

Recognition – At Last!!

39th IPSD Dog on
“Special Operations”



For their services with a combined US Special Forces unit in March of 1967, The Special Operations Association in October 2002 honored Budda, 4A82, and his first handler Bob Brown, of the 39th IPSD. The association remembered Budda's

actions "In Memoriam", and Bob was made a life member during a formal presentation at their annual meeting in Las Vegas. According to the association, Budda is the only Military Working Dog ever to have served in this capacity.

The Special Operations Association (SOA) is a 1700+ member fraternal organization of American and foreign participants who have documented proof of having served in special military operations in combat theaters, primarily during the Southeast Asian conflict. The group also includes World War II and Korean Veterans as well as those from the more recent conflicts; membership is limited to members of Free World forces who aided or took part in missions deep inside hostile territory in a combat capacity. The association is mainly composed of US Army Special Forces personnel but also includes Air Commandos; Navy SEALs, Force Recon Marines and veterans of other elite military and civilian organizations, who were a part of Special Operations.

During the Vietnam War, U.S. political and military leaders confronted strategically important but elusive ground targets. Political and other considerations prevented the deployment of conventional ground units, and air power alone proved unable to eliminate the targets. In both cases, policymakers turned to special operations forces (SOF) to conduct reconnaissance operations to locate the hidden targets. During the Vietnam conflict, SOF teams crossed the border into Laos to search for critical targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail that were obscured from above by triple-canopy jungle and camouflage. This network of footpaths, trails, and roads ultimately came to serve not only as a supply line for North Vietnamese forces but also as a basing area from which attacks could be staged on South Vietnam. U.S. forces confronted formidable obstacles in their efforts to stem the flow of traffic along the trail.



Missing War Dog tribute.

In early 1967, Budda and Bob of the 39th IPSD were selected for TDY assignment to the highly classified all-volunteer unit. Budda engaged in unconventional warfare and clandestine operations, roving deep into areas crawling with NVA soldiers, and lead six top-secret expeditions "over the fence" into Laos. Budda and Bob shared the knowledge of acts of remarkable valor that will never make the pages of history books. But nevertheless, the mission of a Scout Dog and his handler is to save and protect friendly forces. This they did, and did it well. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

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NEWS FROM CHAPTER 25

This is a copy of the stickers for our fundraiser. These would be given out instead of buddy poppies. This is similar to what the Vietnam Veterans of America use. We took our Chapter number off of them so they could be used by all Chapters. I would like to see if any other Chapter would like them and if anyone had changes? We also have vinyl signs that can be purchased inexpensively. Please let me know.
bob5992@cox.net



Bob Madden
B/2/503d



Alpha Company 2/503d, Fall In!!!

If you served in Company A, 2d Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) from 1963 to 1972 please join your fellow "No Deros Alpha" buddies in Columbus, Georgia for an A/2/503 ONLY mini-reunion.

Reunion Dates:

May 4-8, 2011

Reunion Central:

Hilton Garden Inn
1500 Bradley Lake Blvd.
Columbus, GA 31904

Hotel Reservations:

Phn: 1-706-660-1000

Fax: 1-706-660-1919

Web: <http://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/CSGGHGI-A2503-20110504/index.jhtml;jsessionid=LGUS5XWRRQ3K2CSGBJBNEWQ>

Airborne!

Terry "Woody" Davis

A/2/503d

davis_terrence@bellsouth.net



"From now until the end of the world, we, and it shall be remembered, we few, we Band of Brothers. For he who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."

- William Shakespeare ("King Henry V")

Honors Ceremony Set for 11 June at the Memorial

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation is pleased to announce that a formal "Honors Ceremony" will be held at the Memorial on Saturday, 11 June, at 1000 hours.

This Ceremony will honor the nine warriors who fell during Operation Enduring Freedom X in Afghanistan, and to unveil their names on the panels commemorating our fallen. The Memorial Foundation will add the name of a fallen Vietnam warrior to the list of our brothers who died so long ago.

The name of SSG Salvatore Giunta will be added to the roster of those who have been awarded the Medal of Honor while serving in the 173d Airborne Brigade. This brings to fourteen the names of those so honored.

Data related to the Brigade's deployment for OEF X, if available, will also be unveiled as part of the ceremony.

All Sky Soldiers, families, and friends are invited to attend this brief but meaningful ceremony. When plans for the event are finalized, information will be placed on our website ([www. 173dairbornememorial.org](http://www.173dairbornememorial.org)).

Kenneth V. Smith

Colonel, USA (Ret)

President

173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation

WW2 and Japan Surrender

Check out this great video on the web, which includes:

- 503rd Combat Jump on to the "Rock"
- MacArthur's return to Corregidor
- End of War footage

http://corregidor.org/now%20showing/cine/cine_02_jump_on_corregidor.html



Chet at Benning

At exactly 1:40 mins. into the video we understand the paratrooper crashing into the side of the bomb crater is our very own 503rd trooper Chet Nycum who attended the 173d reunion in N. Myrtle Beach in June 2010. *Airborne Chet!*



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Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Presents:

Florida's 24th Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion

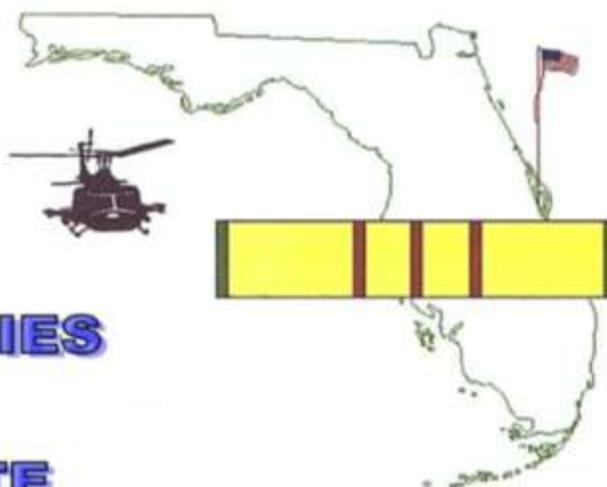
The Nations Largest Veterans Reunion

Supported by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.- VVOF.org

May 5, 6, 7, 8, 2011

Additionally, come visit The Vietnam Traveling Memorial WALL May 1 - 8, 2011

LIVE MUSIC
FOOD & DRINKS
MILITARY VENDORS
MILITARY DISPLAYS
POW / MIA CEREMONIES
THE LAST PATROL
THE MOVING TRIBUTE



Also visit the Reunion Web Page at:

floridaveteransreunion.com

Meet Your Vet Brothers & Sisters
All Veterans, Families and Public Invited

Wickham Park

321-255-4307 - Melbourne, FL
Take I-95 to Exit 191 or old Exit 73
No Coolers, Glass or Pets allowed
in the Reunion Area

Per Wickham Park: Golf Carts Permitted
for the Handicapped Only And Must
Abide By FL Highway Laws

Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall
<http://travelingwall.us>

**Vietnam and All Veterans of
Brevard, Inc**
PO Box 237225
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Semper Fuckin' Fi!



