

The time was now 1710 hrs and D Coy reported "Enemy now 200 metres to our direct front, 42 (the radio call sign for 11 pl) being attacked from north, east and south, 43 (the radio call sign for 12 pl) pinned down attempting to reach them." The artillery continued with rounds now falling dangerously close to the friendly locations. The success this had on preventing the enemy from overrunning the position was immeasurable. At 1720 hrs, artillery began firing regimental missions as ordered by the Forward Observer (FO), Captain Stanley. The expenditure of Artillery ammunition became a concern, and additional supplies were ordered from the Logistics Support Base at Vung Tau. Soon, a flight of Chinook helicopters were delivering pallet-loads of shells directly into the Artillery area, despite the near impossible flying conditions.

At the same time, 12 pl was sent out to approach 11 pl from its west. As they left CHQ, Major Smith was advised that 10 pl was withdrawing with its casualties, so Smith retained the 12 pl Sections to reinforce CHQ's strength.

As 10 pl arrived in the company location a Company Aid Post (CAP) was established, and CHQ, 10 pl and the 12 pl Section were placed on the ground to provide protection for the casualties.



Accurate and sustained artillery support was vital to the outcome of the battle. The photo above shows a 105-mm L5 Pack Howitzer of 105th Field Battery firing from the Bien Hoa gun position, South Vietnam, 1965. (L-R: Sgt Ian Morley, Gnr Frank Guylus, Gnr Dick Hall). Eighteen similar guns at the 1 ATF base at Nui Dat provided D Coy close support during the battle. (Photo from 105th Battery RAAF Historical Collection, Ian Morley photograph)

12 pl reached a position about 200 metres behind 11 pl and came under heavy fire: they were subsequently attacked from their north east and south east. With the

attacks continuing on 11 pl, CHQ and 10 pl were also now being subjected to attacks from the east by the enemy who were following up 10 platoon's withdrawal. Major Smith called for an air strike at 1702 hrs and would accept napalm to 100 metres. At the same time an ammunition resupply by helicopter was called for.

The time was now 1710 hrs and D Coy reported "Enemy now 200 metres to our direct front, 42 (the radio call sign for 11 pl) being attacked from north, east and south, 43 (the radio call sign for 12 pl) pinned down attempting to reach them." The artillery continued with rounds now falling dangerously close to the friendly locations. The success this had on preventing the enemy from overrunning the position was immeasurable. At 1720 hrs, artillery began firing regimental missions as ordered by the Forward Observer (FO), Captain Stanley. The expenditure of Artillery ammunition became a concern, and additional supplies were ordered from the Logistics Support Base at Vung Tau. Soon, a flight of Chinook helicopters were delivering pallet-loads of shells directly into the Artillery area, despite the near impossible flying conditions.

The Jim King Story describes the scene on the Gun Line. Morrie Stanley's Story describes his experience as the Delta Coy FOO (Forward Observation Officer)

D Coy reported that all platoons and CHQ were now under constant attack from the east and south. Artillery fire was brought within 100 metres from 11 pl. The strike aircraft requested earlier reported they were unable to give close support to the now desperate D Coy due to the cloud cover and torrential rain. Their visibility was reduced to nil, so the aircraft dropped their ordnance to the north east.

Back at the 1 ATF Base 5 RAR took over the defence of the perimeter. Two "Huey" choppers from 9 Sqn RAAF had been tasked to fly the ammunition resupply out to D Coy. The 6 RAR RSM, WO1 George Chinn, organised the ammunition resupply on to the choppers, and at 1800 hrs the artillery ceased for 15 minutes to allow the helicopter resupply to get to D Coy. Again, the dreadful flying conditions were overcome, and with the aid of a coloured smoke grenade the critical resupply was successful; falling literally into the hands of the CSM WO2 Kirby (who subsequently was killed later in the tour), who quickly organised its distribution.

(continued....)



Meanwhile, 2Lt Sabben's 12 pl had sustained 6 casualties out of its 20 man strength in keeping the 11 pl escape route open. Another coloured smoke grenade thrown by 12 pl allowed the remainder of 11 pl to finally withdraw to the 12 pl position. After fighting off several more assaults, the 11 pl and 12 pl group withdrew the 300 metres to the Company position.

Concurrently, 3Tp 1 APC Sqn with A Coy on board were heading towards the D Coy location. The going in the late afternoon torrential downpour was very slow and the move was not without its problems, the departure from base having been delayed for over an hour and a crossing of the flooded Suoi Da Bang River yet to be negotiated. However none of their problems quite matched the problems of D Coy at that point of time. Light was fading, as was the Coy's ammunition supply. It seemed impossible for D Coy to hold on any longer.

The enemy continued to attack from the east, north east and south east. D Coy were finally regrouped as a Company. At 1820 hrs Major Smith reported that the enemy could be reorganising for another attack and that they had temporarily broken contact. He stated that he had two platoons about 75% effective and one platoon virtually non - effective. The Company had hastily reorganised into all-round defence and the ammunition resupply was distributed, just as the enemy launched another series of massive wave-style attacks on the Coy front. These lasted until it was noticeable that it was approaching last night.



