

(I cannot call them ‘Afghans’)



I've had a few inquiries lately for the throws we sold last year. I don't have any on hand but will place ONE MORE order for them. This is the LAST CALL for these so please spread the word.

When we first decided to make them available it was to raise money for a welcome home party after OEF X (that never developed). We donated all of the proceeds to charities which help the Wounded Warriors and used at least 85% of all funds towards helping the Wounded Warriors and not for admin costs. At that time they were available for \$40.00 plus \$9.95 for shipping.

Since we are not in fund raising mode anymore they will be \$40.00 each. If there are any proceeds over the cost of the throws and shipping they will be donated to Defenders of Freedom. Why Defenders of Freedom? Because they have supported many of the ROCK Paratroopers and continue to do so. And because they fall within the guidelines of not having admin costs over 15%.

If you are interested in one of the 2/503 throws please contact me.

**Leta Carruth**

[tankerbabelc@gmail.com](mailto:tankerbabelc@gmail.com)

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**Note:** On 11 January 2011, CSM Loren Storjohann and Honorary Colonel Ken Smith of the 503rd Regiment, announced the designation of Leta as **Honorary Member of the Regiment** *“for providing sustained physical, moral and substantive support to the warriors of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment from 2007 forward,”* by Order of the Secretary of the Army. Ed

**~ Advertising Policy ~**

Our policy remains to run no for-profit ads in our newsletter, with the exceptions of books written by Sky Soldiers about the Vietnam War, and books written by 503rd troopers covering WWII, which are run free of charge.

***"War hath no fury like  
a non-combatant."***

~ Charles Edward Montague



## GREAT WAR MOVIES

A couple of stories grabbed me in last month's newsletter.

First, the one guy talking about how one of his buddies killed himself. Over the Memorial weekend, I watched a lot of great war movies, among them was, *"The Best Years of Our Lives."* The film deals with soldiers who have returned home and the problems they face. I just saw an article in today's paper about some guy due to return home whose wife wants a divorce; she had cleaned-out their bank account and moved out. So, he gets to return to that and an empty apartment.

The other story, and this is not the first of these, was the sister seeking info on her brother who was killed in November '67.

Also watched *"Apocalypse Now Redux"* and noticed that the Martin Sheen character was in the Herd at one time; he wore the Herd's patch in the movie. Then watched *"Kelly's Heroes"*, one of my favorite WWII flicks.

When we were in the LURP company, my pards and I would go into Bien Hoa and around Long Bien and 'borrow' army jeeps. We would then take them to some jet jockeys we hooked up with on the airbase and would trade them for really nice survival gear which we used in the bush. Don't ask me what they did with the jeeps.

When we were in the LURP Company, our base camp was outside of Bien Hoa; we were responsible of course for guarding our section of the berm surrounding the Long Binh airbase. At our camp we had jump platforms with sawdust pits to practice PLF's, and, we had our own jump tower; it was kinda like a mini-bunji jump in harness.

Anyway, one time, we stole the eagle statue from the 101st (I had mixed feelings about this caper as I was One-O-One stateside). We put the eagle in the 'jump door' of our jump tower!! The Screaming Eagles failed to see the humor in that. We were basically juvenile delinquents with stripes and guns!

**Steve 'SGT Rock' Vargo**  
C/2/503d



The famous *Screaming Eagles* or, as those of us who served with the 101st Airborne Division occasionally refer to ourselves (beer is often involved)...the *Pucking Buzzards*. God forbid a Leg call us that. Ed

**Note:** "While filming *Apocalypse*, the 38-year-old Sheen suffered a heart attack, and over the next few years he reassessed his life, ending his use of drugs, cutting back on alcohol, and becoming much more politically active."



Sheen, in *Apocalypse Now* wearing Ranger Tab

### Dialogue from opening scenes in the movie:

(A hung-over Capt. Willard – Martin Sheen)

Soldier: *"Captain Willard? Are you in there?"*

Willard: *"Yeah."*

Willard (voice over): *"It was a real choice mission, and when it was over, I'd never want another."*

Willard: *"Whaddya want?"*

Soldier: *"Are you all right Captain?"*

Willard: *"How does it look like?"*

Soldier: *"Captain Willard of 505 battalion, 173rd Airborne, assigned SOG?"*

Willard: *"Hey buddy, are you gonna shut the door?"*

Soldier: *"We have orders to escort you to the airfield."*

Willard: *"What are the charges?"*



# And More Reunions of the Airborne Kind



**503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team  
Association WWII**, September 21 – 25, 2011, Denver,  
Colorado.

**Contact:**  
Yolonda Goad  
Tel: 303-682-0004  
Eml: [yolo@live.com](mailto:yolo@live.com)

## *“The Year of the Pathfinder”*

**July 19-23, 2001**

**2011 Convention**

*Sponsored by the  
National Pathfinder Association*



**Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**Contact:**  
[nationalpathfinderassociation.com](http://nationalpathfinderassociation.com)



2/503d practice jump '66 in RVN.  
Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d

**AIRBORNE....AND THEN SOME!!**



**11th Airborne Division Association**, 68th Reunion,  
September 25 - 29, 2011 Tucson, Arizona.

**Contact:**  
Charles Magro  
Tel: 256-247-7390



**506th Association Rendezvous**, (Fort Campbell),  
November 8 – 11, 2011, Oak Grove, Kentucky.

**Contact:**  
COL Sean M. Jenkins  
Tel: 270-439-1499



**82nd Airborne Division 65th Annual Convention**,  
August 10 – 14, 2011, Dayton, Ohio.

**Contact:**  
Tel: 937-898-5977  
Eml: [srgabn@aol.com](mailto:srgabn@aol.com)



**101st Airborne Division Association 66th Annual  
Reunion**, August 17 – 21, 2011, Lexington, Kentucky.

**Contact:**  
Tel: 931-431-0199

**Note:** If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne  
Reunions please send details to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

See Pages 11-12 for Lurps & Rangers Reunion  
details.

See Page 17 for WWII 503rd reunion in Savannah,  
GA



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# An invitation to all Vets

## 4th Annual Tandem for Troops Skydiving Event!

If you have always wanted to skydive, here is an opportunity to do so. During this one weekend, disabled Vets get 1 FREE tandem jump, video, and pictures (of your experience), food and fun. All other Vets (and their families) receive a discounted rate.

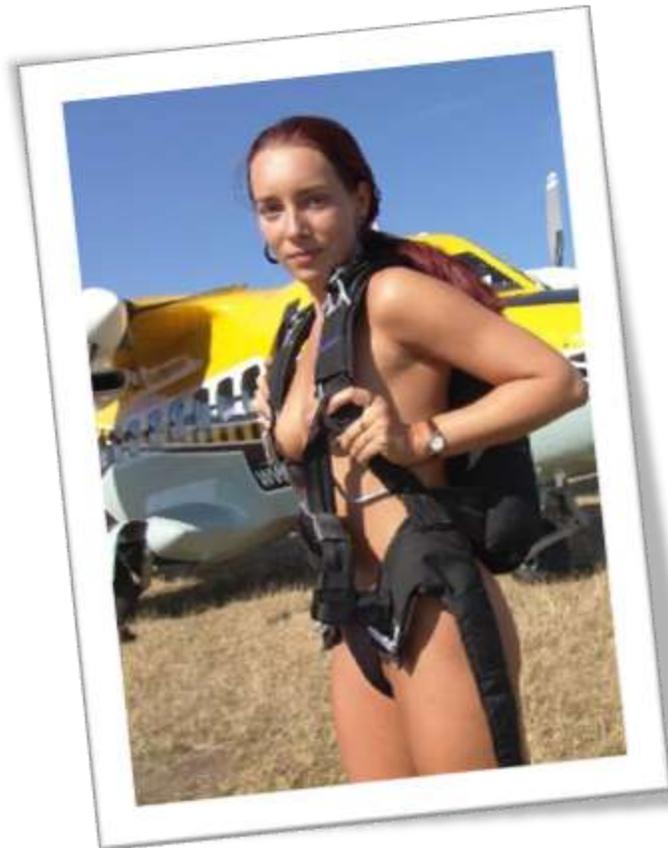
This wonderful event is put on by Skydive Midwest. The owner, Keith, is a former Marine, yet again giving to his country.

