



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter

October 2009 / Issue 7

For the men, and their families, of the 2d Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) ~ We Try Harder!



Secretary Shinseki Announces New Efforts to Explore Health Consequences of Service in Vietnam

September 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today plans to begin additional research by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to better understand the health consequences of service in Vietnam.

"The National Vietnam Veterans Longitudinal Study (NVVLS) will allow VA to pursue another valuable research tool," Secretary Shinseki said. *"The insight we gain from this study will help give us an understanding of how to better serve America's Veterans."*

NVVLS will study the Vietnam generation's physical and psychological health. The new study will supplement research already underway at VA, including studies on PTSD and on the health of women Vietnam Veterans. This is a follow-up study to a previous one that concluded in 1988.

VA has begun work to solicit bids to conduct the study, which is expected to run from 2011 through 2013.

VA is responsible for providing federal benefits to Veterans and their families. VA is the second largest of the 15 cabinet departments and operates nationwide programs for health care, financial assistance and burial benefits. The VA health care system operates more than 1,400 sites of care; nearly 5.5 million people received care in VA health care facilities in 2008.

Facts About VA Disability Compensation

Disability compensation for veterans is not subject to federal or state tax. About 80 percent of veterans receive their VA benefits by direct deposit, which VA recommends for security reasons.

Veterans are rated at increments of 10 percent reflecting degree of disability. As federal regulations summarize the underlying principle, *"The percentage ratings represent as far as can practicably be determined the average impairment in earning capacity resulting from such diseases and injuries and their residual conditions."*

The largest category of veterans on the compensation scale is at 10 percent disability (\$123. per month), with 782,000 veterans at this rate at the beginning of fiscal year 2009, among the millions of veterans receiving disability compensation.

The criteria for rating the severity of various disabilities are available online at

http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/38cfr4_07.html

As medical knowledge, laws and procedures change, VA regularly publishes proposed changes to these criteria in the *Federal Register* for public comment before a final regulation is adopted. Where a veteran has more than one disability, the percentages are not simply added together to produce a new rating. Instead, a formula described in federal regulations calculates the overall rating. (Vets often refer to this as "VA Math", where 20+20+20 does not equal 60. Ed.)

A veteran may be rated at zero percent, meaning there is evidence of a service-connected condition, but it does not impair the veteran. An example is a minor scar. This zero percent rating, though not compensable, can be beneficial, since it may raise the veteran's priority in other VA programs such as health care eligibility. In addition, it may be reviewed for a higher rating if the condition worsens.

VA Disability Continued...

A veteran may have a number of disabilities each evaluated as zero percent which produce a 10 percent combined disability rating, entitling the veteran to disability compensation. At the beginning of fiscal year 2009, there were more than 13,000 veterans in the category of "compensable zero" ratings.

There were 884,500 new and reopened claims requiring a disability rating received from veterans in fiscal year 2008, an average of nearly 74,000 claims filed per month. (Current outstanding claims exceed 905,000, see Issue 6, Page 1 of our Newsletter).

Among veterans on the rolls, the largest category of service-connected disabilities is musculoskeletal problems, accounting for about 40 percent of all disabilities. This includes such problems as impairment of the knee and arthritis due to trauma. Data on the number and type of disabilities are published annually (<http://www.vba.gov/reports/htm>)

Purple Heart Captain

A Sky Soldier buddy visited here for the past week, a former non-career Captain and company commander with the 4/503d, and recipient of the Purple Heart. He flew in to see Dr. Scott Fairchild, the PTSD guru who continues to be of so much help to our guys and their spouses. Some months ago Cap needed hearing aids, so he decided to contact his local VA clinic on the chance they might help. Not only did the VA provide him with the hearing aids, and a new pair of glasses, but unknown to him, after reviewing his military records, they informed him he was due about \$15,000. in accrued monthly VA compensation for the Purple Heart he received but was never paid. Cap was unaware anything was due him for the wounds he received in Vietnam. Did I mention Cap also earned a PhD after leaving the army? The thought occurs, of course, if this bright, old army officer didn't know compensation was due him for his Purple Heart, perhaps some of you don't know either. If you have a Purple Heart and never applied to the VA for the special compensation due you, you might want to contact your local DAV or VA and inquire about it. Should you be fortunate to receive some past due funds, please consider sending \$100. to the Sky Soldier Memorial Fund (see our Newsletter 5, Page 1).



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Our Newsletter ~ Notice!

