



**503rd buddies on Negros Island 1945, from left:
Jim Wilcox, Bob Boundy & Chuck Breit**

When we got to Manila, all 4 boats were docked at piers next to each other. I heard someone yelling, "Chuck! Chuck!" and here at the pier right next to me was the boat I should have been on. I made my way over and one of the guys said, "You missed roll call this morning, but the captain put you down as present." Just then someone grabbed my shoulder and said, "I knew you would show-up somewhere." It was Captain Rambo.



**Chuck & Dee Breit at
173d reunion in 2010.**

He said he couldn't let me get away with this and that I would be on KP duty for the rest of the trip. The ships are only set-up to feed the crew in the mess hall so with me inside, I was able to pass food out through the port holes when needed. This was what the Captain had in mind when he put me on KP. Leave it to a paratrooper, always thinking ahead. Jim didn't know about any of this until we got together back in the states.



**Joan & Jim Wilcox
in Everett, WA**

We don't see each other very often, Jim lives in Washington, near Seattle and I live in Florida about 90 miles north of Tampa, but we talk to each other on the phone about an hour each week. When Jim and I get together he still looks like that guy that pulled me over the top of the hill more than 65 years ago. And now we both have lovely wives to take care of us.



The Japanese saber dropped at Chuck's feet on Corregidor, now on display at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning.

####



Extract from 2d Bn S-3 Journal of 3 November 1945

All men under 60 points are transferred to 11 AB EDCMR Nov 3. Lucky bots as they are still airborne. Well even if our colors are being taken home by any Tom, Dick, & Harry the few of us remaining still have our boots and wings.

Extract from 2d Bn S-3 Journal of 6 November 1945

Many changes took place during the past week. More ack-ack boys arrived. On Friday the remnants of a damm good outfit left for the 11th ABD. The guys in the fifties will probably beat the high pt men home. Most of the fill ins look well fed, they won't be that way long if we continue eating 503d chow(?). New officers seem as if they'll be okay, tho' they lack the youth, & piss and vinegar of the jump officers. The training schedule for the week was discontinued. Next weeks training schedule looks rather nice. Who knows, maybe what's left of us will start living like humans again. Food is improving, showers are being put up and some clothes can be had. These A.A. boys have the right idea about living.

Just waiting for the boat. Morale high among all troops. As this is the last entry I'll close out by saying that I'm damm glad to be closing out. My biggest day is coming. Where's that discharge?

[Sent in by Paul Whitman, 503rd Heritage Bn web site]



World War II Artwork

Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA



Last Man Home

Nicolas Trudgian



The Jolly Rogers

Nicolas Trudgian



Welcoming Our Troops Home

I just returned from a week in Tucson but the week prior to that I spent a couple days in Italy with the troops. Roy (Lombardo) was supposed to attend but got snowed in, so it was just Herbert Murhammer and me.

As I cleared customs I saw Herbert's smiling face. He had driven down from Geneva where he and Annie live. We drove to the post, got signed in and discussed the evening activities with Cpt. Nagy. They knew Roy and the punch bowl would not make it, but wanted to conduct the punch bowl ceremony and borrowed the 2/503 punch bowl (smaller than ours). So we went to the liquor store and emptied the shelves.

I called Roy (waking him up) for the recipe for the Bravo Bull punch just to make sure and he sent what he had. Realize we had a 6 hour time difference. Herbert and I then returned and checked into our hotel. After a quick nap our escorts showed up and hauled us up to a restaurant located on the hill adjacent to the cathedral.

Herbert and I set-up the best we could for the ceremony. We put together a batch of "concentrate" to aid refilling the bowl. A couple of troopers presented us a bag of dirt from the Korengal Valley which will be placed with the Bravo Bull punch bowl. There was plenty of eating and drinking. Herbert and I were introduced. I played MC and told the troops a little of the BULL history which most of them already knew but enjoyed hearing it again.

They all knew the legend of Ranger Roy so I told a couple of stories about him, knocking off some of the luster. I told them when they were old and fat like us they would tell the story of Sergeant Paterson and the cow that committed suicide just as we tell the story of Clyde the queer monkey. I told them if they had problems of adjusting to civilian life, to seek help and that here are several agencies willing to help. Self medication with drugs and alcohol will only make things worse.

I had to announce that we did not have cups for the fallen. We would toast all the fallen, but not read the names. I could tell from the various list of names I had, that some were missing so I decided to not miss any and just salute all.

Troopers scrambled with their canteen cups when the punch was finished. Herbert and I set-up an assembly line so we were both serving the punch and it went pretty fast. Everyone was served, we did the toast. Then they scrambled for seconds. We went through 3 bowls of punch (\$150.00 of booze). With Herbert and a couple of the young troopers drinking the dregs as they passed the bowl around. They got most of the dirt, although we tried to stir it up as we served it.

If you have not seen this ceremony with these young troopers you cannot grasp the emotion of it. I had both my hands about shaken off. I was hugged until I was sore and my shirt was wet with tears. Most of which were not mine.



Jim (standing) with Sky Soldiers and their ladies.

Day two was a day of rest and recovery with Herbert and I attending a private dinner with Sal Giunta and 5 of his buddies and Leta, the 173d Lady. At the dinner she presented Sal a painting with him, our dinner companions and the 2 KIAs in the background. Dinner was in a Chinese restaurant and the girl who I asked to take the photo insisted on sticking her finger over the lens.

On top of all that, Sal snuck off and paid the bill!

Day Three we spent resting up and getting ready for the 2/503 banquet. Once again they did a great job. Herbert and I got to visit, be entertained and generally pampered by the young troopers. We sat in the center of the B company area which was a lot better than being off on a VIP table as previously done.

Jim Robinson
FO/B/2/503d



~ 75th Ranger Regiment Association Reunion ~

July 25 - 31, 2011
Fort Benning, GA



Lurps & Rangers of the 173d Airborne Brigade



Part of the lineage of the 75th Ranger Regiment:

173d Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol
74th Long Range Patrol
75th Inf. N/Company Rangers
74th Long Range Surveillance

Reunion Headquarters:

Holiday Inn

2800 Manchester Expressway
Columbus, GA 31904

Reservations: 706-324-0231

(Mention "75th Ranger Reunion" to receive special room rate of \$79. per night)



(All 173d and sister units welcome to attend)

Reunion Registration Rates:

Members: \$40.
Sat. Banquet: \$40.

Reunion Contact:

Robt. 'twin' Henriksen
Unit Director
360-393-7790

Our reunion will be held in conjunction with the current 75th Ranger Regiment *Rendezvous and Change of Command*

Tentative Activities:

- Visits to the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial and the National Infantry Museum
- Massive tactical jump by active airborne troops, Fryar Field DZ
- Ranger School Class Graduation
- Weapons displays by active military soldiers
- Bicycling along the River Walk & Horseback Riding
- Introduction to Yoga & Stress Reduction for Spouses
- Seminars on Veteran's Benefits & Navigating the VA
- 75th Ranger Regiment Association meeting & business meeting
- Fort Benning Change of Command ceremonies
- Be *Airborne* again – Jump at a small Alabama airport (Fri.)
- Banquet at the "Iron Works" historical building (Sat.)
- Ranger Hall of Fame inductee at River Center for Performing Arts. Carl Vencill is our nominee
- Services at Ranger Memorial – reading names of fallen heroes

90 members and several widows of KIA have already registered to attend. REGISTER TODAY! [RLTW!!](#)



The Day I Was Shot Down by a Heat-Seeking Missile

**By Vince (Vien) Hoang
South Vietnamese Air Force**

I was honored when Jim Bethea and Lew Smith (both HHC/2/503d '65/'66) asked me to recount my stories from serving in the South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) during the Vietnam War. Much time has passed since that spring when I was shot down by a heat-seeking SAM missile, but my harrowing experience remains clear to this day.