**Location:**  
**Skydive Midwest**  
**Sturtevant, WI**

**Dates:**  
**16-17 July, 2011**

**Call now to reserve your time:**  
**Skydive Midwest at (877) 348-3688.**

[Notice sent in by Bob "Ragman" Getz, Task Force CO, 2/503d, but not the photo)]



Now, we're not sure if this is the jumpmaster, but I'm calling in my reservation now. *One-thousand one, one-thousand two, one-thousand three.... Can we count to a hundred?* Ed

*I wanna be an Airborne Ranger,  
I want my wife to yell at me  
and call me an idiot cause I got  
drunk on cheap California wine  
and went out and had this tattoo  
put on my arm and I'll probably  
never get any again, ever.*



William C. Vose, Esq., Capt., A/HHC/2/503d, '66/'67, Chief Assistant State Attorney in Florida, displaying his new Ranger tattoo. His lovely bride, Roberta, was heard to say, "He's such a cutie."

(Photo by Woody Davis, A/2/503d)



## 23% of Disability Claims Processed Incorrectly

May 21, 2011 • Ben Krause

Ten years ago, the VA Inspector General didn't investigate veterans' allegations of VA misconduct. At that time the VA IG's office investigated only veterans that purportedly made false claims. Now, the VA Inspector General estimates 23% of veterans' disability claims were "processed incorrectly."

In that the VA's General Counsel recently admitted to a Supreme Court Justice that 60-70% of the veterans' disability claims denied by the Board of Veterans Appeals were "in error" and wrongfully decided, the VA IG's estimate would seem somewhat shy of the truth. The plain truth is that the VA's disability claims process is not the Due Process that the Constitution guarantees as *justice for all* citizens and non-citizens alike. When "damage control" and "stonewalling" are recognized as "conspiracy to defraud" and "obstruction of justice" it will be apparent to all that 100% of the VA's quasi-judicial disability decisions were wrongfully decided.

Source:

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/05/va-audit-23-percent-of-disability-claims-incorrectly-processed/>

## 2012 Retiree COLA Update

Terry Howell – *Military Advantage* - May 20, 2011

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the national inflation rate is still trending upward. Of course anyone who has been grocery shopping lately could tell you that, but, the BLS reports that the Consumer Price Index for April is up 0.8 percent over the March CPI, which bodes well for COLA in 2012. This is important for military retirees, and those drawing VA benefits, because the CPI is the indicator used to determine the annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) and adjustments to VA Disability and Compensation, Vets Pension, and other VA rates for the following year.

Source:

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/05/2012-military-retiree-cola-update/#ixzz1NNmdbCQ0>>

*"The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living."*

~ General Omar Bradley



Downtown Bien Hoa, January 1966

## Coming and going to Vietnam: A 1970 documentary

CBS News May 26, 2011

In 1970, five years after the troop buildup in the Vietnam War began, American servicemen were still being drafted and shipped to war at the rate of about 12 planeloads a week. At the time, the entire country was gnarled in a great debate over the war and whether the sacrifice of these young Americans was worth the fight.

So, Mike Wallace boarded a commercial Super DC-8, chartered by the military and bound for Bien Hoa airport near what was then called Saigon, to ask the freshly drafted soldiers what they thought of this war they were told to fight. After they arrived, he boarded a plane back to the U.S. with a group of war-weary troops who just finished their year-long tour in Vietnam. The result is a fascinating documentary-style look at the soldier's state-of-mind in 1970 America.

See the video at: [www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803\\_162-20066518-10391709.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803_162-20066518-10391709.html)



Downtown Bien Hoa today



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# 404th Radio Research Detachment (Airborne) Operations 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)



**404th RRD (Abn) Base Camp Perimeter Sign**

Every time the detachment moved, and it moved a lot, it left two men behind to recover equipment. At least a dozen men were scattered throughout the Central Highlands (*An Khe, Ban Me Thout, Bien Hoa, Dak To, Kontum, Pleiku, and Tuy Hoa*) with that job.

Additionally, three PRD-1 radio direction finding sets were loaned to the Americal Division (Provisional) Radio Research Company. Another three PRD-1 sets were loaned to the 371st Radio Research Company in support of the 1st Cavalry Division. The 404th retained no PRD-1. The Americal Division was operating in the southern I CTZ and the 1st Cavalry Division operating adjacent to the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam. Two of the detachment's 5 kW generators had been traded to an engineer unit in the 9th Division operating in the Delta area of Vietnam in exchange for a refrigerator. A deadlined truck was hand-receipted to the Air Force on Tan Son Nhut Air Base located outside of Saigon in return for spare parts. And there was an AR 15-6 investigation for 512 missing classified documents.

In October, 1967, the 173d Airborne Brigade with the 4th Infantry Division moved (*Operations Greeley and MacArthur*) to counter troop concentrations by the 1st and 10th North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Divisions near Kontum. This was a two-month battle in which reportedly 170,000 artillery rounds were fired by US artillery and the Air Force flew 3,000 air support sorties of which 300 were B-52 bombing runs. Tragically, one 500 pound bomb was mistakenly dropped on a 173d Brigade unit killing 42 paratroopers. One of the bloodiest battles of the war (*Operation MacArthur*) took place in the Central Highlands near Dak To, 03 to 22

November 1967. About 4,500 troops of the 173d Airborne Brigade and the 4th Infantry Division faced 6,000 North Vietnamese troops of the well trained and experienced NVA 174th Infantry Regiment entrenched in a complex of fortified bunkers on Hill 875, near the Dak To and Ben Het Special Forces Camps. (Photo at right is from *Life Magazine* - Memorial service with 98 pairs of boots, one pair for each man of the 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade who died on Hill 875).



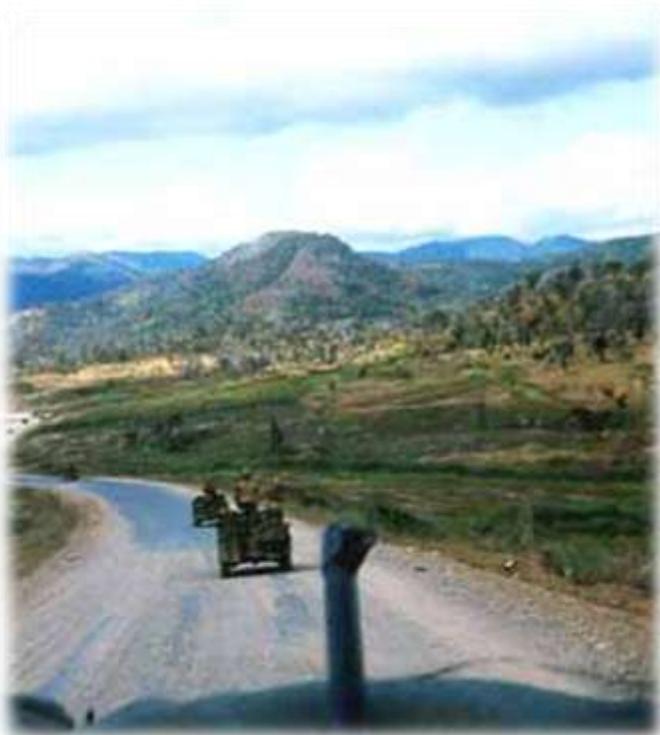
On 19 November, the 2nd and 4th Battalions of the 503rd Infantry were ordered to "move onto and clear Hill 875." They captured the summit on 23 November. The ferocity of the action is the subject of several books about the battle. Three Medals of Honor were awarded during the eight day battle and both battalions received the Presidential Unit Citation. The North Vietnamese were forced to withdraw across the Cambodian border reportedly with 1,500 to 2,000 dead and 3,000 wounded. US casualties numbered 285 killed and 985 wounded. The 404th RRD (Abn) and other Radio Research units were acknowledged for accurately pinpointing and assessing the commitment of the 1st NVA Division's reserve 174th NVA regiment and its flanking maneuver well before the battle. The 174th end run was not a surprise to senior commanders.

The 173d Airborne Brigade fought in Dak To, Kontum, Pleiku, and Phu Bon Provinces in late October and throughout November. The 404th RRD (Abn) was with them. It was monsoon season during the November, 1967 battle for Dak To and the entire 173d Airborne Brigade was buried in mud. The detachment's equipment was submerged, the radio intercept operators often sat in mud inside the S-144 equipment shelters. Unit personnel stacked wooden pallet upon pallet inside the tents to prevent the equipment from sinking into oblivion.

The only vehicles able to traverse the red mire were fully tracked engineering bulldozers needed to pull the detachment's wheeled vehicles out of the mud onto roads and parking platforms. There was so much mud that unless an enemy mortar round scored a direct hit it did no damage, the mud absorbed the explosion.

