

ROBERT PAUL GIPSON

Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army
Company B, 2d Battalion, (Airborne) 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade, (Sep)
Date of Action: March 16, 1966

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Robert Paul Gipson, Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Specialist Four Gipson distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 16 March 1966 while serving as a member in a company conducting a search and destroy operation in the Republic of Vietnam. During the morning hours, Specialist Four Gipson's company was attacked by a large Viet Cong force employing numerous automatic weapons, small arms, mortars and recoilless rifles. Because of the intensity of the battle, available ammunition supplies were rapidly expended. At this time, Specialist Four Gipson unhesitatingly carried ammunition to the front line platoons. Moving up and down the heavily engaged front lines, he repeatedly exposed himself to intense hostile machine gun fire while resupplying the platoons with vitally needed ammunition. He then made a second trip through the bullet swept area to obtain additional ammunition, and again braved the intense hostile fire as he returned to the front lines with it. During the course of action, Specialist Four Gipson maneuvered to the battalion landing zone which was under constant .30 and .50 caliber machine gun fire. With complete disregard for his safety, he dauntlessly moved into the open while securing ammunition for the front lines, and then took up a firing position there. In the closing hour of the five-hour battle, he was mortally wounded by a burst of Viet Cong machine gun fire. Specialist Four Gipson's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.
Home Town: Athens, Georgia



PHILIP P. HAYDEN

First Lieutenant, U.S. Army
Company C, 2d Battalion, (Airborne) 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Date of Action: February 1, 1967

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Philip P. Hayden, First Lieutenant (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. First Lieutenant Hayden distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 1 February 1967 while serving as rifle platoon leader during a surprise attack by a Viet Cong force near Phuoc Vinh. The insurgents opened fire with machine guns, rifles and grenades. The hostile attack was so sudden that four men were wounded forty meters forward of the friendly perimeter. Lieutenant Hayden unflinchingly ran through the hostile barrage to his left flank machine gun position which was receiving the heaviest attack. He immediately reinforced the position with his own fire and directed his gunners' fire, enabling two of the men outside the perimeter to crawl into the camp. Completely disregarding his own safety, Lieutenant Hayden ordered his men to maintain maximum fire and crawled out to the wounded men. Despite the hail of fire flying over him from two directions, he managed to get one man back to the safety of the camp. When he returned for the second man, however, a group of insurgents focused their fire on him and seriously wounded him. Assuming that they had killed him, five insurgents were moving closer to the friendly forces when Lieutenant Hayden wounded or killed all of them. Two of his men then crawled from the perimeter to help him. He told them to help the other casualty back toward their perimeter, covered their withdrawal with intense fire, then returned to safety himself. First Lieutenant Hayden's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



ROBERT RICHARD LITWIN

Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army
Company A, 2d Battalion, (Airborne), 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Date of Action: June 22, 1967

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Robert Richard Litwin, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company A, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). Platoon Sergeant Litwin distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 22 June 1967 while serving as rifle platoon sergeant of an infantry company on a search and destroy mission near Dak To. His platoon was savagely attacked by a North Vietnamese battalion and pinned down by an intense hail of automatic weapons fire. Seeing his platoon leader killed, Sergeant Litwin stood up in the midst of the raging firefight to rally his men against the numerically superior hostile force. Wounded early in the battle, he refused aid and directed the fire of his men on wave after wave of onrushing enemy soldiers. He heard a cry for help and braved withering fire to race forward of his lines and aid a wounded comrade. Wounded again, he bravely carried the man back to safety under heavy fire. He continued to repel the mass assaults while radioing for air strikes within fifty meters of his positions. He sustained another wound while directing the air and artillery strikes, but continued to refuse aid while fighting furiously to repulse the enemy onslaught. Realizing that his defenses could not last much longer, he moved through the bullet-swept area directing the withdrawal of his men. While evacuating the wounded, he was hit again. Continuing to refuse aid, he sent his men ahead and remained to cover the withdrawal. He was mortally wounded while courageously leading his men in the face of grave danger. Platoon Sergeant Litwin's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Home Town: Willimansett, Massachusetts



MARTIN TERRANCE MCDONALD

Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army
HHC Company, 2d Battalion, (Airborne), 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Date of Action: April 10, 1971

