

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Something special is happening. Thanks to over 150 Sky Soldiers representing all units of the 173d Airborne Brigade, and friends of the 173d, we will be welcoming to the reunion in North Myrtle Beach, SC this June, paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) from WWII as our honored guests. Upon learning of our good fortune to meet these warriors and brothers of the Greatest Generation, here's what a few of our troopers said:

"These guys deserve far more than we can ever repay. Doesn't matter if they were a company clerk, cook or carrying a Garand."

"Let's show these early Troopers that we appreciate all that they did before us."

"The WWII guys are my heroes. I have followed them at Air Shows, Doolittle Raider Reunions, special talks and presentations, you name it, I have been there to pay them homage."

"I'd be honored; and would like to know more about these amazing guys. Potential here for bridging to a past that commends us all."

"I hope they attend, I'd love to meet them."

"This should have been done years ago. So many potential friendships lost to time. I look forward to meeting these brother paratroopers."

"Great idea!"

"You'll want to do it with class and to really show how much we appreciate and understand what these guys went through during 'the big one.'"

"Outstanding idea!"

"I think this is a great idea. You have my vote!"

"That's an excellent idea! I will be honored to be in their presence."

"This is a great tribute! Great Idea!"

"If you had not asked me to help with this fabulous undertaking, I would have felt insulted! Yes, yes, yes! I will be proud to help in this much delayed honoring of these 'Founding Fathers' of the 173rd! I look forward to meeting each and every one of them."

"Thanks for the opportunity to somehow show my appreciation for those who (among many other things), freakin' jumped back onto Corregidor to retake it from the Japanese. It is my distinct pleasure and again thanks for the opportunity."

The Chapter 30 reunion organizing committee members will be doing their utmost to welcome these troopers, and they invite all in attendance to meet and thank each of these men for their courageous and history-making service to their country. The history they lived and the legacy they passed on to us as 503rd paratroopers is something we can all be proud of.

A special word of gratitude is due these good people who are helping make this happen:

Nick Aguilar (1/503)
 Levin Austin (173d)
 Tim Austin (3/503)
 Jim Bailey (2/503)
 Gordon Baker (173d)
 Jesse Beachman (4/503)
 Dave Beal (2/503)
 Bob Beemer (2/503)
 Bill Berry (173d Eng.)
 Gayle Bethea (2/503 spouse)
 Jim Bethea (2/503)
 Jerry Bethke (2/503)
 Walter Bills (2/503)
 LTC Blanken (173d)
 Pat Bowe (2/503)
 Wayne Bowers (2/503)
 Mike Broderick (2/503)
 Bob Bruce (1/503)
 Dave Canady (2/503)
 Abel Candia (2/503)
 Bob Carmichael (2/503)
 Ed Carns (2/503)
 Mike Carver (2/503)
 Jimmy Castillo (2/503)
 Chuck Cean (3/503)
 John Chester (E/58 LRRP)
 Jim Chieco (2/503)
 John Civitts (2/503)
 Bob Clark (5th SF)
 Butch Clark (2/503)
 Harry Cleland (2/503)
 Tim Cloonan (173d Med)
 Bob Cockerill (173d)
 Dave Colbert (2/503)
 George Colson (2/503)
 Wambi Cool (2/503)
 Virgil Cooley (2/503)
 Gene Councilman (1/503)
 Buzz Cox (2/503)
 Larry Cox (2/503)
 Gary Davidson (2/503)
 Terry "Woody" Davis (2/503)