Soldiers who served in D Company, 6RAR, examine a battered rusty weapon at the site of the Battle at Long Tan. (Photo from vnafmann.com/longtan_battle.html)

A Coy and 3 Tp were about 800 metres away and they were struggling to get to D Coy. As they got closer they began to take fire, and reported that they had contacted possibly three enemy Companies who withdrew after being fired upon by the APCs. B Coy, moving on foot, were also closing up behind D Coy and the Commanding Officer (CO) of 6 RAR, Lt Colonel (Lt Col) Townsend aboard another APC joined A Coy as the force relieved D Coy.

As the last of the massive enemy assaults faded, B Coy arrived in Delta's position and were used to cover the approach from the west. It was just on dark. The Artillery was stopped to allow APCs to approach the Company position, and in the silence, the D Coy survivors could hear the APCs approaching. The battle was over.

On their arrival, 3 Tp and A Coy moved across D Coy's front, firing the 50 cals of the APCs as a precaution. The 6 RAR CO, who had arrived with A Coy, then took control of the aftermath. A Coy formed a screen to the east while D Coy took care of their dead and wounded. A casualty evacuation was organised in a clearing some 750 metres to the west, with the APCs forming a hollow square using their internal lights with top hatches open to guide the incoming choppers. The following morning, after a sleepless night with constant threat of further attacks, battlefield clearance commenced. D Coy again were up front for this task.

This was "*The Battle of Long Tan*".

THE ENEMY

The enemy was found to be the 275 NVA Regt and D445 VC Provincial Battalion plus one other NVA battalion in support. The original contact was believed to with a standing patrol or screening force. The enemy constantly tried to envelop the Australians, from the northern and southern flanks. The dispersion and movement of D Coy and all three Platoons probably deceived the enemy as to the size of the force they had contacted. The large amount of fire support would have aided in this deception.

The enemy were well equipped and were almost certainly prepared for a major assault on the base rather than a contact out in the field. Most of the enemy soldiers carried ammunition for crew-served weapons which were not in evidence on the battlefield in addition to their personal AK or SKS rifle with up to 250 rounds of ammunition. Furthermore, most were found to have 2 or 3 grenades on them, with some Grenadiers carrying satchels of 15 to 20 grenades. These were not used during the battle. The individual soldier was not camouflaged, yet had netting or frames on which to hang camouflage. His drills and discipline were of a high standard. He was apparently well fed and his clothing and equipment were in good order. Most Australians were surprised at the personal proficiency and battle discipline of their counterpart.

(continued....)





Diggers returning to base after battle.

Footnote (VC Defector) In 1969, Ex Sgt Loc of D445 Bn, Battle of Long Tan, a guide and interpreter with 6 RAR stated that most casualties were caused by artillery. That the total number of VC killed in the battle was well in excess of 1,000. Most of these they were able to carry out on the night of 18 August to a very large hospital complex dug out in the mountains to the North-East of the battlefield. There were also 1,000 missing from the units. He refused to believe that the total Australian force was only about 100 men with casualties of 18 killed and 25 wounded.

Enemy Casualties

- 245 KIA (Body Count)
- 3 Captured
- 150 KIA (Subsequent Intelligence estimate)
- 500 WIA (Subsequent Intelligence estimate)
- Note: During Operation Marsden in late 1969, Australian forces captured a Viet Cong dispensary that had a list of dead and wounded attributed to Long Tan. Those figures were 878 KIA/Missing/Died of wounds and approximately 1500 WIA.

Friendly Casualties

6RAR

- D Coy: 17 KIA, 23 WIA
- A Coy: 3 injured
- B Coy: 3 injured

3Tp 1 APC Sqn

- 1 KIA (Cpt Clements) 1 WIA (remained on duty)

Finds

Documents; large quantities of enemy webbing and clothing; 33 assault rifles; 5 SKS rifles; 8 light machine guns; 3 carbines; 1 heavy machine gun on wheels; 2 recoilless rifles; 4 rocket launchers; 1 60mm mortar; ammunition (12,000 rounds of various small arms, 300 grenades of different types, 100 rounds of mortar, recoilless rifle and rocket launcher ammunition).



Warrant Officer 2 Jack Kirby, Company Sergeant Major (left) and Major Harry Smith, Officer Commanding D Company 6RAR, pose with the 7.62 Chinese communist heavy machine-gun captured at the Battle of Long Tan.

Congratulatory Messages From Army Canberra To 1 ATF

"The Prime Minister's Press Secretary has asked that the following message be passed to you. QUOTE. Our forces in their latest engagement have acquitted themselves with skill effectiveness and high courage in the best Australian tradition. Please tell them that Australia is proud of them. I have publicly expressed my sympathy to the bereaved. My sympathy also goes to the wounded. I send them best wishes for a speedy recovery."

Signed Harold Holt, Prime Minister

"Hearty congratulations to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and a company of the 5th Battalion RAR for their fine show in Operation SMITHFIELD. Your troops have won a most significant victory over the enemy and one of the most spectacular in Vietnam to date."

Signed W.C. Westmoreland, General Commander USMACV

(continued....)



