

"RECOLLECTIONS ON CORREGIDOR"

By: Howard Lout
"A" Co., 503d PRCT

 *I am putting down the circumstances that took me to where I was when the Japanese blew up the large cave at Monkey Point on February 26, 1945. I've used parts of several books to verify the starting date. After that, events are as I remember them. They will not always jibe with the books.*

The morning of February 24, the first Battalion of the 503d moved over and around Malinta Hill toward the eastern end of Corregidor. While that hill had been held by a battalion of the 24th Infantry Division, the island had been cut into two halves. "A" Company proceeded along the southern shore. I was acting squad leader of the third squad, third platoon of that Company.

We went slowly, sometimes wary of anti-vehicle mines in the road (after we saw the first one we walked to the side of the road). Occasionally we would wait, then follow a mortar barrage. At one point the company held up briefly while our squad checked out an area off the right flank.

In the late afternoon we swung left and third squad, third platoon, became the battalion's extreme right flank as we prepared to assault a hill we called "Water Tank Hill."

We stayed put while artillery, and probably the 81mm mortars, worked over the hill. Then we fixed bayonets and went up, at the same time keeping an eye to the right. Nothing threatened there and we encountered only one enemy soldier at our end of the line. He waited until we were right upon him, then jumped from a hole and ran. Many of us fired simultaneously, and he was shot a lot of times.



It was getting dark when we reached the top and there took up a defensive position. With one or two inches of soil over solid rock there was no digging in.

This time our squad was on Company "A's" extreme left. To our left, Company "B" I believe it was, started its defensive line. Between us was a machine gun and crew from Battalion Headquarters Company. Even a somewhat depleted parachute infantry battalion was crowded together on that small hill – and not dug in. The platoon CP guys were only about 4 yards behind us. We would all sleep with our helmets on.

After settling the business of how we would take turns staying awake, no doubt also done in every other squad, I fell asleep. Sometime later the sound of explosions woke me. They were about like hand grenade explosions, and the flashes were just short of the hill's crest – short of us. My first, bleary thought was that the Japanese were advancing up the hill, throwing grenades ahead. The machine gunner just to our left must have also thought that, for he opened up at those flashes.

More awake, now. I realised it was not enemy advancing, but probably one with a knee mortar – and his rounds were not reaching us. The flames from that machine gun, though, must have been over two feet long. In my most authoritative voice I ordered the machine gunner to cease firing. He did, but the damage was done. About 30 seconds later, there was a clank right among us and I guess we all realized that, although it was a dud, the little mortar now had the range.

Another 30 seconds and the next one came in. It was not a dud. I felt pain in the back of my neck, just below my helmet, and knew I'd been hit. Ears ringing, I rolled over and started crawling toward the platoon CP to see the medic. The ringing stopped and I heard Lt. William Sullens, Platoon Sgt. Harvey Hicks and Pvt. Harry Hamilton all say they'd been hit, and all had much more serious wounds than I did.

Harvey Hicks told us his leg was "blown clean off." I didn't complete my crawl. Compared to them I was fine.

No more rounds fell that I heard. The navy had been contacted and fired star shells over us, illuminating the area. I was later told that, in the bright light, someone had spotted and shot the guy with the knee mortar.

By daylight Sullens, Hicks and Hamilton had died. I reported the third platoon situation to the company commander and caught a ride to the regimental aid station. My bleeding had stopped, but I wondered if a fragment of something was still in the neck.

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At the aid station I was given a shot of Novocain by the regimental dentist who *"don't like to fool with a neck"* and turned over to a doctor who probed. Nothing in there. Later I was assigned a cot, and I spent the night of the 25th in it.

Next morning, when I told the doctor I'd like to go back to the company, he said I didn't have to go and that he admired my spirit. Since then I've wondered why on earth I did go back when I didn't have to. But I was rested and clean. My wound, though a close call, had turned out to be no more than a nick. Just about every person I'd met in the past 3 years was up there. I guess I figured I should be too.

I was issued clean fatigues and a rifle covered with Cosmoline. I cleaned the rifle and started back. The trip was no more than a mile, and I caught a ride for most of it in a service company jeep driven by Charles Woodlee who at one time had been in "A" Company. Walking, I found the company and reported to the first sergeant in the words of General MacArthur, *"I have returned."* He was not a bit amused and sourly told me, *"We've put those left into two platoons. You are now in the second platoon."* I was told by the second platoon sergeant, *"You were a squad leader. We don't need any more squad leaders so you're a rifleman again and you're in the second squad. That's them just going out on patrol."*

I caught up with the patrol and fell in, as I recall, between Robert Atz and Paul Saul. I never learned the purpose of the patrol or where we were going – or who the patrol leader was.

Almost immediately we were strung out over the entrance to a large cave with a metal door. A tank sat broadside about 30 yards from the door. Other patrol members stretched ahead, then down so that the patrol's first scout, Ted ("Pat") White, was at the entrance level and a little to one side. I was not quite to a point directly over the door and, looking down to the right, could see Pat, the door and the tank.

Pat called up to us, *"There are two dead Yanks down here."* That's all I can remember, so it is probably when the explosion occurred.



I have been told that the whole of its force could not escape out the entrance (but what did tipped the tank,) so the earth over the cave, to my left, opened up. Likely the concussion from that broke my left eardrum and killed my left eye's optic nerve. The broken bones were probably due to falling rocks. I received casts on both legs, and other care, at our aid station, though I cannot remember it and was sent to a hospital at Subic Bay where I "came to."



Pat White was not killed by the explosion; Bob Atz and Paul Saul were.

I began the journey towards home. Thirteen months later, after a couple of operations and the broken bones had healed, I was discharged from the Army. It had taken me about as long to remove the cosmoline from that rifle as it did to find my company, start out on patrol and get blown up.

Story and photos provided courtesy of the 503rd Heritage Battalion web site.