Please send all stories, opinions and other submissions, including photos (JPEG), to rt0173d@cfl.rr.com This Newsletter is issued periodically. If you do not wish to receive notices of the Newsletter please send a note to the above address. *Airborne! All the way!!* Thanks to Paul Dinardo, 3/319th, for offering to post all past and current issues of the *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter* on his web site. If you missed any issues, they now appear on his Fire Base 319 web site at <http://www.173dabn.org/> as will all future issues. A notice will be sent to you as each future edition is released. *Thanks Paul!* Call up this page of Paul's site to directly access the Newsletters:

<http://www.173dabn.org/2bat/news.html>

Correction

Sky Soldier Ray Ramirez noted an error in our Newsletter about when the 4/503d, the *Geronimo Battalion*, joined the Brigade (see Issue 6, Page 10).

"The 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry deployed from the USA on 6 June 1966, aboard the USNS General John Pope. We left the Oakland Army Terminal at about 1600 hours and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge a few minutes later. Would this be the last time we saw any part of California? 18 days later we dropped anchor outside of Vung Tau and the next day we joined the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), at Bien Hoa. We didn't join the 173d in August." (Thanks Ray!)



Laundry in Bien Hoa. A good place for a cleaning.

REUNION OF SKY SOLDIERS IN THE BIGHORN

By Roger Dick, C/2/503



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A reunion was held in Greybull, Wyoming this September at the home of Christine and Rev. Mike McMillan, sniper 4/503d, to reunite men who served in the Brigade from “The Rock” to the trip back to Ft. Campbell. Some served almost every day of their tours together, like the four survivors of Dak To from 67-68, but most met for the first time in Mac’s back yard upon arrival. The bonding was immediate and permanent regardless of the paths we each traveled since Vietnam. The common bond we share as brothers forged in the jungles and mountains will remain strong, and in many cases superseding any and all relationships developed since.

available and accessible. One could just close your eyes and be transported back hundreds of years. As we departed, Mac stopped the caravan to point out Big Horn mountain sheep in the distance which he said he had only seen once in the past 35 years. This was more than providential, it was spiritual.

Day two started out with breakfast at a friend’s house followed by a shooting match with WW II Garands, all supervised by Mac’s friends and neighbors. The results of the shoot confirmed why some of us were RTO’S and others were snipers. Ironically, the number two man, after Mac, who placed first, turned out to be a medic,

Doc Bob Evalt. Of course the pros (Mac’s friends) and competitive shooters among us were in a different league from us ex grunts. It was hard to believe we were using the same weapons from the same distances. These guys were great!

Rev. Mike McMillan, Sniper 4/503d, placed first in this competition.

Pass the ammunition!



L-R: Bill Vose, Mike McMillan, Bill Metheny, Wes Thompson, Walter Bills, Roger Dick, Tim Cloonan, Clarence Johnson, Jon Willette

This photo was taken within hours of most of us meeting and set the stage for the good humor we would share and the fun we would have reminiscing, and enjoying “the moment” as we all have learned to do, post Vietnam. The five days we shared together went by in a flash and encouraged many of us who had never spent one day at an organized 173d gathering to come out of our holes and reunite with our brothers.



Mac set up a fantastic itinerary. We traveled by rugged four-wheel drive vehicles into the mountains, inaccessible to all but the locals who not only know where the historic treasures are, but how to get to them. Just imagine seeing the original camp sights of the Indian tribes as they migrated across this rugged territory with their tee pee stone rings still intact and the original materials used for their arrow heads and tools readily

***“What the hell are you doing Trooper!!!
Even a goddamn Leg knows how to put that magazine in!!”***

The two kegs of beer consumed that day reminded us all of the early days in-country when we returned back from a long mission. (Beer, & steaks cooked on a barbecue grill.)



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When was the last time any of you have even seen a C119? I'll bet it was jump school in the 60's. Well, Mac has a graveyard of them 15 minutes from his home owned by a friend who allowed us to not only walk around them but also climb in for nostalgic purposes. We could all feel the vibrations and once again could not wait to "exit the door when the green light came on". Also on the grounds were C130's, B29's etc.



Some of the guys wanted to purchase buffalo meat so Mac took us to a local ranch where they are raised. Mike May the owner and his son gave us a special tour of their 45,000 acre ranch and an education about "living in the west". It opened many eyes and we all gained new appreciation for the environment and the government's attempts to reintroduce wolves and other predators back into their natural habitats. Several of the guys did order large quantities of meat which will be harvested and shipped back this fall.