Photo by Jeff Bundy, *Omaha World-Herald*

Leading the fight is U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Michael Burghardt, known as 'Iron Mike' or just 'Gunny'. He is on his third tour in Iraq. He had become a legend in the bomb disposal world after earning the Bronze Star for disabling 64 IED's and destroying 1,548 pieces of ordnance during his second tour.

Then, on September 19, he got blown up.

He had arrived at a chaotic scene after a bomb had killed four U.S. Marines. He chose not to wear the bulky bomb protection suit. *"You can't react to any sniper fire and you get tunnel vision,"* he explains. So, protected by just a helmet and standard-issue flak jacket, he began what bomb disposal officers term 'the longest walk', stepping gingerly into a 5 foot deep and 8 foot wide crater.

The earth shifted slightly and he saw a Senao base station with a wire leading from it. He cut the wire and used his 7 inch knife to probe the ground. *"I found a piece of red detonating cord between my legs,"* he says. *"That's when I knew I was screwed."*

Realizing he had been sucked into a trap, Sgt. Burghardt, 35, yelled at everyone to stay back. At that moment, an insurgent probably watching through binoculars, pressed a button on his mobile phone to detonate the secondary device below the sergeant's feet. *"A chill went up the back of my neck, and then the bomb exploded,"* he recalls.

"As I was in the air I remember thinking, 'I don't believe they got me...' I was just ticked off they were able to do it. Then I was lying on the road, not able to feel anything from the waist down."

His fellow Marines cut off his trousers to see how badly he was hurt. None could believe his legs were still there. *"My dad's a Vietnam vet who's paralyzed from the waist down,"* says Sgt. Burghardt. *"I was lying there thinking I didn't want to be in a wheelchair next to my dad and for him to see me like that. They started to cut away my pants and I felt a real sharp pain and blood trickling down. Then I wiggled my toes and thought, 'Good, I'm in business.'"*

As a stretcher was brought over, adrenaline and anger kicked in. *"I decided to walk to the helicopter. I wasn't going to let my teammates see me being carried away on a stretcher."* He stood and gave the insurgents who had blown him up a one-fingered salute. *"I flipped them one. It was like, OK, I lost that round but I'll be back next week."*

Sgt. Burghardt's injuries, burns and wounds to his legs and buttocks kept him off duty for nearly a month and could have earned him a ticket home. But, like his father, who was awarded a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts for being wounded in action in Vietnam, he stayed in Ramadi to engage the battle against insurgents who are forever coming up with more ingenious ways of killing Americans.

[Sent in by Frank Dukes, A/2/503d]

Happy birthday Bommel. LYL



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Part I: Preparing for War

By Roy Lombardo



Ranger Roy

My story starts in the early days as the Brigade was forming up as an airborne infantry unit. We had some WWII veterans and many from the 187 ARCT, but I want to talk about a few of the young officers and how we prepared for our ultimate deployment, which we were fairly certain of doing.

There was no formal military education program but we knew that what was going on in SE Asia would affect the US military at some point. So several of us decided to BE PREPARED. In fact, the Ranger Handbook had not yet been written and graduates only had access to whatever notes they took while a student.

I and 1LT Carmen Cavezza came from the 82d Airborne Division and brought some Ranger school and Airborne experience with us. 2LT Wayne Downing came straight from Ranger School. 1LT Ronn Hoffman and 2 others (whose names elude me) came to the Brigade after a 6 month deployment with the 1st Special Forces Group, bringing some practical combat experience from around RVN.

We hung out together and read avidly every book we could locate on Counterinsurgency. This was 1963 and there was NOT the wealth of information which is now available. We'd trade books and discuss what we read. If we'd bump into an officer from the 1st SFG, we'd pump them for their experiences in RVN. How did language training work? What weapons were used to arm the friendly forces? What was the terrain like and how did they move and communicate?

Slowly we begin to gather an accurate picture of some of the problems that might take place if we deployed and discussed how we might overcome them.

Some of the books:

- *The ATOM Pamphlet* - Antiterrorist Operations in Malaya
- *The Centurions and the Praetorians* both by Jean Latergny
- *Street Without Joy* - Bernard Fall

And others that don't quickly come to mind.

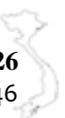
We studied language to the extent possible, realizing that some knowledge of French would be helpful. I still have my notes from my early classes on Vietnamese using phonetic spellings to represent the sounds that I was trying to master. Many years later when I attended formal language training at the State Department, I was surprised how accurately my phonetics were to the real pronunciations.

We trained with our respective units on Okinawa, learning how best to pack and live in the jungle. Okinawa's jungle was a secondary jungle because the vegetation was barely recovered from the denuding fires of WWII in 1945, less than 20 years earlier. There were no special uniforms, weapons, or equipment. Cleated boots were only available to those who had the local shoemaker modify Jump or QM boots. A good KaBar or similar knife was essential to jungle movement and living, so we added that to our gear. Waterproof map cases, small taped flashlights were all part of our gear that we acquired. Heat tabs were available through the supply system but you had to get the supply sergeant to order them from stockpiles.



Iriomote 1964

(continued....)





173d jungle warfare training on Iriomote.

The Brigade would deploy annually to Taiwan for training with the Nationalist Chinese Airborne Regiment. In 1963, we deployed to Thailand in the summer and to Taiwan in the fall. In January 1964, the Brigade conducted Jungle Training on the island of Iriomote, the second largest island in the Ryukyuan Chain, next to Okinawa. Iriomote was almost uninhabited, while Okinawa had millions of residents. Jungle training probably deserves a separate article to do it justice.

In November the Brigade deployed to Taiwan for 2 weeks, which was the best possible warm-up for our deployment to RVN on 5 May 1965.

The officers I listed earlier became an unofficial cadre for training in general, and for instructors in the Bde Jungle School specifically. We weren't "know it all's" but those in our platoons and companies listened when we spoke because of what we'd done and where we'd done it.

OVERALL we learned and professed that the jungle was NEUTRAL. You can learn to live in it, operate effectively, and do your tactical job. The jungle was not your enemy, the VC/PAVN were. When you could move and communicate as well as the bad guys, you could beat them at their own game and walk away from

the encounter Alive. More to follow. For the next chapter, collect your salt tablets, which is how we flavored our water to replace the excreted salt from our sweating bodies.

Fondest Airborne regards,

BDQ Roy

Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret)
CO B/2/503d, '64/'65



2/503d blast on Taiwan.
 Photo by Tom Goodwin



We call it...ZZ



On March 11, 1966, paratroopers of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade prepare to load choppers at Bien Hoa Airbase (the "Snakepit") for assault into War Zone "D" during Operation Silver City.

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

March 16, it seems to come our way every year about now. For some odd reason I neglected to make mention of that fateful date for many of us in our March newsletter. Old man time is catching up with us I suppose.

There are so many battles, small and large, memorable to us, from Marauder in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta, to the savage battles at Dak To, and those before, between and after, countless of them. Yes, for hundreds of us, March 16 will forever remain our most significant recollection from our time during that war -- the battle at LZ Zulu-Zulu.

Just hooked up recently with Pat Feely, a B Med medic attached to Charlie Company at ZZ, and a retired LTC who made the army his career. Pat had asked for background information on the battle, and his inquiry pretty much prompted this note to you. Pat was one of the medics who tended to the Charlie Company troopers wounded by artillery on the night of the 15th.

