

## **'SGT. BROWN IS DEAD, SIR'**

**A MAN HAD BEEN SHOT AND WAS MISSING,  
BUT- - -**

**By Tom Tiede  
Newspaper Enterprise Association**

COURTENAY, Vietnam, Jan. 14, 1966, Bravo Company had to fall back.

They had stumbled into an ambushing roost of Viet Cong who were fortified inside camouflaged rows of freshly dug trenches. Over the ditches, suicide snipers had been lashed to observation trees to direct knee-high fire on the approaching Yanks.

The boys from B made several crawling assaults, under iron sleet, toward an enemy they could not see and positions they could not locate.

Grenades popped like thunder. Automatic weapons fouled the air.

### **BROWN IS MISSING**

But it was no use. Wet with rain and sweat, dirty with mud and blood, Bravo Company broke contact, regrouped and took combat census.

*"Anybody missing?"* a lieutenant whispered.

*"Sgt. Brown,"* somebody answered.

*"Where is he?"*

*"Sgt. Brown is dead, sir."*

The group fell silent. Jim brown...dead. Some shook their heads in anger. Others crossed themselves and swallowed.

Then, as the rain began to fall faster, the aching troops scooped away wet leaves and sat on damp ground. Ammunition was counted. C-ration tins sprang open...medics with ashen faces wandered from man to man.

### **TOUGH FIGHT**

It had been a dirty go. They had battled blind, outnumbered and unprotected. Every officer in the unit had been wounded and scores of their men with them. Only one failed to escape, however. The sergeant...Jim Brown of Fayetteville, N.C., a 30-year-old husband.

*"Dammit!"* a man muttered.

*"He musta been hit more than once,"* somebody guessed.

*"I saw grenades falling all around him."*

*"He took a lot of shrapnel."*

*"Who saw him last?"*

*"I seen him go back because he couldn't find a buddy."*

### **BROWN REELING**

*"Dammit!"*

The sergeant had, indeed, gone back for a friend, but not before being thrice torn open by the enemy arsenal.

His squad had crawled within 50 yards of the unseen trenches before an anti-tank shell blasted the first rip in his body.

It was a hollow thump of an explosion that left Brown reeling with vertigo.

**He kept moving, however, and 25 yards later he took a second set of fragments, this time from a grenade.**

**Again he shook it off and moved closer. Again he was opened up by the shattering of a hand thrown bomb.**

Finally, he was ordered back. But then a man in his squad couldn't be found. Sergeant Jim Brown crawled into hell once more.

**The rain had continued throughout the night and those of Bravo Company who slept at all, slept wet period. And nervous. Artillery zeroed in on the VC trenches after dark and shelled them through the night. At dawn, Air Force jets flew in to drop their bombs.**

### **IN TARGET AREA**

Sergeant Brown was in the target area, of course. The men wondered if they would ever find his body.

**By mid-morning all combat had ceased and the jungle was quiet. The sun rose and the thicket steamed. Silently, the boys from B collected their gear for an air evacuation.**

Suddenly, one of them heard a noise. He turned his head and blinked his eyes. A few yards away a man approached awkwardly, his eyes red, his face white, his clothes caked with stains of blood. *"Hey, guys,"* the man cried. Dazed, frightened, sick with confusion, he was near collapse. But Sergeant Jim Brown was by no mean dead.

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SSG James Brown served in B/2/503d in '65/'66.



# Bean Mess for the Brain

By Tom Conley  
HHC/C/2/503d, '65/'66

This cyber space cook book is Dedicated to Big & Rich and Kris Kristofferson for unlocking my closet and letting "the sun shine in". "Open up your hearts" as you read "Bean Mess for the Brain".

## 'Forty Years On The Rock'

**For these woods are filled with the lives of young men  
and deep in the dark they call cadence again.**

**The rhythmic step the pounding of feet the ungodly  
march song that won't let me sleep.**

**I have no fear of those evil the wicked in life I fear  
being condemned to march late in the night.**

**Welcome them home. Don't leave them behind. We  
that survived have them alive in our mind.**



**RTO Tom Conley learning about bean mess  
at Camp Zinn in Vietnam, circa 1965/66**

Do you only sing the song of the "great generation"? Was theirs "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight"? The great generation with great relief drew lines in the sand. Their kids who weren't too self centered to serve

nor selfish to contribute, "Asked not" and stood the line. Some did it in vista, in the foreign service; some the peace corps, some the Green Berets. Some took their draft notice, some volunteered; they all stood the line.

Then and now generations of us have stood the line drawn by the "Great Generation". We stood it in Germany. We stood and still stand in Korea. We sail the seas and once more the "shores of Tripoli". Those that burnt our fathers flag; can they feel the love of their borrowed lives? Do the words "*does that star spangled banner yet wave*" bring tears to their eyes? Never! Should they ever take for granted that someone else's children should stand the line for them.

This is how to make "*BEAN MESS FOR THE BRAIN*," a recipe for my children.

This isn't your chicken soup. I'm getting short. Before I see the "*green green grass of home*". Let's talk about Zen and the art of making bean mess. It's your world now. I can't tell you how to "*roller skate in a buffalo herd*". I can tell you how to make bean mess.

I was raised by three "generations of the daughters of eve". They didn't make bean mess. They made polenta, fajitas, fried eggs in real butter. They sipped whiskey on soft July nights and watched the lightning bugs. They taught me "joie de vivre". Put that in your bean mess as the first and primary ingredient. It's called love.

That kind of love hollers down the generations, it crosses national boundaries, it's multilingual, its nourished with this old dads bean mess.

I'd like to invite the world to share some bean mess and some store-bought desert (one attempt at oatmeal cookies was enough). We had bean mess and oatmeal mess on the table at the same time and I learned a valuable lesson from your bright shining eyes. I had the love but I had limitations on how I could send it down the line.

After you stir in the love, don't attempt more right away and don't expect it to come back right away. But, don't ever stop using love as the primary ingredient!

Love of yourself, love of life, the world, and all the creatures in it. We are all mysteriously stuck together like bean mess.

It wasn't a dust mote I remember, it was cold sheets and a lonesome whistle. It was a three story cold water flat, bathroom out the door. An icebox, you know block ice.

(continued....)



A steam train rumbling down the tracks and that lonesome whistle. The great grandmother watches me. She came to Ellis Isle, her and me are here to stay. We are cans. I didn't know we were on the wrong side of the tracks. I didn't know this train got to disappear from railroad news. *Good morning America...* Not, *good morning Vietnam*, "welcome to my world won't you come on in". That's when I knew me and the lady that booked in as "domestic help" were cans.

Cold sheets, the plaintive cry of a steam whistle, *Doom! Doom! Doom!* 51 caliber chicom. Let me wake up in them cold sheets. It's about trains and trucks and mom; it's about cans, welcome to my world won't you come on in.

