

Congresswoman Linda Sánchez Names Whittier Man First “Veteran of the Month”

For Immediate Release

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Washington, DC – On Friday, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez kicked off her new veterans’ outreach program by naming retired U.S. Army **Sergeant E-5 Raymond Ramirez** of the City of Whittier as the 39th Congressional District’s first “Veteran of the Month.” Mr. Ramirez is the first recipient of the award and was chosen by the newly created Veterans Advisory Council.

Mr. Ramirez began his military career in 1964 when he enlisted with the U.S. Army and was immediately deployed to Vietnam. He was assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade, the first major ground combat unit of the U.S. Army to serve in Vietnam. Mr. Ramirez exhibited courage and heroism while in combat, earning him awards and medals including the Combat Infantry Badge and the Army Commendation Medal with “V” Device, 2nd Oak Leaf Cluster. His unit also received the Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) for assisting the U.S. Marines in the fall of 1966, and the U.S. Army Meritorious Unit Citation. Upon his return from Vietnam in June of 1967, he was assigned to the 1st Armored Division at Fort Hood, TX.

"Mr. Ramirez’ dedication to our country is inspiring and I was pleased to honor him today," said Congresswoman Sánchez. "It’s vitally important that we never forget the sacrifices made by our fighting men and women. I look forward to recognizing a new veteran each month."

Later, Mr. Ramirez attended Rio Hondo College and California State University, Los Angeles. He then worked for several years in the defense industry and then the County of Los Angeles and the City of Commerce for over 25 years.

He is currently an active member of the American Veterans Post 113 (Irwindale, CA) and the Association of the 173d Airborne Brigade, where he is the former

President of the Western States, Chapter 10. Notably, he serves on the board of directors for the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation whose “sole mission” is to build a 173d Memorial “on a piece of American soil.” (see July 2010 Issue 17, Pages 12-20 of our newsletter).

To honor Sergeant Ramirez’ hard work and dedication to his country, he was presented with a flag flown over the capitol in his name. The presentation took place at Congresswoman Sánchez’ Cerritos office Friday.



A saddened Ray Ramirez, 4/503d Sky Soldier during recent funeral services for his friend SPC “Doc” Raymond Chavez Alcaraz, Jr., who was killed in action while serving as a medic in Afghanistan with C/1/503d. (See Oct. 2010, Iss. 20, Pg. 16 of our newsletter)

Congresswoman Sánchez’ “Veteran of the Month” program is coordinated by her Veterans Advisory Council, comprised of distinguished veterans from across the district. Each month, a veteran will be recognized for their service overseas and here at home. For more information regarding the “Veteran of the Month” program please contact Jamie Zamora at Jamie.zamora@mail.house.gov or (562) 860-5050.



New Sky Soldier Coin



the time it was the largest funeral he had ever seen except for one for a well-known public figure. Senator Warner (the elder) from Virginia was in attendance as was the Deputy CG of AFSOC. Scott died in a CH-47 crash (flown by 160th Army Special Operations Aviation Regiment out of Fort Campbell) on 18 February 2007 in Afghanistan along with the pilot and co-pilot, several other crew members from the 160th and 2 Rangers from the 75th. Scott was the Team Lead and was near the pilot for communications reasons. The Deputy Commander of AFSOC came to the house to brief Rose and Bill on the crash, although to this date no definitive reason has been given. As are all of their missions this was a classified operation so we will most likely never know all of the facts. Bill goes on to report that Scott

died doing what he loved to do and for what he was so highly trained and skilled in doing.

Below you will see a picture of Bill as he dedicates a coin at the gravesite of his step-son.

I know you all wish the family and friends of these fallen warrior/hero Airborne Airman and Aviators all the best.

[Sent in by Paul Fisher, LTC,3/503d]

Coins Dedicated at Arlington National Cemetery

CPT Bill Duval, Commanding Officer of HHC/3/503rd in 1970 and his wife Rose, also a retired veteran herself recently dedicated three 173d Airborne Brigade Coins on behalf of fallen warriors who were killed in Afghanistan in February of 2007. It is significant because one of the coins was dedicated to Rose's son and Bill's step-son Tech Sergeant Scott Duffman of the 24th Special Tactics Squadron (Scott was a USAF Para-Rescuer [‘PJ’], Master Parachutist, HALO, SCUBA qualified and a Combat Medic who had completed multiple combat tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan with the Joint Special Operations Command). The other coins were dedicated to the Pilot, CWO-3 Hershel McCants and Co-Pilot, CWO-3 John A. Quinlan both of the 160th Special Operation Aviation Regiment (SOAR) A.



Bill Duval 3/503d, 173d Abn dedicating coin.

Bill reports that when Scott was honored at a Memorial Ceremony at JSOC Headquarters there was standing room only in their large 'shake out' bay. And at his funeral in Arlington the Director of Arlington said that at



Sky Soldier Alvin Ealey Farewell Brother

Sunrise, October 11, 1948
Sunset, November 7, 2010

Al wanted to come to Arlington on November 10, 2010 to be with the Herd in green pastures one final time. However, he slipped away for eternity three days prior to this date. We will miss him and may he always remain in our memories as a fine Sky Soldier and friend.

Ed Kearney, B/2/503d

A quote by Al in the story, *The Battle at Bau San*:

“I want to thank Lewis Wingfield for the day he saved my life, March 14th or 15th, 1966. He crawled over to me, looked me right in my face, stopped me from going where I was going and said, ‘They are killing ‘em up there.’ The next day, March 16th, I’ll never forget that day; it started off with us walking through camp getting ready to go out. Then a helicopter was shot down.



