

September 2012, Issue 45

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Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 2/503 Photo of the Month ~



“Paratroopers jump off rubber rafts in a combat crossing of the Song Be River in D Zone, some 30 miles northeast of Saigon, Vietnam on Sept. 30, 1966. The 173rd Airborne Brigade began Operation Sioux City with several helicopter assaults. Boats followed the troops and an hour later A Company of the 2nd Battalion/173rd Airborne Brigade headed north across the 150 feet wide, fast flowing river, in rubber boats with outboard engines under cover of machine guns and air strikes.”

(AP Photo/Horst Faas)



Chaplain's Corner

We Are Called

Step back with me for a moment and let's relook at the words *"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."* Recall they come from a play penned by William Shakespeare (King Henry V), and the portion we're using is often referred to as the "St. Crispin's Day Speech." This writing was done nearly two hundred years after the battle between the French and British at Agincourt (1415). I believe it is a great example for leadership. Again, the speech is fiction. So whether you and I are at Agincourt, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan or Lexington, KY, there is a calling on our lives. *"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here I am! Send me."* Isa 6:8 The question is whether we will go?



Cap

One of my favorite writers is John Maxwell* and he deals with leaders, their calling and their response. One of my favorite stories deals, as I recall, with a football team that is in big time trouble. The football has been kicked off to them and they catch it but don't advance the ball very much. When the team goes back into the huddle they are penalized over and over for delay of game.

You and I are in the bleachers and we yell down – *"What's the matter with you guys, you are still in the huddle?"* They yell back, *"This is the greatest we've ever seen. What a group! The best fellowship! Some players have memorized the playbook – hundreds of plays!"* We yell, *"Why don't you get on line and play the game?!"* They yell back, *"Why should we? We might get hurt. No one gets hurt in the huddle!"*

Question: Am I, are you, are we, or is our Chapter in a "happy huddle?" Do we never step out of the huddle to apply what we've learned and what we're called to do? It's what happens after the huddle that counts.

Consider this...***"Be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you. For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others."***

II Tim 2L1-2

We Are Called. Maybe we are just at parade rest, marking time, and need help. Did you know for every 10 men in the average U.S. church (a) 9 will have kids who leave the church, (b) 8 will not find their jobs satisfying, (c) 6 will pay only the monthly minimum on credit cards, (d) 5 will have a major problem with pornography, (e) 4 will have a divorce affecting 1,000,000 children overall, and (g) all 10 will struggle to balance family and work.**

Just maybe we are being called to make a difference in our homes and in our community. And so – as the time grows short, what does that mean to me and you?

Have we...invited Him into our life?
Have we...spoken about Him to others?
Do we...know how to offer Christ?
Do we...know what our ministry gift(s) is/are?
Are we...a player in the game, or...are we still in the huddle?

We are called – but the question comes down to this; *who* is being called? And the answer is...

***"We few, we happy few,
we Band of Brothers."***

* Dr. John Maxwell, www.johnmaxwell.com

** Dr. Pat Morley, www.maninthemirror.org

Note: Tom Abraham, C/2/503d, '66/'67, sent this, *"I've been working with a Marine Wounded Warrior group called Semper Fi Outdoor Odyssey here in western PA. It's a great program, totally privately funded. MG Tom Jones, USMC (Ret) conducts it at his campground in the PA wilderness. He takes 20-30 young wounded warriors 5 or 6 times a year for a week to help prepare them for transition to civilian life. He's had Army, Navy, and even airborne troops. He has a whole cadre of volunteers who work with these kids all week long coaching them on how to plan and get their life back on track. They are all in the medical board waiting period. I go with many others on the last day to give them mock interviews as practice. The program has been in effect for 4+ years and has served about 900, mostly Marines and their families, in 32 sessions with between 30-35 per session."*

To help us reach others with this message, send me what you, your Chapter or other Vets are doing in this regard. Thanks.

Rev. Jack Kelley, LTC (Ret)
Former CO, A/2/503, RVN
JackTKelley@aol.com



Three US soldiers killed in Afghanistan identified

Stars and Stripes

Published: July 26, 2012



Justin Horsley, 1/503



Brenden Salazar, 1/503



Adam Ross, 2/503

GRAFENWÖHR, Germany — Three U.S. soldiers from sister infantry battalions in Italy who were killed in enemy attacks in Afghanistan during the past week have been identified.

Spc. Justin L. Horsley, 21, of Palm Bay, Fla., and Pfc. Brenden N. Salazar, 20, of Chuluota, Fla., were killed July 22 in Pul E Alam when enemy forces attacked their unit with an improvised explosive device, according to the Department of Defense.

Pfc. Adam C. Ross, 19, of Lyman, S.C., was killed by small arms fire in an attack two days later in Wardak province, according to a department news release.

The three soldiers were with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, which cased its colors in mid-June for a nine-month deployment to Logar and Wardak provinces. The 173rd is based in Vicenza, Italy, and commands subordinate units in both Italy and Germany.



A memorial ceremony was held at the chapel on Caserma Ederle honoring all three soldiers. Horsley and Salazar were assigned to the brigade's 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment; Ross was part of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment.

The 173rd has lost 82 soldiers in four deployments to Afghanistan and one to Iraq since 2003.

They Fought Together, They Died Together, They Came Home Together



“The remains of Army Spc. Justin L. Horsley were flown into Melbourne International Airport on Saturday morning. Members of the Army National Guard Honor Guard salute before removing the flag-draped casket from the plane.” (Rik Jesse/Florida Today)



“Members of the receiving party retire to their limousine after the coffin was removed from the plane.”

(Rik Jesse/Florida Today)



Solemn crowd greets fallen soldier as he returns home

By Ron Barnett
Staff Writer
GreenvilleOnline.com

Pfc. Adam Ross arrived home to a hero's welcome this afternoon.



The body of Upstate soldier, Pfc. Adam Ross returned to Greer Thursday afternoon. Ross was killed last week in Afghanistan. (Ken Osburn / Staff)

The Byrnes High School graduate, killed in Afghanistan last week, was flown via military charter to Greenville-Spartanburg Airport.

His arrival was greeted by more than 100 who watched solemnly from behind a chain link fence as the flag-draped casket was taken from the jet and carried to a waiting hearse, as his grieving family watched in silence.

The hearse, along with family cars, was escorted by police and about 60 members of the Patriot Guard motorcycle group to Wood Mortuary in downtown Greer.

Along the way, hundreds lined the streets, saluting, holding flags and signs of support.

Burial was at Wood Memorial Gardens on Gap Creek Road in Lyman.

Ross, 19, was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, according to the Department of Defense. He had been stationed at Vicenza, Italy, since last September. He had been in Afghanistan three weeks, his family has said.

Ross was killed in Wardak province with wounds suffered when he encountered small arms fire, according to the Department of Defense.

In Memory of Joseph Ross Franklin



July 11, 1928 - July 18, 2012

Col. Joseph Ross Franklin, PhD, USA (Ret), 84, of Pensacola, died Wednesday, July 18, 2012 at home. Col. Franklin was born July 11, 1928 in Honolulu, Hawaii to Daniel Franklin and Frances Ross Franklin. He attended and graduated from U. S. Military Academy at West Point in 1950. Col. Franklin served in Korea, where he was wounded, and three tours of duty in Vietnam, including as Assistant Brigade Commander of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep). He was a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star and Purple Heart, retiring from the U. S. Army after thirty years of service. Col. Franklin received his PhD in Foreign Relations from the American University. He was a member of the Legion of Valor and an active member of Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Col. Franklin was preceded in death by his daughter, Victoria Gough and his sister, Elizabeth Ewy. Survivors include his wife, Nancy Franklin of Pensacola; son, Daniel Franklin of Pensacola; daughter, Jennifer Kellen and husband Joel of Corpus Christi, TX; granddaughter, Emmalee Noel Gough and sister, Dianne Payne. A memorial mass was held at Holy Spirit Catholic Church, with internment at Barrancas National Cemetery with full military honors. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made for Masses at Holy Spirit Catholic Church for our wounded veterans and active duty men and women. Condolences may be offered at www.oaklawnfunerals.com



The Colonel with his bride, Nancy.



Our Legacy Will Continue

By Steve Welch
C/2/503d

We are part of a special group of soldiers who made history serving with the 173d Airborne Brigade. Our feats are still talked about today and remembered by other military members across America.



Steve, one month before 875

I had to go to the Naval Language Institute base in Monterey, California to get some papers filled out. As I was walking around with my wife looking for the place I had to go and, of course, couldn't find it. I spotted this guy and figured I'd ask directions.

I had my 173d hat on with the combat jump wings attached to it. Approaching him he kind of gave me a weird look...one of awe. I asked him where it was I had to go to find this building. He asked me if I was in Junction City? I said yes, and he said what about Hill 875? I also said yes. He then told me he had been attached to the 173d as one of his airborne infantry stops, since he was also attached at one time to the 82nd Airborne as well as the 101st Airborne in his 12 year career as a major and had also made the jump in Iraq.

I was surprised when he said he was a Major because he didn't look that old, or maybe my eyes are just old. With each of his questions and clearly out of respect, he would address me as "Sir".

He then proceeded to tell me that out of all the Airborne units he served with, the 173d was the one he liked the best because of its storied history. He said when he first came into the 173d he heard about the jump, Battle of the Slopes and the Battle of Hill 875 and how high we of the 2nd Battalion had set the bar for those in the Brigade. He said everyone he served with wanted a chance to fill their boots with the same courage, honor and spirit we showed in those battles.

While he was talking I felt humbled by his words and very proud of being part of the history of our Battalion. The respect he was showing me was very moving and appreciated. We walked to the building and then talked for quite a few more minutes as he kept asking me more questions about what took place and how proud he was to be a member of the 173d. I could see he wished he had hours to talk to me, but he was already really late for his class.

As we parted company he said it was a privilege to meet one of the men he had heard so much about, and as he shook my hand he grasped it with his other hand and told me *thank you*. He walked farther away and was almost into the building when he unexpectedly stopped and waved, and I did the same.

If you think what we accomplished in Vietnam will be forgotten, it won't; and the stories are still being told and will continue to be passed along to every member who wears the 173d patch on his arm.

Side Note: I was recently at the VA hospital in Palo Alto getting my travel pay. This guy is reading my shirt, which displays the 2nd Battalion and the 173d patch along with Hill 875 and the year 1967. The guy tells my wife... *"You've got yourself one hell of a guy there. He's very lucky he made it back alive."*

Airborne!



Survivors of Hill 875, Dak To. A few lucky hell of a guys.



Who Dat?

This photo of a trooper *taking 5* and keeping up on current events in the middle of a war, appeared in last month's issue of our newsletter. Maj. Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d, would return to Vietnam for a second tour as a chopper pilot.



Sure looks like ----- LT Gus Vendetti.
Terry "Woody" Davis
A/2/503d

That's a picture of Gus Vendetti, XO of A/2/503d, on page 48 (August issue). It would have been about September 1966 -- can't remember date exactly. I took the pic and converted it from a slide recently. Jack Kelley was our Company Commander then. Notice how Gus is sitting on his upside-down helmet, as we all did in those days. Regards,

Bob Guy
A/HHC/2/503d

Yep. That's our very own Mr. Vendetti. Here's another photo of the lad, taken in '05, when he, Bill Vose (also A/2/503) and this editor returned to Vietnam and humped into the "D" Zone jungle to find LZ Zulu-Zulu from Operation Silver City. A killer of a hump for three old guys. The jungle tried, but it didn't beat him. Ed



Neve give-up...never surrender!

2013 TRICARE Prime Enrollment Fees Announced

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The fiscal year 2013 TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for uniformed service retirees and their families go into effect Oct. 1, 2012. The Prime enrollment fees for 2013 are \$269.28 for retirees, and \$538.56 for retirees and their family members.

Survivors of active duty deceased sponsors and uniformed services medically retired service members and their dependents are exempt from annual fee increases. Their enrollment fee is frozen at the rate in effect when they were classified and enrolled in TRICARE Prime. Their fee remains frozen as long as there is no break in their TRICARE Prime enrollment.



As always, active duty service members and their families have access to TRICARE Prime with no enrollment fee.

The 2013 fees are based on the cost of living adjustment retirees received in 2012. The adjustment was applied to the \$260 (individual) and \$520 (family) 2012 Prime enrollment fees. Because of this, most retirees who were enrolled in Prime prior to Oct. 1, 2011, will see a more significant increase since their enrollment fee remained at the 2011-levels of \$230 and \$460 per year.

Beneficiaries can opt to pay their enrollment fee monthly, quarterly or annually. Before deciding to pay annually, beneficiaries should keep in mind that in most cases enrollment fees are non-refundable, and Congressional changes to fees in the 2013 budget could occur. For this reason, it's recommended that beneficiaries pay their enrollment fee monthly or quarterly. To learn more about TRICARE Prime enrollment fees, please visit www.tricare.mil/costs

Sign up for TRICARE e-mail updates at www.tricare.mil/subscriptions. Connect with TRICARE on Facebook and Twitter at www.facebook.com/tricare and www.twitter.com/tricare



Notable Sky Soldiers

The Good, and Not so Good

The 173d's service, particularly in Vietnam, has been featured several times in popular culture. The most prominent of these is the 2006 single released by the country music duo Big & Rich, entitled "8 November". The song was based on the story of Niles Harris, a member of the 1st Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade, during Operation Hump. On 1 July 2006, a documentary inspired by the song and based on the brigade's actions during the operation premiered on the GAC Channel.

Captain Willard, a fictional character portrayed by Martin Sheen in the 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*, was a member of the 173d assigned to Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group. He was depicted as being in "the 505th battalion", although no such unit was ever part of the 173d. Throughout the movie, he wears the Vietnam-era, mustard yellow, "subdued" shoulder sleeve insignia worn by 173d paratroopers on their jungle fatigues during the Vietnam War. In the 1987 movie *Lethal Weapon*, the patch worn by Danny Glover's fictional character Roger Murtaugh during a retrospective of his time in Vietnam was that of the 173d Airborne Brigade. In the 1998 movie *The Siege*, fictional Major General William Devereaux, played by Bruce Willis, states that he was in the 173d Airborne Brigade at the same time that character Anthony Hubbard was in the 82nd Airborne Division.

Numerous servicemen from the 173d, mostly from the Vietnam era, gained notability after their military careers ended. These include Congressmen Duncan Hunter and Charlie Norwood, Archbishop of Baltimore Edwin Frederick O'Brien, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Robert M. Kimmitt, business owner Barney Visser, activist Stan Goff, and Sergeant Major of the Army Gene C. McKinney.



Congressman Duncan Hunter

Duncan Hunter was born in Riverside, California to Lola L. (née Young) and Robert Olin Hunter. He graduated from Rubidoux High School in Riverside in 1966. He attended the University of Montana from 1966 to 1967, and then briefly the University of California, Santa Barbara, before being commissioned into the United States Army in 1969. He served in South Vietnam from 1970 to 1971 during the Vietnam War in the Army Rangers' 75th Ranger Regiment, attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade. He participated in 24 helicopter assaults as well as in a small-number of night-time reconnaissance patrols. He held the rank of First Lieutenant, and was awarded the Bronze Star, Air Medal, and service ribbons such as the Vietnam Service Medal. He has said, *"I didn't do anything special in the U.S. Army, but I served with very special soldiers I will never forget."*



Charles Norwood

Norwood served as a Captain in the United States Army from 1967 to 1969, beginning with an assignment to the U.S. Army Dental Corps at Sandia Army Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 1968 he was transferred to the Medical Company (Company B-Med) of the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam, and served a combat tour at Quin Nhon, An Khe, and LZ English at Bong Son. During his tour, he participated in experimental military dental practices that are now standard procedure for the armed forces. Norwood was one of the first participants in the Army's outreach program that delivered dentists to forward firebases in lieu of transferring patients to rear treatment areas. He provided some of the first field-based dental treatment of military guard dogs, and assisted in non-dental trauma care in Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals. In recognition of his service under combat conditions, Norwood was awarded the Combat Medical Badge and two Bronze Stars. After Vietnam, Norwood was assigned to the Dental Corps at Fort Gordon, Georgia, where he served until his discharge in 1969. He remained a member of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Military Order of the World Wars until his death. As a tribute to his life and service, The Veterans Administration hospital in Augusta, GA, bears his name and is officially known as the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center.



(continued....)



Edwin Frederick O'Brien Archbishop

Frederick O'Brien was ordained a priest in 1965 and spent five years at West Point as a civilian chaplain. He requested and received permission to become an active-duty airborne chaplain in the 82nd Airborne Division. Afterwards, he served as a combat chaplain in Vietnam in 1971-1972, with the 173d Airborne Brigade and 1st Cavalry Division, ministering to troops at fire bases. He was named Archbishop for the Military Services in 1997 by Pope John Paul II. The Archdiocese for the Military Services serves 1.5 million Catholics including U.S. military personnel and their families and 170 Veterans Affairs hospitals and U.S. government employees overseas.



Robert M. Kimmitt

Robert M. Kimmitt was born December 19, 1947, was United States Deputy Secretary of the Treasury under George W. Bush. He was nominated by President Bush on June 29, 2005. The United States Senate unanimously confirmed him on July 29, 2005, and he was sworn into office on August 16, 2005. Kimmitt served through the end of the Bush administration, leaving office on January 20, 2009. After being commissioned as a Regular Army officer in 1969 at West Point, Mr. Kimmitt completed field artillery, airborne, and ranger schools. He then served a 17-month combat tour with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam (1970-1971), earning three Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. He was subsequently assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY (1972-1974). He retired in November 2004 as a Major General in the Army Reserve.



Barney Visser

Visser (born 1949) is the co-owner of Furniture Row as well as owner of Furniture Row Racing in the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series. Furniture Row Racing, based in Denver, Colorado is one of a few Sprint Cup teams not based in Charlotte, North Carolina. Visser graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School. He volunteered during the Vietnam War for 21 months after high school, and he served as a paratrooper for 11 months with the 173d Airborne Brigade between July 1968 and June 1969. Visser and his wife Carolyn have seven children.



Stan Goff

Stan Goff (born November 12, 1951 in San Diego, California) is a writer, activist, and United States Army veteran having served from 1970 to 1996. He has been an anti-imperialist activist, feminist, socialist, and is now a Christian and a pacifist. He is the co-author of the weblog Feral Scholar, along with D.A. Clark. He is the author of the books *Hideous Dream* (2000), *Full-Spectrum Disorder: The Military in the New American Century* (2004) and *Sex & War* (2006). He has also been a contributor to *Counterpunch* and *Huffington Post*. Goff was sent to Vietnam in 1970-71 during the Vietnam war. He served with the 173d Airborne Brigade as an infantryman, after which he was reassigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC following a bout with drug-resistant malaria. In 1973, he was honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant. During a break in service, he attended college at the University of Arkansas in Monticello and married Elizabeth Mackall. In 1977, he enlisted again in the Army and was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) as a Private First Class, re-earning his sergeant's stripes in 1979. That same year, he volunteered for Ranger School, and after graduation, was reassigned to the 2nd Ranger Battalion at Fort Lewis, WA.



Gene McKinney

McKinney was the 10th Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) of the United States, serving from July 1995 to October 1997. He was the first and to date the only African-American to reach that rank in the United States Army. McKinney was the only Sergeant Major of the Army to resign. In 1998, he was court-martialed on a variety of charges including sexual harassment and obstruction of justice. He was convicted and demoted to the rank of Master Sergeant. Gene C. McKinney was born in Monticello, Florida on November 3, 1950. He is one of five brothers, all of whom served in the Army. One served as an officer; one retired as a master sergeant; another served in Vietnam; and an identical twin, Command Sergeant Major James C. McKinney. He enlisted in the United States Army in August 1968, and completed OSUT as an Infantryman at Fort Benning, Georgia. From 1969-1970, he saw combat in Vietnam with the 173d Airborne Brigade.





Veterans Spurned

Vietnam veterans had severe psychological problems for many years after returning Stateside. But to what extent did public reaction to the war exacerbate the problem?

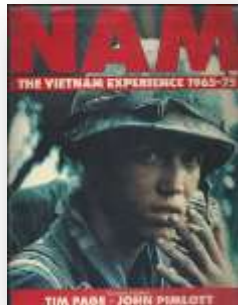
Many returning veterans have had problems of adjustment into civilian society. It has not been unusual for men to feel that their sacrifices have not been sufficiently appreciated, nor to experience psychological problems long after the end of their service.

After World War I, the number of disability awards to former British servicemen increased significantly between 1921 and 1929 because many psychological scars did not become apparent for some years. Nevertheless, there was something different about Vietnam.

Of the 3,402,100 US servicemen who served in Southeast Asia between 1964 and 1973, some 2,594,000 served within the borders of South Vietnam. About 80 per cent made a successful transition to civilian life, but there was still an unusually high proportion of veterans who were not so easily assimilated. Possibly as many as 700,000 veterans developed some symptoms of what was officially accepted in 1980 as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition similar to that described as shell shock in World War I and as battle fatigue in World War II. About 10 percent were diagnosed as suffering from the disorder itself.

However, while the nature of the war contributed to the development of such psychological problems, many difficulties also stemmed from the widespread feeling on the part of all veterans that they were being forced to shoulder the nation's collective guilt, or shame, or humiliation. There was no official homecoming beyond the welcome from family or friends and, even then, there might be little real understanding or sympathy.

One veteran, who later became Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, recalled waking up yelling while on a domestic flight soon after returning home;



“The other passengers moved away from me – a reaction I noticed more and more in the months ahead. The country didn’t give a shit about the guys coming back, or what they’d gone through. The feeling toward them was, ‘Stay away – don’t contaminate us with whatever you’ve brought back from Vietnam.’”

Although many veterans were aware of the hostility towards the war amongst the US public, few were prepared for the level of hostility directed towards themselves. Some joined the anti-war movement, possibly seeking a kind of emotional catharsis for their guilt feelings as well as approval and acceptance. Many waited years for the understanding they craved, a process that has been assisted in no small way by the unveiling of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial (paid for by public subscription and not government funds) in Washington in November 1982 and the new readiness of Americans to come to terms with their past.

(Source: NAM The Vietnam Experience 1965-1975)

A Vietnam Vet

“Never once did I tell a prospective employer I was a Vietnam vet. One day while walking through the terminal at Los Angeles International Airport, decked out in business suit and tie while carrying a briefcase, a loud noise went off to my rear. I immediately found myself in the prone position on the terminal floor. A lady and little boy were standing nearby, and I heard the child say, ‘Look Mommie,’ as he pointed at me and laughed. At the time I felt the fool, but today....well, today I don’t hit the ground quite as fast.” Ed



Vietnam vets in group, coming to terms with their war.



VA NEWS

Redesigned Transition Assistance Program Announced

July 23, 2012

WASHINGTON -- Today President Obama announced the launch of the redesigned Transition Assistance Program developed by an interagency team from the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, and Homeland Security as well as the Office of Personnel and Management and the Small Business Administration.



The revamped program, called **Transition GPS**, is the first major overhaul of the transition assistance program for military members in nearly twenty years. The effort began in response to a call from President Obama in August 2011 to ensure all service members are “career ready” when they leave the military.

