



2/503d **Vietnam** Newsletter



For the men, and their families, of the 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) ~ *We Try Harder!*

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com See all issues: <http://www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php> May 2010 ~ Issue 15

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

No DEROS Alpha trooper, RTO Don Anderson, catching some zzz's in August 1966.
So, you wanna be a paratrooper, huh?



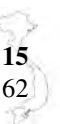
Note the poncho liner in the upper right of the photo. Looks kinda like Charlie.

Photo by Col. Robert Guy, 2/503d



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Agent Orange Retro Claims Allowed



Tom Philpott
Military Update

New Agent Orange Rule to Allow Retro Claims by 86,000

About 86,000 Vietnam War veterans, their surviving spouses or estates will be eligible for retroactive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs -- an average of 11.4 years for veterans and 9.6 years for survivors -- under a draft VA rule to expand by three the number of diseases presumed caused by herbicide exposure in the war.

The 86,000 are beneficiaries who can reopen previously denied claims for these conditions: ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and chronic B-cell blood cancers including hairy cell leukemia. But another 29,000 claims are expected to be approved this year for Vietnam veterans suffering from these diseases but applying for benefits for the first time.

The projected cost of this dramatic expansion of claims linked to Agent Orange and other defoliants deployed four decades ago is \$13.6 billion this fiscal year and \$42.2 billion over 10 years. VA plans to hire 1772 new claims processors, starting this October, to be able to handle these claims *"without significantly degrading the processing of the non-presumptive workload."*

In the proposed rule published March 25 in the Federal Register, VA officials explained that Secretary Eric Shinseki has cut the usual 60-day public comment period by half *"to promote rapid action"* on these claims.

When a final rule is published, soon after April 26, VA claim offices across the country can begin making payments. Veterans with these diseases will need to show they set foot in Vietnam during the war. Those who served aboard ship just off the coast remain ineligible.

John Maki, assistant national service director for Disabled American Veterans, said DAV was glad to see the comment period cut to 30 days. Otherwise, the draft

regulation contains no surprises. *"It basically is going to take those three conditions and just add them to disabilities already listed as presumptive diseases for Agent Orange,"* Maki said.

One surprise still might be the thoroughness of the draft rule's analysis of the beneficiary populations and the costs facing the department from this wave of claims for both retroactive payments and new benefits. Adding ischemic heart disease to the list of presumptive Agent Orange illnesses is by far the most significant part of the new rule, accounting for 82 percent of additional expected payments to beneficiaries.

The rule defines ischemic health disease as a condition causing inadequate supply of blood and oxygen to the myocardium, the middle and thickest layer of the heart wall. "IHD" can include, but is not limited to, acute, subacute and old myocardial infarction; atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease including coronary artery disease (or spasm) and coronary bypass surgery, and stable, unstable and Prinzmetal's angina.

Because IHD is a heart disease it *"does not include hypertension or peripheral manifestations of arteriosclerosis such as peripheral vascular disease or stroke,"* the draft regulation explains.

Of 86,000 beneficiaries eligible for retroactive claims, VA estimates that nearly 70,000 of them are living Vietnam veterans, their average age now 63. Of those, 62,200 previously were denied compensation for IHD, 5400 were denied for B-cell leukemia and 2300 for Parkinson's disease.

About 53,000 who previously filed claims for these diseases already are receiving VA compensation for other service-related diseases. Of those, roughly 8350 are rated 100-percent disabled and therefore might not be eligible for retroactive pay.

VA assumes that veterans with Parkinson's disease or for B-cell leukemia will be awarded a 100-percent disability ratings. The average rating for ischemic heart diseases is expected to be 60 percent.

In calculating VA costs from this change, VA assumes that 80 percent of the eligible population will apply for benefits and 100 percent of those who do will be approved. But eligible vets and survivors must file claims to get paid; nothing will happen automatically. To file claims online visit:

<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. Veterans without a computer can call a toll-free helpline at 1-800-749-8387.

(continued....)



VA maintains a directory of veterans' service organizations with trained staff to help in filing claims. The website: <http://www1.va.gov/vsso/>. Many state, county and local governments also have personnel to help. Find information on these agencies at: <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>.

VA also expects many ineligible veterans to file claims. They will be found ineligible because they can't show they ever set foot in Vietnam though they suffer from one of the qualifying diseases. Many claims will be filed by veterans with hypertension but those will be rejected because that condition is not a "heart disease" under the VA draft regulation.

In total, VA expects claims volume from presumptive [Agent Orange](#) diseases to hit 159,000 this year and to exceed 270,000 by fiscal 2019.

Maki noted that entitlement to benefits only occurs with final publication of the regulation. Retroactive payments usually will be made back to the date a claim was filed for a presumptive disease.

"It is possible, since this is a liberalized law, that somebody may be able to get the retroactive date [moved back] to one year prior to the effective date in the regulation, if they can show they had the claimed condition prior to that year," Maki said.

The growing list of Agent Orange diseases stems of a court case, *Nehmer v. Department of Veterans Affairs*, filed in 1986. The class action lawsuit won by veterans, and reinforced by legislation, requires VA to direct the National Academy of Sciences to report every two years on any positive association between new diseases and exposure to herbicides in Vietnam.

In 2007, the Bush administration went to court to challenge the legal need for NAS studies on presumptive AO diseases to continue. It lost. The NAS reports are to continue through Oct. 1, 2014, with the possibility that more diseases will be found to have an association with herbicide exposure.

To comment, e-mail milupdate@aol.com, write to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centreville, VA, 20120-1111 or visit: www.militaryupdate.com.

Note: I strongly urge you NOT to file your claim online or without representation by the DAV or other non-VA veteran's organization. Ed

~ EARLY DAYS AT CAMP ZINN ~

The Mess Hall was outdoors under the trees and the tables we ate from were long pieces of PSP (Perforated Steel Plating used for building temporary landing strips),

supported between two trees. We ate while standing with our mess-kits resting on the PSP. Next to the mess area stood a large General Purpose tent used to house the kitchen. The chow line ran past the rolled up side of the tent where the KP's served the meals. After eating, we cleaned our mess kits and utensils in three large, shiny metal garbage cans. One was filled with boiling soapy water and the other two were filled with boiling rinse water. All were heated by diesel-fired portable heaters each complete with it's own smoke stack. Occasionally the heater would take in too much fuel and a little internal explosion would occur which would cause the smokestack to emit a puff of black smoke.