Al at Camp Zinn '66

I killed more people that day than I care to remember. That was the day Jody got the tripod shot on his M-60.”
Alvin Ealey, B/2/503d

Remembering Al

Being friends with Al was influenced, as many things were, by Spencer Alexander. Al had not been very active with the Bravo Bulls before Spencer's unexpected death. He went to Chicago for the funeral. We met again at Ed Johnson's house and went to the funeral together. With that single event, an extremely strong friendship began. He and Lew Wingfield, Al's buddy and neighbor, joined us at a Memorial Service at Arlington. From the funeral and Veteran's Day service, Al slowly became more engaged in Bravo Bull



One of Al's favorite caps.

activities. He joined us at Bragg and at Marilyn Logan's funeral.

He was a very devoted Christian. To know him, you had to be conversant with his on-going religious journey. He faithfully read the Bible and associated religious books, all of which was recorded in his personal journal, which was always within easy reach in his truck.

He and later he and Missy became frequent visitors to Beverly Manor. We'd sit out in the shade of the willow tree with the girls sipping wine, while Al and I had something a bit stronger. He became my advisor on house repairs and, when I didn't move as quickly as he thought appropriate, he jumped in. He teamed with me to paint my house, with him doing more than his fair share. He brought a steel scaffold to use on the upper floors but he refused to let me aid him in moving it. Those who knew Al, knew that there was only Al's way. You could talk but when he decided, it was his way. It was a bit difficult adjusting to that but he put that lop-sided smile on and adjusted his 173d ball cap, and even a hard-headed grump would agree to his plan.

He loved his children but had waited a long while before he decided to demonstrate that love. This complicated his relationships but that was his way....and it worked for him. He also loved his Mom and called her daily. Through him, I got to know her and she became my friend as she neared her end. A gracious, loving lady, who he worshiped and who had impacted his life in a positive fashion.

This next vignette tells completely of our relationship. I have a fireplace in our kitchen, which at some ancient time was the site for cooking. I closed the chimney and installed a gas log heater to which a gas line had to be extended. Al learned of this and brought his tunnel/underhouse suit, with breathing device. The first step was to drill a hole in the kitchen floor to pass the gas line to the log heater. Al said to tap the floor and he would drill up at that point. While I was tapping, he started drilling. The drill blade came through the floor where I was sitting and just barely missed my ass, while ripping my trousers. He had no idea how close I came to disaster and we have an unwanted hole in the middle of the floor. After we stopped laughing, we adjusted and got the job completed.

I'll miss him and all the good times that we shared under the willow, when we remembered and drank to our youth and the soldiers we marched among.

May he enjoy his Heavenly reward in the company of our departed comrades,

**Roy Lombardo, COL (Ret)
CO B/2/503d**



Stories of the R&R Kind

Cleo, What A Gal, or; *It Ain't So Bad To Volunteer*

Rest & Relaxation is a wonderful concept. PTSD among combat soldiers would most likely be much higher without a break from the rigors of war.

I was fortunate enough to have two R&Rs during my year in Vietnam. While serving with Charlie 2/503 in June of 1967 I was given an R&R to Japan. Shortly after being assigned to the newly-formed Delta Company around September or October of that year, a Sergeant with a clipboard came around asking who had not had an R&R. Being the agile and quick thinking paratrooper I once was (noticed I said once) I thought if he's asking, they must not know. If I raised my hand and they found out I was BS-ing what were they going to do, send me to Vietnam? So I raised my hand and a few weeks later I found myself in Australia. What a time that was!



Wayne Bowers
Check equipment!

But back to Japan... While on the flight over I met a "leg" from the 4th Davison. He worked in the rear and had never served on line. I don't remember his name but do remember him being from North Carolina. I also remember him saying he had always heard most paratroopers were half crazy. We seemed to have several things in common and decided to "buddy up" for the week.

After arriving and settling in the hotel we met in the lobby to begin a night of real R&R. Before leaving the hotel we asked one of the bellhops where we should begin our evening. When we arrived at the bar he made a suggestion, but our thoughts were "this is not the type of place we were looking for." It was a very upscale bar filled mostly with Japanese men dressed in suits. We decided to stay for a couple of drinks and shortly thereafter two Japanese businesswomen approached us seeking our advice on a business plan they were developing. These girls did not meet the expectation of

the fast and cheap women we were looking for. They both were very attractive and appeared to be in their mid-twenties. I was nineteen at the time and my buddy was about the same age. They dressed like American girls, smelled like American girls and reeked of money.

The leader of the two was very outgoing and spoke excellent English with little or no accent. She insisted we call her Cleopatra. The other girl was somewhat shy and spoke broken English. We sat there for a while developing the "business plan" over a few drinks. After the plan was fully developed and financial arrangements made, Cleopatra invited us to her apartment for drinks and light entertainment. After all, she had, how should I say, stiffened my attention.

We took a taxi to her apartment during which Cleopatra and the taxi driver had a lively conversation in Japanese with much loud laughter. I remember thinking we were probably being laughed at but I really didn't care as my mind was fully wrapped around the "business plan."

After about a ten-minute drive we arrived at a high-rise apartment building in a well-to-do area of Tokyo.

Cleopatra flashed an ID type card at the doorman and he let us into the building. We took the elevator to one of the upper floors, which opened to a long hallway. I remember the hall was brightly lighted and very clean. We came to her apartment and she opened the door to a small foyer where we took off our shoes. We then entered the living area of her apartment, which was nicely appointed with Egyptian décor. The entire apartment was well organized, very clean. There was a young Japanese male sitting on the sofa watching TV. Cleopatra said something to him in Japanese; he stood up, smiled and then left. I asked her who the male was and she stated he was her houseboy.

Cleopatra made drinks for the four of us after which we went to her bedroom to conduct Phase II of the business plan. Shortly after completing Phase II Cleopatra informed me she had fallen in love with me and wanted me to spend the rest of my time in Tokyo with her, for a small fee of course. I can't remember the amount of the fee but I do remember it was going to be about twice the cost of our hotel room. I told her I would have to discuss it with my buddy.

(continued....)



She gave me a Japanese robe much like the one she had just put on. We then returned to the living area to join my buddy and the other girl. I asked my fully-dressed buddy if he had conducted his phase of the business plan. He just looked at me with a big silly smile on his face.

