

**To: All My Contacts:**  
**Members and those somehow connected to**  
**LRRP/RGR of the 173d Airborne**  
**Sub: Artist (Britt) paying tribute to Veterans**

I met Britt Collins at the July 2011 75th Ranger Regiment Assoc. Reunion. He had a display of his artwork set up at the Holiday Inn Hotel - hospitality room. He was such a pleasure to meet, and his sincerity toward us Vietnam Veterans and his talent displayed that in his artwork. To the right is one of his paintings that most of you have already seen.

Have talked to him on several occasions and he informed me that he has been collecting many items from the Vietnam era. After the reunion, our own member, Bill "Wilkie" Wilkinson N/CO Ranger '68-'71 team Juliet, donated his collection to Britt, which "Wilkie" had in the past, trailered around to events around the country and displayed. "Wilkie" thought it was time to pass the collection on and he thought of no other than Britt to give it to.

Bill "Wilkie's" collection (very large) will continue being displayed by Britt and I admire both for the time involved in displaying items from the past. One

item that I have is a NVA ruck, which I used on missions, and will be sent to Britt as he doesn't have one. Any of you wondering who to contribute your items from Vietnam, to be respectfully displayed to everyone, I recommend you contact Britt, as he and two of his friends are together in gathering / displaying our past.

Below is a message received from Britt and his website. Take the time to view his site and comment.

Recommend you save his site to your Favorites.

**Robert "Twin" Henriksen**  
N/CO Ranger with 173d Airborne Brigade

PS: Happy New Year To All

Date: Fri, Dec 30, 2011 at 12:05 PM  
Subject: Re: Robert (173rd Abn Ranger) to Britt  
To: Robt 'twin' Henriksen <[novrgco@gmail.com](mailto:novrgco@gmail.com)>

Robert,

Sorry it's taken me so long to get back. I have just returned from out of town, and I'm old school, so I take a break from email over the holidays.

So, this is the right email address. I will be starting up a new year of work. Most of it Vietnam related.

Good talking with you last week. Stay in touch.

All the Best,

Britt Taylor Collins

**Britt's website:**  
[www.bootsonthegroundART.com](http://www.bootsonthegroundART.com)



# Searching for Lost Brothers

I have sent this to you in hopes that perhaps someone within our ranks can add to this investigation. Bob Fairbairn was the initial recipient of this email.

**Peter Klausner**  
A/4/503d

Mr. Fairbairn,

I am the Case Analyst for several Battle of Dak To missing service-members, primarily the 173rd ABN Sky Soldiers that disappeared during heavy fighting in November 1967 in Kontum Province, Vietnam. Several joint investigations to Vietnam have not resolved many of these cases.

I found your name in our old hard copy wartime files of the missing, regarding the case of PFC Edwin Martinez-Mercado, PFC Gary Shaw, PVT John Stuckey and SP4 Robert Staton who on November 11, 1967 were assigned to Company C/1-503rd INF (ABN). Your letter from 1994 and a sketch were placed in only one of the files. PFC Martinez and your sketch and recollection of key terrain features is highly detailed in my opinion and quite possibly could help a field investigation team go to the site. The mission of the unit was to move to Hill 889. We have interviewed many former "enemy" witnesses in Vietnam, but have not yet found the loss locations. Most of the searches revolve around Hill 875 and I need to refocus efforts on Hill 889 with better detail – hopefully you can help me.

I have many questions for you but want to initially reach out and make contact. Possibly find out if you are aware of fellow service-members who served with these individuals, do these former members have any diaries, old wartime maps or other documents that may be useful in tracing the movements of the units and help us locate their last known location.

I have reviewed several AARs at National Archives for Battle of Dak To November 1967. I would like to send an Investigative team to retrace the unit movements on Hill 889 and Hill 875 but JPAC needs more detail to initiate the mission, that is where you and your fellow veterans come in. I am a firm believer in Veteran knowledge being the key to unlock most of these cold cases. I have had recent success in the recovery of SP4 David Lemcke (of Rochester, NY), killed on Hill 31 in a bunker explosion at an outpost in Quang Tri Province. Veterans who were there, helped me make the case to go back out and excavate, giving me details of the base, construction of the bunker and actions taken that day to recover him. We were successful and he was laid to rest 12 November 2011, it made for a very special Veterans day for me.

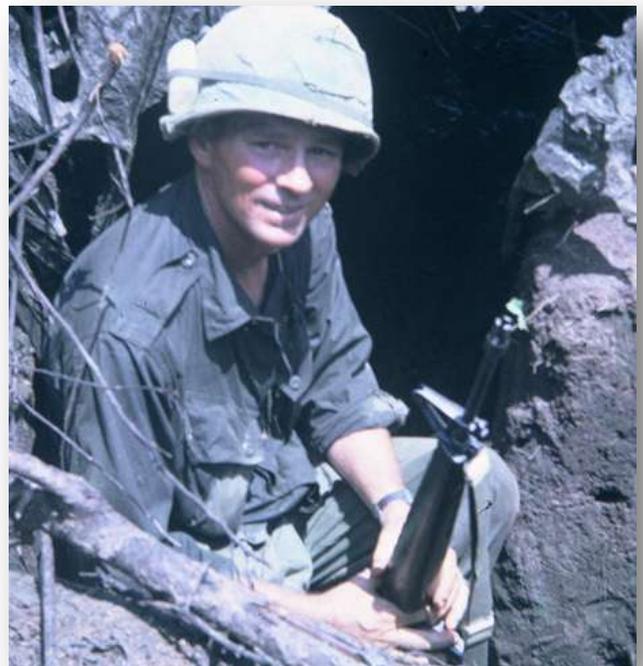
Any chance you can reach out to your fellow Veterans? Any upcoming meetings or get-togethers? You would be surprised what little pieces of the puzzle are needed to resolve these cases. Specific cases I work for 173rd ABN BDE include: 1st Platoon, C/2/503rd INF (ABN) members SP4 Croxdale, SGT Iandoli and PFC DeHerrera lost on November 19, 1967 on Hill 875 during an errant friendly CP bombing. As well as PFC David Reynolds 1st Platoon B/4/503rd INF (ABN) the RTO for LT Larry Moore, killed 21 November 1967 on Hill 875.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and more importantly your service to our country.