Airmobile Operations

An excerpt from *Illustrated History of the Vietnam War, Sky Soldiers*, by F. Clifton Berry, Jr., 1987. (photos added)



173d on the move. (Photo by John Cavinee, Cowboys)

FROM THE time it had arrived in Vietnam the 173d specialized in difficult quick reaction missions. For these the Sky Troopers had settled into an efficient combat routine. On notice of an airmobile operation, the squads and platoons formed into five or six-man groups, the right size load for a Huey. Leaders checked weapons, ammunition, and water. As much of the plan as was known was briefed to the men before liftoff.

Often little detail was known. For instance, if the operation was a quick-reaction mission such as an 'Eagle Flight' to reinforce a unit in contact with the enemy or to exploit a sighting, the men would know only that the helicopters would go into the LZ on a certain compass heading. On landing, they were to move out in a certain direction, reassemble, and follow orders.

However, deliberate operations planned from the base would start with an intelligence analysis developing a picture of enemy activity and confirming the location of a VC or NVA unit. An operation plan is then made at higher headquarters. The 173d's role is fitted into this overall plan.

The 173d commanders make their own plans to conform to the larger picture. Its battalions and other units do the same. Maps are issued, along with transparent acetate overlays marked with the maneuver and fire support plans.

The plan is outlined to all involved. They prepare their combat loads, draw ammunition, and check their equipment. Troopers going out for the first time wonder how they will behave under fire. Veterans wonder if they'll get hit this time, or if they'll make it through one more combat assault uninjured. The 'short-timers,' men whose rotation date is near, think about getting through the operation and back to the States.

At the appointed time, the units break up into their helicopter loads. The approaching helicopters are heard before they are seen. The wop-wop-wop of their rotors beating the air rises in frequency as they draw near. In a column they look like a swarm of disciplined dragonflies as they approach. The troopers are on their feet. Leaders hold their maps tight to keep them from blowing away in the rotor downwash. Weapons' safety catches are on so some idiot doesn't put a round through an engine.

The troopers climb aboard, settling on the diamond-patterned aluminum floor. There are no seats. Door gunners pat their M-60 machine guns reassuringly.

The commander of the helicopter radios an order. The helicopter pilots bring up engine power. On command, they lift their birds to a low hover, about three feet off the ground. The leader radios the order to go. The pilots lower the helicopter noses and gain airspeed. They climb to cruise altitude, about 1,200 feet.



2/503d on another mission.
(Photo by Pat Bowe, HHC/Recon)

(continued....)



The helicopter doors are off. The wind whips through the troop compartment. The scenery below might be rice land, with the turtleback pattern of dikes. Or it could be primary jungle, with the canopy tops reaching 200 feet into the air. Or it might be the coastal plain or Delta, with streams sluggishly flowing in a pattern like the veins on the back of your hand. Old B-52 bomb craters often have water in their bottoms. They look like suburban swimming pools in South Florida or California, without the houses.

Nearing the landing zone the pilots might pass back a comment to the door gunners about the smoke from artillery and air strikes hitting around the LZ. The door gunners relay information to the troops. But the troops can hear better than the crew, because they have no headsets or earphones. They listen for the crump of bombs bursting in the soil, the whoosh of gunshot rockets, and for the staccato stuttering of machine guns on fighters and gunships both. They watch for the F-100 and F-4 fighters, as they roll off the target and climb to position for another pass. Now and then a fighter flies the wrong way. He sails through the helicopter formation, leaving momentary terror in his wake.

Some LZs can take a dozen or more Hueys, the bulk of a rifle company. Others may be smaller. Allowing clearance between blades and fuselages, and distance for a steep approach and climb, a two-ship LZ needs a space about 30 by 30 meters.

The smaller the LZ, the longer the helicopters are exposed to enemy fire.

The landing zone might be 'cold', with no enemy fire. Or the enemy might resist the landing. Then the LZ is 'hot'. A hot LZ can turn into an awful mess in a hurry if helicopters are hit and downed. Then everyone must keep his head to make the operation work. Gunships pour fire around the edges of the hot LZ. The helicopter door gunners fire both to left and right, pouring 7.62mm machine gun rounds into the trees to keep the enemy's heads down. Commanders and observers search for the flash of enemy weapons, then direct fire on them.

Like all commanders of the 173d, General Smith was always present in his command chopper in the air over an assault landing. With him were an operations officer, an artillery representative, and a member of the brigade's air section. Each had his own radio to deal with his portion of the action. The airborne commander had the flexibility of the helicopter and reach of communications "to get things back on track in a hurry," General Smith recalls.

"When the command chopper began running low on fuel it was replaced by another. The brigade's deputy commander and a similar coordinating team were aboard to take charge. These two groups rotated as necessary so that the capability of spotting glitches and overcoming them was immediate." The same procedure was used for extracting units by helicopter, which General Smith describes as "infinitely more hairy than insertions."



2/503d Air Assault into the rice paddies of Vietnam.

(Photo by Fitz-Enz)

A cold LZ is a pleasure to watch. For a few moments it is transformed from a quiet clearing in the jungle into a disciplined and busy air terminal. Colored smoke marks the spot for the lead helicopter, and the formation homes on it. The formation descends. The helicopters touch down in column (or vee or line abreast, as required), settling on the skids again. The pilots keep power up and ready to lift. The troops pile off the helicopters, hitching up their rucksacks and equipment. They dash away in the direction briefed. If that is to the right, the men pouring out of the left sides of the helicopters run around the noses of their birds. No one passes a helicopter by its tail. The tail rotor can decapitate you in a split second.

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If the ground is soft, it sucks against the men's jungle boots, slowing them down. If they have landed in elephant grass, it saws across their faces and arms; if we rice fields, they face the choice of running along the dikes where the going is easy, or through the fields where the mud and water slow them down. On the dikes, in a tight column, they are easy targets for enemy fire. So they slog. That never changes. The squad leaders count their men, place them into the movement formation, and report them ready to the platoon leaders.

The platoon leaders radio their readiness to the company commander. He spreads out his command group. The forward observers, forward air controllers, and the company's own radio-telephone operators spread out. The company commander gives the word to move out.

