



# 2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

November 2009 / Issue 8

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

## *In Honor Of Our Dak To Sky Soldiers*

### **BATTLES OF DAK TO, HILL 875 ASSAULT**

#### **COMBAT AFTER ACTION REPORT:**

##### **Task Organization:**

Companies A, C, and D, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry,  
173rd Airborne Brigade

##### **Date of Operations:**

19 November - 23 November 1967

##### **Location:**

YB796134, Map Series L7014, Sheet 6538 III,  
DAK TO District, KONTUM Province

##### **Reporting Officer:**

Brigadier General Leo H. Schweiter

##### **Task Organization:**

A/2/503d Infantry

1 Scout Dog Team, Medical Team, Artillery Forward  
Observer Team, 4.2 Mortar Forward Observer,  
Engineer Team

C/2/503d Infantry

1 Scout Dog Team, Medical Team, Artillery Forward  
Observer Team, 4.2 Mortar Forward Observer,  
Engineer Team

D/2/503d Infantry

1 Scout Dog Team, Medical Team, Artillery Forward  
Observer Team, 4.2 Mortar Forward Observer,  
Engineer Team

##### **OPCON Elements:**

Engineer Platoon, 173d Engineer Company,  
19 November - 20-1300 November.

MIKE Special Forces Company #26,  
19 November - 20-1300 November.

MIKE Special Forces Company #23,  
21-1500 November - 23-2400 November.

Companies A and D/1/12th Infantry, (4th Inf Div),  
21-1500 November - 22-1000 November.

#### **Supporting Forces:**

##### **Artillery:**

3/319th Artillery (DS) 173d Abn Bde,  
105mm Howitzers(6), Towed  
C/6/14th Artillery (GS) 8" 175mm Howitzer  
A/5/16th Artillery (GS) 155mm How (SP)  
B/5/16th Artillery (GS) 155mm How (SP)  
D/5/16th Artillery (GS) 155mm/175mm Howitzer  
A/3/18th Artillery (GS) 8"/175mm Howitzer  
B/2/19th Artillery (GS) 105mm Howitzer, Towed  
C/2/19th Artillery (GS) 105mm Howitzer, Towed  
A/4/42nd Artillery (GS) 105mm Howitzer, Towed  
B/1/92nd Artillery (GS) 155mm Howitzer, Towed

##### **Air Support:**

##### **Transportation:**

The Brigade Aviation Officer handled all of the 2/503d Infantry's requirements for troop and cargo transportation with the exception of DUSTOFF's. The resupply pilots and crews were particularly valorous in their support during the battle on Hill 875.

##### **Dust Off's:**

All DUSTOFF's were handled through the Administration/Intelligence (S2) Net and performance was outstanding.

##### **Air Strikes/FAC's:**

Supporting Air Strikes including Sky Spots and ARC Lights were coordinated through Brigade S3 Air.

##### **Special Purpose Flights (Intelligence):**

The 2/503d Infantry received prompt and adequate support for SNOOPY, RED HAZE, VR and SLAR missions through the Brigade S2 Air.

##### **Armor:**

B/1/69th Armor gave excellent cooperation and support throughout the contact.



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### Chemical:

The 2/503d Infantry had three defoliation missions flown during November on which they received excellent cooperation and prompt action by the Brigade Chemical Officer.

### Engineer:

The 173d Engineer Company provided excellent support especially in clearing operations. They were indispensable in clearing thick bamboo clumps and in removing large trees.

### Intelligence:

The Intelligence Annex to OPOD 25-67 Operation MACARTHUR, Headquarters 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) dated 0900 05 November 1967 gave the most current enemy locations available for use by friendly forces prior to conduct of Operation MACARTHUR. These enemy locations were general in nature and there were no confirmed enemy locations within the Battalion area of operation at the beginning of the operation.

### Mission:

The 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day of 18 November 1967.

### Concept of Operation:

The attack was to be made with 2 Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as the boundary between the attacking Companies. The Companies were to attack with two Platoons forward and one Platoon in reserve. A Company, was to be held in reserve and was to ensure security of the rear flank of the other two Companies and secure the area at the bottom of the hill.



### Execution:

At 0730 hrs 19 November, the ambush elements from A, C and D Companies closed their unit's night laager site vicinity YB 798138. CPT Harold J. Kaufman, Senior

Company Commanding Officer issued the battle order while Artillery and Air preparation was being fired on Hill 875. The 26th MIKE Special Forces Company reached its blocking position at YB 797127 at 0822 hrs.

At 0943 hrs the Air Strikes were complete and the three Companies began moving.



173 airborne assault on hill 875.

The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The Companies were to assault with two Platoons forward and one Platoon held in reserve. D Company had its 3rd Platoon on the left, 2nd Platoon on the right, CP behind the 2nd Platoon and the 1st and Weapons Platoon following in reserve. C Company had its 3rd Platoon on the left 2nd Platoon on the right, CP behind the 3rd Platoon and the 1st Platoon following in reserve. A Company was to be in reserve and to secure the rear.

The weather was clear and warm and the ridge slope gradual, approximately 100 meters wide, dropping off sharply to the east and more gradually to the west. The vegetation was fairly thick with bamboo, scrub brush and tall trees growing up the hill.

C and D Companies started out in two columns each. As they reached the base of the hill they deployed into two Platoons abreast with two Squad files in each Platoon. They advanced slowly through the tangled and gnarled vegetation which had been mashed down by the bomb strikes.

In the centermost file of the two Companies was the 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon of D Company, SP4 Kenneth Jacobson was the point man. SP4 Charlie Hinton about 5 meters behind him and SGT Frederick Shipman, the Squad leader, behind Hinton. As they approached the military crest of the hill, Jacobson received 3 small arms rounds and was killed instantly.



The time was 1030 hrs. SP4 Hinton and SGT Shipman moved up closer to Jacobson and called for a Medic. As the Medic, SP4 Farley, came up he was hit by small arms fire and died a few minutes later. SP4 Hinton and SGT Shipman still did not know where the fire was coming from. It wasn't until the NVA started throwing grenades that SGT Shipman and his men could identify where the initial fire had come from. After the initial bursts of fire, rucksacks were dropped and the Platoons began closing up and deploying on line. As they approached SGT Shipman's squad, which had been slightly forward, enemy fire increased rapidly with recoilless rifle, automatic weapons fire and rifle grenades coming from the NVA positions. Over on the right flank as C Company's 2nd Platoon closed up and moved forward, one of their point men, SP4 Quinn, was hit by small arms fire. As the Medic, SP4 Haggerty, moved up to assist he was killed by small arms fire.