It's about cans. Africans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans, and White trashcans. *We built this City out of rock and roll*. We traded them bagpipes for fiddles, the song of the streets. Sunday morning coming down. We took out the trash "yakkity-yak don't talk back", fought their wars, paid their taxes, and now this trains' got to disappear from railroad news.

**"And sons of porters ride their fathers magic carpet and didn't get the news. Good morning America, how are ya? Don't you know me? I'm your native son."**

"Welcome to my world won't you come on in?" That was the lead to a radio program aired on Armed Forces Radio. A working class Jew from North Philly saved my life not private Ryan's. Did I live a good life? Da da da-nant combat, the cans, doctored the language and our sagging spirits. The U.S. was *the world*, the Reeowl world. "We were hungry we were barely alive. Bang! Bang! they shot us down. Bang! Bang! we hit the ground."

Trains, troopships, leaving on a midnight train to a better place and time. I'm off that lonesome highway. I am getting short in the world. What to leave in and what to leave out?

The military was the first truly integrated equal opportunity employer; a meritocracy. That is what the world really is, "a meritocracy". Can you dig it?

Short was the word for approaching D.E.R.O.S (day to return stateside). The shorter you got the more you worried about the humbug, a short round, a scorpion bigger than a crawdad, a hundred-pacer snake, going home in a body bag. Four of us in Charlie Company found a unique way to avoid the short timers' blues -- we extended our tours....

That's what I'm trying to do now, I'm short in life. What a long strange trip it's been. I know this train's got to disappear from railroad news. I want to extend

my tour long enough to leave this lonesome whistle in your ears.

The four who extended were a Native American, two White trashcans, and an African American. This little short story is about the African American. He volunteered to walk point, he extended and volunteered to continue to walk point. One time Shelton was walking point in War Zone "D" and saw a trip wire. He was in motion when he saw the wire. He jumped and hollered a warning so the rest of us would stay back. When Shelton's feet hit, the ground gave way. He was falling headlong into a punji pit. This booby trap was meant to snare him, he was supposed to trip it; activating a delayed fuse then fall into the staked pit and be impaled on shit-smearred stakes. When help came to him that is when the delayed fuse booby trap was to explode (maximizing casualties). Well, he didn't trip it and he shouted a warning. Later, I asked Shelton, "how did he avoid being impaled by the punji stakes?" Shelton replied that when he broke through and knew he was going into a punji pit, he figured the ground holding the stakes was soft and that if he wind-milled his arms and legs he could avoid a direct impalement. He did. Later he and every squad leader in his platoon were KIA'd due to a tactical error by their lieutenant. The world lost a beautiful human. What's left? 8E40, a line on the black scar in this nations heart .

Shelton volunteered to walk point. With every step he risked his life for people like me who weren't as good at walking point. He had something to contribute, something he did well, something of Merit. I extended. I was good at what I did. I humped a radio. I humped it till my enlistment was up -- I wasn't a hero, I was a target. I learned from Shelton that we are put on this earth with something to contribute. ...Your life's not your own, neither are your successes. Your mistakes are truly your own.

That brings us to the second ingredient in bean mess. You have to contribute to bean mess and to life.



**Tom outside HHC commo hooch. He would serve as RTO for Bn CO LTC George Dexter during Op Marauder Jan. '66 before transferring to Charlie Company.**

(continued....)





**Tom Conley on 2 Jan 66 at LZ Wine in the Mekong Delta with LTC George Dexter during Operation Marauder**

### **Stand and Deliver**

Rogers Rangers, the unit was a rapidly deployable light infantry force tasked with reconnaissance and conducting special operations against distant targets.

Two-hundred-and-two years later troops of the airborne 503rd infantry battalions were given ‘Rogers Rangers cards’ as a training aid. The cards had solid hard-won commandments; like *keep your powder dry and your tomahawk sharp*. The commandment this story is about is *“don’t return to camp the same way you went out”*.

Our base camp’s mission was to protect Bien Hoa airbase. The herd circled the wagons. ‘C’ Company’s perimeter faced an open area, a field of fire, a killing field. One tactic employed to protect the perimeter was three-man ambush patrols. A good meal at the mess tent, arm up, out the gate before dark. Leave by the 50 cal. machine gun. Set up on a trail, hopefully ambush the ambushers. Pull out at first light, take the long way back and probably miss breakfast at the mess tent.

The average age of the grunt was 19. A three-man patrol could have two teenagers and a twenty year old. They might could smell bacon cooking as the sun came up. Have you ever tried to feed teenage boys? Even bean mess, they will eat it, maybe put hot sauce on it. The smell of bacon, a kids appetite, three young men on the way to breakfast didn’t know what Major Rogers knew. They came back through the killing fields. Us back in camp got to hear and see the killing. Standing there with tin coffee cups in our hands. No time to mourn, time to respond to the enemy, more will die in the killing fields this morning .

The enemy knew we would come for our wounded. To the enemy they were bait. To us they were our brothers.

After another D-Day (assaulting hostile guns) and an Armageddon for some, the Company commander got us all together on the ‘psb’ street and reminded us of our tactics. That captain was the real deal, a combat leader

who felt the death of every man in his command; no time to mourn, time to teach.

He taught us teenagers. He told us again *“not to come back to camp the way we left”*. During his impassioned plea, I overheard one grunt tell Sgt. Corbin, *“Hey you were scared out there today”*. Sgt. Corbin looked at him and said, *“I’ve known fear!”*

This little story ain’t about no “ra ra” facing your fears. This is about how to make bean mess. How to make the bread of life, a sustaining meal. This ain’t no chicken soup. This is thick and spicy and it will carry you through a hard day. It ain’t no quiche . This meal is for your backbone. It ain’t popular. It ain’t convenient. It’s for *“your heart and nerve and sinew so that they may serve you long after their turn is done”*.

I’ve known fear that made me want to crawl into my mind and wake up in my own cold sheets. I’ve known rage that could unleash the furies of hell on an enemy *“just to watch ‘em die”*.

*“And I came away with a different point of view”*.

The rest of our country missed out on a big thing about that *“crazy Asian war”*. They missed out on a generation of their *“best and brightest”*.



**Tom with his daughter Theresa post Vietnam. Her dad would years later tell her of bean mess.**

They missed out on heroes, like Private Olive; say it Kris Kristofferson, about the love of a man who gave his life for his fellow man. *“So in dying Private Milton Olive taught those of us who remain how we ought to live”*. You can chant peace and love and drop your coins at the 7/11. Love ain’t a party. Love came home to this country with a flag draped over it. A love like the colors of that flag. A love that don’t run.

That love of life; of doing something with your borrowed life. That love is the first ingredient in bean mess. Like bean mess, love needs to be shared. You may not like the bean mess. You got to respect the love.

*(continued...)*



Respecting yourself, loving yourself, your borrowed life, you can't help but to respect all life.

Now "feel the love" and stir it into the bean mess of life...

