

Vietnam Veteran's Memorial & BBQ in Frankfort, KY

The Reunion Organizing Committee scheduled a great outing to the *Vietnam Veteran's Memorial* in Frankfort, KY, which included a salute to the fallen from the state.



Below center is WWII 503rd trooper Tony Sierra with his wife, Elizabeth on his right, surrounded by Sky Soldiers at the Frankfort memorial. If you gotta be surrounded, being surrounded by Sky Soldiers ain't a bad thing.



KY Vietnam Veterans Memorial Briefing Outline & Remarks By Jerry Cecil

Friday, 8 June 2012



Col. Jerry Cecil, C/1/503d, addressing guests at Memorial.

How the Memorial Came to Be

Group of Vietnam Veterans (1984-1988)

When no one else seemed interested in such a project -- except the veterans and their families.

Juried selection competition

Over 10 submissions -- blind appraisal of entrants.

Helm Roberts' design unanimously chosen

Site chosen-donated by state-in perpetuity

Louisville, Lexington and other cities finally became interested -- but Frankfort, the state Capitol -- was the correct choice for a state Memorial.

Design Elements

An enclosure -- 1962-1975 (the official beginning and end dates of US involvement by regular Armed Forces).

Flagpoles -- area for ceremonies. The two flags -- American and KY flag -- that these soldiers knew when they served. We recently added the POW/MIA flag -- following the lead of the National Vietnam Memorial. *Granite Plaza* with Sundial (gnomon). Each hour represents a year of Vietnam involvement; the granite is from the same Georgia quarry and we have reserved a corner of the quarry for future needs of this Memorial.

Summer and winter solstice lines.

Ecc. Verses around base.

Names of fallen inscribed on plaza.

Names of POWs/MIAs behind gnomon (so the shadow would not fall on their names). If/when all POWs/MIAs are accounted for -- that stone will be turned over -- only stone in the plaza that is polished on both sides -- and their names will be inscribed in the proper panel on the plaza.

Place of reflection and remembrance. In 25 years of visiting the Memorial, I have never been here when no one else was either departing or arriving to visit the Memorial.

How it 'works'

"The genius of Roberts' design is in the precision put into determining the location of each name, which is fixed mathematically by the date of casualty, the geographic location of the Memorial, the height of the gnomon and the physics of solar movement. The 327 cut stones were then designed and cut to avoid dividing any individual name." (Christina Noll)

None of the stones have the same dimensions or markings -- so they could not put in another place. Although the sundial forms a radial pattern, none could be changed because it would throw off the marking and engravings, and each one has been calculated for this latitude.

Names are arranged along sunlines (there are 365 sun lines and, of course, Leap Year had to accounted for).

On date of death in Vietnam

Shadow touches the name on the anniversary of the soldier's death.

Of the death -- in perpetuity

What it means

Their sacrifice is not forgotten (See the 23 flag sets arranged around the base of the gnomon? Each flag set represents a fellow Sky Soldier from Kentucky who died while serving in the 173d Abn Bde (SEP). *Their fellow soldiers inspired the Memorial and will remain sentinels to protect and maintain this spot so that future generations can visit and reflect* on the Meaning of their service.



Major Brown sings National Anthem.

(continued....)



Warped Gnomon

After 18 years the Gnomon had warped slightly. This was pointed out to Helm Roberts by a boisterous young lad during a school visit. Seeking to avoid any further disruption, Helm told the boy it must be an “*optical illusion*” and perhaps he was mistaken. But the next day, Helm returned to the monument and attached a plumb line to the top of the gnomon and checked it against his index mark on the plaza. The young schoolboy was right! The gnomon had become slightly warped through the constant sun, wind, rain, ice, snow, freezing and thawing of the seasons.

In Helm’s ‘engineering mind’, there was only one solution -- REPLACE THE GNOMON, which the Board members approved. In Helm’s words, “***this Memorial is either correct or it is not!***” This story illustrates the importance that we have placed to insure the Memorial remains meaningful in its purpose.



Throughout the day as the shadow of the sundial touches individual names, guests are careful not to step on the names of our fallen inscribed in the floor of the Memorial.