(continued...)





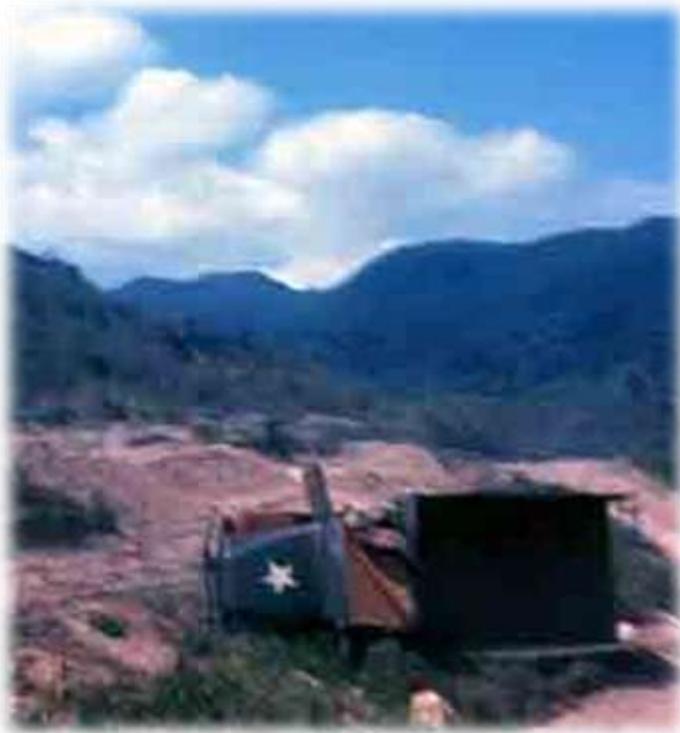
**A 404th RRD (Abn) convoy in the vicinity of Mang Yang Pass, Route 19. Object lower center on hood of vehicle is fabricated to cut garrote wires strung across roads by the enemy.**

Fortunately, the detachment's soldiers, mostly young privates on their first enlistment, found gallows humor in their predicament and pulled everything together.

Fourteen detachment trucks among hundreds of other vehicles drove in a convoy 150 miles east from Dak To to Tuy Hoa on Route 19. Route 19 bisected the treacherous Dak Pihao mountains including the Mang Yang and An Khe passes. The Man Yang Pass, a narrow slit in the mountains, was the ambush alley written about by the French journalist Bernard Fall in his classic book *"The Street Without Joy"*. The Communists regularly ambushed military traffic on Highway 19 since 1953 when the French were fighting the Viet Minh. Every convoy passed the military cemetery at the top of the northern rim of the pass. The cemetery contains hundreds of graves from the ambush of the French Group Mobile 100 in June 1954. It was reported by Fall that the Viet Minh buried the French soldiers only to their waist, facing toward France, the upper portions of their bodies fully exposed before the French Army later conducted a proper burial. It was a story often repeated.

*Deadman's Curve*, named so because of the many casualties that convoys suffered there is located a few kilometers west of the Mang Yang Pass. It is a sharp, 'S' curve that forces convoys to slow to 5 mph. Tall gray tree trunks denuded of all branches and leaves by daily bombing, napalming, defoliating, and shelling, as well as seemingly millions of rounds of small arms fire, stood like eerie sentinels. Despite the daily pounding, a steep

thick jungle underbrush covered both sides of the highway creating the worst ambush site in Vietnam. South and immediately opposite the curve a forest covered mountain rising 1,000 feet over the road, offered the Viet Cong a perfect ambush site and they fired constantly on the 173d convoy. Only one detachment vehicle completed the convoy without being towed. Most were hit by small arms fire or shrapnel from mortars and roadside explosive devices or mines planted every night and swept every day. Fortunately, there were no hits by B40 rockets.



**A 173d Airborne Brigade M35 truck destroyed by enemy improvised explosive device or mine, circa February, 1968.**

The most frequent cause of breakdown during the convoy was burned out brakes caused because most drivers were not trained as truck drivers (they were electronic equipment operators) to engine brake with lower gears when descending the mountains. Instead they laid on the brakes when carrying three times the authorized weight for both truck and trailer. The front wheels fell off several trucks because the wheel bearings had not been repacked for at least six months, since submerged in the mud at Dak To, and probably not since they left Fort Campbell in 1965. That no one lost their life or was seriously injured was providential.

The 173d Airborne Brigade incurred considerable combat losses during the battles in the Central Highlands.

(continued...)



Losses were compounded by the exceptionally heavy monsoon rains that occurred at the same time. Combat support and service was overwhelmed. After the culminating battle for Dak To, in November and December 1967, the brigade was redeployed to Phu Hiep village near Tuy Hoa City on the coast of Vietnam. The chief purpose of the move was to allow the 173d to recover, rehabilitate, and repair from the battle.

It wasn't only the 404th suffering from a lack of maintenance. It took the 173d Brigade ten days to recover all of its vehicles strung out between the 200 miles from Kontum to Dak To to Tuy Hoa. During the operational difficulty at Dak To in which the brigade's commanding general directly addressed the executive officer of the 313th RR Battalion, the general pointed out that the brigade was in as bad a condition as the 404th and that there was no assistance that he could render, but the general demanded better cryptologic support – in particular the general wanted more airborne radio direction finding intelligence and LLVI teams. Combat creates such paradoxes.

Upon arrival at Tuy Hoa and with the seaside base camp barely established, a typhoon hit the area and destroyed most of the tentage and inundated the brigade's equipment with salt water from the storm surge. The base camp sat in 6 to 12 inches of salt water for over a week. The logistics was so poor that the damaged tentage was used for another three months which explained the jerry rigged canvas, cardboard, and plywood shelters erected inside the medium general purpose squad tents. That same typhoon also hit the adjacent Air Force Base at Tuy Hoa. Detachment personnel scrounged the base garbage dump and recovered better tentage discarded by the Air Force than issued by the Army. With a little mending by Vietnamese sail makers the detachment got by.

In late January 1968, about a month after the typhoon, with the brigade in the middle of refitting, the enemy launched their Tet Offensive. The enemy attacked the cities in Central Vietnam, Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Tuy Hoa / Phu Hiep as well as cities in the central coastal and highland areas that lay within the Communist 5th Military Region. The other cities to the south, that included Saigon, were attacked 24 hours later early on 31 January.

Radio Research and Military Intelligence units throughout Vietnam alerted their support combat commanders to pending local attacks, but MACV couldn't put the nationwide offensive together into a strategic picture until it was obvious.

Fortunately, the Tet Offensive lost its element of total surprise because the North Vietnamese changed calendars the previous August. North Vietnamese leaders ordered the offensive to be launched on the night of the first day of Tet and to take all objectives by total

surprise on the first day. For an unknown reason, the North Vietnamese Army Supreme Command was not aware that there were different dates for Tet between North and South Vietnam. Most North Vietnamese Army units in the Communist 5th Military Region (*adjacent to North Vietnam*) used the North Vietnamese calendar and conducted their attacks on 30 January. But the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units in the south attacked on 31 January.

A week before what was later called the Nationwide Tet Offensive, the 404th RRD (Abn) accurately analyzed and predicted that portion the Tet Offensive against An Khe and Tuy Hoa cities. The 173d was well prepared in defensive positions to counter the attacks. Several hundred Viet Cong were killed attacking the 173d positions near Phu Hiep village and hundreds more were killed fighting the 173d and especially Company D, 16th Armor, in bitter hand-to-hand fighting in Tuy Hoa city. The initial Tet attack was not a big event for the 173d. What remained of the enemy gave up and went away.



**404th RRD mascot – "Banana" circa April 1968**

During Tet, 173d Airborne Brigade task forces were also sent to relieve the Special Forces camps at Kontum and Dak To and then to the Pleiku-Ban Me Thout area. Two-man LLVI and ARDF relay teams from the 404th RRD (Abn) accompanied each brigade task force for weeks at a time. At one point the 404th base camp was the only 173d Airborne Brigade unit left at Phu Hiep and fortunately tied into and provided very sanitized intelligence support to the 26th Republic of Korea (ROK) Infantry Regiment's perimeter.