**Kate van Auken**  
LTC, United States Army  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office  
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**Note: Anyone with information which might help please contact her.** Ed

## WHODAT?



**Who is this 2/503 SFC?**  
*Ahhh, the sweet sweat of the boonies.*



## While Pushing the Germans Back From Stalingrad...

At 10:00 p.m. on December 31, Russian artillery around the *Kessel* exploded in a frenzied acknowledgement of the holiday. Because they knew Soviet gunners were operating on Moscow time, two hours ahead of German clocks, Sixth Army troops had prepared for the deluge. Hunkered down in their holes, they rode out the fifteen-minute salvo welcoming in a year of promised glory for Soviet Russia.

Inside Stalingrad, the expectations of Russian troops ran high. The ice bridge across the Volga was the main reason for their attitude. From Acktuba and Krasnaya Sloboda, hundreds of trucks now crossed the river daily, bringing with them camouflage suits to replace tattered gray brown uniforms. In the middle of the river, traffic masters waved food convoys to depots set up under the cliff. Cases of American canned good began to litter foxholes strung along the defense line from Tsaritsa to the tractor works. Ammunition piled up to the point where Russian gunners now fired antitank shells at lone German soldiers.

In all the war Goldstein had never seen a battlefield quite like Stalingrad; a city so utterly broken by bombs and artillery, cluttered with skeletons of hundreds of horses, picked clean by the starving enemy. And always there were the grim police of the Russian NKVD, standing between the front line and the Volga, checking soldiers' papers and shooting suspected deserters dead.



Stalingrad laid waste by German army



Russian army at Stalingrad pushing the Germans back to their Fatherland

The horrible battlefield shocked Goldstein and he played as he never played before, hour after hour for men who obviously loved his music. And while all German works had been banned by the Soviet government, Goldstein doubted that any commissar would protest on New Year's Eve. The melodies he created drifted out through loudspeakers to the German trenches and the shooting suddenly ceased. In the eerie quiet, the music flowed from Goldstein's dipping bow.



German dead at Stalingrad

When he finished, a hushed silence hung over the Russian soldiers. From another loudspeaker, in German territory, a voice broke the spell. In halting Russian it pleaded: ***“Play some more Bach. We won't shoot.”***

[Excerpt from *Enemy at the Gates* by William Craig]



## Oral B. "Terry" Evans, Jr. A Delta Company, 2/503d Sky Soldier

ALEXANDRIA, VA. – Oral B. "Terry" Evans, Jr. died peacefully on Saturday morning, Dec. 17, 2011. Terry was born on Aug. 30, 1947, to Capt. Oral B. Evans, Sr. (U.S. Army, deceased) and Elizabeth G. Evans of Hampton.



Terry was a 1965 graduate of Warwick High School, and attended the University of South Carolina. After college, Terry followed in his father's footsteps by joining the United States Army, eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant. Terry served as Platoon Leader during the Vietnam campaign, and received several awards for his leadership and bravery in combat, including the Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and the Purple Heart.

Following his military career, Mr. Evans came back to Hampton Roads, where he founded Classic Auto Body Shop in Newport News. Later in life, Terry engaged his artistic interests by becoming the Director of the Chesapeake Museum in Chesapeake, Va. A few years later, Terry was approached by the Department of Defense to be the Museum Curator for the U.S. Army Reserve Command at Fort McPherson, Ga. Most recently, Terry held the position of Museum Curator and Property Manager at the Center of Military History, U.S. Army Museum in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Evans is survived by his two daughters, Elizabeth Jean Sheets of Palm Beach, Fla., and Amanda Leigh Evans of Newport News; his brother, Gordon E. Evans of Burke, Va.; his sister, Deborah Davidson of Newport News; and three grandchildren.

A memorial service was held at W. J. Smith & Son Funeral Home in Newport News. His family welcomes donations to Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters in memory of Terry.

You may view and post condolences online at [dailypress.com/guestbooks](http://dailypress.com/guestbooks)

~ Rest easy LT ~

## Home is new battle for vets

By Shalla Dewan  
*The New York Times*  
(Excerpt)

In Afghanistan, Cpl. Clayton Rhoden of Columbus earned about \$2,500 a month jumping into helicopters to chase down improvised explosive devices or check out bomb factories.

Now, he lives with his parents on the South Side, sells his blood plasma for \$80 a week and works what extra duty he can get for his Reserve unit, the Columbus-based Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines.

Rhoden, who is 25, gawky and polite with a passion for soldiering, is one of the legions of veterans who served in combat yet have a harder time finding work than other people their age, a situation that officials say will grow worse as the United States completes its pullout of Iraq and as, by a White House estimate, a million new veterans join the work force over the next five years...

**The unemployment rate for veterans ages 20 to 24 has averaged 30 percent this year, more than double that of others the same age, although the rate for older veterans closely matches that of civilians...**

The employment gap cannot be explained by a simple factor like lack of a college degree – despite their discipline and training, young veterans fare worse in the job market than their peers without degrees...

The Obama administration has championed veterans' maturity management skills and even their promptness. Employers have jumped on the bandwagon, and large companies such as JPMorgan Chase and Verizon have signed a pledge to hire a total of 100,000 veterans by 2020. More than 220,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are out of work...

The Obama administration has stepped up hiring of veterans, adding more than 85,000 to the government payroll since the 2008 fiscal year...

In his weekly address yesterday, President Barack Obama praised returning veterans and said, "*It is time to enlist our veterans and all our people in the work of rebuilding America.*"

[Sent in by Steve (Sgt. Rock) Vargo, C/2/503d]



# Happy New Year to My Veteran Friends!!

## Veteran to Veteran:

When a Veteran leaves the 'job' and retires to a better life, many are jealous, some are pleased, and others, who may have already retired, wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because *we* already know.

We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

We know in the Military life there is a fellowship which lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet.

We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

These are the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously, still see what others do not see or choose to ignore, and always will look at the rest of the Military world with a respect for what they do; only grown in a lifetime of knowing.

