



Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

October 2010 ~ Issue 20

## ~ PHOTO OF THE MONTH ~

### 2/503d Troopers Capture Bad Guys



See all past issues at these web sites: [www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php](http://www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php) or [http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / October 2010 - Issue 20

Page 1 of 36



# To The Wives, Mothers and Children of the 2/503d

## [Thoughts from the wife of a former 2/503d Battalion Commander]

This note is in honor of the men who served in Vietnam with the 2/503d.

In the many years since that war, children have grown up, daughters have walked down the aisle minus that proud father by their side, sons have achieved either an academic or sports award that would have made a father bust his buttons. Children graduated from high school, college, married, had families of their own, ultimately giving grandchildren to that wife or mother who paid the highest and final price.

In this grandchild may have been seen, by the turn of a head, a familiar laugh, a certain gesture or gait, a family remembrance and resemblance of that one who had departed.

Life, however, must go on, day by day, week by week month by month, year by year. It is to the strength and courage of that wife and mother, as well as the fallen soldier, I wish to recognize and honor. No medals here, and every wife whose husband served knew no matter what she or her family went through at home, it in no way would or could ever exceed the daily challenge, bravery, and danger her husband met every day.

I saw you receive your flag.

I saw your dignified courage and the quiet strength your husband or son would have been proud to see; but then, My Army Sister, came the hard part. For it was left to you to rebuild your and your children's lives without him by your side.

*Even yet, after these many decades, I can only say, it is for you I shed my tears, it is for you, I give my salute.*

The greatest gift those departed can bestow upon their loved ones left behind, is the gift of the good life; the joy, the love, and the happiness that just being alive can bring.

In the year 2010, the road behind us is longer than the road ahead. And so again My Army Sisters, to those of you I knew personally and to those of you I did not, you have never left my mind or my heart. In the remaining years of your life may the sunlight fall brightly upon your path and may the rain fall softly upon your fields.



In the ensuing years that followed, the wife and mother of the fallen soldier had her own lonely journey of rebuilding. As an Army wife and one whom for those seven years lived closely among you and who spent many hours in the Army Community Service Office, let me say:

I saw you receive your message.  
I saw you console and comfort your children.  
I saw you make your final arrangements.

### 173d Memorial, Ft. Benning, Georgia. Some gave all.

It is not important who I am, it is only important that I am an Army Wife who still remembers.

### A Sky Soldiers' Wife





# RUNNING OF THE HERD

The 173d ABCT cordially invites you to participate in the “4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Running of the Herd” – a 24-hour relay run to honor the past and present sacrifices of our Sky Soldiers and their families – at Bamberg, Germany on 8 and 9 November 2010.

This year’s race will mark the Return of the Herd once again, from our 3<sup>rd</sup> Afghanistan deployment. The Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) will close on Bamberg by the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2010, and host the relay to honor the sacrifices of our paratroopers and their families over the last year of separation, and remember our fallen. Specifically, this year’s event will be held in remembrance of the nine Sky Soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice during OEF X. Most recently, four Soldiers from the 173d BSB were killed on 31 August 2010 by an improvised explosive device (IED) that exploded under their vehicle. Charlie Company of the BSB, the medical company hosting the run, felt the impact of this loss especially, as one of the IED victims was a medic and member of the LifeLine family.

The race began in 2007. While deployed to Jalalabad, Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom VIII, the medical company’s command team received a package from the 173d Airborne Association that contained commemorative DVDs that included the song *8<sup>th</sup> of November*, and decided to host the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Running of the Herd – a 24 hour relay race circling the airfield there, starting and ending at midnight from 8-9 November 2007. More than 200 Sky Soldiers participated to honor our fallen paratroopers.

The morning after the 22 to 27 mile race, as the medics were stiffly beginning their shifts, casualties started pouring into the C-MED and Forward Surgical Team, after elements of the 2/503 IN (ABN) were ambushed in Aranus, Afghanistan, with six Sky Soldiers paying the ultimate sacrifice and six others wounded. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Running of the Herd was held in Bamberg in 2008, after the Brigade returned to its bases in Europe in November, to commemorate the men lost in that ambush, as well as the 38 Sky Soldiers that died in the previous 15 month deployment, which the recent movie *Restrepo* and the book *War* memorializes.

We, Charlie Company of the 173d BSB, would be honored to host you for this year’s Running of the Herd. You are welcome to register as part of a team, or simply come to support the runners and be a part of the event. Members of the 173d Association, all Vietnam 173d veterans, sponsor great prizes and sweatshirts for all participants in the event. As fellow members of The Herd and proud Sky Soldiers in the 173d ABCT, we invite you to become a part of this special event this year.

We always open the 24-hour relay with a ceremony at noon on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and hold a closing ceremony and awards presentation at noon on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. We can assist with the local logistics of housing, transportation and other arrangements as you require. We hope to see you on 8 November, ready to run and to remember what it means to be a member of The Herd. Sky Soldiers!

Sincerely,

**2LT Emille Prosko**

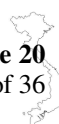
Running of the Herd

Officer in Charge

**SGT Robert Mullins**

Running of the Herd

Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge



## **The Man With the Rifle Knows**

(Author Unknown)

This poem was hanging on the wall at the jump school in Ft. Benning. I remember reading it when I was there in the summer of 1963. It says the author is unknown but I'll bet he was a Sky Soldier.

**Rick Jerman**  
**HHC/2/503d**

**Men may argue forever on what wins their wars  
and welter on cons and pros.  
And seek their answers at history's doors,  
but the Man With the Rifle Knows.**

**He must stand on the ground  
on his own two feet,  
and he's never in doubt when it's won.  
If it's won he is there, if he's not it's defeat.  
That's his test when the fighting is done.**

**When he carries the fight it's not with a roar  
of armoured wings spitting death.  
It's creep and crawl on the earthen floor,  
butt down and holding his breath.**

**Saving his strength for the last low rush,  
grenade throw and bayonet thrust;  
And the whispered prayer before he goes in,  
of a man who does what he must.**

**And when he's attacked, he can't zoom away,  
when the shells fill the world with their sound.  
He stays where he is, loosens his spade,  
and digs his defense in the ground.**

**That ground isn't ours till he's there in the flesh,  
not a gadget, or a bomb, but a man.  
He's the answer to theories which start afresh  
with each peace since war began.**

**So let the wild circle of argument rage  
on what wins as war comes and goes.  
Many new theories may hold the stage,  
BUT THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE KNOWS.**

## **“THE 3RD BATT COIN”**

In the last issue of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt Newsletter there was an advertisement announcing a 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt coin. It stated that I designed the coin. Well, that is partially accurate. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt coin has its genesis in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt “flash coins”. I used those actual coins to develop a prototype 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt coin.

