

Once airborne and several head counts later they figured out they had one too many; by this time the gentleman had started to sober up and realized he was in the wrong place. When we landed in Japan the MP's were waiting and we never heard from him again. I always wondered what his wife thought when she returned from the restroom, or got the phone call from Japan? He had a great story to tell.

Pat Sirmeyer
E Troop, 17th Cav, '65/'66

~ The Propel LP ~

I think it was Operation Cedar Falls, 1966. I was the "D" Maintenance rep and platoon leader forward at the fire support base (FSB).



We were in rubber adjacent to an airstrip. The FSB had been mortared a few times but not directly assaulted. The maintenance platoon was the FSB quick reaction force because we had numerous crew-served weapons in the maintenance float and people who knew how to use them.

Steve on guard.

The 173d Support Battalion XO, an infantry major with SF experience and more than one tour in RVN and I think served as the FSB OIC. Late one night I got a call from the TOC directing me to get my gear and bring a Starlite scope to the TOC ASAP. I did as directed and upon arriving at the TOC was told that they had lost contact with an LP manned by Propel soldiers (319th I think) and that the major and I were to go out and find these guys. The major would lead and I would follow with my eye glued to the Starlite scope. After confirming the "running password" we headed out into the rubber, the major in the lead. The major would stop about every ten or fifteen paces and whisper "Propel LP." Receiving no response we moved further out into the rubber. I guess after six or seven times he got a response. Meanwhile I'm still glued to the Starlite scope. Challenge and password were exchanged. "Advance and be recognized." So we did. The major slid into the hole with three soldiers. He asked, "Didn't you hear the TOC trying to contact you?" "Yes," replied the sergeant. "Why didn't you reply?" asked the major. "Sir," replied the sergeant, "we're a listening post."

Steven Skolochenko
"D" Maint., 173d Spt. Bn, '66/'67



AN/PVS-1 Night Vision Sight "Starlight Scope"
(1st Generation) used on M14 Rifle (circa 1965-70)

Type: Passive "starlight" scope intensifying ambient light
Weight: [estimated] 8 pounds complete with battery
Effective range: same as with conventional sights

~ Sandwich Anyone? ~

I may have already told this story in a previous newsletter, but it's the only amusing thing I remember about that damn war. In late 1965, I had been in-country only a few days when a hard chargin' combat



experienced vet Sgt. had me ride shotgun with him into Bien Hoa so we could get our "jeep washed." We stopped at a roadside cafe where we met two other Sky Soldiers for lunch; one, another experienced combat vet, and the other a Cherry like me, neither of us having been on a mission as of that date. We all ordered hamburgers for our meal (dog burgers?). We two Cherries listened intently to the two combat vets, hanging on their every word, hopefully learning something from them which might help keep us alive over the upcoming year. Our burgers were served and the Cherry to my right bit into his sandwich. He then immediately spit out the mouthful of hamburger, including half of a giant dead cockroach, slowly putting his sandwich back down onto his plate. The hard chargin' Sgt., who had been on numerous operations since May, asked our Cherry buddy, "Don't you want that sandwich?" Meekly, the other FNG said, "No." The Sarge reached over, picked-up the Cherry's sandwich with the bite missing, pulled the remains of the dead giant cockroach out, and ate the burger. I put my sandwich down and went without lunch that day while trying not to throw-up. Welcome to the Nam G.I. It wasn't many weeks later I could eat hamburger-cockroach sandwiches with the best of 'em. After lunch our jeep was indeed washed.

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

(continued....)



~ At The Ready On Full Auto ~

One of my favorite experiences happened on ambush one night. It had been a terrible night; slipping in the paddies, lit up by the moon, reports of a lot of enemy activity, etc.

At any rate, I took my ambush out that night, and we planned to set up on the edge of a ville facing the trail that went up into the high ground. As we approached the hootch we intended to use on the side of the trail, we started to fan out and set up. I wasn't watching where I was headed and tramped in a bucket which stuck on my foot. After a whole lot of clanging and banging, we had to call in for new ambush coordinates. I think even Uncle Ho heard us that night.

On another night, we went to basically the same area and set up around the back of the village waiting for them to come out of the high ground after firing up Charlie Company. We hunkered down tight and had drifted into to our 1-on 1-off routine when I heard something move to the side of the hootch.

I nudged my RTO and motioned for him to pull the pin on a frag. I went to the corner of the hootch and was stumped....I can't yell "Dung lai" or pop around the corner without getting a few rounds center mass. But I couldn't bring myself to fire around the corner on the off chance it might be a kid that got out of his hootch or something.