Mistakes in Stone Panels

At other times, we have remade and replaced entire panels because of a single mistake or damage to a name from the elements. This is obvious when you see the range of coloration in the stones before you. For years, a couple would faithfully attend our ceremonies to honor their son’s name on the Memorial. And for years, following the ceremony, they would insist that their son’s name was incorrect -- they named him “Jimmy” at birth, but he was listed as “James” on the Memorial. So, after we ‘finally’ grasped the meaning of this error to the parents, we replaced the entire stone to change his entry to “Jimmy.” Once again, ***this Memorial is either correct or it is not!***

Helm Roberts’ last project at this Memorial was begun shortly before he died -- it is a perhaps, ‘long overdue’ recognition of soldiers who, while not perishing in battle, may have died as a result of that service. This

new area with 5 benches will be dedicated on Veterans Day in November.

Finally, a few years ago I asked Helm of all the accolades, awards, and recognition he received about the Memorial, would he please send me one or two of his favorites that sum up the meaning of the Memorial. He sent me the following letter written in 2003 by Mrs. Gerry Riffe, the sister of CPT Charles F. Swope, whose name is on the Memorial:

*“Mr. Roberts,
I was there on the day and time my brother died and I cannot tell you how moved I was when the shadow pointed to his name and his name only. I had the misconception of how the sundial worked thinking it would cover his name along with many others with a shadow leading from the base never imagining that it would actually point to his name as it did. My day wouldn’t be complete without thanking you for helping to provide such a memorial to all the men and women whose names appear there.”*

Thank you.



Gary Prisk, Skip Kniley & Danny Day.
Three buddies at the Memorial....honoring buddies.



SHADOW OF DEATH

VIETNAM MEMORIAL

FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Frankfort, KY



From the floor of the memorial sundial.

The sundial of the Kentucky Vietnam Memorial is designed to cast a shadow on the name of each of Kentucky's fallen heroes on the anniversary month and year of their death.

Like most of the Sky Soldiers attending the 2012 Reunion in Lexington, I drove over to the Memorial at Frankfort and found myself looking at names on the granite face of the sundial. I immediately began looking for the name of my friend, SSG Glen Rountree, A/3/319th, and found his name on the January 1969 ray.

I first met Glen while setting up a new firebase for A Battery in 1968. Just before dark I dug in next to Glen and his LT, another southerner, and spent most of the night talking to them and listening to the LT's story about how he lost his army gun in Ranger School. I very quickly learned that Glen was from Kentucky and finding someone from back home there in Vietnam was like discovering a lost relative. I would see him many more times afterwards and always looked forward to talking about current events happening back home in Kentucky.

Glen was a great guy and if God could create a perfect Sky Soldier, he would be his first pick as a model. The last time I saw Glen was late December 1968, when he was staying at battalion headquarters in LZ English, four days short waiting on DEROS. Glen's last duty assignment with the 319th was to take a M151 to Qui Nhon to pick up a PFC, a nineteen-year-old kid from

A Battery who had gone AWOL. For some unknown reason Glen decided to head back to English when he should have spent the night at Qui Nhon. He found himself near Bong Son about dusk when he was ambushed by VC.

When we recovered the M151 and brought it back to English the top of the PFC's head was still in the jeep and we had to take that part of him to Graves Registration to keep his body intact. Glen had the soldier handcuffed and sitting in the passenger side of the jeep, but Charlie must have thought he was an officer as the M151 had two 46's with long antennas and the guy caught their first rounds through the windshield. Glen had returned fire with the 60, but a round hit the ammo can on the mount which broke the link in its belt.

They finally took him down with a round through his hips; he was flown to Okinawa and we thought he'd made it but were very heartbroken to learn he had died a couple of weeks later from pneumonia. The driver escaped with minor injury as he ran to a bridge position held by regional forces. The M151 was shot to pieces, rounds through the radiator, engine block, rims, tires, and in no shape to move on its own.

All of the artillery guys at English who knew Glen were very upset at the fact he was so short and on Highway 1, regardless of the reason. After reflecting on the outcome I very quickly realized that if it hadn't been for Glen I would have probably been the one going to Qui Nhon to retrieve the PFC.

It is only fitting that Kentucky has such a unique and marvelous monument to honor Sky Soldier SSG Glen Everett Rountree.

