

Tet was a boxcar-odds gamble, Mr. Robbins concludes, a resounding tactical and strategic defeat for the VC and North Vietnam, itself jarred by air attacks that pinpointed targets with, some say, only pinprick success. Lyndon B. Johnson's concept of "limited war" and "gradualism" backfired, giving the enemy breathing room. No all-out bombing of the North took place until late in the war, ordered by Richard M. Nixon, mainly to free our prisoners of war. Mission accomplished, finally.

In the war-torn South, unsustainable losses caused doubters in Hanoi to suggest tossing in the towel. They were for negotiating with the "lackeys," perhaps to win by other means, over time, by guerrilla actions, but no set-piece battles. Dead set against this option was hawkish Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, architect of the war, who had the ear of iconic Chairman Ho Chi Minh, veteran of the French defeat in his homeland.

Few knew a "peace faction" in Hanoi wanted to quit. Settlement terms were discussed openly, even in the closed North Vietnamese government press. But the hawks in Hanoi's Politburo won: Tet was launched, perhaps significantly, on Ho Chi Minh's 77th birthday - a blood-soaked gift for the aging chairman?

Mr. Robbins argues convincingly, as did Mark Moyar in "Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965," that media created, perhaps inadvertently, a wrongful perception of Tet. "Charlie," as then-young GIs called the elusive VC, and his North Vietnamese comrades accomplished in Tet, by losing badly, what they could not do on the battlefield - stirred brewing American anti-war passions. Until then, polls showed widespread if not deep support for "LBJ's war" - if not for his overly optimistic generals and his defense secretary, Robert McNamara, the headstrong ex-auto executive.

Americans' lack of resolve became our Achilles' heel, Mr. Robbins concludes, for losing a war actually won, and won repeatedly, on the battlefield. The "peace movement" stoked by dour war assessments ("unwinnable," was it?) likely prolonged the conflict, a view held by Mr. Robbins and other Vietnam War scholars. Significantly, more than half of U.S. combat deaths occurred after Tet of 1968, when victory, it seemed, was at hand.

Another casualty, particularly among the military, was trust in media. Before that, a certain respect was engendered by "the press." After Vietnam reporting, mostly from the safety of Saigon hotel balconies, a distrust, even disgust, among us GIs surrounded our perception of civilian media. It continues today, a sad legacy of the Vietnam War, incited again by coverage from Iraq and now from Afghanistan. Military folks may well ask, "Whose side are they on?"



South Vietnamese Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the national police, fires his pistol into the head of suspected Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem, also known as Bay Lop, on a Saigon street, early in the Tet Offensive on February 1, 1968. (AP Photo/Eddie Adams)

Led by the avuncular Walter Cronkite, mainstream media in the Republic of Vietnam *"defined battle(s) in a way that favored the enemy, regardless of the facts,"* Mr. Robbins writes tellingly. One military man curtly said, ***"The Viet Cong can't beat us, but the New York Times and CBS-TV can."***

Some criticism can be laid off on media as a straw man, but not all, in this writer's opinion.

Media bias was found in coverage *"through choices of which stories ran and how they were to be edited,"* Mr. Robbins writes. Early in Tet, a single defeatist story line emerged in mainstream media: "Disaster in Vietnam!" (Shades of war in Iraq 40 years later?)

Journalists *"took every opportunity to belittle the U.S. effort in Vietnam [and] trumpet its failures and shortcomings,"* Mr. Robbins writes. A one-sided picture emerged. To "friendly" media, it seemed as if the U.S. military could do no right. (Shades of Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad?)

For a serious student of this war's brutish realities, Mr. Robbins' book is a don't-miss read. He tells a story not wholly revealed, until now, ripping shibboleths about the Vietnam War. Mr. Robbins plays a key role in a new revisionist school of military historians. Because, well, because history relies on facts, on immutable facts, truth unvarnished and not spun, if we are to learn from it. Mr. Robbins takes us a giant step in that direction.

Gary L. Larson is a retired magazine editor and former U.S. Air Force combat correspondent in Southeast Asia (1964-65).

[Sent in by MG Jerry Bethke, HHC/2/503d]



MILITARY UPDATE

Historical look at benefits reveals trends

November 30, 2010

By Tom Philpotts

Proposals to raise VA health care fees for some veterans in efforts to curb federal budget deficits, causes some to conclude that veteran benefits are under attack.

Bernard Rostker, former undersecretary of defense for personnel and now a senior fellow at the RAND Corp., has a more optimistic perspective on how America cares for and compensates its wartime veterans.



His original premise, he said, was that veterans' care and benefits today reflect a deeper attachment to the force, the result of moving from a military of conscripts after the Vietnam War, to a more professional force comprised of volunteers.

But as he completed volume one, covering the Colonial era through World War II, Rostker said he found the premise to be wrong. Much of what's being done today for veterans of the all-volunteer force is "rediscovering" what's been done before.

One exception, he said, are the unprecedented resources aimed at the invisible mental wounds, reflecting more medical knowledge, the nature of current wars and an attitude shift, even since the Persian Gulf War.

Otherwise, the infusion of money and staff for veterans' care and benefits fits an historical pattern, Rostker said, noting the nation's deep appreciation for those who fight for country and suffer wounds or illness.

Other patterns emerge, Rostker said. Government support tends to deepen with budget surpluses. Benefits tend to improve as veterans age, their ranks thin out, and enhancements become more affordable.



Home from France....WWI

For more than a year Rostker has researched what will be a two-volume study on the treatment of veterans and their survivors, going back to before the Revolutionary War, with a special focus on wounded warrior care.



Staff Sgt. Brian Mading, 29, of Bonita Springs, Fla., and fellow 173d paratroopers negotiate rough terrain down a mountain in Afghanistan, taking 10 hours to descend it.