The point men in each squad watch, smell, and listen for the enemy. Everyone listens for the swiiissssh of incoming mortar rounds, or the cracksnap of enemy rifle fire. Their stomachs tighten up in anticipation and the sweat rolls down their faces and necks in the close humid heat. An olive drab towel around their necks absorbed the sweat.

When the company arrives at the designated spot, it may be time to eat. Security outposts are placed 50 – 75 meters in all directions. When word comes down to move again, the outposts are pulled in, the squads form in the movement formation, and the process is repeated.



C/2/503d troopers humping the bush.

(Photo by Jack Leide, C/2/503d)

This may go on for days with no enemy contact. The leaders and men must guard against becoming complacent, especially at night. The entrenching tool, a portable folding shovel carried by every man, is vital then. Swinging their trenching tools, the troops dig into the protection of the ground for the night. Night security is posted. Half the men sleep, wrapped up in ponchos. The other half remain on alert, waiting out the night.



A/2/503d trooper 'taking 5'.

(Photo by Les Fuller, A/2/503d)



Chopper Dude...*Finally* Airborne!



Col. Don Bliss, Caspers, on his 80th birthday, wondering what the hell he's doing up there! *"Is everybody happy?" cried the Sergeant looking up.*

Since I had a super tour with the 173d as a "LEG", I just had to show you that I can do something stupid in my old age. Therefore, on my 80th birthday, May 12, 2012, I did my first stint at sky diving.

This was the only time I ever jumped out of a good airplane (except a couple helicopters that the VC had done considerable damage to during my two tours in Nam). Here are a couple pictures to prove it was me that pulled this stunt.



We jumped at 13,500, floated to about 5,500 and pulled the ripcord. Floated back down to the earth with a reasonably smooth landing and then pulled the 173d Airborne Brigade flag out of my shirt, and there it is.

"The days he lived and loved and laughed kept running through his mind."



I had to carry that flag with me on the jump and the instructor was excited about it also. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience even though I wondered what I was doing up there when I looked out of that airplane.

Don Bliss, COL (Ret)
173d Brigade Staff Aviation Officer &
Aviation Platoon Commander
Caspers

~ AIRBORNE ~

The word does not say much to some, but it speaks volumes to others – to those who knew what we were then, and still are. They say we were a crazy bunch. And maybe we were, but we got the job done. Just how crazy we were is open to debate.



To ALL OUR PARATROOPER BROTHERS, on the question of who is the toughest fighting man in the world, I say this: when we load that plane and step out that door, we are all the same. Once we were all great. We were a special breed. We are getting a little older now, and We can't do some of the things We used to do, but, We still think the same, and We will be Airborne until We die.

For those of you who are still in, give it all you have; you will not regret it.



Airborne all the way, do or die; or as the Greeks would say, come home with your Shield, or ON IT.

The above was paraphrased from a guestbook entry by Richard C. Cover, Jr., 11th Abn Div 1954 to 1957.

*The first week of jump school,
they separate the men from the boys;*

*The second week of jump school,
They separate the men
from the fools;*



*The third week of jump school,
the fools jump!*

ATFW!



Who Dats?

Six brothers, one wife, and a horse named Sugar.



This is a tough one. In this 1957 photo three of the brothers included one *All American* of the 82nd Abn, one *Sky Soldier* of the 173d Abn, and one *Green Beret* of the Special Forces; two of the brothers served in Vietnam. Shirts must have been at a premium in those days. Any idea who they are?

Buddies Hook-Up in Vegas

We had a mini 173d reunion here in Vegas, and I was surprised to see 1LT Bill Olds, B/2/503d. He asked about Dan Buttolph, CO HHC/2/503d so I told him where he was and gave him Dan's email address. I remember putting him and others on a medevac chopper, so you can see my surprise after 47 years.



L-R: Bill and Top Searcy

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



Sky Soldiers in Vegas



~ A Note of Thanks ~

Many thanks to all of you who sent me greetings on my 88th birthday. There is no greater gift you could send to this old soldier than word from those who served in the 2d Battalion 503d Airborne Infantry, particularly those who served with such skill and courage when I had the honor of commanding the battalion but also those who served in Vietnam after my time and those who serve with the battalion today in a different war against a competent, dedicated and deadly enemy. You made my day!

Airborne All the Way!

George E. Dexter
Colonel, USA, Retired
Commander 2/503 Abn Inf
Aug '64 - Feb '66



The "Old Man" ready to blast on Okinawa.

~ Jimmy Bruce Furlow ~ Sky Soldier & Teacher

Jimmy, age 63 of Fountain Hills, AZ, formerly of Nashville, TN, passed away on June 12, 2012. Jimmy served during the Vietnam War with the 173d Airborne Brigade. During the Fall of 1969, he was wounded in combat, which resulted in the loss of both legs. He was honorably discharged in September of 1970. In 1993 Jimmy realized his goal of becoming a teacher. Although a double amputee, he always had a desire to teach. He was a valuable staff member at Hendrix Jr. High School. His challenges have been an educational experience for all students at the school. Students saw in Jimmy an energetic, educated individual. They learned he never used his disability as an excuse. He expected as much of himself as he did of his colleagues and students. He was a good teacher, a confidant, and an advisor. He presented interesting, fast-paced lessons. He incorporated new techniques to help students improve their study skills. He varied his lessons, stressed the multiple intelligences of learning, and took a personal interest in each student. In 1998, Jimmy was awarded the *USA Today All Star Teacher* award. He retired from teaching in 2010, and will be remembered fondly by his students and colleagues. Jimmy is survived by his wife, Ruth Furlow; two sons, Jeremy and Joshua Furlow; sisters, Joan Pendergrast, Joyce England and Wanda Elliott; and brothers, David Furlow and Everett Butler. Funeral services were conducted on June 19, 2012 at Woodbine Funeral Home Hickory Chapel, by Rev. Joe Gray. Jimmy was laid to rest at Middle Tennessee Veterans Cemetery with full Military Honors.