*(continued....)*



The Commanding General of the 173d explained, “*I can leave Company D, 16th Armor, but I don’t have any more troops; listen to this area (Phu Yen Province and Tuy Hoa city) and keep the Koreans out of trouble.*”

During Tet, Tuy Hoa was the single major city in Vietnam which enemy forces could not penetrate the defensive perimeter. The 404th was cited by the brigade’s commanding general for providing the early warning necessary to prevent an enemy success there. During the next several months, the enemy tried several times to capture Tuy Hoa city until his regimental sized unit was unequivocally destroyed. Remaining combat elements of the 5th NVA Division and its entrenched headquarters were annihilated during a single battle in April during which 200 NVA were killed and 17 taken prisoner. Not a single member of the regiment escaped. That victory was directly attributed to the 404th and earned an enlisted analyst assigned to the unit, the Legion of Merit Medal for Achievement. The medal was presented by the Commanding General, 173d Airborne Brigade, after the Colonel commanding the 26th ROK Regiment thanked the commanding general for the 404th help.

By late January, the brigade’s rear element previously at Bien Hoa moved to the main brigade base camp now established at Camp Radcliff, An Khe, and the 404th moved its base camp from Tuy Hoa also to An Khe.



**A portion of the 173d Airborne Brigade’s Camp Radcliff at An Khe (or the 4th ID’s Camp Enari at Pleiku). The reddish tint is the result of red dust blown up by helicopters into everything.**

By February 1968, the 173d Airborne Brigade was located along the 100 miles of Route 14 from Kontum to Pleiku to Ban Me Thout and along 150 miles of Route

19 from Pleiku to An Khe to Qui Nhon as well as conducting operations to the west of Tuy Hoa. The 404th had elements located in Dak To, Ban Me Thout, Kontum, Pleiku, An Khe, and Tuy Hoa / Phu Hiep.

During April, 1968, the 173d Airborne Brigade was assigned expanded operational areas at Bong Son (LZ English), An Khe, Tuy Hoa and along Route 19 East. In addition to its airborne infantry battalions, an artillery and combat support battalion and other assigned and attached units of company and detachment size, the brigade included an armor battalion, a cavalry squadron, and an attached mechanized infantry battalion.

The brigade’s personnel strength approached 6,000 men, half the size of an infantry division and frequently operated in a box-shaped area of responsibility 150 miles to a side (22,500 square miles – larger than ten states back home). The 404th supported the entire brigade and was spread so far that the mail runs took over a week and still missed many soldiers. At least twenty percent of the men assigned to the detachment had never met one another.

Aside from supporting the brigade in its several head-to-head tactical operations against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, the detachment also provided area coverage (*general support*) for Phu Yen Province, of an NVA division headquarters, a separate regiment, a Viet Cong main force battalion, and local Viet Cong infrastructure units. The large area of responsibility, constant relocation, and untenable transportation combined to make the detachment unlocatable by either the 313th RR Battalion or the 509th RR Group for weeks at a time. For that matter neither the 173d Airborne Brigade headquarters nor the IFFV could locate battalion size units of the 173d for several days during this period.

Fortunately the detachment was able to refurbish with new and repaired equipment at Bong Son (LZ English) in May 1968. The detachment reported Readiness Condition C2. The 404th Radio Research Detachment (Airborne) is now thought to be one of the most decorated company size units in the US Army. The 404th was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for Bien Hoa, six times awarded the Army Meritorious Unit Citation, and awarded fifteen campaign silver bands. When last seen, before ASA predictably lost it, the 404th Radio Research Detachment (Airborne) guidon staff was filled from top to bottom with silver citation and campaign bands. [*The lineage is passed to the 404th Military Intelligence Company activated in the Regular Army 16 June 2000 at Menwith Hill, England*].

(continued...)



Brigadier General Leo H. Schweiter, Commanding General of the 173d Airborne Brigade talked with 404th analysts practically every day. The general lauded the 404th RRD (Abn) for using COMINT and COMSEC operations to prevent a battalion of the 503rd Infantry from walking into a regimental size ambush and for its superb support during Dak To.

Brigadier General Richard J. Allen commended the detachment for allowing the 173d Airborne Brigade to constantly outmaneuver enemy forces and saving the lives of many Sky Troopers. Both Generals, Schweiter and Allen, approved SP4 Minnock's Legion of Merit Medal following the destruction of the 5th North Vietnamese Division Headquarters. Infantry battalion and company commanders routinely visited the 404th detachment to express appreciation and thanks for critical support by the LLVI teams and ARDF.

This report acknowledges the officers and NCOs of the 313th Radio Research Battalion for assistance rendered during the period of this report and also Captain John Moon, Military Intelligence, 173d Airborne Brigade, for his consistent support to the 404th RRD (Abn) as well as his exceptional use of the detachment's Special Intelligence. Generals Schweiter and Allen understood how to use the detachment to multiply combat power – they made the detachment's excellence meaningful.

#### **Footnote:**

Reportedly, it was determined years later that lacking sufficient storage containers for 3,400 classified documents, the missing 512 documents had been stored with another unit and subsequently certified destroyed. No one then in the unit recalled that transaction and there were no document receipts. That can't be worse than another Radio Research unit that used classified documents for toilet paper in pit toilets.

### **SP5 Edward Minnock 404th Radio Research Detachment 173d Airborne Brigade**

#### **~ Legion of Merit ~**

SP5 Edward Minnock enlisted in the Army in September of 1966 and deployed to Vietnam as a member of the 404th Radio Research Detachment, attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). As a private, he was the acting Operations Sergeant for the 404th, a position normally held by a sergeant first class.



On 27 March 1968, he began to notice that the incoming information pointed to an enemy attack on Tuy Hoa City within the next ten days. He directed his soldiers to concentrate their efforts on the forthcoming operation. Within five days, Private Minnock had produced a comprehensive tactical analysis and prediction of how and when the enemy would attack. Private Minnock briefed the brigade and subordinate commanders, as well as the commander of a Korean regiment and his American advisor. In order to gain credibility with the Korean commander, Private Minnock impersonated a captain because he believed that the Korean officer would not listen to an enlisted man.

Private Minnock accurately predicted which units comprised the enemy force, their size, the time of the attack, the routes of advance and withdrawal, and the primary targets of the assault. The targets included two important bridges, the city prison, the American airfield, and a South Vietnamese artillery battalion located in the city. Private Minnock's information resulted in the postponement of an offensive operation by the Korean regiment, allowing them to act as a reserve during the enemy attack, and the repositioning of other key forces. He also accurately predicted the new location of the 5th North Vietnamese Army Division Headquarters. He then coordinated and directed the bombing of the headquarters by two 175-millimeter artillery shells and eight 500-pound bombs, thus seriously degrading the enemy's command and control capability. Subsequent intelligence gathered during and after the battle confirmed the startling accuracy of Private Minnock's predictions.

As a direct result of his efforts, the enemy was soundly defeated with minimal friendly casualties. His truly remarkable achievement is a textbook example of the difference that can be made in the outcome of a combat action by the initiative of one individual soldier. Private Minnock's contributions are doubly impressive given his relative age and inexperience.



**For his actions, Private Minnock was decorated with the Legion of Merit, the only private ever to hold that honor.**

Source:

<http://www.a2zcomputerworks.com/asa/asapgs/hg08.html>



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## Learning How to Speak Aussie

This primer will prove invaluable should you ever again find yourself in a war (or bar) with Diggers on your flank.

**Digger:** Initially one who took part in the gold rushes in New South Wales and Victoria in the nineteenth century. Now the term for an Australian foot soldier under the rank of corporal. This second meaning came into general currency during World War I on the redoubts to Gallipoli. At the time the members of the opposing Turkish army were at a loss to understand why Australians were willing to needlessly sacrifice their lives for perfidious Albion. These days the new remaining survivors are at an equal loss. However, they strongly object to the feminist legions of Women Against Rape marching on **Anzac Day** (25 April), which commemorates Gallipoli, reasoning, "*They should march on their own bloody day.*" National Rape Day has yet to be officially gazetted.

**Raw Prawn:** If someone '*comes the raw prawn*', one has behaved in an extremely offensive fashion, hence, "*Don't come the bloody raw prawn with me, mate.*"

**Top Night:** One has been blind drunk. One generally has a '*top night*' in the company of friends whereas one can get shickered by one's self.

**Shicker:** If one gets '*on the shicker*' one intends to get drunk, hence shickered.

There will be a test.

### Source:

"*The Dinkum Aussie Dictionary*" courtesy of  
A.B. "Aussino" Garcia, HHC 2/503d

**Aussino:** A cross between an American Chicano paratrooper and an Aussie Digger.

**Aussie:** See Shicker.

## It's a Pisser

An Australian Combat Field Sergeant and a U.S. Paratrooper General were on exchange duty and were sharing the latrine.