***"For these woods are filled with the lives of young men and deep in the dark they call cadence again".***

I caught a ride to school most days with a neighbor. It was hard for him to get around. He lost a leg hitting the beach on D-Day. I didn't feel sorry for him -- he was Pvt. Ryan visiting the graves in his mind telling them he was living a good life. I had another neighbor who walked real stiff; he fought the whole war with a bad back from a glider crash coming in with the 82nd behind the beaches on D-Day. I didn't feel sorry for him -- he was Pvt. Ryan visiting the graves in his mind telling them he was living a good life.

Who I feel sorry for is a generation of U.S. citizens that grew up without heroes. They should know about a pilot named Alvarez. They should know about Roy Benavides. Maybe they would come away "with a different point of view about Mexican Americans. More U.S. airmen were killed in the skies of Vietnam than British airmen in the Battle of Britain. I feel sorry for a generation that lost that many of their best and brightest.

I feel sorry for a generation that grew up not knowing their flag would only have two colors on it. If it wasn't for the United States Marine Corps -- that is right, only two colors, white and blue. Them red stripes are from the blood of The United States Marine Corps. From the Halls of Montezuma to Hue. Hurrah for the RED, the white and the blue. I feel sorry for a generation that never learned to sing cadence. Us that bloused our boots and hit silk, we sang cadence:

***"Stand up, Hook up, shuffle to the door,  
jump right out and count to four.  
Dress it right and cover down, 40 inches all around.  
That's the airborne boogie, what a crazy sound.  
Standing tall and looking good,  
you ought to be in Hollywood."***

I was singing cadence. I didn't need a PhD in history. I didn't need a dissertation on morality to know how to sing and stand tall. Don't you know me I'm your native son? My roots came here as indentured servants, as farm labor, as house cleaners. They came here for a reason. This is a meritocracy. African slaves may have got shipped here but their offspring were singing cadence and standing tall right next to me and the other cans for the same reason. This is a great Country, an experiment in merit. We didn't need a draft councilor to stand tall.

This is a meritocracy and it was our turn to 'stand the line in the sand' to stand tall, to sing cadence and to toe

that line our fathers drew. I feel sorry for those parents that thought they were special and owed their country no form of service; their children grew up without a clue. That their parents, who relied on elitist status and amoral self-serving rhetoric only furthered the cause of an amoral and elitist government. Why oh why didn't they volunteer in droves as CO's and serve as medics and engineers?? They couldn't answer Kennedy's clarion call. What would happen if they had a war and everyone volunteered as Conscientious Objectors? Kris Kristofferson talks about a medic named Joel. Here's another Pvt. Olive. Really, what those parents said was I'm too elite and important to stand the line and risk what those medics did.

1812 President Madison requested a declaration of war against Britain. 1846 President Polk requests a declaration of war against Mexico. April 25th, 1898 the U.S. declares war against Spain. 1917 America declares war on Germany.

1941 U.S. declares war on axis powers. February 11th, 1945 FDR sits down in Yalta with Stalin and Churchill and drew lines in the sand

usurping the power of the Senate. Committing

troops to the U.N. usurping the power of Congress. THE LINES WERE HARD WON BY MERIT. The usurping of power was elitist not meritorious.

Within 5 years of this new elitist aristocracy, U.S. citizens were fighting and dying in Korea.

You got the love, stir it in, you got something to contribute give it. Its' time for another ingredient.

The want to, the want to contribute, the want to stand tall and sing as you give... You have to be like Shelton, you have to want it. Do you believe in merit and a government of due process?

Stand tall and deliver!

You got to know how to cook for hard times. It isn't complicated. This meritocracy is a single melting pot. It's time to say what is right and do what is right; not what is only in your special interest. We are a country for the people and by the people. Is it of the people? The recipe for bean mess for the brain is simple. Do the right thing more right things happen.

Your all my kids, I'm your son. Here's my nightmare.



**The old RTO sharing stories of yore with a third generation**



## I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW: *LEGS IN THE HERD*

## RARE EARTH FROM HILLS 875 & 882

This is not a misprint. This month marks the 44th anniversary of the Battle of Hill 875. Military statistics record the 173d Airborne Brigade sustained over 225 KIAs, and another 250+ WIAs beginning in early November up through the taking of Hill 875 on November 23, 1967. In particular, the majority of these casualties were from the 2nd Battalion. However, what is rarely talked about or even known to many is who made up their replacements?

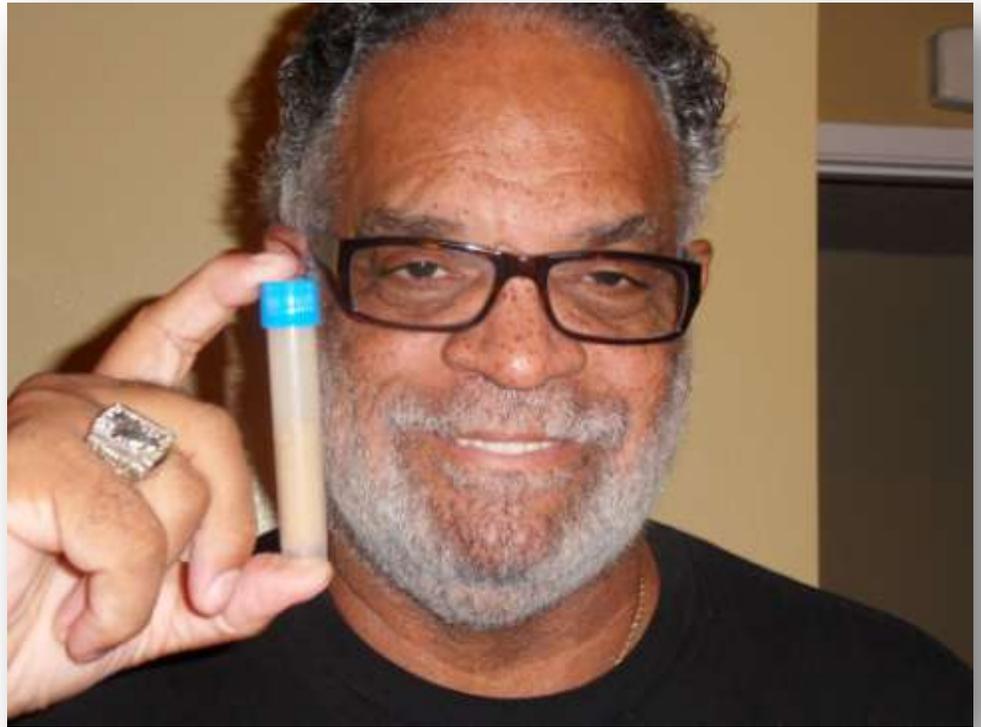
At the San Antonio reunion I queried several 2nd and 4th battalion rank and file members as to how their specific units were replenished after November's decimation. Most remembered their replacements arrived via intra-battalion transfers or fresh stateside FNGs. The same can't be said of Alpha 2/503d's replacements. I remember vividly that just days after the *Hill*, Alpha welcomed a dozen or more **non-airborne** replacements. They didn't attempt to conceal their "Leg" status. On the contrary, they expressed their honor in joining such an illustrious unit. They understood that they were authorized to wear the "patch" sans the airborne designation over it, and that in itself was sufficient recognition...they were, forever how briefly, Herd Bros.