Wars bring change too. The Department of Veterans Affairs budget has more than doubled since U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 -- from \$51 billion then to \$114 billion in the fiscal years that ended Sept. 30. VA spending is set to climb another 10 percent this year, to \$125 billion.

(continued....)



Persian Gulf War



Vet groups laud a 25 percent rise in VA spending since President Obama took office. Some contrast that largess to the Bush administration difficulty in June 2005 when it had to request a \$2 billion supplemental for VA to meet pressing health care obligations. Some veterans groups had called the original budget that year “tightfisted, miserly” and “woefully inadequate.”

Rostker avoids such comparisons. But his research might inform cost-conscious politicians about the perils of scrimping on veterans.

President Franklin Roosevelt made such a misstep, he said, while trying to pull the nation out of the Great Depression. At his urging, Congress in 1933 passed the Economy Act, which cut deeply into veterans’ benefits. Roosevelt told the American Legion convention “the mere wearing of a uniform” in war should not entitle a veteran, and later his survivors, to a pension for disabilities incurred after he left service.



President Franklin Roosevelt signs declaration of war against Japan.

The backlash was strong enough that the following March, Congress overrode Roosevelt’s veto and restored most benefits it had cut a year earlier.

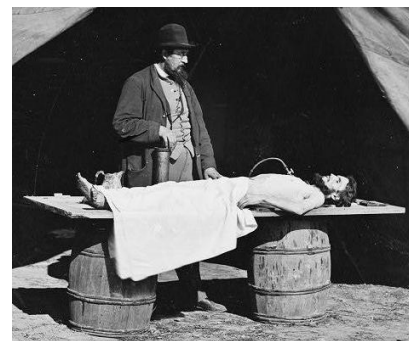
The Continental Congress in 1776 first recognized responsibility for wounded veterans, voting to authorize half pay for life to anyone who lost a limb or their ability to earn a living due to the revolution. By 1805 Congress approved pay for disabilities developed years after a veteran left service.

By 1818, with federal coffers flush with tariff money, the Department of War gave pensions to anyone who served in wartime, not just disabled,

Ten years later Congress settled complaints of Revolutionary War veterans by granting 850 surviving officers and soldiers full pay for life.

Rostker noted too that in 1833 Congress first approved “concurrent receipt” – payment of both an “invalid pension” and service pension. In 1836, Congress extended pension eligibility to widows and children of Revolutionary War veterans, adding enormously to the cost. The last spouse eligible for that Revolutionary War pension died in 1906, Rostker said.

The Civil War Pension Law of 1862 was viewed as the most generous any government had ever adopted, Rostker said, allowing disability payments for injuries or ailments incurred as a direct result of service. It set up a medical screening system, though reliance on hometown doctors led to rampant fraud and soon a purging of the rolls, Rostker said.



Civil War medical treatment

Payments to surviving spouse and children could exceed what veterans got. The last Civil War pensioners lived well into the 20th Century.

The study will span newer, more controversial periods including Gen. Omar Bradley’s reform of the VA after World War II, Korea and Vietnam and Gulf War Syndrome.

Through history, Rostker said, “*you see the generosity in many ways. You see it in the amount of money given, in the change of eligibility standards. And recently in the understanding of the mental aspects of conflict.*”

To comment, send e-mail to milupdate@aol.com or write to *Military Update*, P.O. Box 231111, Centreville, VA, 20120-1111

(Reprinted with permission of Tom Philpotts, *Military Update*. Photos added to report).



CASPER PILOT STILL HOVERING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS



Casper pilot Phil Johnson and his helio.

Several years ago my brother and I purchased this Army trainer (TH-55) from an elderly farmer in Eastern Oklahoma. His doctor had advised him that it was time to quit flying. Wayne had never been in the service but he sure loved that little helicopter. We used a flat bed to get it back to California. I am afraid we'd still be en route if we flew it back. Leaving the ranch it felt like we were taking his only child.



Heading to new home out west.

We keep it at a small airport near our homes, about 40 miles north of Los Angeles. Several Casper's have been up in it. *Sky Soldier Magazine* ran an article of fellow Casper Pilot Art McBride taking a ride. Since we got spoiled since Fort Walters, RPM control is everyone's main problem in the beginning. We all spend way too much time looking at the instruments. During flight school you knew by the sound what the RPM was.



Phil's mom, Betty, ready for lift-off on her birthday.

Here's a couple pictures, including one of my mother on her 90th birthday. She really wanted to go up on her 90th, and did real well! Take Care

**Phil Johnson, CW02
Casper Aviation, '69-'70**

HIS FIRST SALUTE



L-R: Dennis Morris, 2d LT Daniel Morris & Robert Will.

I was invited by Dennis Morris, whom I served with in C/3/503d in 1969, to the commissioning ceremony of his son Daniel to exchange the first salute with the new Lieutenant. Dan was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the US Army National Guard.

Dan was active duty Army for 6 years as a non-com and rose to the rank of Staff Sgt. He was Jumpmaster qualified and served in Iraq with the Special Forces. After separation he attended school at the University of Florida and the Army ROTC program. He was commissioned on April 30, 2010 and graduated the following day with a Bachelor's degree in Business Management. You know his parents are very proud of him and I was honored to attend.

**Robert Will, SGT
C/3/503d**



VISIT TO NORMANDY



I'll try to make a long story short. Several years ago our Casper group invited Max Cleland to be our keynote speaker at one of our reunions. He was head of the Veterans Administration at the time and a Vietnam vet who lost both his legs. I really felt he gave a great speech and I think most would agree. Several of us have stayed in contact with him over the years.