The Aussie Sergeant finished first and walked out without washing his hands. The U.S. Paratrooper watched in disgust, finished his squirt, washed his hands and walked up to the Aussie and said, "*Sergeant! In the U.S. Paratroops we were taught to wash our hands after taking a leak.*"

The rather large Aussie Sergeant replied, "*In the Australian Army mate, we were taught not to piss on our hands!*"

## For our California Area Vets

Flyers/Fact Sheets on the Veterans Homes of Greater Los Angeles and Ventura Counties are available on line. There is immediate availability for the Lancaster [www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Lancaster.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Lancaster.aspx) and Barstow [www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Barstow.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Barstow.aspx) Veterans Homes for assisted living and independent living (in Barstow). Thank you for helping us spread the word about these wonderful Veterans Homes that were built as an expression of gratitude toward California's deserving Veterans. A veteran and a spouse can also apply! Thank you so much for your help!

**Jeanne Bonfilio**

**Public Information Officer - California DVA**

## Senators tell VA to reduce veteran suicides

**Rob Hotakainen**

*McClatchy Newspapers*

With veterans now accounting for one of every five suicides in the nation, the Department of Veterans Affairs is under pressure from the courts and Congress to fix its mental health services in an attempt to curb the death toll.

"*The suicide rate is out of control. It's epidemic proportions right now,*" said Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director of the group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "*There are very few programs that are effective, and there's a serious lack of national awareness.*"

While the government keeps no official tally of veteran suicides, the VA said last year that veterans account for roughly 20 percent of the estimated 30,000 suicides annually in the United States.

Antonette Zeiss, the acting deputy chief officer of mental health services with the VA's Office of Patient Care Services, said the department's call center had received more than 400,000 calls since it began nearly four years ago. Of those, she said, more than 55,000 were referred to local VA suicide prevention coordinators for same-day or next-day service.

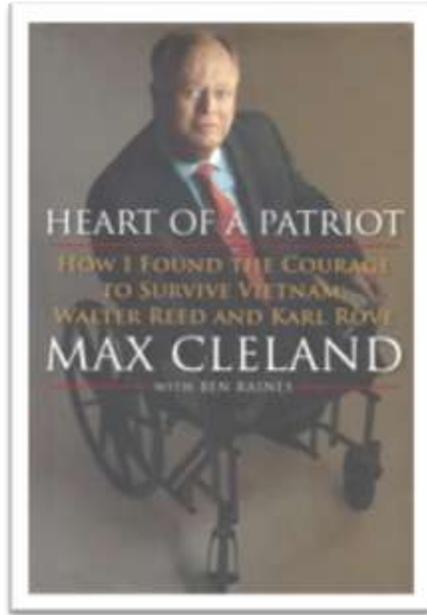
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## No Combat Vet or United States Senator is Exempt from PTSD

An interesting book you might want to read is *Heart of a Patriot* by former U.S. Senator and Vietnam vet Max Cleland. It's a story of triumph over adversity, over life threatening wounds. While a story about the dirty side of politics, it's also a story about one veteran's fight with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Following are excerpts from this book by a Vietnam veteran. Ed



### Excerpts:

I lost my confidence and my sense of purpose. I lost a sense of meaning in my life...Depression began to a sweep over me. I grieved for the time I had once been whole, and I grieved for the time I had been a U.S. Senator. I was inconsolable, and Liz and I fought more and more. It wasn't her fault. I was simply coming apart at the seams. More and more I couldn't relate to her, and she became increasingly frustrated with my inability to cope with day-to-day life. This was not the life she had bargained for.

*"Sadness is a cold, Depression is cancer."* That was what I had, a cancer of the soul. It was deep and dark and real.

I wasn't recovering. What really sent me over the edge was the invasion of Iraq in April 2003. I couldn't believe I was seeing another generation of young Americans sent into a muddled situation with no serious plan to win and no exit strategy...To me, it was Vietnam all over again. I couldn't bear to watch the shock and awe of war broadcast right into my living room. I couldn't read newspapers or listen to the radio. It was just war, war, war, everywhere I turned. All of that war news triggered deep emotions about war in general for me, particularly anger at the people who start wars. Here, once again, was a war being waged by a bunch of old men who had never been in battle and didn't understand the terrible human toll involved.

One day after coming in the front door and finding me listless once again, Liz looked at me and screamed, *"Tell me you're on medication!"*

I wasn't. I hated the idea of medication. I hated the thought that my brain was out of control, that it wasn't working right and I needed medication to fix it. I thought the cure for depression was to read another inspirational book. Boy, was I wrong; I have a shelf of them to prove it. Without drugs, I couldn't concentrate.

With Liz urging me to do so, I sought psychiatric help for the first time...thanks to those sessions, I was soon to learn that I hadn't left my war years behind me like I thought. I had just buried them under layer upon layer of scar tissue. The Senate defeat and the war in Iraq quickly ripped all of that away, leaving the great trauma of my life as bare and raw as it has been in 1968. It all conspired to transport me right back to the days of being blown up in Vietnam and lying on the ground dying. For the first time, I began feeling the total hopelessness and fear of the battlefield, reliving again those first desperate moments after I was blown up. My body and brain reacted accordingly. On high alert, my adrenaline ran wild. My brain chemicals became depleted.

The day I sat down across from the top psychiatrist at Bethesda Naval Hospital for the first time, I cried bitterly...

Charlie had actually become a professional counselor to war veterans. After getting out of the Marines in Vietnam, he had turned around and joined the Air Force as a B-52 bomber pilot. He was a successful Air force major, but then started having trouble getting his life together. He finally walked into a VA Vet Center – the program that I had created when I was head of the VA – and sought help. He told me the Vet Center saved his life.

*"How are you feeling?"* he asked. *"Well, I'm tense, I'm filled with anxiety, and I feel like hell. I feel like something horrible is about to happen at any moment and there is nothing I can do to escape it."*

*"That's PTSD, Max. It's an anxiety disorder. It can be full of fear and tension. It was for me."*

For the first time in my life, I connected my own anxiety with PTSD. I thought I had avoided it. But I had it in spades.

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**No one is exempt. Not Generals, not Senators, nor Colonels, Captains or Privates. But, help is available. Contact your nearest Vet Center or DAV office now.**



## INCOMING!

We received a number of notes about the special edition of our newsletter covering The Battle of the Slopes (June 22):

*"Half way through...tough to read."*

Dr. Tim Cloonan, Col. (Ret)  
173d Surgeon, VN  
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*"Funny, but the way I recall the night before A Company's battle was different than some accounts...Jim Anderson was pointman leading us out to do an ambush, I was about 7th man from the point and I thought it was wrong to follow the trail that lead out of the perimeter. As we approached the ridge about 60 meters from the perimeter Jim decided to get off the trail and as he stepped into the jungle Jim saw an NVA and they both opened up on each other... neither was shot. I remember going to one side of the trail to the left, as I did I saw the CID who was with us go to the right side of the trail and as he moved to the left side where most of us were he was shot in the neck. Our Medic was on his knees trying to help him and he looked at me and shook his head. I remember helping the medic pull the CID just outside of our perimeter where he was declared dead. After that artillery was directed around our perimeter and as we waited for another attack by the group that ambushed us on the trail I remember being behind bamboo or something like that. Later Cook was killed when he went out in front of the perimeter to take a leak and instead of saying 'Friendly' he just hit the ground, one shot rang out and from my position I hear someone yelling that the new guy had gotten killed. We were all on high alert that night waiting for an attack that never came. That is why we had two bodies to carry down to A Company the next day.*

*Some things you remember vividly and some things you don't....but I remember the combat jump, Battle of the Slopes and Hill 875 very well, as I relive them often in my dreams....very vividly."*

Steve Welch  
C/2/503d  
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*"It was very informative for me. As in any action, the viewpoint of the individual soldier is small. You know what is going on around in, or in your squad etc., but rarely do you ever get or see the big picture. It was interesting to read the documented history of the action; read all the accounts.*

*I felt so sorry to see how bad the guilt has ripped the one Sky Soldier who took that cig case from the dead brother. Hell, in WWII it was common practice to strip whatever you needed from dead comrades. Nothing to be ashamed of at all. Good comments by you to try to ease his pain.*

*I just now ordered from Amazon the book Dak To by Edward Murphy (used-48 cents).*

*I never realized how fucking close us guys in Charlie were to really being in a meat grinder and how many of them motha fuckers there were around us!!!*