Take a moment to view this video. Jimmy's kids clearly loved him as a teacher:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4cij5D3z6E>

All the Way, Mr. Furlow!



Chapel at Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery



Ex-CO Gets Reprimand, \$300K Fine

Jun 15, 2012

by Nancy Montgomery



KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany -- Col. James Johnson, convicted of fraud, bigamy, and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, was sentenced Thursday to a reprimand and a \$300,000 fine.

The court-martial panel also imposed a sentence of five years' confinement if Johnson, the former commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, fails to pay the fine. He was not dismissed from the service and was not sentenced to forfeit his pay and allowances. His convictions all had to do with an affair he had with an Iraqi woman he met while deployed and his efforts to help her family.

Thursday's hearing began when Johnson addressed the panel for the first time in the proceedings.

He implored the five colonels deciding his fate to let him leave the courtroom a free man so that he could protect the woman, Haveen Al-Atar, from the damage inflicted by the pair's illicit love affair. *"She has nowhere to go,"* Johnson said. *"She's hiding in an*

unnamed hotel, waiting to see if anybody will show back up to care for her," Johnson told the court. *"I passionately ask that you consider that."*

Haveen Al-Atar's father, who has disowned her, has threatened to send her back to Iraq, Johnson said, where she'd either live a destitute life on the street or even be murdered in an honor killing. Her ex-husband, whom she was forced to marry, then forced to divorce when her relationship with Johnson came to light and dishonored the family, he said, has threatened to take away her beloved 4-year-old daughter. *"Haveen and her daughter are at the center of my life,"* Johnson said.

Johnson's convictions included failure to obey orders and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. He pleaded guilty to 15 counts, two of which were later dismissed. He contested two counts of conduct unbecoming, but was convicted at trial.

The charges were all connected to his relationship with the Al-Atar family, whom he'd met on an Iraq deployment in 2005. The family fled to the Netherlands as refugees in 2007. Johnson filed false travel vouchers when he visited the family, beginning in 2008, and improperly used government vehicles.

When he deployed to Afghanistan in 2009, he gave the family a government cellphone that racked up \$80,000 in charges. He also steered money to Haveen's father, Alladin Al-Atar, by hiring the former math teacher who had fought against Saddam Hussein and worked with the Americans, as his cultural adviser for Afghanistan. In addition, he attempted to get a contract to bring water-producing windmills made by a Dutch company to Afghanistan which, if approved, would have netted Al-Atar, who worked for the company, more than \$500,000, prosecutors said.

(continued...)



Prosecutors told the jury that Johnson had abused his command to aid Al-Atar and find favor with his daughter, with whom he committed adultery, then wrongful cohabitation, then bigamy.

But Johnson told the panel on Thursday that for the contracts with Al-Atar, his motives were pure; he wasn't merely funneling money to Al-Atar. Although the two conferred by telephone and Al-Atar spoke none of the languages of Afghanistan and had never been there, *"I honestly believed the advice provided by Mr. Al-Atar were part of our success in Afghanistan,"* Johnson said. *"What I know in my heart is Mr. Al-Atar was contributing more than other advisers."*

The water-producing windmills, Johnson said, had they worked, would have saved resources and lives by reducing water deliveries to combat outposts. *"It was a good idea,"* Johnson said, and others agreed until they learned it wouldn't work.

Johnson began his statement, which was not under oath, by taking full responsibility. *"I deeply regret having disgraced my family, disgraced my unit, disgraced my profession and disgraced my friends,"* he said. *"I failed the soldiers I commanded and the officers I served with for 26 years. I've lost my son and daughter."*

Lt. Col. Charles Kuhfahl, Johnson's defense lawyer, asked how the colonel, an honor graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, who was always rated best and brightest among his peers and who shone in four combat deployments, could explain all that had happened.

"I failed in two large areas. I should have ended my marriage many years ago," Johnson said. *"I should not have kept the Al-Atars in my professional life. I allowed the lines of my professional life to cross into my personal life. Those lines became more blurred, and my decisions became more questionable."*

He said his relationship with the Al-Atar family had been above-board at first, but his feelings deepened as time passed. *"I found somebody that was a companion, a friend; we respected each other,"* he said of Haveen Al-Atar. *"I started rationalizing decisions I was making that pertained to (her father)."*

Later, after he was fired, sent to a basement office at U.S. Army Europe headquarters in Heidelberg, told not to speak to colleagues and had earned the enmity of his children, he said, *"I found I had nothing more than Haveen and her daughter to rely upon."*

Johnson said the woman and her daughter had moved into his base quarters because they'd had nowhere else to go, and that officials had then taken away the base

access card he'd gotten for her and banned her from all USAREUR bases. *"They've tried to strip her away from me,"* he said.

He married her, although he was not yet divorced, he said, because she was in a perilous immigration status. Kris Johnson, whose divorce from the colonel is not yet final, and who turned him in in an email to investigators last year, sat in the courtroom with the couple's two teen-age children. *"You're a pathetic human being,"* she told him during a break.

After the sentence was announced, Kris Johnson said it was insufficient and that she had wanted her estranged husband in jail. She was relieved, she said, that he was not sentenced to forfeiture and she would get to keep half of his retirement benefits, when their legal and financial affairs are settled. *"If he ever signs my divorce agreement,"* she said. *"He could drag the divorce out for another five years and live in a bigamous marriage."*

The colonel said he'd been trying to repay the money he'd illegally spent and would pay double back if that would allow him to *"stop hurting my son and daughter"* and *"stop hurting Haveen Al-Atar and her daughter."*

He'd tried to pay back the money and tried three times to resign in lieu of court-martial, he said.

The panel seemed persuaded by his statement and the closing arguments of his lawyer.

Prosecutor Lt. Col. Will Helixon in his closing argument had asked the panel to sentence Johnson to dismissal and confinement for a period of *"years, not months."*

He said Johnson still was minimizing what he'd done, characterizing his actions as cutting corners, errors in judgment, blurring the lines.

