



173d Arlington Memorial Stone

On 2 May 1998, the Society of the 173d Airborne Brigade dedicated a Memorial stone and tree in Arlington Cemetery to commemorate the heraldry of the Brigade and to honor our fallen. It was the collective judgment of the Society leadership at that time that years of trying to get the Brigade reactivated would continue to be unsuccessful and so the marker was inscribed with activation/deactivation dates and focused solely on Vietnam.

Sadly, we lacked faith in the Army and its leadership. Within two years, the Brigade Color was unfurled in Italy and the vaunted "Wing and Bayonet" patch reappeared on the shoulders of a new generation of Sky Soldiers. In recognition of their demonstrated valor and staying power, the Association leadership -- spearheaded by Sigholtz Chapter President Terry Modglin and Project Officer Ed Anthony -- have the task of replacing the original memorial stone with one that reflects more accurately the history and status of the Brigade.

The current 173d Airborne Brigade Association officers, in their wisdom, have declared the Arlington Memorial a Sigholtz Chapter responsibility and while agreeing with the need to replace the marker, have assigned the Chapter responsibility for raising the \$3,000.00 needed for this project. Consistent with past practices, including the funding of the original Arlington marker, the Chapter leadership has decided to solicit donations from individuals rather than using Chapter dues for this project.

Arlington Cemetery Officials have approved the changed wording and Ed Anthony, who was project officer for the 1998 effort, has contacted the craftsmen who will produce the new marker. Chapter leaders plan to dedicate the new stone next May. **But we need your support to make this happen.**

MG Williamson, who with then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton -- one of our own -- presided at the 1998 ceremony. While MG Williamson will not physically be with us at the coming dedication, he will be there in spirit. In his honor, in memory of all our comrades with whom we had the privilege of serving, and recognizing the valor, service, and sacrifices of our Sky Soldiers currently serving, I ask for your financial support for this project.



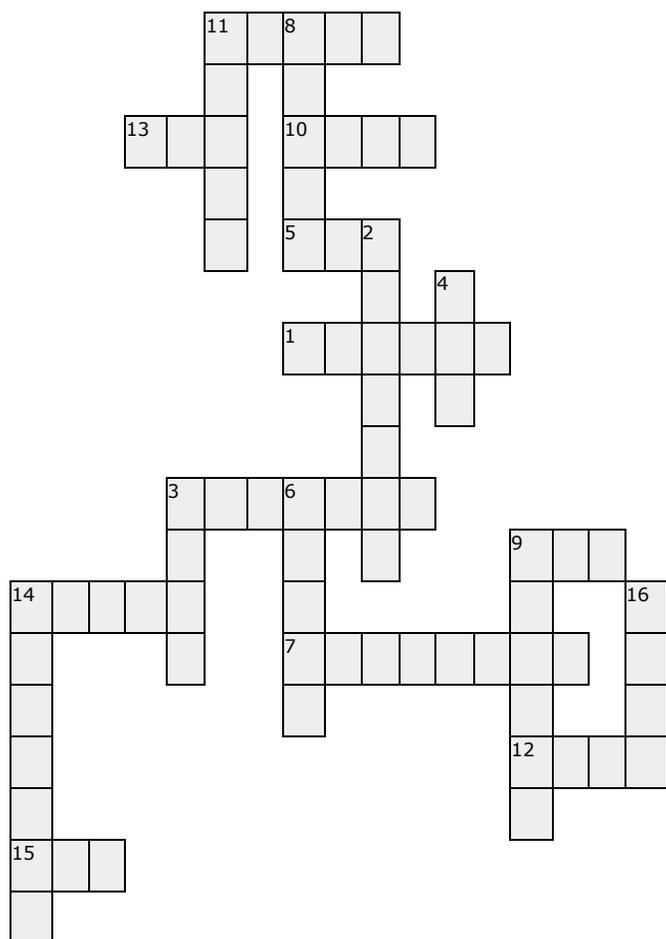
Photo by Richard E. Miller

Please make out a check payable to the "Sigholtz Capitol Chapter" and marked "Arlington Memorial" and mail it to **PO Box 15133, Arlington, VA 22215-0133**. Contributions to the Memorial may be deductible under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code and each donation will be acknowledged.

Ken Smith
Treasurer
Sigholtz Capital Chapter



2/503d Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1---Sorry 'bout that
- 3---Beer drinkers from OZ
- 5---A vehicle with guns
- 7---What's all the way?
- 9---Radio
- 10--____ the Magic Dragon
- 11--Chow
- 12--A chopper
- 13--Phoney money e.g.
- 14--A sad famous hill
- 15--End of radio transmission

Down

- 2---Water holder
- 3---Left without permission
- 4---Your job title
- 6---Small group of men
- 8---A company
- 9---Cisco and _____
- 11--City of tunnels
- 14--Search and _____
- 16--Third to last letter

(answers and name of winner coming next month)

Note: Whoever is first to send in an email with the puzzle having all correct answers or a list of correct answers with corresponding numbers across and down, will be mailed a bottle of Cruzan Rum, the editor's favorite grog from St. Croix, VI. The Islanders say, "If you drink too much Cruzan, you'll get Cruzan Confusion."

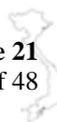
Send to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com



503rd PRCT Reunion in Texas

Our national reunion this year was very calm. There were 14 veterans and about 30 family and friends. There were the usual stories told in the hospitality rooms. I think we have gotten to the point where we are drinking more coffee and sodas and less alcohol. They are not as noisy as they used to be either, or maybe my hearing is going bad. As always, it was nice to see old friends. That is what it is all about. I believe next year it will be in Denver, Colorado.

