



March 2011, Issue 25

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~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



2/503d trooper doing what he does best during November '66 practice jump in South Vietnam.

(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon 2/503d)



Springtime: A Reason And A Season For Hope

By: Rev. Dr. Ronald R. Smith
1st LT/FO/B/2/503d



I love March. March is, at the very least, the beginning of spring. Indeed, spring officially begins on the 20th of March, although in our more northern regions it's hard to think of spring with ice and snow still on the ground.

March also sends me back to my tenth grade English class at AC Flora High School in Columbia, S.C. We read William Shakespeare's play, Julius Caesar. In Act I, Scene 2, the soothsayer bids Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March." Ides was the 15th day in March, as well as May, July and October -- and the 13th day in the other months (it's complicated!). But if the Ides of March is almost the beginning of spring, then it must also be near the end of winter.

Recently, Disney released the third in a series of films about Narnia, the mythical land of C.S. Lewis. Lewis, who in his middle years was a devout and committed atheist, set out to disprove Christianity. In the process, however, he became a convert and one of the staunchest followers and defenders of the Christian faith in the 20th century. His books, *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *A Grief Observed* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are still among best sellers nearly fifty years after his death.

In the first book of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe", when the Pevensi children first arrive in Narnia by walking through the wardrobe, they discover a curse is on the land. The curse has a very real manifestation; it's always winter and never Christmas. Winter has become the perennial season. The whole land is plunged into a dark night of the soul. But when the children begin to hear the mysterious, thrilling, earth-shaking news, Aslan is on the move, they are intrigued. The great king is back, he's already at work and what he's planned will change everything. Winter gives way to spring; the snow melts; the ice breaks; the cold lifts; the trees blossom -- and of course, this is symbolic of a new beginning for us as well. This is a great Biblical theme. When God moves, creation itself responds. Just as creation mourned when Christ was crucified -- the darkness at midday, the earth shaking -- it exalts when Christ is risen, the ultimate act of spring for human beings and also the whole creation.

Springtime comes after winter. It is a season of hope and renewal. For some of us, the winter symbolizes the difficulties of recovering from war, death, loss, and

grief. Spring offers hope, renewal and new life. Trees recover their leaves and flowers burst forth in a plethora of colors and shapes. The light of day is longer. The sun comes up earlier and sets later. Springtime: The season of hope springs eternal. Spring is full of hope.

When I think about hope, I'm reminded of these words from the pen of the apostle, Paul:

Romans 4:25-5:11 *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The sufferings and perseverance through our personal winters, cultivates and develops character and hope. Hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. With God there is always the opportunity for a new beginning.

An object of His grace,

Ron

Ron's message of hope and a new beginning is appropriate this month as commencing with the April edition he will be passing the holy reins of our newsletter to Chaplain Conrad "Connie" Walker, COL (Ret), former 2/503d and Brigade Chaplain with the 173d who, in '66/'67, joined us on numerous operations in Vietnam. On behalf of our 2/503d troopers, we wish to thank you, Ron, and your number one able and dedicated assistant, Ms. Ginny Gray, for sharing your messages of hope, faith and benevolence these past many months. Airborne Reverend, good job LT!



Azusa Vietnam War vet will be first soldier since war to visit bloody battle site

By Ben Baeder, Deputy Metro Editor
San Gabriel Valley Tribune
February 2, 2011



Wambi Cook, 64, of Azusa, a Vietnam Veteran from the 173d Airborne Brigade, poses for a picture at his home in Azusa, Wednesday, February 9, 2011. Wambi Cook is one of about 100 men who served in the battle of "Dak To" during the Vietnam War. (Photo by James Carbone)

Wambi Cook grew up next to the University of Pittsburgh football stadium. When the home team scored, he could hear the roar of the crowd. So he knew this had to be a dream.

There was no way he was really hearing the same loud crescendo in a Vietnamese jungle. He closed his eyes, knowing that when he opened them, the imaginary sound of the approaching hoard of North Vietnam Army regulars would disappear. It didn't.

He and about 70 men of Company A of the 173rd Airborne Brigade opened fire. After a few more attacks by the North Vietnamese, Cook looked around and realized he was the only U.S. soldier still able to fight. Everyone else was dead or severely wounded.

Cook, who is now 64 and lives in Azusa, couldn't believe how many charges the North Vietnamese mounted. *"I thought, 'They can't. I can't believe this is real. They can't be doing this again.'"*

That fight - the Battle of the Slope - took place June 22, 1967. Seventy-six soldiers of the 120-member company were killed, including several from friendly fire. Historians believe U.S. forces may have been outnumbered 15 to one. Five months later, Cook took part in the Battle for Hill 875. Most of his company was killed or injured.

A few days after the November battle, Cook wrote his mother: *"Mother, I've never been so nervous in all my 10 months over here. I jump at every unordinary sound. I don't think I can take it anymore. June 22 took a lot out of me, but I never expected the same thing to happen again. The Lord almighty has seen fit to let me live again."*

Now Cook and two old friends are visiting the central Vietnam area of Dak To where the battles took place. He will leave Monday, and, in an unexpected move, the Vietnamese government is allowing Cook and his friends to visit Hill 875. As far as anyone knows, the three men will be the first Americans to visit the site since the close of the war.

"I don't know if we'll actually get to do it, but it's on the itinerary," said Cook, noting officials could call off the visit with no explanation.

Making a second trip

It's his second trip to Vietnam. In 2008, he was allowed to see the site of the Battle of the Slope, but Hill 875 was off limits.

"I really don't know what changed, but at least it's on the schedule," he said.



U.S. troops move toward the crest of Hill 875 at Dak To in November, 1967 after 21 days of fighting, during which at least 285 Americans were believed killed. The hill in the central highlands, of little apparent strategic value to the North Vietnamese, was nevertheless the focus of intense fighting and heavy losses to both sides. (AP Photo)

When he tells people he's going back to the site of the battle, he gets one of two reactions, he said. Some say they would never go back. Others wish they could go, but say they don't have the means. *"For me, it brings a lot of peace,"* said Cook, a retired private school principal. *"I'm not trying to exorcise any demons. It gives me a sense of calm. A sense of fulfillment."*

(continued...)



Since Vietnam loosened controls on its economy in the 1990s, the southeast Asian country and the United States have built a solid relationship, said Peter Zinoman, an associate professor of history at UC Berkeley who specializes in southeast Asia. *"Most analysts think that at the moment, the (relationship with Vietnam) is the strongest it has been since the war,"* Zinoman said.

The United States and Vietnam have something in common - they're both worried about the growing power of China. Both countries like having someone to turn to for trade, he said.

Soldiers fuel tourism

The Vietnamese have been especially friendly toward U.S. war veterans, he said. Former soldiers have been at the vanguard of a growing tourism industry between the two countries. However, the central highlands area of Vietnam around Hill 875 is a hub of unrest. Ethnic minority groups have been making trouble for the Vietnamese government. In addition, the area is very remote. Those are the most likely reasons that tourists were kept away, Zinoman said.

"My guess is it was not because of anything to do with the war or history," Zinoman said. *"Those are regions in the highlands where there have been a lot of domestic populations that have been causing unrest."*

For the 173d, the area is sacred ground. The brigade suffered horrible losses throughout 1967, but they were able to drive the North Vietnam Army regulars out of the area.

