



**2/503d Bn CO LTC George Dexter and RTO Connelly  
at LZ Wine in the Mekong Delta during Operation  
Marauder, January '66.**

**August Brooks, A Co.  
SP4 Burch, B Co.  
Archie Caffee, A Co.**

**Jack Bixby, A Co. (KIA)  
John Bowers, B Co.  
Wayne Bowers, C Co.  
Lee Braggs, HHC  
Larry Brisco, B Co. (KIA)**

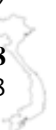


**RTO Dominick Cacciatore A/2/503 at Camp Zinn  
at live firing range before going on OP**



**A/2/503 CO Capt. Ed Carns. The Cap's RTO must be out  
of the picture frame tied to that rubber chain.**

*(continued....)*





**RTO Pennington A/2/503d taking five.**

Richard Childress, B Co.  
Harry Cleland, B Co.  
Hal Clem, HHC  
Dave Colbert, HHC/E Cos.  
George "Scotty" Colson, HHC

Ernesto Corrieno, B Co  
John Cotanch, B Co.  
Mo Dahl, C Co.  
RTO De Gregorio, A Co.  
Roger Dick, C Co.



Top pic is the unknown RTO, B/2/503 - Dec. '67 to early Jan. '68, Capt. "The Swamp Fox" Rogans` RTO. I know he was really close to leaving when I arrived in Dec. '67. I want to say HICKS, not sure. Bottom pic must be a lost RTO or a missing LT in 2nd Platoon.

**Richard "Airborne" Martinez**  
B/2/503d '67/'68

Jesse Dunn, C Co.  
Troy Duran, C Co.  
Richard Dykes, B Co.  
Ron Ellet, HHC  
Dugan Ersland, A Co.  
RTO Fabish, HHC  
David Farraro, A Co. (KIA)  
Woodrow Fike, A Co.



**RTO (Sgt.) Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503d, '68-'69**

(continued....)







**RTO Murphy A/2/503, monitoring the Net.**

Bob Fleming, C Co.  
Lamar Fredericks, A Co. (KIA)  
Pat Fruchtenicht, HHC/D Cos.  
Pat Garvin, C Co.  
Bob Gerber, A Co.  
George Goodman, HHC  
Rick Grantham, E Co.  
Dave "Griff" Griffin, B Co.

### **Experience and Good Troops**

My RTO experience and some good troops had a lot to do with my squad coming out ahead in competition with even experienced E-6's. Having the communications skills didn't hurt either when I went through the Recondo Raider course at Bragg.

**Dave "Link" Linkenhoker**  
B/2/503d

Eugene Grim, A Co.  
Gary "Red" Grossman, B Co.  
Johnnie Hansel, C Co.  
Glen Harmon, C Co.  
Jerry Hassler, HHC

### **Weapons Platoon RTO**

I was an RTO from early Nov. '67 until late Jan. or early Feb. of '68 with the Weapons Platoon of B/2/503rd. I arrived in country with Jim Miller of Tucson, Arizona, and Jim was the RTO of the Recon Squad of B/2/503d.

**John Bowers**  
B/2/503d

## **~ The RO Tactical Radio ~**



**Weight: 18 ounces**  
**Range: 210 miles**

18 ounces?!! That just ain't fair.

## **~ The PRC25 ~**



**Weight: 23.5 pounds**  
**Range: not far enough**

Robert Hill, C Co.  
Leo Hittle, B Co.  
Guy Hodgkins, C Co.  
Wayne Hoitt, HHC

I was an RTO in A Company. I carried the PRC25 for 1st Squad 2nd Platoon, call sign 2 Alpha. I lasted the whole year without being wounded. Many times I thought it might be beneficial to get wounded so I could get rid of that piece of crap and give it to the FNG.

**Bob "Luke" Lucas**  
A/2/503d

*(continued....)*



### **It's A Boy!!**

SP4 Zackry L. Lindsey from Atlanta, GA on handset in August 1969, receiving a call from the Red Cross informing him he has just become the father of a 9 lb. 6 oz. baby boy. Zackry was the artillery RTO with B/2/503d. The 2d Battalion was on a pacification mission in the valley near the I Corps/II Corps line.



**Pictured with Zackry are 1LT Throckmortan, FO 1LT Ron Smith and an unnamed trooper.**

(Photo provided by Ron Smith, B/2/503d)

### **~ That Radio Was Good To Me ~**

Sorry, no memory of other RTO names. Just can't seem to pull 'em out of my ass these days. I took our squad RTO position into my second month with 1st Platoon B/2/503 around March 1970. All OJT of course, making a lot of mistakes early on. Continued as RTO when volunteers were requested to replace KIA members of Stag Team 2 out of Ca Cong village on the coast around June 1970. Remained the teams' RTO until the team was disbanded in mid-December 1970, I received my Buck Sgt. stripes at the same time and was DEROS'd back to the states with the 82nd.



**Link in 1970**

My last duty out of LZ English was to escort a B Company trooper being held in Da Nang to Na Trang to his court martial for knocking out the Execs' teeth. Never got to reunite with the Stag Team or my old platoon before the DEROS. However, the experience as RTO came in handy stateside as well as there was a chronic shortage of Staff's (E-6's) with my company at Bragg (coincidentally 1st Platoon B/2/505). Even with my short time as an E-5, but with combat experience, I was often given a squad of my own during squad competitions, and general training periods.

