

FOR THE MEN, AND THEIR  
FAMILIES, OF THE 2ND BATTALION,  
173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)

**WE TRY  
HARDER!**

**2/503d**  
**VIETNAM**  
\*\*\*\*\*newsletter



February 2012, Issue 37

Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

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

<http://firebase319.org/2bat/news.html> or [http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)

## ~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



Near Song Be, RVN, 2/503 medics tend to wounded Charlie Company trooper. (Photo by SP4 Alan Price, Bde PIO)



# Chaplain's Corner



**Our Leapin' Deacon with  
Mrs. Deacon, his bride Ann**

Dear and Honored Sky Soldiers, Families and Friends:

Grace and Peace!

## **Psalm 105:1-4**

Give the Lord thanks and invoke him by name, make his deeds known in the world around. Pay him honor with song and psalm and think upon all his wonders. Exult in his hallowed name; let those who seek the Lord be joyful in heart. Turn to the Lord, your strength, seek his presence always.

## **Galatians 5:22**

But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these.

In the Season of Beginnings, we frequently lift up our Founding Fathers, particularly Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in that their birthdays loom before us. However, this time we concentrate on another of our Heroes of Heroes, a distinguished past senior citizen and wise leader, Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin's father Josiah, hoped that his son would be a clergy-person, but Ben had other ideas of service and servant-hood to our Lord, and that was to care for people and our Nation in extraordinary ways. His accomplishments in serving humankind and our Lord are staggering. He lived a life of curiosity, wit, and wisdom and was brilliant beyond description even though he had only two years of formal education. He declared numerous times that he did not remember a time when he could not read. He spoke at least five languages. This historic genius expressed himself in service to his fellow human beings as an inventor, printer, writer, scientist, statesman, diplomat, teacher/philosopher, humorist, economist, and as a musician, playing several instruments including the violin.

Franklin dearly loved to improve the quality of life for people. His helpful endeavors and inventions included the Franklin stove, which used less wood and provided greater safety; bifocal eye glasses; the lightning rod; a practical odometer to measure distance of travel; a long arm to assist short people to reach higher objects without

dangerously climbing; watertight bulkheads to enable ships to work more safely and effectively – and the list goes on. He refused to profit from his many inventions. His personal way to glorify his Heavenly Father was to help people be more comfortable and fulfilled.

This quiet, inspirational Founding Father found much of his personal happiness in his dear wife, Deborah Read, and their 44 blessed years together, even though he was deployed for 11 of their 44 years on special Ambassador duty to England and France.

Ben Franklin was the only Founding Father who assisted in preparing and signing all four of the vital documents, which led to the beginning of the United States: Declaration of Independence in 1776; the Treaty of Alliance with France 1778; Treaty of Paris 1782, a peace agreement with England which ended the Revolution; and the United States Constitution 1787.

Ben Franklin's wise, clever and witty statements are quoted worldwide: *"A penny saved is a penny earned," "Well done is better than well said," "Early to bed, early to rise makes a person healthy, wealthy and wise."* His wise advice about money and savings helped shape our Country's economy and set the course for the American Dream. His wide-spread fame as a writer and publisher came from *"Poor Richard's Almanac"* published each year from 1733 until 1758. He also founded an academy that became the University of Pennsylvania. WOW! What a happy and helpful leader who still amazes and inspires citizens to set the pace to lead with care and wisdom.

When our Constitutional Convention was in dire discord nearly destroying our new Nation, Ben Franklin rose to his feet and everyone carefully listened as he spoke. He proposed that every session be opened with prayer imploring the assistance of our Lord in all Assembly deliberations. To this day, Congress follows his pristine advice and holy wisdom and opens with prayer. Thank God for this happy and hope-filled servant, Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. In his last public act he signed an appeal to Congress to abolish slavery and grant freedom to all.

Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord God, Savior Jesus, and Winsome Holy Spirit,

**Chaplain Conrad Walker, COL, Ret.**  
**"The Leapin' Deacon"**  
**National Chaplain Emeritus**  
**173d Airborne Association and**  
**Military Order of the Purple Heart**





## Charlie Company CO '66/'67 having a Blast with Chinese Paratroopers



**The young Captain Jack in the boonies in RVN.**

He was the Defense and Army Attaché in China during that time as a Brigadier General. This was just before the turmoil of the Tiananmen incident in 1990. *"This was a very, very rare if not the only case of a foreigner jumping with the Chinese,"* says the General.

The aircraft was an AN-2 Colt. *"It may look very archaic, but is a great jump airplane -- very big door. I had to pack my own chute and after the jump we had dinner in the regimental mess hall, drank too much Mao Tai, and spent the night. A great airborne experience. Fortunately, my Chinese language helped me to have a great visit."* says Jack.

These are a couple of pictures of MG Jack Leide prior to jumping with a Chinese PLA airborne regiment (that's Jack on the left in the two guy picture, and below standing in front of the red star on the plane).