Never think for one moment you are escaping from that life. You are only escaping the 'job' and merely being allowed to leave 'active' duty.

So what I wish for you is that whenever you ease into retirement, in your heart you never forget for one moment that you are still a member of the greatest fraternity the world has ever known.

A veteran - whether active duty, retired, served one hitch, or reserve - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The Government of the United States of America' for an amount of *'up to and including my life'*. From one Veteran to another, it's an honor to be in your company.

Thank you for your service to our country and defending the freedoms we enjoy.

[Sent in by Corky Corcoran HHC/2/503d & 173d Sig]



Like the 2/503 Bravo Bulls' fraternity, for example

# You Never Forget Your First PLF

Just a thought about PLFs.

My wife and I were in Madison, WI, this week and had time to go to Lake Wisconsin to view the Bald Eagles that come there each winter.



Watching them was beautiful. But, while I was heading down one rock covered hill to the beach, I lost my footing. I was falling forward and the training I received from those NCOs on the Swing Landing Trainer took over. I was going down feet, knees, stomach and face when I felt myself twisting to the right. My body turned, knees bent and my fall was on the right going down on my right side and rolling. I ended up on my back without a bruise or scratch (a little stiff but nothing else). Thank God for Airborne Training!

Which reminds me of a time at LZ English.

While assigned to Headquarters, I occasionally had time to visit the O-Club after the evening mortar attacks. I usually drank with Doc Trainer, the Bde Surgeon. One night we added the two JAG



## Headed for a bad PLF

Officers to our group but they were "legs". So, I offered to work with them on becoming Bar Qualified in PLFs. They were very excited and climbed up on the bar for their Bar PLFs. After five attempts, they were adequate and I christened them as being PLF Bar-Qualified. Doc and I continued to drink and they headed out. I thought they went to their quarters but they climbed up on the roof of the O-Club and jumped off. We heard two screams of pain and ran out to see what had happened. They were both laying on the ground moaning and holding their ankles. Just a little proof that you can't teach "legs" without qualified NCOs.

**Robert A. Getz (RAGMAN)**  
Task Force CO, 2/503d

*"Any PLF you can walk away from is a good PLF." ~ Unknown Paratrooper*



## Veterans & Sleep Apnea (OSA)

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is a widely misunderstood condition. Unless the veteran has a solid diagnosis of OSA while on active duty, the condition may be impossible to claim as service connected. Snoring may be a sign of OSA or it may not. OSA is a serious health condition and more information is brought into our knowledge banks every day.

To be awarded a benefit for OSA will require a medical record that supports your claim that you had OSA during your military service. A statement from your spouse or a buddy isn't likely to carry any weight. If your OSA has been diagnosed well after your military service has ended but you've heard how lucrative the benefit is (50% if you use a CPAP) you should think long and hard before you apply for the award.

If you were a chronic heavy snorer while on active duty, can you document that? Did you ever make a sick call because of chronic daytime sleepiness? Have you ever been at fault in an accident where you fell asleep at the wheel of your vehicle? During any hospitalization or surgical treatment, did a health care provider make a note to your record about your airway obstruction or a breathing problem during anesthesia?

Once you're sure that you can prove your case, you may want to file that claim. If you don't believe that you have the evidence you'll need, consider delaying any action while you attempt to have a nexus letter written. That could require a formal IME that you'll pay for out of your own pocket.

If you're a heavy snorer today, whether or not you are able to make a service connection and receive a VA benefit, get a sleep study done. Sleep studies are now available for you to have it all done in the privacy of your own bedroom. You no longer must spend a night in a sleep lab...you can take a small piece of equipment home (a headband sort of arrangement) and wear it to bed. When you return it in to your doctor the data gathered will be analyzed for a diagnosis.

Using a CPAP may reduce the incidence of adult onset diabetes, heart disease, strokes and many other of the conditions that come to us as we age. Not only that...the daytime sleepiness you experience from the lack of a good night's sleep will be much less severe.

Medicare and most insurers will pay for the home sleep study and the CPAP you may need afterwards. It's well worth your time.



## Sleep Apnea Treatment May Lower Heart Risks

Sleep specialist Meir Kryger, MD, of the Yale University School of Medicine and the VA Connecticut Health System, tells WebMD the findings highlight the growing recognition that sleep disturbances play a significant role in chronic disease. *"It is now clear that patients with heart disease or a metabolic disease like type 2 diabetes should be asked about their sleep habits, and they should be treated if they have sleep apnea,"* he says.

## Obstructive Sleep Apnea is Elevated in Veterans With PTSD

Do you have a rating for PTSD? Do you also have a positive diagnosis of OSA? Do you use a CPAP?

You may be eligible for OSA service connected benefits as a secondary condition even if you don't have a service medical record of OSA.

Consider that many of the medications that are used to treat sleep disturbances or mental health conditions may have an effect on your sleep patterns. If your OSA was diagnosed after you started taking medicines to aid your sleep or to treat some mental health conditions, you might want to consider filing for OSA as secondary to the service connected PTSD.

Before you decide to do that, review the side effects of the medicines and be ready to offer a sound reasoning for your claim. Once you're sure that the medicines you take cause or aggravate your OSA, file for the appropriate benefit.

## Ratings For 6847 Sleep Apnea Syndromes (Obstructive, Central, Mixed):

- Chronic respiratory failure with carbon dioxide retention or cor pulmonale, or; requires tracheostomy - 100%
- Requires use of breathing assistance device such as continuous airway pressure (CPAP) machine - 50%
- Persistent day-time hypersomnolence - 30%

Asymptomatic but with documented sleep disorder breathing - 0%

Source:



[http://www.vawatchdog.org/Obstructive\\_Sleep\\_Apnea.html](http://www.vawatchdog.org/Obstructive_Sleep_Apnea.html)

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]



## A Letter to the Parents from His Buddy

8 July 67

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Zsigo,

I don't know if you remember me or not, my name is Don Austin.

I just got word of Alex's death and I don't really know how to put my feelings in words. I have lost quite a few buddies over here, but none as close as Alex was. When he died, you not only lost a son, and me a good friend, but the world lost a good man.