Mason Branstetter had the great suggestion to perhaps remove the rank insignia and include some association with the 173d Airborne Brigade. So the 173d Patch and

a small Regimental Patch were included in the coin design.



The question may come to mind... Why a 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt coin? Well, about a year ago I met a young MI Major and his family. He had just come from Italy to teach at the West Point Prep School after serving for over seven years with SETAF and the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team. He showed me his 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt flash coins and I immediately began planning for a 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt flash coin.

It was not to garner any credit for myself, but rather to only honor 173d Airborne soldiers who have served and sacrificed. To honor men who gave it all and to honor men who have passed on. Men like Col Don Soland and Col John Wooschlager to name a couple.

I have been so humbled by the response to the coin and wish to share a few stories.

I received a request for 5 coins from one former paratrooper who said he was going to dedicated three of them, one for his step-son, one for the pilot and one for the co-pilot who were lost in Afghanistan when their helo went down. He sent me a check for \$50 to pay for the coins. I sent him a check back for \$30 telling him that no self-respecting paratrooper could accept money for a coin dedicated to a fallen soldier.

One Paratrooper's wife sent me an email asking me to hold one coin till payday and she would send me a check for her husband's coin. He wanted one to put in his shadow box with his medals. I told her just send me your address.

Then there was the paratrooper who sent an extra \$100 to cover the cost to design and produce the first 100 coins, an overwhelmingly generous gesture.

I NEVER intended to make money on this coin. Any and all of it will go to the poor and to get more coins in order to provide one to those who served and who want a 3<sup>rd</sup> Batt Flash Coin.

Perhaps someone from the 4<sup>th</sup> Batt will design a Flash coin and complete the set. To that person, I want to be first in line to reserve one.

Respectfully,

Paul R. Fisher, LTC (Ret)  
3rd Bn Commo Officer  
1969-1970



**H.R. 4667:  
VETERANS' COMPENSATION  
COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT  
OF 2010**

111th Congress

**Sponsored by:**

Thomas Perriello [D-VA]  
Stephen Buyer [R-IN]  
Joe Donnelly [D-IN]  
Bob Filner [D-CA]  
John Hall [D-NY]  
Deborah Halvorson [D-IL]  
Ann Kirkpatrick [D-AZ]  
Ciro Rodriguez [D-TX]  
Harry Teague [D-NM]

To increase, effective as of December 1, 2010, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

**Mar 22, 2010:** This bill passed in the House of Representatives by roll call vote. The vote was held under a suspension of the rules to cut debate short and pass the bill, needing a two-thirds majority. This usually occurs for non-controversial legislation. The totals were 407 Ayes, 0 Nays, 22 present/not voting.

**Sep 22, 2010:** This bill passed in the Senate by Unanimous Consent. A record of each senator's position was not kept.

**Sep 23, 2010:** Presented to President.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that implementing H.R. 4667 would increase spending for those programs by \$50 million in Fiscal Year 2011.

Source: [GOP.gov](http://www.gop.gov), the website of Republicans in Congress.



## Compensation Rate Increase Hoax

*September 29, 2010*

Many DAV members have been contacting National Service Officers across the country regarding rumored legislation that would significantly increase disability compensation.

Please be advised that no legislation has been introduced that would double compensation for 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans or would quadruple compensation for veterans rated 10 percent or significantly increase the other ratings.

H.R. 4667, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2010, was introduced to increase, effective as of December 1, 2010, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes. The increase is based on the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), if any, that would be provided to Social Security recipients.

Please advise other DAV members that the rumored increase is a hoax and that the COLA increase, if any, will be announced as soon as it is known. As always, thank you for your hard work and dedication to America's service-connected disabled veterans and their families.

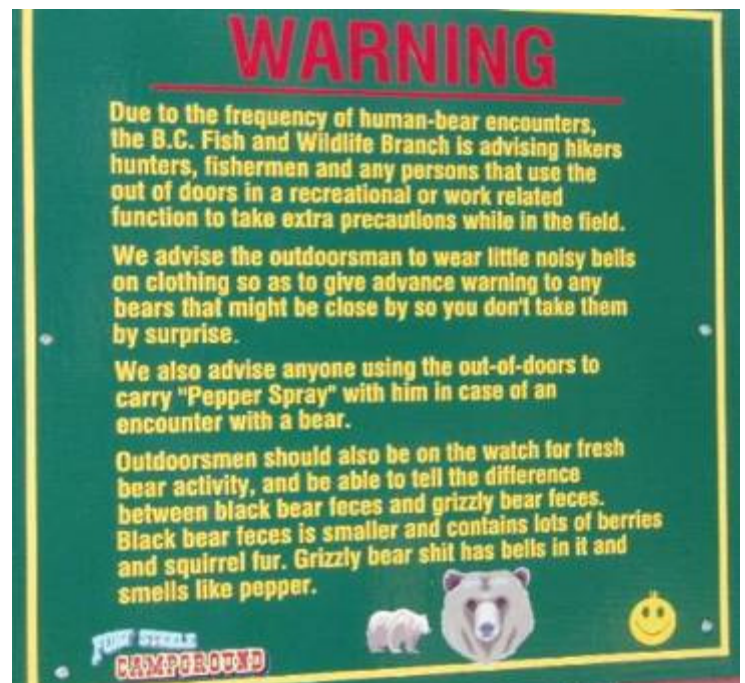
Source: DAV web site:

<http://www.dav.org/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=324>

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## WARNING!!

