

Battle of the Slopes (Dak To)

June 22, 1967

John Smith, Jr.

Squad Leader, Sergeant E-5

Company A, 2nd Battalion Airborne 503rd Infantry
173d Airborne Brigade Separate

On June 21, after a three day stay following numerous day patrols and night ambushes out of an NVA prepared base camp, the word filtered down to the troops that the company would move out and head to the airstrip at Dak To. All rucksacks and heavy equipment would be transported back to Dak To by air lift to make sure the company could make the hike to the airstrip before night fall on June 22.

The morning of June 22 seemed to be the same as any other day in the jungle. The exception being the air was thick with moisture to the point that we were surrounded by a dense fog with cool air all around.

The point squad headed out down the trail. The rest of the company followed, by platoon, in the order that was determined by the Company Commander. One platoon was left behind to spread tear gas through the old laager site, rendering the site useless to the enemy. The trail seemed to wind on a gentle downward slope with thick jungle all around - though not as thick as most - and the fog seemed to be lifting a little. While moving slowly down the trail, everyone was on guard but spirits were running high expecting to spend the night at the Dak To airstrip and pulling perimeter guard.

Rounding a slight bend in the trail and out of site of the old laager site, we heard sporadic gun fire from the front of the column; what seemed to be coming from the point man. All movement halted. It was our point man and he'd made contact with the point man from an element of the enemy. When the platoon that stayed behind to sabotage the laager site heard the gun fire, they ramped up their activities in order to pull out and take their place in the column.

Prior to that platoon passing the platoon that my squad and I were assigned to, three artillery rounds dropped in and exploded to the left of my squad about thirty feet away. By the time I saw the flash, black smoke and heard the explosion, I didn't bother to hit the dirt. Scrap metal passed in front and behind me wounding several members of the platoon that had actually hit the dirt. We immediately started to assess the severity of wounds received - patching up and applying first aid. There was not much talking; just getting the job done.

During this time, the men from the platoon that had stayed behind were passing through and headed for their assigned position in the column. The word was passed

up to my platoon to keep moving forward. We began to move out with the wounded. The gun fire was still in the distance.



John in Boise, Idaho prior to a jump with a SF Group, 1974.

My Platoon Sergeant called me over and informed me to take my squad down the trail as far as I could make it and form a makeshift defensive position to halt the enemy advances. I immediately gathered my men and informed them of our mission. I took point and headed further down the slope. We entered a slightly open area with the daylight barely making it through the canopy. We crossed over the open area forming a defensive position along the dense jungle edge and took up our positions.

We started to take sporadic gun fire above our heads. By using the sound of the enemy's gun fire for a location, we returned fire by shooting into the jungle. I noticed a paratrooper with an M-60 setting up behind us though this did not seem right to me. I quickly moved to advise him of my men's location. He indicated that he saw us.

Before heading back to my squad position, I noticed the Platoon Leader, RTO, and a medic standing up. The medic was patching up the Lieutenant. At this point there were only three people still standing - the Lieutenant, the medic and me. The medic was on his knee placing a bandage around the Lieutenant's chest while still getting and giving instructions via radio.

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At this point the Sergeant, who had just joined the unit coming from Fort Benning as a jump school instructor, passed by me headed in the opposite direction. By this time, the enemy had completely flanked us by cutting us off from the main body of the company and opened up an intense volley of gun fire causing me to take up a prone position near the makeshift command post.



Those were the days....

Each time anyone tried to make it back up the trail, they were wounded or killed. No one could get out. Artillery and air support was ineffective as the enemy was right on top of us. To mark our position a red smoke grenade was popped but could not be seen by the Air Force fighter pilots when released from ground level. Another smoke grenade was tied to the top of a tall tree that was bent over and released when the pin was pulled. That worked and the air support could identify our location.

The enemy continued to rake the area with intense gun fire forcing the paratroopers to protect the radio with their bodies. Casualties were mounting up and ammo was running low. Coming from a rear position, bullets were flying all around us.

Staff Sergeant Green fought his way over near my position. We continued to fire into the jungle. Sergeant Green's M-16 malfunctioned and he quietly asked me for assistance. I picked up a rifle from a fallen paratrooper and flipped it in his direction - taking care not to get my head and body too high in the air thus exposing my position. I was lucky to land in a slight depression.

With each exchange of gun fire from the North Vietnamese Army, we seemed to answer with less volume of return fire. Of course this meant we were taking casualties at an alarming rate. At this point a small group of men, all volunteers, managed to break through from a secure position at the top of the slope. The only problem was they stopped and took up a defensive position in the middle of an open area with no

cover or concealment. Needless to say they started to take direct fire immediately and incurred casualties. I motioned and hollered '*get out of there.*' A couple of the paratroopers took up a position behind me laying head to feet.

The next volley of fire from the NVA hit one of the men behind me in the shoulder area. Upon exiting his shoulder, the bullet was redirected and hit me in both legs mid calf region. It felt like a baseball bat hitting me. I had no idea of how bad I was hit.

With getting low on ammo and receiving on target volumes of gunfire, someone at the top of the slope, in an effort to assist, started to fire an M-79 grenade launcher. Unfortunately, their aim was off and projectiles landed in the middle of the paratroopers to my left. After about five exploded rounds, the paratroopers started yelling that the rounds were falling inside the makeshift perimeter and not on the enemy. I was more than happy the guy on the M-79 stopped when he heard the yelling because the rounds were walking in my direction.

To my amazement I looked up and saw Sergeant Hostack walk by checking the line. This was not the first time he had strolled by. I then heard him complaining of being hit in the hip. I saw blood coming from a gash on the side of his face. He headed back to his position by the radio.

There were only a few paratroopers who were able to continue the fight and the wounded were many. With ammo running low, we heard chanting coming from the NVA – *rah, rah, rah* – as if they were preparing for an all out assault. I said to myself, I wish I had my bayonet.

The smell of gunpowder and blood had taken over the atmosphere like a thick carpet. The jungle was hot and full of humidity, a big change from when we started out in the morning. The intense gun fire from the NVA was sporadic now. I quietly said I think we better try to make it back to the top of the slope. Sergeant Hostack heard me and he agreed. He said '*everyone that can move try and make it back.*'

I saw Staff Sergeant Green move by me and another young PFC popped up and moved out. Coming from the site of the radio, my Platoon Sergeant crawled by me on his hands and knees. Although we were not taking any gun fire, I felt that it was not safe to get too exposed. So falling in directly behind my Platoon Sergeant, I maintained a low crawl while getting more ammo from a fallen Paratrooper.

