separated. Cox stayed with the wounded woman and assisted in getting her to the hospital.

*"I remember the last thing she did when we got to the hospital was give me a thumbs up," recalled Cox. "I knew she was going to fight and that I could leave her in the hands of the doctors."*

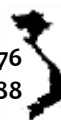
## Continuing to Help

Vura continued helping victims escape and treated more wounded until the rescue teams arrived on scene. *"I started making my way around the barricades, and myself and another individual made some makeshift stretchers to carry the wounded to safety," he said. "During that process, we carried around five to six wounded individuals, as well as several deceased bodies, out. At that point, SWAT arrived and secured the area. ... I just walked to the strip, sat down and tried to process everything that just happened."*

Many would say these Marines went above and beyond the call of duty and demonstrated characteristics that are instilled in every Marine during training and life in the Marine Corps. However, they have no desire to be recognized for their actions.

*"I went to this country concert to get away from all of my life's problems, and it became the realest moment of my life," Vura said. "Remember the basics and know that something like this could happen at any moment." "With Sergeant Vura there, I had more courage than I would have had on my own," Cox said. "We were there when the people affected needed us.... We are Marines 24/7."*

***Semper Fi young brothers!  
And All The Way!!***





# Are you eligible for more VA benefits? New web matrix explains primary, derivative benefits

September 15, 2017



**A**t the Veterans Benefits Administration, we often come in contact with people who ask, "What are my benefits? What am I eligible for? Or, I receive X benefit, but what other benefits can I use?"

Those are hard questions to answer because in many cases, it depends. VA benefits eligibility is based on your character of discharge. And some benefits connections are equally hard to explain without further personal information. But some Veterans become eligible for additional benefits based on a number of different situations. The additional benefits that open up from a given situation is what we call "derivative" benefits.

To better explain this, to ease the understanding between a primary benefit and its derivative benefit(s), we built a **Derivative-Benefits Eligibility Matrix** on our website:

[https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/derivative\\_sc.asp](https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/derivative_sc.asp)

On this webpage, there are three matrices and, depending on which one you click, will lead you to a table where you identify your situation.

The three matrices are very basic: **Service-Connected**, **Non-Service Connected** and **Circumstance**. They're as simple as they sound. Under Service-Connected, you scroll down the table until you find your service-connected disability rating. The corresponding column that matches with your row lists to a number of VA benefits. These are the derivative benefits. Under Non-Service Connected, you follow the same procedure based on your receipt of a non-service-connected benefit, like Aid & Attendance or Housebound.

Examples of situations under the Circumstance matrix include Veteran statuses like Medal of Honor recipient, former prisoner of war and others.

Most Veterans we talk to are aware that, with a 30-percent disability rating, you can add your dependents to your award to increase your monthly payment. Your monthly, 30-percent disability compensation payment would be the primary benefit, and the dependent pay added to your rate would be the "derivative."

But let's create another scenario to illustrate a different example, one from the "Circumstance Matrix."

Say that you're the spouse or dependent child of a Veteran who died from a disability related to military service. If this is your circumstance, then you may be eligible for **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation**, Dependents Educational Assistance, Civilian Health and Medical Program, and the VA Home Loan Guaranty (surviving spouse). These benefits are "derivative" to the situation.

The derivative, or additional, benefits listed next to your situation in the matrix are hyperlinked to another page on the VA website. This makes it easy for you to find more information, as well as instructions on how to apply.

That said, the three matrices only list federal benefits derived from VA decisions. After all, we administer your *federal* VA benefits. But there could be some benefits from outside VA that you may be eligible for, such as state benefits, or those connected to membership with Veterans Service Organizations or private charities and non-profits.

Now that you have a better understanding of derivative benefits, the only thing left to do is give the eligibility matrix a try. See what pops up for your own situation!

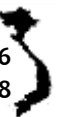
**Disclaimer reminder:** *The internet, this blog and social media are not the places to share sensitive information, and I'm unable to answer complex or overly personal questions. As always, IRIS is the best place to ask specific questions with personal information.*

**Jason Davis served five years in the 101st ABN, including two combat tours to Iraq. He's currently an M.A. candidate in Writing at Johns Hopkins University and serves as social media administrator for the Veterans Benefits Administration.**



Source:

<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/41322/are-you-eligible-for-more-va-benefits/>



# Medal of Honor Awarded to Army Captain for Actions in Laos

By C. Todd Lopez  
Army News Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24, 2017 — More than 47 years after his heroic actions in Laos during the Vietnam War, Army Capt. Gary Michael Rose was recognized with the Medal of Honor.

"This will enshrine him into the history of our nation," said President Donald J. Trump, during the Medal of Honor ceremony yesterday at the White House.

Rose served as a combat medic during the Vietnam War with the Military Assistance Command Studies and Observations Group, part of Army Special Forces. He was recognized for his actions between Sept. 11-14, 1970, in Laos. The mission he was part of, "Operation Tailwind," had for many years been classified. Trump said Operation Tailwind was meant to prevent the North Vietnamese Army from funneling weapons to their own forces through Laos, along the Ho Chi Minh trail. The operation involved about 136 men, including 16 American soldiers and 120 Montagnards -- indigenous people from Vietnam's Central Highlands. The men were inserted by helicopter deep inside Laos.

"Once they landed in the clearing, they rushed to the jungle for much-needed cover," Trump said. "Soon, another man was shot outside their defensive perimeter. Mike immediately rushed to his injured comrade, firing at the enemy as he ran. In the middle of the clearing, under the machine gun fire, Mike treated the wounded soldier. He shielded the man with his own body and carried him back to safety."



"This award, which I consider a collective medal, is for all of the men, to include the Air Force and the Marines who helped us," Rose said. "This is our medal. We all earned it..."



Newspaper report, Monday, October 9, 1967...

## HUSH PUPPIES

By Charlie Wadsworth

By DON RIDER

(Pinch hitting for war correspondent Charlie Wadsworth)

Lt. Thomas T. Remington, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Remington, 2712 Nela Ave., wrote home from Vietnam last summer, "Some cold, fresh milk certainly would taste good."



LT Tom  
A/2/503

On Sept. 17, the day after his 23rd birthday, the mailman caught up with Lt. Remington, out on patrol in the hills and delivered some cold, fresh milk, sent to him by his parents,

Syd Johnston, manager of Roberts Perfection Foods, says Remington's father dropped in one day and asked if such a shipment could be handled. They agreed to try.

They packed dry ice around a half gallon plastic bottle and the senior Remington mailed the carton for \$12.80. With packaging, the cost came to \$16.

Lt. Tom wrote home, delighted at the surprise and letting the folks know the milk arrived eight days after mailing, "cold and fresh."



Since the Remington case came up, Johnston found out one of his own routemen, William A. Rowe, 5007 S. Falmouth, has sent William Jr., a couple of dairy product packages "somewhere in Vietnam."

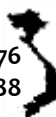
The younger Rowe has been treated, not only to fresh milk, but also to chocolate milk and cheese dips.

Mailing is possible because of Styrofoam boxes, dry ice and sealing tape.



Our good buddy Tom would go on to become a Circuit Court Judge in Florida. He retired from his judicial duties on December 31, 2012.

Following extensive research by private investigators we employed, no evidence which would hold up in a court of law was discovered of any '(real) milk sharing' going on in the 2/503 circa 1967; not to say there wasn't any such sharing. © Ed



# D. G. Magruder, Army Lieutenant Killed in Vietnam

Six weeks ago the three Magruder brothers all were arriving in Vietnam.

Then U.S. Army Capt. Robert B. Magruder came home with six combat decorations.

Today First Lt. Douglas G. Magruder, 24, is on his way home too, escorted by his two older brothers, Robert and U.S. Navy Lt. Marshall Magruder Jr., still stationed in Vietnam.

**Lt. Magruder, of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was killed at Dak To Saturday by heavy mortar and artillery shell fire.**



**Doug and Honey**  
...He is interred at Arlington

He will be buried with military rites in Arlington National Cemetery, alongside his grandfather, Gen. Marshall Magruder, the U.S.'s first armored artillery general, and his granduncle Gen. Bruce Magruder, the first commanding general of the first armored division in the U.S.

Lt. Magruder was voted the Outstanding Athlete Triathlon while he attended West Point from 1962 to 1964. At least one member of each general of Magruder's has attended West Point since 1802.

He was an All-American athlete in track and swimming at Coral Gables Senior High where he graduated in 1961, and attended the U.S. Military Academy Prep School for one year before entering West Point.

**He also attended Miami Dade Junior College and was a Distinguished Military Graduate of the University of Miami in 1966. His other achievements at UM include the Military Honors Society and the Scabbard and Blade, and he was a member of the M Club, Sigma Chi Fraternity and a letterman on the track team.**

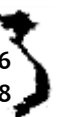
His father, Maj. Peyton M. Magruder Sr. said, "*He volunteered both for the paratroopers and to serve in Vietnam. He was too fine a boy for me to be afraid to talk about it.*" The Magruder's live at 757 Malaga Ave., Coral Gables.

Other survivors include his wife, Rebekah (Honey) Shelley; his two-month-old son, Douglas G. Jr.; and his maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Shelley Jr. of Miami.



## A Fellow Officer

"I was in Vietnam the day I saw your name in *Stars & Stripes*, the war became more personal that day. I remember the day we met at Ft Bragg and I told you that you would stay with the 82d for approximately 18 months and that's when you told me that you had volunteered for Vietnam and would only be with us of 4 months. I remember Honey and how much in love you were. I remember the good times you and Honey and Ellen and I had together. I wrote your first efficiency report. I'm sure it would have been the first of many exceptional reports. I have not had the courage to see 'The Wall.' Too many good friends and too many memories. Maybe someday. Rest in peace. I think of you often." **Jack Wilson**





Kudos to this Air Force Academy superintendent...