**Dave "Link" Linkenhoker  
B/2/503d**



**A/2/503d troopers RTO Jim Gettel on left with good buddy Leonard Benovitz**

Richard Holmes, C Co.  
Don Horger, A Co.  
Don Hudson, HHC  
Olaf Hurd, HHC



**An RTO, doing his thang.**

*(continued....)*







A/2/503d RTO "Bob" Johnson on left with Sgt. Benovitz

Thomas Hurd, C Co.  
 "Bob" Johnson, A Co.  
 William Johnson, A Co.  
 RTO Johnson, HHC  
 Bill Knapp, B Co.  
 Stu Kumasaka, HHC



HHC/2/503 Bn Command Group RTO and his buddies humping the "D" Zone. Still can't figure out what the hell they're doing on that damn foot path.

(Photo by Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d)

John Leppelman, C Co.  
 Dave Linkenhoker, B Co.  
 Bob Lucas, A Co.

### Shoot me now!

Geez, this is really a memory challenge. But I had a special bond with my Company HQ RTO's. Besides touring Vietnam together as part of a mobile antenna farm which the bad guys liked to shoot at, we ate together, slept together, pulled radio watch together and generally "covered" each other's asses. In 1965, SGT E5 George Schleife was the C Company commo sergeant and a very accomplished C-ration chef. Jack S. Moore Jr. started as a SP4 RTO, he made SGT E5 and served as my operations sergeant. He was seriously wounded in Dec '65. He was evac'd to the States. I later visited him at Walter Reed and in Florida. Not sure about the rest of his military service? I think he lives somewhere in the SE US. I would love to regain contact with him after all these years! Other guys that I can remember packing radios and putting up with me were Johnnie Hansel, SP4; Jesse Dunn SP4; Raymond Wiles, SP4; and Richard Holmes, SP4. I think it was Holmes that had the distinction of having his handset cord shot off. I don't remember the names of the platoon RTO's, but hopefully somebody can come up with more names. It took a good man to pack a PRC-25 around with an obvious antenna that advertised "shoot me now"!

**Fred Henschell**

C/2/503d



A/2/503 CO Captain Carmen Cavezza with his RTO Sgt. James Underwood

PFC MacGregor, C Co.  
 Terry Marcinkowski, HHC  
 Art Marquez, C Co.



## RTO Loves Them Bulls

Myself, I got handed the Radio when our RTO, whose name I did not know, got wounded and was evacuated and the LT saw me and handed it to me saying I was his new RTO -- I was Bravo/3/1 and I have a few pics of me with the "Dam Target" on my back. Actually, I enjoyed carrying it as I always knew (well as much as anyone) what was going on at the time or supposed to be going on. I really enjoyed being in the 3rd platoon with such great men as Olive, Mike Carver (Skoshie Bit), George Lewis (Pineapple), Pappy Sides, Donnie Orville Wilfong, Caldwell, Grimes, Sgt Yrieno, Williams, Larry Fogle, Robinson, James C. New III, David Kuhns, Lloyd Michaels, and so many others as well as all the Bravo Bulls that I am proud to have served with and will carry dear to my heart as long as I draw a breath. Sorry but when I get going about our crew in Nam I get so excited thinking of B Company men like Dave Glick, Jack Schimpf, BDQ Roy (Lombardo) although I do not remember Lombardo myself from Nam I know he was there and met him at the Lake George Bulls' reunion last fall. Others Doc Wolcott, Don Matlock, Gainey, Beaver. Anyone remember what Beavers real name was??? The list just goes on and on. I did not go over with you all and did not get there until September 9, '65 and left 11 months 21 days and 15 hours later. We had the finest group of men in and assigned to our Brigade that the Army ever put together and if that makes me just a little bit Proudful of our men then I am Guilty as charged. Bless you Brothers.

**Bill Knapp**

**B/2/503d**

**"Preacher" Chaplain Chapter 26, 173d Abn Assoc.**

PFC MacGregor, C Co.  
Terry Marcinkowski, HHC  
Ted Matuliwick, HHC  
Ted Menke, A Co.  
Jim Miller, B Co.



**Commo & Recon RTO Jerry Hassler, 2/503d , '66/'67**



**Alpha Company RTO in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta on 2 Jan 66 during Operation Marauder.**

Roy Mills, A Co.  
Roy Mischew, A Co.  
Jack Moore, C Co.  
RTO Moore, E Co.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

On 1 June 1970 was published a *Sky Soldier* special edition by the 173d Airborne Brigade with introduction by BG H.S. Cunningham. The following is an excerpt from this army publication:

**WALKING TARGET:** He comes in all shapes and sizes but his load is the same. Not to mention the risk.

He's one of the most critically needed men of any operation, whether it's a fire team on a night ambush, or a battalion in the field. His is one of the least desirable of jobs.

The radio operator wears an uncomfortable load and poses a beautiful target for snipers. His long, whip antenna tells everyone who he is, and the most basic instruction of any military force is the importance of radio communications. Charlie desperately tries to get the RTO.

But, in spite of his load and the risk he runs, once a trooper becomes accustomed to his radio, he sticks faithfully to it and, in many cases, would not swap jobs with anyone. He knows how important he is.

