



March 2012, Issue 38

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<http://firebase319.org/2bat/news.html> or http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



Photo from the web. According to caption, these are 2/503 Bravo Bulls prior to moving out to "D" Zone on 24 June 1965.

(Photo by SSG Lyle V. Boggess, Bde PIO)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2012 – Issue 38

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Chaplain's Corner



The Leapin' Deacon

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and protect you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.

Honored and Steadfast Sky Soldiers, Families and Friends:

Peace and Blessings!

“SO HELP ME GOD!”

Our first president uttered these powerful and boldly clear faith and trust words on 30 April 1789, when Washington was sworn in as our heroic leader. Since that important historical day, after repeating the oath of office, he spontaneously added the words, “*SO HELP ME GOD.*” These simple, wonderful and powerful words, “*SO HELP ME GOD*”, have been considered part of the presidential oath of office.

Washington was unanimously elected for a second term. He is the only president to be unanimously elected not once, but twice. When asked to serve a third term, he declined. In his Farewell Address George Washington vividly spoke:

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens...Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without

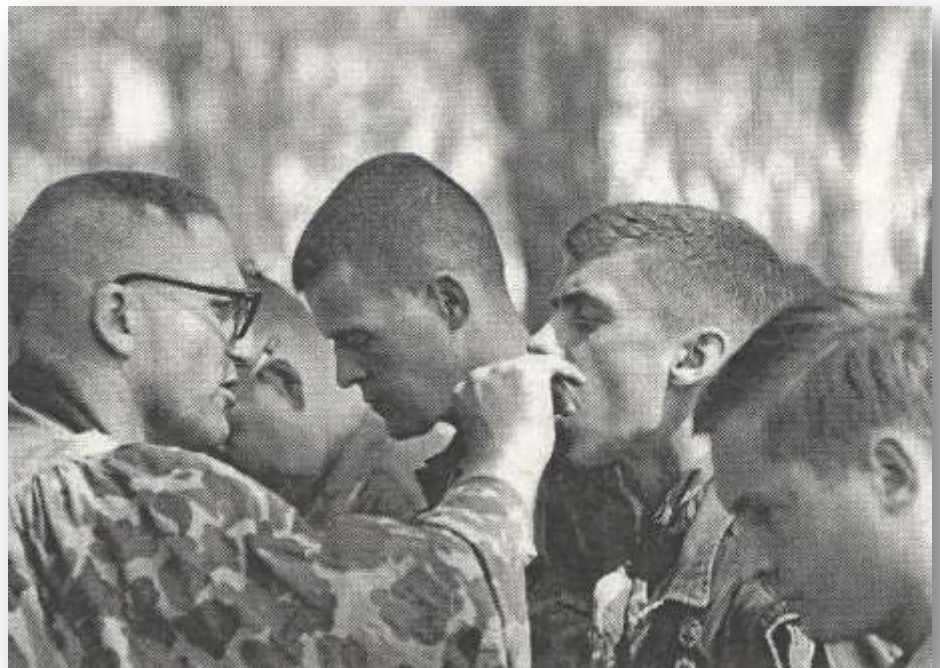
religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

Sky Soldiers All: We are truly a blessed nation deeply rooted in our Lord's Word and His greatest commandments: “*Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.*” This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it. “*Love others as well as you love yourself.*”

These two commands are pegs; “*everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them.*” (Matthew 22: 37-40)

Our Founding Fathers were remarkably gifted leaders of unrivaled character and integrity, with few exceptions, in their love of our Lord God and Nation and in declaring our Living Hope in the Name of our Great God, our Lord Jesus and the calling Holy Spirit.

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



Chaplain Connie with his boys in the boonies.



173rd Opens 2nd Year

BACK TO WAR ZONE 'D'

The Army Reporter, May 21, 1966

BIEN HOA (173rd ABN-IO) – The 173rd Airborne Brigade celebrates its first year in Vietnam by plunging again into an area near War Zone D.

The operation, called “Dexter”, began on May 4, 1966, exactly one year after the arrival of the brigade at Bien Hoa, and one year after the monsoon, which the Viet Cong idly boasted, was to mark the beginning of the final victorious offensive.

Ninety-eight officers and 1863 enlisted men with supporting equipment, supplies and ammunition left Okinawa on May 5, 1965, on heavily laden C-130s and C-124s. The remainder sailed from Naha Port, May 7.

The brigade, less the 1st Battalion of the 503rd Infantry, established a defensive position at the Bien Hoa Air Base, an installation once controlled by the French and a vital target to the Viet Cong. The 1st Battalion established a perimeter at the airfield at Vung Tau, and on its first night in the war-torn country, the 173rd Airborne Brigade began operations by sending out ambush patrols.