# Superintendent addresses racial slurs at USAFA

**U.S. Air Force Academy Public Affairs**

**September 29, 2017**



The Air Force Academy superintendent addressed cadets, faculty, staff and cadet candidates Sept. 28, 2017, in the wake of racial slurs recently written on the dormitory message boards of five African American cadets at the Academy's Preparatory School.

**U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. (AFNS)** -- The Air Force Academy superintendent addressed cadets, faculty, staff and cadet candidates Sept. 28, 2017, in the wake of racial slurs recently written on the dormitory message boards of five African American cadets at the Academy's Preparatory School.

*"If you're outraged by those words, then you're in the right place,"* said Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria. *"That kind of behavior has no place at the Prep School, has no place at USAFA and has no place in the United States Air Force."*

Silveria advised cadets to engage in open discussion on the topic and focus on solutions.

*"What we should have is a civil discourse and talk about these issues,"* he said. *"That's a better idea."*

He referenced current race issues across the country, to include Charlottesville, Virginia, Ferguson, Missouri and the protests in the National Football League, and gave an example of a recent forum the dean of faculty hosted for cadets to discuss Charlottesville.

Silveria went on to talk about the power of diversity.

*"It's the power that we come from all walks of life, that we come from all parts of this country, that we come from all races, that we come from all backgrounds, gender, all make-up, all upbringing,"* he said. *"The power of that diversity comes together and makes us that much more powerful."*

Silveria left cadets with what he called his most important thought on the subject.

***"If you can't treat someone from another race or different color skin with dignity and respect, then you need to get out,"*** he emphatically said. ***"If you can't treat someone with dignity and respect, then get out."***

This was not the first time the new superintendent discussed the topics of dignity and respect. In his first address to cadets, faculty and staff in August, he made it clear where he stands, *"If you want to find a red line with me, it will be in the area of respect and dignity."*

Air Force Academy Security forces are investigating the incident.

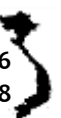
Source:

[www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1329996/superintendent-addresses-racial-slurs-at-usafa/](http://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1329996/superintendent-addresses-racial-slurs-at-usafa/)

## "Aim High... Fly-Fight-Win"



U.S. Air Force Academy photo.



# *GIs Reinforced at Dak To In Futile Try to Rout Reds*

## **Casualties Increase in Hill Assault**

SAIGON – (UPI) – Airlifted infantry reinforcements Monday linked up with a force of 500 American paratroopers who suffered heavy casualties in fierce but futile assaults against North Vietnamese atop a jungle-covered peak in the battle of Dak To.

A late battlefield report early Tuesday said the three paratroop companies from the 173rd Airborne Brigade had suffered 76 killed and 81 wounded in the fight for Hill 875 which towers some 2700 feet a scant two miles from the Cambodian border.

The casualty list was lengthened accidentally when one Allied plane flying in support of the paratroopers accidentally dropped a 500-pound bomb amid a group of wounded GIs waiting to be evacuated to field hospitals.



Sky Soldiers fight thru enemy trenches and bunkers on their way up Hill 875. (web photo added)

As the Central Highlands fighting entered its 20th day Tuesday in the triple-tier bamboo jungle around Dak To, the announced American losses in the battle stood at 273 killed and 831 wounded. The Communist dead by official count was 1,181 with many others believed killed and their bodies dragged off by their comrades.

A report said "many officers" were among the casualties suffered by the paratroopers who ran into withering fire from rockets, small arms and mortars from North Vietnamese forces entrenched atop the vine-covered ridge.

The North Vietnamese also bombarded helicopters trying to get the American wounded out to safety, bringing down seven of the U.S. craft Sunday and Monday. American warplanes responded by flying 1,500 sorties to drop bombs and napalm on the North Vietnamese who are holding the hill from bunkers and tunnels dug into the slopes.

**Reinforcing U.S. Infantrymen, carried by helicopters to the battle area, had to hack their way through 3,000 yards of dense bamboo jungle and scrub to link up with the embattled paratroopers.**

In other action red bereted South Vietnamese paratroopers pushed North Vietnamese forces off another key hill near Dak To, and reported killing 360 of the Communists in their successful two-day struggle for Hill 1416.

The South Vietnamese lost 32 killed and 153 wounded in their assault on the jungle peak nine miles north of Dak To, officials said..

The air war over North Vietnam also heated up as American bombers hit two new targets – a concrete plant and a barge yard near Hanoi. But the American jets encountered missiles "all the way in and all the way out," a pilot reports, and U.S. losses were high.



November 13, 1967....

## GIs Beat Back Furious Attack After 2 Hours

SAIGON (/P) U.S. troops beat back a furious North Vietnamese charge late Monday, firing 105mm howitzers at point-blank range in the jungled hills of the central highlands 14 miles south of Dak To.

After a two-hour battle, the North Vietnamese broke off the engagement, but their suspected major camp two miles farther south was plastered early Tuesday by U.S. B52 eight-engine Stratoforts.

**FOR 10** hours before the North Vietnamese struck, the enemy had rained mortar and rocket shells on positions of the U.S. forces, elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

The U.S. helicopter gunships attacked the Communists, hoping to find the reinforcements U.S. intelligence reports said were shifted to the Dak To front from the area of Pleiku, about 50 miles south.

The American lost nine killed and 21 wounded in the renewed fighting, the U.S. Command reported. Its revised figures put U.S. casualties in 11 days of fighting around Dak To at 97 killed and 521 wounded.

### U.S Troops Repel Raid At Dak To

The North Vietnamese casualties in Monday's battle were not known, but U.S. headquarters said 625 of the enemy were killed in the previous 10 days of fighting.

North Vietnamese troops launched a mortar attack Monday night on another battalion of the 173rd Airborne, dropping in 72 rounds. U.S. casualties were not immediately known.

**NO MAJOR** ground fighting was reported elsewhere in South Vietnam, but the U.S. Command announced a new Marine Corps operation in the northern part of the country on the South China sea coast six miles above the coastal town of An Hoa.

The operation kicked off with a helicopter assault by units of the 7th Marines Regiment on Monday. The command said that so far there had been no contact with the enemy.

Over North Vietnam, stormy weather of the monsoon season once again limited raiding U.S. planes Monday to targets in the southern half of the country.

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Readout of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis' Meeting with Vietnam Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich

Oct. 24, 2017

**Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana W. White provided the following readout:**

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis met with Vietnam Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Clark, Pampanga, Philippines.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional security and emphasized the need for continued ASEAN cooperation to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. They also reaffirmed their intention to deepen the bilateral defense relationship, particularly in the area of maritime security, and highlighted progress made since their August meeting in Washington.

Secretary Mattis underscored the United States' commitment to work with partners such as Vietnam to promote a peaceful and stable region.



**Defense Secretary Jim Mattis speaks with Vietnamese Defense Minister Gen. Ngo Xuan Lich at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defense Ministers handover of chairmanship from the Philippines to Singapore in Clark, the Philippines, Oct. 24, 2017.**

(DoD photo by Army Sgt. Amber I. Smith)





# Commander In Chief's Speech to the United Nations



**M**r. Secretary General, Mr. President, world leaders, and distinguished delegates: Welcome to New York. It is a profound honor to stand here in my home city, as a representative of the American people, to address the people of the world.

As millions of our citizens continue to suffer the effects of the devastating hurricanes that have struck our country, I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to every leader in this room who has offered assistance and aid. The American people are strong and resilient, and they will emerge from these hardships more determined than ever before.

Fortunately, the United States has done very well since Election Day last November 8th. The stock market is at an all-time high — a record. Unemployment is at its lowest level in 16 years, and because of our regulatory and other reforms, we have more people working in the United States today than ever before. Companies are moving back, creating job growth the likes of which our country has not seen in a very long time. And it has just been announced that we will be spending almost \$700 billion on our military and defense.

Our military will soon be the strongest it has ever been. For more than 70 years, in times of war and peace, the leaders of nations, movements, and religions have stood before this assembly. Like them, I intend to address some of the very serious threats before us today but also the enormous potential waiting to be unleashed.

We live in a time of extraordinary opportunity. Breakthroughs in science, technology, and medicine are curing illnesses and solving problems that prior generations thought impossible to solve. But each day also brings news of growing dangers that threaten everything we cherish and value. Terrorists and extremists have gathered strength and spread to every region of the planet. Rogue regimes represented in this body not only support terrorists but threaten other nations and their own people with the most destructive weapons known to humanity.

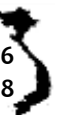
Authority and authoritarian powers seek to collapse the values, the systems, and alliances that prevented conflict and tilted the world toward freedom since World War II.

International criminal networks traffic drugs, weapons, people, force dislocation and mass migration, threaten our borders, and new forms of aggression exploit technology to menace our citizens. To put it simply, we meet at a time of both of immense promise and great peril. It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights, or let it fall into a valley of disrepair.

We have it in our power, should we so choose, to lift millions from poverty, to help our citizens realize their dreams, and to ensure that new generations of children are raised free from violence, hatred and fear.

This institution was founded in the aftermath of two world wars to help shape this better future. It was based on the vision that diverse nations could cooperate to protect their sovereignty, preserve their security and promote their prosperity. It was in the same period, exactly 70 years ago, that the United States developed the Marshall Plan to help restore Europe. Those three beautiful pillars — they're pillars of peace, sovereignty, security and prosperity.

*(continued....)*



The Marshall Plan was built on the noble idea that the whole world is safer when nations are strong, independent and free. As President Truman said in his message to Congress at that time, *"Our support of European recovery is in full accord with our support of the United Nations. The success of the United Nations depends upon the independent strength of its members."*

To overcome the perils of the present and to achieve the promise of the future, we must begin with the wisdom of the past. Our success depends on a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity and peace for themselves and for the world.

We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions or even systems of government. But we do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties: to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation. This is the beautiful vision of this institution, and this is foundation for cooperation and success.

Strong sovereign nations let diverse countries with different values, different cultures and different dreams not just coexist, but work side by side on the basis of mutual respect.