Gary Cucinitti (1/503)
 Reed Cundiff (173d LRRP)
 George Dexter (2/503)
 Matt DeZee (N75 Rangers)
 Roger Dick (2/503)
 Tom Dooley (2/503)
 Jim Dresser (2/503)
 Frank Dukes (2/503)
 Mark Dunlap (2/503)
 Tony Esposito (2/503)
 Paul Fisher (3/503)
 FL Chapter (173d)
 Bob Fleming (2/503)
 Craig Ford (1/503)
 Rick Fred (2/503)
 Les Fuller (2/503)
 A.B. Garcia (2/503)
 Tony Geishauser (Cowboys)
 Jim Gettel (2/503)
 Steve Goodman (2/503)
 Jim Gore (2/503)
 Johnny Graham (2/503)
 Gary Granade (E-Troop)
 Joe Gray (2/503)
 Jim Green (2/503)
 Dave Griffin (2/503)
 Mike Guthrie (2/503)
 Steve Haber (2/503)
 Eddie Hair (1/503)
 Larry Hampton (1/503)
 Mike Hargadon (2/503)
 Mike Harris (2/503)
 Barry "Bear" Hart (2/503)
 Jerry Hassler (2/503)
 Jim Healy (2/503)
 Dennis Hill (1/503 & 3/503)
 Wayne Hoitt (2/503)
 Ken Kaplan (2/503)
 Ed Kearney (2/503)
 Bill Knapp (2/503)
 Skip Kniley (3/319)
 Gary Kozdron (1/503)
 Virgil Lamb (2/503)
 Dave Linkenhoker (2/503)
 Joe Logan (2/503)
 Roy Lombardo (2/503)
 Art Martinez (2/503)
 Frank Martinez (173d)
 Mike McMillan (4/503)
 Bill Metheny (4/503)
 Dave Milton (2/503)
 Rick Navarrette (2/503)
 Bill Nicholls (2/503)
 Jerry Nissley (2/503)
 Dave Norman (2/503)
 Ben Oakley (2/503)

Larry Paladino (2/503)
 Ed Perkins (173d)
 Marcus Powell (2/503)
 Anonymous (2/503)
 Ed Privette (2/503)
 Court Prisk (3/319)
 Gary Prisk (2/503)
 Ed Privette (2/503)
 Jim & Julia Quick (2/503)
 Ken Redding (2/503)
 Dan Reed (2/503)
 Paul Reed (173d)
 Bill Reynolds (2/503)
 Floyd Riester (Bde HHC)
 Jim Robinson (2/503)
 Lee Robinson (2/503)
 Don Rockholt (2/503)
 Andy Russell (2/503)
 Walter Russo (173d)
 Nick Sabree (2/503)
 SD Chapter (173d)
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 Roy Scott (3/319)
 John Searcy (2/503)
 Tom Siopes (2/503)
 Pat Sirmeyer (E-Troop)
 Mike Sirmeyer (Cav)
 Arvil Sirvula (2/503)
 Ken Smith (2/503)
 Lew Smith (2/503)
 Ron Smith (2/503)
 Ralph Southard (2/503)
 Larry Speed (1/503)
 Jim Stephens (3/319)
 Sam Stewart (2/503)
 Mike Sturges (2/503)
 Ed Swauger (2/503)
 Pat Tadina (173d)
 Ted Thompson (2/503)
 Wes Thompson (173d Eng.)
 Thunderbird Chapter (173d)
 Joel Trnekle (2/503)
 Alton Turner (2/503)
 Steve Vargo (2/503)
 Terrel Vickery (2/503, 75th)
 Dave Walker (Ranger/LRRP)
 William Wallace (173d)
 Bob Warfield (2/503)
 Jerry Wiles (2/503)
 Pat Wright (2/503 & 4/503)
 Ray "Zac" Zaconne (2/503)
 Dwight Zimmerman (173d)

AIRBORNE! ALL THE WAY!!





CORREGIDOR DAY 1

~ The Jump ~

by Chet Nycum
 "G" Company, 503rd PIR

I recall Mindoro and the "G" Co. Roll Call of my morning of Feb. 16, 1945 starting with a very routine "FALL IN," so like many other "FALL IN's" that I can still sing its peculiar cadence.