“I applaud the leadership of President Obama to bring together government agencies around the goal of enhancing career opportunities for service members,” said Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta. *“Our personnel have developed extraordinary technical expertise and world-class leadership skills that are in high demand. Transition GPS will help military members apply their experience to additional training, formal education, and develop successful civilian careers.”*

“One of our fundamental responsibilities as a government is to properly prepare and support those serving in our military so they are career ready as they transition back into civilian life. With this new initiative, we can better ensure veterans receive the care, benefits and employment services they have earned,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *“This collaborative effort will have an impact well beyond this current generation of individuals returning from combat.”*

VA Announces New Grants to Help End Veterans Homelessness

July 17, 2012

Initiative Targets 42,000 Homeless and At-Risk Vets and Families

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the award of nearly \$100 million in grants that will



help approximately 42,000 homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. The grants are going to 151 community agencies in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

“We are committed to ending Veteran homelessness in America,” said Shinseki. *“These grants will help VA and community organizations reach out and prevent at-risk Veterans from losing their homes.”*

Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, VA is awarding grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that provide services to very low-income Veteran families living in -- or transitioning to -- permanent housing. Those community organizations provide a range of services that promote housing stability among eligible very low income Veteran families.

Under the grants, homeless providers will offer Veterans and their family members outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits and assistance in getting other public benefits. Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of Veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.

This is the program’s second year. Last year, VA provided about \$60 million to assist 22,000 Veterans and family members. In 2009, President Obama and Secretary Shinseki announced the federal government’s goal to end Veteran homelessness by 2015. The grants are intended to help accomplish that goal. According to the 2011 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress, homelessness among Veterans has declined 12 percent since January 2010.

Through the homeless Veterans initiative, VA committed \$800 million in FY 2011 to strengthen programs that prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. VA provides a range of services to homeless Veterans, including health care, housing, job training, and education.

More information about VA’s homeless programs is available on the Internet at www.va.gov/homeless. Details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program are online at www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.



WHILE BACK AT CAMP ZINN in Bien Hoa between ops, a few of us were fortunate to occasionally score a one or two-day pass to Saigon. For those of you who did, the report below will sound very familiar. *(Photos added)* I had arrived Zinn sometime around mid-December '65, and had heard about the sin going on in nearby Bien Hoa and downtown Saigon, and was looking forward to learning more about it and contributing my part to the local economy in those cities. In late December, still having not been on a mission, I was riding shotgun on a deuce heading out of camp to collect water somewhere. As we stopped at the main gate we saw a guy walking toward us wearing a green beret. *"That's my brother!"* I yelled to the driver. Bob had heard I was in-country and caught a flight from Da Nang to come down to see me. Even though still a cherry, in more ways than one, the duty sergeant pulled me off the water truck and gave me a day pass to Saigon! Hey, this war stuff ain't so bad. Here's a photo of the Sneaky Pete and his Sky Soldier kid brother before heading out to win hearts and minds in the Paris of the Orient. On his third tour with the Forces, Bob would later contribute one of his eyes to the war effort, taken by a sharp-shooting NVA near Dak To. Ed



Bob & Smitty at Zinn, December '65

SIN CITY

Where could you get a massage and buy dope on the streets? In downtown Saigon, that's where.

The author, Tim Page, operated out of Saigon while covering the war as a photo-journalist for *LIFE* magazine. Here he recounts his early impressions of a once sleepy colonial city.

There remained two sophisticated night clubs with floor shows, music and dancing – the Arc en Ciel, and Maximos. Diners had a choice of over a dozen restaurants, ranging from cheap Vietnamese cafes to three-star Michelins. Much of the night-life was controlled by the Union Corse (French Mafia) and Chinese Tongs (secret societies) who in turn were obliged to pay tribute to the Vietnamese masters of the moment. The black marked flourished. You could buy anything or (virtually) anybody.



A street in Saigon, *Paris of the Orient*, 1965

By the end of 1966, Saigon had become as worn-out and corrupt as a blowsy old hooker, dolled up in new chrome and plastic. Back in 1965, it had the freshness of a southern French town, with stuccoed buildings in pastel shades of buff and cream, tiled roofs and gaily painted shuttered windows. The city was then still recovering from the post-Diem period when Diem's sister-in-law, Madame Nhu, had banned all forms of licentiousness, including *The Twist*. A spate of guerrilla bombings, like that on the floating My Cahn restaurant, meant that a night curfew had been enforced upon the US military and Vietnamese civilians. Night-life flourished, but compared to its later flowerings it was still a limited affair.

The bars opened soon after the siesta hour and did their business until 11 o'clock. Then it was Cinderella time, with the Saigon Cowboys (the pimps) collecting their painted charges on souped-up scooters and Honda 50s.

The few thousand American advisors and helicopter crewmen were easily absorbed into the city, many only getting short furloughs to town from the boonies. The bars tended to cater separately to one group of military, and as the volume of men swelled, they followed their predecessors to the watering holes. The Sporting Bar on Tu Do, the main high street, was initially a Green Beret haunt, possibly one of the raunchiest. Later on it became a Lurp and hard-core bar.

(continued....)





Famous Tu Du Street in Saigon (Photo by Tom Briggs)

In theory at least, it was forbidden to enter Saigon in jungle gear or ‘camis’ – camouflage fatigues. It was also against the regulations to pack a weapon unless you were an officer there on duty and could carry a sidearm. The Special Forces and country team guys blatantly disobeyed the rule, plainly uncomfortable without their pet UZIs, CARs, Swedish Ks, M16s, sawn-off thumpers or whatever. The Saigon-based Military Police, whose forlorn task it was to enforce in-town regulations on the bars, would come into the dark, long rooms and accost boonie-rats in camis, their weapons on the bar, topless hookers draped across their knees. But if they tried to confiscate the weapons and arrest the guys for not being in A1 service dress, they got a leveled weapon, safety off, and a cheerful ‘Fuck Off’ in return. A regular stand off a’ la OK Corral. The MPs usually backed off.

I sat once, drinking with a fellow photographer Sean Flynn and members of the Cai Cai A Team, up from the Delta, when I walked the MPs. They accosted the weapons sergeant, Marachek, who was smoking an opium-painted joint, rapping to us, and fondling a young thing. Our beers were on the bar and we were perched on the vinyl-topped stools. The MP tapped Marachek on the shoulder and mumbled about weapons and camis.

Marachek eased himself up to his massive six foot two, turned around, unzipped his tiger suit pants, withdrew his cock and proceeded to stir his Ba me Ba (33) beer with it. The mamasan and girls burst into shrieks of appreciative laughter and the MPs made an embarrassed exit. The other team members had only casually stirred from their booths, their ladies’ heads bobbing in their laps, to show their support for their main man.

The bars that catered to the hip GIs ran a service of ready-rolled joints, or cigarettes painted discretely with opium and kept in a jar under the counter. You could find a couple in the vicinity of any BEQ (Bachelor Enlisted Quarters). Out near Tan Son Nhut airbase, there was a whole sub-strip of massage parlors, truck washes fronting ‘steam and cream’ joints and acid-age bars, replete with day-glo posters, ultra-violet lights and pulsating rock music.

Prostitution was no new thing in Saigon. The French had both legalized and profited from it, monopolizing a civilized system of military brothels. The Vietnamese Army continued the habit, often allowing women to travel with the troops when not occupying the post barracks and frontier forts. At Dien Bien Phu in 1964, North African and Vietnamese hookers had become nurses and frontline fighters as the Viet Minh encircled and then destroyed the base.

In downtown Saigon only money mattered and the prices soon went up for a massage and a quickie, the clientele being naïve out-of-towners or officers. The works could set a man back \$10. Green, or 15 in MSC (Military Script Currency), and to lure a bar girl out of her den for a liaison you had to buy her out. That is, you had to buy the estimated amount of Saigon teas she would have consumed in her absence....

This was a song many of us would learn as we were winning those hearts and minds. Ed

***I love you.
You love me.
You buy me Saigon Tea?
50 P***

....You always paid the mamasan, and whatever the girl wanted was up to you to negotiate on top of the number of ‘teas’ she had knocked back. She got a cut of these takings and occasionally you would meet one that actually had liquor in her glass, not coke or tea...

(continued....)



...There were always the hard core who turned on to dope too. The Bluebird, below our apartment on Tu Du, had an infamous reputation and the passage beside it harboured dirty-picture sellers as well as junk touts. The black guys tended to segregate themselves with their music and had established a separate quarter behind the docks in Canh Hoi. Generally it was not cool, as a white, to go over there. Those who did, found a soul sin city, the air thick with primo Cambodian Red marijuana and the rooms reverberating to the beat of James Brown, Wilson Pickett, and The Temptations. The bar girls there could really move, and there was a predominance of darker Khmer ladies in the dank back rooms. It was easy to score the illicit in Canh Hoi, although most of the sidewalk cigarette sellers would carry ready-rolled joints alongside regular US and Viet brands. You could buy a carton of your favourite brand where all the cigarettes had been carefully emptied and reloaded with herb, a pinch of tobacco artfully placed next to the filter and at the tip. Perfect party camouflage at a buck a pack, tax seal intact.



A Saigon bar girl greets a passing U.S. soldier on Tu Du Street in downtown Saigon. "I love you long time, G.I."

The corruption of Saigon was completed by the building of multi-story military quarters, requiring endless service industries. The traditional cafes swung to providing burgers, fries and milkshakes. Tailor shops sprung up on every block, running up mufti safari suits, while curio stores knocked out desk name-plates, mounted unit insignias and endless nick-nack souvenirs. The black market blossomed, supplying the nouveau riche of the city, hairspray being a number one item, straight from the commissary shelves. You could order a fridge, a jeep or a case of panty-hose by mail order before it even entered the docks.

Neon lights and hard cash

Neon lights went up, announcing the coming of the West, and bouffant girls in miniskirts tottered self-consciously amongst the graceful Saigon women. The ranks of the working ladies were swelled fly the flood of refugees from the embattled countryside. Deserters and dodgers went underground, flourishing on the black tide of goods. The traffic was overloaded by thousands of 50cc Suzukis, Bridgestones, Yamahas and Hondas. Trucks fought the diminutive four-door Renault 4 cabs for road space. Jeeps blasted through the lot, ploughing room for official Ford sedans.

In early 1965, STROLLING IN Saigon had been like walking in Avignon. But there were only 17,000 Americans in-country at that time. By 1967 there were almost half a million. 50,000 who called Saigon home. They came replete with TV and radio stations, wallets full of hard cash, insatiable libidos and one of the worst forms of clap known to mankind – the Heinz 57 variety, for which there was no known cure, just an endless drip. And with the rapid passing of their youth, the old Saigon faded behind a ferro-concrete-clad smile and endless concertinas of barbed wire.

Source:

[NAM, *The Vietnam Experience 1966-75*, by Tim Page & John Pimlott]

But for most of us, there was the Mekong Delta, the "D" Zone jungles, the rubber tree plantations, the Central Highlands, and the hills at Dak To.



Ho Chi Minh City, 2012

Saigon, after Tet offensive



~ Famous People Who Served in the Military ~

Gene Autry was a film actor, singer, and professional baseball team owner. When World War II broke out, he was determined to join the armed forces and do his part. On July 26, 1942, during a live broadcast of his radio show *Melody Ranch* and at the Pentagon's request, he was inducted into the Army Air Forces as a Technical Sergeant.



Gene Autry (above) being sworn in as Flight Officer by Capt. Herb Dailey, on 21 June 1944 in Love Field, TX.

Martin Balsam, a Hollywood actor was born November 4, 1919 and died from heart failure on February 13, 1996. He is known for his Oscar-winning role as Arnold Burns in *A Thousand Clowns* and his role as Detective Milton Arbogast in *Psycho*. He attended DeWitt Clinton High School, where he participated in the drama club. He studied at the Dramatic Workshop of The New School in New York with the influential German director Erwin Piscator and then served in the United States Army Air Forces during World War II.



Boxcar Willie was born in Sterratt, Texas, as Lecil Travis Martin on September 1, 1931 and died April 12, 1999. He was an American country music singer, who sang in the "old-time hobo" music style, complete with dirty face, overalls, and a floppy hat. "Boxcar Willie" was originally a character in a ballad he wrote, but he later adopted it as his own stage name. Martin joined the United States Air Force in 1949, and served as a pilot and flight engineer for the B-29 Super Fortress during the Korean War in the early 1950s. In 1962, he was still in the Air Force and had been flying daily missions. He later became a Flight Engineer on



KC-97L aircraft in the 136th ARW in the Texas Air National Guard, including air refueling flights around the USA and overseas in Germany. In 1976, Martin left the Air Force and became a full-time performer.

Charles Bronson, a Hollywood actor was born November 3, 1921 and died August 30, 2003. He was born Charles Dennis Buchinsky of Polish and Lithuanian background. He starred in films such as *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Great Escape*, *Rider on the Rain*, *The Mechanic*, and the *Death Wish* series. He was often cast in the role of a police officer or gunfighter, often in revenge-oriented plot lines. His family was so poor that, at one time, he reportedly had to wear his sister's dress to school because he had nothing else to wear. In 1943, Bronson enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces and served as an aerial gunner in the 760th Flexible Gunnery Training Squadron, and in 1945 as a B-29 Superfortress crewman with the 39th Bombardment Group based on Guam. He was awarded a Purple Heart for wounds received during his service.



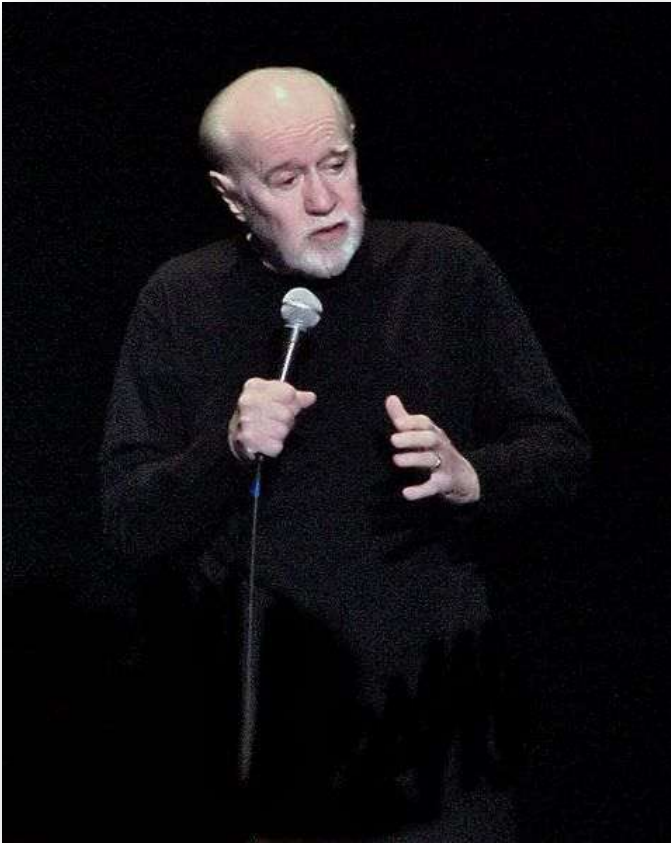
George Walker Bush was born July 6, 1946. He is an American politician and businessman who was the 43rd President of the United States from 2001 to 2009 and the 46th Governor of Texas from 1995 to 2000. In May 1968, Bush was commissioned into the Texas Air National Guard. After two years of active-duty service while training, he was assigned to Houston, flying Convair F-102s with the 147th Reconnaissance Wing out of Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base. In late 1972 and early 1973, he drilled with the 187th Fighter Wing of the Alabama Air National Guard, having moved to Montgomery, Alabama to work on the unsuccessful U.S. Senate campaign of Republican Winton M. Blount. In 1972, Bush was suspended from flying for failure to take a scheduled physical exam. He was honorably discharged from the Air Force Reserve on November 21, 1974.



(continued....)



George Denis Patrick Carlin was born May 12, 1937 and died June 22, 2008. He was an American stand-up comedian, social critic, satirist, actor and writer/author, who won five Grammy Awards for his comedy albums. George Carlin dropped out of high school and later joined the US Air Force, where he was court-martialled three times.



“I don't like words that hide the truth. I don't like words that conceal reality. I don't like euphemisms, or euphemistic language. And American English is loaded with euphemisms.

Cause Americans have a lot of trouble dealing with reality. Americans have trouble facing the truth, so they invent the kind of a soft language to protect themselves from it, and it gets worse with every generation. For some reason, it just keeps getting worse. I'll give you an example of that.

There's a condition in combat. Most people know about it. It's when a fighting person's nervous system has been stressed to its absolute peak and maximum. Can't take any more input. The nervous system has either (click) snapped or is about to snap.

In the first world war, that condition was called shell shock. Simple, honest, direct language. Two syllables, shell shock. Almost sounds like the guns themselves.

That was seventy years ago. Then a whole generation went by and the second world war came along and very same combat condition was called battle fatigue. Four

syllables now. Takes a little longer to say. Doesn't seem to hurt as much. Fatigue is a nicer word than shock. Shell shock! Battle fatigue.

Then we had the war in Korea, 1950. Madison avenue was riding high by that time, and the very same combat condition was called operational exhaustion. Hey, we're up to eight syllables now! And the humanity has been squeezed completely out of the phrase. It's totally sterile now. Operational exhaustion. Sounds like something that might happen to your car.

Then of course, came the war in Viet Nam, which has only been over for about sixteen or seventeen years, and thanks to the lies and deceptions surrounding that war, I guess it's no surprise that the very same condition was called post-traumatic stress disorder. Still eight syllables, but we've added a hyphen! And the pain is completely buried under jargon. Post-traumatic stress disorder.

I'll bet you if we'd of still been calling it shell shock, some of those Viet Nam veterans might have gotten the attention they needed at the time. I'll betcha. I'll betcha.”

~ **George Carlin**

Clerow “Flip” Wilson Jr. was born December 8, 1933, in Jersey City, New Jersey, and died from liver cancer on November 25, 1988. Wilson had 17 brothers and sisters; and was sent into the foster care system. At 16, he lied about his age and joined the United States Air Force. During his time in the service he was sent to military bases to cheer up the service men there.



Wilson's barrack mates claimed that he was always “flipped out” and gave him his nickname, Flip. Wilson was discharged in 1954 as an Airman First Class. An American comedian, he was the first black comic to transcend race lines with his own TV variety show using material that was universally funny to everyone regardless of race, gender or nationality. Wilson hosted TV's first successful black variety show, “The Flip Wilson Show,” 1970-1974, winning two Emmys on 5/09/1971, and a Grammy.





~ 2/503 Sky Soldiers Extraordinaire ~



~ Gary "Cap" Prisk ~

Gary Prisk was born in Phoenix, Arizona in 1943, and it was reported he was more inclined to throw a four-seam rock than study. His kindergarten teacher wrote the following on the back of his report card: *"Would you please start Gary for school earlier so he won't be tardy so often."*



Gary and his family moved to Bremerton, Washington, a Navy blue-jacket town where his father went to school. His dad, an officer during WWII, would serve on Field Marshall Montgomery's staff. Gary played baseball and tennis, worked in construction, and graduated high school with less than average grades, extremely high scores on the SAT's, and no plan.

He states memories of Sunday dinners, his father's den, and a clatter of colorful bits of advice led Gary to war, armed with an irreverent black humor—that and little regard for authority. The sudden death of his father allowed instants of sudden hatred he used to hone his leadership skills, and which he drew on to lead men in combat years later as the commanding officer of Charlie Company 2/503d. Gary's older brother, Col. Court Prisk, served in Vietnam as the commander of the 173d Airborne's C Battery, 3/319th Artillery.

Rejecting the Army's call to return to Vietnam, Gary resigned his regular army commission and returned to the University of Washington earning a second engineering degree, an MBA, and being accepted into the doctoral studies program in finance. He suspended his doctoral studies after his thesis committee rejected his proposals. Gary returned to working in construction after he realized he spent most of each day expecting to be ambushed. Working outside, *"I could better check my perimeter."*

"Cap," as he is affectionately addressed by the men he led in combat, refers to his soldiers as *"The Hill People."* Having talked with a number of those 'People', we learned it is clear, to this day they would follow him to the gates of Hell, and beyond.

Gary is the author of *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt*, an award winning fictional tale based on fact of the 173d Airborne during the Vietnam War.

~ Louis A. "Zuc" Zucco ~

Louis A. Zucco was born in Yuba City, California on July 5, 1948. He joined the army at 17. He did Basic Training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, and Jump School at Fort Benning, Georgia.



Louie was assigned to B Company, 1/325, 82nd Airborne Division as a M-60 gunner.

Upon arrival in Vietnam on June 1, 1967, Louie was assigned to 2/503 H&H Company Recon. He remained with Recon until "D" Company was formed where he stayed until DEROS, May 26, 1968.

"As a cherry being broke in on point, Recon was sent out to link up with 'A' Company. We discovered the base camp of the 174th NVA Regiment. The next morning we were told to go back. 'A' Company was already deep in battle. Recon was sent back up after the battle and began searching for the 174th NVA Regiment. They vanished!! The 'A' Company CO told us he didn't need Recon there anymore."

Five months later, November 19, 1967, Louie found them on Hill 875. For five days he found them, and was informed after that, this was the end of The Battle for Dak To.

Louie was one of the troopers featured and interviewed for the documentary, The Battle at Dak To – Hill 875, which can often be seen on the Military Channel.

On May 26, 1968, as a Sergeant E-5, Louie was honorably discharged from the Army. He was awarded the Parachutist Badge, the Purple Heart, ARCOM and Combat Infantryman's Badge.

During his professional career Louie worked in construction and as an ex-pat in Israel, Egypt, Venezuela and Papua New Guinea, and lived in Portugal and Spain between assignments. He later served as Apprenticeship Coordinator for the Cement Mason's Union of Southern California.

He was quoted as saying, *"Every day since November 19, 1967, 'I climb Hill 875.'"*



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~



56th Annual Reunion of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, September 23-26, 2012.
Holiday Inn, Richmond Intl. Airport, Sandston, VA.

Contact:

Nancy Young, Secretary
Eml: youngncy@comcast.net



2012 FSB Ripcord Association Reunion, October 3-6, 2012, Indianapolis Marriott East, Indianapolis, IN.

Contact:

Web: www.ripcordassociation.com



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, August 23-29, 2013, Las Vegas, NV. See Page 64 for details.

Contact:

Jim Bradley

Phn: 727-376-2576 (after 4:30 p.m. EST)

Eml: webmaster@173rdairborne.com

Web: www.2013Reunion.com



13th Annual 39th IPSD (Infantry Platoon Scout Dog) Reunion, 173d Abn Bde, August 31 – September 2, Mountain Rest, SC.

Contact:

Johnny Mayo

Phn: 803-762-6756

Eml: K9heroes@att.net



101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans 19th Annual Reunion, September 5-8, 2013. Reunion headquarters Best Western Ramokta Hotel, Rapid City, SD.

Contact:

Rodney Green

Reunion Coordinator

Eml: randhgreen@sio.midco.net



Charlie Company, 2nd Bn, 506th Inf., 101st Airborne Division Reunion, September 26-29, 2012, Holiday Inn, Oak Grove, KY.

Contact:

Gary and Debbie Gilliam

Phn: 313-550-7260

Web: <http://company-c--2nd-bn--506th-inf.com/>



Florida All Airborne Days, Fred H. Brown All Airborne Chapter, 82nd Abn. Div. Chap 88, Special Forces Association, September 27-30, 2012, Holiday Inn, Jacksonville, FL.

Contact:

Mike Walding

Phn: 904-759-0913

Eml: mjwalding@comcast.net

~ Other Reunions ~



Battle of the Bulge Veterans, September 26-30, 2012. New Orleans, LA.

Contact:

Doris Davis

Phn: 650-654-0101

Eml: doris@battleofthebulge.org

Web: <http://www.battleofthebulge.org/>



2012 Combat Infantryman's Reunion, October 18-21, 2012. Nashville, TN.

Contact:

Web: <http://cibassoc.com>

Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne reunions please send details to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com



~ This Month in History ~

"They were the best of times; they were the worst of times."