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Martin Terrance McDonald, Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. Specialist Four McDonald distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 10 April 1971. On that date Specialist McDonald was serving as a medical aidman for a six man reconnaissance team on an offensive mission in Phu My District, when the team was taken under fire by an estimated platoon-sized enemy force. The enemy-initiated contact included rockets, machinegun and automatic small arms fire. In the initial hail of fire, the team leader was severely wounded, and the remainder of the team was halted a short distance away, leaving him in an open, vulnerable position. Specialist McDonald, although wounded himself during the initial contact, realized the extreme danger his team leader was in and, with total disregard for his personal safety, exposed himself to the intense enemy fire and ran to the aid of his fallen team leader. He then placed himself between the team leader and the enemy and began returning fire. An incoming rocket landed nearby, wounding him for the second time as the force of the explosion knocked him to the ground. He immediately recovered and rolled over on his team leader to protect him from the enemy fire. Realizing that further movement was impossible, Specialist McDonald stood up between the enemy and the severely wounded man and began placing accurate semi-automatic fire upon the enemy positions, until he was mortally wounded by an enemy rocket. Specialist Four McDonald's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.
Home Town: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



BILLY W. PONDER, SR.

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army
Company C, 2d Battalion, (Airborne), 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Date of Action: August 23, 1968

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Billy W. Ponder, Sr., Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. Staff Sergeant Ponder distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 23 August 1968 while on an ambush mission in Binh Dinh Province. He was standing guard by four sleeping fellow soldiers near two buildings suspected of being used by the Viet Cong. Shortly after midnight he saw an enemy soldier rise from a rice paddy dike twenty-five meters to his front and immediately fired at the aggressor. Suddenly a grenade landed amid his four awakening comrades. With complete disregard for his own life, Sergeant Ponder yelled a warning to the men and jumped on the deadly missile to shield them from the blast. Some seconds later, when the grenade failed to detonate, he took it from under his stomach and threw it toward the enemy's position, where it finally exploded. Staff Sergeant Ponder's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

JAMES PAUL ROGAN

Captain, U.S. Army
Company B, 2d Battalion, (Airborne), 503d Inf. Reg.
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Date of Action: November 13, 1967

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to James Paul Rogan, Captain (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Captain Rogan distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 13 November 1967 while serving as commanding officer of an airborne infantry company during combat operations near Dak To. His company was pinned down by withering rocket and automatic weapons fire from a large enemy force, and Captain Rogan immediately called for reinforcements and moved through a murderous hail of bullets to direct their deployment in support of his troops. When his two radio operators were killed, he personally took over communications and coordinated the actions of his platoon while maintaining contact with his higher headquarters. Completely disregarding his personal welfare, Captain Rogan repeatedly exposed himself to the enemy weapons and moved among his men to encourage them and treat the wounded. He called for medical evacuation helicopters and personally supervised the clearing of a landing zone despite continuous sniper fire which was being directed at his movements. When the helicopters arrived, he moved into the center of the open landing zone to guide them in. Savage fire forced the aircraft to discontinue their rescue mission, and Captain Rogan deployed his men in a defensive perimeter for the night. Throughout the night, he continued to expose himself to the ravaging enemy barrage to command his men in repelling repeated assaults within twenty meters of his positions. His fearless leadership inspired his troops to fight furiously and inflict a decisive defeat upon the determined enemy. Captain Rogan's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Home Town: Salt Lake City, Utah



Nephew Looking for Buddies

Hello,

I am the nephew of Kenneth L. Greene (I was named after the uncle I would never meet). I am looking for anyone who may have pictures of him or information about him during his time in Vietnam. I know he was killed on Hill 1338 during the Battle of the Slopes. I am trying to get any information I can. Both my uncle and my father served in South East Asia.

Thank You

Kenneth L. Greene
kgreene@bicyclegreenmachine.com

Kenneth Lawrence Greene

**Private First Class
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Somerville, Massachusetts
April 12, 1947 to June 22, 1967
KENNETH L GREENE is on the Wall
Panel 22E Line 040full**

Note: We put Kenneth in touch with Wambi Cook, A/2/503, who survived The Slopes, in hopes Wambi can hook him up with buddies.



