

For them, Woodstock was a side show, college protestors were spoiled brats who would have benefited from having to work a few jobs in order to pay their tuition, and Vietnam represented not an intellectual exercise in draft avoidance, or protest marches but a battlefield that was just as brutal as those their fathers faced in World War II and Korea.

Few who served during Vietnam ever complained of a generation gap. The men who fought World War II were their heroes and role models. They honored their father's service by emulating it, and largely agreed with their father's wisdom in attempting to stop Communism's reach in Southeast Asia.

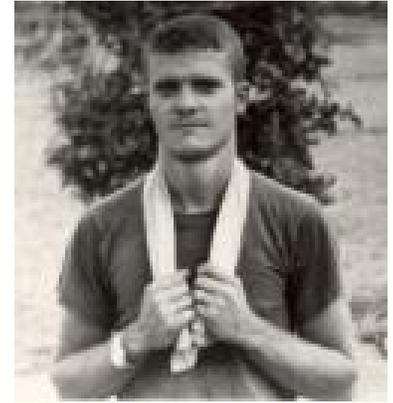
The most accurate poll of their attitudes (Harris, 1980) showed that 91 percent were glad they'd served their country, 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service, and 89 percent agreed with the statement that "our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win." And most importantly, the castigation they received upon returning home was not from the World War II generation, but from the very elites in their age group who supposedly spoke for them.

Nine million men (and women) served in the military during the Vietnam War, three million of whom went to the Vietnam Theater. Contrary to popular mythology, two-thirds of these were volunteers, and 73 percent of those who died were volunteers. While some attention has been paid recently to the plight of our prisoners of war, most of whom were pilots; there has been little recognition of how brutal the war was for those who fought it on the ground.

Dropped onto the enemy's terrain 12,000 miles away from home, America's citizen-soldiers performed with a tenacity and quality that may never be truly understood. Those who believe the war was fought incompletely on a tactical level should consider Hanoi's recent admission that 1.4 million of its soldiers died on the battlefield, compared to 58,000 total U.S. dead.

Those who believe that it was a "dirty little war" where the bombs did all the work might contemplate that it was the most costly war the U.S. Marine Corps has ever fought - five times as many dead as World War I, three times as many dead as in Korea, and more total killed and wounded than in all of World War II.

Significantly, these sacrifices were being made at a time the United States was deeply divided over our effort in Vietnam. The baby-boom generation had



cracked apart along **Jim Webb in Vietnam** class lines as America's young men were making difficult, life-or-death choices about serving. The better academic institutions became focal points for vitriolic protest against the war, with few of their graduates going into the military. Harvard College, which had lost 691 alumni in World War II, lost a total of 12 men in Vietnam from the classes of 1962 through 1972 combined. Those classes at Princeton lost six, at MIT two. The media turned ever more hostile. And frequently the reward for a young man having gone through the trauma of combat was to be greeted by his peers with studied indifference or outright hostility.

What is a hero? My heroes are the young men who faced the issues of war and possible death, and then weighed those concerns against obligations to their country. Citizen-soldiers who interrupted their personal and professional lives at their most formative stage; in the timeless phrase of the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, "not for fame or reward, not for place or for rank, but in simple obedience to duty, as they understood it."

(continued....)



Who suffered loneliness, disease, and wounds with an often-contagious élan. And who deserve a far better place in history than that now offered them by the so-called spokesman of our so-called generation.

Mr. Brokaw, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Spielberg, meet my Marines.

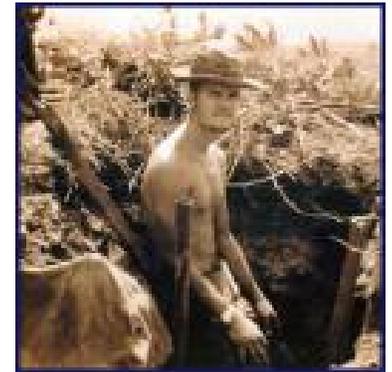
1969 was an odd year to be in Vietnam. Second only to 1968 in terms of American casualties, it was the year made famous by Hamburger Hill, as well as the gut-wrenching *Life* cover story showing pictures of 242 Americans who had been killed in one average week of fighting. Back home, it was the year of Woodstock, and of numerous anti-war rallies that culminated in the Moratorium march on Washington. The My Lai massacre hit the papers and was seized upon the anti-war movement as the emblematic moment of the war. Lyndon Johnson left Washington in utter humiliation.

Richard Nixon entered the scene, destined for an even worse fate. In the An Hoa Basin southwest of Danang, the Fifth Marine Regiment was in its third year of continuous combat operations. Combat is an unpredictable and inexact environment, but we were well led. As a rifle platoon and company commander, I served under a succession of three regimental commanders who had cut their teeth in World War II, and four different battalion commanders, three of whom had seen combat in Korea. The company commanders were typically captains on their second combat tour in Vietnam, or young first lieutenants like myself who were given companies after many months of "bush time" as platoon commanders in the Basin's tough and unforgiving environs.

The Basin was one of the most heavily contested areas in Vietnam, its torn, cratered earth offering every sort of wartime possibility. In the mountains just to the west, not far from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the North Vietnamese Army operated an infantry division from an area called

Base Area 112. In the valleys of the Basin, main-force Viet Cong battalions whose ranks were 80 percent North Vietnamese Army regulars moved against the Americans every day. Local Viet Cong units sniped and harassed. Ridgelines and paddy dikes were laced with sophisticated booby traps of every size, from a hand grenade to a 250-pound bomb. The villages sat in the rice paddies and tree lines like individual fortresses, crisscrossed with the trenches and spider holes, their homes sporting bunkers capable of surviving direct hits from large-caliber artillery shells. The Viet Cong infrastructure was intricate and permeating. Except for the old and the very young, villagers who did not side with the Communists had either been killed or driven out to the government controlled enclaves near Danang.

In the rifle companies, we spent the endless months patrolling ridgelines and villages and mountains, far away from any notion of tents,



Jim Webb in Vietnam

barbed wire, hot food, or electricity. Luxuries were limited to what would fit inside one's pack, which after a few "humps" usually boiled down to letter-writing material, towel, soap, toothbrush, poncho liner, and a small transistor radio.

We moved through the boiling heat with 60 pounds of weapons and gear, causing a typical Marine to drop 20 percent of his body weight while in the bush. When we stopped we dug chest-deep fighting holes and slit trenches for toilets. We slept on the ground under makeshift poncho hooch's, and when it rained we usually took our hooch's down because wet ponchos shined under illumination flares, making great targets.

(continued...)



Sleep itself was fitful, never more than an hour or two at a stretch for months at a time as we mixed daytime patrolling with night-time ambushes, listening posts, foxhole duty, and radio watches. Ringworm, hookworm, malaria, and dysentery were common, as was trench foot when the monsoons came. Respite was rotating back to the mud-filled regimental combat base at An Hoa for four or five days, where rocket and mortar attacks were frequent and our troops manned defensive bunkers at night. Which makes it kind of hard to get excited about tales of Woodstock, or camping at the Vineyard during summer break.