As many of the soldiers get older, they are starting to rekindle camaraderie through meetings and reunions. One such meeting is at 11 a.m. Saturday at AMVETS Post 113, 14910 E. Los Angeles St., Baldwin Park. Dubbed the "Sky Soldiers," the group on Saturday will celebrate the 44th anniversary of the only combat jump in South Vietnam, which took place Feb. 22, 1967. Among those killed in action the day of the jump were John Salter of Pico Rivera and Selvester Vasques of Azusa, according to the Society of the 173d Airborne Combat Brigade.

Cook and the rest of the area men who served in the 173d are reaching out to any fellow veterans and their families in hopes they will attend Saturday's event.

For Cook, time - along with looking at old letters he wrote to his wife and mother - has given him a chance to get perspective on the war.

He was cocky before Dak To, he said. *"The 173d had kicked a lot of ass down south. We never lost,"* he said. *"But there wasn't that same confidence after that first repel on June 22."* For him, the battles of Dak To remind him of his mortality and it makes him thankful to be alive to watch his six children grow up.

Search for a hero's family

Cook also wants to find the family of the man who saved his life.

He and fellow soldier Bill Reynolds were honored for running into fire during the June 22 battle to rescue injured medic Rick Patterson. But there's more to the story.

North Vietnamese soldiers killed the two

soldiers assigned to give cover fire to Reynolds and Cook. Then Reynolds was shot and unable to walk. Cook was desperate. He and Reynolds had been ordered to leave their weapons behind so that they might be able to more easily carry Patterson. *"All hope was lost,"* he said.

Then they saw medic David Heller charging toward the enemy with an M-60 machine gun. Heller was within 10 feet of Cook and Reynolds when a bullet tore through his head and killed him. But the brazen display spooked the enemy enough to give Cook time to run up and grab a rope to drag his friends to safety.

"Heller was kind of a misfit," Cook said. *"I really didn't know him too well."* Cook retrieved Heller's body, and the slain man was given the Bronze Star. Cook would like the honor upgraded.

"He's from South Boone, Colorado, I'll never forget that," he said.

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[Reprinted here with courtesy of Mr. Ben Baeder, Deputy Metro Editor *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*]

Note: In next month's issue of our newsletter will be a feature story of Wambi and his buddies' return to the summit of Hill 875.



Assault on Hill 875



PTSD ANONYMOUS

I also saw SSG Sal Giunta's involvement during the Super Bowl. No one can doubt his contributions to the Herd and the country .

Dr. Scott Fairchild's byline (February issue, pages 45-46 of our newsletter) is spot-on. The impact of complex combat stress (or whatever is PC now) is chronic with direct impact on the quality of life of many of our Sky Soldiers and other combat vets.

After ten years of experience and observation, it is clear that we need to excise some new options, particularly at the community level. I believe the 173d Abn Bde National needs to champion the use of its local chapters to do more in a coordinated fashion across the nation. We need to partner with United Way with its national web network (and Combined Federal Campaign funding) to establish a true, KISS oriented, customer targeted clearinghouse where folks can get contacted with real humans ASAP.

We know that the Herd and the Special Forces Association have forward operating bases (Chapters) across the country and overseas. Along with other motivated organizations, i.e. United Way, etc., a lot could be done if supported. The numerous DOD and VA web sites do not contribute such a clearinghouse, i.e. <http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov> does not fulfill this simple and direct need.

The *National Council on Disabilities* report, March 2009, highlights this on pages 49-50 of that report.

Doc Hicks and others of us in the Tacoma/Fort Lewis area came to this conclusion some time ago and created the following concept to offer some sort of local support groups for those we saw, and continue to see, with multiple DXs following multiple deployments.

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Notes:

~ Looking for Buddies ~

Brother Sky Soldiers:

A local 'nam Sky Soldier is trying to find the family of, or anyone that might have known **Amado Valencia**.

Amado was a KIA in '69. His family lived in Bakersfield, CA at some point. He had a sister, Lucy Valencia, who was subsequently married and moved (?) back to Texas. Amado also had a couple brothers in the service, ABN, possibly. One brother was called 'Boy'.

One of our troopers really wants to try and locate the family. If anyone has any info, please RSVP.

Many thanks.

Dave Glick
B/2/503d

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AMADO ACOSTA VALENCIA
SP4 - E4 - Army - Selective Service
173d Airborne Brigade
KIA Binh Dinh, South Vietnam
Hostile Ground Casualty
May 15, 1969
Panel 24W – Line 22

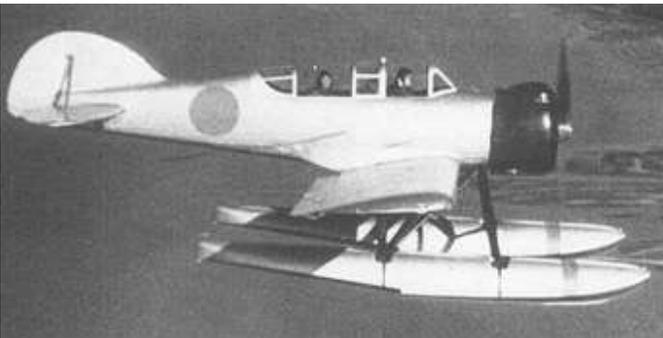


The Day Japan Bombed Oregon

By: Norm Goyer

September 9, 1942, the I-25 class Japanese submarine was cruising in an easterly direction raising its periscope occasionally as it neared the United States coastline. Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor less than a year ago and the Captain of the attack submarine knew that Americans were watching their coastline for ships and aircraft that might attack our country. Dawn was approaching; the first rays of the sun were flickering off the periscopes lens. Their mission; attack the west coast with incendiary bombs in hopes of starting a devastating forest fire. If this test run were successful, Japan had hopes of using their huge submarine fleet to attack the eastern end of the Panama Canal to slow down shipping from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Japanese Navy had a large number of I-400 submarines under construction. Each capable of carrying three aircraft. Pilot Chief Warrant Officer Nobuo Fujita and his crewman Petty Officer Shoji Okuda were making last minute checks of their charts making sure they matched those of the submarine's navigator.



The only plane ever to drop a bomb on the United States during WWII was this submarine based Glen.

September 9, 1942: Nebraska forestry student Keith V. Johnson was on duty atop a forest fire lookout tower between Gold's Beach and Brookings Oregon. Keith had memorized the silhouettes of Japanese long distance bombers and those of our own aircraft. He felt confident that he could spot and identify, friend or foe, almost immediately. It was cold on the coast this September morning, and quiet. The residents of the area were still in bed or preparing to head for work. Lumber was a large part of the industry in Brookings, just a few miles north of the California Oregon state lines.

Aboard the submarine the Captain's voice boomed over the PA system, "Prepare to surface, aircrew report to your stations, wait for the open hatch signal." During training runs several subs were lost when hangar doors were opened too soon and sea water rushed into the hangars and sank the boat with all hands lost.

You could hear the change of sound as the bow of the I-25 broke from the depths, nosed over for its run on the surface. A loud bell signaled the "All Clear." The crew assigned to the single engine Yokosuki E14Y's float equipped observation and light attack aircraft sprang into action.



The aircraft carried two incendiary 168 pound bombs and a crew of two. The "Glen" was launched via catapult from a I-25 class Japanese submarine.

They rolled the plane out its hangar built next to the conning tower. The wings and tail were unfolded, and several 176 pound incendiary bombs were attached to the hard points under the wings. This was a small two passenger float plane with a nine cylinder 340 hp radial engine. It was full daylight when the Captain ordered the aircraft to be placed on the catapult. Warrant Officer Fujita started the engine, let it warm up, checked the magnetos and oil pressure. There was a slight breeze blowing and the seas were calm. A perfect day to attack the United States of America. When the gauges were in the green the pilot signaled and the catapult launched the aircraft. After a short climb to altitude the pilot turned on a heading for the Oregon coast.