~ September 1965 ~

Sep. – Oct: After the North Vietnamese Army attacks a Special Forces camp at Plei Mei, the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry is deployed against enemy regiments that were identified in the vicinity of the camp. The result is the battle of the Ia Drang Valley. For 35 days, the division pursues and fights the 32nd, 33rd, and 66th North Vietnamese Regiments until the enemy, suffering heavy casualties, returns to bases in Cambodia.



September 1965

10th Aug. -- 5th Sep: The 173d Airborne Brigade conduct Operation Pleiku in Kontum Province. The brigade loaded its men on C-130s and C-123s to relieve the siege of the Special Forces CIDG Camp at Du Co, about four kilometers from Cambodia. The 173d provided security in the Thanh Binh Pass by conducting many platoon and company size sweeps of the area. Early September, the 1/503rd were ordered to Kontum. During this operation VC activity decreased to an 18 month low.

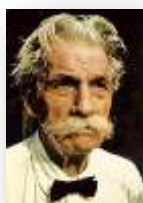
1st: The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne conduct Operation Talon in An Khe Pass, Binh Dinh Province.

1st: The 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry and support elements conduct an unnamed operation near Kon Tum, in Kon Tum Province.

3rd: Charlie Sheen, American actor is born.

4th: The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne conduct Operation Venture in An Khe area, Binh Dinh Province.

4th: Dr. Albert Schweitzer, German theologian, philosopher, missionary doctor (Nobel 1954), dies at 90. (Schweitzer was the cousin of the father of Reggie Smith, this newsletter editor's German bride). Ed



Schweitzer Young Reggie

7th Sep. -- 8th Oct: The 173d Airborne Brigade conduct Operation Big Red 7 in Ben Cat, Phuoc Ving, Di An and Phu Loc. Following an airmobile assault, the 1/503rd destroyed two VC hospitals, a signal school, and several training camps. As a result of the combat operations, 17 village chiefs, some of whom had not been to their villages in over a year, returned. Elections and religious ceremonies were also held.

7th: The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne conduct Operation Bayonet, as part of Operation Highland (Sep. 9th), in Anh Khe area, in Binh Dinh Province.

7th: Vietnam War: In a follow-up to August's Operation Starlight, United States Marines and South Vietnamese forces initiate Operation Pirahna on the Batangan Peninsula.



A photo provided by the U.S. Air Force shows four "Ranch Hand" C-123 aircraft spraying liquid defoliant on a suspected Viet Cong position in South Vietnam, September 1965. The four specially equipped planes covered a 1,000-foot-wide swath in each pass over the dense vegetation. (AP Photo/US Air Force)

11th: The 1st Cavalry Division of the United States Army arrives in Vietnam.

13th: Beatles release "Yesterday".

(continued....)



 **14th – 28th:** The 173d Airborne Brigade conduct search and destroy missions in Ben Cat, Bien Hoa Province during unnamed operation. 56 enemy KIA.

  **14th -- 25th:** The 173d Airborne Brigade and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conduct search and destroy missions during Operation 24-65, in Binh Duong Province.

 **21st:** The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was deployed from Fort Benning to An Khe (IICTZ). They were accompanied by full support services, including artillery, engineers, medical personnel and airpower (helicopter and fixed-wing).

 **18th – 22nd:** The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne and the 1st Cavalry conduct Operation Gibraltar in Qui Nhon, during ARVN operation.

  **28th -- 13th Nov:** The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne and 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines during Operation Sayonara conduct routine security to cover the deployment of the ROK Capital Division in Qui Nhon, Binh Dinh Province.

~ September 1966 ~

During the first nine months of 1966, only 46 per cent of the ARVN's large-scale operations resulted in contact with the enemy, against the 90 per cent achieved by US forces. Over the same period, ARVN desertions were running at an annual rate of 130,000, a massive 21 per cent of the total. (NAM The Vietnam Experience 1965-1975, by Tim Page & John Pimlott)



September 1966

 **1st --** The 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division conducts search and destroy missions during Operation Sunset Beach in Quang Nam Province.

1st: During a visit to neighboring Cambodia, French President Charles de Gaulle calls for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

1st: United Nations Secretary-General U Thant declares that he will not seek re-election, because U.N. efforts in Vietnam have failed.

  **2nd:** A new mission code-named Operation Attleboro (Phase I), involves the U.S. 196th Brigade and 22,000 South Vietnamese troops as they begin aggressive search and destroy sweeps through Tay Ninh Province. Almost

immediately, huge caches of supplies belonging to the NLF 9th Division are discovered, but again, there is no head-to-head conflict. The mission ends after six weeks, with more than 1,000 Viet Cong and 150 Americans killed.

~ Operation Attleboro ~



Operation Attleboro

This operation was actually made up of Phase I and Phase II. Phase I was the period of time early on beginning about 2 Sep 66 and extended into early Nov 1966. Phase II began about 6 Nov 66 until the end on 24 Nov 66. Operation Attleboro turned out to be the largest series of air mobile operations to date and involved all or elements of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 25th Division 1st Infantry Division, a brigade of the 4th Division, as well as numerous Army of the Republic of Vietnam and Regional Forces/Popular Forces and Nungs. In the end, the operation became a Corps operation commanded by II Field Forces. Tay Ninh West, often called "New Tay Ninh" to distinguish it from the old French constructed airstrip in the Vietnamese town of Tay Ninh called "Old Tay Ninh", was a newly built and yet uncompleted base camp of GP medium and small tents built especially for the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade was the first of four Light Infantry Brigades due to be sent to Vietnam. They were formed at Ft. Devens, MA and had arrived in Vietnam at Vung Tau a month before in August 1966. The Brigade was untested in battle and Operation Attleboro, named for a town in Massachusetts from which the 196th had come, was the code name picked for their first combat encounter with the jungles of Vietnam. The three straight-leg infantry battalions were airlifted in airmobile fashion to LZ's surrounding Tay Ninh in all directions. No real action was encountered and the units were moved about from LZ to LZ and back to base camp.

(continued....)



Most of the air movements in the early Phase I was done by the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion and its assault helicopter companies, the 118th, 68th and 71st. The terrain all over War Zone C, and particularly around Tay Ninh and all the non-farm land, was what might be classed as high Savannah. Tall wavy elephant grass interspersed with occasional very tall trees was the norm. Rainfall in this area is not as much as areas farther east and near the sea coast of Vietnam. Many areas around Nui Ba Den and adjacent to Tay Ninh (West) were punctuated with huge 6-10 feet tall termite mounds. These mounds created havoc, when found with tall elephant grass, for helicopters dropping off troops in a combat assault. All aircraft crews were especially watchful for termite mounds. Operation Attleboro, Phase II, was punctuated by a massive build-up of more Inf battalions and aviation assets. Phase II erupted after the 196th Light Infantry Brigade had, for several weeks, experienced no significant contact with the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army (NVA).



South Vietnam, 1966: A wary infantryman clutches his grenade launcher as he pauses for a rest during Operation Attleboro in the jungle of Tay Ninh province.

(Kim Ki Sam, Stars and Stripes)

However, intelligence had indicated that their elements were somewhere in this area of War Zone C and this sounded the alarm. The decision was made to involve the 1/27th Inf of the 25th Infantry Division, elements of the 1st Infantry Div (at Dau Tieng), 3rd Bde of the 4th Inf. Div (soon to become part of the 25th Inf. Division), the 173d Abn Bde, the 11th ACR, several ARVN Bn's and of course the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Operation Attleboro was a very large and complex movement of maneuver battalions in what some have called, "Eagle Flights". However, they did not follow the normal rules of engagement

for "Eagle Flights". It must have been interesting from the enemy's viewpoint to see all the helicopters flying around and landing and taking off with and without troops on board. The Viet Cong and NVA had done a masterful job of hiding and evading observation. In the end over 1,000 enemy were killed while US losses were 155 KIA and 494 wounded. Not wanting to give away their positions, there was little ground fire at the helicopters. There was apparently very few anti-aircraft weapons employed by the NVA and Viet Cong units and only 30 caliber weapons were used to inflict single shot damage to the aircraft.



4th Sep. – Oct. 25th: The 101st Airborne Division and 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment conduct search and destroy and security during Operation Seward in Phu Yen Province. VC/NVA KIA: 347, Allied KIA: 27

5th: Jerry Lewis' 1st Muscular Dystrophy telethon raises \$15,000.

6th: Race riot in Atlanta, Georgia.

9th: The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act is signed into law by U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson.

10th: Muhammad Ali TKOs Karl Mildenberger in 12 for heavyweight boxing title.

12th: The heaviest air raid of the war to date occurs as 500 U.S. jets attack NVA supply lines and coastal targets.



1966



Ho Chi Minh Trail

(continued....)



12th: "... But I think most Americans want to know why Viet-Nam is important....I think they know that communism must be halted in Viet-Nam, as it was halted in Western Europe and in Greece and Turkey And Korea and the Caribbean, if it is determined to swallow up free peoples and spread its influence in that area trying to take freedom away from people who do want to select their own leaders for themselves....I think that our people know that if aggression succeeds there, when it has failed in other places in the world, a harsh blow would be dealt to the security of other free nations in Asia and perhaps a blow to the peace in the entire world....To give them time to build is one reason that we are all there. For there are times when the strong must provide a shield for those on whom the Communists prey. We have provided that shield in other countries. We are providing it there. And this is such a time....We are there for another reason, too, and that is because the United States must stand behind its word, even when conditions have added to the cost of honoring a pledge that was given a decade ago....I do not have to remind you that our pledge was in fact given by treaty to uphold the security of Southeast Asia. Now that security is in jeopardy because people are trying to use force to take over South Viet-Nam. When adversity comes is no time to back down on our commitment, if we expect our friends around the world to have faith in our word." Lyndon Johnson



1966

 **13th -- 22nd:** At Dau Ting Airfield the 4th Battalion and B Battery/ 319th Artillery provided airport security during Operation Atlantic City.

 **14th:** The Philippine Army deployed to Vietnam. The Philippines was involved in the Vietnam War, supporting civil and medical operations. Initial deployment in 1964 amounted to 28 military personnel, including nurses, and 6 civilians. The number of Filipino troops who served in Vietnam swelled to 182 officers and 1,882 enlisted personnel during the period 1966-1968. This force was known as the Philippine Civic Action Group-Vietnam or PHILCAG-V.

15th - U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, responding to a sniper attack at the University of Texas at Austin, writes a letter to the United States Congress urging the enactment of gun control legislation.

23rd: The U.S. reveals jungles near the Demilitarized Zone are being defoliated by sprayed chemicals.

 **26th Sep. -- 9th Oct:** During Operation Sioux City in Xom Cat the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 173d Abn Bde along with artillery support deployed 23 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. They discovered numerous food, weapons and vehicular maintenance caches.



30th Sep. – 3rd Oct: The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conducts Operation in Phuoc Tuy Province, providing assistance to the village of Duc Thanh.

~ September 1967 ~

During 1967 the Americans pursued two strategic aims in Vietnam. On the one hand, they were determined to disrupt the build-up of NVA/VC main force strength in the South, creating a protective shield of 'Free World' forces astride likely infiltration routes and destroying any enemy formations which tried to break through; on the other hand they recognized the need to clear existing communist bases in the South as a preliminary to more effective pacification.

(NAM The Vietnam Experience 1965-1975)



September 1967

1st: North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong publicly states Hanoi will "continue to fight."



1st -- 31st Jan: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment conduct security duty along Route 1 during Operation Valdosta in Long Khanh Province. Enemy KIA 10, Allied KIA 2.



Pham Van Dong
1906-2000

3rd: National elections are held in South Vietnam. With 80 percent of eligible voters participating, Nguyen Van Thieu is elected president with Nguyen Cao Ky as his vice-president, the pair winning just 35 percent of the vote.

3rd: Woody Guthrie, singer-songwriter, dies of Huntington's Chorea at 55.



4th -- 15th: Operation Swift was a search and destroy mission in the Que Son Valley carried out by the 1st Marine Division. The ensuing battles killed 114 Americans and an estimated 376 North Vietnamese.



11th – 25th: The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne and the 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment conduct search and destroy (consolidated with Operation Wallowa on 11 Nov. '67), in Quan Tin Province.

(continued....)





11th Sep. – 31st Oct: U.S. Marines are besieged by NVA at Con Thien located two miles south of the Demilitarized Zone. A massive long-range artillery duel then erupts between NVA and U.S. guns during the siege as NVA fire 42,000 rounds at the Marines while the U.S. responds with 281,000 rounds and B-52 air strikes to lift the siege. NVA losses are estimated at over 2000.



12th Sep. -- 31st Oct: The USAF and US Navy conduct bombing missions during Operation Neutralized in Con Thien, near DMZ.



19th Sep. -- 31st Jan. '68: Operation Bolling is conducted in Tuy Hoa / Phu Hiep. The 2/503rd along with A/3/319th returned to the coastal area to regroup and refit its units with men and equipment while conducting patrols in their TAO.



Operation Bolling UH-1D Gunship with Soldiers, October 1967.

~ September 1968 ~

5th: 21 killed by hijackers aboard a Pan Am jet in Karachi, Pakistan.



7th – 12th: The 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (ANZAC), and the 104th Field Battery cordon off then conduct search and reconnaissance in force, during Operation Innamincka in Phuoc Tuy Province.



September 1968

9th: Arthur Ashe defeats Tom Okker to win U.S. Tennis Open. **Note:** Arthur Ashe and his family lived a few houses down from us in Miami soon before his death. We didn't know the Ashe's personally, but they would always wave hello when we saw them, and for me, being an old tennis player, it was a big deal. Ed

A Soldier, Tennis Player and Much More



President Reagan greets Arthur Ashe in 1982

Arthur Ashe was a top ranked tennis player in the 1960s and 70s. Raised in the segregated South, he was the first African-American male tennis player to win a Grand Slam tournament. He was much more than an athlete though. His commitment to social justice, health and humanitarian issues left a mark on the world as indelible as his tennis was on the court. Arthur Ashe was a conscience leader, humanitarian, educator and athlete.

On July 10, 1943 Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. was born to parents Arthur Sr. and Mattie C. Ashe in Richmond, Virginia. Arthur began learning tennis from an early age, in part because his father took a post at Brook Field in 1947. The position came with a house that was located in the middle of the blacks-only playground at Brook Field, which was an 18-acre park that included tennis courts. At the same time as he was playing tennis, he was an avid reader and straight A student. In 1950, a few months before Arthur's 7th birthday, his mother died of complications from surgery. In 1950 Arthur met Ronald Charity, one of the best black tennis players in the nation and a part-time tennis coach, who took an interest in Arthur. He began working with him regularly, teaching him strokes and proper form.

Arthur continued with his tennis under Johnson's instruction and in 1958 became the first African-American to play in the Maryland boys' championships. This was also his first integrated tennis competition. During the summer Arthur could travel and participate in competitive tournaments around the country; during the school year his competition was much more limited because he was limited to black opponents from Richmond and there were only outdoor tennis courts for blacks.

(continued....)



In order for him to continue his tennis, he was sent away before beginning his senior year in high school to St. Louis, Missouri.

Upon graduating from high school first in his class, Arthur went to UCLA, which had one of the best college tennis programs. Playing there brought him more recognition amongst tennis enthusiasts. That year he was also named to the U.S. Davis Cup team as its first African-American player.

Following school Arthur served his country, joining the U.S. Army from 1966-68. While stationed at West Point in New York, he reached the rank of second lieutenant. During his time in the army he continued to play tennis, participating in the Davis Cup and other tournaments. Still an amateur, Arthur triumphed over Tom Okker of the Netherlands on September 9, 1968 to win the first U.S. Open. Unfortunately, because of his amateur status he could not accept the prize money, which was given to Okker despite his loss. He is the only African-American man to ever win the title. Upon returning to West Point, Arthur entered the dining hall that evening where, unexpectedly, everyone gave him an enthusiastic standing ovation.

1975 would prove a banner year for Arthur. On July 5, 1975 he defeated the heavily favored Jimmy Connors in four sets to win the Wimbledon singles title. He was the first and only black man to win the most prestigious grass-court tournament. This year he also attained the #1 men's ranking in the world.

Arthur's retirement from tennis in no way meant slowing down. He took on many new tasks: writing *Time Magazine*, the *Washington Post* and *Tennis Magazine*; commentating for ABC Sports; and continuing his activism against the South African Apartheid regime. That same year, in fact, he was appointed captain of the U.S. Davis Cup team. Under his leadership—including members such as John McEnroe, Peter Fleming and Jimmy Connors over his period as captain—the U.S. won the Davis Cup in 1981 and 1982. In 1981 he also served as national chairman of the American Heart Association.



Ashe wins Wimbledon

In 1983 his career was officially commemorated by his induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, RI.

On February 6, 1993 Arthur Ashe died of AIDS-related pneumonia in New York at the age of 49, having earlier contracted the illness from a blood transfusion. His body was laid in state at the Governor's Mansion in his hometown of Richmond, VA. He was the first person to lie in state at the mansion since the Confederate general Stonewall Jackson in 1863. More than 5,000 people lined up to walk past the casket. His funeral was attended by nearly 6,000 people including New York City mayor David Dinkins, Virginia governor L. Douglas Wilder, Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and Rainbow Coalition chairman Jesse Jackson. Andrew Young, the former U.N. ambassador and Atlanta mayor who had married Arthur, delivered the eulogy.

On what would have been Arthur's 53rd birthday, July 10, 1996, a statue of him was dedicated on Richmond's Monument Avenue. Before this, Monument Avenue had commemorated Confederate war heroes; in fact, as a child Arthur would not even have been able to visit Monument Avenue because of the color of his skin. Arthur is depicted carrying books in one hand and a tennis racket in the other, symbolizing his love of knowledge and tennis. In 1997 the USTA announced that the new center stadium at the USTA National Tennis Center would be named Arthur Ashe Stadium, commemorating the life of the first U.S. Open men's champion in the place where all future U.S. Open champions will be determined.



Depicting knowledge and tennis.

(continued....)





12th -- 24th: The 1st & 4th Battalions, Royal Australian Regiment and the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment conduct security during Operation Hawkesbury along the Bien Hoa-Long Khanh Province border.

16th: Richard Nixon appears on 'Laugh-in'. *Sock it to me?*



Richard Nixon, center, is flanked by Dan Rowan, left, and Dick Martin right, of 'Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In' TV show at October 1968 campaign stop in Burbank, CA. Nixon appeared on 'Laugh-In' in mid-September 1968 in the humorous 'sock-it-to-me' segment. (AP Photo)



16th Sep. – 19th Oct: Movement of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division to northern I Corps and the 3rd Brigade 82nd Airborne Division to III Corps, during Operation Golden Sword.

17th: "Mission Impossible" premieres on CBS-TV.

17th: New Orleans Saints 1st NFL game, they lose to Los Angeles Rams 27-13. *Go Rams!*



19th – 25th: The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conducts reconnaissance in force operation during Operation Crown in Phuoc Tuy Province.



27th – 29th: The 1st and 2nd Brigades, 101st Airborne and the ARVN 54th Regiment conduct search and destroy missions during Operation Phu Vang in the Thua Thien Province.



29th Sep. – 6th Oct: The 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (ANZAC) conduct reconnaissance in force operation during Operation Sceptre near Ap Sui Nghe in Phuoc Tuy Province.



29th Sep. -- 11th Oct: The 2nd & 7th Battalions, Royal Australian Regiment conduct search and destroy missions during Operation Kenmore in the Phuoc Tuy Province.

29th: Gladys Knight and Pips releases "I Heard it Through the Grapevine".



29th Sep. – 12th Oct: The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conducts reconnaissance in force during Operation Windsor in Bien Hoa Province.



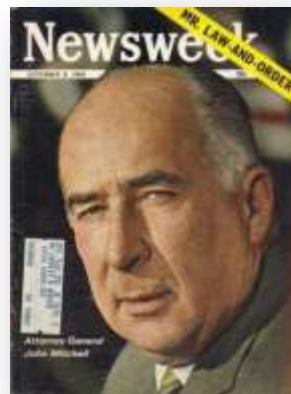
Gladys Knight & The Pips

30th: 1st Boeing 747 rolls out.

30th: The 900th U.S. aircraft is shot down over North Vietnam.

~ September 1969 ~

2nd: Ho Chi Minh Nguyen Ta't-Tanh, North Vietnamese president, dies of a heart attack at age 79. He is succeeded by Le Duan, who publicly reads the last will of Ho Chi Minh urging the North Vietnamese to fight on "until the last Yankee has gone."



September 1969

5th: The U.S. Army brings six specifications of pre-meditated murder charges against Lt. William Calley for the death of 109 Vietnamese civilians during the My Lai massacre in March of 1968.



14th Sep. – 15th Oct: The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conduct mission to locate and engage elements of the VC D445 Battalion during Operation Kingston near Thua Tich village.

16th: President Nixon orders the withdrawal of 35,000 soldiers from Vietnam and a reduction in draft calls.



18th Sep. – 15th Dec: The 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division is redeployed from South Vietnam to the United States during Operation Keystone Cardinal.

18th: Tiny Tim and Miss Vicky get engaged. *Whoopee!*

(continued.....)





27th Sep. – 7th Oct: The 3rd Battalion, 506th Airborne Infantry Regiment conduct clear and search mission during Operation Hancock Flame in Binh Thuan Province.



28th Sep. – 6th Dec: The 101st Airborne conduct Clear and search mission during Operation Republic Square in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.



29th Sep. – 8th Nov: The 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne conduct screening for the deployment of the 4th Marines during Operation Norton Falls in Quan Tri and Thua Thien Provinces.



29th Aug. – 30th Sep: The 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Infantry Regiment (ANZAC), the 199th Infantry Brigade and the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Force conduct reconnaissance and land-clearing during Operation Burnham in Phuoc Tuy Province.



General Rosson presents Meritorious Unit Citation to Thai Panther Division.



30th Sep. – 31st Oct: The 9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conduct reconnaissance in force mission during Operation Jack in Bien Hoa Province.

~ September 1970 ~



1st Sep. – 30th Nov: The redeployment of the 23rd Infantry Division, 11th Infantry Brigade and the 198th Infantry Brigade from South Vietnam to the United States, during Operations Keystone Oriole (Charlie).

3rd: Vince Lombardi, football coach (Packers), dies in Washington, D.C. at 57.



September 1970

4th: George Harrison releases "My Sweet Lord" single.



5th Sep. – 6th Oct '71: The 101st Airborne, the 5th Inf, Division and the ARVN 1st Division conduct Operation Jefferson Glenn in Thua Thien and Quang Tri Provinces.



Operation Jefferson Glenn ran from September 5, 1970 to October 6, 1971 and was the last major operation in which U.S. ground forces participated in Vietnam. It was the final major offensive in which the 101st Airborne Division fought. This was a joint military operation combining forces of the 101st Airborne and the 1st Infantry Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The purpose of this operation was to shield critical installations in Huế and Da Nang by patrolling communist rocket belts along the edge of the mountains. President Richard Nixon had begun his Vietnamization program in the summer of 1969; the objective was to increase the combat capability of the South Vietnamese forces so that they could assume responsibility for the war against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese forces as U.S. combat units were withdrawn and sent home. Shortly after the completion of Jefferson Glenn, the 101st Airborne began preparations to depart South Vietnam and subsequently began redeployment to the United States in March 1972. There were 2,026 known enemy casualties, and 60 allied KIA.



Screaming Eagles, Vietnam, 1970

(continued....)



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10th Sep. – 25th Oct: The 1st Squadron SAS and the 8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conduct operation to ambush a VC party in Hoa Long.

11th: The Ford Pinto is introduced.