As many of you, perhaps most of you, I too find myself pondering that event on occasion, and thinking of the 'what if's' about it. As in what if Tony Geishauer and Joe McHenry's Huey had not been shot down within our perimeter prematurely opening the battle? As in what if they had safely delivered those yummy hot eggs and simply departed without a shot being fired, or the B Company patrol had not been ambushed? And what if Alpha and Charlie Companies had gone on their separate search and destroy missions leaving Bravo and a small HHC contingent to man that LZ with a regiment of bad guys waiting at the ready? What if?

According to Tom Faley, Charlie Company CO at ZZ, his answer to the 'What If' question is:

"The situation had the makings of a massacre. It was so immense. Once they opened up and hit the helicopter, all hell broke loose all around our perimeter. Quite frankly, I was stunned. I thought 'What the devil is going on?' In the end it was a massacre, but not of the Americans. Luckily, the Vietnamese attack was premature. Had it started an hour later, we would have been out of the shelter of our foxholes, strung out on patrols and quickly overwhelmed."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

One hell of a What If.

Nearly two-hundred of us were wounded that day, some severely maimed for life, while a small number of our boys died so we might live, and where hundreds of the enemy died. How do we thank these men of ours..... we can't, words don't work when thanking someone for one's life. So what do we do...we remember them.

To mark Operation Silver City and the fight at Zulu-Zulu is the following brief report which appeared some time ago in *Sky Soldier* magazine; additional photos have been included. It was an honor of a lifetime to have been there with you guys, *All the Way*.

Smitty Out HHC/2/503d, '65-'66



THE BATTLE AT BAU SAN

**IT WAS 40 YEARS AGO ON
16 MARCH 1966,
PARATROOPES OF THE
FAMED 173D AIRBORNE
FOUGHT IN WHAT WAS
REPORTED TO BE ONE OF
THE MOST SUCCESSFUL
OPERATIONS EVER
CONDUCTED BY THE
BRIGADE IN VIETNAM.**

By: Lew "Smitty" Smith



2/503d enroute to War Zone "D", 11 March 1966.

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

In the vast and dense jungles of War Zone "D", on the late afternoon of 15 March 1966, the 2d Battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), arrived position Zulu-Zulu during Operation Silver City. The battalion was part of a major offensive to "locate and destroy or capture all personnel, equipment and intelligence material" of the Viet Cong's Military Region Seven (MR7) headquarters. Only a few of these Sky Soldiers knew they would be up against "an enemy capable of defending this complex with a maximum force of three Main Force Regiments, two Main Force Battalions, one Local Force Battalion and Local Security elements." Nor did these paratroopers expect to be fighting North Vietnamese soldiers in the thick jungles of South Vietnam.

But, on the morning of 16 March 1966, while awaiting a delivery chopper to arrive with a breakfast of hot eggs, the men of the 2d Battalion were in for something much hotter and even more dangerous than the army's powdered eggs. In this small jungle clearing the Viet Cong referred to as Bau San (the cabasa swamp), Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d would find themselves surrounded by an enemy force three times their size. Comprised of Viet Cong of the 271st Main Force Regiment and reinforced with what may have been a majority of North Vietnamese soldiers, the enemy was fanatically committed to overrunning LZ Zulu-Zulu and destroying all paratroopers there. It was on 8 November 1965, when the VC's 271st suffered over 600 casualties at the hands of the 173d Airborne's 1st Battalion, and the bad guys were looking for some payback.

The enemy in the jungle had already made its presence known to the 2d Battalion on 13 March, when six "B" Company and two HHC troopers were wounded in a fire fight. Also wounded that day was the "B" Company Commander, (then) Capt. Les Brownlee, who years later would become acting Secretary of the Army.



Evacuation of future Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee, on 13 Mar 66.

Les Brownlee provided

The next day, 14 March, the battalion was attacked again, this time "C" Company receiving six wounded, HHC one wounded, with three "C" Company and one HHC troopers KIA. Up to that point the 2d Battalion found itself chasing an elusive enemy, a hit-and-run enemy, an enemy unwilling to stand and fight it out – but, that would soon change.

Following a trail of B-52 bomb craters on the late afternoon of 15 March, the four companies of the 2/503d, along with attachments, humped into Zulu-Zulu, a small 100-by-160 meter clearing in the triple-canopy jungle.

(continued....)





L-R: "C" Company CO Capt. Tom Faley, Bn XO Maj. Willard Christensen and Bn CO LTC John Walsh during Operation Silver City. Tom Faley provided

After quickly knocking down anti-chopper poles from the LZ, then establishing the battalion perimeter and sending-out two and three man listening posts, the Sky Soldiers settled in for the night.



15 Mar 66, 2/503d arrive LZ Zulu-Zulu. The bad guys are watching. Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

"The night (March 15/16) was sleepless; even aside from the few 75mm shells we were taking sporadically, something just felt wrong..."

Wayne Hoitt/HHC/2/503d

During the evening of 15 March two "C" Company mortar men were wounded by incoming artillery bursts,

one losing the lower half of his legs. Unbeknownst to the Sky Soldiers manning the perimeter at LZ Zulu-Zulu that night, they were being "softened-up" by elements of the Z-37 and Z-43 Artillery Battalions of the VC's U-80th Artillery in preparation for a planned early a.m. attack. Amazingly, a reinforced enemy Regiment had moved in during the night undetected, and surrounded the troopers at LZ Zulu-Zulu.

"On a bright, sunny morning of the 16th of March, I awoke and was greeting the beautiful morning in the jungle while watching a helicopter hovering above the LZ and attempting to land. As this was occurring, gunfire from one side of the landing zone was directed at the chopper. The chopper was hit and began swaying in mid air from side-to-side. Suddenly, the blades were ripping into the trees, raining branches all over the area. The chopper crashed and the gunfire intensified with our brothers returning fire. We had no idea of the size of the unit we were engaging, but it was big."

A.B. Garcia/HHC/2/503d

Once the resupply chopper crashed into the tree line, incoming fire erupted from all sides of the LZ, supported by enemy mortar and artillery attacks. Gun fire intensified from all around Zulu-Zulu with waves of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers attacking each of the Company lines -- but, the gallant and resolute men of the 2d Battalion held their ground and for hour-after-hour repelled the attacks. During this five-hour battle these brave paratroopers of the 2/503d did not surrender a single foot of their perimeter to the enemy forces attacking them.

"There was a lot of shooting on my left flank, and a heavy machine gun was firing from our right flank... One of our machine gunners was

courageously standing on top of a termite mound cutting down the attacking enemy 10 feet from our perimeter."

Gus Vendetti/A/2/503d

(continued...)





The Cowboy's breakfast bird's final resting place at ZZ.

Photo by Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d

Early in the battle ammunition throughout the battalion was quickly becoming depleted. Huey's with desperately needed ammo sling-loaded beneath them were repeatedly driven off by intense and accurate enemy fire. Many choppers took hits that morning in their courageous attempts to resupply the troopers under attack.



A/2/503d Jack Ribera under attack at Zulu-Zulu.

"I had one 20 round mag left for my M16 and a grenade or two, as did most of the rest of us."