As the enemy fire lulled, they moved forward 5-6 meters on line, then the enemy fire exploded again. After returning fire and pausing for indirect fires to be brought in, the 2nd Platoon moved forward approximately 20-30 meters using fire and movement. During the next two hours they took most their casualties from frag wounds, the exploding recoilless rifle rounds and hand grenades. Meanwhile, the 3rd Platoon of C Company, which was near the trail dropped their rucksacks and moved forward alongside of D Company, receiving mostly sniper fire along the way.



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As they reached D Company's location, they too came under heavy recoilless rifle and B-40 rocket fire. At this time, C and D Companies marked their positions with smoke as FAC's adjusted in Artillery and Air Strikes. The Paratroopers returned fire on enemy positions, after approximately 30 minutes the Companies began moving again utilizing fire and movement.

Just five meters in front of SGT Shipman's position was a bunker from which the contact had originated. 1SGT Deebs, SSG Page and others from D Company took the first bunkers throwing 4-5 hand grenades through the port. SSG Johnson's 1st Squad 2nd Platoon of D Company came across a dead NVA in a V-trench to the left of the bunkers. The 2nd Platoon advanced past the bunker and the trench, only to have an NVA throw several grenades at them from the bunker they had just blown, the bunker apparently had a tunnel leading to it from higher on the hill. The 2nd Platoon reported killing several NVA in the position and still they continued to receive resistance from the bunker.



***"I tried to position myself in order to throw a grenade at or into the bunker. At the same time I was turning to see if I could get a visual on Carmody. In doing so, I saw a young black guy take a round in the face and fall over backwards."***

**Wayne Bowers**





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The Platoons advanced slowly for 15-20 meters not knowing exactly where to fire since the enemy had its positions well concealed in the thick broken bamboo and brush. Heavy recoilless rifle fire, grenades and small arms fire brought the assault to a stand-still in some places. Over on the left side, D Company reported advancing to within 15-20 meters of what appeared to be the main bunker system.

Over on the right-hand side they were only able to close to within 15-20 meters. During this assault, LT Smith 3rd Platoon Leader of C Company was cut down by automatic weapons fire and later died. Also a couple of artillery rounds fell short on D Company on the left, injuring PSG E6 James Beam, SP4 Frank Carmody and one or two others.



Captain Kaufman seeing that the assault was bogging down and realizing that the rear was being attacked, ordered his men back and formed a perimeter. They did so over about 30 meters of the ground they had just covered, drawing their wounded with them. SP4 Witold Leszuzynski was WIA as he covered LT Peter Lantz who brought LT Smith back into the perimeter before he died. Over on the left hand side, 3rd Platoon of D Company also got the word to withdraw and did so. The 2nd Platoon however didn't get the word and continued fighting, before long they realized that there was no one on their flanks. D Company's 3rd Platoon had pulled back approximately 30 meters when they received word that the 2nd Platoon was pinned down. They moved back up the hill to help with the 1st Platoon covering. D Company began a rapid and broken withdrawal, but many of the men were not quite sure of the situation. Captain Kaufman, C Company Commander, drew and fired his pistol in the air several times to regain control. Captain Kaufman only had his men pull back into the perimeter rather than withdraw, as he didn't want to lose the high ground that they had gained. The front edge of

the perimeter was only 20 meters from the NVA bunker and trench where the battle started. The men began to dig in with knives, steel pots or anything else they could work with.

A Company had left the laager site that morning (right on the heels of C and D Companies) in the march order of 2nd, 3rd, CP, Weapons and 1st Platoon. They moved approximately 500 meters in 45 minutes. As they moved up the hill the 2nd Platoon broke off to the right keeping in sight of C Company and the 3rd Platoon went off to the left keeping D Company in sight. The CP, Weapons and the 1st Platoon remained in the middle. When the contact with C and D Companies occurred, A Company halted. As the action developed, Captain Kiley ordered the Weapons Platoon to start constructing an LZ, at a point approximately 100 meters from where C and D Companies were engaged. The 1st Platoon secured the LZ from the rear by putting OP's out 30-50 meters to the flanks and rear and by positioning the remainder of the men on line 15 meters back. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons secured the flanks. As C and D Companies slowly advanced, the two A Company Platoons moved with them as best they could. The LZ construction was going slowly, an LZ kit was requested at 1300 hrs and dropped in at 1400 hrs. Shortly afterwards, the LZ received several mortar rounds.

The rear OP was located 30-40 meters back along the trail that the Companies had moved down earlier. It was manned by SP4 James Kelley the Team Leader who was armed with an M-16, SP4 John Steer, a rifleman, PFC Carlos Lozada a machine-gunner and PFC Anthony Romano the assistant machine-gunner. A little after 1400 hrs SP4 Kelley was sitting on the right side of the trail behind a tree with PFC Romano, SP4 Steer and PFC Lozada, smoking and waiting. Romano mentioned not to fire at the first enemy that approached but to let them get close. SP4 Kelley began to hear twigs breaking in front of him so he leaned around the tree and aimed uphill. Suddenly as firing broke out on the left (possibly mortar fire), PFC Lozada yelled "*Here they come Kelley*" and began to fire in long sweeping bursts down the hill into a group of about 15 advancing NVA. Lozada's initial bursts into the advancing NVA caught them by complete surprise and at such a close range that the M-60 machine gun tore the column to pieces. The NVA were caught by complete surprise and were unaware of the presence of the rear Observation Point.

As soon as the firing broke out members of the 1st Platoon, SGT Jeffery Hilleshiem, PFC James Howard (RTO), PFC James Spellers and SP4 Eugene Bookman, dashed forward to aid the OP's who were rapidly being pinned down by the advancing NVA. SGT Hilleshiem was hit while running forward and PFC Romano, assistant machine gunner, ran to help him, bringing him back to the LZ. PFC Lozada knelt behind a log and continued firing long sweeping bursts into the advancing NVA while SP4 Kelley and SP4 Steer fired their M-16's from the right side of the trail.

The sudden heavy fire from the rear had momentarily slowed the NVA attack and alerted the rest of the Company. SP4 Kelley called for Lozada to fall back. Lozada responded by running across the trail firing and getting behind a log on the right side of the trail and continuing to fire into the onrushing NVA with steady streams of fire. Kelley continued to yell as he fell back and just after he shot a well camouflaged NVA at 10 meters, his weapon jammed (Note: The NVA's face was blackened and his weapon was wrapped in burlap). While Kelley worked on his weapon, Lozada jumped into the trail and began firing from the hip at the charging NVA as he walked slowly backwards up the trail. SP4 Steer, started dropping back, Kelley fixed his weapon and started firing again. Lozada's machine gun jammed (or he ran out of ammunition), as he ran to catch up, the NVA fire hit him in the head knocking him onto Steer. Steer became confused, so Kelley ran back down the hill and got Steer on the trail moving back up hill.