A history-making year began for 173rd soldiers that day in May. They were the first Army ground combat unit to serve in Vietnam, the first to enter the supposedly impenetrable Iron Triangle, the first American ground unit to fight in the highlands. They added to the list the first trip into War Zone D by an American unit, the first trip into the Delta by an American ground combat unit. They became the first unit to conduct a joint American-Vietnamese combat operation, and they were the first ground combat unit in War Zone C.

Operation “Hump” produced the heaviest single day’s fighting for the 173rd in Vietnam. It began on Nov. 5, 1965, approximately 25 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. In one of the most hard-fought battles of the war, the 173rd Airborne Brigade virtually annihilated a Viet Cong battalion in War Zone D. Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson, who commanded the brigade at the time said, *“This was the largest kill by the smallest unit, in the shortest time in the war to date.”*

The most successful operation for the brigade was Silver City, in which the paratroopers killed 328 Viet Cong and had only minor losses themselves. Conducting the search and destroy operation near the village of Phouc Vinh, the brigade captured 136 weapons, 140,000 rounds of ammunition, 1000 assorted explosive devices, 11,000

documents, truckload of miscellaneous equipment, and 165 tons of rice, salt, and cooking oil.



TACTICS DISCUSSED – Civic action projects are discussed by Brig. Gen. Paul F. Smith, commanding general of the 173rd Abn. Bde., a Special Forces advisor and the local Buddhist representative.

(Photo by 173rd ABN-IO)

Operation Marauder in the Delta, Operation Crimp in the Ho Bo Woods, Ben Cat I and the Iron Triangle, the road convoy to Kontum, spearheaded by the brigade’s D-16 Armor, which relieved the beleaguered forces of Kontum, and which opened Route 14 for travel. There was Pleiku and Operation Smash.

Not all of its first year was spent in battle and fighting, however. Highlighting the year was the visit to the brigade by *Playboy Magazine*’s Playmate of the Year, Jo Collins. Miss Collins arrived at the brigade area in Bien Hoa in January, and in one short week gave a remarkable boost to the morale of the Sky Soldiers.



Playmate Jo Collins raising the morale of Bravo Bulls at Camp Zinn.
(Photo from Les Brownlee)

(continued....)



The brigade was adopted by the city of Rochester, Minn., and the city invited a sergeant from the brigade to visit Rochester with his wife. First Sergeant William E. Workman of Co. A, 1st Bn. was chosen to represent the brigade back home.

The 173rd began conducting civic action operations upon its arrival in country. Its C-5 (Civic Action) section was not officially formed until September, 1965. Currently the brigade Civic Action section has a strength of three officers and seven enlisted men.

During operations the civic action teams went into the towns and villages visited by the brigade. Since operations limit time, high-impact short-term civic action projects were undertaken. The projects consisted of medical attention, clean-up, paint-up campaigns, and public works repair projects.

The brigade engineers have many times provided heavy equipment operators to improve roads and structures in the area.

The C-5 section has compiled an impressive list of accomplishments. They have built and repaired schools, bridges, dispensaries and roads. Tons of captured food have been turned over to GVN and hundreds of thousands of piasters have been donated for hospitals, orphanages, and scholarships for deserving students.

In February, 1966, command of the 173rd Airborne was assumed by Brig. Gen. Paul F. Smith, who replaced General Williamson. Under new leadership the brigade continued to add to their lists of firsts and successful operations.

Plain of Reeds, Marauder, Cu Chi, Ben Cat, War Zone D, Iron Triangle, Kontum, Vo Dat, Courtney, are all names of operations and villages. They are meaningless to many; to others they will serve as reference points for stories about the war, as Port Chop Hill and T-Bone Hill and Salerno serve for other wars.

They remain to the men of the 173rd Airborne Brigade as solemn reminders of battles fought and lives lost and blood spilled.

These insignificant dots on a map mark the battles for men who slept in mud, bore the sweltering heat, shared their beds with jungle insects, remembered the men who died 10,000 miles from home in a steaming jungle or stinking rice paddy, and who could not say, *"this ground is ours, we bought it with our lives"*.

One year after its arrival in Vietnam, the 173rd Airborne Brigade is again near War Zone D to seek out and destroy the running enemy. As the brigade begins its second year in Vietnam it continues its mission: to seek out, engage, and destroy the enemy wherever he may be.



VA Loan Facts for 2012

January 16, 2012

VA Home Loans allow qualified buyers the opportunity to purchase a home with no down payment. There are also no monthly mortgage insurance premiums to pay, limitations on buyer's closing costs, and an appraisal that informs the buyer of the property value. For most loans on new houses, construction is inspected at appropriate stages and a 1-year warranty is required from the builder. VA also performs personal loan servicing and offers financial counseling to help veterans having temporary financial difficulties. Although there is no maximum VA loan, lenders generally limit the maximum VA loan to \$417,000.

VA reference site:

[herehttp://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/eligibility.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/eligibility.asp)

Powell's Panthers Hook-Up in Florida



2/503d recon troopers from '66/'67, Jerry Hassler (L) from Franklin, TN, and Marcus Powell of Merritt Island, FL have mini-mini reunion at a buddy's house.

"Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. These events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of America's leadership in the world."

~ Gerald Ford, April 1975



Vietnam War Myths

Here we attempt to address some of the most widely spread, yet inaccurate, myths about The Vietnam War.

Myth: The average age of an infantryman fighting in Vietnam was 19.

Assuming KIAs accurately represented age groups serving in Vietnam, the average age of an infantryman serving in Vietnam to be 19 years old is a myth, it is actually 22.8. None of the enlisted grades have an average age of less than 20. The average age of a man who fought in World War II was 26 years of age.



Myth: The domino theory was proved false.

The domino theory was accurate. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand stayed free of Communism because of the U.S. commitment to Vietnam. The Indonesians threw the Soviets out in 1966 because of America's commitment in Vietnam. Without that commitment, Communism would have swept all the way to the Malacca Straits that is south of Singapore and of great strategic importance to the free world. If you ask people who live in these countries that won the war in Vietnam, they have a different opinion from the American news media. The Vietnam War was the turning point for Communism.

Myth: The fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II.

The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. One out of every 10 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,169 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.59 million who served. Although the percent who died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II. 75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded who survived the first 24 hours died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800 mile border with



Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords of 1962 would secure the border). The 1990 unsuccessful movie "Air America" helped to establish the myth of a connection between Air America, the CIA, and the Laotian drug trade. The movie and a book the movie was based on contend that the CIA condoned a drug trade conducted by a Laotian client; both agree that Air America provided the essential transportation for the trade; and both view the pilots with sympathetic understanding. American-owned airlines never knowingly transported opium in or out of Laos, nor did their American pilots ever profit from its transport. Yet undoubtedly every plane in Laos carried opium at some time, unknown to the pilot and his superiors.

Myth: Most Vietnam veterans were drafted.

2/3 of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. 2/3 of the men who served in World War II were drafted. Approximately 70% of those killed were volunteers.

Myth: The media have reported that suicides among Vietnam veterans range from 50,000 to 100,000 - 6 to 11 times the non-Vietnam veteran population.

Mortality studies show that 9,000 is a better estimate. "The CDC Vietnam Experience Study Mortality Assessment showed that during the first 5 years after discharge, deaths from suicide were 1.7 times more likely among Vietnam veterans than non-Vietnam veterans. After that initial post-service period, Vietnam veterans were no more likely to die from suicide than non-Vietnam veterans. In fact, after the 5-year post-service period, the rate of suicides is less in the Vietnam veterans' group."

Myth: A disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War.

86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, 1.2% were other races. Sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, in their recently published book "All That We Can Be," said they analyzed the claim that blacks were used like cannon fodder during Vietnam "and can report definitely that this charge is untrue. Black fatalities amounted to 12 percent of all Americans killed in Southeast Asia - a figure proportional to the number of blacks in the U.S. population at the time and slightly lower than the proportion of blacks in the Army at the close of the war."



(continued....)



Myth: The war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated.

Servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers.

Myth: The United States lost the war in Vietnam.

"The American military was not defeated in Vietnam. The American military did not lose a battle of any consequence. From a military standpoint, it was almost an unprecedented performance." (Westmoreland quoting Douglas Pike, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley a renowned expert on the Vietnam War) [Westmoreland]. This included Tet 68, which was a major military defeat for the VC and NVA.

Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972, was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang.



No American had involvement in this incident near Trang Bang that burned Phan Thi Kim Phuc. The planes doing the bombing near the village were VNAF (Vietnam Air Force) and were being flown by Vietnamese pilots in support of South Vietnamese troops on the ground. The Vietnamese pilot who dropped the napalm in error is currently living in the United States. Even the AP photographer, Nick Ut, who took the picture was Vietnamese. The incident in the photo took place on the second day of a three day battle between the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who occupied the village of Trang Bang and the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) who were trying to force the NVA out of the village. Recent reports in the news media that an American commander ordered the air strike that burned Kim Phuc are incorrect. There were no Americans involved in any capacity. *"We (Americans) had nothing to do with controlling VNAF,"* according to Lieutenant General (Ret) James F. Hollingsworth, the Commanding General of TRAC at that time. Also, it has been incorrectly reported that two of Kim Phuc's brothers were killed in this incident. They were Kim's cousins not her brothers.

Source:

<http://www.vietnam-war.info/myths/>

New Law Change Increases Insurance Coverage for Veterans

January 10, 2012

WASHINGTON – Some Veterans covered under the Veterans Group Life Insurance program (VGLI) now have the opportunity to increase their coverage to the current maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program.

"Currently, 70 percent of the Veterans covered under VGLI are under age 60, have less than \$400,000 of coverage, and will greatly benefit from this law change," said Allison A. Hickey, Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Benefits.