Don Rice/HHC/2/503d

The 1/503d received orders from the Silver City CG to immediately move to Zulu-Zulu to reinforce the troopers of the 2/503d under severe enemy attack. It was

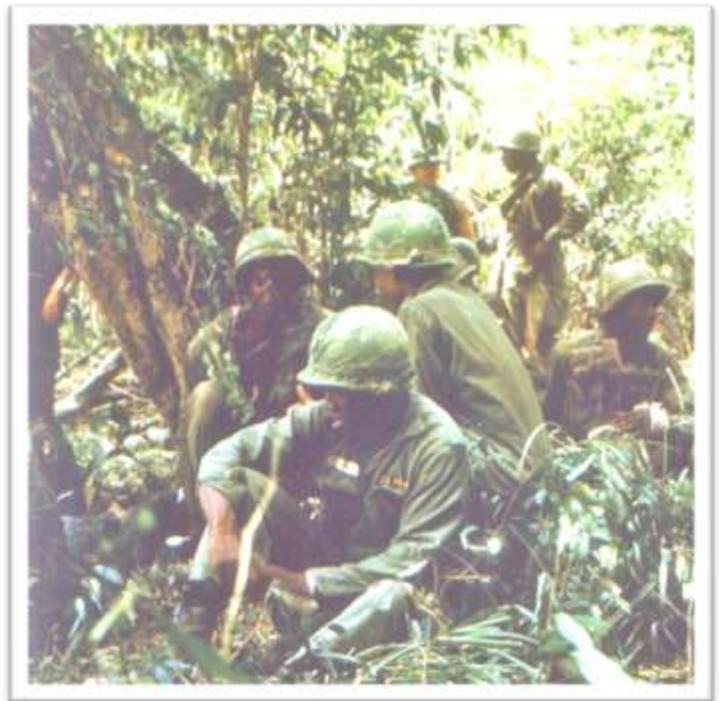


for his actions on this date that First Battalion's Al Rascon was later awarded the Medal of Honor.

Heroic actions were a common occurrence throughout the battalion that day. Numerous wounded troopers held their ground while fighting off the attacking forces rather than crawling back to the LZ for aid. Many of the unit's casualties were incurred by troopers running ammo to the Company lines engaged in the battle.

"I'll never forget when a major came over to the tree where all the wounded were being assembled and told me to get all the walking wounded to fix bayonets and to be prepared to react to any breach in the lines with a bayonet counter attack."

Chuck Guy/HHC/2/503d



Strategic reserve: Wounded troopers at Zulu-Zulu.

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

Throughout the battle countless TAC Air strikes and artillery missions were conducted all around the perimeter of Zulu-Zulu. Following the battle numerous groups of badly mangled VC bodies were found, attesting to the effectiveness of supporting fires.

"Firing was so intense it was beyond description. The VC was coming from all directions."

Willard Christensen/HHC/2/503d

(continued....)





Pop smoke for dustoff! Wounded troopers waiting on edge of LZ for medivac, 16 Mar 66. Photo by: Wayne Hoitt.

This breakfast meeting in the dense jungle of the “D” Zone would go down in history as one of the 173d Airborne’s finest entries into a journal of countless battles won during the war, with over 400 enemy soldiers and numerous facilities and equipment destroyed and weapons and documents captured. *Time* magazine reported in their March 23, 1966, edition:

“The Airborne won with fewer casualties and more enemy dead than any major engagement of the war to date.”

It was on 4 August 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for bravery during combat actions at LZ Zulu-Zulu, to the men of the 2/503d and attached units.

“The combination of Viet Cong killed, equipment destroyed and intelligence information captured, makes SILVER CITY one of the most successful operations ever conducted in Vietnam. Brigade forces continued to effectively exercise the three most important capabilities of Civic Action/Psychological Operations, Intelligence Gathering, and Tactical Operations concurrently.”

CG/173d Bde

In July 2005, three paratroopers of the 2d Battalion who survived the battle of 16 March 1966, returned to Vietnam. Enduring a five-hour hump into and out of War Zone “D’s” jungle, Sky Soldiers Gus Vendetti, Bill Vose and Lew Smith returned to LZ Zulu-Zulu for the first time in 39 years. When asked why they were taking this tortuous trip into the jungle, Bill Vose replied...

“Because we can.”



Mementos from the boys at Zulu-Zulu recovered in '05.

[This report originally appeared in the Winter 2005-06, Vol. XX, No. 4 edition of *Sky Soldier* magazine. Additional photos have been added to the report]



Sky Soldier Musings About Zulu-Zulu

Can you believe it was 45 years ago? Seems like yesterday!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d

And it carried over to the next day, which was St. Patrick's Day, and so that day is for the wearin' of the jungle green, I guess.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

Hi Guys: As Larry said, tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day, as it was 45 years ago. But today is St. Heribert's Day (Heribert is my real first name), just as it was 45 years ago when I celebrated at LZ Zulu Zulu with lots of firecrackers popping left and right and above and the ground shaking underneath. St. Heribert proved to be an efficient patron saint and guardian angel, otherwise I wouldn't write these words today. In about half an hour's time (remember that over here in Switzerland I'm way ahead of you all), I'll open a bottle of champagne and toast to all those that were there, and especially to those whose souls are still there and also to all those who helped St. Heribert in this most difficult task (the helicopter crews, the artillery guys, the bomber pilots). Lift your glasses guys. Here's to us.

Herbert Murhammer
B/2/503d



2/503d trooper on his way to Zulu-Zulu. Op Silver City.

I'll have a toast tonight, and remember those I served with. God Bless you all.

Joe Logan
B/2/503d

So many years ago but it seems like yesterday. Man were we young. I will have a toast tonight to all that made it home alive and to those brave soldiers that never made it through that day.

Craig Ford
C/1/503d

Took my wife, kids and their kids to dinner tonight (March 16), by chance to a Japanese restaurant, so there was a sense of the orient in the air. Made a quiet toast with my rum drink to the menboys we lost that day...not sure the family would have understand a vocalized toast.

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d

Hooah!

John Searcy
HHC/2/503d

Well I wasn't going to reply, but I was so impressed with the other replies I can only say it has been a great 45 years (I thought it was closer to 9 or 10. hahahahaha!). I too will drink some fine California champagne, not the wimpy French stuff, and celebrate our all making it through another year. You know, before we lose any more we really should plan a ZULU ZULU reunion dinner sometime in the future!

Bill Vose
2 LT, A/2/503d, Weapons Platoon Leader OJT
3/16/1966

TO ALL: I celebrated my toast on the 13th when our small party walked into that VC base camp as a prelude to what was to follow when Bravo Company came in to pull us out. What did I get us into? My best to all.

Art Martinez
HHC/2/503d

Amazing that it has been over 45 years!!! I will sit in my Tee Pee with the ribbons you guys took to Zulu-Zulu a couple of years past covering them with dirt from that LZ. Remember them? I know Vose couldn't lay them down due to the company of guides. They hang proudly in my hooch. Some of us were so lucky, and the other brothers not so. But, we carry them in our hearts and will forever. *"Lest We Forget"*

A.B. "Aussino" Garcia
HHC/2/503d

March 16 1966....Ah such sweet memories.....NOT. But I am glad to be alive to have them. Just hate the nightmares...love the memories of fighting with some of the best soldiers in the world. Happy Rebirthday,

Chuck Guy
HHC/2/503d Class of '64-'66

I second that, classmate.