**"McCallum?" "HERE." "McLemore?" "HERE."
 "McNeill?" "HERE." "Newell?" "HERE." I go
 tense. Norelli?" "HERE." "Nycum?" "HERE."
 My body relaxes. "O'Brien?" I exhale. "HERE."**

But this morning I wonder if today will be the day my luck runs out. I start to become conscious about being different to the others, as if being different places me somehow more in danger, that fate might separate me from them. I notice many men in the lines around me have their jump boots, and look at my feet, self-conscious that I am wearing WWI leggings. Were they really out of the small sizes? Is there some damn thieving supply clerk somewhere with small feet and a beautiful pair of Corcorans? Why not me?

We load on to a convoy of trucks, which are then off to the air strip where we are directed toward banks of stacked parachutes, each man taking one and strapping it on. We adjust ourselves, and each other, starting to look like a flock of mean, heavily armed penguins as we waddle around fastening our loads. As one of the two platoon scouts, I am 'Tommy Gun' equipped. I am carrying three days supply of rations, ten each twenty round clips of Thompson .45 ammunition, two fragmentation grenades, and two Phosphor grenades, my

trench knife, and my utility knife. The last item I fasten to my webbing is the weapon case, in which I am carrying a Thompson machine gun hanging diagonally across my body. I am number 3 in my string because they like the Tommy Gun men in early, in case there is a problem. I try to tell myself that I am ready, so many times until I can believe it true.

The command is shouted to load up, and I load onto the waiting C-47. We are each so heavy, we cannot get on the aircraft without the assistance of the man behind. Ahead of me is *, and behind me is *. It is 1030 hrs.

Our plane is air borne and we try to settle back to get as comfortable as possible, to wear our 60-80 lbs of equipment as if it was but a rosette in a tuxedo. I look at my brothers in arms. Is it to be my turn today? If not mine, then whose?

Time passes. Our altitude must not be high, for the tropic heat remains with us. I recall the crossing of the Owen Stanley Mountains going to Markham Valley, where our lips were blue from the cold. Our Jumpmaster speaks. No coach at a football game was ever more sure of himself. Casual to look as unconcerned as if it were just a bus ride, I do not wish to name Lt. H, though I recall him well. *"We have been picked by MacArthur to retake Fortress Corregidor from the Japanese! This is our special honor!"* His words take my thoughts back to the fall of Bataan, the Death March, and the siege and surrender of this island to the Japanese, and my hate and anger are renewed. We are hallowed to be taking back the Fortress Corregidor. I do not know whether men on the other aircraft were given the same talk.

(continued....)





Chet ready for his Qualifying Jump at Fort Benning

Our flight does not seem long, as none of the flights into combat seem long, for time goes on quickly when one is not eager to get to the drop zone. I am sitting here quietly, as if wanting a longer flight can somehow make it so. Too soon I hear the order

“STAND UP AND HOOK UP!”

Each of my brothers rises up from his thoughts, and with snap fastener in his left hand, allows the static line to pass over the top of his wrist and snap it on to the cable running the length of the aircraft.

“CHECK EQUIPMENT!”

I check my gear, and check my static line again. I would check it a hundred times if it would assure me absolutely, but I must check the gear of my brother in front of me, the Number 2 man in our stick. Number 3 checks me.

“COUNT OFF!”

“1 O.K!”

“2 O.K!”

“3 O.K!”

“4 O.K!”

I notice my breaths are short, and my heartbeat is racing. What was that about into the valley of the shadow of death? That is not for me today, I congratulate myself.

The silence when the entire string has given the OK startles me. How quickly the eternity rushes time past my eyes and ears, and I see the red light come on.

“STAND IN THE DOOR!”

The green light is on, and for a few eternal seconds, we are not moving. Then, almost as one, we quickly move forward, my right hand never leaving the back of Number 2 in front of me. In but the time it takes to blink, I let go of him as he falls away into the blast of the airstream, and I am falling behind him.

”JUMP, GO!”



