



May 2011, Issue 27

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

See all issues to date at either of these web sites:

www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php or http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 173d Photo of the Month ~



“In this Jan. 1, 1966 file photo, women and children crouch in a muddy canal as they take cover from intense Viet Cong fire at Bao Trai, about 20 miles west of Saigon, Vietnam.” (AP Photo and inscription/Horst Faas) Note: It’s more likely this photo was taken on 2 January 1966, of either the 1/503d or 2/503d as the two battalions didn’t move into the rice paddies until that date during Operation Marauder. 2/503d assaulted LZ Wine, a hot landing zone – see Issue 10, Pages 27-35 for story.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

On The Path of Wisdom, Kindness and Care

Dear Sky Soldiers,
Families, and Friends of
the 173d Airborne Brigade:



The Leapin' Deacon

Psalm: 86:11-15

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.
For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.
But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

When we pray, we need to make sure that we earnestly resign our Command, our attitude that we are in charge. When we pray, we no longer give orders, outline policies, nor prescribe courses of actions or avenues of approach. Our blessed Lord is in charge and carries out His missions and purposes as He wills through us, His followers, and yes, His faithful 21st Century Disciplined Disciples. We can, indeed, declare our deep desires, wishes and hopes, but we wait upon the command of ANOTHER.

We, the 2/503d Sky Soldiers are deeply challenged and caring servants of God and Country as we wholeheartedly serve all of our Troops of all ages and ranks, and Veterans from past and present service and combat. We have revealed to us in Holy Scriptures and tradition that we are not the good, but thanks be to God, the forgiven by His Holy and Saving Work.

As we thrust our lives and persons into new and fresh beginnings, we confidently surround one another in prayer with the Spirit of Hope and forgiveness, fresh attitudes of meaningful cooperation, and life-giving assistance to the caring enterprises of the Herd and family.

A living legend, Nelson Mandela, in the recent past, celebrated his 90th birthday. This tremendous person is a vibrant witness of forgiveness, humility, and setting aside the poison of hatred. He spent nearly one-third of his long life in a brutal prison for incitement against apartheid, along with the charge of treason. He, correctly, and by God's Grace, hung in there – knowing he was a bearer of the news of freedom for all people. In 1994, Mandela became South Africa's first black president and, most important, its first democratically elected president and world leader with a convincing attitude and spirit of forgiveness, humility and wisdom. Let us have the same wisdom, attitude, and action as we pray for all

Sky Soldiers and families and all Patriots.

Let us Pray:

Lord God, we, this very hour are experiencing new and fresh beginnings. May our hearts respond to your victorious leadings – your kind of forgiving life, your kind of caring attitude and behavior, and your kind of ways and truths. May we move firmly down the paths of wisdom, kindness and care. Bless us in our vital and vast mission of care for our Combat Warriors, Wounded Warriors, Veterans, and families.

In the Name of our Kind Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, and the Giver of Peace, the Holy Spirit. AMEN



Chaplain Conrad (Connie) Walker
"The Leapin' Deacon"
National Chaplain Emeritus
173d Airborne Association and
Military Order of the Purple Heart



The Leapin' Deacon in Vietnam doing what he does best.



Preface to *The Leapin' Deacon*

**Dateline: Jungles near Xuan Loc, Vietnam
29 June 1966**

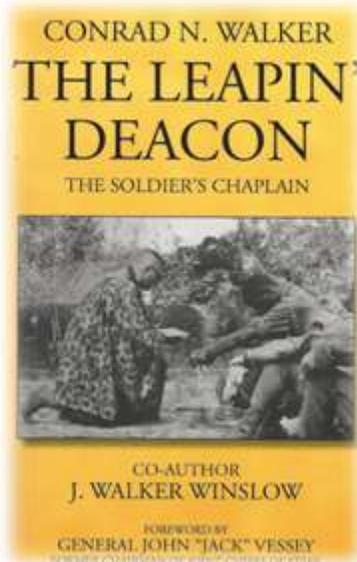
By Charlie Morris, A/2/503d

“As the relief force entered our area, Chaplain Connie Walker was the first man to reach me. I was in tears; I had lost some of the best fighting men in the world. Many of my boys, I knew, would never fight for their country again. I tried to show the chaplain the most severely wounded, but he realized our state of mind and immediately had prayer with me, then went to every man. While praying with PFC

William Marshall of Detroit, he noticed that the young soldier was bleeding heavily above the tourniquet on his arm, which has been blown off below the elbow.

Chaplain Walker used part of his own clothing and quickly applied another tourniquet high on the arm and stopped the bleeding.

After rendering spiritual aid, the chaplain started chopping trees to try and clear an LZ for the evacuation of the wounded and dead. I've never seen a man in my life work as hard as he did. The chaplain is a 'mighty big man'. He seemed to be a tower of strength. Every time that my vision cleared so that I could see, I saw him working like a buzz saw. He even held huge trees as they were being chopped down, using a 'bear hug' and moved them to avoid hitting our wounded comrades. I could never express the respect and appreciation Chaplain Walker won that bloody day.” Charlie Morris



**SSGT Charles B. Morris
Medal of Honor Recipient**

Chaplain Walker's book is available from LangMarc Publishing www.langmarc.com

"A HANDFUL OF SILK AND GOD"

Anonymous 462d Trooper, 503rd PRCT WWII



**Sobbing low, bucking high,
Motors thunder through the sky:
Prop blasts over strut and wing,
Maddened demons, howl and sing:
And out of this we are going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**Small red light gleams at the door
Throwing blood-red pools on metal floor.
Beyond is space, vast and deep:
Awoke you screaming, once, from sleep.
And out of this you're going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**A match is struck to a cigarette:
Grim young faces in silhouette:
No figment of a fear-struck brain--
These, the shadows that line the plane--
They too into void are going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**They too hold fear, bridled tight,
Fighting fear with fear of fright:
Facing the job, the task at hand,
Grimly determined, indomitable band.
Soon into space we're going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**But our hearts beat high for the land we love,
And our courage comes from the sky above.
When down from the clouds with our Weapons
of hell**

**We'll avenge the comrades we loved so well.
What more shall we need when we get the call
BUT A HANDFUL OF SILK AND GOD--
that's all?**

Source: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion Web Site



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / May 2011 – Issue 27

Page 3 of 40



Letter from a 503rd Trooper

It was an honor to receive this letter recently from trooper Jim Mullaney of the 503rd PRCT, WWII. Jim kindly gave us permission to share his note with you. This letter and his letter on the following page tells us everything we need to know about this man, this paratrooper, this brother. *Airborne, All The Way, Jim!*

Smitty:

Thanks for your recent letter and your writing in the 173d Newsletters. All are enjoyed very much. Always good hearing from and about paratroopers.