Phil raising American flag at Normandy Cemetery

President Obama appointed Max as Commissioner of American Battle Monuments Commission. Max contacted Hans Hooker, superintendent of the Normandy Cemetery and in turn I was invited to raise the flag.

In Vietnam I was a Chief Warrant Officer with Casper Platoon during the '69/'70 time period all at LZ English. I ended up logging more time in the LOH Flying Inferno

than in the Huey. I keep in contact with Don Bliss (Casper CO) mostly on Facebook, he's sure a nice guy.



German gun emplacements at Normandy

Here are some photos that I think Rangers might be interested in. What a hell of a job they did at Utah Beach!! Really set high standards for future Rangers to follow which I know for a fact you guys did.



Utah Beach seen from gun emplacement

Could you please let all the Rangers know that if they ever plan a trip to that area, that they contact me and I will get them in contact with Hans Hooker. They will really receive the VIP treatment and it will be something they will never forget.

(continued....)





I asked Hans if he could show me his grave. In the next picture his assistant, Greg, is rubbing Omaha beach sand into the headstone so we can see his name better.



He then places two flags, American and French at the foot of the headstone. Hans then conducts a very formal ceremony in which he presents the flags to me to be delivered to my friend.



The bottom of the flags will always have Omaha sand on them. He then took us down to the exact location where the landing craft hit the beach. By the time it was over I really felt I knew this man -- just amazing.

Phil Johnson
Caspers, '69-'70
casperpgj@yahoo.com

Town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise.....D-Day battle

The early landings, at about 0140 directly on the town, resulted in heavy casualties for the paratroopers. Some buildings in town were on fire that night, and they illuminated the sky, making easy targets of the descending men. Some were sucked into the fire. Many hanging from trees and utility poles were shot before they could cut loose. The German defenders were alerted.

(continued....)

Tributes

I thought you guys might find this kind of interesting.

A friend of mine asked me to take a picture of his uncle's headstone, John Allison, while at the cemetery. He was with the 49th Engineer Group. According to witnesses no one got off the landing craft, an artillery shell hit them as the door was opening.



A famous incident involved paratrooper John Steele of the 505th PIR, whose parachute caught on the spire of the town church, and could only observe the fighting going on below. He hung there limply for two hours, pretending to be dead, before the Germans took him prisoner. Steele later escaped from the Germans and rejoined his division when US troops of the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment attacked the village capturing thirty Germans and killing another eleven. The incident was portrayed in the movie, *The Longest Day* by actor Red Buttons.

Later that morning, about 0500, a force led by Lt. Colonel Edward C. Krause of the 505th PIR took the town with little resistance. Apparently the German garrison was confused and had retired for the rest of the night. However, heavy German counterattacks began later in the day and into the next. The lightly-armed troops held the town until reinforced by tanks from nearby Utah Beach in the afternoon of 7 June. There were other notable soldiers in the Allied assault on the town.

Today, these events are commemorated by the Airborne Forces Museum in Place du 6 June in the centre of Ste-Mère-Église and in the village church where a parachute with an effigy of Private Steele in his Airborne uniform hangs from the steeple. Bullet holes are still visible in the church's stone walls. Inside, there are stained glass windows, with one depicting the Virgin Mary with paratroopers falling in the foreground.



Though injured and deafened by the church bells, Private Steele survived his ordeal. He continued to visit the town throughout his life and was an honorary citizen of Ste. Mère Église. The tavern, Auberge John Steele, stands adjacent to the square and maintains his memory through photos, letters and articles hung on its walls.

Steele died of throat cancer on May 16, 1969 in Fayetteville, NC, just three weeks short of the 25th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

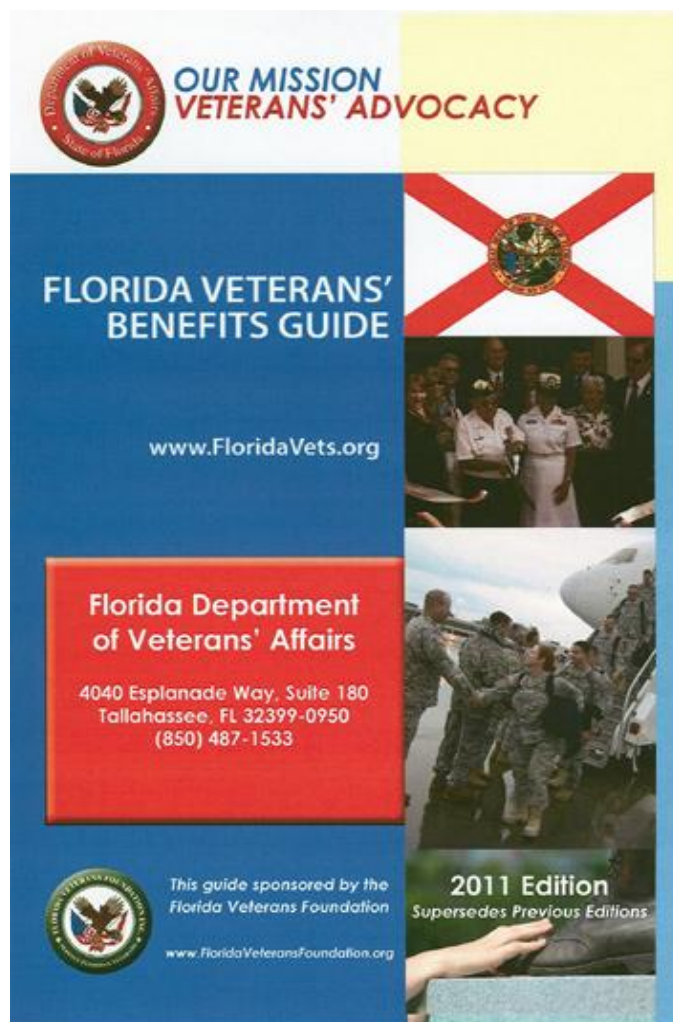
Florida Publishes State Veterans' Benefits Guide

TALLAHASSEE -- The 2011 edition of the *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide* is being released by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The 24- page guide, sponsored by the Florida Veterans Foundation, provides information about federal and state veterans' benefits and how to obtain them.