A number of our guys are campers, hunters and outdoorsmen who are at risk of encountering bears in the wild. This recently posted sign offers some excellent precautionary advice. Thanks to my nephew, Tony Clark, and good buddy Jim Gettel, A/2/503d, for sending this in. You guys probably saved lives. Ed



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / October 2010 - Issue 20

Page 5 of 36



## THEM CHOPPER PILOTS



Your short story on page 28 (*A Chopper Jockey*, September newsletter) got my attention. If you only knew how often all of us pilots came to losing it when we had a full load of troops to extract, you'd be surprised.

What would usually make things very dangerous was that we were loaded to the max, in high density weather conditions which made the load seem heavier than it actually was. In addition, we often had to change directions to get out of the LZ than we took coming in due to enemy fire being more effective in the direction we had planned to leave by.

The other big killer was elephant grass. A helicopter hovers by using the ground effect created by the rotor beating down on the ground and keeping it up in the air in a hovering mode until you can nose the a/c over to get some airspeed. Elephant grass takes away ground effect during hovering.

Elephant grass, which is very long - long enough to hide an elephant some times (thus the name), would take away the effect of ground effect while we hovered and tried to get some traction to get the hell off the ground. In any number of cases we found ourselves losing rotor rpm due to elephant grass, taking off downwind rather than into the wind because of enemy fire. I've come within inches of buying the farm a half dozen times due to these conditions.



**2/503d trooper arriving aid station '66.** (Jack Ribera, A/2/503d)

If it was not for the exceptional training we got in flight school that was reinforced by on the job work in our little paradise, many of us would be looking up at the daises today.

In addition to flying in Vietnam, I flew in Korea and Thailand. I remember once a colonel getting a little nervous when we made a landing into a dusty area that seemed to make it very difficult to land in Thailand. We knew what we were doing, but it seemed like a difficult landing to the non-rated person. Before we took off again, the colonel asked if we were sure we could take

off in all this dust safely. He said he was in a helicopter that crashed in Vietnam with a pilot who didn't do it right. I told him not to worry - we would do what we call an instrument take-off (ITO) as if we had zero-zero visibility. Within one hundred feet or about 5 to 10 seconds we would be clear of everything and be looking at blue skies again. I did a simple ITO, when the colonel slapped my shoulder and gave me the thumbs-up sign like I was an ace pilot.

In Korea, I was flying a general and his party around. The winds were really strong that day, but I had the a/c under control. We had made several take-offs and landings with this guy, but the winds continued to buffet us around some. He asked me before we were to take off for the last time to go back to the airfield if I thought it was unsafe to fly in this wind. I told him I was the safest pilot in the detachment and he had nothing to worry about. He came back with, *"You'd better be. If you put a scratch on this helicopter I'll have your ass court-martialed."* I almost rolled the throttle off to idle to tell the general to fuck himself. He could walk back as far as I was concerned. But instead, I did a normal take-off you do in heavy winds and landed back at our field w/o incident.

Most officers I flew saluted the pilot on their way out as a simple "thank you" for the safe trip. I got nothing from this guy.

I was a warrant officer in Vietnam, but as the aircraft commander, I was in charge of the aircraft and the mission when we went anywhere. A major got on the aircraft in Saigon. My crew chief noticed that he had a magazine locked and loaded in his M-16. That was against company policy and was only allowed when we went on combat assaults due to accidents that had happened in country. I told the crew chief to tell the major to take the magazine out of the rifle and take the round out of the chamber. The crew chief relayed to me that the major said he was a major, he outranked me and he was going to keep his rifle loaded -- I was to mind my business and fly the helicopter. I immediately went to flight idle, took off my helmet, turned around and simple said, *"Major, unload your fucking weapon or get the hell off my helicopter."* Within five seconds the weapon was unloaded and we took-off. Sometimes you just have to talk nice to the passengers for them to do what you want.

These stories could go on forever. Most guys were fine, but every once in a while, you'd find some major assholes. There were some enlisted assholes too, but not as many.

**Tony Geishauser**  
**Cowboy Pilot, '65/'66**



## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

**OBJECTIVE:** This fund provides an opportunity for a better tomorrow by financially assisting Sky Soldiers and Qualified Dependents in furthering their education.

**POLICY:** Provide financial grants to students who are or plan to attend an accredited college, university, or higher technical trade school. Neither applications at the high school or prep school level are accepted.

**ELIGIBILITY:** **Sky Soldier** as defined as an individual who is at the time of application is a current member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association or was KIA.

**Qualified Dependents** is defined as a spouse, child, grandchild and/or stepchild of a Sky Soldier.

### 2011 Application Process

Download Application.

Submit Application to Scholarship Chairman.

Applications copied and mailed to Scholarship Committee.

Scholarship Committee reports ranking of applicants to Scholarship Chairman.

Final Scholarship Awards communicated to Foundation President.

Announcement of Scholarship Awards at General Membership Meeting.

Prospective applicants who consider themselves eligible, must fill out the downloaded application form at: [173d Airborne Brigade Foundation - Scholarship Program](http://173dAirborneBrigadeFoundation-ScholarshipProgram).

Contact Bill Vose, chairman of the scholarship committee and send transcripts to him at: [wcvose@cfl.rr.com](mailto:wcvose@cfl.rr.com)

**SCOPE:** The scholarship program is supported by voluntary donations from Association members and others. Please donate at [www.skysoldiers.com/foundation.htm](http://www.skysoldiers.com/foundation.htm)

**The 173d Airborne Brigade Foundation - Scholarship Program** is a 501 ( c ) 3 Corporation recognized by the IRS for tax deductible donations.

## Thanks to 173d SC Chapter 30

Wayne Bowers, C/2/503d, reunion committee member of this years' reunion in North Myrtle Beach, reports Chapter 30 donated \$1668.72 to the 173d Scholarship Fund on behalf of their Chapter, attendees to the reunion and all donors to the WWII 503rd project.

## THE RAZORBACKS



I often see mention of the "Cowboys" in our newsletter, but have not seen any mention of the "Razorbacks".