As with most airborne units around the world, they were very professional, says Jack, *"tough as nails, hard drinking and you could feel the sincere camaraderie with fellow airborne soldiers. Interestingly, this is the same airborne regiment that was sent in to physically occupy Tiananmen during the height of the crisis -- the key PLA mission during the whole operation."*

*Airborne all the way!*

*Cap*

**Jack Leide, MG (Ret)**  
**CO C/2/503d**



Our Cap, outnumbered, but he has them surrounded. You can't see it, but on Jack's right shoulder is the 173d patch making the jump with him in China.



## From a Sky Soldier

I don't think of this stuff very often, just another thing in the rice paddy of shit that we hump thru every day. But, while reading it I got a strange feeling. Don't know what it was; happiness, relief or maybe just that someone realized how we got shit on. It was a good feeling and I did end up teary eyed; it didn't last long as my training took over and I stuffed it and moved on. Maybe you could share this in our newsletter, who knows, maybe some of the brothers might get a moment of a good feeling.



Mike

**Mike Sturges**  
A/2/503d

### AN OPEN LETTER TO ANYONE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Dear Hero,

I was in my twenties during the Vietnam era. I was a single mother and, I'm sad to say, I was probably one of the most self-centered people on the planet. To be perfectly honest...I didn't care one way or the other about the war.

All I cared about was me—how I looked, what I wore, and where I was going. I worked and I played. I was never politically involved in anything, but I allowed my opinions to be formed by the media. It happened without my ever being aware. I listened to the protest songs and I watched the six o'clock news and I listened to all the people who were talking. After a while, I began to repeat their words and, if you were to ask me, I'd have told you I was against the war. It was very popular. Everyone was doing it, and we never saw what it was doing to our men. All we were shown was what they were doing to the people of Vietnam.

My brother joined the Navy and then he was sent to Vietnam. When he came home, I repeated the words to him. It surprised me at how angry he became. I hurt him very deeply and there were years of separation—not only of miles, but also of character. I didn't understand.


In fact, I didn't understand anything until one day I opened my newspaper and saw the anguished face of a Vietnam veteran. The picture was taken at the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. His countenance revealed the terrible burden of his soul. As I looked at his picture and his tears, I finally understood a tiny portion of what you had given for us and what we had done to you. I understood that I had been manipulated, but I also knew that I had failed to think for myself. It was like waking up out of a nightmare, except that the nightmare was real. I didn't know what to do.

One day about three years ago, I went to a member of the church I attended at that time, because he had served in Vietnam. I asked him if he had been in Vietnam, and he got a look on his face and said, "Yes." Then, I took his hand, looked him square in the face, and said, "Thank you for going." His jaw dropped, he got an amazed look on his face, and then he said, "No one has ever said that to me." He hugged me and I could see that he was about to get tears in his eyes. It gave me an idea, because there is much more that needs to be said. How do we put into words...all the regret of so many years? I don't know, but when I have an opportunity, I take it...so here goes.

Have you been to Vietnam? If so, I have something I want to say to you—*Thank you for going!* Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Please forgive me for my insensitivity. I don't know how I could have been so blind, but I was. When I woke up, you were wounded and the damage was done, and I don't know how to fix it. I will never stop regretting my actions, and I will never let it happen again.

Please understand that I am speaking for the general public also. We know we blew it and we don't know how to make it up to you. We wish we had been there for you when you came home from Vietnam because you were a hero and you deserved better. Inside of you there is a pain that will never completely go away...and you know what? It's inside of us, too; because when we let you down, we hurt ourselves, too. We all know it...and we suffer guilt and we don't know what to do...so we cheer for our troops and write letters to "any soldier" and we hang out the yellow ribbons and fly the flag and we love America. We love you too, even if it doesn't feel like it to you. I know in my heart that, when we cheer wildly for our troops, part of the reason is trying to make up for Vietnam. And while it may work for us, it does nothing for you. We failed you. You didn't fail us, but we failed you and we lost our only chance to be grateful to you at the time when you needed and deserved it. We have disgraced ourselves and brought shame to our country. We did it and we need your forgiveness. Please say you will forgive us and please take your rightful place as heroes of our country. We have learned a terribly painful lesson at your expense and we don't know how to fix it.

From the heart,

  
Julie Weaver  
Burleson, Texas

**Consider it shared, Mike. And hey, brothers, *thank you for going.* Damn fog. Ed**







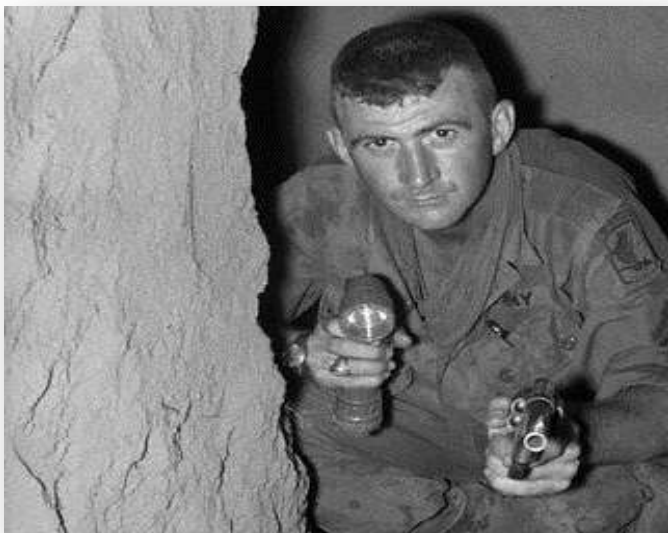
## Incoming!