Chuck Breit
503rd PRCT, WWII



MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT'S FAMILY SHUT OUT OF SCHEDULED WHITE HOUSE VISIT A DAY AFTER HIS BURIAL, BECAUSE GRANDSON WORE SHORTS

Nicholas K. Geranian
Huffington Post

SPOKANE, Wash. — The White House apologized Thursday for turning the family of a Medal of Honor recipient away from an exclusive tour last week because the late veteran's 10-year-old grandson was wearing shorts.



Vernon Baker

Vernon Baker, the last surviving black Medal of Honor winner from World War II, was buried Friday at Arlington National Cemetery after dying in July from complications of brain cancer at age 90. He belatedly received the military's top award from President Bill Clinton in 1997, after historians concluded he'd been wrongly denied because of his race.

On Saturday, his widow and grandson went to the White House for a special tour of the West Wing, which includes the Oval Office and rooms that are in use.

The staffer who was to lead the family wasn't sure whether 10-year-old Vernon Pawlik's attire – shorts and a T-shirt bearing a picture of the boy's grandfather – was considered appropriate, officials said. Another winner of the military's top award, Thomas Norris, also was turned away because he was not previously cleared for the tour.



Thomas Norris

Norris and the Baker family had turned down a previously arranged East Wing tour for the more exclusive visit to the West Wing.

"This is an unfortunate misunderstanding," White House spokesman Adam Abrams said Thursday. "We would

have loved to have hosted 10-year-old Vernon and his family at the White House and we have reached out to the Baker family and Lt. Norris to communicate our deep regret and invite them back to the White House."

A message left at the home of Baker's widow, Heidy, who was also on the tour, was not immediately returned.

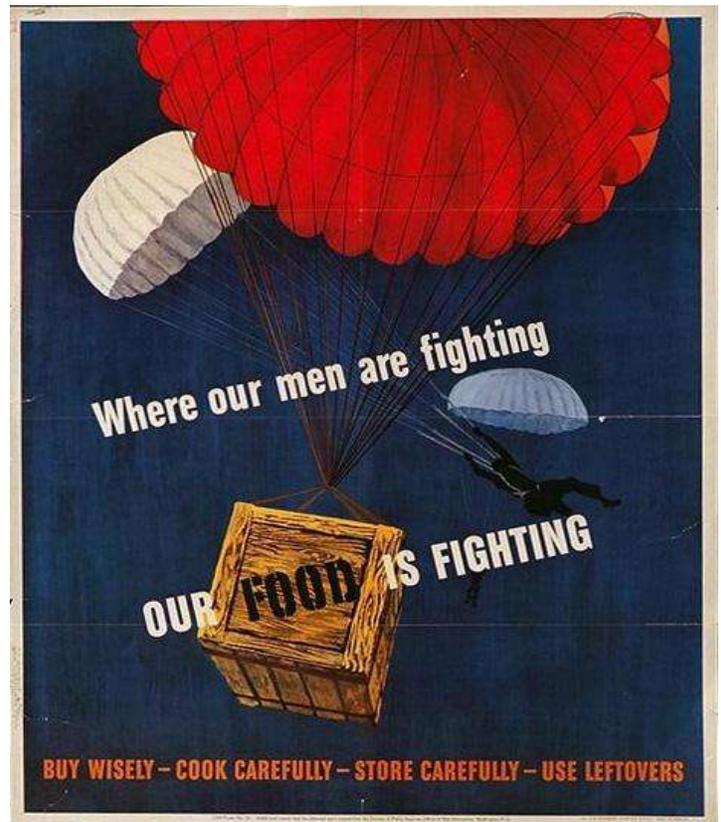
In 1945, Baker rallied black troops after their white commander deserted and they captured a German stronghold in Italy, taking out three machine gun nests, two bunkers and an observation post. But he did not receive his award for more than half a century, and no black soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for battlefield valor, during that era. An Army study initiated in the early 1990s concluded Baker and several other men had been denied the award because of racism.

Six other black World War II veterans received medals posthumously at a 1997 White House ceremony where Baker got his medal. (Huffington Post)

[Sent in by Ed Kearney, B/2/503d]



WWII POSTER



[Sent in by Jack "Jackattack" Ribera, A/2/503d, '66]



Correction

In Issue 18, Page 29 of our August newsletter a story appeared describing the circumstances behind how the parachute from the Corregidor combat jump on display at the Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning, GA got there. Chuck Breit, of the 503rd PRCT, who jumped the chute, mentioned the report contained some errors. To set the record straight, I asked Chuck to give us his first-hand account of how his chute made it from the landing zone on Corregidor to the museum. Thanks Chuck. Ed



Regarding my Parachute

The Rock force left Mindoro for the jump on Corregidor with one thing in common, and that was to retake the island fortress. Our flight to Corregidor was less than an hour and strange as it may seem, I fell asleep. A short time later I had a very good view of the

island because I was standing in the doorway ready to push out my equipment bundle.

After pushing out my flame thrower I followed in a diving position which caused me considerable oscillation when the chute opened. I looked down but I never really saw the ground because I was there. I landed in the downward slope of a shell hole which made for a comparatively good landing. I figured my time in the air from 400 feet was about 23 seconds. I got out of my harness and climbed to the top of the hole. Strangely enough, my equipment bundle was only about 50 feet away. I put it in the shell hole and covered it with my chute. At this point in time, I needed to be able to move quickly to accomplish our mission of securing the barracks.



Chuck

About a half dozen men from my demolition squad were already beside me and we continued on to the barracks, a 3 story building about 500 yards long. It took us about an hour and a half to make our way through to the other end. Because of the shelling and bombing before our jump, most of the enemy were holed-up in the tunnels and caves. Our jump was a complete surprise to them.

After the first couple of hours the resistance increased and by noon, even though we had secured the jump areas, the men in the second wave of jumpers were fired upon more than we were. Before the day was done we set up a hospital area and Regimental Headquarters in the barracks and then set-up a perimeter around the parade ground.