I was leaning against one of the PSP "tables" eating my noon meal when I heard a Huey helicopter in the distance heading in our direction. I thought "*This is great; it's going to fly right over us!*" I would get a good view of it!

As the chopper passed directly overhead and I'm standing there admiring it and looking the door gunner right in the face, the field stove belched out a big, black puff of smoke.

The door gunner in the helicopter must have had a healthy sense of self preservation because he immediately swung his M-60 machine gun around and opened fire on the smoke – and us.

Suddenly, neat little shafts of sunlight shot through the walls of the G.P. tent as bullets passed through the canvas and small geysers of dirt and leaves fluffed up around our feet.

Maybe twenty rounds were fired before the gunner realized that we were friendly troops. It was over in an instant and miraculously only our feelings were hurt.

This I copied from the movie [The Four Feathers](#):

"... those who have traveled far, to fight in foreign lands, know that the soldier's greatest comfort is to have his friends close at hand. In the heat of battle it ceases to be an idea for which we fight, or a flag. Rather we fight for the man on our left, and we fight for the man on our right. And when armies are scattered and the empires fall away, all that remains is the memory of those precious moments that we spent side by side."

Jim Bethea
HHC, 2/503d, '65/'66





CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

STARTING OVER: GETTING A FRESH CHANCE AT LIFE

Dr. Ronald Reese Smith
1LT, FO, B/2/503d, 3/319th
ronaldreesesmith@gmail.com

When I was in the eighth grade, about to graduate from junior high school to high school, Mr. Taylor, our Assistant Principal, gave our whole class a speech. He said we were each going to arrive in high school the next Fall with a record wiped clean. None of the old teacher's remarks which had accumulated in our files would go with us to "tip off" our new teachers. *"If you want to be a totally new people next year,"* he said, *"you can."* And then he turned to a big brawny blonde-headed kid in our class and said, *"That includes you too, Stanley."*

Stanley was our class "Charlie Brown." He was always in trouble for something – smarting off, fighting, sneaking a smoke behind the music room; always something! To the teachers and parents alike, Stanley was the kind of person most likely NOT to succeed – most likely to head for trouble -- a dubious honor.

We knew that if there were trouble, Stanley would get blamed. It never occurred to us that all that could instantly change. It never occurred to us that no one would know the "old Stanley!"

It wasn't long into the new Fall until Stanley obviously failed again. He was sent to the principal's office at the high school. That was an event that was to be repeated dozens, maybe hundreds of times, during the next four years. The fresh start had not worked – at least not for Stanley.

You know – somehow I doubt that Stanley truly got a fresh start. Oh, his records were erased, but it wasn't forgotten. That track record was carved into every cerebral body cavity of the student body. All the rest of us knew what to expect from Stanley, even if the new teachers did not. A fresh start would have to erase not only the official record, but all those built-up expectations of trouble that existed in the minds of Stanley and his friends. Without that, Stanley didn't stand a chance.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful if Stanley's record could have been erased and forgotten? When Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross, the burden of our sin was

taken off of us and placed on Jesus. When we come and acknowledge our sin before God, when we call sin what He calls sin, when we confess our sin and ask God to forgive us of our sin – He does so! And in that forgiveness, He chooses not to remember it again. That does not mean that God has some kind of cosmic dementia or Alzheimers. It's not that God cannot remember, it is that God chooses not to remember. When God forgives us, He does not expect it to be brought up again. Our next sin will be treated like our very first. In Jesus Christ we truly get a fresh start. In Jesus Christ, God gives us another chance.



On New Year's Day, 1929, Georgia Tech played the University of California in the Rose Bowl. In that game a man named Roy Reigals recovered a fumble for California. Somehow, he became confused and disoriented and started running 65 yards – in the wrong direction. One of his teammates, Benny Low, outdistanced him and downed him, just before he scored for the other team. When California attempted to punt, Georgia Tech blocked the kick, and scored a safety, the ultimate margin of victory.

That strange play came in the first half. Everyone who was watching the game was asking the same question: *"What will Coach Nibbs Price do with Roy Reigals in the second half?"*

The men filed off the field and went into the dressing room. They sat down on the benches and on the floor – all but Roy Reigals. Roy put his blanket around his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands and cried like a baby.

If you've ever played football, you know that a coach usually has a great deal to say to the team during the half-time. That day, Coach Price was quiet. No doubt he was trying to decide what to do with Roy Reigals. Then, the timekeeper came in and announced that there were three minutes before playing time. Coach Price looked at the team and simply said: *"Men, the same team that played the first half, will start the second."*

The players got up and started out – all but Roy Reigals. He did not budge. The coach looked back and called to him again; still he did not move. Nibbs Price walked over to where Roy Reigals sat and said, *"Roy, didn't you hear me? The same team that played the first half will start the second."*

(continued....)



Then, Roy Reigals looked up and his cheeks were wet with a strong man's tears. "Coach," he said, "I can't do it. I've ruined you; I've ruined the University of California; I've ruined myself. I couldn't go and face that crowd in that stadium to save my life."

Then Nibbs Price reached out and put his hand on Roy Reigals' shoulder and said to him, "Roy, get up and go on back; the game is only half over."

Roy Reigals went back and those Georgia Tech men will tell you they have never seen anyone play football as Roy Reigals did the second half of that game.

When I read that story, deep inside, I said, "What a coach!" And when I read the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, from that Roman execution rack outside of Jerusalem's wall, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing," I say, "What a God! What a Savior."

You and I take the ball of life and run in the wrong direction; we stumble and fall and we are so ashamed of ourselves that we never want to try again. Then God comes and bends over us in the person of His Son, and says to us: "Get up, go on back, the game is only half over."

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." That is the gospel of grace. That is the gospel of the second chance, and the third chance, and the five hundredth chance – as we need it.

Whatever it is that burdens you and troubles you, know that there is nothing that you or I have ever done, or ever will do, that will separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. None of us have ever done anything so bad that we cannot come to God. And there are none of us, no matter how high and lofty our service, that do not need to come to God.

Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman emperor and strong saint, used to say to himself every morning: "Today you will meet all kinds of unpleasant people; they will hurt you and injure you and insult you. But, you cannot live like that; you know better, for you are men in whom the Spirit of God dwells."

Again, this is the gospel of grace. God gives us a new, fresh start, a new beginning, every day, every moment when we agree with Him and call sin what he calls sin. And because of that, we are forgiven. And because of that, we have a second chance. Do you need a fresh start? God is in the business of new beginnings and He will give one, everytime you ask Him!