A/2/503d RTO, Wambi Cook, survivor of The Slopes

Jack Porterfield's Son Looking for his Dad's Buddies

I was just trying to figure out what battalion and company my father was in. It's not something he ever talked about with us. I got bits and pieces through the years but he always changed the subject. I think he was at Hill 875 so he was in the 2nd or 4th battalion but I don't remember what company; it's either Bravo or Delta, I can't remember. He has had terminal brain cancer since June 2011 and he can't remember. He trained at Fort Polk in Oct. '65 and '66; then was deployed to Vietnam. His name is Jack M. Porterfield. If you need more information please contact me. Thanks,



Jack

Kenny Porterfield
Son of 2/503d Sky Soldier Jack Porterfield

Kenny, I am saddened by the fact that Jack has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Like most vets, we have refused to talk of our service, just wanting to close that door. I will forward this to our magazine editor for printing hoping we can get feedback from our membership. Does your father have a DD Form 214 in any of his paperwork that he may have kept? That is a form that will have his unit he served with, time overseas, and awards. I will stay in touch. Airborne.

Roy Scott
President, 173d Association

Found his 214 and his last duty assignment says 2/503, 173d Abn Bde. 7 metals and three engagements: (1. Operation Oregon, Pleiku, Vietnam; 2. CTZ Reaction force Tay Ninh Province; 3. BN Operation, Katon, Vietnam). Dates effective 10/29/65 through 11/07/67.

Roy Scott

Is that 2nd battalion? I couldn't find what company he was in on his 214.

Kenny Porterfield
kpsafety@yahoo.com

Any buddies of Jack Porterfield please contact his son at the email address shown.



Sky Soldiers of Zulu-Zulu & Operation Silver City

March 1966, in the “D” Zone jungle

All paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), have their special dates; dates of reflection, and often dates marking deep sadness over the loss of their buddies or the life-changing wounds they sustained, both physical and mental. If nothing else, combat soldiers are the keepers of dates, for if we and our loved ones don't hold those dates close, no one will. And for Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne, dates such as the 8th of November, and dates marking operations such as Marauder, Crimp, Toledo, Yorktown, New Life, Dexter, Junction City, and battlefields such as the rice bowl of the Mekong Delta, the Ho Bo Woods, and the Slopes and Hill 875 in the central highlands of Dak To, and so many others, will forever be memorable and important, if only to us. And there are other dates which hundreds of us view with particular reverence, when as young men of our cherished 2/503d we were thrust into the jungles of Vietnam searching for and finding other young men with whom to fulfill the mandate and calling of war -- to kill, or to be killed. And these special dates in March of 1966, never fail to activate our memories and our sadness, although we often combat that sadness with typical airborne humor. We try to laugh, lest we cry.

In military terms, Operation Silver City in the “D” Zone jungle was perhaps the ‘most successful’ combat operation of the 2/503d during the Vietnam War, yet historians seem to give it and the men who conducted it little recognition, as deaths of our fellow Sky Soldiers were few compared to the tragic results of other battles such as the Slopes and 875. Yet, if not for a twist of fate, many believe the 2/503d came ever so close to being totally annihilated, but instead, exited that jungle as victors. A premature attack by an enemy machine gunner which shot down a Huey inside our perimeter delivering hot eggs for breakfast, and/or the ambush of an early morning clearing patrol of Bravo Company troopers began a battle which was not planned to happen.

Well accustomed to our daily activities, the enemy knew our battalion would break- down into smaller units; they had seen this many times before on this operation. And once our units were separated from one another, it would be then they would spring their trap, overrunning each unit, one-by-one, with a force estimated at three-times our battalion strength. But, on 16 March 1966, the Gods of War favored our battalion if not certain of our men.

Our manned perimeter with its fighting positions was kept in place, and we were successful in beating back the hordes of attacking enemy soldiers. You see, dates are important to us, as they are important to these troopers here who share a unique bond formed and polished and forever embedded in their memories of one another and of those who sacrificed their lives and limbs and minds so we might remember. Ed

2/503 Arrive LZ Zulu-Zulu



15 Mar 66

The bad guys are watching.
(Photo by Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d)

~ Messages about March ~

Mar. 16, 7:15 a.m: Sending this note early so you have it before 7:15 am, 16 March 2012. Just a note to say I hope you are all doing well and having your scrambled eggs, bacon, and coffee this morning. We need to remember all the great friends that fought together at LZ Zulu-Zulu that morning 46 years ago and say a prayer for those that gave their all that day. Love ya Brothers,

Chuck Guy
HHC/2/503

(continued....)