Strong sovereign nations let their people take ownership of the future and control their own destiny. And strong, sovereign nations allow individuals to flourish in the fullness of the life intended by God.

In America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch. This week gives our country a special reason to take pride in that example. We are celebrating the 230th anniversary of our beloved Constitution — the oldest constitution still in use in the world today.

This timeless document has been the foundation of peace, prosperity and freedom for the Americans and for countless millions around the globe whose own countries have found inspiration in its respect for human nature, human dignity and the rule of law. The greatest in the United States Constitution is its first three beautiful words. They are: *"We the people."* Generations of Americans have sacrificed to maintain the promise of those words, the promise of our country and of our great history. In America, the people govern, the people rule, and the people are sovereign. I was



In foreign affairs, we are renewing this founding principle of sovereignty. Our government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens — to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights and to defend their values.

As President of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries will always, and should always, put your countries first.

All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens, and the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition. But making a better life for our people also requires us to work together in close harmony and unity to create a more safe and peaceful future for all people.

The United States will forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies. But we can no longer be taken advantage of, or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return. As long as I hold this office, I will defend America's interests above all else.

But in fulfilling our obligations to our own nations, we also realize that it's in everyone's interest to seek a future where all nations can be sovereign, prosperous and secure.

(continued....)



America does more than speak for the values expressed in the United Nations Charter. Our citizens have paid the ultimate price to defend our freedom and the freedom of many nations represented in this great hall. America's devotion is measured on the battlefields where our young men and women have fought and sacrificed alongside of our allies, from the beaches of Europe to the deserts of the Middle East to the jungles of Asia.

It is an eternal credit to the American character that even after we and our allies emerged victorious from the bloodiest war in history, we did not seek territorial expansion or attempt to oppose and impose our way of life on others. Instead, we helped build institutions such as this one to defend the sovereignty, security and prosperity for all.

For the diverse nations of the world, this is our hope. We want harmony and friendship, not conflict and strife. We are guided by outcomes, not ideology. We have a policy of principled realism, rooted in shared goals, interests and values.

That realism forces us to confront a question facing every leader and nation in this room. It is a question we cannot escape or avoid. We will slide down the path of complacency, numb to the challenges, threats, and even wars that we face. Or do we have enough strength and pride to confront those dangers today, so that our citizens can enjoy peace and prosperity tomorrow?

If we desire to lift up our citizens, if we aspire to the approval of history, then we must fulfill our sovereign duties to the people we faithfully represent. We must protect our nations, their interests, and their futures. We must reject threats to sovereignty, from the Ukraine to the South China Sea. We must uphold respect for law, respect for borders and respect for culture, and the peaceful engagement these allow. And just as the founders of this body intended, we must work together and confront together those who threaten us with chaos, turmoil and terror.

The scourge of our planet today is a small group of rogue regimes that violate every principle on which the United Nations is based. They respect neither their own citizens nor the sovereign rights of their countries. If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph. When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength.

No one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the well-being of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea. It is responsible for the starvation deaths of millions of North Koreans, and

for the imprisonment, torture, killing and oppression of countless more.

We were all witness to the regime's deadly abuse when an innocent American college student, Otto Warmbier, was returned to America only to die a few days later. We saw it in the assassination of the dictator's brother using banned nerve agents in an international airport. We know it kidnapped a sweet 13-year-old Japanese girl from a beach in her own country to enslave her as a language tutor for North Korea's spies.

If this is not twisted enough, now North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the entire world with unthinkable loss of human life.

It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict. No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles.

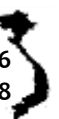
The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime. The United States is ready, willing and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary. That's what the United Nations is all about; that's what the United Nations is for. Let's see how they do.

It is time for North Korea to realize that the denuclearization is its only acceptable future. The United Nations Security Council recently held two unanimous 15-to-0 votes adopting hard-hitting resolutions against North Korea, and I want to thank China and Russia for joining the vote to impose sanctions, along with all of the other members of the Security Council. Thank you to all involved.

But we must do much more. It is time for all nations to work together to isolate the Kim regime until it ceases its hostile behavior.

We face this decision not only in North Korea. It is far past time for the nations of the world to confront another reckless regime — one that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing death to America, destruction to Israel, and ruin for many leaders and nations in this room.

*(continued....)*





The Iranian government masks a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of a democracy. It has turned a wealthy country with a rich history and culture into an economically depleted rogue state whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed and chaos. The longest-suffering victims of Iran's leaders are, in fact, its own people.

Rather than use its resources to improve Iranian lives, its oil profits go to fund Hezbollah and other terrorists that kill innocent Muslims and attack their peaceful Arab and Israeli neighbors. This wealth, which rightly belongs to Iran's people, also goes to shore up Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship, fuel Yemen's civil war and undermine peace throughout the entire Middle East.

We cannot let a murderous regime continue these destabilizing activities while building dangerous missiles, and we cannot abide by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program. The Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into. Frankly, that deal is an embarrassment to the United States, and I don't think you've heard the last of it — believe me.

It is time for the entire world to join us in demanding that Iran's government end its pursuit of death and destruction. It is time for the regime to free all Americans and citizens of other nations that they have unjustly detained. And above all, Iran's government must stop supporting terrorists, begin serving its own people and respect the sovereign rights of its neighbors. The entire world understands that the good people of Iran want change and, other than the vast military power of the United States, that Iran's people are what their leaders fear the most. This is what causes the regime to restrict Internet access, tear down satellite dishes, shoot unarmed student protesters and imprison political reformers.

Oppressive regimes cannot endure forever, and the day will come when the Iranian people will face a choice. Will they continue down the path of poverty, bloodshed and terror? Or will the Iranian people return to the nation's proud roots as a center of civilization, culture and wealth where their people can be happy and prosperous once again?

The Iranian regime's support for terror is in stark contrast to the recent commitments of many of its neighbors to fight terrorism and halt its financing. In Saudi Arabia early last year, I was greatly honored to address the leaders of more than 50 Arab and Muslim nations. We agreed that all responsible nations must

work together to confront terrorists and the Islamist extremism that inspires them.

We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we cannot allow it to tear up our nation and, indeed, to tear up the entire world.

We must deny the terrorists safe haven, transit, funding, and any form of support for their vile and sinister ideology. We must drive them out of our nations. It is time to expose and hold responsible those countries who support and finance terror groups like al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, the Taliban and others that slaughter innocent people.

The United States and our allies are working together throughout the Middle East to crush the loser terrorists and stop the reemergence of safe havens they use to launch attacks on all of our people.

Last month, I announced a new strategy for victory in the fight against this evil in Afghanistan. From now on, our security interests will dictate the length and scope of military operations, not arbitrary benchmarks and timetables set up by politicians.

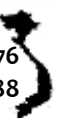
I have also totally changed the rules of engagement in our fight against the Taliban and other terrorist groups. In Syria and Iraq, we have made big gains toward lasting defeat of ISIS. In fact, our country has achieved more against ISIS in the last eight months than it has in many, many years combined.

We seek the de-escalation of the Syrian conflict, and a political solution that honors the will of the Syrian people. The actions of the criminal regime of Bashar al-Assad, including the use of chemical weapons against his own citizens — even innocent children — shock the conscience of every decent person. No society can be safe if banned chemical weapons are allowed to spread. That is why the United States carried out a missile strike on the air base that launched the attack.

We appreciate the efforts of United Nations agencies that are providing vital humanitarian assistance in areas liberated from ISIS, and we especially thank Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon for their role in hosting refugees from the Syrian conflict.

The United States is a compassionate nation and has spent billions and billions of dollars in helping to support this effort. We seek an approach to refugee resettlement that is designed to help these horribly treated people, and which enables their eventual return to their home countries, to be part of the rebuilding process.

*(continued....)*



For the cost of resettling one refugee in the United States, we can assist more than 10 in their home region. Out of the goodness of our hearts, we offer financial assistance to hosting countries in the region, and we support recent agreements of the G-20 nations that will seek to host refugees as close to their home countries as possible. This is the safe, responsible and humanitarian approach.

For decades, the United States has dealt with migration challenges here in the Western Hemisphere. We have learned that, over the long term, uncontrolled migration is deeply unfair to both the sending and the receiving countries.

For the sending countries, it reduces domestic pressure to pursue needed political and economic reform, and drains them of the human capital necessary to motivate and implement those reforms. For the receiving countries, the substantial costs of uncontrolled migration are borne overwhelmingly by low-income citizens whose concerns are often ignored by both media and government.

I want to salute the work of the United Nations in seeking to address the problems that cause people to flee from their homes. The United Nations and African Union led peacekeeping missions to have invaluable contributions in stabilizing conflicts in Africa. The United States continues to lead the world in humanitarian assistance, including famine prevention and relief in South Sudan, Somalia, and northern Nigeria and Yemen.

We have invested in better health and opportunity all over the world through programs like PEPFAR, which funds AIDS relief; the President's Malaria Initiative; the Global Health Security Agenda; the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery; and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, part of our commitment to empowering women all across the globe.

We also thank, we also thank the secretary general for recognizing that the United Nations must reform if it is to be an effective partner in confronting threats to sovereignty, security and prosperity. Too often the focus of this organization has not been on results, but on bureaucracy and process.

In some cases, states that seek to subvert this institution's noble aims have hijacked the very systems that are supposed to advance them. For example, it is a massive source of embarrassment to the United Nations that some governments with egregious human rights records sit on the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The United States is one out of 193 countries in the United Nations, and yet we pay 22 percent of the entire budget and more. In fact, we pay far more than

anybody realizes. The United States bears an unfair cost burden, but to be fair, if it could actually accomplish all of its stated goals, especially the goal of peace, this investment would easily be well worth it. Major portions of the world are in conflict and some, in fact, are going to hell. But the powerful people in this room, under the guidance and auspices of the United Nations, can solve many of these vicious and complex problems.