[Sent in by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d, '66/'67]

(continued....)



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## Special RTO Duty

*"Is that a PRC25 in your pocket  
or are you just happy to see me?"*



**Bravo Bull 2/503 RTO Larry Paladino welcomes  
Playboy Playmate of the Year Jo Collins to Camp Zinn  
in 1966 on direct orders from Capt. Les Brownlee.  
*It's not what you know...***

John Mudrick, A Co.  
Ted Olzack, C Co. (KIA)  
John Oury, B Co.  
Larry Paladino, B Co.  
Tom Parrott, D Co.



**Chargin' Charlies with their RTO nearby.**

## Don Quixote & Sancho Panza

or;  
*Never believe a Texan*



**2 Jan 66, Bn XO Maj. Bob Carmichael and Smith, his  
trusty RTO, await their chopper ride to LZ Wine in the  
Mekong Delta during Operation Marauder.**

On my cherry mission as we were coming in to land at  
LZ Wine, Bob leaned down to me and over the roar of  
the chopper blades yelled out, ***"Don't worry, Smitty, this  
LZ is secure,"*** just before the roof above our heads was  
torn apart by incoming fire. I've haven't believed a  
goddamn thing he's told me ever since! Smitty Out

RTO Pennington, A Co.  
Jackie Puckett, HHC  
Jim Ratz, A Co.



**A 2/503d RTO looks on as buddy inspects a VC camp.**

*(continued....)*



## A Four Foot Thingy

Re: the radio.

Contrary to popular opinion, PFC's and Spec 4's were not the only guys lucky enough to wander around the jungle with a 4 foot thingy waving above their heads.



I usually sent Corrineo and Sutton off with one of the platoons and I stuck close to the company commander. Especially after Roy Lombardo left. Consequently, I carried my own PRC25; I had 3 of them. I usually had the antennas folded and tied down with rubber bands. I do not know when the infantry companies got the 25's but they had not reached B Company by the battle of July 7, 1965. With the 25 I could talk to everyone, especially air, both fixed and rotary wing. During the above mentioned battle, while I was jumping around on various frequencies, my antenna popped up (I was trying to keep it on the ground). It was immediately hit and flopped into the half erect position. I had the only functioning radio as the rest of the company radios crapped out or were shot off the backs of the RTOs. It still worked and I was able to yell and swear at just about everyone for the rest of the battle.

**Jim Robinson, FO/B/2/503d, '65/'66**

## Two Recon RTOs Meet Again



**RTO Jerry Hassler, right, takes a look at the plaque recognizing his friend, RTO Olaf Hurd, left, as Outstanding Military Veteran. Hassler surprised Hurd with his visit. It was the first time they had seen each other in 43 years.**

Dan Robinson, HHC  
Peter Rooney, A Co. (KIA)  
Jesse Sanchez, 2/503



**Jim's RTO, Ernesto Corrineo in village.**

Jack Ribera, A Co.  
Don Rice, HHC  
Jules Rice, A Co.  
Paul Richards, B Co.  
George Rivera, A Co.



**2nd Platoon B/2/503d PSG SFC Mac Adams with his RTO Dave "Griff" Griffin.**

(continued....)



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## **FOXTROT UNIFORM, OUT**

I was an RTO with A/2/503rd, 173d Abn Bde (Sep) for Squad Leader Sgt. Joseph Pomroy, 1st Plt. 1st Sq. from about April '66 until Nov. or Dec. of '66, when I was Med Evac'd out with malaria and dysentery (I lost so much weight that I did not recognize myself).

On my first field operation (scared to death) the RTO got hit -- I was so new with the platoon that I didn't even know what his name was. We were being air lifted out the next day so I was given the radio and that was it. I was now the squad RTO.

I really don't have a favorite RTO story, being in the jungle was never a fun place to be humping a radio w/extra battery (I got to keep the plastic bag), roll of land-line wire and everything else, also going thru the jungle fighting with the "WAIT-A-MINUTE-VINES". At that time not all RTOs were school-trained, they came off the line just like me; we had our own radio check, it went something like this :

**ONE, this is ALPHA ONE, radio check, KILO MIKE ALPHA over...**

**ONE ALPHA, this is ONE, FOXTROT UNIFORM ...OUT**

We did it this way until the new CO, Capt. ED CARNS "suggested" that we do radio checks by the book.

The plus side of being an RTO was that you knew what was going on all the time, the down side was that as an RTO you knew that the VC and NVA were looking for the person with an antenna coming up from his back. Just one more thing not to think about.

Finally, it took me a long time before I realized just how much power an RTO has. He has the power to save a life by calling in a dust off or taking a life by calling in an air strike or artillery. I am just proud to say that I served with the HERD and that I was an RTO.

**Dominick Cacciatore, OUT**



## **~ We're Proud to be RTOs ~**

There are very few poems about radiomen, I've searched and searched the day long, to find any odes which might best depict when they were so young and so strong.

Our RTOs, of one I was which,  
and now sadly share this with all,  
took a damaging toll in our war long ago,  
as told by the names on *The Wall*.

'Walking Targets they were,  
*the RTOs' task,*  
as they humped that PRC far and near.  
Up to mountain plateaus to green valley's below,  
seldom spending much time in the rear.