On our area of the parade ground we placed one man every 20 feet. No foxholes, you just got behind whatever would give you cover on the ground. It was a very lonely feeling but we did not have many men to cover a large area. We had two banzai charges through the night.

When morning came, I noticed I was very close to where I landed on the jump. I found my chute was still there so I cut the suspension lines loose from the canopy. I rolled it up and put it in a wooden ammunition box and took it with me back to our HQ area along with my flame thrower. One of our bazooka men, Vincent H. Minkler, had been wounded and was being sent back to Mindoro. He took the box with him and mailed it home for me.

When I got home I gave it to the 503rd Association. They gave it to the National Infantry Museum in Ft. Benning, Ga. It is on display there in honor of all the men who helped to retake Corregidor.

**Chuck Breit
503rd PRCT WWII**



**Chuck's chute on display in the
Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning.**





THOSE UNHERALDED CREW CHIEFS

By Tony Geishauser, Maj.
Cowboys, '65/'66

There was nothing better in a helicopter unit than a really good crew chief - most I worked with were damn good too. These guys would fly everywhere we went and then they would spend hours after our flying day was over getting the aircraft ready to fly the next day. Lots of maintenance in keeping a helicopter flying.

In addition to flying with us and maintaining our a/c, they also manned one of the 60s on each bird. The crew chief and the gunner usually had standing orders to shoot when we were going in on a combat assault or extraction whenever they had a target. It was a little startling sometimes to be flying along fat, dumb and happy and all of a sudden have a sixty open up on someone or something on the ground. I never knew a good pilot who didn't take care of his crew chief, because we depended on them so much.

Two quick stories about crew chiefs:

We were going to be on a big extraction to pick up the Herd who had been out in the field for a week training new guys. There was going to be about 40 helicopters involved in the extraction. We had rotors turning, but were sitting on our pads back in Bien Hoa a few miles away from where we were going to make the extraction. The Falcons, our gunships, were flying up and down the LZ seeing if they could draw enemy fire or to see where the enemy was.

We had taken several hits over the past week re-supplying the troops, so we knew there were Charlies in the area. The Falcons reported back that the LZ was cold. Our crew chief immediately got on the intercom and said, *"That's bad news, sir. Better fasten your seat belts. This is going to be a rough extraction. Charlie is just waiting in the weeds for us to come in."*

Sure enough -- of the 40 helicopters that took part in that extraction, 19 of them were hit and two pilots were hit. Our crew chief knew his shit.

The second time I was shot down, it was the crew chief who figured out how to get us out of there. I had a new pilot I was breaking in on how to corkscrew down over an LZ we were going to go into to re-supply. The idea was to get down really fast and stay as close to the perimeter as you could.

In peace time a good rate of descent would be about 500 to 700 feet a minute. In a combat situation, a good combat pilot would kick the aircraft out of trim so it could fall faster, lower the collective pitch stick and fall about 3,500 feet a minute. That might wrinkle the thin skin of the tail boom sometimes if it wasn't done right, but better the chopper's skin be wrinkled than the crew's by bad boy bullets.



Cowboys & 2/503d troopers on the move.

(continued....)



A little longer story:

I had been doing all the landings and the new guy was doing an adequate job taking the a/c out of the area. He finally wanted to try a landing, but he fucked up and didn't get down fast enough. He thought 750 feet a minute was a fast drop. He was an ex Navy pilot; not a good sign. At any rate, before I could physically help him lower the collective, we started taking hits. Luckily the rounds didn't hit anything that made the ship un-flyable like in LZ Zulu-Zulu (Op Silver City '66), but we did get hits in the fuel tank, rotor blades and a few other places.

The crew chief got out of the helicopter as soon as we landed and assessed the damage pretty fast. He said we were not safe to fly. He told me to get our maintenance officer - "Horse Thief" - and he'd tell them what we needed to fix our bird to fly out of there. We made the call, Horse Thief arrived with the parts he took off an a/c in a secured LZ, and they got the a/c fixed pretty fast. The company commander wanted us out of his AO ASAP as we were a magnet for bad guys.

The maintenance officer reported to me that the a/c was good to go. I said, "Great. Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to fly your helicopter out of here and you're going to fly mine. You're a test pilot; I'm not." He thought about that for a second and thought he might want to take another look. He did and we swapped places and I followed him out. While the crew chief was right again on all the things that needed to be fixed were, the fuel leaked out of my bird like it was pissing in flight. That was before we had self-sealing fuel bladders. We made it back to base camp because of the good work of a damn good crew chief. 🍷



2010 REUNION ITEMS AVAILABLE

Chapter 30 reports they still have a few collectible items left over from this past June's 173d reunion in North Myrtle Beach, SC. Items still available include:

MEN'S SHIRTS:

Small, Qty: 1 Large, Qty: 2 Triple Large, Qty: 1

WOMEN'S SHIRTS:

Small, Qty: 2 Medium, Qty: 2 Large, Qty: 10

TRAVEL BAGS WITH 173d PATCH:

17

For each item purchased, Chapter 30 is donating \$5.00 to the 173d Airborne Brigade Foundation. For prices and to order items contact [Tom Hanson @ cross173@sc.rr.com](mailto:Tom.Hanson@cross173@sc.rr.com)

On behalf of our Chapter much thanks. *AIRBORNE!*

Wayne Bowers
C/2/503d, Chapter 30



You gotta luv them funny fly boys.



Guten Tag mein Herr.



2/503d First Blood

The recent article about the "Razorbacks" (October newsletter, Pg. 7) brought to mind one of the first unreported combat engagements of the 2/503d.



As XO of the 2/503d I was missioned to take the advance party of the 173d Abn Bde (Sep) into Vietnam.

We landed at Bien Hoa AFB Republic of Vietnam on 5 May 1965. We flew direct from Okinawa on a 90 day TDY, the rest is history.