When we arrived in Vietnam, a lot of the things that became commonplace a couple of years later, were in their development stage. There was a unit, I have no idea what it's size was, company, battalion, whatever, providing gunship duty for us. They had bright red razorback hogs painted on the nose of their choppers.

As I recall, they operated both B and D model Hueys. Their armament varied from chopper to chopper. I recall one had a pair of M-60's attached above the skids on both sides. They were fed via the flexible duct work that ran from the magazine, that took the place of the rear sling seat. The rocket pods were hung on in various positions.

There was a lot of talented shade-tree mechanics attempting to cobble up systems that worked. Often M-60's were hung on the side, in the door opening; some were inside and some were outside, with a bracket system. It seemed that each was different, in an attempt to determine the best setup. These guns had to have the ammo hung on them in cans.

The goofiest system I saw was an M-60 suspended with a bunch of bungee cords. You had to give them credit for doing their damndest to solve a problem. I saw a lot of them on the ground and in the air.

Once, I hitched a ride in one and learned that they were each equipped with the full auto version of the M-14 "just in case." They would provide security flying and strafing in an oval pattern around the LZ that we would be assaulting in the striped hueys.

Whenever we needed some fire support and artillery would be shut down by all the tourists, I would get on the correct frequency and call "Razorback Razorback over." Invariably I would hear from one of them and I could direct their gun runs.

They did a great job. They lacked the ability to bomb that the Sky Raiders had but, because they were slower they were much more accurate.

**Jim Robinson, FO, B/2/503d**



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / October 2010 - Issue 20

Page 7 of 36



# 2/503d Sky Soldiers Where Are They Now?



**Jack Kelley**, CO A/2/503d in 66, Gen. Deane's Aide in 67, S-3 3/503d in 70. Retired as LTC in '79, then ordained and 25 years in ministry. One wife, two sons and four grandkids. Presently at "parade rest" looking for a job -- Fayetteville, NC. "Blessed day."



"Dramamine 6"

**William "Bill" MacKenzie**, Lieutenant, B/2/503d '68-'69, 82nd Abn. Div. '69-'70. Photo of myself and my two sons along with a photo of outing to Bong Son in '68 during a 3 day stand down. About to retire from department after 33 years' service to Massachusetts Police. 38 years of marriage and blessed with one grandson. Live in Andover, MA.

Bill & sons



Bill & buddies

**Tom Remington**, A/2/503d Platoon Leader from May thru Nov. 21, 1967. I was a replacement for the losses at the Battle of the Slopes and was wounded on Hill 875. Spent about six months in Army hospitals. Upon discharge, went to law school and then practiced law in Ft. Walton Beach, FL for over 20 years. Since 1993 I have been a Circuit Judge. Still working and have our 9th grandchild on the way. In early June, my son (age 38) and I went to Ft. Benning for the dedication of the 173d Memorial. It was quite a moving experience and well worth the trip. We also enjoyed the newly built National Infantry Museum. Several years ago, I took part in a T V documentary for the Military Channel on "Hill 875". The interview took place in Atlanta and I got to meet up with several other survivors of 875. I hope to retire in two years and spend more time with grandchildren and do a little fishing. Best regards. Tom Remington

## Note:

Let your buddies know where you are and what you've been doing. Send in your info and a photo for the November issue of our Newsletter to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

## ~ Be All You Can Be ~

There's Army strong, and then there's Army dumb.



Photo sent in by John "Top" Searcy, HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

A Sky Soldier would have shot the bear and eaten the cub while sipping a fine, dry Chianti. This guy must be a Straight Leg.....or was.





## ~ About Her Dad ~

Hi, my name is Kimberly Kimball Gonzales. My father was PFC Richard Kimball, Jr., he was killed in action in Vietnam in November of 1967. I was only two years old when he died and I have no memory of my dad. Below is the information I have found so far that may be able to put me in touch with anyone who knew him during his time of service. I was hoping to get in touch with anyone who may remember him or even have pictures of him. I appreciate anything you can do to help me. Thank you for your time.

HHC, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD ABN  
BDE, USARV

Sincerely,

**Kimberly Kimball Gonzales**  
[kmylou@comcast.net](mailto:kmylou@comcast.net)

## To Kimberly

Richard Nelson Kimball was part of D Company's Hq section. D Company initially was part of HHC 2/503. It did not become a regular company (like A, B & C) officially until the spring of 68. He was our supply guy in the bush with us. Richard made the initial assault on Hill 875 and was killed very early in the days' events. There was a guy standing up shot in front of the first bunker to open up on our point. I can't remember who it was. He was standing there bleeding, the NVA didn't finish him, though they could easily. They were waiting for someone to come and get him.

Well Richard Kimball saw this. He threw down his ruck and ran to the wounded guy to get him, despite being yelled at by numerous people to stop and get down. Kimball apparently thought he could rescue this wounded guy and was shot and killed by an NVA machinegun in that first bunker. I witnessed this and still see it frequently.

I spoke to Rich before we started up the Hill while Father Watters was still having his last Mass near us. I think the family would like to hear what I have to say.

**Bob Fleming**  
HHC/D/2/503d

Hello Kimberly, my name is Paul M. Ramirez and I had the pleasure of serving with him, your father, in Viet Nam. Your dad was known to us that knew him as "The Fugitive" a TV series that ran in the 60's and early 70's. When I saw the email from Smitty I had to reach out to you if nothing more than to say what a great guy your dad was. I did not know much of his personal life because many of us kept things like that to ourselves. I

had no idea that he had a family. Here we are almost 43 years later this November that your dad and I were in a 5 day battle in the Dak To highlands from November 19, 1967 to the 23rd of November. I was the communications sergeant for the newly formed D Company 2nd Battalion 503rd Infantry 173d Airborne. I did not know your dad for a long time, we met in Bien Hoa South Viet Nam when we were both assigned to HHC Company Commo Platoon. If I recall he came from Pennsylvania. I may be wrong, it has been so many years ago. I don't know how old your dad was, I had just turned 21 years old that July. Kimberly, just know that I valued your dad's friendship and was present the day he paid the ultimate price for our country. I will always honor him and his memory in my own mind and heart. God Bless and always be proud of who and what your father gave for his family and country.