Mar. 16, 1:34 p.m: Health, happiness and prosperity to all who made it back. I skip the eggs and coffee on March 16th as a kind of personal ritual. At happy hour today I'll hoist one to absent friends.

Wayne Hoitt
HHC/2/503d

Mar. 16, 1:51 p.m: Thanks Chuck, and best wishes to all you survivors of 16 Mar 66, and Operation Silver City. 46 years? You're kidding of course. Damn, you guys are getting old. Received the annual, early a.m. phone call from Bill Vose waking me from sleep this morning with, "*Hey, RTO, wake-up, there's movement in the line!*" It's good to get the call. Just last week Cowboy Tony Geishauser and his wife were in Florida for a couple days. Of course, a point was made to remind him of having intentionally crashed his Huey inside our perimeter so he could live his life-long dream of fighting in ground combat with the 2d Bat. Many of you who were in Ft. Worth will recall his speech saying, "*Cowboys may be late sometimes, but we always deliver,*" upon which he presented us with 300 coupons for free breakfast at MacDonald's. That still wasn't good enough, so I made him buy a pizza. It was good to see the Cowboy and he was thanked for taking that early morning hit for us. According to many, had we broken-up into three smaller units as planned before the bad guys attacked, with Alpha and Charlie going on separate patrols leaving Bravo and a small HHC contingent to man the LZ, it's likely none of us would be here today. It's probably not good to focus too much on that thought. Attached is Wayne Hoitt's famous photo of LZ Zulu-Zulu which he took upon our arrival there on 15 Mar. What a great pic of when we were young and brave. Thanks hooch buddy for capturing that moment for us. Before anyone claims the date, I'm calling for a 50 year anniversary reunion of all survivors of ZZ and Op Silver City, to be held in Cocoa Beach, FL on March 15-17, 2016, assuming this old RTO is still here then. If not, then maybe Vose will take the reins on it, he's too mean to die. No agenda, no admission fee, just brothers being with brothers. Semi-hot, scrambled, powdered eggs will be served from marmite cans on the early morning of 16 Mar. Maybe we can get them delivered by a Huey which doesn't get shot down this time?

What a day and operation it was of gallantry by so many...it's an honor to know you guys. In memory of our brothers. ATW

Lew (Smitty) Smitty
HHC/2/503, '65/'66

Pretty sure some guys were overlooked on this note and no doubt added a few who missed this Op.

Mar. 16, 1:57 p.m: Today is the day we should all pause for a minute with/or without a drink in our hand

for the guys that didn't make it that day. As the chopper pilot shot down, I was being protected by the best fighting battalion in the 173d near the center of the perimeter. It was sad to see several dead troopers being brought back to our area. What a sad day to young soldiers with their whole lives in front of them seriously dead. Here's to you and our fellow soldiers who gave their all and others who gave whatever they could for the cause.

Tony Geishauser
Cowboy173

Mar. 16, 2:52 p.m: Can't believe I did not remember! First time in 46 years---unbelievable! Now I have a reason to have a cocktail or six.

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d

Mar. 16, 3:14 p.m: I was one of the 3 surviving troopers from C Company, 3rd platoon, 3rd squad that made it through the ambush two days earlier. I was wounded early on the 16th but it wasn't until that afternoon that I was able to get out. To those of you that got me on the poncho and back to the rear, thank you. To the Chaplain and medic who assured me I wasn't going to die, and the medivac that got me out, thanks. To everyone, thanks, it's great to be alive.

Steven Haber
C/2/503d

Mar. 16, 3:56 p.m: Pretty damn elegant for a Californian....and you must have been asleep, I didn't say there was movement in the line, I said, "*Get up PFC, we have to take ammo to the line!*" I'm up for 2016 if I can take off WORK! HAHAAHAHAHA

Bill Vose
A/2/503d



The dapper Capt. Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d, going out on the town on 16 March 2012, thanks to him and his buddies.

(continued...)



Mar. 16, 4:49 p.m: A March 16th does not pass without thinking about the men we lost that day. I'll be there for the 50th reunion.

Joe Logan
B 2/503

Mar. 16, 5:46 p.m. Thanks for including me on this. I hope it's all right if I participate – I was hit on the 13th while commanding B Company and evacuated to Long Binh (93d Evac) so was not at Zulu-Zulu. I recall the 16th when the medivacs began arriving at the evac hospital where I was. When I recognized some of the first wounded brought in as being from 2/503, I went out and tried to assist with bringing them in. I was probably just getting in the way but was trying to find out all I could about the battle. It was clearly “a big one!”

