

# 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE REUNION '10

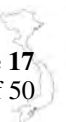


THE HERD MOVES TO  
2-6  
JUNE  
THE GRAND STRAND



*Hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30*

Reunion Program cover.





# 173d Airborne Reunion ~ North Myrtle Beach, SC

June 2 ~ 6, 2010

~ A Reunion Like No Other ~



The Avista Resort in North Myrtle Beach, SC, a perfect venue for paratroopers to play. I think there was an “A” on there until the 173d arrived.

Now I’ve attended a number of 173d reunions over the years, the first a fantastic reunion in Rochester, MN about ten years ago -- everyone of us will never forget our first reunion; kinda like our first firefight, our first jump, or first love, something we’ll always remember. Annual brigade reunions in Daytona, Ft. Worth, and at Bragg, and the two 2/503d reunions we put on here in Cocoa Beach, FL which I attended, all equally served the good purpose of providing exciting venues where brotherhood was enjoyed, where many buddies found buddies they hadn’t seen in decades -- it doesn’t get much better than that. This year’s reunion in North Myrtle Beach was no different in that sense.

Yet, of the few reunions in which I participated, there was something demonstrably different about the event held last month in South Carolina. And kudos go out to the Sky Soldiers and their Sky Soldierettes of Chapter 30; and to reunion committee members Jesse Beacham, Ashley Bowers, Wayne Bowers, Art Coogler, Jim “Top” Dresser, Eddie Hair, Tom Hanson, Joe Marquez, Ramona Marquez, Bill Nicholls, Judy Nicholls, Hal Nobles and Robert Smith for a job well done...for a fantastic job!

The June reunion combined a number of special elements which, in my view, set it apart from all other reunions to date, at least all other reunions I’ve attended. This year’s program offered the brotherhood we all find so important, plus the normal social activities we enjoy at these affairs. There were ample opportunities to honor our fallen as we always do, generally in small groups around a table or across a bar top, yet irrespective of the locale, never once forgetting.



In a word: *Airborne!*

As paratroopers we felt pride and even a longing as those young troopers with the Army Golden Knights touched down on the DZ on the beach to the cries and applauds of soldiers and hundreds of civilians. We enjoyed listening to and watching the awards presented that day to deserving souls for their good work of one kind or another, and as they gave special recognition to the WWII veterans in attendance.

Unfortunately, there was one, single distraction by a man who inappropriately used this otherwise patriotic event to speak out against the president of our country, his bride, and the “Dinks” and “Gooks” of years gone by. Following his remarks a number of people, local civilians, walked away shaking their heads; I wanted to reach out to them, to tell them he is neither speaking for the Association nor me, yet I did not. I fear their views of the 173d were forever tarnished that day, and that is sad, indeed, and the only unfortunate outbreak at an otherwise perfect reunion.

(continued...)





So, what, in my view, set this reunion apart from all those preceding it? It well could have been the PTSD awareness sessions led by Dr. Scott Fairchild and Iraqi War Veteran Crystal Turman, two experts on the illness who devote much of their waking hours to helping vets from all wars past and present, and their spouses and partners, to better understand and deal with that devil. Speaking with the Doc upon return to Florida he mentioned upwards of 30 Sky Soldiers are now, finally, seeking the help and treatment they so dearly need and deserve and have earned. That alone, at any other reunion, would have been the centerpiece exceptional.

Watching the Golden Knights do their thang on the beach, the outdoor entertainment, the golf tournament, the neat 173d stuff offered by the vendors, the day trip to Charleston, the non-stop daily brotherhood, all made the week in North Myrtle Beach memorable. But the showcase at this event, the historical happening which set this reunion apart, was even more special.



**LTC Hal Nobles, 3/503d  
Reunion Committee Chairman**

Thanks to the forward thinking of the entire reunion organizing committee, the financial support of over 180 Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d, this year's reunion achieved something which had gone unachieved for well over 40 years.....fellow paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade came together formally with their paratrooper brothers of the 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Regimental Combat Team of World War II -- the original troopers of "The Rock."

With the exception of a few more earned wrinkles than have many of us, not a great deal more wrinkles than have many of us, these guys were and are hardly different than us. Like us, they are survivors of war. In listening to and speaking with these men of the Greatest Generation, and by the way, they are all of that and more, it was if we were sitting for



**Charley Hylton ready to burst out in song. He does a mean Texas Two-Step too.**

the first time with long, lost buddies. They spoke their language which was also ours...a language only war vets understand. And many of us "young guys" (they call us young guys -- ya gotta love 'em!) agreed, it was unfortunate these veterans of different times and different wars took so long to finally join hands in brotherhood.