**Sergeant Paul M. Ramirez** 2nd Battalion 503rd  
Infantry 173d Airborne and friend of Richard Kimball  
"The Fugitive" - God Rest His Soul.

## ~ The Missing Hearts ~

Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is Jim Pineau and my uncle, Norman R. Pineau, served with the 2nd Bn 503rd 173d Airborne during Vietnam. During his first tour he participated in Operation Silver City and was wounded on Mar 16, 1966. Uncle Norm says he notified the medic he was wounded after the battle and remembers the medic writing it down. At approx 0725, a resupply helo was shot down and Norm went in the helo to retrieve the air crew and ammo and was hit by shrapnel. He has requested help with his Member of Congress to receive the Purple Heart for his wounds, but to date the National Archives has not been able to locate paperwork verifying his wounds. If you or anyone you know may remember Norm or this incident, please respond to this email or call my cell at [207-240-2936](tel:207-240-2936). Thank you for your service and for your time.

Sincerely,

**Jim Pineau**

Hi Jim:

Thanks for your note. I was there that day with your uncle. And like Norm I too was wounded but never received the Purple Heart. There had to be well over 100 of us in the same situation.

(continued....)



Unless he was dusted off, there was probably no record kept by the medic who treated him during the battle....same in my case. I personally know of at least three other guys wounded that day who never received the Heart.

Thirty odd years later our former Bn commander and a Captain who witnessed me being wounded put me in for the PH, but some Colonel at the Pentagon shot it down. The only thing I can recommend is for him to get as many witness letters as possible and go back thru his Congressman.

In '05, two 2/503d buddies and I returned to Vietnam and humped back in to the "D" Zone jungle to find LZ Zulu-Zulu, site of the battle Norm and I were in. I kept a trip journal which has grown into somewhat of a historical record on Silver City. It's over 200 pages long. Attached is the first part. Please give it to Norm for me and ask him if he wants the rest of the story. If so I'll send it to you in installments.

Is Norman aware of our monthly "2/503d Vietnam Newsletter"? I'll put your note in the next issue, maybe some of his buddies will recall the incident and contact you. Please tell my brother Norm, Smitty said hi.

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

### ~ They Called Each Other Mister ~

I remember a landing strip on flat ground below a very high mountain with a Special Forces camp on top. The operation was to find a Viet Cong General who was said to have a helicopter in Cambodia that he used to go to his units near the Cambodian border. I was a member of a small unit of about 20 soldiers of the 173d and five guys from the top of the mountain in jungle fatigues. They were not Special Forces and called each other Mister. We flew to near the Cambodian border and crossed it on foot, then we skirted a trail I think was the HO CHI MINH looking for the helicopter. Before we found it our pointman jumped down into a stream, looked to his right at a Viet Cong who he said was unarmed. The gook took off and our pointman didn't shoot because we had orders not to engage unless we had to. Anyway, it was decided that we should back track and go back over the border. We did, got picked up and went back to the mountain. Funny thing about the helicopter we used to get to the border, it had a map with a stylus that moved on the map as the chopper moved. Not sure about the date of all this but anyone that saw that mountain would remember. Anyone remember this operation?

**Lonnie Mitchell**  
**B/2/503d, '66/'67**  
**lmitchell2053@embarqmail.com**

## The P-38 Winner Is.....

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

In last month's issue we promised to send a P-38 to who was first to identify the trooper in this photo.

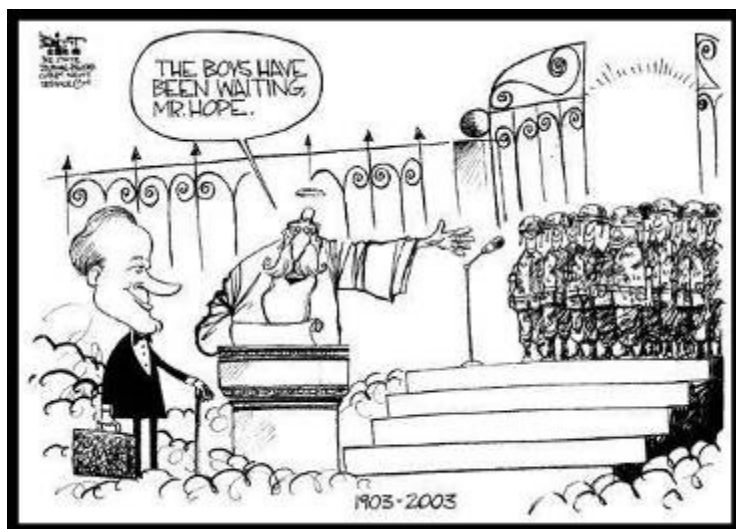


**Hal Clem, HHC 2/503d, '65/'66**

*"Just read the newsletter. That's Hal Clem, HHC 2/503d '65/'66, with the P-38. I carry one on my key chain all the time. One of those little ever-present reminders. Say hi to the boss for me."* Jim

Jim correctly identified Hal in the wire struggling with his nifty can opener. Since Jim keeps his close to his heart, we'll send his pretty bride, Gayle, her very own P-38 so she no longer has to borrow his. Ed

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# LETTERS HOME FROM VIETNAM

We'll periodically include letters from 2/503d troopers written in Vietnam and sent home. The following letter was sent by Wambi Cook (A/2/503d) to his mother, Alma Cook, who passed away this past May 11 at the age of 84. In Wambi's own words, "*Still missing you Mummy.*"

\*\*\*\*\*

Hello Dear,

Well, I received your last letter yesterday. I'd already written you a couple days before. I didn't have time to answer it and we went (as of today) 4 days without resupply. We're to get resupplied in a few hours and I thought I'd get this off before the last chopper leaves. We're to go another 5 days without resupply.



**Wambi with his mother, Alma**

We may return to Tuy Hoa for a few days either the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of Nov. If its just long enough to get a good shower, it would suit me fine. I've had only one shower in 34 days. Well two if you count the one day at the beach. I really feel cruddy. Two days without cleaning up is bad but 4 and 5.....