Copies of the guide are being distributed to county veteran service offices, VA facilities and state colleges and universities.

An online version of the guide is being posted on the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org.



~ AFTER ACTION REPORT ~

MARKHAM VALLEY

REPORT OF OPERATIONS

26 OCT 1943

EXTRACT ONLY

APO 929

Headquarters
503d Parachute Infantry
26 Oct. 1943

SUBJECT : Report of Encounter with Enemy Forces.

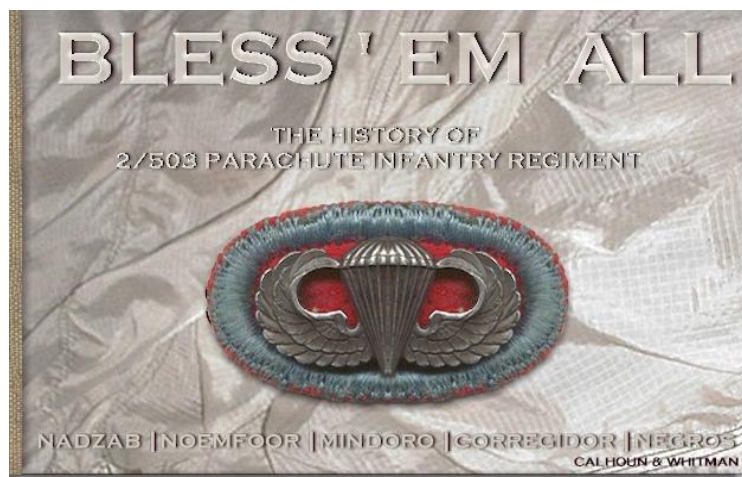
TO: The Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington D.C.

In compliance with paragraph 10, AR 345-105, dated 18 November 1929, the following report of the Parachute activities in operation against Japanese forces in the Markham Valley, 5 September 1943 to 19 September 1943 is hereby submitted.

1. **GENERAL:** The 503d Parachute Infantry was employed in conjunction with the 7th Australian Division and the 9th Australian Division in an air-sea and ground offensive against Japanese forces in the Markham Valley, New Guinea 5 September 1943 to 19 September 1943. The mission of the 503d Parachute Infantry was to seize the Nadzab E/L Strip and prepare it for use in landing of Airborne Australian troops and to close the western inland approaches of the Markham valley.
2. **DEPARTURE:** Due to the splendid co-operation of the Fifth Air Force and the 54th troop Carrier Wing, all departures were effected smoothly. All planes had been properly fitted for parachute drops, viz, doors taped and all excess accoutrements removed from the interior prior to arrival of the troops.



The troops arrived at the airfield and were at their assigned planes two hours prior to take-off. During this period, parachutes and equipment were fitted on the individuals. Fifteen (15) minutes prior to take-off, all men were seated in the planes with parachutes and full equipment on.



At 0825 hours, 5 September, the take-off was started. The rendezvousing of the eighty-two (82) transports required forty-five (45) minutes. When all elements were in formation, the flight to the drop area was started.

3. **FLIGHT AND DROP:** The flight was flying three (3) battalion columns in a formation of six (6) planes echeloned to the right rear and thirty (30) seconds between elements. After flying for one (1) hour, the first check point (Tsili-Tsili) was passed. At this point, all men were stood up in the plane and equipment checked. Twelve (12) minutes later, the Markham River, the second check point, was passed and the men stood in the door. In three (3) minutes the troops were jumping and in four and one-half (4½) minutes, eighty-one (81) transports were emptied. Each battalion landed on their assigned jump fields and proceeded immediately to their assembly areas.



Photo inscription: *Hurry Up and Wait - Standard army procedure in effect prior to the Nadzab Jump.*

(continued....)





503rd PIR jump onto Nadzab, September 5, 1943

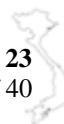
4. **GROUND ACTION:** The ground action proceeded as planned. The 1st battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry seized the Nadzab E/L Strip and commenced its preparation to receive airborne troops. The 2d and 3d Battalions, blocked all approaches from the North and East and established a network of extended patrolling. Very little activity was encountered. The 2/2 Australian Pioneer Battalion joined the 1st Battalion at 1800 hour, 5 September 1943, to take over the preparation of the strip. The original strip was 1500 feet long and had remained unused for twelve (12) months. This strip was improved and extended to 3300 feet. The 1st battalion then set up a perimeter defense around the strip to protect the 2/2 Australian Pioneer Battalion and the natives working with them. The Airborne troops, in C-47 airplanes, began to land at 1000 hour, 6 September 1943, 23½ hours after the jump was made.

On 8 September 43, the 25th Australian Brigade had arrived and had replaced our 3d Battalion who were then withdrawn to the vicinity of the strip.

The Australians continued their push down the Valley and on 14 September 43, the 3d Battalion was sent forward to protect their L of C and to prevent enemy infiltration to their rear. The main body of the Japanese Forces had at this time evacuated LAE and were withdrawing to the Northwest. This body encountered the 3d Battalion at 0600 hour, 15 September 43, and the Battalion immediately set up a defensive position to prevent their breaking through. A detailed account of this action is attached herein as enclosure #2. (not included herewith. Ed)

The vigorous and aggressive patrol action of this unit resulted in a few encounters with enemy patrols. The Japanese patrols always withdrew and in several instances, large amounts of equipment was abandoned.