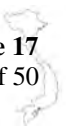
This bonding, this paratrooper thing we first learned about during jump school at Benning so many years before, was never more apparent than on two separate events I witnessed. The first occurred on the evening of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, while a group of us met with WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> troopers Chuck Breit, Paul Hinds and Charley Hylton and their wives in the Tree Top Lounge at the Avista Resort -- damn, they drink a lot of Scotch! An aside: Upon return home my wife saw the Amex bill and complained I spent too much money on drinks for my Sky Soldier buddies. I told her, "*Hell no! My guys drink cheap beer. It was those damn 503<sup>rd</sup> guys and their Scotch!!*" Greatest Generation my ass!

So there we were, drinking and toasting and laughing and lying and drinking and, etc., when, to keep a promise to a buddy, the late Bravo Bull John Nix, we broke out in a loud if off-key rendition of 'Blood on the Risers.' It was later pointed out Chuck Breit may have been the only trooper there not reading the lyrics! There's something special about singing that song with fellow paratroopers...but, you know what I mean.



**Chuck Breit in Tree Top Lounge teaching lyrics to "Blood on the Risers" to 1<sup>st</sup> Bat's Craig Ford.**

*(continued....)*





**The 503<sup>rd</sup> PRCT troopers at “Operation Corregidor.”  
L-R: Chet Nycum, Chuck Breit, Charley Hylton,  
Paul Hinds & John Cleland.**

The second memorable happening happened during “Operation Corregidor,” when the five 503<sup>rd</sup> vets spoke with us and shared some of their experiences during the war in the Pacific. Moderated by Maj. Tony Geishouser, Cowboys ‘65/’66, each guest recounted some of his memories from WWII -- and to the well over 100 people in attendance it was if we were watching a t.v. documentary on the Military Channel, but live! And then, Paul Hinds spoke.

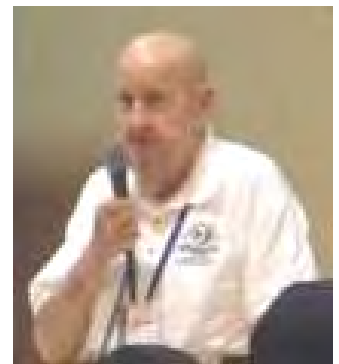


**You could here a pin drop during Chet’s account of combat on Corregidor and throughout the Pacific theatre.**

Now, Paul is an unassuming even quiet sort of man. Yet, when he told the story of how he changed the records of his buddies who were KIA to indicate they had purchased the \$10,000. life insurance policy from the army, when in fact they had not, every trooper in the room stood and gave him a resounding applause!

The connection between the the WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> guys and the 173d troopers in attendance was cemented for all time at that moment -- and Paul will likely go down in history as the first ever WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> paratrooper to receive a standing ovation at a 173d Airborne reunion

for his now famous “Paul Hinds’ Great Life Insurance Switch Speech!”



**That sneaky insurance switcher, Paul.**

When the idea was first conceived to invite WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> troopers to the reunion, Cowboy Tony Geishouser emphatically stated, “If you do this, do it with class.” It seems the reunion organizing committee took to heart Tony’s edict. This was most evident during the closing banquet, when all our guests were called on stage and honored by everyone there. I even got to kiss Margee Linton, twice, the widow of 503<sup>rd</sup> trooper Maurice “Sleepy” Linton. Hell, it don’t get much better than that.

### Smitty Out

**Fortunately, the kiss photo could not be found, plus, Sleepy could be watching, and I don’t want to tangle with that dude!**



**The late Maurice “Sleepy” Linton, 503<sup>rd</sup> paratrooper extraordinaire.**

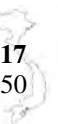




# Some Reunion Photos from North Myrtle Beach, SC



SC Chapter 30 and the Association of the 173d Airborne Brigade honor our guests at the closing banquet.



## A Few More Reunion Pics



L-R: Mike McMillan 4/503d, Chuck Breit 503<sup>rd</sup> PRCT, Mike Sturges 2/503d, Jerry Wiles 2/503d



Thanks to Jean O'Neil, Wambi Cook, Wayne Bowers, Jim & Barb Dresser and many others for sharing their photos.

# BLESS 'EM ALL



## ~ No Smoking ~

*Francis X. O'Neill, Jr.*

That first night on Corregidor I spent in the vicinity of the water towers . Stan Crawford, later killed at the graveyard on the end of island, and I shared a foxhole.

Lt. Leathers, the 3rd platoon leader, passed the word **"NO SMOKING."** About 11:00 p.m. Stan asked me if I wanted a cigarette. Together we got down as far as we could in the hole, cuped our hands and lit up.

Other fellows followed our lead. There was a metal pole about 5 ft in back of us. All of a sudden all hell broke loose. Bullets kept hitting the pole with a ringing effect. No one was sure where the firing was coming from, so we just fired in front of us as the rest of the fellows in our platoon did.

We suffered no casualties although we heard some calls in Japanese.

After about ten minutes the firing stopped.

Lt. Leathers came down to each hole and wanted to know who started the firing and who was smoking.