### Surprise Photo

Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. Where'd you dig up the picture of me in the tunnel? I'm casually reading thru the January newsletter and there I am staring out at me. What a hoot!!!

**Charles "Pappy" Patchin**  
B/D/3/319th



Pappy

### A/2/503d CO and his CO Send Good Wishes to the Sky Soldier Family

The Lord has truly blessed us with a wonderful family and great friends. May His Hand be upon you each day and may this holy season and 2012 hold for you His blessings and opportunities. *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."*

I Chronicles 16:34.

**Rev. Jack and Lynn Kelley**



~ Family Kelley ~

### A Big Thanks from Radar to Hawkeye

A big thanks to Ken Kaplan (CO B/2/503d). Meeting him again put me back in time; like we had never been separated. One of the best reunions ever.

**RTO Harry Cleland**  
HHC/B/2/503d

### Not a CSM...Then

I don't think they had CSM's (Command Sergeant Majors) in '65. Mish's rank would have been SMG (Sergeant Major), we didn't get the CSM rank until 1968.

**John "Top" Searcy**  
HHC/2/503d



We identified SGM Mish, HHC/2/503d, shown here on the right, as a CSM in this January '66 photo which appeared in last month's newsletter. Top Searcy set us straight; but I ain't doin' those 20 pushups Top! Five at best, and that's on a good day. The last RTO in the canal is moi. Ed

### Van Campen, B/2/503d MIA

In the summer of 1989, the Western States Chapter 10, had the 1st ever 173d reunion on the "left coast". The reunion was held in Santa Rosa, CA, "the wine country". General William Westmoreland was the Guest Speaker. Beringer Wine was served at the banquet and it turns out that an employee of Beringer Wine would become an elected California Assembly Member, and Congressman Mike Thompson, who served in the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate).

At the reunion Memorial ceremony, we honored our fallen and our Missing In Action. The Van Campen (MIA B/2/503) Gold Star Mother was there along with a sister from Oroville, CA. The mother has since passed away, a sister still lives in Oroville, CA, and another sister was living in Fresno, CA, about two years ago.

There is no longer a newspaper in Oroville, CA, that could help us with a news story about Van Campen.

One of the things that the JPAC persons sometimes ask for are Photos and Dental information such as Dental records. Dental remains can then be matched with the MIA remains.

**Ray Ramirez**  
Recon/4/503d



# THREATS TO EUROPE IN 2011

By John Cleese

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent events in Libya and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved."

Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated" or even "A Bit Cross."



The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorized from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance." The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the

Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pooed Off" to "Let's get the mongrels." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.



Damn. It's true!



The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides."



The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbour" and "Lose."



A wonderful Belgian lady

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels.

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.



Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be all right, Mate." Two more escalation levels remain: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!" and "The barbie is cancelled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.



Australian barbie

-- John Cleese - British writer (of Monty Python fame), actor and tall person

An instigator of some of the more groundbreaking developments in twentieth-century comedy, John Cleese is one of Britain's best-known actors, writers, and comedians. Famous primarily for his comic efforts, such as the television series *Fawlty Towers* and the exploits of the *Monty Python* troupe, he has also become a well-respected actor in his own right.

[Article sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA, photos added]





# The Bridge on the River Kwai



Historical parallels

*The Bridge on the River Kwai* is a 1957 British World War II film by David Lean based on *The Bridge over the River Kwai* by French writer Pierre Boulle. The film is a work of fiction but borrows the construction of the Burma Railway in 1942–43 for its historical setting. It stars William Holden, Jack Hawkins, Alec Guinness and Sessue Hayakawa. The film was shot in Sri Lanka (credited as Ceylon, as it was known at the time). The bridge in the movie was located near Kitulgala.



**The bridge over the River Kwai in June 2004. The round truss spans are the originals; the angular replacements were supplied by the Japanese as war reparations.**

The largely fictional film plot is loosely based on the building in 1943 of one of the railway bridges over the Mae Klong—renamed Khwae Yai in the 1960s—at a place called Tha Ma Kham, five kilometres from the Thai town of Kanchanaburi.

In 1997, this film was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and selected for preservation in the United States Library of Congress National Film Registry.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission:

*"The notorious Burma-Siam railway, built by Commonwealth, Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, approximately 13,000 prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar). Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre."*



The incidents portrayed in the film are mostly fictional, and though it depicts bad conditions and suffering caused by the building of the Burma Railway and its bridges, historically the conditions were much worse than depicted.

The real senior Allied officer at the bridge was British Lieutenant Colonel Philip Toosey. Some consider the film to be an insulting parody of Toosey.