It was more than 35 years ago when I reluctantly folded my flight suit, struggled to bury the anguish of war-torn memories, and started a new life in this wonderful country with empty hands.

When I set foot on American soil I was the loneliest and poorest person in this country, yet I felt like the happiest man in the world for only two reasons: I was ALIVE and I had FREEDOM!

The challenges of starting a new life, with absolutely nothing to my name and after having left all my loved ones back home, were daunting and seemed frighteningly insurmountable. I still don't know how I managed to overcome them, but freedom is priceless, so the privilege of living in the United States was worth the sacrifice I had to endure.

After so many years, the dreadful images of war still replay vividly in my mind. Often I find myself sitting down alone in quiet afternoons, thinking about my unfortunate comrades who died during the war. I remember with bitter sorrow the many friends whose planes exploded out of the sky or plunged into the deep jungle, never to be found. My heart stings with remorse when I contemplate those who died in communist prisons or spent many years suffering under the brutality of concentration camps, where they were treated like animals.



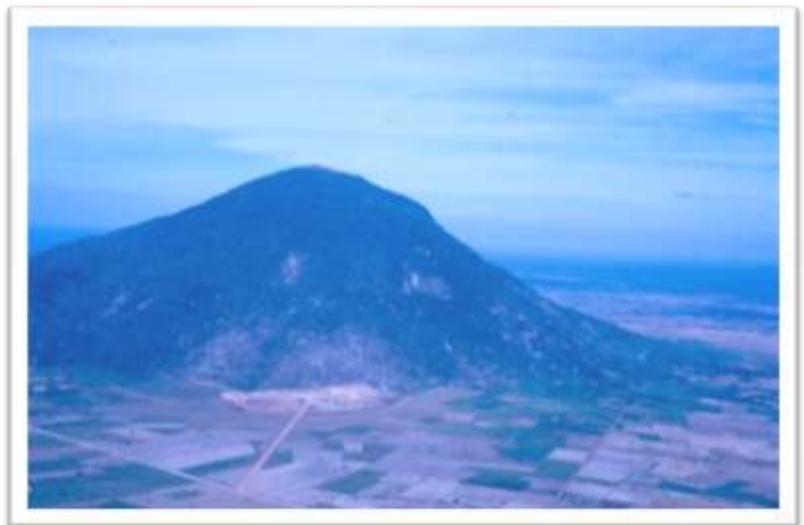
Vince, with the Bureau of Reclamation, before going in a tunnel to investigate control equipment.

I have a brother who was a Vietnamese paratrooper and was injured several times during the war. He became disabled as a result and eventually died under the communist regime after the fall of South Vietnam. The communist government was extremely repressive and cruel, particularly towards those perceived as allies or supporters of the US.

It was my pleasure to meet Jim in Grand Coulee, WA and to learn that he was a former paratrooper who spent a tour of duty in Vietnam. I instantly felt like I'd known him for a long time. I would like to tell Jim and all of you who served in the Vietnam War of my gratitude and that you should be proud of your sacrifice in fighting for freedom. Despite the enemy's attempts to smear you, the distorted depictions by the press, and the many who turned their backs on you or betrayed you in the media, the Vietnamese people and all those in the world who love and yearn for freedom will always be grateful for your service.

One late afternoon in March 1975 (I do not recall the exact date), I was ordered to lead a flight of three F5 Freedom Fighter planes from Bien Hoa Air Force Base, heading to Nui Ba Den (the Black Virgin Mountain) approximately 50 miles away. Nui Ba Den is a 3,000 foot mountain, located 18 miles from the Cambodian border in the Tay Ninh province. The enormous natural edifice was formed from a pyramid of trees and solid granite, a simultaneously mysterious and important strategic military location.

The South Vietnamese infantry was camped near the summit of the mountain to protect the city, which the Viet Cong desperately wanted to attack in every way possible, but they had to first conquer the mountain.



Nui Ba Den, the "Black Virgin Mountain"

(continued....)





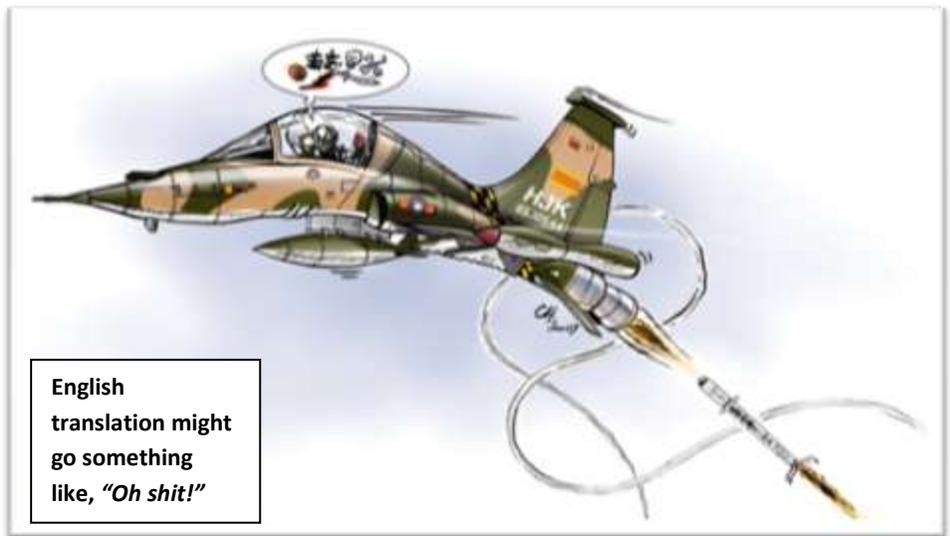
The F-5 Freedom Fighter. Not Vince's, but one like his.

The VC hurriedly amassed troops to storm and overrun Black Virgin Mountain, while ARVN troops engaged in fierce battles near the foot of the mountain.

Our flight faced intense enemy ground fire and the steep mountain slopes made it extremely difficult to navigate and attack precise targets on the side of the mountain to cause sufficient damage to the enemy. After making a couple of passes around the top of the mountain and after the FAC marked the target with smoke, I was able to assess accurate enemy locations. In the first pass I "rolled in hot" and dropped a 250 pound bomb on the target without any problem. However, in the second pass, after delivering a second bomb and while pulling the aircraft up to gain altitude, I heard a thunderous bang. I got hit by 37mm anti-aircraft a couple of times before, but this time was quite different. My aircraft shook violently, I knew immediately with a gut-sinking feeling that I had been hit by a missile. After that, all of a sudden, there was an eerie silence all around me. It was then the aircraft began to drastically lose speed and it became difficult to maintain altitude.

I knew that I had sustained enormous damage to my right engine. The instruments indicated that the left

engine's temperature was rapidly increasing and the needle was fast approaching the red zone on the temperature gauge.



English translation might go something like, "Oh shit!"

To eject or not eject?? The question popped up in my mind. The remaining engine could die anytime. I had to quickly assess the situation and to make the correct decision or I would face the consequences: possibly ending-up in the brutal hands of the enemy if I ejected, or potential death if stayed with my airplane.