In the first second, I have fallen over 150 feet towards “B” field, and I feel the jolt and look up to see a full canopy. There is just enough time to stop my oscillation. The wind is blowing me backwards, and I see a bomb crater in front of my feet. I drop into the crater, sliding part way down its side, landing full and fair on my back in a cloud of dust. It is as good a landing as I can hope for.

The very first thing I see is a trooper with a movie camera taking pictures of my landing. For the rest of my life, I shall see myself on film, television, and video dropping into Corregidor WWII in my WWI leggings. I catch my breath momentarily, and some Headquarters troops pounce on me and help to free me from my harness. I remove my Thompson from its case, and discard the case. I load a magazine, cock it and put it on safety. Hell will break loose later. A few quick words, and they point me toward a section of the field which I will soon discover is on it’s southern edge.

(continued....)





The jump into Corregidor, 16 Feb 1945

Now in company, I take a position looking down the beaten slopes towards the beach, laying there waiting to provide covering fire when the infantry reaches the beach. I see a trooper climbing the slope towards me, using his rifle as a pick, jamming the barrel into the ground to pull himself up.

"Give me cover," I tell the man next to me, and I lay my Tommy gun down and go towards him, grabbing his shoulders, and carrying him through to the first shelf below Topside. I run west along this shelf to another bomb crater and deposit him solidly into it. I clean the dirt from his rifle barrel, and take up a 'ready to fight' position. Having done this, I realize that I have done it all without thinking.

Two men join us in our crater. They are not troopers, and they are asking me questions, *"What's your name, soldier, where you from?"* Are they reporters, or photographers? Don't they realize there's a war on, and we're in the middle of it?

I return to the safety of my Thompson, and take up my position. There, on Topside, I am playing tourist, with nothing much to do. I scan the view, and take in the beauty of the invasion before me. I see the Navy ships

to the South of the island, and wonder what the name of the Destroyer might be. There is also a minesweeper, running paravanes off the bow. The other boat is running straight toward the shoreline directly under me. It looks like an LCM, but with a series of tubes pointed skywards. I do not need to ponder as to its role, for shortly it starts spitting projectiles into the air, and in an instant I calculate their trajectory as directly towards my position. I roll down into a pile of broken concrete slabs, and wonder if it's possible to get any closer to the ground as a few projectiles hit the ground on either side of me, but I am entirely unharmed, though a little disappointed to find myself as a target without first even seeing a Jap.

The action of the day moves us towards the beach, where we know the 34th Infantry are landing and I find myself resting directly above bottom side, where I clearly see Malinta to my front. I congratulate myself on the show I am sure to see, but my cheer is too soon. There is a large explosion to my right, I feel it on my cheek. I look to see if one of our Navy friends has been hit, and for the instant recognize the destroyer which I had been looking at earlier. I realize that the mine-sweeper is nowhere in sight, and I cannot even see a ripple where she once was.



Is that the way it is, one minute here, and the next gone?
Does it matter whether by shore artillery, or mine?
I look out on the waters and see a flotilla of ships
coming around the island and heading towards the south
beach, and I know it is our team coming to reinforce
Malinta Hill. already ashore. We move down the slope
to be ready to cover the troops as they come ashore. One
of the tanks does not get far for it strikes a land mine and
becomes immobile as it tries to move across the beach.
There are our comrades of the 34th Battalion reinforcing
the assault on Malinta Hill.



Landing Zone "B"

*(During the war I never heard it called
a Drop Zone)*

The race to the top of Malinta is over, and we are pulled
back across Topside to clean out enemy pockets.

Suddenly there is a large explosion and I look over my
shoulder to Malinta Hill, where I see large billows of
smoke emerging from one of the main entrances.

As the smoke from the explosion moves towards
topside, I wonder how many of our men on Malinta Hill
are dead, and how many Japs in the Hospital inside the
hill have died. I mourn just our men, and move on.