Stan, in his dry humour voice, said immediately that we did since he smelled cigarette smoke in front of us.

***"Those damm Japs were smoking, so I opened up and so did the rest of the line. Those bastards could smoke and we couldn't. That made me mad."***

Leathers, a tall, well-built man from California, and a capable officer, had all to do to keep his temper.

Of course I supported Stan's story. We both lost a stripe.

When he asked Leathers why, he was told his story, although good, was not good enough; Leathers had smelled American cigarette smoke. Stan did not question the Lt's sense of smell.

Later Leathers put Stan in for the Silver Star, which Stan was awarded posthumously. Crawford was a courageous man with a dry sense of humor and a good friend. I still pray for him. I'm sure many strange things happened that first night. This was only one of them.

[From the 503<sup>rd</sup> Heritage Battalion web site]



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# CREEPY CRAWLIES

## ~ An Army on the Move ~

One night, lying in my hooch on the ground somewhere in the jungle, I heard this noise which sounded like a snake wiggling its way on the ground. Pitch dark. Very awake, I listened, and even though I had never heard the sound before, I recognized it was an army of termites on the move and my hooch was in the way. I moved. In the morning, I discovered some dry blood on my side and my canvas magazine pouches had been chewed on. Those little suckers didn't cotten to anything standing in their path. Remember how we used to poke holes in the termite mounds and watch them seal it again instantly from the inside? Even took cover one time behind one. Of course, the worse, more fearsome enemy were the ants!

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



**In 2005 a 2/503d trooper inspects a termite mound (or VC firing position?) in the "D" Zone.**

## ~ With a Spoon Full of Sugar ~

I guess my story, as most, took place on some hillside in Dak To. I woke up on an ambush to find blood running out of my mouth and down my neck. I gagged because of the blood and simultaneously swallowed what turned out to be a leech formally attached to my tongue. It must have burst creating the blood flow and freeing it to easily go down my throat. We just drove on; another day in paradise.

**Roger Dick**  
**C/2/503d, '67/'68**



**Evil little bastards!**

## ~ He Held His Cool ~

It was the squad's first night out away from the safety of base camp and I had the job of hauling the radio. Our leader that evening was Sergeant Mercer, a soldier's soldier. When we settled into our night position before dark we had a bite to eat and now we were ready for action if it should come our way. It was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. While Sergeant Mercer took the first watch I tried to doze off, which wasn't easy with all the new sounds coming from the jungle surrounding us. While not in a deep sleep (I'm not sure there was such a thing when your in combat), I could feel something crawling up my leg. As I slowly became awake and more aware of something making it's way up my body I was so tense I didn't move a muscle. When it came close to my face, I swept it off my shoulder, jumped up and found myself looking down the barrel of an M-16. I scared the crap out of Sergeant Mercer, and if it was anyone else I probably wouldn't be around to write this but he held his cool, calmed me down and he then proceeded to get himself a good night's sleep as I assured him I wouldn't be going back to sleep. I never saw what was crawling on me but later on having numerous things crawling over me I came to the conclusion it had to be a scorpion.

**Steve Haber**  
**C/2/503d, '65/'66**



## ~ In the Dumps ~

May 5, 1965, our first day in Vietnam, we were walking down the road and took a break. I went into the jungle to take a crap and my ass was covered with fire ants. It was a quick initiation into them and I never had a problem after that because I paid better attention to whatever log I might be sitting over. And in our squad tent one day I dumped out my boot in the morning like we were told to do and out popped a scorpion, which someone with boots on immediately stomped to death. And in the same tent a green snake once came up through the wooden floorboards. I don't remember what happened to it, but I think it suffered the same fate as the scorpion. Leeches, of course, were a regular problem in the damp jungle. Not being a smoker I didn't have a cigarette to burn them off, but someone always was around with one. Or you'd squirt mosquito repellent on them.

**Larry Paladino**  
**B/2/503d, '65/'66**

*(continued...)*



## ~ No Good Deed Goes Unpunished ~

I have several of these stories but will only share one rat story. The rats in the Delta were sometimes as big as cats. There was one giant that inhabited the Ranger Advisor Team House in Ben Tre. At night we'd sleep with the battalion, but during the afternoon when the Rangers took a siesta, we'd nap in the team house. The senior NCO had gotten a rat trap which looked big enough to catch a coyote. While cutting ZZZ's, I came awake to a commotion that was going on in the open rafters of the house. This giant rat had one paw in the trap and was pissed and dragging this 1" x 4" x 8" trap around which limited his mobility. My resourceful RTO drew his trusty .38 Special (a gift from the Detroit Chief of Police) and drilled that sucker. The good news was a kill shot. The bad news was a major hole in the tin roof. No good deed goes unpunished.