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Roy Lombardo, B/2/503d

This is when a five to ten round burst of gun fire from a position behind us came directly across my head and back. My Platoon Sergeant was hit. He took the full burst of gun fire from that AK-47 in his back and side. He immediately stopped and slumped over. While standing in a crouched position, I headed towards my Platoon Sergeant and with his last breath he said, *'I'm too full of lead; I can't make it.'* For some strange reason, I suddenly felt safe – not because it was him and not me but because in that moment, as many can relate to, everything came to a standstill and I had this moment of clarity that seemed to say, *'all would be well.'*

Then Hostack and a young PFC walked up and Hostack said *'help your Platoon Sergeant.'* Unfortunately, Hostack had no idea of what had just happened. Hostack and the PFC disappeared as quickly as they appeared. I checked for a pulse on my Platoon Sergeant but could not find one.

Taking one last look over the field of battle, I was standing alone thinking of my squad and saw no movement. The jungle was cut down, sunlight was shining through and I grabbed another M-16. While slinging one over my back, I started to head back up the slope. At this point, I cautiously made my way through the jungle arriving in a clearing at the top of the slope. I saw a group of men pulling on a rope which turned out to be attached to a wounded Paratrooper who they were dragging to safety. Not something you see every day. The medivac chopper was coming and going. Realizing that my squad was lost, I went over and reported to the person who was keeping a record of personnel being choppered out and reported that I was wounded in both legs.

This whole battle happened in such a short period of time – though in some ways it seemed like an eternity and in others it was a blink of the eye. Why one person lives and another doesn't is one of the great mysteries. The answer is totally beyond me.

However, as an amusing antidote to end my recollections let me tell you this. When I was at the Brigade hospital recuperating, who should come walking in looking for a Dak To survivor, none other than the Hammer! Command Sergeant Major Jackson. And what did he say to me you ask... ..nothing but *"What happened son?"* And here I thought he was going to say, *'Get your gear and get on the next chopper and head back to your unit.'* Airborne!



I can't place my hand on my copy of *Dak To* (maybe on loan or may be lost in my library filling system) but I made copious notes when I read it. Willy Kapule DEROSed right before the startup of action and was replaced by Bobby Hastings, who was KIA by that errant friendly airstrike. Jackie Siggers was wounded (lost his hearing) as a result of the same air strike but helped to medevac the WIA and KIA. That strike landed on an assembly of Battalion Leaders present to receive an OPORD, so there was an immediate loss of several key personnel, hurriedly replaced.

Based on my limited knowledge because I was advising Viet Rangers in the Delta, but I knew many of the people. This would be my summation:

NCO leadership and Company Grade Leadership were stretched awfully thin in 1967. The superstars deployed with the Bde in '65 after tuning up for 2+ years in Thailand, Iriomote, Taiwan before deployment. '66 saw the next batch of young leaders come in as replacements, but with limited jungle experience. '67 saw shake and bake NCO's coming into the equation, officers directly from the Basic Course and the Advance Course but again with little practical experience and zero jungle experience. Fighting in the jungle and particularly a primary jungle is not easily mastered as evidenced by the losses and reluctance to come to the rescue of endangered forces.

My personal analysis is simply my opinion and is not intended to denigrate the willingness and ability of those that were in the Bde at that time. But *Dak To* was the meat grinder for the reasons that I indicate after many personnel changes that the Hürtgen Forest was for the US divisions that landed at Normandy but no longer were the same units (because of WIA/KIA and inexperience of replacements).

May those lost all be dancing on Fiddler's Green, awaiting our future/distant arrival.

"War is at best barbarism...Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell."

General William Tecumseh Sherman
His statement in 1879, a decade
after he led Union forces to victory
in our Civil War.



Roger Dick, C/2/503d

Charlie Company and Alpha company set up independent perimeters on hilltops several clicks from the Dak To airstrip on June 21, 1967. That night we in "C" Company encountered enemy fire and lost an ARVN scout. We also lost a new man on his first night out in the field. He inadvertently walked in front of the line and was shot in the head by the man in the position next to me. The sad part is, he was a Cherrie so few knew his name then, or will remember him as anything other than the new Cherry who died by friendly fire the night before June 22. He was shot by my Godfather; the young man who stood up for me when Father Watters baptized me a catholic in the mountains of Dak To. I understand his family was told he died in action during "The Battle of the Slopes," which was just as well. As we all know, one did not earn an identity until the Cherrie status was replaced with that of grunt. At the time we had not quite two months in-country but had made this transition.

Both companies broke camp about the same time on June 22nd, and headed out, with "A" Company destined to return to the Dak To airstrip that day. I don't remember where we in "C" Company were headed but we were carrying two dead troopers with us because we could not get a chopper in for extraction once "A" Company entered this terrible and devastating ambush.

All resources were dedicated to supporting them and our mission was to reach and support "A" Company ASAP. As an RTO, I kept switching between our company and battalion frequencies to listen to the battle in real time. It was the most horrific thing I had ever heard and we were all terrified as we made our way to their last known position. These radio transmissions are now available.

When we reached their old perimeter we realized to our horror they had covered the area with CS gas crystals prior to breaking camp. None of our gas masks worked and everyone in the company was moving away from the gas ASAP while being fired on by snipers and at one time by our own helicopters flying above the triple canopy trying to support "A" Company. Fortunately, no one was seriously wounded other than the bee stings we all encountered when passing through the gas. Apparently the bees did not appreciate the gas either.

The "C" Company commander (Captain Leonard) received a lot of criticism for not moving faster that day and was ultimately relieved of his command. Many of us in "C" Company considered this unfair and thought he became the scapegoat for poor decisions made by starched fatigues flying 1200 feet in the air circling in the comfort and safety of their helicopters. To this day I believe we moved as fast a conditions allowed and nothing could have prevented the loss suffered by the

brave men of Alpha who were outmanned, outgunned and out maneuvered by people who "knew their territory".

The battle scene was horrendous. The few survivors were terribly wounded and all appeared to be in shock. There were reports of mass executions of the wounded by the NVA, but we saw no evidence of this. There was very little confirmation of the NVA losses. The excavation the following day of quickly dug shallow graves did however reveal the loss of life inflicted by the men of Alpha as they desperately fought for their lives.

On June 24 we abandoned this battlefield and humped back to Dak To to lick our wounds, reform, refit, and head back out into the mountains that would become the site of the most ferocious battles of the war.

Randy Tenney, FO/A/2/503d

Re: 22 June 1967, Battle of the Slopes. What I was going to tell you concerned some heroic 2/503 Alpha Company survivors. First, Bill Nichols. Bill was part of the group I was in temporary command of who went back up the slope to check on enemy troops to our rear. He witnessed me being wounded by the NVA soldier who was wearing a Tiger uniform and black beret. Bill saw my shoulder blade before we returned to Platoon Sergeant Hostack, and said *"You will be O.K."*

Second, I believe the soldier in the hospital (106th General) on Yokohama was a trooper named Maris (sp), a Mexican-American who, along with Lavart (sp) the other survivor which Charlie Company found – both spent that terrible night on 22 June with the enemy, and GOD only knows what they went through.