To the best of my recollection, these *Airborne Legs* remained with Alpha at least until I DEROS'd the second week of February 1968. I'm also pleased to report that wings or no wings, these men acquitted themselves admirably and with distinction while members of Alpha.

Who was responsible for their assignment to the Herd? Was this the first/only occurrence of *Legs* in an airborne unit? When did they leave the Herd? What became of them? This inquiring mind wants to know.

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

**Note:** You can view Hill 875 as it looks today on YouTube either through Megawambi or Dak To Hill 875.



**Wambi, displaying hallowed soil.**

For those faithful 2nd Batt newsletter followers and other interested parties, I extend an offer I made earlier this year; myself and two comrades returned to Viet Nam this past February, and through varied maneuverings and a bit of luck, we ascended the infamous Hills 875 and 882. Before leaving the Hills on 2/22/11, we each secured a baggie of *sacred soil* that we hoped to share primarily with those 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalion Bros. who survived these battles. A few survivors took advantage of this offer. Well, we have residual earth that is still available, but on a first request basis. All that is required is to send to my home address a self-addressed prepaid envelope. The amount of soil is approximately seven (7) grams. Check with your local USPS as to the necessary postage cost. Actual battle participants will have priority.

**Contact:**

**Wambi Cook**  
18458 East Orkney Street, Azusa, CA 91702  
or [Wambicook@aol.com](mailto:Wambicook@aol.com)

***Lest we forget***



# 173d Chapter News



## CHAPTER 9

This email abstract is from the National Secretary. Chapter 9 will be prepared to discuss this important issue; however it does reinforce the issue of getting the *Sky Soldier* magazine VIA email. We in Chapter 9 support “electronic magazines” and recommend as many as possible opt for this. You can make this change by logging onto National’s website and selecting “magazine status” problems or contact either Dennis or me. Let us know your feelings on this proposed change.

**Dennis Hill**

[dhill173@verizon.net](mailto:dhill173@verizon.net) (781-769-6062)

**Peter Klausner**

[logpc@comcast.net](mailto:logpc@comcast.net) (508-238-0219)

Sirs and Ladies:

We have another issue we need to discuss at the Mid-Winter. Please read, discuss with your Chapters and be prepared at the Mid-Winter to discuss this important issue.

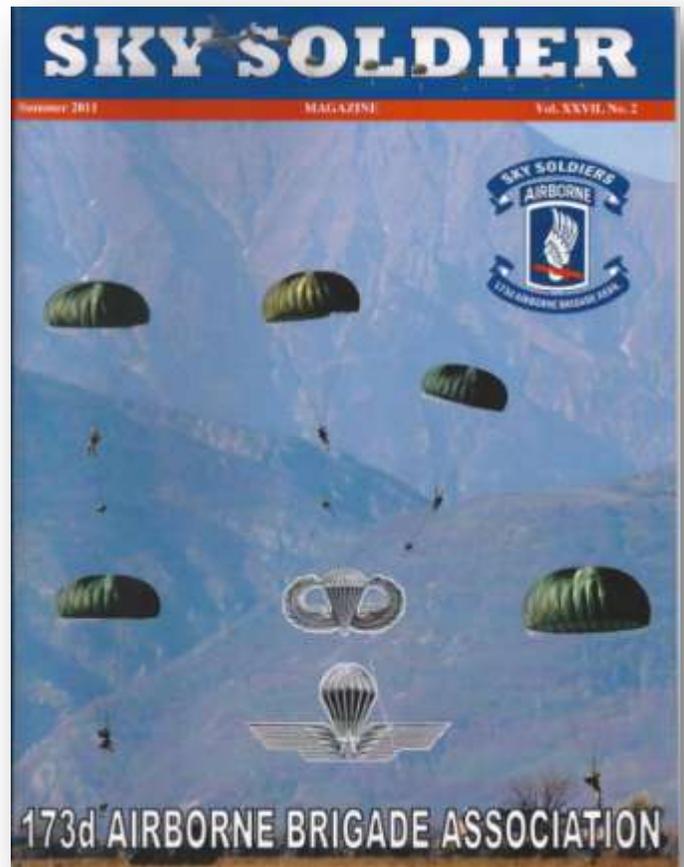
**PROBLEM:** The rising cost of the *Sky Soldier Magazine* and decreasing revenue (long term) due to increasing Life memberships, will lead this Association to a great financial distress in the future. Many other veterans’ Associations have ended Life memberships and or have made serious adjustments in cost of joining as life members.

### Possible Solutions:

1. End life memberships
2. Adjust cost of life memberships
3. Replace *Sky Soldier Magazine*

#### Pros and Cons of each solution:

1. End life memberships: this will stop the financial collapse in the future but will lose us life time Members -- especially our younger Sky Soldiers whom we need for our future.
2. Adjust cost of life memberships: Like the 101st, Special forces, etc., set all NEW Life membership cost by age groups up to 4 times the current life membership fee. It will decrease the financial problem in the future and cost us less loss of memberships but will still affect membership.
3. Replace how we provide the *Sky Soldier Magazine*. This could be done at any time in the future after much discussion and notice – say in 3-5 years.



### Magazine replacement:

1. Quarterly Electronic magazine could start next year (available now).
2. Produce a “Year Book” each year and mail it to all current members. (Major events, Officers, Reunion Photos, Chapter Reports, new KIA, new Decreased and current Members list).
3. In reality members would not be afforded less from the Association but more.
4. It would save financially -- one mailing versus four.
5. We can look at other printing options to reduce cost!
6. Obviously some members will be upset over any change but much like or current Social Security system we need to Fix It and not just push it off until we go bankrupt.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL SKY SOLDIER YEAR BOOK – APPROX 48 Pages Max - \$ 7,000

### Next General Membership Meeting

Chapter 9 ~ General Membership Meeting

5 November 2011

12:00 - 14:00 Hrs

22 Hathorn Road, Jaffrey, NH

**Tim Austin**

[www.newenglandskysoldier.com](http://www.newenglandskysoldier.com)

(continued....)



## Midwest Chapter 17 Midwest Christmas Party Franklin, OH

Members of Chapter 17, your fearless leaders are making early preparations for our annual Christmas Party. We intend to hold it once again at the VFW7596 Post in Franklin, Ohio.

We will be located southwest of Dayton. The Holiday Inn is available for rooms. John Kyne and his wife have the ball rolling for us. We are hoping to hear your response. Let us know so we can plan for the numbers.