**Vietnamese rats.....yummy.  
And the tails are so chewy.**

**Roy Lombardo  
CO, B/2/503d, '65**

## ~ His Special Purpose ~

It was late at night and we were all asleep tucked safely under our mosquito nets in our hooch along the HHC perimeter at Camp Zinn. Ours was the end hooch, a musty, old army tent with open sides, possibly WWII vintage, closest to the EM mess hall. While no doubt dreaming of milk shakes and shaking girls the man next to my cot awoke screaming. His screams not only woke everyone of us to rapid heart beatings, but they were so loud and terrifying we knew we were under attack. Everyone grabbed his weapon expecting bad guys with bayonets at the ready would soon be picking their way down the aisle of the tent. Shaking our heads and eyes awake and finding no enemy in sight, we turned our attention to our hapless and nameless buddy, groaning and holding his crotch, to learn a rat had been dining on his Johnson! The good news is, both he and his special purpose survived the ordeal, as the rest of us returned to our cots giving extra attention to tucking in the mosquito nets while holding our own.

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

## ~ Instant Ulcer? ~

My story is relatively tame. We were humping through the boonies as usual, I was an RTO. The side of the hill was pretty steep so was paying more attention to my footing than to the undergrowth. Happened to walk under a nest of those leaf cutter ants that make their nest by the warrior ants, the ones with the huge pincers, holding the edges of the leaves together into a ball. Well the top of my helmet brushed the thing and a crew of ants came spilling out on the back of my neck. I took off at a dead run down hill, tripped and ended up upside down against a tree with the radio still strapped to my back and my legs flailing in the air. It's a wonder that I didn't break my neck. Oh well, all in a day's work. I never had a leech. Guess they didn't like me. The closest I came was when I went on a water patrol and was filling a canteen. As the water poured in I saw this little black worm like creature swimming toward the canteen. I've since wondered what it would do if I hadn't noticed it and had swallowed the thing. Instant ulcer? (Joe: Talk to Roger).



**Joe Marquez  
C/1/503d/'69, N/75<sup>th</sup>/Juliet/'70, A/2/503d/'70,  
Chaplain: SC Chap. 30 & 173d Association**

## ~ Stories of the Creepy Crawly Kind ~

I have a few stories for you. 1st one was while we were still in the rubber tree orchard at Bien Hoa during Raymond Burr's visit. We were up early staging for an assault on Zone C. Was talking to Garcia and about that time one of those large black scorpions stung the crap out of me on the left elbow. Man did it swell up. Along comes Gerald Levy (KIA, Operation Marauder) by to admimster his fun-time medical magic. Needless to say I didn't make the air lift. This was early in June 65.

*(continued....)*





Also while we were in the rubber tree orchard we would tie the end of our 2 man pup tent between 2 rubber trees. Seemed like every other day we would have ant wars. Red ants lived in the trees, Black ants lived on the ground. You could sit and watch the black ants go up and they would actually cover one side of the tree; half hour later they would come down holding a red ant. A couple of days later it would be the reverse of the order of the previous attack.

Once we ended up moving into the field in front of the rubber tree orchard, we moved into our 12 man squad tents. While sleeping on my cot under a mosquito net I awoke to see a large rat that I thought was on the outside top of my netting. So being the dumb ass that I was, I reached up to smack it off with standard issued 1911a. Well it was on the *inside* of my netting and it landed on my chest, ran under my light-weight poncho liner and as I kicked it the shit bit the hell out of my left ankle. Of course I had to let Levy know what happened and the fun he got out of that was not fun for me. I had to take rabies shots in a 1/2 inch area on either side of my belly button. Of course this had to be everyday as close to the same time as possible. I made it 4 days then told Levy to take the other 10 shots and put them were the sun don't shine too often.

While I was in 3rd Med Evac after being hit in the neck, I woke up the 2nd day to see Sgt. Rose in the bunk beside me. Asked him what had happened to him. I laughed so hard I thought I would break my stitches open. He told me he had reached down to pick up a



**Green Viper.....Vietnam** snake only it was faster than he was. Go figure.

Once we had set-up the 2/503 into square and built the berm around the perimeter, they then started setting up nite watches on the perimeter. Of course we had it mined for 75 feet and then concertine wire set up also, except for the roads coming into the 4 access points. Well, one Marvin Harper, Sugarman and myself had guard duty on the C Company's side. It was probably about 1am and Sugarman was up top on the berm. Harper and I were having coffee, when all of a sudden we heard this loud pop, like someone had slapped the shit out of someone. Then down rolls Sugarman; up on top of the berm there was this monkey/chimp going into to his strutting stuff. By the time Harper or I could react, off he went. We laughed so damn hard Sugarman was furious but we just couldn't stop. We never could figure how the hell that monkey made it into and out of that mine field. AIRBORNE!