SSG Roger D. Conley
H&S/3/319th /173d ABN
RVN 5/68-5/69

Glen Everett Rountree
Staff Sergeant
A BTRY, 3RD BN, 319TH ARTILLERY
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Williamsburg, Kentucky
September 4, 1941 to January 13, 1969
On the Wall at Panel W35 Line 84





L-R: Pam Geishauser & Elizabeth Sierra on a sunny day in Frankfort, KY.



Sky Soldier's wreath at Memorial.



Memorial in foreground, BBQ in background, under a blue Kentucky sky.



David & Terry Davis and Terry Aubrey





Trooper chowing down at the BBQ.





Reflecting





The young guns meet the old gun in Frankfort.



Choppers land at the LZ....wait a minute!



I got point, follow me!



Ya had a good home but you left! You're right!!



Move out! Take two salt tablets and drive on!!



Some of America's finest.



Honoring, and remembering. If not us, who?



~ The Old Guard ~



Jim Bethea

We are veterans of the Vietnam War.

**Time is counting the cadence now
as the years slowly march us into history.
The battlefields where we screamed and cried
and bled and died
settle like falling leaves onto its pages.**

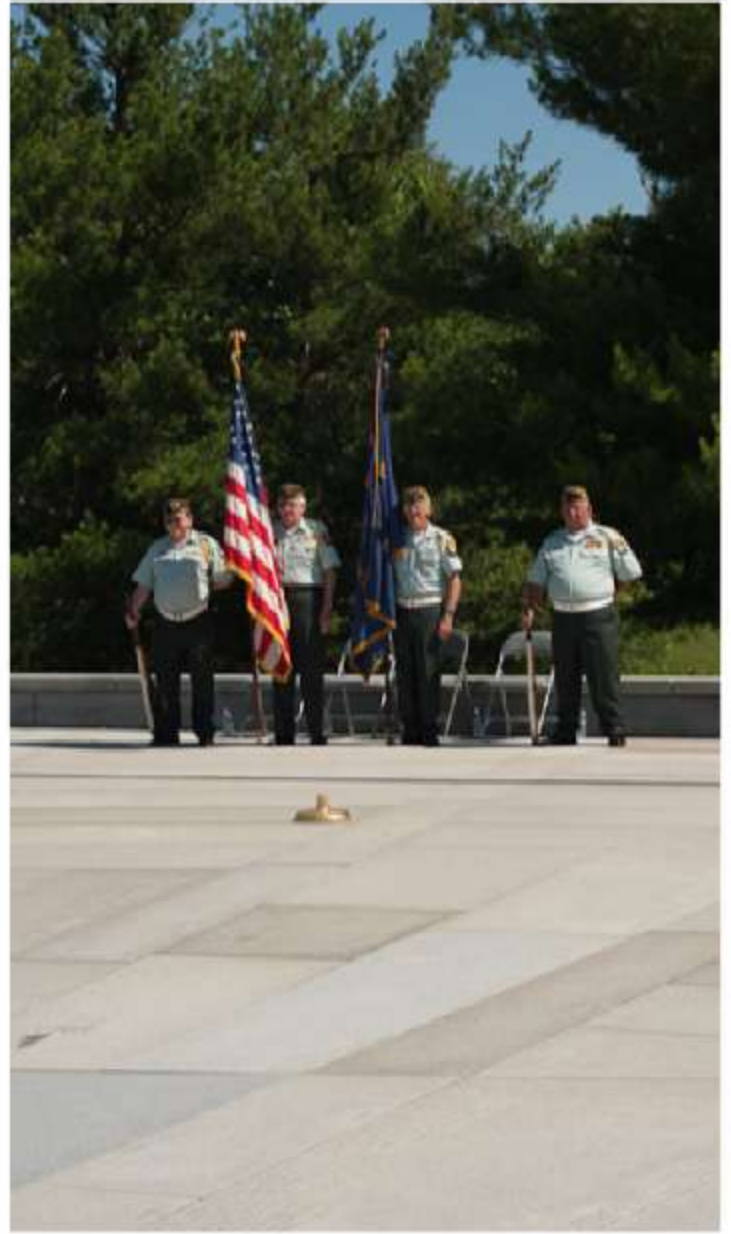
**We make our daily pilgrimage to the
seductive siren on the rocks –
Our Lady of the Valley of the Shadow – Vietnam.
She has been our companion for so long now
that it would be hard to imagine life without her.
Indeed, we would be like lost children.
She is the tapestry against which
all things are compared.
We measure everything and everyone
by the yardstick of our experience with her.**