"Sir, *this call's for you,*"  
was their usual refrain,  
passing to and fro commo's galore,  
in waist deep water of paddy dykes  
or while hugging the jungle floor.

Good job my boys, and a job well done,  
and this I want you to know.  
It was an honor, indeed, to be one of you,  
to be a 173 RTO.

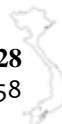
~ A 2/503 RTO



**Good buddy RTO Lee Braggs, HHC/2/503d**

SP/4 Santelli, C Co.  
Gary Saso, 2/503d  
George Schleife, C Co.

(continued....)



Gerald Sebastian, HHC  
 Lew Smith, HHC  
 Chris Segler, HHC  
 Steve Senseney, C Co.  
 RTO Sorrell, A Co.

## The Pensive RTO



**B/2/503 RTO and buddies looking for bad guys.**

RTO Souve, A Co.  
 Stanley Snead, C Co.  
 Patrick Steele, E Co. (KIA)  
 Joe Svetlick, HHC  
 Swoop (nickname), C Co.  
 RTO Symon, A Co.



**Wayne Bowers, C/2/503d**

I carried a radio for the squad leader (Sgt Kuntz, KIA Hill 875) and later for the platoon leader (Lt Philbin) while in Charlie Co., 1967. I may have spelled both names wrong. While in D Co. on Hill 875 our Platoon RTO was KIA. As we were pulling back I came upon him and the platoon leader. He was yelling, ***"I'm gonna shoot the next son of a bitch that doesn't help me!"*** I grabbed the kid by the pack frame and we dragged him about 40 meters. He later died. I had known him for a while. I can see his face as clear today as then, however, his name has left me. He was from New England, I think Conn.

**Wayne Bowers**  
**C/2/503d**

My best friend, **RTO Ted Richard Olzack**, was killed on Hill 875 on November 1967. At that time I was in the Mekong Delta with the Mobile Riverine Assault Force. Anyone remember a young LT named Tracy Murrey from Miles City, Montana? I believe he received a DSC for his actions during that battle.

**Wayne Tuttle**  
**C/2/503d**

(continued....)



**RTO Hal Clem, HHC/2/503d, working his P-38.**





## His Dad Was The Best

My name is Jim Miller. I was with B/2/503d, Nov. '67 to Oct. '68, but records may show Nov. '67 to May '68, then HHC/2/503d from June '68 to Oct. '68. I was in the Arizona National Guard for a year, but in January 1967, I left the Guard and went on active duty and signed-up for Airborne Infantry with my buddy. After basic training at Ft. Ord, CA they told us that instead of Infantry Advanced Training, we were both going to 05C MOS training, first at Ft. Ord. then on to Ft. Gordon, Georgia. After Radio/Teletype training, we went to Ft. Benning, Georgia for Jump School. Following Jump School, my buddy went to Special Forces Training and I went to Vietnam, assigned to the 173d.

I arrived in Vietnam at Bien Hoa the first part of Nov. '67, then on to An Khe. Very shortly after arriving at An Khe, they put a bunch of us new arrivals to the 173d on a flight to Dak To. I remember arriving at night and they "Herd"ed us into a tent. There were 4 of us that were 05C MOS and we were all told that we were going to be assigned to a Infantry Company at daylight. (Hill 875 was in progress).

B/2/503d had been very badly hit before Hill 875, and that is where they sent us, to replenish their depleted ranks. After Hill 875 was secure, they told us that we could return to our MOS and back to HHC, and I requested to stay with Bravo Company, and they granted my request.

After the first of the year (1968) B/2/503d was back to strength. They reformed the Company Recon Squad and I volunteered to be the RTO. We left Dak To at the start of the Tet Offensive and went to other areas in the Central Highlands. After that, we were back at An Khe for a short period, then were trucked to Bong Son.

At Bong Son, we were short-handed in our Recon Squad and a fine young man named Larry Briscoe volunteered to come into our group. Last man in, unfortunately, has to carry the radio. Larry did not hesitate. Larry was a very strong, brave and courageous man, but he was much more than that. He was very caring about his fellow troopers and he always made sure that others were taken care of before himself.

Larry had a tremendous sense of humor and a smile that could make you melt. In the middle of the worst conditions you can imagine, Larry's smile and laughter could make the worst of times better. Larry had the smile of Paul Newman and the courage of a lion.

On May 6, 1968, we were sent out on a S&D thru the hedge rows around Bong Son. Shortly after our chopper landing, I led us into an ambush (I was the pointman in our Recon Squad). The first man the VC went for was

Larry, because he had our radio. Larry was KIA. A Lt. tried to get to Larry, but he too was shot and killed.

I owe my life to Larry and every day I ask God, why him and not me? I know that Larry had a son that was living in Colorado as I saw it on a posting with the Association. I should have contacted him, but couldn't. Can't let things go. Still struggling with the past. Tell him, his dad was the best.

Tell him to be very proud of his dad. His dad was everything that this county stood for. But more than that, his dad was everything that God stood for. There is a verse in the Bible that I refer to, in honor of Larry, for it says it all. In John 15:13, *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."*

Larry, I love you and miss you. God Bless you and your family.

**Jim Miller**  
B/2/503d

Bill Totten, C Co.  
James Underwood, A Co.  
Terrel Vickery, B Co.  
Norman Walsh, C Co.