**An allied P.O.W. wearing only loin cloth stands alongside primitive tripod used for leveling ground for the Thai-Burmese railway.**

On a BBC *Timewatch* programme, a former prisoner at the camp states that it is unlikely that a man like the fictional Nicholson could have risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel; and if he had, due to his collaboration he would have been "quietly eliminated" by the other prisoners. Julie Summers, in her book *The Colonel of Tamarkan*, writes that Pierre Boulle, who had been a prisoner of war in Thailand, created the fictional Nicholson character as an amalgam of his memories of collaborating French officers. He strongly denied the claim that the book was anti-British, though many involved in the film itself (including Alec Guinness) felt otherwise.



**Allied POWs. Thai-Burmese Railway**

Toosey was very different from Nicholson and was certainly not a collaborator who felt obliged to work with the Japanese. Toosey in fact did as much to delay the building of the bridge as possible. Whereas

Nicholson disapproves of acts of sabotage and other deliberate attempts to delay progress, Toosey encouraged this: termites were collected in large numbers to eat the wooden structures, and the concrete was badly mixed.



Some of the characters in the film have the names of real people who were involved in the Burma Railway. Their roles and characters, however, are fictionalized. For example, a Sergeant-Major Risaburo Saito was in real life second in command at the camp. In the film, a Colonel Saito is camp commandant. In reality, Risaburo Saito was respected by his prisoners for being comparatively merciful and fair towards them; Toosey later defended him in his war crimes trial after the war, and the two became friends.



**Victims from the construction of the railway.**

The destruction of the bridge as depicted in the film is entirely fictional. In fact, two bridges were built: a temporary wooden bridge and a permanent steel/concrete bridge a few months later. Both bridges were used for two years, until they were destroyed by Allied aerial bombing. The steel bridge was repaired and is still in use today.



[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA, as part of a slide presentation. See video [MOST\\_NA\\_RZECE\\_KWAI.pps](#)]







## Florida Publishes 2012 Veterans' Benefits Guide

*Courtesy of the Governor's Communications Office*

TALLAHASSEE -- Gov. Rick Scott recently announced nearly \$2.5 million in defense grants to local communities and organizations which support Florida military installations. These funds will continue to enhance and maintain Florida's reputation as the most military friendly state in the nation.

*"I am proud that Florida continues to support our military bases, military service members and their families, and the defense industry through the defense grant programs," said Gov. Rick Scott. "Additionally, these programs work to protect a \$65 billion economic impact, and the over 686,181 direct and indirect jobs, which the defense industry annually infuses into Florida."*

Of the grants, eleven are Defense Reinvestment Grants, totaling \$850,000, that have been awarded to defense communities in support of military base retention and economic diversification. The program helps communities develop and implement base sustainment and economic diversification strategies. The other nine awards are Defense Infrastructure Grants totaling \$1,581,245.

These grants address infrastructure needs of communities which host military installations. For more details, visit [www.floridadefense.org](http://www.floridadefense.org).

*Governor Scott Awards 2011-12 Defense Grants*

TALLAHASSEE -- The 2012 edition of the *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide* has been released by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. The 24-page guide, sponsored by the Florida Veterans Foundation, provides information about federal and state veterans' benefits and how to obtain them.



*"As we strive to expand our outreach efforts, this guide becomes a primary tool in our arsenal to advocate for our state's veteran population," said Mike Prendergast, FDVA Executive Director.*

Copies of the guide are being distributed to county veteran service offices, VA facilities and state colleges and universities. An interactive version is available online at [www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org). For more information or to request a guide, call (850) 487-1533.

## New Temporary Exhibit "The Animal Called POW"

Opening at 10 a.m. on February 10, 2012 in the Temporary Exhibit Gallery of the ASOM, this exhibit will stay open through January 2013.



**Examine a realistic "Tiger Cage" like the one Colonel James "Nick" Rowe lived in for five years.**

This exhibit is made possible by the support of Booz/Allen/Hamilton; The SERE School, Camp Mackall, NC; The United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Public Affairs office; Fort Bragg's Division of Plans, Training and Mobilization; many former POWs and their families; and the Airborne & Special Operations Foundation.



Support the Museum. To continue to see these types of exhibits you can make a donation to the Foundation which supports the museum at:

[www.asomf.org/pages/donations/donation.php](http://www.asomf.org/pages/donations/donation.php)

[Sent in by Ron "Ropes" Rice, C/1/503d, 173d LRRP]



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~ *Letter of Appreciation* ~

*2d Battalion (Airborne)  
503d Infantry Regiment  
173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)  
in the Republic of Vietnam*



~ *2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2011* ~

Roy S. Lombardo, Jr., LTC (Ret)  
*Sky Soldier-Ranger Extraordinaire*  
Bravo Company  
2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment  
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)  
Republic of Vietnam

Dear Ranger Roy:

The officers and men of your Bravo Bulls and the entire 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), Republic of Vietnam, share in the distinct honor of presenting you with this award in recognition of your dedicated and never ceasing support of and care for the troopers of the Bravo Bulls, all men of our battalion and brigade and their families.

Please accept the statue of this soldier 'leading the way' as testament to you, Sir, as you continue to *lead the way*.