Johnson was sweeping the horizon but could see nothing, he went back to his duties as a forestry agent which was searching for any signs of a forest fire. The morning moved on. Every few minutes he would scan low, medium and high but nothing caught his eye.

The small Japanese float plane had climbed to several thousand feet of altitude for better visibility and to get above the coastal fog. The pilot had calculated landfall in a few minutes and right on schedule he could see the breakers flashing white as they hit the Oregon shores.

Johnson was about to put his binoculars down when something flashed in the sun just above the fog bank. It was unusual because in the past all air traffic had been flying up and down the coast, not aiming into the coast.

(continued....)





Warrant Officer Fujita is shown with his Yokosuka E14Y (Glen) float plane prior to his flight.

The pilot of the aircraft checked his course and alerted his observer to be on the lookout for a fire tower which was on the edge of the wooded area where they were supposed to drop their bombs. These airplanes carried very little fuel and all flights were in and out without any loitering. The plane reached the shoreline and the pilot made a course correction 20 degrees to the north. The huge trees were easy to spot and certainly easy to hit with the bombs. The fog was very wispy by this time.

Johnson watched in awe as the small floatplane with a red meat ball on the wings flew overhead, the plane was not a bomber and there was no way that it could have flown across the Pacific. Johnson could not understand what was happening. He locked onto the plane and followed it as it headed inland.

The pilot activated the release locks so that when he could pickle the bombs they would release. His instructions were simple, fly at 500 feet, drop the bombs into the trees and circle once to see if they had started any fires and then head back to the submarine.

Johnson could see the two bombs under the wing of the plane and knew that they would be dropped. He grabbed his communications radio and called the Forest Fire Headquarters informing them of what he was watching unfold.

The bombs tumbled from the small seaplane and impacted the forests, the pilot circled once and spotted fire around the impact point. He executed an 180 degree turn and headed back to the submarine.

There was no air activity, the skies were clear. The small float plane lined up with the surfaced submarine and landed gently on the ocean, then taxied to the sub. A long boom swung out from the stern. His crewman caught the cable and hooked it into the pickup attached to the rollover cage between the cockpits. The plane was swung onto the deck. The plane's crew folded the wings

and tail, pushed it into its hangar and secured the water tight doors. The I-25 submerged and headed back to Japan.

This event, which caused no damage, marked the only time during World War II that an enemy plane had dropped bombs on the United States mainland. What the Japanese didn't count on was coastal fog, mist and heavy doses of rain made the forests so wet they simply would not catch fire.

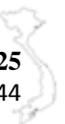


This Memorial Plaque is located in Brookings, Oregon at the site of the 1942 bombing.

Fifty years later the Japanese pilot, who survived the war, would return to Oregon to help dedicate a historical plaque at the exact spot where his two bombs had impacted. The elderly pilot then donated his ceremonial sword as a gesture of peace and closure of the bombing of Oregon in 1942.

Reprinted with courtesy of Aircraft Marketplace blog
<http://acmp.com/blog/the-day-japan-bombed-oregon>

[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA]



~ More on The Jump ~

In last month's issue of our newsletter (Pages 13-16), we included recollections on the Junction City combat jump. Following are recollections which came in too late to be included. Ed

Jump Wings With A Star

As usual, I really enjoyed the latest newsletter. Regarding your coverage of the combat blast for 2/503; two things stick in my mind. One, CWO Howard Melvin, head of Riggers in C Co. (S&T) was making his fourth or fifth combat blast and, two, the merchants in Bien Hoa were selling jump wings with a combat jump star a week or so ahead of the jump. So much for OpSec. AATW

Steve Haber
C/2/503d



Beautiful downtown Bien Hoa 1966
How do I love thee? Let me smell the ways.
(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d)

Silver Wings Upon Her Breasts

You might remember that we were supposed to make three practice jumps before the February 1967 combat blast. We made two and then the third was cancelled because the enemy had mined the drop zone. On the combat jump one of the guys was hung-up in a tree hanging so high up that he would have died if he jumped. To make this as bad as it could get a VC was shooting at him and we were all hollering for him to swing back and forth.

A Chinook finally blew him out of the tree as a last resort. His chute opened just in time. A Platoon from Bravo company got ambushed. VC had a 50 cal and

there was nothing to hide behind bigger than a broomstick. Napalm was called in or no one would have made it out.

On the way to Vietnam we flew on a commercial 707. We had a stewardess named Gloria. She was barely 5 foot 2 but nature had been good to her and she had enormous breasts. She was great. She broke out the booze and talked one-on-one with I believe everyone on the flight as we flew up over Alaska toward Vietnam.

Someone took a shooting expert badge and hung it on her right breast near the nipple and within a short time about a dozen tags were added to the badge. At this point someone put another badge on the other breast and there soon was an equal number of tags hanging from both breasts and she came down the aisle looking like a stripper coming down a runway. She hugged almost everyone when we got off the plane and tried to give the badges and tags back. Nobody would take 'em. I hope she's still got 'em. Funny what you remember.

Lonnie Mitchell
B/2/503d

Looking for a 173d Yearbook

My name is John Bryant. I served with the Rangers and then the Public Information Office from 1970 till our unit stood-down and came state side. I extended my tour in-country and stayed behind when the Herd came home.

Due to our stand-down we rushed the last magazine to print. We did not get it in time to distribute it in Vietnam. It was to be given out when our unit reached the states. This issue had a split front page with a Freedom Bird and a pair of Boonie Boots on it. The back page was of a member from 2nd Bat as he sat watch over the mountain leading into the Sequoia Valley. He was seated on a rock with his rifle at port-arms. The green mountains were in the background with a cloud blanket covering the valley.

I didn't come stateside with the rest of the unit, and was reassigned in-country. I did a lot of work on that yearbook and never got a copy of it -- 40 years later I might never get a copy. I was hoping you might ask those who receive the newsletter to Will me their copy. If they have one that is boxed-up and they never look at it or want to clean house and pass it on; I'd love to get a copy of it. Many of the photos in the Journal were taken by me including the back cover.

I know this is a long shot, but it's the only shot that I have!

John Bryant, Rangers
john.bryant19@yahoo.com



SGT. NASTY

From Iva Tuttle, spouse of Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503d

It was with great regret and sorrow that we read of the passing of Sgt. Nasty. We knew him as Carl Asbury instead of Ernest, but that's nothing unusual with the way the Army handles names.

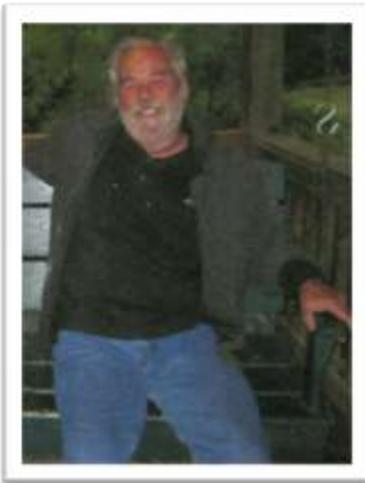
Just wanted to share a story with you about him and the first time we actually met.

In 1994, we attended our first reunion in Sacramento, California. After the reunion, Wayne mentioned that since we had moved to Canada he hadn't been in touch with any of his buddies from C Company 2nd Batt. By that fall, a number of them had been found and talked to. The list was growing every day it seemed – slowly at first, but gradually we were getting more and more names. In 1995, at Rochester, it was decided that we'd keep working and try to get some of the guys together from '66-'67, at least to attend the reunion at Anaheim and have a kind of mini-reunion there.