11th – 13th: Operation Tailwind was a covert incursion into southeastern Laos by a company-sized element of U.S. Army Special Forces and Montagnard commando (Hatchet Force) of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG or SOG), during the Vietnam War (also known as the Second Indochina War). The purpose of the operation was to create a diversion for a Royal Lao Army offensive and to exert pressure on the occupation forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).

18th: Jimi Hendrix dies in London of drug related complications.

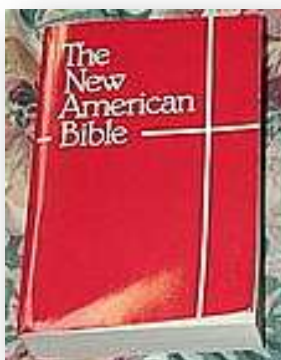
19th: "Mary Tyler Moore" show premieres.

21st: Monday Night Football premieres.

22nd: President Nixon requests 1,000 new FBI agents for college campuses.

29th: Edward Everett Horton, actor/narrator (Bullwinkle Show), dies at 84.

30th: New American Bible published.



~ September 1971 ~

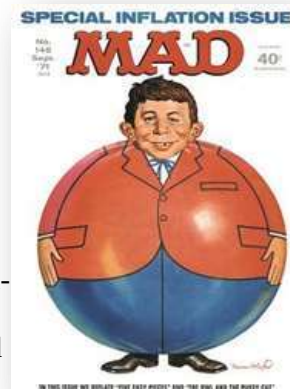
3rd: Watergate team breaks into Daniel Ellsberg's doctor's office.

6th: Summer Olympics resume in Munich Germany after massacre.

9th --13th: Attica Prison riots. A revolt breaks out at the maximum-security prison in Attica, New York. In the end, state police and the United States National Guard storm the facility; 42 are killed, 10 of them hostages.

11th: Nikita Khrushchev, dies of a heart attack at 77.

"He who cannot eat horsemeat need not do so. Let him eat pork. But he who cannot eat pork, let him eat horsemeat. It's simply a question of taste."
~ N. Khrushchev



September 1971



Khrushchev at U.N.

22nd: Captain Ernest L. Medina is acquitted of all charges concerning the massacre of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai.



29th: 7th Platoon, C Coy, 3RAR. "Charlie Company took out the fortified village and destroyed the lot...(6 & a Wakey)."

~ September 1972 ~

1st Sep. – 30th Nov: Redeployment of miscellaneous units from South Vietnam to the United States during Operation Keystone Pelican.

1st: Bobby Fischer defeats Boris Spassky in a chess match in Reykjavík, Iceland, becoming the first American world chess champion.

4th: U.S. swimmer Mark Spitz becomes 1st athlete to win 7 Olympic gold medals.



September 1972

(continued....)



5th: 11 Israeli athletes are slain at Munich Olympics by terrorists.

6th: Munich Massacre: A Palestinian terrorist group called "Black September" attack Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games.

9th: Terry Anne Meeuwsen (Wisc), 23, crowned 45th Miss America.

12th: William Boyd, cowboy (Hopalong Cassidy), dies at 77.

In 1935 Boyd was offered the lead role in Hop-a-long Cassidy (named because of a limp caused by an earlier bullet wound). He changed the original pulp-fiction character to its opposite, made sure that "Hoppy" didn't smoke, drink, chew tobacco or swear, rarely kissed a girl and let the bad guy draw first.
[Damn. Might as well die. Ed]



15th: Report of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the VNA (Vietnamese Peoples Army) General-Lieutenant Tran Van Quang at the Politburo Meeting: *"Dear comrades! I reported to you earlier about the situation which has developed and about the fundamental characteristics of the past stage of our people's conflict against the American imperialists. I will cover the main tasks of the people and the army of North and South Vietnam which were proposed by the 23rd plenum of the TsK PTV.*

These tasks once again confirm our resolve to attain victory. This is a very correct course for our party and people at the present stage of conflict. We have already worked out measures for achieving the resolutions of the 23rd Plenum of the TsK. We will also cover a number of the Supreme Command's and the Government Defense Council's positions, in which an evaluation of our victories gained over the period from 30 Mar 72 to the present is given.

The military situation for us is developing favorably on all fronts. A number of profound changes which took place in the military situation demanded that we develop a necessary frame of reference for solving all issues which arise during the war. Several meetings between us and the US aimed at developing measures on resolving the Vietnam issue have already taken place. We have decisively rejected a number of proposals put forth by the American side. With assistance from a number of countries, there were to be secret meetings in Paris and in other places aimed at drawing up a solution to the Vietnam issue. Such meetings took place. They once again testified to the deranged nature of the proposals put forward by the American side. As before, we have maintained our position, the essence of which includes the following: if the US truly wants to resolve the Vietnam issue, then above all else it must refuse to

support the Nguyen Van Thieu regime, and only afterwards will we engage in a discussion about a cease fire. This demand is the main tenet in our conflict against the American imperialists.

If Nixon continues adhering to his policy of 'Vietnamization' of the war and desires to leave the present Saigon Government of Thieu in power, then the peace negotiations between us and the US will not yield any results."

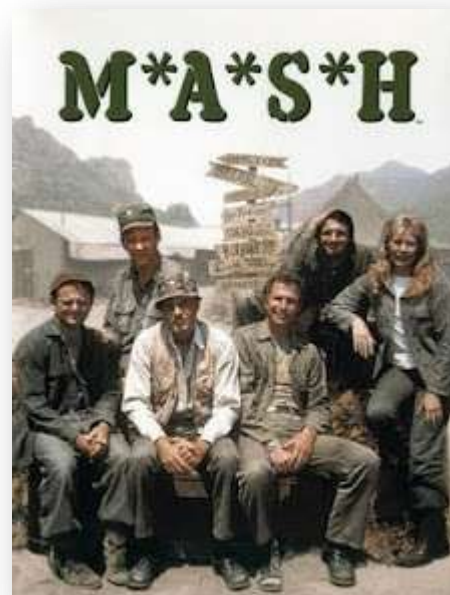
16th: Quang Tri City is recaptured by South Vietnamese troops.

17th: "M*A*S*H," premieres on NBC TV.

21st: Marcos declares martial law in Philippines

27th: Gwyneth Paltrow, American actress, is born.

29th: Heavy U.S. air raids against airfields in North Vietnam destroy 10 percent of their air force.



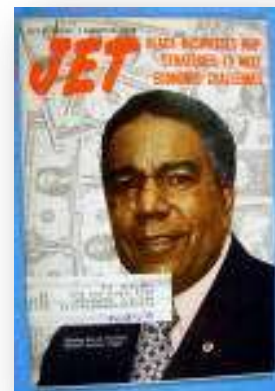
~ September 1973 ~

Congressional action during the Summer drops U.S. aid to South Vietnam from \$2.1 billion to \$700 million. Political and economic instability begins to shake the South Vietnamese government.

11th: Chile's democratically elected government is overthrown in a military coup after serious instability. President Salvador Allende commits suicide during the coup in the presidential palace, and General Augusto Pinochet heads a U.S.-backed military junta that governs Chile for the next 16 years.

14th: Israel shoots down 13 Syrian MIG-21s.

15th: Secretariat wins Marlboro Cup in world record 1:45 2/5 for 1 miles.



September 1973

(continued....)



20th: Jim Croce, American songwriter/vocalist (Time in a Bottle), born 1943, dies in a plane crash at 30.

22nd: South Vietnamese troops assault NVA near Pleiku.

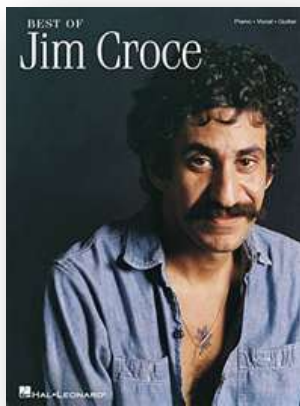
22nd: Henry Kissinger, United States National Security Advisor, starts his term as United States Secretary of State.

23rd: The Oakland Raiders defeat the Miami Dolphins 12-7, ending the Dolphins unbeaten streak at 18. It was the Miami Dolphins' first loss since January 16, 1972 in Super Bowl VI.

26th: Ralph Earnhardt, American race car driver (born 1928), dies.

26th: Concorde makes its first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic in record-breaking time.

29th: Insurance industry announces auto racers get into more highway accidents.



Ralph Earnhardt

~ September 1974 ~

On 16 September 1974, President Gerald Ford signed an executive order establishing a clemency program for all Vietnam-era draft offenders. According to figures compiled by the Departments of Defense and Justice, apparent draft dodgers (including deferments) numbered over 570,000, of whom 209,517 were actually accused of dodging by the government. Of those accused, 8,750 were convicted of draft offences. The majority of the cases, however, were dropped under Ford's clemency program.



September 1974

September: The U.S. Congress appropriates only \$700 million for South Vietnam. This leaves the South Vietnamese Army under-funded and results in a decline of military readiness and morale.

2nd: President Gerald Ford signs Employee Retirement Income Security Act.

4th: Creighton Williams Abrams, American General (born 1914), dies.

Creighton Williams "Abe" Abrams, a veteran of three wars, was regarded as a brilliant tank commander by his peers. General Abrams is known for skillfully presiding over America's withdrawal from Vietnam. He was the son of a railroad repairman and in 1936 graduated from West Point in the same class as William Westmoreland. He was born in Springfield, MA on 15 September 1914.



WWII

In 1940, after four years as a troop officer in the 1st Cavalry Division and several months as a tank company commander with the 1st Armored Division, Abrams joined the new 4th Armored Division for the Allied Operations across Western Europe. He served in all the 4th's campaigns as a Battalion or Combat Commander, earning a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in September 1943.

It was Abe's tanks that broke the German encirclement of the 101st Airborne at Bastogne and his Commander, General George S. Patton, Jr., once said: *"I'm supposed to be the best tank commander in the Army, but I have one peer – Abe Abrams. He's the World Champion."*

Following the war he spent two years as Director of Tactics at the Armored school before returning to Europe in 1949 to command the 63rd Tank Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division.

Korean War

After spending a year at the Army War College, Abrams was assigned to Korea and served successively as Chief of Staff of I, X and IX Corps. In 1956, following a year as Chief of Staff of the Armored Center at Fort Knox, he was promoted to Brigadier General and became Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Reserve Components. Four years later he was promoted to Major General and appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of U.S. Army Europe. Abrams subsequently returned to Washington and after occupying several important positions he was promoted to General in 1964 and was sworn in as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

Vietnam War

On 1st June 1967 Abrams was appointed Deputy Commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam and was responsible for overseeing the U.S. advisory effort with the Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF). Thirteen months later, following the Tet Offensive and General Westmoreland's promotion to Army Chief of Staff, he became Commander of MACV.



(continued....)



Unlike his predecessor, who had favored a division of effort – U.S. units concentrating on the destruction of the enemy's main forces, whilst the RVNAF focused on pacification (the “other war”) – Abrams articulated a “One War” approach. Rather than relying on the body count to gauge the progress of the attrition strategy, the new commander stated that population security would now be the barometer for success.

In this regard Abrams favored using small unit patrols to deny the Viet Cong access to the people and to disrupt the movement of Communist forces and their supplies. However, despite advocating the primacy of pacification, large combat operations in remote areas continued, such as the assault on Hamburger Hill in the A Shau Valley in May 1969.

Beginning in July 1969, Abrams was tasked with implementing President Nixon's Vietnamization policy, which turned responsibility for military operations over to the Vietnamese so that U.S. forces could be withdrawn. In order to achieve this without South Vietnam collapsing the pacification program was accelerated, particularly in the southern provinces. Able to be withdrawn from the pacified areas, the ARVN replaced the departing American soldiers fighting the enemy's main forces in the northern regions. Abrams' implementation of Vietnamization was portrayed as a success after the ARVN was able to confront the NVA's 1972 Easter Offensive whilst the territorial forces simultaneously managed to maintain security in the southern Delta.

In October 1972, after four years in command of MACV, Abrams became Chief of Staff of the Army, where he continued the Army's transition to an all-volunteer force and its reorganization in Western Europe.

Post Vietnam

General Abrams died of lung cancer on 4 September 1974 at the age of 59, the first Army Chief of Staff to die in office. He was buried with full military honors in a special plot at Arlington National Cemetery.

The **M1 Abrams** is a main battle tank produced in the United States. The M1 is named after General Creighton Abrams, former Army Chief of Staff and Commander



of US military forces in Vietnam from 1968 to 1972. It is a well-armed, heavily armored, and highly mobile tank designed for modern armored ground warfare. Notable features of the M1 Abrams include the use of a powerful gas turbine engine, the adoption of sophisticated composite armor, and separate ammunition storage in a blow-out compartment for crew safety. It is one of the heaviest tanks in service, weighing in at close to 68 short tons. The M1 Abrams entered US service in 1980, replacing the 105 mm gun, full tracked M60

Patton main battle tank. It did, however, serve for over a decade alongside the improved M60A3, which had entered service in 1978. Three main versions of the M1 Abrams have been made.

8th: Evel Knievel's attempt to jump the Snake River Canyon at Twin Falls, Idaho, fails after a parachute prematurely deploys on his “sky cycle.”



8th: TWA Flight 841 crashes into the Ionian Sea 18 minutes after take-off from Athens, after a bomb explodes in the cargo hold, and kills 88 people.

8th: President Gerald Ford pardons former President Richard Nixon of all federal crimes.

16th: President Gerald R. Ford announces a clemency program for draft evaders and military deserters. The program runs through March 31, 1975, and requires fugitives to take an oath of allegiance and also perform up to two years of community service. Out of an estimated 124,000 men eligible, about 22,500 take advantage of the offer.

16th: U.S. General Haig becomes NATO-supreme commander in Europe.

21st: Walter Brennan, American actor (born 1894), dies.



Born in Swampscott, Massachusetts to Irish emigrants, he was christened Walter Andrew Brennan. His father was an engineer and inventor. Walter Brennan studied engineering before becoming an actor. While in school, he became interested in acting, and began to perform in vaudeville. After service in World War I (where, according to legend, his vocal cords were damaged by mustard gas, which also caused him to age prematurely), he moved to Guatemala and raised pineapples, before settling in Los Angeles where he became involved in the real estate market and made a fortune. Unfortunately, he lost most of his money when the market took a sudden downturn. Film historians have long regarded Brennan as one of the finest character actors in motion picture history.

28th: 1st Lady Betty Ford undergoes a radical mastectomy.

28th: “Surfin’ USA” by Beach Boys reenters chart and peaks at #36.

(continued....)



~ September 1975 ~

1st: The last original episode of the American television series Gunsmoke airs on CBS after a record 20-year run.

5th: In Sacramento, California, Lynette (Squeaky) Fromme, a follower of jailed cult leader Charles Manson, attempts to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford, but is thwarted by a Secret Service agent.



September 1975

14th: Pope Paul VI declares Mother Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton the first native born American to be canonized a saint. When she was canonized in 1975, the Vatican credited her with miraculously curing three desperately ill individuals: Carl Kalin – who had encephalitis, Ann Theresa O’Neil – who had leukemia, and Sister Gertrude Korzendorfer – who had cancer.

17th: Rollout of 1st space shuttle orbiter Enterprise (OV-101).



April 29, 2012, Space Shuttle Enterprise’s final flight.

28th: Bill authorizes admission of women to military academies.

29th: Casey Stengel, American baseball player and manager (born 1890), dies.



Other Historical Events in Military History During The Month of September

September 1, 1939: At 5.30 a.m., Hitler’s armies invaded Poland starting World War II in Europe.

September 2, 1864: During the American Civil War, Atlanta was captured by Sherman’s Army. “*Atlanta is ours, and fairly won,*” General William T. Sherman telegraphed President Lincoln.

September 2, 1945: President Harry Truman declared V-J Day (Victory over Japan Day) commemorating the formal Japanese surrender to the Allies aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

September 2, 1945: Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of Vietnam and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

September 2, 1962: Soviet Russia agreed to send arms to Cuba, leading to the October Missile Crisis after the shipments were discovered by the U.S.

September 3, 1783: The Treaty of Paris was signed by John Adams, Ben Franklin and John Jay, formally ending the American Revolutionary War between Britain and the United States.

September 3, 1939: Great Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany after its invasion of Poland two days earlier.

September 4, 1886: The last major U.S.-Indian war came to an end as Geronimo was captured. He died of natural causes in 1909 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

September 7, 1940: The German Luftwaffe began its Blitz bombing campaign against London during World War II.

September 9, 1943: The invasion of Salerno began during World War II in Europe as Allied forces under General Mark Clark made amphibious landings along the western coast of Italy near Naples. Initial gains by the Allies met strong resistance from German forces.

September 10, 1943: Hitler’s troops occupied Rome and took over the protection of Vatican City.

September 11, 2001: The worst terrorist attack in U.S. history occurred as four large passenger jets were hijacked then crashed, killing nearly 3,000 persons.



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Sky Soldiers Killed in Action in September

~ Lest we forget ~



1965

MARQUES, PAUL JOSEPH

1965-09-09, SAN PEDRO, CA, SP4, 22

CAMARENA-SALAZAR, EDUARDO

1965-09-17, EL CENTRO, CA PFC 21

ANDERSON, LEE E.

1965-09-19, PHOENIX, AZ, SGT, 21

EMBREY, GRADY KEITH

1965-09-19, LA GRANGE, GA, PFC, 19

PIERCE, LARRY STANLEY

1965-09-20, TAFT, CA, SSG, 24



Larry Pierce
Medal of Honor recipient

1966

TRAXLER, TOMMY JR.

6-09-06 CRYSTAL SPRINGS, MS, PFC, 21

BARNEY, ALEXANDER LORENZO

1966-09-10, NEW YORK, NY, PFC, 19

MILLER, JOSEPH LLOYD

1966-09-15, DENVER, CO, SGT, 22

RANKIN, EDWARD GARRY

1966-09-16, WAYNESBORO, VA, PFC, 19

RANDALL, LOUIS R.

1966-09-25, COVINGTON, KY, PFC, 18

WESTPOINT, THOMAS LEE

1966-09-30, CHARLESTON, SC, SGT, 24

COTNEY, ELMER EUGENE

1966-09-30, LINEVILLE, AL, SP4, 20

BROYLES, LANHAM ODELL

1966-09-30, OILDALE, CA, SP4, 19

1967

AUER, EDUARD ADOLPH

1967-09-19, MANSFIELD, OH, SSG, 29

PERSON, DAVID EUGENE

1967-09-22, KIRBYVILLE, TX, MAJ, 34

BAMVAKAIS, JOHN ROBERT JR

1967-09-28, JEFFERSON CITY, MO, SGT, 20

1968

JAWOROWICZ, LAWRENCE FRANK

1968-09-05, DETROIT, MI, CPL, 20

PARKER, HERMAN, JR.

1968-09-05, GRAY SUMMIT, MO, PFC, 18

BROWN, DAVID CARLTON

1968-09-07, FORT MONROE, VA, CPT, 24

GRISMER, EDGAR JOSEPH

1968-09-07, LOUISVILLE, KY, SSG, 19

WINTERS, STEVEN ANDREW

1968-09-07, TULSA, OK, CPL, 20

KARR, DAVID RAY

1968-09-07, QUITMAN, MO, SFC, 25

GILRAY, ROBERT BRUCE JR

1968-09-07, CHATHAM, NJ, 2LT, 23

EVANS, CECIL VAUGHN

1968-09-07, SALISBURY, MD, SSG, 20

FRAZER, KENNETH CHARLES

1968-09-09, CHESTER, IL, SGT, 22

ELLIOTT, ROBERT THOMAS III

1968-09-09, ANCHORAGE, AK, 1LT, 23

HUFFMAN, DAVID KEITH

1968-09-11, SPEEDWAY, IN, SGT, 22

HUSTEAD, TERENCE MICHAEL

1968-09-13, MORAGA, CA, SGT, 25



Terrence Hustead

WELCH, RICHARD WILLIAM

1968-09-13, WILMINGTON, MA, PFC, 18

BENZ, ROBERT JOSEPH

1968-09-13, SYRACUSE, NY, SP4, 22

MORAN, LONZO JOSEPH, JR.

1968-09-13, LAWTON, OK, PFC, 20

LEWIS, GARY LEE

1968-09-13, FORT MADISON, IA, PVT, 22

UNDERWOOD, HARRY WILLIAM

1968-09-14, ST LOUIS, MO, PVT, 19

OWENS, CHARLES EDWARD

1968-09-17, GASTONIA, NC, CPL, 19

(continued....)



PAULK, ELIAS JOHNSON

1968-09-19, OCALA, FL, SSG, 20

HULSLANDER, ROSS THOMAS

1968-09-19, GAINESVILLE, FL, CPL, 20

SCHULTZ, JAMES CHESTER

1968-09-19, CHICAGO, IL, CPL, 19



James Schultz

BROCK, THOMAS DEAN

1968-09-23, GREENVILLE, SC, SGT, 20

CARTER, GREGORY

1968-09-23, COLUMBUS, OH, SGT, 21

HARING, KARL RICHARD

1968-09-24, AURORA, IL, SGT, 19

WOLFE, RICHARD GLEN

1968-09-24, NEWARK, NJ, SP4, 20

HACEK, JAMES DAVID

1968-09-26, CRYSTAL LAKE, IL, CPL, 20

TOBEY, MICHAEL JAMES

1968-09-26, GREENFIELD, MA, SGT, 19

LESANDO, NICHOLAS PETER, JR.

1968-09-26, GREENWOOD, NY, CPL, 21

FILIPPELLI, ALFRED ANDREW

1968-09-26, WOODSIDE, NY, CPL, 20

REEDER, PHILIP DALLAM

1968-09-27, BEAUMONT, TX, PFC, 19

WEBB, VIRGIL JUNIOR

1968-09-27, MARYSVILLE, OH, CPL, 26

LAWTON, EDWARD LESTER

1968-09-27, THERMOPOLIS, WY, CPL, 19

MASON, CHARLES JOSEPH L.

1968-09-27, WASHINGTON, DC, PVT, 20

1969

MC ALLISTER, CAMERON TRENT

1969-09-07, OMAHA, NE, SSG, 28

SMITH, THOMAS LEROY

1969-09-11, OMAHA, NE, CPL, 21

RYAN, JERRY VAN

1969-09-11, WALNUT CREEK, CA, CPL, 20



Jerry Van Ryan

CAGLE, RANDY GRAHAM

1969-09-11, MENLO, GA, CPL, 18

SQUIER, WILLIAM RUSSELL, JR.

1969-09-13, BROWNELL, KS, SSG, 20

PYPNIOWSKI, LARRY

1969-09-16, WHITE HOUSE STATIO, NJ, CPL, 20

LOWE, WALTER BEDFORD JR

1969-09-16, GARDEN CITY, TX, SSG, 22



Walter Lowe

SERVANTEZ, JOSEPH ANTHONY

1969-09-17, INKSTER, MI, SGT, 21



Joseph Servantez

RODRIGUEZ, ENCARNASION

1969-09-17, LA MIRADA, CA, SGT, 21

LABRECQUE, ROBERT WILLIAM

1969-09-18, RIVIERA BEACH, FL, CPL, 18

TRACY, JOHN WAYNE

1969-09-18, SEMINOLE, OK, SSG, 35

DYER, MARTIN BARRY, JR.

1969-09-19, NEW YORK, NY, SGT, 20

HAGER, ROBERT LEE, JR.

1969-09-22, KANNAPOLIS, NC, CPL, 20

TOMPKINS, JAMES ERVIN

1969-09-25, WASHINGTON, DC, SSG, 28

HENNEGHAN, ROBERT LEE

1969-09-27, COWARD, SC, SGT, 22

NEWSOME, JOHNNY

1969-09-27, LOS ANGELES, CA, CPL, 20

1970

COATES, EMORY THERON

1970-09-05, CHICAGO, IL, SGT, 20

(continued....)