The American people hope that one day soon the United Nations can be a much more accountable and effective advocate for human dignity and freedom around the world. In the meantime, we believe that no nation should have to bear a disproportionate share of the burden, militarily or financially. Nations of the world must take a greater role in promoting secure and prosperous societies in their own regions.

That is why in the Western Hemisphere, the United States has stood against the corrupt and destabilizing regime in Cuba and embraced the enduring dream of the Cuban people to live in freedom. My administration recently announced that we will not lift sanctions on the Cuban government until it makes fundamental reforms.

We have also imposed tough, calibrated sanctions on the socialist Maduro regime in Venezuela, which has brought a once-thriving nation to the brink of total collapse.

The socialist dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro has inflicted terrible pain and suffering on the good people of that country. This corrupt regime destroyed a prosperous nation by imposing a failed ideology that has produced poverty and misery everywhere it has been tried. To make matters worse, Maduro has defied his own people, stealing power from their elected representatives to preserve his disastrous rule. The Venezuelan people are starving and their country is collapsing. Their democratic institutions are being destroyed. This situation is completely unacceptable and we cannot stand by and watch.

As a responsible neighbor and friend, we and all others have a goal. That goal is to help them regain their freedom, recover their country and restore their democracy. I would like to thank leaders in this room for condemning the regime and providing vital support to the Venezuelan people.

*(continued....)*



The United States has taken important steps to hold the regime accountable. We are prepared to take further action if the government of Venezuela persists on its path to impose authoritarian rule on the Venezuelan people.

We are fortunate to have incredibly strong and healthy trade relationships with many of the Latin American countries gathered here today. Our economic bond forms a critical foundation for advancing peace and prosperity for all of our people and all of our neighbors.

I ask every country represented here today to be prepared to do more to address this very real crisis. We call for the full restoration of democracy and political freedoms in Venezuela.

The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented. From the Soviet Union to Cuba to Venezuela, wherever true socialism or communism has been adopted, it has delivered anguish and devastation and failure. Those who preach the tenets of these discredited ideologies only contribute to the continued suffering of the people who live under these cruel systems.

America stands with every person living under a brutal regime. Our respect for sovereignty is also a call for action. All people deserve a government that cares for their safety, their interests and their well-being, including their prosperity.

In America, we seek stronger ties of business and trade with all nations of goodwill, but this trade must be fair and it must be reciprocal.

For too long, the American people were told that mammoth multinational trade deals, unaccountable international tribunals and powerful global bureaucracies were the best way to promote their success. But as those promises flowed, millions of jobs vanished and thousands of factories disappeared. Others gamed the system and broke the rules. And our great middle class, once the bedrock of American prosperity, was forgotten and left behind, but they are forgotten no more and they will never be forgotten again.

While America will pursue cooperation and commerce with other nations, we are renewing our commitment to the first duty of every government: the duty of our citizens. This bond is the source of America's strength and that of every responsible nation represented here today.

If this organization is to have any hope of successfully confronting the challenges before us, it will depend, as President Truman said some 70 years ago, on the

*"independent strength of its members."* If we are to embrace the opportunities of the future and overcome the present dangers together, there can be no substitute for strong, sovereign, and independent nations — nations that are rooted in their histories and invested in their destinies; nations that seek allies to befriend, not enemies to conquer; and most important of all, nations that are home to patriots, to men and women who are willing to sacrifice for their countries, their fellow citizens, and for all that is best in the human spirit.

In remembering the great victory that led to this body's founding, we must never forget that those heroes who fought against evil also fought for the nations that they loved.

Patriotism led the Poles to die to save Poland, the French to fight for a free France and the Brits to stand strong for Britain.

Today, if we do not invest ourselves, our hearts and our minds in our nations, if we will not build strong families, safe communities and healthy societies for ourselves, no one can do it for us.

We cannot wait for someone else, for faraway countries or far-off bureaucrats — we can't do it. We must solve our problems, to build our prosperity, to secure our futures, or we will be vulnerable to decay, domination and defeat.

The true question for the United Nations today, for people all over the world who hope for better lives for themselves and their children, is a basic one: Are we still patriots? Do we love our nations enough to protect their sovereignty and to take ownership of their futures? Do we revere them enough to defend their interests, preserve their cultures and ensure a peaceful world for their citizens?

One of the greatest American patriots, John Adams, wrote that the American Revolution was *"effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people."*

That was the moment when America awoke, when we looked around and understood that we were a nation. We realized who we were, what we valued, and what we would give our lives to defend. From its very first moments, the American story is the story of what is possible when people take ownership of their future. The United States of America has been among the greatest forces for good in the history of the world, and the greatest defenders of sovereignty, security, and prosperity for all.

(continued....)





Now we are calling for a great reawakening of nations, for the revival of their spirits, their pride, their people, and their patriotism.

History is asking us whether we are up to the task. Our answer will be a renewal of will, a rediscovery of resolve and a rebirth of devotion. We need to defeat the enemies of humanity and unlock the potential of life itself.

Our hope is a word and world of proud, independent nations that embrace their duties, seek friendship, respect others and make common cause in the greatest shared interest of all: a future of dignity and peace for the people of this wonderful Earth.

This is the true vision of the United Nations, the ancient wish of every people, and the deepest yearning that lives inside every sacred soul.

So let this be our mission, and let this be our message to the world: We will fight together, sacrifice together and stand together for peace, for freedom, for justice, for family, for humanity and for the almighty God who made us all.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the nations of the world. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

**Source of verbatim text of speech:**

[www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/09/19/trumps-menacing-united-nations-speech-annotated/?utm\\_term=.5acf61a68b77](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/09/19/trumps-menacing-united-nations-speech-annotated/?utm_term=.5acf61a68b77)



~ Note ~

In reply to a few of our Sky Soldier buddies who've asked why we include speeches by President Trump, we stated:

1) we included speeches which involve our military by Commanders In Chief Bush and Obama in past issues, and  
2) we deem it equally important Commander In Chief Trump's speeches which address and involve our military be captured verbatim and for all time. Ed

### ***A politician's speech worth reading....***



**Washington, D.C. --- U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) delivered the following remarks after being awarded the National Constitution Center's annual Liberty Medal. Vice President Joe Biden, Chairman of the National Constitution Center's Board of Trustees, presented the 2017 Liberty Medal to Senator McCain for his lifetime of sacrifice and service to the nation:**

**T**hank you, Joe, my old, dear friend, for those mostly undeserved kind words. Vice President Biden and I have known each other for a lot of years now, more than forty, if you're counting. We knew each other back when we were young and handsome and smarter than everyone else but were too modest to say so.



Joe was already a senator, and I was the Navy's liaison to the Senate. My duties included escorting senate delegations on overseas trips, and in that capacity, I supervised the disposition of the delegation's luggage, which could require -- now and again -- when no one of lower rank was available for the job -- that I carry someone worthy's bag. Once or twice that worthy turned out to be the young senator from Delaware. I've resented it ever since.

*(continued....)*



Joe has heard me joke about that before. I hope he has heard, too, my profession of gratitude for his friendship these many years. It has meant a lot to me. We served in the Senate together for over twenty years, during some eventful times, as we passed from young men to the fossils who appear before you this evening. We didn't always agree on the issues. We often argued -- sometimes passionately. But we believed in each other's patriotism and the sincerity of each other's convictions. We believed in the institution we were privileged to serve in. We believed in our mutual responsibility to help make the place work and to cooperate in finding solutions to our country's problems. We believed in our country and in our country's indispensability to international peace and stability and to the progress of humanity. And through it all, whether we argued or agreed, Joe was good company. Thank you, old friend, for your company and your service to America.

Thank you, too, to the National Constitution Center, and everyone associated with it for this award. Thank you for that video, and for the all too generous compliments paid to me this evening. I'm aware of the prestigious company the Liberty Medal places me in. I'm humbled by it, and I'll try my best not to prove too unworthy of it.

Some years ago, I was present at an event where an earlier Liberty Medal recipient spoke about America's values and the sacrifices made for them. It was 1991, and I was attending the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The World War II veteran, estimable patriot and good man, President George H.W. Bush, gave a moving speech at the USS Arizona memorial. I remember it very well. His voice was thick with emotion as he neared the end of his address. I imagine he was thinking not only of the brave Americans who lost their lives on December 7, 1941, but of the friends he had served with and lost in the Pacific where he had been the Navy's youngest aviator.

*'Look at the water here, clear and quiet ...' he directed, 'One day, in what now seems another lifetime, it wrapped its arms around the finest sons any nation could ever have, and it carried them to a better world.'* He could barely get out the last line, *'May God bless them, and may God bless America, the most wondrous land on earth.'*

The most wondrous land on earth, indeed. I've had the good fortune to spend sixty years in service to this wondrous land. It has not been perfect service, to be sure, and there were probably times when the country might have benefited from a little less of my help. But

I've tried to deserve the privilege as best I can, and I've been repaid a thousand times over with adventures, with good company, and with the satisfaction of serving something more important than myself, of being a bit player in the extraordinary story of America. And I am so very grateful.

What a privilege it is to serve this big, boisterous, brawling, intemperate, striving, daring, beautiful, bountiful, brave, magnificent country. With all our flaws, all our mistakes, with all the frailties of human nature as much on display as our virtues, with all the rancor and anger of our politics, we are blessed.

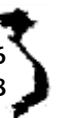
We are living in the land of the free, the land where anything is possible, the land of the immigrant's dream, the land with the storied past forgotten in the rush to the imagined future, the land that repairs and reinvents itself, the land where a person can escape the consequences of a self-centered youth and know the satisfaction of sacrificing for an ideal, the land where you can go from aimless rebellion to a noble cause, and from the bottom of your class to your party's nomination for president.

We are blessed, and we have been a blessing to humanity in turn. The international order we helped build from the ashes of world war, and that we defend to this day, has liberated more people from tyranny and poverty than ever before in history. This wondrous land has shared its treasures and ideals and shed the blood of its finest patriots to help make another, better world. And as we did so, we made our own civilization more just, freer, more accomplished and prosperous than the America that existed when I watched my father go off to war on December 7, 1941.