At the 1996 reunion, there were about 30 men – quite a few who hadn't seen each other since Vietnam – that were together. We had gotten two adjoining rooms so there was enough room for everyone to sit and visit and have a safe place to just hang out and reminisce. As a result of that reunion, we came home with another list of names. Men were talking and not realizing they were mentioning names they had thought were forgotten.

During the next year, more time was spent trying to locate men. Some wanted to be found, others didn't. Some wouldn't talk, some just wanted someone to listen. One of the men we found was George Foote who mentioned his Sergeant – a man by the name of Carl "Nasty" Asbury. He told us how he was wounded on Hill 875 and how Sgt. Nasty was wounded too, and how great this guy was and he would follow him anywhere. He did not tell us that he thought Sgt. Nasty was KIA so the search began.

A few weeks later, a man answering the description returned a phone call I made to Joshua Tree, stating he was Sgt. Asbury. He told me that all his buddies had been casualties of Hill 875. I said, "Well, I got your name from a man by the name of George Foote who lost



Ernest/Carl.....Sgt. Nasty

part of his foot on 875." Carl hung up the phone without another word.

I called Foote and told him that I thought I'd found Sgt. Asbury. I had a contact number and would try again and see if Carl wanted to talk to him. That resulted in another hang-up because Foote thought Asbury was KIA -- both swearing the other had been removed in a body bag.

I was used as a go-between for quite a few days with a lot of the conversations coming from the bottom of a bottle before I could talk them into talking to each other. It was almost reunion time in Tucson and it was mentioned to them that we were going, we would have a suite again and it would be a safe place to meet.

The result was that on the way to Tucson, Foote picked up Asbury and miraculously they arrived in Tucson. There were many bottoms of bottles – most of the time Asbury would end up in the chair in our room for the night. Our son, David, took him on to protect him and keep him safe and make sure he was okay. Even to diving under a table at the banquet when the shoot-out occurred.

One day when I went into the room to check on Carl, I told David he didn't have to stay there watching him all the time. David looked up at me with tears streaming down his face and said, "***Mom, do you realize that all these men were younger than I am now when they were going through that hell? I do have to stay here.***"

The morning of the memorial service, Carl came up to me after the service and told me 'thank you' and started to walk away. He stopped, came back and said to 'tell David thank you, and if he had to ever go back to war, he wanted my son to have his back.' I don't know how much bigger a compliment a parent could have.



Iva & Wayne Tuttle

We kept in touch for quite awhile until he went back to his bunker. He and Foote spent a lot of time together – even went to Mexico for a while. Carl, I hope you have your peace. Know you were loved and remembered by a young man that looked on you as a hero – as the young man you once were.



CSM Vincent D. Roegiers

Sadly, I must inform you that CSM Vincent D. Roegiers died on Thursday, 27 January at about 1700 hours. CSM Roegiers was suffering from Alzheimer's.

The Funeral was held on Tuesday, 1 February at 1030 hours at Saint Elizabeth Ann Seaton Catholic Church in Fayetteville, NC.

Mrs. Roegiers' home address is 126 Glen Almond Court, Dunn, NC 28334-2856. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations to the American Cancer Society.

Following is CSM Roegiers' biography. I cannot attest to its complete accuracy but I believe it is close.

May he finally be at peace.

Ken Smith
A/D/2/503d



Vincent D. Roegiers **Command Sergeant Major** **U.S. Army, Retired**

Command Sergeant Major Vincent D. Roegiers was drafted in March, 1945, and underwent basic training at Camp

Livingston, Louisiana. He subsequently attended the last Airborne Class conducted at Fort Benning during World War II. Following completion of Airborne training, CSM Roegiers was assigned to the 13th Airborne Division at Fort Benning.

CSM Roegiers was reassigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg in late 1945, where he served in numerous positions from 1945 through 1955. Following this Airborne assignment, he rotated to the Federal Republic of Germany where he served with the 2nd Armored Division at Mannheim.

On a typical Airborne track, CSM Roegiers returned to Fort Bragg after his Germany tour. From 1958 through 1960, he served with A Company, 505th Parachute Regiment, and then as a Division Operations Sergeant with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In 1960, CSM Roegiers was transferred to Okinawa. From 1960 through 1963, he was assigned to the 503d Airborne Battle Group (Forward) of the 25th Infantry Division. When the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was formed in March 1963, CSM Roegiers was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry (Airborne), where he served until 1964.

Completing his Okinawa tour in 1964, CSM Roegiers returned to the United States and was assigned to 4th Student Battalion (Airborne), at Fort Benning, GA, where he helped train Airborne soldiers. In 1967, he was reassigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade, then deployed in the Republic of Vietnam. He served as CSM of the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry and then as CSM of the 173d Airborne Brigade.



In 1968, CSM Roegiers returned to the United States and was detailed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. From 1968 through 1969, he served as CSM of the 4th Cadet Regiment, and was subsequently selected as CSM of the United States Corps of Cadets, a position he held from 1969 through 1973.

Following his tour at West Point, CSM Roegiers deployed to Korea where he served as CSM of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from 1973-1974. Redeployed in 1974 to the Home of the Infantry, CSM Roegiers served as Command Sergeant Major of the United States Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, GA, until his retirement in 1979. CSM Roegiers retired with 34 ½ years of service in the United States Army.

CSM Roegiers' numerous awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with "V" device (with 3 OLC), the Air Medal (w/ 2 OLC), the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device (w/ 3 OLC), the Good Conduct Medal (w/ 10 OLC), the World War II Victory Medal, the American Theater – Mediterranean Campaign Medal, the National Defense Medal (w/ 1 OLC), the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (w/ 4 stars), the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), the Presidential Unit Citation, the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and the Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Unit Citation. CSM Roegiers wore the Master Parachutist Badge and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

Rest easy, Command Sergeant Major, job well done.





Henri Huet/Associated Press: American soldiers held a memorial service for seven men of the U.S. 101st Airborne in a clearing near a former French rubber plantation in Lai Khe, South Vietnam, December 1965. The photograph is part of the “Henri Huet: Vietnam” exhibition at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

Among war photographers, the name Henri Huet once ranked alongside Robert Capa. He is remembered, by those who knew him, as among the bravest, the most soul stirring, the most tragic of his class of shooters. Now a new generation of Parisians and tourists have a chance to view his haunting work at “*Henri Huet: Vietnam*,”



Henri in Vietnam.

running Feb. 9 through April 3 at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie (5/7 rue de Fourcy; 33-1-44-78-75-00; www.mep-fr.org) in Paris’s Fourth Arrondissement.

Curated by *The Associated Press*, for whom Huet worked for many years, and Huet’s niece, the show will highlight work produced by Huet while embedded (before we knew the word) with troops in Southeast Asia, as well as the work of a handful of his contemporaries.

War Photographer Remembered at Paris Show

By Sarah Wildman

In Transit

February 1, 2011

The show marks the 40th anniversary of Huet’s untimely death in a helicopter explosion above Laos on Feb. 10, 1971 — a crash that took the lives of three other photojournalists: Larry Burrows of *Life* magazine, Kent Potter of U.P.I. and Keisaburo Shimamoto of *Newsweek*.

The former A.P. bureau chief in Saigon, Horst Faas, and Huet’s niece, H el ene G edouin, an editor with the French publishing house Hachette, were determined to restore Huet’s legacy, and bring an awareness of his work to the public. Mr. Faas and Ms. G edouin first put together an exhibition, as well as a book, of his work in the small French city of Perpignan. The Paris exhibition is a significant expansion on the first show, including several never-published photos.