Trooper Jim

Tony Geishauer (Cowboys) and Jerry Hassler (Recon 2/503d) sent very interesting notes on Veteran's Day. Your letter and theirs make us ancient guys realize how things haven't changed very much since the 1940s. The people who are Paratroopers – regardless if they were WWII, Korea or Nam, or the present day are the same types. Just great Americans and great soldiers.

Reminds me of an incident at Fort Bragg in June of 1942.

Lord Louis Mountbatten came from Britain to see us jump. Afterwards he inspected the troops and asked one of the "H" men if he liked being a paratrooper. The man answered, "No Sir."

Lord Mountbatten stated that he understood the entire unit was made up of volunteers and he wondered why the soldier was in the unit if he didn't like it.

"Sir," the trooper said, "I'm going into combat soon and I want to be with men who do like to be paratroopers."



Lord Mountbatten moved on with a smile on his face.

Like I said – paratroopers are the same breed even after sixty plus years.

Thanks again for writing, and my door is open if you ever get near Louisville. Perhaps we'll meet someday.

**Jim Mullaney
503rd PRCT, WWII**



The following letter from Jim is reprinted here with courtesy of Jim and the 503rd PRCT Heritage Bn web site.



"I, mistakenly, surmised that as the years passed these memories would fade into oblivion as so many others have, but this event seems to be indelible."

THE LETTER

BY JAMES M. MULLANEY

July 12, 1995

Royal and Darlyne Jaynes
16061 Best Lane
Eugene, Oregon 97401

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jaynes,

This letter is something I've intended to write for many years but could never quite get around to putting it all in perspective. Secondly, I'm a procrastinator. Thirdly, I was and am in doubt as to whom I should address this unusual but true story.

I don't want my note to dwell on personal war experiences any more than is necessary to present accurately what took place on Corregidor Island in February 1945.

On February 16th of that year the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team made a parachute drop onto Corregidor at 08:45. I was a member of this unit and jumped with the first wave. We landed on "Topside" where the barracks, the golf course, theatre, and officers' quarters were located. Prior to the assault we were informed there would be about nine hundred Japanese on the island. It didn't take long to realize that there were at least five to six thousand. About eight hundred paratroopers made the 08:45 drop. The next drop was scheduled four hours later.

I suppose in modern day military parlance this could be described as a fluid situation. At any rate that is what this writer was doing on Corregidor.

After eight days of heavy fighting on the tiny island (about three and a half miles long and a half mile wide at Topside to a few yards wide at the tail end) we finally moved around Malinta Hill and advanced toward the overgrown air strip called Kindley Field. It was at Kindley Field where my story took place.

We had captured the strip and were conducting patrols to clear out the caves and tunnels just west of there near Cavalry Point. In our earlier briefings we were informed that this is where the Japs had landed in April 1942 during their assault on the fortress that led to General

Wainwright's surrender. As we moved through the tall weeds cautiously toward the bay we discovered many skeletons - I remember fifteen or twenty - all Japanese.

The enemy had not taken the trouble to bury their dead. Just left them there to rot in the tropic heat or make a few good meals for the ubiquitous rats. These bodies laid in a semi circle. I found one body facing the others in the semi circle from a distance of about twenty feet. It was an American...

The uniform he wore had weathered the tropics much better than his body. The shoes and leggings were still in place around bones. The pants were frayed and brittle but still covered the backside and lower spine. The wool shirt was torn. His helmet (World War One type) was cocked over his skull and cheek bones. He had all his teeth and the helmet strap gripped them lightly. He was in a prone position.

His .03 rifle was under his right arm bones with the forefinger bone of the right hand inside the trigger guard. There was no ammo in the rifle or nearby.

I imagined for a moment how he had fought to the end. It was obvious that this brave man had killed many of the enemy and battled courageously in a hopeless situation. With due respect I gently moved the helmet strap and looked at his dog tags.

His name was Skelton. I couldn't be sure of the first name but it looked like "John". His home town was Eugene, Oregon.

I've often thought that I should write to the mayor, if Eugene has one, or some official about this incident but then I was worried that these details would possibly hurt his family or friends. I, mistakenly, surmised that as the years passed these memories would fade into oblivion as so many others have, but this event seems to be indelible.

As I write to you people I am hoping that "John" Skelton can in some way be remembered in your thoughts and prayers. If any of his family or friends can be located let them know what a soldier he was. Show them this correspondence and tell them that here in Louisville, Kentucky is one person who never met John Skelton but will never forget him.....



James M. Mullaney
503rd PRCT, WWII



Silver Staples Upon His Chest...

A good story about education....

Hank, a former Non-Commissioned Officer (Sergeant), having served his time with the Army 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) as a Scuba Team Sergeant, took a new job as a school teacher. Just before the school year started he injured his back and was required to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body; fortunately, the cast fit under his shirt and wasn't noticeable.

On the first day of class, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in the school. The smart-alecky punks, having already heard the new teacher was a former Green Beret warrior, were leery of him and decided to see how tough he really was, before trying any pranks.

Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, the new teacher opened the window wide and sat down at his desk. When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he picked up a stapler and promptly stapled the tie to his chest.