Our RTO (Company Commander's RTO) for Company C, 2/503 Inf Abn was SP/4 Santelli, the spelling might not be right and don't know his first name. Don't know how long he was in Vietnam, but he was in the fire-fight 3 Mar 67 with me, after we made the Combat Jump.

**Gary Baura, CSM**  
C/2/503d

I was assigned to C/2/503d from April 1970-71. Our platoon policy was that each Cherry Boy had to carry the radio until a new Cherry Boy was assigned to your squad. The Old Timers thought process was that it was better for a Cherry Boy to be killed than an Old Timer because he had not been in country too long.

**Robert Hill**  
C/2/503d

Myself and John Berry were the first Company HQ RTO team for the new D Company when they changed the TO&E to include a D Company. John currently lives quietly in Renton WA.

**Bob Fleming**  
D/2/503d

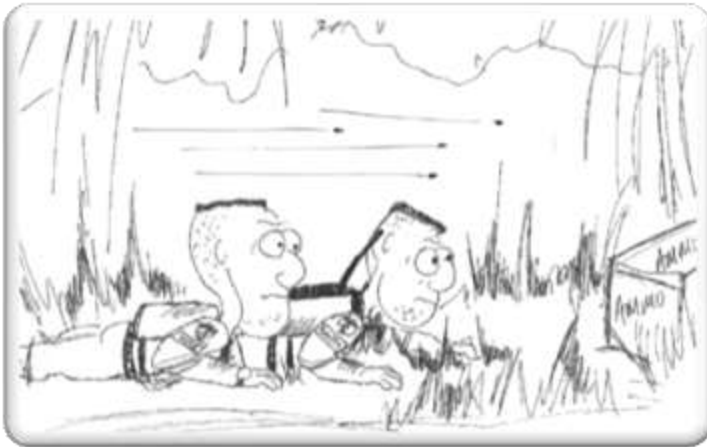
Sounds crazy, but I don't really remember my company RTO's, but I was a close friend with Mike Adams, RTO for B/2/503, KIA on 875.

**Ed Perkins**  
HHC/A/2/503d

(continued....)



## The LT & his RTO on the Hunt for Ammo



**LT Vose A/2/503 and RTO Smith HHC/2/503  
hunting for ammo at Zulu-Zulu 16 Mar 66.**



**"Psst! Hey! What are you guys doing out there??"**



**Out there?**

(By Dan 'The Wild' Smith)

My RTO was Ernesto Corrieno. A great kid who I have never been able to find. I think he was wounded in the October ambush but cannot confirm that.

**Jim Robinson**  
**FO/B/2/503d**

I did not know the first name of my company RTO (Paragon Charlie), but he was a slender (weren't we all) black kid named Smith. Really good troop. He was there Dec. '69 - May '70. I really am ashamed that I cannot remember more names now than I can.

BTW got a story about him. We got resupplied in the low grounds just west of LZ English. The next morning we moved a few Km to the base of the hills/mountains and took a break. I told him to put up the long antenna so I could talk to battalion. He said he must have forgotten it at our RON position, so I had the platoon we were with set up security and he and I walked back to the previous nights RON position and as might be expected, there it was. We picked up the antenna and rejoined the platoon and continued our mission. He never forgot anything again. LOL

**Darrell "Moe" Elmore, LTC**  
**C/D/HHC/2/503d**

I, Terrel (HOG) Vickery, was RTO from July '68 to September '68 in Company B/2/503, until I transferred to LRRPS/Company N/75 Rangers.

**Terrel Vickery**  
**B/2/503d**

My name is Troy Duran, I was a Red Leg RTO with "C" Co. 2/503 from approximately April '67 to Dec. '68.

**Troy Duran**  
**C/2/503d**

I was an RTO with E/2/503 (Wildcat Recon, Team #1) for about three months in early 1970. We were based out of LZ English.

**Rick "Granny" Grantham**  
**E/2/503d**

Best I can remember, 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Bn, Oct '65- April '66, RTOs name was Bush. I had a hard time keeping some distance between us when the shit hit the fan. He drew a lot of fire. Love his dedication tho. Was a damn good RTO too. First name Specialist. That's the best I can do after 45 years. Second thought...his name could have been Burch. If you find out let me know.

**Jim Stanford**  
**B/2/503d**

(continued...)





## MORE ABOUT RTOs (Radio Telephone Operators)

The basis of this section is to give you an idea of what an RTO looks like and what he might be wearing. 'The Look' is exactly like a rifleman except you have this great big radio strapped to your back. So you want to be a RTO? Here we can discuss what you should have in your collection to display a basic RTO in the US Army in Vietnam. Mind you this is what I think, so you don't have to go along with it. At the end of the day it's up to you what you carry and how much weight you assign yourself. Along with all of your basic Rifleman load, you will be packing a radio, this could be a PRC77 or PRC25 or PRC10, with either the radio carrier or pack frame with shelf. RTO's were targets! They often tried to hide the radio a bit. You often see claymore mine bags tied to the radio, used to carry spare batteries, flares, etc.. A radio accessories bag would also be attached to the straps holding the radio in place, this would contain antenna components, maybe a spare handset. A buttpack is attached below it.

This RTO keeps his radio well masked and in doing so keeps his profile down. Remember, RTO's are easy targets to VC with their antenna acting like a flag. Take out the radio and you take out a valuable platoon resource.