[Sent in by Paul Epley, 173d Bde PIO]



If only it were true...



General Vo Nguyen Giap

A report has been circulating for years through email, I just received it again the other day, stating General Giap and North Vietnam were on the verge of surrender before America's decision to pull-out from Vietnam, which is interesting, if it were true, but it isn't. Here's the text of that urban legend: Ed

General Giap was a brilliant, highly respected leader of the North Vietnam military. The following quote is from his memoirs currently found in the Vietnam War Memorial in Hanoi:

"What we still don't understand is why you Americans stopped the bombing of Hanoi. You had us on the ropes. If you had pressed us a little harder, just for another day or two, we were ready to surrender! It was the same at the battle of TET. You defeated us! We knew it, and we thought you knew it. But we were elated to notice your media was helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields. We were ready to surrender. You had won!"

General Giap has published his memoirs and confirmed what most Americans knew. The Vietnam war was not lost in Vietnam -- it was lost at home. The same slippery slope, sponsored by the US media, is currently underway. It exposes the enormous power of a Biased Media to cut out the heart and will of the American public. A truism worthy of note: ... *'Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media for they will destroy your honor.'*

All research I've conducted, and it's readily available on countless university, government and historian's web sites and books, including first-hand interviews with the General, claim the very opposite. In fact, one can surmise he would never give up and they would prevail.

Interestingly, he was surprised the Americans never employed nuclear bombs to bring the war to an end.

Vietnam War historian: Giap made no such statement

According to Clemson University history professor Edwin Moise, General Giap never wrote or stated any such thing. From Moise's comprehensive Vietnam War Bibliography:

The most relevant statement I could find that is actually attributable to General Giap was uttered in a 1989 interview with Morley Safer, as excerpted in *The Vietnam War: An Encyclopedia of Quotations* by Howard Langer (Greenwood Press, 2005, p. 318):

"We paid a high price [during the Tet offensive] but so did you [Americans]... not only in lives and materiel... Do not forget the war was brought into the living rooms of the American people. ... The most important result of the Tet offensive was it made you de-escalate the bombing, and it brought you to the negotiation table. It was, therefore, a victory....The war was fought on many fronts. At that time the most important one was American public opinion."

While Giap did not discount the importance of anti-war protests in the U.S. as contributing to America ending the war, I've found no credible source stating Vietnam was ever near surrender.

"In his most recent statement on the matter, a 1996 interview conducted for a CNN series on the Cold War, General Giap attributed the Communists' eventual military victory to their *courage, determination, wisdom, tactics, intelligence and sacrifices, along with Americans' lack of knowledge about the Vietnamese nation and its people*, but he said nothing about a defeated Vietnam preparing to give up the effort before U.S. protesters changed the course of the war."

You'll recall Ho Chi Minh telling the French they too would never win, as Vietnam was prepared to lose 10 men to everyone Frenchman killed, and then, no doubt, send 10 more.



Paris peace talks

Someone once said, "Everyone is allowed their own opinion, no one is allowed their own facts." Ed





173d REUNION ITINERARY

(Tentative, subject to change)



June 22 -- Wednesday

- 1200 - 2000 Registration
- 1300 - 0100 Hospitality Room
- 1300 - 2200 Vendors
- 1800 - 2000 President's Reception



June 23 -- Thursday

- 0900 - 1200 Board of Director's Meeting
- 1000 - 1700 Registration
- 1000 - 2200 Vendors
- 1300 - 2400 Hospitality Room



June 27 -- Friday

- 0730 - 0900 Gold Star Reception & Breakfast
- 0900 - 1500 Registration
- 1000 - 2400 Hospitality Room
- 1000 - 2200 Vendors
- 1000 - Board buses for trip to Fort Sam Houston
- 1030 - 1500 Tour Fort Sam Houston
- 1700 - 2300 BBQ, Mariachis, Dance at Maverick Plaza

June 25 -- Saturday

- 0900 - 1100 Registration
- 0900 - 1200 General Membership Meeting
- 1000 - 1200 Ladies' Brunch
- 1000 - 2200 Vendors
- 1000 - 1200 Hospitality Room

BANQUET DINNER

- 1815 - 1850 Cocktails
- 1900 - 1910 Post Colors
- 1930 - 2035 Dinner
- 2035 - 2130 Speakers & Awards
- 2130 Retire Colors
- 2135 - ??? Entertainment & Dancing

Maverick Plaza

June 26 -- Sunday

- 0830 - 1000 Continental Breakfast
- 1030 - 1130 Memorial Service, Arneson River Theater
- 1130 - Reunion closing. Depart or stay and see more of San Antonio.



The Alamo

Reunion web site: <http://www.skysoldiers.com>





173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION ~ REUNION 2011 ~



22 June – 26 June 2011, San Antonio, TX

Hosted by Texas Chapter 13

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Unit served with in the Brigade _____ Dates served _____

Circle Shirt Size: S M L XL 2XL 3XL Male/Female _____

Exact hat size _____ (Note: A cowboy hat will be given to the 173d member above if Registration Form and hat size are received by March 1, 2011.)

Guests:

Circle Male or Female and Shirt Size for each guest

Name _____	Relationship: _____	M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL
Name _____	Relationship: _____	M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL
Name _____	Relationship: _____	M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL

Registration/ Event Fees

- ___ \$173.00 per Association Member
- ___ \$125.00 per Guest
- ___ \$125.00 per Gold Star Family Member
- ___ \$ 75.00 per Active Duty Soldier (Not on Orders)
- ___ FREE Active Duty Soldiers on Orders (i.e., Command, Color Guard)
- ___ \$ 75.00 per Vendor Table
- ___ FREE Gold Star Brunch – 173d Gold Star Families
- ___ Brunch Ladies Brunch (Included with registration)
- ___ Please check if planning to attend.
- ___ \$ 15.00 Trip to Fort Sam Houston per person
- ___ \$ 15.00 Sky Soldier Adoption Program “Have a meal on me” for active duty soldiers



Hilton Palacio del Rio, San Antonio, Texas

\$ _____ Total Enclosed

Make Checks Payable to: [Texas Reunion 2011 – 173d Airborne Brigade](#)