**Jim Starrett**  
C/2/503d, '65/'66

## ~ Air Borne Shit ~

This "War Story" does not contain any creepy crawlies (although that pile of shit may very well have had some interesting inhabitants). Nor was it while I was with the Herd. It happened a year earlier while I was an Adviser to a Vietnamese Infantry Battalion. However, it is a "War Story" and does have the possibility of a number of creepy crawlies flying through the air and landing on my NCO and I. If it works, print it:

On my first tour, every morning, my NCO and I would drive into the 5<sup>th</sup> Railway Security Battalion's compound. As we drove in, we would observe the Vietnamese GIs, their families and those who lived along the railway hunkered on the railway tracks. Those French narrow gage tracks were just the right height to hunker down and take a shit without your ass touching the ground. And that's what they did each day of their morning constitutional.

Later in the day, a group of people went down the rails and collected all the shit for a dung pile across from the main entrance to the battalion's compound. As time passed by, that pile was loaded on carts and taken out to the rice paddies as fertilizer.



Now this ain't no bullshit.

### Caught ya!

On the first night after Tet of '68, my NCO and I were lying on the ground at the main entrance to the compound waiting to see what the NVA Battalion that had been sent into Nha Trang was going to do. We had sporadic gunfire back and forth throughout the day but neither had attacked the other. During the night, we fired at one another. It went on that way until the NVA thought they should make life uncomfortable by mortaring our position. Eventually, a mortar round came into our area. It landed right in the center of that pile of shit. The shit went up into the air and came down – plop, plop, plop – throughout the area. It landed – plop, plop, plop – on each one of us in our positions on the ground. We smelled like shit for the rest of the night. AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!

**Bob "Ragman" Getz**  
2/503d Task Force Commander, '69

(continued....)



## ~ Fok Yu Lizard ~

Since arriving in Alpha's second platoon in February 1967, I had my share of periodic night ambushes, obligatory clearing patrols, and what seemed like daily OP detail. Why I didn't catch my first D Zone OP until late March, I attribute to pure luck. Until then, all the aforementioned were in concert with seasoned vets. On this particular night, I was paired with fellow FNG fresh out of the initial Jungle School class. I had no second thoughts about my night partner's abilities. One week of structured jungle training seemed satisfactory in my horribly screwed mind.

He never questioned me when I told him he'd be responsible for 90% of this duty that night....foolish boy! We settled in for what I expected to be a peaceful night's respite. I began my first (and only hour) shift with uneventful "sit reps."



**Maj. Watson, HHC/2/503d, '67**  
shift with uneventful "sit reps."

Just before the cherry was to take over, I heard what I later described as a "bold ass" gook sing-song jeer; "Fuck youuuuu! Fuck youuuuu! Fuck youuuuu!" he taunted. Violating radio protocol, I asked specifically for the CO by name to inform him personally that "Charley was too damn close for comfort and someone needed to get to our position ASAP before we're overrun." It only took a second or two before we heard the entire perimeter erupt in raucous, uncontrollable laughter. The 'Fuk Yu Lizard' had struck again!

I pulled the entire OP that night without so much as a blink. I never again slept on OP, LP, or any other P. Lesson learned.

**Wambi Cook**  
A/2/503d, '67/'68

## ~ A Bright LT? ~

Keep in mind now that I didn't get to the Nam until 1970, so I'm not as old as you guys. Anyway, we worked out of LZ English but hardly ever saw the place. Once in a great while just to keep us from going looney I guess, they would pull us out of the field for a few days of rest but this particular 4th of July we were back at English pulling berm guard. It was already dark and everyone was at their assigned bunkers for the night and here came a 3/4 ton. The LT was looking for a couple of volunteers from each bunker to go a couple of miles out

of the LZ. It seems some helicopter guys were having fun right a dusk and clipped a plam tree and crashed. We were to secure a perimeter around it for the night and were vehemently promised to be choppered back in the next day after the downed bird was picked up. I went. They choppered us out and we set-up the perimeter. Now about this Lieutenant. He was a very scrawny, excitable kind of guy, so bad I think, that he was kept in the rear. He found a spot on a nice dry paddy dike and all was well until his leadership abilities took over and he stood up in the dark and announced in a loud voice "Men, this is the Lieutenant, and if you need me I will be right here." At that point he turned on a flashlight for all the world to see. The guy next too him whispered, "Turn out that light and get down." He did and about 15 minutes later we all hear slapping and thumping coming from his location. Then the flashlight came on again and the same guy told the LT to put out that light you dumb s.o.b....rhe Lieutenant said in a rather loud voice that he was being bitten by ants. At which the guy replied be quiet or I'm moving somewhere else, and this was the LT's RTO talking. Like I said, it was on the fourth and if you think fireworks are pretty here in the states, you should see all the real flares and things like that going off over a large LZ. We did luck out on that one though because as I understand it people also started celebrating with some CS. Glad I missed that part. The whole time this was going on, and all night long, I kept wondering where is the helicopter crew? Shouldn't they be out here helping US guard their downed bird too? But it gets better; the helicopter ride we were promised to take us back....can you believe we were lied to and had to hump back in? No step for a stepper though....by the way, I know I don't use capital letters and all, but I am retired now and don't have to go by all the rules anymore.