John Searcy
HHC 2/503

(continued....)



One hell of a class it was. Curriculum was a bitch. While at the reunion in Myrtle Beach last year had the opportunity to see Willie Monroe, paralyzed from wounds received when he, Freddie Parks and Bill Vose (all A/2/503) went outside the perimeter to take out that machine gun nest wreaking havoc along that line. May have been another trooper with them but don't recall his name. They all were wounded by that gunner, but Willie the worst off. Spent some time with him at one of our 2/503 reunions here in Cocoa Beach years ago, but happy to report at this most recent meeting, altho still confined to a wheelchair, Willie appeared to be moving and speaking better -- in fact, don't recall him speaking much at all at the earlier reunion. Vose: If you put on a Zulu-Zulu dinner, get a big table.

Lew "Smitty" Smith

HHC/2/503d, Class of '65-'66, graduated cum scared shitless

I took Hidalgo and Parks with me on that little jaunt!

**Bill Vose
A/2/503d**

Does not seem possible that it was 45 years ago but what the heck I got to be 64 somehow and it looked like 19 was doubtful more than once that day. I may be a non drinker but will hoist a diet coke to all of you Brothers for your hard work on that day and to those who went to be with the Lord of their choice. I have always been so proud to have been with all of you then and now. Never has there been assembled a finer group of American fighting men in the history of the U.S.A. AATW. As a Preacher I pray that the God of your choice will bless each and everyone of you and yours with long healthy, love filled years to come.

**Trooper Bill Knapp
Bravo 3/1, '65-'66**

I don't know if William Gossett (KIA Zulu-Zulu) was on my helicopter or not. I don't think he was. We were fully loaded w/canisters of food and drink and we were sling loading 400 pounds of ice. Other than my crew the only other two passengers we had on board were two cooks who were supposed to distribute the food. Forty-five years was a long time ago, but I recall pretty clearly that one of the cooks fell out of the helicopter with our cargo doors open as we were starting to fall from the sky after being



Capt. Tom Goodwin, commo boss, wounded at ZZ.

hit. The other cook, I was told, was killed during the fire fight. Was never able to confirm that. I started to get pretty apprehensive in ZZ after the firelight went on for hours rather than the normal minutes most went on. I should have been scared, but when I started seeing Tac Air coming in, helicopter gunships, and pallets of ammo being dropped off for our guys, I thought we were going to be OK.

**Tony Geishauser
Cowboys, '65/'66**



Tony G. (L) & Joe McHenry, the unlucky chopper pilots at Zulu-Zulu.

Congratulation to all that made it out that day. The chopper shot down was to be my ride out of combat and the start of my way home. It seem as tho every replacement I would get wounded before I could leave the area.

**Jimmy Stanford, Captain
B/2/503d, Special Forces Retired**

Jimmy. Sorry I screwed up your ride home. I was one of the pilots flying the bird that spilled the eggs and was not flyable to take you home. Believe me, I know the feeling of not getting out on the chopper that was supposed to take you out.

**Tony Geishauser
Cowboy 173**



John was KIA during the early morning B Company squad's clearing patrol on 16 Mar 66.



~ 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!!](#)



A Letter From Robert Donovan WWII 503rd PRCT To A Sky Soldier

leave the theater until September 1945, returning home to Salem.



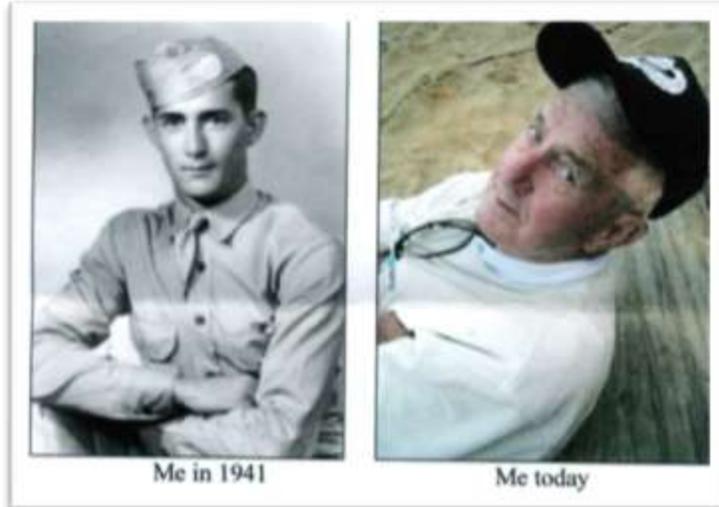
The most significant operation in which I participated – of which you obviously have some knowledge – was the retaking of fortress Corregidor, an island in Manila Bay, The Philippines. The operation was considered one of the most successful airborne undertakings in military history, but it occurred near simultaneously with the U.S. Marine assault on Iwo Jima, so it got much less attention than perhaps it deserved. I was present when Gen. Douglas MacArthur returned to the Island, as he promised when evacuated from Corregidor in 1942. I am proud to have been a part of the island's liberation.

Upon returning from the Pacific, I married the best friend of my young sister Ruth. Janice Donovan (nee Kingston) and I have been married 64 years. We have three children – all of them now living near me in the Washington, DC suburbs, to where I moved our young family in 1959 in pursuit of a job with the United States Government. My sons followed me into the federal civil service. My eldest, Kenneth, retired after 39 years from the U.S. Park Police, riding a horse most of that time along the National Mall in Washington; he now works under contract as a security consultant to the U.S. Department of Justice. My middle son Donald is now the third highest-ranking official in the U.S. Marshals Service. My son Paul is a senior instructor of analysis at CIA, following an analytic career that led him to brief the President, Vice President, and other senior U.S. and foreign officials. I now have six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren – ironically almost none of them have entered federal service.

Thanks again for taking the time to write. Your remembrance means very much to me.

Airborne all the way!

Robert E. Donovan



Dear Friend:

Thank you so much for your kind letter. It pleases me that those younger than me appreciate the sacrifices that soldiers, sailors, and marines of my era made on behalf of this great nation. It brings me comfort that the ultimate price paid by so many of my dear friends and comrades has not been forgotten. You and others like you – many of whom also serve overseas today under very difficult conditions – give me absolute confidence that such sacrifices were not in vain. I apologize for the delay in responding. Now 90 years of age, I need to get my son's help in printing my letter.

I too was once a young man. Growing up in Salem, Massachusetts, I initially served first in the United States Coast Guard. On the eve of the war, I enlisted in the United States Army and eventually was assigned to the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team and subsequently deployed to the Pacific Theater. For most of the war, I served as a machine gunner in Company Headquarters 3rd, but frequently I was attached to I or G Companies during actual combat operations. I participated in all of the 503rd's combat missions except the jump at Nadzab, in New Guinea, in what was then the Dutch East Indies; that operation occurred as I was arriving from Australia. I received the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in battle at Noemfoor Island, also in New Guinea. I received the Bronze Star for meritorious service during my tour of duty in the Pacific. I didn't



Senate Declares March 30th as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day”

Resolution Introduced by Senator Richard Burr

Washington D.C – The U.S. Senate yesterday declared March 30th as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day,” agreeing unanimously to a resolution introduced by Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

On March 30, 1973, all U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. This March 30th, the Senate has encouraged Americans across the country to recognize Vietnam veterans for their sacrifice and demonstrate a warm welcome to these soldiers who returned from war to a politically divided country.