Les Brownlee
B/2/503

Mar. 16, 6:43 p.m. Yep!!! We're getting older. Not too long ago I was worrying about getting older...now I worry about NOT getting older. Time does get away from us as we age. Must be the good clean living we're doing. Lots of thoughts have been going thru my mind lately about that day. If the Cowboy hadn't been in such a damn hurry I would have been on that Huey headed back to base camp and then home. My year in country was all but over.

Jim Stanford
B/2/503d

Mar. 16, 7:35 p.m. Hello all. RTO Smith, man you are still a good communicator, should have gotten back with you before now but the spouse has been very sick with colon cancer, she is still handling it like a good Special Forces Retiree wife, she has earned her Green Beret these past few years with her sickness. We do hope to get back to Florida soon, keep in touch.

Lee Braggs
HHC/2/503d

Mar. 16, 9:00 p.m. Tried to keep busy all day today, but have to go to a funeral tomorrow, which doesn't help when dealing with these dates. Oh, well, back to March Madness (I guess we all had some March madness those many years ago).

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

“A helicopter lifts a wounded American soldier on a stretcher during Operation Silver City in Vietnam, March 13, 1966.”
(AP Photo)



Mar. 17, 2:58 a.m: It is difficult to think back to that day without remembering those we lost and the others whose lives were forever altered. I, like many others, recall the sights, sounds and smells of that day. Cowboy, I can still hear you coming down, with uncalled for assistance, over my left shoulder. Just can't recall who shared my firing position that day. Still have my water canteen with bullet holes in it - certainly helped save me. Hard to believe that so much time has passed. Zulu Zulu was my last operation before returning state-side with several other Bravo Bulls, especially Carlton Love. Carl and I roomed together at Campbell until my discharge, December 15, 1966. Wouldn't it be something if we could gather four years hence to commemorate the 50th anniversary? Thanx to you and Bill Vose for planting that idea and I can think of no one better than you, Smitty, to initiate something. But without powdered eggs and with something stronger than black coffee!!!!

Dave Glick
B/2/503d

Mar. 17, 6:23 a.m: Hi all you beautiful survivors. I duly celebrated on this 16th of March (like I did on all previous commemorations). Not that I need an excuse to pour one down behind my necktie (that's silly: I never wear ties), but this memorable day (among so many others) is an excellent reason to rejoice. Every time I lift my glass to my lips, I think of all of you and especially of all those that did not make it out alive from LZ Zulu Zulu. I fully support Smitty's initiative of getting together on March 16, 2016. I'll do my utmost to be there, even if I have to swim across the Atlantic. In the meantime, only one order: stay alive, take two salt tablets and drive on (BDQ Roy dixit).

Herbert Murhammer
B/2/503d

Mar. 17, 11:27 a.m: Hey, thanks for the photo and the memory, though mine is full of holes. I do remember unloading a chopper when all hell broke loose and later sitting in a med tent getting a scrape looked after, but not much in between. SOP I guess.

Russ Webb
HHC/2/503d



Herbert. A young German paratrooper in the U.S. Army

(continued....)



Mar. 17, 11:38 a.m.: Briefly, my memories of those days-night: took shrapnel in the neck from a grenade at night when laying in a hammock (and now regret that I told the medic it was nothing and not to tag me); stepped on Sgt. Quick's stomach at night while carrying a box of ammo to his platoon on the perimeter; seeing one (or two) VC remains covered in flies (they were chewed-up by M60s); losing a couple of my closest friends -- Gossett and Gipson, plus others; taking replacements out, including Cortez (Covarrubias) and having to wait at a holding area because it was too hot on the LZ and they didn't want to take the half-dozen of us in yet; jumping in a foxhole when grenades came in at night and 1st Sgt. MacDonald said "what are you doing in here?" -- apparently we dug those for nothing; being fortunate that I rotated out three weeks later.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