In the meantime the others who came to help the OP's, Bookman and Howard were wounded and Speller killed by the heavy NVA fire. McGill and Coleski assisted the wounded men and they all moved rapidly up the hill using fire and movement with other men in the Platoon. Kelley dropped M-26 frag grenades behind him as he moved up the trail.



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Back on the LZ after the first mortar rounds hit, the Weapons Platoon ran for their gear and formed a perimeter. As the action and mortar fire increased, SP4 Jack Shoop and PFC Martin Bergman ran back onto the LZ and attempted to initiate counter mortar fire. While in the process, Shoop was hit and killed by small arms fire.

Captain Kiley instructed his 2nd and 3rd Platoons who had been carrying wounded down to the LZ to move down and reinforce the 1st Platoon. This was his last transmission. There were approximately 8-10 WIA's on the LZ when the rear attack broke out. LT Thomas Remington immediately started moving his 2nd Platoon back down from the right hand side of the ridge, they never made it.

The NVA were approaching on a large well traveled trail that was very well constructed, including steps cut into the side of the hill. They smashed into the west flank of the 2nd Platoon near the front, cutting them off from the rest of their Company around the LZ. SGT Aron Hervas was leading the 2nd Platoon when the NVA opened up with a heavy volume of fire, he spun firing, hitting several NVA before he was felled with a bullet through the head, SP4 Frank Stokes and PVT Ernesto Villereal were killed in action. SP4 Benzene and PFC Sexton were pinned down, SP4 Orendorf and some others moved down and got Sexton out, however SP4 Benzene, after killing 5-10 NVA from behind a tree, was himself killed. LT Remington was hit in both arms and both legs, PSG Smith (SSG E6) and several others were wounded in the fire fight. The 2nd Platoon consolidated as best they could and pulled back up the hill to C and D Companies perimeter. The 3rd Platoon was on the eastern edge of the ridge met lesser resistance and was able to link up with the LZ. They did receive effective fire from the west and sustained several casualties, as the NVA had smashed through to the main trail.

The NVA were evidently well prepared for the battle. The rear attack, attack from the left flank and mortar attack all came within minutes of each other. Both of the attacking forces were estimated to be company size. Several of the NVA were well camouflaged. It was noticed that several of the NVA had strange grins on their faces. One trooper reported seeing an NVA charge into a tree, bounce off and continue his charge.



When the hill was finally taken, it was noticed that many of the enemy casualties and equipment had been policed from the battlefield indicating that the enemy had avenues of withdrawal that could have been utilized at any time.

A Company's CP group was hit by one of the initial mortar rounds, wounding Captain Kiley, LT Busenlehner, SGT Lyons, SGT Stacey and others. The CP group was then caught in the midst of an NVA attack from the west. A C

Company Medic who had been one of the wounded at the LZ, said that the NVA came "swarming" up the side of the ridge. The CP group killed several of the NVA force before succumbing. There were six (6) in the CP group, Captain Kiley, SP5 Taylor

(Senior Medic who had been treating Captain Kiley and the others), SP4 Young (RTO) and three others, all died fighting. One of the group was shot in the legs and the C Company Medic could not carry him and had to abandon him to scramble back up to the perimeter. LT Busenlehner, SGT Stacey and SGT Lyons had moved down to the Weapons Platoon near the LZ and instructed them to withdraw since the CP had been knocked out. The Weapons Platoon took their one good radio and as many of the wounded as they could carry and moved back up towards the C and D Company perimeter.

In 10-15 minutes, the NVA pushed A Company up the hill towards C and D Companies perimeter, PSG Siggers posted men on the trail to hold it open for the withdrawing Paratroopers. As fast as the "Sky Soldiers" fired, the faster the NVA kept coming. Survivors of A Company described themselves as being literally swamped by a hoard of charging NVA soldiers. At 1500 hrs C Company reported to Battalion Headquarters that an estimated 200-300 NVA were all around them. The entire perimeter had come under mortar attack and now recoilless rifle, small arms and B-40 rocket fire pounded the perimeter as the NVA had followed A Company right up to the perimeter.

Where the perimeter was established the slope was rather gradual, pitching off to either side. C Company had from 12 to 5 o'clock on the perimeter, D Company from 7 to 10 o'clock and A Company mingled from 4 to 10 o'clock. The Company CP's were located together where the wounded were consolidated. The Paratroopers beat off the NVA attack, but continued to receive sporadic but effective sniper and mortar fire. At 1550 hrs C Company reported receiving B-40 rocket fire. At 1640 hrs an LOC ship dropped in an



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ammunition resupply but it landed approximately 15 meters outside the perimeter on the forward slope between the NVA and the US positions. LT Lantz and LT McDonough organized recovery teams and moved out to recover it, the operation was going fairly smoothly

when a sniper hit LT Lantz, killing him instantly. The recovery party withdrew immediately. The 335th Assault Helicopter Company continued to attempt to resupply the Companies, however heavy hostile fire drove them away. A total of six (6) ships were grounded from automatic weapons and small arms fire.

At 1750 hrs two pallets were successfully dropped in.

Throughout this period a heavy barrage of TAC Air and Artillery was adjusted in on the enemy. Sky Raiders, F-100's and Helicopter Gunships delivered their payloads, making their passes on a SW to NW tangent on the perimeter. At 1858 hrs just after dark a jet fighter approached Hill 875 from a NE to SW direction passed directly over the heads of the Sky Soldiers. One or two of its bombs fell short landing directly in the middle of the C Company CP where the leaders and wounded had been congregated. There were at least 42 killed and 45 wounded (either by the bomb or after having been wounded prior). LT Bart O'Leary, D Company Commanding Officer, though suffering from serious wounds stayed on the Battalion net throughout the night maintaining communications. At first there was mass confusion and some panic. Most of the leaders had been either hit or killed including the Chaplain, Father Watters, the entire C Company CP group, and leaders from each of the Platoons.

***"I felt a flame wrap around me.  
At the same time a extreme  
noise hit me. Everything went  
black. For awhile I was  
unconscious, I don't know how  
long. My first memory is of  
gasping for air, sucking in hot  
ash and debris..."***





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***things were still falling from the blast. My legs had been naked before the blast because of my earlier wound. The hot burning ash falling was burning my legs and I was still so stunned at this point I could not move. I had no idea what had happened to cause all this pain, where I was or probably what planet I was on. I was bleeding from every part of my body. I had so much blood in my eyes and didn't have much function in my limbs. I sat there and took the pain."***

**Bob Fleming**

The Paratroopers quickly recovered however, with leaders emerging from the ranks. The wounded were gotten off their feet and quieted down. PSG Peter Krawtzow took charge of C Company and reorganized their sector of the perimeter. LT McDonough from D Company and LT Sheridan from A Company had only minor wounds and were instrumental in re-establishing control. A Company's artillery RTO was the only one with contact to the Battalion Fire Direction Net. He adjusted the first Artillery defensive concentration walloping it in towards the perimeter. As he was adjusting his second defensive concentration in front of a different sector of the perimeter, he gave an adjustment that would have brought the round too close to the perimeter. During this period, PSG Krawtzow had gotten hold of a radio and began turning the frequencies to get any friendly station. He happened to land on the Battalion Fire Direction Net and monitored the errant adjustment. At this point he intervened and he and SSG Moultrie called in and adjusted the defensive concentrations for the rest of the night.