(continued....)





Nadzab jump.

(continued....)





5. **EVACUATION:** a. The 1st Battalion was evacuated by air to Port Moresby on 14 September 43 after the arrival of the 25th Australian brigade with instructions to prepare for another mission.

b. The 2nd Battalion and regimental Headquarters Division was evacuated on 17 September 43.

c. The 3d Battalion was evacuated on 19 September 43.

6. **MISCELLANEOUS:** a. The morale of the men was excellent. The general attitude was one of determination. The men were disappointed in that they had been ordered not to be used were Infantry could be employed and were required to remain behind while the Australians pushed down the Valley.

b. One (1) plane load of fifteen (15) men did not jump because the crew chief was taking off the door, it blew out and was hanging on the side of the plane. It would have endangered the life of every man who would have tried to jump.

c. One (1) man did not jump as he fainted when the men were preparing to jump. No man refused to jump on this mission.

7. **RESULT:** a. The prescribed mission assigned to the 503d Parachute Infantry was carried out most successfully.

b. The casualties were as follows:

Killed in action - Eleven (11)

Wounded in action - Forty-three (43)

Note: This report is included here unedited from:

http://corregidor.org/BEA503/Reports/Markham%20Valley/markham_post_report.htm



G'Day Mate! Hey buddy!

(All photos courtesy of Daniel MacRaild)



YOMITAN DROP ZONE, OKINAWA



I'm attaching a series of pictures of a 2/503 jump on Yomitan in 1965 (with inscriptions). I served with the 1st Special Forces on Okinawa for almost two years before joining the 173d. According to my Jump Log, I made a total of 24 jumps on Yomitan, 14 with the Special Forces and 10 with 2/503. Of my Special Forces jumps, three were night jumps and 8 were equipment jumps. All ten of my 2/503 jumps were with equipment. Most of the Special Forces jumps were from helicopters while almost all the 2/503 jumps were from C-130's.

Frankly, I don't remember anything unusual about any of those jumps. I never had to pull my reserve, never was in danger of tangling with another trooper in the sky, and the wind was never high, so I never sprained an ankle or got dragged. However, on my one off-island jump with 2/503, on Taiwan during Exercise Sky Soldier in October of '64, the wind was high and I got dragged clear across the DZ before getting my chute collapsed.

George Dexter, Col. (Ret)
Bn CO, 2/503d

I jumped three times on Yomitan. Never hit the runway. I think my friend, Jesse Harris, lost his helmet and hit his head on the runway and was in the hospital for a while. I remember getting up so damn early and it was dark when we jumped, at least once. I guess that was considered a night-jump exercise. It seems to me the land on either side of the runway was potato fields.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d



"What I'd give for a nice sandy Drop Zone." (George Dexter)

(continued....)





"The smoke was there too."

(George Dexter)

I had arrived on Okinawa from the 25th in Hawaii. Had been off jump status for a few years. A NCO was assigned to give me pre jump. We walked over to the 34 foot tower, he looked at me and said, *"Do you know what that is?"* I said, yes. *"O.K.,"* he said, *"we are finished here."* Next thing I know is I'm looking down between my legs at Yomitan. I probably jumped on Yomitan 10 times -- something to remember.

Ron Thomas
HHC/2/503d

It does bring back memories. I believe Yomitan was a Jap air field during WWII.

Rick Jerman
HHC/2/503d

I was the Command Sergeant Major (CSM) of 1st Bn, 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa from Jan '89 to Apr '91. I made a HALO jump on Yomitan Drop Zone while stationed there.

Gary Baura, CSM
173d & US Army Special Forces

I can remember we used to have to go out there for rock stacking duty. We picked up all the coral rocks and put them in piles so you didn't get injured doing a PLF on top of them as they were laying all over the place. You

could slip away from the piles for day jumps but night jumps were *Real* fun. Then the local farmers would scatter the rocks all over the place, I guess they didn't like some of us jumping in their fields that bordered the DZ. They probably thought if the rocks are scattered we wouldn't be jumping in...LOL

Right before we went to Vietnam we went out there to jump from a helicopter that looked like a flying Banana. Everyone was told to get a vigorous exit to clear the wheel....well one guy didn't and got hung-up on the wheel and they tried for quite a while to shake him off. They finally decided to slowly lower the chopper to the ground and at about (looked like) 75 feet the wheel turned and released his chute and he hit like a ton of bricks -- I can't remember who it was. Anyone recall who it was?

Chuck Guy
4.2 Motar Platoon HHC/2/503d

I remember well my seventh jump getting dragged down the runway on that so-called drop zone.

Ron Woodley
A/2/503d

(continued....)



After jump school at Fort Bragg, with those beaches they called drop zones, my graduating class was sent to the 101st at Fort Campbell. This was April 1958. When the buses arrived at the Campbell repl depl, there were a bunch of NCO's (each with a fancy swagger stick) banging on the sides of the buses, exhorting us "cherries" to get the f#@k off the bus and into formation. They then proceeded to inform us that there had been five jumpers killed on the "best" drop zone at Campbell (Yamoto?) earlier that day! They then roughly described the difference between the beach like DZ's we were trained on and the horrors we had to look forward to on the DZ's at Campbell. They kept asking if we wanted to quit the Airborne before they wasted their time by assigning us to our new units. A few guys took them up on that offer.