***To fear the world we have organized and led for three-quarters of a century, to abandon the ideals we have advanced around the globe, to refuse the obligations of international leadership and our duty to remain 'the last best hope of earth' for the sake of some half-baked, spurious nationalism cooked up by people who would rather find scapegoats than solve problems is as unpatriotic as an attachment to any other tired dogma of the past that Americans consigned to the ash heap of history.***

(emphasis added)

(continued....)



We live in a land made of ideals, not blood and soil. We are the custodians of those ideals at home, and their champion abroad. We have done great good in the world. That leadership has had its costs, but we have become incomparably powerful and wealthy as we did. We have a moral obligation to continue in our just cause, and we would bring more than shame on ourselves if we don't. We will not thrive in a world where our leadership and ideals are absent. We wouldn't deserve to.

I am the luckiest guy on earth. I have served America's cause -- the cause of our security and the security of our friends, the cause of freedom and equal justice -- all my adult life. I haven't always served it well. I haven't even always appreciated what I was serving. But among the few compensations of old age is the acuity of hindsight. I see now that I was part of something important that drew me along in its wake even when I was diverted by other interests. I was, knowingly or not, along for the ride as America made the future better than the past.

And I have enjoyed it, every single day of it, the good ones and the not so good ones. I've been inspired by the service of better patriots than me. I've seen Americans make sacrifices for our country and her causes and for people who were strangers to them but for our common humanity, sacrifices that were much harder than the service asked of me. And I've seen the good they have done, the lives they freed from tyranny and injustice, the hope they encouraged, the dreams they made achievable.

"May God bless them. May God bless America, and give us the strength and wisdom, the generosity and compassion, to do our duty for this wondrous land, and for the world that counts on us. With all its suffering and dangers, the world still looks to the example and leadership of America to become, another, better place. What greater cause could anyone ever serve.

Thank you again for this honor. I'll treasure it.



## VA Awards Grants to Help Homeless and At-risk Veterans and Families

**WASHINGTON** – Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has awarded \$343 million in grants to 288 nonprofit organizations to help low-income Veterans and their families.

The grants were awarded under VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

*"With these important grants, we are able to leverage the expertise of local experts to help our most economically vulnerable Veterans avoid or exit homelessness,"* said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. *"This is another VA program that moves at-risk Veterans toward housing and independence."*

SSVF funding, which supports outreach, case management and other flexible assistance to rapidly re-house Veterans who become homeless or to prevent Veterans from becoming homeless, was awarded to organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

SSVF served more than 148,800 participants, including approximately 95,300 Veterans and 31,950 children in fiscal year 2016. As a result of these and other efforts, Veteran homelessness is down significantly since 2010.

In addition, approximately 360,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly re-housed or prevented from falling into homelessness as a result of VA's homelessness programs and targeted housing vouchers through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Today's recipients competed successfully for grants under a Dec. 7, 2016, Notice of Fund Availability. The funding will support SSVF services in fiscal 2018. Information about the SSVF program, including the complete list of grantees, may be found at [www.va.gov/homeless/SSVF/](http://www.va.gov/homeless/SSVF/)

Source:

[www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2947](http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2947)





On 19 November 1967, SP4 Jack L. Croxdale, II, Radio Operator, PFC Benjamin D. De Herrera, Squad Leader, and Sgt. Donald landoli, Squad Leader were members of Company C, 503rd Infantry on a search-and-destroy operation in South Vietnam in the vicinity of grid coordinates YB 798 138. At 1435 hours, Companies A, C and D (503rd Infantry), were in heavy contact with an unknown-size North Vietnamese force and were surrounded. During the operation Sgt. landoli was wounded and was seen in the Company C command post area at grid coordinates YD 797 137, along with SP4 Croxdale and PFC De Herrera. At 1850 Hours a Marine bomber accidentally dropped a 500-pound bomb on the command post area, resulting in additional US personnel killed in addition to those killed in action because of enemy activity. The following day a search of the area was conducted; the remains of SP4 Croxdale, PFC De Herrera and Sgt. landoli were identified and tagged. However, only the remains of PFC De Herrera and SP4 Croxdale were reported to have been placed on a helicopter enroute to Dak To. Following the attacks, a three-day search of the battle area was conducted without success in locating Sgt. landoli. However, as of 4 January 1968 the US Army mortuary at Tan Son Nhut, South Vietnam, had not processed or identified any remains of PFC De Herrera, Sgt. landoli or SP4 Croxdale, and the location of those remains is unknown.

# FULFILLING OUR NATION'S PROMISE

By Wambi Cook  
Alpha Company  
2/503rd Infantry  
173d Airborne Brigade  
(Separate)  
February 1967 –  
February 1968



Wambi at Dak To, 1967

# Return to Hill 875

March 4, 5, 6, 2017

## PROLOGUE

Before I go any further, you may want to first research as much as possible *The Battle of Dak To*, specifically, Hill 875. There are numerous unclassified resources i.e., After Action Reports (AAR) and several documentaries to name just two that are freely available if properly requested. I'm hoping in doing so, you'll have a broader perspective and respect for what I'm about to reveal.



According to the United States Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), there are 82,565 Americans unaccounted for from past conflicts: WWII 73,068 - Korean War 7,754 - Vietnam War 1611 - Cold War 6126 - Iraq & Other Conflicts 6. Out of the 82,000 missing, 75% of the losses are located in the Asia-Pacific theatre, and over 41,000 of the missing are presumed lost at sea. The DPAA's mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel from past conflicts. Their research and operational missions include coordination with hundreds of countries and municipalities around the world.

(continued....)



## DPAACASE 0921

I retired in 2006 after 40 plus years as an administrator in both secondary and postsecondary education. My full time job is husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, sibling and friend. You can only imagine how I (Pittsburgh, PA born & raised) felt when in late August of 2016, I was contacted via email by a Senior South East Asian Analyst, Ray Kern, of the DPAA (here forth referred to as the Agency). He asked if I'd be interested in joining their elite team of research and investigative experts along with two former 173d helicopter pilots, Casper Platoon, Steve Greene and AHC 335th Cowboys, Jim McLaughlin on an assignment the agency had been expecting approval since 2008. Our Objective: Locate and identify the remains of three 173d Airborne Brigade, 2nd Battalion infantrymen unaccounted for from the battle for Hill 875.



Jack Croxdale



Ben De Herrera



Don landoli

November 1967 was the deadliest month of the entire war for the 173d. The 173rd Airborne Brigade sustained over 209 KIA, 642 WIA and 12 helicopters shot down. Last but not least, there were \*3 MIA, SP4 Jack Croxdale, PFC Benjamin D. De Herrera, and Sgt. Donald landoli. For decades the prevailing theory by those familiar with the battle, hypothesized that these three previously wounded troopers had the added misfortune of being vaporized by a friendly bomb while awaiting their extraction. This conclusion was quite credible considering that approximately 40% of all KIA and WIA during the battle were attributable to the 500 pound High Explosive bomb piloted by a US Marine pilot. All the wounded had been centrally placed in a triage locality adjacent to the command post. The three MIA were a part of this cluster. Almost fifty years have passed. Can the Agency realistically expect to find any vestiges of these brave paratroopers? A question I posed directly to Ray.

*"If the bomb scenario is more likely than not,"* I asked, *"why is the DPAA pursuing what appears to be a remote gamble for success?"* Ray reminded me of their resolute commitment to the Agency's motto:

## "Fulfilling Our Nation's Promise"

### CIVILIAN WITNESSES

Through the internet, I'd discovered Jim Mc Laughlin, a California-raised farm boy. As a helicopter commander with the 335th AHC, Jim did two tours in Vietnam, but stopped flying choppers soon after his discharge. Jim worked for the California Department of Food and Agriculture as an office and field computer technician, digital cartographer, and GPS Specialist (mapping specialist). I'd first contacted him via the internet in 2007. My first return to Vietnam was upcoming that next April, and I wanted all he had on Hill 1338 (Battle of the Slopes) and Hills 875 and 882. Needless to say, his maps proved invaluable in 2008 and every trip thereafter. I got to meet him in 2015 at the Chino, California Yanks Air Museum. A refurbished 335th AHC Huey was being dedicated and we became fast friends immediately. His mapping resource library is highly sought after by governmental entities and the general public as well.



The 335th Assault Helicopter Company's (Cowboys) Huey at the Chino, CA Yanks Air Museum (web photo)

Steve Greene (native New Yorker) and I first connected through the internet as well. Steve, like Jim, did two tours of combat flying as a Casper Platoon commander. The first was cut short due to being wounded, but he completed a full 12 months on the second go round....



(continued....)





....Steve reacted after reading a piece I'd written on the Battle of the Slopes (22/June/1967 in 2010). He flew sorties during Hill 875. Five months earlier, Steve had three Hueys shot out from under him during the June mêlée. His intimate and personal insights surrounding both clashes made him a wise choice for this undertaking. He spent over 47 years as a professional pilot; medic evacuation, fighting forest fires, tourist guide, traffic reporter, movies, local and national news, just to mention a few. My perspective would be that of the "Boots on the ground" with Steve and Jim, "Eyes in the Sky." We three Sky Musketeers enthusiastically embraced our good providence and clicked right off the bat.



**Cowboy Cmdr James McLaughlin, Wambi and Casper Platoon Cmdr Stephen Greene at Novetal Hotel, Da Nang.**

Our area of operation would be the Central Highlands of Kontum Province, Dak To City -- specifically, the site of Hill 875, (YouTube -megawambi) which is located near the Sa Lon village, Ngoc Hoi District. On 22 June 1967, this expanse was also the scene of America's costliest loss of life, by a single US unit in a one-day battle. Seventy-six (76) members of Alpha Company 2/503 were annihilated by an estimated NVA force of 1500 North Vietnamese regulars. Previous and subsequent Battles of Dak To would take an especially large toll on the whole of 173d Brigade.