We had a great little time last year at that location so it should be familiar to you. However, we need the bodies to make it worthwhile so please give a call to let us know if you intend to come out.

We will have the food and drinks waiting and hopefully, a live band. The date is set:

**Who:** Midwest Chapter 17

**What:** Annual Christmas Dinner

**When:** December 3rd, dinner between and 7 or 8 P.M.

**Where:**

VFW POST 7596  
422 South Main Street  
Franklin, OH  
937-746-7286

**Hotel Info:**

HOLIDAY INN  
851 Commerce Center Drive  
Franklin, OH  
937-746-1094

\$69. Per night + tax

**Contact**

John Kyne, [937-862-4487](tel:937-862-4487)

Bill Terry, [614-476-3060](tel:614-476-3060)

You know the Chapter, you know its members so let's come out and have a wacky time.

Also, to our members in Kentucky and Indiana, Dayton is not that far away. Come on out and join in. Last year we had a group from Pennsylvania and we hope to see them again.

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## Our Medics

Plans are still in the works to feature the brave Medics of the 2/503d and all 173d sister units. Please send your medic stories and photos to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)



## Last Month's WHODAT?

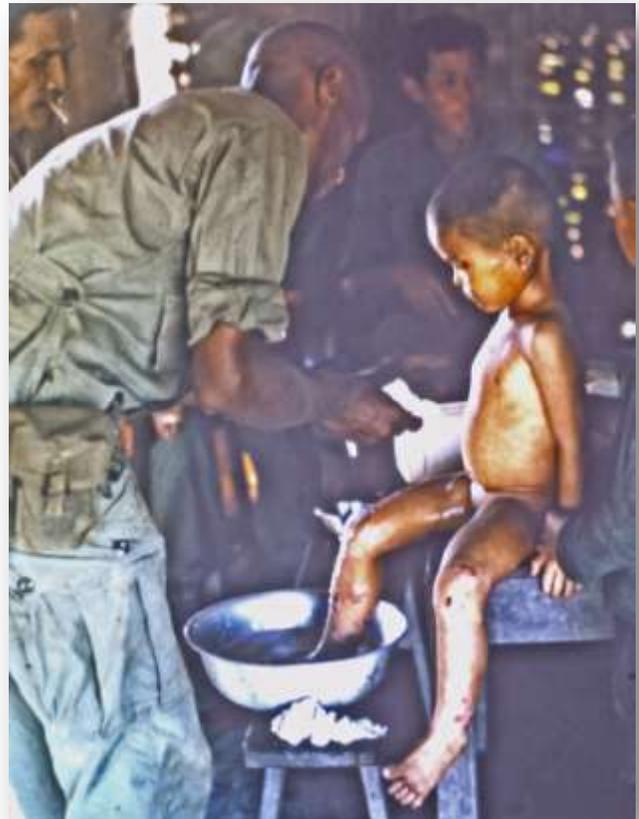


Photo taken by (then) LTC George Dexter (Col. Ret.), battalion CO 2/503d during *Operation New Hope* in 1965. We believe it is Sgt. Parker providing medical care to villagers.



## VA to Help Cover Some Home Loan Fees

Week of October 10, 2011

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will cover extra costs for veterans who struck deals on home loans and faced the possibility of higher fees amid confusion over a federal law change. The problem involves a Sept. 8 notice from the Department of Veterans Affairs loan operations that said certain fees would be lower beginning Saturday. But Congress delayed those lower fee rates from taking effect until November in legislation awaiting President Barack Obama's signature. For more information and updates as they become available, visit the News and Announcements box on VA's Loan Guaranty Home Loan Program website. For more guides on how to get a VA home loan and make the best use of it, visit the [Military.com](http://Military.com) VA Home Loan Center.

[Sent in by Richard "Airborne" Martinez, B/2/503d]



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / November 2011 – Issue 34

Page 38 of 45

# Survivor Benefits for Spouses of Disabled Veterans

Sadly, more and more of us are taking that final jump. The following was taken from the Veterans Administration web site at [va.org](http://va.org). It appears there are two basic forms of benefits for surviving spouses. DIC, Dependency and Indemnity Compensations, and DEC, Survivors & Dependents Assistance.



**Department of Veterans Affairs**

## Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

### What Is DIC?

DIC is a monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of a military service member who died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, OR veteran whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease, OR veteran whose death resulted from a non service-related injury or disease, and who was receiving, or was entitled to receive, VA Compensation for service-connected disability that was rated as totally disabling for at least 10 years immediately before death, OR since the veteran's release from active duty and for at least five years immediately preceding death, OR for at least one year before death if the veteran was a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999.

### Who Is Eligible?

The surviving spouse if he or she: validly married the veteran before January 1, 1957, OR was married to a service member who died on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, OR married the veteran within 15 years of discharge from the period of military service in which the disease or injury that caused the veteran's death began or was aggravated, OR was married to the veteran for at least one year, OR had a child with the veteran, AND cohabited with the veteran continuously until the veteran's death or, if separated, was not at fault for the separation, AND is not currently remarried.\*

**Note:** A surviving spouse who remarries on or after December 16, 2003, and on or after attaining age 57, is entitled to continue to receive DIC.

The surviving child(ren), if he/she is: not included on the surviving spouse's DIC unmarried AND under age 18, or between the ages of 18 and 23 and attending school.

**Note:** Certain helpless adult children are entitled to DIC. Call the toll-free number below for the eligibility requirements.

The surviving parent(s) may be eligible for an income-based benefit. See our fact sheet, Parents' DIC.

### How Much Does VA Pay?

The basic monthly rate of DIC is \$1,154 for an eligible surviving spouse. The rate is increased for each dependent child, and also if the surviving spouse is housebound or in need of aid and attendance. VA also adds a transitional benefit of \$286 to the surviving spouse's monthly DIC if there are children under age 18. The amount is based on a family unit, not individual children. Benefit rate tables, including those for children alone and parents, can be found on the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates> or call the toll-free number below.

### How Should a Claimant Apply?

Claimants should complete VA Form 21-534 Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pension and Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child.

### What Are Some Related Benefits?

Health Care (CHAMPVA)  
Federal Employment Preference  
Home Loan Guaranty  
Survivors' & Dependents' Educational Assistance  
For More Information, Call Toll-Free **1-800-827-1000** or Visit VA's Web Site at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).  
Compensation and Pension Service – December 2008

## Survivors & Dependents Assistance (DEA)

### Summary of Benefits

Beginning August 1, 2011, break (or interval pay) will no longer be payable under DEA except during periods your school is closed as a result of an Executive Order of the President or an emergency (such as a natural disaster or strike). For example, if your Fall term ends on December 15th and your Spring term begins January 10th, your January housing allowance will cover 15 days in December and your February housing allowance will cover 21 days in January.

Dependents' Educational Assistance provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of certain veterans. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits.

*(continued....)*



## Survivor Benefits continued....

These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances.