With our deepest gratitude and respect,

The officers and men of the Bravo Bulls  
and the 2/503d

*Airborne...All The Way, Sir!*



***"I am very grateful for this recognition and humbled by the comments."***

~ Roy Lombardo

Our thanks to Ed Kearney, B/2/503d, and his lovely bride Joyce, for presenting the *2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2011* award to LTC Roy S. Lombardo, Jr., (Ret), CO B/2/503d, on behalf of the Bravo Bulls and the officers and men of the 2/503d. We asked Ed to have a few pics taken which we could share with everyone. Ed says there were some damp eyes at that table. Ed



Joyce reading Letter of Appreciation to the Ranger.



Roy accepts trophy presented by Ed.



BDQ Roy, 2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year....Airborne!

***"Take two salt tables, and drive on!"***

"Hats off to Jack Schimpf (B/2/503d) for initiating Roy's nomination and all the Bulls who seconded that nomination." ~ Ed Kearney





# THE NOEMFOOR SUBWAY

By Louis G. Aiken, Sr.  
B/503rd PRCT, WWII

## HOW MAC RODE HIS SUBWAY FROM NOEMFOOR, DUTCH INDIES TO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



After the Noemfoor operation was completed the various units were assigned company areas, etc. Tents were erected, company streets laid out and so on. So I guess we were in a semi-garrison set up. The year was 1944, September or early October.

The CO during the operation was Capt. Chester Smith and he would remain CO until he was WIA during the Mindoro operation.

I guess it was about 9 or 10 a.m. one hot morning that I decided to walk up to the orderly (room) to check the bulletin board, or whatever. Our company street was probably 300 ft more or less in length with tents erected on both sides facing each other.

I was squad leader of the 2nd squad, 2nd platoon and T/Sgt. Wesley Rice was the platoon sergeant. On my way up to the orderly room I had to pass in front of Sgt. Rice's tent; however before I reached the sergeant's tent I saw a young soldier, who will be called Mac, exit from the tent. Mac continued on up toward the orderly room. Just before I reached the sergeant's tent, Rice also emerged from his tent into the company street and is watching Mac as he walked away.

I could see the sergeant was shaking his head and chuckling to himself as if he was slightly puzzled about something. He turns to go back into his tent and spies me, he stops and says, *"Come here, Aiken. You ain't gonna believe what Mac just told me, that boy has done lost his marbles."*

Sgt. Rice explained that Mac walked into his tent and unfolded a rough sketch of a proposed underground subway running the entire length of "B" Co's street. He then explained to Sgt. Rice that the troops could ride up to the orderly room during rainy weather, plus they

would not have to walk on the hard coral surface of which Noemfoor was composed. Mac further suggested that Sgt. Rice bring this matter to the CO's attention for his consideration and comments on the proposed project.

Just what Sgt. Rice did about the situation at that particular time I do not remember. However, we both agreed that Mac was either coming loose at the seams, or that he was just having a bit of fun at the expense of Sgt. Rice.

Actually to the best of my memory nothing much else was ever said about the matter while we were still on Noemfoor awaiting our next assignment, which was to be a move to Leyte, P.I. in late 1944.

We arrived on Leyte where, I guess, we could be considered at that point as being held in reserves just in case we are needed.

Somewhere between the proposed subway on Noemfoor and our arrival on Leyte I end up with Mac in my squad. Somewhat later word comes down that we are to prepare for the Mindoro operation and, of course, we get prepared. Then comes the day we are to load on an APD (*Assault Personnel Destroyer*) for the trip to Mindoro, or wherever we are supposed to land.

I decided to check the squad one last time, to see that each man has the necessary equip, ammo, rations, etc. I assign this task to Charlie Boyes from Mobile, Alabama.



He makes the rounds checking the squad and then comes back to me, shaking his head and grinning. I said *"What's the matter, Charlie?"* He said, *"It's Mac - you know what that crazy bastard said to me when I asked him where his entrenching tool was?"* I said, *"I have no idea."*

Charlie tells me that when he checked Mac that his entrenching tool is missing and when he asked Mac why he didn't have an entrenching tool. That Mac looked at him and said, *"Who the hell needs an entrenching tool on the steel deck of a destroyer, you certainly don't think I can dig in on that thing, do you?"* Perhaps these aren't the exact verbatim words spoken but they are close to it.

Well, it didn't take me long to recall the subway incident on Noemfoor. However, I was still somewhat skeptical and felt that Mac was trying to convince us that he had flipped his lid and was section eight material.

(continued....)



We took him back to his old tent area and found his entrenching tool. I told him he had better have it when we hit whatever beach it was we were supposed to hit. Charlie Boyes just shook his head and mumbled something to himself and walked away.

"B" Co. loaded on the APD; it was an old, oval deck, 2 stack vessel. I guess we were on board for less than 72 hrs., or perhaps less than 48 hrs., just sitting at anchor, I can't remember. Word comes down that there has been a Jap breakthrough up the line at Ormoc Bay. We are off loaded so that the ship can be used in that immediate area. It may have transported some of the 77th Division troops into the Ormoc area. I heard that the old ship incurred damage or was sunk in the fracas, or at least that was the explanation I remember.