Mail Checks to: John Rolfe, 100 Oleander Road, Comfort, TX 78013

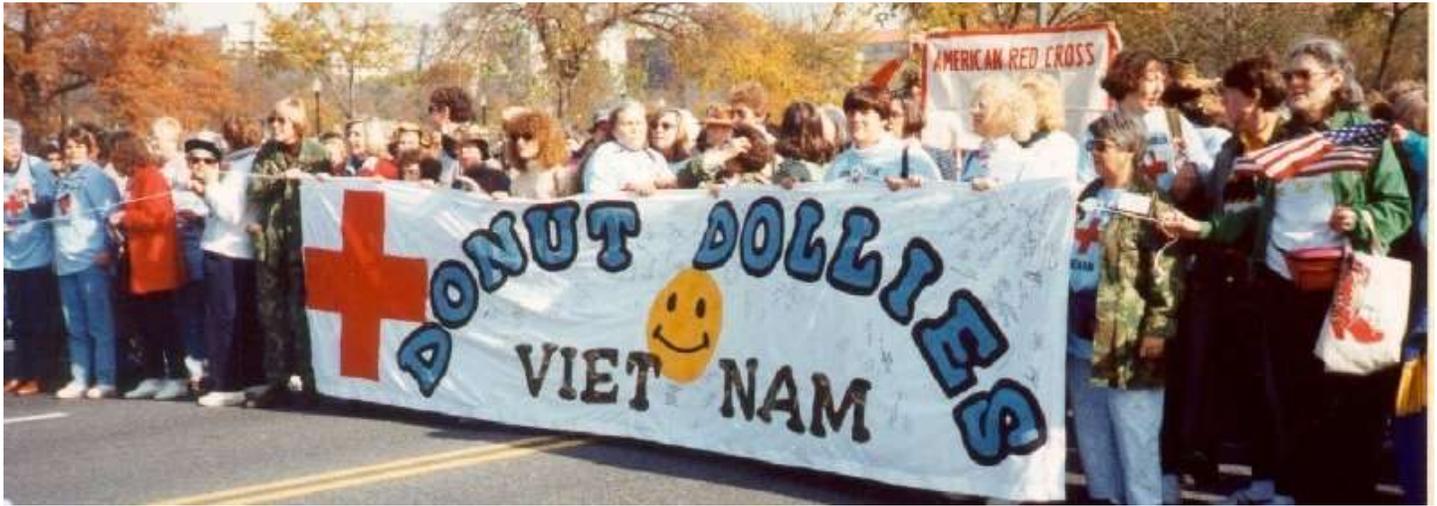


For Hotel Reservations: Hilton Palacio del Rio, \$119 + tax per night. Call 1-800-HILTONS and request the group rate for The 173d Airborne Brigade Association, Inc., or use the unique group code ABA.

Overflow Hotel: Menger Hotel, \$119 + tax per night, Call:1-800-345-9285 and request the group rate for the 173d Airborne Brigade Association.

To Register Online, visit www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011





Donut Dolly Book Set For November

I wonder if you can include this in our newsletter. A couple years ago I invited this woman to speak at one of our vets' PTSD meetings. She was just starting her book then.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

Friends:

Hooray! My publisher, University of North Texas Press, has informed me that my book, *Donut Dolly: An American Red Cross Girl's War in Vietnam*, will be published on November 11, Veteran's Day, 11-11-11. I'm so excited.

Here's an overview:

Donut Dolly
An American Red Cross Girl's
War in Vietnam
By Joann Puffer Kotcher

Donut Dolly puts you in the Vietnam War face down in the dirt under a sniper attack, inside a helicopter being struck by lightning, at dinner next to a commanding general, and slogging through the mud along a line of foxholes. You see the war through the eyes of one of the first women officially allowed in the combat zone.

Kotcher was once abducted; dodged an ambush in the Delta; talked with a true war hero in a hospital who had charged a machine gun; and had a conversation with a prostitute. She found answers to the questions: What is it really like in a war? What will a soldier say to a girl while sitting in a bunker with shells flying overhead? What did the men think about the war? Why would a man risk his life to save another? The answers will surprise you.



Number Six: North Texas Military Biography and Memoir Series

Joann Puffer Kotcher
Donut Dolly
American Red Cross
Korea '64-'65
Vietnam '66-'67

There were three categories of Red Cross Workers in Vietnam.

SMH "Service to Military Hospitals." These women and men worked in the hospitals directly with the patients, doing a combination of social work and recreation therapy.

SMI "Service to Military Installations."

These women and men were the Red Cross social workers who arranged compassionate emergency leaves and received and passed on communications from the families back home regarding births, deaths, and emergencies.

SRAO "Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas." These women were the Donut Dollies. Their job was to provide "a touch of home in a combat zone." They brought games and Kool Aid and a respite from thinking about the war to men in the field.

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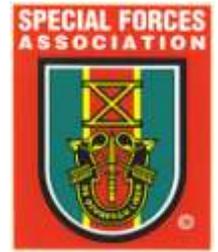




Lowell Wesley Stevens, Sr. Paratrooper Extraordinaire *Rest Easy Trooper*

FAYETTEVILLE – MSG Lowell Wesley Stevens, Sr., 69, of Fayetteville, made the leap into eternity on Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2011. Lowell arrived on this earth as the first child of a coal mining family on July 8, 1941, in Putney, W. VA. He was the son of the late Elmer and Opal Young Stevens. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Larry; and his sister, Jean. He was named after both of his grandfathers, Lowell H. Stevens and John Wesley Young. Lowell was the first one in his family to graduate from high school, but had only two options after doing so; go to work in the coal mines, which had killed his dad, or join the U.S. military. His father had served as a machine gunner in Europe during the last stages of World War II with the 376th Infantry Regiment of the 94th Infantry Division and was immensely proud of his Combat Infantryman Badge. On July 29, 1959, Lowell entered the U.S. Army, having enlisted for Airborne unassigned. He graduated from Jump School in February 1960, and six years later he was a master parachutist. Later on, he added HALO and HALO Master Wings to his chest. From December 1959 to May 1963, he was a proud member of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY. In May 1963, he volunteered for Special Forces training and completed the course with MOS 112 (Heavy Weapons Infantryman) in November of that year. In November 1963, Lowell was assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) located on Okinawa and performed the duties of the Heavy Weapons man on A-Detachments. He served on Detachment A-312 from Company C on a six month TDY mission to South Vietnam from June to December 1964. From May to July 1965, he was a squad leader in the Recon Platoon of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment. In October 1965, Lowell was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in South Vietnam. Between this date and August 1972, Lowell completed a total of 71 months with the 5th Group in Vietnam. His duties included serving on A-Camps, MACV SOG, Mike Force company commander, and instructor at MACV Recondo School. He served for a total of six years and five months in Vietnam. After Vietnam, he was assigned once again to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) on Okinawa for 18 months. In April, he was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg. During the last eight years of his military service, he performed the duties of the team sergeant on Operational Detachments. In his opinion, nothing in the Army was greater or more important than the team sergeant on an

ODA. After retiring from the Army on March 1, 1980, he was an owner and operator of a new Peterbilt truck, leased to trucking companies that specialized in hauling steel and machinery until July 1983. During these 3 ½ years, he traveled the continental United States and visited with his rig all but two of our states. He enjoyed seeing our country from the vantage point afforded him by the cab of his truck. In July 1983, he started work on Camp Mackall as the range control representative. He took an intense interest in the history of Mackall and for more than 27 years, he endeavored all but daily to learn the rich history of the "home of the Airborne during World War II." He said many times that his service in Vietnam and his time at Camp Mackall defined his life and provided a degree of contentment that few men ever realized. On Sept. 1, 2010, Lowell retired from civil service on Fort Bragg with more than 47 years of enjoyable service with the federal government. Although he did not like to enumerate the awards he received while in the Army, it is customary to do so, so here it goes: Silver Star Medal (three awards), Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (six awards), Purple Heart (two awards), Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge and a handful of "I was there" awards. He was most proud of his Vietnam Campaign Medal, which indicated that he was awarded 16 campaigns out of a total of 17 awarded for the entire Vietnam War. He is survived by his sister, Frances Stevens James and husband Cecil, of Thomson, GA; his wife of more than 35 years, Emiko; son, Lowell Jr. and wife Lauri; daughters, Natalie Stevens and husband Bart Palmer and Cheryl Stevens Mericle; two grandsons, Chance Palmer and Brandon Stevens; and two granddaughters, Brooke Stevens and Chasity Palmer, all of Fayetteville. Memorial services were held in Fayetteville on Monday, Jan. 31, 2011. Interment followed at Sandhills Veterans Cemetery in Spring Lakes with full military honors.