**Alex Zsigo, A/2/503  
KIA 6/22/67 Dak To**

I've been over here with the 1st Inf. Div., for almost 11 months. I guess I know what's going on over here as much as the next guy.

This is a cold hard war over here, but as far as I'm concerned it must be fought here and now before it is too late. I don't know what you think of the war, or what Alex thought, but I am sure he felt along the same line as I do.

He was a hero in every respect of the word. He proved this by his actions over here. He was stationed only 15 miles from me for a long time, but I never got a chance to see him, I was always out in the field, or he was.

I don't know why the good Lord picks some and not others, but if it is my turn to go, I know I have served for a wonderful nation and a just cause.

I can remember when I was in grade school in Lennon. I went to school with Alex, and then later we went to high school, and played on the football team together. We came down to Detroit to enter the army on the same day, but he was sick and they sent him home. These things I will never forget. Alex was a great guy and will be remembered by many many people.

I hope you don't think he died in vain. I believe the good Lord needed him elsewhere. I best close for now. I hope I did not bother you or inconvenience you in any way, if so, please forgive me.

Sincerely,

Don Austin

[Sent in by Dave Zsigo, Alex's brother]



[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

## Rules Liberalized for Veterans with Undiagnosed Illnesses

### *Application Window Extended for Five Years*

WASHINGTON – Veterans of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses have an additional five years to qualify for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

*"Not all the wounds of war are fully understood,"* said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

*"When there is uncertainty about the connection between a medical problem and military service, Veterans are entitled to the benefit of the doubt."*

A recent change in VA regulations affects Veterans of the conflict in Southwest Asia. Many have attributed a range of undiagnosed or poorly understood medical problems to their military services. Chemical weapons, environmental hazards and vaccinations are among the possible causes.

At issue is the eligibility of Veterans to claim VA disability compensation based upon those undiagnosed illnesses, and the ability of survivors to qualify for VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Under long-standing VA rules, any undiagnosed illnesses used to establish eligibility for VA benefits must become apparent by Dec. 31, 2011. The new change pushes the date back to Dec. 31, 2016.

Veterans or survivors who believe they qualify for these benefits should contact VA at 1-800-827-1000.

Further information about undiagnosed illnesses is available online at

[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar) and  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif/index.asp)

About the Vietnam War....

*"It's time that we recognized  
that ours was in truth  
a noble cause."*

~ Ronald Reagan, Oct. 1980



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# Airborne and Jump School Vintage 1961 and 1962

By **Court Prisk, COL (Ret)**  
**CO, C Battery, 3/319th**

## Background

The “Regular Army” I joined in May 1960, after Ranger and Airborne School, was very different than the triangular division Army that fought in Korea or the new one that deployed to Vietnam five years later.

When I reported as a Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery to the Mortar Battery, 504th Airborne Infantry Battle Group, 82nd Abn Division, Fort Bragg in May 1960, I had just finished Ranger and jump school at Fort Benning. Now, for those who joined the Army after 1963, and especially for those current Sky Soldiers who are hepped up about the today’s “new” Striker Brigade, hooya. The Striker Brigade Concept, is really old old old army redressed and like the new old blue uniforms, some of the bling has changed but not the basic ideas. There were independent combat brigades / regiments during the Civil War and during the Indian Wars. The regimental combat team concept was introduced between the World Wars so the “regimental” colors and history could be carried on.

After Korea, the Army started changing structure from the three Infantry or armor regiments with a Division Artillery to the “new” Pentomic Army. By 1960, the Pentomic Army had ten (10) “regular Army” Infantry divisions (including two (2) airborne divisions: 82nd, and 101st) –the 11th Airborne Division was retired in 1957 to be reborn as an Air Assault Test Division for two years (1963 – 1965). In addition to the Infantry Divisions, there were five (5) “regular Army” Armor Divisions. The only STRAC One divisions were the two in Korea and the 82nd; all three were at 85% manning. There were eight (8) Army Corps: the 2nd in Korea, the 5th and 7th in Germany, the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg plus four others. The Corps, in addition to



**Court Prisk in Vietnam**  
aka “STRAC”

“regular Army” divisions, were responsible for reserve and National Guard Divisions that had not been deactivated after Korea.

The Pentomic division was cellular in structure and designed to fight on nuclear and conventional battlefields (I am thankful we never had to test the concept on either field). Five infantry battle groups replaced three infantry regiments and became the basic fighting units of the division. Each battle group contained a headquarters company; three rifle companies; an organic mortar battery; a large reconnaissance platoon, an antitank section, and logistics units needed to make it an independent, self-sustaining (or self-annihilating if you listen to the cynics of the time) on the nuclear battlefield. The division’s supporting units (Division Artillery, smaller than before, signal, engineer, support, and command and control) were organized similarly in cellular multiples of five.

For a Field Artillery file being assigned to a “Mortar Battery” was unique. For the Infantry grunt, having the Field Artillery man the 4.2 Inch Mortars meant that he was a bit (perhaps not much) safer—the 4.2 was always an “area” support weapon and no matter how well trained the firing crew, the 4.2 in mortar was not and will never be a close direct support weapon. With a trained cannon crew, the 105mm Howitzer can put 80% of the rounds fired within 50 meters of a point at four clicks; the 4.2 Inch Mortar (by the way also 105mm) will put 50% of the rounds fired within 150 meters of a point at four clicks and the other 50% within 300 meters. The 4.2 Inch Mortar is definitely an area suppression weapon and was not recommended for close support.

A couple of additional tidbits about the regular army airborne I joined in 1960; it was a professional airborne. Captain Schnoor, my battery commander, had 20 years of active duty as an Artillery Officer. He had been a lieutenant with the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific during World War II. He had had twelve years’ experience as an airborne 105mm Howitzer Battery Commander after WWII. In fact, during the period 1944 until 1960, he had two years as a 75mm Battery Executive Officer and two years in Korea when he had received a temporary promotion to the rank of major. Then there was my battery first sergeant, 1st Sgt Delacati who had twice refused promotion to Sgt Major because he considered himself “*a first sergeant not some Colonel’s lackey.*” After being the Top for 20 years, he considered himself “*somewhat of an expert at the job.*”

(continued....)



My platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant E-6 Bones with more than 16 years' service had served with Delacati in five successive units over the previous 12 years. Likewise in May 1960, all of three of 504th Airborne Battlegroup's Infantry Company Commanders, the Battlegroup's E-7 Recon Chief, and the XO of the Battlegroup, 82nd Abn Division wore a star on their combat infantry badge. The infantry company commanders had a minimum of 12 years in command of an Airborne Infantry Company; the Charlie Company Commander had been an airborne infantry company commander for 16 years. The Recon section in the Battlegroup HHQ Company had four people who had been long-range reconnaissance with the British or Aussies during WWII in Burma or Malaya.

I remember being told that the 504th was about the middle in terms of experience, with the 187th and 503rd Airborne Battlegroups being the most experienced. I have no way of knowing how accurate that information was and only share it because the 503rd Airborne Battlegroup gironed (rotated) as a unit to Okinawa in either late 1962 or early 1963 to become part of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

In May of 1960, needless to say, any idea that I, a snot nose butter-bar, with less than a year in the military, was going to somehow impress anyone or make a difference was quickly forgotten. After 6 months as a forward observer and 8 months platoon leader; I was nominated to be the OIC of the third week (Jump Week) of Basic Airborne Training (BAC). I was selected for the position in July 1961. Once again, I was surrounded by experience and tradition—master blasters wearing one or two bronze stars. Perhaps the most incongruent aspect of my assignment as OIC of Jump Week was not being a novice trooper in charge of master blasters, it was being a novice trooper in charge of the Army Sky Diving Team. (I don't know when they were officially named the "Golden Knights"). I had never jumped without a static line, and everyone on the team had hundreds of free fall jumps and I had none. The picture of me was taken with Staff Sergeant Martinelli, the supply / quartermaster sergeant for the BAC third week and the Team. After 50 years, the only things I remember about SSG Marinelli was that he took it upon himself to see that I stayed out of trouble and that he kept sixteen pairs of fatigues and field jackets, nine with E-6 Stripes and seven with E-7 stripes; I remember him telling me he had been a sergeant first class "*at least five times in past six years.*" The C-119 behind us in the picture was our principal jump platform for the BAC and Jumpmaster courses. In addition to the C-119, in the summer of 1960 a couple of National Guard units supported us once or twice with C-47s; as the C-119's were given to the National Guard and Reserves, the new C-123's were

increasingly being used by the regular Air Force and for alert jumps.

### A Real New Guy

The first story about Fort Bragg BAC took place in the August of 1961. My parents and my brother Gary (CO C/2/503d VN) traveled from Bremerton, Washington to Fort Bragg to see my new son, Stuart. Gary had just graduated from high school; he didn't know shit from shinola about the Army. A few days after they arrived, SSG Martinelli suggested that we put him through ground training and teaching him how to jump out of a Sky Diving Team practice plane on a Saturday.

A plan was born. The next Monday, my brother Gary showed up for the start of ground school in starched fatigues, spit shined boots, a helmet borrowed from someone by Martinelli.



LT Court Prisk & SSG Martinelli

For the first week, nobody noticed Gary's last name, as first week basic troopers went by their student number pasted with tape on the helmet. For someone who had never done a pushup in his life, Gary became an expert. Ten pushups each for not knowing his section leader, his platoon sergeant, his first sergeant, or his company commander....

(continued....)



...Ten pushups for not knowing where his company billets were, ten for not knowing where his mess hall was (he was supposed to run there and back for lunch), ten for not knowing his unit motto, and ten for looking sharp but being dull. SSG Martinelli prepped Gary and Martinelli had Gary run to Division C&C where someone would pick him up and bring him to 3rd Week HQ next to the packing sheds at Pope Airbase, where I gave him a pack lunch.

Throughout the first week of ground training Trooper 319 got better; he could pump out 100 pushups if required and thank heavens, because at the end of the second week that skill was tested over and over. The second week of Gary's ground school started off okay, then on Wednesday morning as Gary was being checked as he shuffled to the door on the 34-foot tower, the tower jump master adjusted his shoulder straps and read the name. That afternoon when Gary returned to sawdust jump and roll pit, his world became much louder with shouting on all sides and he once again was into heavy pushup practice. To his credit, Gary made it through the last two and half days of ground training. And while he thanks me now; (as I am sure all who know him can imagine) at the time there wasn't one word in his vocabulary with me even close to "thanks."



Court, center, eyeballs Gary, his sharp looking but dull brother.

The preceding picture shows the jump grader and acting OIC for the tower jump on Gary's 10th day, the same day that the instructors matched the name. You notice I am closely watching Gary as he listens to the wire jump critique.

The Saturday after ten days of ground training, Gary jumped at 3000 ft with SSG Martinelli as jumpmaster. Me, I was on the ground laughing myself silly. My dad\*, who was filming with an old 8mm camera, was having a wonderful time right up until I told him who was jumping next. The film goes from very steady to very shaky as Gary descends into a Cornfield.

\*[Court and Gary's dad, a Major during WWII, served on the staff of Field Marshall Montgomery. Ed]



WWII photo of Maj. Edward Prisk, second from left, back row, with Field Marshall Montgomery and his staff.

### Stand-up, Hook-up

The second BAC jump school story happened in late September 1961, the month after Gary went back to Bremerton (he still was too shy to tell me thanks for teaching him how to do pushups). Anyway, after two days of rain, the BAC was forced to jump twice a day on Wednesday and Thursday in order to get the five (5) jumps in the week. On Wednesday, I jumped in the morning, but because my uniform was really messed up by the wet sands of Sicily Drop Zone, I decided to just jumpmaster the second flight of the day. The second jump, I went up in boots, shorts, T-shirt, Ball Cap. By unusual chance, there were no B-12 backpacks, so I put on a T-10 and had a reserve B-12 gut pack.

For the second jump of the day I was the right door jumpmaster, that's the right as you look at the tail of the plane. We were flying in a C-119 with the clam doors open; they formed a loose V in back.