“I’m pleased that the Senate has agreed to set aside a day to give our Vietnam veterans a warm, long-overdue welcome home. I strongly encourage communities throughout North Carolina and across the country to observe this day with activities and events that honor these veterans for their service. It’s time they receive the recognition they have earned and deserve. This day also provides our nation with an important teaching moment. Never again should our men and women serving in the armed forces receive the same treatment as those returning from Vietnam,” said Senator Richard Burr.

Senator Burr introduced the resolution for the second consecutive year on February 16, 2011.

The United States became involved in Vietnam because policy-makers believed that if South Vietnam fell to a communist government, communism would spread throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The US Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961, and in 1965, ground combat troops were sent into Vietnam. On March 30, 1973, after many years of combat, all US troops withdrew. More than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam.

Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Thad Cochran (R-MS), James Inhofe (R-OK), Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Mike Johanns (R-NE) co-sponsored the legislation. The resolution now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.



Senator Burr

HOW WERE YOU ‘WELCOMED HOME?’

Send in your welcome home story to rto173d@cfl.r.com and we’ll include it in the May issue of our newsletter.

Not all Vietnam Vets received an unfavorable welcome back from the combat zone, many did of course, my older brother, Bob, for one. Bob served three tours with the 5th SF until blinded in one eye during combat. He was and remains a patriot through-and-through.



Bob and I come from a small steel mill town in Southern California. On leave home between one of his tours the Sneaky Pete decided to stop by one of the many beer gardens in that rough territory, the original home of the Hell’s Angels.

Sitting at the bar there decked out in his pressed and bloused khakis, spit-shined Corcoran’s, silver wings on his chest and green beret, the fighting soldier from the sky was pretty much minding his own business when five steel workers approached him who weren’t big fans of our war. It’s reported he got in some good licks, which would make any paratrooper proud, before those steel benders left him there on the floor with the holy hell beat out of him. Welcome home soldier, thanks for your service to your country.

**Lew “Smitty” Smith
HHC/2/503d, ’65-’66**



Bob, visiting me at Camp Zinn in December ‘65



~ Last Month's Whodat? ~

In last month's newsletter we asked you to identify this young trooper with the jump school haircut holding his M-79.



I think the guy holding the M-79 is Willie Matthews. He was in 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon B Company, 2/503d. Sure looks like him in '66/'67. Love the newsletters. Capt. Kaplan was my CO.

Ray Tanner
HHC/B/2/503d

~ A Few Years Later ~

Former B/2/503d CO LTC Ken Kaplan (L), with his trusty RTO, Dave Griffin.



*"Thanks Griff for carrying that PRC for me."
"Anytime, Cap."*

Airborne Bravery

One day, a general of the Army, an Admiral, and an Air Force General are having an argument about whose branch of the military is the bravest.

So the Admiral yells to a passing Navy Seal, *"Sailor, catch that falling anchor!"* The Sailor snaps to attention, shouts, *"Yes, Sir!"*, runs under the anchor, and is crushed to death trying to catch it. The Admiral turns to the others and says, *"Gentlemen, that was bravery."*



So the Air Force General takes his turn and calls an Airman over. *"Airman, catch that landing plane."* The Airman snaps to attention and shouts, *"Yes, Sir!"* and is sucked into the propellers and is sliced to death. The Air Force General turns back to the others and says, *"Gentleman, that took guts."*

Finally, the Airborne General yells for his Paratrooper. *"Trooper, get into that airplane, go to 1,200 feet and jump out."* *"All the Way, Sir!!"* shouts the Paratrooper. *"But,"* the General says, *"do it without a parachute."* The Paratrooper snaps to attention and without hesitation shouts, *"Fuck you, Sir!"* The Airborne General turns to the others and says, *"Gentlemen, now that took guts."*



The 3 Weeks of Jump School

Week 1

The men are separated from the boys.

Week 2

The men are separated from the fools.

Week 3

The fools jump!



Gen. Petraeus Admits Son Served Term in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON -- Challenged by a congressman to "be honest" about how long American troops might have to fight in Afghanistan, Army Gen. David Petraeus revealed that he has a personal stake in ensuring that the U.S. war objectives are met – his son, Stephen, whose recent combat tour was kept "very quiet."



Gen. Petraeus & son Stephen

In an emotional exchange with Rep. Walter B. Jones, a Republican, Petraeus said "if I ever felt that we couldn't achieve our objectives," he would be "very forthright" not only with his superiors in the military chain of command but also with President Barack Obama and members of the Congress.

Noting that Obama has said the U.S. will have combat troops out by the end of 2014, with the Afghan government in position to provide its own security, a skeptical Jones said he could imagine a senior military leader coming before Congress in 2015 and pleading for more time and more sacrifice.

"You know, 15, 16, 17 years, for God sakes, how much more can we take, how much more can we give treasure and blood?"

Jones asked

Petraeus replied: "I may not be at this table, probably won't be, in 2015, but I'll tell you that my son is in uniform, and Lieutenant Petraeus just completed a tour in Afghanistan, which thankfully we were able to keep very quiet, and left in November after serving as an infantry platoon leader. We're very proud of what he did. He thinks he was doing something very important."

His son, 2nd Lt. Stephen Petraeus, served in Afghanistan as a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team. AP

Reid S. Jaffe

Grants Coordinator
Bureau of Preparedness and Response

[Sent in by George "Scotty" Colson, HHC/B/2/503d]

VA Watchdog dot Org

Keeping an eye on the VA because somebody has to!

Scams and Fraud Committed by Patriots

By Tom Stoddert

Scams against veterans are so integrated in our society that we don't see them anymore. However, it's almost like having a target painted on your back. That bulls eye says, "I am available to: donate, buy, contribute to, to be given bullshit, to be lied to, to shed tears for you, give you my vote, and permission to screw up my claims to the VA." Very thick manuals could be written with a chapter on each type and the way they work.

A definition for SCAM could be anything that provides more "bang to the buck" to the person/group than promised to the veteran.

Today I opened an email that I had received from several other people warning about a very nice sounding veterans' group called Veteran Affairs Services. It seems this group collects your personal information and then steals your identity. How do they get your attention so that you give them your personal info? They tell you they are there to help you get benefits from the VA. Hell Yeah! Give me benefits and you have a patriotic name, so I don't need to think any further.

First of all, if you have a problem and think the VA may help, then get off your butt and check it out, at least on line. Jim Strickland has a great website (VAWatchDog.org) and guess what... you can trust him. This paper has great resources. The site www.va.gov is the source. Please note, if it does not have dot.gov, it's not the VA no matter what the name is. OR... just contact your state's department of veterans' affairs; they are in phone book and it's free.

Second, if you ever have had contact with the VA, even a home loan, they have all your info. You don't need to go beyond providing your last name and last four digits of your social security number, nothing more, to anyone. If it is the first time, you will need to fill out a VA form 21-526. Complete it out in your time and mail it in yourself. VA form 21-526, when filled out, will provide enough info for any crook to steal all your blood relatives' IDs.