After making contact with local Air Force and Army receiving parties and setting up a secure cantonment area, I was anxious to see as much of the local Bien Hoa area as possible. As luck would have it a local Huey Gunship Unit called "The Razorback's" heard of my interest and offered to take me on their next recon mission.

Their motto "*Death is our Business and Business is Good*", should have given me pause, but being a 39 year old Airborne Major with 22 years service, I said to myself, "*What the hell, how bad could it be?*"

The mission for the day was to "Recon by Fire" an area of about ten (10) miles circumference around Bien Hoa. We were armed with two (2) door mounted M60's and six (6) rocket pods.

It started out as a real cake walk, during which time I was permitted to stand up behind the pilot as he pointed out some of the terrain features and known hot spots.

This lasted for about twenty (20) minutes when "**The Shit Hit The Fan**". Our Recon by Fire had dug up three (3) different hot spots from which we were receiving 50 cal resistance – each tracer looked like a basketball. As part of my briefing before boarding I was given my combat position and duties, which consisted of sitting on my flak jacket on a pile of M60 ammo cases and insuring that the door gunners were properly supplied with ammunition.

We expended all of our M60 ammo and fired all six (6) rockets in about 20 minutes, which from where I was squatting seemed like an hour. The mission then called for us to return to base and re-arm.

The pilot, an older Captain with more sense than I, told me I need not go back up. I asked if the days' mission was completed? He said that they still had 2/3's of the area to cover.

Completely out of my element but not wanting them to think ill of the FNG Airborne Troops coming into country to "Kick Ass and Take Names", I signed on for two more combat missions that day.

Having been in country for only five (5) days, the 2/503d had three (3) Huey Gunship Combat Missions under its belt, and although only serving as an ammo bearer, was probably responsible for drawing first blood.

William E. White, LTC (Ret)
XO 2/503d, '64/'65

Note: Thanks Bill. That's history being made before we made history. Ed 

HOOK UP!

I'm trying to help my father find some buddies he was with over there. His name is Larry Ernest Bernard. He was in C/2/503d and in country from March '67 to March '68. Please contact me if anybody knows him, at Larrysharley96@yahoo.com Thanks,

Larry Bernard, Jr.

WHO IS THIS YOUNG 2/503d MASTER BLASTER?



He ain't no Charlie, but then again, he is.



THE LIGHTER SIDE OF WAR?



~ Beware the Floaters ~

I have words of advice from an experience I had while during the monsoon season at Dak To in 1967. Never build your hootch downhill from the latrine when at the FSB. The latrine fills up during the rain and things will float through your hootch. Below is a picture of Father Peters saying Mass by the Dak To airstrip. A lot of guys might remember him. He and Father Watters were great guys and as you know Father Watters was killed on Hill 875. He was awarded the MOH for his actions there. [See Issue 3, Pg. 8 of our newsletter. Ed]



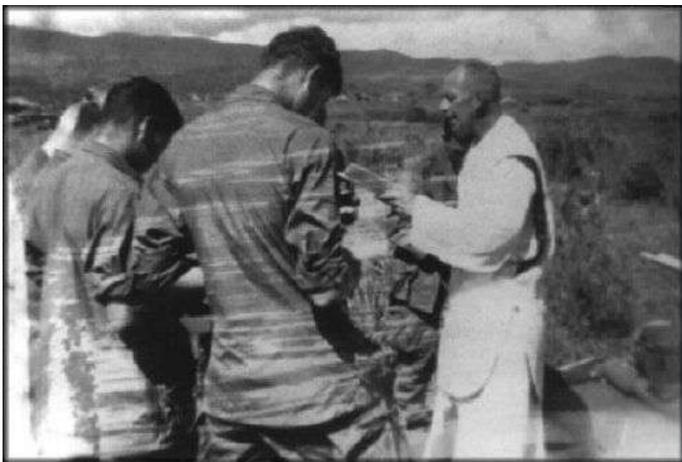
LT Allen

an M-151 and as I approached the Hq. Company entrance a bolt of lightning struck the concertina wire. The wire suddenly seemed to light up in a quick blue arc like flame and then became enveloped in a thin shroud of acrid smoke. The guard shacks, as I recall, were constructed of 2bys and 4bys covered over with corrugated tin or aluminum AND they served as an anchor point for the concertina wire. Well, consequently, when the lightning struck the wire it also lit up the guard shack. After a moment's pause, the guard who had been sitting in the shack staggered through the door and looked around to see what the hell had happened. I'm sure he thought that we were under attack – but what a weapon! It was a serious incident and the guard could have been killed or injured but after we realized that the guard wasn't hurt and the immediate concern had passed it looked almost like a cartoon.

Bob Allen
D/4/503d, '67/'68

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

~ Coconut Attack ~



Father Peters

I was out at a place called LZ Orange a MACV base where we had a forward TOC. I went out on a night mission with the advisers and some Ruff Puffs (VN NG locals) . This MACV E-7 and I were at the center of the village and were lying on the ground next to a big palm or coconut tree.



Terry & Doc O'Donnell

Everything was quite when this dog started barking on the other side of the village. Suddenly something about the size of a fist or frag lands between us – talk about two guys beating the record for the low crawl in different directions. Then we waited for the frag to go off, and waited and waited. We finally raised our heads and saw a palm frond or some young coconut lying where we had been. We had a good laugh after we quit shaking.