El Tee Ron
1LT, FO, B/2/503d, 3/319th

"GONE TOO SOON"

Mr. Ronald Allen Tucker, passed away on April 4, 2010 of an apparent heart attack in Tallahassee, Florida. "Ronnie," formerly of Pittsburgh, PA, was a Vietnam War veteran and a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He served from 1965-1967.



During his service he received two Overseas Service Bars, Parachutist Badge, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Purple Heart, Vietnamese Campaign Medal w/Device, Marksman's Badge (Rifle M-14), and a Bronze Star appurtenant to Parachutist Badge.

He was a retired Lieutenant from the State of Pennsylvania, Department of Corrections. As a retiree, he was an avid fisherman and traveler. He loved tennis and was fortunate enough to have attended two US Open Tennis Tournaments.

At the time of his death, Ronnie was living in Tallahassee with his wife, Debi Tucker and his grandchildren Kevin & Alyssa who adored and loved him deeply.



Ronnie, rest in peace. Airborne brother.



Assistant to the Battalion Surgeon

My name is **Donald W. Stanek** and I was an assistant to the battalion surgeon 2/503d in 1966-1967, with the 173d Airborne Brigade. I was honored to serve with **Father Watters** (Medal of Honor recipient) who lost his life in his 3rd or 4th extended tour in Nam. He told me he would continue to extend his tour because he felt his place was with his men. Somehow, I had the feeling he was going to be there until the end.

Col. Sigholtz and **Lt. Col. Partain** were the ranking officers I served with during my tour of duty, both of whom I felt honored to serve with.

The first casualty I observed was a 19 year old black soldier shot through the neck by a sniper, the only casualty in our company as we prepared to make camp for the night; because night time belonged to "Charlie." At the time I thought to myself perhaps his mom back home was writing him a letter, or baking him some cookies, and only we knew that for him life was over!!!

Having never been in combat before I didn't know what shrapnel really was until I got hit across the chest with a piece. It drew blood (just a scratch – lucky me), and one of the medics said he could put me in for a Purple Heart, but I told him, "*Hell no you won't!*", because guys lost arms and legs and their lives for the Purple Heart and they were the men who deserved it!

Sometime later I was awarded the Commendation Medal with "V" device (for valor) for going into a booby-trapped area and rescuing several wounded troops, one of which required a tracheotomy which I assisted the battalion surgeon with. Later I was told that the area was full of booby-traps and that we could have been killed getting the wounded soldiers out of the area. I believe my reply was something like, "*I'm glad I didn't know that!!!*"

The first Viet Cong prisoner we took was hiding in an underground bunker and was wounded and paralyzed on his left side from a head wound. I noticed his weapon, a Russian made SKS, which I disassembled and sent back to the states. I've kept it as a souvenir and until today still have it (Tay Ninh, Vietnam 1966).

About two years ago I met another Vietnam vet from the 1/503d, a medic by the name of **Doc Hutcheson**, who was also there in 1966 and 1967. He is currently living in Florida about 18 miles from where I currently reside.

My job was Assistant to the Battalion Surgeon and I rotated from A, B and C Companies to Recon when I replaced a lost medic until we got a replacement. Later, in 1967, I was promoted out of my MOS (73506) to the

Civic Action Team for the last 8 week of my extended tour of duty (18 months).



Donald W. Stanek
HHC, 2/503d, '66-'67

VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

VFW's 111th National Convention in Indianapolis will be held Aug. 21-26. Posts can support VFW programs by registering members early for \$10. This fee covers the cost of a convention packet, available onsite. Registration forms were mailed March 1. VFW by-laws call for each Post to advance-register at least one delegate.



For housing assignments, see the list at www.vfw.org then 111th National Convention. Hotels are conveniently located near the convention center. For more information contact Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM, Manager of VFW Convention & Meetings: (816) 968-1198, or visit the web site listed above.



HE WAS OFFERED \$1 MILLION FOR THE FLAG BUT TURNED IT DOWN

(Sent in by Bob Clark, 5th Special Forces)

In the first inning, on April 25, 1976, during a game at Dodger Stadium, two protesters, a man and his 11-year-old son, ran into the outfield and tried to set fire to an American flag they had brought with them. **Rick Monday**, then playing with the Cubs, noticed they had placed the flag on the ground and were fumbling with matches and lighter fluid; he then dashed over and grabbed the flag from the ground to thunderous cheers. He handed the flag to Los Angeles pitcher Doug Rau, after which the ballpark police officers arrested the two intruders.

When he came up to bat in the next half-inning, he got a standing ovation from the crowd and the big message board behind the left-field bleachers in the stadium flashed the message, "**RICK MONDAY... YOU MADE A GREAT PLAY...**" He later said, "*If you're going to burn the flag, don't do it around me. I've been to too many veterans' hospitals and seen too many broken bodies of guys who tried to protect it.*" On August 25, 2008, Monday was presented with an American flag flown over Valley Forge National Historical Park in honor of his 1976 rescue.



Photo by Jim Roark

At the end of the season, the Cubs traded Monday to the Dodgers in a five-player deal with two players (one of whom was Bill Buckner) going to the Cubs.

At the September 2nd, 2008 Los Angeles Dodgers game, Rick Monday was presented with a Peace One Earth medallion by Patricia Kennedy, founder of the non-profit organization Step Up 4 Vets, for his actions on April 25, 1976 and his military service with the Marine Corps.

MORE FROM THE VFW

Emergency Care Now Reimbursable: A new law enacted Feb. 1 will reimburse veterans for emergency health care. *Public Law 111-137, the Veterans Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2009*, covers vets enrolled in VA's health care system.



The law allows VA to reimburse an enrolled veteran for the cost of emergency treatment at a non-VA facility if the veteran has outside insurance that only covers part of the cost. Previously, VA could reimburse veterans or pay outside hospitals directly only if a vet had no outside health insurance.

The law also allows VA to provide retroactive payments to vets who had such care before the law went into effect. The Congressional Budget Office estimated the law will cover some 700 future claims per year and as many as 2,000 veterans retroactively.

R.H.I.P.

Bn XO/CO LTC Bob Carmichael at 2/503d reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL in 2006.



Damn ossifiers get all the good Red Cross packages.
"Hey! RTO! Bring me a drink!"