I so wish Sgt. Hostack had been put in for the Medal of Honor. I witnessed many acts of heroism during my two tours in-country, but he was true to his men and made several trips back down the hill to recover wounded. On almost every trip he was wounded. Sgt. Hostack was also a survivor of Korea (and WWII?). He was a soldier's soldier. He has passed on but I will always remember him, a native of Worchester, Mass.

***"I hate war as only a soldier
who has lived it can, only as
one who has seen its brutality,
its futility, its stupidity."***

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower



Buckets of Blood

By: Wambi Cook
A Company 2/503d
February 1967 - February 1968
Survivor of The Slopes



RTO Cook during a reflective moment in Vietnam

After 44 years, I remain perplexed as to why A Company, 2nd Battalion's clash on 6/22/67 (or more popularly labeled, Battle of the Slopes) has yet to receive the recognition it most justly deserves in the annals of the 173d Airborne's illustrious pantheon of historical battles. This statement is by no means my personal crusade to disparage the many and wide-ranging gallantly fought encounters by our Vietnam era or the present day Herd personnel. So, I query: has any other singular American unit suffered as many casualties (KIAs 76, WIAs 30+) in a solitary day's skirmish as that of Alpha?

I advance three personal theories: 1. High profiling the unspeakable losses by elite American troops is not good copy for liberal and conservative pundits alike; 2. Many survivors continue to deal with their inescapable demons on a regular basis, and wish not to relive, in all likelihood, the worst day of their lives; and 3. Some influential, but non-combatant individuals who orchestrated crucial aspects of the day's events from afar, do not want their dubious military battle strategies second guessed.

~ AFTER THE BATTLE IS OVER ~

Early on the morning of June 23, 1967, a half dozen five-gallon water buckets were strewn about the make-shift hex-tent morgue, hastily assembled earlier that morning to ostensibly take delivery of an untold number of KIAs from the previous day's conflict. The depot was located about 25 meters or so just off the Dak To airstrip. In next to no time, the buckets would soon comele with the blood of my 76 brothers of Alpha Company, 2nd 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade.

History tells us we were hit by a battalion size, elite NVA strike force -- an unfathomable 15-1 ratio. At the time, it felt like it was Alpha against a power of determined evil bent on annihilation and nothing less. I can't recall if I was "asked" to be a part of the group assigned to identify my Alpha comrades slaughtered 24 hours earlier, or did I presume this responsibility by default. I'd only recently returned to duty from a month's stay in Long Binh's 93rd Evacuation Hospital recuperating from a grenade wound suffered on Mother's Day the month previous.

Yes, I could readily identify by name and/or face the majority of the rank and file of A Company, but there were at least a half-dozen or so FNG replacements since I left -- a handful of whom arrived to the field just a day or two before June 22. Or, perhaps, because of my time in country, I was the logical choice for the duty. In any case, someone had to do it, and why not me?

If memory serves, 2nd battalion's Bravo and/or Charlie companies assumed the unenviable task of policing the battle site. What this experience has done to their psyche is beyond imagination. Besides me, and possibly another Alpha volunteer, our team also consisted of a half-dozen B-Med personnel. From a letter I'd written my wife later that day, three quarter ton truckloads containing the bodies began arriving early on the afternoon of the 23rd.

Throughout our obvious tribulation, I doubt if any of us explicitly questioned what the body count would ultimately tally. We worked in pairs: two of us per deceased would align each body bag neatly two abreast, leaving just enough space between to perform a tip-toe maneuver to avoid stepping on our fallen brothers. This configuration allowed for perhaps a dozen bodies per tent-load.

One of us would unzip the bag just enough to expose the face. On occasion, we were instructed to expose the entire body. Why some and not all, I don't recollect.

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The majority of the contorted bodies were grossly bloodied as a result of multiple pre and post-mortem head wounds. All were soiled due most likely to their overnight exposure to the harsh Central Highlands' elements. Often times a sponge was needed to wash off enough of the dried, caked-on blood to confirm positive identification.

Some faces were so battered and unrecognizable, it was necessary to use their dog tags for identification. No sooner would we conclude with one group, when another incoming consignment would appear... the process would start again.

When a bucket became too flushed with blood, it was quickly refreshed, and we continued our work in an orderly "military fashion."

In the course of most of the afternoon, there was little beyond perfunctory exchanges between us while going about our work. To some, our efforts may have appeared detached or matter of fact. However, we couldn't cloak the obvious -- our hearts grew heavier as the day drew longer.

Each time I came across a comrade who I'd known intimately, and not just in passing, my task became more untenable. I considered begging off several times during the progression. I took a moment to ponder my dilemma pragmatically, and continued to execute my duty not only as a fellow grunt, but as a friend who would expect nothing less were the circumstances reversed. I had to bring a satisfactory conclusion to what I'd started...for them, and for my own mental well being.



**John "Mac" McEachin, A/2/503
KIA 6/22/67**

Just when I thought I'd made it through this aberration, I wearily unzipped a bag containing John "Mac" McEachin, my closest and dearest friend from the day I

first set foot in Camp Zinn. I was positioned a few feet from Mac when he got hit. The wound was in his lower leg or thigh region. Nothing fatal, I thought at the time. He was still conversant when a handful of us started belly crawling back up the hill. I didn't realize it until our extraction later that afternoon when mustered for a head count, that Mac was not among us. Just after what would be the third and final human wave assault, I witnessed what appeared to be a mortally wounded brother feigning death in hopes Charlie would bypass him. Mac was savvy enough to pull it off. My heart ripped when it hit me, that I'd not only lost a dear friend, but a kindred spirit to eternity. I made a hasty retreat a step or two outside the rear of the tent. There, I cried as I never had before and never would again.

Of course, I could name a dozen troopers in Alpha with whom I'd become extremely close -- several beginning as far back as AIT. McCray, from Miami, Duffy, Mika, Sharber, Kelly -- we would never again coexist. My treasured friends -- my boys, would cease to exist. With Mac, I lost not only a true friend, but a nicer human being you'll never find.

There remained another seven months of my tour of duty, but from that day on, I rejected any and all attempts for anything more than casual friendships. I was convinced, I could not emotionally handle the loss of another Mac.

Mention of an actual body count didn't surface until the following day. Survivors gathered on the 24th to convey our stories "for the record" to the Brigade's historians. I chose to man a position on the perimeter -- just me and my thoughts. I was "ordered" to relinquish my foxhole to assemble en masse with my fellow Alpha survivors; General Westmoreland wanted to personally award our "unofficial" Presidential Unit Citation to each of us, a civilized gesture, I mused.