This Cleopatra girl was a real pro, no pun intended. She again asked if we would stay the rest of our R&R there with them. When we hesitated, can you believe she tried to sway us with sex?! When we informed her we were more interested in sampling other sites of Tokyo she became very argumentative and entered into a total and complete tantrum. She began yelling and asked us to leave. Suddenly there came a knock on the door and the other girl sprang to open it. It was the houseboy and three other guys. One of them looked to be an aspiring Sumo wrestler, this guy must have been around 300 pounds.



Wayne, ready for Phase II

My buddy and I gathered our things and left amidst Cleo's screaming and yelling. We walked down the street to the first bar we came to. We were pretty well pissed at this time but still had our common sense. After a couple of glasses of "liquid courage" I convinced my buddy we had just been conned. After partaking of more "liquid courage" (we were three sheets in the wind by this time) we decided we were not going to be cheated.



Shinjuku, Tokyo. "Cleo! Where are you?!!"

We walked back to the apartment and after several minutes and a fist full of Japanese money we persuaded the doorman to let us in. Somehow we found the right apartment. We knocked and the houseboy opened the door. We pushed our way in and demanded to see the

girls. They informed us the girls were not there and they began to laugh. Now no self-respecting paratrooper was going to be laughed at, so I loudly proclaimed I was going to kick the ass of every SOB in the place if I didn't get my money back. Before I had a chance to tell them I was just kidding I was being punched and bounced off the wall. I noticed the big fellow had my buddy in a headlock as we were being rudely pushed toward the door. Being a well-trained, highly motivated US paratrooper with a keen ability to assess the situation, I decided a full retreat was in order. Besides, my buddy and I were scared shitless.

Someway, somehow, the next afternoon I woke up in the right bed in the right hotel with a few knots a few bruises and a major headache.

Over the years as I have looked back on those times I can't help to realize how incredibly stupid I was and often wonder how I made it this far in life.

Wayne Bowers
D/C/2/503d, '67-'68

Un-kept Promises



L-R: Two Chargin' Charlies, Roger Dick & Sam Stewart, still at the bar.

The only thing I have to contribute is: After a typical night out on the town on R&R I slithered out of bed and into the bathroom where I attempted to ease the severe hangover with a warm bath. All of a sudden the water started sloshing back and forth over the sides of the tub and everything fell off the bathroom shelves. I immediately swore off drinking and made promises I would never keep. It turned out Taipei was experiencing an earth quake and I was in a room 22 stories up swaying back and forth. I was never so glad to grab a drink in the lobby in my life. So much for promises made during fire fights or earth quakes.

Roger Dick
C/2/503d



A Different Kind of R&R

My R&R was in Viet Nam killing people. Had a lot of fun.

Virgil Lamb
C/2/503d

The Teenage Captain

[That's what some of the other company commanders called him -- Gary Prisk, CO C/2/503d. But not his men, they called him *Cap* -- they would die for him, and some did. Ed]

Unorthodox, perhaps... a bit crazy, perhaps... willing to deal anyone that might kill a GI, absolutely... at odds with the Operations Major, always... did Charlie Company have more enemy KIA and fewer casualties than any other company while this young captain was running gates. Yes we did. But, we were not blessed with social skills.

But when we were blessed with a two-or-three day stand-down my orders to the platoon sergeants were simple... ***“Get re-fit and ready for the next insertion... and then don't fuck with the troops.”*** Seems simple enough until you get rear-area Majors trying to run your company... We ruined more than one career.

On one stand-down the General had put Bong Son on-limits and the singing houses off limits... understanding how ambushes were conducted, my Field-First Sergeant, my RTO and I went to town ahead of the company. ***“A recon was necessary, doo dah.”*** The Brigade MP's arrived well after the company. The silly shits wrote up 74 DR's, processed them through Brigade, then Battalion, and they landed in Charlie Company's orderly room before dark, with a great deal of ceremony and with the excitement of two rear-area Majors... Rear-Area Majors were loathsome bastards...

So I raised my beer can to the heavens and with a great deal of ceremony dedicated each “DR” to the hand shredder... each dedication requiring more beer. When asked by the Battalion CO what I intended to do about the DR's I said, ***“I have directed the First Sergeant to send the ‘DR’ to the trooper's family so they could see first-hand what their soldier has been up to.”***

This was not what he thought would happen. The dumb bastard should not have made a fuss over paratroopers ***“goin'-to-town.”***

This picture which follows is of members of second platoon taken in Bong Son in July 1968. Note the pipes

and the nature of these men... some of America's finest militia.



Standing/sitting... left-to-right. Pvt. Henry Kot... Doc Pratt... PFC Dennis Uhlott... Doc Walsh... Sp 4 Mark Apodaca... Sp 4 Dan Johnston. In Front... left-to-right. Sp 4 Bill Totten... Sp 4 Montgomery “Mr. Monty”

As was the custom when a man left country, those left standing wanted the man to remember that he was leaving his friends in the jungle... we were always glad to see a man leave, Standin' Tall with his goolies in fine trim... we just had to get a bit pissy about his leaving.



The picture above is of SSgt Edmund Burns, 1st Platoon Sergeant, waiting to be placed on his “Freedom Bird” for the first leg of his leaving country. SSgt Burns did not accept his fate with grace, tagging more than one paratrooper before he was subdued, his uniform shredded, tied to a bamboo pole and covered with shaving cream.

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Promising all forms of retribution... swearing as if his god might hear... he slanged my mother and anyone else he could think of.

Months later, not thinking this ritual to its end, I was caught half-stepping one fine day when on my way to Hawaii for R&R.



The Teenage Captain, the Company Commander Gary Prisk, sitting after having his uniform torn-up and being hog-tied by his men in preparation for his Liberty Flight for R&R.