~ ARCHIVE YOUR HISTORY ~

Those wishing to preserve their Vietnam writings, artifacts, etc., here is the contact web site for Texas Tech University's *Vietnam Center and Archive*
<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/donors/materials.htm> It's an interesting site just to visit.

Jim Bethea, HHC, 2/503d, '65/'66



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SKY SOLDIERETT'S CORNER



Boy, the last month has been hectic. And it seems like it has flown. We need to add another couple of weeks to the month.

Is everyone signed up for the Memorial Dedication and Reunion? When we see our significant others try to reclaim the life they had in Vietnam, often what they see in the mirror isn't what is really reflected there.

Each year, too, more and more of them have advanced to Trooper's Green and laid down their weapons. The grieving of their lost friends and their lost youth and for some of them – even their lost lives – starts all over.

This is also a time of year when anniversaries seem to be abundant in our household. Just as we remember dates that are significant in our lives, the dates in Vietnam are unforgettable. Because of the events surrounding those important dates, it taints even happier anniversaries.

God help you if any of your anniversaries coincides even approximately with one of his important dates. And since he was there for a year – guess what – ALL of them coincide.

If the veteran did not deal with the traumatic events of the anniversaries soon after he returned home, each year as he remembers the date it becomes more significant and important to him. Pretty soon there are no happy anniversaries in your life. And the ones that could have meaning and happiness are overshadowed by the ones he can't forget. Then he starts to forget dates that are important except for the ones related to combat.

Added to that is what one psychologist described as the 'decade effect.' On or about the ten-year anniversary of a traumatic event, there is usually a crisis or complete upheaval in a person's life that hasn't dealt with trauma. Each ten years that passes without dealing with the trauma, the crisis or upheaval that happens during that period increases in intensity from the previous ten-year anniversary. If the trauma is not dealt with by the time the 40th anniversary occurs, a major catastrophe usually occurs. Makes you stop and think about your life and changes that have occurred and when they have occurred.

You will have an opportunity at this reunion to get more understanding of some of these things. Some of you have the opportunity to take part in group sessions. I really envy your ability to have someone to share with. This is my group therapy.

On another note, we have been watching the series "The Pacific," on HBO the last few weeks. My father was in the army as a tank platoon leader supporting the Marines as they went through the Phoenix, Solomon and Marshall Islands. This series has really helped me understand what he went through during the war – another silent warrior!! I feel we will have the privilege of a lifetime to get to honor others who served and led the way for our veterans.

Hang in there. Some days are better than others – just cherish them – the bad days are just around the corner again!

Iva Tuttle
Wife of Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503d



In our April newsletter Iva spoke of a young girl lying on a grave at Arlington. At the time neither Iva nor I could find the photo. I don't know if this is the specific photo Iva was speaking of, but, it's a photo, and a photo which speaks volumes. Ed



FRANK GARCIA, A SKY SOLDIER

Thursday, April 1, 2010

Funeral services for Frank Garcia, 65, of Orchard, were held April 3, 2010, at Davis-Greenlawn Funeral Chapel in Rosenberg, with burial following at Greenlawn Memorial Park in Rosenberg. Deacon Albert Yanez officiated at the services.



Frank was born Jan. 14, 1945, in Alief, and passed away Tuesday, March 30, 2010, at Oak Bend Medical Center surrounded by his loving family.

Frank served three tours with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam before being honorably discharged. He was very proud of serving his country, and had since been very involved with the D.A.V. Frank loved woodworking, raising his goats and steers and spending time with his family, friends and "Mr. Wellers."

He is preceded in death by his parents, Frank "Pancho" Garcia Sr. and Annie Garcia; and brother, Domingo Garcia.

Frank is survived by his loving and beautiful wife of 36 years, Vicki Garcia; children Ginger Mejia with husband, Rafael "Gato" Mejia, Cheryl Antu with husband, Jimmy Antu, Matt "Pape" Ramos with wife, Bekah Ramos, and Abraham Garcia; brothers Tony Garcia, Manuel Garcia and Jesse Garcia; sisters Lupe Garcia, Frances Wofford, Rosie Garcia and Bebe Garcia; grandchildren Crystal Mejia, Angel Mejia, Aaron Mejia, Cailee Antu, Julia Antu, and his "Big Shot" grandson, Christian Mejia; and numerous other family members and friends.

Donations in Frank's memory may be made in his name to the Disabled American Veterans.



~ Rest well Frank. Airborne brother ~

A Poem Worth Reading

He was getting old and paunchy
And his hair was falling fast,
And he sat around the Legion,
Telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he once fought in
And the deeds that he had done,

In his exploits with his buddies;
They were heroes, every one.
And 'tho sometimes to his neighbors
His tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened quietly
For they knew whereof he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer,
For ol' Bob has passed away,
And the world's a little poorer
For a soldier died today.

He won't be mourned by many,
Just his children and his wife.
For he lived an ordinary,
Very quiet sort of life.

He held a job and raised a family,
Going quietly on his way;
And the world won't note his passing,
'Tho a soldier died today.

When politicians leave this earth,
Their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their passing,
And proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories
From the time that they were young
But the passing of a soldier
Goes unnoticed, and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution
To the welfare of our land,
Some jerk who breaks his promise
And cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow
Who in times of war and strife,
Goes off to serve his country
And offers up his life?

The politician's stipend
And the style in which he lives,
Are often disproportionate,
To the service that he gives.

While the ordinary soldier,
Who offered up his all,
Is paid off with a medal
And perhaps a pension, small.

It's so easy to forget them,
For it is so many times
That our Bobs and Steves and Johnnys,
Went to battle, but we know,

(continued....)



It is not the politicians
With their compromise and ploys,
Who won for us the freedom
That our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger,
With your enemies at hand,
Would you really want some cop-out,
With his ever waffling stand?

Or would you want a soldier--
His home, his country, his kin,
Just a common soldier,
Who would fight until the end.

He was just a common soldier,
And his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us
We may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict,
We find the soldier's part
Is to clean up all the troubles
That the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor
While he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage
At the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple headline
In the paper that might say:
"OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING,
A SOLDIER DIED TODAY."

Sent in by MG Jerry Bethke, HHC/2/503d, and
Gayle Bethea, wife of Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d.