Under the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, enacted on Oct. 13, 2010, Veterans can increase their coverage by \$25,000 at each five-year anniversary date of their policy to the current legislated maximum SGLI coverage, presently, \$400,000.

To date, approximately 21 percent of eligible Veterans have taken advantage of this opportunity, resulting in nearly \$113 million of new coverage being issued.

The VGLI program allows newly discharged Veterans to convert their SGLI coverage they had while in the service to a civilian program. Before enactment of this law, Veterans could not have more VGLI than the amount of SGLI they had at the time of separation from service.

For example, those who got out of the service prior to Sept. 1, 2005, when the maximum SGLI coverage was \$250,000, were limited to \$250,000 in VGLI coverage. Now on their first five-year anniversary, these Veterans can elect to increase their coverage to \$275,000. On their next five-year anniversary, they can increase the coverage to \$300,000, and so forth.

The additional coverage can be issued regardless of the Veteran's health. To be eligible to purchase this additional coverage, the Veteran must:

- Have active VGLI coverage,
- Have less than the current legislated maximum coverage of \$400,000,
- Request the additional coverage during the 120-day period prior to each five-year anniversary date, and
- Be less than 60 years of age on the five-year anniversary date of his or her coverage.

Eligible Veterans are notified of this opportunity a week before the start of the 120-day period prior to their anniversary date, and twice more before the actual anniversary date. For information call 1-800-827-1000.





Who Packs *Your* Parachute?

Charles Plumb

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, *"You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"* *"How in the world did you know that?"* asked Plumb. *"I packed your parachute,"* the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, *"I guess it worked!"* Plumb assured him, *"It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."*

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, *"I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back, and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good Morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."*

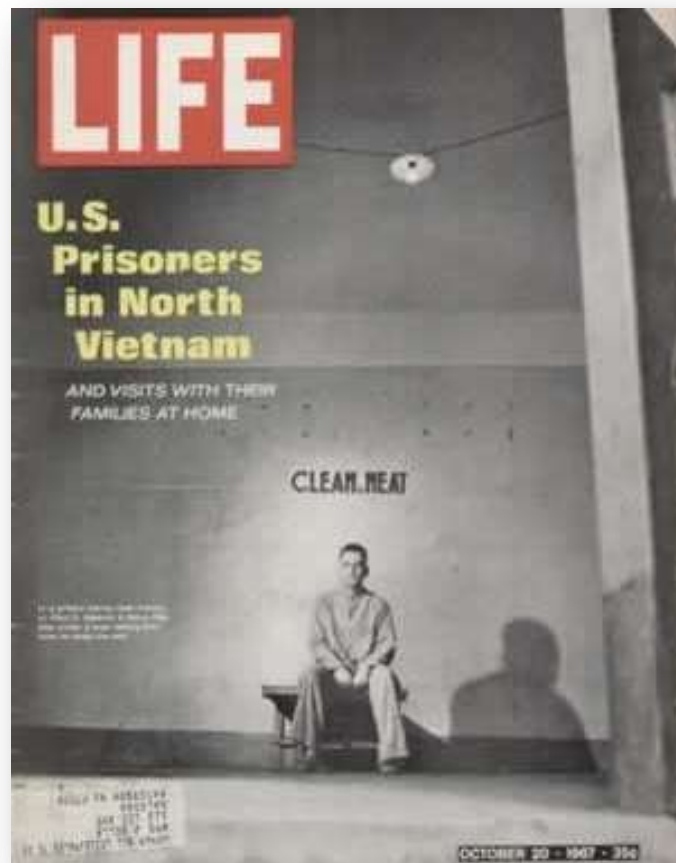
Plumb thought of the man and the hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, *"Who's packing your parachute?"* Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory -- he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachute.

And now for the rest of the story...