We had been told while training that Marine officers in the rifle companies had an 85 percent probability of being killed or wounded, and the experience of "Dying Delta," as our company was known, bore that out. Of the officers in the bush when I arrived, our company commander was wounded, the weapons platoon commander wounded, the first platoon commander was killed, the second platoon commander was wounded twice, and I, commanding the third platoons fared no better. Two of my original three-squad leaders were killed, and the third shot in the stomach. My platoon sergeant was severely wounded, as was my right guide. By the time I left, my platoon I had gone through six radio operators, five of them casualties.

These figures were hardly unique; in fact, they were typical. Many other units; for instance, those who fought the hill battles around Khe Sanh, or were with the famed Walking Dead of the Ninth Marine Regiment, or were in the battle of Hue City or at Dai Do, had it far worse.

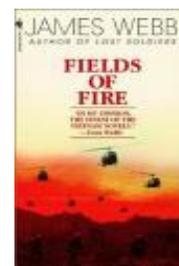
When I remember those days and the very young men who spent them with me, I am continually amazed, for these were mostly recent civilians barley out of high school, called up from the cities and the farms to do their year in hell and then return. Visions haunt me every day, not of the nightmares of war but of

the steady consistency with which my Marines faced their responsibilities, and of how uncomplaining most of them were in the face of constant danger. The salty, battle-hardened 20-year-olds teaching green 19-year-olds the intricate lessons of the hostile battlefield. The unerring skill of the young squad leaders as we moved through unfamiliar villages and weed-choked trails in the black of night. The quick certainty when a fellow Marine was wounded and needed help. Their willingness to risk their lives to save other Marines in peril. To this day it stuns me that their own countrymen have so completely missed the story of their service, lost in the bitter confusion of the war itself.

Like every military unit throughout history we had occasional laggards, cowards, and complainers. But in the aggregate, these Marines were the finest people I have ever been around. It has been my privilege to keep up with many of them over the years since we all came home. One finds in them very little bitterness about the war in which they fought. The most common regret, almost to a man, is that they were not able to do more for each other and for the people they came to help.

It would be redundant to say that I would trust my life to these men. Because I already have, in more ways than I can ever recount. I am alive today because of their quiet, unaffected heroism. Such valor epitomizes the conduct of Americans at war from the first days of our existence. That the boomer elites can canonize this sort of conduct in our fathers' generation while ignoring it in our own is more than simple oversight. It is a conscious, continuing travesty.

Former Secretary of the Navy James Webb was awarded the Navy Cross, Silver Star, and Bronze Star medals for heroism as a Marine in Vietnam. His novels include "The Emperor's General" and "Fields of Fire".



SOUND FINANCIAL ADVICE FROM A SKY SOLDIER

[This came in from A/2/503d good buddy Jack “Jackattack” Ribera and should be considered by everyone interested in building their financial worth]:

The wife of a A/2/503d friend of mine on their wedding night approached my buddy Mike, her new husband, and asked for \$20. for their first time making love. In his highly aroused state, the trooper couldn't refuse.

For over 40 years this scenario repeated itself. Seems like a cute way for her to afford new clothes and other incidentals she needed

One day she arrived home and found the sad sack in a very drunken state, typical of Mike, as those of you who know him, know. During the next few minutes, and very depressed, he explained his employer was downsizing and had to let him go. At 62, and unlikely to find a job in Spokane paying as well, the old paratrooper feared they were financially ruined.

Calmly, Mike's wife handed him a bank book which showed more than forty years of steady deposits, including interest paid, which totaled over \$2 million. She explained for more than four decades she had charged him for sex every time and used the money to invest in bonds, and saved every penny!

Mike was so astounded he could barely speak, but he finally found his voice and the trooper blurted out....



That's when she shot him. I'm gonna miss Mike.

Damn, Jack. After reading that sad report I quickly ran to my bride Reggie of 43 years and found out she had been doing the same thing, but was charging **\$25.** each time!!!! She then told me we had saved 50 bucks. Ed

A LITTLE COMBAT JUMP DITTY



I find the 173d jump an interesting mystery – there is an old retired Colonel (like me) named Wayne Dill; he ‘planned’ the Junction City jump for the Sep Bde, 101st. The planners were ‘limited’ to a one over-flight recon of the area/DZ and probably the only thing my old ass remembers is I went on that flight with Wayne – two old farts (then young Capt.’s) at an unbelievable altitude (another restriction). The brigade also had to ‘requalify’ its personnel on jump status – and then for some damn reason, the operation was transferred to the 173d.

We all had this sophisticated radio (big damn thing that had all sorts of capability); we had two – one was always down. I remember Ray Largen the Bde Signal Officer begging the General to exempt the radio from these re-qualification jumps, but Gen. Mattheson (a Capt. at Bastogne) cut him no slack. Guess what – ha! I'm full of BS today – another tale/jump story.

During the recertification jumps, done in the vicinity of the Kontum valley with interesting little winds and heat vectors throwing the C-130's all around/up and down. I ended up sitting next to the Deputy Bde Cdr (Col. Chester B. McCoid), a WWII vet, an old airborne head who looked like John Wayne and was immensely admired by everyone. I had been out drinking the night before and anyway, I was starting to get sick. I told the Colonel this and in a loud voice (to overcome the noise of the C-130 and more importantly, to entertain the troops), he says “*God-damn-it Lawton, I'm not going to have an officer get sick in front of these fuckin' swine!*” [and he waves his hand in a sweeping motion to indicate to the troops who are watching all this drama] and tells me to standup/hookup and stand in the door to which my sick ass responds – “*Sir, the red light hasn't even come on,*” and he responds “*Get in the fuckin' door!*” He put me out (w/full eqpt), just as the red light that had come on, changed to green. I'm chuckling as I write this – great officer.

John P. Lawton, Col. (Ret), 4/503d

LTC Bob Sigholtz addresses his 2/503d troopers prior to Junction City jump.

Photo by Wayne Tuttle



THE COST OF WAR

Following is a note 2/503d good buddy Butch Clark sent to his friend Jerry who had offered to drive Butch to *The Wall* in Washington, DC. Butch is a friend, a fellow Sky Soldier, and he is dying. Ed

Jerry, you couldn't find me because I was hiding! Think back to the 80's on the 3rd of July at the Oakland VA Hospital. The protesters were on every TV channel in the city -- protesting the PTSD treatment guys were given at that hospital.

I was there for 90 days and never once saw a doctor; just some resident interns. Then one day a doctor walks into my room and says, "*Clark, you look too healthy to be here!*" and walks out.