**Bud Sourjohn**  
A/2/503d, '70

[damn, bud, it took me 1/2 hour to capitalize all those letters! cut me some slack man! hee hee ed]



"LT! Turn that goddamn flashlight off!!!"





## VA MAKES FILING CLAIMS EASIER AND FASTER FOR VETERANS

### **Simpler forms and new program reduce paperwork and speed process**

WASHINGTON – As part of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki's effort to break the back of the backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reducing the paperwork and expediting the process for Veterans seeking compensation for disabilities related to their military service.

*“These reductions in paperwork, along with other improvements to simplify and speed the claims process, symbolize changes underway to make VA more responsive to Veterans and their families,”*  
said Secretary Shinseki.

VA has shortened application forms to reduce paperwork for Veterans. The new forms, which are being made available on VA's Web site include:

A shortened **VA Form 21-526** for Veterans applying for the first-time to VA for disability compensation or pension benefits. This form has been cut in half – from 23 to 10 pages. It is immediately available to Veterans via Web download, and will be available through VA's online claim-filing process later this summer.

**VA Form 21-526b** for Veterans seeking increased benefits for conditions already determined by VA to be service-connected. This new form more clearly describes the information needed to support claims for increased benefits.

In order to make the claims process faster, VA has also introduced two new forms for Veterans participating in the Department's new fully developed claim (FDC) program, which is one of the fastest means to receive a claims decision.

Gathering the information and evidence needed to support a Veteran's disability claim often takes the largest portion of the processing time. If VA receives all of the available evidence when the claim is submitted, the remaining steps in the claims-decision process can be expedited without compromising quality.

To participate in the FDC program, Veterans should complete and submit an FDC Certification and **VA Form 21-526EZ**, “Fully Developed Claim (Compensation),” for a compensation claim, or a **VA Form 21-527EZ**, “Fully Developed Claim (Pension).”

The forms were designed specifically for the FDC program. These six-page application forms include notification to applicants of all information and evidence necessary to “fully develop” and substantiate their claims. With this notification, Veterans and their

representatives can “fully develop” their claims before submission to VA for processing.

Along with the application and certification, Veterans must also submit all relevant and pertinent evidence to “fully develop” their claims. A claim submitted as “fully developed” may still require some additional evidence to be obtained by VA, to include certain federal records and a VA medical examination.

[Thanks to 173d Ranger Ron Thomas for sending in this report]

## THE STATUE

This statue currently stands outside the Iraqi Palace, now home to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. It will eventually be shipped home and put in the Memorial Museum at Fort Hood, TX.

The statue was created by an Iraqi artist named Kalat, who for years was forced by Saddam Hussein to make the many hundreds of bronze busts of Saddam which dotted Baghdad.

Kalat was so grateful for the American's liberation of his country, he melted 3 of the heads of the fallen Saddam and made the statue as a memorial to American soldiers and their fallen warriors.

Kalat worked on this memorial night and day for several months.

To the left of the kneeling soldier is a small Iraqi girl giving the soldier comfort as he mourns the loss of his comrades-in-arms.



Sent in by Harry Cleland, B/2/503d.



## ~ CORRECTION ~

In the June issue of our newsletter on the top of Page 11 an incorrect photo appeared in connection with our final salute to the late Bravo Bull, **John Wills**. My deepest apologies to his family and buddies. The following photo of John should have appeared. Ed



Sky Soldier John Wills  
Vietnam

## ~ MORE INCOMING!! ~

**Norman Samples** served with Charlie Company in Vietnam 1969-1971. He's looking for his friend, **Victor Rosales**, same years. If you have any information please contact Norman at: [grocker@peoplepc.com](mailto:grocker@peoplepc.com)

## Military's Mental Health Treatment Leader Steps Down

By **Katie Drummond**  
June 24, 2010

The director of the military's top center for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries is resigning, after ongoing criticism of the facility's inability to cope with the thousands of troops suffering from the "signature wounds" of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Brig. Gen. Loree Sutton announced the decision to staffers at the Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) on Monday, *ProPublica* is reporting. The center is at the crux of the military's massive efforts in bolstering both psychological and brain injury-related diagnostics, treatment, prevention and research. Sutton was instrumental in creating the DCoE in 2007, and has held The top job ever since.



**BG Loree Sutton**

The timing of her departure, which has yet to be publicly announced, is another indication of the armed forces' messy, mismanaged mental health program. Even as the Defense Department unveils a 72,000 square-foot facility dedicated to mental health issues, some legislators are wondering why the military still can't get a grip on ailing troops.

"This is a total failure," Rep. Bill Pascrell, co-chairman of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, said last week. "We're failing to find TBI and post-traumatic stress disorder in an era when the military is trying to find and assist folks who need it." And, with the bulk of a 2007 influx of \$1.7 billion for mental health-care going to the DCoE, it makes sense that Sutton would shoulder the brunt of the responsibility.