Most of us expected rear duty for a couple weeks before we saddled up again. According to a letter I'd written my mother days after 6/22, our ranks were hurriedly replenished, and we were back operating in the hills of Dak To not far from the **Slopes** as early as June 27.



From the Air

By: **Tillman L. Jeffrey**
Falcon 81
335th Assault Helicopter
Company (Cowboys)



Warrant Officer Tillman Jeffrey

The 22nd of June started out like most other days at Dak To at that time of the year; a solid overcast sky with rain, mist, and low clouds obscuring the tops of the surrounding mountains. These conditions meant lousy flying weather at the best, and downright suicidal flying weather at the worst. Though only one Cowboy airlift platoon and one Falcon light fire team from the 335th AHC had been permanently based at Dak To since 19 June, the entire company had been working the area out of Camp Holloway at Pleiku for over a month. The ever-present hazards of flying in the Central Highland; monsoon weather, triple-canopy jungle, and very steep mountainous terrain were very familiar to our pilots and aircrews.

The Cowboys had flown their first combat assault of Dak To on 18 June and it was a vastly different experience from our old operation area in III Corps around Bien Hoa. III Corps had plenty of open area, roads, towns, and other landmarks. Around Dak To it was like flying over a vast sea of green. We flew another combat assault on 19 June, moving a total of 270 Sky Soldiers on eight lifts, and on that mission we took quite a lot of ground fire but received no hits on our aircraft. We transported 230 Sky Soldiers on 20 June as the 173d continued to move out into the surrounding areas. Back at Dak To airstrip the Cowboy ground crews assisted by the 173d Engineers continued the task of building bunkers, putting up helicopter revetments and tents. During the few days we'd been at Dak To the weather was so bad that we were losing at least two hours per of operational flying time each day.

We called the Dak To airstrip "Dak To International" because there wasn't much there in the way of creature comforts and also because the borders of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were only a few minutes flying time to the west. This part of the border area was also referred to as The Tri-State Area. In keeping with the stated policy of the United States government at that time, our tactical map coverage ended at the South Vietnamese border. Of course, political policy didn't preclude us from flying LRRP, People Sniffer, and Bomb Damage Assessment missions across the border and off our maps.

The first news of trouble that the Cowboys had on the 22nd of June was early in the morning when our light fire team at Dak To was scrambled to support A/2/503d INF. The word was that a large force of North Vietnamese Army troops 2,000 meters south of our base camp had ambushed A Company.

That day I was scheduled to fly with the Falcon's platoon leader, CPT Phil Osterli, and we grabbed our flight gear and side arms and ran out to the Falcon revetments. At that time it was raining off and on and the clouds were so low we couldn't even see the mountains to the south of Dak To where A Company was engaged, so both crews readied their gunships, monitored the 173d's command net on our FM radios, and stood by.



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C-130 explodes at Dak To

(Tillman Jeffrey photo)

The artillery batteries at Dak To were firing in support of the beleaguered company, and the volume of outgoing fire was a pretty good indication that the tactical situation was pretty bad.

At around 0815 the weather improved enough for us to try and fly out to A Company's location. It was still instrument weather by Army Regulations, but certainly good enough for us to try and get up to A Company. We knew that they were only about two clicks to the south of Dak To, but the low clouds, rain, and mist masked their exact location. Once we were off the ground, our light fire team formed up in a loose trail formation and we headed up the mountain. Over the FM radio we could hear gunshots and explosions in the background as the ground commander and the battalion commander coordinated artillery fire and air strikes with Air Force Forward Air Controllers and A-1E Skyraider aircraft.

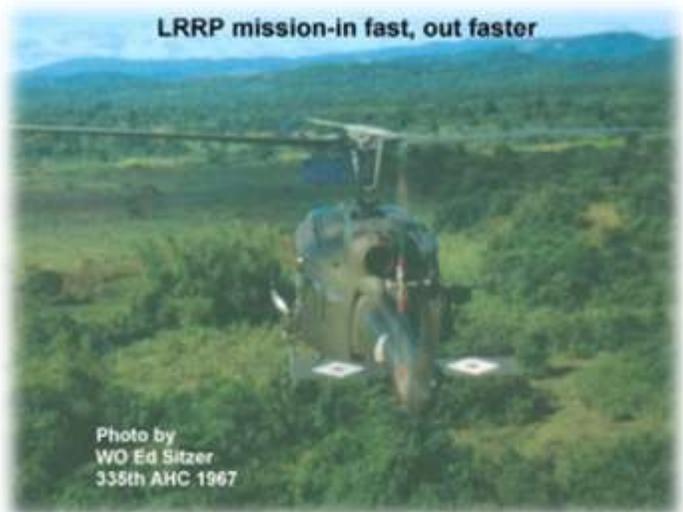


The A-1E Skyraider, 1968 photo.

As we flew up the mountainside at 60 to 70 knots, we started to get into some really dense clouds and heavy mist and visibility worsened to less than two hundred feet. It was also raining steadily. From time to time we lost sight of the jungle canopy below us., as we entered areas of more intense rain. At that point flying blindly into the mountainside or into an unseen tall tree was our

greatest danger. Every eye on board our pair of gunships was focused outside and to our front as we groped our way up the mountain. Our crew chiefs and door gunners were invaluable in watching out for trees and altering the pilots to every hazard. Without their efforts, we'd have probably flown into the side of the mountain.

We finally spotted red smoke filtering up through the tops of the trees, and we knew that we were close to A Company's position. When we began to take NVA ground fire, we knew that we were in the right place. CPT Osterli had radio contact with A Company's commander, and we set up a wide orbit around their smoke. The A1-E's were just finishing another strike as we got there and was glad to see them go. Dodging the trees was bad enough, but dodging fast-moving Skyraiders working in and out of the clouds seemed to be just a bit too unhealthy! Amid the background sounds of gunfire, explosions, and the screams of the wounded coming over the FM radio, the Falcons began to lay down suppressive fire around the area of the smoke.



During this time the NVA maintained a fairly brisk level of automatic weapons fire in our directions, but their aim wasn't very good – probably due to the low clouds, smoke, and the overhead jungle canopy. I suppose that we could see their muzzle flashes and tracers a lot better than they could see our helicopters. We also knew that any ground fire that was directed our way was fire that wasn't being directed at A Company. The NVA made our work easier by using tracers, which allowed us to pinpoint their location and apply suppressive fire. We fired wide on our initial gun runs in order to pinpoint where A Company was to avoid hitting them, and then let them adjust our rockets and 7.62mm machine guns closer to their position.