(continued....)



I decided to stay with my F5 Freedom Fighter!



fighter airplane) and I knew that I had little margin of error to land. If I flew below the flight path it would be nearly impossible to gain attitude and I would crash before reaching the runway. I had only one chance. I braced for the worst, but was determined to control the airplane with all my might. What was minutes seemed like an eternity. The precise moment my aircraft touched the ground is still a blur, but I had somehow made a safe landing. I had survived and the plane had survived with me. Even though it wasn't easy, yet I had made the perfect approach for landing.

After the airplane safely touched the runway, I could use the brakes for only a few seconds before I lost all hydraulic power, because the hydraulic system was broken after the airplane got hit by the missile. Without brakes and nose wheel steering capabilities, the airplane careened down the runway uncontrollably until it went off the runway and finally stopped when the front wheel became buried in the mud and grass.

I survived with no injuries, other than the emotional ones I carry to this day.

I still had two more bombs under my wing that I could not jettison -- it was a strict rule of engagement to not allow airplanes with unreleased bombs back onto an airbase, except in the case of emergencies. There was simply not enough time and it was too risky to fly the airplane to the free target zones, release the bombs and fly back to the airbase. I had to act quickly and decisively, so I gently controlled the aircraft and headed back toward Bien Hoa Airbase.

I wrestled with the aircraft, barely sustaining an altitude of merely 3,000 feet, but was only about 50 miles from the base so I decided to hold on to my airplane as long as I could. My goal was to land, but if things took a turn for the worse there was still enough time for me to eject.

I contacted the tower, and all emergency vehicles were waiting for me at the airbase. I lined up the airplane for landing approach a few miles from the runway for emergency landing (this is not a normal way to land a



Vince, next to his Freedom Fighter after his safe and heroic landing at Bien Hoa Airbase.





Bachmann Removes VA Budget Cut Suggestion

Plans to remove \$4.5 billion budget cuts that would affect disabled veterans

February 4, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 4, 2011 — Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) posted a statement on her congressional website today that she would remove from consideration a \$4.5 billion suggestion that would have affected payments made to disabled veterans.



She had previously posted on her website a list of \$400 billion in suggested federal spending cuts, to include \$4.5 billion from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This elicited an immediate and strong reaction from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on Jan. 28.

"We appreciate her listening to the VFW and others," said VFW National Commander Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Oregon.

[Sent in by Terry "Woody" Davis, A/2/503d]

The Congresswoman stated:

"One point on my discussion list was a \$4.5 billion proposal that would affect payments made to our veterans. That discussion point has received a lot of attention and I have decided to remove it from consideration. The problem of government spending must be solved, but not on the backs of our nation's war heroes. I have always been a proud supporter of the United States military and I continue to stand with our veterans. In the months ahead I look forward to working with our Veterans Service Organizations to ensure that we fulfill our commitments to those who sacrificed so much in their brave service for our country."

Read the congresswoman's full statement at: <http://bachmann.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=223583>

Carl Lee Simpson, Jr.



Carl Lee Simpson, Jr., age 62, of Atkinson, died Wednesday, January 5, 2011, at his home.

He was born November 16, 1948, in Wilmington and was the son of the late Carl Lee Simpson, Sr. and Malla Bloodworth Simpson. He was preceded in death by Harry and Bessie Simpson and his sister, Patricia Ann Simpson Hylton. Lee was also preceded in death by his devoted and faithful companion, a German shepherd named Harley Heinz Munroe Simpson. Lee leaves behind his dear new Shepherd, Talon Von Beauregard "Bo" Voodoo Simpson, age 7 months.

Surviving are his first born son, Carl Lee Simpson, III of Virginia Beach, VA, and second born son, Alexander "Alex" Murphy Simpson of the US Coast Guard stationed in Homer, Alaska; sister, Linda Simpson Wallace (Thomas) of Atkinson; nieces, Patricia Rand (Walter), Brandi Wagner (Dave), Jamie Wood and Misty Bingham; nephew, James Barry Hylton; great nieces and great nephew, Lucy Rand, Jack Wood and Sidney, Ainslee and Lilly Wagner; and many extended family and friends.

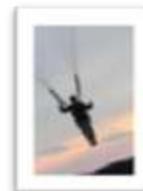
Lee served in the US Army in Vietnam with the rank of SP4, in E Company (RECON) 2/503d INF, 173d Airborne Brigade. He proudly received the Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars, National Defense Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal, all reflecting his military valor.

Lee was a devoted and loving father, brother, and uncle who will be remembered by those who knew him, cared about him and loved him as a man with a heart of gold and who would do anything he could to help you.

Having served his country and working hard to provide for the needs of his family, Lee was retired most recently from NATCO, a contract provider of Underwater Geological Surveys for the Army Corps of Engineers, as a boat captain.

In his younger years he was passionate about hunting and fishing, but more recently he was content to observe and photograph wildlife. Lee loved to talk about all his youthful exploits and the people dear to him through life's experiences. As a young boy, after the death of his parents, Lee was raised in Atkinson by Bessie Holley Simpson and Harry Simpson as their son and was tutored and guided by Harry in the art of farming and loving the land.

Cherished memories of Lee will forever remain in our hearts.



Airborne, Lee. All the way Brother.



Incoming!!

A Special Request from a Trooper

Could you ask in your next newsletter if anyone out there has any pictures of me? I am fighting this cancer and would like to leave some photo to my daughter. Served from June '64 to May '66 with C/2/503d. Would really like to have some pics to leave her. Your newsletter has been my favorite reading over the past couple of years. AIRBORNE!

Jim Starrett

jimstarrett@rocketmail.com

On A Search & Find Mission

I am interested in reaching anyone on Major General Paul Smith's staff at brigade in April of 1966. Will appreciate anyone contacting me who can help.

Email: luapyelpe@centurylink.net

Phone: 704-301-0278

Thanks!

Paul Epley
Bde PIO

#####

VA to Expand PTSD Therapy

February 28, 2011

In response to a Government Accountability Office report on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the Department of Veterans Affairs has decided to offer cognitive processing therapy and prolonged-exposure therapy to treat the disorder at its facilities. In cognitive processing therapy, the patient addresses conflicts by writing about the traumatic event in detail and then reading the story aloud repeatedly in and outside of session. For more information cognitive processing therapy and prolonged-exposure therapy, visit the VA's National Center for PTSD webpage.

VA Suicide Prevention Line

The journey after military service can be a difficult one. If you are a veteran in crisis or know of one who is, please call the VA's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line to speak with trained counselors, or find a Crisis Center near you.

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

~ Association News ~

Sky Soldiers:

Effective 1 February 2011, Dennis Hill is the new National Membership Secretary. Contact him at membership@skysoldier.org

If you have questions, please visit your local chapters' website or our national website at www.SkySoldier.org or contact your local chapter officers or our National officers at:

President@SkySoldier.org

VP@SkySoldiers.org

Treasurer@SkySoldier.org

Secretav@SkySoldier.org

Membership@SkySoldier.org

Chaplain@SkySoldier.org

Webmaster@SkySoldier.org

Editor@SkySoldier.org

GoldStar@SkySoldier.org



WHODAT?



Who is this young 2/503d trooper with the jump school haircut holding his M-79?