"Please pass on to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. My heartiest congratulations for the outstanding results attained during Operation SMITHFIELD. The large number of enemy killed as compared to the light casualties of the Australians is indicative of the professionalism of your Task Force. I especially want to congratulate D Company for its outstanding performance."

Signed Maj. General Seaman, Commanding General II Field Force Victor

Approval to wear CGCP

Following the Battle of Long Tan, Delta Company was awarded on 28th May 1968, the *United States Presidential Unit Citation* for "Extraordinary Heroism in Military Operations Against an Armed Enemy."

It was the intention of the South Vietnamese Government to also award the Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (CGCP) to Delta Company however this was not approved at the time by the Australian Government.

Following a number of reviews and changes of government, on 15th August 2008, the Australian Government announced changes to military awards in response to the independent review of Battle of Long Tan recognition.

Cabinet Secretary, Senator John Faulkner, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Dr Mike Kelly, have carefully considered the reports of the independent review panel and a number of public responses to the reports.

Key decision, approved by the Governor-General, are:

Harry Smith, Commander D Company 6RAR, will be offered the Star of Gallantry (equivalent to the Distinguished Service Order), and Platoon Commanders Dave Sabben and Geoff Kendall, will be offered the Medal for Gallantry (equivalent to the Military Cross). This restores the original award recommended for Smith by his commanding officers, and accepts that the intention was to award Sabben and Kendall higher honours.

- The strength of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam on 18 August 1966 will receive approval to wear the former Republic of Vietnam's gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation Emblem.

Any other unresolved concerns regarding individual awards for Long Tan will be referred to the independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal. The Government will consider itself bound by the Tribunal's recommendations on these matters.

Implementation of these recommendations will properly recognise the individual and collective gallantry of these men on 18 August 1966, provide an equitable mix of awards for the battle, and will confer considerable honour on all the men of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam who fought in the Battle of Long Tan.

Awarded UCG

Following a review and recommendations made by the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal, on 31st March 2010, the following award was gazetted.

UNIT CITATION FOR GALLANTRY- AUSTRALIAN ARMY



Delta Company, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR)

For acts of extraordinary gallantry in action at the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

**By Her Excellency's Command
Stephen Brady
Official Secretary to the Governor-General**

[Source: 6RARassociation.com]



Aussies erecting memorial in the rubber trees at Long Tan.



The Fallen at Long Tan 6RAR & 1 APC

2Lt Gordon Sharp

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21;
National Serviceman
Born: Tamworth, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Richard A. Aldersea

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Perth, WA
Married
KIA - Chest wounds



Cpl Peter E. Clements

Unit: 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn
Age: 21
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Cunderdin, WA
Single
WIA - died at hospital



Pte Glenn A. Drabble

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q.
Single
KIA - Gunshot wound



Pte Kenneth H. Gant

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Ernest F. Grant

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Thuringowa, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Victor Grice

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Ballarat V
Single
KIA



Pte James M. Houston

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Wallsend, NSW
Married
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte David J. Thomas

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Bendigo, V
Single
KIA - Chest wounds



L/Cpl Jack Jewry

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: St Mary's NSW
Married
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Francis B. Topp

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 19
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Toowoomba, Q
Single
KIA



Pte Paul A. Large

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
National Serviceman
Born: Wellington, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Maxwell R. Wales

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Goondiwindi, Q
Single
KIA



Pte A. F. (Lionel) McCormack

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Launceston, Tas
Single
WIA - Died at hospital



Pte Colin J. Whiston

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Sydney, NSW
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Dennis J. McCormack

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Adelaide, SA
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



"In Memory of those members of D Coy 6 RAR and 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn who gave their lives near this spot during the Battle of Long Tan on 18th August 1966. Erected by 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Bn 18 Aug 69"



Pte Warren D. Mitchell

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Dalby, Q
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Douglas J. Salveron

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Duty First



~ 2/503 Sky Soldiers Extraordinaire ~



Les Brownlee

Les served as the Acting Secretary of the Army from 10 May 2003 until his resignation effective 2 Dec. 2004. He became the 27th Under Secretary of the Army on 14 Nov.

2001, following his nomination by President George W. Bush and confirmation by the United States Senate. From 10 May 2003 until 19 Nov. 2004, he served as the Acting Secretary of the Army. As Under Secretary, Brownlee assisted the Secretary in fulfilling statutory responsibilities for recruiting, organizing, supplying, equipping, training and mobilizing the United States Army and managing its \$98.5 billion annual budget and more than 1.3 million active duty, National Guard, Army Reserve and civilian personnel. Brownlee served on the Republican staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee beginning in Jan. 1987, under both Senator Strom Thurmond and Senator John Warner. In Mar. 1996, Brownlee was designated Staff Director of the Senate Committee on Armed Services by then Chairman, Sen. Thurmond. In Jan. 1999, he was designated Staff Director for then Chairman, Sen. Warner, serving until November 2001 when he was confirmed as the Under Secretary of the Army. From 1987 to 1996, he was a Professional Staff member responsible for Army and Marine Corps programs, special ops forces and drug interdiction policy and support. In addition, as Deputy Staff Director, he was deeply involved in policies and programs relating to ballistic missile defense, strategic deterrence and naval strategy, shipbuilding and weapons programs. Les is a retired Army colonel. He was commissioned in 1962 as a lieutenant in the infantry through the ROTC program at the University of Wyoming. He is a distinguished honor graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger Course, an honor graduate of both the Infantry Officer Advanced Course and the Command and General Staff College, and a graduate of the Army's airborne course as well as the U.S. Army War College. During his last two and a half years in the Pentagon, he was Military Executive to Under Secretary of the Army James Ambrose. He holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Alabama. Les served two tours in Vietnam, including as company commander of B/2/503, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep). His military decorations include the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart.