### **For more information see the Survivors & Dependents Assistance Pamphlet Current payment rates.**

#### **Eligibility**

You must be the son, daughter, or spouse of: A veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability. The disability must arise out of active service in the Armed Forces.

A veteran who died from any cause while such permanent and total service-connected disability was in existence.

A servicemember missing in action or captured in line of duty by a hostile force.

A servicemember forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.

A servicemember who is hospitalized or receiving outpatient treatment for a service connected permanent and total disability and is likely to be discharged for that disability. This change is effective December 23, 2006.

#### **Period of Eligibility**

If you are a son or daughter and wish to receive benefits for attending school or job training, you must be between the ages of 18 and 26. In certain instances, it is possible to begin before age 18 and to continue after age 26. Marriage is not a bar to this benefit. If you are in the Armed Forces, you may not receive this benefit while on active duty. To pursue training after military service, your discharge must not be under dishonorable conditions. VA can extend your period of eligibility by the number of months and days equal to the time spent on active duty. This extension cannot generally go beyond your 31st birthday, there are some exceptions.

If you are a spouse, benefits end 10 years from the date VA finds you eligible or from the date of death of the veteran. If the VA rated the veteran permanently and totally disabled with an effective date of 3 years from discharge a spouse will remain eligible for 20 years from the effective date of the rating. This change is effective October 10, 2008 and no benefits may be paid for any training taken prior to that date.

For surviving spouses (spouses of service members who died on active duty) benefits end 20 years from the date of death.

#### **How to Apply**

You should make sure that your selected program is approved for VA training. If you are not clear on this point, VA will inform you and the school or company about the requirements.

Obtain and complete VA Form 22-5490, Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance. Send it to the VA regional office with jurisdiction over the State where you will train. If you are a son or daughter, under legal age, a parent or guardian must sign the application.

If you have started training, take your application to your school or employer. Ask them to complete VA Form 22-1999, Enrollment Certification, and send both forms to VA.

Section 301 of Public Law 109-461 adds a new category to the definition of "eligible person" for DEA benefits.

The new category includes the spouse or child of a person who: VA determines has a service-connected permanent and total disability; and at the time of VA's determination is a member of the Armed Forces who is hospitalized or receiving outpatient medical care, services, or treatment; and is likely to be discharged or released from service for this service-connected disability.

Persons eligible under this new provision may be eligible for DEA benefits effective December 23, 2006, the effective date of the law.



DEA provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to a service-related condition, or who died while on active duty or as a result of a service related condition. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances.

*(continued....)*



Special Restorative Training is available to persons eligible for DEA benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs may prescribe special restorative training where needed to overcome or lessen the effects of a physical or mental disability for the purpose of enabling an eligible person to pursue a program of education, special vocational program or other appropriate goal. Medical care and treatment or psychiatric treatments are not included.

Special Vocational Training is also available to persons eligible for DEA benefits. This type of program may be approved for an eligible person who is not in need of Special Restorative Training, but who requires such a program because of a mental or physical handicap.

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**It's recommended surviving spouses of deceased disabled veterans request any needed assistance from the DAV, Disable American Veterans, to best understand and apply for benefits.** Ed



**Department of Veterans Affairs**

### Death Pension Benefits

What Is Death Pension?

Death pension is a benefit paid to eligible dependents of deceased wartime veterans.

#### Who Is Eligible?

You may be eligible if:

- the deceased veteran was discharged from service under other than dishonorable conditions, *AND*
- he or she served 90 days or more of active duty with at least 1 day during a period of war\*, *AND*
- you are the surviving spouse or unmarried child of the deceased veteran, *AND*
- your countable income is below a yearly income limit set by law.

\**Note:* Anyone who enlists after September 7, 1980, generally must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which called or ordered to active duty. Service from August 2, 1990 to present is considered to be a period of war (Gulf War) in addition to other periods of war such as World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

#### Income Limits ( Effective December 1, 2008)

*If you are a... Your yearly income must be less than...*

Surviving spouse with no dependent children \$7,933  
Surviving spouse with one dependent child \$10,385  
(Add \$2,020 to the limit for EACH additional child)  
Housebound surviving spouse with no dependents \$9,696  
Housebound surviving spouse with one dependent \$12,144

Surviving spouse who needs aid and attendance with no dependents \$12,681  
Surviving spouse who needs aid and attendance with one dependent \$15,128  
Surviving child (no eligible parent) \$ 2,020

**Note:** *Some income is not counted toward the yearly limit (for example, welfare benefits, some wages earned by dependent children, and Supplemental Security Income).*

### How Much Does VA Pay?

VA pays you the difference between your countable income and the yearly income limit which describes your situation (see chart above). This difference is generally paid in 12 equal monthly payments rounded down to the nearest dollar. Call the toll-free number below for details.

**Note:** *Certain expenses (i.e., medical expenses, education expenses, or expenses related to the last illness or burial of the veteran or a dependent) paid by you are taken into consideration when arriving at your countable income.*

### How Can You Apply?

You can apply by filling out VA Form 21-534, *Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation,*

*Death Pension and Accrued Benefits by Surviving Spouse or Child.* If available, attach copies of dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates).

For More Information, Call Toll-Free **1-800-827-1000** or Visit Our Web Site at <http://www.va.gov>.

Compensation and Pension Service, Department of Veterans Affairs.

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## Express Mail to Slow Down

### Week of October 10, 2011

Effective Oct. 3, 2011, the United States Postal Service has revised mailing standards for Express Mail Military Service items mailed from the United States to APO/ FPO and DPO destinations for delivery. USPS, in conjunction with the Military Postal Service Agency, is revising the service commitment from a universal two to three day standard to a three to five business day standard depending on the origin and destination. For more information, email the Military Postal Service at: [MPSA-TR@conus.army.mil](mailto:MPSA-TR@conus.army.mil) or visit the Military Postal Service Agency website.

For more military-related news, visit the [Military.com](http://Military.com) **News Center.**



# Mortality Rates Of Vietnam Veterans

by Michael Patrick Brewer on Apr. 08, 2011, under Veterans Benefits

Thank you Patrick Brady for shedding some truth to the rapidly circulating rumors that we are passing on to glory at an accelerated rate. Some good news for Vietnam Veterans is always welcomed. I for one intend to be staring into the camera on the History Channel one day when they introduce me as the, "oldest living Vietnam Veteran!" I am a Life Member of VVA and a past president. I have nothing but the utmost respect for this fraternal organization and the purity of their advocacy. The VVA motto of never leaving another veteran behind is taken seriously.

Go to VVA.org to see their award winning publication,

## ***"The Veteran" Not Dead Yet***

**Patrick S. Brady**

### **Mortality Rates Among Vietnam Veterans**

Recently, the Internet has been awash with dire predictions of the imminent demise of all Vietnam veterans. Both alarmed and suspicious, Vietnam veteran Pat Brady did some investigating. Here's what he found.