**Today she may return us to a mountaintop view of a
cloud shrouded emerald green valley.
Tomorrow may bring a visit to the place with the
dark, blood soaked sand and the
bits of sticky, drying flesh clinging to the bushes.**

**We have that secret place that we retreat to
when the outside world gets too close.
It is where we go to deal with hurtful things.
It is the place where we keep the little
locked box with the bad things in it.
There, we are still soldiers...it is our bunker.**

**Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d,
173d Airborne, '65/66**

~ The Old Guard ~



Still soldiers.





Colonel Jerry Cecil with Mrs. Jackie Roberts, widow of Helm Roberts, designer of the Memorial.





KENTUCKY VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL Frankfort, KY



Kentucky Sky Soldiers on the KVVM¹ 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)

By Date Deceased

Johnnie E. Rice	21	7 Jul 1965
Danny R. Ward	19	8 Nov 1965
Kenneth E. Ducan	21	17 May 1966
David W. Stewart	19	11 Jun 1966
Rene C. Lopez	25	12 Jun 1966
Carlos D. Moore	18	27 Jul 1966
Louis R. Randall	18	25 Sep 1966
Bobby L. Hayes	28	6 Feb 1967
Chester P. Simpson	18	6 Feb 1967
Waddel Evans	19	11 May 1967
William C. Turner	21	17 May 1967
Ervin L. Burns	28	22 Jun 1967
Frank B. Dunford, III	19	22 Oct 1967
Clarence Hall	19	20 Nov 1967
Lawrence D. Greene	25	30 Jan 1968
Edgar J. Grismer	19	7 Sep 1968
George C. Rowland, Jr	31	17 Nov 1968
James Hall	29	1 Jan 1969
Bobby L. Gentry	19	8 Jul 1969
Harvey Claude Reynolds	37	22 Oct 1969
Lawrence O. Washington	28	29 Jan 1970
Marcus R. Davis	23	4 Apr 1970
Billy H. Ratliff	20	24 Sep 1970
Robert D. Kavich	18	22 Nov 1970

Visit the KVVM website at www.kyvietnammemorial.com

¹ Names taken from scrapbook of Hugh C. "Robbie" Robinson, deceased 2005.





A solemn moment at Vietnam Veteran's Memorial,
lest we forget.

Thanks to these folks for sharing their photos with us for this newsletter:

- Terry Aubrey, E/2/503d
- Jerry Hassler, HHC/Recon/2/503d
- Jim Gettel, A/2/503d
- 503rd Heritage Battalion web site -- Paul Whitman webmaster
- Wambi Cook, A/2/503d
- Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial (KVVM) website -- and Lon Whitson, webmaster
- Tony Geishauser, Cowboys
- Gary Prisk, C/D/2/503d
- Craig Ford, C/1/503d
- Jerry Cecil, C/1/503d
- Dominick Cacciatore, A/2/503d
- Dave Milton, A/2/503d
- Les Fuller, A/2/503d



My wife and I took a roundabout return drive back to the Hyatt and literally stumbled on the Kentucky Capitol building in Frankfort where we took this snapshot. Ed



~ The Closing Banquet ~



Sky Soldiers and friends of Sky Soldiers meet one last time before falling-in again in 2013 in Las Vegas. Seated from left is Mary Lea Quick and her dad Jim Mullaney, and fourth & fifth from left are Nancy & Dick Adams, with guests.



L-R: Tony Cicchino with Elizabeth & Tony Sierra.



Operation Corregidor II.



Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, WWII





Mary & Ray Basham.



From right, Tony Cicchino & Theresa Poklop and friends.



Cap Prisk, enlightening the masses, as Roy Scott, Mrs. McFarren and LTG McFarren look on.



Dinner Guests.



CSM Earl Rice, formerly of the 173d ABCT, representing the new generation of Sky Soldiers.
Graham Rollings, 2/503d, in the red tie is telling his new bride, "I used to look like that." The new bride smiled.