~ CORRECTION ~

In the story sent in about "Miss Ann Margaret," which appeared in Issue 13, Page 6, of our newsletter, photos were also sent, including this picture of Ann with, whom we assumed to be the

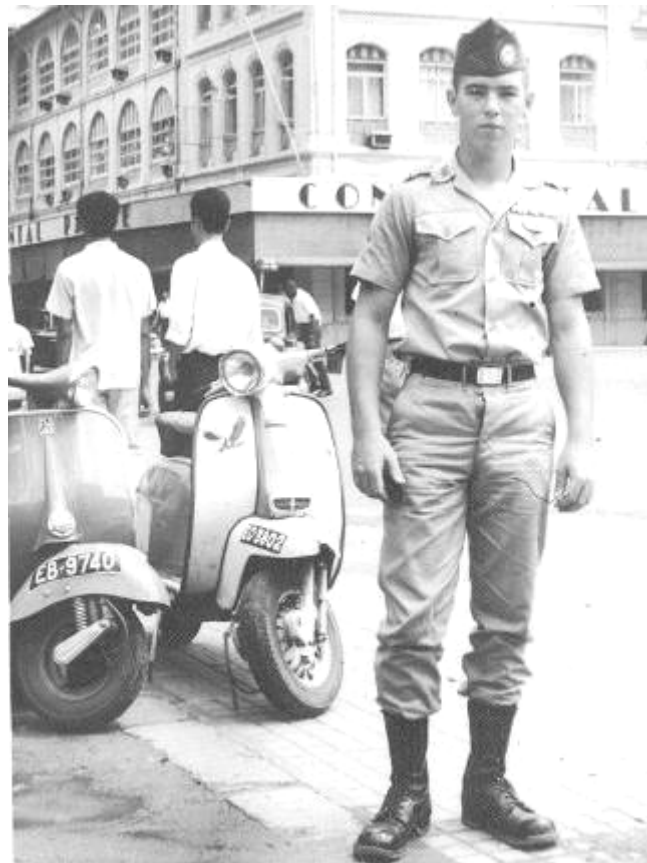


Vietnam vet the story was about. The photo, however, did not escape the keen eye of Maj. Ed Privette, CO HHC 2/503d. Ed correctly pointed out the man in the picture is King Carl Gustaf XVI of Sweden. We don't know this for a fact but, this may well be the first time in history a King has been mistaken for a Vietnam vet, or vice versa!

HEP ME! HEP ME!

This is a photo of Mike "the kid," a buddy of mine from the 2/503d '65/'66, taken in front of the Continental Hotel in Saigon 1966. He may have served in HHC and possibly in the commo section. He DEROSSED before me that year, and gave me this picture of him before going back to the World. If you recognize him and can put me in touch that will be great. Thanks!

Lew "Smitty" Smith, rto173d@cfl.rr.com



Lew
to a cool head
that knows his
way in the boonies
keep your head
down on this operation
& I'll see you
in California
"Stay cool"
Mike
"The kid"

Mike. I'm staying cool brother, old and cool. Lew

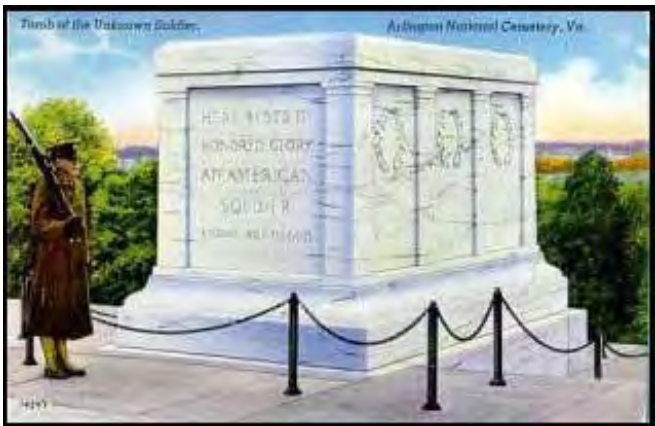


A GOOD OMEN?

You guys won't believe this. Yesterday I had an appointment at the VA with my head doctor. His office number is 173. How about that.....

A 2/503d Buddy

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER



This is really an awesome sight to watch if you've never had the chance, very fascinating.

1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?

21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.

2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?

Twenty-one seconds for the same reason as answer number 1 above.



3. Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.

4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time and if not, why not?

He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.



5. How often are the guards changed?

Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30".

(continued....)





A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are President Taft, Joe E. Lewis {the boxer}, and Medal of Honor recipient Audie Murphy {the most decorated soldier of WWII} of Hollywood fame.

Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

In 2003, as Hurricane Isabelle was approaching Washington, DC, our US Senate/House took 2 days off with anticipation of the storm. On the ABC evening news, it was reported that because of the dangers from the hurricane, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment.

They respectfully declined the offer, *'No way, Sir!'* Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment, it was the highest honor that can be afforded to a service person. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930.



Other requirements of the guard:

They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform {fighting} or the tomb in any way.

After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.

The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt.

There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty is in front of a full-length mirror.

The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery.



(The Unknown, sent in by Jimmy Castillo, C/2/503d)
173d memorial stone at Arlington Cemetery





2/503d base, Camp Zinn, Bien Hoa, Vietnam, named in memory of Ron Zinn. Photo by Col. George Dexter

1LT RON ZINN HONORED

Hi friends and cousins,

Last Friday evening at Silver Lake Country Club in Orland Park, Illinois, I, along with my sister, Joyce, and cousin Connie, attended a special event.

District 230 which includes Carl Sandburg, Stagg, and Andrew High Schools, held their 2nd annual Hall of Fame inductions into Legacy Hall. It is kind of hard to believe that this was only the second one, but that is the case. 15 most worthy alumni from these 3 schools were inducted. Ron was not the only one to be inducted Posthumously.

There was another fine young man who lost his life in Viet Nam. One super still young, young lady was inducted. She had accomplished a great deal as a student and as an alumni. On one of her charitable trips overseas, she contracted malaria. What a nasty disease it can be. In her case, it cost her portions of both arms and both legs. She is now confined to a wheelchair, but her spirit of optimism and hope was very moving.

Each inductee as they were introduced had a photo powerpoint display. My goodness, what a truly outstanding group. America is blessed to have people as these in her midst. And just think, most of them are from our high school, some even back to the same grade school that we attended.

When it came time for me to accept the award for Ron, I was not sure what to say because I had no idea as to the time limit. However, I made it poignant, and yet not too long.

Ron had a notebook that I also had for some years after his passing. On it he had written:

“IN LIFE THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THINGS THAT WE DO NOT WANT TO DO; BUT IF WE ARE TO SUCCEED, WE WILL DO THEM.”