by Paul Galanti



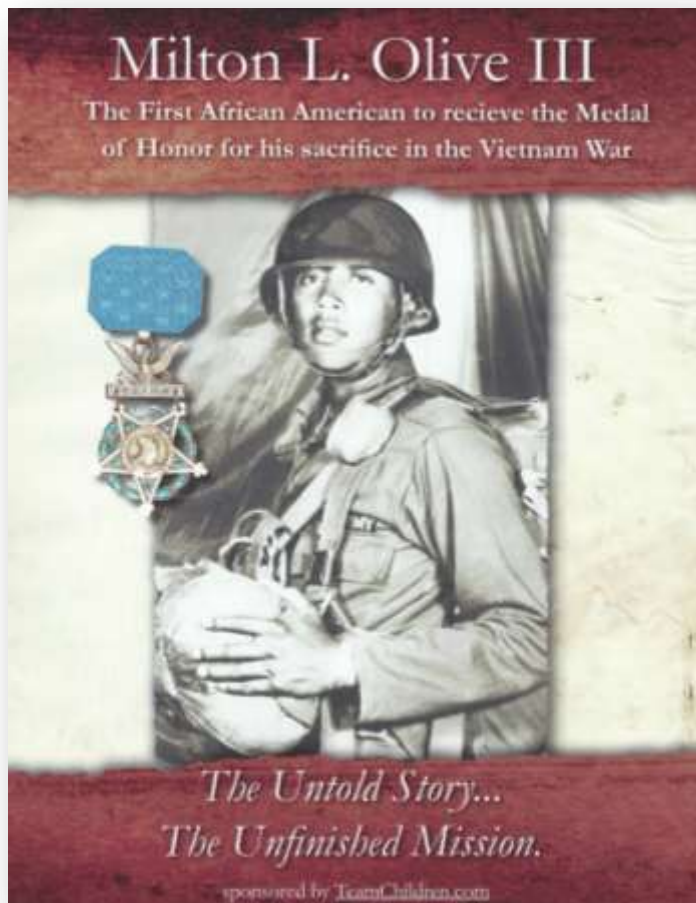
Charlie Plumb was one of my plebes at Annapolis during the summer of 1960. Later I flew a couple of check flights with him in Pensacola when I was a primary flight instructor. In June 1967, the "V" had some East German visitors filming *"Pilots in Pajamas"* in our camp. I was in the October 1967 *Life Magazine* cover *"Clean & Neat"* cell plotting how to foil any attempts to use us for propaganda when I heard a clatter outside the room.

I ran to the window (it had fixed slats and was the only cell I lived in from which I could look out) and saw a guard followed by a POW going under the window. As they passed out of sight, another POW appeared moving more slowly. As he passed under the window, I whispered, *"I'm Paul Galanti. Who are you?"* The POW looked startled and pressed on to get his food. When they returned he fell very far behind his cellmate and the guard, glanced up at the window and whispered back, *"I'm Charlie Plumb. Thanks for not washing me out of the check ride, you S.O.B."*

[Sent in by Craig Murphy, E/Recon/2/503d]



An Unlikely Brotherhood



In 1965, Milton Olive, a young black man from the south side of Chicago, Illinois, and Robert Toporek, an 18-year-old white man from the city of Charleston, South Carolina, met while in the Vietnam War. Separated by deeply imbedded racism, their relationship began on a rocky road. To resolve the tension between them, Toporek and Olive went behind their tent one day and “beat the hell out of each other.”

When the fight ended, so did the racial tension. All that was left were men whose lives depended on one another. Their relationship became one of mutual respect and deep friendship. Both were members of Company B, 2/505rd Inf., 173d Airborne Brigade, third platoon.

A word from the Author:

“I fought side-by-side with Milton in Vietnam. The day he so selflessly gave his life to protect the lives of 4 members of our platoon forever changed my life. From that day on, I vowed to devote my life to making a positive difference in the lives of others.”

~ Robert Toporek

A Lesson in Courage:

On October 22, 1965, while on a mission in Phu Cong Province, the third platoon was ambushed. Although heavy gunfire temporarily pinned them down, the platoon was able to attack strategic enemy positions. As the Viet Cong fled, Private First Class Olive and his squad pursued the enemy. Suddenly, an enemy hand grenade was thrown into their midst.

PFC Olive immediately grabbed the grenade and absorbed the blast by falling on it with his own body, ending his life. Through his bravery, unhesitating actions and complete disregard for his own safety, he prevented additional loss of life or injury to the members of his platoon.

A Commitment Pledged:

As Robert Toporek helped carry his friend’s body out of the jungle that unforgettable day, he made a commitment to dedicate his life to honor Milton Olive’s memory and heroism. If he survived, Robert vowed to find a way to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Toporek served two terms with the 173d Airborne Brigade. He received the Bronze Star with V for Valor; the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm Leaf, one of the highest awards given by the Vietnamese Government; and was decorated with a Purple Heart. After the war, Toporek was awarded a fellowship from the Ford Foundation to study methods of personal growth and the impact of



Robert, 1965

This led step-by-step to several other pursuits; always with the goal of helping others realize their potential.

Remembering a Hero:

(Excerpt from remarks by President Lyndon Johnson during the posthumous presentation of the Medal of Honor to the parents of Milton Olive):

“So let us never exult over war. Let us not for one moment disguise in the grandest justifications of policy the inescapable fact that war feeds on the lives of young men, good young men like Milton Olive. And I can never forget it. I am reminded of it every moment of every day. And in a moment such as this, I am reminded all over again how brave the young are, and how great is our debt to them, and how endless is the sacrifice that we call upon them to make for us.”

[Source: The eBook, *An Unlikely Brotherhood*]



~ The 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam ~



In the early '60s, the Army predicted a large involvement in Southeast Asia and began building up the 101st Airborne Division in addition to several other units. In July of 1965, the 101st was ordered into combat. The 1st Brigade (Separate) of the 101st Airborne Division landed at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam on July 29, 1965. It was the third unit to be shipped to the new war zone and was comprised of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 327th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry.