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By the time a second Falcon light fire team had arrived from Camp Holloway and they relieved us on station so that we could return. We continued our flights and gun runs until the battle ended, hot fueling at Dak To while we rearmed with rockets and 7.62. Later that morning, the Cowboys airlifted elements of the B/2/503d INF into a single-ship LZ 300 meters north of the battle in order to aid A Company. Throughout the day, Cowboy slicks flew single ship re-supply missions into the battle area.



Image from the 173d Airborne Brigade's yearbook from 1966 and 1967. (courtesy of Tillman Jeffrey)

When we finally finished flying that day, we had made numerous landings back at Dak To in order to refuel and rearm. We never shut down our helicopters at all that day, leaving the engine idling while the crew chief, gunner, and both pilots assembled rockets, humped ammo, and loaded ammo trays. If you were lucky you could grab a quick smoke, take a leak, or have something to drink before the next flight. Normally, the aircraft commanders kept a tally of landings by drawing trick marks on the windshield with a grease pencil. That day we simply didn't have the time. The Falcon gunships expended a total of 230 2.75" rockets and fired 36,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition during the battle.

We learned later that A Company had lost 74 men killed in action and another 23 wounded. Forty-three of those killed were by head wounds inflicted at close range. B and C Companies each lost one man killed in action and the attached ARVN forces lost one advisor/interpreter and two Civilian Indigenous Group soldiers. The casualties suffered by the North Vietnamese Army will never be known for certain. There were 106 NVA confirmed killed by body count and three captured.

The 22nd of June was a battle in which the Cowboy's long history of working closely with the 173d Airborne Brigade really paid off. When the Sky Soldiers needed really close-in air support, the Falcons trusted the grunts to mark their positions and to put them on the target, and the grunts trusted the Falcons to delivery their ordnance where it was needed. Unfortunately, on that day our guys were in the process of being over-run, and it was necessary to fire much closer to our troops than we would have liked. I have always believed that the gunships were a big help to A Company that day, but

because the NVA was in such close contact, we may have inflicted some unintended casualties on our guys. This has not been an easy thing to live with in the years since that day.

For their actions in support of A/2/503d INF on 22 June, twelve Cowboy and Falcon pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thirty-seven enlisted air crewmen were awarded Air Medals for valor. In all of 1967 only twenty-five DFCs were awarded to members of the 335th Assault Helicopter Company, with that single day accounting for almost fifty percent of those DFCs.

The 22nd of June was the worst day of flying that I experienced during my two tours in South Vietnam. But it is also what I consider to be the "best" day of my flying career. The bad part is that we weren't able to help save more of A Company. If the weather had only been better earlier in the morning we could have gotten to their position sooner. Perhaps that would have made a difference to the outcome of the battle. On that day every pilot and air crewman from the Cowboys used every last ounce of their skill in support of A Company. On a personal level, I'm not too proud to admit that luck far outweighed my flying skills that day. One lesson that I've learned from my many years of flying helicopters is that sometimes skill alone is not enough. You also need luck, and I had luck in spades that day.

I have never seen so many acts of bravery as I witnessed in the air that day. For that reason, I consider 22 June 1967 to be the "best" day of flying that I have ever experienced. I was lucky enough to have been there that day and to have been awarded the DFC, but the medal only serves to remind me that true heroes of The Battle of the Slopes were the officers and men of A, B, and C Companies, 2/503d Infantry.

**This report originally appeared in *Sky Soldier*, Spring 2007,
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**Photos from Tillman Jeffrey's web site
 and Cowboy's web site.**

Note from a A/2/503 Survivor of The Slopes

I think it's a time for me to be best forgotten. I have a 2 month old baby I am caring for. The years I have spent trying to deal with or talk about and remember that time have done nothing to help me at all. I cannot afford to let those thoughts back in my mind for the sake of my grandchild. I am very aware of what Wednesday brings but I am truly trying to avoid the emotions that come with those thoughts. Those who gave all on that day will always be in my heart as are so many others.

(continued....)



AIR MEDAL FOR HEROISM

For heroism while engaged in aerial flight in connection with military operations against a hostile force: SP4 Gary Cody distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 22 June 1967 while serving as gunner on a gunship assigned the mission of providing cover for the insertion of reinforcements for a beleaguered company of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Although under intense enemy automatic weapons



SP4 Gary Cody

fire, Specialist Cody courageously maintained his vigilance, spotting enemy fire and suppressing it. On several occasions, disregarding his safety, Specialist Cody exposed himself to great danger by leaning out the door of the aircraft to accurately report positions of other aircraft in the area to his aircraft commander.

The heroic actions of Specialist Cody were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

For heroism while participating in aerial flight Warrant Officer Tillman Jeffrey distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 22 June 1967 while piloting a gunship and directing fire into the enemy area surrounding Company A, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), which was encircled by an estimated two battalions of North Vietnamese Regulars. Warrant Officer Jeffrey, untiringly and without regard for his safety, continued his flights and gun runs into the area, stopping only long enough to refuel and rearm. Warrant Officer



Jeffrey's superb flying skill and exceptional valor in the face of heavy enemy automatic weapons fire and low cloud formations, assisted greatly in covering the troops on the ground and giving suppressive fire wherever requested. The heroic actions of Warrant Officer Jeffrey were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

In memory of Tillman L. Jeffrey 2/14/1947 – 10/28/2010



Tillman Jeffrey, 63, of Loomis, California, went to be with the Lord on October 28, 2010. After a brave two year battle with cancer, he passed away at his home in the loving arms of his wife with his dachshunds and poodle nearby.. Tillman was born February 14, 1947, Valentine's Day, in Barnett, Texas. He grew up in El Cajon and the San Diego area.

Rest easy Cowboy, job well done.



Clarence Johnson, A/2/503d

I had been with the 2nd Battalion two weeks in Pleiku, when the word came down that we'd be moving to Dak To, in the Central Highlands. Dak To was to be our forward base and next area of operation. Reports were there was heavy enemy movement in the area. The same day we left Pleiku the battalion set up a perimeter next to the Dak To airstrip.

The next day we choppered out into the hills and made our presence known. We had been humping the hills a few days with no enemy contact. On June 21st, we came across a complex of bunkers – the type of bunkers we couldn't see until we were on top of them, the only kind 'Charlie' made.

These bunkers seemed to be no more than a day old, as the dirt around the bunkers was still damp and had just been abandoned when we arrived.

After we'd found the bunkers, we moved to another location and settled in for the night. That night we were given orders to return to the Dak-To airstrip the next day. We were to get a day or two off, a very much needed rest.

My squad and platoon were to lead the Company back down the hill to our new base. First squad, second platoon were counted on a lot to be the point element. The fellows in the squad were experienced and very capable of leading point for the Company -- maybe even proud of the fact that we were assigned the task.