Dead silence He had no trouble with discipline that year.

[Sent in by James Shifler, 3/319th]



~ On Being A LRRP ~ Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol

By Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRPs

LRRP was a very different experience than the batts. You faced being shot at on a semi-daily basis as you note. We'd be out for 3 or 4 days and then back for two and were never in battles that lasted for days. We were more in control of what was happening since five very frightened folks can move very, very quietly (much like migrating cockroaches) and spot the other guys without being spotted. I think we saw VC and NVA about half the patrols we went on without being spotted. We'd report in what we had seen and moved on.

We spotted five different groups in one day of up to half company size - and then the bastards decided to RON within 50 meters or less so that we were within their

security perimeter. It got interesting and I did have dreams about that for years - as did everyone else but by the time things started happening we had 5 gunships and four F-100s on station.

Four months later we did have a "meeting engagement" when they were waiting for us on the LZ (we had been spotted earlier in the day by two RPD gunners) but this RPD gunner was asleep when our point man, Mannie Moya, was nearly run over by 3 guys on bikes (2 or 3 km from Cambodia). Mannie was damned near drilled by the MG at 15 meters as was Bumgardner. We took out the three and the MG and his right security and then ran like rabbits.

We had reported finding a probable occupied battalion level base camp and we had a battalion of 105s covering our exfiltration (which turned out to be 2 km away from where it was planned) -- we kept hearing folks working, laughing and joking etc. It later turned out that we had probably been wandering about a regimental base camp since the 25th got into a huge fight at almost the same coordinates three days later (Alexander Haig was battalion commander and got a DSC for it).

Yep, thought about that for years and these were the main emotional things in my life until I got married and had kids.

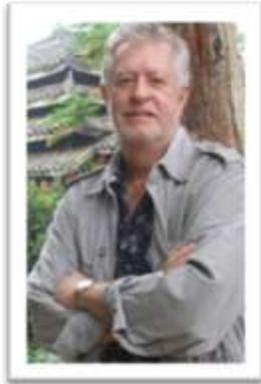


LRRPs from left: Ray Hill, Reed Cundiff, Roger Bumbardner, Mannie Moya & Bruce Baughn
Can't see their faces? They're LRRP's!



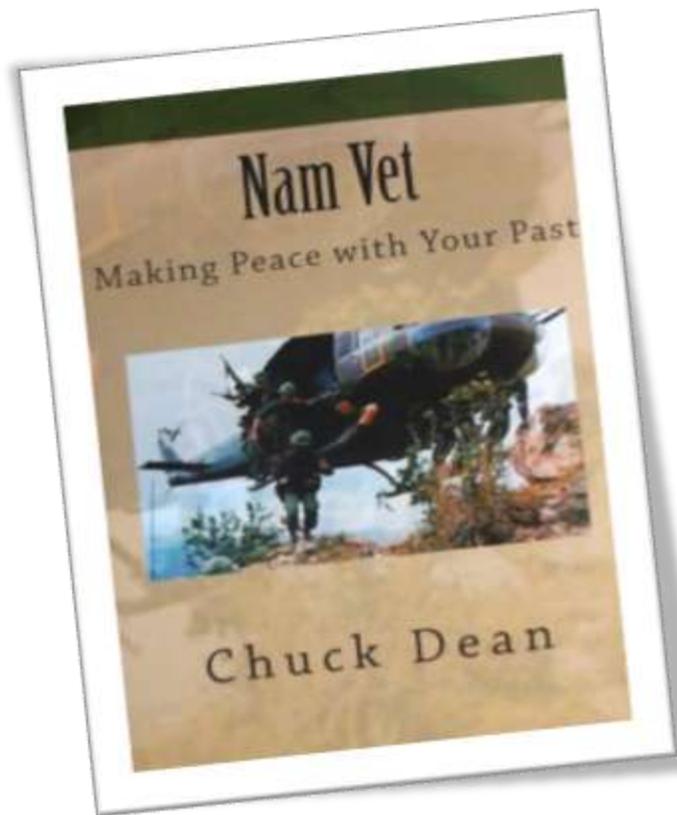
Sky Soldier Continues His Mission Of Helping Vets And Their Families

Chuck Dean is a combat veteran of the Vietnam War. He was one of the first paratroopers to be deployed in 1965. After his wartime service he spent two years as a Drill Instructor at Ft. Ord, California. Chuck has worked with thousands of soldiers and veterans in the U.S. and across the globe--including Russia, Italy, Canada and France. Chuck also served as the National Chaplain for the 173d Association (1996-2004).



Chuck

His mission has always been to help other veterans find positive solutions to the many challenges of transitioning home after wartime service.



In the Spring of 2004, Chuck was invited by the U.S. Army to assist the paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade in their re-adjustment after combat in Iraq. His focus while at their re-deployment base camp in Vicenza, Italy, was to help the troops re-integrate with their loved ones, and re-adjust to peacetime conditions after prolonged combat exposure in Northern Iraq. The 173d is the same unit Chuck served with as a young paratrooper in Vietnam.



He continues to write and live in Seattle, Washington, and is the author of several books on recovery issues, including his best-selling *"Nam Vet: Making Peace with Your Past"*. More than 250,000 copies of a recent book written for the modern warriors, *"Down Range: To Iraq and Back"* has been distributed to the military both at home and in the war zones. *"After Ashcroft"* and the sequel *"The Second Crow,"* are his latest works of fiction and can be found on www.amazon.com.

Note: Years ago when trying to make sense out of my little participation in our war while struggling with the onset of PTSD, I happened to come across a copy of Chuck's *Nam Vet*. More than any book or anything I ever read about the illness and coping with it, his book helped me better understand the illness, and me. Can't recommend it enough. Ed



Hallowed Ground At An Old Beach Hotel

One of my VA counselors had been a NCO in 1st Cav. When I told him that I had been in the 173d he rolled his eyes and said that he had been in charge of part of a quick reaction force whose purpose was to assist units that got into actions heavier than they could handle. He said that whenever they got a call to assist the Herd they knew they were going into a hornet's nest.