Brief Stories About VN Buddies

My Vietnamese story is remembering that while attending the 173d reunion banquet in Chicago, I think in 1995, in the beautiful old ballroom of the historic Blackstone Hotel, one of our waiters was Vietnamese and had fled the country to America during the fall of Saigon. One of the speakers mentioned that and fortunately there was no animosity from anyone at our table, unlike so much of it that I hear from vets who for some strange reason lump our ally South Vietnamese in with the ones we fought. Also, one of my cousins' daughter is married to a Vietnamese and they live in Las Vegas. We went to their wedding and I had no flashbacks of any kind and felt good that that family's Italian roots were embracing someone from another part of the world.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

I've had the privilege of working with several Vietnamese. Two worked with me at Boeing's plant in Portland, Oregon. One of them spent some time in a rehabilitation camp near Saigon after the war... he lived in a one-man open hole in the ground with no shelter for the better part of a year. The other was just a boy when we were there but he lived in Bien Hoa and his name was Hoa Bien...at Boeing we called him Hoa. Here at the Grand Coulee dam in Washington, we have a young electrical engineer named Henry Nguyen. He and Vince Hoang (see Vince's story on Pages 27-29 herein) took American first names that were similar to their Vietnamese names to help them fit in. Vince's first name was Vien. This is good.

Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d

Not a big deal but today I got a call at work from someone wanting to organize a non-profit trail fun run to benefit Medtrix, an organization to help supply clean water to people in Vietnam. He was a college student from a northwest University in Washington and was hoping to get about 400 people.

A few years back when I lost my job at United I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and was set up as a sponsor for a Vietnamese family to help them jump through the hoops of getting a house. I tried for a while but ended up backing out of it because I wasn't available all the time I needed to be ...they were doing better than I and had more intelligence, he had a job as an engineer with Boeing and his mother was my age collecting social security and doing better than m. His wife was a stay at home mom and I was struggling to find work. I just did not feel I had anything to offer them. But I did put some time in helping to build a home, spackling etc.

Claudia Tobin
Sister of Larry Paladino

~ Wells Fargo to Refund Troops ~

Nearly 60,000 service members and veterans who have refinanced their VA mortgage loans through Wells Fargo, Wachovia and SouthTrust will receive refunds as the result of a \$10 million settlement in a class-action lawsuit, a Wells Fargo official said.



Those who may be eligible refinanced their loans between Jan. 20, 2004, and Oct. 7, 2010, Wells Fargo spokeswoman Vickee Adams said. On average, the refunds are expected to be about \$175., she said.

In about a month, Wells Fargo will mail letters to each eligible service member and veteran who has participated in the refinancing program, Adams said. The letter will include information about how to apply for the refund, and where to go for more information. *FloridaToday*

~ True Story ~

An Amsterdam-based company wants to sell small blue helmets to NATO troops stationed in the Ivory Coast.

But these aren't miniature versions of the well-known headgear worn by NATO peacekeepers – the “blue helmets” are actually blue condoms, made by a specialty shop called Condomerie, with proceeds from the sales going to a local organization that jointly raises money for AIDS prevention and for a soccer tournament.

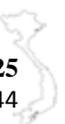
A first shipment from the “*Make Love, Not War*” campaign includes 2,000 condoms. *ArmyTimes*

Couldn't find the blue helmet on their web site, but found this little guy. Ain't he cute?



"Show me a man that will jump out of a plane and I'll show you a man who will fight."

Jim Gavin website



~ 22 Rules of Life & Self Control ~

By A.B. (Aussino) Garcia
4.2 Platoon, HHC/2/503d, '65-'66
February 24, 1995

1. BELIEVE IN YOUR PERSON.
2. HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF.
3. HAVE RESPECT FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS.
4. TAKE PRIDE IN WHATEVER YOU DO.
5. ALWAYS BE HONEST AND SINCERE.
6. WHEN TALKING TO PEOPLE, ALWAYS LOOK 'EM IN THE EYES. FOR THE EYES REVEAL HIDDEN THOUGHTS.
7. BE COMPASSIONATE, AND CONSIDERATE TO YOUR FELLOW MAN.
8. NEVER TRUST THOSE WHO APPEAR TO BE TOO HONEST.
9. BE A GOOD LISTENER. (But refer to No. 10. below)
10. DON'T TAKE NO SHIT.
11. APPRECIATE YOUR CREATORS' GIVEN LIFE AND RESPECT YOUR ENVIRONMENT.
12. ENJOY ALL YOUR SENSES. (HEARING, SMELL, TASTE, SIGHT, LOVE, EMOTIONS AND CONTENTMENT IN LIFE).
13. BE THANKFUL FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND, TO THE CREATOR.
14. WHEN YOUR DOWN AND OUT, SOMETHING GOOD ALWAYS HAPPENS.
15. ALWAYS BE POSITIVE IN THOUGHT AND SOUL.
16. GIVE CREDIT WHEN IT'S DUE.
17. NEVER BE ASHAMED TO EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS OR THOUGHTS.
18. WHENEVER YOU PROMISE SOMEBODY SOMETHING, ALWAYS COME THROUGH WITH YOUR WORD. FOR YOUR WORD SHOULD BE YOUR HONOUR.
19. YOUR WORD SHOULD BE HONOURED, TRUSTED, AND RESPECTED.
20. IF EVER YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, TRY TO SORT YOURSELF OUT IF POSSIBLE.
21. REMEMBER, THAT NOBODY KNOWS YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF.
22. APPRECIATE EVERY SINGLE BREATH THAT YOU TAKE, AND THANK GOD EVERY NIGHT FOR YOUR GIFT OF LIFE ON THIS WONDERFUL WORLD.

Good thoughts from a good trooper.

Remembering a Buddy

I just finished reading your Issue 13 (March 2010) and I saw a photograph of Ron Cavinee, although it was somewhat hazy. I am attaching another photo of him taken in late January '66 just a few weeks before his was killed. I don't know if you keep an archive of photos, but if so, please include this one.



Ron Cavinee, KIA

And thanks for the great article on Jack Ribera and Mike Sturges. The last time I saw Mike he was in the 93d Evac with a big chunk of leg missing. I visited Jack once while he was still in Walter Reed since Washington, DC is my home town. I remember he had a rubber band device on his hand as part of his recovery therapy. The next time I went to see him, he was gone. I am glad to see he and Mike are well.

Barry Grant
A/2/503d, '65-'66



Ronald C. Cavinee

Private First Class
A Co., 2nd Bn., 503rd Infantry Regiment
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Army of the United States, USARV
11B1P: Infantryman (Airborne Qualified)
Crooksville, Ohio
March 30, 1944 to February 26, 1966
Panel 05E, Line 079



~ MEETING ON THE STREET ~

My wife, Reggie, and I were at an Italian restaurant in Melbourne, FL picking up a Go order a couple weeks ago. While she went inside to do the heavy lifting, I remained in our van parked outside. With the window down I heard a couple folks talking at the rear of the vehicle. They had noticed and were commenting on the 101st, 173d and 509th Airborne stickers on the mounted spare tire. The man and his lady noticed me sitting there and came over to talk. It was Sky Soldier LRRP Sid Smith and his bride. I later mentioned this chance meeting to good buddy Reed Cundiff because, like Sid, Reed had served with the 173d LRRP's. Reed's reply is below. For such a small unit which the 173d was, it's amazing sometimes how we all seem to meet Sky Soldiers all over the country. Ed

Sid is a good friend of mine. He was on Team 3 and I was Team Leader of Team 4, and the two teams shared a hooch and we were quite close. We were on two double I-team patrols together.