L-R: Mac McMillan, Buffalo

While the scenery was spectacular, the relationships developed and the stories shared will remain with us always. We were reminded how intimately we are connected when Mac related the story about the day he and his spotter were seriously wounded in 1970.

As Mac was relating the story he mentioned the name of his team leader who saved their lives by applying immediate first aid and coordinating the dust off. Much to our amazement we were able to confirm this same man served as *our* squad leader and was medivac'd from the third platoon, C/2/503 in 1967. We did not know if he lived or died until Mac told us his story some 42 years later. So, the life we saved in 1967 is the man who saved Mac and his spotter three years later.



Reunion hosts, Christine & Rev. Mike McMillan

We all shared a very special week due to the herculean efforts and kindness of Mac and his wife, Christine, and their friends who opened up their homes, their hearts and their lives to people they had never even met but will remain connected to forever.

My wish was to have all of my 173d brothers here for this mini-reunion, but I know that was unrealistic. Those who came to these sacred lands were meant to be here and they were changed, as I was changed by hosting my first 173d outdoor gathering. Thank you brothers!

Rev. Mac (retired), 173d Airborne Sniper

We're Being Attacked!!!

In some jungle some time in '66, we had just finished eating our C-Rats for breakfast when word came down it was our squad's turn to clean weapons before moving out. We were sitting with our backs to trees on the down-slope of a small incline; at the top of the slope was the Mortar Platoon. Rather than have a chopper come in to pickup the supply of unused mortar rounds from the previous night, the 4.2 platoon was indiscriminately firing them into the surrounding jungle. I had just finished putting my M-16 back together and noticed a buddy of mine on the opposite side of the path who still had his weapon in a couple of main pieces. When all of a sudden four or five shirtless guys from the Mortar Platoon came running down the slope screaming as they went by us. I immediately jammed a magazine into my gun and took a prone position behind the tree, pointing the weapon at what I was sure would be hundreds of NVA charging right at us, knowing I was going to die at any moment. I quickly glanced over at my equally terrified buddy only to see him with his mouth and eyes wide open, desperately trying but failing to jam the two pieces of his weapon together, as if playing an accordion in 4/4 time. For some reason this sight seemed amusing to me, even though death was coming right at us at any second. Well, we didn't die that morning. The base plate of the mortar had come loose while firing, and a mortar round went straight up in the air. Some of the mortar men chose to run by us while others jumped into a burning trash pit, some sustaining burns to their bodies. It's strange how sometimes simultaneous emotions of fear and amusement are so closely intertwined in war.

Smitty/2/503

A Bit of History

The CH-47 Chinook made its first flight on September 21, 1961. The tandem rotor helicopter had already been in production for the Army by Vertol Aircraft Co. in 1960, when



2/503d photo, Vietnam

Boeing bought the company. Chinooks were first used in combat in 1965 during the Vietnam War. By 1968, according to Boeing, Chinooks had logged 161,000 flight hours and transported 22.4 million passengers and 1.3 million tons of cargo. Since then, the Chinook has been upgraded several times. The CH-470 version is today standard for the Army. *ArmyTimes*



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My Wife

By a combat soldier

*As I sit and ponder, which I often do
Of terrible things, like the horrors of war
I break away from the fear, sweat and waterless tears
By thinking of you, My Wife.*

*As I sit and wonder what tomorrow might bring
With fears of the worst that might happen
I ease my mind of those terrible things
By thinking of you, My Wife.*

*As I sit in anger of the many thoughts
in my mind
Confused as to how to put them in order
I relax and adjust to the tension
By thinking of you, My Wife.*

*So you see dear, As I sit here and smile, I realize
My straightness is a crooked road
You are my love, my friend, My wife.*

Terrence L. (Woody) Davis, A/2/503

Sky Soldiers To Drop In On The Grand Strand

Elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association will conduct special operations in and around the province of North Myrtle Beach. The operations are to kick-off 2 June 2010. The Paratroopers are expected to accomplish their mission by 6 June 2010 (D-Day anniversary). A recon company (SC Chapter 30, lead by retired LTC Hal Nobles) has moved in, secured high ground and set-up base camp at Avista Resort located at coordinates 300 North Ocean Boulevard, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29852. R&R casualties are expected to be heavy, so pack your rucksack, fill your canteens and prepare to move forward. For a look at the complete battle plan, including hotel information, call-up the web site: www.173dreunion2010.com

“The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.” **President George Washington**

PARATROOPER CREED

I volunteered as a parachutist, fully realizing the hazards of my chosen service and by my actions will always uphold the prestige, honor and high esprit-de-corps of the only volunteer branch of the Army.