*(continued....)*



Since the flight from Pope north and then south to Sicily DZ was less than 20 minutes and the jump sequence routines started at six minutes out; the jump masters normally hooked up immediately and stood against the clam door looking out and of course at the stick. This day, when the red light came on, I mouthed the commands and gave the hand signals to my stick for stand-up and hook-up. (The C-119 shook, bounced from altitude to altitude, and rattled so much and so loudly that voice commands were useless). Everyone stood up and hooked up, but about mid-way back in the stick a dunderhead had his static line crossing his throat from left to right. All the antics I could think of didn't register on the brain behind those doe eyes. So, I unhooked my static line and stomped back to dunderhead, I told him what a sweet boy he was, and jerked on his static line to show him how he would have strangled himself. After getting his static line in his right hand, I stomped back up to the door. As I was reaching up to re-hookup, the plane dropped about 300 feet in a down draft, I fell against the door frame and tumbled out the door.

For anyone who has jumped Sicily drop zone, you may know that there is or was a rather deep (100+ feet) gravel pit with a small lake on the north end of the DZ (just across the road). Anyway, I tumbled out of the plane over the small lake in the center of the gravel pit. As I fell, I held on to the T-10 static line and pulled the B-12 reserve. It opened beautifully, and I floated straight down toward the late September, North Carolina cold gravel pit water. On the way down, as I started to practice how I was going to help dunderhead understand just what kind of low life I thought he was and how screwed he was, I climbed out of the harness and stood on top of the T-10 parachute. The B-12 had very little steer ability, and I really didn't think the rock ledges would be much better, so I was happy to have lake below me as I hauled as much riser down as possible. When I went below the edge of the pit, I let the risers go. There was a pop, the descent almost stopped, and I stepped out of harness into the water.

Meanwhile, since there wasn't any jumpmaster, the left stick jumped as planned, and then the plane flew around and the same jumpmaster jumped the other stick. Someone picked me up at the gravel pit and I was waiting for dunderhead when he reached the bleachers. I'm not sure what eventually happened to dunderhead. I do know that he had to repeat the complete ground school with special attention and instruction by the cadre.

### Testing High-Low Parachutes

Choosing the Army Sky Diving Team at Fort Bragg as one of the test units for the new high-low parachute was a natural. What wasn't natural was a novice without any

free-falls, the OIC of the Team, as part of the test. Not wanting to be a wimp, I said nothing. My first free-fall was from 12,000 feet, chute opening by barometric at 2,000 feet. It was a jump in pure fright. I was not the farthest from the rally point only because they knew I had no experience in steering free-fall chutes and had me jump so that the wind would carry me toward rally point. The jumpers who landed farther away jumped last and were fighting the wind. The test was either 16 or 20 jumps at different altitudes and different metrics of success. I participated in four of the jumps, the last three jumps in order to keep the secret that the OIC was Senior Jumper without adequate free-fall experience for the test.

### STRAC

The Strategic Army Corps (or "stupid troopers running around in circles")

October 1962, I was the still the OIC of the third week of Basic Jump School at Fort Bragg. The STRAC concept had each Regular Army Division with battlegroups on various stages of Alert. STRAC 1, meant one Battlegroup, elements of the Division C&C personnel, and representative support units would be on four hour alert—ready to deploy in four (4) hours. When any element of the 82nd Airborne Division Command and Control Element participated in an alert jump, the cadre of the BAC third week responded to the Alert as Jumpmasters and equipment loading support. Normally, the C&C and BAC third week cadre would go up with the alert elements at least once, most of the time twice, a month.

If jumps were scheduled to be a fly-around to one of the local drop zones or Camp McCall, the cadre would participate in the equipment jump. If the jump was to be at Benning, Campbell, or at any other installation from Florida to North Carolina, or West to the Texas border, the BAC cadre would return to Pope Air Force Base without jumping.

When I was assigned to the Jump School in July 1961, my "shit was STRAC." But, by 16 October 1962, it was just shit. The extra boots had no laces; the socks all had holes in them; there were only two pairs of old shorts; the extra poncho had been loaned to a friend; all of the fatigues had holes and were missing buttons, and I had removed my dopkit (razor, soap, etc.).

On the 16th of October 1962, at 0200 hours, when the 3rd Week Cadre reported to the Quartermaster Packing Sheds at Pope, everything appeared routine.

*(continued...)*



The first hints of something other-than-routine came just before I left for Base Ops and the 0315 morning weather decision. In addition to a few of the Air National Guard flying-boxcars (C-119) and many C-123's moving into the airfield loading area, I saw some of the Regular Air Force's new C-130's being parked in the loading area. The next big hint was the weather decision. Normally the Air Force Weather Officer (a Major) and I were the only two officers awake to make the weather decision for morning jumps. However, on that early morning Pope Base Ops was crowded when I arrived; and my decision was monitored by two Army one-stars, an Air Force one-star, and a herd of Colonels.



USAF C-130E, circa 1962

When I returned to my office near the QM packing shed, the rumors were flying and the pucker factor multiplied geometrically after the first three or four hundred soldiers and officers had left the First Aid Station. Normally, the medic would read your shot-record, take your name if you needed a shot, and schedule you for shots at the dispensary. This morning, however, the medics were directing people to one of a dozen stations where the needles were out and four different types of shots were being administered.

What sent the pucker factor nearly off the gauge was the issue of sealed map packets, to be opened in the air and only when ordered; that, and the directions from the Assistant Division Commander, BG Patrick, to organize a secure area in which to issue live ammunition. Thankfully on the fateful day, no live ammunition was issued; the sealed map packets were not opened (they never left the ground); and in the end the alert Battle Group and a large Division Command Element, did a local jump at Sicily and Salerno drop zones. As for me, I did a fly-around and landed back at Pope. I then went to the PX, the QM Store, and then to the house to pack my gear. *STRAC* was my byword for the next twenty-five years after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

### Consolidation of BAC

The picture at the right shows the 3rd Week BAC in August 1962. More than half of the Sky Diving Team had volunteered to ship out with the 503rd Abn Battlegroup and had been reassigned to that unit to bring it up to 115% manning before gironing to Okinawa to refit and to fill out the 173d Abn Brigade. Even the two

E-5 replacements for the jump week, had over six years of Abn experience.