I know this is going to sound silly but I'll risk the label of being a silly old man: My first reunion was in Cocoa Beach at a place called The Wakulla Suites. We had a second floor room and from time to time I would go out onto the balcony overlooking the pool area where most everyone had congregated and just watch.

I realized that what I was looking at was a collection of men who had endured some of the most hellish fighting of any war. It was a collection of individual episodes of heroism -- concentrated, selfless heroism in the flesh. It was awesome, and that place for the time we were there seemed like hallowed ground to me because of their presence.

My uncle was at Normandy on D-Day and lives in Melbourne, Florida. He came to the reunion and we had a few drinks together. I was very pleased to have him see me in such company. It was one of those proud moments.

Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d, '65/'66



Three commo guys in Cocoa Beach.
L-R: Hooch buddies Jim Bethea, Lew Smith & Wayne Hoitt together again after 40 years.



Sky Soldiers and Sky Soldierettes at reunion in FL.



Louie Zucco, 'Herman the Paratrooper', and Ed Perkins at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL.

Third 2/503 Reunion In The Works? "Blast on the Beach"

Semi-serious discussions are underway by Don "Rocky" Rockholt (A/2/503d), the editor of our newsletter, and the Elia P. Fontecchio VFW Memorial Post 10148 to hold a third 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL. We've tentatively agreed to a date sometime in October 2012. As we did twice before, the reunion will be replete with fun activities for Sky Soldiers and their family and friends, and while chiefly a 2/503 affair, open to troopers from all 173d units and WWII 503rd troopers. Skip Kniley (3/319th) and his jumping fools will likely be on-hand for yet another blast onto the beach. Look for details in upcoming issues of our newsletter. Ed



Rocky, winning hearts & minds of the local villagers in Cocoa Beach, FL. If Skip lets him, Don will jump too.



Chaplain Lawrence Anthony "Larry" Kelly, Jr., Colonel

NEWBERRY, SC - Chaplain Colonel Lawrence "Larry" Anthony Kelly, Jr., 78, of Newberry died Saturday, March 26, 2011 at Dorn VA Medical Center. Chaplain Colonel Kelly was born in Charleston on December 23, 1932, the son of the late Lawrence Anthony, Sr. and Emma Styles Kelly.



He was a life-long student, always reading and always learning. Chaplain Colonel Kelly received an undergraduate degree from Coker College, an MBA from the University of South Carolina, and a Masters of Divinity from Duke University. He had been a member of the SC Methodist Conference since 1960.

Chaplain Colonel Kelly retired after 31 years with the United States Military. He first enlisted in the US Navy where he served for four years, including a tour in the Korean Conflict. His remaining military career he served in the US Army, including two tours in Vietnam. He received Combat Jump Wings while serving as Chaplain with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. His last post was at Fort Jackson, SC until his retirement in 1995. Among his numerous military medals and awards are the Legion of Merit medal with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star with Valor, the Purple Heart and the Meritorious Service medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. In 1991, he was presented the State of South Carolina Order of the Palmetto.

He spent most of his retirement with his family and loved building furniture, woodworking, and gardening. He was a member of Central United Methodist Church.

Chaplain Colonel Kelly is survived by his wife, Joyce Dennis Kelly of Newberry; children, Lawrence A. (Kitty) Kelly, III of Columbus, GA; Kathleen Kelly and Mary Anne K. Glass, both of Newberry, and Patricia K. (Bryan) Dowd of Gaston; sisters, Cile K. (Bob) Barber of Newberry, Dorothy K. (Furman) McKnight of Charleston, Patricia Kelly of Newberry, and Ann (Robert) Smith and Barbara Britz, both of Charleston; grandchildren, Larry, Michael, Johnny, Adam, Katie, Matthew, Robert, Joshua, Christian, Patrick, Rachel, and Liam; 8 great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Memorials may be made the American Heart Association Mid Atlantic Affiliate, P.O. Box 5216, Glen Allen, PA 23058-5216; or to the American Cancer Society, c/o Helen Beebe, 181 Trailers Trail, Leesville, SC 29070. On line condolences may be sent to the family at www.whitakerfuneralhome.com.

Rest well with your Maker, Chaplain Kelly.



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



*"Where there is one brave man, in
the thickest of the fight, there is the
Post of Honor."*

~ Thoreau



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / May 2011 – Issue 27

Page 9 of 40





173d REUNION ITINERARY

(Tentative, subject to change)



June 22 -- Wednesday

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



June 23 -- Thursday

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



June 24 -- Friday

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

June 25 -- Saturday

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

BANQUET DINNER

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

Maverick Plaza

June 26 -- Sunday

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



The Alamo

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





173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

~ REUNION 2011 ~

22 June – 26 June 2011, San Antonio, TX

Hosted by Texas Chapter 13



Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Unit served with in the Brigade _____ Dates served _____

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

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

Guests:

Circle Male or Female and Shirt Size for each guest

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

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

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

Registration/ Event Fees

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



Hilton Palacio del Rio, San Antonio, Texas

\$ _____ Total Enclosed



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

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

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

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

Register online: www.texasksoldier.org/reunion2011



~ The Pentagon Papers ~

(Excerpts)

173d Airborne Slated for Da Nang

2 Mar 65 DOD

“ASD (ISA) McNaughton cabled Taylor that the 173d Airborne Brigade (then on Okinawa) would be deployed to Da Nang instead of the Marines. (This last minute change may have been Mr. McNaughton's attempt to emphasize the limited, temporary nature of the U.S. troop deployment and to reduce the conspicuousness of the U.S. presence. Airborne troops carry less equipment and look less formidable than the Marines plus they have no history of peace-keeping intervention in foreign wars).”