Terry Boggs
E/3/503d

~ Lightning Strike ~

Perhaps you remember the perimeter around Camp Zinn, 100 meters by 100 meters, it was six to eight feet high and surrounded by barbed wire. On three of the four sides there were vehicle entrances and at each entrance there was a guard shack. I'm pretty sure this incident happened during the monsoon season but at any rate it was right after a rain. I was coming back to camp from Bien Hoa in an



Rifleman Jim





Camp Zinn '65/'66 (George Dexter photo)

~ Pig Breath ~

Please understand I am recalling this event from a 43 year memory. While the story is still clear in my mind some of the details are not as clear. Sometime in the middle of 1967 while serving with C 2/503 in the Dak To area, I, along with about five or six other grunts and a young Sergeant, was sent on a night LP/Ambush. We were to go about 1000 meters outside the CP and set up on the banks of a small river. The plan was to get in place just at dark and lay along the edge of the river. We were to lay in a line with our heads toward the river just far enough apart to touch the guy to our left or right. The radio was to start with the first man in line and be passed down the line every hour or so. Those without the radio would catch a nap. I was somewhere in the middle of the line and the plan was going well until I was awoken by a noise coming from the jungle about 10 meters from my feet. Those of us who have spent time in the jungle know how dark it can get. This was one of those "can't see your hand in front of your face" nights. I lay there for a short time as the noise got closer. By now real fear was setting in. Moving as slowly and quietly as possible, I reached to my right for the fellow next to me. Unable to touch him I again moved quietly trying to find the fellow to my left. You guessed it, nobody there. Now that "can't control your bladder," fear set in. Meanwhile the noise was a bit louder and much closer. My mind was racing with thoughts. I began thinking Charlie had come in while I was sleeping and cut everyone's throat. Now he was coming back for me.

I could hear my heart pounding and was trying hard to control my breathing. I didn't want to fire my weapon, which would give away my position. I was thinking, ***"What the hell, I'm about to die anyway might as well take some of them with me."*** I began to smell something like bad breath and thought I could feel someone breathing on me. By now I had positioned my rifle to where I could squeeze off a few rounds. Just at that time a muzzle flash appeared and for a split second the darkness disappeared, just long enough for me to see the biggest hog standing at my feet. We heard him squealing as he ran back into the jungle. For the rest of the night, which we thought would never end, we lay shoulder to shoulder wide awake. The next morning while discussing the previous night's events we discovered we all were awake and experiencing the same thoughts. After laughing at ourselves, when we returned to the CP and shared our "pig story" we were the brunt of the joke for several days. Everyone wanted to know how five or six battle hardened paratroopers could be so frightened by one little pig. It was funny the day after, and whenever I recall that night it brings a smile to my heart, but I must admit, I've never been so frightened in my life. If anyone is out there who was with me that night, I sure would like to hear from you!

Wayne Bowers
C/D/2/503d, '67/'68
bowway@aol.com

(continued...)



~ Remembrances ~

1 -- On 2 January 1966, we were in a chopper coming into a hot LZ and trying to find a spot to land in the rice paddy. The new, cherry Radio Operator was sitting on the floor facing out. He looked a little peaked so I bent down to reassure him; at that exact moment a VC shot through the chopper right where my head had been just before I bent down. Not a scratch, thanks to the Radio Operator. Guess who that RTO was???

(I ain't tellin. Ed)



2/503d XO, Maj. Bob Carmichael and his peaked cherry RTO Smitty. Operation Marauder, 2 Jan 66, Mekong Delta.

2 -- After we landed things went from bad to worse. The wounded were migrating to the chopper Evac point.

Three troops appeared, one supporting one trooper on each side. He was also carrying a helmet with the top blown off. He had a very bloody bandage on his head with only one eye functioning. I asked him if he could make it and he said, "Yes, but I have one helluva headache." No doubt about that.

3 -- The Bn was road clearing near Phouc Binh. We reached some higher ground. C Company's 1st Sgt. Desmond 'Hammer' Jackson and I were visiting near a clump of bushes. Three VC with automatic weapons popped out and started shooting. Although he was shot in the leg Sgt. Jackson killed all three, although his first weapon jammed. He grabbed a bystanders' rifle and finished off all three. To this day, I feel I am in Sgt. Jackson's debt.

4 -- We were finishing off what had started with about 6 mortar rounds hitting the top of the smaller corner I slept in. I couldn't help admiring the fact they were able to shoot a mortar that accurately. Having been a mortar platoon leader we were never able to do something like that. Some VC were caught in our wire trying to get in and they were eliminated; one was captured alive but apparently wounded, though not that you could see. We evac'd him to the hospital. Later as things quieted down we went to the evac point, and there was the wounded VC. He apparently recognized me and put out his hand, then died. Sad ending for just a young kid.

While not all necessarily amusing, these are just some remembrances of many from that time.

Bob Carmichael
2/503d, '65/'66

~ Now *That's* Some Funny Shit!

We had been in the bush a good 30 days. We had humped all day and being tired as hell all I wanted to do was finish setting up. All of a sudden I had the urge to take a dump, so I proceeded to go outside the perimeter to scratch out a place to relieve myself. While squatted and enjoying being able to relieve one's self, my only spoon fell out of my pocket and guess where it fell?? It stuck right in the pile of shit... Well, I just picked it up and put it back into my pocket and ended up eating with it about 30 minutes later. Amazing what you do when you're in the jungle.

Harry Cleland
B/HHC//2/503d, '66/'67

(Airborne brother!! Harry, your story gives a whole new meaning to being shit faced. That should give our civilian friends a taste of what it's like to be in combat....so to speak. Ed)



Hootch buddy Harry's lips are still puckering after all these years. Ed

(continued....)



~ That Wasn't Beer! ~

I served in Vietnam with the 173d MP Platoon from June 69 to June 70. I was first assigned OJT to the platoon and was the butt-end of many jokes. I would usually spend any spare time outside the bar at the main platoon area of LZ English, sitting in the evening on the top of a bunker which was turned into the bar patio (of sorts) with the NCOs, hoping to also learn tidbits from the seasoned platoon members to help stay alive and be out of harm's way

Around the end of July or early August, I was sitting on the bar patio with Buck Sergeant Dennis Lowry and several other NCOs and acting jacks. I was listening to the war stories in the darkness when I smelled something burning. Soon, the source of the smoke was found. A cigarette was thrown over the edge of the bunker patio and fell on an old workout bench that had been discarded on the side of the bunker.