The only way I knew I was discharged is my dinner didn't come with the evening meal! I closed that Mental Health ward down. What was happening was, they had drug addicts and guys suffering with PTSD on the same ward. They received more \$\$\$\$ for drug patients than they did for PTSD patients -- it was a racket run by civilian doctors who never showed up to treat us.

So, jump to 1985. Still hiding in the hills. I hung myself from a pine tree in the yard one day. My wife had to wait till I stopped kicking then cut me down. She had an ambulance take me to Highland Drive VA Hospital. After 4 days of recovery I walked out of a locked ward and simply went home. They diagnosed me with PTSD then, but never told me. Every claim I filed for PTSD was denied and I never challenged the rulings because I couldn't deal with the outside world. So I stayed back in the woods and built my wife a custom home while I raised our two sons.

One of our sons holds nose tackle records at Slippery Rock U, and he had won a full ride at SRU. He is my stepson, his name is Ian. My other son is 18 and is just finishing his private pilot license instruction, and is still in school. He plans on going into the Coast Guard as a pilot once he completes 4 years at a University which offers aviation credits. He needs 4 years to be a Commercial Medivac Pilot.

So back to me. I never held a job longer than 3 months. So no Social Security or SSI. I worked for myself buying old homes, re-doing them and flipping them. And then, I suffered 4 strokes in one month! A month later I'm diagnosed with pulmonary fibroses. They gave me 5 years to live. That was in 2000.

Five years ago it got real bad; my third wife of 30 years says, "*Give me all you paperwork. I'm going after the VA*". And she did! She got me awarded 100% service connected disability for, guess what? "PTSD." They wouldn't honor any retroactive payment to '85 because I hadn't appealed that decision. But, one night in 2006 when the war was keeping me awake, I went on-line to the VA web site and filed for PTSD. Because the time limit wasn't up yet I was retroactively compensated to 2006.

They tell me I can't sue for the 1985 filing....and here's the bummer. In order for my wife to receive a pension and my son to receive schooling assistance, I have to remain 100% disabled for 10 years. If I die from my lungs my wife and my son lose everything. But if I die from suicide related to PTSD, they receive the schooling assistance and a half pension, as long as she doesn't remarry!

I am now in End Stage Pulmonary Fibrosis. I am wheelchair bound, house bound hooked to 2 large oxygen bottles and an oxygen concentrator. I suffer severally 5/6/7 times a day where I can't breath. My chest muscles cramp and tighten so badly it further causes breathing problems. My wife has to inject liquid morphine under my tongue to relax my muscles. Add to this, I take 120 mg. of morphine pills every day and 10 mg. of Percocet every four hours for breakthrough pain. I can't go anywhere.

So, thank you, Jerry, for the offer to go to the Wall. Maybe when you go you could carve my name in it. Cause I died in Nam and didn't even know it!

Butch Clark, HHC/2/503d, '65

**Our
brother
today.
Keep
fighting the
good fight,
Butch.**

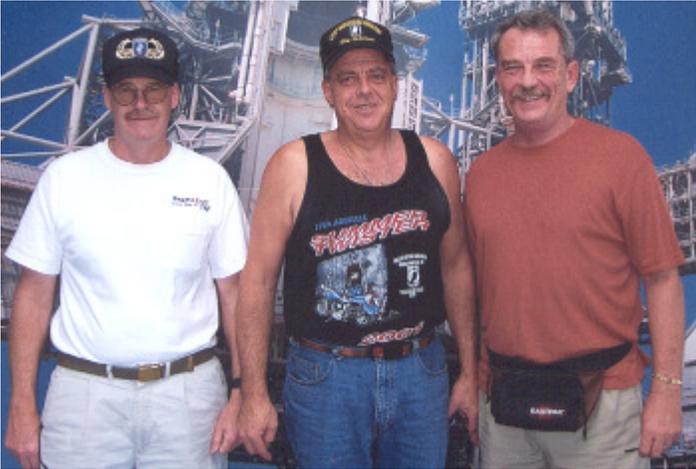


Note: Let's hope someone in Congress or with the Veterans Administration read Butch's story (we're sending it to them), and countless reports just like his, and looks into the regulations which appear to be so unfair. Ed



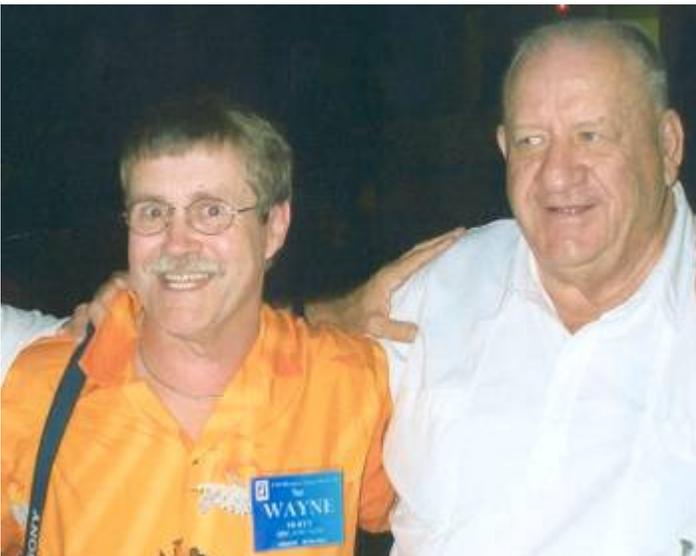
DRAFTING GUYS OVER 60

Drafting Guys Over 60 is a funny tale and obviously written by a former soldier. We've included a few photos of 2/503d buddies we think would easily qualify for this draft and who would want to be the first to go, along with what they might say about going. Ed



Raring, ready and able? L-R: A/2/503d troopers Bob "Luke" Lucas, Mike (if they have cold beer I'll think about it) Sturges & Terry "Woody" Davis. "Where do we sign up?"

I am over 60 and the Armed Forces thinks I'm too old to track down terrorists. You can't be older than 42 to join the military. They've got the whole thing ass-backwards. Instead of sending 18-year olds off to fight, they ought to take us old guys. You shouldn't be able to join a military unit until you're at least 35.



RTO Wayne Hoitt & LTC Bob Carmichael, HHC/2/503d "Sure Colonel, I'll go with you. They do have limo service don't they?"

For starters, researchers say 18-year-olds think about sex every 10 seconds. Old guys only think about sex a couple of times a day, leaving us more than 28,000 additional seconds per day to concentrate on the enemy.



A/2/503d Dale Olson "Count me in! I can take my staff with me, right?"

Young guys haven't lived long enough to be cranky, and a cranky soldier is a dangerous soldier. 'My back hurts! I can't sleep, I'm tired and hungry!' We are impatient and maybe letting us kill some asshole that desperately deserves it will make us feel better and shut us up for awhile.