Robert J. "Bob" Fleming, Jr.

Bob was born January 27, 1945, in Homestead, PA. He joined the army on August 29, 1965, and completed basic training at Fort Knox, KY, and AIT at Ft. Jackson, SC, with an 11B MOS. Bob graduated jump school at Ft. Benning, GA where he made two jumps on his birthday in January 1966. He served with the 101st Airborne at Ft. Campbell, KY and joined A/2/503 in Vietnam where he served from June-August 1967, until re-assigned to Delta Company until 1968. On November 19, 1967, during the Battle for Hill 875 at Dak To, Bob was wounded. That evening a jet dropped a large bomb on the command post killing the majority of already wounded troopers and those caring of them. The concussion of the bomb knocked him unconscious. When he finally came to, he crawled around the CP trying to bandage the survivors. He then climbed into a hole with Sgt. Tenney for the rest of the night. On November 21 he was still waiting for the battle to slow enough for the dust off choppers to get in. By this time he knew his wound was becoming gangrene. Bob was eventually sent to a hospital in Vietnam where the majority of his left buttock was removed. He was then sent to Japan to be sewn-up and healed. After recuperating, he returned to his unit in Vietnam to complete his tour of duty. Bob left the service on June 22, 1968, with the rank of Sergeant E-5. He was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge and Parachutist Badge. Bob served as a police officer with the U.S. Postal Service until his retirement. He and his wife Angela live in Pittsburgh, PA.



Bob & Angela at 173d Reunion in 2012



Jumping into the Iraq War: a daring combat jump under the cover of darkness deposited the 173rd Airborne Brigade into northern Iraq in March. Its presence virtually sealed off the oil-rich region.

by Tim Dyhouse



**173d ABCT enroute to jump into Iraq
“A Can O’ Whoopass”**

They couldn't drive to the battlefield, so they did what they do best: jump feet first into the fray. Two battalions of the Army's storied 173rd Airborne Brigade conducted a successful, nighttime parachute drop into northern Iraq on March 26. The brigade, part of the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, was reactivated in June 2000 and was primed for just such a mission.

It was the biggest combat jump since the invasion of Panama in 1989, and the 173rd's first wartime drop in 35 years, when it jumped near Katum, South Vietnam, during Operation Junction City on Feb. 22, 1967. [On that mission, 845 paratroopers of the 2nd Bn., 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) and A Battery, 3rd Bn., 319th Field Artillery participated].

For the Iraq jump, some 1,000 173rd paratroopers, Rangers and support personnel dropped after a five-hour

flight from Aviano Air Base near their home post at Camp Ederle in Vicenza, Italy. The 2nd Bn., 503rd PIR and the 1st Bn., 508th PIR comprised about 80% of the airborne troops. The rest were engineers, sniper and long-range surveillance teams, Air Force special ops troops, a combat support company and a six-man medical/surgical detachment.

According to *Airman* magazine, 19 airmen of the 86th Expeditionary Contingency Response Group participated.

“It was pitch black,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Charles Cremeans, an independent duty medical technician with the 786th Security Forces Squadron. *“But the jump was a relief -- all the weight [from his 100-pound rucksack] was gone.”*

The 173rd's commander had words of motivation for the troops before the drop.

“Americans are asking you to make the world a better place by jumping into the unknown for the benefit of others,” Col. William Mayville said. *“Paratroopers, our cause is just and victory is certain. I want you to join me tonight on an airborne assault.”*

They descended from 30,000 feet in 17 C-17s to jump at 600 feet. *Airman* magazine reported 20 soldiers were hurt upon landing, and C-17s had to medevac out six who suffered spinal, leg and other injuries. Another 36 unfortunate troopers couldn't participate because the one-minute time limit to clear the planes had expired. The troops landed in muddy fields about 75 miles east-northeast of Mosul to secure Harir Airfield near Bashur. Paratroopers spent the night looking for and digging out heavy equipment--including Humvees--that was dropped first. The airfield was later used to deliver tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

Next stop, Iraq.



(continued....)



The 173rd's area of operations is in an oil-rich, Kurdish-and U.S. Special Forces-controlled region of northeastern Iraq bordering Turkey and Iran. One of the paratroopers' main missions upon landing was to secure oil fields around Mosul and Kirkuk.

"Kirkuk is key," said Army Maj. Mike Hastings in early April. "The Iraqis want it, the Turks want it and various other ethnic groups also want it. What this drop means is that we can secure it until we are relieved by other forces."