Shortly after the bomb hit, at 1930 hrs, one round of Artillery hit in D Company's sector of the perimeter, killing one and injuring 3-4 others, two PRC-25 radios were also knocked out.

The NVA continued to probe during the night, SGT Williams from C Company and others in his foxhole heard movement to their front so they threw a couple of frag grenades. They heard hollering and then the NVA started yelling "Chieu Hoi". The "Sky Soldiers" responded by throwing a couple more grenades. They didn't fire their weapons for fear of revealing their positions. The next morning they found numerous NVA bodies to the front of their position (note, they estimated 25-50 although some felt that this was the result of the second bomb which landed just outside of the perimeter). One of the bodies was within 10 meters of their position with a sack of grenades beside him. The three Companies laagered for the night at YB 797136, three-quarters of the way up Hill 875.

On the early morning of 20 Nov at 0540 hrs, C Company heard movement, then shortly afterwards received several rifle grenades. Fifteen minutes later D Company heard heavy movement higher up on the hill and called in Artillery fire. The first priority for the Companies was to establish and secure an LZ to evacuate the wounded. At 0818 hrs a LOC ship was hit trying to kick off an LZ kit and one man was injured. Bomb strikes were conducted on the hill while the men of the Companies attempted to hack out an LZ.

The Battalion TAC CP organized a command group consisting of the Battalion XO, Major William Kelley, and the XO's of A and C Companies whose mission was to go in and reorganize their elements, expedite the evacuation of the wounded and if possible exploit the tactical situation. Their attempts to get in were frustrated by hostile ground fire in spite of heavy TAC Air, Artillery, Gunship and Infantry ground fire. At approximately 1400 hrs, D Company sent a clearing patrol up Hill 875 in an attempt to locate some of the tree snipers who were driving the helicopters away. The first 4 men in the patrol had barely left the perimeter when a captured M-60 machine gun cut them down killing one and wounding three. The fire came from the vicinity of the bunker which had caused so much trouble before. At 1800 hrs a DUSTOFF helicopter finally made it in bringing Major Kelley and the Command Group and out extracting five (5) of the critically wounded, it was the only ship able to make it in before dark.





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***“We were the first on the killing field the next day. The bamboo was shredded with bullet holes.***

***In front of one dead trooper slumped over his M-60, there were gallons of blood leading up to his gun. He must have killed a lot of them before they got him.”***

***Steve Vargo***

Leaving FSB 16 at 0730 hrs 20 Nov, the 4th Battalion reinforcements marched overland, B/4/503d Infantry closing on the 2nd Battalion Companies at 1700 hrs. A/4/503d Infantry closed at 2000 hrs and C/4/503d Infantry at 2045 hrs. B/4/503d Infantry reported two incoming B-40 rockets and at 2045 hrs 7-8 60mm mortar rounds landed within the perimeter injuring at least one.

On 20 Nov, 2/503d Infantry started its extraction from AO HAWK, their area of operations, by extracting their Battalion Headquarters and the 4.2 Mortar Platoon minus the CP group.

On 21 Nov, together with the 4/503d Infantry, the 2/503d Infantry Paratroopers constructed a new LZ and extracted the wounded. The critical water and food resupply was completed. LAWs and Flame throwers were brought in to assist on the assault of the hill. The two Battalions were hit by three mortar attacks, 0655, 0845 and 1420 hrs, both Battalions took several casualties.

On 22 Nov, Companies A, C and D, 2/503d Infantry, besides securing the perimeter, undertook the task of identifying and extracting the KIA's, they also consolidated and extracted their extra weapons and equipment. They received only one mortar attack but it resulted in the wounding and subsequent extraction of the Battalion Surgeon.

At 1100 hrs 23 Nov, the 4/503d Infantry assaulted and took Hill 875, completing the assault in less than one hour after meeting a minimum of resistance. Elements of the 1/12th Infantry (4th Infantry Division) arrived from the south slope 30 minutes later. Just after the start of the assault, all elements on Hill 875 including the 2/503d Infantry received a mortar attack.

The 2/503d Inf's casualties were; A Company 4 WIA, D Company 1 KIA and 1 WIA.

Between 1630 and 1730 hrs, the three 2nd Battalion Companies were helicoptered to FSB 12, completing a costly but victorious five days of fighting. The 2/503d Infantry's total approximate casualties minus attachments for the period 19-23 Nov 1967 were: A: 28 KIA, 45 WIA; C: 32 KIA, 43 WIA, 3 MIA; D: 19 KIA 33 WIA; HHC: 7 KIA, 9 WIA. Later estimates and sweeps of the battlefield credited the 2/503d Infantry with 255 NVA KIA (BC).

### DAK TO Hill 875 STORIES



For historical purposes and to correct errors and omissions in this After Action Report, we will post on a 2/503d web site unabridged first-hand accounts from Sky Soldiers who survived the battles at Hill 875. While the above accounting gives the army's perspective of the battles, it does not completely tell the story of the men who were there. Send your story to [rto173d@cfl.r.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.r.com). We'll let everyone know when the stories are posted.





# Medal of Honor

## *CARLOS JAMES LOZADA*

Private First Class  
U.S. Army

“A” Co., 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)  
Republic of Vietnam



For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Pfc. Lozada, U.S. Army, distinguished himself at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in the battle of Dak To. While serving as a machine gunner with the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company A, Pfc. Lozada was part of a 4-man early warning outpost, located 35 meters from his company's lines. At 1400 hours a North Vietnamese Army company rapidly approached the outpost along a well defined trail. Pfc. Lozada alerted his comrades and commenced firing at the enemy who were within 10 meters of the outpost. His heavy and accurate machine gun fire killed at least 20 North Vietnamese soldiers and completely disrupted their initial attack. Pfc. Lozada remained in an exposed position and continued to



pour deadly fire upon the enemy despite the urgent pleas of his comrades to withdraw. The enemy continued their assault, attempting to envelop the outpost. At the same time enemy forces launched a heavy attack on the forward west flank of Company A with the intent to cut them off from their battalion. Company A was given the order to withdraw. Pfc. Lozada apparently realized that if he abandoned his position there would be nothing to hold back the surging North Vietnamese soldiers and that the entire Company withdrawal would be jeopardized. He called for his comrades to move back and that he would stay and provide cover for them. He made this decision realizing that the enemy was converging on 3 sides of the position and only meters away, and a delay in withdrawal meant almost certain death. Pfc. Lozada continued to deliver a heavy, accurate volume of suppressive fire against the enemy until he was mortally wounded. His heroic deeds served as an example and an inspiration to his comrades throughout the ensuing 4-day battle. Pfc. Lozada's actions are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.