I realize that a parachutist is not merely a soldier who arrives by parachute to fight, but is an elite shock trooper and that his country expects him to march farther and faster, to fight harder, to be more self-reliant, and to soldier better than any other soldier. Parachutists of all allied armies belong to this great brotherhood.

I shall never fail my fellow comrades by shirking any duty or training, but will always keep myself mentally and physically fit and shoulder my full share of the task, whatever it may be.

I shall always accord my superiors fullest loyalty, and I will always bear in mind the sacred trust I have in the lives of the men I will lead into battle.

I shall show other soldiers by my military courtesy to my superior officers and noncommissioned officers, by my neatness of dress, by my care of my weapons and equipment, that I am a picked and well-trained soldier.

I shall endeavor always by my soldierly appearance, military bearing and behavior, to reflect the high standards of training and morale of parachute troops.

I shall respect the abilities of my enemies, I will fight fairly and with all my might. Surrender is not in my creed.

I shall display a higher degree of initiative than is required of the other troops and will fight on to my objective and mission, though I be the lone survivor.

I shall prove my ability as a fighting man against the enemy on the field of battle not by quarreling with my comrades in arms or by bragging about my deeds, thus needlessly arousing jealousy and resentment against parachute troops.

I shall always realize that battles are won by an Army fighting as a team, that I fight and blaze the path into battle for others to follow and to carry the battle on.

I belong to the finest fighting unit in the Army. By my appearance, actions, and battlefield deeds alone, I speak for my fighting ability. I will strive to uphold the honor and prestige of my outfit, making my country proud of me and the unit to which I belong.



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Chaplains's Corner



My grandchildren are a great source of joy in my life. Like most of us, after the war I returned home and started building a career and a family while still in a numbed state of existence. Christine and I were blessed with three sons along the way but I was so driven to succeed in those early days that I seem to have missed many opportunities for quality time with my three sons.

Sports and hunting were activities I participate in with my sons. However, in my younger years I approached recreation and hunting with the zest of a military mission. Winning and losing seemed more important than the time we shared together as a family.

All three of my sons were excellent athletes and hunters, but the cost was the intimate relationship that so many of us missed because of our shut down emotions and the fear that was driving the need to protect our children from what we had experienced in that war.

Before each hunting trip I would assign particular tasks to my sons in the process of preparation. Once, my oldest son forgot to bring the additional water I had assigned him to bring along. After we were in the field I discovered the mistake and lit into him like it was a life and death matter, sorely embarrassing him in front of his two brothers and reducing him to tears. In those days everything seemed to be centered on life and death even though I considered the war behind me. My fear was irrational, but I justified my anger by thinking I was doing what was in their best interest.

In my later years, as I begin to find myself again, I went back to my sons and apologized for my fear-driven behavior in those early days. Now, we have a wonderful relationship but how I wish I had understood the irrational fear that was driving my unhealthy reactions to my sons in those early days.

Now grandchildren are a different story. I now better understand myself and I am better able to discern the difference between healthy fears and fear that is driven by that damn war.

My grandchildren are a second chance to get it right. They have given me a new desire to live. So, don't give up on life...our grandchildren need us along with the life's experiences we have obtained both in the war and after. Thank God for second chances.

Rev. Mike McMillan, 173d Sniper





Medal of Honor

Charles B. Morris

Staff Sergeant

U.S. Army

“A” Co., 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade
(Sep)

Republic of Vietnam, 29 June 1966



For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Seeing indications of the enemy’s presence in the area, S/Sgt. Morris deployed his squad and continued forward alone to make a reconnaissance. He unknowingly crawled within 20 meters of an enemy machinegun, whereupon the gunner fired, wounding him in the chest. S/Sgt. Morris instantly returned the fire and killed the gunner. Continuing to crawl within a few feet of the gun, he hurled a grenade and killed the remainder of the enemy crew. Although in pain and bleeding profusely, S/Sgt. Morris continued his reconnaissance. Returning to the platoon area, he reported the results of his reconnaissance to the platoon leader. As he spoke, the platoon came under heavy fire. Refusing medical attention for himself, he deployed his men in better firing positions confronting the entrenched enemy to his front. Then for 8 hours the platoon engaged the numerically superior enemy force. Withdrawal was impossible without abandoning many wounded and dead. Finding the platoon medic dead, S/Sgt. Morris administered first aid to himself and was returning to treat the wounded members of his squad with the medic’s first aid kit when he was again wounded. Knocked down and stunned, he regained consciousness and continued to treat the wounded, reposition his men, and inspire and encourage their efforts. Wounded again when an enemy grenade shattered his left hand, nonetheless he personally took up the fight and armed and threw several grenades which killed a number of enemy soldiers. Seeing that an enemy machinegun had maneuvered behind his platoon and was delivering the fire upon his men, S/Sgt. Morris and another man crawled toward the gun to knock it out. His comrade was killed and S/Sgt. Morris sustained another wound, but, firing his rifle with 1 hand, he silenced the enemy machinegun. Returning to the platoon, he courageously exposed himself to the devastating enemy fire to drag the wounded to a protected area, and with utter disregard for his personal safety and the pain he suffered, he continued to lead and direct the efforts of his men until relief arrived. Upon termination of the battle, important documents were found among the enemy dead revealing a planned ambush of a Republic of Vietnam battalion. Use of this information prevented the ambush and saved many lives. S/Sgt. Morris’ gallantry was instrumental in the successful defeat of the enemy, saved many lives, and was in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army.