B/2/503d Art Martinez & Herman the Paratrooper "If he goes, I'll go."

An 18-year-old doesn't even like to get up before 10 a.m. Old guys always get up early to pee, so what the hell. Besides, like I said, I'm tired and can't sleep and since I'm already up, I may as well be up killing some fanatical son-of-a-bitch.

(continued....)



If captured we couldn't spill the beans because we'd forget where we put them. In fact, name, rank, and serial number would be a real brainteaser.



2/503d Charlie Knecht (L) & 1/503d Craig Ford.
Craig: "Hell yes! I went back to Vietnam in '01 with 7 of you 2d Bat guys and had to buy all the drinks! I'll go but I ain't buyin' the drinks this time!!"

Basic Training would be easier for old guys. We're used to getting screamed and yelled at and we're used to soft food. We've also developed an appreciation for guns. We've been using them for years as an excuse to get out of the house, away from the screaming and yelling.



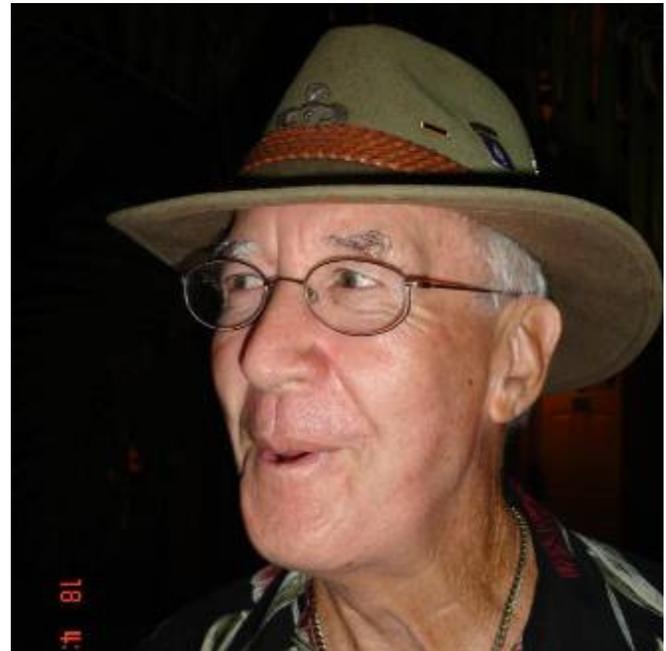
C/2/503d Desmond "Hammer" Jackson
"I'm callin' my Chargin' Charlies right now. We're in! Saddle up boys!!"

They could lighten up on the obstacle course however. I've been in combat and never saw a single 20-foot wall with rope hanging over the side, nor did I ever do any pushups after completing basic training. (Must not have been a paratrooper. Ed)



A/2/503d Don "Rocky" Rockholt
"Afghanistan? O.K. Right after this nap."

Actually, the running part is kind of a waste of energy, too. I've never seen anyone outrun a bullet.



HHC/2/503d Marcus Powell
"Only if I can lead Recon again. Who has the phone numbers for Amyot, Hassler, Hargadon and Kies?"

(continued...)





A/2/503d Freddie Parks

“On one condition, Vose doesn’t go. The last time he had me take-out a machine gun nest, which I did, but that little bastard shot my ass up before I got him. No way if Vose goes.”

An 18-year-old has the whole world ahead of him. He's still learning to shave, to start a conversation with a pretty girl. He still hasn't figured out that a baseball cap has a brim to shade his eyes, not the back of his head.



WWII 503rd PRCT troopers. L-R: Chet Nycum, Chuck Breit, Charley Hylton, Paul Hinds & John Cleland.
“Come on boys, let’s go help those youngins help those youngins.”

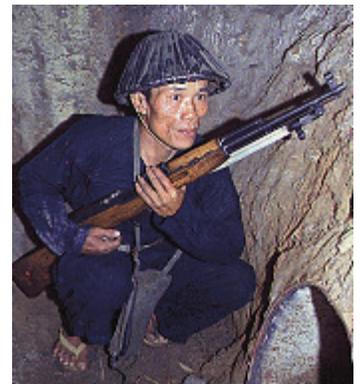
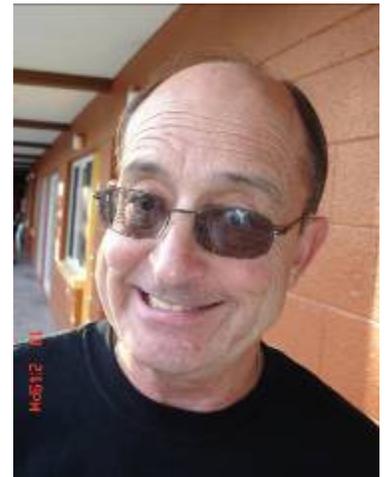
These are all great reasons to keep our kids at home to learn a little more about life before sending them off into harm's way. Let us old guys track down those dirty rotten coward terrorists.

**A/HHC/2/503d
Bill Vose
“Freddie! Freddie!!”**

The last thing an enemy would want to see is a couple million pissed off old farts with attitudes and automatic weapons, who know that their best years are already behind them.

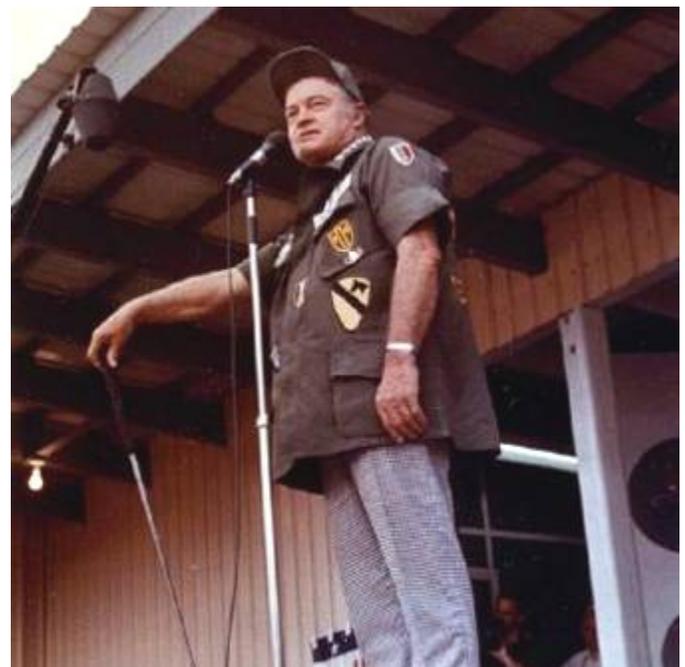
HEY!! How about recruiting Women over 50...in menopause!!! You think MEN have attitudes?

Ohhhhhhhhhhhh my God!!! If nothing else, put them on border patrol. They'll have it secured the first night!



“ Can I come too?”