I was assigned to Echo Company 1/506th (Easy Company of WWII and *Band of Brothers* fame). A few weeks later I got to make my "Cherry Jump". It was to be on Los Banos DZ, one of the smallest and roughest at Campbell. And, because the Air Force was experimenting with some new wind and radar systems, we would be jumping from 2500 to 3000 feet instead of the then standard 1250. We were told that because of the "experimental" nature of this particular drop, we were not allowed to "slip" our chutes toward the DZ. We were told to just enjoy the ride and land wherever we happened to come down. When I exited the aircraft and looked around, I couldn't see anything that looked like a drop zone! Nothing but trees below me as far as I could see! I came down through the trees and luckily got hung up with my feet just touching the ground. Since I had not seen anything that looked like a DZ, I gathered my chute from the trees and started walking in the direction the planes were flying. Took me about an hour to reach the assembly area.

Six years later I got to experience the pleasures of jumping on Yomitan on Okinawa. That was a scary SOB! Concrete runway and airplane parking spaces.



"Love that concrete."

(George Dexter)

And only about 8 seconds long before you would end up on radio towers or in the South China Sea. I don't remember exactly how many times I jumped in the year I was on Okinawa, but, I do know I hit that runway twice! Does anyone believe it is actually possible to make a perfect parachute landing fall? I did it the first time I hit that runway! Balls of the feet. Calf. Thigh. Buttock and Pushup Muscle. Never even felt the ground until I was running around the canopy to collapse it!

The second time I hit the runway was even better. When I realized there was no way I could avoid it, I also realized that the wind was from my rear and not too strong. I was able to make a standing/running landing and didn't even fall down.

That's my story about Yomitan, and I'm sticking to it!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d

Hardest DZ I ever jumped. Coral would cut you up. I preferred water jumps to landing on that damn runway.

Bob Clark
1st, 5th & 7th Special Forces
(RTO Smitty's brother)



NO HIDING PLACE FROM NEW U.S. ARMY RIFLES THAT USE RADIO-CONTROLLED SMART BULLETS

Weapon hailed as a game-changer that can fire up and over barriers and down into trenches.

Soldiers will start using them in Afghanistan later this month.

The U.S. army is to begin using a futuristic rifle that fires radio-controlled 'smart' bullets in Afghanistan for the first time, it has emerged.

The XM25 rifle uses bullets that can be programmed to explode when they have travelled a set distance, allowing enemies to be targeted no matter where they are hiding.

The rifle also has a range of 2,300 feet making it possible to hit targets which are well out of the reach of conventional rifles.

The XM25 is being developed specially for the U.S. army and will be deployed with troops later this month, it was revealed today.

The XM25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System has a range of roughly 2,300 feet - and is to be deployed in Afghanistan this month.

The rifle's gun sight uses a laser rangefinder to determine the exact distance to the obstruction, after which the soldier can add or subtract up to 3 meters from that distance to enable the bullets to clear the barrier and explode above or beside the targets.

Soldiers will be able to use them to target snipers hidden in trenches rather than calling in air strikes.

The 25-millimetre round contains a chip that receives a radio signal from the gun sight as to the precise distance to the target.

Lt. Col. Christopher Lehner, project manager for the system, described the weapon as a 'game-changer' that other nations will try and copy.

He expects the Army to buy 12,500 of the XM25 rifles this year, enough for every member of the infantry and Special Forces.

Lehner told Fox News: *"With this weapon system, we take away cover [from enemy targets] forever. Tactics are going to have to be rewritten. The only thing we can see [enemies] being able to do is run away."*

Experts say the rifle means that enemy troops will no longer be safe if they take cover.

The XM25 appears to be the perfect weapon for street-to-street fighting that troops in Afghanistan have to engage in, with enemy fighters hiding behind walls and only breaking cover to fire occasionally.

The weapon's laser finder would work out how far away the enemy was and then the U.S. soldier would add one meter using a button near the trigger. When fired, the explosive round would carry exactly one meter past the wall and explode with the force of a hand grenade above the Taliban fighter.



The army's project manager for new weapons, Douglas Tamilio, said: *"This is the first leap-ahead technology for troops that we've been able to develop and deploy."*

A patent granted to the bullet's maker, Alliant Techsystems, reveals that the chip

can calculate how far it has travelled.

Mr. Tamilio said: *"You could shoot a Javelin missile, and it would cost £43,000. These rounds will end up costing £15.50 apiece. They're relatively cheap."*

Lehner added: *"This is a game-changer. The enemy has learned to get cover, for hundreds if not thousands of years. Well, they can't do that anymore. We're taking that cover from them and there's only two outcomes: We're going to get you behind that cover or force you to flee."*

The rifle will initially use high-explosive rounds, but its makers say that it might later use versions with smaller explosive charges that aim to stun rather than kill.



Combat Related Compensation [For 20 year military or military/civil service retirees only]

Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) for certain disabled Uniformed Service Retirees has been codified in law at section 1413a, Title 10, United States Code.

The law was enacted December 2, 2002, by Section 636 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-314, December 2, 2002). CRSC provides compensation to certain retirees with combat-related disabilities that qualify under the criteria set forth in the law. For additional information regarding implementation, eligibility and application, visit the Department of Defense (DOD) website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc/>

Concurrent Disability Pay:

Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, contained a provision to restore the retired pay currently deducted from retirees' accounts due to their receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation (currently reflected on Retiree Account Statements as the "VA waiver").

This restoration of retired pay is known as Concurrent Disability Pay (CDP). It is applicable to all retirees who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50% or higher with the exception of disability retirees with less than 20 years of service and retirees who have combined their military time and civil service time to qualify for a civil service retirement. The phased-in restoration will begin January 1, 2004, with the first payments arriving February 2, 2004. CDP will be direct deposited or mailed based on retirees' current retired pay and VA system information. The rates will automatically increase or decrease based on the percentage of disability reported by the VA: If rated at 100%, \$750.00. If rated at 90%, \$500.00. If rated at 80%, \$350.00. If rates at 70%, \$250.00. If rated at 60%, \$125.00. If rated at 50%, \$100.00. These amounts will increase each year until January of 2014 when eligible members will receive their full retired pay entitlement and their VA disability compensation with no reduction.