Even worse for public perception were ongoing media reports, including those from the *Washington Post*, ABC and NPR/*ProPublica*, that exposed gaping holes in the military's abilities to spot traumatic brain injuries and PTSD, which are estimated to afflict one-third of returning troops.

Despite the bad press, the military has made progress in diagnosing and treating both conditions. In 2007, the Pentagon initiated pre and post deployment brain injury screenings, and a study in 2009 pinpointed cognitive rehabilitational therapy as an effective mode of treatment for TBIs.

(continued....)





But questions persist as to whether the screenings are good enough, and whether sick troops are even being seen for treatment.

Sutton, who'd been planning to retire next year, didn't respond to requests for comment. A representative told *ProPublica* that the move was "part of a routine command rotation."

No matter the reason for Sutton's departure, it's increasingly clear that troops — whose suicide rate this year threatens to match war-zone fatalities — need help. But the research that'll lead to solutions isn't exactly cut-and-dry, and glossy facilities won't instantly unravel exactly how the injuries affect the brain, and how they're best treated. Much of that science is still in the lab, and probably years from completion. Sutton, no matter how hard she tried, was largely being asked to find answers without knowing the right questions. Toss in a center in its infancy and two ongoing wars, and the dilemma gets even messier.

Sadly for troops, though, Sutton seems have been one of the more committed leaders in the field. During her three years at DCoE, she's worked under four different brass filling the top spot of assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

And given that Sutton was with the DCoE from the start, and, in a farewell to staff, recalls "*scrambling to build our team, animate our vision, define our mission,*" her departure marks the loss of a leader dedicated to keeping troops healthy. The center's progress may have come up short, but Sutton's commitment is exactly what decades of struggling troops are going to need.

[Thanks to Dr. Scott Fairchild of 'Welcome Home Vets' for sending in this article].

## WELCOME HOME VETS

### - Our Mission -



We welcome our troops back home to Brevard County, Florida.

We honor and assist our military personnel from all wars, recognized conflicts, peacekeeping or humanitarian actions and peace time missions.

Welcome Home Vets, Inc. raises funds for the care and support of Brevard County veterans and their families.

All funds collected are used for the sole purpose of helping veterans "re-unite" with the civilian community.

Welcome Home Vets, Inc. connects vets with community services, financial assistance, job opportunities, medical and educational opportunities, and guiding our veterans to programs in the VA system.

### Please contact us:

Phone: 321-253-8887

Email: [webmaster@whvets.org](mailto:webmaster@whvets.org)

Web: [webmaster@whvets.org](http://webmaster@whvets.org)

## FROM A COBBER

Here is a picture of the badge of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PRCT). It sits just outside a pub in Gordonvale, North Queensland. The 503rd trained in Gordonvale and are well remembered in that area. The pub was a Red Cross canteen during WWII.

I thought it may be of interest to the guys....it would be interesting to know if any trained Down Under.

**Ray Payne, 1RAR**

[raypayne@veteranweb.asn.au](mailto:raypayne@veteranweb.asn.au)



Floor entrance to pub in Gordonvale, Australia, 2010.

Thanks Ray! Yes, a number of our 503rd WWII buddies trained in Gordonvale before heading out to the Pacific islands. Ed

## BEER WAS INVOLVED.

At the 2010 reunion in North Myrtle Beach, SC these two Aussie bastards liquor-boarded me I tells' ya! And there's no truth to the rumor I removed my jockies and put them on top of Mike Sturges' head. Don't believe him. Ed



Mates Gordon Nielson, Smitty, Ned Kelly





# SAN DIEGO 173d AIRBORNE ASSOCIATION

~ Summer Gathering ~

August 19-21, 2010

Re-unite with Fellow Troopers

All Units 82<sup>nd</sup> ~ 101<sup>st</sup> ~ Special Forces ~ Aviation ~ Welcomed



The San Diego Chapter has put together a summer of enjoyment.

Hotel accommodations provided by Mission Valley Resorts.

Hospitality room with added outside accommodations.

Dinner, Soft drinks & Beer provided.

A banquet Dinner with great music, where else but San Diego!

Restaurant, Hotel Bar and Liquor Barn for purchases.

### San Diego's Sight seeing Tours!

We start our departure from our Mission Valley Resort Hotel, a 32 mile loop that will allow us to get on and off at any of the 10 key tour sites. Daily ticket at \$25.00.

For route view go to ([www.trolleytours.com](http://www.trolleytours.com))

Also View our Homepage sight for links to: U.S.S Midway Aircraft Carrier Museum, San Diego Zoo, Night lamp quarters, Sea Port Village and many more locations. San Diego's Registration page provides more info.