WRIGHT, VERNON ARTHUR

1970-09-05, INDIANOLA, IA, SP4, 21



Vernon Wright

MORENO, JESUS, JR.

1970-09-06, CORPUS CHRISTI, TX, SP4, 20

BROOKS, LARRY EUGENE

1970-09-06, DETROIT, MI, CPL, 20

PADILLA, EDDIE JACK

1970-09-07, STEVINSON, CA, CPL, 19

AARON, EUGENE ALLEN

1970-09-07, TAMPA, FL, PFC, 19

SVEEN, BRENT WILLIAM

1970-09-07, FARGO, ND, PFC, 18

ENGLISH, GLENN HARRY, JR.

1970-09-07, CORNWELLS HEIGHTS, PA, SSG, 30

ASEP, MICHAEL

1970-09-08, NEW YORK, NY, SP4, 21



Michael Asep

FRIEND, GARY RALPH

1970-09-09, HARPER, OR, SGT, 19

LEWIS, ELTON

1970-09-09, INDEPENDENCE, LA, PFC, 18

CAMPBELL, WILSON

1970-09-10, LAURINBURG, NC, CPL, 19

ADAMS, MERRITT

1970-09-10, FAYETTEVILLE, NC, SGT, 19



Merritt Adams

HARPER, HAROLD OWEN

1970-09-12, GRAND RAPIDS, MI, SGT, 20

MATHEWS, CHARLES DONALD

1970-09-12, GRAND HAVEN, MI, SP4, 20

MARSHALL, DENNIS CRAIG

1970-09-13, WOOSTER, OH, CPL, 19

WALDRON, JAMES TAYLOR

1970-09-13, MINNEAPOLIS, MN, SGT, 20

GENTRY, DENNIS WAYNE

1970-09-13, ATHENS, GA, SGT, 20

CLAYTON, CURVIN

1970-09-13, DURHAM, NC, SP4, 20

WATSON, TYRONE CALVIN

1970-09-13, PHILADELPHIA, PA, SSG, 28

SEDA, PABLO ISREAL

1970-09-15, NEW YORK, NY, PVT, 21

KEENEY, JOSEPH FRANK

1970-09-16, BALTIMORE, MD, PVT, 21

WELLS, ROGER ORRIE

1970-09-17, PLEASANTVILLE, PA, CPL, 20

LAWRENCE, TORY DRAKE

1970-09-19, MURPHYS, CA, CPL, 22

HENSLEY, MARK ALAN

1970-09-19, GREAT FALLS, MT, CPL, 20



Mark Hensley

SHIPE, THOMAS ALLEBACH

1970-09-19, VENETIA, PA, CPL, 22

OVERWEG, ROGER DALE

1970-09-19, ZEELAND, MI, SGT, 20

JINDRICH, STEVEN FREDERICK

1970-09-22, DENVER, CO, SP4, 20

SEGAR, CALVIN RUSSELL

1970-09-22, BISBEE, AZ, PFC, 18

RATLIFF, BILLY HARRISON

1970-09-24, POMEROYTON, KY, SGT, 20

1971

CADIEUX, THOMAS PAUL

1971-05-09, LA GRANGE PARK, IL, SGT, 21

Source:

<http://www.173rdairborne.com/KIARVN.htm>

Photos from Virtual Wall



~ What I Remember About September ~

No Good-Bye's

I'm working on a on a forty-five year memory, but I'm reasonably sure it was in September of '67 when word came down that the platoon leader, Lt Philbin, wanted to see me at the Charlie Company CP bunker. When I got there along with several other guys we were told to gather our gear and report back in 15 minutes, we were being transferred to newly-formed Delta



Wayne Bowers

Company. No time was given to say good-bye to guys I had bonded with for the past six months. There were even some who I had known since AIT. The army is famous for ripping apart friendships and slapping new ones together. The only guy I remember going with me was Harry Stephens. While Harry and I were not very close, I had known him from AIT and Jump School. He was a great guy who was liked by everyone. Another guy I had known from AIT was Dick Holt. I can't recall saying good-bye to him. We were escorted from Charlie to Delta by a young E-5, Sergeant Carpenter. When I got to my new company I was placed in a squad with Harry. The first guy I bonded with was Russ Thoreau who had come from Bravo Company. He and I became close friends over the next few months. Another fellow I recall meeting that first day was Clarence Hall. Ciao

Wayne Bowers
C/D/2/503d

If it Itches, Scratch it

Damn it trooper, who knew what month it was? The only calendar I had was my short-timers calendar back at Camp Zinn. But if Doc Short kept a daily log, I might be able to tell you if I had been to Bien Hoa. ;-(

Woody Davis
A/2/503d



Woody Davis

Woody. Did you ever itch anywhere? If so, you've been to Bien Hoa. Ed

No One Slept, Not a Second



L-R: Bravo Bulls John Boggs, Jimmy Flowers in the center telling Larry McCormack on the right he is a "Numba 1 G.I."

In September 1966, I was assigned as lead machine gunner with the Second Platoon, B/2/503. The Battalion was engaged in Operation Toledo, and we were conducting search and destroy missions in the hills outside Vung Tau. My machine gun crew consisted of my assistant gunner, Gibbs, my two ammo bearers, Jerry Richburg and Jimmy Flowers, and me. I had been operating in that capacity since I arrived in Vietnam in April 1966.

One night during that operation, Staff Sergeant James Strode assigned my crew to ambush patrol with a brand new (new in country) buck sergeant whose name I can't recall. Sgt. Strode asked me to show the "cherry" sergeant how to set up the ambush. I found a well-used trail about 80-90 meters outside the perimeter near a large tree with exposed roots that provided excellent cover for both the rifle squad and my gun crew. I placed a trip wire across the trail for the ground flare, and set a claymore near the flare next to the trail. I held on to the detonator for the claymore. I told the sergeant that, if we made contact, I would detonate the claymore, that we should unload everything we have at the area of the trail near the flare, and then run like hell back through the perimeter while screaming the nightly password. It was a standard plan for most of the ambush patrols to which I had been assigned since I had been in country. Best laid plans and all that shit, right? Wrong!

(continued....)



After dark, I took the first two-hour watch while the rest of my team slept. I woke up one of the guys to relieve me around 10 or 11 and I immediately fell asleep. At some point during my deep sleep, I heard some type of "hissing" sound that woke me. As I opened my eyes, I saw the trooper who was on guard next to me sound asleep. The reason I could see him so well was because the trip flare lit up the whole area very well. When I realized what was going on, I squeezed the detonator for the claymore. As it exploded, I remember hoping that a deer or wild pig had set off the trip flare. I started to man my gun to open up on the area around the flare, but as I did, I saw the rookie sergeant jump up and start running toward the perimeter with the rest of the guys following him, including my crew. Since I decided *not* to hold a suicidal one-man standoff, I followed suit. The sergeant ran in an area parallel with the perimeter instead of toward it and when he realized he was lost, he hit the dirt as did everyone else while forming a sort of "J" shaped formation with me at the opposite end from the sergeant.



Bravo Bulls on patrol. (Photo by Jim Robinson, B/2/503)

As we lay in the tall grass, the sergeant tried to radio the CP, but was having trouble doing so. It was at this point we all learned the hard way that it was not the local wildlife that set off the trip flare. On both sides of our little formation, we started hearing movement. As it turned out, we could hear that movement for what seemed like forever as enemy troops walked on both sides of us within 20 to 30 feet to our front and rear.

At times, we could hear whispering, and on one occasion, I could see a figure within 15 feet of me as he stopped and stood there. Jimmy Flowers had his .45 out and whispered, "*I see him,*" as he was about to fire a round at the figure. Knowing it would be sure death for all of us, I made him put the gun down. So, there we lie, completely exposed, and sure that the enemy would detect us at any moment and open fire on our lame-ass position. I had pretty much written the rest of my short life off that night.

Around daybreak, the movement had stopped and I started thinking I might come out of this alive after all. Then, all of a sudden, we heard a bloodcurdling scream that came from about 40 or 50 yards away. I was sure the enemy had detected us at some point and was signaling their charge to attack. I waited to see movement or hear gunfire, but nothing happened. I threw a grenade in the direction of the scream. It detonated, but again, nothing happened.

A few minutes later, the sergeant made radio contact with the CP and they sent a clearing patrol to bring us in. I went toward the perimeter to meet with the patrol and led them back to the bedraggled ambush patrol. We went to the area where we heard the scream earlier, but found no sign of anyone or anything to indicate the enemy had been there.

I was never so relieved in my life as when I walked back into the perimeter and into relative safety. I have thought about that night almost every day since. How any of us survived is a true mystery to me. Had the enemy troops walked just a few feet to either side of where they actually walked, they would have stepped on us. If Jimmy had decided to fire that .45, we wouldn't have stood a chance. That incident has haunted me more than any firefight or close call I had while in Vietnam. I have asked myself many times why my life was spared that night, but when I see my four children, 10 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren, I surely realize they are the reason I survived that incident as well as all the other incidents I experienced in Vietnam.

Oh yeah, as a postscript I will tell you that the very next night Sgt. Strode sent our asses back out on ambush patrol again to see if we could do it right. I guarantee you, no one slept that night, not for a second.

Larry McCormack
B/2/503d, '66-'67

(continued....)



One year of Insanity ***Sept 1966 to Sept 1967***

This is not in any kind of sequence.... just random thoughts.

Tan Son Nhut repo depot. "You will never get to that unit, probably end up in the Big Red 1". Hot, dirty, trucks with beds full of sandbags, long lists of people to get on the trucks. Two hours later just me, all alone feeling forgotten, waiting... then a huge black NCO..."You Lt.



Jack Owens

Owens?" Yes. "Get on the bus". An OD Jap, 40-man bus. "Blood" Burns alone, one M-16, 3 magazines taped together, am the only one aboard. Arrive Camp Zinn, scared, nervous, looking at people. Everyone armed to the teeth, weapons loaded, grenades, dust, red dirt, and that God awful smell. It never went away.



Camp Zinn

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

Processed in, sent to A Company CPT Jack Kelly CO, Tony Torres 1st SGT, CPT Ralph Southerland XO? Platoon leaders--Gus Vendetti, Bob Guy, Bob Johnson, Larry Allgood & me. Clem Green (Jack Kelly) tells me lots of shifting going to happen soon. Assigned to 3rd platoon, Willie Pitts Platoon Sgt...move out in 3 hours to cover the RAR area, they just left...???? No idea what they were talking about. It was perimeter guard, not in our area, back in our area for PT & morning formation. My God we're at Ft. Bragg. Draw jungle fatigues, draw weapon, meet squad leaders...Sgts. Williams, Perkins, Charlie B. Morris, Doug Kerns. Morris is not allowed to go to the field, awaiting some award. Go to the club, very nervous. NCO, Sgt Floyd, running O-Club, meet all sorts of guys, all want to meet the new meat. Drinks, Bob Guy drinking gimlets,



what the hell is that...Poker game....divided up my stuff....Magill, Abrams, Dooley, others....won 600 bucks, bad sign??? First mission, going to D-Zone, TAOR. What the hell is a TAOR?? Sweaty, butterflies, never flew a Huey before, smells like diesel, rocking side to side, on the ground, sitting on the floor feet over the side, everybody but me relaxed, up we go nose down tail up. Cool air aloft, cold, short ride. Welcome to the jungle!!! Patrol out whole company. Wham boom "short round" "medic" run over there, three guys on the ground, body parts everywhere, one still alive, missing a leg, dust-off on the way, too late. Never knew who they were, not A Company. Keep going...Willie Pitts trying to keep me straight, tuff-job, holy shit this is for real!!!! Time running together, no sense of time, just keep going this ain't real, like maybe a John Wayne movie. Boom, boom, boom...what the hell, big green things flying through the trees, everybody's down. Why??? Check on the platoon, all OK, walk over to the CP, Kelly's in a hole talking on the radio, bam, bam, he's adjusting artillery. Guy yells "Get your ass down, those are Chicom 50 calibers!" Oh yeah...10 minutes, break contact, no one hurt, push on. Next day platoon patrol, big boom, "Medic!", get there quick, kid hit in the chest, homemade claymore, bad wound, try mouth to mouth all blood, medic takes over call for dust-off, I'm yelling on the radio. Kelly gives radio to Tony Torres, try to calm that green LT down. Johnny Jones dies. Willie Pitts says we had a KIA, we can go in now. He's right. Back to Camp Zinn, riding on some trucks...ass is sore, mostly from Kelly chewing on it, he's excitable. Learning. Some guys climbing into a 5 ton eng. dump-truck, grenade came loose went off, big mess. We lost more guys to ourselves than to the enemy. New SOP on carrying grenades. LTs hooch is a mess. Ralph went home, Gus is XO. Next day hung over, in the hooch talking--in walks a NCO I've never seen before. He put a pistol into Guy's face and said "Are you prepared to die?", he was drunk. Larry Allgood jumped up, pulled a small revolver from his pocket, put it to the back of the jerk's head and ordered him to put the gun down---NOW! He did. They took him outside, never saw him again, never talked about it again. Maybe it never happened.



Gus Vendetti

(continued....)



Larry DEROSSED, replaced by Art Fumerton, to become my best friend. (For the next four+ years in S.E. Asia I was never without a pistol). Tony Torres went to be Sgt. Major 4th Bat. Pidgon now 1st Sgt. I'm still Jr. LT in the battalion, great. Appointed Company motor officer, what a pain in the ass, home from the field, to the motor pool. A Sergeant comes back from the hospital, he was shot in the ass. A lot of the guys in the platoon wanted him dead, believed he caused a lot of good men to die. There were five or six guys, all recovering from wounds, left from the platoon where he was the acting platoon leader. They were going to kill him, and he knew it. I'm stuck with all of them. Meet lots of people, Dr. Klienstiver, Chaplin Creek---room mates, a real unholy duo, a sex addict and a Baptist minister---wow. Larry Willoughby, Bn S-2, and new Bn CO

Bob Sigholtz, (from my area of the world N.E. PA). Sioux City--training time, new people, live operation, learn to work together. Willie Pitts used a foul smelling shaving powder. I shaved every day Airborne rules, sometimes without water.



The late Col. Bob Sigholtz

Col Sigholtz was an old line 82nd guy. He wanted to do what was done in WW11. 82nd did a river crossing, we did a river crossing in rubber boats -- think it was the Song Be river, not the Rhine. (See cover photo, Ed) This was an adventure, I loved it. I was hooked, I could never imagine anything as exciting. The jungle was full of stuff, supply huts, rice (how do you destroy rice?), ammo, booby traps, even punji pits, but they were old, not used lately. Back we come, Camp Zinn, everybody getting used to new people. A Company is all "good old boys" from Ft. Bragg, Charlie from the 101st, and Bravo from Jump school. I guess the NCO network was in high gear. A lot of the company was in the DR, they had CIB's for which they got a lot of grief. Lt's and troopers came from all over. PT in the morning, then to the goddamn motor pool, training troops---people talking about jump training---jumping off the back of a 2 ½ ton going 5mph, I don't believe it. To the club, drink like crazy. Off we go, how many drunk guys can we get in a M-151, maybe 10, down across the base to 2nd Surgical Hospital, why?---nurses. Oh we were loved by the male staff....Jack Kelly sitting, talking to an older blonde major. She was the Sr. nurse and maybe 30, well one of the male staff was

displeased with this, so he expressed himself. Kelly called me over and told me to explain to this medical officer he did not want to be bothered. The MSO said *"This is our club, you're not welcome"*. After a short debate and maybe a few threats he left. After many more drinks we all got in & on our M151 and went back to Camp Zinn---we were formally asked to never return, by a letter I think. Jump training---wow---we were going to do it.



2/503 practice jump in Vietnam (Pat Bowe, Bn Recon, photo)

We were off to Saigon and the ARVN Airborne School. LTC Sigholtz in his jeep, leading three packed cattle trucks. These trucks were massive open vehicles full of loud, armed paratroopers. All went well until we got to Saigon, and the traffic, no rules, chaos, HQ6 was stopped dead by traffic. Col. Sigholtz sent the jeep to the rear of the column, and moved to the lead cattle truck, with air-horns blaring we moved thru the traffic. In Vietnam he who has the biggest truck has the right of way. Jump refresher, then a practice jump out of a C-130. Willie Pitts knows I have 5 jumps and of course he's the jumpmaster. I got to see a lot of South Vietnam standing in the door; he really had me in the door for at least 10 minutes, had his head between my legs and did his best to make me nervous. I had to go first....obligation. Hit the ground, feet, ass and head. Someone said it was the worst PLF they ever saw. I walked away from it, so it was good; so much for the "cherry" jump. Back to Camp Zinn, P.T. in the morning, Bn formation, on the berm for a "mad minute" (expended all ammo carried on the last operation), reload magazines, clean weapons, ready to go again.

(continued....)





2/503 honing skills for combat jump. One thousand one, one thousand two..... (Pat Bowe photo)

This was 1966 and we could still get a pass to go to downtown Bien Hoa. Everybody not on guard went. Art and I would go to a French restaurant and have dinner. Onion soup, shrimp, and some French style baguettes with armored plated crusts and insects baked right in, and drink only beer. We would then wander thru the bars and whorehouses to find the troops and get them on the trucks to make curfew. Never had a real problem with any of our guys. Willie Pitts never went to town, never took an R&R, real straight arrow (too bad it was not mutual). I do not recall one meal at the Bn. Mess Hall, which was right down our Company street, but after breakfast the next day we went down to the airfield, right into the passenger terminal and loaded up on Huey's and left for SIOUX CITY. These things are running together in my mind, it's been 45 years, some things are as clear as a bell tone, and other things muddled. We are in D-ZONE, RIVER CROSSING on RB-15's, WWII again, some NCO sitting on a 106mm R.R. wearing a patrol cap. One of the guys called him "the littlest ranger," said he had a canteen full of left

ears. Don't know. Went across Song Be river with Sgt.'s squad, muddy riverbanks---somebody found a cave full of NVA contraband, I think it was Lt. Guy.



LT Bob Guy, A/2/503 at Zinn
(Woody Davis photo)

The Sgt. later found a reason to go home, personal problems (old trick, have wife file for divorce, go home problem solved, hardship---yeah sure!!!) I ran into him at Bragg a year later, he was in the Op Force at school. He would not talk to me. Willy Pitts and I began to work together, he was a natural leader, the guys loved him, but he was a 4.2 mortar platoon guy, not a 11B, he volunteered for the line after another guy wrecked the platoon. The platoon was a patchwork, made-up of assorted MOS's and a heavy mortar Sgt., add to that a green Jr. LT and here we are. Two weeks in the jungle, seems like I do not see anyone but my platoon, move here, move there, move back---does anyone know what they're doing? Sgt. Williams, E-5, squad leader, Willie said he made E-5 five times in ten years, always in trouble. That other Sgt., scared -- enough said. One day he was hit by a small sliver of shrapnel, he kept yelling "I'm hit, I'm hit!" He was hit in the back on his LBE, the metal sliver never broke the skin. Willy told him to be quiet.

(continued....)





Jack Owens, A/B/2/503d, standing along the Willie Pitts Jr. Parkway in Albany, GA, Willie's hometown. Jack says, "Willie Pitts was my platoon sergeant in Sept. 1966. He was Paragon Alpha 35. He retired a Major, died in 2005. Best NCO and best soldier I ever knew."

Another Sgt., Doug Kerns, a kid from Montana, maybe 20 years old, always smiling, did all asked of him. Found out he was an E-4 promoted to acting Sgt. to cover Charlie Morris' squad---Charlie was restricted to Camp Zinn, awaiting a MOH. Charlie slept fully dressed wearing a hat and holding a loaded M-14. His eyes upset me. I helped write the award...he got it.



SSgt. Charlie Morris, A/2/503, Medal of Honor recipient

Doug was our best squad leader. Things I remember; checking the perimeter at dark and walking off at a tangent, ending out in the jungle about 50 meters in front of the line. I was sure someone would blow me away, then I set a trip flare, I started to yell "*friendly, friendly*" and expected to die soon. I stumbled back into the perimeter and was quite shaken, the guys looked at me like they knew I was there all the time. I vowed never to do that again! Another day we were in a firefight and I hit the ground and rolled, when I stood up my left leg was sticking out of my pants, the entire seam was busted from my hip to my calf, that looked great, even better with no underwear. Two days to get a new pair of pants. That nite I slept next to a full body-bag, that was a rude awaking. With one butt-chewing from Jack Kelley over H&I fire, we ended this madness and went. Back to Camp Zinn. We became "old hands" at passing thru the passenger terminal at Bien Hoa airbase. It was fun. I felt good being stared at by all the "legs", those coming and going. All the guys would talk about the "freedom bird" that would take them home. I didn't want to do that, I was loving every minute of being here. One time we stacked our black M-16's on the tarmac and waited under the huge tin shed. When we retrieved our weapons they were so hot they burned our hands. Another time, walking past a big stretch DC-8, dirty, ragged, coming in from the field, I looked up and there were three lovely aircrew members standing at the top of the steps. Well I went up those steps as fast as possible. The girls were really friendly. I was sitting on the top step drinking real milk when Jack Kelley came by. Nevertheless, to say he expressed his displeasure. Another time passing thru the terminal I ran smack into an old family friend, Leo Pleckie, he was drafted and on his way to a signal site up north. The strangest part is that one year later I and my new green beret were passing the same place, and there was Leo, going home. We still talk about that whenever we see each other. We see each other less now because we live in the same town. Back to Camp Zinn. I remember life at Bien Hoa more vividly than the field, showers, starched uniforms (lasted about 5 minutes), A Company clubhouse, cold drinks (non-potable ice), PX with expensive watches, cameras, and stereos. The A Co. club was run by the guys who were recovering from wounds; Sgt. Coony never went there. Bn. morning formation by the chapel, with Jack Kelley leading us down the street; me, always on the left and Sp4 Gothey on the guideon.

(continued....)



We came in from Sioux City, and the hooch was a disaster, like we never had great housekeepers, but the joint was a mess, more so than usual. We all swore we would find the asshole who did this. We all dumped our LBE on the table, cleaned our weapons, took a shower and went about our business. About an hour later we all came back, four fearless LT's and there hanging from the electric cord was a huge monkey. We found the guilty party. One of the guys threw something at the beast but missed, the monkey reached down to the table, grabbed a can of C's and let fly. Someone said *"shoot the fucking thing"* and a lot of other good ideas. The monkey reached down again and came up with a grenade, and let fly. Out the door and down the street went the lieutenants. Monkey 1 -- Lieutenants O. Later on someone came and got rid of the thing, never saw it again. We cleaned up the monkey shit and got on with training.

Jack Owens
A/B/2/503d

Any Place in the Storm

September 27th, 1967, I turned 21 years old. As a birthday present, my platoon leader excused me from our platoon sized ambush scheduled for the night, and I was allowed to remain with the rest of the company at our laager site. I was also exempt from pulling guard duty from the other platoons.



Ed Perkins

At that time I was at a weight of about 128 lbs, so I took my poncho, cut down some small trees and erected my gook hammock between the poles, made my cross members, stretched the poncho over the frame and settled in for a full night's sleep. Since it was monsoon season, I had envisioned a warm, dry sleep. As the night drew on, however, I soon discovered that every crawling, creeping, biting insect in Southeast Asia had decided to use **MY** shelter to get in out of the rain. So there I was, very dark thirty, striking down my shelter, moving to another spot and re-erecting the damn thing in a pouring down rain. Needless to say, it was not such an enjoyable night after all!!