Fellow officer and friend, Roy Lombardo, related to me in the past couple of years how much Ron had inspired him, and how he still thinks of him 45 years later. Roy also told me just how Ron gave his life; and that was trying to save the life of a fallen comrade and friend.

One of the photos on the screen behind me showed Ron in full dress West Point uniform, saluting the Corp, as he was receiving a parade in his honor, the only underclassman to have ever accomplished such a feat. I related another photo that I have of Ron, and will always cherish, is Ron in full dress military uniform at the age of 4, taken in 1943. Perhaps that picture was the impetus for his love of the military.



Ron at West Point

I wrapped it up by saying this, *"What else can I say, Ron Zinn loved his family, West Point, and ultimately, his county. He gave his life for all. Thank you for this honor."*

Afterwards, several people told me that my acceptance brought tears to their eyes. Quite an evening indeed!! How proud Joyce and I are to have had Ron as our big brother. I can only imagine what else he may have accomplished.

Many of you do not know that the base Ron worked out of was renamed "Camp Zinn" until the end of the conflict.

Peace to each of you and be thankful daily for your blessings.

Jerry Zinn



Prologue

Confusion wasn't the half of it. AK-47s were chopping the jungle into a tossed salad.

While Charlie took aim at his humping tackle, Lieutenant Edward Hardin ran about learning whey El Tees didn't live very long. With his vitals in hiding and his life a crapshoot, if ever a man was hunting trouble -- in Vietnam, in 1967---he damn sure found it.

His father warned him not to expect much from the world.

Instinctively irreverent when tending war's misfortunes, infantrymen from the Twenty-Fourth Foot in the Transvaal, the Fifth Marines and the Seventh Infantry in the Chosin Reservoir, and the 173rd Airborne and Fourth Infantry in Dak To, smiled to mask an altered state of mind.

Lieutenant Edward Hardin was naturally irreverent--a bit of luck he had not foreseen. When Eddie received his deployment orders his father read each work and said, "A dogface needs to know how to eat, dig, shit, and shoot. The rest is just the war."

Scoffing his best scoff while allowing room to avoid the major's left hook, Eddie replied, "Yeah, right. The trick is not shitting on your boots."

Hardin's men could eat and shoot, dig and shoot, and shit and shoot, all while screaming for a medic. It's not that chaos came with these men--it's just that something did.

They were an odd assortment, boys really--twelve-month men really. Their pictures were familiar--the cocked hats and the melancholy grins. They enjoyed talking about girls and home, rumors and cars, the little things mostly.

They enjoyed a good joke most of all. Caught in a time of chattel sacrifice, the regret that anchored their black humor was the baseline for their survival. Slogging through the mud, in and out of the vines, fighting a war that was mindless, and discomposed, Hardin's men had a duty they could not define: to a smile once remembered.

Sure enough--Vietnam's war sucked.

A noble cause, the old men said, blood and bile curdling in a steel pot, a boot standing alone, mist curling over the fractured body of one paratrooper, then racing to the next. Hollow eyes glistened with tears of fatigue and winced at the roar of small-arms fire.

Infantry combat is a deeply personal, scarring experience.

An infantryman never comes home, regains a sense of empathy, or fall completely in love. He is but a remnant of the boy you once knew--a short-fused remnant.

Coming alive again required the friendship of time.

Hardin strolled aimlessly along the duckboards. The air was bitter, as if drawn through a straw. A faint echo sounded. Leaving Dig-it's rucksack at B-Med had not stopped the sequence.

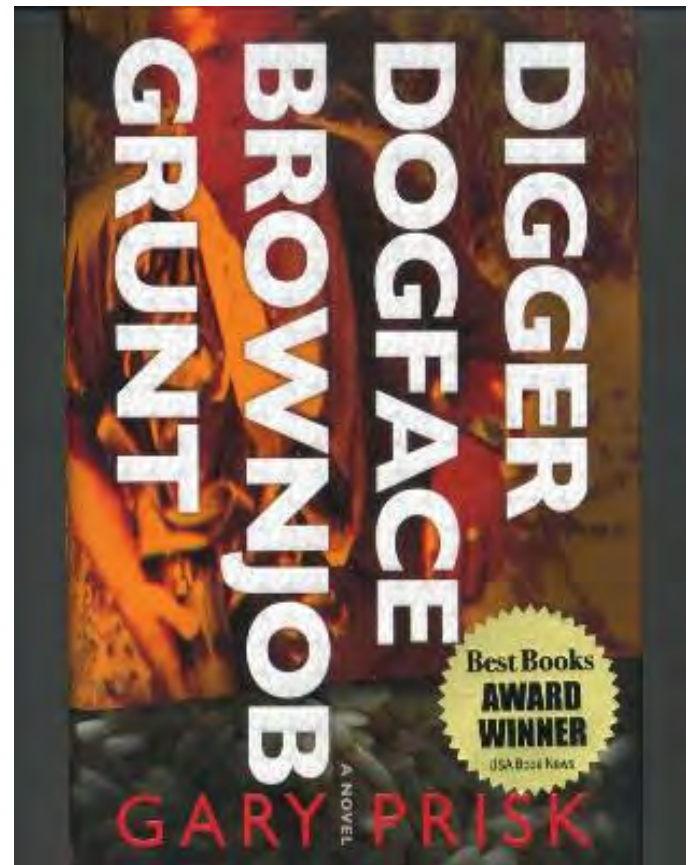
Sitting on the edge of a bunk, he tried to relax. Dig-it screamed a melancholy scream, then laughed at Hardin's way. Hardin could have saved Doppler some time. The whistle of a passing train matched the scream of a friend dying in combat, dying alone.

These mental gymnastics were not driven by a fever of unknown origin. Burning with efficiency, Hardin had factored, categorized, and stored thousands of still-frame holographs, a library of the sights and sounds of slaughter: the smell.

And to think he had enjoyed watching *Victory at Sea*.

Bathing in a composite that drew his features into a similitude of voiceless regret, he considered embracing his fever, claiming it for himself as a profound remedy.

He was tired of war.



Gary Prisk, Capt., served as a platoon leader with C/2/503d and company commander with the battalion in 1967/68. His book, *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt*, a Cougar Creek Press publication, is available on Amazon.com



BE PROUD OF YOUR ROLE

An excerpt from [Sky Soldier.org](http://SkySoldier.org):



Wambi, at *The Wall*

During more than 6 years (54 major campaigns) of continuous combat, the “Brigade” earned 14 campaign streamers and four unit citations. Sky soldiers serving in Viet Nam received 13 Medals of Honor, 46 DSCs, 736 Silver Stars, and six thousand Purple Hearts. There are over 1790 Sky Soldiers named on the Viet Nam Memorial Wall.