"No," Helixon said. *"He engaged in criminal conduct. He said, 'Screw it. I'm going to make this contract happen.'"*

Kuhfahl said the appropriate sentence would be a fine, paying back the money misappropriated, or doubling it. Although in murders or arsons, for instance, there's no undoing the damage, he said, *"in this case, you can unring the bell."*

Kuhfahl pleaded with the panel not to impose confinement. *"Don't destroy his life,"* Kuhfahl said. *"Give him the opportunity to pick up the shattered pieces of his life and try to move on."*

[Sent in by a Sky Soldier]



JUMPIN' JIM GAVIN

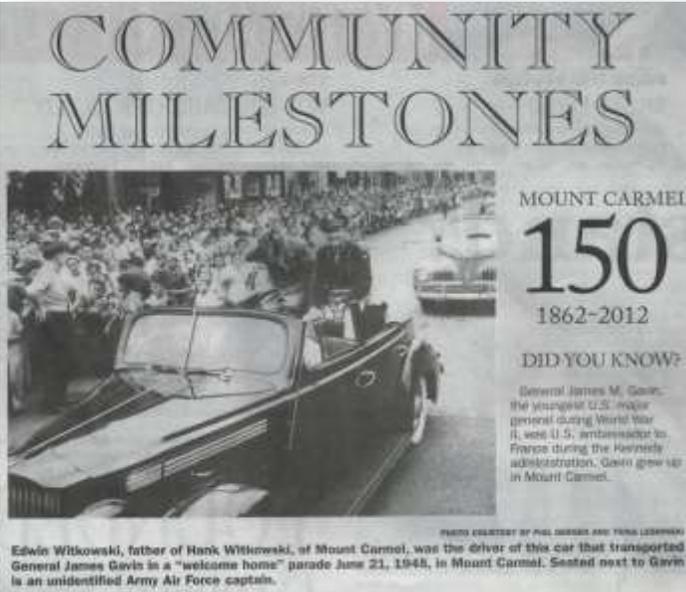
This year, Mount Carmel, PA (the town Annette is from, about 8 miles from Shamokin) celebrates its 150th Anniversary.

Mount Carmel was the boyhood hometown of James M. Gavin, the World War II Commander of the 505th PIR and then the 82nd Airborne Division. LTG Gavin (Ret) visited his hometown on many occasions and maintained friendships with many of the townspeople. During the occupation of Germany, Gavin returned to the US to promote a war bond campaign, see his family and visit his hometown. The town held a huge welcome parade for her most famous son 67 years ago today.

Our local newspaper printed photos from the event and I thought you might like to see one. ATW!

Bob Sandri

Proud father of Matt Sandri, 82nd Abn, KIA 3/20/04



The “unidentified” Captain in the photo seated next to Gavin is COL (Ret) Michael Pivarnick.



Jumpin' Jim Gavin, *All American*

THE 503RD P.R.C.T. HERITAGE BATTALION **Online**



I have completed another book. This one comes in at a forest-munching, paper-mill profiting extravaganza of 340 pages. There's a 49 page preview button available on the 2/503d Vietnam Newsletter hosting page at http://corregidor.org/VN2503/newsletter/issue_index.htm and at the 503d PRCT Heritage Bn Publications page at <http://corregidor.org/publications.htm>

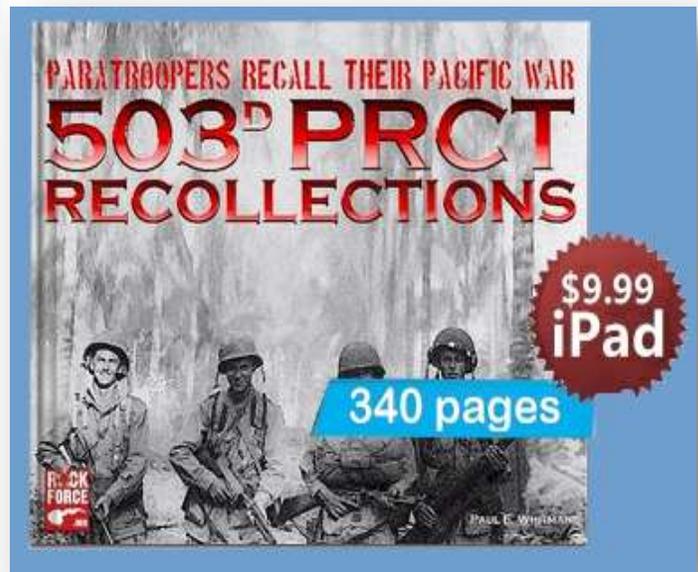
The book is split into sections about each of the campaigns – Training, Australia, New Guinea, Noemfoor, Mindoro, Corregidor and Negros. Essentially it is a pictorial collection, and I have tried to include the best, most informative and most human images from all the collections I have been given access and from the earlier books. I have featured a series of short campaign histories and retrospective vignettes by the WWII men themselves. The basic edition (the softcover) is being sold at printer's selling price.

Personally, I hate iPads, but they get the benefit that there's a ten buck e-book version available. The hardcover image wrap is the Cadillac of the versions, it doesn't need to be plugged in.

Paul Whitman

Webmaster

503rd Heritage Battalion Website





New Mental Health Center at VA Palo Alto Health Care System Opens

June 25, 2012

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Robert Petzel joined Veterans, staff and congressional representatives on June 22 to open a state-of-the-art, 80-bed acute mental health center at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

“This new facility will ensure that California’s Veterans continue to have access to high-quality mental health care that they earned through their service to our Nation,” said Petzel. *“This is a priority for the American people. It’s a priority for the Department of Veterans Affairs. And there is nothing more important to me than making sure America’s Veterans receive the health care and services they need and deserve.”*

The new center, on the Palo Alto campus, will provide a continuum of mental health services, from inpatient to outpatient, with an additional research component. The 90,000 square-foot facility will house four units, each with 20 inpatient acute psychiatric beds. The project also includes outdoor enclosed gardens for the patients, a separate mental health research and office pavilion and a utility building to service the complex. Most rooms are private, with some semi-private, and all have private bathrooms.