*Like I wrote in the issue, that night of the 22nd, they probed us good all night long but since we held the high ground and dug in, they didn't want any part of us. They would have paid dearly if they had tried to assault us in any strength no matter how many of them fucks there were.*

*I think it might be Wambi Cook (?), but I think he was one who survived the Battle of the Slopes but also the later big November battle -- geez, there is indeed a Sky Soldier angel on that brother's shoulders!*

*Was surprised and elated to read Steve Welch's recollection of the "Battle of the Slopes," and to see his Vietnam picture. We were both sent back to Kontum to be processed to go home. After supper, we stood for some time in front of our tent talking about all the things we were looking forward to doing when we got home. I left him to go lay down on my bunk.*

*Not more than a minute later I hear a rifle shot. I run out of the tent, the first thing I see is Steve on the ground. Someone had accidently fired his M-16 hitting Steve in the belly. Steve was rushed to the aid station and we all hoped for the best.*

*About six months later as a member of Fort Irwin's pistol team, we were at Fort Ord for a pistol match. One evening while walking the aisles at the PX, I turn a corner and meet Steve. We were both surprised and happy to see each other again. Steve was still recovering from his wound. He told me he married his girl friend, and we talked of meeting later. Unfortunately we did not meet again. My best wishes to Steve and his family. AIRBORNE! "*

Steve "Sgt. Rock" Vargo  
C/2/503d  
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(continued....)



**(Slopes)**

***“To all the Herd, special thanks and all who contributed to the Special Edition; 2/503, 3/319, B Company/Med, the Cowboys, and to our fallen heroes of all the 173d, their friends and families, a heartfelt thank you forever! Let everyone who knew Platoon Sergeant Hostack know he really deserves the MOH. He has passed on since, but I believe his family would be honored if we can accomplish that! Can never be too late.***

***I contacted Wayne Cleveland and asked him to check with Col. Smith, about a procedure for an award for Hostack, I'm sure he will pass it along. Also, as far as I am concerned, the whole company deserves the MOH. I will never be able to express the valor all our brothers displayed that terrible day....our newsletter was a sure tribute to them all; at last the dead brothers are recognized. I cried when I read all the personal testimonials, but want you to know they were tears of honor, respect and friendship, concerning all who participated and supported A/2/503, they were so to speak tears from heaven, not me....”***

**Randy Tenney, FO  
A/2/503d, '65-'67**  
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***“I too believe Sergeant Hostack was deserving of the MOH. His actions on June 22nd, '67 were nothing less than incredible.”***

**Wayne Cleveland  
A/2/503d**

**Note:** As a result of Randy and Wayne's notes, research is being conducted to determine 1) what, if any award(s) Sgt. Hostack earned for his heroic actions, and 2) to determine what, if any, award can be obtained for his family. Ed  
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***“Reading this one brought tears to my eyes. I am so glad I rotated out before 2/503 moved north. There but for the grace of God...***

***Good interview. Hindsight is necessary to try and avoid mistakes. No doubt in my mind the 173d leadership failed. Even Milton failed to make sure he had maps and some idea from someone, anyone, what his mission was and what backup was necessary.***

***When my Recon Platoon faced our big action on 5 Feb '67, we were already in a defensive ambush position. Our LT had badly sprained his ankle the day before and was of little use. The platoon often relied on Sgt. Powell to guide us right. Powell was not there as he had gone on R&R and had only arrived back the day***

***after. We failed to recognize the two VC we had killed the night before were an LP. If the VC had waited to come at us and instead, had set up an ambush on the trail, it may have had a different outcome. Instead, they sent a small patrol down the road and two of them were killed. Then they tried to surround us. As with any battle, once engaged, many of the guys tended to bunch up. Sorta natural I guess. Alpha Company came to our rescue. They were slow in coming because they were heading into an unknown situation where we didn't really know the strength of the enemy, and even today we have no real idea, although after Alpha arrived, we found a company size base camp. At least a platoon same as us.***

***Dak To losses were due to poor leadership, but more importantly, the enemy was so well situated, losses on our side were to be expected. Look at how many of the survivors actually thought they were fighting VC and not PAVN. Overall, it doesn't really matter as political leadership decided we weren't gonna win the war due to fear of the Chinese and Soviet Union. Same as the Korean stalemate.”***

**Jerry Hassler  
RTO S-2/Recon 2/503d, '66-'67**  
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***“I just glanced over the newsletter until I can get time to actually read it. There is a photo of one of the survivors captioned 'Red'. That man's last name is Burns, he was in 1st Platoon with me. Damn it, I'm glad I DEROSed instead of extending. Just thought I'd let you know his name.”***

**Woody Davis  
A/2/503d**



**“Red” Burns, A/2/503d. Survivor of The Slopes**

*(continued...)*



**(Slopes)**

*"Thanks for the "The Battle of the Slopes". I don't recall reading about the battle but probably did back then. I was commanding a Basic Training Company at Ft. Ord at the time."*

**Bob Sweeney, LTC (Ret)**  
HHC/C/2/503d

*"I would like to think that I have lived my life in such a way that I have honored the men whose tomorrow's ended on 22 June 1967. However, Doc Rick Patterson gave me a present that I treasure. This is a photo of Rick with his family. I look at that photo and feel proud."*

*My Father used me that day. I thank God and give Him the Glory. Nuff said!"*

**Bill Reynolds**  
A/2/503d



Sr. Medic, Doc Rick Patterson (C) with his beautiful family. Doc credits Bill for saving his life; "He risked his life to save mine and in the process was saved from serious injury by his pocket Bible from a bullet that was meant for me." Rick

*"It took me nearly three hours to get through this because I would stop and reread sections again and again, to put them into perspective."*

*Obviously, a lot of people remember different things and there are mistakes in narratives that you were provided (including mine because the Artillery Battery we had at Dak To on 22 June was Alpha Battery - and I believe I wrote Bravo).*

*Nonetheless, it is all out there for better or for worse."*

**Ken Smith, COL (Ret)**  
A/D/HHC/2/503d

*"For a long while The Battle of the Slopes made me hate Vietnamese. Most of the KIAs that I carried were executed, shot in the head. I remember treating a medic, Spec 5, I think, who was found the next day or that night -- the last man found alive on 1338. The NVA thought that they had killed the guy and he played dead with part of his left skull missing from a missed AK executioner's shot from close range. Often wondered if that guy made it. He survived the night alone, wounded, but made it to my medics. The guy was lucky the gook was in a hurry.....Doc."*

**Earle "Doc" Jackson**  
B Med

*"Thanks for the article, I will share it with the 42nd Scout Dog Platoon. We always are grateful when the other units send us things."*

**Jackie "Mom" McIntyre**  
Friend of the 173d & 42nd IPSD Scout Dog Platoon

*"Received your message but, some of my thoughts require a bit more time to put together in order to make good sense. It's been a long time since June, 1967; however, the events surrounding Hill 1338 and the culmination of that "battle" are vivid, to say the least. If, and when, I do submit to your newsletter, I'll make an honest effort to concentrate on, and write about the most magnificent soldiers with whom I've ever served."*

**Ron Leonard, COL (Ret)**  
CO C/2/503d

*"Please add a note that after being relieved of command Ron Leonard was transferred to the 4/503rd and while commanding a company on Hill 875 he received the 'Distinguished Service Cross' for heroism, our nation's second highest award. All these troopers did their best under the worst conditions."*

*Ken Smith and I were in a position to observe and hear, on a broader basis than those standing in triple canopy jungle, listening to one radio channel. I am so damn glad that I was not out there in the shoes of Deane, Partain, Willoughby, Milton and Leonard. I tip my hat to each of them. And to those who died I'm sorry we all couldn't have done more. ATW*

**Ed Privette, MAJ (Ret)**  
HHC/2/503d

*(continued....)*



(Slopes)

***"WOW. You guys made the reputation of the 173d. I am shaken by some of the words written by the men who were there. To know some of the guys -- Bob Fleming and Wambi Cook -- makes it even more personal and real to me. I can't tell you the respect I have for you guys, and the pride I have in being a member of the 173d Airborne. No finer group of men around."***

**Jerry Sopko  
D/4/503d**  
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***"You've broken my heart all over again. Thank you for continuing to give these stories a voice."***

**Ginny Gray  
Friend of the 173d  
Asst. to Rev. Ron Smith, B/2/503d**  
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***"I didn't get to read the issue until last night. It was all I expected and more. The reflections from Charlie Company were particularly priceless. I found nothing their accounts to be insightful. I was approached by a half dozen brothers at the reunion wanting to vent and express their continued grief and guilt about their inability to support us that day. I tried to assure them that we survivors empathize with their dilemma, but we want them to move forward. I don't think I was very successful."***

**Wambi Cook  
A/2/503d**  
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## Old Glory

As the legend goes, it was George Washington and two other members of the Continental Congress who asked Betsy Ross to sew the first American flag sometime in the late spring of 1776. The young widow was only in her early 20's when she completed the first flag with thirteen stars arranged in a circle.