**At Hill 875, paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), 503rd Infantry Regiment look on at their fallen Sky Soldier buddies. (web photo)**

Ray mentioned that the Agency was well aware of our intimate engagements during the battle, in fact, this knowledge was the primary impetus behind our being selected for this mission. We three somehow survived the five-day bloodbath, and the Agency's policy mandated that whenever possible, employ actual 'Eyewitness Participants' to augment their objective. For all intents and purposes, and the official records, we were officially designated as Civilian Witnesses.

Without prompting, I made it crystal clear that there were probably other Hill 875 ground combatants that were better suited than I for this assignment. He said he'd researched my military and civilian back story, and I also came highly recommended by both Steve and Jim. Over the years I'd written extensive first-hand accounts relating to both Hills 1338 (Slopes) and Hill 875. I'd mined my own verdant memory by viewing all available documentaries and read many eyewitnesses first-hand accounts surrounding the battle. I was confident that my overall knowledge of the Hill 875 battle was equal to most military pundits.



**The airstrip at Dak To near the base of Hill 875, circa 1967. (web photo)**

I will honestly admit that I was fearful throughout every enemy firefight I was ever a part of (and there were many). However, this condition worked to my advantage because for my 12-month tour of duty in an infantry rifle company, I persisted in a perpetual state of vigilance. I was always prepared for the worst case scenario.

I instantaneously ceased second guessing the agency's decision. I was the right candidate for the task. Over the years I'd spoken with many combat veterans who could recall scrupulous descriptions of their every moment during a particular battle. Were as I, on the other hand, commencing several weeks before Hill 875, resided in an almost Zen-like survival mind-set, and remained so from one breath to the next, exhaling only after the Hill was finally taken, ironically, on Thanksgiving Day.

*(continued....)*





I went on to expound that I'd just returned the previous April from my third, and what I exclaimed at the time to all within earshot, my final "personal" trek into Southeast Asia. My Vietnam Bucket List was complete. But after a brief Nano-second of reflection, I unswervingly accepted the invitation with the honor and grace in which it was intended - and before he changed his mind. I next prompted Ray that I and two other 173d members who had successfully mounted both Hills 875 and 882 in February 2011, the first, and likely, the only American combatants to have done so. He acknowledged they were aware of this exploit as well. Indeed, I contemplated, the Agency had done their homework.

Hell, yeah, I was the right man for this duty. Let's do this!

Please forgive me, but I'll be referencing my three earlier Vietnam ventures throughout this narrative, a minor indulgence that I hope will ease the flow of the text.

Case 0921 would be the first of four inclusive missions that officially commenced when we arrived in Honolulu on 23 February with an unofficial end date of March 21st 2017 (an approximate date the fourth and final team was scheduled to return to DPAA headquarters). I was delighted to learn the government was underwriting our entire trip including all our expenses. I estimate the total "witness expense" was in excess \$6,000 per man. My curiosity led me to inquire what the cost of a typical investigative undertaking might be, and was told it depended on any number of variables, to include length of mission, location, number of personnel required, equipment etc. In other words, "It's none of your damn business!" Surprisingly, I didn't take it personally. No harm, no foul.

## **DPAA HEADQUARTERS WEST, HONOLULU, HAWAII**

Soon after checking into to the Hale Ali' Gateway Inn located on Hickam AFB, we proceeded to the DPAA Asia Pacific Headquarters, a short drive from our residence. Our orientation agenda listed the first three days for 'Acclimatization' which I took as their opportunity to give us 70 somethings the once over before heading to the hinterlands of Vietnam. I imagined their honest thoughts were, "Are these old farts really up to the task?" That afternoon we were welcomed by unit Navy Commander Jones and SGM Swam at the Agency's strikingly beautiful two-year old facility. Later that same afternoon, we toured the entire facility and were warmly greeted by a variety of people. We were to meet some of the available Agency administrative

support staffers, forensic specialists, and anthropologists, to mention just a small segment of the personnel. Each individual conveyed words of encouragement and success toward the upcoming endeavor. It was perceptibly apparent; their words of inspiration never appeared perfunctory or the least bit obligatory.



**CSM Swamm, Jim, Wambi, Steve and Navy DPAA  
Commander Roberts at DDPA Asia-Pacific Headquarters.**

We were all exceedingly impressed by the state of the art CSI laboratories. Everything one would imagine a science lab to be could be found here. Unfortunately, we were restricted as to what we could video or photo, but left knowing that the staffs behind those lab coats were world class scientific professionals with all the skills and resources essential to get the job done. There were tons of questions we wanted to ask, but time constraints won out. Check the official website for detailed information. <http://www.dpaa.mil/>

Later that afternoon, we took part in Case 0921 study analysis with the team historian, Dr. Jim Cloninger. Jim had been conscientiously researching and studying our case for months. Though it was apparent he knew the events of the battle from every angle, he modestly deferred to each of our specific remembrances for the more personal and intimate broad strokes of the battle's nuances. He wanted to know any and everything about our involvement during the mêlée. Our individual and group interviews with Jim and Ray were conducted in the agency's all-encompassing resource library. We delineated classified and unclassified After Action Reports, a myriad of detailed maps, GPS coordinates, and a couple detailed autopsy reports....

*(continued....)*



....In the back of my mind, I felt positively that once we identified the location of either of the two landing zones or perhaps the location of the 500 pound bomb crater, I could better fix or pinpoint my ground location during the battle with some degree of certainty.

I was taken aback when Steve and Jim posed a couple of dubious questions as to possible alternatives to the missing troopers: Could the three KIA bodies awaiting extraction have fallen from the pile of KIA into the 30 meter, precipitous abyss adjacent to the LZ? Or, perhaps, they fell from the helicopter while in flight? Each commander's face displayed noticeable shock at these questions, and were exceedingly demonstrative in their response: Both scenarios were extraordinarily doubtful. They and their crews were seasoned professionals, and to infer they would tolerate such to occur was insulting. These and any other alternative possibilities were never raised again.

I was curiously intrigued by the numerous anecdotal recollections of the varied and diverse military personnel who were not necessarily active boots on the ground, but played pivotal roles in its successful outcome. Over the years I've spoken and written exhaustively about my personal memoirs of the 12 months I spent as a member of our elite but doomed Alpha Company. I drew from ghastly memories that for decades I vainly struggled to repress. For more the 35 years these commemorations usually invaded my thoughts in bits and pieces usually while asleep, but not uncommon during my waking hours. I've engaged in dozens of conversations with other "eyewitnesses" and for the most part, we all would typically agree on the basic sequence events of a particular incident. However, another account of same encounters, could sometimes deviate, and, oft-times, dramatically from one combatant to the other. I literally laid an arm's length from a buddy during a brutal firefight, and when recounting our separate recall, the casual listener could easily conclude we were referring to two distinctly different occurrences.

The three of us were especially stunned after reading official accounts of the behind scenes deeds of a handful of so called experts whose actions (or inactions, my supposition) led up to the US Marine pilot who was responsible for dropping the aforementioned 500lb high explosive bomb in the midst of our wounded, resulting in an estimated 40 friendly fire deaths. Someday the exactness behind this deadly fiasco will be disclosed for public scrutiny to judge. I reserve my judgment for later discourse.

After lunch, we met with our team physician, Colonel John Vogel. He wanted to confirm we'd brought sufficient prescribed medications, and conferred on the mandatory malaria meds protocol. I told him I hadn't needed them before, so why

now? The full bird colonel made it clear that we were *his* personal and professional charges. He wasn't cutting any corners when it came to our physical as well as mental wellbeing. John reminded us that the entire team's foremost duty was our safety. He warned that their interest could, at times, seem gratuitous and overbearing, but we should trust in their professional judgement without question. We were to discover that John was a man of his word, thank goodness.

The following free day was devoted to Cultural Awareness activities. Jim and I visited the Pearl Harbor Punch Bowl featuring the US Arizona. That same afternoon, Steve joined us at the Pacific Aviation Museum. Those two knew the names and classification of every damn flying machine displayed from WWII up to the present. I asked a lot of questions, and they patiently provided answers that I could easily understand. The night was spent at a food truck venue downtown. We were the oldest by decades of the couple hundred foodie attendees. Food from a truck has never set well with me. I had wanted to walk along the strand of Waikiki Beach, but the stringent time constraints made it all but impossible. The first time in four trips to the islands that I hadn't done so.



**Colonel Vogel (ctr) with Wambi during their ascent up 875**



**USS Arizona**

(continued....)



Our last day in Honolulu was spent ensuring that all our gear was ready. They'd provided a list of both mandatory and recommended items we would need during the 13-day mission. This advice I followed implicitly. Having been exposed to the country and its environs previously, I had a slight advantage over my two colleagues which would serve me well in the long run. There was one article of clothing we were not permitted to bring: camouflage clothing. I skirted around this restriction and proudly packed and wore a blue 173d insignia camo shirt. Apparently, past witnesses came "too well prepared." (John Ramboesque) I knew exactly what and how much I would require. I'd brought a medium-size canvas bag to check, and a smaller carry-on. Most of the hotels offered daily laundry service, and I had no stylish reservations about wearing the same outfit more than once.

We met the rest of the research and investigation team that night at the base AMC air terminal. Along with Historian Dr. Jim Cloninger and Doc Vogel, we were joined by: Co-Team Leaders, SFCs Marcus Taylor and Lead Investigator, Chris Varner, Dr. Josh Peck, Anthropologist, two military veteran Vietnamese American Linguists, Kelvin Ngo and Kuong Vu, one Life Support Investigator, Rex Hodges, one Navy Chief Petty Officer, Dennis Anderson, one AF Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) expert, SSGT. Steve Alvarez. They would travel by military air transport, ostensibly because the volume of equipment the mission required wasn't cost effective to ship via a commercial flight. We, on the other hand, were booked on United Airlines, departing early the next morning. We all would meet as a complete team in Da Nang the following night. The flight to Da Nang via Narita Japan Airport alone was over 9 and one-half hours, Narita to Da Nang another five hours or so. We three elected to upgrade (at our own expense) at least to Japan - \$450 well spent, I can assure you.