Ed Perkins
A/2/503d, '67-'68

Remembering a Buddy

Never will forget September 1967. The brigade was moved back to Dak To, we had been there earlier in April or May of that year, I can't remember, but it was our second trip to the area. My M-16 jamming and always a lack of water. I was assigned to 1st Platoon, C/2/503, Lt Carley was our



Terry Sabree

platoon leader. Have had bad nightmares about "The Hill;" my best friend Wadell Evans was killed on O.P. watch and I will always feel it was my fault because, that night I was in Saigon, trying to get a passport from the embassy in order to go on a 7 day leave a couple of days later. Wadell and I had always watched each other's back, and tried to share O.P. duty together. He was out with a cherry who tried to smoke on O.P. and I was told "Charlie," ambushed them and he was killed. After that incident, I just did not feel anything other than my buddies were worth dying for, and not one other thing in the whole damn country! I have tried for years to suppress the memories of 875, but I can't. "WET, HOT and the SMELL OF DEATH! I took a bust to six after Dak To, for a security job in Vung Tau for my last two months. Never did go on that leave.

Sim Nicholson, a.k.a. Terry Sabree
C/2/503d & 5th SF

Waddel Evans

Private First Class
C CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Hopkinsville, Kentucky
July 6, 1947 to May 11, 1967
Waddel Evans is on the Wall
at Panel 19E, Line 90



(continued....)



Welcome Delta to the 2/503

In September 1967, assisted by Company XO 1st LT Bart O'Leary, 1SG Michael Deeb, RTO Bob Fleming and 3/319th FO SGT Tenney, I was forming and training D/2-503 in the battalion base area near Dak To. 75% of the Company consisted of veterans drawn from A, B and C Companies and the other 25% were from outside the Battalion. We used pop-up targets made from C-Ration Cartons and Commo Wire for squad level training. D/2-503 conducted its first combat patrol two weeks after initial organization. My pucker factor was high but within a few days the company was demonstrating the high standards of professionalism that would characterize its service throughout the remainder of its time in RVN.

Ken Smith
D/2/503d



Ken Smith

2/503 Chapel at Camp Zinn



(Photos by Bob Sweeney
C/2/503)

"Oops!"

In September 1966, I turned 19 and was chiefly focused on surviving the final three months of my tour, consumed with the idea, really. It was around this time a Sergeant, Willie something (we came over together in



Thomas, Scott & Smitty on convoy

December '65 from the 101st) and I would hold regular contests to see who could hit the dirt the fastest when the first round went off...this was a great short-timers' game we played which often produced laughs between us, especially if no firefight erupted. Believe this was the month we went on a convoy north of Bien Hoa; this may have been Operation Toledo? It might also have been this same operation where we camped for the night on top of a VC tunnel system. That night I recall seeing the silhouette of a man dressed in white appear out of nowhere inside our perimeter, pause briefly, then run a short distance

before he disappeared into what must have been another tunnel entrance to what we later determined was a makeshift hospital underground. No one took a shot at him as we'd be shooting at each other, plus, he was rather fleet of foot. Word quickly went 'round, "Gooks in the wire!" No one slept that night. Have always suspected he came out to take a crap only to find himself surrounded by paratroopers; and if he survived, he probably didn't shit for days. I hope he did survive, just so he could tell the story. Also thought this was the month Mike Sturges and Jack Ribera of A/2/503 were both hit by an enemy Claymore-type mine which nearly took their lives. Mike corrected me and said that happened in August '66.

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

(continued....)



Treated to Some Home Brew

I had expected to bring my wife to Okinawa in August 1965 since the last I had heard was that the 173rd ABN Bde was TDY to RVN. I was in San Francisco with my wife and was about to head for Travis AFB when I learned from my father, who was stationed in Okinawa, that the 173d had PCSed to RVN. After some tears, hugs and kisses I sent my pregnant wife back to Jacksonville, Florida to live with her parents until I returned in August 1966.



LT Bob Sweeney, Weapons Platoon Leader (left) and LT Les Brownlee, XO of C/2/503rd in front of our hooch.

It is hard to remember details of my experience in RVN during the month of September 1965. It was my first full month in country and after arriving at the 2nd BN, 503rd base camp I was assigned to Company C as the Weapons Platoon Leader. I drew my combat gear, boarded a C-130 and headed for Pleiku in the Highlands. I met my Company Commander, Cpt. Fred Henschell, and Company XO, 1st Lt. Les Brownlee, and was briefed on our assignments.



This is Cpt Henschell sampling the home brew from a community jar.

The air was cool and humid but it was better than the hot humid air at Bien Hoa. I can't remember much about any of the patrols the company was assigned but I do remember that there wasn't any contact with any VC units, at least not by C Company. I do remember the company stopping at a native village and being treated to some home brew.



This is a photo of me taking a bath in a field expedient tub made with my poncho.

**Bob Sweeney
C/2/503d**



Main Street, Charlie Company, 1965

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VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Melbourne, Australia

John Arnold

1RAR

August 18, 2012

Each year in Australia we observe Vietnam Veterans Day on August 18th, the date of The Battle of Long Tan during which 124 men of Delta Company 6 RAR took on and defeated a numerically superior force of NVA and VC, historically noted as some 2400 men. This was the first large battle that the Australian troops in Vietnam had fought as an individual effort.

Initially called Long Tan Day it is now officially recognised throughout our country as a day of national remembrance for ALL Australian veterans of the war in Vietnam. This year is also the 50th anniversary of Australia's involvement in Vietnam since our first advisors of The Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATV) were deployed in 1962 along with the American Special Forces.

Each year the event is conducted and controlled by the Victorian branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association Australia and it is ALWAYS a well organized commemoration but no one, not even a veteran can control the weather. In Melbourne this year the weather was a bitch; wind rain, fog and COLD. It was almost at a point where many blokes were wondering if they should even attend the ceremony, which we understood to be scheduled for an 11.00 hours commencement but, luckily, pride overtook discomfort.

From about 09:30 on Saturday August 18 veterans and their wives & partners began arriving in the parklands which surround the most sacred building in the city, The Shrine of Remembrance. Even in the prevalent weather the various banners, flags, uniforms and head-dress of blokes began to brighten the morning. The most popular location was the area at which two tents were erected from which hot coffee, tea and DELICIOUS bacon & egg rolls were being handed out as a breakfast. The lines to these two tents were quite extraordinarily long with veterans and family members trying to get a bit of warmth into their bodies. Mind you, a little rum in the coffee was quite OK to assist with this. This was just as well as we were later advised that the commencement time had been scheduled for a 12:00 hours commencement.

In typical military style we stood around and met up with our mates and reacquainted ourselves with blokes we hadn't seen for years. The cries of "Hey, (so & so), where have you been hiding?" and similar, the quizzical

looks between blokes who KNEW they knew each other but weren't quite sure and then the sudden realization that it WAS who they thought, made the atmosphere build up to one of excited discussion, laughter and joviality.

Due to the weather the organizers did away with the usual march to the forecourt of The Shrine and we formed up in that area in front of the 'Official's Tent' with all the dignitaries sitting in dry comfort looking at we wet, near frozen survivors of a forgone era.

After a short while standing around waiting (sound familiar?) the Premier (equiv. US Governor) arrived and so the ceremony could proceed. At that moment, almost like in the movies, the sky cleared, the rain moved on and the wind died down but it remained BLOODY cold. Due to the weather the ceremony was trimmed down a little but remained a touching event. After the laying of the wreaths and the hums, songs and prayers it was over once again for another year, BUT NOT QUITE..

Due to the 50th anniversary of the AATTV deployment there were quite a number of US Special Forces out here to join in these celebrations and we got talking to many of them. There was a number from Hawaii who our own Scott Birnie, who is originally from there, got into the where's and why for's of living in that paradise. One of the SF blokes was from Michigan and he was quite at home in our weather, saying it was put on just for his enjoyment and memories of home. Our chapter representation was small but noticeable with the Gippsland Aussino; Garcia, FEILOH Arnold, Billy Noble from down on Phillip Island (and a volunteer in the Vietnam Veterans Museum), Scott Birnie the Hawaiian and two lost Kiwis, Harry Akarana and Willy Parker both from 161 Arty Btty in our day.



Billy Noble, Harry Akarana, A.B. Garcia and Scott Birnie



~ Agent Orange ~



A UH-1D helicopter from the 336th Aviation Company sprays a defoliation agent on a dense jungle area in the Mekong delta.
(US Department of Defense/Brian K. Grigsby, SPC5)

Agent Orange is the code name for one of the herbicides and defoliants used by the U.S. military as part of its herbicidal warfare program, Operation Ranch Hand, during the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971, Vietnam estimates 400,000 people were killed or maimed, and 500,000 children born with birth defects. The Red Cross of Viet Nam estimates that up to 1 million people are disabled or have health problems due to Agent Orange. A 50:50 mixture of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, it was manufactured for the U.S. Department of Defense primarily by Monsanto Corporation and Dow Chemical. The 2,4,5-T used to produce Agent Orange was later discovered to be contaminated with 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzodioxin, an extremely toxic dioxin compound. It was given its name from the color of the orange-striped 55 US gallon (208 l) barrels in which it was shipped, and was by far the most widely used of the so-called "Rainbow Herbicides". During the Vietnam War, between 1962 and 1971, the United States military sprayed nearly 20,000,000 US gallons of material containing chemical herbicides and defoliants mixed with jet fuel in Vietnam, eastern Laos and parts of Cambodia, as part of Operation Ranch Hand. The program's goal was to defoliate forested and rural land, depriving guerrillas of cover; another goal was to induce forced draft urbanization, destroying the ability of peasants to support themselves in the countryside, and forcing them to flee to the U.S. dominated cities, thus depriving the guerrillas of their rural support base and food supply. The US began to target food crops in October 1962, primarily using Agent Blue. In 1965, 42

percent of all herbicide spraying was dedicated to food crops. Rural-to-urban migration rates dramatically increased in South Vietnam, as peasants escaped the war and famine in the countryside by fleeing to the U.S.-dominated cities. The urban population in South Vietnam nearly tripled: from 2.8 million people in 1958, to 8 million by 1971. The rapid flow of people led to a fast-paced and uncontrolled urbanization; an estimated 1.5 million people were living in Saigon slums. United States Air Force records show that at least 6,542 spraying missions took place over the course of Operation Ranch Hand. By 1971, 12 percent of the total area of South Vietnam had been sprayed with defoliating chemicals, at an average concentration of 13 times the recommended USDA application rate for domestic use. In South Vietnam alone, an estimated 10 million hectares of agricultural land were ultimately destroyed. In some areas TCDD concentrations in soil and water were hundreds of times greater than the levels considered "safe" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Overall, more than 20% of South Vietnam's forests were sprayed at least once over a nine-year period.



“Our own Yanks”

The 503rd Gordonvale Era

2nd December 1942 – 22nd August 1943

The 503rd – Gordonvale Project – started in February 1978 following a request from Darryl McIntyre seeking local memories of the 503rd in Gordonvale. Mr. McIntyre at the time was working on a post-graduate degree in history and attached to the Australian National University, Canberra.

Mention must be made of the assistance provided in March 1978 by Mr. Philip Stewart, Cairns, which led the Society towards the Plaque.

Appreciation is expressed to Mr. Clive Morton who prepared this text from submitted memories by a number of citizens who recalled that particular era of our history.

As to the presentation of this booklet, the following persons should be acknowledged: Mr. Eb Pyne, Edmonton, Miss Helen Hesp and the Management of the Mulgrave Central Mill Co. Ltd. for its production.

To the Society members and other persons in Australia, the United State of America, also The National Archives and Record Services, Washington, who responded toward this Gordonvale Event over the past 14 months, I offer my sincerest gratitude.

Our Society is extremely grateful that this International involvement has achieved a most fitting climax.

**A.J. Hesp
President**

Mulgrave Shire Historical Society, 1987



“A monument thanking the Australian people for their hospitality while we were there.”

Sam W. Raber, 503rd PIR, WWII

THE 503RD PARACHUTE INFANTRY INCLUDING THE 501ST PARACHUTE BATTALION AND “A” COMPANY 504TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY

arrived at Cairns, Queensland from Panama on December 2nd, 1942. The troops were loaded on lorries and proceeded to a so-called camp area approximately one and a half miles southwest of Gordonvale on Gillies Highway. This camp was situated on both sides of the road near Alley Creek in the lower Riverstone area.



“Our campsite was only a mile and ½ out of Gordonvale, but you can see it was really in the boondocks.”

Sam W. Raber, 503rd PIR WWII

Facilities and food supplies seem to have been scant for the arriving troops who had been rationed to two meals a day for some time prior to their arrival. Mrs. Nancy Drexler M.B.E. recalls the 503rd arrival:

“About 3-3:30pm, Sergeant Suchting, officer in charge of Gordonvale Police Station telephoned me and said a large contingent of hungry Americans was on its way to Gordonvale. He asked me to contact Country Women’s Association, Catholic Daughters of Australia, Australia Comfort Fund, Red Cross and all available church and other women’s organization’s members and go as quickly as possible to Riverstone Road to help prepare and serve a meal.

We got together some food, mostly tomatoes, and as many hurricane lights as we could muster. When we arrived at Riverstone Road, fires had already been lit in make-shift fire-places amongst the trees, and boilers were in place. I don’t know who had done this, but I understand some Americans had inspected the area as a possible camp site some days before. There were trestles put up covered in what seemed to be thousands of bread rolls. I was told that the bakers in Gordonvale had been working overtime to provide the rolls.

(continued....)



As dusk fell we put the hurricane lights up in the trees as best we could. We were frightened. Not at the thought of approaching the Americans but at the prospect of being bitten on the legs by snakes in that bush paddock.

Next thing dozens of trucks arrived and there seemed to be soldiers as far as the eye could see. We started to panic a little at that stage wondering how we could possibly feed all those men. One officer approached us and told us just to make up some hamburgers. We didn't know what a hamburger was. He explained and we made them in some sort of fashion.

The soldiers lined up in orderly manner and, as each man came forward, one lady gave him a cup of tea and another lady a hamburger. It took hours, but the soldiers were very patient and never complained.

By morning the Americans invaded the cafes and shops in Gordonvale and bought anything eatable and saleable. Due to the stringencies of the times, the victuals consisted mainly of local grown watermelons and the gutters of Gordonvale were soon overburdened with watermelon rind.

This was the first commercial transaction between the Americans and the local business houses and the attitude adopted that first day was to continue. Most priced their wares and services on the same basis as to an Australian customer, a minority fleeced the Americans and continued to do so for as long as they could get away with it.



"The 'Hang Out' for 503. The only pub in Gordonvale. You can imagine the business they had. It's a good thing they had a brewery in Cairns to keep them supplied." Sam Raber

Shelter for the men at the campsite consisted, at first of the shelter half of a tent each man carried. Two men joined these two halves together to make a two man tent which was erected in the bush wherever tree stumps or ant beds allowed.



503rd camp at Gordonvale.
(Wester collection, 503rd Heritage Battalion website)

During the first few days of the American invasion their much vaulted organizational ability and efficiency was unable to be detected by onlookers. It has been stated that the general chaos resulted because the 503rd was intended to be landed elsewhere to the north but the various proposed sites were annexed in turn by the Japanese. It has also been stated that the vessels carrying the Americans had been loaded and re-loaded with accompanying disorder which included the placing of foodstuffs below the heavy equipment and like. In wartime parlance the arrival could be described in the term, "S.N.A.F.U."

Phase IV of the history of the 503 states:

"During the month of December (1942), training was suspended and time devoted to the erection and installation of the camp. The troops are quartered in pyramidal tents and are being supplied with wooded floors as fast as they are being built. The officers are quartered in wall tents. A Post Exchange (known in the idiom as a P.X. – author's note) was set up and is operating daily. Items for sale consists mainly of beer, toilet articles, shoe shining kits, etc."

It has been recorded elsewhere (Meimors O.P. Russell, Regimental No. 39009418 Parachute Regiment) that most of the work of erecting the camp was done by the Australian Civil Construction Corps who were camped with the Americans and utilized wood for the camp construction, mess halls, etc. from the sawmill in Riverstone Road.

The Unit's History records the first death from their ranks when, on Christmas Day 1942, Private First Class Henry J. Blalock 20453795 drowned in the Little Mulgrave River.

(continued....)



On December 29th the first group parachute jump in the district was made by Colonel Kinsler and 15 ranking officers from a C39 aeroplane. This jump probably took place at Murro's Flats.

The Americans request 3 of the town's hotels, the Gordonvale and Commercial as army hospitals and the Central as an American Red Cross Canteen. In charge of the Red Cross was a personable American, Miss Cath Irving, and 2-1-C Miss Crawford who presided over a contingent of Filipino cooks.

Basically the role of the American Red Cross in Gordonvale was to keep up the morale of the 503rd. To this end they organized dances and sent out 6 wheel lorries with canvas canopies to bring in Australian civilian womenfolk to the dances at the Lyric Hall and elsewhere. There was a Powder room at the American Red Cross complete with full length where the "Parabelles, as the ladies were called, could pretty up for the dances. The American Red Cross paid homage to a spirit of high moral tone by insisting that the young ladies were returned to their homes under the watchful eye of a chaperone, an insistence which caused considerable local amusement among male cynics.

Small boys were inexorably and consistently drawn to the footpath area fronting the Red Cross Canteen. They found that by standing here and looking doleful they could guarantee being given ice-cream and candy by the paratroopers. Both these items were unprocureable elsewhere. One paratrooper even taught one schoolboy's pony to eat ice-cream on location at the footpath. Mr. Bert Healy felt privileged to be a well-known provider of saddle horses to the 503rd, many of whom were keen horsemen.

During its operation the American Red Cross was visited by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the then U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Cath Irving was not destined to see her homeland again. She died of illness after leaving Gordonvale.



Eleanor Roosevelt in Australia during WWII.

On 17th February 1943 women who had volunteered to pack parachutes were summoned to the U.S. Hospital for medical tests followed by an intelligence test. Successful applicants, some 24 in number, then undertook a two-week training course at the Lyric Theatre (now the R.S.L. Hall) which the Americans had commandeered together with the now-vanished P.D.L. Fertilizer Depot at the eastern end of the Shire Council Depot.

The P.D.L. Depot was used as a storage shed for parachutes, and small boys were known to enter it illicitly and remove the miniature pilot chutes which were used on the "free jump" parachutes where no static line was used. The stealing of these pilot chutes came to an abrupt and deserved end when the son of one of the local law enforcement officers released one from the highest rung of the Water Tower in Norman Park. The chute drifted with the prevailing northerly wind into the Police Station yard and subsequent inquiries by the forces of the law terminated this dangerous form of de facto sabotage.

The official packing of parachutes took place in a specially constructed facility in Norman Park known as the Packing Shed.



"Teaching a Gordonvale rigger" in the packing shed.
(Gerard Weber collection, 503rd Heritage Bn website)

Ida Griffin, Zelma Boland and Alice Sorensen recall: "We worked two to a table and riggers were responsible for seeing that our work was well done as their names, and not ours, appeared on the inspection record cards. The white parachutes were of pure silk and a joy to handle with the green camouflaged chutes of nylon also easy to handle. The equipment chutes were a differ matter, very coarse linen material and often necessitated asking a strong masculine pull for the final lacing together...

(continued....)



... These were capable of carrying all sorts of heavy equipment with which the parachute troops were made self-sufficient in combat. The work was interesting and well paid for those days. Pound 12 to Pound 13.10.0 a fortnight according to memory. Breaks of ten minutes were granted every hour and we were provided with a volley ball court. Prior to the combat jump we worked till 2am if necessary to overhaul and repack all chutes... sustained by coffee and doughnuts at regular intervals."

A product of the Packing Shed was Dulcie Pitt. Her vocal talents were readily recognized and encouraged by the 503rd. The local girl went on to become the international singer, Georgia Lee.

Georgia Lee (died 23 April 2010) was a jazz and blues singer from Cairns, Queensland, Australia. Born as Dulcie Rama Pitt, her father was of Jamaican descent and her mother was Indian, Australian Aboriginal, Islander and Scottish. During her career she would perform with American artist Nat Cole.



The Packing Shed had a concrete floor which has withstood the inroads of time quite commendably. After the war it provided as tennis courts No. 1 and No. 2 for the Gordonvale and District Tennis Association. The No. 1 court was resurfaced in 1978 but the surface on the No. 2 court is still the original Packing Shed floor. The Mulgrave Shire Historical Society holds the opinion that the site of the Packing Shed should be marked by a small plaque.

On the 24th February 1943 all jumps in the Regiment were ordered on a 3 day manoeuvre in wet weather and headed for the Little Mulgrave area. By 26th February most of the men returned to camp leaving "A" Company and the mixed remnants of a mixed platoon acting as "enemy forces" all marooned by floods on the Tableland side of the Little Mulgrave River. Privates John Kobiska and Bernard Petrie were drowned trying to cross the river. These two drownings angered many of the 503rd as well as the local people who were not convinced that sending men on manoeuvres in the middle of the wet season was either wise or necessary.

Two distinguished visitors inspected the camp. Lt. Gen. Walter Kreuger, C.O. U.S. Sixth Army, on 24th March, and Sir Leslie Wilson, Governor of Queensland, on 9th April 1943. On 12th April, Staff Sergeant Bernard was drowned while on manoeuvres. Two more

distinguished visitors arrived in May. General Downing, British Army Liaison Officer with the Australian Army on the 1st, and General Lavarack, 1st Australian Army on the 5th. Once again the visit of two V.I.P.'s heralded a tragedy, as the next day Private Robert H. White was electrocuted when he came in contact with power lines on a parachute jump. At the time it was said that Private White landed safely but his parachute opened up in a strong breeze and lifted him back into the wires. The 503rd designated this area, the Robert H. White Jump Field. Recollection places this event as somewhere in the vicinity of the Red Barracks (only recently removed) on Warner's Farm (Munro's Flats) over the old traffic bridge and near the foot of the Pyramid. Recollection also suggests that following this jump it became customary to turn off the electricity in the power lines when paratroopers were jumping nearby.



"AN EASY WATER CROSSING - Gordonvale was not a benign training area, and training was hard, the men had to be toughened up, and kept at their peak. The watercourses could change their nature in a minute, with tropical rainstorm torrents sweeping down through their narrow banks. There were a number of fatal training incidents, the result of less than prudent planning and preparation, and a certain recklessness of command. Pvc. Henry J. Blalock drowned on 23 December 1942; Priv. John Kobiska drowned while crossing the Little Mulgrave River, 21 February 1943 while outward bound on a march; Pfc. Bernard R. Petrie drowned while re-crossing the same river on the return leg, 24 February 1943; and S/Sgt. Bernard drowned 12 April 1943. Ultimately, the officers of the 503d would lose confidence in Col. Kinsler - but that is another story."

(Gerard Weber collection, 503rd Heritage Bn website)

(continued....)



Local observers recall that a donkey, the unofficial mascot of the 503rd, came to earth by parachute. Memories recall that a jeep was dropped with four parachutes attached. If the above is fact, perhaps one can assume that the parachute was widely tested in our area.

Mr. A.J. Hesp, Alcomba, recalls: "Odd parachute drops attracted the interest of the local people, whereby many Mothers, leaving their household duties, and with their children drove, cycled or walked, some pushing infants in prams, to the local jump field. One area that I particularly remember was P. Larsen's cane farm and now the farm of Messrs. N.C. and R.C. Hickling. The jump areas were fields of sugar cane in varying stages of growth.



This is 503rd PIR trooper Sam W. Raber standing in front of a sugar cane field in Gordonvale. "Look at the height of that sugar cane. Must be 12 ft. tall," he said. Sam returned to Gordonvale in 1991 and again in 1995.