I stood there for what seemed like an eternity when I decided to whisper Dung lai, and if there was any movement, I would let go on full auto. I did, and I heard a rustling sound that stopped as quickly as it started. Still uneasy about firing, I said it a little louder and lunged around the corner with my '16 pointed out in front and on full auto. I immediately hit something that was moving...I then said Dung lai in an excited street voice. I immediately got a reply this time; it was a calf tied to the side of the hootch, and I hit him in the head with my flash suppressor. He let out a little "MOO-O-O" and my RTO and I fell against the side of the hootch with our hearts beating like a blown engine and we started laughing. Couldn't hold back the laugh, and we each were trying to stifle the laughter. Bolt, the RTO, was trying to put the pin back in the frag while laughing and tears rolling down his cheeks.

Someday I'll have to tell you about the ambush where I turned to find a suspected VC stopped dead at my right rear. Freaked me out!

Jerry Sopko
D/4/503d, '69/'70

(Editor's choice. Funniest story of the lot):

~ They're Right Over There, LT ~

We had just got a new cherry Lieutenant and he had been in the field with us about a month. Remember now, this is in '70 so our platoon was only at half strength all the time and was broken down into what we called Hawk Teams. That's 5 man teams and each team was assigned a grid square butting up to the other team's click. It was the usual ambush every night and search and destroy patrols every day, at the same time looking for a good ambush site for that next night. Every fourth day we were given coordinates for all the teams to meet for resupply. During this particular resupply I helped unload the chopper and saw a nice, large, yellow onion rolling around in it, so I grabbed it and stuck in my side pants pocket.



Bud in the boonies

Also, we had mail on the chopper and I received a care package from home. In this package I got a can of Wolf brand chili and a can of old El Paso Tortillas (can't find those anymore). So for lunch I took some C-Rat beefsteaks and broke them up into pieces and cooked the chili, chopped up the onion and beefsteaks in my canteen cup and shared it with everyone. We would smear it on the tortillas for a homemade jungle enchilada. The cherry LT thought it tasted very good and asked me where I got the onion. I told him, "*Over there among those bushes, Sir, they grow everywhere around here. You just have to know where to find them.*" We lounged around for a while before moving out to our new grid square, and in about an hour I saw the Lieutenant over in the weeds digging around for onions.

Bud Sourjohn
A/2/503d, '70

(continue....)



~ Every Soldier's Nightmare ~

On one of our daily humps of search and destroy we crossed this river which was about waist deep. After crossing we sat down for a little rest. Timothy Johnson decides he's gone long enough between baths and drops his ammo belt, M-16 and all his clothes and back in he went. Ole Timothy



Vietnamese leeches

was in that river buck naked when he lets out a scream that would curdle your blood, and high steps it for dry land. We all scramble for our 16s thinking Timothy has spotted the whole North Vietnamese Army. Not seeing any enemy we figure Timothy has other distress. Up on the bank he's yelling, "Get 'em off! Get 'em off!"

We had to get close to see the big fat gray leeches spread all over his glistening body. They were big suckers and scattered from chest to ankles. Now we all know that leeches don't hurt, but boy can they give you the willies. We all gathered around Timothy and showered him down with bug juice till the leeches all fell off. We all then looked at our empty bug juice bottles and wondered what the hell we were going to do when the mosquitoes would come at us later that night.



**Good buddy Ed Swauger.
He's on the left.**

**Ed Swauger
B/2/503d, '68/'69**

~ Going On Patrol In Civvies ~

By 28 February 1945, we were still doing a little patrolling, but activity was lessening every day. We found a large supply of men's clothing. There were cotton slacks and various colors of slacks and shirts. I remember many bright yellow shirts and many blue colors. Someone, I believe General Marquat, said the Japs had emptied the merchandise out of the stores in Manila and brought it out here and stored it. This was also the reason for the large amounts of alcoholic beverages out here.

We put on some of the clothes to lounge around in. It was so nice to get out of the board-like, hot fatigues. Then someone wore a yellow, cotton shirt on patrol. The patrol moved across the Parade Ground and was seen by some in regimental headquarters.



**LT Calhoun on LST returning
from Corregidor to Mindoro.**

(Bill Bailey photo)

Orders came out immediately threatening the most dire consequences for anyone caught wearing any civilian attire. I guess they were right. Parachutists really did not look dressed for the part attired in jump boots, blue trousers, yellow shirt, steel helmet and wearing a rifle belt and web suspenders with the pouches filled with 8-round clips and frag and WP grenades hanging from the suspenders.