Sid was in on the big fight of our day. The new XO, Bob Stowell (who had done an excellent job as a platoon leader with 1/503d) went out with the team with Gary "Wolf" Lotze as their new Team Leader.

The entire team were original "Provisional LRRP" and had gone to Recondo Class 00. I have met two West Point classmates of Stowell's and they said they figured he would be the first flag rank from their class. I have also been told he was the best platoon leader in 1/503d.

They ambushed three guys (maybe two). It turned out that they were the poor slobs used as bait since they were hit from all four sides. Dave Liebersbach, now in Alaska, was called in under the heavy fire when he saw an entire enemy squad running towards them. He figured if he moved too soon he would be nailed. He waited until all 9 or 10 were charging, one behind the other, then stepped out and killed them all -- at least all of them went down and didn't have anything more to do with the situation since each shot probably went through 2 to 4 of them.

Everyone of the Sky Soldiers did incredible things and everyone except one had bullets in clothes, weapons or packs. The LT took three rounds in the chest. He figures they were 7.62 x 25 submachine gun rounds since they stayed in; 7.62 x 39 mm AK or SKS rounds would have been fatal.

I was talking with Forrest Kendall as he was unpacking the radio. He thought he had been hit during the fight since he felt warm fluid going down the back of his legs. Two bullets had gone through the canteen in one of the back pockets of his RVN airborne backpack, and one round went between the battery and his PRC-25 radio leaving nice little holes through the frame.

Gilmore, who was pointman, had a bullet go through the cerise panel when he was signaling the gunships, and while I was talking with him (at the artillery base camp near Nui Ba Dinh) he stated he had looked down at one of his boots and felt something burning -- a bullet had gone right through the sole of his boot as if a drill press had drilled through it.

Another guy had a bullet go through the buffer assembly of his M-16, basically putting it out of action but they had picked up two AK-47's. They went through 300 rounds each. They were cocky as hell for two days and then they realized that they had perhaps a 1% chance of making it through without being annihilated and basically fried. The team did not go out again although the guys went out with other teams.

Sid is a good guy. I forgot to mention that the action described here was probably the most decorated LRRP action in RVN. The LT received a DSC; Lotze, Liebersbach and Gilmore each earned Silver Star's, and Sid and Kendall were awarded Bronze Stars w/V -- all of them well deserved.

Reed Cundiff
173d LRRP



~ A Note From 22 February 2011 ~

Wow.....

It is a few minutes before 0900 (EST) but 44 years ago, at 0900 (local time in Vietnam), we exited those C-130s. Bravo Company, with the white engineer tape on our helmets, led the way as we were first out the doors to establish the LZ as LTC Sigholtz developed our portion of Junction City. I was proud of you guys then and am equally so today. Have a great day and to Harry (Cleland), as I pledged to you two years ago, I will dip into the Chivas Regal you sent and will toast to you all. Stay well and stay in touch.

Bravo 6 Ken Kaplan





IAVA ACTION FUND REPORT CARD



The IAVA Action Fund Report Card is the result of a two year process. Beginning with an annual survey of our members every December, the legislative agenda is formulated directly from those issues they deem a priority. IAVA then delivers these priorities during the annual *Storm the Hill* event in February when IAVA member vets meet face-to-face with lawmakers. IAVA and IAVA Action continue to advocate for key legislation, which address our legislative priorities, throughout the year through direct outreach to members of Congress, Congressional testimony, and media appearances. Finally, when a Congressional session concludes, we produce the Report Card based on key veterans' legislation that came to a vote during that session, grading every Senator and Representative on their level of support for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Visit http://iavaaction.org/report-card/a_team_d_list to see how your representatives and senators are rated in terms of their support or lack of support on issues important to the veteran community.

[Sent in by Hugh Imhof, N/75 Rangers]

Young Warriors. Are there any other kind?

Thought our guys might like to see some modern day warriors. This is Sergeant Rudy Rueda (with thumbs up) and his weapons squad saying thanks for the goodies. He's the guy we sent the care packages to. He's still in Afghanistan with the 101st but was previously in the Korengal Valley with Battle Company, 2d Battalion, 173d. He's one of the troops interviewed in the documentary *Restrepo*.

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d



Screaming Eagles still soaring.

Cong Scatter Like Scared Turkeys

Original source: home.att.net/~gkozdrod/fb173q.htm

LZ English -- Thanksgiving Day, while walking slack for a three-man 'reaction team', a 173d Abn Bde Reconnaissance Sergeant saw some turkeys, namely 10 Viet Cong. But the hunted saw the Sarge first, spraying Sgt. Charles G. Rolon with a burst of M-16 fire that slammed five rounds into his rifle but none into Rolon.

"We were walking up a mountain stream, cluttered with gigantic rocks that cut visibility down to about six feet," said the 25 year old Co. E, 2nd Bn, 503d Inf. Trooper. *"Just as we made a turn up the winding stream, we met the VC Regulars, but as I raised my M-16 to fire, I saw the Red take aim and next my weapon was kicked out of my hands by his fire. I just happened to be carrying my .45 caliber pistol that day and I shot the surprised communist before he had time to reload."* The contact occurred at extremely close range, the boulders and the twists in the stream concealing friendly and enemy movement.



At LZ English 1970, Charlie Rolon on left holding sniper rifle next to his buddy Dennis Wayne Baxley (KIA 8/9/70).

Rolon, from Jersey City, NJ and his team gave the enemy a goodbye burst of lead and feet, back to their parent unit, known as a six-man Cat team. The entire team, augmented with additional reinforcements, returned to the scene later in the day, but the Reds had dragged their dead and wounded away. Rolon and his reach-out team were credited with two enemy kills. He himself is mighty grateful to his weapon – it took two rounds through the magazine, one in the barrel and two that penetrated the rifle barrel.

[Sent in by Charlie Rolon, Sr., E/2/503d]





These are the same men sitting for a photo for the *London Daily News*. Seated left to right are Major Sweeney, Major Hardin, Montgomery, Major Earle, and Major Howarth. Standing from left are Major Sharpe, Major Prisk, Major Poston and Major Frary.

This photo was taken just a few days before the snow began to fall in December 1944, with The Battle of the Bulge just around the corner.

For all you boys who worship the “Officer Efficiency Report” and the glory they left on your microfiche, below is the sum-total of Major Prisk’s efficiency report for landing on Omaha Beach and surviving the balance of the European Campaigns.

This one-paragraph, two-sentence tribute stood front and center in my father’s den. Note, it took two years to get this tribute into the major’s personnel file.



The text of the letter from Field Marshal Montgomery reads:

**War Office
Whitehall, London S.W.I.**

**Major General Edward F. Witsell
Adjutant-General
War Department
WASHINGTON 25 D.C.,**

Major E.R. Prisk, (O-330527) U.S. Army,

Major Prisk served with me as one of my Liaison Officers at H.Q. 21st Army Group from 17th May 1944 to 3rd July 1945. During this time, the efficiency with which he carried out his duties was of the highest order.

**(signed) Montgomery of Alamein
Field Marshal,**

20 June 1947. Chief of the Imperial General Staff

The Major died in July of 1967 at the YMCA after a boxing workout. He had been the 1932 West Coast Collegiate Welter Weight Champion from Washington State University.