After Turkey denied the U.S. permission to base ground troops on its soil and use land routes to drive into northern Iraq, U.S. commanders considered flying the brigade into Harir Airfield. But that scenario, they decided, would have taken too long. Commanders figured a full-blown airborne assault also would have a deep psychological impact on the Turks, Iraqis and Kurds.

"I was very excited," said Sgt. James Michael Brown, of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 1st Bn., 508th PIR, on his feelings immediately prior to the jump. "It was very muddy and pitch black. I couldn't see my hands, let alone any enemy."

No Enemy Resistance

Thanks to U.S. warplanes that covered their landing, paratroopers met no enemy resistance. The threat from an estimated 100,000 Iraqi troops dug in along the line separating the Kurdish-controlled region from the rest of the country never materialized.

"I saw no enemy soldiers," said Capt. Kyle Hadlock, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 508th PIR. "I landed in mud that became my enemy until the next day."

Beyond securing oil fields, another task for the brigade, as with many other U.S. units in the country, is to provide a semblance of order following the war. Two rival Kurdish factions--the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan--dominate the north. In Mosul, Kurds have reportedly forced Arabs from their homes, set up checkpoints to search cars and charged customers at gunpoint to enter gas stations.

Al Qaeda-linked, Tehran-backed

One potentially nasty foe for the 173rd trained to fight in Iraq was the al Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Islam. Holed up in mountainous villages on the border with Iran, the group of some 700 Islamic extremists had been fighting against the secular Kurdish government of northern Iraq --out of Saddam Hussein's control since 1991--for nearly two years. The group also had been blamed for several terrorist attacks in northern Iraq.

The Kurds say Ansar al-Islam is backed and funded by Tehran. About 150 of the group's members are thought to be pro-Taliban fighters who escaped from Afghanistan in late 2001. They include members from Algeria and other Arab countries.

In late March, 100 U.S. Special Forces and 10,000 Kurdish pesh merga ("those who face death") troops struck Ansar guerrillas, killing between 150-200 and capturing two, including a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip. Documents, such as the Jihad Encyclopedia, and information from the prisoners confirmed the group's al Qaeda links.

"One of the problems with al Qaeda is that it is not a clearly identifiable organization," explained a Special Forces officer involved in the attack. "They don't wear an al Qaeda uniform or carry an al Qaeda passport, but they launch out these professionals who train and start groups."

Vets Provide Link to Home

Since members of the 173rd deployed to Iraq, their families and the unit's veterans have been able to stay connected with them in ways never experienced in past wars. The Web site for the Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade -- www.173rdairborne.com -- has become a magnet for friends and relatives of those deployed in Iraq.

Though U.S. operations in northern Iraq have been successful, an unfortunate incident on May 3 resulted in the death of a 173rd trooper. According to the Pentagon, Sgt. Sean C. Reynolds of the brigade's 74th Long-Range Surveillance Company was *"climbing a ladder when he fell,"* causing his M-9 pistol to accidentally discharge.

[Source: 2003 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.]
(Photos added)



Love them riggers.



~ COVER PHOTO OF THE YEAR 2011 ~

We asked our readers to rank from 1st to 3rd their favorite covers of our Newsletter from last year. A wide majority selected the March 2011 cover with the photo by Pat Bowe (Recon/2/503d) of a trooper parachuting in Vietnam as their Numba 1 pick. May took 2nd Place, with September & October tied for 3rd. Everyone who participated wins one (1) free PLF in your backyard. *Hey, be careful out there!*

1st Place - March 2011



~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



~ 173d Photo of the Month ~



Saluting our Brothers of the 1/593d

"The Best of the Best"



~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

2nd Place – May 2011

3rd Place – September 2011

3rd Place – October 2011



INCOMING!



~ A PTSD Note ~

After she received a report listing symptoms of PTSD suffered by many combat vets, she sent this note:

"Yes, I did see my Dad in there. Everyone needs to be educated on this disease and it should be treated with all the concern and skill medicine treats any other disease. In learning more about it I have a better understanding of my beloved Dad and all other vets of combat. In my opinion nothing our country can do can ever come close to repaying combat vets for their devoted service and sacrifice."

Daughter of a WWII 503rd Trooper

~ Zippo Made it Home ~



Both Jerry Sopko, D/4/503, and his Zippo survived the war.

~ Aussie Arty ~

Thanks for another great read in your newsletter mate.

I suppose a lot of Paratroopers in the 173d would not have known that they had at one time an Aussie Artillery Battery supporting them. The 105th field Battery Royal Australian Artillery was part of the 173d at Bien Hoa 1965-1966, the first Australian Artillery Battery in Vietnam.

Our connection with the 2/503rd came on Operation Silver City 9 to 22 March 1966.

The Infantry during the battle were fighting with the bravery you would expect. We were in a position close to the two Battery's of the 3/319th Artillery. The American Artillerymen were running short of ammunition, we continued to fire in support with more ammunition being brought in by Aircraft.

I can remember the aircraft were Caribou's, they flew in very low and the Ammunition exited from the rear of the plane with parachutes. It was very good flying by the pilots and must had been dangerous for them.

As the Ammunition hit the ground some cases would break open and shells and cartridge cases would fly all over the place but most of the valuable cargo was carried back to our position and used to good effect.