No one with the Agency would probably admit to it, but I'm certain that if at any time during this three-day orientation, had any team member detected or had serious concerns about either our mental or physical deficiencies, they had a moral and ethical duty to relieve us of our commitments. Of course, we three were not the least bit worried. We were ready from the jump. Let's do this!

## DA NANG DPAA CASE #0921

Da Nang is just one of several dozen or so picturesque coastal cities located along Vietnam's eastern boundary. Since the war's official end some 40 odd years ago, the country has been transformed dramatically in many aspects. It has one of the fastest growing economies of any South East Asian developing country. Yet stray a mile or so outside of most urban areas and time has stood still for the greater portion of the population. A professed conservative communistic philosophy continues to hold sway over the people, but to the average visitor, capitalism is alive, and thriving. Most major world banks are well invested within the infrastructure. McDonald's, Pizza Hut, and Starbucks, to mention just a few western eateries, are deeply embedded in their everyday lives. I imagined Uncle Ho rolling in his Hanoi mausoleum with a WTF look etched on his face. Xin loi (Loosely translated, Tough shit).



**Wambi, with nightlights of Da Nang in background.**  
(web photo)

This Da Nang jump off point was chosen because it is a mere five-hour overland drive to our Kontum Province destination. Kontum is situated on the western most border of Vietnam. Eight miles or so as the crow flies from both the Cambodian and Laotian borders. Their eastern mountain ranges are easily visible from most moderate elevations throughout this particular region of the Central Highlands.

*(continued....)*





Kelvin Ngo had been sent ahead days earlier, and he met us at the airport to transport us to our hotel. The rest of the team was due in about the same time. Our residence for the next three days would be the Da Nang Hyatt Resort and Spa. The entire ocean front property met or exceeded most four or five star stateside accommodations: king size bed, walk in closet, Jacuzzi tub, multiple pools with swim-up bars, several restaurants, and a full one-hour body massage, and pedicure/manicure could be had \$20 (add \$3. for ear groom). I should also point out a sumptuous breakfast buffet was included in our daily rate of \$119. per night. You want proof? View my Facebook postings, at your envious leisure.



**Da Nang Hyatt Regency Resort**

Our first day to the site wasn't scheduled for another two days. We assembled as a group for the first time the next morning. Several American civilian and military personnel from the Hanoi main headquarters met with us to go over the details of the mission as well as the protocol expected between us and our Vietnamese counterparts. Several of the team had upwards of 30 missions under their belt, and for a couple, this was their maiden voyage. The Hanoi contingent also brought with them five 4-wheel drive SUVs and a 3-ton equipment truck we would require. Apparently, the US motor pool has over 50 such vehicles in their Hanoi HQ.

We held a team "building" dinner at a downtown Italian restaurant the first night. The fare was decent and a cocktail or two made it even better. At this venue our personal relationships with the team were launched. We got to know one another on a more upfront and personal level. For a couple hours we shared mutual background stories, and of course war stories were in no short supply. From that moment on, our bond became stouter with each passing day. It was clear to us three that the team was prepared to assist us in any and all aspects of our goal.

We were frequently assured that each member was always available to address any of our needs, no matter how minor it might appear. This was not just lip service; they meant it and would demonstrate their commitment to our specific needs at several junctures before our journey's end.



**American and Vietnamese friends share a toast at the beginning of a worthy mission.**

The following evening we were joined by the official Vietnamese members of the mission at popular Vietnamese restaurant - their treat. Its personnel consisted of three to four army field grade officers (civilian dressed) and up to four assistants/drivers. One young major had spent time in the United States and his English, though not fluent, was more than passable. Thankfully, our Vietnamese-born American linguists were always available to interpret and smooth over any of our unintended cultural gaffes. As an example, we were to address questions directly to the officer even though they didn't speak a word of English. I was sure a couple understood more English than they led on, but we followed the ritual as instructed. The Vietnamese commonly toast throughout the meal. Their drink of choice is best described as (60%) rice moonshine. This homemade elixir (always dispensed from a Coke bottle) is fairly potent, and after eight or ten two shots, who gives a shit. This dual-group interaction would continue through every joint lunch and dinner meal thereafter.

We were scheduled to depart for Kontum no later than 8:00 AM the next morning. I insisted on a wakeup call. I don't think I was alone in this appeal.

*(continued....)*



My SUV included Steve Greene and Doc Vogel. Our conversations ran the gamut from our work experiences, families, world points of interest, to our political leanings. There was always some subject that piqued each of our interests which made for lively and convivial exchanges during the course of the ride. The drive itself was relatively uneventful. I'd taken a similar ramble on two earlier outings, but this time around we would take an alternate route which would circumvent the less daunting mountain route that I'd remembered. Nevertheless, the rugged backdrop never ceased to amaze.

At times when we would run out of small talk, we took in some of the most awe-inspiring landscape imaginable. Much of this majestic geography should be seen to be believed. You could drop a Californian (High Sierras), Georgian (Pines), Tennessean (Smoky Mountains), or Alaskan (Anywhere) into its midst and they'd swear they were home. Oft times I would catch myself recalling how hellish these hinterlands had been to millions during the war. Some of my worst incubuses were fostered here. Although I've long accepted the fact that these imaginings will remain in my psyche for eternity, and I'm fine with that. My fate could have been far worse. By retaining such dreadful thoughts, my appreciation for living grows exponentially.

Our gear was stored on the SUVs and we were on the road by 7:45 AM. I recapped to the team leaders that the road up the mountain that appeared freshly constructed in 2011 was probably more navigable this time around. We Americans numbered 13, and the Vietnamese were equal in number. All of our team carried an oversized backpack filled with articles related to their specialty, and at least two 2.5 liters of water. The Vietnamese, for the most part, carried nothing but water. I on the other hand, had, after leaving Vietnam in February 1968, vowed to never get rain soaked and never shoulder a backpack of any kind. My carrier bag of choice was a single sling canvas man-bag, large enough to hold my iPhone, iPad, hand towel and a couple energy bars.

## THE HILL THAT WASN'T

My presumption of a rapid ascension to the top of the Hill came into rapid question when we abruptly veered off the main Highway 14 that I remembered dropped us off a few hundred meters from the southern base of the Hill in 2011. This alternative route carried us onto a poorly maintained, single lane dirt road which bisected a trifling hamlet made up of a half dozen clay and straw outbuildings. This must be a faster, substitute passage to the base, I reasoned. After five arduous minutes and still seated in the SUV, my

eyes became transfixed on what was the unmistakable silhouetted image of the Hill, just as I'd remembered it in 2011. I remember thinking to myself,

***"I told you I'd be back."***

Then, without warning, a surplus of battle ponderings cascaded from consciousness. I hastily closed my eyes, deeply inhaled as if it was my last breath for what seemed like an eternity, followed with short exhaling breaths as an expectant mother might employ during child delivery. I didn't expect this onslaught of emotions to erupt so suddenly, if at all. I'd been there and done that. I mentally and visibly wasn't as prepared for this happenstance as I'd thought. Now what's next, I wondered? I felt a profound urge to scream "AYYYY!!", from the depths of my lungs? Should I? Certainly this wouldn't come as a shock to the seasoned investigators, but what about the others? How would they react to my unbridled demonstrative outpouring? PTSD, they might conjecture? I immediately gathered my emotional ramblings and decided otherwise. Next, I rapt my view directly at the base of the Hill then gradually followed upward to the highest point visible. I took another, more subtle breath, but mentally let out what I measured as an even healthier exhalation of exaltation that only I could understand. Okay, I'm ready for whatever comes next.



**Three patriots take five on their heated ascent of Hill 875.**

After gathering my thoughts, I was immediately struck by how unintimidating and indistinguishable the Hill appeared amongst the thousands of similar undulating landscapes native to this mountainous province....

*(continued....)*





....Without detailed grid coordinates provided by the Agency, to the average observer, this vague mount is unremarkable from one hill to the next. Yes, but unlike so many of the other adjoining dunes, this lifeless knoll is woefully scarred on all sides, from top to bottom. I didn't recognize this starting point from 2011, so I assumed we were approaching our objective from a different side. Years of relentless and bloody land clashes coupled with thousands of pounds of armament had destroyed the Hill's bloody essence. Yet I was soon to discover that 40 years later, many resilient inhabitants thought to the contrary, and continued to work the land by cultivating the hardy pepper and manioc plants on the steepest of slopes. It was good enough for their ancestors, so why not themselves?

The anticipation that we'd soon be driving to its summit was palpable. Then, unexpectedly and without warning, the lead vehicle came to a jarring halt, and its occupants slowly began exiting and rapidly began removing their gear from the rear. Why have we stopped so far from the road that leads us directly to the top, I deliberated? Perhaps a lead element will deploy to reconnoiter our eventual route of travel to ensure its void of dangerous obstacles such as unexploded ordnance. Yes, that must be the plan. I could read the headlines, US CIVILIAN MIA INVESTIGATORS KILLED SEARCHING FOR VIETNAM VETERANS KILLED IN ACTION.

After a quick briefing, I was told I'd be taking point. What? Fifty years later and once again ordered to the front, involuntarily. Thanks for the last second heads up. Before taking my first step, Doc Vogel and CPO Anderson checked if I was ready and if I had my water. They then assured me that I should walk at a stride comfortable for me and to not worry about the rest of team. I'm certain these same comforting instructions were conveyed to Jim and Steve as well. The team would adapt to our physical capabilities. If I was harboring any lingering doubts about their sincerity regarding our safety and welfare, this gesture of genuine concern sealed the deal.