On 25th June 1943 the inevitable two distinguished visitors arrived to coincide with a subsequent tragedy. Generals MacArthur and Blamey were to witness a jump at the Green Hills jump field. This field was first situated in front of the old C.S.R. Officer (near Mr. J. Bernard's present residence) but was soon transferred to a large area in the vicinity of Mr. F. Deal's present farm.



Generals MacArthur and Blamey

It was on this larger field that the 25th June jump took place. The aircraft had circled the field for some time waiting for the two Generals. By the time they arrived it was late afternoon, nearing dusk and quite cold on the ground and obviously colder in the planes circling overhead. The road up to the jump field was bordered for the most of the way with thick lantana. On the occasion U.S. Military Police with side arms had blocked the road to all comers at the old Simmonds Creek Bridge and were hidden in the lantana growth all the way to the jump field, halting jeeps and checking passes and all the usual paraphernalia inseparable from such events. Needless to say, these security precautions were not small boy proof and the author rode a horse through the lantana to the jump field, unchallenged and unseen after first having the audacity to wave at the exalted ones as they were driven over the old bridge and receiving a curt not from General Douglas and a scorching glance from General Tom in return.

When the jump eventually took place Private Donald Wilson 13972389 died as a result of not hooking up his static line prior to jumping. He was awarded a Purple Heart at the request of General MacArthur. (Note: The misspelling of the General's last name in the original booklet may have been unintentional, or maybe not. 2/503 Newsletter Editor)

(continued....)



There was quite a deal of speculation following this death. The main thrust of criticism from Gordonvale was at the fact that the paratroopers were kept so long in the aircraft flying around in the cold, waiting for the two Generals. It can be seen by the reference to civilian concern over the incidents involving paratrooper casualties that the American unit was well thought of by the local population."

Mr. A.J. Hesp sums up one incident: "I clearly recall one Saturday morning seeing this aircraft circling our area with a parachute attached to the rear section of the plane. The parachute was dark blue in colour. The plane seemed to be in the air for hours trying to shake off its burden. Our thoughts were for the poor soldier who was unable to be freed. I do not recall how the parachute was eventually freed but we did hear that a motor bike was attached to the chute and not a man."



"LINED UP FOR A PRACTICE JUMP - Cairns, North Queensland. Chet Nycum (503rd PIR) recalls that on one occasion (which two independent records now fix to be 25 June 1943) near Cairns, General MacArthur witnessed a practice jump. 'Look,' said the General, 'there is a man whose chute did not open,' 'No,' corrected Colonel Kinsler, 'that is just a kit bag.' At that moment, Pvt. Donald Wilson bounced ten feet, and then he bounced five feet. Ordinarily, an injury or death happening in a training jump does not merit a Purple Heart as it is not incurred in the face of the enemy. Before he left the field, MacArthur ordered Kinsler to award Wilson the Purple Heart. General MacArthur was not ever an ordinary soldier."

(Gerard Weber collection, 503rd Heritage Bn website)

Mr. C.H.S. Thomason says: **"My father has happy memories of the first contingent of American troops who arrived in 1942. They were a fine, well-disciplined body of men and they were held in high regard by the locals."**

Mr. C.J. White recalls that Mrs. Lily Swallow would take baskets of cookies nearly every night to the American Hospitals (Gordonvale and Commercial Hotels). The men respected and thought a great deal of her. After the war they sent a pair of blankets with the Colour Emblem of the Battalion worked into them. Of the paratroopers, Mr. White says,

"I found them to be the best Americans I had ever met."

On 1st July 1943 the first air alert was received at the Riverstone camp and in the town. Townspeople were impressed by the physical fitness of the Americans who joined them in sprints to the air raid shelters.

Norman Park provided three such shelters bordering the Norman Street footpath. Two had the appearance of earth mounds, each protected beneath weeping fig trees. The third shelter was the conventional concrete construction and design common to other towns. The latter construction is used today as a public facility. A close study of tree trunks show evidence of their history.

The Americans maneuvered with the Australian Army, the 1st Battalion at Mareeba with the 2nd Australian Corps on 11th July, and the 3rd Battalion with the Australian 7th Division at Kahan on 26th July.

The paratroopers and the Australian soldiers were involved in extra training on at least two other occasions in Gordonvale. The most notable episode consisted of 13 separate fist fights in under an hour which ranged through the Park up the streets and into the American Red Cross where an Australian soldier, pursued by a group of Americans, ran up the interior stairway and paused where an Australian female civilian was employed on the first stair landing operating a cash register.

The Australian soldier relieved her of her command by picking up the cash register and throwing it down the stairs on top of the pursuing Americans. Coins rolled out as far as the street, where various small boys who were in the process of running from fight to fight, stopped for a few moments to gather up coins and place them in their pockets in case the money went rusty in the night air.

Voted the best fight of the night was a two man affair which took place on the roadway between the present Bryce Hardware Store (then Corner House Hotel) and the Queens Hotel opposite (now the Great Northern)...

(continued....)



... This fight halted all traffic in the main street as hundreds of soldiers and civilians gathered for the pre-TV entertainment. Ringside seats were on the fire-escape and open verandahs of the two Hotels which hung out over the footpath.

Police, both civilian and military had difficulty restoring order. Soldiers were handcuffed to the branches of almost every tree in the Park while Military Police paddy wagons, both U.S. and Australian ran a shuttle service. One of the town's policemen was involved in an unfortunate incident involving mistaken identify when an Australian soldier who had been floored to the footpath by an American soldier, looked up and mistook the then current Queensland Police slouch hat for that worn by the Australian Military Police. He "king hit" the policeman with a punch from the footpath before he realized his mistake.

The two ingredients which precipitated these clashes and most other bouts between the U.S. and Australian forces were the age old formula of grog and women. The Australian soldiers resented the apparent success the Americans enjoyed with the Australian womenfolk. The Australian soldier had a popular catchery which he used to describe all American soldiers, **"Over-paid, over-fed, over-sexed, and over here."**

As a point of interest this was precisely the sentence that the British Army in the U.K. used when describing the Austrian soldiers who enjoyed similar popularity with the British womenfolk.

The sex life of the 503rd in the district was never the subject of census or scientific investigation of the Kinsey type, and therefore no valid historical comparisons can be made. True, small boys engaged in research by placing themselves in tree branches at favoured spots at night. This research was known as "dogging" but the claimed observations at the time were even then regarded as suspect.

Early opinions, based on confusion having to do with the language barrier, formed the belief that the Americans were more notable animal lovers than women chasers. This opinion was based on an erroneous interpretation of their frequent usage of the term "son of a bitch" and their inquiries as to where a "cat-house" might be found. This mistake was soon put to rest by any who cared to listen to the words of a song the paratroopers brought with them from their Headquarters in Fort Benning. It began, **"In the hills of West Virginia lived a girl named Nancy Brown,"** and went on to describe the purity of the said Nancy when exposed to the viles of the city

slicker just urging for a thrill, **"who took poor little Nancy Brown right up in the hills."**

Nancy remained pure until,

"Then there came a paratrooper with a hundred dollar bill..."

Regrettably, Nancy became commercial and her subsequent career was covered by the words,

"Now she's living in Fort Benning, living in Fort Benning,

Living in Fort Benning doing well,

No more broken girlish wishes, no more washing dirty dishes,

And the West Virginia Hills can go to hell."

By all that as it may be, there were frequent criticism of local women who formed romantic attachments with the paratroopers. The phrase used by the critic was that they were "Yank-happy". This criticism, of course mainly came from the Gordonvale males. One of our local females put the whole matter in perspective when she said at the time, "If there were 2,000 eligible young American Nurses up at Riverstone Road instead of 2,000 young paratroopers, I wonder how many of our husbands or boyfriends would be home at night?"

The US Army will today honour two women from Cairns who packed parachutes for American soldiers in World War II.

Margaret Clarke (shown here) and Marie Field worked for a regiment of American paratroopers who trained in far north Queensland before being deployed to New Guinea. Mrs. Clarke says it



came as a surprise when she heard they would be receiving awards of appreciation almost 70 years later. **"The 503rd Battalion at that time were training in Gordonvale and round about and we were taken up in a plane to watch them do it from the air,"** she said. **"That was a scary thing to watch because they were nervous, especially if they thought these young women had packed their parachutes."**

(continued....)



There were, at least, two Chaplains attached to the 503rd representing both the Roman Catholic and the Episcopalian denominations. At the old St. Michaels school a room downstairs known as C.U.S.A (Combined United Service Organization) was formed. The room was used for card playing, mostly discreet euchre and bridge rather than poker, and a watchful eye was kept by the Parish Priest, Fr. Wallace, and the Catholic Chaplain, Fr. Powers (now Monsignor). Later a billiard table was installed where the paratroopers spent many relaxing hours. A similar facility was established under the Country Women's Association building.

At the Church of England, the Rector's wife, Mrs. E.P. Stalley, organized square dancing and other social events for the Americans.

It seemed that either by accident or design, the Chaplains took their turn at parachute training. The Episcopalian Chaplain, Probert Herb, always claimed that he would easily be identified in the air after he left the aircraft, ***"You'll know me easily, I always pull the reserve chute as soon I'm through the door and descend on two parachutes. I've no intention of being killed coming down from heaven."***

The two Chaplains with the local Priests were responsible for organizing a combined Mother's Day Service at St. Michael's Church which was attended by all denominations; decades before the ecumenical movement was proclaimed in other parts of the world. The church and the collection plates were both filled to overflowing. Two pioneering women, Mrs. K. Crossland and Mrs. M. Mighell, were chosen as "Mothers of Mother's Day 1943," as each had lost a son in the First World War.

The Communion Service was followed by a Communion Breakfast of bacon and eggs served in the Park under huge marquees, the meal and catering being all attended to by the 503rd.



C-47 transport planes loaded with parachute troops for the drop at Nadzab. Two men at left are General George Kenney and General Douglas MacArthur. (U.S. Army)

On 7th August 1943 orders were received by the 503rd to move the organization to New Guinea for operations. By August 15th an advance party of one officer and 11 enlisted men departed by plane for New Guinea followed by the complete 2nd Battalion and 95 men from other units on August 15th. The planes were so heavily laden that men of the paratroopers were sure the Cairns runway would not be cleared by the ascending planes and that the occupants would be awarded Purple Hearts on the basis of being killed while crashing into the mangroves.

The remainder of the Regiment were moved to Cairns and loaded on the S.S. Duntroon on 19th August which sailed on the 20th and reached Port Moresby on the 22nd. Trucks moved the men out to a camp area 17 miles north-east of the town at Rigo valley where one third of the unit went to hospital with dysentery due to sanitation and fly infestation.



The HMAT Duntroon. Built in 1935 as MV Duntroon for the Melbourne Steamship Company, the ship was offered for conversion into an armed merchant cruiser at the start of World War II, but was not accepted. In 1942, the ship was requisitioned by the Australian Army for use as a troopship, and became HMAT Duntroon. Her Army service continued until 1946, when she was chartered by the RAN for transport duties with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. During her career, *Duntroon* collided with and sank two vessels: the auxiliary minesweeper HMAS Goorangai in November 1940, and the destroyer USS Perkins (DD-377) in November 1943.

On the morning of the 5th September 1943 by 7:30am the paratroopers were loaded into eighty-two C47 aircraft assembled at 6 airstrips in the Port Moresby area. They took off and met their fighter protection over the Thirty Mile Strip and ascended to 9,000 feet to fly over Owen Stanley Ranges. The doors of the aircraft had been removed and it was bitterly cold inside.

(continued....)



Five aircraft carrying Australian gunners from 2/4th Field Regiment, most of whom had not used a parachute before, accompanied the air Armada of 302 aircraft comprising C47s, B25s, and A20s for this parachute landing at Nadzab in the Markham Valley...



Gunners from the Australian Army's 2/4th Field Regiment in a C-47 transport plane en-route to Nadzab in New Guinea where they later made a parachute landing. September 5, 1943.

(Collection of the Australian War Mem.)

...Above the flotilla three B17s carried a brass hat Brigade which included General MacArthur out for a second look at the paratroopers following his Gordonvale visit. Of the five aircraft carrying the Australians, two carried troops, the remaining three, the field guns and equipment.

The American jumpmaster on one of the aircraft told the author:

"These Aussies had more guts than any man I knew. We came in at 600 feet and they jumped straight out. One man froze up at the door. I could see his feet trying to push out and his arms trying to hold him back. I knew he would feel real bad about it afterward if he didn't make the jump, so I gave him a helluva kick in the butt which drove him through the door."

It is not the purpose of this paper to relate the activities of the 503rd on active service, rather it is to record remembered events relating to their stay in Gordonvale. The Nadzab jump is related because it was the 503rd first action after they left us. It is recorded to place on record the feelings of the townspeople when they knew the 503rd was facing the enemy.

Despite wartime censorship, word filtered through that the landing had been unopposed and the anxiety of the townspeople abated. We soon found out that casualties were confined to a few broken legs and some minor injuries and the unofficial pipelines of information soon told us who had been hurt.

It is difficult to describe adequately the feeling of our town towards the 503rd without canvassing a broader historical field. Probably, never again, will servicemen and civilians of differing Nations enjoy such a common bond. The war in the South Pacific was a clear cut conflict. The United States of American, after Pearl Harbor, had lessened its divisive

isolationist attitude regarding Europe and was of one mind in its opposition to Japanese aggression.



503rd PIR make their first combat jump during WWII, onto Nadzab. (Collection of the Australian War Mem.)

Prior to the forties, the dream-like glamorous magical fantasy of Hollywood viewed in our local Theatres, limited our thoughts of America. In 1942 – 1943, we and the Americans had become people with a common purpose, with none of the future questioning concerning Korea or the trauma surrounding Vietnam.

Despite the scars of the Great Depression we were both perhaps the last examples of an age that still had a certain innocence. There was nothing sophisticated about our town-people's feelings toward the 503rd. The Americans were warmly welcomed into our homes and soon became family.

After 37 years, to those of us who knew them, they are still totally and uniquely...OUR OWN YANKS.

H.C. Morton

Source: Mulgrave Shire Historical Society Bulletins
[Sent in by SFC Lin Basham (Ret), daughter of WWII 503rd PIR paratrooper, Ray Basham. Photos added courtesy of Sam Raber, 503rd PIR WWII, the 503rd Heritage Battalion web site, Paul Whitman, webmaster, and public web sites]



Who Dat?



Who's this strac lookin' trooper outside his hooch? Must have been the early years, he's still wearing all those red, white & blue patches which say "aim here". Rumor has it, he did multiple tours in Vietnam and went on to make the army a career, retiring a SFC, but never bragged about it.

New VA Mental Health Outpatient Clinic to Open in Reno

WASHINGTON -- To better serve the mental health needs of Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching a new Mental Health Outpatient Clinic at the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno, Nev. *"VA is continuing to elevate its service to our Veterans by becoming the twenty-first century standard of excellence in health care and focusing on Veteran-centric care, particularly in the critical area of mental health. I fully anticipate that this new mental health outpatient clinic in Reno will provide the world class care that our Veterans in Northern Nevada and Northern California deserve and have come to expect,"* said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki. This brand new, state-of-the art, 15,500 square foot facility is one of the first of its kind to be designed around the patient centric model that incorporates a natural, open healing environment with leveraged technological advances to make it more energy efficient. The facility offers 40 brand new clinical spaces for one-on-one counseling and three larger multi-purpose rooms to facilitate group therapy sessions.

Eternal Rivalry ~ Army & Navy

A Sailor and a Paratrooper were sitting together and arguing about who'd had the tougher career.

"I did 30 years in the Army Airborne," the paratrooper declared proudly, "and fought in three of my country's wars. Fresh out of jump school I dropped in behind enemy lines at Corregidor, and eventually took out an entire enemy machine gun nest with a single grenade. As a sergeant, I fought in Korea alongside General MacArthur. We pushed back the enemy inch by bloody inch all the way up to the Chinese border, always under a barrage of artillery and small arms fire. Finally, as a staff sergeant, I did three consecutive combat tours in Vietnam. We humped through the muddy jungle and razor grass for 14 hours a day, plagued by rain and mosquitoes, ducking under sniper fire all day and mortar fire all night. In a firefight, we'd fire until our arms ached and our guns were empty, then we'd charge the bastards with bayonets!"

"Ah", said the Sailor with a dismissive wave of his hand, "lucky G.I., all shore duty, huh?"



SKY SOLDIER'S EXCHANGE

~ Troopers helping Troopers ~

Our policy remains to not run ads in our newsletter, however, if you served or are serving with the 173d or one of our attached units (i.e. RAR, Kiwis, 75th, Cowboys, Caspers, etc.), don't forget to send in by September 15th your 1/2 or 1/4 page *free advertisement* of something new or used you want to sell for this *special ad publication*. Email to rto173d@cfl.rr.com

The *Sky Soldier's Exchange* with your free ad will be sent to upwards of 2000 troopers on October 1st, in time for the holidays.

Space is *not* available to advertise stuff sold by an employer unless you are the business owner, and no real estate, auto, personal guns or investment/financial services ads will be run. Any ad the editor deems inappropriate will not be included. One ad per trooper, please. Half-page ads are subject to reformatting to 1/4 page at editor's discretion.

If we receive enough submissions we'll consider running this special publication of free ads once yearly. A sample page of the *Sky Soldier's Exchange* follows.

ATW!

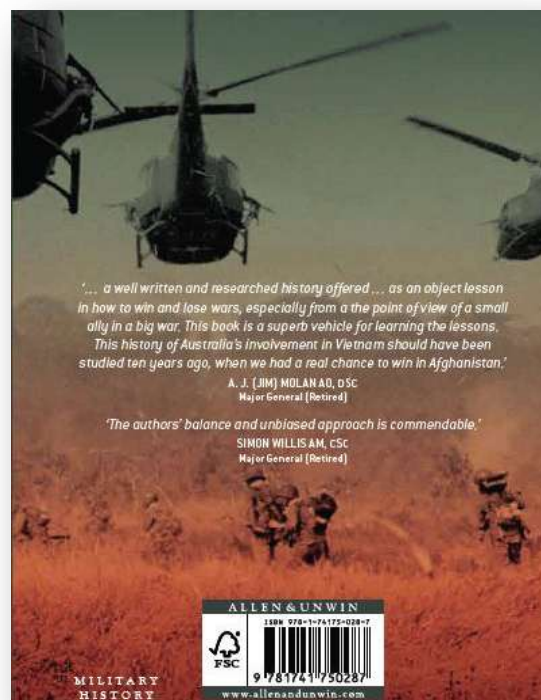
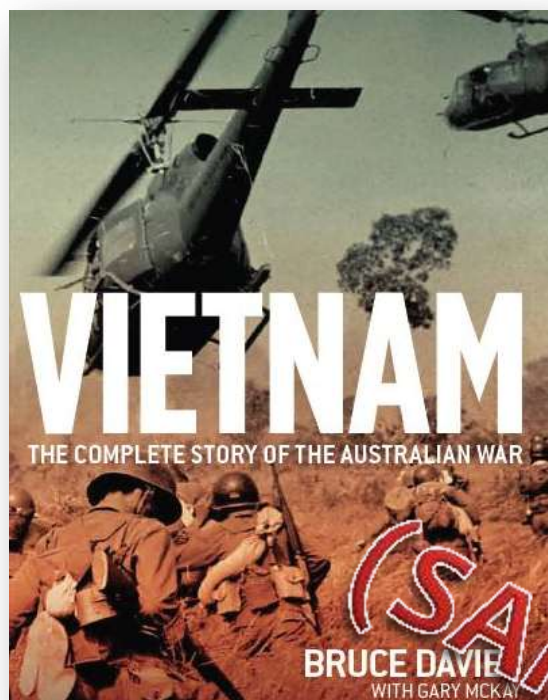




SKY SOLDIER'S EXCHANGE



~ Vietnam... The Complete Story ~



My book is available through all of the bookshop chains including on-line at Amazon.com There will also be an e-book version. Bruce Davies, 1RAR ('65-'66). Email: bruce.davies@tpg.com.au

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Herd Road Builders Carve Highway 173

Firebase 173
Sept. 14, 1970

LZ ENGLISH (RVN) The road through VC Valley has been completed. Highway 173, as the new road is called, winds from Bong Son up VC Valley, over the Northern ridges of the Tigers and down to Lo Dieu Beach.

The road is the main system of a five road highway system that leads up into the farthest reaches of VC Valley. The new lines of communication and transportation have opened up an area that has been isolated since history began. With the new exchange of information the valley is starting to catch up with the rest of the country.

The road was built by the 173d Engineers. It has been a long, hard job. The work crews have been ambushed, sniped at, and mined by the local VC. The more the road opened, the more desperate the VC became. They knew that the road would weaken their hold on the population. The VC sniped, but the engineers kept up the work.

Spec. 4 Bill Miller of Madison, W. Va. And Spec. 5 Widell Ridenour of Keswick, Iowa had the important job of cutting the mountain pass. Using D-7 bulldozers the two carved the road up the mountain and down into the valley. It took two-and-a-half months to cut the pass. During this time everything that could happen to a "Cat Operator" did. The VC ambushed them, the VC planted mines, the VC sniped at them, the road bank collapsed, and the dozer slid off a steep cliff. Still the engineers finished.

"I'm damn proud of the road. It took a lot of trouble and casualties to build, but it's worth every bit of it. Already you can see the changes in the people. I think we've done a good job," said Miller.

The officer in charge of the project, 1st Lt. Jerry Ricker of Stanford, Maine, admits they had problems with the villagers. The Vietnamese wanted the road to wind around all the rice paddies, gardens, and anything else they liked. The people couldn't seem to understand that the road wouldn't last one monsoon if they did that.

Sometimes the Vietnamese would even lay down in front of the dozer. That's when MACV was called to come out and straighten out the mess. It took a while, but the valley's inhabitants finally agreed with the policy of running the road straight. Now the project is almost completed. VC Valley has been opened to the world.

[Sent in by Terry Boggs, E/3/503d]

PARATROOPERS from the 173d Airborne Brigade comb a hillside in search for enemy caves in the mountains west of Tam Quan.

(Firebase 173,
Sept. 14, 1970)



The American Legion

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization. Focusing on service to veterans, servicemembers and communities, the Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the United States. Membership swiftly grew to over 1 million, and local posts sprang up across the country. Today, membership stands at over 2.4 million in 14,000 posts worldwide. The posts are organized into 55 departments: one each for the 50 states, along with the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico and the Philippines.

Over the years, the Legion has influenced considerable social change in America, won hundreds of benefits for veterans and produced many important programs for children and youth.

**The March 1919 Paris
Caucus set in motion
The American Legion.**
<http://www.legion.org>



EDUCATION CENTER PLANNED FOR VIETNAM MEMORIAL

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., commonly called The Wall, may soon have an addition that will be a place where the stories and sacrifice of those who served in our nation's military will be honored and remembered.

With a groundbreaking planned for November 2012, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation says the Education Center at the Wall will be a multi-million dollar, state-of-the-art visitor's center and learning facility to be built on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans and the Lincoln Memorials. Visitors will better understand the profound impact the Vietnam War had on their friends and family members, their home towns and the nation. The education center will feature the faces and stories of the 58,272 men and women on The Wall, honoring those who fell in Vietnam, those who fought and returned, as well as the friends and families of all who served.

Established in 1979, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., promoting healing and educating about the impact of the Vietnam War. Support the Education Center at the Wall by visiting www.buildthecenter.org or calling 866-990-WALL.