## TAPS

Day is done. Gone the sun.  
From the lakes. From the hills.  
From the sky. All is well.  
Safely rest. God is nigh.



Fading light. Dims the sight.  
And a star. Gems the sky.  
Gleaming bright. From afar.  
Drawing nigh. Falls the night.

Thanks and praise. For our days.  
Neath the sun. Neath the stars.  
Neath the sky. As we go.  
This we know. God is nigh

## Board of Veterans Appeals Expanded



Week of October 26, 2009 -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the addition of four new Veterans Law Judges to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA), which will enable the board to increase the number of cases being decided. BVA is an appeals body where veterans, their dependents, or their survivors can go when they're not satisfied with decisions about claims for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The board currently has 60 Veterans Law Judges. VA provides a pamphlet entitled, *How Do I Appeal*, to anyone who isn't satisfied with the results of a benefits claim that was decided by a VA regional office, medical center or another local VA office. For more information about BVA or to download a copy of the pamphlet, visit VA's Gateway to VA Appeals webpage at [www.va.gov/ybs/bva](http://www.va.gov/ybs/bva).



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### INCOMING!

*"Thank you for the Newsletter. The latest mentioned a Captain receiving back pay for his Purple Heart that he was awarded from Vietnam. If this is true, please send me a point of contact or reference for more information. Thanks again."*



In our October Newsletter, on Page 2 of issue 7, we reported a former Captain with the 4/503d received unpaid retroactive compensation from the VA for his Purple Heart and wounds received. It was suggested to the Sky Soldier above he contact either the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or Veteran's Administration (VA) to inquire if monies are due him. It's likely a specific claim must be filed with the VA.

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Jump Master Top John Searcy, 2/503d '65/'66, set us straight on jump commands which appeared in the last issue of our Newsletter.



*"Good looking Newsletter, but you forgot the Jump Commands: "Check Static Lines" and "Sound Off For Equipment Check".*

John W. Searcy Sr., "Top", 2/503d

Out of fear of having to drop and give Top twenty, which could be very hazardous to our health, the correct commands appear here:

***Get Ready!***

***Outboard personnel, stand up!***

***Inboard personnel, stand up!***

***Hook-up!***

***Check static lines!***

***Check equipment!***

***Sound off for equipment check!***

***Stand in the door!***

***GO!!!***







## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Fellow 173d sniper Larry Hampton and I traveled to Ft. Benning this October to the International Sniper Competition. Larry collected me at the Atlanta airport and we headed to Columbus for our rendezvous with Sky Soldier Butch Nery, current Secretary of the Army Sniper Association. I worked for Butch in Vietnam and this would be our first reunion since the war days. Our common grief is the loss of a great soldier and friend, Art Wright, who served for Butch as his RTO. Butch and I have plans to find Art's daughter, born while Art was still in Vietnam, and tell her what a wonderful man the father she never knew was.

I look at these reunions with old friends as a spiritual thing. Good things happen when we get back together as we tend to revert to the troopers we were at another point in time. This trip was no exception, seeing Butch again was very special for me and him as well, I'm sure.



**Mike, a young soldier, and Larry Hampton**

Also, a young Marine Scout Sniper from here in Greybull, WY was competing at Benning. I was with this young man's family when he was born and he is as much a son to me as my own sons. Getting to see him in action at the competition was above anything I could have ever asked from the Creator of all good things.

Thirty-one teams from around the world were competing. Watching these precision teams in action is a thrilling experience. Getting to shoot the latest precision weapons at the vendors' shoot was a dream come true as well. Especially in view of the cost of ammo these days.



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The magic of our trip continued when the winners of the service rifle shoot were announced. The Marine Sniper team with the young sniper from here in Greybull took the top spot. I am very proud of this young man. I know the battles he fought growing up, and to see him with that smile of confidence and personal pride was worth the whole trip.

At the awards banquet, a power point presentation reminded us of those in the Sniper/Ranger community who have fallen in battle in recent years. The price of war is a hard reality in these difficult times and another reason we should try to be there for these younger warriors. Many will return home scarred as we were; body, soul and spirit. Helping them find their way back into a more sane life is something most of us learned the hard way. Perhaps our voice of compassionate experience will help make a difference in their lives?

The trip to Benning would not have been the same without my brother sniper Larry Hampton being there to share it with. We laughed together, cried a couple of times and drank much more than we should have. We did our best to represent the 173d Airborne in an exemplary manner and were humbled by the young troops who know about and respect the 173d Airborne. Our stories laid dormant for many years, but now we are one of the premiere Brigades in the United States Army. The young troopers we met who currently wear the wing bayonet are quality soldiers.

Try to make it to a 173d reunion in the future. This could very well open the door to other possibly similar experiences to this trip Larry and I were blessed with. Life is a circle and you never know what lies around the bend. For years I languished in my bunker totally oblivious of the possibly of what might lay ahead of me. So keep moving old trooper, life is a gift and our later years still hold great opportunities. God Bless you all.

**Rev. Mike "Mac" McMillan**  
**Retired Chaplain and 173d Airborne Sniper**



## A SKY SOLDIER VISITS THE TRAVELING WALL



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Just returned from visiting the *Traveling Wall* in Melbourne, Florida. Since I left the 173d in late 1966, I've never once been among that many Vietnam veterans at one time.

I arrived there around 1:30 p.m. on a beautiful, hot and sunny day here, and they had erected about 2/3 of the *Wall*, with many warriors from many different units coming together out of respect for our fallen and each other; some limping, some using canes to move about, others moving very slowly as the *Wall* took its shape.

As one vet would arrive at the *Wall* with a tractor's scoop filled with sand, other vets would dutifully empty the scoop with their shovels, placing about a two foot swath of sand at the base of the *Wall*, moving from one end to the other. Following them was an army of middle aged men, whites, blacks, Hispanics, struggling with wheel barrels filled to overflowing with red mulch which they would deliver to more men armed with rakes and shovels who would place the mulch along the line of sand. *"Good job!"* I said to a small, skinny vet struggling with a large, heavy barrel of mulch as he went by. *"I'm not used to this! I fly a desk for a living!"* he kidded back.