I didn't advance at any one sequence for more than 30 meters before I had to stop to rest and hydrate. At these intervals I'd peer back at the column to see if I detected any frustration, exasperation, or annoyance because of my plodding pace. Thankfully, I could not. Naturally, some members probably yearned for a faster stride, but you couldn't tell by their body language. Another example of their unwavering support.

## HILL 875?

I ventured to a portion of the Hill where in 2011 I could look westward 8 kilometers, and could without difficulty extricate the intersecting borders of Laos and Cambodia. I had taken videos that clearly depicted this confluence. I asked Doc to shoot me a westerly azimuth from where I stood to replicate the scene from 2011, but before me reared a steep rise obstructing any view beyond its crest, making it impossible to discernably recognize any land distinctions beyond it. Why couldn't I now duplicate this same panorama? At that moment, I decided I must address these haunting doubts to the team sooner than later. Perhaps I can convince them it wasn't too late to change the site. If I was proved right, they'd understand and would alter the mission accordingly. I decided I would wait until we got in that afternoon and challenge them with my apprehensions, but until such time, nothing more need be said.



**Search team digging for remains of fallen troopers on Hill 875.**

For the next three or four hours, the remainder of the team went about their specific assignments; several proceeded down to where they hoped to find proof of the two landing zones or some semblance of the bomb crater at the very least. Some of the others began meticulously probing the soil (often on hands and knees) in five metered square grids. On occasion someone would ask us if anything looked familiar.

*(continued....)*





We voiced our limited recollections, but assured them that if anything concrete emerged, we'd let them know post haste. Find the LZs or bomb crater, I thought. I was poised that this discovery would be a game changer. Of course they wouldn't find either since they exist on another Hill altogether.

After a half hour of involuntary elephant grass acupuncture, I meandered over to view the goings on downhill. I observed Chris and Jim, heads bowed low, slowly and systematically, crisscrossing each other's path. I called out inquiring if they'd found anything? I was especially interested in this specific section because according to what I'd learned in my briefings, my company, Alpha, would have been positioned in this precise location on November 19, the first day of the assault. They could literally be tramping on the same ground I or my buddies had tread 49 years ago. I wasn't fooling myself. This supposition was well within the realm of possibilities. Without warning, a flood of unavoidable 'What ifs?' lurked portentously into my ponderings.

flank. So for the next hour, they analytically charted the area, but without success. They did, however, uncover several 'NVA' fighting possessions. The foxholes and slit trenches they spotted were extremely deteriorated but simply identifiable. They also detected an opening to what was probably the NVA's main bunker entrance or exit.



**During one of their assaults up the hill, 173d Sky Soldiers take firing positions in captured enemy trenches and bunkers. (web photo)**



**Wambi treks up Hill 875, today mostly barren terrain yet 50 years before a thickly-forested-covered-range where he and his buddies fought desperately for their lives.**

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted as I eavesdropped on walkie-talkie exchanges between Marcus and another member stationed somewhere in and around the opposite southern portion of the Hill. They had yet to signal affirmation of coming across any of the principal landmarks i.e., LZs or crater. I suggested they might conduct their search more to the East. I remembered Alpha's line of march was toward that

Some three hours later it was decided to call it a day. We would start anew first thing the next day. We gathered our belongings and started back on the same trail we'd taken six hours earlier. The terrain downward was just as tenuous as it was on the trek up, but we still managed to complete our descent in less than 15 minutes.

Before boarding our vehicles, I approached Jim Cloninger and Chris Varner and shared with both what I described as a couple persistent trepidations and questions I had about the site. I proposed we meet after dinner to address these minor concerns. Since it was another three hours before the dining room opened, they suggested we can meet in a conference room in a couple hours after freshening up. Earlier I apprised Jim and Steve of my proposition and asked them to join us. But first, a much needed shower was the order of the day.

*(continued....)*



I rushed right to my room and emailed Les Fuller (his wife, Billie) and Gene Counselman, my three 2011 travel mates, informing them of what had just transpired. I asked for their understanding and hoped I hadn't caused any of them unnecessary anguish. With a 16 hour time difference, I couldn't expect a response until that next morning at the soonest. How would this news be received by others? I could only hope for the best.



**L-R: Gene, Wambi and Les at Dak To in 2011.**  
(Photo taken by Billie Fuller)

I based my starting point where the maps' coordinates indicated not only where Alpha Company was rooted, but where my third platoon had dug in later early the morning of the 19th. Ideally, once I could determine the approximate position of third platoon, I could better localize where the crater likely could be found. I intensely recalled assuming a vigilant, and low-crouched fighting position as the sun began to slowly dissolve in the west. The entire scene was surreally calm. Was the beginning of the end about to commence. I always prepared for the worse.

At the time, the innocent wounded and CP were situated no more than 20 meters from where I settled. To this day, I have no explanation as to why my life was spared from the bomb's impact. While most who found refuge in chaotically fashioned fighting foxholes, I took my chances topside, and as close as possible to the front of our perimeter. I lay perpendicular using a fallen tree stump as my only shelter from whatever was to come next. Every man anticipated an all-out enemy dusk assault straightaway after the fatal bomb hit. Thankfully, this event was inexplicably not implemented by the enemy. We were ripe for picking. Why this opportune moment never materialized is still a mystery to this day?

By midday, members had uncovered a couple dozen negligible pieces of shrapnel, which are typically the product of exploded mortar rounds. They're usually found an inch or two from the ground surface. One battered piece of aluminum paper was also identified. I commented that it looked like it may have been used in a C Ration meal condiments package. They tagged it then bagged it.

In the fall of 1967, Hill 875 was the climactic clash that most of the Brigade had been expecting since our return to Kontum Province three weeks earlier. I recall when all segments of the Brigade, especially my aggressive Alpha Company, steadfastly and daily engaging the enemy nonstop leading up to the Hill. Yet no one could have predicted or foresaw what would culminate beginning November 19.

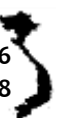
I soon realized my sensory memory bank had reached overload mode. I somehow willed my remembrances to a screeching halt. That was all I could or would handle for the day. Besides, I reasoned, I had another full day yet to come. I decided I would organize my thoughts that evening, putting me in a much better cerebral state for the proceedings to come.

We hadn't settled into the hotel lobby two minutes when Marcus informed the team that the Witnesses would not be joining them the next and final day. Why not?, I nippily queried. Apparently, they had collected sufficient qualitative data and physical articles the first two days. The third and last day would be utilized tethering these facts and figures into preliminary reports for the Hanoi and Honolulu offices. An official account disclosure could take several months and would be made public only after the families of the MIA have been updated.

I decided to use the day for a little personal sartorial indulgence. Vu escorted me to a local salon where, for less than \$10., I received a decent hair trim, pedicure, manicure, ear cleaning, and a procedure that massaged the bottom eyelids. Besides tickling the hell out of me, I found no redeeming benefit in the latter.

The team arrived early noon and nothing in detail was discussed about the day's findings. Chris was able to collect a large envelope of sacred soil that I'll distribute (or exchange for that of 2011) to my Herd brothers and friends as long as the supply lasts.

*(continued....)*





After our group dinner ended that evening, both crews retired to the front lobby lounge area where Steve passed out cigars and individual Casper Platoon insignia shot glasses. Steve personally poured each member a healthy snort of premium single malt scotch whiskey. He lugged this potion across the Pacific for this very occasion. I presented to every American and Vietnamese team member a commemorative 50th Anniversary 173d Challenge Coin. Once the groups gradually disbursed, I shared my personalized bottle of 173d 2012 California Cabernet Sauvignon to a handful of American members still able to walk and talk coherently.

Our road trip back to Da Nang on the 6th lacked the lively lighthearted banter we shared four days earlier. I can't speak for the others, but I would describe my mood as slightly morose. Our last Da Nang hotel, Novatel, was located along the river strand. Upon check-in, we were introduced to the three newest witnesses scheduled for the second and third missions. Two were with the 1st Calvary Division, (whose mission commenced the next morning with the same team) and one with the Americal Division. Their specific areas of investigation were just a couple hours from Da Nang. We volunteered brief overviews of what to expect in the coming days and wished them well. They joined us for dinner that same night.

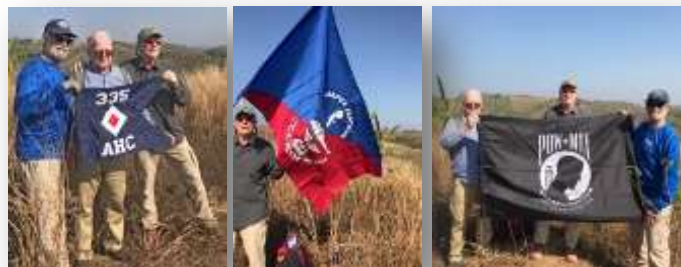
## EPILOGUE

Along with myself, there are no more than a handful of Alpha Company members who share the unenviable distinction of having had over 139 members of our unit KIA and over 250 WIA during our 12 months in Vietnam- all of whom were accounted for. The primary and unprejudiced impetus behind this mission was to extract unassailable evidence of the remains of three brave Sky Soldiers still unaccounted for from The Battle for Hill 875. To this end, our objective was not met. However, in my mind's eye, we did not fail, by any measure. What little we did ascertain will make the next phase of Case 0921 a lot easier for those to follow. Make no mistake, the Mission Continues.

To the families of Jack Croxdale, Benjamin De Herrera, Donald Iandoli and the remaining 82,000 American MIA/POW, never forget the DPAA's motto:

***“FULFILLING OUR  
NATION’S PROMISE.”***

## *At the Summit of 875*



**50 years later, Alpha Company's RTO Wambi Cook returns the 173d Airborne Brigade colors to the summit of Hill 875.  
*Lest we forget.***

**“SWEET IS WAR TO THOSE  
WHO’VE NEVER  
EXPERIENCED IT.”**



*Thank you Wambi, All the Way, brother!!*