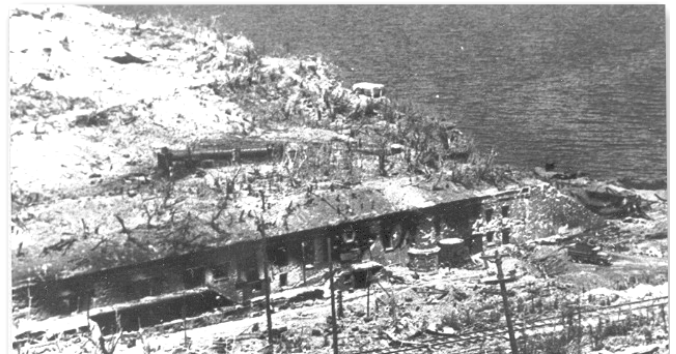
On Topside again, I am now together with my platoon,
and we are waiting briefly to ensure that our landing is
secure.

We start moving towards the north, "towards the ice
plant," I am told. The patrol puts us on a road that
crosses past the Hospital and then in front of the parade
ground on Middleside, and as we move down the road
we see Lt. E, one of our officers, standing alone out in
the open, to the left of the ice plant. He has his field
glasses to his eyes, and is intent on his inspection of
something that interests him. We shout at him to take
cover, but he does not seem to hear us. Then, as I am

looking at him, he falls, dead. Clearly a Japanese
soldier, hidden somewhere in the landscape though his
field glasses, perhaps at the ice plant, was looking back
at him.

Through him I learn to avoid any lingering affection for
the Corregidor landscape.

We fan out to cover the ground ahead of us, and come
upon an ammunition dump on high ground east of and
above the ice plant. The storage area faced NW and SE,
and all the shells are stacked with their projectiles
pointing northwest into the hill. As we move across this
storage area we can see that the Japs have wired the
dump with explosives. We quickly move back and
report the find.



The Ice Plant

Some demolition men arrive, and after a short delay,
they set off an explosion. After the explosion, small
fires burn in the area well into the night, and we move
into a position that slopes down towards bottomside and
the ice plant. There, about half way across the face of
the road, is a wrecked truck. It looks all the world as if
our air corps friends have been sporting with it, but some
of the men decide to seek its shelter for the night.

It being the end of the
day, some of the men,
feeling relatively safe
inside the G Company
sector, set to trying
some of the sake and the
whiskey which had been



found in our journey across Topside. The whiskey has
four roses on the label, and with a sake chaser the two
made a powerful mix. Now and then, a round from the
ammo dump opposite us explodes as the fire cooks it off,
and the shell casing is blown high into the air directly
over our heads and into the bay beyond us. As the shell
casings would turn and tumble in flight above us, they
made a sound "kalk kalk kalk kalk kalk," sounding for
all the world like wild turkeys flying overhead.

(continued....)



Some of the troopers, for we are now well into the night, are feeling pretty wild and brave, and on hearing the turkeys, start shouting and shooting at them. The firing at the turkeys doesn't last very long, for there is much bitching about wasting ammo, and giving our positions away.



"G" Company



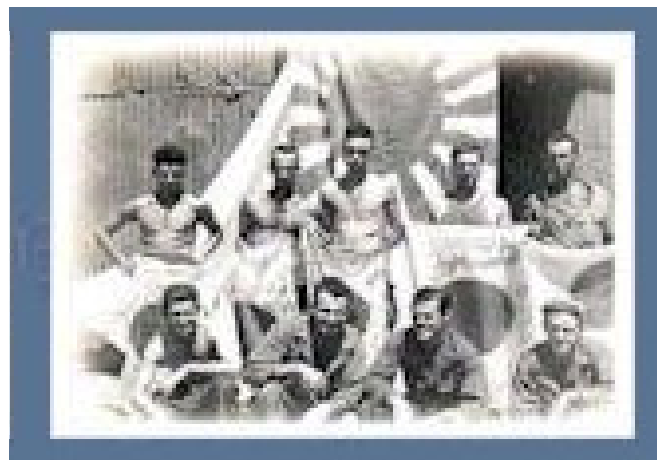
"G" Comany with captured enemy.