For months, in fact since Dak To or December of 1967 the wizards in the intelligence business in Vietnam had declared that a trooper had deserted in the field. There were a good many versions of the desertion, the most popular being that he just threw down his shit and walked off. Many of the versions had him from Delta Company; some versions had him from 1st Batt or 4th Batt. I think each Batt had a deserter that was in fact a ghost. I figured the story was all horse shit and meant to shit-scare the rest of the studs away from such thoughts.

Suffering through those combat briefings at the Tactical Operations Center given by a Major who had never been in the field, we were constantly given the caution to keep an eye out for the deserter. Oh, and you'll love this... he was blond so he should be easy to spot. And, he was average weight and height so he should be bigger than the boys running around in sandals wearing shorts and sunscreen. Personally I don't think there was a deserter.

There is another story as well. The troopers had called the Battalion TOC and told them they had captured the deserter... Doo Dah. Those same MP's with the 74 "DR's" wanted to shackle-drag my ass all the way to Long Bing Junction.



Gary Prisk in his hooch with a handy friend nearby.

I needed that honey in my bunker at LZ English, before and after R&R.

As an aside...I need some help with names of these troopers in the following photos.



2nd Platoon, Charlie, Kontum, February 1968

(continued...)





2nd Platoon Charlie, An Lao Valley, September 1968



2nd Platoon Charlie, Bong Son Area, July 1968



3rd Platoon Charlie, Kontum Area, February 1968

Gary Prisk, Capt.
CO C/2/503d
garyprisk@yahoo.com

Aussies + Beer = Elephant

Sometime after Cpt. Sutton took over Bravo, he came to me and said, "You look like you are getting a little crazy. Tomorrow morning you will report to your battery and go to Saigon."

Somehow I found a khaki uniform that did not look too bad and went to the Battery where the Battery commander was checking out his First Sergeant. The captain asked him, "Well Sarge, what are you going to do in town?" The First Sergeant was a short, husky, tough little guy named Martinez (I think). The First Sergeant replied, "I'm going to drink all their whiskey and fuck all their women, Sir!" The battery commander just rolled his eyes.

This was one of the early trips and we went into town in an armed convoy of several deuce and half trucks and a couple of jeeps. I wandered around and eventually ended up on the roof of the Caravel Hotel. I had a fabulous lunch of lobster (crayfish) with a wonderful old French wine, served in a Crystal decanter. While eating I watched a couple of Sky Raiders strafe and bomb a target several miles south of the city. They must have hit a huge supply depot as there was a ball of fire, then almost a mushroom cloud.

As we assembled for the ride back home, two troopers came around the corner leading a baby elephant. The NCOIC, I think it was one of the Sergeant Majors, told them that the elephant was not going with us. The troopers whined that they had spent all their money on him and could not leave him. Good fortune appeared, as two Aussie troopers stumbled onto the scene. They were soon convinced that they needed an elephant. The last I saw of them they were standing in the street with empty pockets and an elephant between them.

Upon return to the unit, the artillery First Sergeant reported to the battery commander with a snappy salute and a "Mission accomplished Sir!" With that, he kneeled face forward into a mud puddle about 4 inches deep. Everyone was laughing, but after a while I noticed that his face was still under water, so I dragged him out feet first and dropped him on dry land. I understand that he survived and I never was given any recognition for saving a First Sergeant.

When I got back to B Company Sgt. Howe was forming up to take his squad out on a night ambush patrol. I put on my stuff and went with him. As luck would have it we had contact with a small group of VC, killing several of them. Then their buddies decided to mortar us a little. By dawn it had been an interesting 24 hours.

Jim Robinson, FO, B/2/503d

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The Non R&R

It was some date in June '66 when I left Bien Hoa en-route to Saigon to catch a flight to Okinawa for R&R. My Vietnam vet Sneaky Pete older brother, Bob, was waiting for me at the airport there and, according to him, he was accompanied by two lovely young ladies of Japanese persuasion who were more than prepared to entertain the traveling RTO -- assuming, of course, the radio operator had saved enough entertainment money. I didn't think it was language classes they had in mind either.

Arriving Tan Son Nhut Airport I was disappointed to learn there was no space available on the stand-by flight to the island, and I would have to spend the evening in Saigon occupying myself with cultural activities until a flight out the following day.

Grabbing a taxi to downtown Saigon I found the cultural center of the city along Tu Do Street. In one of the many bars there I happened to meet a sailor and an air force guy, and we hooked-up for the evening - it was like a scene right out of some 1940's movie with Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra, without the dancing and singing. Unbelievable as it may seem, we all met and fell in love with three lovely young ladies, these of the Vietnamese persuasion, who were kind enough to invite the three of us back to their home which looked not unlike a hotel with one large room and three beds. Somehow, the army, air force and navy survived that night of cultural awakening, but this RTO awoke the next morning with severe chest pains. I was rushed to 3rd Field Hospital nearby where the docs determined I had a bad case of pneumonia -- damn cultural centers!



Saigon cultural center in 1966 along Tu Do Street.



Working girls in Saigon, 1966.
Sign: *Please Pay When Served*

As I recovered on the 2nd floor ward of that hospital for nearly a month before being returned to Camp Zinn, I would often wonder about my SF brother and his airport Geisha girls. Sadly, I never did get R&R during my year in-country (I think Wayne Bowers took mine), and to this day I credit that fact to my having been too critical to the war effort to warrant one. Those island girls must be pushin' 70 today, which means I still have a shot at dating them, if I could just catch a flight to Okinawa.

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

Showers at English!

I was stunned when I heard it. Seven months before when our company trucked into LZ English in Bong Son from An Khe, English was just getting started. Hell, the latrine was just a long trench. Now inside showers. So, minutes after stepping off the Huey that brought me and my company in from the boonies for a week of relaxation and before I was detailed for bunker duty, K.P. or the creme de la creme duty of the fighting infantryman, "burning shit," I headed off for the showers tent. It was better than great this shower and while toweling off in came a guy I knew from A.I.T. in Georgia. He greeted me like a brother and we talked of the others we trained with and what happened to them. He ran off a few names he knew who were KIA, and when he said the name Carter, I screamed "NO!"