The next day, about half an hour after daybreak, the first squad started down the trail towards Dak-To. Our point man carried an M-16 rifle. The second man was our Sergeant and squad leader... a leader in every sense of the word. He was confident and respected, demanding the same qualities of his men. The Sergeant carried an M-79 grenade launcher; I carried an M-16 and was the backup for this seven man squad.

We must have travelled 200 meters from the rest of the Company, when a short burst of M-16 rounds went off, followed by an explosion. The explosion was a grenade from the M-79 the Sergeant was carrying. As I proceeded toward the front, the men were hustling back and I was shooting into our left front. There was sporadic fire coming from our front. Seven of us took cover behind a clump of bamboo trees forming a semi-circle position to weigh this sudden development. We were firing our M-16s and holding our own, until we started taking rounds from our left flank.

The enemy fire was beginning to get heavy, to put it mildly -- it was past time to get out. When we picked up to rejoin the Company, we continued to maintain a line

of fire; the second squad had reached us by this time with the rest of the platoon. Our immediate action was to line ourselves facing the left flank and left front. Two M-60 machine guns were in place and began pouring out the fire power. The enemy had fire power of its own and began to use it, as the shooting became intense on both sides. The fire fight was on.



Sky Soldier buddies, all survivors of The Battle of the Slopes, at mini-reunion in Oklahoma. L-R: Sam Stewart, Roger Dick, Walter (Bills) Bills all C/2/503d, and Clarence Johnson A/2/503d.

My squad members were killed instantly from an extremely heavy barrage of fire. I scrambled for better cover and lost contact with the squad and became separated from the rest of the Company. I was out there all alone.

As my mind raced, my throat began to get heavy and tight. I knew my time had come. I couldn't call for help, not with my weapon in my hand. I was going to die as a soldier, an Airborne Soldier. I kept firing my M-16 and crawling my way up towards the platoon.

Before I could get back on line my M-16 jammed and couldn't eject the spent cartridge. I got a bamboo shoot down the barrel but couldn't free the shell casing. I discarded my M-16 and picked up another a few feet away. This weapon was also jammed so I tried to eject the shell casing with the bamboo stick but it was no use.

It was very hard to move out of my position, even though I knew I had to move. After a time I finally managed to rejoin the platoon and get another M-16 and ammunition.

(continued...)



The enemy fire seemed to cover every square foot of our area. This was evidenced by the bodies and weapons lying in what had become half a perimeter. We were taking fire from all sides, except directly behind us. The enemy was coming out of the dense jungle, trying to overtake us. It was now apparent that we were fighting an NVA unit.

Smoke grenades were set out to mark our position for air strike.

RTOs were down, radio communication was becoming nonexistent. One M-60 became silent and the other was so hot it could only sputter out its rounds.

I heard a voice directly behind us shouting out commands. I turned around to see our platoon sergeant on one knee take a round to the side of his face, leaving a deep gash in his cheek. The sergeant didn't seem to be affected in any degree and kept on fighting. We were down to a few men and fast running out of ammunition.

The enemy seemed to let up because of our inability to match their fire, although we were still taking heavy fire. I moved to a different position and joined two other guys, only to be pinned down by sniper fire.

One of our radios was lying about eight feet from me. My intention was to crawl and get the radio, but the man beside me said "Let the radio go." I stopped and in just seconds the radio shattered into pieces. The radio was riddled with bullets as well as the area around the radio, where I would have been had I not stopped.

Our guns had become silent, it was now only a matter of time. The NVA could make their assault at any moment...this was it. We had to take out the sniper or die trying.

We shot a burst of rounds in the area of the sniper and thought we had quieted him. We then started crawling towards the hill we had come down that morning. As we made our way up, we came upon three troopers going in the same direction while dragging two wounded. We helped with the wounded and began to crawl up the steep hill, getting into better cover and what seemed like safety, when the two wounded were hit with many rounds from another sniper. These men died instantly, still in our grasp.



The Slopes in 2011, as viewed from the banks of the Po Ko River. Today, peaceful, beautiful, and quiet.

(Photo by Wambi Cook, A/2/503d)

We fired in the direction of the sniper, which gave us time to find cover of the jungle. I was bringing up the rear, knowing I had only a few rounds left, but the important thing was we were moving up the hill and could hear M-16s going off. Finally, we made contact with the rest of the Company.

Early that evening we had a Company formation for head count. There was one man left from each of the three squads in my platoon. There were 33 men standing in formation June 22, 1967.

My fellow soldiers fighting at the Battle of the Slopes were given standing orders, and every individual met the challenge and many paid the ultimate price for being an American soldier. As a member of the 2nd Platoon, A Company, 503rd Airborne Infantry, I was proud to have stood side-by-side with my fallen comrades -- they were all heroes.



Wayne Cleveland, A/2/503d

I'll admit that even though it was 44 years ago it is still troubling to recall great details of that day.

I was an 18 year old rifleman with A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry. Like many, no most of us, I was just a kid looking for adventure when just out of high school I enlisted. All I wanted was to be a paratrooper and go to Vietnam...just a naïve kid. I was pretty cocky as were most of us because we had won handily every fire fight we had been in at that point.

We spent the night before on top of the mountain in a very sophisticated and recently abandoned NVA base camp. I could smell the enemy in the hole I slept in that night. The next morning we moved down the steep mountain following a well worn path that even had steps carved in it. The point stuck to the path because it was nearly impossible to move off of it. The triple canopy we were dealing with had thick bamboo, then very large trees topped with vines. We really never got direct sunlight.

We were on the march for a very short time when the point made contact. We moved up but found ourselves in sort of a small bowl that offered no cover whatsoever. We could see movement all toward our front and flanks and asked to move back up to better defensible positions, but the word came back that the other rifle platoons were going to move down to assist and the weapons platoon would stay on top of the mountain to fire support.

I was hit with what I believe to be rifle grenade shrapnel almost immediately. The blast wounded several guys, some very seriously, but my wounds were not too bad. I dug a hot piece of lead out of my back and had another small wound in my calf. At this point we were completely engaged and it was clear that we were in trouble.

With no cover and the volume of fire the NVA was laying down we couldn't even get on our knees. One of the things that struck me was the fire was so intense the bamboo was cut down a couple of feet high above my head. To my amazement our platoon sergeant, SFC (I think) Leon Hostack, although wounded in the face and I believe elsewhere was moving around on his knees directing fire and yelling at us to keep the fight up. Why he didn't earn the MOH is a mystery to me.

Air and artillery support was of little help. It seemed to me that a lot of the ordinance was exploding high in the trees and we were so close to the enemy nothing seemed to help. Most of us ran out of ammunition and were taking ammo from our KIA's.