We haven't run into much since we left the fire support base. My platoon did kill two VC about 4 days ago. We were just about to set up our ambush and they came hopping through the bush. We called for them to stop but they fired at us. About 10 of the 34 of us opened up on them. Ones head was blown to bits and each had at least 30-50 holes in them. From the papers we took from them, we believe they were high officials.

We also uncovered tons of rice which I'm sending you a few grains. You break the shell and white rice will appear. You're probably one of the few mothers in the USA who has her own enemy rice supply ( smile). We also should get mail in. The last letter I got from Anita (my first wife) said she bought a \$444.00 bedroom suite. I told her to forget about it. I want to be there when we

furnish our home. I'm waiting for her "cursing out" letter.

I just realized your last name is "Powell." (Mom had just remarried). Do you want to use it or remain Cook? I will stop writing letters to Alma L. Powell. I'll keep with Cook until you tell me different.

I guess that's about all until we return to Tuy Hoa. No, I haven't forgotten your birthday, 11/22. The fellas can't believe you're my mother. (Mom was a beautiful woman).

They look at me and say I must have lived a hard life. (Ha!) I still don't know how old you really are (she had me at 21) and I'm sure you don't want me to start guessing.

Give my best to Taru and Tawana (siblings). On the writing of this letter, I have 104 days to go. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November I hit the century mark. I'll really be conscious of the days.

So love, I'll see you. Take good care of yourself. I wish you all the happiness and luck in the world. You deserve it.

Your son always,  
Wambi

\*\*\*\*\*



## **Recommended reading:** **'Faith of my Fathers'** **by John McCain** **(POW 1967-73)**

Book gives insight into the prosecution of the war and decisions that influenced military actions. Chapter 21 was about McCain's father, Jack, who in 1968 was CINPAC, Commander In Chief Pacific. After Tet I, Jack McCain wanted to launch a major offensive on Hue (the old imperial capital in North Vietnam). Washington rejected the plan due to the fear of the Red Chinese entering the war.

**Review by: Steve Vargo, C/2/503d**



## ~ Tribute to the 173d Airborne ~

Check out the link below to see a music/video tribute to the 173d Airborne Brigade. Send to your distribution, if you will. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh1SPtFlgXE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh1SPtFlgXE)

Thanks Herd Brothers,

**Eddie Hair**  
C/1/503d

## ~ America's Best ~



FORT BENNING, Ga. -- Sgt. 1st Class Jack White, an Airborne School instructor, received the Army's second-highest military decoration, the Distinguished Service Cross September 7.

In a ceremony on the hallowed ground of the 173d Airborne Memorial at the National Infantry Museum, White was surrounded by his family, Soldiers he served with in the 173d Airborne Brigade and the Fort Benning community.

The award was for his actions June 29, 2008, in Khost Province, Afghanistan, while serving as a squad leader with the Vicenza, Italy-based A Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment.

That night, White and 18 other Soldiers on a tiny observation post near the Pakistan border turned back an enemy force of 105 Taliban fighters who attacked from a ridge with small-arms fire, RPK machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

*"He brought them all back unscathed,"* said Command Sgt. Maj. Rick Weik, who was the battalion's command sergeant major and now fills that role at the 198th Infantry Brigade. *"Very easily this could've turned bad. If it wasn't for his leadership, it would've."*

In the past decade, more than 1.5 million troops have deployed in the war on terrorism. The 173d Airborne Brigade accounted for four Distinguished Service Cross awards during OEF VIII.

*"Heroic actions can serve as lessons learned,"* said Maj. Gen. Michael Ferriter, the Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning commanding general. *"We*

*talk an awful lot about inspired leadership here. The Soldier we honor today is the epitome of inspired leadership."*

Col. Michael Fenzel, then a lieutenant colonel, led White's battalion in Afghanistan. He's now commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas.

*"Heroes are made long before the events that thrust them into a position to have to act,"* Fenzel told the audience. *"Jack White became a hero to those that served with him long before the evening of June 29 on Observation Point East."*

The observation point was a 90-minute climb from Combat Outpost Spera, which sat 1,000 feet below. It's just 25 meters from Pakistan.

On the morning of June 29, the Taliban fighters began a 10-hour crawl up the side of the mountain toward White's position at the top. As the attack commenced, White was awoken by an RPG that landed less than 20 meters away. He immediately low-crawled out of the sleeping area to lead the observation point's defense.

White spoke of the unity and strength of the small tactical unit and squad, and of the human dimension of combat.

*"You don't really think, you just think about what you have to do at the time,"* said White, 30, who was a staff sergeant when the incident occurred. *"It ain't like the movies; it ain't fun. It's the last place you want to be, honestly. But your training takes over, and you start thinking about the guy to the left and right of you, and make sure everybody gets out of there safe."*

*"If it weren't for my guys that were up there ... I wouldn't be speaking to you today."*

Maneuvering through heavy enemy fire, White engaged and quickly adjusted his men to repel the attacking force, according to his citation. With no regard for his own safety, he ordered multiple "danger-close" fire missions, called in airstrikes, and directed lethal mortar and artillery launches.

*"There was no way to get to them quickly, (and) over 100 Taliban assaulted them with the intent of overrunning them,"* Command Sgt. Maj. Weik said. *"But when I heard his voice on the radio, I knew everything was going to be OK ... and he brought all those boys off that mountain."*

The fight lasted more than an hour, but the enemy finally broke contact and retreated.

(continued....)





*"These Taliban and foreign fighters came in waves and the attacks on the main combat outpost below them emanated from six other directions," Col. Fenzel said. "The other attacks were designed to isolate OP East so it could be destroyed, but the enemy hadn't taken into account the expertise, the cool and violent response under the direction of one man ... Jack's own personal actions, bravery and leadership are the reason why 18 other American Soldiers are alive today."*

White has been on four deployments — three to Afghanistan and one to Iraq. The Distinguished Service Cross wouldn't be possible without the actions of his comrades, he said.

*"All my guys who were up on the OP with me, I wish they were here today," he said. "It's mainly for them. That's how I see this award, not for me, but for everybody."*

His unit also earned seven Army Commendation Medals and a Bronze Star, all with "V" devices for valor.