After the battle the CO of the 2/503rd sent a message to our Battery Commander and said, *"Thanks for saving our lives, I've never seen finer shooting"*. The battle was reported in the newspapers back home in Sydney and my Mother saved the clippings for me.

One of the saddest memories of the Australian Gunners was that the Paratroopers killed in action were brought back near our position close to where we gathered the Ammunition.

More than one Gunner commented, *"I hope the dropping Ammo doesn't break open near these men. They can't protect themselves anymore and must be treated with honour"*.

Even after all these years, what happened on the gun line on this operation still affects a lot of my mates.

We were glad to do our part with the American Gunners in the battle and happy that we could make a difference that day.

Best wishes from "Down Under"

Ubique.

**Graham Woodward
President Chapter 23. Queensland.**



Who Dats?

This photo appeared in last month's issue of six brothers, one wife, and a horse named Sugar, noting three of the brothers included one *All American*, one *Sky Soldier* and one *Green Beret* in the brood.



Thanks to two dads and one mom the back row are L-R Kriss, Tim & Pat Smith, the front row are Rick Clark (82nd Abn) and his wife Judy, Lew "Smitty" Smith (173d Abn), and Bob "Big Bear" Clark (1st/5th/7th SF).

Smitty & Bob both served in Vietnam. While with the 5th SF on his third tour Bob's army career ended when the bad guys claimed one of his eyes in a firefight in the Dak To area. This photo was taken in 1957 at our parent's chicken ranch in Chino, CA. We couldn't afford shirts, altho Judy & Bob could. One crazyass chicken-plucking, horse-riding & airplane-jumping family. Sadly, we lost Judy years ago. Ed



173d Airborne Brigade....doing what they do best.

Future Sky Soldier?



I would like to announce that Charlotte and I welcomed into this world on June 25th at 7:57, weighing in at 7 lbs. 11 oz. and 21 inches, our Great Grandson "Shane Mathew Frost" and we are DAMN PROUD!!!! I just love this picture!

**Gary "Cooch" Cucinitti
1/503d**

Congratulations Pops!

*"It mattered not what politicians argued.
It mattered not what history would reveal.
We had no expectation but to serve where duty called us.
We asked for no reward except a nation's thanks."*

**Albert J. Nahas, COL, USA (Ret)
Vietnam Veteran**



173d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion



Las Vegas August 25-29, 2013

Here's some early information about the 2013 Reunion.

~ Reunion Registration Fees ~

\$150 per Member & per Guest, before 25 July 2013

\$165. per Member & per Guest, after 25 July 2013

\$150. per Gold Star Family Member*

\$75. per Active Duty Soldiers (not on orders)

Free per Active Duty Soldiers (on orders)

\$100. per Vendor Table (173d Vendors only)

\$25. Sky Soldier Adoption Program

"Have your meals on me."

* Free Gold Star Luncheon, 173d Gold Star Families

~ Hotel ~

The Orleans

4500 W. Tropicana Avenue

Las Vegas, NV 89103

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Processing Milestone Allows VA to Refocus on Claims Backlog (From DAV)

The VA's claims system will soon be getting up to speed as it clears the gridlock of nearly 230,000 claims related to the three newest Agent Orange-related presumptive service-connected illnesses of ischemic heart disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemia and Parkinson's disease. The completion of work on the claims means that 1,200 senior claims representatives dedicated to review the Agent Orange claims can now be reassigned to tackle the current backlog of other disability claims.

The VA announced it was nearing completion of the Agent Orange-related claims which had been assigned to about 37 percent of its rating staff. The VA's Veterans Benefits Administration had set up 13 resource centers exclusively dedicated to deciding these claims.

"We are very pleased the VA is nearing the end of a massive endeavor to give justice to our veterans suffering from these three presumptive service-connected diseases," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. *"The VA dedicated its most senior claims workers to complete the task of fulfilling the promises made to the men and women who served."*

Among the cases were more than 150,000 complex claims that required review under a U.S. District Court order. These so-called Nehmer claims cases had been denied before the VA decision to award presumptive service-connection for the three illnesses due to Agent Orange exposure.

"As a result of the VA's diligence, all of the Agent Orange Nehmer claims for living veterans have been completed, and there are fewer than 500 remaining claims that benefit survivors," said Jesinoski. *"Now these skilled VA raters can direct their talents to reducing the huge backlog of claims pending."*

The Agent Orange claims originated from a 2010 VA amendment to its regulations to add the three diseases to the list of those presumed to be related to exposure to the herbicide. It affected Vietnam veterans who served between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975. It also included Korean veterans exposed to Agent Orange along the demilitarized zone between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971 and service members exposed to herbicide tests and storage at military bases within and outside the United States.





VA NEWS ~ G.I. BILL

WASHINGTON – Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs applauded a decision by the attorneys general of several states to give VA the rights to use the GIBill.com website, after the website's original owners QuinStreet Inc. agreed to give up the internet site to settle a lawsuit by the states.