This next RTO is carrying a flare, two smoke grenades, an ID panel, map, radio accessories bag, machete and a pink flashlight. The radio is a PRC-10. I am not sure what the pouch is on the right. I wonder about the stuff being stored under the hold down straps. If they are pulled out to use, the radio would be loose on the carrier.

The RTO in this picture has an ID panel under his straps and on the left side there is an M-16 cleaning pouch (I think) and on the right is a case for a long wire antenna reel.



You see a towel under the shoulder straps on his pack straps. Being a Rifleman also, he is carrying an ammunition bandoleer.



[Check the stash. Obviously a Leg RTO, not that there's anything wrong with that]

Source:

[david.brubakers.us/Vietnam/Vietnam\\_Equipment\\_page\\_3.htm](http://david.brubakers.us/Vietnam/Vietnam_Equipment_page_3.htm)

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LTC Bob Sigholtz on the Net as RTO Johnson holds map.

## The Captain RTO

Sometimes, thinking back, it seems the two most “forgotten” guys in the company were the medics and the RTO’s. Doc Beaton and his medics were exceptional, professional and, if I had thought of it when I should have, I’d have told them... “*You’re the best!*” As for RTOs, my RTO, PFC Johnson, and I learned a very hard lesson together.

The company had encountered some light small arms fire as we hit a small enemy camp. I was trying To get a handle on what was happening when Johnson told me that Col. Sigholtz (the Battalion



“Dramamine Six”

Commander) wanted to speak to me. I determined that the firefight was more important and told Johnson to tell the Colonel that I would be right back to him, *that we were in contact*.

Immediately, Johnson grabbed my arm and said that the Colonel wanted to speak to me *now* on the radio...still it seemed the firefight was the higher priority and again I asked Johnson to tell the Colonel I’d call him in just a minute...one more time Johnson grabbed me.

I stopped and turned to face him, somewhat ticked off -- and Johnson said, “*Sir, Colonel Sigholtz has relieved me as your RTO, and, Sir, he wants you to carry the radio, and, Sir, he wants you to call him the minute you get the radio on your back*”.

Johnson and I learned a great lesson that day.... “*When the voice from above says ‘now’ it’s time to obey*”

**Jack Kelley, Capt.**  
CO A/2/503d

(continued....)





## The Hill People

Capt. Gary Prisk, CO C/2/503, called his men *The Hill People*. Pictured here are some of his RTOs and their buddies.



**RTO Spec Four Bill Totten**



**L-R: RTO Sp4 Bobby Watts, Capt. Gary Prisk & RTO Sp4 Steve Senseney near the Fishhook.**

Raymond Wiles, C Co.  
Bill Wiseman, HHC  
Reggie Yates, B Co.  
Louie Zucco, 2/503



***"RTO Glen Harmon tucked in brush behind NVA chippy...west of Kontum."***



**L-R: RTO Sp4 Steve Senseney with Sgt. Bledsoe near Fishhook in An Lao Valley.**



***"RTOs Sp4's Bobby Watts & Thomas Hurd liberating Bong Son."***

*(continued....)*





## THE RTO IS NEVER WRONG

There has always and only been one RTO for me, SGT Gary Wright, a native American from Oklahoma. He was the Commo Chief of B/2/503 on Okinawa, when I was the Company XO and he was the Commo Chief when I was the Company Commander.



**Sgt. Sam Arnold had given a K bar knife to one of the local Yard leaders who we had befriended. Here he is sharpening it as Gary Wright looks on. At the time we were humped up on Route 19 close to the Special forces camp there. Somewhere I have a photo of either or both of them ogling a topless lady from the tribe. (See Page 39)**

(Jim Robinson, B/2/503d)

Initially, until June of 1965, the battalion only had PRC-10's. Those that go back to those days remember the calibration system but also know that one radio calibrated to 98.2 might not be able to speak to another radio on the same calibration. At that point, the RTO's would conspire and request a "long count" to attune their radio to the Battalion base radio. The problem was that a long count in Area 1 might work, but as the units moved the calibration might waver and slide away. Gary's position was to do what worked. My position was that if the radios were properly maintained any one could set the right frequency and communicate.

Then comes our deployment to RVN with a major problem on company and battalion communications. Around mid- May ('65) we are on a search and destroy in War Zone "D" with communications coming in and out. Gary is doing his "long count" every few minutes to stay in contact. BINGO!! After finding an abandoned VC training camp, we find a library of documents, letters, who-knows-what in a hut before we

torch it. When I try to report to Battalion, I can't get them although they can be heard. Now we have two waterproof bags of documents...and two heat casualties: John Sahm and Sp5 Reed.

We are in "D" Zone and we get through briefly to HQ and are instructed by Sam Gillette to find a med-evac LZ and send the papers at the same time. It was almost dusk

and we were in primary jungle.

Looking at the map, I note that there is an eraser-size white spot on the map about 1.5 KM away on a magnetic azimuth of about due north. I get a small merry band together of stretcher carriers and security, ground our rucksacks, and hope we can get the med-evac done before dark. The XO beds down the company in the night defense.

We find a grass-overgrown but otherwise clear route that seems to head where we want to go and not showing any signs of human activity. With security out, we hustle as fast as two stretchers can be carried and arrive at what appears to be a suitable LZ.