After a brief period where the Soldiers acclimated themselves and received all their equipment, the 1st Brigade (Separate) went into action.

The Brigade was ordered into the Song Con Valley, about 20 miles northeast of the town of An Khe. During one mission, the 2nd Bn, 502nd Infantry encountered heavy enemy fire at their landing zone. Three company commanders were killed and the contact was so close, air support and artillery could not be called in until they pulled back. That night, 100 sorties and 11,000 rounds of artillery hit the enemy. The next morning, the 2nd Bn 502nd Infantry was pulled out. They later discovered that they had landed in the middle of a heavily entrenched enemy base.

For the rest of 1965, the 1st Brigade (Separate) continued to mount patrols and interdicted the enemy supplies lines.

At the beginning of 1966, the enemy greatly reduced his operations. In May, the enemy began massing in the Pleiku and Kontum provinces. The 1st Brigade was moved from An Khe to Dak To, a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) base camp in the northern area of South Vietnam. Here a South Vietnamese force was surrounded by the 24th North Vietnamese Regiment.

The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered in to reinforce the South Vietnamese position.

After evacuating the South Vietnamese forces, the 2nd Bn, 502nd Infantry established their lines inside the abandoned camp and sent C Company forward in an exposed defensive position. On the night of June 6, the 24th NVA Regiment attacked C Company in a brutal assault. In a desperate attempt to stop the enemy advance, the commander of C Company called in air strikes on top of his own position, killing NVA and Americans alike. It was a hard decision to make, but it worked. The 24th NVA Regiment pulled back long enough for A Company 1/327 Infantry to be brought in by helicopter to reinforce the C Company positions. With the arrival of A 1/327 Infantry, the 24th NVA Regiment began to retreat.

The soldiers of 1st Brigade (Separate) pursued the enemy and several large scale air attacks were called in. Hundreds of enemy soldiers were killed but the 24th NVA Regiment managed to escape into Laos.

In October and November 1966, the 4th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Divisions were heavily engaged with enemy forces in the Kontum province. When it became clear that the enemy was attempting to withdraw into Laos, a massive helicopter airlift of the 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division landed just as the enemy was crossing into Laos and safety. The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered into reserve at Phu Yen.



101st troopers helping a wounded buddy, May '66.

In early 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) acted as a rapid reaction force, reinforcing American and South Vietnamese forces when necessary and responding to enemy attacks. They had become experts in rapid helicopter assaults.

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In April of 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was attached to Task Force OREGON and placed under operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force and moved to Chu Lai. At Chu Lai, the 1st Brigade (Separate) assisted in a large-scale pacification effort in the Quang Tri province. Later, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was called in to assist a Marine battalion to finish off an enemy attack around Khe Sanh, which would be the scene of a long, bloody siege in 1968.



One tour was not enough for this Screaming Eagle.

In the fall of 1967, Task Force Oregon was reorganized into the 23rd Infantry Division, better known as the Americal Division.

The 1st Brigade (Separate) was detached and waited for the arrival of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division, which arrived in December 1967.

On January 31, 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive. Tet, the traditional Vietnamese New Year Celebration, was supposed to be a peaceful time. The enemy attacks caught the Americans by surprise. The 101st Airborne Division, along with the 1st Cavalry Division and the 5th Marine Regiment, began to fight for control of Hue City. Hue was considered vital to the Communist effort because of its history of Buddhist activism and Communist sympathy. The North Vietnamese felt that Hue would be their first political foothold into South Vietnam and committed Regular forces to its capture.

When Tet began, Hue was defended by South Vietnamese Army units who were quickly driven from the city. The 101st Airborne and the 1st Cavalry were sent to recapture the city.

The battle for Hue raged for three weeks and was the only extended urban combat of the war. Later, the 5th Marine Regiment would be called in to reinforce the 101st Airborne and 1st Cavalry.

Fighting in Hue was intense and advances were measured by houses. Each building seemed to hold enemy soldiers. In some cases, the soldiers of the 101st Airborne fought hand to hand. Finally, after much destruction to the city, Hue was liberated from the North Vietnamese.

During the Tet Offensive, over 33,000 enemy soldiers were killed and many thousands more captured. Tet was a major American victory despite the appearance of defeat back home in the political arena.

It is interesting to note, that one platoon from C Company, 1st Bn 502nd Infantry, 2nd Brigade was airlifted into Saigon and fought a pitched battle on the roof of the American Embassy after it had been infiltrated by enemy forces.

Following Tet, American forces began launching hundreds of small unit counter attacks designed to contain and destroy any remaining infiltrated enemy units operating in South Vietnam.

In March and April, the 101st Airborne attacked enemy supply bases in the A Shau valley during Operation SOMERSET PLAIN. During this operation, several hundred tons of enemy supplies were captured.