In September 1962, there was a significant increase in the student load at Fort Bragg BAC and Jumpmaster training course when the 101st Jump School closed at Fort Campbell. In early 1963, the 82nd Airborne Division, BAC closed down with Army consolidating all BAC at Fort Benning. The Jumpmaster School for the 82nd remained open throughout Vietnam. Of course, starting in 1963 the 101st Abn Division, became the 101st Air Assault Division adopting most of the lessons learned from the 11th Air Assault Test Division.

When I joined the Herd in Bien Hoa in April of 1966, I was one of the first replacements for the original contingent. There were still about a fourth of my BAC / sky diving team with the 503rd. They had remained in Okinawa until the Herd deployed to Nam in 1965. I don't know when or how they departed Nam.



3rd Week BAC, 1962

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**Note:** Court is a graduate of West Point and served his country in the U.S. Army for over 27 years. Ed



# Reunions of the Airborne Kind



**101st Airborne, 2012 Snowbird Reunion.** February 15 - 18, 2012. The Doubletree Hotel, Tampa, FL.  
*Hosted by the 101st Florida Gulf Coast and Sunshine State Chapters.*

**Contact:**  
**Web:** [www.101abnfgcc.org](http://www.101abnfgcc.org)

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**82nd Airborne Div., Winter Weekend Getaway,** February 24 - 26, 2012, Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa, Hilton Head, SC, hosted by Ben Vandervoort Chapter.

**Contact:**  
**Bill Eberle**  
**Phn:** 843-682-4171  
**Eml:** [airborneben#hargray.com](mailto:airborneben#hargray.com)

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**503rd PRCT, 2012 Deep South Chapter Corregidor Reunion.** Margee Linton writes that the reunion will be held February 24-26, 2012, at Hilton Head Resort on Hilton Head Island, SC. They have accepted the invitation to meet with the 82nd Airborne Division Chapter. Registration fee is \$75.00 per person and rooms are \$90.00 plus tax, and is open to all Sky Soldiers. See Page 51 for registration form.

**Contact:**  
**Margee Linton**  
**Eml:** [sleepy503@aol.com](mailto:sleepy503@aol.com)

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**A Company 2/327, 101st Airborne, Vietnam Veterans 2012 Gathering.** April 26 - 28, 2012, The Marten House Hotel, Indianapolis, IN,

**Contact:**  
**Dennis Sheridan**  
**Phn:** 817-504-1750

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**2012 Currahee Reunion, 3rd Battalion 506th Infantry Regiment (Airborne),** May 2 - 5, 2012. Hilton Garden Inn, Columbus, GA

**Contact:**  
**Hoyt Bruce Moore, III**  
**Web:** [www.506infantry.org/reunion.htm](http://www.506infantry.org/reunion.htm)

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**173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion,** June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Pages 46-50.

**Contact:**  
**Dave Carmon**  
**Eml:** [dcarmon@roadrunner.com](mailto:dcarmon@roadrunner.com)  
**Web:** [www.skysoldier17.com](http://www.skysoldier17.com)

**Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67** is having a reunion in Lexington, Kentucky the same days as the 173d Association annual reunion next June. More to follow.

**4/503d Reunion,** Friday, June 8, 2012. We're going to do it during the annual 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY. Jerry Downard, Donnie Farmer and Joe Flesch are taking the lead. More later, but mark your Calendar.

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**Casper Platoon Reunion 2012,** June 28 - 30 & July 1, 2012, Hilton San Francisco Financial District, San Francisco, CA

**Contact:**  
**Steve Greene**  
**Reunion Chairman**  
**Web:** [greenaire@mac.com](mailto:greenaire@mac.com)

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



# The 2012 173d Reunion

Lexington, KY

June 6 -10, 2012

Hosted By Chapter 17

Room rate 115.00 plus tax per night with Free Parking

## New Registration fees:

Sky Soldiers 99.00

Spouses & Guests 75.00

Gold Star 75.00

Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner

The Hyatt is taking reservations now.

Call 800.233.1234

Ask for the 173 Airborne guestroom block or code G-173A.

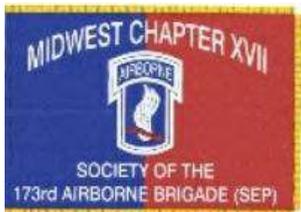
Also use this code when making reservations on-line  
at the Lexington-Hyatt website - [www.lexington.hyatt.com](http://www.lexington.hyatt.com)

Information and Forms will be posted soon at [www.skysoldier.org](http://www.skysoldier.org) and [www.Skysoldier17.com](http://www.Skysoldier17.com)



# ~ REUNION PROGRAM ~

Hosted by Midwest Chapter 17



## June 6 - Wednesday

0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
 0900 – 2230 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
 0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
 1800 – 2000 President's Reception @ Jasmine-Franklin

## June 7 - Thursday

0700 – 1230 Golf Outing TBA GC  
 0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
 0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
 0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
 1300 – 1600 Operation Corregidor II, Kentucky Theatre

## June 8 - Friday

0830 – 1030 Gold Star Reception & Breakfast @ Regency 1  
 0900 – 1100 Board of Directors Meeting @ Regency 3  
 0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
 0900 – 2200 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
 1000 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
 1100 – 1500 Kentucky Veterans Memorial – Frankfort – VFW Lunch

## June 9 - Saturday

0830 – 1000 Ladies Brunch @ Bluegrass Pre-function Area  
 0900 – 1130 General Membership Meeting @ Regency 1&2  
 0900 – 1700 Registration @ Regency 1 Foyer  
 0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
 0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room

## Banquet

1800 – 1845 Cocktail Hour @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
 1845 – 1900 Post Colors/Convocation @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
 1900 – 2035 Dinner @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
 2035 – 2115 Speakers & Awards @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
 2115 Retire the Colors

## June 10 Sunday

0800 – 0900 Memorial Service @ Regency 1  
 1130 Reunion Closing

**BE SURE TO ATTEND OPERATION CORREGIDOR II**



# 173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION 2012 REUNION



**JUNE 6-10, 2012, LEXINGTON, KY**

## ~ Registration Form ~

Please print. Copy form for additional guest(s)