[Thanks to Terry Boggs, 3/503d for sending in the story]



“Sorry fellas, I won’t be making this one with you, but I’ll be thinking of you.”



173d Airborne Soldier Recommended for Medal of Honor

By Michelle Tan - Staff writer
Posted : Tuesday, July 6, 2010

A soldier who served in Afghanistan could be the first living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

News outlets in and around Cedar Rapids, Iowa, have reported that Staff Sgt. Sal Giunta, who is from that area, is believed to be the soldier being considered for the nation's highest valor award. Giunta is currently stationed in Vicenza, Italy.

The recommendation has been sent from the Defense Department to the White House, according to an Army source, who confirmed that Giunta is likely the nominee. The *Washington Post* was the first to report the nomination, but did not reveal the soldier's name.

A source close to the nomination said the soldier fought through a barrage of fire to repel enemy fighters in a fierce battle in late 2007 in Afghanistan's treacherous Korengal Valley. His actions saved the lives of several other soldiers.

The White House and the Army refused to comment on the nomination. Efforts to reach Giunta and his family were unsuccessful.

The AP reported officials are concerned that early disclosure could be seen as pressuring President Barack Obama to approve the medal, creating a potentially embarrassing situation if the award is not approved.

If approved, the award would be just the seventh Medal of Honor since the beginning of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. All six prior awards were posthumous, including four for acts of heroism in Iraq and two in Afghanistan.

The small number awarded and the fact that all were awarded posthumously has raised questions among members of Congress and senior military leaders.

When asked by reporters, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in September the issue has been "a source of real concern to me." He added: The Medal of Honor nomination process is "a very time-intensive, thorough process. But I would say that I've been told there are some living potential recipients that have been put forward," he said during a Sept. 17 news conference.

Military officials have said it's difficult to compare the number of awards from previous conflicts to those for Iraq and Afghanistan because warfare has evolved so much.



"The types of actions that we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, although they can be brutally violent for short periods of time, they are not the long duration, force-on-force type of battles that we fought in the past," Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey said June 7 during a meeting with *ArmyTimes* editors and reporters. *"That said, I think ... you're going to continue to see awards for Medals of Honor and Distinguished Service Crosses continue to process through, and I would expect that some of those, especially for a living soldier, would be favorably approved."*

Giunta's heroic actions are chronicled in a new book titled "War," by Sebastian Junger.

A specialist at the time, Giunta deployed with the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team for its June 2007 to August 2008 tour in Afghanistan.

According to Junger's book, late on Oct. 25, 2007, Giunta and his fellow soldiers from B Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, were on their way back from a major operation when they are ambushed by the enemy.

Giunta was the fourth soldier from the front; Sgt. Josh Brennan was walking point, according to "War." The enemy fired machine-gun and small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades from such close range that the Apache attack helicopters overhead were unable to help the soldiers on the ground.

"First Platoon is essentially inside a shooting gallery," Junger wrote. *"Within seconds, every man in the lead squad takes a bullet. Brennan goes down immediately, wounded in eight places."*

As the battle progressed, Giunta *"sees two enemy fighters dragging Josh Brennan down the hillside. He empties his M4 magazine at them and starts running toward his friend,"* according to the book.

"Giunta jams a new magazine into his gun and yells for a medic. Brennan is lying badly wounded in the open and Giunta grabs him by the vest and drags him behind a little bit of cover."

Brennan doesn't survive surgery, Junger wrote. Giunta later talks to Junger about his actions. *"I did what I did because that's what I was trained to do,"* he told Junger. *"I didn't run through fire to save a buddy - I ran through fire to see what was going on with him and maybe we could hide behind the same rock and shoot together. I didn't run through fire to do anything heroic or brave. I did what I believe anyone would have done."*

[Sent in by Dr. Scott Fairchild, LTC (Ret), 82nd Abn. Div.]

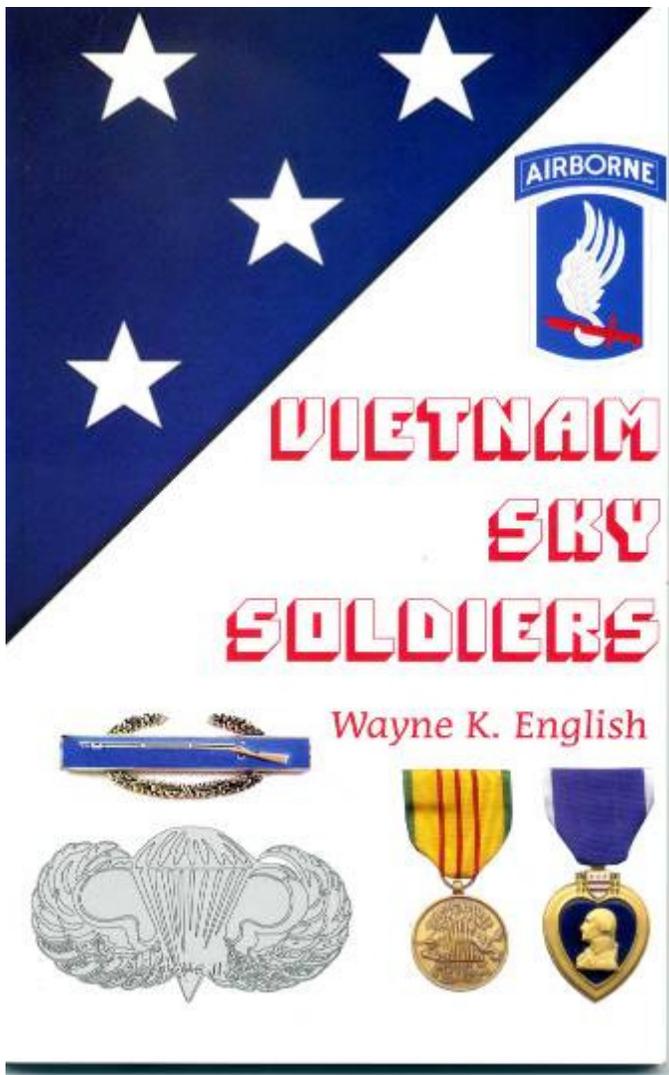


VIETNAM SKY SOLDIERS

Wayne English who served in the 4-Deuce platoon with the 2/503d in '65/'66 has written this book detailing some of his experiences during the Vietnam War.

An Excerpt from Wayne's book:

"The ambush seemed to slow a little. The sounds were steady. The machine gun seemed to be slowing but it was still cutting down brush around us. I looked up and coming down the trail toward me was a guy crawling. When he looked up at me, his face was white and covered with large drops of sweat. It was Fogle. I had gone to jump school with him I don't now why, but my first question to him was, 'Where have you been hit?' He replied, 'I'm hit in the chest and I'm afraid to look at it.'"