People, young and old and in two's, walked from a truck to the framework of the memorial carrying with them each panel bearing the names of our fallen brothers and sisters. An old soldier with a large plastic can moved past me picking up stray pieces of paper and any other small bits of trash he could find. I helped him police the area nearby where I had been sitting and watching the black panels go into place, one by one, so many of them. *"I haven't gone on police call in over 30 years,"* I joked to him. He kinda snorted, and didn't seem to find much humor in this old paratrooper's remark.

I wore my 173d Airborne hat, the one I bought for the Rochester reunion because I didn't want to be the only one there without *the* hat, but came across no Sky Soldiers during the two hours I was there. One tall fellow wore a hat with Airborne wings on it. I asked him if he knew where the 173d camp would be, he didn't. He then said, *"I was 82nd Airborne, it don't mean a thing,"* I replied, *"Yes, it does."* My god, these men looked so old, these are not the 18, 19 and 20 year old boys I used to know, but looking in the mirror it becomes obvious, I look just like them.

It was surprising to see so many vet bikers there, with their powerful, shiny machines parked nearby, some bearing U.S. and/or P.O.W. flags. Next to the bikes a unit of former U.S. Marines were having a cookout and

the food smelled good. Nearby the *Wall* men were holding and consoling one of their brothers who had fallen to his knees, weeping.

While I exchanged hellos and nods with some of these warriors, not seeing any Troopers I moved away from this group and sat on a picnic table watching the erection of the *Wall* finally come to an end. The sand men and the mulch men not far behind.

A couple 1st Bat and 2d Bat buddies who served a year later than me, asked me to join them at what will be a small 173d camp next weekend, as the *Traveling Wall* will be on display here until then. I plan to come back.



The Wall at Wickham Park, Melbourne, Florida

For nearly ten years I've worn Terry's bracelet on my wrist (173d, KIA, '66), but just recently it wore so thin it broke in half and I didn't have it with me. I looked for Terry on the *Wall* but couldn't find him or any other names I knew. But, I had visited him a few times at the memorial in DC, and will find him and other brothers again in Melbourne next weekend when the directory will also be here.

More than any other one impression from my visit today, was seeing the many young people and kids, the sons and daughters of these surviving warriors. The thought repeated itself in my mind all afternoon, there are so many sons and daughters not living today as the father they might have had is named on that damn *Wall*.

While today's experience left me a little emotionally spent, it also confirmed what a young officer I carried a radio for some years ago told me recently, he said, *"We are the lucky ones, we survived."*

Celebrate life, brothers, it's truly a gift we were all given.

Smitty Out

# MILITARY APPRECIATION MONDAY

~ November 16, 2009 ~



The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Golden Corral are again teaming-up to salute active duty and veterans for *Military Appreciation Monday* on

November 16, 2009, at any Golden Corral restaurant. That's the day Golden Corral restaurants nationwide welcome our nation's veterans and active duty military men and women to a free buffet dinner and drink, and lots of camaraderie. *Military Appreciation Monday* is Golden Corral's way of saying "Thank YOU!" to our nation's veterans and active duty military. Be sure to visit the DAV information table to meet members of Chapters in your area and check out the free DAV information. Mark your calendar now for Monday, November 16, 2009.



## BLOOD ON THE RISERS

He was just a rookie trooper and he surely shook with fright.  
He checked off his equipment and made sure his pack was tight.  
He had to sit and listen to those awful engines roar.  
You ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

*Gory, gory, what a hell of way to die.  
Gory, gory, what a hell of way to die.  
Gory, gory, what a hell of way to die.  
He ain't gonna jump no more.*

"Is everybody happy?" cried the sergeant looking up.  
Our hero feebly answered, "Yes", and then they stood him up.  
He jumped into the icy blast, his static line unhooked.  
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

He counted long, he counted loud, he waited for the shock.  
He felt the wind, he felt the cold, he felt the awful drop.  
The silk from his reserve spilled out and wrapped around his legs.  
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*



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The risers swung around his neck, connectors cracked his dome.

Suspension lines were tied in knots around his skinny bones.

The canopy became his shroud, he hurtled to the ground.

And he ain't gonna jump no more.

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

He thought about the girl back home, the one he left behind.

He thought about the medics and wondered what they'd find.

And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

The ambulance was on the spot, the jeeps were running wild.

The medics jumped and screamed with glee, rolled up their sleeves and smiled.

For it had been a week or more since last a 'chute had failed.

And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

He hit the ground, the sound was "Splat," his blood went spurting high.

His comrades they were heard to say, "A helluva way to die."

He lay there rolling 'round in the welter of his gore.

And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

There was blood upon the risers, there were brains upon the 'chute.

Intestines were a-dangling from his paratrooper suit.

He was a mess, they picked him up and poured him from his boots.

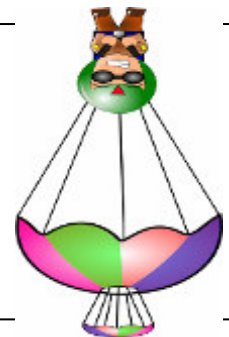
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

*Chorus:*

**What's the difference between a bad golfer hitting a ball into a lake, and a bad paratrooper?**

**A bad golfer goes  
SPLAT ..."Damn!"**

**A bad paratrooper goes  
"Damn!" ...SPLAT!!**



.. .. .  
- .. .  
.. . !



## SKY SOLDIER EXTRAORDINAIRE

It is our honor to recognize 2/503d trooper,  
**Robert B. Carmichael, LTC, Inf. (Ret)**



Born 28 October 1929, in Wewoka, Oklahoma, LTC Bob Carmichael enlisted in the army in 1952, later completing after completing officer training. He served as Battalion Executive Officer and Battalion Commander of the 2/503d in 1965/1966. At the request of General Williamson, he returned to Vietnam for a second tour in 1969 as Battalion Commander with the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Bob's storied army career spans nearly 22 years, and in addition to Vietnam, includes service in Korea, Alaska, and the USA Command & General Staff



Bob, Maj. Terry & RTO Hoitt, '66

College, among numerous other appointments. Referred to as "RBC" by family and friends, the Colonel was graduated the University of Texas with a BA in Psychology, and has completed numerous advanced infantry and officer courses while in service to his country. Bob played a critical role during *Operation Silver City* in March of 1966, when his advice to 173d Brigade was followed to tactically and quickly move the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to LZ Zulu-Zulu where the battalion could set-up a defensive perimeter before being attacked by a reinforced enemy regiment. Years later he was in command of the 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Bn which was victorious in one of the most major battles ever fought in Vietnam, during *Operation Crook*.