MG Maxwell Taylor

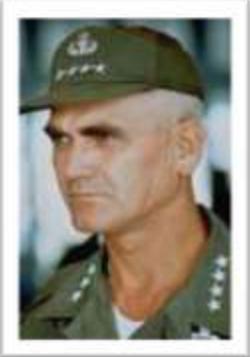
No choice but to reinforce with additional US/3d country forces as rapidly as possible. Westmoreland asked that all forces then in the planning stages be approved for deployment, plus he identified more forces (9 maneuver battalions in a division (-) and one MEB) which might be required later and for which planning should begin. He asked that the 173d be held in SVN until the Airmobile Division was operational.



McNamara (L) and John T. McNaughton. (DOD photo)

7 June 65 MACV 1911/ 07033 5Z

“Westmoreland told CINCPAC that a summer offensive was underway to destroy GVN forces and isolate and attack district and province towns. The enemy had yet to realize his full potential, and RVNAF's capability to cope was in grave doubt. RVNAF build-up was halted because of recent losses.



Gen. Westmoreland

5. Eleventh Hour Change

One final obstacle to the Marine deployment was raised when Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton cabled the Ambassador in Saigon on 2 March stating that the 173rd Airborne Brigade, then stationed on Okinawa, would be substituted for the Marines. Other than exchange of cables, there is no documentary evidence in the files to indicate what might have been the rationale behind the belated attempt to deploy the 173rd Airborne to Da Nang in place of the Marines. One can only surmise the reasons behind such a move, but certain characteristics of the two forces may provide a clue.

The Marines present *prima facie* a more formidable appearance upon arrival on the scene. They have organized a complement of heavy weapons, amphibious vehicles, and various other items of weighty hardware, including tanks, in contrast to the smaller and lighter airborne. Together with their accompanying armada of ships, the Marines might be seen as a more permanent force than the airborne. This, coupled with the common knowledge that the Marines have a long history of interventions in foreign countries for purposes of peacekeeping and stability, might have influenced someone in the decision apparatus to consider using the airborne in their stead as a positive signal that the Da Nang deployment was to be of short duration.

(continued...)



2/503 ANTI-TANK "ENTAC" PLATOON

1964. Sky Soldiers ready to go....anywhere.



If this was indeed the case, it suggests that there were still high-ranking people in Washington who were hoping to make the deployment of U.S. troops temporary and limited.

General Westmoreland objected to the proposed change on the grounds that the Marines were more self-sustaining and the Ambassador agreed with him.



CINCPAC Headquarters

CINCPAC, in objecting to the proposed change, sent the following telegram to the JCS:

The action outlined in Ref A, which would place the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a two-battalion brigade, at Da Nang, embodies several features which are undesirable. A light and flexible airborne force would be committed to a fixed task depriving CINCPAC of his air mobile reserve. It is the only airborne assault force in the theater. A comprehensive array of plans and logistic preparations which affect many of our forces, and the forces of other countries, would be undermined. The action would employ units which are less adequately constituted for the purpose.

Since the origination of OPLAN 32 in 1959, the Marines have been scheduled for deployment to Da Nang. Seven CINCPAC and SEATO contingency plans and a myriad of supporting plans at lower echelons reflect this same deployment. As a result, there has been extensive planning, reconnaissance, and logistics preparation over the years. The CG, 9th MEB is presently in Da Nang finalizing the details of landing the MEB forces in such a way as to cause minimum impact on the civilian populace. The forces are present and ready to land, some now embarked, with plans for execution complete. The deployment has been thoroughly explored by Amb Taylor with Prime Minister Quat and the method in which the Marines would be introduced was mutually agreed upon as pointed out in Ref B (not included).



PM Quat

Another practical consideration is the fact that 1300 Marines are already at Da Nang. The Marines have been there in varying numbers for more than two years and thus have long since established the logistics and administrative base for future Marine deployments. They have a long standing and effective local relationship with the populace and the RVNAF. Then,

there is the matter of adaptability for the task. Da Nang is on the sea coast. Each Marine BLT has its own amphibian vehicles, which are adaptable to continuing seaborne supply. Each one has a trained shore party to insure the flow of material across the beach in an area where port facilities are marginal. They embody amphibious bulk fuel systems which serve as a cardinal stand-by in case of interruption of commercial fuel supply. Their communications equipment and procedures are compatible with the hawks, helicopters and other Marine formations now in Da Nang and their organic heavy engineer equipment will be effective in developing the defensive works needed for accomplishing the task. The Marine MEB includes tanks and artillery. The airborne battalions, on the other hand, being designed for a different task, are deficient in each of these important particulars-in varying degrees-and are thus less desirable for the assignment.

The situation in Southeast Asia has now reached a point where the soundness of our contingency planning may be about to be tested. The tasking has been completed. Logistic arrangements and lines of communication are establishing and operating. Command arrangements have been made and agreed upon and plans for landing and disposition of forces ashore have been made and these forces are ready to execute them. It therefore seems imprudent, at this time, to shift forces in a major sector and to force changes in contingency posture for other parts of Southeast Asia.

Whatever force is landed, its strength should be adequate for the job. The airborne force, if selected, would require substantial and diverse augmentation to achieve the desired combat capability.

If the final decision is to deploy and [sic] Army Brigade instead of the MEB to Da Nang, then I would recommend a one Brigade Task Force of the 25th Infantry Division. This would provide a ground combat capability reasonably similar to the ground elements of the MEB. The command and control elements and the initial light infantry elements of this task force could be airlifted to provide some early security at Da Nang. Achievement of a more adequate capability similar to the MEB would require air and sealift from Hawaii and CONUS augmentation of some support units for the task force. The DAFFD should not be used since it is an essential element of other contingency plans.



I recommend that the MEB be landed at Da Nang as previously planned.”

(continued....)



F. ANALYSIS

This paper has raised basically two analytical questions. First, what was the significance of the landing of the two Marine battalions rather than other units, such as the 173rd Airborne? Second, what was the mix of objectives behind the deployment, and did the deployment meet these objectives?