Gregory Carter befriended me when I felt so alone on my arrival at Fort Gordon for two months of jungle training. He would read me letters he got from his girlfriend because I didn't have one. He told me often that he was going to make it through Vietnam and get back to her. I couldn't believe it when I heard he was killed. I slowly walked back to the company area and put in for R&R. A week later I was flying into Sydney, Australia.

I checked out places to go as soon as I got to my hotel. First night there I caught a taxi out to a ranch house for an evening of horseback riding. I met a girl there who filled the rest of my days there. We did something different each day and we ended each day with a kiss in my hotel. Though she told me right off she would not sleep with me she did give me a "Forest Gump" moment on my last night there.

And like Forest, I too got dizzy. I left Jennette and Australia the next morning and on the plane I realized that she had taken my mind off Vietnam and Gregory's death. I will never forget him, but for that one week I was happy to not think about him and war. Thank you Jennette!

continued....)



Hey Jude
The minute you let her under your skin
Then you begin to make it better....



Ed in Vietnam

I like this photo because it shows LZ English down below, the Tiger Mountains to the right (which we practically lived in for the year), and behind me is the South China Sea.

It was the death of a friend in Vietnam that finally pushed me to enlist in the Army. I knew I would probably get drafted, but after going to the funeral of my friend from high school, I just decided, well, I should do my part.

After seven months of ground fighting with the infantry of the 173d Airborne, the loss of another friend made me feel like I'd done enough. I needed a vacation.

A yearlong tour came with one week of R&R. The Army offered a trip to Thailand, but more than anything, this Arizona kid wanted to ride horses again. That meant Australia.

They only wanted the officers and the married people to go to Australia and Hawaii, so it was a little bit of a battle for a couple of days before they would let me go. I just told 'em, "*Hey, that's where I'm going, and if not I'm going back to my unit.*"

I flew into Sydney in October 1968 and picked a hotel at random from the list I was provided. The Army also offered an itinerary of activities, and the next day I was at a private ranch for a horse ride and evening dance with eight other GIs, all of them strangers.

At age 20 and a combat veteran, I was still as shy as a school kid and found myself sitting alone while the other soldiers mingled with the local girls who had been invited to keep them company. I was about to call a taxi when a tall blonde in a pretty dress asked me to dance.

I was pretty doggone nervous. I got embarrassed 'cause I don't dance.

The next day, I called back to the ranch to get her phone number. She was surprised that I'd called her back because she didn't think that we really hit it off that well.

Horses were my first love, from the time I was 6, but I did no more riding that week. Instead, Jeanette showed me around the city. I especially loved the Taronga Zoo on Sydney Harbor. And everywhere we went I kept hearing the hit song of the moment: the Beatles' *Hey Jude*.

I was more of a country-Western guy. We never stopped to listen or talk about the song, but it played in the background all week long. I flew back to Nam with the song playing in his head and the memory of a chaste goodbye kiss on the lips. But I had to put that out of my mind.

We were out in the field a lot. We had to be on our toes, and I just couldn't let my mind wander back to home and Australia. Even though Jeanette wrote me and I wrote her, as soon as you read it, you put it in your pocket, your backpack or whatever and just get back to what you were doing. I knew I had to get her out of my mind.

When I returned to Arizona, though, I bought the song, and even today that na-na-na chorus will take me back to my week in Australia. It's the combination of bitter and sweet that stays with you forever.

For a few years after my tour of duty, I wrote and called, but eventually Jeanette pointed out that there was a wide ocean between us. I told her, "*You're right. You'll always be on my mind, but I probably should just let you go.*"

Ed Swauger
B/2/503d

Gregory Carter

Sergeant

**D CO, 1ST BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD
ABN BDE, USARV**

**Army of the United States
Columbus, Ohio**

November 21, 1946 to September 23, 1968

GREGORY CARTER is on the Wall
at Panel 43W Line 068

[Ed is a retired mail handler in Tempe, AZ. He has self-published a book about his wartime experiences, *Earning the CIB: The Making of a Soldier in Vietnam*, Whitehall Publishing, 2005]

(continued....)



Excuse me Sir, but may I pretty please have my seat back?

I had only been in-country three months when our sergeant had us lined up and was calling off allocations for R&R destinations. He called one allocation for Japan and nobody responded, so kiddingly I said I'd go. Several weeks later my sergeant said to grab my gear and get to the LZ, that I was going to Japan. Well I get to Japan and end up in the hospital with malaria, had something to do with all the booze I drank the first night there breaking down my resistance. The only good thing about that was that I missed June 22, 1967.

After Hill 875 there was hardly anyone in the company that had been in-country long enough so I acquired an R&R to Japan. When I got to Cam Ranh Bay I heard that they had just opened Australia for R&R, so when I laid my orders for R&R to Japan down in front of the clerk I asked what are my chances of going to Australia instead, he just pulled out a stamp and stamped my orders for Australia. I and two other E-4s were on standby for a flight to Australia, so when they started calling off names they loaded the plane by rank. They called two Lt. Colonels and then me and the two other E-4s and then other officers, NCO's and enlisted men. I was the third man on the plane so I took the window seat on the left and the two E-4s sat next to me and the Lt. Colonels were in the front seats on the right. We had a nice flight to Darwin, they even showed a movie, Mary Poppins, of all movies to show a plane load of soldiers going on R&R.