(Note: no one in the company has ever done a med-evac before). Somehow,

Gary gets through to battalion in garbled fashion and gives our location.

The two heat casualties appear to be in dire straits. After waiting on the edge of this LZ, security out, I see a distant flashing light of an approaching helicopter about 2 miles out after 3 long hours of waiting.

*"Sergeant Wright, see if they are on our frequency."*

*"Dust off, this is Tiger Spanker, over."* Nothing.

*"Call battalion to see if Dust Off has our frequency."*

*"Paragon 3, this is Tiger Spanker, over."* Nothing  
Miraculously, I hear, *"Tiger Spanker, this is Dust Off 16, over."*

We answer but Dust Off apparently can't hear us. Gary is calling Battalion for a long count, but he doesn't know if they can hear us, either. I don't know how but without help from battalion, Gary unlocked and spun the calibration dial and had Dust Off loud and clear.

*"Sir, I have Dust Off!!"*

*"Dust Off 16, this is Tiger Spanker. Have you in sight, proceed about one mile on current azimuth and watch for my mark."*

(continued....)





Gary says, *"Sir, they won't see smoke. Use this illuminating grenade,"* which comes out of his jacket pocket. I pop the grenade and it lights-up the LZ like an NFL stadium at night.

Dust Off comes on and does about a dozen pedal turns to dodge saplings that we couldn't see before the illum grenade, puts his light on, and brings it down like at Fort Rucker. In go the casualties and they get immediate saline drip. In go the documents, which net an undercover VC in Bien Hoa the next day. Dust Off heads off to Bien Hoa.

Tiger Spanker and his merry band beat feet about 200 meters and go into a tight perimeter, fearing that the VC may be out looking for us. The night proved uneventful but no one slept. In a whisper, I asked, *"Sergeant Wright, how did you get Dust Off so clearly??"* *"Sir, I waited for them to transmit and honed in on their volume,"* said Gary. *"Your radio technique and illuminating grenade saved two lives tonight,"* I said. *Well done!!"*

From that moment, a bond of trust was solidified that didn't end until his death in Seattle a few years ago. He was a far better soldier than Gunga Din.

**Roy Lombardo, CO**  
**B/2/503d**



**'No DEROS Alpha' trooper, RTO Don Anderson, catching some zzz's in August 1966.**  
**So, you wanna be a paratrooper, huh?**



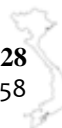
**RTO Don Horger, A/2/503d**



**A/2/503 RTO Don Horger on left with his 6, LT Bill Vose**



**B/2/503 CO Capt. Ken Kaplan and his faithful RTO Harry Cleland**





**Two RTO buddies in the rubber tree plantation 1965,  
Jim Bethea & Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d**

Bobby Watts, C Co.  
Roger Wells, A Co. (KIA)  
Rich Whipple, HHC

I was with Headquarters Company in '68/'69. I was an RTO at the Fire Support Bases as well as ARVN compounds, relaying (PRC25) between the infantry and base camp. I was also on a combat assault, being the only commo guy (with a 15' whip antenna). We sometimes were in the middle of some hot battles, and we'd damn better relay accurately for the lives of the infantry.

Also Terry Marcinkowski (Kalamazoo, Michigan) did the same duty as I did with HHC/2/503d.

**Rich Whipple  
HHC/2/503d**



**RTO Symon and 3rd Platoon buddies, A/2/503d**

Do not remember the first name but my RTO in E Co. 2/503 '69 was Moore. Maybe someone else will see his name and send it on

**Preston Parrott  
E/2/503d**

You asked about Burch or Busch as the 3rd platoon RTO 65-66? You asked if anyone knew his first name but I do not remember him and was in the 3rd platoon from September '65 - September '66 and got handed the Radio sometime in late October. I believe because our guy got wounded or KIA, I do not know for sure which, all I knew is the Lt handed it to me and it became my job. I was not trained for it just OJT as happened many times in those situations. I took to it like a duck to water and enjoyed it most of the time cause I am nosy by nature and liked knowing what all the cluster fudges were about. When no one knew anything at least us RTO's knew who didn't know what -- you know what I am talking about. I know that I carried it for long time. Pretty sure it was until August '66 when Grimes and I went to Tokyo for R&R and that is another story in itself. Anyway, sorry 'bout being so long winded but I get started seems like I can't stop. Could not talk for about 35 years about any of it but now when I communicate with another Bull it seems like I cannot shut up. Probably cause I tried some of the VA groups to "Help" me cope but sitting in a group listening to some meatball who was traumatized cause the power went out and his refrigerator thawed out somewhere in Vung Tau when it was Bravo Company who cleared the mountains around Vung Tau which had some suckie moments -- I got violent and almost thumped the guy and got thrown out of the Rap Group.

**Bill Knapp  
B/2/503d**

Unfortunately, I don't recall the CO's RTO. I was Recon soon after 6/22/67, and was enjoying not having to dig a nightly hole that it was all about my "good fortune." Surprisingly, I can still vividly recall the faces and voices of several outstanding RTOs but names escape me.