The significance of putting the Marines into Da Nang turns on whether this deployment was intended or was viewed (1) as the first elements in a phased build-up of U.S. ground combat forces, or (2) as a one-shot response to a peculiar security need at Da Nang. There is evidence for both propositions.

There are two pieces of evidence in support of the phased build-up proposition. First, no less than seven CINCPAC contingency plans treated Da Nang as a base for U.S. Marine Corps activity, and at least two of those plans provided for major Marine ground forces in the I Corps tactical zone of South Vietnam. Except for Phase II of OPLAN 32-64, however, contingency plan build-ups of force were predicated on overt DRV or Chinese Communist action. At the time of the initial landings, such overt action was anticipated in the OPLAN but had not yet occurred. It was a fact, on the other hand, that some sort of action was needed in the South to halt the course of the insurgency there, and that two Marine BLT's would not do the trick.



The second piece of evidence was the last minute attempt by Ass't Secretary of Defense McNaughton to substitute the 173rd Airborne for the Marines, and CINCPAC's strong reaction against this attempt. The only apparent rationale for the McNaughton move is as a blocking measure against expected pressures for further build-ups as embodied in the contingency plans. The substitution would have created planning tangles for the Chiefs and CINCPAC and, therefore, would have

delayed pressures for further deployment pending the development of new plans. CINCPAC's vigorous response, based on administrative and logistic arguments, coupled with concern for the loss of an airmobile reserve force, persuaded Washington and thwarted the McNaughton effort. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that McNaughton, at least on the record, did not receive any support for his attempt. Conceivably, Ambassador Taylor, who had expressed serious reservations about the implications of the ground force deployment, could have joined forces with McNaughton. Taylor's failure to do so was probably based on the fact that he did not believe the pressures could be significantly thwarted by the substitution, and that, therefore, it made much more military sense to proceed as planned.

The evidence against the phased build-up proposition and for the one-shot security hypothesis rests on one major document, and paradoxically, on the absence of other documents. The major document is the McGeorge Bundy Memorandum for the President of February 7, 1965. In this memorandum, Bundy reviews the entire situation in Vietnam without any reference to future ground force deployment—even though the request for the Marine BLT's was only two weeks away. Moreover, the usual flood of documentation preceding a decision of significance is not to be found. In other words, it appears that the key decision makers in Washington are not focusing hard on the importance of the deployment. The attention-getter, as the Bundy memo indicates, was the impending air war against North Vietnam.



Bundy at White House

The significance of the Marine BLT deployment must also be measured up to the objectives intended by the deployment. There were four distinguishable rationales:

- (1) Freeing ARVN forces from static defense to base security;
- (2) Providing added security for U.S. air bases being used in the air war against North Vietnam;
- (3) Signaling Hanoi with increased U.S. determination to pay a higher price in meeting its commitments; and
- (4) Bolstering GVN morale.

(continued...)





VC 1965

The first objective was the one most stressed publicly-to release RVNAF for offensive action against the Viet Cong. General Westmoreland cabled the JCS on 22 February saying that the deployment of the Marines to Da Nang would result ultimately in freeing four RF companies, one tank platoon, and another RF battalion then being formed. The MACV Monthly Evaluation of March 1965 stated that only two RF companies had in fact been released. It is apparent, then, that this objective could not have been taken very seriously. While it can be argued that any slight improvement in the local force ratios vis-a-vis the Viet Cong was desirable; even the most optimistic prediction of releasable RVNAF units would not have had much importance.



A second rationale was the notion of security for a major U.S. air base being used in bombing operations against North Vietnam. Da Nang was exposed and the probability of a Viet Cong attack on it could not be ignored. While the two Marine BLT deployment, by itself, was recognized as being insufficient for high level of confidence about base security, there can be little doubt that U.S. troops did make that important base more secure. In retrospect, it could be construed that this was the first sign of U.S. awareness of RVNAF inadequacy. There is, however, no documentary evidence available to support this view and, in fact, the real extent of this ineffectiveness was not recognized until a few months later.

A third objective may have been to signal Hanoi with the seriousness of the U.S. resolve in Vietnam. Notwithstanding the relatively minute combat power imposed in two battalions, the very fact that they were deployed would be a much clearer sign to Hanoi of U.S. determination in the fleeting appearance of a few jet aircraft or the shadowy presence offshore of a mighty

fleet of ships. Taken in conjunction with the well-known U.S. shibboleth against involvement in a major Asian land war, the deployment should have been a highly visible step unequivocal in its meaning to Hanoi. Yet, there is no evidence that anyone in the U.S. government intended the deployment to convey such a signal and there was no discussion of what responses we expected from Hanoi. If this indeed were an unspoken objective, it made little dent on NVN designs. If anything, it may have aided those in Hanoi who wanted to send additional regular NVA units into SVN.



NVA soldiers

A fourth U.S. objective was bolstering morale within the GVN and the concomitant willingness to carry on the fight. It was quite reasonable to assume that the Marines, like the air strikes on NVN that preceded them, did have a beneficial effect on morale. It is equally obvious, however, that any such effects would be transitory. Long-term improvements in morale could only come with dramatic and lasting alteration of the situation, and the two Marine battalions did not have that capability by themselves.



March 8, 1965, Marines land at Da Nang

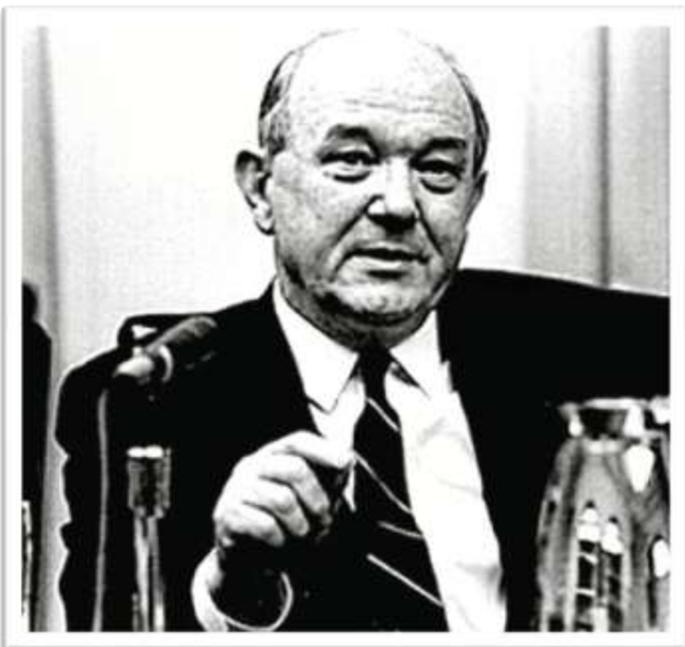
(continued...)