When we landed in Darwin to refuel and then on to Sydney we had an hour lay-over. The stewardess said that when we got back on the plane that we were supposed to get in the same seats that we had when we landed. So we all headed for the airport lounge and started pounding down beers as fast as we could get them. Well, being out in the field we didn't get our hands on very much beer and when we did it was 3.2% and Australia beer is like 8 or 9 %. So I staggered back to the plane, stumbled up the steps and made it to my seat only to find someone sitting in my seat. I informed the guy that he was in my seat and that the stewardess said same seats that you had when we landed, he still didn't move. Then the fact that I was a 19 year old paratrooper who has been out in the boonies for months and who was drunk took over. I informed him in so many words that if he didn't get out of my seat I was going to remove him myself, he still didn't move. So I made a move towards him with the intention of bodily removing him from my seat, but before I even got one step towards him he got out of my seat and went back to his own seat. I sat down in my seat and looked at the two guys sitting next to me, who were looking at me wide eyes. I asked them what the hell they were looking

at and one of them asked if I knew who I just removed from my seat. I said I didn't and they informed me that it was an officer. I turned around and looked at the guy; it was a rear echelon butter-bar Lieutenant who just lowered his head. I turned back to the guys sitting next to me and informed them what the stewardess had said about getting into the same seats we had when we landed and that she had more rank than anyone else in the plane. I looked over at the Lt. Colonels and they were laughing their asses off. Hey, I was a drunken 19 year old paratrooper!!

Ray "Zac" Zaccone
C/2/503d

173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Memorabilia

The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation has several Memorial Memorabilia items for sale. Order early for Christmas!

173d Memorial Medallions in Copper Nickel and Antique Brass Finish.

Souvenir 173d Memorial Bricks.

DVD's of the memorial dedication and two signed "Day of Honor" Guitars.

Limited supply of hard hats and entrenching tools used at the groundbreaking ceremony in June of 2008. Any reasonable offer will be considered on these two items.

All monies raised from the sale of these items will go to the perpetual care of the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial.

If you need further information please contact:

Craig Ford, Treasurer

173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation.

Email: cdford1503@frontier.com

Cell Phone: 425 422-7976

Address: 17207 76th Avenue West
Edmonds, WA 98026

"After 60, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you're probably dead."



173d Awarded Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) in 1973

(This article is an edited reproduction of a story prepared by Ray Ramirez of Chapter X and published in the Summer 1998 [Volume XIII, No. 3] edition of *Sky Soldier*.)

The 173d Airborne Brigade earned its share of individual and unit awards in Vietnam, including a Presidential Unit Citation, a Meritorious Unit Commendation, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. One award, however, has largely been overlooked or forgotten with the passage of time. Task Force Healy, created from various elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade, received the Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) in 1973.

Task Force Healy was composed of 173d units, with the primary force being the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry (which was commanded by LTC Michael D. Healy). Joining the 4th Battalion were five helicopter of the 335th Aviation Detachment, Battery B, 3-319th Field Artillery, elements from 1st Platoon, E Troop, 17th Cavalry, a platoon from the 173d Engineer Company, individuals from the 173d Military Intelligence Detachment, elements from the 173d Scout Dog Detachment, and elements from the 505th Forward Air Control Team. (Note: The units are identified from GO 32 and do not accurately reflect the correct title of the Scout Dog Platoon assigned to the Brigade.)

This task force was pulled out of Operation Attleboro, being conducted by the Brigade in the area of Dau Tieng and the Michelin Rubber Plantation in early October, 1966. It deployed north on short notice to reinforce the 3rd Marine Division in the Da Nang area of I Corps, and came under the operational control of the Third Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF), headquartered in Da Nang and commanded by LTG Lewis Walt.

Task Force Healy made history on 7 October 1966 by becoming the first Army ground combat unit to operate in I Corps. Line elements of the task force conducted squad and platoon size patrols and ambushes, and maintained mountain top security for Marine Hawk missile batteries as well as security for the Nambo Bridge on Highway I. During their tour in I Corps, the paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade lived in old French forts, fishing villages, the Hai Van Pass, Flames OP, Burnt Hill, and Marble Mountain (where they protected a Naval Academy Heisman Trophy winner

The sadness from Sky Soldier KIA's was mitigated in part by incidents of bravery. A member of the Military Police squad was awarded the Silver Star for breaking up a roadside ambush. The Headquarters S-2 Clerk/Driver was awarded the Silver Star for saving lives and

large amounts of equipment. He was instrumental in stopping a daylight sapper attack on the Naval Supply Activity (Ammunition Dump) in downtown Da Nang. He killed and wounded several sappers, and helped the Marine and Air Force Military Police capture the surviving sapper squad members.

While Sky Soldiers provided protection to the Da Nang region, no mortar or rocket attacks were launched against either the sprawling Da Nang Air base or the oil tanks in the Hai Van Pass; additionally, the Nambo Bridge remained intact. Shortly after Task Force Healy departed the Da Nang area, the VC blew up the Nambo Bridge, severely inhibiting north-south traffic, and rocket and mortar attacks resumed on Da Nang Air Base.

GENERAL ORDERS NO. 32
HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, DC
24 September 1973

(Extract)

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION (NAVY). Award of the Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) for periods indicated is confirmed in accordance with paragraph 194,AR 672-5-1.

355th Aviation Detachment
Battery B, 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery
Troop E, 1st Platoon, 17th Cavalry
173d Engineer Platoon
173d Military Intelligence Detachment
173d Military Police Detachment
173d Scout Dog Detachment
505th Forward Air Control Team
4th Battalion, 503d Infantry (For the period 7 October 1966 to 4 December 1966)

“The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION
TO THE THIRD MARINE DIVISION
(REINFORCED)

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

For extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces in the Republic of Vietnam from 8 March 1965 to 15 September 1967.

(continued...)