Mar. 17, 11:47 a.m.: Les: Great to see that you are still keeping up with the 2nd Bn. Although you didn't say anything about your being wounded, I recall that you were wounded while rescuing the Support Platoon from contact with the NVA that attacked the Bn. on Mar. 13. That was the firefight in which Lt. Phil Tabb lost his life. When the Bn. returned to our Base Camp I took over as the Support Platoon Leader. I related a story to Smitty about the time I was a Basic Training CO at Ft. Ord, Calif. after I returned to the States. I went into one of the many barber shops on Ft. Ord for a haircut and when my number was called I sat in a lady barber's chair. She noticed my 173d combat patch and said that her son-in-law, who was killed in Viet Nam, was in the 173d and asked if I might have known him? I stated that there were a lot of soldiers in the unit but I might have known him. She said his name was Phil Tabb. I had trouble responding that I took his place after he was killed. She almost fainted but said that her daughter might want to talk to me but I never received a call. I know we all have sad memories about our time in Viet Nam but most of my memories are good ones about the fine officers and soldiers I served with. I know you have done well in your return to civilian life. Did you stay in the Defense Department after you served as Acting Secretary of the Army? My wife, Barbara, and I now live on the east bank of the Savannah River in North Augusta, SC. Regards,

Bob Sweeney
B/2/503d

I'm still looking for the B Co. troopers who were part of our small party on September 13, 1966, during Operation Silver City.

Art Martinez
HHC/B/2/503d
abmmartinez4@yahoo.com



Survivors of Silver City
(Photo from Bob Sweeney)

In memory of our brothers.....

"For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

VA Expands Medical Forms Program to Support Faster Claims Processing

March 22, 2012

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today the release of 68 new forms that will help speed the processing of Veterans' disability compensation and pension claims.

"VA employees will be able to more quickly process disability claims, since disability benefits questionnaires capture important medical information needed to accurately evaluate Veterans' claims," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *"Disability benefits questionnaires are just one of many changes VA is implementing to address the backlog of claims."*

The new forms bring to 71 the number of documents, called disability benefits questionnaires (DBQs), that guide physicians' reports of medical findings, ensuring VA has exactly the medical information needed to make a prompt decision.

When needed to decide a disability claim for compensation or pension benefits, VA provides Veterans with free medical examinations for the purpose of gathering the necessary medical evidence. DBQ's can be found at

<http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>

The newly released DBQs follow the initial release of three DBQs for Agent Orange-related conditions.





2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 503D INFANTRY



~ The Rock Report ~

The Command Corner

The Rock has been busy for the past few months and focused on a training path to get us ready for the 173rd Airborne Brigade's next Afghanistan deployment. In the past few months we have performed a tremendous amount of challenging training. The training has been focused on our readiness as a forced entry airborne capable force, creating lethal squads and platoons, and broadening our cultural knowledge for the next fight. In the past few months we have executed multiple airborne operations, two platoon level live-fire scenarios, and two major collective battalion training events at the Joint Maneuver Readiness Center (JMRC) at Hohenfels and Grafenwoehr, Germany. Last month, The Rock did platoon level maneuver live-fires in Monte Romano, Italy which culminated in separate platoon airborne assaults from Italian CH-47 helicopters straight off the drop zone into a live-fire scenario. For most, if not all, it was the first ever opportunity to execute an airborne assault live-fire. It was also a great opportunity for the Paratroopers to deploy to a new venue and train in Italy versus executing 'another' trip back north to Grafenwoehr, Germany. The Italian climate treated us all quite well and made a significant impact on morale during the training. We will take the Italian sunny skies any time over the wet, cold, and overcast German climate in February.

Recently we have made great gains in regards to individual training proficiency as well. The Rock had the highest number of Jumpmasters (with 15 graduates) and Pathfinder graduates (with 5 graduates) in the brigade during the recent mobile training team courses that were held here in Europe. I am extremely proud of our new Jumpmasters to include the only 2nd Lieutenant in the Brigade to graduate, 2LT Chris Philhower, and our most junior graduate, Corporate Steve Moss. We also had six Paratroopers graduate from the demanding Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course (RSLC), and five Rock studs earn the coveted Ranger Tab, bringing our total number of Ranger qualified personnel in the battalion to 78! Command Sergeant Major Mike Ferrusi and I are confident that these individual achievements combined with our recent collective training define The Rock as a formidable fighting force.

The Rock Families have been incredibly supportive while the Paratroopers have been away from the home front. We have a new addition to the team to help support the families, and also improved some of the spouses'

knowledge of support agencies in the area. Of course we have also been busy adding new numbers of future Rock Paratroopers to the formation. In the past six months we have had 27 new babies delivered here in Italy.