Eventually I got raked by an AK. My rifle was shot out of my hand, my helmet was hit which knocked me face

first in the dirt, and two rounds hit me just below my butt leaving me with a gaping hole in my left leg and entrance wounds in my right. Just after that the guys on my left were overrun. I put my head down and I could hear NVA guys all around. I eventually found the nerve to lift my head and to my surprise three other guys did as well. All of us were wounded and we started quietly crawling away. Most of us were not armed. I only had a frag.



Ricky Sanchez, A/2/503d, survivor of The Slopes

We could hear our guys screaming and then gun shots. The NVA were also talking very loudly, like in a frenzy.

We were crawling very low to the ground because none of us were capable of standing and the vegetation was so thick. After a while it became clear the NVA knew some of us were making it up the hill and we could hear them crashing through the jungle. Fortunately, we made it to a clearing and as I rounded a fallen log I came face to face with a claymore. I recall knocking it down and yelling "Rawhide!", our running password.

The next thing I know I am up on my feet running – interesting what the will to survive will do for you. I recall seeing a friendly throw his rifle down and running down to me. Firing started and everything is pretty cloudy after that.

(continued....)



They eventually lowered chain saws and a clearing was cut large enough to lower baskets and I was lifted off of that hill.

In the aftermath a lot of frankly unbelievable things happened to me. The first medical doctor I saw was a surgeon who happened to go to high school with my older brother. He not only saved my leg but looked after me. Medical care in Nam, then a short hospital stop in Okinawa because I sprung a leak on the med flight to Japan. Then the 106th General Hospital in Yokohama, Japan.

I eventually spent the rest of my time in Hawaii at Schofield Barracks. It think it worth noting, at least to me, that Thomas Ross Poore "Ross", a best friend since school days, fired 105 support for me that day. We're still very close. Also, I would end up working at the US State Department some 38 years later with Ken Smith. Ken, who I didn't know at the time, was a battalion officer who, while circling overhead, called in my med-evac...small world.

I have always recognized how lucky I was to survive that day. I admit often feeling guilty that I survived and so many died and wonder what our country lost thinking of the contributions that those who died that day would of made. I've tried to do them honor by being the best I can be.

I'm blessed to have a wonderful family – a great wife, two kids and seven grand kids. As bad as that day was, and as troubling as it is for me, I know that I am a better person as a result of that terrible experience. I am truly blessed.

Earle "Doc" Jackson, B Med, '66/'67

This photo was taken during the rainy season near Hill 1338.

Dak To was a hell hole. I was TDY with 2nd Batt for a few days after 1338 and again at 875 until we got medic replacements -- the bullies have a hell of a history.



Paul Perkins, A/2/503d survivor of The Slopes



Brave Saga of Four Score Who Fell at Dak To



Dak To, South Vietnam, June 23 (UPI) – A Catholic chaplain offered Mass today at this outpost in South Vietnam's central highland for 76 Americans killed in a savage seven-hour battle with hordes of screaming North Vietnamese regulars. Survivors vowed to avenge their fallen comrades, some of who were wounded and then executed.

Files of bloodied uniforms, boots and steel helmets were stacked nearly within sight of the makeshift altar where the priest prayed for the Americans who had worn them.

Tell-Tale Bullet Holes

The helmets bore small, nasty holes in the back. They had been worn by men of the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade, wounded in the battle Thursday night and then executed by North Vietnamese who stripped their bodies of food and weapons.

A U.S. military spokesman in Saigon later said American casualties from the battle rose to 80 killed and 34 wounded. Joseph Fried, staff correspondent of *The News*, reported. Enemy dead were estimated at 475.

Survivors of A Company sat in the sun, gazed at the ridgeline where the battle was fought, waited for replacements and promised to take revenge on the Communists.

Capt. David A. Milton, 28, of Dallas Tex., the A Company commander, said the battle was fought in the worst jungle he had seen in Vietnam.

"Initially we thought we had run into five or six Viet Cong," Milton said. "I don't think we ran into an ambush. I think we just bumped into at least a battalion or two."

Attack after Screaming Attack

"You have no idea of the fights that took place up there. Those men took three banzi-type attacks on the first perimeter and we took one on the hill. They (the Communists) screamed bloody murder when they attacked."

The men were excellent and there was always somebody in command down there. At one point, I was talking to three PFC's on three radios. They had apparently taken over the platoon. There is no way to convey to the folks back home what they did there. They took on 800 fresh, brand new north Vietnamese troops and killed over half of them."



Forward Observer

on Hill 1338

FO A-Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Artillery

On the 20th of June 1967, we came upon an area near Hill 1338 where over 300 fresh bunkers were discovered. There were fresh footprints throughout the area; but the enemy was not to be seen. In the heavy jungle with its triple canopy, it left all of us with the eerie feeling which would not pass during the night.

The morning of the 21st the CO sent out patrols to sweep our company area as we prepared for the day's activities. Helicopters were coming in and they dropped off two large canisters of CS gas. Our mission was to spread out the CS gas and prepare to depart the area for Dak To which could be seen from our position.

Late in the afternoon hot chow was delivered by the helicopters and we prepared to sit down to a hot meal when our CO called my FO and me over to join him with dinner. Father Watters had become totally dehydrated and was ordered to leave the AO on the next available chopper. Watters reluctantly obeyed the order knowing that he could not serve any more useful purpose for the men that night. It was a very restless night.

When dawn broke on the 22nd, patrols were sent out and we began filling in our positions from the night before. The point squad was sent out about 50 meters in front of the company as 2 line platoons were followed by the CP and one line platoon. Weapons platoon was in the rear as we began our descent. Descent was steep but made a lot easier because of the steps that were cut into the mountainside.

Silence was shattered by a large explosion and heavy small arms fire. The point squad had made contact and was knocked out immediately. My FO and I immediately charged down the hill when we encountered intensive small arms fire. We began adjusting artillery to within 35 meters of our lines.

Sergeant Hostack ordered us to check fire as there was air support on station. We could not hear the jets as they came screaming in to drop their ordnance until they had passed our position. Complete chaos ensued as 500 lb. bombs struck the ground and intense small arms fire was popping all around us. We braced ourselves for another charge by the NVA. After holding off three charges we were low on ammo and too many Sky Soldiers were either wounded or dead. Hostack ordered us to pull back, ***“Grab the wounded, weapons and ammo and get back up the hill to the CP!”***

I grabbed my rifle, and a wounded trooper whose leg was shattered, and headed back up the hill. Slipping and falling it felt like hours before I reached the summit and dropped off my wounded trooper. Hostack and I again started heading back down to find more wounded. When I first headed up the hill I came upon another trooper whose knee looked as if it was blown off. I told him that I would return.