You can order a copy of "Vietnam Sky Soldiers" direct from Wayne by contacting him at:

englishgap@bellsouth.net

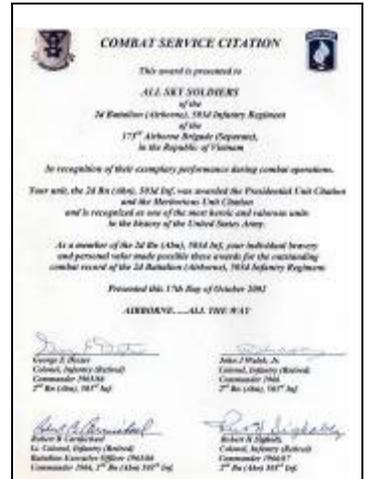
2/503d COMBAT SERVICE CITATION - VIETNAM

Some years ago, recognizing too many of our men were never formally honored for their dedicated and heroic service in the 2d Battalion during our war, former battalion commanders Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh and Sigholtz issued the "2/503d Combat Service Citation" to every man who served in the battalion in Vietnam during any year,

"In recognition of their exemplary performance during combat operations."

While it is not an official army award, the citation, signed by each commander, is particularly special as it is from the men we followed into battle. If you served with the 2/503d at any time during the Vietnam War and have not received your award, please email your name (as you wish it to appear on the citation), your company and years served with the battalion, and physical mail address to rto173d@cfl.r.com Your citation will be mailed to you. This is what one of our troopers said after receiving his Combat Service Citation:

"Yesterday I received the Combat Service Citation in the mail. It's Beautiful, and something I will Cherish for the remainder of my life. I have already framed it and hung it on the wall. It arrived while my grandchildren were here on a visit. They read it and for the first time, actually started asking questions about the War. We talked for almost 3 hours, and now they finally have some basic knowledge about a time that has been hidden from them by their so-called educators



That 3 hours with them reminded me of the speech Gen. George Patton gave to his Troops:

'When your grandchildren ask you: What did you do during the Great War, you won't have to say, Well, I shoveled shit in Louisiana.'

Thanks again to our past commanders for making that possible, and May God Bless The Sky Soldiers."

Ted Mobley, HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

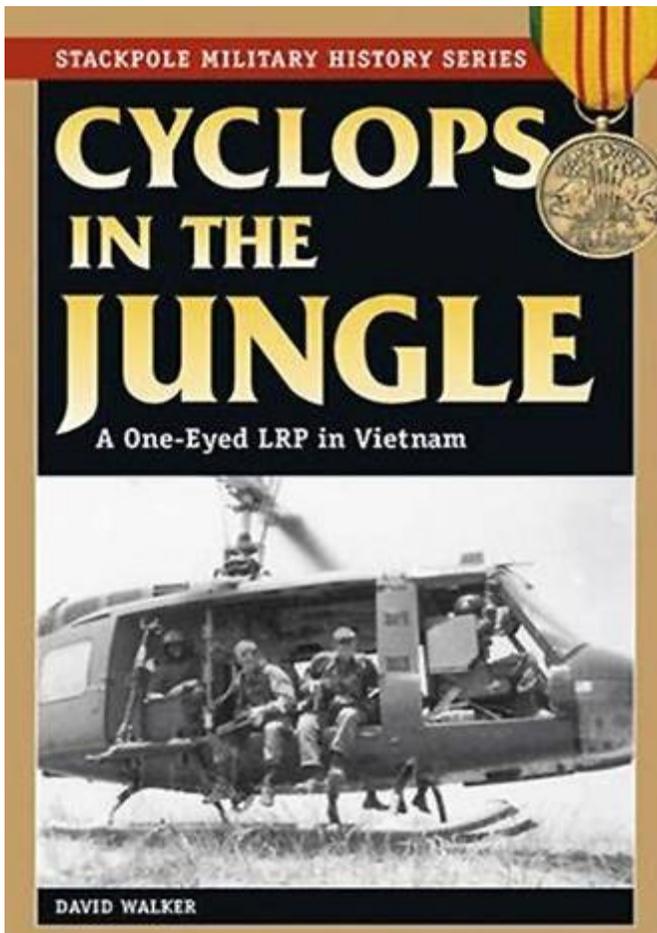


NEW BOOK

By Dave Walker, N75 Ranger

Just spoke to my chief editor at Stackpole Books, and my book, *Cyclops in the Jungle...a One-Eyed LRP in Vietnam*, just went to the printer. It will be available in 4-5 weeks. Please forward this e-mail to our mass unit mailing list and whoever else you know that might need a sleeping pill. Thanks.

Dave Varmint/Hawkeye sends



A 2/503d buddy said he tried this in Vietnam. It didn't work then either.

A GREAT COMPLIMENT FROM AN ALL-AMERICAN



Good buddy, Bob Beemer, B/2/503d, sent in the following note he received from a WWII 82nd Airborne trooper friend of his. What a great compliment about the content of our newsletter by one of those amazing All Americans. It's kinda nice to know some of those paratroopers who forged the way for us enjoy reading about us 'youngins' -- they call us 'youngins', you gotta love 'em! Ed

“Thought you'd like to see what a WWII 82d guy who jumped into Holland had to say about our newsletter.”
Bob

“Bob. It takes me a long time to read everything in the newsletter but I do enjoy it immensely. I think it's the best Airborne paper or whatever you want to call it of any Airborne Unit in any Division or Regiment ever formed. The stories of the men, about the even small incidents they experienced, are outstanding. Even some of the funny stuff you know is sometimes deadly but the Humor comes through. And anyone who has ever been in Combat can feel what is going on....I have the usual old geezer aches and pains but I can't kick. When they finally put me in the box I'll have a big smile on my face. I have no complaints. Stay well Bob. Airborne”
Walt

“No ground gained was ever relinquished.”

General Gavin's 82nd Airborne proud boast after Normandy, WWII.



WWII AIRBORNE BRACELET

Hope you can help with passing this on to any of the remaining 503rd who were here in Gordonvale, Australia. Apart from other objects we have here left by men in the 503rd we also came across this bracelet. Maybe some of the men left may be able to help us with its history.



This lady's bracelet recalls the time the United States 503rd Parachute Regiment spent in the Gordonvale district, (between December 1942 and August 1943). It is made up of five silver three-pence coins, joined by four fine silver chains. The embossed emblem on the middle coin is that of the 503rd. All the coins are dated 1942 and, interestingly, they were minted in the American city of Denver (the only time Australian coins were minted outside Australia). This Regiment was the first US parachute regiment raised, and the only one to train in Australia – here in Gordonvale – before parachuting into hostile enemy territory in New Guinea and then Corregidor.

I volunteer at the Mulgrave Settlers Museum in Gordonvale, Queensland. I have only been working there a short time and am fairly new to the area. My main job is to put all the Museums' objects, documents etc. onto a computer data base. I became involved with the 503rd because we have had visitors wanting to know if we had anything written on the 503rd and their time in Gordonvale.