“This new facility is like day and night to the current one,” said Christopher Hurt, 25, an Iraq War combat Veteran and patient. *“I’ve heard other people say they’ve never seen a facility this nice. It’s bright, airy and just makes the healing process so much nicer. It even has a work-out room and basketball court. I love it.”*

The building's therapeutic design and healing environments were the result of collaboration with clinicians and considering the perspective of the Veterans who will receive care in the facility. Features to enhance the treatment of Veterans can be found throughout the project, including patient access to landscaped gardens, ample use of natural light in all internal patient and staff areas, views to landscaped areas from all patient bedrooms, color, texture and material palettes selected to aid in the healing process. To view the VA Palo Alto Mental Health Center visit http://www.paloalto.va.gov/construction_mhc.asp.

Last year, VA provided quality, specialty mental health services to 1.3 million Veterans. Since 2009, VA has

increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. Since 2007, VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of Veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

In April, as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced VA would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 to help meet the increased demand for mental health services. The additional staff would include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

More from the VA....

VA Continues PTSD Outreach with AboutFace Campaign

June 20, 2012

Veterans Provide Video Testimonials on Experiences with PTSD

WASHINGTON – In observance of June as PTSD Awareness Month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has begun a new online initiative, *AboutFace*, focused on helping Veterans recognize PTSD symptoms and motivating them to seek treatment.

“We must do all we can to help Veterans identify possible indicators that they may be suffering from PTSD,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *“It requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to be effective. We hope that this initiative, while just one aspect of our program, will play an important role in that effort.”*

The *AboutFace* campaign introduces viewers to Veterans from all eras who have experienced PTSD and turned their lives around with treatment. Through personal videos, viewers will meet Veterans and hear how PTSD has affected them and their loved ones. Visitors will also learn the steps to take to gain control of their lives.

AboutFace, which is PTSD specific, was designed as a complementary campaign to VA’s current *Make the Connection* (www.MakeTheConnection.net) campaign. *Make the Connection* uses personal testimonials to illustrate true stories of Veterans who faced life threatening events, experiences, physical ailments, or psychological symptoms; reached out for support; and found ways to overcome their challenges.

(continued....)



~ A Pic From The Past ~

“VA is committed to ensuring the men and women who bravely served our Nation can access the resources and services tailored for them that can lead to a more fulfilling life,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s under secretary for health. “We want Veterans to recognize themselves in these stories and to feel optimistic that they can overcome their challenges with proper treatment. We set aside this month of June to urge everyone to increase awareness of PTSD so those in need can get effective treatment that will enable them to lead productive, fulfilling and enjoyable lives.”

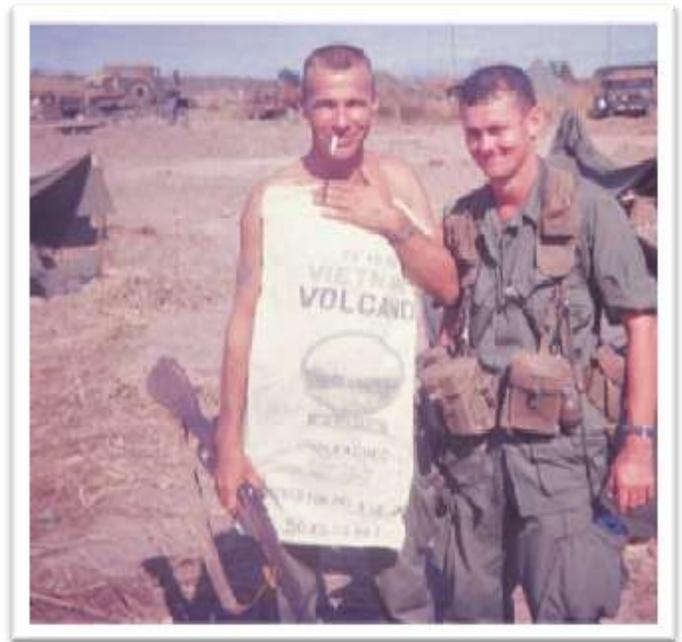
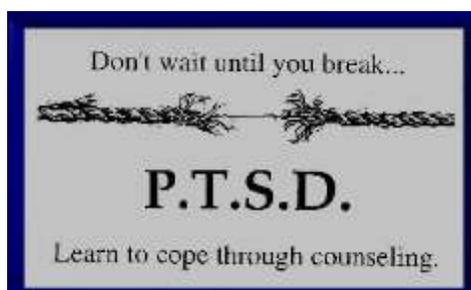
AboutFace launched in June in time to help bring attention to PTSD Awareness Month. It is located on the National Center for PTSD website, www.ptsd.va.gov. There viewers will watch as Veterans candidly describe how they knew they had PTSD; how PTSD affected the people they love; why they didn’t get help right away; what finally caused them to seek treatment; what treatment is like and how treatment helps.

VA provides effective PTSD treatment and conducts extensive research on PTSD, including prevention. Those interested in further information can go to www.ptsd.va.gov to find educational materials including courses for providers on the best practices in PTSD treatment and the award-winning VA/DoD PTSD Coach Mobile App for electronic devices, which provides symptom management strategies.

These campaigns are part of VA’s overall mental health program. Last year, VA provided quality, specialty mental health services to 1.3 million Veterans. Since 2009, VA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. Since 2007, VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of Veterans receiving mental health services, and a 41 percent increase in mental health staff.