The Colonel's many army service and combat awards are too many to list here, but include the Silver Star, the Army Commendation

Medal, the Bronze Star w/V & 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart w/1 Oak Leaf Cluster; but Bob's army career was never about collecting medals. Bob was and remains to this day a *Soldier's Soldier*, never once losing sight of the value and importance of the lives of the men he commanded. One private recalls a softball game at Camp Zinn in 1966, when the Colonel was playing ball with his troops. After turning in a particularly good play one of the soldiers yelled

"Way to go, Major!" The (then) Major Carmichael turned to his young teammate and said, "*Call me Bob*". He recognized between the lines on a baseball field there is no rank or seniority, and to this day Bob continues to live his life by that same credo. Coming from the ranks of privates, RBC has never forgotten his early beginnings; just

ask any of the G.I.'s who served with the man and they will tell you they're ready to assault the next rice paddy or hump into the next jungle with him, anytime he says. Today, the Colonel is retired and lives in Austin, Texas with his commanding officer, Mrs. Exie Carmichael. While Exie pretends to fill the role of RTO, our brave Colonel would much rather face a company of attacking NVA than to disagree with the real commander in the Carmichael family. Instead, RBC spends much of his time fishing, tending to his vegetable garden, rooting the Long Horn's on to victory; and with his lovely wife, helping G.I.'s even when those same G.I.'s have no idea from where the help originates. *Colonel Carmichael, give us the word. We're ready to load up with you one more time. Airborne Sir!*



2 January 1966, Mekong Delta



LTC Carmichael & Gen. Williamson



Les Brownlee & Bob Carmichael



# THE CREATION OF A SKY SOLDIER

(Slightly edited, with apologies to the author who was likely a Marine)



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2/503d troopers. "We eat this shit up!"

1,000 yards during a fire fight, calm the fears of the latest FNG, and feed a family of 4 on a grunt's paycheck." "Yeah," said the angel, "but can the sonofabitch jump?!" "He can jump alright," said the Lord, "it's the landing he's not very good at."

The angel walked around the model and said, "Can it think?" "You bet," said the Lord. "It can sing all the lyrics to 'Blood On The Risers', recite all his general orders, and engage in a search and destroy mission in less time than it takes for his fellow Americans back home to discuss the morality of the War, and still keep his sense of humor." The Lord gazed into the future and said, "He will also endure being vilified and spit on when he returns home, rejected and crucified by the very ones he fought for."

Finally, the angel slowly ran his finger across the Sky Soldier's cheek, and said, "There's a leak...I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model." "That's not a leak", said the Lord, "that's a tear." "What's the tear for?" asked the angel. "It's for bottled up emotions, for holding fallen brothers as they die, for commitment to that funny piece of cloth called the American flag, for the terror of living with PTSD for decades after the war, alone with it's demons with no one to care or help."

"You're a genius," said the angel, casting a gaze at the tear. The lord looked very somber, as if seeing down eternity's distant shores. "I didn't put it there," he said. Author Unknown

When the Lord was creating Sky Soldiers, He was into His 6th day of overtime when an angel appeared. "You're certainly doing a lot of fiddling around on this one."

And God said, "Have you seen the specs on this order? A Sky Soldier has to be able to run 5 miles through the bush with a full pack on, endure with barely any sleep for days, enter tunnels his higher ups wouldn't consider doing, and keep his weapons clean and operable. He has to be able to sit in his hole all night during an attack, hold his buddies as they die, walk point in unfamiliar territory known to be VC infested, and somehow keep his senses alert for danger. He has to be in top physical condition existing on c-rats and very little rest. And, he has to have 6 pairs of hands." The angel shook his head slowly and said, "6 pair of hands....no way."

The Lord says "It's not the hands that are causing me problems. It's the 3 pair of eyes a Sky Soldier has to have." "That's on the standard model?" asked the angel. The Lord nodded. "One pair that sees through elephant grass, another pair here in the side of his head for his buddies, another pair here in front that can look reassuringly at his bleeding, fellow soldier and say, 'You'll make it' ... when he knows he won't."

"Lord, rest, and work on this tomorrow," said the angel. "I can't," said the Lord. "I already have a model that can carry a wounded soldier



"C" Company troopers, 1967.

Photo by: Maj. Gen. Jack Leide



## NGUYEN

[I don't know who authored this, a Vietnam vet for sure. It's been resting in a computer file for 10 years. Thought I'd dust it off and bring it out. Ed]

She was perhaps seven years old, her left leg crippled by some unknown Third World disease, and when I first saw her, she was just another Vietnamese kid running across the shit-scattered courtyard of the Qui Nhon orphanage, a body shop dealing with the human residue of war, lust, and betrayal.

She stopped before most of the charging crowd even slowed down, and I watched her there, the small, hesitant smile which flickered on-off-on across the too-thin kid-face, standing proudly on the malformed foot, the midnight black eyes fixed on mine, not smiling, not begging, just gazing at me.

I walked through the waist-high crowd of orphans milling around myself and the others of my infantry unit, and knelt on the grubby earth of her world before her; she smiled with her eyes and hugged me, and my world changed.

Her name, as best I know it, was Nguyen, as common in Vietnam as "Smith" or "Jones" in the United States, and she became, for me, a living symbol of the insanity of political incompetence, and broke, finally, the pact which I had once held so proudly between myself, the United States Army, and the government which had sent me here.

Nguyen was but one of dozens of orphans in the small, out-of-the-way institutions run by Catholic nuns of some order or other. Inside, where it was academically cooler by some five degrees, fifteen or twenty infants, none over two, wailed, slept, stank, and otherwise emoted the misery of their condition, most of them covered with dense blankets of flies, while the dark-robed women moved among them, motivated, I suppose, by a purpose much higher than mine.

Here and there among the cribbed detritus of human lust were the products of Vietnamese women and black soldiers, cursed forever by the society to which they had been born, unwanted by the prostitutes who bore them, the soldiers who fathered them, nor by those who now cared for them. The chance meeting of random genes had succeeded in creating yet more misery in a world which was already overloaded.

There was really nothing special about Nguyen, just another crippled Vietnamese kid in a country full of crippled Vietnamese kids, but she was the only one I

noticed, the knowledge that I -- in the person of my country, my Army, and my government -- were as



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responsible for as the man or weapon which had killed her Parents.

Somewhere between that first, hesitant meeting and the moment I lifted from the airstrip at Qui Nhon in the throbbing bowels of a C-130, going back to a place which was no longer my home, the forces of insane cosmic chance slashed the fabric of my soul, a scar which would, over time, slowly close, but which would never heal.

The soldiers of my unit did what they could for the children of the orphanage, often going far beyond legality or good sense, but it was not - could never be - enough to undo what already was. Children died there each day, and we learned not to ask for a child we did not see, learned not to enter the fever-dream interior of the shadowed nursery, learned how to smile and joke while our eyes fought tears and our minds dealt in whatever way they could with the living damnation we had, however indirectly and unwillingly, created here.



We stole, we spent our paychecks, we inveighed other units, and we did it all for nothing, for - in the end - it changed nothing. But, of course, we knew that before we started.