USS Midway

You can also drop me a line and I will e-mail info to you. San Diego Home page: ([www.myspace.com/chapter28sd173rd](http://www.myspace.com/chapter28sd173rd)) Chairman Gil Reynoso Home (1-760-294-8741) Cell 1-760-500-1944 ([g\\_reynoso\\_r@yahoo.com](mailto:g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com))

### Directions:

**North county:** South on Hwy 5 to Hwy 8 E. ¼ Mile then exit Right on Hotel Circle. At exit immediately turn Left on to Hotel Circle South, hotel on Right side.

**South county:** South on Hwy 15 to Hwy 163 southbound toward Hwy 8. At junction stay right and take Hotel Circle exit. It will become Hotel Circle N. for ¼ mile to underpass, turn left to Hotel Circle S. Hotel on Left side.

**Arizona:** Entering at California border you will travel Hwy 8 westbound. Just after passing Hwy 163 about ¼ mile to Hotel Circle, exit Hotel Circle and turn immediately Right on to Hotel Circle N. about ¼ mile to under pass to Hotel Circle S. The hotel will be on your Left.

*Airborne....All The Way!*

**SEE YOU THERE!**



*(continued...)*







# SAN DIEGO 173d AIRBORNE ASSOCIATION

~ Summer Gathering ~  
August 19 – 21, 2010  
Registration Form  
(copy form for additional names)



First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Guest First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to:

**SD173rd Airborne Association**  
**and mail to:**  
**Alex Quintanar, Treasurer**  
**The SD 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Association**  
**4597 Lyric Lane, San Diego, CA 92117**

Headquarters for the 2010 Summer Gathering is:

Registration Fee per person for 2010 Summer Gathering R.S.V.P. By Aug 1, 2010 .....\$100.00

Registration fee covers the following 2 events:

1. Two Hospitality nights (Thursday & Friday) Food & Beverages provided.
2. Saturday night Dinner and Dance: Semi – Formal dress attire and Rock & Roll music by **THE ORBITS!**

Circle meal choice for Saturday night's dinner:

Member: London broil or Chicken Breast  
Chardonnay  
Spouse /Guest: London broil or Chicken  
Chardonnay

Daily participation options:

Each member or guest attending Saturday night dinner only, R.S.V.P. by Aug 1, 2010 ..... \$50.00  
Each Member or guest attending Thursday hospitality only.....\$25.00  
Each Member or guest attending Friday hospitality only.....\$25.00

Total amount for Registration.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

The following events are not included in Registration Fee:

- Site seeing tours, available tickets \$25 per person per day.
- Ten prime locations to see, get on and off all day.
- Airborne and military memorabilia will be offered for sale by invited vendors.

Free prize raffles Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights!!

## MISSION VALLEY RESORTS

875 Hotel Circle South  
San Diego, CA 92108

Please R.S.V.P. to the hotel by August 1, 2010 to get \$79.00 +Tax room rate

Contact the Hotel at 1-619- 298-8281  
(request 173<sup>d</sup> block)



For more information please contact:

Gilbert Reynoso  
Phone: 1-760-294-8741, Cell 1-760-500-1944  
E-mail: [g\\_reynoso\\_r@yahoo.com](mailto:g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com)  
or visit  
[www.myspace.com/chapter28sd173rd](http://www.myspace.com/chapter28sd173rd)

**AIRBORNE...ALL THE WAY!**



## Some Good News From the Front

MG Jack Leide, former CO C/2/503d, '66/'67, reports his son, LTC John Leide, has returned home safe from his tour in Afghanistan. Now there's some good news.



*Welcome home trooper!*

## SEPTEMBER AGENT ORANGE HEARING SET

Tom Philpott, June 17, 2010

### September Agent Orange Hearing Set; Webb wants answers.

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki will get the Senate hearing he didn't want.

Sen. James Webb (D-Va.) says he will use a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing -- rescheduled now for Sept. 23 -- to have Shinseki explain his decision to compensate Vietnam veterans, and many surviving spouses, for three more ailments including heart disease.



**VA Secretary Eric Shinseki**

Shinseki announced last October that ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and B-Cell leukemia will be added to the list of illnesses presumed caused by exposure to defoliants, including Agent Orange, used to clear jungle in combat areas during the war.

VA projects that the decision will cost \$13.4 billion in 2010 alone as it will qualify a few hundred thousand more veterans for service-connected disability compensation.

Those veterans, it now appears, will have to wait at least a few more months before claims can be paid. And there is at least some doubt now they will be paid. That will depend on whether Webb and enough of his colleagues are dissatisfied with the science behind Shinseki's decision.

In an interview in his Capitol Hill office Wednesday, Webb said he was surprised to find among line items in an emergency wartime supplemental bill (HR 4899) a few weeks ago \$13.4 billion attributed to "veterans." He asked staff to find out what it would fund.

*"It came back this was the Agent Orange law,"* Webb said. Webb, a highly-decorated Marine from combat service in Vietnam, said this deepened his skepticism over the soundness of that law and how it has been used.

*(continued...)*