Published on the Special Forces web site:
<http://www.sfa62.org/>

[Sent in by Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d]





~ Sky Soldier Extraordinaire ~



Chaplain/Pastor Conrad N. (Connie) Walker

Pastor Conrad N. (Connie) Walker was born in Herrick, Illinois. He attended elementary school in Illinois, and graduated from Grant Community High School in Fox Lake, Illinois where he excelled in student leadership and athletics. He graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. After four years of study, he graduated from Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota and was ordained a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. After seminary, he was called as pastor of Shiloh Lutheran Church in Elmore, Minnesota. In September 1962, he was called by his church to Active Duty as a U.S. Army Chaplain. While in seminary, and as a parish pastor, he served in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Minnesota National Guard.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker served at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 101st Airborne Division; Vietnam, 173d Airborne Brigade; Fort Benning, Georgia, Student Brigade (Airborne, Ranger, Pathfinder School); Fort Hamilton, New York, Advanced Chaplain School; Thailand, USARSUPTHAI and Special Forces; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Command and General Staff

College; Fort Hood, Texas, 1st Cavalry Division Chaplain; Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Post Chaplain and Faculty Resource; US Forces Korea, Eighth U.S. Army, Command Chaplain United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command; Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Post Chaplain; Kaiserslautern, Germany, 21st Support Command, Command Chaplain; Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Fifth Army Chaplain. He retired from active duty on 1 November 1990, to accept a call as Senior Pastor at MacArthur Park Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas. After serving as parish pastor for five years, he began his new mission of Worldwide Retreat Ministry.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Valor, Legion of Merit and Purple Heart for his pastoral mission under hostile conditions



in Vietnam. He is a Master Parachutist, having made many hundreds of jumps with the troops, to include one combat jump with the 173d Airborne Brigade.

He spent many years as an outstanding athlete. He played guard for the University of Washington Huskies, and had opportunities to play professional football and box professionally upon graduation, but followed the call to enter seminary to further prepare to be a pastor. He was a heavyweight boxer for nine years, holding titles in the Midwest and on the West Coast. He coached boxing throughout his Army calling.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker and his wife, Ann, are the parents of five adult children. They have ten granddaughters, ten grandsons (four currently on Active Duty), one great grandson and six great granddaughters. His family has accrued a combined total of over 120 years of meritorious and distinctive service with the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

He is a member of the Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America. He is co-author of the dynamic book about his life story and bold witness, *"The Leapin' Deacon"* – The Soldier's Chaplain. The forward is written by General John Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker and Ann continue in Retreat and Spirituality Ministries, Pastoring and Mentoring seminars, Prayer breakfasts, Banquet speaking, and Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer Professional Training and Leadership. He is presently serving as National Chaplain Emeritus for the Military Order of the Purple Heart and International/National Chaplain Emeritus for the 173d Airborne Association, and most recently accepted our invitation to share his message each month in the *Chaplain's Corner* of our newsletter.



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Pathfinders Pathfinders

Before our successful Pathfinder Reunion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in June 2007, a small group of 101st retired and active duty combat veterans (Danny "Bear" Rozier, CSM Shawn "Jump or Die" Jones, Steve "Brainiac" Campbell and Pat "Dirt Ball" Dougherty) worked closely together to father that historic gathering and formalize an idea for a national organization of Pathfinders.

Association for our young Pathfinders who are currently ordered to multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Pathfinders of Today

The stress on our young troopers and their families is unrelenting. Our soldiers return from war to the problems of reconnecting with loved ones and finding a place within a family that has learned to live without them. Our membership of young and old warriors wanted the NPA website www.nationalpathfinder.com and Flickr account to provide a means for Pathfinders to stay connected to their families and the Pathfinder Brotherhood.

With this website, the NPA Officers and Governors are attempting to accomplish these important goals. If you haven't joined the National Pathfinder Association, you will find instructions on our web site. If you have questions or comments concerning the NPA, please explore the Contact tab of our website. You can expect a quick and helpful response.

"The Year of the Pathfinder"



2011 Convention

*Sponsored by the
National Pathfinder Association*

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada

July 19-23, 2001

nationalpathfinderassociation.com



Pathfinders of yore.

Two years later at the 2009 Pathfinder Reunion, this same working group presented a rough draft constitution and bi-laws which was conditionally approved by all Pathfinders present. The attendees also voted in a Slate of Officers and Board of Governors with the mission to obtain a legal Charter for a "National Pathfinder Association (NPA)."



The charter membership of the new Association wanted a professional organization that would provide a meeting place for old warriors to come together and embrace their comradeship. They also wanted a life-long





On Arlington National Cemetery

I would like to share some very positive news on our continuing efforts to fix what's broken at Arlington National Cemetery.

It was last June when many of us first heard about Arlington's reliance on paper records and maps, and the systemic disorganization and shameful errors that inevitably resulted. I think all of us were especially shocked and appalled to learn about dozens of instances of misplaced or misidentified remains at the cemetery.

As an American, a Virginian, a member of the Senate and as the proud son of a World War II Marine veteran, I thought it was important to take action to try to correct these problems.

So last August, we announced a unique agreement with the Army. Several of our leading Northern Virginia technology companies assigned their brightest problem-solvers to work with the Army to honestly assess the back office disaster at Arlington, and recommend a responsible path forward.

We already knew that Arlington Cemetery officials were relying on hand-written files, paper maps and 3-by-5 index cards, which was an entirely inadequate system for responsibly tracking the 300,000 military heroes buried at Arlington and the 6,000 military funerals conducted there every year.

Senator Warner, with members of NVTC and representatives from Arlington National Cemetery, announced the release of an assessment of problems at the cemetery.

As a result of this assessment, we now know there were other disappointing management issues at the cemetery:

- Arlington relied on a single fax machine and an inadequate telephone system, which created a difficult and frustrating bottleneck for thousands of families trying to send death certificates, service records, letters of confirmation and other important documents.
- This continued reliance on pencil and paper records required families to produce duplicate documentation that in many cases already existed in the Pentagon or VA computer systems – but for

some reason these computer networks were not linked.

- Funeral urns containing the remains of our nation's military heroes frequently were stored on top of file cabinets, in closets and on spare desks at Arlington for extended periods of time, labeled with a temporary, hand-written sticker, awaiting the arrival of the appropriate funeral and burial paperwork.
- Arlington grave markers frequently arrived with misspelled names or other inaccurate information because hand-written records were illegible or incorrect.

Now, it is clear these management issues and workflow challenges existed at Arlington National Cemetery for years, even decades -- and they certainly won't be solved overnight.



But this business plan prepared by members of the Northern Virginia Technology Council provides the Army with a clear roadmap to bring Arlington National Cemetery into the 21st Century digital age.

If implemented correctly, these recommendations will honor the sacrifice of those men and women who are buried at Arlington. This business plan also will go a long way towards restoring the faith and the confidence of those families who have entrusted the remains of their loved ones to Arlington.

An assessment of this quality and depth typically would cost a client hundreds of thousands of dollars, but it is important to note that these Virginia companies and NVTC provided this public service for free. I want to publicly thank them for this great example of corporate citizenship.

The Army already has replaced the management team at Arlington, and Army leaders say they have taken preliminary steps to address several of the problems identified in this report.

But let me be clear: my interest in fixing what's broken at Arlington does not end today. I consider it my responsibility to stay focused on these issues, and to continue to press the Army to follow-up quickly and appropriately, so that we can put this disappointing chapter behind us.