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Brigade Unit Served With: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates served: \_\_\_\_\_

### Registration/Event Fees (Check boxes)

- Per Sky Soldier Association Member  \$99.
- Per Each Guest. (Number of Guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_)  \$75.
- Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner
- Per Child or all other extra dinner only guests  \$40.
- Per Gold Star Family Member  \$75.
- Per Active duty Soldier (Not on Orders)  \$75.
- Per Active Duty Soldier on Orders  Free  
(i.e. Command, Color Guard)
- Per Vendor Table  \$75.
- Ladies Brunch (Number attending \_\_\_\_\_)  Includ
- Per player in Golf Tournament (No: \_\_\_\_\_)  \$45

Enclosed is my check for this Total Amount: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make Check Payable and Mail to:

Midwest Chapter 17  
 P.O. Box 09640  
 Columbus, OH 43209

### Hotel Reservations:

Hyatt Regency – Lexington, \$115.00 + tax per night.  
 Reservations: 1-800-233-1234  
 Request group rate for 173d Airborne Assn. guestroom block or code G-173A. This is also the code to use if making reservations on-line at - [www.lexington.hyatt.com](http://www.lexington.hyatt.com)

Overflow Hotel:  
 To be announced



## "HISTORY, HORSES & HOOCH"



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / February 2011 – Issue 37

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# OPERATION CORREGIDOR II

## Honoring our WWII Paratroopers of the 503<sup>rd</sup> PRCT

Midwest Chapter 17 is proud to announce we will be inviting paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought throughout the Pacific during WWII to attend next year's 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY as guests of the officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade. This is *troopers honoring troopers* and is not sanctioned by either the 173d or 503rd Associations. It's a paratrooper thang.

In 2010, at the annual reunion in N. Myrtle Beach, SC hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30, five (5) troopers of the 503rd attended as guests of men of our Brigade and friends of the 173d and 503rd. As honest Abe once said,

***“Any nation that does  
not honor its heroes  
will not long endure,”***

and that's just what we'll be doing in Lexington, honoring these men.

Of the over 3000 men who served with the 503rd during WWII, sadly, less than 100 troopers are still with us. We hope you'll join in not only helping out with the funding (until sufficient funds have been raised), but attending our reunion next June and meeting these troopers personally and attending the WWII interactive presentations.

To date, these Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d and 503rd have made contributions getting us to about 2/3 the way to where we need to be. Our thanks to each of you! *Airborne!!*

Steve Aballa, 2/503    Ron Amyot, 2/503  
Ed Anthony, 172d Mid    John Arnold, 1RAR  
Jim Baskin, 4/503    Bob Beemer, 2/503  
Jerry Berry, 4/503    Pat Bowe, 2/503  
Wayne Bowers, 2/503    Bravo Bulls, 2/503  
Jim Brookmiller, 4/503    Bob Bruce, 1/503  
Bob Carmichael, 2/503    Leta Carruth, 2/503  
Mark Carter, 173d LRRP    Chapter 27, Australia  
Chapter 30, 173d    Bob Clark, 5<sup>th</sup> SF  
Harry Cleland, 2/503    John Cleland, 173d Bde

Dave Colbert, 2/503    Jim Cole, 2/503  
Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP    Gary Davidson, 2/503  
Terry Davis, 2/503    Mike de Gyurky, 2/503  
Bruce Demboski, C/2/503    George Dexter, 2/503  
Roger Dick, 2/503    Tom Dooley, 2/503  
Jim Dresser, 2/503    Frank Dukes, 2/503  
Tony Esposito, 2/503    Scott Fairchild, 82nd Abn  
Pat Feely, B Med    Paul Fisher, 3/503  
Craig Ford, 1/503    Joe Franklin, 173d Bde  
Jim Frelak, Cowboys    A.B. Garcia, 2/503  
Tony Geishauser, Cowboys    Jim Gettel, 2/503  
Johnny Graham, 2/503    Bernie Griffard, 2/503  
Larry Hampton, 1/503    Tom Hanson, 3/503  
Mike Harris, 2/503    Jerry Hassler, 2/503  
Dick Holt, 2/503    Nick Hun, 2/503  
Ken Kaplan, 2/503    Ed Kearney, 2/503  
Jack Kelley, 2/503    Dave Kies, 2/503  
Bill Knapp, 2/503    Bobby Kohaya, 2/503  
Gary Kozdron, 1/503    John Kyne, 2/503  
Joe Lamb, 2/503    Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503  
Joe Logan, 2/503    Nick Hun, 2/503  
Roy Lombardo, 2/503    Bob Lucas, 2/503  
Richard Martinez, 2/503    Jim Montague, 2/503  
Butch Nery, 4/503, N75    Hal Nobles, 3/503  
Bill Ostlund, 173d    Jack Owens, 2/503  
Larry Paladino, 2/503    Ed Perkins, 2/503  
Lou Pincock, 2/503    Jack Price, 2/503  
Gary Prisk, 2/503    Dan Reed, 2/503  
Bill Reynolds, 2/503    Jack Ribera, 2/503  
Jim Robinson, 2/503    Lee Robinson, 2/503  
Graham Rollings, 2/503    Jack Schimpf, 2/503  
Bill Shippey, 2/503 N75    Roy Scott, 3/319  
Ken Smith, 2/503    Lew Smith, 2/503  
Steve Skolochenko D Maint    Jerry Sopko, 4/503  
Larry Speed, 1/503    Jim Stanford, 2/503  
George Stapleton, 3/503    Mike Sturges, 2/503  
Bob Sweeney, 2/503    Bill Thomas, 2/503  
Marc Thurston, 2/503    Alt Turner, 2/503  
Steve Vargo, 2/503    Jerry Wiles, B/2/503  
Ron Woodley, 2/503    Bill Wyatt, 2/503

We're raising necessary funds to cover the cost associated with inviting between 3 to 5 503rd troopers and their spouses or a family member to the reunion. For information about donating to this worthy effort, please contact [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) for details, or use the form on the following page to send in your donation to this worthy effort.