Then why is it that a significant number of Bros. still choose to *embellish* their role in the war rather than accept their critical contributions? The **Brigade** is recognized for these distinguished achievements -- not just line or artillery units. e.g. Naturally, the Wall reflects those who were more directly engaged in combat related actions. However, that number would be vastly larger were it not for the efforts of the various support contingents within the **Brigade**.

Only much later do we “line grunts” begin to appreciate the behind-the-jungle roles so many played in seeing that our time in the field was more than just tolerable. Thank you **Supply** for seeing that we were timely resupplied under what was always “get it to them yesterday circumstances.” Thank you **Engineers** for seeing that our line-of-march was less taxing because you blew to hell some of Nam’s biggest Asian Redwoods. Thank you **Mess** because your field deliveries of hot meals came only seconds before we seriously thought of using C-rations instead of our frags. How the **Mail** managed to reach us even in the worst of times is worthy of a special citation in itself.

Even though we tend to harp critically on what the **S** unit didn’t foresee, the fact is, their intelligence saved more lives than we’ll ever know. We **All** performed our

duties, oft times under the most adverse and untenable circumstances. The aforementioned represent but a fraction of the various and sundry non-combatative units whose **Role** may never be fully appreciated.

To the uninformed and most outsiders, heroes are typically designated within the 11B prefix. Fortunately, there are enough of us survivors who know full well that the Herd’s place in Viet Nam history was borne by the collective labors of individuals whose sole mission was for the benefit of their brothers.

“Sweet is war to those who have never experienced it.”

Wambi Cook
A/2/503d

And if anything might be added to this report Wambi sent in, a special collective voice of gratitude is deserved by those countless men and women who served as doctors, nurses and attendants at the Mash units and hospitals, and all associated with them. There’s was a war few of us would have cared to experience, but all of us owe a great deal.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO A SNEAKY PETE EXTRAORDINAIRE

He did three tours in Vietnam with the 5th SF, a career man, the army was his life. But it was not to be; on his third tour the bad guys blew out one of his eyes, and to this day he walks around with shrapnel in his brain. For over 40 years, until just recently, we never once sat down together to talk about our war experiences -- even though that war greatly impacted us, our parents, and our families. Happy Birthday Bob, I’m proud of you my older brother, and you’ve been a special force in my life.

Your brother-brother



Bob Clark & Smitty at Camp Zinn 1965



**OUR MISSION -- FACILITATE THE
TRANSPORTATION OF SKY SOLDIERS
TO THE MEMORIAL DEDICATION &
SUPPORT THE MOST MEANINGFUL
EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE FOR OUR
SKY SOLDIERS!!**

By Terry Modglin, 4/503d

The **Country Inn and Suites**, 1720 Fountain Court, Columbus, GA 31904, will be the Rally Point for those members of the **2/503d** who wish to stay at the same hotel with their battalion buddies for the Dedication of the **173d National Memorial** at 10 a.m. June 1, 2010. The room rates are \$88. for single or double, and \$90. for a suite (of which there are just 5), plus tax. These rates are good for just the 31st of May and 1st of June. There is a big soccer tournament just before our contingent arrives and a smaller one just after so it is highly unlikely rooms will be available on these shoulder nights.

This is definitely a nice hotel, recently renovated. The 3d and 4th Battalions will be staying at hotels within the same zip code. There is no obligation for attendees to book rooms at any particular hotel. The Country Inn will provide free transportation to and back from the Memorial Dedication for guests booking 30 days in advance.



The hotel's phone number is **706-660-1880**. Their email is cx_clbs@countryinns.com If you call in the reservation, just indicate you are part of the **173d Airborne Group**. If you register through the Internet, go to <http://www.countryinns.com/hotels/gacolumb> and after you select your dates to stay, in finding

your rate you will see a link for "More Rates." Go there and put in the Promotional ID **173AIR**.

If this hotel is filled (as I expect it will be), we have other hotels in that area for more 2d Bat Sky Soldiers.

There will likely be a tour of Fort Benning on June 1, after the Dedication. Details will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.



In the interest of transparency, as I have indicated throughout, I am receiving no money whatsoever from this initiative, but my travel planner colleague, Mark Zeller, is receiving 10% commission on the hotel room nights taken. We have already spent a lot of time on this and Mark will likely spend really significant time on this over the months ahead because it has so many moving parts. Believe me, the money will be hard-earned and will help offset some of his out-of-pocket expenses.

We are not part of the Memorial Foundation or the Association, but we have received the goodwill and cooperation of both. Mistakes made, if any, are ours alone....the *Transportation Memorial Dedication Group*.

If you have any questions, or guys with other battalions needing hotel information, please email me at Terry.Modglin@Gmail.com or call me at **202-270-3083**.

Airborne!

Terry Modglin, 4/503d

This notice appears in our newsletter as a courtesy to those working in support of the 173d National Memorial. Ed.





The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial

The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial will be dedicated on June 1, near the new National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia. A Transportation Memorial Dedication Group, not affiliated with the Association or the Memorial Foundation, has established for May 31 and June 1 room blocks at 18 Columbus, Georgia area hotels, and designated seven of those hotels as unit Rally Points so that Sky Soldiers on this singular occasion can see their buddies with whom they served. Additionally, there is a bus the day after the Dedication from Columbus to the Annual Reunion (\$99) in North Myrtle Beach, and a tour of Fort Benning (\$25 -- limited to 100) an hour or so after the Dedication. All this is being done to facilitate attendance at the Dedication and enhance the experience. A microwebsite of the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau is up and running and will make it easier for Sky Soldiers to make hotel reservations - www.meetincolumbusga.com/173d/ Refer to the Accommodations link in order to find all the hotels with room blocks.



The 173d Memorial at Ft. Benning, GA.

Please share this information with your Members, remembering that April 30 is a cutoff date for a number of the offers involved.

Please ask all Sky Soldiers and friends, when they register at the hotels, to indicate that they are in the "173d Airborne Brigade Transportation Group" so that they receive the correct room rate and we know who will be there from specific units.

Please address any questions to Terry Modglin, Volunteer Liaison to Sky Soldiers for the Transportation Memorial Dedication Group, at terry.modglin@gmail.com, or call 202-270-3083. Thank you.