## A Tip of the Hat

And hats off to our WWII, heroes; we would not have been fighting for the USA had they lost. My dad was a WWII soldier who served in Europe, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He told me the men in the Pacific had it much worse, especially if they were captured. He has passed on now, but I grew up with those wonderful men of WWII. Thanks to Chuck Breit of the 503rd PRCT and all Vets this Memorial Day.

**Randy Tenney  
FO A/2/503d**  
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(enlarge)

**Pfc Clyde Bates of Evansville, Wisc. and T/5 Frank Guy Arrigo of East Chicago, Ind. hoist the Stars and Stripes whilst under sniper fire on 16 Feb. 1945. The previous Corregidor flag was burned prior to the surrender on 6 May 1942.**

[503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion web site]

## WHODAT?



**We don't have a name to go with this trooper believed to be 2/503 from the early years in Vietnam.**



## SAN ANTONIO 2011 / 173d REUNION

This year's reunion meant a little more than any previous gathering I'd attended. How privileged Gene Counselman (A/1/503d) and I were to share hallowed soil vials taken from Hills 875 and 882 with over a dozen survivors from these historic encounters.

I also had both participants and other select members autograph the Herd flag we brought to the Hill this past February. Their reactions upon receiving the vials were priceless. I may require chest x-rays resulting from the bear hugs employed by Gary Cucinniti and Mark Thurston. Or the numerous so-called hard core warriors who unabashedly cried on my shoulders when they realized what I had placed in their palm. These scenes will hold a special place in my heart and mind forever.

And for those remaining few who probably wanted to say more but could only manage a thank you, I understand and no apologies necessary.



**L-R: Gene Counselman A/1/503d, Wambi Cook & Les Fuller both A/2/503d on peak of Hill 875, in 2011.**



**Inscription on vial of soil: "Hill 875, Dak To, Viet Nam"**

I regret that there was too little acknowledgment for the 44th anniversary of the Battle of the Slopes. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, 6/22/67 will get the recognition it so rightly deserves.

On a brighter note, to the best of my knowledge, more No DEROS Alpha survivors (Dave Milton, Mike Deeb, John Smith, Jr., Clarence Johnson and I) were in attendance than any previous reunion over the past decade. I sincerely hope we gave some solace and comfort to those individuals who continue to bear

indescribable anguish and guilt over their inability to come to our aid that fateful day. They made it abundantly clear that they were ready and willing, but for any number of circumstances beyond their control, were unsuccessful. We assured them that it was just our time, and glad we're alive to tell them so.

I am humbled and honored to call myself a 173d Sky Soldier. Thanks to each and every one of my Brothers.

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

### ~ Special Thanks ~

We would be remiss if we failed to extend a special thanks to Wambi Cook for his idea and motivation behind inviting men of the 2/503d and our sister units to have their recollections of *The Battle of the Slopes* recorded for posterity in the June special edition of our newsletter. From all of us, thanks Wambi, and thanks to all the troopers who were there with you, and in memory of those who did not return. Ed

*All the way...*



## Her Name Was Winnie (Regina, May, Wilbie, Hazel Smith)

It was late at night, another hot, humid night in the jungle, RTO Lee Braggs and I, sitting elbow-to-elbow in a hole dug out of the ground, were on battalion radio watch in October 1966. Earlier that day I had taken *two* anti-malaria pills, having missed one the day before, thinking the extra dosage would make-up for the oversight. Upon reaching our laager before dusk, the commo guys had erected the long antenna outside this hooch. Nothing much was going on other than the occasional “*Sitrep negative, Out*” transmissions we’d receive from the line companies surrounding us, and then our passing those same preferred messages to brigade.

First Sergeant Sullivan, the boss in charge that night, sternly admonished me, “*Smith, ditch that comic book, you can’t do two things at the same time and do them both right!*” Have always remembered those words of his, and for decades have tried to prove him wrong, but never quite could.

Sometime after midnight I began to shiver, then turned to my RTO buddy and said, “*Lee, I’m freezing, man.*” Lee touched my arm then my forehead and replied, “*No you’re not, you’re burning up!*” A few moments later I left the hooch, went outside, dropped my draws, grabbed hold of the long antenna pole, and somehow survived a bad case of the drizzling shits. The severe chills continued, when a Medic was called over to take my temperature, 102 degrees.



Good buddy Lee Roy Braggs

Somehow surviving the night, a Dust Off was called in the next morning and they flew me to a nearby MASH unit where I stayed for two days. The Doc’s having found nothing worthy of note, sent this RTO back to Camp Zinn while our battalion remained in the field.

It was kind of neat to have our entire hooch to myself, especially with none of those mean, nasty Airborne sergeants around giving orders. I caught a ride to the Bien Hoa Air Base nearby in hopes of finding a milk shake. A milk shake was found but it tasted as if it were made with water and goat piss...I threw it away and returned to Zinn.

I vaguely recall one of our guys returning from R&R. He later told me he found me naked, pissing on someone’s cot (Xin Loi brother), and on the verge of delirium. A cloudy ambulance ride to Long Binh Hospital along Highway 1 followed, where an uncomfortable night was spent. Somehow I had my wallet with me but a Leg attendant determined it, and the few bucks in it, would be better off in his care....never saw that wallet again.



3rd Field Army Hospital, today an arms museum

Succumbing quickly to the affects of whatever was ailing me, another Dustoff flew three of us on stretchers to 3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan Son Nhut on the outskirts of Saigon. That first night there I recall begging for water as what seemed like the entire medical team there were surrounding my bed, but they would only dampen my lips with a wet cloth. Coming in and out of consciousness, I heard someone say they ‘*better send him to Japan.*’ I survived the night and what was later determined to be the falciparum malaria attack.

But that’s not what I’m writing about. I want to tell you about Don Hernandez and General Westmoreland and the kid with no genitals, and the kid who killed himself, and of course, Winnie.



Don was a sick or wounded soldier from the 25th Infantry, and in the bed next to mine.

Don and I on day pass in Saigon. The girl is probably indicating we are *Numba 1 G.I.’s*. No?

For the two months in hospital (no trip to Japan for this G.I.) we became good friends, both from California and both Chess players. And then there was Winnie.

(continued...)



Edwina, Regina, May, Wilibie, Hazel Smith, she told me her name was, although to this day I wonder if she had been having fun with this young G.I. about the number of her first names. She was new in-country, a 1LT nurse ready to do her part for the war effort, a beautiful young girl – although any American female round-eye was considered beautiful in those days, yet Winnie was indeed an attractive girl.

In the early days following arrival there (they later told me I had almost died from the malaria that night), I could barely move, having lost a lot of weight in a very short time frame -- probably down to about 110 pounds then. In spite of that, I had no interest in bed pans, and instead, would head to the latrine at the end of the ward, barely able to walk, holding onto the end of each bunkmate's bed lining the wall leading me to Nirvana, and somehow finding a comfortable sitting place without passing out....it's good to be King.

"Smith!" Nurse Smith yelled, "Get back to your bed!!" Yet, Winnie gave me ample time to enjoy my new surroundings before two aides carried me back to bed. It was during that very respite when General Westmoreland toured our ward and told all the guys there how proud he was of them. Had he known how difficult and dangerous it had been for me to find this toilet seat, I'm sure he would have been equally proud and perhaps awarded me a medal for superior bravery at the risk of fainting or shitting on one's self. A Bronze Star w/S?

Winnie was from the Carolina's, and asking her what her future hopes and plans were, she replied she 'hoped to return there and have twelve kids'. I couldn't help myself, and thought, now that's a lot of fucking.

Winnie would often play her guitar and sing to us on her ward. Off and on over the decades I would think of her, envisioning her at the foothills of the Smokey Mountains playing in the backyard with twelve little kids, all with four or five first names each, happy. But it was not to be, at least for a long time.