The butt fell in the old cotton stuffing and began a small but roaring fire which was making much smoke from the burning Naugahyde covering.

The NCOs, in unison, lined the patio edge and pulled out their fire hoses with their sirens wailing from the top of their lungs and attacked the fire about ten feet below. The Platoon Sergeant at the time was SFC Billy Martin, a leg. He came up with a little bitty Dixie cup of water and poured it on the fire. He then shouted, *"Pour your beer on the fire, not me!"*

We were all laughing so hard; we almost fell off the bunker. The truth was finally known; you really could not tell the beer from piss.

Here is the bar, beside the full tank to the right. The door of the bar is open to the patio on the top of the bunker for the platoon area. In the middle of the picture is the platoon bulletin board.



In the following picture you see SFC Billy Martin to the left, acting sergeant Johnson to the right, and I think Sergeant Doss in the middle.



Doss just passed away this past year. Both pictures were taken from the side of PMO.

Jerry W. Colwell
173d MP Platoon, '69/'70

~ Skinny Dipping ~



Boc Si...Doc Evalt

We were by the south China Sea where there was this small lake with water filtering into it. It was a bit of R&R; this was June '68 or close to that. Now you don't have to repeat this verbatim but I'm going to tell you the fucking truth. There was this small ledge we could dive off of. I am a diver so I dove in only to get my head stuck in the mud. God did that hurt!!!! As I am recovering from my headache someone is yelling *"Doc, Doc!!!!"* Here comes Rodger Koefod running up to me with a 6" leech hanging off his left testicle. I did what any good Medic would do....

(continued...)



I try to cut it with a razor to no effect, then I tried to put a lighter to it with no affect, then I put insect repellent on it...then the fucking thing finally fell off. Rodger would always say to me, *"If it's my time Doc, it's my time."* The guy could sing like a bird. I would try to keep up with him but there was no comparison. He got killed in an ambush. I never loved a man so much. He was my Jonathon. I'm no fucking David but I came to love that man. Rodger's name is on the Wall. I'm not sure if I spelled his name right but believe me Rodger's name is on that fucking wall.

Bob "Doc" Evalt
2/503d, '68/'69

Rodger Magnus Koefod
Corporal
B CO, 2nd Bn, 503rd Infantry, 173d Abn Bde
USARV, Army of the United States
Moscow, Idaho
July 7, 1948 to April 27, 1969
Panel 26W Line 064

~ Outhouse 1 CO 0 ~



Paul, on day promoted to Captain

When I was at Dak To (airfield) running the perimeter defense, we used to get rockets often during the day. In fact, our mess hall among other facilities was hit numerous times, so we did not assemble in groups. I kept track and after a few days noted that we never got rockets at 3:00 PM. So with that data in hand I would make my daily constitutional to the six-holer every day

at 3 in the afternoon. On this particular day as I was doing my business a freight train (122mm) went over head and hit about fifty yards down range. Now, what I failed to say is that to get into the outhouse one had to step up two stairs. So this means to get out one had to step DOWN two stairs. Well, as I was at hole number three about four or five steps from the door I had a good head of steam generated when I got to the door without my steel pot on my head. So that means when my forehead made contact with the 4X4 cross beam I saw stars and planets and a sharp pain to my forehead. I still had 100 yards to go to cover as rounds were still incoming and when I rounded the corner to get into the bunker I tumbled over the desk just inside the bunker. Lifting myself up the BN Commander said, *"Paul, what happened, you're bleeding?"* I put my hand to my forehead still throbbing from my contact with the outhouse and my hand came away filled with blood. You know foreheads, small cut big bleeding. After the attack he made me go to the Aid Station; I went, band aid applied the Doc said, *"What about statement for the Purple Heart?"* I said forget it and went back to the command bunker. That night at the Bn staff meeting the BN Commander in front of the staff said the Doc told him I did NOT want the Purple Heart for my wound during the attack. I told him never mind sir. He persisted and I told him he would laugh if I told him, so never mind. He really insisted, so I told him about my foreheads meeting with the outhouse crossbeam. If they had not DEROSSED, the entire staff would STILL be rolling on the ground laughing about my heads contact with the Outhouse cross beam. NEEDLESS TO SAY, NO PURPLE HEART FOR THE OUTHOUSE...did not deserve it.

Paul Fisher, LTC (Ret)
CO, HHC/3/503d, '69/'70

Thinking I would catch the 6 off guard, I sent the Colonel the following reply to his story. Ed

"Hey Cap. The first thing I learned in-country was to 'Duck!' Guess you missed that class. Ouch!"
Smitty Out

The Colonel replied: ***"You do realize when you 'duck' in a crapper there is only one place to go."*** Paul

Score: 3/503d 1 / 2/503d 0

(continued....)



~ Chef's Surprise ~

This story is the one from back at Camp Zinn after operations. We'd be partying pretty hard, getting into all sorts of mischief and upsetting some of the NCO's and ossifers. Late at night after heaps of drinks, we'd get pretty hungry, so the brothers would ask me to break into Graham Rolling's mess hall and get something to eat.

Mind you I was starving just as well. We'd been on the slurps for about 6 hours and around midnight or beyond, the guts would rumble. I'd get myself inside the mess hall, knock off some tuna fish cans, mayonnaise, a



The Singing Aussino

couple of onions, and some chocolate chip cookies. After returning back to the party, we would take the liner out of somebody's steel pot, mix the lot in it and dip into the goodies with the chocolate chip cookies. Man, that was terrific and filled the belly!! Graham Rollings found out years later after I told him of our escapades, and that I was the culprit raiding his mess hall. Every time I'm in his company, he relates that story to everybody. He tells everyone within ear shot, "This man used to raid my mess hall!" I'm proud of it too I tell ya.