The Major’s son,
Gary Prisk





The Grungy Grunt

In last month's issue of our newsletter (Page 12), we asked you to identify this Grungy Grunt with the nickname "Airborne" who is guarding those sandbags. He's our very own Richard Martinez from B/2/503d. We asked Richard to send in a Sit Rep:

Before Nam, while in High School (graduated '66), living then and now in Wasco, CA, I worked part-time for my dad at a Chevrolet Dealership Body Shop. When I returned home dad and I opened a small shop of our own (Dad was a WWII Vet. The VA sent him to school to retrain when he returned home).

Sadly...truthfully, I came home an addict -- medicating for obvious but unknown reasons at the time, which escalated gradually to include divorces, financial problems, lost practically everything. Finally, it all came to a Happy Ending in '98. Been living a somewhat happier life -- drug free!! Now, being of a sounder mind and body, I have worked with other addicts and alcoholics. The local judge recognized this work and gave me a Community Service Award ... imagine that!

I bought a Harley sometime back and am living the American dream of some not all. I ride today for the Brothers that never will, with a POW - MIA patch on the back of my vest. I roll with a fellow Herd Brother I met a few years ago, Bob "Chopper Bob" Gore, who just happened to be in B/2/503d and the same platoon as I but a year later. His younger brother Jim was there with him. I arrived in-country December 5, 1967 and left December 4, 1968.

In the forty or so years since Vietnam I've struggled in the jungles of my memories, as many of my brothers have. I have been married twice. I have a son, Brian, from my first marriage, a daughter, Amberly, from my second marriage, and have been divorced since '91. She (Amberly) has given me three grand kids; Roman, who is 8, has aspirations of being a scientist and has the brains to do it with, Mike 5, will probably become a cage fighter ...mischievous and mean ... All Day!! Ashley 3, grandpa's little girl...she better become a NUN!

Richard "Airborne" Martinez, B/2/503d

173rd Airborne Brigade commander suspended

By Kevin Dougherty
Stars & Stripes, February 24, 2011

The Army has formally suspended Col. James H. Johnson III as commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which has about 3,300 soldiers in Italy and Germany. The Army took action Feb. 17, according to Col. Bryan Hilferty, chief of public affairs for U.S. Army Europe.



Colonel James H. Johnson, III

"He's been suspended," Hilferty said, declining to comment further since the case is under investigation.

In response to written questions, Hilferty characterized the suspension as temporary pending resolution of the probe. No one else has been suspended or relieved in connection with Johnson's case, he said.

Col. Kyle Lear, the deputy commanding officer of the 173rd, has been named as the interim commander, Hilferty said.

Johnson took command of the brigade in October 2008 and led it through a yearlong rotation to Afghanistan that ended late last year. The unit, which traces its lineage back to World War I, includes Salvatore Giunta, the first living Medal of Honor recipient for actions in the current wars. He received the medal for events in 2007.

The 173rd Brigade is based in Vicenza, Italy, and includes six battalions. Two battalions are in Vicenza, and four are in Germany, with three of them in Bamberg. The fourth battalion is in Schweinfurt.

Before becoming brigade commander, Johnson headed up the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment.



503d Medallion



To order your own medallion contact Paul Fisher. All profits go to the 173d Foundation and to a local food bank in New Jersey.

Paul R. Fisher, LTC (Ret)
3/503d Commo Officer, '69-'70
fisherppd@att.net

~ A String of Beads ~

I am after some necklace beads one of the brothers there (in the U.S.) made. He gave me a set and they are totally different than all the other necklaces. They are more Native American looking. The bigger beads are white, and the others are small ones in white, yellow, green and red as the colours of the South Vietnamese flag. From Down Under, thanks mates!

A.B. Garcia
4.2 Platoon, 2/503d, '65-'66
abugar@connexus.net.au

NJ Vietnam Vets Foundation Scholarships

Graduating seniors have until April 15 to submit applications and essays to qualify for scholarships offered by the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation. The \$2,500. scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors from New Jersey who plan to further their education either at a college or university or trade/technical school. For a scholarship application form, visit the the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation website at www.njvvmf.org or call 732-335- 0033, ext. 100.

Scholarship Finder - Remember: Not applying for scholarships is like turning down free money. Get started on your search for scholarships today -- visit the [Military.com Scholarship Finder](http://Military.com).

*“To be sure of hitting the target,
shoot first then call whatever you
hit the target.”*

~ Valorous Unit Award ~

Those who served in the ROCK, 2/503d - to include FUSION, C/3-321, B/4-39, and HHC, RSTB from 25 Jan 2008 to 30 July 2008 have EARNED the Valorous Unit Award. The PUC for 2007 is still pending. Congrats!

Bill Ostlund, COL
173d Abn Bde

HISTORY CHANNEL FILM ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR



I'm conducting audio and video research for a History Channel production and am curious if any of your members have film/audio from their time in Vietnam. The film we're producing is "Vietnam in HD" and the 173rd is featured prominently in the film. Some vets might be familiar with our work on World War II, as we also produced "WWII in HD" for HBO

I'm searching for 8mm and 16mm film from in-country or the home-front between 1964-1975, in addition to any cockpit/ground audio recordings veterans may have and are willing to share. As a courtesy, we're also transferring any film reels to DVD for veterans, something that we've found helps bring these documents out of the attic to be viewed again for, most times, the first time in years.

Might you be able to help? Also, are you aware of who possesses the rights for the "Have you heard of the 173rd" song as well as the official march song?

Warmest Regards,

Doc Kane
773-660-4920
on project for **Vietnam in HD**
a Lou Reda Production www.louredaproductions.com

[Sent in by Roy Scott, 3/319th, 173d Society President]

Note: Believe the song he is referring to was written and performed by Richard Ware, A/2/503d, which includes the lyrics, "Have you heard of the Herd, the 173d, Airborne Brigade...", and "You know they came from the Rock, to punch out Ho Chi Minh's Clock". Ed



Our National Anthem

by Mark Corallo

So, with all the kindness I can muster, I give this one piece of advice to the next pop star who is asked to sing the National Anthem at a sporting event: Save the vocal gymnastics and the physical gyrations for your concerts. Just sing this song the way you were taught to sing it in kindergarten — straight up, no styling.

Sing it with the constant awareness that there are soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines watching you from bases and outposts all over the world. Don't make them cringe with your self-centered ego gratification. Sing it as if you are standing before a row of 86-year-old WWII vets wearing their Purple Hearts, Silver Stars and flag pins on their cardigans, and you want them to be proud of you for honoring them and the country they love — not because you want them to think you are a superstar

musician. They could see that from the costumes, the makeup and the entourages. Sing "The Star Spangled Banner" with the courtesy and humility that tells the audience that it is about America, not you.



[Sent in by Sandra Smith, daughter in-law of editor]

And while you're at it, it's not "Or the land of the free," it's "O'er the land of the free." I think only vets and 6th graders should sing it at sporting events. Ed

The First Verse

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
what so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?

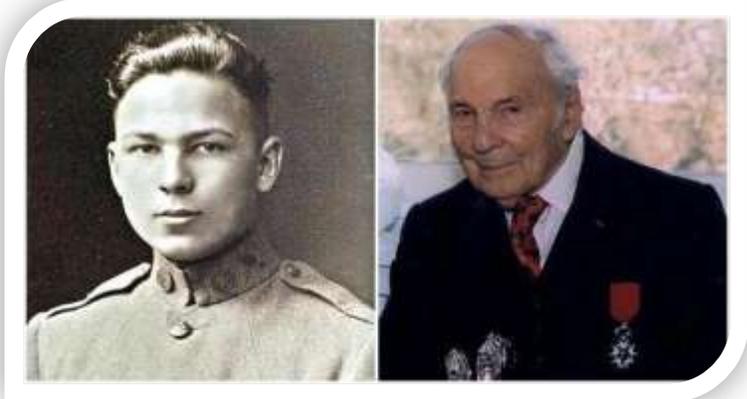
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous
fight,
o'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly
streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.