***"If you're alive and reading this, how does it feel to be among the last one-third of all the U. S. Vets who served in Vietnam?"*** Like a ritual salute, this question has passed from one veteran website to another in the past 18 months, accompanied by a drumbeat of numbers: 711,000 Vietnam veterans died between 1995 and 2000, or 142,000 deaths every year, 390 every day; no more than 850,000 Vietnam veterans remain out of 2.7 million, meaning at least 1.8 million have fallen to the swift scythe of the Grim Reaper; and "only the few" will still be around by 2015. *"We died in 'Nam,"* reckoned one veteran, *"just haven't fallen over yet."*

This actuarial cadence-count went viral on "Before They Go," a nine-minute video posted on YouTube by Veterans Appreciation Alliance, a group seeking sponsors and contributions for its Grateful Red, White & Blue Appreciation Tour. One website hailed the video as a *"warning that our Vietnam vets are dying off rapidly, and we need to give them a proper 'Welcome Home' before they are gone."* Many veterans proved quite ready to believe that their comrades were falling fast to Agent Orange, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide.

But others were skeptical. Passing through the blogosphere, the supposed daily death toll of 390 Vietnam veterans sprouted a spurious pedigree, with several websites attributing it to the Naval Health Research Center. This was news to the Center, whose Public Affairs Office called on the makers of "Before They Go" to remove the bogus attribution. The nine minute video disappeared from YouTube by mid-April 2010, replaced by a four-minute version cleansed of the offending mortality figures.

Yet the mournful numbers still pop up all over the Internet. Are they true? Where did they come from? First, we must face the limits of our knowledge: No one knows for sure how many in-country Vietnam veterans are alive. So anyone who tells you he is sure is making it up.

The number living must be measured against a baseline of those who were there in the first place. But no one is sure of that number either, despite a surfeit of surveys and estimates. The Department of Defense kept a consolidated file of those who died in the Vietnam War but not of those who fought it. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and almanacs of the war are conspicuously silent about how many actually saw duty in Vietnam. To make up for the lack of an in-country master list, estimates and surveys have started with figures for those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, and for those who served in the Vietnam theater, a term that includes Vietnam, its coastal waters, Laos, Cambodia, and sometimes Thailand.

Defining the era presents problems of its own, with Section 101(29) of the U.S. Code for Veterans offering two definitions of the Vietnam era: 1) February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975, for veterans who served in Vietnam; and 2) August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, for those who served elsewhere. These are the same parameters used to determine eligibility for membership in VVA. Adding to the confusion, some estimates treat the Vietnam era as ending not in 1975, but in 1973, the year of the Paris Peace Accords. So different estimates of those who served and those who survive produce different results, varying according to the location of service (Vietnam itself or the Vietnam theater) and time covered (usually starting in 1961, 1964, or even 1965, and ending in 1973 or 1975).

A survey of surveys appeared in the first volume (1994) of the Institute of Medicine's semiannual studies, *Veterans and Agent Orange*. Estimates of in-country Vietnam service, the Institute found, ranged from 2.6 to 3.8 million, with most falling between 2.6 and 2.9.

*(continued....)*



Estimates for the Vietnam theater ranged from 2.7 to 4.3 million, with 3.4 million the most widely cited figure. These numbers must be seen against the larger total of those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, 8.75 million from 1964-73, and 9.2 million from 1964-75. Depending on the estimate, one out of three Vietnam-era veterans served in the Vietnam theater, and four out of five Vietnam theater veterans served in Vietnam itself.

With these estimates in mind, we can start closing in on what can be said about the number of living in country Vietnam veterans. Better figures are available for era veterans than for in-country veterans. The 2000 Census long form, for example, asked about period of service but not place. Estimates for living in-country veterans can be extrapolated from figures for living era veterans. Setting a benchmark for the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 8,380,356 living Vietnam-era (here defined as 1964-75) veterans, about 90 percent of the original 9.2 million, with the death toll near 800,000. The Centers for Disease Control reached a like finding in a Post-Service Mortality Study of 18,313 Vietnam-era veterans, half of whom served in country. By the end of 2000, the CDC found, about 91 percent of era veterans were living, aged 46 to 67 in the sample, with a mean of 53; death rates for veterans were lower than for all men in the U.S. through 1998; and in-country veterans suffered 7 percent higher mortality than other veterans. That difference, the CDC said, was “*not statistically significant*,” was confined to the first five years after discharge from active duty, and was limited to “external causes”—mostly traffic accidents, suicides, homicides, and unintentional poisonings, many of them drug-related.

If in-country Vietnam veterans accounted for about a third of all Vietnam-era veterans, and if they were dying only slightly faster than the others, then the 800,000 era veterans who died from the 1960s through 2000 should have included fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans. That fact rules out the supposed passing of 711,000 of them between 1995 and 2000 alone, a figure that forms one verse of the Internet litany.

Reaching a comparable estimate for the Vietnam theater, the VA Office of Environmental Epidemiology keeps an incomplete list of 3,056,000 Vietnam theater veterans, and counts 349,000 theater veteran deaths through 2001, a count the Office considers 95 percent complete. If four out of five theater veterans served in country and if they were dying only slightly faster than other veterans, then the 349,000 theater deaths should have included 280,000 to 300,000 in country veteran deaths through 2001, an estimate in line with the CDC and Census figures through 2000.

The VA’s *Veteran Population Model for 2007* estimates that 8,448,000 Vietnam-era (1964-75) veterans were living in 2000, and 7,526,000 living on September 30, 2010. While 47,000 leaving the military joined the ranks of Vietnam-era veterans during the decade, 969,000 deaths thinned those ranks. Again, if a third of era veterans were in-country veterans who were dying only slightly faster than other veterans through 2000, they should account for 325,000 to 350,000 of the 969,000 Vietnam-era deaths from 2000 to 2010, unless their mortality rate skyrocketed far above the rate for other veterans after 2000. There is no evidence that it did, and some that it did not.

A *Current Population Survey* by the Census Bureau for August 2009 estimated 7,183,000 living Vietnam-era veterans, including 3,566,000 living Vietnam theater veterans. Compared to other estimates, the era figure seems low, while the theater figure seems high, but the high number may cover a longer period—1961 to 1975—and may reflect inflated self-reporting of Vietnam service. But even allowing for such complications, the survey weighs against any soaring death rate for in-country Vietnam veterans. If three million or more theater veterans are alive, and four out of five of them are in-country veterans, then 2.4 million or more in-country Vietnam veterans should still live, triple the 800,000 rumored on the Internet.

### Origins Of A Myth

So, thank God, most in-country veterans are not dead yet. But who started the story that they were?