Captain Joe Ronnie Hooper (August 8, 1938 – May 6, 1979) was a Vietnam veteran whose combat decorations surpassed those of Audie Murphy or Alvin York. He was the recipient of the Medal of Honor, America's highest military decoration for valor in combat. During two tours of duty with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 501st Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, he received the Medal of Honor (February 21, 1968 outside of Hue), two Silver Stars for gallantry, 6 Bronze Stars for heroism, 8 Purple Hearts, and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He is credited with 115 enemy kills in ground combat, 22 of which occurred on February 21, 1968.



The 101st Airborne was next ordered into the coastal lowlands in the Thua Thien province in Operation NEVADA EAGLE which began May 1968.

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For 288 days, the 101st Airborne conducted sweeping patrols of the area and engaged the enemy almost daily. After it was over, the province was cleared of enemy forces and the 101st Airborne had captured enough rice, weapons and equipment for 10 enemy battalions.

Following NEVADA EAGLE, the 101st Airborne returned to the A Shau valley and began a series of operations to clear the valley of enemy forces. During one operation, the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry assaulted Dong Ap Bia Mountain, aka Hill 937, where the enemy had established a well-fortified base camp. For 10 days, 3/187 Infantry launched attack after attack on the enemy position but could only advance yards at a time. The enemy had established several lines of defense. Fighting on Hill 937 was some of the most brutal of the war and was often hand-to-hand. The 2nd Bn 501st Infantry, 1st Bn 506th Infantry and A & D Co 2nd Bn 506th Infantry of the 101st Airborne were called in to take Hill 937. In the end, Hill 937, now called "Hamburger Hill", was captured.

The battle was very controversial because it had no tactical or strategic importance and the Army later abandoned it.



Screaming Eagles on Hamburger Hill

Defending the operation, the commander of the 101st Airborne acknowledged that the hill's only significance was that the enemy occupied it. *"My mission, was to destroy enemy forces and installations. We found the enemy on Hill 937, and that is where we fought them,"* he later said.

The A Shau valley was finally cleared and armored forces were brought in to reopen abandoned airstrips. After these operations, the 101st Airborne went through a series of reorganizations. Their name was changed to the 101st Air Cavalry Division and later the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). With the change in names came a change in mission. The 101st Airborne was ordered back into Thua Thien to participate in Civil operations designed to bolster the South Vietnamese government forces. They established a series of fire and patrol bases and conducted several operations that prevented the enemy from re-entering Thua Thien. In addition, the 101st Airborne provided valuable technical training to the South Vietnamese forces and supported several South Vietnamese operations into Laos to cut off enemy supply and infiltration lines. These operations were designed to allow the South Vietnamese Army to operate on their own and turn over the fight to them. This was called "Vietnamization."

In late 1971 and early 1972 the 101st Airborne Division began returning home to Fort Campbell.

The 101st Airborne Division spent almost 7 years in combat in South Vietnam. During that time, the Division became one of the most feared units of the American Army. During Vietnam, Army forces were ordered to create black and green subdued shoulder insignia that were designed to blend in with the green uniform. The 101st Airborne is the only unit to retain their colored emblem.

The North Vietnamese called the 101st Airborne the "Chicken Men" because of their insignia. (The Vietnamese had never seen an eagle before). Many enemy commanders warned their men to avoid the Chicken Men at all costs because any engagement with them, they were sure to lose.

This brief summary of the History of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam is not all inclusive of all Combat Operations.

Source:

<http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/101abndivvietvets/page15history101.html>



National Veterans Golden Age Games

May 31 – June 5, 2012 - St. Louis, Missouri



Athletes at the Arch

Registration for the 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games in St. Louis is now open! The Games will be held May 31 – June 5 offering exciting competition for Veterans age 55 and

older who receive care at the VA. NVGAG 2012 is also a qualifying event for the 2013 *National Senior Games*. See you in St. Louis!

About the National Veterans Golden Age Games

Life begins at 55, at least it does for more than 700 Veterans competing in this national event, the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States. It is the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. It is one of the most progressive and adaptive rehabilitative senior sports programs in the world, offering 14 different sports and recreational activities.



www.va.gov/adaptivesports

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1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975

~ This Month in History ~

March 1965

2nd: Operation Rolling Thunder begins as over 100 American fighter-bombers attack targets in North Vietnam. Scheduled to last eight weeks, Rolling Thunder will instead go on for three years. The first U.S. air strikes also occur against the Ho Chi Minh trail. Throughout the war, the trail is heavily bombed by American jets with little actual success in halting the tremendous flow of soldiers and supplies from the North. 500 American jets will be lost attacking the trail. After each attack, bomb damage along the trail is repaired by female construction crews. During the entire war, the U.S. will fly 3 million sorties and drop nearly 8 million tons of bombs, four times the tonnage dropped during all of World War II, in the largest display of firepower in the history of warfare. The majority of bombs are dropped in South Vietnam against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army positions, resulting in 3 million civilian refugees due to the destruction of numerous villages. In North Vietnam, military targets include fuel depots and factories. The North Vietnamese react to the air strikes by decentralizing their factories and supply bases, thus minimizing their vulnerability to bomb damage.