On the last day, the afternoon before I would rotate back to a country I no longer cared for, I slid into the seat of the jeep which would take me back to my company area, and I saw Nguyen for the last time, the same proud stance, the eyes which saw through eternity, and the ungodly, soul-wrenching something which said "*I will endure.*"

I mumbled something to the driver, and as the jeep pulled out of the shit-filled courtyard, I beat my right fist

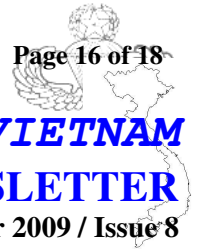
bloody against the doorframe of the jeep while the tears rolled uncontrollably down my cheeks.

For me, Vietnam was over; for Nguyen, it was forever.

## **TO MY VIETNAM VET YOU, ME AND PTSD**

### **(A wife's letter)**

Author unknown



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*I wish there was some magic cure for the disease called Vietnam. I wish the past could be buried and forgotten. But I know that it can't be. I know that I will fight this war until death claims one of us. Sometimes it actually occurs to me that death will be our only release from this nightly hell we both go through.....separately yet together.*

*Days are just as bad, the nightmares become the flashbacks. There's nothing I can say or do to make you forget. All I can hope for is that you will someday be able to cope with all of the memories. But it scares me that you sometimes see our world through younger eyes. Those eyes don't see the same world as I do. The world seen through them is far away...through time and distance. The people in that world are trying to kill you and I know you will try to kill them first. But what if it is one of the children that you are seeing as the enemy? Would I have the power to stop you?*

*I always know I am in for a particularly bad time when you start drinking. If you would only stop after a few beers, it might not be so bad. But you never do. It seems that when the alcohol hits you, the ghosts all come out of their hiding places to haunt you even if it isn't night. I cannot even begin to count the holes in the walls and doors that have been patches over the years. I've probably gone through a dozen sets of glassware, not to mention the good crystal china set that were left to me by my mother. Every pane of glass in the house has been replaced at least once after you have either punched it or thrown something through it. It's a joke having a waterbed, really. I must have been crazy buying it. It has more patches on it than a patchwork quilt. But the broken things can be repaired. It's the shredding of my soul that cannot be fixed. And every experience tears it up just a little bit more.*

*Why do I stay with you? Because I know that you are a good man inside. I know that the man I fell in love with is in that body and most of the time that's the one I see. I know that you cannot help what this terrible affliction called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder does to you. I know it isn't me that you're mad at, it's just that I'm available for you to vent your anger and frustrations on. And I pray that someday the effects of Vietnam will fade away, although I know it just won't happen. I must have hope or I couldn't bear it. I love you and would want you to stay by me if some horrible affliction affected me. I married you for better or for worse. Even if it seems that there are more worse times, I get through it by remembering the good times. I am lucky enough to have friends who are going through the same thing with their Vietnam vets and are always there to give me the strength and support I need during the periods of crisis that come. God helps me too.*

*I know that it hurts you when you face all the things that are out of control in your life, especially those times when you lash out at me, those time when you lash out at me both physically as well as verbally. I know that you wish you could be different. Just know, sweetheart, that I will stand by you through everything, good or bad, and we can never give up. We are still fighting wars....yours was in Vietnam and mine is the Vietnam left in you. We will not surrender. We will fight for the rest of our lives, if necessary, but we will survive this TOGETHER.*

*I will be your rock when things are shaky. I will be your listening ear when you need to talk. I will be your strength when you are weak. I will hold you close when you need comfort. I will be your friend when you have no one to turn to. I will be your DMZ when the pressure is too great. I will be your commander when you need direction. I will be your pointman when we face life's highways.*

*I will be your medic when your pain is too great to bear.*

*But remember, my unsung hero, I will be your wife throughout it all.*

**Written by Tina Thomas, wife of a Vietnam combat vet.**

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This poignant letter was sent in by Iva Tuttle, wife of 2/503 Sky Soldier Wayne Tuttle. This letter also speaks



of me and my wife, as I know it does many of us. Thank you Iva. And thank you to all our wives.

## BRAVO BULL PUNCH

The punch starts with a pinch of soil from LZ Zulu-Zulu, followed by some Iraqi soil, then some Afghan soil followed by a beer, the preferred drink of paratroopers; followed by a bottle of Vodka, the preferred drink of the NCO Corps; followed by a bottle of brandy to salute our gallant allies (the Australians in both WW II and in Vietnam); followed by a bottle of champagne (each) for the Regiment's service in WWII, the Cold war, RVN, and the Global War on Terror; followed by a bottle of red wine to symbolize the blood that we spilled on all of the battlefields.



BDQ Roy Lombardo B Company CO, 2/503d, mixing his special concoction in Italy.

## AIRBORNE & SPECIAL OPERATIONS MUSEUM TO HOST GET-TOGETHER

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. The Airborne & Special Operations Museum Foundation will host a special event for all 173d Airborne Brigade/ABCT soldiers, past and present, on Sunday, November 8, 2009, from noon to 3 p.m. The informal event will give soldiers the opportunity to share stories and participate in fellowship. The get-together coincides



with the museums' latest special exhibit, *The 173d Sky Soldiers, The Legend Continues*, which is on display through the month of November.



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According to Paul Galloway, Executive Director for the museums' foundation, invited are all 173d Sky Soldiers, past and present, to gather in the museums' Reflection Garden area for a time of talk, reflection, stories and fellowship. This is a great opportunity for soldiers of the 173d to get together.

Refreshments will be available in the museums' Reflection Garden. Please let all your Sky Soldier buddies know about this event. From Vietnam vets to the country's latest heroes, we hope everyone has a chance to drop by and be a part of this.

Thanks and *AIRBORNE!!!* Contact: 910) 643-2774, [pr@asomf.org](mailto:pr@asomf.org)

## APPLEBEE'S SALUTES VETS ON VETERAN'S DAY

In recognition of your service to our country, all veterans and active duty military personnel are invited to eat free at Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar Restaurants this Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009.

As you may recall, Applebee's launched a pilot program last year on Veterans Day offering free entrees to military service personnel and veterans. Because the response was so overwhelmingly positive, Applebee's is extending the invitation throughout the country this year.

We would appreciate your help in spreading the word. Please help us share details across your various communication channels.

All U.S. veterans and active duty military with proof of current or former military service will eat free at all Applebee's nationwide on Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2009.

Proof of service includes: U.S. Uniform Services Identification Card, U.S. Uniform Services Retired Identification Card, Current Leave and Earnings Statement, Veterans Organization Card, photograph in uniform or wearing uniform.

For additional details, visit:  
[www.applebees.com/vetsday](http://www.applebees.com/vetsday) Please don't hesitate to  
contact us if you have any questions.