**LT Bill Calhoun
503rd PRCT, WWII**

(The culprit, who was wearing the yellow shirt and blue trousers, can be named after all these years, was..... Lt. Calhoun).

**Submitted by Paul Whitman
503rd P.R.C.T. Heritage Battalion Web Site**

~ WHOSE IS IT? ~

While we were operating out of Bien Hoa in 1967 in War Zone C, I was walking point when I came upon a VC slit trench, which were almost always outside their perimeter. Well, it smelled like a VC had just used it, so I turned around to the guy behind me and whispered,



Chargin' Charlie Zac in Vietnam

"Pass the word back that I found a slit trench and it smells like fresh shit."

(continued....)



I no sooner got the words out of my mouth when there was a couple of shots came my way. When I hit the dirt I was facing the other guy. I said to him ***“Now that’s fresh shit!”*** He replied, ***“Yeah, and I think it’s mine!”*** Luckily, the VC just shot a couple of times and took off.

Ray “Zac” Zaccone
C/2/503d, ‘67/’68



~ REMEMBERING HARRY ~

Why I’m compelled to write this I don’t know, maybe to purge some of my demons? Why do I write this, maybe to keep his memory alive? Why? After all I wasn’t that close to him. We had so little in common. He was very outgoing, always smiling, never complaining and liked by all of us, but he was different. His conversations were mostly of God, his mother and his home in Virginia. He didn’t smoke or use colorful language like the rest of us. As nineteen-year-old boys, we spent our down time playing cards, talking about girls and telling *war stories* of our R & R’s. When he spoke of girls it was in a more respectable tone.

I don’t know if he had or has siblings, I don’t know if his parents are still living. Surely he must have aunts, uncles and cousins. Am I the only one who thinks of him, and if so, why? There were other guys I became closer to, some died some lived, but their memories never cross my mind as often as his. And, then there is that silly little song he was always singing....”*Every time I go to town the boys always kick my dog around.*”

I knew Harry Stephens for less than one of his nineteen years. Just like his face keeps appearing in my mind, he kept showing up in my life in 1967. We first met in jump school and then fate placed us together in Charlie 2/503d in March. We were in different platoons but would run into each other during stand-downs. Later that year, September or October, we were both assigned to the newly formed Delta Company. This time we were in the same platoon so we had more frequent interaction. Still, he was just a guy in my platoon, we weren’t that close.

It’s nearing the 43rd anniversary of his last smile and I still see it clearly. Harry died on Hill 875, 19 November 1967.

Shortly after the initial contact we began to dig in. We paired up in twos and began digging. Harry paired with Clarence Hall, a veteran of “The Jump”. They were about two meters to my left and on the downhill side of me and Frank Carmody. Harry and Clarence were able to dig down about two and a half feet when the mortars

started coming in. When it was over we all began to check on each other and discovered Harry and Clarence had taken a direct hit. Although Clarence was black and Harry was white, it was difficult to tell one from the other.

Isn’t it strange how fate works? If anyone should have lived it should have been Harry -- there were many more of us who were less deserving. As I stated earlier, Harry and Clarence were about two and a half feet below ground while Carmody and I were only about one foot down. They were only a couple of meters from us and we weren’t scratched. I’ll always wonder, WHY?

Wayne Bowers
C/D/2/503d, ‘67/’68

**Harry Edward
Stephens
Specialist Four
D Co., 2nd Bn
173d ABN BDE
U.S. Army
20 Oct 1945 ~
19 Nov 1967
Richmond, Virginia**



Harry

**Clarence Hall
Specialist Four
D Co., 2nd Bn
173d ABN BDE
U.S. Army
17 Mar 1948 ~
20 Nov 1967
Newport, Kentucky
(no photo available)**



Card found on a WWII web site. *Airborne!!*



A SIMPLE BLOOD TEST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Don't believe me? Read the following report, or ask Sky Soldiers Don, Bob, Craig, Floyd, Jim, Ray, Tom and other buddies whose names I can't recall right now....all whom were diagnosed with **Prostate Cancer**. Fortunately, each trooper underwent a PSA blood test and they are still here with us as a result.

LTC Bob Carmichael, our battalion XO/CO in '65/'66, a survivor of prostate cancer, has been after me for the longest time to publish some thorough information in our newsletter about this heinous disease. He promised me I still have a chance at that third stripe, so here it is.....