O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Frank Buckles, Last Known U.S. Doughboy, Dies at 110

Advocated for National World War I Memorial in D.C.



A soldier from the *first* Greatest Generation

WASHINGTON – Frank Woodruff Buckles, who lied about his age to enlist in the Army in 1917 and became the last known U.S. veteran of World War I, died on February 27, 2011.

"We have lost a living link to an important era in our nation's history," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "But we have also lost a man of quiet dignity, who dedicated his final years to ensuring the sacrifices of his fellow 'Doughboys' are appropriately commemorated."

Burial with full military honors will be held at Arlington National Cemetery. Details about the funeral are expected to be released soon.

A long-time resident of Charles Town, West Virginia, where he had a farm, Buckles was born in Bethany, Missouri. He enlisted shortly after his 16th birthday and served in France and Germany.

At the start of World War II, he was a civilian working with a steamship company in the Philippines. He was imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner of war camp for three and a half years.

In his later years, Buckles became an advocate for the expansion of a little-known memorial to World War I Veterans from the District of Columbia into a national memorial.

More than 4,700,000 Americans served in the military during World War I. About 53,000 died of combat-related causes, while another 63,000 deaths were listed as non-combat.



The West Point Center for Oral History



February 18, 2011

Dear Sir:

The West Point Center for Oral History is currently working on an hour-long documentary film on the experiences of USMA's Class of 1967. Our production company, The Documentary Group, which was founded by Peter Jennings, is producing the project.

Two of the soldiers we interviewed for this documentary were Carl Savory and Fred Lowrey, graduates of West Point, and members of the 173d Airborne Brigade. We are urgently seeking footage and/or photos of Vietnam, and especially of the 173d Airborne Brigade in order for us to accurately depict their experiences. While Savory and Lowrey's appearance would be tremendously helpful, we are casting our wide net as wide as possible.

Are you aware of anyone within the unit or company who may have a repository of film footage (or photographs)? We are open to everything - film, photos, audio, etc - and hope that you will pass this email along to any potential contributors. Please note that all materials will be handled with the utmost care and returned to the owner in due time.

Thanks in advance for your assistance and contribution to an important addition to the historical record.

If you have any questions, comments, or clarifications, please contact Stephanie Chang at 212-456-5713 stephanie@thedocumentarygroup.com, and please cc me if sent through email.

Very Respectfully,

Amada Chavez
The Documentary Group
www.thedocumentarygroup.com
212-456-5886
amada@thedocumentarygroup.com

[Sent in by Tim Austin & Jack Price, 173d Airborne]

From their web site: The Documentary Group produces work based on a very simple principle: have faith in the intelligence, taste, curiosity and integrity of the audience. TDG was founded in 2006 by the core members of PJ Productions, following the death of legendary broadcaster Peter Jennings. The producers and directors, who were for many years the team behind Jennings' documentaries at ABC News, are dedicated to continuing the tradition of smart, important and innovative film-making. Their credits as individual producers and directors include hundreds of hours of network programming, independent feature documentaries, and original educational films.

Donald Reeder, 2/503d Trooper

Donald Reeder, a Southern California resident and a former member of the 2/503d in Vietnam about 1966-67, has passed away from his battle with cancer. He passed away on Saturday, February 19, at the VA Hospital in Long Beach, CA.



I don't know exactly which Company of the 2/503d he served with but it may have been B Co. When I met Reeder a few times many years ago, he lived in Corona, CA, and then he moved to Anaheim, CA.

Please let the members of the 2/503d know about the passing of Don Reeder. Thank you.

Ray Ramirez
Recon/4/503d

Note: We searched for a photo and additional details about Don but, unfortunately, were unable to find anything more. Ed

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

Sunday, March 27, 2011, is the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day", and there will be a special event at the California High School Stadium, 9800 Mills Avenue, Whittier, CA 90604. Jose Ramos, who served in the 82nd and served with the 101st Abn. Div. in Vietnam is the guy behind this special celebration. Jose rode his bicycle from Irwindale, CA, in 2004, and was going to Washington, DC, to promote some a federal Resolution. For more information, people can go to whvvd@aol.com.

Ray Ramirez
Recon/4/503d

MOH Recipient Sal Giunta to end Army Career

It's been reported Sal has opted not to re-enlist in the army and will leave service this coming June. He and his wife, Jenny, will move to Fort Collins, Colorado where he plans to continue his education. From all of us with the 173d, we wish you and your bride well, Sal.



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 41 of 44



Three Gold Star Mothers Honored

The pictures are of our South Florida All Airborne Chapter banquet where we honored 3 Gold Star mothers. From R-L are Velma, Gorgie and Marcela (Restrepo) mother.



The next picture is the Restrepo family and Sky Soldiers Rivera, Diaz and myself Jose Perez Ortiz.



[Sent in by Jose Perez Ortiz, D/16th Armor]



Richard L. Wilson a Sky Soldier



Birch Bay, Wash. - Retired Army Master Sgt. Richard LeRoy "Dick" Wilson, has retired from this life and has gone on to live with his Heavenly father, his father, his mother and his young son. Richard was born on Nov. 12, 1936, in Yakima. He passed on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in his home in Birch Bay. He leaves behind his wife, Mary, of 45 years; his two sons, Jenlih and Randal; along with two half brothers and two half sisters. Richard served more than 20 years in the U.S. Army and did three tours in Vietnam, one with the 173d Airborne Brigade and two with the 5th Special Forces Group A Team 363 MIKE Force and "SOG." Richard holds numerous awards and citations such as the Bronze Star with "V" device (three awards), Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with "V" device, Air Medal, CIB and Master Parachutist. After his military career, Richard went to work for the North Carolina Department of Corrections as a guard at the state penitentiary in Raleigh, N.C., where he attained the rank of sergeant. Richard was generous to his friends and those in need. He will be missed by all who knew him.



Beware of Unclaimed Boxes in the Distance

There's a former 173d officer buddy of Vietnam vintage who continues to suffer with symptoms of PTSD. No, it's not our good friend Bill Vose, as some of you might assume. Vose has balls of Kryptonite, or so he believes, and wears a cammo'd shirt with a big red "S" on the front. No, this buddy is another equally brave soul who led us into battle in Vietnam. Yet, like many of us, for years he's conveniently stuffed that war deep down inside where it could do no harm, or so he had hoped. We'll call this trooper Major Joe, a different G.I. Joe than the one you read about in our last newsletter. Thought I'd share this note with you, a note sent him recently. Ed

Joe, you may not know how typical your story is, maybe you do. Since getting treatment myself (for PTSD) and trying to help others come in from the bush, I've learned something about it. Not unlike some of your peers, those guys who think they have steel balls, I simply believed *I did my service, nothing was owed me, PTSD is bullshit. See ya.*

My first introduction to the illness was at the Rochester reunion in 2000, my first ever. I walked away disappointed in my vet buddies who seemed fixated on percentage points the VA had or might award them. Just like some of your buddies, I too viewed it as a scam, guys looking for a free ride is all. Hell, I had been a business owner for over 20 years at the time, semi-successful, semi-educated, nothing was wrong with me.