"This action is a victory for Veterans and a victory for the GI Bill. Veterans and VA applaud the great work by the states' attorneys general, along with Holly Petraeus and her team," said W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs. *"We all want Veterans to be informed consumers and for schools to meet their obligations in training this Nation's next 'Greatest Generation.'"*

Holly Petraeus is assistant director for service member affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The attorneys general of several states had sued QuinStreet Inc., the owner of the GIBill.com domain, charging it with deceptive practices by directing Veterans and Service Members on its website exclusively to for-profit schools that were clients of QuinStreet.

The announcement comes as VA is seeking legal authority to trademark the term *GI Bill*. An executive order by President Obama on April 26 directed VA and the Department of Defense to undertake a number of measures to "stop deceptive and misleading" promotional efforts that target the GI Bill educational benefits of Service members, Veterans, and eligible family members and survivors.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was authorized by Congress in 2008, is the most extensive educational assistance program since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944. VA has issued nearly \$20 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to more than 759,000 people and their educational institutions. All of VA's education benefits are designed to be flexible and give Veterans the power of choice by enabling them to pursue college degrees, technical certifications, or vocational training according to their preferences and needs, at public, private non-profit and private for-profit schools.

For-profit schools are held to the same approval standards as all other schools, and VA education programs at for-profit institutions are approved by the State Approving Agencies, which act independently on behalf of the federal government to ensure quality education and training is provided to Veterans within each state.

Gould said Veterans should not be recruited aggressively by institutions principally because of financial motives, and that VA's and other federal and state agencies' oversight activities provide strong monitoring. VA is engaging with other federal agencies to provide this oversight, including the departments of Defense, Education, and Justice, as well as the Federal Trade Commission and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

"VA looks forward to helping Veterans make informed decisions by accepting this gift of the GIBill.com domain. We will continue to support our Veterans by helping them obtain the best education of their choosing—a right for which they have bravely served, and which they have rightly earned," Gould said.

For more information on GI Bill programs, please visit www.GIBILL.va.gov or call 1-888-GI-Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551) to speak with a GI Bill representative.

VA Selects Site for the New Louisville Replacement Hospital

The Department of Veterans Affairs has selected a site to serve as the location of a 21st century medical center in Louisville, Ky., replacing an existing 60-year-old facility.

VA Gulf War Task Force Report Released

VA has released the second in a series of annual reports from its Gulf War Veterans Illnesses Task Force, outlining how the department will address the concerns of Veterans deployed during the Gulf War of 1990-1991. The report focuses on efforts to improve the delivery of health care for Gulf War Veterans, including the launch of a prototype clinical care model specifically for Gulf War Veterans.



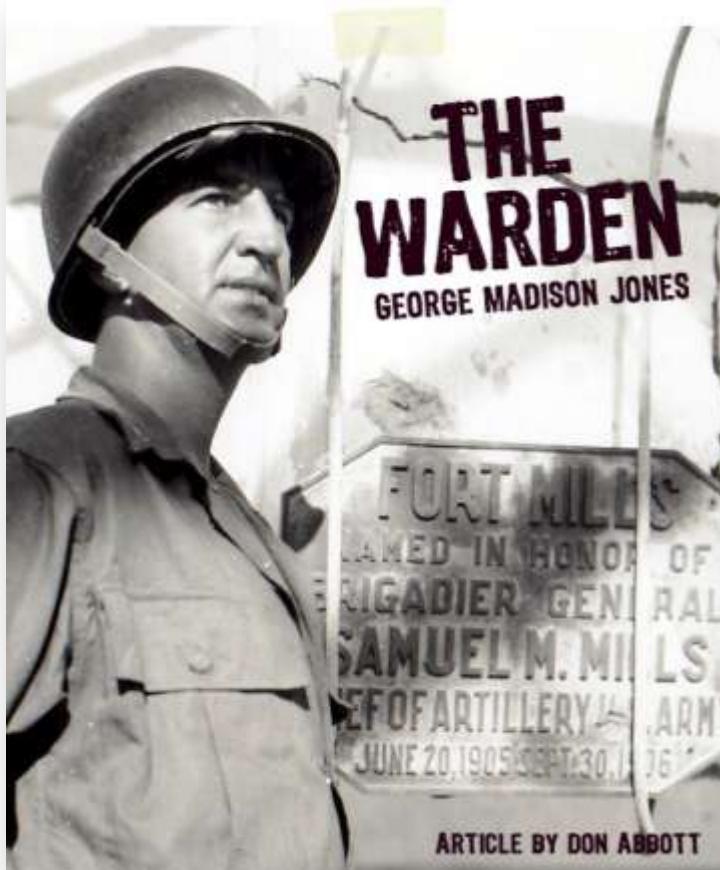
"George is an all-around something or other. He is a goat, but only in such unimportant things as academics. He is quite an athlete, but he can sit down and rest without being a "key jangler." He can converse, but he can also keep still when silence is in order. He can be serious, but not any more often than is necessary. He is near enough correct to keep reverses out of the room, but near enough incorrect to make living with him comfortable. He'll ask for advice when he needs it, and give it freely when asked for it (and not give it too often when he's not asked). All in all, he has added a lot to our stay at West Point."