A.B. "The Aussino" Garcia
HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

~ Air Police at Tan Son Nhut ~

One of the first things you saw upon landing in Saigon was the Air Police. Now, this ain't no bullshit. They were all over the air base in their shiny jeeps. There were three in each jeep which had the windshield down on the hood, protective metal bar mounted on the front bumper and an M-60 machine gun mounted in the center of the vehicle. Each of them wore tailored, starched jungle fatigues. Their boots were spit shined to perfection. They each wore black Aussie-type hats with chin straps. And, around their necks, each had a white, silk ascot. At first, I thought there was a movie being filmed along the lines of "The Green Berets" and that

these Air Force-types were the stars who were going to do some fantastic things – like killing Gooks. That thought was blown away when I saw the expensive 35mm cameras each was wearing around their necks. I'm guessing they were for photographing the USO beauties who came over to entertain the troops. As it turned out, they were the security folks at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. I saw them there every time I flew in or out. Except for Tet of '68, I always wondered if they ever ran into any of the VC or NVA as they rode around the air base?? They probably were paying the local Vietnamese to shine their shoes/jeeps and starch/clean their uniforms. Something the Green Berets called Garrison Troopers. **AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!! RAGMAN**

Bob Getz
2/503d Task Force CO

What Goes Good With A Coke? A Rubber Tree Stump??



Mike on guard duty at Zinn

I remember one story. It was serious at the moment.... but I can kinda laugh about it now. We were on an operation and the area got secured pretty good and these little kids came along selling gook soda-pop, and another good buddy of mine was buying one along with me.... and bout that time our platoon Sgt. saw what was happening and told us not to buy any of them. Well, when he got out of sight, we went ahead and bought a couple of gook soda-pops anyhow. Yes, he saw it and found us out.... and we suffered for it when we arrived back at base camp. We all had to secure our gear & weapons....but usually we had free time. But, not so for my buddy and me.....while everyone else was relaxing and writing letters home, etc....my buddy and I had to dig-up those awful rubber tree stumps....while that platoon Sgt watched us from the door opening of our tent. Now that is a LOL....but it wasn't then! Blessings,

Mike Guthire
A/2/503d, '65/'66

(continued....)



~ For All To See ~

In 1965, while on a mission after only a month or two from arriving in Nam, myself and another trooper were sitting on what we thought was a termite hill. Not once but twice fellow soldiers would walk by and tell us we were sitting next to a snake. Finally one guy came over and pulled us to the front and lo and behold there was the biggest snake I'd ever seen, and this monster was curled up. One of the guys wanted someone to jump on top of the hill and his plan was to cut the head off when it came out. After that didn't work someone got the idea to shoot the poor thing and two guys let loose on full automatic. You'd think it would be dead but instead it started making its way out.



Vietnamese cobra liquor.
Drink anyone?



Joan & Steve Haber in Thailand
at George Farris' home in Bangkok

It took another full mag to stop it. If memory serves me right, which it doesn't, we stretched it out to 16 feet. I'm sure someone remembers as the head was taken off and the mouth opened and brought back to base camp and impaled on a pole for all to see.

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

~ Mashing The MASH Huts ~

Funny you mention the 173d. I was in Vietnam in '66 working in the 3rd MASH hospital (hospital admin, admissions and dispositions) which just happened to be located in the midst of the 173d's Brigade Area. We were located just off the end of the Bien Hoa Air Base runway at the time. Their chopper gunships were just about 2 hundred yards from my office door – pointed in my direction. A CWO pilot with a little too much time imbibing “brewed products” got in his Huey and

accidentally fired a rocket right past my office (next to the ER). Right after I left in December of '66 the hospital moved to the Delta and was housed in “inflatable” quonset huts. The idea didn't work well as I understand it. Shrapnel tended to collapse the buildings.”

Richard King
3rd Mash Hospital, '66



Front of Admin. Office, 3rd MASH Hospital

~ A Couple From The Aussies ~

Guys from the early days at Bien Hoa will recall (Gen) Butch Williamson declared that the brigade was to be alcohol-free (Mission Impossible!). One of our second lieutenant platoon leaders got himself down to the VN AF Officer's Mess at the airbase, tied on a load, but remembered his friends and colleagues at the battalion – so he bought several cases of beer, piled them in the center of the road and waited until a 173d jeep appeared. The guy in the front asked if he could give the young officer a lift; agreed -- “Take me to the Australian battalion!” This happened smoothly. The guy from the front of the jeep walked with our platoon leader to 1RAR HQ. It was Butch Williamson himself....one second lieutenant with 30 days straight duty officer. No beer.

On the very first shake-down operation we did, June 1965, just down south of Bien Hoa, the RRU guys with us heard a Viet Cong on the radio relating what he could see of the helicopter activity. From what he said, they worked out where he was, told our CO, and it was decided to fire some artillery onto him. Sure enough, he yelled that artillery was falling near him and he was moving, but from what he said later, it was possible to chase him with artillery every time he got back on the air. Great fun and only possible in the combat zone.

(continued....)



The Australian equivalent of the US hot dog at sports events is the meat-pie, with tomato sauce (ketchup). In 1970 the Australian Football League combined with Qantas Airlines to fly a shipment of frozen pies to Vietnam for the guys in the field. But these were unloaded by mistake at Bangkok and thawed out. Sometime later, one of the sergeant majors of a small specialist outfit sent into the internal mail system of the Aussie field formation a notice that more pies would arrive, on a certain date, and would be issued from the Amenities Officer's location; units should telephone him ASAP with numbers required.

There were a number of clues in the letter to show it was a joke, but this letter was on official Army paper and people believe what they want to believe.