I found that trooper and grabbed hold of him to carry him back up the hill. My RTO was there helping me as we climbed when all of a sudden he yelled, “Look to your right!” Standing there was a NVA who was lowering his AK-47 and pointing it at me. I dropped the paratrooper and spun to my right diving for the ground when a round tore through my right collarbone. The pain was intense as I got off a burst of rounds at the NVA. Not seeing the NVA I began dragging the wounded trooper with my left arm, pulling him to the top of the summit. When I reached the CP I looked down at my Sky Soldier and realized that he was dead.



106th General Hospital

The medic worked on me and they choppered me out to B-Med at Dak To. They patched me up and flew me to the Mash Unit in Pleiku. There they worked on me and stabilized me for the flight to Japan. I was put into the 106th General Hospital in the Pre-Op ward.

(Report from *Sky Soldier*, Spring 2007, Vol. XXII, No. 1)
The author's name did not appear in connection with this report.



Killed in Action, Kontum Province, Vietnam, June 22, 1967

Terry Lee Odis Allen, A Co.
Erling Alton Anderson, 39th Scout Dog Plt.
James Arnold, A Co.
William Joseph Boehm, A Co.
Ervin L. Burns, A Co.
Albert Butler, Jr., A Co.
Darrell Wayne Butts, A Co.
Carlín Martin Campbell, Jr., A Co.
Ronald Cleveland Clark, A Co.
Thorne M. Clark, III, A Co.
Vernon Terry Cochran, A Co.
Jack Lester Cripe, A Co.
Lloyd Dwain De Loach, A Co.
Lester Michael De Riso, A Co.
Charles Orvis Deedrick, Jr., A Co.
Thomas Alfred Deschenes, A Co.
Thomas Benedict Duffy, Jr., A Co.
Timothy James Egan, A Co.
James Richard Emmert, A Co.
Russel Warren Engle, A Co.
Bobby Lee Finney, A Co.
Burrell Gibson, A Co.
Kenneth Lawrence Greene, A Co.
David Junior Heller, HHC
Alvin Gene Hill, A Co.
Doyle Holcomb, A Co.
Richard E. Hood, Jr., A Co.
Vins Ronald Hooper, A Co.
David E. Johnson, A Co.
Harry J. Johnson, A Co.
Richard Bruce Johnston, A Co.
Richard J. Johnston, A Co.
Donald R. Judd, A Co.
Stephen Allen Kelly, A Co.
Kenneth Kawika Lima, A Co.
Frederick Hugo Liminga, HHC
Robert Richard Litwin, A Co.
Jimmy Clint Lowry, A Co.
Gary Allen Luttrell, A Co.
Walter Christian Mayer, A Co.
Ellia A. McBride, Jr., A Co.
William Stanley McBroom, A Co.
Frank McCray, Jr., A Co.
John McEachin, Jr., A Co.
Stephen Adam Mika, A Co.
Donald Martin Munden, A Co.
William Arthur Munn, A Co.
Timothy John Murphy, A Co.



Daniel Lee Negro, A Co.
Jerry Lynn Noe, A Co.
Michael Donald O'Connor, A Co.
George Patton, HHC
John Perry Patton, A Co.
Nguyễn Phúc, 2/503 Bn Scout
George Albert Poor, Jr., A Co.
Leonard Burton Poore, A Co.
Robert Lee Preddy, A Co.
Floyd Elmer Quarles, A Co.
Ralph Joseph Rizzi, A Co.
Trine Romero, Jr., A Co.
Hector Mario Saenz, A Co.
James Walter Sanford, A Co.
Warren H. Schrobilgen, Jr., A Co.
Jeffrey Ross Sexton, A Co.
John Sharber, Jr., A Co.
Lloyd Edgar Smith, A Co.
Charles Harry Snow, A Co.
Johnson Augustus Steidler, A Co.
David Allen Stephens, A Co.
David Richard Stephenson, A Co.
Robert Louis Stevens, Jr., A Co.
Edmond Ceasar Sutton, A Co.
Fa'Asaviliga V. Tafao, A Co.
Larry Burns Turner, A Co.
Daniel Viramontes Valdez, A Co.
Charlie Lewis Walker, A Co.
Willie Craig Warren, 173d Eng. Co.
Michael J. Waterman, A Co.
Edwin Jerome Williams, A Co.
Alexander C. Zsigo, Jr., A Co.

Other 173d KIA - Operation Greeley

June 21, 1967

Jimmy Lee Cook, C Co.
Clifford W. Leathers, Jr., E-Troop

June 23, 1967

Ellis A. McBride, Jr., B Co.

June 27, 1967

Michael Parker, HHC

Source:

<http://virtualwall.org/ipanels/ipan22e.htm>



~ ONE DAY IN TIME ~



Freedom Birds coming and going down the
air strip
One day in time
We all made the trip.

Some apprehensive and some GUNG HO
This place, This dimension
We did not know.

Those were the days when people changed
Boys became men, and men became boys
Shooting and killing with
Their weapons
Their toys.

The question in our minds
What is right
What is wrong
WHY ME.

This gauntlet of hate
Of love
Of fear

This passage of life, the end is so near
(Yet closing in on tomorrow).

This place, This time
Scorned by man
The torment and pain born in this land
(The twilight zone).

During the day we fought for the cause
Our lives
Our peace of mind
And sitting at night blinded by the darkness
Wondering.

Will I see the family I left behind
My Father, My Mother
My Sister, my Brother
“Will I see my girl, waiting desperately for me.”

Listen to the freedom birds flying out of sight
overhead
Coming and going
Carrying the living and the dead.

Look at yourself and look into the Wall
(Memorial)
There is no start
There is no finish
We live with it and we die with it
(one and all).

If you know; if you were there
The reflection of friendship we dared not share.
For losing a buddy was too hard to bare.

Look into the Wall.
And tell him

I wished you knew you were my best friend
“My buddy”
I will never forget you.

My friend died on the 19th but the book says the
20th and I wondered why,
I tried to remember, was it yesterday we
arrived?

I know in my heart they are not dead, but lost
forever, not today or tomorrow,
“but just one-day in time.”

In recognition of my best friend, my buddy,
James Nothern, from Credence, Arkansas.

Not dead but forever lost, November 19th, 1967
on a hill far away.

“One Day in Time”

Les Daughtridge, Jr.
C/2/503d

On the Wall

**James William
Nothern, Jr**

**Specialist Four
C CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Clarendon, Arkansas
June 16, 1947 to November 20, 1967
JAMES W. NOTHERN Jr is on the Wall
at Panel 30E Line 046**



173d Airborne Brigade Memorial

Fort Benning, GA



Photos taken by Dave Milton, A/2/503d, on day of dedication of the Memorial, June 1, 2010.