Raid on Bien Hoa Air Base

It seems from this vantage point that only the objective of base security really made sense. The deployment of the Marines to Da Nang might have deterred an attack on the base by a regiment of main force Viet Cong. The Marine Infantry were dug in on commanding terrain facing the North and West along the most likely avenues of approach. The security of the base was by no means assured by their presence, however, as by their own admission they were in no position to prevent determined attack--or, especially, raids and mortar attacks--the kind that had done so much damage to Bien Hoa the year before. The U.S. forces only had responsibility for half of the base complex, and it was doubted that the RVNAF could prevent the Viet Cong infiltrating sabotage squads through the heavily populated areas on the GVN side. The Marines did not, as Secretary Rusk said they would, put a tight security ring around the base.



Dean Rusk

The ring was not closed until considerably later, and even then, the Viet Cong successfully penetrated the defenses and caused considerable damage in a raid on 1 July 1965--the first of a series of raids that have continued up to the present.

The landing of the Marines at Da Nang was a watershed event in the history of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It represented a major decision made without much fanfare--and without much planning. Whereas the decision to begin bombing North Vietnam was the product of a year's discussion, debate, and a lot of paper, and whereas the consideration of pacification policies reached talmudic proportions over the years, this decision created less than a ripple. A mighty commandment of U.S. foreign policy—

thou shall not engage in an Asian land war -- had been breached.



173d troopers a few weeks after arriving Vietnam.

Besides CINCPAC and General Westmoreland who favored the deployment, Ambassador Taylor who concurred with deep reservation, and ASD McNaughton who apparently tried to add a monkey wrench, this is a decision without faces. The seeming ease with which the Marines were introduced and the mild reaction from Hanoi served to facilitate what was to come. It also weakened the position of those who were, a few scant months later, to oppose the landing of further U.S. ground combat forces.

Source:

www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/pent8.htm



Juvenal Vidal Vallejos

A Sky Soldier



Juvenal Vidal Vallejos, 80, of Billings, passed away Tuesday, March 29, 2011. Born on May 7, 1930, Juvenal Vidal Vallejos (Val) to Barbara and Lucio Vallejos in Honolulu, Hawaii. Val, his sister Grace (Ingracia) and brother Richard (Ciryoku) grew up in Downtown Honolulu. Val also has an older brother, Tony Amagsanay and sister, Philomena Bungato. He graduated from Farrington High School in the class of 1949. At the age of 18, he joined the National Guard. In 1949, he enlisted in the US Army and was stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in Company A of the 25th Infantry Division, a.k.a. Tropic Lightning Division. He did tours in Korea, where he received the Purple Heart for injuries to his right leg, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, twice, where he received the Purple Heart for

eye injury due to shrapnel. He was very proud to be Airborne. He proudly served in the 82nd Airborne Division and the 173d Airborne Brigade, "Sky Soldier." Vallejos earned his Master Parachutist Badge with over 100 jumps. He was awarded the Bronze Star for heroic, meritorious service, Good Conduct Medal seven times, Combat Infantry Badge (2nd Award). Vallejos finished out his career as First Sergeant E8 "Top" of HHC 1st Bn 14th Inf 1st Bde 25th Div Schofield Barracks, Oahu, Hawaii, right where he started. 1st Sgt. Vallejos retired in 1975. On his eve of retirement he received a letter of appreciation stating that he was a strict disciplinarian the most successful in gaining instantaneous results from the troops. He was a 24-hour a day soldier, always ready and eager to perform, an example for all to follow. As his troops, friends and family called him, **HARDCORE**. During his school years he met and married his High School sweetheart, Shirley Kaiwi. From this union they were blessed with their son Edward Vallejos. They later divorced. In 1960, Val married Nancy May Chase and was blessed with son Billy Chase. Thru this union they were blessed with two more sons, Richard and Charles Vallejos. Nancy and Val later divorced but remained best friends. Val fought many battles in his life, and when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's, he treated it no differently than any other battle; he had a plan of action and followed thru, fighting his hardest. Val was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Richard C. Vallejos; brother-in-law, David Awong; Shirley Kaiwi and Nancy May. He is survived by his sister Ingracia Awong; his sons Edward (Barbara) Vallejos, Bill (Nyana) Chase, Richard (Marilyn) Vallejos, and Charlie (Donna) Vallejos; and his Grand Children Lisa (Carl) Cabanada, Brandon (Lisa) Vallejos, Dylan, Chelsy Chase, Richie and Ashleigh Vallejos. Great Grand-daughters, Kaylee and Kelly Ann; and numerous nieces and nephews. Thank you to all those who helped Val thru his last battle. A Special thanks to all friends and loved ones and the staffs at Aspen View, Autumn Springs and St. Johns Garden Court for all of the love and support in his final days. Dad, you earned your wings as a Sky Soldier, now you've earned your wings to the Kingdom of Heaven. No more pain and peace forever. We love you. Aloha.



All the Way, brother.



ON GOING BACK TO VIETNAM

Why do we go back?? Different reasons for all of us. Many don't know the reasons. Many go back maybe to find what they left there, their innocence. Perhaps our youth that got consumed in such a short time. Perhaps some go back to see if that hollow feeling we came home with can somehow be filled. I do know when you go back and open your eyes and hearts to the people of that county and meet them at their level, a comfort comes over you, and for me I am so glad I went back.