(continued...)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / April 2011 – Issue 26

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If you are afraid of feeling guilty for not donating; then promise yourself to make out a check to the local USO when you get home. Many a GI and family have benefited from them at an airport.

I did check out a group that was brought to my attention. Most of their executive board members, besides lacking educational and professional credentials, appear not to have an IQ exceeding room temperature. I tried to contact a teacher from my home town who was listed on their web site who had some sort of business relationship with them. He never replied to me about them. They also send out thank you letters for previous donations you did not make. What's more, I noted that they were raising money for benefits duplicated by the VA.

Raising money for duplicated benefits? I have seen this too many times, even on TV, raising money for benefits already provided by the VA and/or the state. They will never specify exactly what they do with the money from your donated car, boat, or RV.

Contact any suspicious group and ask what the percentage of money received goes toward operating expenses. In other words, what percentage of your donation goes to reasonable working costs and not toward the CEO's Mercedes' payment?

The financial dangers that specialized patriotic financial planners put veterans and widows into is the subject of many media articles. A particular organization called the American Association for Wartime Veterans (AAWV), that I have discussed previously, has repeatedly assured me there is a paragraph in the VA's regulations that allows the AAWV to reposition a veteran's assets (ethically and safely) so to make veterans eligible for VA pension benefits. I can't find it and I am still waiting for them to send me that information. In the meantime I did find documentation that the VA is required to periodically check a beneficiary's financial standing if they are getting a pension benefit based on financial need.

To me the most frustrating fraud against veterans and the VA are coming from veterans. Remember that dud that always stood at the back of the formation and immediately left for sick-call every day, then you didn't see him or her till the evening meal? Guess-what? They are still out there and probably ahead of you in line at the VA Rating Board. They were untrustworthy then and



now the VA has them. They are significantly using up the VA's resources that could be used for you by filing bogus B/S claims for benefits. I brought this up because it is a major problem and it us who will have to police up this garbage.

Another example of bad veterans are what happened to two large chain stores in this area, who have been great supporters of veteran issues, but have now left the arena. They pumped some serious resources into the veteran community over the years. However. one was fooled by phonies collecting donations for homeless vets in Seattle. The other was conned, by a so-called Navy vet in a wheelchair, for donated sporting goods.

These scam artists steal our hard earned reputation and the resources for the benefits that were sacrificed for. They make us look bad and we are the only ones that can clean up their acts. Call them out to their face.

To close and sum it up, if you don't know them, don't work with them, no matter what they claim.

Source:

http://www.vawatchdogtoday.org/Scams_Fraud_Deceit.html

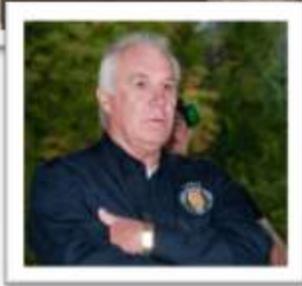
Thom is a writer at VAWatchdogToday dot Org. "The VAWatchdogToday dot Org site is keeping a close watch on all veterans charities and provides updated information about the ones you should avoid and the ones who make good use of your money."

[Reprinted with courtesy of <http://vawatchdogtoday.org>]



WHODAT?

Who is this 2/503d trooper who went on to become Chief of Police?



Hint: He was a "Chargin' Charlie".

No. He won't fix your speeding ticket when you drive too fast through Mount Weather, VA.

~ A MOTTO ~

I had the good fortune of serving as one of the RTO's in the Battalion Command Group under Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh & Sigholtz in '65/'66. In fact, Sigholtz was responsible for my 'best day' at war. But, Bob, if you can hear me, come on, Colonel, even National Car Rental's slogan was "Maybe we are better?" Ed 🙄



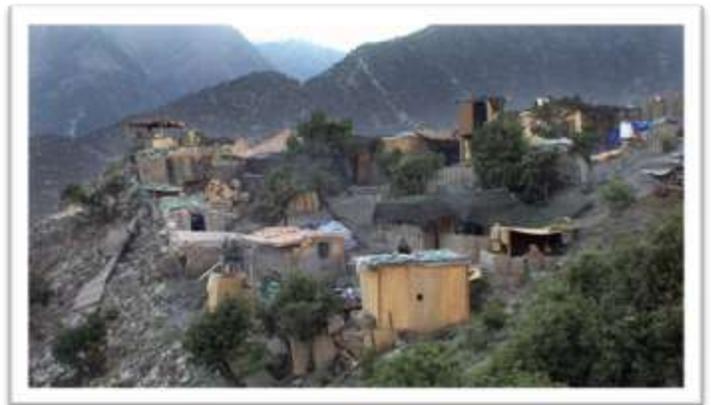
Restrepo Soldiers Motivate Trainees

March 17, 2011
Army News Service
by Vince Little

FORT BENNING, Ga. -- Two Soldiers from the platoon depicted in Restrepo delivered some motivation to a basic training unit in its fourth week on Sand Hill.

Staff Sgts. Elliott Alcantara and Teodoro Buno, who appeared in the Oscar-nominated documentary, spoke to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, during its Warrior Ethos class March 8. The basic trainees watched the 90-minute film and then took part in a question-and-answer session about the importance of camaraderie and what they can expect to see in war zones. The two men also discussed the hardships and impact a separation can have on relationships back home.

Restrepo chronicles the deployment of Vicenza, Italy-based 2nd Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), in northeast Afghanistan's rugged Korengal Valley between May 2007 and August 2008. The movie focuses on a remote 15-man outpost called Restrepo, named after a platoon medic who was killed in action. It was considered among the most dangerous postings in the U.S. military.



Outpost Restrepo

"My strength has now been reduced to the equivalent of 36 squadrons...we should be able to carry on the war single-handed for some time if not indefinitely."

Sir Hugh Dowding - RAF Fighter Command - May 1940

Really.



The following, entitled "Give Hero His Freedom", was sent to the editor of *ArmyTimes* (photo added):



GIVE HERO HIS FREEDOM

Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta has given more than enough for his country, so why can't we let him begin a new life for himself? During the All-American Army Bowl, I got to hang out with my old battle buddy for just a handful of minutes because he was constantly being whisked away to shake hands with higher-ups, wave to crowds, and speak at events.

His day is planned for him hour by hour with a full escort and protection detail, and when he gets "free time," you can bet his detail is in the next room standing by.

Staff Sgt. Giunta just wants time with his family, something he has not been truly free to do since he received the Medal of Honor. So why can't we respect his decision and let him do so? Why do we have to make a stink about it in the papers and still ask for more of him?

When he and I were catching up and talking away from gazing eyes and cameras, he looked exhausted, yet he still puts on a smile, stands up straight and soldiers on when the eyes are back on him.

We can at least let him begin his life anew without bellyache and grief of national attention, but as a thankful nation.

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah L. Minor
Cincinnati

SSG Minor: I can't speak for all of us with the 2/503d or 173d, but after talking with a number of our buddies, I can speak for some. We agree with you completely. Ed

VFW Against TRICARE Increase Plans

The Department of Defense announced plans to offset Tricare medical program expenses.