So the unfortunate Amenities Officer got phone calls from every outfit, and despite his protests, people believed the letter – hell, it was on official paper! Then he started to get threats – those pies were for the combat troops, not REMFs. Well, on the day, hundreds of people arrived to collect their unit pies – M113s, engineer dump trucks, jeeps, you name it, it was there, hundreds of soldiers, including a grunt platoon about to leave on patrol who walked down to get their pies. The Garrison Military Police had to be called to disperse the crowd and tempers were high. Naturally, command wanted to know who was responsible, but no one was going to admit it. For weeks, at conferences, people would wave that letter and ask about the pies. Victor Charlie never had as much success as that one letter created.

It will not get into the official histories, but from 1965 some Aussies would leave cartoons and letters for the VC/NVA at places where we had found their food and ammo caches, and this started in the early searches in War Zone D, with ball-pen drawings showing grinning ARVN on trucks loaded with bags of rice and a sarcastic 'thanks guys' letter to the VC. We did this one time in about August '65, with an invitation to the VC to go to Tan Uyen and have dinner with the ARVN battalion there (I forget which one). Well, a few nights later, the sounds of heavy bombardment came from Tan Uyen.....oops!

One of these letters 'to and from' got right out of control.

If there is one activity Aussies and New Zealanders like, it is giving the finger to the other bunch. The Aussies had New Zealand people merged throughout some battalions, which became six-company battalions, and with NZ officers in the HQ staff. One battalion S2 was a New Zealander. It was a quiet day and the S2 had one of

the Aussie linguists write a 'Viet Cong' letter to the Australian field HQ, requesting a copy of an Australian field manual, with catalogue number. So far, so good, and if the letter arrived alone it would have been recognized as a joke.

Aussies & Kiwis at work:



But, the battalion had a contact with the very VC unit that supposedly sent the letter, and in the system the joke-letter got mixed with the real stuff. Uh-oh. The proverbial shit hit the fan, because the field manual requested was classified '**Secret**' – **Escape and Evasion**. How did the enemy know this Secret manual existed, and worse, how did they know the Ordnance catalogue number? This got real big real fast, up to Saigon, back to Australia, to Army HQ, to Logistics HQ; the commanding general was hauled out of bed at oh-dark-thirty to get his staff in to the office and track down this security breach. Then word started to leak that it was a joke started by a New Zealand officer. The Aussie command wanted him boiled alive, but as he was not under Aussie jurisdiction, no New Zealand commander was going to punish him for creating such an upset in the Australian army. That officer probably has not had to buy a drink since that day.

Lex McAulay
1RAR, '65/'66

(continued....)



~ Sucking In Cadence ~

Being fresh meat to the Army and to Viet Nam I was never given an orientation on the country of Viet Nam. You know, like its people, history, wildlife or anything associated with it. This was in April of 1966. My company was just issuing M16s but since I was new and my company was moving out in a few days they gave me a raggedy shotgun. Anyway, during this first operation I saw a lot of old timers going through many body gyrations, lots of swearing and breaking silence when we were in the jungle.

I finally got a chance to ask one of my squad buddies what the problem was and he said it was the damn leeches. Now I'm from Kansas and these leeches looked like, what I call inch worms. So the next time we stopped I checked myself and found a few. Now I didn't go crazy like some of the others so I started to wonder if I was missing something. That evening after making camp I asked my Platoon Sgt. about the leeches and did I have anything to worry about. He said you only have to worry if you get over a hundred on you at once and they start sucking in cadence. Needless to say I didn't lose any sleep over the leeches. Now the termites are another story.

Jim Montague

Weapons Platoon, C/2/503d, '66/'67

~ Is That A Squirrel In Your Pocket Or Are You Just Happy To See Me? ~

I transferred from Recon Platoon just after the Battle of the Slopes. Anyway, since I came from Recon Plt, CPT (Ken) Smith, our company commander, thought it would be nice to have a Recon Squad walking point every day. So here I am walking point, trying to be as quiet as I can when this damn ground squirrel runs out of the bush and starts running up my leg!

Picture this GI, armed to the teeth, swatting at this little squirrel and still trying to be quiet. All of a sudden the guy walking behind me knocks me off of the trail and opens up to the front. When the shooting stopped, we walked further down the trail and here's this gook shot all to hell. I asked what the hell happened, and the guy that opened up says, "There was a sniper ahead, but he was laughing at you and that damn squirrel so hard he couldn't get off a shot at you."

Everybody in the recon squad was rolling in laughter!

Ed Perkins

Recon/A/2/503d, '67/'68



"You gotta have balls to walk up this trail!"

Rocky

~ You Goofin' On Me Bro? ~

I don't know where we were, but I was in country about 4 or 5 months at the time – this was after a pretty good fire fight. Mike Sturges (my hero) and I were told to watch over some dead gook bodies (why, I don't have a clue, they ain't goin' anywhere). So while I piled a couple together (so they couldn't escape) I heard some talking on the other side of this mound. Locked and loaded I carefully looked over. There was my hero lighting a cigarette for this dead gook. Mike had him propped against a tree, legs and arms folded! He's telling him to *inhale!* Now, was he goofin' with me or being a good American soldier? Hmmm?



L-R: Jackattack & his hero Mike

Jack "Jackattack" Ribera
No Deros Alpha 2/503d, '66

~ A Reluctant Warrior ~

After graduating jump school in the early part of 1966, I received orders for Vietnam. I was to report to Ft. Dix for my flight, which was mostly Paratroopers destined for the 2d Battalion. After leaving Dix we landed in Anchorage, Alaska to refuel – we were to be there at least an hour or two so being good soldiers we headed to the bar for libations and fun. During our time there, there was a couple sitting next to us who kept buying us drinks and we, of course, did the same for them.



Pat in VN '66

Anyway, at one point the lady excused herself and left for the ladies' room. While she was gone they called for us to board the plane. The lady's husband, who had insisted the whole time that he wanted to go with us, stood up as we were leaving so we gave him a field jacket and took him on the plane with us. (The bastard even kissed the stewardesses on the way to the plane).

(continued...)