Throughout this period, the Third Marine Division (Reinforced), operating in the five northern most provinces of the Republic of Vietnam, successfully executed its threefold mission of occupying and defending key terrain, seeking out and destroying the enemy, and conducting an intensive pacification program. Operating in an area bordered by over 200 miles of South China Sea coastline, the mountainous Laotian border, and the Demilitarized Zone, the Third Marine Division (Reinforced) successfully executed eighty major combat operations, carrying the battle to the enemy, destroying many of his forces, and capturing thousands of tons of weapons and materiel. In addition to these major operations, more than 125,000 offensive counter guerrilla actions, ranging from squad patrols and ambushes to company-sized search and destroy operations, were conducted in both the costal rice lands and the mountainous jungle inland. These bitterly contested actions routed the enemy from his well-entrenched positions, denied him access to his source of food, restricted his freedom of movement, and removed his influence from the heavily populated areas. In numerous operations, the Third Marine Division (Reinforced) demonstrated the great efficacy of combined operations with units of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. In July 1966, the Third Marine Division (Reinforced) moved to the north to counter major elements of the North Vietnamese Army moving across the Demilitarized Zone into the Province of Quang Tri; its units fought a series of savage battles against the enemy, repeatedly distinguishing themselves and, time and again, forcing the enemy to retreat across the Demilitarized Zone. Imbued with an unrelenting combat spirit and initiative and undeterred by heavy hostile artillery and mortar fire, extremely difficult terrain, incessant heat and monsoon rains, the Third Marine Division (Reinforced), employing courageous ground, heliborne and amphibious assaults, complemented by intense and accurate air, artillery, and naval gunfire support, inflicted great losses on the enemy and denied him the political and military victory he sought to achieve at any cost. The outstanding courage, resourcefulness, and aggressive fighting spirit of the officers and men of the Third Marine Division (Reinforced) in battle after battle against a well-equipped and well-trained enemy, often numerically superior in strength, and the great humanitarianism constantly shown to the people of the Republic of Vietnam, reflect great credit upon the Marine Corps and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

~ A Football Game ~

It was in the fall of 1964 the 2nd Bat HQC was stationed at Camp Kue Okinawa. If we were not in the field training we would have A&R (Athletic Recreation) on Wednesday afternoons. Most generally this meant we were off so it came to be known as Alcohol and Romance. We would head for the EM Club at Kadena AFB, Sukuran EM Club, or up Jagaru Hill to some off limits bars. This is where the romance came in. One Wednesday afternoon two Lieutenant platoon leaders, both football players, one from West Point and the other from the University of Alabama, decided their platoons needed to play a football game. There was beer, lots of beer, bet on this game. Since we were paratroopers and not legs that sissy touch or flag football was out of the question, we played full contact tackle football. Needless to say the only football equipment we had was a football. The two LTs were the quarterbacks and as the afternoon progressed it became the goal to smash the other side's smartass LT into the rocky turf of Kue. This mission was accomplished more than once and the LTs were good sports about it. The two platoon Sgts were referees and pretty much forgot about the rules. There was blood, bruises, a few loose teeth, along with several fist fights that erupted during the game. The West Pointer had to buy the beer which eased some of the pain resulting from the game. There were some pretty good injuries and I don't know if the two LTs got their asses chewed or not but orders came down that there would be no more football games of that nature.

Rick Jerman
HHC/2/503d



Rick and buddies.



New Miramar National Cemetery Opens Providing Burials for Area Veterans and Family Members

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Meredith McFadden 619-422-5963

San Diego, CA – Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego officially opened today by providing its first burials of veterans and family members at the new facility.

“This is an eventful day for the veterans of San Diego and Imperial Counties,” said Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee. *“It is reassuring for thousands of the brave men and women who have served our country to know that they will find a final resting place with dignity and honor close to home.”*

Military honors at the opening ceremony included a rifle salute and the playing of “Taps.” Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Steve Muro gave remarks and was joined by VA and local officials in the interment of cremated remains. Casket burial options will be available in early 2011.

Congressman Filner has worked for years with other members of the San Diego congressional delegation to establish a satellite veterans’ cemetery, an annex to nearby Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery which closed to casket burials in 1966. Although it stays active with casketed interments of family members of those currently interred and inurnments of cremated remains, Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery will soon run out of Crematorium niches.

Property at the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar was dedicated as the Miramar National Cemetery on January 30, 2010. When completed, the 313-acre Miramar National Cemetery will offer in-ground gravesites for caskets and cremated remains as well as a columbarium, providing a full range of burial alternatives to approximately 235,000 Veterans in the San Diego County area. Riverside National Cemetery, located approximately 90 miles from San Diego, was until now the nearest national cemetery offering full burial options.

[Sent in by Nick Aguilar, C/HHC/1/503d]



Department of Veterans Affairs begins payment for new Agent Orange Claims

VA Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations
Washington, DC 20420
202-461-7600

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 1, 2010

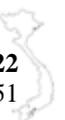
VA Begins Paying Benefits for New Agent Orange Claims – VA encourages Affected Vietnam Veterans to File Claims

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun distributing disability benefits to Vietnam Veterans who qualify for compensation under recently liberalized rules for Agent Orange exposure.

“The joint efforts of Congress and VA demonstrate a commitment to provide Vietnam Veterans with treatment and compensation for the long-term health effects of herbicide exposure,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Up to 200,000 Vietnam Veterans are potentially eligible to receive VA disability compensation for medical conditions recently associated with Agent Orange. The expansion of coverage involves B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia, Parkinson’s disease and ischemic heart disease. Shinseki said VA has launched a variety of initiatives – both technological and involving better business practices – to tackle an anticipated upsurge in Agent Orange-related claims. *“These initiatives show VA’s ongoing resolve to modernize its processes for handling claims through automation and improvements in doing business, providing Veterans with faster and more accurate decisions on their applications for benefits,”* Shinseki said.

(continued...)



Providing initial payments – or increases to existing payments – to the 200,000 Veterans who now qualify for disability compensation for these three conditions is expected to take several months, but VA officials encourage all Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and suffer from one of the three diseases to make sure their applications have been submitted.

VA has offered Veterans exposed to Agent Orange special access to health care since 1978, and priority medical care since 1981. VA has been providing disability compensation to Veterans with medical problems related to Agent Orange since 1985. In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness do not have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service.