3rd: Temptations' "My Girl" reaches #1.

8th: The first U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam as 3500 Marines land at China Beach to defend the American air base at Da Nang. They join 23,000 American military advisors already in Vietnam.



U.S. Marines arrive Vietnam. *Semper Fi!*

Note: The 173d Airborne Brigade was originally slated to be the first combat unit committed to the war at Da Nang. (Pentagon Papers)

9th: President Johnson authorizes the use of Napalm, a petroleum based anti-personnel bomb that showers hundreds of explosive pellets upon impact.

11th: Operation Market Time, a joint effort between the U.S. Navy and South Vietnamese Navy, commences to disrupt North Vietnamese sea routes used to funnel supplies into the South. The operation is highly successful in cutting off coastal supply lines and results in the North Vietnamese shifting to the more difficult land route along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

21st: Martin Luther King, Jr. begins march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.



Caption: "When you pray, move your feet."

29th: Viet Cong terrorists bomb the U.S. embassy in Saigon.

March 1966

1st: An attempt to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution fails in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 92 to 5. The attempt was led by Sen. Wayne Morse.

4th: John Lennon, says "We (Beatles) are more popular than Jesus"

9th: The U.S. reveals that 20,000 acres of food crops have been destroyed in suspected Viet Cong villages. The admission generates harsh criticism from the American academic community.

(continued....)



9th - 22nd: The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP), including elements of the 1st Royal Australian Regiment, conducted a heliborne assault near the Song Be River in War Zone "D" to initiate Operation Silver City in Long Khanh Province. The first few days of the operations consisted of thorough screening of the area, leading to the discovery of vast quantities of food, munitions, bunkers, tunnel systems, documents, and several large VC base camps. The seventh day of Operation Silver City will long be remembered by the troopers of the 173d, for on this day the 2/503rd Infantry was attacked from all directions by the 501st VC Battalion. The troopers held their perimeter while inflicting heavy losses on the guerrillas. Resupply of needy ammunition was delivered during the battle by helicopter at no small risk to equipment and crews. Numerous tactical air strikes were initiated with great effectiveness. The VC had to resort to chaining their machine gunners to the tripods of their weapons, but even these measures could not stop the crack troopers of the 173d. The 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry was directed to reinforce the 2nd Battalion during the battle. The VC element was nearly annihilated by this time and chose to break contact rather than tackle two battalions of Sky Soldiers. Four hours after initial contact, all VC were routed or destroyed. The after-action mop-up patrols counted a total of 302 VC bodies with only seven US losses, the highest kill ratio to date. Throughout the rest of the operation it was indicated that an estimated 150 additional VC dead had been dragged away. [See *OPERATION MARAUDER: ALLIED OFFENSIVE IN THE MEKONG DELTA* by Col. Tom Faley, in Issue 36 of this newsletter].



Col. Tom Faley
CO C/2/503d

10th: South Vietnamese Buddhists begin a violent campaign to oust Prime Minister Ky following his dismissal of a top Buddhist general. This marks the beginning of a period of extreme unrest in several cities in South Vietnam including Saigon, Da Nang and Hue as political squabbling spills out into the streets and interferes with U.S. military operations.

26th: Anti-war protests are held in New York, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco.

March 1967

8th: Congress authorizes \$4.5 billion for the war.

14th: JFK's body moved from temporary grave to a permanent memorial.

22nd Feb - 15th Mar: Tay Ninh Province. At 0900 Hours the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry along with A Battery, 319th Artillery led by Brigadier General John R. Deane, Jr., made the only (mass) combat parachute jump of the war in War Zone "C". The overall operation employed a large contingent of forces: The 1st and 25th Divisions, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, elements of the 4th and 9th Infantry Divisions, South Vietnamese units and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Operation Junction City's objective was to locate and destroy the Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), the supreme headquarters of the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam. The accomplishments of Phase I were significant: 266 VC killed, 4 captured. The complete destruction of the COSVN Public Information Office for Psychological Propaganda and a COSVN Signal site dealt a heavy blow to the enemy propaganda effort.



Gen. Deane



LTC Bob Sigholtz, CO 2/503d, addressing his troops before combat jump during Junction City.

20th: Minh Thanh through 13th April. Phase two of Operation Junction City began with the establishment of fire support bases along Route 13 from Lai Khe to Quan Loi (east of An Loc). A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry came under attack north of the village of Bau Bang. Massed troops of the VC 273rd Regiment erupted out of the rubber plantation, swarming over the ACAVs and tanks on the southeastern perimeter. Calling in artillery support from A/3/319th the VC were destroyed leaving behind 227 killed while the Americans only suffered 3 casualties.

(continued....)