Please note that CDP pay cannot exceed gross retired pay. For example, a retiree who is rated at 100% as indicated above but whose gross retired pay is only \$631.00, will only have \$631.00 restored. For more details, visit:

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38CFR/BOOKB/PART3/S3_750.DOC

VA Processes First Claims for New Agent Orange Presumptives

New Program Speeds Approval for Vietnam Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has decided more than 28,000 claims in the first six weeks of processing disability compensation applications from Vietnam Veterans with diseases related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

"With new technology and ongoing improvements, we are quickly removing roadblocks to processing benefits," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *"We are also conducting significant outreach to Vietnam Veterans to encourage them to submit their completed application for this long-awaited benefit."*

VA published a final regulation on Aug. 31 that makes Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam and who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, or a B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia eligible for health care and disability compensation benefits. With the expiration of the required 60-day congressional review on Oct. 30, VA is now able to process these claims.

Vietnam Veterans covered under the new policy are encouraged to file their claims through a new VA Web portal at www.fasttrack.va.gov. Vietnam Veterans are the first users of this convenient automated claims processing system.

If treated for these diseases outside of VA's health system, it is important for Veterans to gather medical evidence from their non-VA physicians. VA has made it easy for physicians to supply the clinical findings needed to approve the claim through the new Web portal. These medical forms are also available at www.vba.va.gov/disabilityexams.

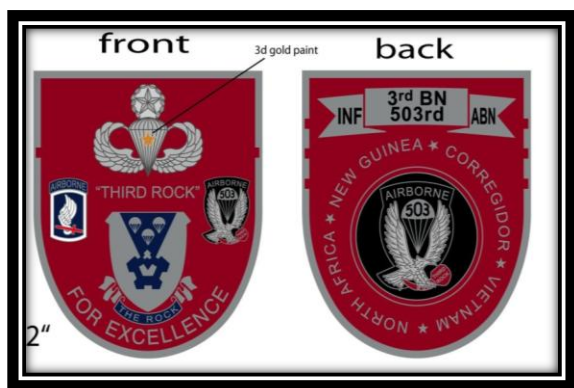
The portal guides Veterans through Web-based menus to capture information and medical evidence required for faster claims decisions. While the new system currently is limited to these three disabilities, usage will expand soon to include claims for other conditions.

VA has begun collecting data that recaps its progress in processing claims for new Agent Orange benefits at: www.vba.va.gov/VBA/agentorange/reportcard/index.html.

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]



~ 3rd Batt Coins & Medallions ~



I would like to take this opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding about coins versus Medallions.

Because of the interest in the first batch of 3rd Batt coins I decided to fix one side of it and produce another 100 3rd Batt coins with the Bn hash marks on the front flash. The back remains the same with only one hash mark and it is still \$10.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

I have about 30 of those coins remaining.

The medallion is in the shape of the WWII 503rd patch. It is 2.5" long and 2" wide and 0.23" thick.

Because of its size and number of colors it cost more to produce so I raised the price to 20.00 plus 3.00 shipping. I know it is a bit expensive but my goal has not been to make money on either the coin or the medallion. Rather to give all the profits away. I have done that with the 3rd Batt coins and will continue to do so till all are gone.

Some fellow paratroopers have bought coins to donate them to other paratroopers, some have donated money to the poor and I reserved some to just GIVE away.

I plan to do the same with the 503rd Medallion. All profits will go to the 173d Society and Foundation and to a local Food bank. That is why I priced the Medallion at 20 bucks.

If I do not sell them then I will have a very large SINGLE Medallion collection.

In ANY event I cannot tell you how much joy I have received in this whole process. The men and women I have met make it all worthwhile.

Warm Regards, AATW

Paul Fisher, LTC (Ret)
HHC/3/503d

Cell (908) 489-0366
Home (732) 542-1598
Email: fisherppd@att.net

COWBOYS 1965-66

Chopper Soul

Ranger Rudy Teodosio
#49 1970-71 Team
Charlie and 27 year
military career, sent me
information on the 173d
ABN support chopper
from the 335th Assault
Helicopter Group called
"Cowboys (1965-66).
The information on the
chopper was first sent to
us by Bill Spies
(Patrolling page 51
lower right & 52).

The organization
responsible for this is
the Worldwide Rangers
Organization - check
them out!



We need more of such items
restored for the public and
veterans to look at as our era of Vietnam fighting must
never be forgotten.

HEY, I'd like to buy a non-flying Huey and place it on
my front yard and sit in the door having my mocha --
coffee and chocolate mixed together as we did in the
field / radio-relays and in our hooch's.

Going to find out when the bird will be officially
donated to the museum, at which point the Long Range
Reconnaissance Patrol members of our Unit who rode
this bird can be there as the pilots and our door-gunner
have been located.

Thought that all of you who will receive this will enjoy
reading about chopper "SOUL".

RLTW

Robert 'twin' Henriksen
173d Special Ops Unit Director
(Lrrp + Lrp + Rgr + Lrs)

Anet 247 - Worldwide Army Ranger's Vietnam
helicopter spreads "good cheer"





Worldwide Ranger's



Vietnam helicopter spreads "good cheer"

For the past few months, a Vietnam helicopter has been spotted "buzzing the trees" at various locations in Columbus, Ga., and Phenix City, Al.