This “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits. The three new illnesses – B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia, Parkinson’s disease and ischemic heart disease – are added to the list of presumed illnesses previously recognized by VA. Other recognized illnesses under VA’s “presumption” rule for Agent Orange are:

- Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- Chloracne
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- Hodgkin’s Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)
- AL Amyloidosis

Veterans interested in applying for disability compensation under one of the three new Agent Orange presumptives should go to www.fasttrack.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.

With the Aussies at Song Be April, 1966

We were running missions in the hills north of Song Be in conjunction with a mob of Aussies. We had come off a series of patrols, and were assigned to pull security for one of 319ths howitzers on some sort of Eagle flight. While we waited for the gun to show up, we sat in the shade near a couple of three-quarters that had been loaded to above the side rails with food and ammo, and covered with a tarp. The driver and his shotgun man sat

in the cab, their feet up on the lowered windshield, and an E4 with an elephant gun sat on top the load. A couple of gun jeeps were parked in a casual perimeter in the clearing, and everyone was either napping or enjoying their versions of military cuisine.



Mark Carter, LRRP extraordinaire.

Our team had sort of spread out along a line of bushes near the truck with our C-rats, and generally were approving of not having to walk anywhere carrying our basic load.

The E4’s name escapes me just now, but he was newly promoted, as I remember. He fussed with his web gear and got it all adjusted, made himself a bully seat on top some of the boxes, and butted the elephant gun on his thigh. I watched him break it open to check the load, then snap it shut with that well-practiced flip used by guys who need to shoot the damned thing at real targets, using the famous flip, thumb off the safety, aim and fire drill. Except of course he wasn’t in a firefight so all he had to do was load the thing and make sure the safety was on.

Now, what happened next was perfectly reasonable, if stupid, and I know we’ve all done it one form or another: he looked at the safety on the elephant gun, and for a moment he didn’t remember if it was supposed to be forward or back, or whether he’d reflexively moved it when he snapped the gun shut. So, naturally, he tested the trigger. Sure enough, his thumb had been doing the thinking that time, and a sharp BLAM! announced to everyone in the clearing that an M-79 shot was out.

(continued....)



~ OOPS! Another Correction ~

G'day from Australia,

I always look forward to reading each issue of the newsletter.

I read with interest your article on the Australian insertion into New Guinea on 5 September 1943, when Australian Gunners and their 25 PDR guns went in support of US troops of the 503rd Infantry at Nadzab, New Guinea in 1943.

One small point that needs correction is; it was not 24 hours after they were inserted before the first round was fired, it was 2 hours. This information is recorded at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia.

Keep up the great work getting information to the troops on health and what has happened to Veterans after their retirement.

Sid Cheeseman, AM PJ
Chapter XI Downunder



33 Artillerymen of the 2/4th Field Regiment, under the command of Lt. Pearson, participated in the paratroop drop over Nadzab, 5 September 1943. AMW 030141/24 Photo courtesy of the 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion web site.

Port Moresby, 1943. A gunner adjusts a parachute before the Australian airborne artillerymen and their guns -- dismantled and attached to parachutes -- join the transport planes which took them over the Markham Valley. AWM 015701.



Everyone in the clearing froze. I looked over at my TL. He looked at me. I glanced around at the rest of my team. We all looked at the E4 on top the three-quarter. By this time, every eyeball in the clearing was trained on the E4 on top the truck. Now, being highly trained professionals, we all took the time to notice that his weapon was still pointed almost straight up, and he was contemplating the tree canopy directly above him, through which his HE round had threaded itself, hitting nary a leaf or branch in its passage. I guess time was standing still, because we had plenty of time to get to our feet and run around in the clearing a bit before we decided to get under the truck. Not easy, because we had our rucksacks on. I was vaguely aware of the truck driver and shotgun man trying to squeeze in among us. Well, first come first served, but all were welcome.

After a while a loud BLAM! outside the clearing informed us that the M-79 round wouldn't be landing among us, so we crawled out from under the truck—this also not easy, on account of the rucksacks and all—and we went back to eating our C-rats.

A few minutes later an Aussie senior NCO and his driver came stomping up to the clearing, and the senior NCO wanted to know who had fired off that round. That's not exactly how he put it, but I couldn't really make out the individual words, on account of the way his vocal chords actually put out sound at two or three different frequencies at the same time, and, too, there's that accent, you know. The NCO did a lot of arm-flapping, which actually got the message across pretty well. Somebody pointed out the E-4 who was still sitting on top the truck, looking at his elephant gun like it was a third hand or something. Before the NCO actually climbed up on the truck one of the officers arrived to see what all the hubbub was about.

Fortunately all that was damaged was one of those funny-looking little jeeps the Aussies drove, which now was missing a front tire, quarter-panel, and part of an axle. After a while the Aussies got calmed down, and the officer was able to get a Chinook laid on to haul the Aussie jeep back to Bien Hoa. I heard the cherry E4 got to be a cherry E3, but that might have been just a rumor.

War usually is actually hell, but sometimes it's just heck. Take care,

Mark Carter
173d LRRP, '65-'66

~ Hooking Up ~

Do anyone of you have contact info for my good buddy LT Art Fumerton? I last saw him in California in 1967. He was in A Co. and later in Recon. Thanks!

Jack Owens, A/B/2/503d
j_owens1941@live.com



A Different Christmas Poem

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.

My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.

The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, Then the
sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.

Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Sky Soldier, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts...

To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said, "It's really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night.
It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times."

"No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.
My Gramps died at 'Pearl' on a day in December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram
always remembers."

My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.

"I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile."

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
"I can live through the cold and the being alone,
away from my family, my house and my home."

"I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
I can carry the weight of killing another,
or lay down my life with my sister and brother,
who stand at the front against any and all,
to ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
to know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
that we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

~ Author unknown ~

[Thanks to Paul Fisher 3/503d for sending this in]



~ Merry Christmas Sky Soldiers ~