The Veteran's Administration has found a direct correlation between **Agent Orange** and **Prostate Cancer**. Hell, those of us who served with the 173d in Vietnam used to tramp thru vegetation treated with that chemical and others, and we'd often even sleep in the stuff.

Do yourself, your wife or partner and kids or grandkids a favor (even if you don't read the report below)....

Get your prostate checked with a rectal exam or a simple PSA blood test....TODAY!

Smitty Out

P.S. If you opt for the rectal exam, be sure to ask for dinner and a movie.



ABOUT THE PROSTATE

The more you know about the normal development and function of the prostate, where it's located, and what it's attached to, the better you can understand how prostate cancer develops and impacts a man's life over time – due either to cancer growth or as a result of treatments.

Normal Anatomy

The normal prostate is a small, squishy gland about the size of a walnut (20 milliliters). It sits under the bladder and in front of the rectum. The urethra – the narrow tube that runs the length of the penis and carries both urine and semen out of the body – runs directly through the prostate. The rectum, or lower end of the bowel, sits just behind the prostate and the bladder.

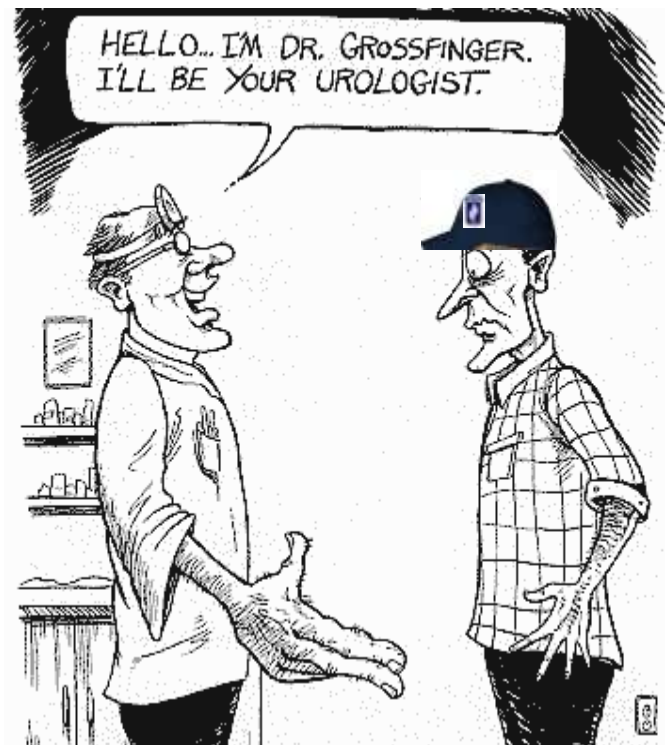
Sitting just above the prostate are the seminal vesicles – two little glands that secrete about 60% of the substances that make up semen. Running alongside and attached to the sides of the prostate are the nerves that control erectile function.

Normal Physiology

The prostate is not essential for life, but it's important for reproduction. It seems to supply substances that facilitate fertilization and sperm transit and survival. Enzymes like PSA are actually used to loosen up semen to help sperm reach the egg during intercourse. (Sperm is not made in the prostate, but rather the testes).

Other substances made by the seminal vesicles and prostate – such as zinc, citrate, and fructose – give sperm energy to make this journey. Substances like antibodies may protect the urinary tract and sperm from bacteria and other pathogens.

The prostate typically grows during adolescence under the control of the male hormone testosterone and its byproduct DHT, or dihydrotestosterone.