Winnie after the war

One day on that second floor ward it seemed as if the entire professional baseball league came prancing down the ward. Included in this entourage was Joe Torre, my

baseball 'hero' at the time. I had been a catcher in high school, and Torre, also a catcher, was that year's MVP and an All-Star. He sat on my bed and we talked for a few moments. A photo was taken of the two of us shaking hands, his large, battered hand engulfing mine. Sadly, that pic went missing over the years. It was a good war day, for me.



Visiting the U.S. base at My Tho in 1966, left to right are Joe Torre and Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves, Harmon Killebrew of the Minnesota Twins, Brooks Robinson of the Baltimore Orioles and former St. Louis Cardinals great Stan Musial.

In 1966, a number of celebrities invaded our hospital ward, smiling, shaking hands and making small talk. Roy Rogers and Dale Evans stopped by my bed to say hello. Dale sat on the bed while Roy stood there in his patented cowboy hat and get-up. I found them to be extremely warm, nice and caring people. Martha Raye also visited the hospital and performed for the sick, wounded and staff there in an outside courtyard.

Adjacent to Martha Raye's stage area at 3rd Field were two dining rooms, now used as rental facilities for banquets and weddings, yet during the war served as our mess hall. Down the hall was the bottom floor of the hospital which functioned as emergency and operating rooms while the entire second floor was the ward where soldiers recovered from their various wounds and illnesses. I remember standing in that very hallway as they wheeled in a wounded soldier fresh from battle. He had lost both his legs and his genitals; still conscious, still living, and he would live. I often think of him and what his life has been like.

(continued....)



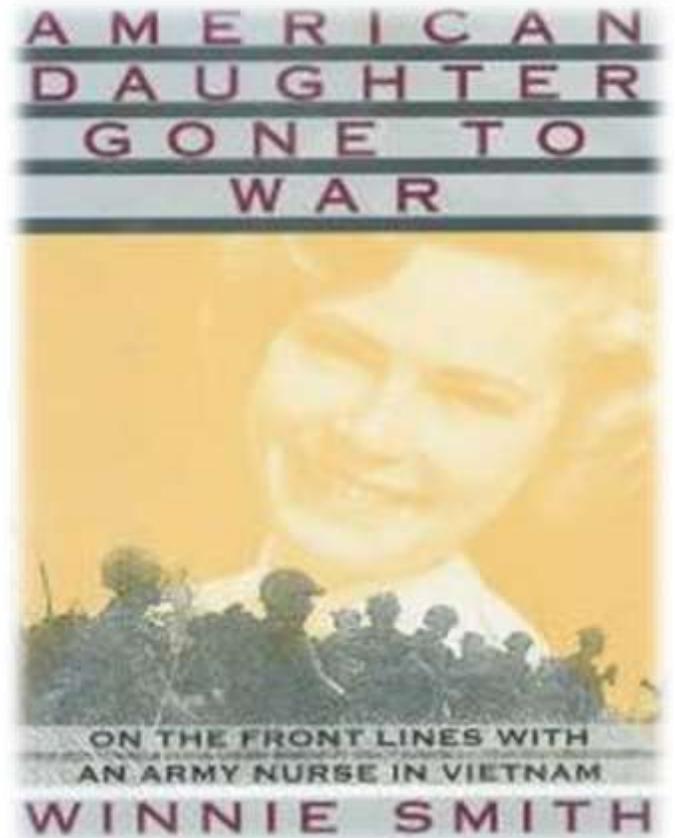
Years later Ms. Smith lobbied for the women's memorial in Washington, DC. During President Reagan's filmed speech at the dedication of the soldier's monument near *The Wall*, hers was one of the voices in the background calling out, "*What about the women?! What about the women?!*"



**Memorial in Washington, DC honoring women veterans of the war**

In 1991, Winnie would author the book, "*American Daughter Gone to War -- On the Front Lines with an Army Nurse in Vietnam*," an abundantly candid account of a young combat nurse's nightmarish duties during war. Speaking to her war experience Ms. Smith captured, perhaps, the very essence of what it is like to be a Vietnam vet when she wrote:

***"For us the subject is not history; it's a condition of our lives. In a country where youth is adored, we lost ours before we were out of our twenties. We met our human frailties, the dark side of ourselves, face-to-face, and learned that brutality, mutilation and hatred are all forgivable. At the same time we learned guilt for all those things. The war destroyed our faith, betrayed our trust, and dropped us outside the mainstream of society. We still don't fully belong. I wonder if we ever will."***



Excerpts from the preamble to her book:

*"Winnie Smith was an idealistic twenty-one-year old first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps in 1965... Smith's days and nights blurred into the draining tropical heat and the numbing onslaught of casualties... The daily struggle to keep dying men alive, to heal terrible wounds and offer solace for ruined lives, undermined both Winnie's idealism and her strength. Only her dedication to the soldiers she served and the thought of returning to her life in the United States sustained her."*

Her book states Winnie cared for well over 600 wounded and dying soldiers during her year-long tour in Vietnam. Hers is an abundantly clear and heart wrenching story of what she and those in the medical corps lived with as a daily diet during our war. Sadly, the thoughts of those 12, multi-named kids playing with their happy mother in the foothills was not to be. It was simply too much to hope that our war would leave untarnished the young Miss Smith.

In 2005, Gus Vendetti and Bill Vose, A/2/503d, and I returned to Vietnam and visited Winnie's second floor ward at the 3rd Field Army Hospital. I wrote of that visit:

*(continued....)*



“Standing around before taking the tour, I again recognized the outdoor courtyard a few steps away where Martha Raye performed for the hospital staff, patients and others in November of 1966. Off to the right was the small 10’x10’ office where, in June of 1966 (my first stay at this hospital), the young U.S. soldier walked in demanding to be sent home. The hospital Administrator escaped through the only door just before the boy pulled the pin on the grenade he was carrying, killing himself. I walked into the small office and ran my hand over the wall which once was pocked-marked with holes, with pieces of body parts and bloodstains everywhere. I recall that day well and remember thinking then, he would be sent home.

The museum has been expanded to include this 2nd floor. Arms and war memorabilia now adorn the walls and floor of this ward. There are no screams here anymore, there’s no crying to be heard, there’s no dying going on, and music which once was a young nurses’ singing and guitar playing, soothing the pain of her charges, has long since drifted away. The bed which was mine was long ago removed, most likely melted into new steel used to build the new buildings going up throughout this town. In its place are standing two plastic palm trees which bookend weapons from our war on display here. I stood there looking at this space but came to no better understanding of why I was drawn here....it’s just a room.” (From *The Battle at Bau San*)



**Capt. Bill Vose, Maj. Gus Vendetti and RTO Smith on Winnie’s ward, 2005.**

Thank you Nurse Smith. Her name was Winnie.

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

**Hey guys! Bend those antenna’s down!!**

This photo was received too late to be included in our early June issue which featured RTOs of the 2/503d.



**Pictured here from L-R are Don Horger, Joseph Jackson and Roy Minchew, all A/2/503 Weapons Platoon RTOs.**

(Photo from Don Horger)

## **MEDICS OF THE 173d & SISTER UNITS**

Plans are still in the works to feature the brave Medics of the 2/503d and *all* 173d sister units. Please send your stories and photos to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) As Bob Beemer, B/2/503d so rightly said,

***“How do you write a story about the greatest people in the world? Everyone of them should receive a lifetime achievement award.”***



## ~ Happy Independence Day ~

During the American Revolution, the legal separation of the Thirteen Colonies from Great Britain occurred on July 2, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed in June by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the Declaration of Independence, a statement explaining this decision, which had been prepared by a Committee of Five, with Thomas Jefferson as its principal author. Congress debated and revised the Declaration, finally approving it on July 4. A day earlier, John Adams had written to his wife Abigail:

***“The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.”***

Adams's prediction was off by two days. From the outset, Americans celebrated independence on July 4, the date shown on the much-publicized Declaration of Independence, rather than on July 2, the date the resolution of independence was approved in a closed session of Congress.

Historians have long disputed whether Congress actually signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, even though Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin all later wrote that they had signed it on that day. Most historians have concluded that the Declaration was signed nearly a month after its adoption, on August 2, 1776, and not on July 4 as is commonly believed.



In a remarkable coincidence, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the only signers of the Declaration of Independence later to serve as Presidents of the United States, died on the same day: July 4, 1826, which was the 50th anniversary of the Declaration. Although not a signer of the Declaration of Independence, James Monroe, the Fifth President of the United States, died on July 4, 1831. Calvin Coolidge, the Thirtieth President, was born on July 4, 1872, and thus was the only President to be born on Independence Day.