Either way, in the morning, there is no turkey for breakfast, but more than a few sore heads.

As we try to rest, the sky lights up and we hear our .75's firing salvos. We do not see the explosions though the star shells keep bursting towards the east for about fifteen minutes, and once again all is quiet. I will learn later that a group of Japs, in the hundreds, assembling somewhere east of Malinta Hill, never did have an even chance to form their Banzai charge. I like those odds.

After the barrage, it becomes quiet with only isolated sporadic firing as Japs try moving through our lines, or as nerves and anxiety gets the better of us. It doesn't help that we know by experience how well the Japs can move at night into our positions. Sometime in the night's wee hours, one of them manges to crawl under our water-carrier, and blows himself into glory, destroying our water supply as he departs. I have had a good day, yet a disappointing one. Ready for anything, I have not even seen one live Japanese. I know many men have not had an easy day of it, for I know that those men who dropped short, or dropped long, have had to fight for their lives towards safety, and lost. There are missing faces, the area is alive with the sound of gunfire,

and the aid station at Topside is doing a sad and busy trade.



"G" Company buddies after island was taken

Morning comes of the second day and we cautiously move from our cover, expecting all the while to draw fire, but none comes.

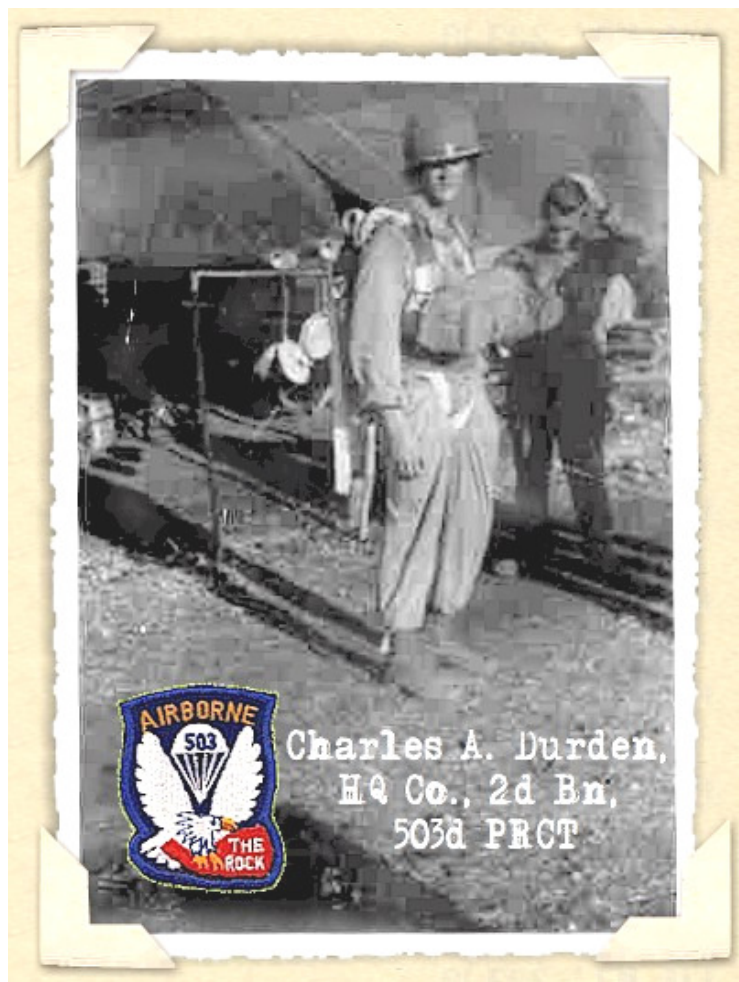


Photo of Charles before jump in to Corregidor where he was wounded in battle.