Bill Nicholls
A/2/503d



In 2005 two 2/503 Alpha Company troopers returned to Vietnam and the jungles of the "D" Zone to find a battle site from their youth, Maj. Gus Vendetti (L) and Capt. Bill Vose shown here in the "D" Zone jungle at the site of LZ Zulu-Zulu. Only they can tell you what they found there.

Roger that, Bill, no simple answer, and maybe we each have our own different answers? Some years ago I searched for the reason behind why two trips back were called for, and now some of us are talking about a third re-invasion. Still not sure to this day what that reason is. Here's a failed attempt at trying to explain it. Ed

"And so, these four graying men, two former young officers and two former young privates, will venture into the deep and dark jungles of Vietnam, to a specific place to find a specific time when they were soldiers fighting to keep one another alive, carrying with them their own crosses, looking to cover their scars, drawing strength from one another and hoping to find some peace with their souls. Why are we going back? Because we *must* go back.

Perhaps we're wiser than we think. Perhaps what Gus, Mike T, Audey Murphy-Bill Vose and I are doing will help us better understand our scars from war, even though one would be hard pressed to get fellas like Vose and Vendetti to even admit to having scars. So, back we go again, lest we, like so many others from our war, like thousands of others, like Bob Stokes (?), end our Vietnam saga in such a final and permanent way. Back we go, in search of a special kind of band aid to cover our wounds; not the permanent kind. Not many of us care to admit it, but *that* is the reason veterans go back.

One would think as years continue to distance us from that place and time, we would find it easier to deal with and understand our roles in that war and its effect on our psyches. Yet, as the years march by, for me at least, just the opposite is true, I remain more confused than ever. And so, I go back. And so, they go back. When in hell's name will we ever move forward – *can* we ever move forward? *Goddamn you Vietnam, leave us alone for Christsakes!"*

(The Battle at Bau San)

~ The Airborne Life Is Not For Me ~

Fifty-one years ago, Herman, a young lad from the Carolina mountains, was drafted by the Army and volunteered for jump school.

On his first day at Benning the Army issued him a comb. That afternoon the Army barber sheared off all his hair.

On his second day at jump school, the Army issued Herman a toothbrush. That afternoon the Army dentist yanked seven of his teeth.

On the third day at Benning, the Army issued him a jockstrap...

The Army has been looking for Herman for 51 years.



We may have included this in an earlier issue but I'm too lazy to check. It's worth repeating. Ed

BATTLE OF THE SLOPES HILL 1338

~ The Brotherhood ~

“I now know  why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who suffered and were stripped of their humanity.

I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades. Such good men.”

~ Author unknown



At N. Myrtle Beach reunion in 2010, from left:
Mike McMillan A/4/503, Chuck Breit 503d PRCT WWII,
Mike Sturges A/2/503 & Jerry Wiles B/2/503.
Such good men.

(photo by Barb Dresser)

Request for Recollections

**It's time to record your memories.
What did you do? What did you witness?
What do you recall?
How has that battle changed your life?**

June marks the 44th anniversary of what most Vietnam War historians consider the costliest encounter by a single American unit in the entire war. On June 22, 1967, Alpha Company 2/503 Infantry, and its 120 plus troopers headed for their Base Camp located adjacent to the Special Forces camp and the Dak To airstrip. In less than three hours, a combined NVA and VC enemy force of as many as 1000 annihilated Alpha. Seventy-Six (76) warriors lost their lives along with 30 or so wounded that fateful day.

Though Alpha suffered unimaginable casualties, there were a diverse number of entities who were intimately involved and affected by the day's events. We're asking not only for Alpha survivors, but Bravo and Charlie companies' remembrances. What went through the minds of the 319th or the mortar contingents who pondered the accuracy of their fire missions? We'd like to hear the details from those officers who directed the fighting from the TOC, as well as the Casper platoon who played an integral part throughout the day. There exists an uncounted number of combatants who still carry a mountain of remorse from when they stood helplessly on the banks of the Po Ko River awaiting the order to "saddle up", an order which never came. Lastly, the voices of the families of those lost must be heard.

We ask that your submissions be sent in no later than May 15th for inclusion in the June issue of our *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter*.

Send your recollections and any photos you might have to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and please pass this request on to your buddies who survived the *Battle of the Slopes*. With enough recollections the editor says he'll produce a *Special Edition* covering the battle.

All issues to date of our newsletter can be seen at either of these web sites: www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php and http://corregidor.org/VN2503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

Wambi Cook
A/2/503 Survivor of the Slopes



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / May 2011 – Issue 27

Page 19 of 40



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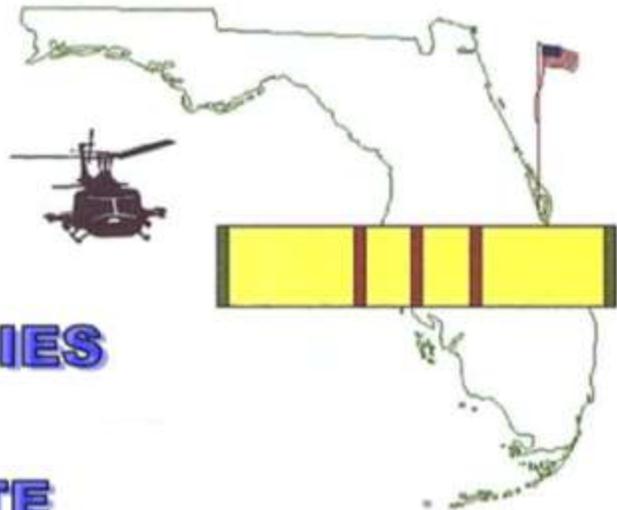
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321-427-2843
Fax (321) 690-0106**

**Daydrmr333@aol.com
vets2gether@cfl.rr.com
dmwassmer@yahoo.com**