In the near future we will begin our next major challenge. We will soon be back in Afghanistan and placing ourselves in harm's way. This next deployment will be filled with dynamic adjustments and we are prepared to do whatever our Nation's leaders ask us to do. I would like to share our major themes with you that will assist in defining success in country. Our most important goal is to achieve stability in our local area. This can only be accomplished if the Afghan indigenous forces are capable. First, we will execute every task with the intent of working ourselves out of a job. We want our brothers of the Afghan National Security Forces to be able to stand on their own. Also we will work hard to make sure that every solution is long-term sustainable by the Afghans (and not us) and that the Afghans are solving Afghan problems. This is not going to be easy, but we are very confident that these goals are obtainable.

Every day the Command Sergeant Major and I are humbled to be a part of this great organization and feel tremendous pride when we look across the formation. The Rock's ranks are filled with amazing individual Paratroopers with incredibly supportive and resilient families. The next year will be a true challenge, yet with the strength of our families and the bravery of our Paratroopers, there is no doubt we will make our Nation proud!

Sky Soldiers!

Rock 6 & Rock 7



LTC Michael M. Larsen "Rock 6" &
CSM Michael A. Ferrusi "Rock 7"





Presidential Memorial Certificates

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased Veterans.

History

This program was initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy and has been continued by all subsequent Presidents. Statutory authority for the program is Section 112, Title 38, of the United States Code.

Administration

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers the PMC program by preparing the certificates which bear the current President's signature expressing the country's grateful recognition of the Veteran's service in the United States Armed Forces.

Eligibility

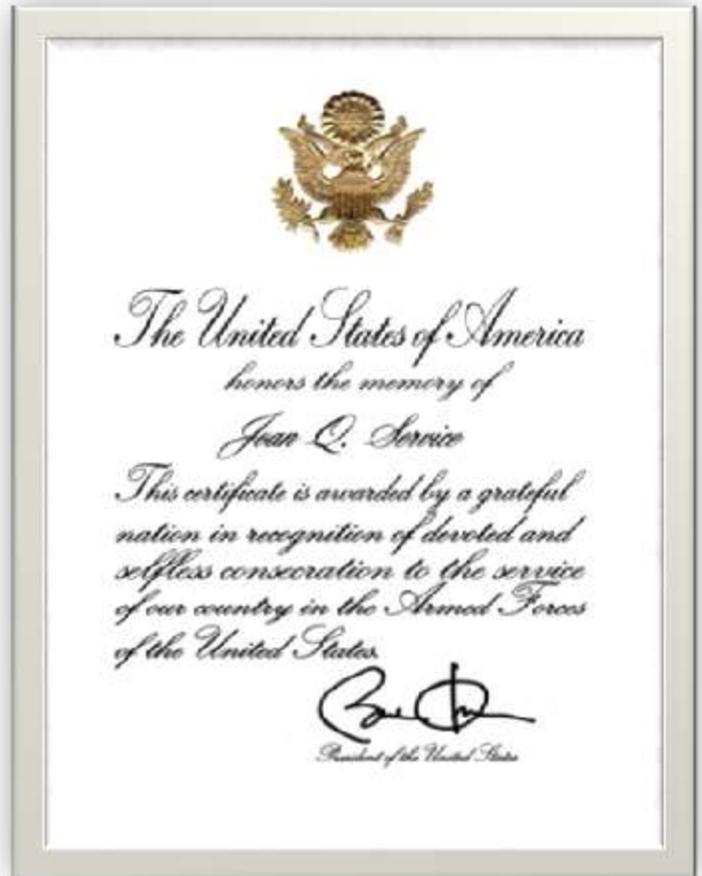
Eligible recipients include the next of kin and loved ones of honorably discharged deceased Veterans. More than one certificate may be provided.

Application

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply for a PMC in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail or toll-free fax. Requests cannot be sent via email. Please be sure to enclose a copy of the Veteran's discharge and death certificate to verify eligibility, as we cannot process any request without proof of honorable military service. Please submit copies only, as we will not return original documents. If you would like to apply for a Presidential Memorial Certificate, or if you have already requested one more than sixteen (16) weeks ago and have not received it yet, please call **1-202-565-4964** to find out the status of your request. Please do not send a second application unless we request you to do so. You may also send request for status by email to pmc@va.gov.

We do not administer to other VA programs and we do not have access to military documents or records. For assistance with other VA benefits or records please contact your closest VA Regional Office at **1-800-827-1000**.