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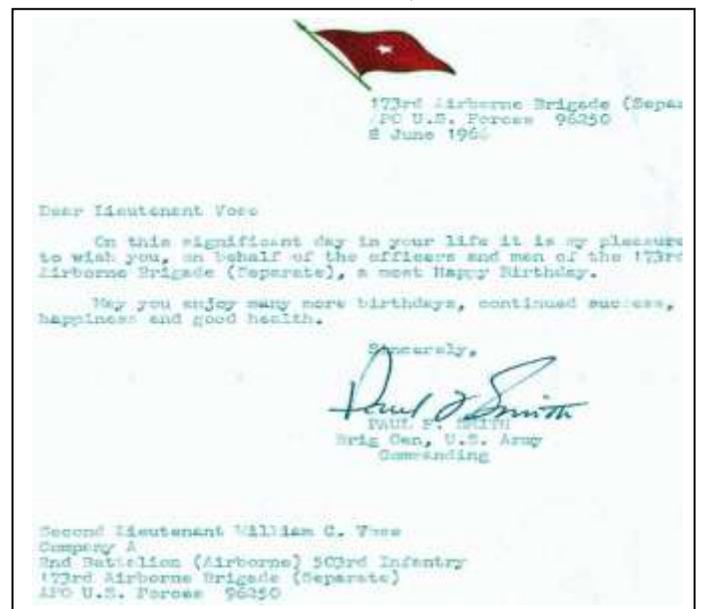
For more information on *AboutFace*, visit www.ptsd.va.gov/aboutface/ or contact the National Center for PTSD at (802) 296-5132.



James “Jack” Voyles & Rex Stickler, Recon

I was recently converting some slides that I took in Vietnam and came across this one from Jan '67. We were on Operation Cedar Falls if I recall correctly. Last month you mentioned that Rex Stickler had passed (Issue 39, Page 17) -- the pic is of Rex and his platoon sergeant, SSG Voyles. Rex had the Recon Platoon at the time this photo was taken in late January 1967. I took the picture at the 2nd Battalion TOC after they returned from a mission. Wish I had found it earlier so I could have sent it to him before his death. Best wishes,

Bob Guy, Col. (Ret)
A/HHC/2/503d, '66-'67



Belated birthday wishes to Mr. Vose.



Families & Friends Looking For Buddies

You have graciously helped me in my efforts to locate men that served with **Rusty Engle**, A/2/503/173d in 1967. In the process of trying to get leads on whom he might have served with, I looked through old copies of *Sky Soldier* viewable on line. I copied several notices of men or women searching for information about men who served with the 173d in 1967. I had forgotten to get this list to Wambi Cook A/2/503d) before he went to Lexington.

If there are any at the reunion who would want to get in touch with the families of men they served with, could you pass on this list of names for them to look at? [Below are the original postings from *Sky Soldier* magazine]:

Robert P. Degen, KIA November 20, 1967. Information about him sought by a friend, Ed Malloy, in a message posted in *Sky Soldier* in 1995. His posting gave his address in Vancouver, WA. He now lives at 739 Cordova Circle, The Villages, Florida, and has a current phone listing as: (352) 633-0530.

William Shaffer, with the 173d from 5/66 to 5/67. A medic, he requested information about any of the 15 other medics that went to jump school with him in 1966. Shaffer still lives in Arkansas.

David R. Reynolds, B/4/503, KIA November 21, 1967. Sought by a high school friend, Mark Lavetti, in a message posted in *Sky Soldier* in 1997. Mark currently lives at 13005 Bryantown Court, Bryantown, MD. His current phone is listed as: (301) 932-8066.

Carl Robbins, with the 173d from May 2 to Nov. 23, 1967 [WIA], was seeking information about two men who were with him on Hill 875: Dewayne Lombardo, and Dennis Cooney. His wife is Deborah K. Robbins, The phone number is (765) 987-7093. I don't know if Carl is still alive or not.

Sa Won Chang, 3rd platoon/A/1/503 from May, 1967 to March, 1968, posted in *Sky Soldier* in 1996 that he was seeking to locate men he served with: Platoon Sgt. Hernandez, 1st Sgt. Duckett, Platoon Leaders Quinn and Doan; his squad members were: Fred Knight, Kinner, Jones, Herbert, Holland, Sutalo, Sgt. Porter. Chang has a Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/people/Sa-Won-Chang/100000777879635>. I think this is the correct Sa Won Chang. He was career army. There are pictures of him during the 80's on his webpage: <http://www.sfaxiii.org/Sa%20Won%20Chang.htm>.

Finally, in a message posted in 1993, the director of In Touch, that seeks to put families of KIA in touch with the men their loved ones had served with, posted a notice indicating they were seeking information concerning about a dozen men whose families wanted further information about them. In Touch people later started the Virtual Wall. You can get contact information from the webpage:

<http://www.virtualwall.org/contactus.htm> or by writing to webmaster@VirtualWall.org

You don't need to deal with any of this if you don't have time or don't want to be bothered. This is your reunion, and it's for you to enjoy seeing your friends, not to facilitate my agenda.

Most of the postings in *Sky Soldier* are ten years old or older, so these individuals may no longer even care to locate the men in their original messages, or may have died since the posting. It's simply that if men at the reunion happen to remember one of these names, it might be a relatively easy way to put them in touch with those wanting to locate old friends. I have tried to get current telephone numbers or contact numbers for all of the individuals except for Army medic William Shaffer. Thank you.

Keith Hale
Friend of Rusty Engle

Note: Keith's message was not viewed until after the reunion in Lexington. Thanks Keith. Ed

Note:

In the cover note which accompanied the *Special Reunion Edition* of our newsletter (June Issue 42), I mentioned I saw a brief newsrelease in the *Miami Herald* about the 173d reunion in DC held in the 80s. Here's a tid bit about that reunion. Ed

The DC Reunion

At the time of the DC Reunion, membership in the Society was pretty small so it was a word of mouth thing. Much of the membership was recruited at that reunion and at the *NYC Welcome Home Parade* which was in the days immediately following the reunion. The only reason I know that was because I was a charter member of Chap II in NYC and the group of us that attended the DC reunion had to rush home Sunday night and open the hospitality suite at the hotel in NYC on Monday through the end of the week.