About Charlie Morris:



“Sergeant Morris, I don't know anything more or anything better that I could say to you than all the American people for whom I am supposed to speak are grateful to you and appreciative that the Good Lord has given you to us and has brought you back. May God bless you.”

President Lyndon Johnson

Gus Vendetti & Charlie Morris 1966

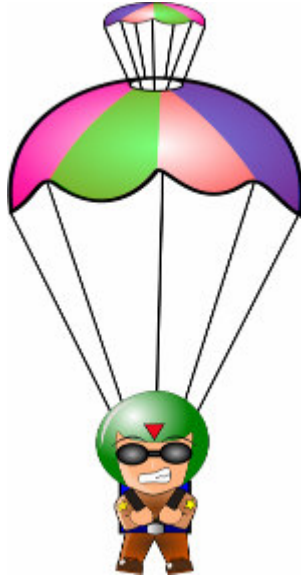
“We are not only fellow soldiers, but we are friends. I saw him at Cam Ranh Bay when he was decorated ... by our Commander in Chief. I saw him several times in the hospital. The indomitable spirit that he displayed on the battlefield ... he displayed in the hospital every time I saw him -- self-confident, proud to be a soldier, proud to serve his country ... proud to be an American.”

Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

The Stupid Paratrooper

About ten cherries are making their first parachute jump. This 6 foot, 280 pound Jump Master standing by the open door says:

"Okay ladies, hustle up to this door, jump out in turn, and count slowly to three. When you get to three, your chute will automatically open. Now in the event, and this is highly unlikely, your chute doesn't open, pull the cord on your bellies. That's your emergency chute. The emergency chute will open immediately. Any questions?"



But these guys are too scared to even talk. The Sergeant grabs the first guy in line and, while pulling him to the door, yells; *"When you get to the drop zone, there'll be trucks waiting to take you back to the base. GO! GO! GO!"*

As scared as they are, they all make it out the door, except the last guy in the stick. This guy is a really sad looking, 98-pound pessimistic creature. Very reluctantly he shuffles up to the door and, just before he gets booted out, falls out and starts counting: *one... two...* He finally gets to three.

Nothing.

He waits about five seconds and counts to three once again.

Still nothing.

He starts frantically fumbling around, and finally finds the rip cord. He jerks on the handle and the cord comes off in his hand. Raising his head to the heavens, he screams:

"I bet them trucks ain't waiting either!!!"

***STAND UP!
HOOK UP!
CHECK EQUIPMENT!
STAND IN THE DOOR!
GO! GO! GO!***



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California News

My friend, Jose Ramos, a Medic with the 3/506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division and the 82nd Abn. Div., lives here in Whittier, CA, and he has been working on a piece of Federal legislation to create a *"Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day"*. He had a House Resolution passed a few years ago that went to the US Senate and then to the President, but George Bush never signed the HR.

Well, Jose started again and had a new HR 234 passed by the US House of Reps., and the US Senate and its awaiting signature again. The State of California just had a piece of legislation signed by the Governor on Friday at the 29 Palms USMC Training Center. Jose Ramos was there for the signing along with other Veterans and USMC (Col. Ret.) Assemblyman Cook of Yucaipa, CA, who sponsored the State legislation.

The California legislation that the Governor signed is Assembly Bill 717.

We are trying to get other States to pass similar legislation. Go to www.whvvd.org for info about the legislation.

Ray Ramirez, 4/503d



2/503d Jim "Top" & Barb Dresser



SKY SOLDIER EXTRAORDINAIRE



It is our honor to feature 2/503d trooper,
Sergeant Donald “Rocky” Rockholt.