I started to gather all the photographs, photos of the objects we have, letters from ex 503rd people and memories of the 503rd from people here in Gordonvale. It is an ongoing project as I keep finding things scattered around the museum. Originally thought it would only be a few pages. So far I have about 60 pages of a booklet done. Many of the people who gave objects etc. to the museum have passed away. I originally tried to get in touch with *Static Line* for information on some of the objects. Finally Tim Stout answered and was a great help in identifying most of the insignias etc.

There was a back to Gordonvale trip for some of the 503rd in 1979 which was before my time here. We would be most grateful for any of the remaining 503rd for their stories of their time here or copies of any photographs they may have. We are mainly interested in the 503rd and their attachment to Gordonvale.

I've been a bit long winded but appreciate your help and that of any others. Will send a photo of one insignia we have that Tim couldn't identify with. Maybe some of you can.

Many thanks,

Travis Teske

[You can contact Travis at travistt@tpg.com.au]

From a WWII 503rd Trooper

I have a whole table top covered with Aussie coins. I have only seen one bracelet of the type described in the e-mail, and it was made long after the war was over and the Aussies had adopted the dollar standard.

Many of the people in New Zealand and Australia collected them and made trinkets to sell. Small tables covered with coins and then covered with clear plastic is one example, pre-selecting the date for the coins on that bracelet was a spark of genius. Probably increasing its sell price, but all the while remembering it was against the law to destroy Aussie currency during the war period. Most likely the Bracelet was made long after the war.

Chet Nycum, G/503rd PRCT

AND MORE ABOUT THE BRACELET

Couldn't resist putting in my 'two cents' on the photos of the Australian coins.

That is a very nice little piece of Sweetheart Jewelry. I remember the threepenny (generally pronounced thripney) bits from when I was a kid – they were around and common until 1966, when we went to a decimal system. In slang we also called them a "tray" – from the French, I suppose. The wartime ones are silver. In 1966, they exchanged them for two cents.

The 1942 coin is really quite rare – there were only 528,000 minted. Because of this critical shortage in the wartime economy, the following year 24 million were minted in the USA.

The 1943 have a mintmark S for San Francisco, and D for Denver. I can't see the detail on the picture. They were popular as they were generally the coin for a bus, tram or movie theater. Also donuts.

Paul Whitman

503rd Heritage Battalion Web Site

http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/index.htm



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CORREGIDOR CHUTE

The next time you have the opportunity to visit the 173d Memorial at Fort Benning, GA, you'll want to tour the National Infantry Museum nearby. As you enter the WWII exhibit, off to your right encased behind glass for all time you'll see this cammo'd parachute donated to the museum by Chuck Breit of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team. Following his combat jump onto the Island of Corregidor on February 16, 1945, Chuck was able to bury his chute in the ground.



After the island was captured he later recovered his chute and gave it to a friend who returned it to Chuck upon his return stateside. In 1984, he donated it to the Infantry Museum. In a note from the museum to Chuck:

"The National Infantry Museum is honored to add the camouflage parachute you used in the jump on Corregidor on February 16, 1945. This is truly a fine artifact that we are pleased to add to the Airborne collection. We are proud to accept this gift, and I want to thank you on behalf of Fort Benning and the National Infantry Museum for allowing us the privilege of having this unique item for our collection."

E. Frank Hanner, Curator, National Infantry Museum
Department of the Army

"Mr. Hanner, I sincerely thank you for accepting this chute. I am very happy that it will stand in the museum as a memorial to all of the 503 RCT who were there that day on Corregidor." Charles E. Breit

503rd PRCT paratrooper Chuck Breit attended the 173d Airborne Brigade reunion in North Myrtle Beach, SC this past June. Chuck was the first of the WWII 503rd troopers to become an Associate Member of the 173d Airborne Association following the reunion. Airborne Chuck!

LUCKY BULL

Claudia Tobin, sister of Larry Paladino, RTO and tunnel rat extraordinaire with B/2/503d '65/'66, announced recently her brother had a birthday. To honor him on his birthday we're running this historical photo of Larry offering up his very best airborne welcome to *Playboy* 'Playmate of the Year,' Jo Collins at Camp Zinn in 1966. To further recognize him for his service to country and *Playboy* magazine, some of his fellow Bulls sent in their ideas for captions which might best fit the photo. Happy Birthday from your Bulls, Larry!



"Larry Paladino welcomes Playboy Playmate of the Year Jo Collins to Vietnam in 1966."

"I've heard of DEEP THROAT...but someone's tongue is sticking out in your pocket!"

"Is that the best you can do, GI?"

"Does this mean that while I'm here, I have to sleep in the supply tent with Sgt Arnold?"

"Where is Captain Lombardo? Did he get lost again?"

"This is my rifle....this is my gun...."

"Is that an M-16 in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?"

"Wouldn't you prefer the Heimlich maneuver?"

"Someone get the hose!"

"The Company Commander sent the most deserving Bull to represent the company...."

Roy Lombardo, CO/B/2/503d

"I don't think Larry was capable of saying anything (at that time). I did not see her in Vietnam, someone had to be out fighting the damn war. I did get to meet her at one of the reunions in Los Angeles when she dropped by. There, she was a very handsome, well spoken woman; unlike most of the gum chewers we see today in the media."

Jim Robinson, FO/B/2/503d



THE PRICK and that it was

The AN/PRC-25 (fondly or not so fondly referred to as the 'Prick' by the RTO's who carried it) was first introduced into Vietnam in 1965 when BG Ellis Williamson, 173d brigade commander, told Gen. Westmoreland better portable radios were vitally needed.



Its development began as an experiment in FM (frequency modulation) based vehicular-mounted communications at Ft. Monmouth, NJ, in 1948. The previously used AM (amplitude modulation) sets were bulky and susceptible to engine interference. In 1955 the Signal Corps decided to pursue both vehicle and manpack radios utilizing solid-state technology. The original 20 pound developmental model was completed in 1958 with the testing model a year later. In May, 1961, the "Prick-25" officially became part of Army inventory, but the AN/PRC-10 still was the primary radio in combat units.

At Williamson's request, Westmoreland requested 2,000 of the new radios for immediate dispatch to Vietnam. They were originally slated to go to Europe but the U.S. Army Electronics Command released its entire stock of 1,000 radios to Nam. The new radio was first used in a large-scale operation during the 1965 Pleiku campaign in the Ia Drang Valley.

[Report sent in by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d, '66/'67]



Jerry Hassler, a young, good lookin' RTO with his, well, you know.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

On 1 June 1970 was published a *Sky Soldier* special edition by the 173d Airborne Brigade with introduction by BG H.S. Cunningham. The following is an excerpt from this army publication:

WALKING TARGET: He comes in all shapes and sizes but his load is the same. Not to mention the risk.