Most recently, the UH1-D helicopter was seen with brightly-clad holiday elves sitting in the door gunner's position as she delighted hundreds of adults and children waving at her in the annual Christmas parade.

"Soul was her name when she was flown by the 335th Assault Helicopter Company -- known as the 'Cowboys' -- in Vietnam," said Ranger Bill Spies, a member of Worldwide Army Rangers, Inc. (WAR), which owns the helicopter.

Spies and fellow Ranger Charlie Craft, wearing Santa hats, waved at the crowd during the Christmas parade. Spies said he, Craft and "many others owe their lives to ships such as 'Ole 736'." Soul's tail number is 64-13736.

One of the workhorses of the Vietnam War, Soul was recently painted to look the way she did when she was flown in Vietnam. "Help for Heroes," a group from Seale, AL, painted the helicopter with supplies provided by WAR and Paul Voorhees from Ranger Joe's.

After being refurbished, the helicopter made her debut atop a flatbed in the November 13 Veteran's Day Parade in downtown Columbus. "During the parade, four active-duty Airborne Rangers from the Warrior Training Center and Ranger Training Brigade -- Sergeants Long, Bilts, Hickman and Spears-- demonstrated rappelling while hanging out the door," said Spies.

Soul also greeted soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division during a "Welcome Home" event held November 10 at the



Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) on Victory Drive in Columbus. Soldiers and their families were able to climb aboard Soul while she was on display.

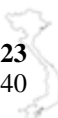
During the Veteran's Day Parade, Vietnam door gunner Milton Smith manned Soul's pilot seat while his grandson, Kyle, had the copilot's seat. Another Vietnam veteran, Ranger Tony Foster, along with one of his "battle buddies," were Soul's door gunners.

Larry Alexander, a helicopter instructor and pilot who flew 1,286 hours in Vietnam, drove the pickup truck pulling Soul during the Veteran's Day Parade. Alexander's son, Doug, a Gulf War veteran, and his grandson, Payton, also rode in the helicopter. "WAR president Willie Snow led Soul's float through the parade," said Spies.

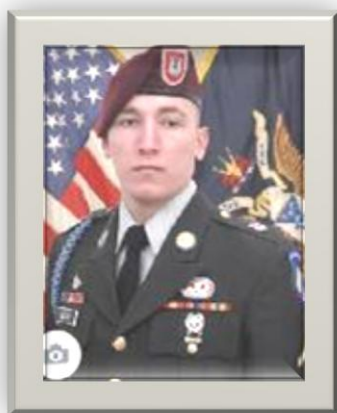
Soul's participation in the Veteran's Day and Christmas parades along with being displayed at the VFW were made possible "only by the efforts and donations of many people," said Spies, citing civilian Mark Smith, who volunteered to drive his pickup to pull Soul in the Christmas parade.

Above-L-R: Elves Sara Castillo, Chloe Spies & Samantha Castillo.

Right: Rangers (L-R) James Jackson, Charlie Craft, Bill Spies and Raymond Castillo.



**A SALUTE AND FAREWELL TO OUR SKY SOLDIER & RANGER BROTHERS
WHO MADE THEIR FINAL JUMP THIS PAST YEAR**



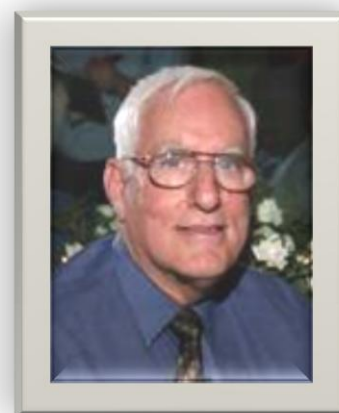
Nicholas S. Cook



Ronald Allen Tucker



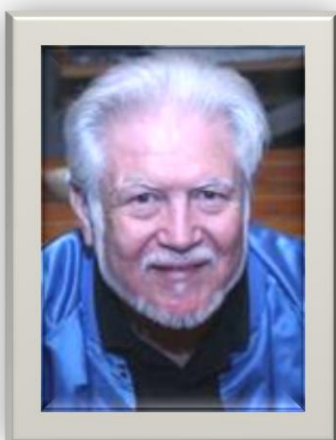
Frank Garcia



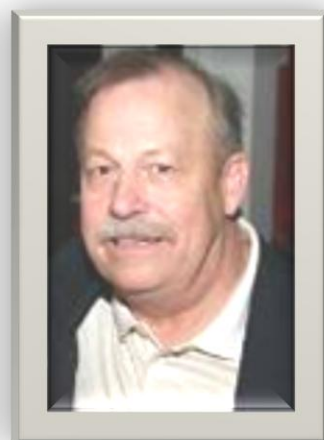
Dick Eckert



John Wills



Ruben Dimas, Sr.



John Nix



Louis Robert Fastuca



Butch Clark



Joseph Whiting Dimock, II

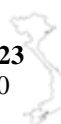


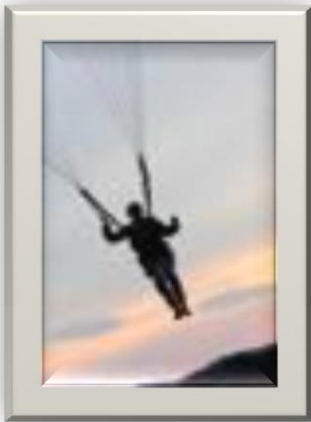
David Charles Dolby



Vinson B. Adkinson, III

(Sadly, continued....)





Terry Lee Robertson



Raymond C. Alcaraz, Jr.



Matthew Eric George



James Anthony Page



Robert Miller



Lance H. Vogeler



James A. Thorne



Lucas Tyler Beachnaw



Al Ealey



"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."

George S. Patton