Terry Modglin,
4/503d

HONORING OUR MATES DOWN UNDER

The Australian and New Zealanders who were killed while under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade, US Army during 1965-66, will be listed on their National Memorial. This will be the only memorial on US soil to list the names of the Aussies and Kiwis, quite possibly the world ... no greater honour or acknowledgement could be given to our mates.

(continued...)



The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial will be located at a prime site on the *Walk of Honour* at their nation's new National Infantry Museum, immediately adjacent to Fort Benning, Georgia, USA. On land fully accessible to the general public (no fee and no need to go through clearance to get on post). This prime location is an integral part of the campus of the National Infantry Museum, stated to be among the premier attractions in that area. The Walk of Honour adjoins the Parade Ground. Designed with ample space to expand as the Brigade's history continues.

This is a memorial to all who have served or will serve in the 173d Airborne Brigade, especially to those who fell in combat, whose names will be listed from all engagements; those that have been and those to come in the order in which they were taken from us.

The design is truly powerful, built on the concept of a circle of sacred ground with the Wing and Sword (from their patch) dramatically rising toward the sky and their story told under its banner. A place more than a monument that provides opportunity for reflection as well as commemoration. A destination that can help veterans tell their children and grandchildren (and yes, great-grandchildren) about their service, their legacy, and their comrades, with the benefit of an extraordinary museum that helps them understand what we did and why we did it.

But most importantly a place where our promise to remember them is kept.

The dedication will take place at 10:00 a.m. on the 1st of June 2010, just about 45 years, to the day, of the 1RAR Group's arrival in Vietnam.

As a member of the 1RAR Group I was overwhelmed when advised that they intended to include our 30 KIA's ... it is not the norm for the yanks!

A request has been made to the Minister, Alan Griffin MP, requesting sponsorship of a small number of Australian members of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association to attend and witness the dedication and show our appreciation of their acknowledgment of our service with the Brigade.

A reunion will follow on from the dedication and held at North Myrtle Beach SC. If anyone would like information email me at raypayne@veteranweb.asn.au

**Ray Payne, OAM
Secretary Chapter 23
173d Airborne Brigade Assoc.**

THE PASSING OF VETERANS

If I was going to the reunion, I would be honored to serve as host to our WWII vets. Unfortunately I won't be attending..

Of the 16,112,566 American veterans of WWII, fewer than 2.5 million remain alive. With another 311,000 projected to die this year, they are passing at the rate of 852 a day or 35 an hour or about one every two minutes. Sometime, around Christmas 2014, the number of living WWII vets will dip below one million, and in 2024 fewer than 100,000 will remain. In 2036, it is guesstimated there will be only 370 left, less than half the size of an infantry battalion.

Of course, WWII is perhaps mankind's most documented event and historians can soldier on without them. U.S. Army records alone weigh 17,120 tons, enough to fill 188 miles of filing cabinets set side-by-side. Vast caches of oral histories and personal reminiscences abound. But what will it mean to this nation for it to lose what has been deemed its greatest generation?

The last Revolutionary War vet lingered on until after the Civil War, dying in 1869 at the age of 109, while some War of 1812 veterans lived to see the 20th Century, and Civil War veterans lived into the 1950s. The last Spanish-American War survivor died in 1992, at 106. All the WWI veterans are now gone. With the veterans gone, so too does remembrance and ritual. Few remember the U.S.S. Maine. No longer is there a minute of silence on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. WWII pushed aside memories of WWI.

As these events pass, more will be written without sentimentalism and pandering to particular audiences. Some of this lack of sanitized and romanticized sentiment will be for the good and some will choose the opportunity to rewrite valient and heroic efforts as imperialistic greed and disregard for any rules of war. The negative realities of war will be emphasized.

As has been mentioned, the Vietnam veteran is also passing. As we also learned in Burkett & Whitley's book, *Stolen Valor*, far more veterans pretend to exist than served in-country and aboard ships. Our war has been rewritten from the start. Perhaps after we're all dead and gone, someone will write the truth? What is happening now is far too many fake Vietnam veterans are providing their "true" stories for the archives.

**Jerry Hassler
HHC/Recon/2/503d, '66/'67**



173d Memorial taking shape at Fort Benning, Georgia, April 2010



Photos sent in by Craig Ford, 1/503d



A TACTICAL DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN

I believe it was the Commo Platoon that had a ¾ ton truck rigged up as a portable communications center. It consisted of a large plywood box painted OD built onto the back of the truck. There was at least one large antenna affixed to the side of the box and other than the entrance in the rear, there were no openings.

On one of the battalion's first operations while we were in the rubber trees, there were some KIAs and I guess that because of the proximity of the enemy the KIAs were not recovered. I don't know whether the battalion was still out on the operation or not but I was detailed to drive an NCO and about 6 other guys out to the area of the fight and see if we could find the bodies and recover them.

The NCO sat in the cab with me and the other 6 rode in the box. There were immediate concerns raised by the guys in the back about the lack of visibility from inside the box and their ability to return fire if we were fired upon. But, orders were orders.

We drove along a highway along which there were several very small towns and finally turned off onto a dirt road that led across some fields and then into the brush and jungle.

The guys in the back were banging on the walls of the box in protest but the NCO ignored them. On a little further and the dirt road narrowed into a trail that was barely wide enough for the truck. I was sweating bullets. I just knew that any second the last thing I would see was the wind shield shattering. It was one of those times when I knew I had to do something but everything in me was saying "Don't do this!"

The guys in the back were really getting rowdy when finally the NCO said, in effect, that the search was useless and told me to turn around. We returned to the rubber trees and I don't know if anyone ever did recover the bodies.

What a dilemma that was for that NCO. Having to follow the orders of whoever it was that issued them knowing that they were a tactical disaster waiting to happen. Anyone else remember that?

Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

Jim: I recall hearing of one trooper who was not found. Didn't know there were others. Ed



“Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.”

~ Abraham Lincoln ~

He's right.

"Do not put off till tomorrow what can be put off till day after tomorrow just as well."

~ Mark Twain ~

Damn. He's right too!

~ A MEETING WITH WESTY ~

We were encamped in another Michelin rubber plantation and someone had come through earlier telling us to get our shirts on, spruce up a bit as **Westmoreland** was due sometime and to be on the look out for him. A little later, sure enough, here comes the big man himself with an entourage including **Col. Walsh**, battalion commander.



(continued...)