Best,

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

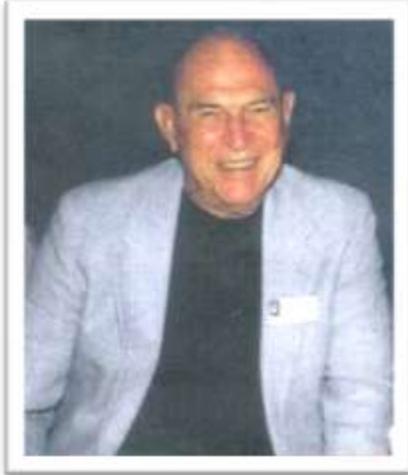




**ALMOST AWOL
or,
503rd Paratroopers Don't
Make Good Sailors**

**By Chuck Breit
503rd PRCT, WWII**

I had just turned 19 and I was on the Island Fortress Corregidor in the Philippines. The date was February 20, 1945, or close to it. I was never much on dates and places. I was in the Regimental Headquarters Company Demolition Squad, 503rd PRCT. My job was to carry the 64# flame thrower. I was 6' and 185 pounds so they figured I was the man for the job.



Trooper Chuck

On this particular day we were assisting a rifle company in taking a Jap held concrete bunker that looked out over the bay. It was on the edge of the cliff near top side at about 400'. On the side toward us was a steel door and on the side facing the sea were three openings for firing at an attacking force.

Bob Boundy fired his bazooka and it blew the door wide open. Johnny Banks, my BAR man, fired a burst at the opening to give me covering fire so that I could make a run at the bunker. When I reached the door area wind was coming out the open door in a blast. I couldn't fire into the wind so I ran to the top of the bunker figuring I could use it in the openings on the side toward the sea.



Chuck ready to blast*

***[Among his many exploits after his army service, Chuck was a stunt flyer and that handsome devil also worked as a stand-in for Clark Gable. Oh, the parachute he jumped onto Corregidor is on display in the WWII exhibit in the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning GA].**



503rd Troopers landing on "The Rock"

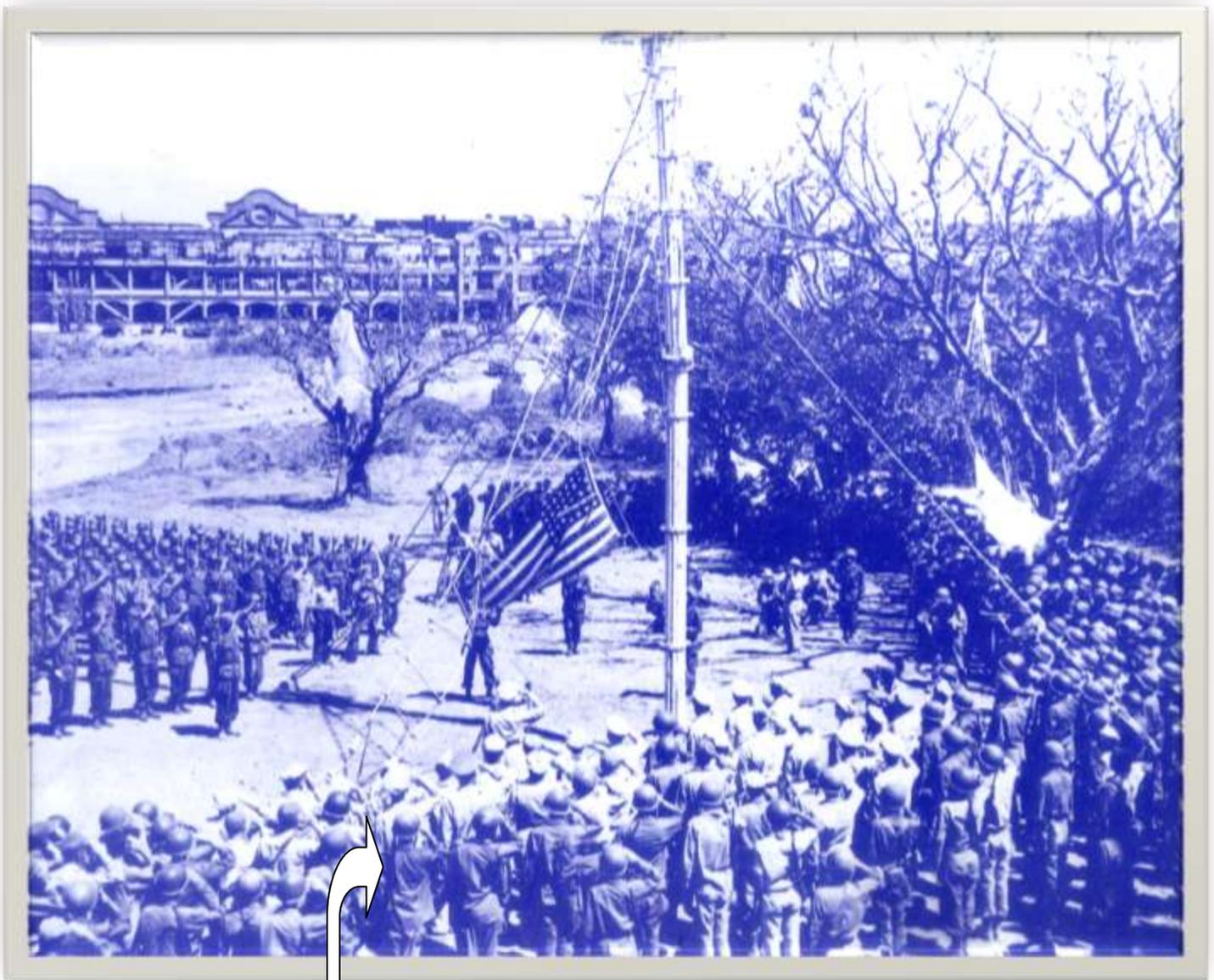
Before I could get in position to fire, the rifle squad got in my way so I threw a phosphorous grenade into the opening and the Japs began charging out. I began firing with my .45 automatic until it was empty. A Jap with his saber raised over his head was coming at me and before I could reload, John Banks cut him down. His saber dropped at my feet. John looked at me and said, "I think that one is yours".



Two troopers....Chuck & Jim

(continued....)





L-R: John Banks & Chuck Breit during the raising of the American flag while serving as body guards for General MacArthur upon his return to Corregidor.

On our way back to top side we were fired on in an open area. We ran to make our way to a hillside at the end of the field. I was getting very tired as we reached the hillside. When I got near the top a man reached down, got hold of my shoulder harness and pulled me up. His name was Jim Wilcox, and needless to say we became very good friends.

About 8 months later on Negroes Island, the war had already ended. Jim was being sent home on a boat from Negroes. I was being sent to Japan to be sent home. Out in the harbor off the beach were 3 or 4 LSTs. When they loaded me onboard, I picked up a folding cot and on this large tank deck I picked out a spot, unfolded my cot and put my duffle bag on top. I went up on deck and found that they were not leaving until the next day because they had more men from the 40th Division to load.

As soon as the sun went down I dove in the water and swam to shore, about 300 yards. I went to where Jim was staying and got some dry clothes. We went out for a good dinner and an evening of fun. Then, before morning we went back to the beach and borrowed a small boat and rowed out to the LST.

I climbed up the anchor chain and found I was looking down a rifle barrel from the wrong end. I explained things to the guard and waved goodbye to Jim. What I didn't realize at the time was that because of the boats swinging with the changing tide, I was on the wrong LST! I didn't know this until a few hours after I got onboard. By then it was too late, they were already hauling anchor for leaving. We were heading for Manila and all four boats were going to the same place.

(continued....)