The Distinguished Service Cross has been awarded to more than 13,000 U.S. service members since its inception in January 1918. Since the global war on terror began, it's gone to 15 Soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom and six from Operation Enduring Freedom.

## ~ Our Memorial ~

Help spread the word of our 173d Memorial through those that have access to electronic media. Every paratrooper that has worn "The Patch" should be able to see some part of this tremendous accomplishment by our 173d Memorial Committee, all their many hours exhausted on this 1st class project, and all their personal financial contributions. My personal THANKS to each of you that were part of this most successful effort. If some brigade or division that served in Vietnam has organized, planned and executed a project that has been this successful, it should be shared with all.

This should also be shared with the Gold Star families, the spouses, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, and all who paid the supreme sacrifice.

We were the fortunate ones. We should do everything within our power to never let our fallen comrades be forgotten. The Memorial Committee has done this. Their efforts should be recognized by one and all.

Please view this You Tube link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh1SPtFlqXE>

**Eddie Hair**  
SC Chapter 30

## A VISIT TO THE BRIDGES OF MARKET GARDEN

I thought I should share the following. As many of you know, I have been to Omaha Beach several times. I have always been amazed at how they got across that beach. It is even more frightening when you are on the beach looking up at the bunkers.



**The LT**

Last week, as we toured the Market Garden country, I was left speechless. As most of you know the 101st had the bridge near Eindhoven. The British 1st ABN division was responsible for Arnhem. Jumping Jim Gavin's 82d Airborne was responsible for the area around Nijmegen, and with taking the bridges as one of two major responsibilities.

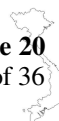
Well, it took several days to take the principal bridge. After several failed attempts, they went up stream about 700 yards and made a river crossing in British boats they had never seen, much less trained in. There was a shortage of paddles so many troopers used their M-1s. The river was about 200 yards across, but what left me terrified, as I stood on the dyke rising a good 20 feet in the air, was the view of the flood plain between the dyke and the river. It looked like a billiard table, absolutely no cover or concealment. On top of that, it was determined that there were 30 German machine guns on the bridge!

I did not count the number of men lost (there was a memorial there with all the names), however, it seems to me that only about 40 were killed -- important if you were one of the 40. No one would ever be able to convince me that a company of men could cross an area like that.

Standing there, looking out, imagining what had gone on, I got that metallic taste in the back of my mouth.

**Jim Robinson**  
FO, B/2/503d, '65

### Operation Market Garden, 1944



## DEATH

Among a few other notables important to us, to include brotherhood, a shared war experience, hell, we're even paratroopers which further binds us together, you may have noticed a common thread linking all past issues of our battalion's newsletter. And, of course, that theme or common thread is one of death.

This death thread has entailed reporting on the passing of some of us as we fall prey to the clock and ailments of various kinds, and the boys we lost years ago when we were boys, all serving to round out our experience with death. We each live with the memory of those kids, those boymen we served with and relied on and yes, tried to protect from the call of death, sometimes succeeding, often times not. We've erected memorials to them, we talk of them and to them, and lift drinks to the memories of them, and mourn those of us now departing on what seems like a daily basis. "*We're dropping like flares,*" one trooper said.

Death, I think, is a peculiar thing to many of us who served in war and is something we're faced with almost as a daily diet, yet unlike those who were not combatants. Our non-combatant friends and relatives also deal with death experiences, yet I suspect their anguish, if not somewhat different is certainly lived less often. Death seems to follow us daily, always just a thought away, a war away or a memory away.

As of this writing we just lost four young soldiers in Afghanistan, and we know there will be more to come. We think of these new dead kids and they remind us of our guys we lost a lifetime ago...we can't escape these thoughts. But, aside from the family members and close friends of our most recent fallen, who else besides them, and us, think of them, truly care for them? Their passing is little more than a news release in some small town newspaper or an old soldier newsletter. "*How sad,*" the civilians say, before moving to the Sports section.

Yet, most of us, along with those families and friends, die just a little whenever we read those notices, whenever we lose a new or old buddy, like Sky Soldier Butch Clark, and whenever we think of guys from that other lifetime we shared who left us long ago.

When the project began to establish this newsletter, it was premised on the idea of providing an outlet for buddies to hook up, for old paratroopers to tell their stories and to have those recollections recorded for all time; not so much for scholastic or military purview, as few have interest in our stories, but perhaps more for our kids, our grandkids and kids of our grandkids (and ourselves) to read one day about when their dad and

granddad was 'young and a soldier' -- the subject of death was never once considered.

Yet, the final jump manifest of young and old continues to grow, name by name and day by day. Old death once chased us with vigor, never relenting, always one step away, always just around the next bend in some nameless jungle, rice paddy or mountain range....that bastard just won't give up.

Loch Heim brothers,

Smitty Out

### Farewell Commo Buddy

Mearl "Butch" H. Clark, age 64, of Sarver died Thursday, September 16, 2010 at his residence. Butch served in Vietnam in the commo section of HHC 2/503d in 1965.



He was born on February 28, 1946 in Natrona Heights, Allegheny Co., PA, the son of Mearl Clark and Betty (Thieman) Clark Cypher.

**Sky Soldier Butch**

Butch was a high school graduate. A lifetime resident of the area, he was a self-employed carpenter. Butch honorably served his country during the Vietnam War as a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade. He enjoyed hunting and fishing, in addition to owning Buffalo Bids, an eBay store that collected and sold Indian artifacts.

He will be deeply missed by his wife Karen L. (Schoentag) Clark, whom he married October 5, 1983; three sons, Ian Anderson and wife Andrea of New Castle, PA, Knight H. S. Clark of Sarver, and Mearl T. Clark of Saxonburg; one daughter, Jennie Healey of Chandler, AZ; three grandchildren, Addison and Macyn Anderson, and Blade Clark; in addition to two sisters, Joann Brice and husband Paul of Melbourne Beach, FL and Colleen Crytzer of Freeport.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one sister, Sally Erb.

At Butch's request, there will be no visitation. An open house was held on Sunday, September 26, 2010 at Butch and Karen's residence in Sarver.

You put up a good fight trooper. Rest well brother.