**Wambi Cook  
A/2/503d**

You are right about us having a lot of RTOs. But, as I mentioned before was during our tour we all took on other jobs as guys were wounded, killed or rotated back to the world. Also, I would remind you that there was a RTO for each platoon, three line and weapons platoon. Weapons platoon furnished these men plus a forward observer to adjust the 81mm mortars that we humped, plus a Company RTO who was in touch with battalion and also a forward observer from 319 arty that adjusted 105,4.2,155,175 and also air support. This is what line company's had. I am not sure what HQ Company had.

**Dennis Begley  
A/2/503d**

*~ Sitrep negative. Out. ~*







### 173d Jungle warfare training on Iriomote,

We landed without incident and set-up in GP Large tents.

The training provided individual skills; squad skills; a few platoon exercises, and a three day battalion FTX which crossed the island. Training is training and we were training in the rain, wet all of the time, seldom with an opportunity to dry off -- not unlike operations in the Vietnam Highlands. No reader would be interested in the specifics of the subjects, so I'll gloss over them with a few exceptions. Bridging (one rope, two rope, and three rope bridges); Australian bush raft; climbing and rappelling, jungle living; E&E were all significant because they taught and developed self confidence.

The three-day FTX was an opportunity to apply all the training skills into one exercise. A graduation exercise of sorts!

Now the island and our training area on the ocean was dominated by a single peak, called Komi-dake, 469 meters high. The contour lines were 20 meters apart and on the map (which I still have) the contour lines almost touch, from which you could conclude that that one was one *steeeep* motor scooter. I did a personal recon of every route, assigned to the battalions (nine days of jungle reconnaissance). The zone of action was about 6-7 kilometers long to cross the island but I knew because I had already done it, that it would take 3 days. Each company zone was about 1 KM wide. Five hundred meters/hour would be fast for small units.

There was no way for me to know (just a 1st LT) that this maneuver scheme that I proposed would be similar to many search and destroy missions in later years. When briefed to the incoming battalion commander, he retorted "*Why do we have to search for the aggressors?? Let them sit and they'll starve.*" Not the school solution but he finally agreed to accept the requirement.

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**Note:** Ranger Roy will continue these reports on our unit up to the date of his DEROS. We will then invite another 2/503 company commander to continue reporting on the history of our battalion from his perspective. Ed

### Honoring our Medics

In the July issue of our newsletter we will feature and honor those brave souls of the 173d Airborne (all units) who were so important to us all, *our Medics*. Please send your brief stories and photos of your Medic buddies to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) by no later than June 15. Thanks.



# REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

MEMORIAL DAY, GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

May 30, 1963

On this hallowed ground, heroic deeds were performed and eloquent words were spoken a century ago.

We, the living, have not forgotten--and the world will never forget--the deeds or the words of Gettysburg. We honor them now as we join on this Memorial Day of 1963 in a prayer for permanent peace of the world and fulfillment of our hopes for universal freedom and justice.

We are called to honor our own words of reverent prayer with resolution in the deeds we must perform to preserve peace and the hope of freedom.

We keep a vigil of peace around the world.

Until the world knows no aggressors, until the arms of tyranny have been laid down, until freedom has risen up in every land, we shall maintain our vigil to make sure our sons who died on foreign fields shall not have died in vain.

As we maintain the vigil of peace, we must remember that justice is a vigil too--a vigil we must keep in our own streets and schools and among the lives of all our people--so that those who died here on their native soil shall not have died in vain.

One hundred years ago, the slave was freed.

One hundred years later, the Negro remains in bondage to the color of his skin.

The Negro today asks justice.

We do not answer him--we do not answer those who lie beneath this soil--when we reply to the Negro by asking, "Patience."

It is empty to plead that the solution to the dilemmas of the present rests on the hands of the clock. The solution is in our hands. Unless we are willing to yield up our destiny of greatness among the civilizations of history, Americans--white and Negro together--must be about the business of resolving the challenge which confronts us now.

Our nation found its soul in honor on these fields of Gettysburg one hundred years ago. We must not lose that soul in dishonor now on the fields of hate.

To ask for patience from the Negro is to ask him to give more of what he has already given enough. But to fail to ask of



him--and of all Americans--perseverance within the processes of a free and responsible society would be to fail to ask what the national interest requires of all its citizens.

The law cannot save those who deny it but neither can the law serve any who do not use it. The history of injustice and inequality is a history of disuse of the law.

Law has not failed--and is not failing. We as a nation have failed ourselves by not trusting the law and by not using the law to gain sooner the ends of justice which law alone serves.

If the white over-estimates what he has done for the Negro without the law, the Negro may under-estimate what he is doing and can do for himself with the law.

If it is empty to ask Negro or white for patience, it is not empty--it is merely honest--to ask perseverance. Men may build barricades--and others may hurl themselves against those barricades--but what would happen at the barricades would yield no answers. The answers will only be wrought by our perseverance together. It is deceit to promise more as it would be cowardice to demand less.

In this hour, it is not our respective races which are at stake--it is our nation. Let those who care for their country come forward, North and South, white and Negro, to lead the way through this moment of challenge and decision.

The Negro says, "Now." Others say, "Never." The voice of responsible Americans--the voice of those who died here and the great man who spoke here--their voices say, "Together." There is no other way.

Until justice is blind to color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with the color of men's skins, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact. To the extent that the proclamation of emancipation is not fulfilled in fact, to that extent we shall have fallen short of assuring freedom to the free.