Don is one of those true American heroes we sometimes hear about. But, if you spent any time at all with Rocky, you would never know that about him. In no uncertain terms, this G.I.’s life thus far has been filled with heralded accomplishments, and major set-backs which would challenge the strongest in our ranks.

After joining the army and completing jump school, Don found himself in Vietnam in 1967, with the 2d Battalion of the 173d Airborne. He didn’t realize he would soon be fighting for his life and the lives of his buddies on the hills of Dak To. In spite of being wounded repeatedly and receiving multiple Purple Hearts, Rocky somehow survived those battles, and in recognition of his heroic acts during combat operations, he was awarded the Silver Star among numerous other awards.



But, being a grunt getting shot at as a daily routine was insufficient for this brave paratrooper; he wanted more, and signed-up for a second tour of duty with his beloved battalion in Vietnam. When he learned the Brigade was forming a specialized Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol unit (LRRP’s), Rocky knew right away that that was for him, and spent his second tour as one of these esteemed soldiers.

Following his years in the army Don served as a policeman in Atlantic City, NJ, and for a time was a professional airline pilot, and later an entrepreneur owning and running his own business.



Rocky and his friend in Vietnam, circa 1967.

Today, Don is retired and lives in Cocoa Beach, FL. He invests much of his time supporting the Gunnery Sergeant Elia P. Fontecchio Memorial VFW Post 10148, where he has served as Commander on multiple occasions.

In spite of tragic family losses and physical disabilities which test him daily, Rocky continues to live a full life; a life of giving and caring for his fellow veterans, while laughing in the face of adversity. This world should have more Don Rockholt’s.



An Ass-Kicking Sky Soldierette

From the wife of one of our former battalion commanders after receiving her personalized 173d challenge coin pendant.

Am afraid I am already in trouble. This was grocery shopping day and I headed out. Texas summers are hot and there are lots of bad hair days, and as I went out the kitchen door I reached up and grabbed my pretty 173d Airborne cap (already had on my coin) and off I went. Just as I was leaving, my Sky Soldier said, "See if you can find the new Dave Campbell football magazine," it has all the college predictions, players etc.

I headed to the magazine rack first thing, and was pouring over the different sports magazines--not having much luck. I knew someone else was there but just wasn't paying much attention. Finally, after this guy had cleared his throat for the umpteenth time I looked over at him. He had a handle-bar mustache, some tattoos, and was wearing a tank shirt, and jeans shorts that were about to fall off of him. I also noticed he was chewing on a tooth pick or match (folks in Texas always chew on toothpicks). He realized he had my attention, and he said, "Pardon me ma'am, I couldn't help but notice your airborne hat and also your coin." I just nodded politely, then he asked if he could see the coin. since I was wearing it, was not sure which way to go, but took it off and let him see it.

About that time I noticed there was a younger guy with him; they both examined the coin, then he handed it back to me and said, "82nd Airborne. I've heard of the 173rd," to which I raised an eyebrow, while with typical airborne ethnocentrism he proceeded to relate the history, accomplishments and total saga of the great 82nd Airborne.

I could see he was really proud of his time with them and listened politely and respectfully. Then he said, "I always heard the 173d was REAL SMALL." My other eyebrow went up, so help me God, out came something like, "Yes, they were small, they were elite, they were fast, and they were hard-hitting?!"



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Mission accomplished and back home in seven hours for supertime while the 82nd trooper was left on the runway waiting to be loaded. Hearing my remarks the young fellow who was holding on to the magazine rack doubled up laughing, and the older guy was chomping pretty hard on his toothpick. About that time sanity returned to me and some inner instinct said, *Lady, get down the aisle and get your eggs, bread and milk* -- thereby I tipped my little airborne hat and moved quickly off.

Somewhere in the conversation, though, he did ask me if the 82nd had such a coin, I did not know. Upon arriving home and relating my story to my Trooper, he did not have a clue either. Hope I don't run into those guys again, or their reinforcements. They looked like they had fallen on pretty hard times. My Sky Soldier suggested maybe I should not wear the hat and the coin at the same time, but darn----there goes the fun. Moral of this story, *always an airborne man--always an airborne wife!* It really happened at the grocery here in Texas--out-da-door.

This amusing story was written years ago by Exie Carmichael, wife (and life-long RTO) of 2/503d Battalion Commander LTC Bob Carmichael. Airborne XE!!!



Hello brothers.