We were not off loaded in our old Company area, but up the beach at a new spot a short distance from the old area.

Perhaps it was the second day in the new area that Mac comes up missing and, of course, we realize now that he is acting very peculiar to say the least. Someone suggested that he may have gone back to the company area. That's exactly what he had done and he left a trail to make sure that someone would follow him. He left bits and pieces of gear strung out as he moved toward the old area, he even disassembled his M-1 and left it strung out to make his trail. However the trail played out as he either ran out of articles to drop or decided the trail was marked sufficiently.

The native personnel near the old area were questioned and, yes, some of them believed they had seen an American soldier such as we described, but they had no idea where he was now. Some of us kinda believed that he may have been in one of the native huts with perhaps someone he knew. Anyway, it's getting late and the search party decides to return to our company area.

Very shortly after we return, ole Mac comes walking in, singing and laughing, talking loud and none of it making any sense. The troops give him the eye, wondering what comes next.

He calms down and I assign him to an area where he can be observed and watched throughout the nite. All seems to be going well, and then about midnite he starts singing and laughing all over again. Ole Teddy Kazor, one of the men who was keeping tabs on Mac, came to me and says, *"Aiken, we got to do something about that crazy feller, damn if I'm gonna let him keep me awake all nite."*

Actually, Kazor used much stronger language than I have accredited to him.

I go down to where Mac is leaning up against a big palm or coconut tree and he is still laughing and singing. I told him to sit down and shut up. He did exactly as he was told. I told him that if he didn't shut up and behave himself for the rest of the night, that I had no alternative but to take him out into the boondocks where I would tie him to a large tree so he could sing and laugh all he pleased, and disturb no one else but himself. He looked at me and said, *"O.K. I'll be quiet."* He kept his word and there was no more disturbance for the rest of the nite. However, I doubt very seriously if Teddy Kezar slept very much the rest of that nite.

Comes morning and Mac is escorted to the company CP. There the CO, the 1st Sgt., Sgt. Rice, myself and others watch Mac climb aboard a jeep that had been summoned for the purpose of escorting him, presumably, to some psychiatrist's office further up the line. As the jeep rolled gently down the beach on Leyte Island, P.I., with Mac sitting in the backseat, he turned and waved goodbye.

I can imagine he was saying to himself, *"I built my subway on Noemfoor, I rode it to Leyte, and now I'm gonna ride that sucker all the way to San Francisco, U.S.A.!"*

You know, he probably sang and laughed all the way back to the Good Ole U.S.A. as he rode home on his Noemfoor Subway.

This story wasn't made up, but actually occurred. I may have embellished it a bit here and there. Forty-six years is a long time ago and it's kinda hard to remember all the exact details.

**Louis G. Aiken, Sr.**  
**Co. "B" 503 Prcht Inf**  
**11/15/90**

P.S. I have no idea what actually happened to Mac when he left "B" Co. riding on that jeep. However, if anybody could ride a subway from the U.S.A, Mac did it.



**Wounded troopers  
coming out of  
Noemfoor.**





# The True Legacy of the Vietnam War

by William Outlaw



Like most other Vietnam Veterans, I returned home from the Vietnam War to an environment in the United States that viewed Vietnam Vets as possible “baby killers,” resulting from the aftermath of publicity surrounding horrible crimes at My Lai and other lesser known incidents. Those were indeed terrible crimes, but in no way should they have tainted all Vietnam era Vets. The impact of the anti-War protests across the nation in the late 1960s and early 1970s fostered an anti-Vietnam Veteran atmosphere here at home that lasted for more than 20 years.

When I used my GI Bill benefits and returned to college, I rarely said anything to anyone about serving in Vietnam. I had friends that knew me for years who did not know about my service there. I think most Vietnam Vets felt the same way I did. Movies and television shows at the time often portrayed Vietnam Vets as taking part in drug-induced killing sprees. Things did not really start changing on that front until the mid to late 1980s, and part of the credit for that must go to the building of the Wall, whose design was controversial among many Vets who did not like it at that time because it placed a “dark, grave-like” emphasis on the deaths of the more than 58,000 who died. However, it has proven that it has served as a place for healing those psychological wounds.

As a reporter at *The Washington Times* from 1983 to 1985, I reported on the controversy surrounding the design and construction of the Wall, and I also reported on many of the Vietnam Vets who began hanging around the Wall at the POW-MIA tents that were pitched close by. I interviewed many of them and spent the night on the Mall with them several times to observe, watch – and to listen. It was clear to me that many of them were still dealing with difficult issues related to their experience in Vietnam.

There were few programs designed to help them receive needed counseling. Many had PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – but had not received treatment or

counseling for it since public recognition of the issue did not begin to become a significant factor until the early 1990s – nearly 20 years after the end of the War.