Nothing, of course, except the heavy drinking, womanizing, three marriage separations, walking out on jobs after telling the boss to fuck himself with no job to go to, getting in fights; doing everything to hide from something at the expense of my wife and sons, when in reality, this old RTO was hiding from our war, but didn't know it then. Just like you, I had done such a fine job of burying it for 30 odd years.

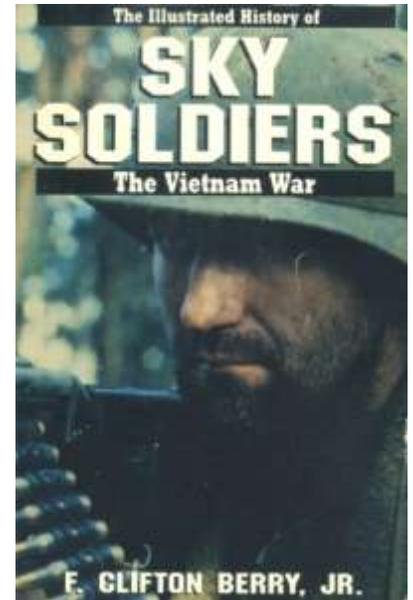
Three 2/503d troopers at 2000 Reunion in Rochester, MN. From left, the late Jim "Skid" Skidmore, Smitty, and Don "Rocky" Rockholt. Life was good.



Until that reunion I couldn't stand to be around vets, wouldn't admit being a vet, my kids hardly knew their dad was a vet. All the while railing at those poor souls on t.v. getting arrested for one thing or another. For a time there whenever the news in L.A. came on with some crime, I consciously hoped it wasn't *another* VN vet, yet often it was. *That's not me goddamit!!* I'd yell at the t.v. I saw what looked to be a familiar box in the distance.

My older brother Bob did three tours with the SF until they blew-out one of his eyes....last year, for the first time ever we sat down together and talked about our war experiences.

Sometime in the 80's my wife, Reggie, and I were in a bookstore in Miami. I happened to pick-up a little, paperback book entitled, "*Sky Soldiers.*" Hell, I thought, I served with that unit. After purchasing the book and taking it home, while sitting there in an easy chair I began to read about operations and battles



"Hell, I served with that unit." I had personally been part of. For no apparent reason I began to weep. Neither my wife nor I could understand it. I had found a box in the distance which had been hidden for so many years.

When the first Iraq war came off, I couldn't eat or sleep, hell I didn't even go to work -- just sat in front of that tube absorbing it all, drawn to it, fearing it....day after day I sat there eating war again. The lid of that box opened a tad.

Having achieved some measure of success with my business, I ran out and bought my dream car, a nifty little European 2-seater in '89, never thought I'd be able to get such a car. I found and put a 173d Airborne sticker on the rear bumper, but it wasn't placed there out of unit pride. No, it was a message to the asshole behind me, *"See! I'm a Vietnam vet and I'm successful! I'm not like those other bastards!!* I was ashamed then of being a veteran. The lid of that box opened.

(continued....)

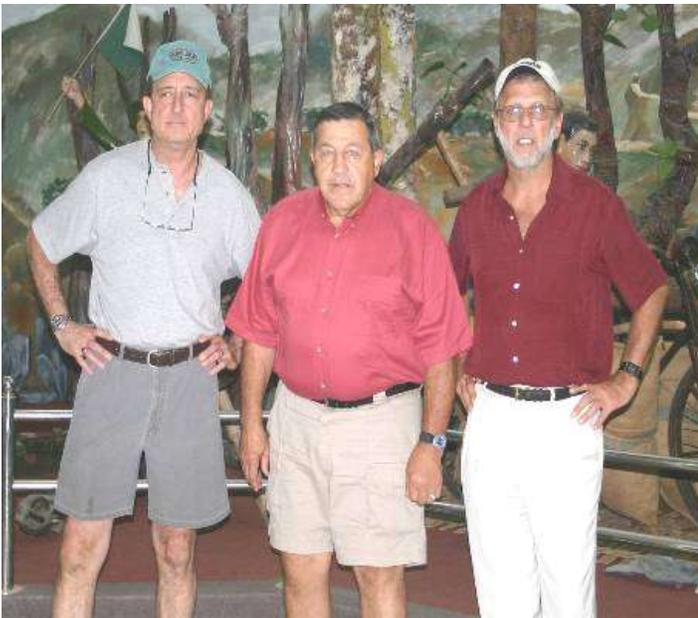


We went to NJ sometime after that to make a presentation to some company, I drove there from Miami. This was during winter and on the drive home late at night I stopped to visit *The Wall* for the first time. Near ten o'clock that night I stood there in the freezing cold yet not feeling cold in front of a buddy's



name, cursing at him for dying, telling him how sorry I was he died. On the long, non-stop drive home to Miami our war came back to me, Joe, and I wept for hundreds of miles. I tried to close that box, but it wouldn't let me.

Firing a secretary forced me to learn how to use email. I would spend every night searching for buddies and anything and everything about the VN war and the 173d. After hooking up with a few buddies from the 173d then more, I printed every reply from them, every word, literally thousands of pages -- they're here in a carton somewhere. I became obsessed. Then my first reunion followed by the first trip back to VN, to be followed by another. The box was opening quickly now.



Visiting our mistress, *Miss Vietnam*, at 3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan Son Nhut on our second trip back in '05. From left, Bill Vose, Gus Vendetti, Smitty.

My world was falling apart. I had eventually walked away from my business unable to tend to it, unable to focus, *everything* became VN; then separating again from my wife who didn't deserve it, this time for 6 years, and moved away from Miami by myself.

Drinking heavily again, actually I had never stopped; fighting with people when I had no reason to...lost and searching, but for what? Let's put on a 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, and then another! That'll fix things!! And then, Joe, the depression you mention sets in, big time, a real equalizer as you know. That box was fully opened now and it was sucking me into it and there was nothing I could do about it.



The first of two 2/503d reunions in Cocoa Beach.

I can't tell you how fortunate I was to meet Dr. Scott Fairchild down here, you've read about him. That Doc helped me make some sense of it all, not completely, but enough to save my marriage and enough to help me become a better husband and father and grandfather, although one son, my namesake, remains distant -- there's no question the Doc saved me some years. He taught me PTSD is *not* being crazy, it's precisely what it says it is, *stress*. And he taught me, for guys like us, if we don't confront that stress but instead bury it inside for years, it will eventually return and return to do damage.

Yessir, as your current activities do and most likely will forever remain *your* therapy, our newsletter, for the time being at least, is mine. That, and along with others, helping the brass and the unwashed find the path to their own peace of mind, or as close to it as possible -- from privates to company commanders to full birds. Even generals are not immune, like Major General Blackledge and the PTSD he carries his shoulder, they all carry their hidden scars. Yet, for many that All American has helped us find the path home. Too many, as you well know, have taken the easy path and continue to opt for that sad ending to their combat saga.

You do good work for your G.I.'s, Major. Watch out for any unclaimed boxes in your path, they're like punji stakes, they can be a real bitch. Here's a solution?

Scott Fairchild, Psy.D, LTC (Ret), 82nd Abn Div
Phn: 321-253-8887, Eml: BaytreeBehHlth@aol.com

Be well, Joe, dance like no one's lookin'. Smitty Out