Jim Chieco
E/2/503d



Classic Photo of a Sky Soldier



This photograph is of Pfc. John R. White, taken by SSG. A. W. Fischer, Brigade PIO 1969. Sergeant Fischer gave me the original photograph. Say hello from me to them. Also to Phillip Brown. The last I heard from Phillip was in 1993 in an e-mail to me at JPL. He was living in Soult Ste. Marie, Michigan.

Mike de G

MEMORIAL UNVEILING CERMONY

We hope you will share this truly amazing honor with the Fritsche family on July 28, 2012 at 11am. The beautiful marble stone which welcomed soldiers to OP (Out Post) Fritsche in the mountains of Afghanistan near the Pakistan border will find a permanent resting place in the Morgan County War Memorial Park at the corner of Jefferson and Washington streets in Martinsville, IN on that morning. Come see the unveiling of the memorial and hear the amazing story behind its creation and journey to its new home.

1SGT Jonathan Hill who was the commander at OP Fritsche when it was brutally attacked will be a guest speaker, as well as Robert Meacham who served with Ryan in the Old Guard, and Eric Bowlen who was

Ryan's coach and mentor during his days as a Martinsville Artesian.

It will be a beautiful and touching event and one we would like to share with you.

[Sent in by Eric Hitchcock, HHC/2/503]

Results of 'The Great Hat Contest'

Thanks again to LTC Bob & Exie Carmichael for the military hats and patches they gave us to give-away to troopers. Results are in, and these are the lucky guys who won:

Bill Berry, 173d Engineers

Johnny Jones, C/2/503

Fabe Sesma, 173d Abn

Bob Sweeney, C/HHC/2/503

Bill Wilkinson, C/2/503

Gordon Nelson, 1RAR

Jimmy Stanford, B/2/503

Andy Russell, A/2/503

Dick Prosser, B/2/503

Dan Fritzman, A/2/503

Mike Switzer, C/3/503

Bill Harlan, C/2/503



As noted by this photo the hats and patches are on display in this man cave in Florida waiting for one lazyass RTO to mail them. Hurry up and wait boys! They're coming soon. No Vose, you didn't win anything so please stop calling.



Mark Twain's Fourth of July Speech in Keokuk, Iowa July 3, 1886

*'Better this decade than the 900 years of
Methuselah.'*

There is more done in one year now than Methuselah ever saw in all his life. He was probably asleep all those 900 years. When I was here thirty years ago there were 3,000 people here and they drank 3,000 barrels of whisky a day, and they drank it in public then.

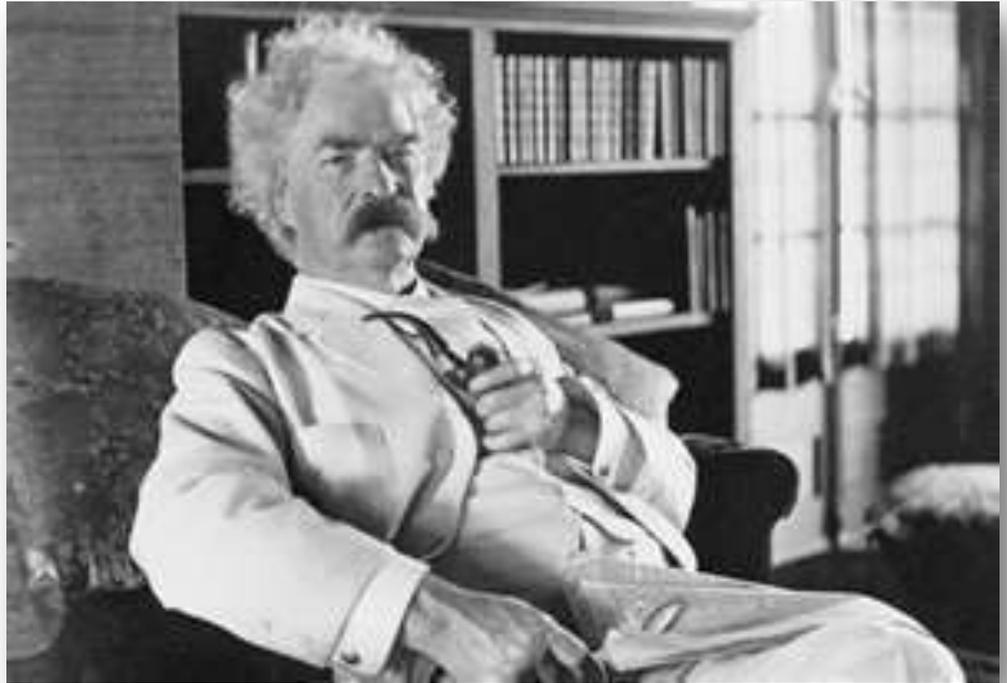
"Ladies and gentlemen: I little thought that when the boys woke me with their noise this morning that I should be called upon to add to their noise. But I promise not to keep you long.

You have heard all there is to hear on the subject, the evidence is all in and all I have to do is to sum up the evidence and deliver the verdict. You have heard the Declaration of Independence with its majestic ending, which is worthy to live forever, which has been hurled at the bones of a fossilized monarch, old King George the III, who has been dead these many years, and which will continue to be hurled at him annually as long as this republic lives.

You have heard the history of the nation from the first to the last--from the beginning of the revolutionary war, past the days of its great general, Grant, told in eloquent language by the orator of the day. All I have to do is to add the verdict, which is all that can be added, and that is, 'It is a successful day.'

I thank the officers of the day that I am enabled to once more stand face to face with the citizens that I met thirty years ago, when I was a citizen of Iowa, and also those of a later generation.

In the address today, I have not heard much mention made of the progress of these last few years--of the telegraph, telephone, phonograph, and other great inventions. A poet has said, *'Better fifty years of England than all the cycles of Cathay,'* but I say



I know that the man who makes the last speech on an occasion like this has the best of the other speakers, as he has the last word to say, which falls like a balm on the audience--though this audience has not been bored today--and though I can't say that last word, I will do the next best thing I can, and that is to sit down."

Happy 4th of July