Now, I am glad to say, things have changed for the better – and are continuing to evolve. There are a host of counseling programs available for Veterans and active duty servicemembers. VA has been a leader in the treatment of PTSD and has a great suicide prevention program in place through its Veterans Crisis Line that has documented success in preventing thousands of possible suicides. VA’s new outreach program, *Make the Connection*, is reaching out to Veterans of all eras to help them obtain benefits and services they need and deserve. (VA suicide prevention: [1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](tel:1-800-273-TALK(8255)))

Veterans Service Organizations also are conducting massive outreach programs and helping millions of Veterans. One newly formed one called *Listening to America’s Veterans* is gearing up to provide Veterans with a forum to write and express themselves. It is not intended to provide counseling; rather it is to become an outlet for expression about what is happening with them now that they have returned from the combat zone. Another new group, *Code of Support*, has been formed to help Veterans and their family members become aware that the public does in fact support them and that help is available.

These services provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense as well as the VSOs were sorely missing in the aftermath of Vietnam. Problems may still exist, but the services and public support are now there as well. The public attitude about service in the military during times of war now has evolved to “*hate the war, not the soldier.*” Perhaps the real legacy of Vietnam is just that—never again should America’s service members return home to find the people holding them in disdain for fighting for their country. Separating the soldier and Veteran from the politics of the War is the true, lasting legacy of Vietnam.

Hail Brothers!!

**William Outlaw is the Director of Communications for the Office of Patient Care Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a Vietnam Veteran.**

[Sent in by Jeff Mazer 3/503d]



Vietnam War protest sign



## ~ Sky Soldiers Lost to the Iraq War ~



**Sean C. Reynolds**  
DOD: 5/3/2003  
Age: 25  
Rank: SGT  
Unit: 74LRSD  
Reason: Non-hostile, weapon accident  
Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
Home: E. Lansing, Michigan



**Justin W. Hebert**  
DOD: 8/1/2003  
Age: 20  
Rank: CPL  
Unit: D/319th  
Reason: Hostile fire, RPG attack  
Location: Shumayt (south of), Iraq  
Home: Arlington, Washington



**Craig S. Ivory**  
8/17/2003  
Age: 26  
Rank: SPC  
Unit: 501FSC  
Reason: Non-hostile, heat related  
Location: Homberg Univ. Hosp., Iraq  
Home: Port Matilda, Pennsylvania



**Kyle G. Thomas**  
DOD: 9/25/2003  
Age: 23  
Rank: SPC  
Unit: A/2/503rd  
Reason: RPG attack  
Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
Home: Topeka, Kansas



**David R. Bernstein**  
DOD: 10/18/2003  
Age: 24  
Rank: 1LT  
Unit: C/1/508th  
Reason: Hostile fire, ambush  
Location: Taza (W of Kirkuk), Iraq  
Home: Phoenixville, Pennsylvania



**John D. Hart**  
DOD: 10/18/2003  
Age: 20  
Rank: PFC  
Unit: C/1/508th  
Reason: Hostile fire, ambush  
Location: Taza (W of Kirkuk), Iraq  
Home: Bedford, Massachusetts



**Joseph Minucci, II**  
DOD: 11/13/2003  
Age: 23  
Rank: SGT  
Unit: C/2/503rd  
Reason: Hostile fire, IED attack  
Location: Samarra (N of), Iraq  
Home: Richeyville, Pennsylvania



**Jacob S. Fletcher**  
DOD: 11/13/2003  
Age: 28  
Rank: PFC  
Unit: C/2/503rd  
Reason: Hostile fire, IED attack  
Location: Samarra (N of), Iraq  
Home: Bay Shore, New York



**Michael E. Yashinski**  
DOD: 12/24/2003  
Age: 24  
Rank: SGT  
Unit: 501FSC  
Reason: Non hostile, electrocution  
Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
Home: Monument, Colorado



## All American The Last Soldier to Die

On Nov. 14, 2011, just a month before the final US troops left Iraq, a 23-year-old soldier lost his life to an improvised explosive device.

David Emanuel Hickman was the last American to be killed in a war that cost some 4,500 Americans their lives, the Associated Press reports.

With the US mission over, his family and friends are remembering him as a joker with the nickname "Zeus" (because, he playfully said, his physique was so impressive the gods would be envious); as an outside linebacker who was the linchpin of a defense so complicated his high school had to scrap it after he graduated because no other teen could figure it out; as someone with a goal of one day joining the Special Forces, and who, in the words of a friend, *"He didn't sign up to get his life on track. He wanted to be a physically and mentally elite soldier."*



David aka Zeus



~ Rest Easy Troopers... All The Way ~





## We Remember This

I came across this article that was cut from a newspaper a long time ago. Don't know what rag it came from but it must have hit me that I had stashed it away.

**Harry Cleland**  
HHC/B/2/503d

"The late N.C. State University professor Richard Walser was the author of *"Nematodes in My Garden of Verse,"* a collection of home-grown, usually atrocious, poems.

Browsing through it recently, I came across *"The Paratrooper's Lament"*, which seems timely now that members of the 82nd Airborne are shuttling home from the Gulf War.

Paratroopers are not given to poetry (*oh yeah, you dumb Leg!!! Ed*), and this one is to be excused for improvising on Joyce Kilmer's thing about trees. During the early 1950s, a Fort Bragg librarian found the ink-scratched manuscript in a notebook never claimed by its owner."