THE HOWITZER 1936

During a good deal of his career in the service of the United States, Brigadier General George M. Jones was widely known – behind his back and out of earshot – as "The Warden". Throughout that time only a few people knew the real reason for his having picked up this peculiar title. Some said that he served in the Military Police. Since that branch was involved with the command of stockades where prisoners were incarcerated under a warden, they assumed that is where he picked up the title. Discussions with the General in his later life, shortly before he died in December 1997, confirmed he was very well aware of where the title really originated.

Having been one of the "prisoners" of the Warden, Don Abbott is one of a select group of veterans of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment who knew first-hand about the incident of how "The Warden" picked up his title.

Here now, Don Abbott "fesses up" and pleads guilty.



How The Warden Got His Name

By Don Abbott
503rd PIR



The 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment left the United States on 20 October 1942 on the old Dutch Motor, the Poelau Laut, which had just been converted from a cargo ship to a troop transport.

The ship was built in 1929 in Amsterdam, Netherlands and had served, in the interim, to handle cargo between Europe and the Dutch East Indies. For the time she was built her speed of 15 knots must have been very satisfactory for that trade. The ship had five cargo holds and gear for handling miscellaneous cargo utilizing a lot of longshoremen.

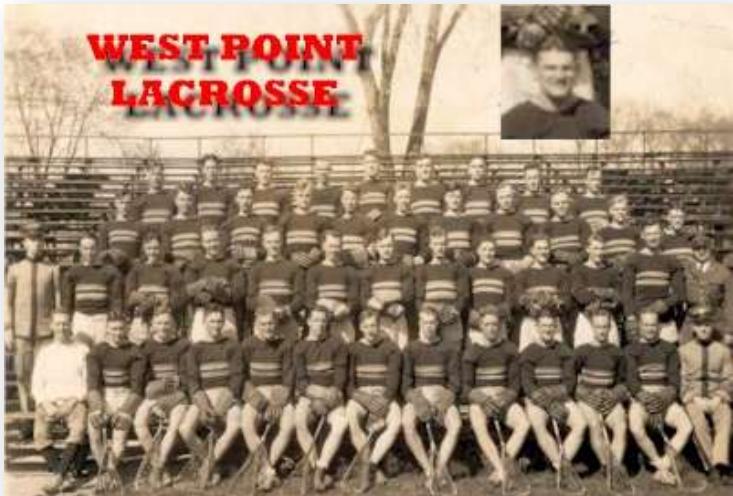
The Poelau Laut had been designed to handle about thirty passengers on its voyages to the Dutch East Indies. The passengers, who must have lived a unhurried life of leisure, occupying small but comfortable staterooms. They had a spacious lounge where they could read, smoke and play cards. The dining room, as well, was spacious for the number of people on the passenger list.



The Poelau Laut

(continued....)





"The Warden" at West Point

When the United States entered World War II the country had only a few ships designed to haul troops. Those, which existed, were far from adequate to move the huge numbers of troops having to be moved to the far reaches of the world. Consequently, ships like the Poelau Laut were taken over by the United States and converted into vessels capable of moving large numbers of troops.

In the case of Poelau Laut all five cargo holds were fitted with tiers of canvas bunks, piled one on top of the other. Frequently, where there was (almost) adequate room, six tiers of these bunks would be installed. The top man had a long climb and woe to the man who would fall out of his bunk -- it was a long way to the deck. The bunks were so close together it took a cooperative effort of the whole stack of men for any one man to turn over. This was a bit difficult to coordinate in the middle of the night. Every Enlisted man was assigned to one of these dismal abodes.

Part of the deck in one hold was converted into mess facilities for the troops. Since, in theory, the men had no heavy work to perform they would not get hungry and need to have three meals a day, the whole shipload of men were fed only twice a day. With the ship almost at capacity and only two mess lines to handle the feeding of the troops, the men spent many hours in line waiting for their food.

The officers had things a bit more luxurious. The dining room which had served the 30 passengers was used to feed the, roughly, two hundred officers of all ranks. Individual tables, seating four, had been replaced by two long tables serving about 20 officers at a time. A wait was required for these tables but nothing to approach the Enlisted "chow line".

Beginning with the Lieutenant Colonels, of which there were a handful, and reaching down into the high seniority Captains, some officers were given state rooms. Where there had been two civilian passengers now there were six officers. This left the low ranking Captains and the First and Second Lieutenants. There were, probably, about 150 of these. Four plywood boxes were built, two on each side of the ship, to house these Officers. About 40 Officers were crammed into each of these "cabins". The bunks here were stacked three high, in most places, which, while not well-appointed, can be endured. Each of these "cabins" had a head, wash stands and showers served with fresh salt water. Once in a very long time the showers were supplied with fresh water from the ships' evaporators. The evaporators were barely adequate for the needs of the ship machinery, so fresh water showers were a rarity.

The night the Poelau Laut left San Francisco Bay she was in a convoy with about ten other ships and several destroyers as escorts. At dawn the next morning the troops awoke to see the convoy, with its escorts, disappearing over the horizon to the West while the Poelau Laut turned to Port and headed, more or less, to the South.



At the sand table on Mindoro, Col. Jones points out to the unit and battalion commanders the features of Corregidor.

(continued....)