(Source: www.dav.org/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=626)



Our Mistress, *Miss Vietnam*

Was just visited today by a former Cowboy chopper pilot ('70) from here in Florida who stopped by before heading out to see Dr. Scott Fairchild, the PTSD guru in Melbourne, FL. The Doc did much of the early work on the illness for the Army at Walter Reed, and has his own practice helping vets of all wars come to terms with their illness and in support of their VA claims. The Doc is a retired LTC with the 82nd Abn, and someone you can trust and open up to, finally. He's helped countless Sky Soldiers and other vets from across the country. And then today this note came in from a Sky Soldier buddy.

"I have read, read again, and re-read the 'Unclaimed Boxes' you sent. That is so real to me. Just like someone had summarized my life after Nam. I suppose most of us can relate to that."

A buddy from 4/503d

Because our readership has grown dramatically since the report was first run in our newsletter, its included here for those it might help. It is never too late to receive the treatment and help you earned and deserve. Ed

Beware of Unclaimed Boxes in the Distance

There's a former 173d officer buddy of Vietnam vintage who continues to suffer with symptoms of PTSD. No, it's not our good friend Bill Vose, as some of you might assume. Vose has balls of Kryptonite, or so he believes, and wears a cammo'd shirt with a big red "S" on the front. No, this buddy is another equally brave soul who led us into battle in Vietnam. Yet, like many of us, for years he's conveniently stuffed that war deep down inside where it could do no harm, or so he had hoped. We'll call this trooper Major Joe, a different G.I. Joe than the one you read about in our last newsletter. Thought I'd share this note with you, a note sent him recently. Ed



Joe, you may not know how typical your story is, maybe you do. Since getting treatment myself (for PTSD) and trying to help others come in from the bush, I've learned something about it. Not unlike some of your peers, those guys who think they have steel balls, I simply believed *I did my service, nothing was owed me, PTSD is bullshit. See ya.*

My first introduction to the illness was at the Rochester reunion in 2000, my first ever. I walked away disappointed in my vet buddies who seemed fixated on percentage points the VA had or might award them. Just like some of your buddies, I too viewed it as a scam, guys looking for a free ride is all. Hell, I had been a business owner for over 20 years at the time, semi-successful, semi-educated, nothing was wrong with me.

Nothing, of course, except the heavy drinking, womanizing, three marriage separations, walking out on jobs after telling the boss to fuck himself with no job to go to, getting in fights; doing everything to hide from something at the expense of my wife and sons, when in reality, this old RTO was hiding from our war, but didn't know it then. Just like you, I had done such a fine job of burying it for 30 odd years.

Three 2/503d troopers at 2000 Reunion in Rochester, MN. From left, the late Jim "Skid" Skidmore, Smitty, and Don "Rocky" Rockholt. Life was good.



Until that reunion I couldn't stand to be around vets, wouldn't admit to being a vet, my kids hardly knew their dad was a vet. All the while railing at those poor souls on t.v. getting arrested for one thing or another. For a time there whenever the news in L.A. came on with some crime, I consciously hoped it wasn't *another* VN vet, yet often it was. *That's not me goddamit!!* I'd yell at the t.v. I saw what looked to be a familiar box in the distance.

My older brother Bob did three tours with the SF until they blew-out one of his eyes....last year, for the first time ever we sat down together and talked about our war experiences.

Sometime in the 80's my wife, Reggie, and I were in a bookstore in Miami. I happened to pick-up a little, paperback book entitled, "*Sky Soldiers.*" Hell, I thought, I served with that unit. After purchasing the book and taking it home, while sitting there in an easy chair I began to read about operations and battles I had personally been part of. For no apparent reason I began to weep uncontrollably. Neither my wife nor I could understand it. I had found a box in the distance which had been hidden for so many years.



(continued....)



When the first Iraq war came off, I couldn't eat or sleep, hell I didn't even go to work -- just sat in front of that tube absorbing it all, drawn to it, fearing it....day after day I sat there eating war again. The lid of that box opened a tad.

Having achieved some measure of success with my business, I ran out and bought my dream car, a nifty little European 2-seater in '89, never thought I'd be able to get such a car. I found and put a 173d Airborne sticker on the rear bumper, but it wasn't placed there out of unit pride. No, it was a message to the asshole behind me, "*See! I'm a Vietnam vet and I'm successful! I'm not like those other bastards!!*" I was ashamed then of being a veteran. The lid of that box opened.

We went to NJ sometime after that to make a presentation to some company, I drove there from Miami. This was during winter and on the drive home late at night I stopped to visit *The Wall* for the first time. Near ten o'clock that night I stood there in the freezing cold yet not feeling cold in front of a buddy's



name, cursing at him for dying, telling him how sorry I was he died. On the long, non-stop drive home to Miami our war came back to me, Joe, and I wept for hundreds of miles. I tried to close that box, but it wouldn't let me.

Firing a secretary forced me to learn how to use email. I would spend every night searching for buddies and anything and everything about the VN war and the 173d. After hooking up with a few buddies from the 173d then more, I printed every reply from them, every word, literally thousands of pages -- they're here in a carton somewhere. I became obsessed. Then my first reunion followed by the first trip back to VN, to be followed by another. The box was opening quickly now.

Visiting our mistress, Miss Vietnam, at 3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan Son Nhut on our second trip back in '05. From left, Bill Vose, Gus Vendetti, Smitty.



My world was falling apart. I had eventually walked away from my business unable to tend to it, unable to focus, *everything* became VN; then separating again from my wife who didn't deserve it, for the third time, this time for 6 years, and moved away from Miami by myself.

Drinking heavily again, actually I had never stopped; fighting with people when I had no reason to....lost and searching, but for what? *Let's put on a 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, and then another! That'll fix things!!* And then, Joe, the depression you mention sets in, big time, a real equalizer as you know. That box was fully opened now and it was sucking me into it and there was nothing I could do about it.



The first of two 2/503d reunions in Cocoa Beach.

I can't tell you how fortunate I was to meet Dr. Scott Fairchild down here, you've read about him. That Doc helped me make some sense of it all, not completely, but enough to save my marriage and enough to help me become a better husband and father and grandfather, although one son, my namesake, remains distant -- there's no question the Doc saved me some years. He taught me PTSD is *not* being crazy, it's precisely what it says it is, *stress*. And he taught me, for guys like us, if we don't confront that stress but instead bury it inside for years, it will eventually return and return to do damage.

Yessir, as your current activities do and most likely will forever remain *your* therapy, our newsletter, for the time being at least, is mine. That, and along with others, helping the brass and the unwashed find the path to their own peace of mind, or as close to it as possible -- from privates to company commanders to full birds. Even generals are not immune, like Major General Blackledge and the PTSD he carries on his shoulder; they all carry their hidden scars. Yet, for many that All American has helped us find the path home. Too many, as you well know, have taken the easy path and continue to opt for that sad ending to their combat saga.

You do good work for your G.I.'s, Major. Watch out for any unclaimed boxes in your path, they're like pungie stakes, they can be a real bitch. Here's a solution?

**Scott Fairchild, Psy.D, LTC (Ret), 82nd Abn Div
Phn: 321-253-8887, Eml: BaytreeBehHlth@aol.com**

Be well, Joe, dance like no one's lookin'. Smitty Out

(This report originally appeared in Issue 25, March 2011)



Photojournalists in Vietnam A Dangerous Job for Many

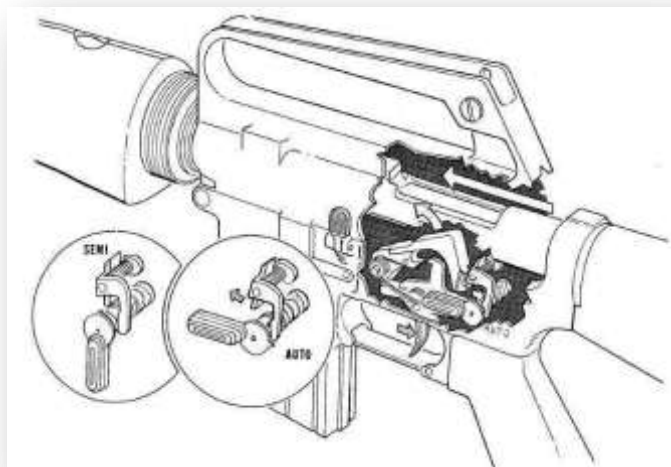


Chaplain John McNamara of Boston makes the sign of the cross as he administers the last rites to photographer Dickey Chapelle in South Vietnam on Nov. 4, 1965. Chapelle was covering a U.S. Marine unit on a combat operation near Chu Lai for the *National Observer* when she was seriously wounded, along with four Marines, by an exploding mine. She died in a helicopter en route to a hospital. She became the first female war correspondent to be killed in Vietnam, as well as the first American female reporter to be killed in action. Her body was repatriated with an honor guard consisting of six Marines and she was given full Marine burial. (AP Photos/Henri Huet)



Among the 135 photojournalists who died while covering the Vietnam War are Larry Burrows, Taizo Ichinose, Luong Ngha Dung, Everette Dixie Reese, Sean Flynn, Henri Huet, Thong Veasna, Dana Stone, Dickey Chapelle, Sam Kai Faye, Terence Khoo, Huynh Thanh My, and Kyochi Sawada.

Taking Care of Your Best Buddy



Section III. CARE AND CLEANING

11. Maintenance

Normal care and cleaning will result in proper functioning of all parts of the weapon. Improper maintenance cause stoppages and malfunctions. Only issue-type cleaning materials as authorized in TM 9-1005-249-14 should be utilized. Cleaning materials are carried by the rifleman in the section provide on the bipod case.

- a. Clean and Lubricating the Barrel.
 - (1) Attach a wire brush to the cleaning rod, dip it in solvent cleaning compound (bore cleaner), and brush the bore thoroughly. Brush from the chamber to the muzzle using straight-through strokes. Push the brush through the bore until it extends beyond the muzzle. Continue this process until the bore is coated with compound. (Never reverse the direction of the brush while in the bore). Remove the brush from the cleaning rod and dry the bore with clear patches. The patches are to be cut into four equal size swabs. No more than one swab will be used at one time in the bore. Do not attempt to retract the rod until the swab has been removed (after going through the flash suppressor).
 - (2) Clean the locking lugs in the barrel extension, using a small bristle brush.
 - (3) Clean the protruding exterior of the gas tube in the receiver with the bore brush attached to a section of the cleaning rod.

[You are now free to kill people]





Radio Telephone Operator

Man with the Sound

By Sgt Tom Faulkner

His weapon operates on batteries and he doesn't have to fire a shot to wipe out an enemy position. Sometimes you say he's "gettin over" and other times you wouldn't take his job for another R&R.

Courage, intelligence and a cool head are all essential and he can make or break a Platoon Leader or Company Commander. When you are hit, he calls for Dustoff and if you are pinned down he can bring the wrath of gunships and artillery to the rescue. Chow, clothing and those little extras like writing paper, soap and cigarettes are at his beckoned call.

He is a radio-telephone-operator (RTO) and frequently your only contact with other elements.

"I choose an RTO based on his intelligence and ability to express himself," said Captain James M. Grimshaw, Delta Company Commander, 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry. *"He also must be mentally alert, level-headed and familiar with radio procedure."*

Captain Grimshaw paused and puffed on his cigar. Then he added, *"An RTO has got to have a good supply of confidence and be capable of making decisions on his*

own. There may be a time when he has to take over a Platoon or even a Company."

Lieutenant Larry T. Leray of Tibodaux, La, Platoon Leader with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion agreed wholeheartedly. *"I want my RTO to be able to act without being told,"* said Leray. *"I've had some terrific RTO's who often knew what I was thinking even before I did."*

The problem though, is finding the right men. *"It's almost like some of these guys were born with a radio in his hands,"* said one Company Commander. *"I've seen some who pick up radios like a fish taking to water. Others just haven't got what it takes."*

Extra Load

In addition to the responsibilities, an RTO has an extra heavy load to carry. A 25-pound radio, extra batteries, sleeping gear and as much as six days rations can sometimes be quite a hassle, especially when trying to maintain the same pace as his CO or Platoon Leader. *"It's really rough when you're in the mud or thick brush,"* declared Pfc Terry L. Evans of Tampa, Fla, an RTO with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion. *"In the bush, the wait-a-minute vines grab your aerial and the mud just seems to keep pulling down."*

Recalling his last ten months with Delta Company as the Company Commander's RTO, Sgt Edward P. Fruchtenicht of Portola, Ca said, *"Sometimes I think I was chosen as an RTO because I was the biggest guy in the Company and they figured the extra weight wouldn't bother me. But I wouldn't have traded it for any other job,"* added the husky Californian with a smile. *"As an RTO you feel like an integral part of the Company and nothing happens out there that you don't know about."*

The duties of the RTO will vary slightly even within Companies, but what he is expected to know and carry is the same. Some merely answer calls and pass the horn to the Platoon Leader or Forward Observer. Others are expected to make some of the minor decisions that a Commander would have to make.

"After an RTO and I have worked together for a while, we learn how each other thinks and reacts to a particular situation," said 1Lt Leray. *"I depend on him to take care of a lot of problems such as calling in our location status, leaving me more time to concentrate on the Platoon and tactical problems,"* said Lt. Leray.

Although the RTO's main function is to maintain constant communication with the Company Commander and the other elements, a good RTO is also aware of the job of each man in the Company. On many occasions, he will have to fill in for a Machine Gunner or even a Medic.

(continued....)



"We were walking through a rice paddy when Charlie sprung an ambush on our point element," remarked Pfc Martin J. Waters, of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion. "The Medic had his hands full, so I ran forward and was able to patch up one of the men, while calling in a Dustoff."

As in any job, the first few days are the roughest for an RTO. He must learn how his Commander operates, adjust to the weight of his rucksack and most of all learn the call signs.

"My first few days were a real horror show," recalled SGT Fruchtenicht. "You've got to keep that handset to your ear at all times and sometimes use as many as ten different call signs. It gets complicated and there is no room for error."

Hazardous Job

"One thing I found out real quick when I became an RTO," said Pfc Waters of Malta, Montana, "was that your aerial makes a pretty good target for the VC. I caught two rounds right through the radio my first week in the field. An RTO's position in a column couldn't be more conspicuous if he wore white fatigues."

However, despite the hazards, hassles and added responsibilities of the job, most RTO's in the 173d Airborne Brigade seem to take a special pride in their jobs.

"I've humped the radio for more than nine months," said Sp4 Paul R. Lash with the Recon Squad of B Company, 2nd Battalion, "and I wouldn't want any other job over here. The extra weight and responsibilities are compensated for by always knowing what is going on and being able to personally help the troops. And besides, it is not all that dangerous."

The job of the RTO remains the most complicated of all combat assignments and although Commanders know what they look for in an RTO it is difficult to define all the virtues that make-up a good one. He is a prime target for the enemy and often is responsible for life and death, success or failure, victory or defeat.

Perhaps one of his most difficult battles is with man's basic instinct, that of self-preservation, for when the hot lead starts flying he must reach for his radio, not for his rifle.

Source:

Sky Soldier Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 2, March 1969

The RT-505 / PRC-25 radio was issued with a 3-foot long steel tape whip antenna (AT-892) for short-range use. The seven-section AT-271 antenna was provided for maximum range.

And a PRC it was.



~ A Different Perspective ~

Could be wrong, but if that shot of Jo Collins on the psp (Issue 44, Page 5) is the one from the Army newspaper, then the skinny GI with the glasses and hat on the left looking at her behind is me. I kept getting ribbed for being the only one there not looking at the rest of her.

Russ Webb
HHC/2/503d



Hey You! G.I. with the glasses. Eyes front!

~ A Horse is a Horse, of Course, of Course ~

Hey guys, have you ever noticed how frequently the number 173 occurs in your life or is it just me? Maybe I just take special notice of that number. This weekend we were at the Youth Arabian Horse Show here in Albuquerque and sure enough one of the contestants had the # 173. For fun we were trying to pick who would win in each class and of course I had to pick # 173. That horse and rider became the runner up to the champion.

Bob Millner
A/2/503

Bob. No, it's not just you. I think many or most of us are aware of and often confronted with that number in our daily lives. One buddy said while he was visiting his psych at a VA clinic the number on the doctor's door was, 173. I recall once being assigned a golf cart, number 173 of course. It didn't help my game. My wife likes to play the Lotto here in Florida, and when we learned there was a Pick 3 thingy, she started playing number 173 for me....so far it's done as well as your horse, of course. Anyone else out there with 'number 173 stories in your civilian life? Send 'em in. Ed



V-J DAY

WWII ENDS

Victory over Japan Day (also known as Victory in the Pacific Day, V-J Day, or V-P Day) is a name chosen for the day on which the Surrender of Japan occurred, effectively ending World War II, and subsequent anniversaries of that event. The term has been applied to both of the days on which the initial announcement of Japan's surrender was made – to the afternoon of August 15, 1945, in Japan, and, because of time zone differences, to August 14, 1945 (when it was announced in the United States and the rest of the Americas and Eastern Pacific Islands) – as well as to September 2, 1945, when the signing of the surrender document occurred, officially ending World War II.

August 15 is the official V-J Day for the UK while the official US commemoration is September 2. The name, V-J Day, had been selected by the Allies after they named V-E Day for the victory in Europe.

On September 2, 1945, a formal surrender ceremony was performed in Tokyo Bay, Japan, aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*. In Japan, August 15 usually is known as the "memorial day for the end of the war" (終戦記念日 *Shūsen-kinenbi*[?]); the official name for the day, however, is "the day for mourning of war dead and praying for peace" (戦歿者を追悼し平和を祈念する日 *Senbotsusha wo tsuitōshi heiwa wo kinensuru hi*[?]). This official name was adopted in 1982 by an ordinance issued by the Japanese government.

On 6 and 9 August 1945, the United States dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. On 9 August, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. The Japanese government on 10 August communicated its intention to surrender under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, but with too many conditions for the offer to be acceptable to the Allies.

The news of the Japanese offer, however, was enough to begin early celebrations around the world. Allied soldiers in London danced in a conga line on Regent Street. Americans and Frenchmen in Paris paraded on the Champs-Élysées singing "Don't Fence Me In". American soldiers in Berlin shouted "It's over in the Pacific", and hoped that they would now not be transferred there to fight the Japanese. Germans stated that the Japanese were wise enough to—unlike themselves—give up in a hopeless situation, but were grateful that the atomic bomb was not ready in time to

be used against them. Moscow newspapers briefly reported on the atomic bombings with no commentary of any kind. While "*Russians and foreigners alike could hardly talk about anything else*", the Soviet government refused to make any statements on the bombs' implication for politics or science.

In Chungking, Chinese fired firecrackers and "*almost buried [Americans] in gratitude*". In Manila, residents sang "God Bless America". On Okinawa, six men were killed and dozens were wounded as American soldiers "*took every weapon within reach and started firing into the sky*" to celebrate; ships sounded general quarters and fired anti-aircraft guns as their crews believed that a Kamikaze attack was occurring. On Tinian island, B-29 crews preparing for their next mission over Japan were told that it was cancelled, but that they could not celebrate because it might be rescheduled.

Japan accepts the Potsdam Declaration



Crowds celebrating V-J Day in Times Square

A little after noon in Japan Standard Time on August 15, 1945, Emperor Hirohito's announcement of Japan's acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration was broadcast to the Japanese people over the radio. Earlier the same day, the Japanese government had broadcast an announcement over Radio Tokyo that "*acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation [would be] coming soon,*" and had advised the Allies of the surrender by sending a cable to U.S. President Harry S Truman via the Swiss diplomatic mission in Washington, D.C. A nation-wide broadcast by President Truman was aired at seven o'clock p.m. (daylight time in Washington, D.C.) on August 14 announcing the communication and that the formal event was scheduled for September 2.

(continued....)



In his announcement of Japan's surrender on August 14, President Truman said that *"The proclamation of V-J Day must wait upon the formal signing of the surrender terms by Japan"*.

Since the European Axis Powers had surrendered three months earlier (V-E Day), V-J Day would be the official end of World War II. In Australia and most other allied nations, the name V-P Day was used from the outset. The *Canberra Times* of August 14, 1945, refers to VP Day celebrations, and a public holiday for VP Day was gazetted by the government in that year according to the Australian War Memorial.

Public celebrations

After news of the Japanese acceptance and before Truman's announcement, Americans began celebrating *"as if joy had been rationed and saved up for the three years, eight months and seven days since Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941."* In Washington, D.C. a crowd attempted to break into the White House grounds as they shouted *"We want Harry!"* In San Francisco two women jumped naked into a pond at the Civic Center to soldiers' cheers. More seriously, rioting sailors looted city stores, overturned automobiles, and attacked women, causing more than 1,000 casualties. The largest crowd in the history of New York City's Times Square gathered to celebrate, while in the Garment District, workers threw out cloth scraps and ticker tape, leaving a pile five inches deep on the streets. A "coast-to-coast frenzy of [servicemen] kissing" occurred, with *Life* publishing photographs of such kisses in Washington, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Miami.

Famous photograph



The subjects depicted in the famous *Life* magazine photograph, taken from a different view.

The best-known kiss that day appeared in *V-J Day in Times Square*, one of the most famous photographs ever published by *Life*. It was shot on August 14, 1945, shortly after the announcement by President Truman occurred and people began to gather in celebration. Alfred Eisenstaedt went to Times Square to take candid photographs and spotted a sailor who *"grabbed something in white. And I stood there, and they kissed. And I snapped five times."* Several people have since claimed to be the sailor and nurse.

Japanese reaction

On August 15 and 16 some Japanese soldiers, devastated by the surrender, committed suicide. Well over 100 American prisoners of war also were executed. In addition, many Australian and British prisoners of war were executed in Borneo, at both Ranau and Sandakan, by the Imperial Japanese Army. At Batu Lintang camp, also in Borneo, death orders were found which proposed the execution of some 2,000 POWs and civilian internees on September 15, 1945.



September 2, 1945 aboard the *USS Missouri*, the Japanese sign their unconditional surrender as General MacArthur and Allied delegation look on. The war is over.

####

And to the paratroopers of the 503rd PIR and the men of their attached units who so bravely fought throughout those islands in the Pacific, we again extend our heartfelt thanks for a job well done, and *All The Way!*





OPERATION SIN CITY



26 - 29 August 2013

The 173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion

Hosted by:

Chicago and Florida Chapters

~ REGISTRATION FORM ~

Please print & copy form for additional names.

(Indicate shirt size for each individual. S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL)

Name: _____

Shirt Size: ____ Phn: _____ Eml: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Unit served with in the Brigade: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

~ Registration Fees ~

____ \$150. Per Member or Guest before 25 July 2013,

\$165. Per Member or Guest after 25 July 2013.

____ \$150. Gold Star Family Member

____ \$100. Per Vendor Table (173d Vendors only)*

____ \$75. Per Active Duty Soldier (Not on Orders)

Free Active Duty Soldier (On Orders, i.e. Command, Color Guard)

Free Gold Star Luncheon (173d Gold Star Family Members)

____ \$25. Sky Soldier Adoption Program* "Have your meals on me".

____ Total of check enclosed in USD.

**Sky Soldier Adoption Program: We have active duty Sky Soldiers fly in from Italy who must pay airfare, hotel, meals and reunion fees costing them thousands of dollars. We try and offset their cost by giving them a break on the registration cost. You can help out by purchasing a meal voucher so our active duty Sky Soldiers traveling in from Europe will have reduced cost. Please contribute to our Sky Soldier Adoption Program and let him/her have their meals donated and sponsored by you!*

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Only authorized 173d vendors may hold a raffle, one per table in the vendors' area only.

173d Gold Star Family Members of our KIA's: Spouse, Parent, Sibling, Children)

Reunion Contact:

Jim Bradley

727-376-2576 after 4:30 pm EST (Please)

www.2013Reunion.com