[Sent in by Jim Robinson, B/2/503d]



Whodats?



I'm in the middle holding the M-16, I can't remember the rest of the names. Maybe you can put the photo in our newsletter and ask if anyone remembers? This was taken after we first arrived in '65, before Camp Zinn became what it did.

Jim Matheny
HHC/2/503d

jim.matheny1@verizon.net



Fort Benning opens new center for Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program



Fort Benning marked the opening of a new center to house its Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program on Friday afternoon.

The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness-Performance and Resilience Enhancement Program center at Brown Hall will provide a place to provide soldiers with mental and physical resilience techniques and enhance their performance under stress.

"We've always valued the physical fitness of our soldiers. What we haven't done is invest in the psychological fitness and resilience of our soldiers," Brig. Gen. Jim Pasquarette, director of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, said before cutting the ribbon opening the center.

The fitness program, which is already in use by several units at Fort Benning, uses practices from sports psychology and resiliency training. Program components include individual assessments, tailored virtual training, class room training and embedded resilience experts.

Pasquarette said recent combat in the last decade has increased the levels of stress among soldiers. The comprehensive soldier fitness program offers some stress prevention up front for soldiers.

Those who have been through the program experience less hesitation and have more mental focus, he said. The program has also improved the success rate for the Jumpmaster course, raising graduation statistics from 67 percent to 76 percent. The course now averages seven more graduates per class than it did in the past.

Family members of soldiers and Army civilians are also eligible to go through the program.

"We want our soldiers to be just as psychologically fit as they are physically fit," Pasquarette said.

Sara Pauff, 706-320-4469

Read more here: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2012/01/28/1911063/benning-opens-new-center-for-soldier.html#storylink=cpy>

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

Happy Birthday Oma!



Reggie, Smittytoo & Smitty on the hunt for manatees.

503rd PRCT in the Pacific



Enjoy reading about the troopers of the 503rd PRCT during WWII in the Pacific? Check out these books:

<http://corregidor.org/publications.htm>

Can you spot the Aussie?



[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA]



Veterans Benefits by State

Visit the site below for a complete listing of web sites of Veterans benefits for every state:

<http://www.veteranprograms.com/id136.html>

[Sent in by Jack Schimpf, B/2/503d]

Outstanding Veteran Service Officers (VSO)

HOUSTON, TX -- Not all Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are the same. Some are dedicated, loyal, and determined to make a difference for veterans. The other end of the continuum are those VSOs who are just collecting a paycheck.

As a means of assisting veterans, U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs announced today that a VSO

Directory is being developed on their web site. The VSO Directory will consist of those VSOs who have demonstrated excellence in helping veterans secure service-connected benefits or increases to their VA pensions. Additionally, all VSOs listed are nominated by veterans who have first-hand knowledge of their commitment to veterans.

"We expect that our VSO Directory will help many veterans find outstanding VSOs in their area who will help them gain benefits," said Rance Jurevicz, Marketing Coordinator for U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs.

Launched in March 2007, U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs researches and distributes compensable benefits information to U.S. veterans. Also, they are a major conduit for free services available to veterans.

Contact: **U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs**
info@veteranprograms.com
<http://www.veteranprograms.com>

Locate a highly recommended VSOs in your area.

Arizona

Julio Martinez
VFW Post 6310
9152 W. Van Buren
Tolleson, AZ 85353
Phone: 623 986-2343
Email: mtal5087@cox.net

Arkansas

Jeffery Clay Stacks
ADVA
213 E 6th Street
Mountain Home, AR 72653
Phone: 870-425-8155

Lori Wilka
Military Order of the Purple Heart
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Email: rbuckman@placer.ca.gov

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Phone: 559-906-9064
Email: caford@kings.k12.ca.us

Jake Moore
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Laguna Hills, CA 92653
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Note: We highly suggest anyone filing a claim with the VA to **not** file the claim without representation by one of the Vet organizations such as the DAV, VFW, American Legion, et al. If all or part of your claim is for PTSD, we urge you to obtain a written evaluation from a non-VA psychiatrist or psychologist to support your claim. There are no fees assessed by Veteran Organizations for their work on your behalf. Also, a complete physical examination by a non-VA doctor with a Doctor's detailed report on the results of that examination will further support your claim for physical maladies. Ed



(Photo by Leonard (Larry) Lanzarin, A/2/503d, KIA)