\*\*\*\*\*

**AND THE BEAT GOES ON.....**





## SGT Vinson Bryon Adkinson, III



*DOB: 13 December 1983 (26 yrs)*

*Hometown: Born in Kansas*

*MOS: 88M (Motor Transport Operator)*

*UNIT: Alpha Company*

*DUTY POS: Truck Commander / Squad Leader*

*FAMILY: Veronica Marie (Stewart) Adkinson (Wife)*

*Jacob Adkinson (Brother)*

*PARENTS: Vinson Bryon Adkinson, Jr. and  
Deborah L. Swinford*

Sergeant Vinson Bryon Adkinson, III was born 13 December 1983 in Kansas. He enlisted in the US Army on 27 May 2003 at age 19.

After SGT Adkinson completed Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, he was assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he served as a Vehicle Driver and deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Following his assignment at Fort Bragg, he was reassigned to Fort Carson, Colorado where he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and served a third combat tour in Iraq. He was assigned to the Transportation Platoon of Alpha Company in the 173d Brigade Support Battalion located in Bamberg, Germany on 11 November 2008. While deployed to Logar Province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X, he completed over 200 missions as a Squad Leader and Truck Commander.

SGT Adkinson's awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Achievement Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), the Army Good Conduct Medal (second award), the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon (numeral four), the NATO Medal, a Certificate of Achievement, the Combat Action Badge, the Parachutist Badge, the Driver and Mechanic Badge with Driver – Wheeled Vehicles, the Basic Marksmanship Qualification Badge, and the Marksmanship Qualification Badge – Marksman with Rifle.

SGT Adkinson was killed in action when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device on 31 August 2010 while conducting combat operations in Western Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. SGT Adkinson is survived by his wife, Veronica; his brother, Jacob; and his parents Vinson and Deborah.



## SPC Raymond Chavez Alcaraz, Jr.



*DOB: 4 November 1989 (20 yrs)*

*HOMETOWN: Born in California*

*MOS: 68W (Health Care Specialist)*

*UNIT: Charlie Company*

*DUTY POS: Health Care Sergeant*

*FAMILY: SFC Lucas Jack Gonzalez (Brother)*

*PARENTS: Raymond Chavez Alcaraz Sr. and  
Alma Delia Murphy*

Specialist Raymond Chavez Alcaraz Jr., was born 4 November 1989 in California. He enlisted in the US Army on 12 July 2007 at age 17.

After SPC Alcaraz completed Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, and Airborne School, he was assigned to Charlie Company 173d BSB. He joined the unit during Operation Enduring Freedom VIII and was attached to Able Company 1/503rd P.I.R. serving as a Platoon Medic. SPC Alcaraz again deployed to Afghanistan with Charlie Company 173d BSB in November 2009 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X. While deployed to Logar Province, Afghanistan, he was attached to 1st Platoon (Assassins)

of Alpha Company 173d Brigade Support Battalion (Airborne) as a Platoon Medic where he completed over 49 missions as a Health Care Sergeant in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X.

SPC Alcaraz's awards and decorations include the Army Achievement Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Meritorious Unit Commendation, the Army Good Conduct Medal (first award), the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon (numeral three), the NATO Medal, a Certificate of Achievement, the Combat Medic Badge, the Parachutist Badge, and the Basic Marksmanship Qualification Badge.

SPC Alcaraz was killed in action on 31 August 2010 while conducting combat operations in Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province, Afghanistan. SPC Alcaraz is survived by his brother, Lucas and parents, Raymond and Alma, who reside in California.



## PFC Matthew Eric George



*DOB: 10 February 1988 (22 yrs)*  
*HOMETOWN: Born in Virginia*  
*MOS: 88M (Motor Transport Operator)*  
*UNIT: Alpha Company*  
*173d Brigade Support Battalion*  
*173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team*  
*Bamberg, Germany*  
*DUTY POS: Vehicle Driver*  
*PARENTS: Donnie Carlton George and*  
*Bridget Ann George*

PFC George was killed in action when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device on 31 August 2010 while conducting combat operations in Western Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. PFC George is survived by his parents, Donnie and Bridget, who reside in Virginia Beach,

Private First Class Matthew Eric George was born 10 February 1988 in Virginia. He enlisted in the US Army on 4 March 2009 at age 21.

PFC George arrived to the unit on 24 April 2009 after completing his Basic Training, Advanced Individual Training, and Airborne School. Immediately upon arrival he was assigned to the Transportation Platoon in Alpha Company 173d Brigade Support Battalion and began to prepare for the upcoming deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X. While deployed to Logar Province, Afghanistan, he completed over 180 missions with his platoon, serving in the capacity of driver, gunner and dismount.

PFC George's awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, a Certificate of Achievement, the Parachutist Badge, and the Basic Marksmanship Qualification Badge.





## PFC James Anthony Page



*DOB: 23 February 1987 (23 yrs)*

*Hometown: Born in Florida*

*MOS: 88M (Motor Transport Operator)*

*UNIT: Alpha Company*

*173d Brigade Support Battalion*

*173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team*

*Bamberg, Germany*

*DUTY POS: Gunner*

*FAMILY: Jarod Russell Weathersby (Son)*

*Cristi Page (Sister)*

*PARENTS: James Herbert Page and*

*Deana Marie Strickland*

Private First Class James Anthony Page was born 23 February 1987 in Florida. He enlisted in the US Army on 6 November 2008 at age 21.

After PFC Page completed his Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, he was assigned to Alpha Company 173d Brigade Support Battalion, where he served as a Driver for the Transportation Platoon. He participated in the Brigade Mission Readiness Exercise in August 2009 before deploying with the unit in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X. While deployed to Logar Province, Afghanistan, he completed over 80 missions serving in the capacity of gunner and dismount.

PFC Page's awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, a Certificate of Achievement, the Combat Action Badge, and the Basic Marksmanship Qualification Badge.

PFC Page was killed in action when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device on 31 August 2010 while conducting combat operations in Western Pul-e-Alam, Logar Province. PFC Page is survived by his son, Jarod; his sister, Cristi; and his parents, James and Deana, who reside in Belleview and Titusville, Florida.