### ~ The Paratrooper's Lament ~

**I think that I shall never see  
A drop-zone lovely as a tree,  
A tree who scans the skies all day  
And lifts her hungry arms to prey,  
A tree whose jagged limbs are pressed  
Against the jumper's bleeding breast  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A mess of troopers in her hair  
Upon whose bosom they have lain  
And infinitely screamed with pain  
Jump-pay is drawn by fools like me,  
But only God can miss a tree.**



*And more on the subject.....*

## Pacific STARS AND STRIPES

### Paratrooper Caught in Tree Sweats Snipers for 7 Hours

S&S Vietnam Bureau  
Saturday, February 25, 1967



(AP Photo)

**MINH THANH, Vietnam** – A paratrooper from the 173d Airborne Brigade walked away unharmed Wednesday after seven harrowing hours snagged in a 150-foot tree.

The trooper, PFC Robert Hill of Kansas City, Mo, was making his first combat jump – Operation Junction City in War Zone D – when his parachute tangled in the branches of the tree.

Dangling like a helpless puppet, Hill was unable to untwist his snagged lines. Hill hung from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., an open target for Viet Cong snipers.

After 7 hours a shout rang up from the ground, "*Pop your second chute!*" Hill yanked his emergency cord hoping to scramble down the parachute lines, but a sudden wind blew the second chute away.

Hill had only one choice left. He jumped. Hill hurdled through his own parachute and braced his legs parachute-style as he hit the ground unhurt.

Hill rejoined his outfit, crediting his airborne training with helping him survive the 150-foot fall.

***Airborne!!!***



## ~ This Month in History ~

### February 1965

**1st:** Martin Luther King Jr. and 700 demonstrators arrested in Selma, Alabama.

**4th:** McGeorge Bundy, American Special Assistant for National Security, arrives in Saigon for talks with US Ambassador General Maxwell Taylor.

**6th:** Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin arrives in Hanoi. He pledges support for forces working towards the unification of Vietnam and condemns American policy.

**6th:** Viet Cong guerrillas attack the U.S. military compound at Pleiku in the Central Highlands, killing eight Americans, wounding 126 and destroying ten aircraft.

**7th:** Cassius Clay becomes a Muslim and adopts the name Muhammad Ali.

**7th-8th:** "I've had enough of this," President Johnson tells his National Security advisors. He then approves *Operation Flaming Dart*, the bombing of a North Vietnamese army camp near Dong Hoi by U.S. Navy jets from the carrier *Ranger*. Johnson makes no speeches or public statements concerning his decision. Opinion polls taken in the U.S. shortly after the bombing indicate a 70 percent approval rating for the President and an 80 percent approval of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Johnson now agrees to a long-standing recommendation from his advisors for a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam. In Hanoi, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin is pressured by the North Vietnamese to provide unlimited military aid to counter the American "aggression." Kosygin gives in to their demands. As a result, sophisticated Soviet surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) begin arriving in Hanoi within weeks.

**7th:** Viet Cong make combined attacks on US bases, the most effective of which are against Pleiku in the Central Highlands where eight Americans are killed and 126 wounded. Losses in material include 10 aircraft destroyed and 15 damaged.

**7th:** Retaliation for the Viet Cong attacks includes air strikes into North Vietnam.

**13th:** President Johnson decides to give the go-ahead for the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam - *Operation Rolling Thunder*.



**16th:** The *Vung Ro Bay Incident* refers to the discovery of a 100-ton North Vietnamese naval trawler unloading munitions on a beach in South Vietnam's Vung Ro Bay on 16 February 1965. The incident spurred further U.S. Navy involvement in the Vietnam War. A U.S. Army officer flying his helicopter along the coast of central South Vietnam suddenly spotted a large, camouflaged vessel perpendicular to the shore. Cargo was being unloaded and stacked on the beach at Vung Ro, an isolated bay on the rocky coast. The pilot immediately radioed his sighting to Lieutenant Commander Harvey P. Rodgers, the Senior Advisor to the South Vietnamese 2nd Coastal District headquartered in Nha Trang, who in turn notified the coastal district commander, Lieutenant Commander Ho Van Ky Thoai. Thoai dispatched South Vietnamese A-1 Skyraiders to the bay where they capsized and sank the ship.



War cargo ship for Viet Cong sunk at Vung Ro.

**18th:** Another military coup in Saigon results in General Khanh finally ousted from power and a new military/civilian government installed, led by Dr. Phan Huy Quat.

**22nd:** General William Westmoreland requests US Marines to protect the base at Da Nang.

**22nd:** General Westmoreland requests two battalions of U.S. Marines to protect the American air base at Da Nang from 6000 Viet Cong massed in the vicinity. The President approves his request, despite the "grave reservations" of Ambassador Taylor in Vietnam who warns that America may be about to repeat the same mistakes made by the French in sending ever-increasing numbers of soldiers into the Asian forests and jungles of a "hostile foreign country" where friend and foe are indistinguishable.

(continued....)