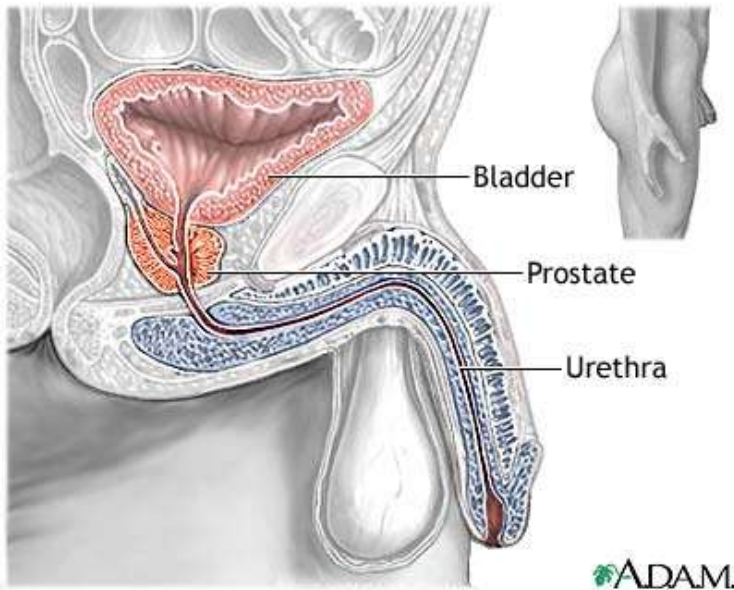
Prostate Zones

The prostate is divided into several anatomic regions, or zones. Most prostate cancer develops from the peripheral zone near the rectum. That's why a digital rectal exam (DRE) is a useful screening test.

(continued....)



BPH, a non-cancerous prostate condition, typically develops from the transition zone that surrounds the urethra, or urinary tube. This explains why the condition is typically more symptomatic than prostate cancer.



The prostate gland is an organ that surrounds the urinary urethra in men. It secretes fluid which mixes with sperm to make semen.

Treatment-Related Changes

Because the prostate is close to several vital structures, prostate cancer and its treatment strategies can disrupt normal urinary, bowel, and sexual functioning.

Urinary function—Under normal circumstances, the urinary sphincters (bands of muscle tissue at the base of the bladder and at the base of the prostate) remain tightly shut, preventing urine that's stored in the bladder from leaking out. During urination, the sphincters are relaxed and the urine flows from the bladder through the urethra and out of the body.

During prostatectomy—the surgical removal of the prostate—the bladder is pulled downward and connected to the urethra at the point where the prostate once sat. If the sphincter at the base of the bladder is damaged during this process, or if it's damaged during radiation therapy, some measure of urinary incontinence or leakage will occur.

Bowel function—Solid waste that's filtered out of the body moves slowly down the intestines, and, under normal circumstances, the resultant stool is excreted through the anus following conscious relaxation of the anal sphincter. Damage to the rectum caused by radiation, or more rarely, by surgery, can result in bowel problems, including rectal bleeding, diarrhea, or urgency.

Sexual function—If the erectile nerves are damaged during prostatectomy, which was standard during this type of surgery up until the mid 1980's, the ability to achieve erection is lost. Sexual desire is not affected, but severing or otherwise damaging the nerves can lead to erectile dysfunction. These nerves can also be damaged by radiation, though this process usually occurs much more slowly over time.

Modern techniques in surgery (nerve-sparing), radiation (intensity modulated radiation therapy, positioning devices, 3-D conformal technologies), and seed placement (brachytherapy) have been developed to try to minimize these side effects, and this process continues to improve.

Fertility—About 10% of men with prostate cancer have what is known as seminal vesicle invasion. This means the cancer has either spread into the seminal vesicles or has spread around them. If that occurs, seminal vesicles are typically removed during prostatectomy and targeted during radiation therapy. The loss of the prostate and the seminal vesicles renders men infertile. After surgical removal, ejaculation is dry, but orgasms may still occur.

PROSTATE CANCER SYMPTOMS

Not everyone experiences symptoms of prostate cancer. Many times, signs of prostate cancer are first detected by a doctor during a routine check-up.

Some men, however, will experience changes in urinary or sexual function that might indicate the presence of prostate cancer. These symptoms include:

- A need to urinate frequently, especially at night
- Difficulty starting urination or holding back urine
- Weak or interrupted flow of urine
- Painful or burning urination
- Difficulty in having an erection
- Painful ejaculation
- Blood in urine or semen
- Frequent pain or stiffness in the lower back, hips, or upper thighs.

You should consult with your doctor if you experience any of the symptoms above.

**DADDY, GRANDPA, PLEASE
DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR TEST**



FLY BOYS GIRLS



And we had to join the damn Army Airborne.



And then we joined too early! Ed

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERAN'S AFFAIRS

Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010 Sent to President's Desk

*House passes legislation to enhance, expand
And modernize benefits for veterans.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Washington, D.C. – House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced that the U.S. House of Representatives voted to approve H.R. 3219, the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010. Amended and approved by the Senate earlier in the week, today's House action sends the bill to President Obama for his signature. The legislation improves and modernizes certain benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans and their families.

Chairman Filner said, "*H.R. 3219 is the result of numerous productive hearings and markups, meaningful oversight and bi-partisan compromise – all*

to ensure that those who were willing to lay down their lives for our country and their families and survivors, receive meaningful, world-class, 21st Century benefits. This bill will make a big difference in the lives of many of America's brave veterans."