Doomsday dirges do not need footnotes, but mortality statistics do, and the sources cited for these Internet numbers are few and mystifying. One of them, “the Public Information Office,” likely leads to the American War Library. As one blogger warned: “*The false number of 850,000 originates from the phony website of the American War Museum, which disseminates much false information for reasons only its manager (it is a one-man operation) might know.*”

The blogger misidentified the site. Otis Willie and Roger Simpson of the Public Information Office of the American War Library (not Museum) disseminated the number in a June 7, 2009, posting on [alt.genealogy](#): “*The official estimate of Vietnam War ‘survivors’ as of 25 May 2009 is 831,000. The number of Americans who served in Vietnam between 1945 and 1975 is 3.2 mil. to 2.7 mil. Is the number counted by DoD in 1984 when producing ‘The Vietnam War Service Index.’*”

(continued...)



# COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA

While most cyberspace chats have rounded off the number of living Vietnam veterans to 800,000 or 850,000, the American War Library's more precise number is echoed in a posting by "Stillhere" on Veterans Benefits Network that regrets "there are only 831,000 of our brothers/ sisters still alive." Calling itself "The World's Largest On-Line Military, Veteran and Military Family Registry," the American War Library asks: "If you are a Vietnam vet, have you verified that your name is listed in the Department of Defense's Official Vietnam Veteran War Service Index?" This "official" index, the same one cited in the Library's posting about 831,000 survivors, is often cited on the Internet as "officially provided by the War Library." As far as I can tell, this Index is nowhere to be found.

The American War Library seems to be a home business run by Phillip R. Coleman in Gardena, California. Various web postings have warned that "Roger Simpson" and "Otis Willie" are two of dozens of names used by Coleman; that the Library solicits personal information from veterans but does not provide free information about veterans; and that the Library and its many related websites post myriad military stories to attract attention and gain legitimacy. For examples of the warnings, Google "American War Library-exposed" or "American War Library scam," or [see www.armchairgeneral.com/forums/showthread.php?t=96622](http://www.armchairgeneral.com/forums/showthread.php?t=96622)

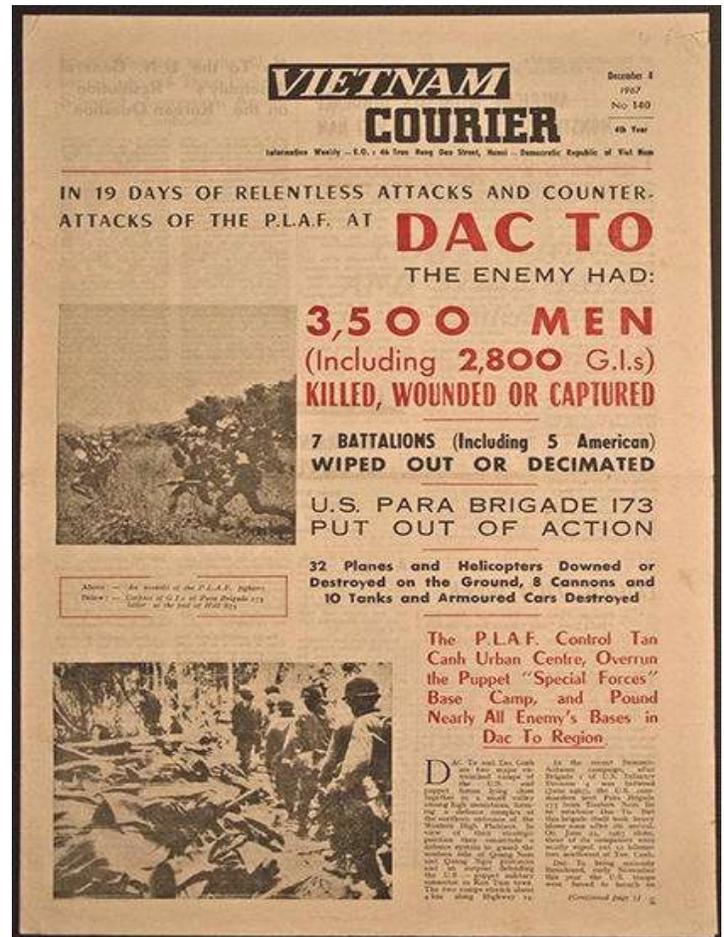
**Statistics are hard enough without phony numbers thrown in. But in the available statistics, we find no evidence that the number of living in-country Vietnam veterans is only 800,000, and strong evidence that it is much higher.** Again, by my own amateur extrapolations, fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans likely died before 2000, and a slightly larger number since, adding up to 600,000 or more dead, leaving two million or more alive. So if you're a Vietnam veteran reading this, how does it feel to stand with the three out of four who are still here and mean to stay for a while?

For information used in this article, I thank Mike Wells of the VA Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, and James Messinger, the treasurer of the National Vietnam War Museum.

Source: This article appeared on [TusconCitizen.com](http://TusconCitizen.com)

*"If you go parachuting, and your parachute doesn't open, and your friends are all watching you fall, I think a funny gag would be to pretend you were swimming."*

~ Jack Handy



[Sent in by Peter Klausner, A/4/503d]

**Note:** On my first (civilian) return trip to Vietnam I had the occasion to interview a former NVA soldier and learned the Communist government released similar reports about Operation Silver City (March '66), claiming 5 helicopters had been shot down at LZ Zulu Zulu and 'hundreds' of American G.I.'s had been KIA. In reality, we had one Huey shot down, perhaps 11 were hit, and less than 20 Sky Soldiers KIA....no mention of the hundreds of VC and NVA killed was reported. Ed

## Those Jumping Fools And the Foolish Things They Do

Gerry's story about the M-14 and his injured shoulder (see Page 27), and my having broken my ankle performing a not-so-perfect standing landing, are just two examples of some of the things young paratroopers do which no one in their right mind would attempt. Send in your *foolish things paratroopers do* story to share with your buddies. Gerry and I hate being the only ones with our silk hanging in the wind. *Chairborne!* Ed



**Armistice Day** (also known as **Remembrance Day**) is on 11 November and commemorates the armistice signed between the Allies of World War I and Germany at Compiègne, France, for the cessation of hostilities on the Western Front, which took effect at eleven o'clock in the morning—the "*eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month*" of 1918. While this official date to mark the end of the war reflects the cease fire on the Western Front, hostilities continued in other regions, especially across the former Russian Empire and in parts of the old Ottoman Empire.

The date was declared a national holiday in many allied nations, to commemorate those members of the armed forces who were killed during war. An exception is Italy, where the end of the war is commemorated on 4 November, the day of the Armistice of Villa Giusti.

After World War II, the name of the holiday was changed to Veterans Day in the United States and to Remembrance Day in countries of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Armistice Day remains an official holiday in France and Belgium, known also as the Day of Peace in the Flanders Fields.

In many parts of the world, people take a two-minute moment of silence at 11:00 a.m. local time as a sign of respect for the roughly 60 million people who died in the war. This gesture of respect was suggested by Edward George Honey in a letter to a British newspaper, although Wellesley Tudor Pole had established two ceremonial periods of remembrance based on events in 1917.