WASHINGTON (February 16, 2011) — In the rollout of their fiscal year 2012 budget submission, the Department of Defense on Monday announced plans to offset huge Tricare medical program expenses by increasing the annual enrollment fees paid by working-age military retirees — first by 13 percent, then by linking future increases to double-digit medical inflation. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is against both plans.

VFW National Commander Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore., believes tying future increases to medical inflation is an escalator clause that will raise Tricare premiums so high that retirees will disenroll and look elsewhere for coverage.

"Asking someone to voluntarily give up 20 or more years of their youth on the simple promise of a pension and lifelong medical care for themselves and their spouses is a cost this nation and our government should be more than willing to bear," he said. "Any changes to how military retirees are treated will send an ominous signal to hundreds of thousands of servicemen and women who may be contemplating military careers." ###



GEAR PROBLEM

AS THE BOMBER SKIDDED DOWN THE RUNWAY, THE
CONTROL TOWER ASKED IF THEY NEEDED ANY ASSISTANCE
FROM THE PLANE CAME A LACONIC SOUTHERN VOICE:
DUNNO - WE AIN'T DONE CRASHIN' YET





The Tank Pilot

By Jim Wilcox
"A" Battery, 462nd

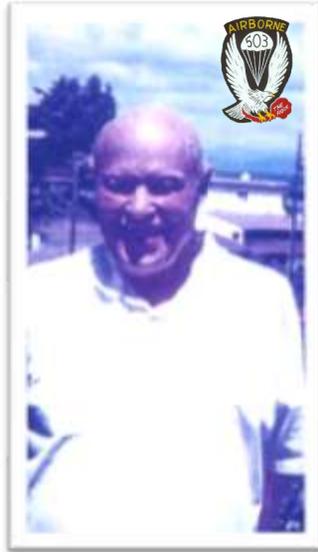
"A" Battery of the 462 Parachute F.A. Battery was assigned with its four guns to aid the infantry companies of the 503rd parachute Infantry Regiment in taking or neutralizing the Monkey Point ammo dump on Corregidor which had remained a nuisance with a very large coterie of Japanese troops inside.

A Sherman tank had been requested from the army soldiers at Bottom Side and was in place when the pack howitzers had been positioned. The tanks' objective was to blow the doors off the entrance to the dump.

The infantrymen ringed the door, standing on the earthen structure which surrounded the doorway of the dump. There were at least 100 infantry ready to take care of whatever number of enemy soldiers might try to exit the dump when the door was blown.

Since the artillery was on standby, there was no immediate need to man the artillery pieces. In the meantime, about 200 yards from the door of the dump, there was a cliff about 50' above the beach where a good view could be had of the beach in the direction of Hooker Point. The beach itself was narrow and in the cliff face the Nips had dug out rooms to accommodate their boats loaded with explosives for Kamikaze attacks on shipping.

I hoped that perhaps I could luck out and see any unfriendlies, and I wanted to see as far as possible. It was a personal battle to stick my head as far out as I could without falling off the cliff. My Tommy gun was slung around my neck by its strap, hanging under my chest while both hands were keeping me from going



Trooper Jim

over – at that very instant the ammo dump at Monkey Point exploded. What I thought was that the island had suffered an earthquake and, having already been in one, I knew to back-up fast because the cliff was falling. I rapidly back-peddled on hands and knees until encountering shelter from the falling rocks from the explosion.

This was an absolute miracle from my personal experience. The shelter was a reinforced concrete locale with four concrete legs supporting a 8'x8' or 10'x10' table top, and the legs were 8" to 12" square, and stood 4' to 5' off the ground.

The air was so thick with dust and debris when I got out from under that place, both my weapons were inoperable, and while these pieces of debris were hitting the top of it, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

When all the rocks stopped falling, we got out to look around and it was dreadful. All those G.I.s who had been standing circling the dump were either blown to pieces or were in dire need of medical attention. I went to my gun and found that Lawrence Brayton and Duane Larson had been killed by falling boulders.



The explosion.

That scene will remain with me forever – so many dreadfully wounded – the medics doing their best – people dying – people dead, total mayhem.

(continued...)



Monkey Point explosion: “The main explosion was followed immediately by four smaller ones. The 1st Battalion was completely knocked out as a fighting unit.”
Bill Calhoun/503rd [503rd PRCT Heritage Bn Archive Index]



The aftermath.

My Battery Commander, Capt. Fred Pope, pointed to a jeep nearby and instructed me to take it down to Bottom Side and bring back a trailer load of blood plasma. The jeep had a trailer which had been full of TNT, and the rocks ripped it all to pieces but it didn't go, which was a blessing. So, unhitching the trailer I made it down and got the plasma.

A noteworthy observation; at a turn near the beach the road went through a turn in a small gully and, evidently, the tank climbing up there to the top went through a 3' tick pile of dead Japanese.

The road was lined with mines which had not yet been detonated or removed – they were made of plywood. The only time in my US Army service that I drove a motor vehicle.

Junk from the explosion hit a Naval vessel ½ mile away. The Sherman tank was blown backwards. Whether the tank blew-up the dump, or if the Japanese soldiers inside were the cause, may never be known.

A few days later we were treated to another explosion. Since the Monkey Point affair was about the end of Corregidor operations, the 503rd had begun collecting into a spot near the 'Longest Barracks in the World.' All munitions on the island, including the howitzers, had been gathered up and placed together there. The first gun was from the dump, the other eleven guns stretched in a loose curve 100 yards away and up a slope.

Early in the p.m., a phosphorous grenade in the pile exploded for no apparent reason, but fraught with possibilities.

Sometime later some small arms ammo started sporadically banging away – next comes a bazooka

missile skittering across the parade grounds. The dump was about the size of a railroad car, and some of us started thinking perhaps this would be an appropriate time to at least retire to where the terrain started to tilt back about 50 to 75 feet.

We could still keep our eyes on what was moving about and duck down behind the brow of the descending slope if the dump cared to 'big bang' it. We hadn't retired to our 'safety first' position for 15 minutes before it went. It meant little to us because we'd seen all this before.

In the convoy on the way to Leyte, I saw a Kamikaze hit the upper forward set of guns on a heavy cruiser and later read it killed about 40 sailors on that ship. It looked like an egg splashing against the Great Wall of China.

When we left Leyte and landed on Mindoro, the Japs were sincerely pissed. The airplanes bombed and naval vessels shelled the island that first night. We were dug in on the beach prepared to repel a threatened landing but instead of a landing we received a 500 pound bomb within 100 feet of our howitzer. Never before or afterwards were we so heavily jarred by an explosion. The ground came up and *Ker Wham!* The hole was about 4 feet in diameter and 15 feet deep.



“Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa dove his aircraft into the *USS Bunker Hill* (above) during a *Kamikaze* attack on May 11, 1945. 389 sailors were killed or missing from a crew of 2600.”

A week or ten days later a Kamikaze dove into a munitions ship fully loaded with bombs slated to be dropped by bombers. This went up as 1 firecracker, no small beginning, just *boom!* It was so big it produced a mushroom cloud and a mammoth sound.

There were sailors waiting there who were fished out of the water after the explosion and who then swore that they would leave that place by airplane only or live there forever. ###