He's one of the most critically needed men of any operation, whether it's a fire team on a night ambush, or a battalion in the field. His is one of the least desirable of jobs.

The radio operator wears an uncomfortable load and poses a beautiful target for snipers. His long, whip antenna tells everyone who he is, and the most basic instruction of any military force is the importance of radio communications. Charlie desperately tries to get the RTO.

But, in spite of his load and the risk he runs, once a trooper becomes accustomed to his radio, he sticks faithfully to it and, in many cases, would not swap jobs with anyone. He knows how important he is.

[Sent in by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d, '66/'67]



A 2/503d RTO, aka *Walking Target*.



DOES IT MATTER?

William T. Calhoun



The sun shone brightly as the great ship passed under the Golden Gate and followed the Navy blimp, November 23, 1943. It carried over 14,000 Army and

Navy passengers headed for points they had never been. My group knew we were bound for the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment.

After serving longer than any other officer in with F Company, almost unbelieving, I walked down the gang plank from the old ship to the wharf at Portland, Oregon a week before Christmas 1945. The physical trials had been great: thirst, hunger, bone tiredness, filth, heat, cold (yes, it's cold up on 4,000 feet, wet mountains even in the tropics), and times when a cigarette was our only recreation. But physical discomforts are superficial which can be laughed at....later.

It is the mental trials that are seared in the soul. The memory of those young men with whom you served will never end. We were a close team, brothers following orders in every move. Our association was seven days a week. More than that, we company grade officers were required to censor mail - a hated task. I learned their loved ones, their dreams, their fears, their plans for the future, and often their inner thoughts. To some I became father-confessor. As some made the supreme sacrifice, the living became more precious. *"Oh, God, don't let them die!"* Though that pain began so long ago, it is still here today. The tears still flow and will as long as I draw breath.

Does it matter? Do the thoughts that remain cemented in my mind for over 50 years matter? As long as I live, it matters. My obsession is a holy quest to remind all who will listen of the brave who gave their lives for us. Can I forget my thoughts, as I saw 20 year old Theodore's dying spasms, of his two baby boys, one who he had never seen? Can I forget my thoughts of 19 year old Karl whose last word was "Momma." Of his letters full of assurance to his older parents assuring them that their only son would be safe? Our regimental song has words which express my pride in serving with them: *"...I'm proud I'm allowed..."* My hopes are inscribed in the Pacific War Memorial on Topside:

**SLEEP, MY SONS, YOUR DUTY DONE,
FOR FREEDOM'S LIGHT HAS COME,
SLEEP IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA,
OR IN YOUR BED OF HALLOWED SOD,
UNTIL YOU HEAR AT DAWN
THE LOW, CLEAR REVEILLE OF GOD.**

Bill Calhoun commanded 1st Platoon, "D" Co. (Corregidor) and later became company commander of "D" Co. (Negros). Bill is the president-elect of the 503rd PRCT Association. (From the 503rd Heritage Bn web site).



173d & 503rd



An interesting and remarkable thing happened at the 173d Airborne Brigade Association's annual reunion this past June. Paratroopers of the 173d came together with their fellow paratroopers of the WWII 503rd PRCT in brotherhood. Truly, it was like old friends and buddies getting back together after years of being apart.

Three generations of 503rd paratroopers shared their stories with one another, tipped their glasses to fallen buddies, laughed together and sang old paratrooper songs. It was a great honor to stand with these men of different wars, to be one of them, to be a 503rd paratrooper.

Albeit late for all of us, these two paratrooper units who share a common lineage are finally coming together as one in brotherhood. And many of us learned we have much in common; we are combat veterans of America's wars, we're all moving a little slower these days, we share a unique bond only warriors understand, and we all are 503rd paratroopers. Damn it's good not to be a Leg.

And now, thanks to Chuck Breit's idea along with the support of his boys of the 503rd PRCT, and 173d Association president Roy Scott and our board of directors, not to forget the forward thinking of Chapter 30 of the 173d Association who brought our units together in North Myrtle Beach, efforts are underway to bring these two units of jumping fools ever closer.

Just recently Roy dispatched a formal invitation to Nelson Gatewood, president of the 503rd PRCT Association inviting all their paratroopers to join our Association as Associate Members. Chuck told me, *"I want to be the first to join!"* and after signing-up for a life membership in the 173d Association, he was the first. We hope to see many more 503rd PRCT troopers follow his lead and become active in our Association.

In turn, 503rd PRCT Association president-elect Bill Calhoun has invited all members of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association to attend their reunion in Dallas, TX this coming September. A number of us are making plans to do just that. (See pages 34 & 35 herein).

We all should be *"proud to be allowed."*

Following is the letter of invitation Roy sent to Nelson Gatewood with the 503rd PRCT.

Smitty Out



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Roy F. Scott, Jr.
President
173d Airborne Brigade Association
1409 Wilmore Drive
Columbus, OH 43209
Phone: (614) 235-6055
Cell: (614) 206-2919

28 June 2010

Mr. Nelson Gatewood
President
503rd PRCT Association
2817 Highway 62 - 412
Highland, AR 72542

Dear Mr. Gatewood:

Before addressing the subject of this note, I first want to share with you, your Board members and your membership how pleased we of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association were to serve as hosts to the 503rd PRCT troopers and their companions at our annual reunion held earlier this month in North Myrtle Beach, SC. Without question, their participation directly contributed to this year's reunion being an overwhelming success and like no other before. What we've heard from some of your men indicates they too enjoyed their time with their fellow paratroopers. I hope we've set the stage for the 503rd and 173d to move together into the future in airborne brotherhood.

Consistent with that hope, and following-up on a request and a wonderful idea by Mr. Chuck Breit, whom, as you know, is a member of your Association, and on behalf of the entire 173d Airborne Brigade Association, I am honored to invite you and all interested members of the 503rd PRCT Association to consider becoming Associate Members of our organization. In turn, we will be further honored to extend any similar invitation from you for our members to consider joining the 503rd PRCT Association if you deem this appropriate.

Working within our bi-laws and approved by our Board of Directors, I'm pleased to report we are extending a special dues rate for the first year membership of \$5.03 per each 503rd PRCT trooper wishing to become an Associate Member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association. For any trooper who simply cannot afford the \$5.03 dues, we will waive that request. Should any trooper have interest in a life-time membership, we've reduced those one-time dues from \$173. to \$121.

No doubt like the 503rd PRCT Association, we too are dedicated to keeping alive the bond shared by all paratroopers. Sharing in our combined histories the proud heritage of the 503rd Infantry Regiment is all the more reason for members of our organizations to come together. As Mr. Breit stated in an earlier note on the subject, no paratrooper should ever stand alone, and with our troopers, hopefully one day participating as members in both Associations, this will ensure not one of us will ever stand alone.

- 1 of 2 -