H.R. 3219, as amended – The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010

Enhances Employment Opportunities

- Reauthorize the recently expired VA work-study program and expand the type of work available for participating veterans. The extension allows for veteran students to complete work study in congressional offices, state veteran agencies, or any position working jointly between the VA and an institution of higher learning.
- Require the Secretary of the VA to verify small business ownership and operate a database of veteran-owned small businesses and service-connected veteran-owned small business in an effort to end contracting with businesses that fraudulently claim to be owned by a veteran.
- Increase job opportunities for veterans by reimbursing energy employers for the cost of providing on-the-job training for veterans in the energy sector. Specifically, the bill would create the pilot "Veterans Energy Related Employment Program" which would award competitive grants to three states that are able to serve a population of eligible veterans, boast a diverse energy industry, and have the ability to carry out such a training program.

Prevents Homeless Veterans

- Reauthorize the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program through fiscal year 2011
- Authorize an additional \$1 million to provide dedicated services for homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children. Grants would be made available to provide job training, counseling, placement services, and child care services to expedite the reintegration of veterans into the labor force.

Ensures the Welfare of Veterans and Their Families by Increasing Insurance Limits

- Increase many of the outdated insurance policy amounts and terms for our veterans, many who are severely disabled or have suffered traumatic injury.
- Increase the maximum loan guarantee amount under the Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance program.

(continued....)



- Allow totally disabled veterans to receive free Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance coverage for two years following separation from active or reserve duty. Gold Star Wives Government Relations Committee Co-Chair Kathryn A. Witt provided the following support for the insurance provisions in the bill: ***"Gold Star Wives of America, Inc. is happy to support the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, H.R. 3912.... Section 401 increases the amount of supplemental life insurance available to totally disabled veterans to \$30,000. This is a much needed increase in this insurance benefit."***

Secures Compensation, Pensions and Other Benefits

- Increase the number of veterans to receive independent assisted living services and the quality of those benefits.
- Provide greater automobile and adaptive equipment to veterans with severe burn injuries.
- Increase the automobile allowance for disabled veterans from \$11,000 to \$18,900.
- Allow low income veterans currently receiving a VA pension to receive payments of up to \$5,000 from state or municipalities without offsetting the pension benefit.

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-27) offered the following statement: ***"Included in this legislation is language I introduced as the Veterans Pensions Protection Act which reverses existing policies that limit veterans from receiving their full benefits offered by state and local governments and makes it easier for our combat veterans to receive the benefits they deserve."***

Paralyzed Veterans of America National Legislative Director Carl Blake offered support for the bill: ***"The increase in the cap for Independent Living services administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation program will prove beneficial to the most severely disabled veterans who simply want to become productive members of society. Once again, we thank the Committee for it continued emphasis on improving benefits for severely disabled veterans and their families."***

Protects Service Members Called to Combat

- Allow the U.S. Office of Special Counsel to receive and investigate certain Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act claims. The provision builds on OSC's extensive expertise and experience in investigating and resolving federal employment claims and will go a long way in protecting veterans who file USERRA complaints as a result of their service in the Armed Forces, National Guard, and Reserves. For three

years, a random selection of claims will be sent directly to the OSC to be resolved.

- Prohibit early termination fees for certain contracts like cell phone service and residential leases after service members receive notice of military orders to relocate to a site that does not support the contract.
- Allow the Attorney General to bring a civil suit against any violator of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, which provides a wide range of protections for service members.

Honors Fallen Service Members and Their Families

- Allow a parent whose child gave their life in service to our country to be buried in a national cemetery with that child when their veteran child has no living spouse or children.
- Increase burial and funeral benefits and plot allowances for veterans who are eligible for a burial at a national cemetery or who died in a VA facility from \$300 to \$700.

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV), long a champion of increasing funeral benefits and plot allowances to reflect modern costs, offered the following statement: ***"Veterans deserve to be laid to rest with full recognition of their military service and by increasing these benefits, we can defray costs for families who might otherwise be unable to cover such an expense. This legislation increases payments so that veterans and their loved ones can have peace of mind when planning for their final arrangements. Veterans who proudly served our nation are entitled to benefit payments to help cover the cost of their final arrangements. But over time, inflation has eroded the purchasing power of these payments, leaving it to families and states to cover any extra costs."***

Strengthens Education Benefits

- Extend the life of the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education, a committee that offers short and long term recommendations for improving the educational benefits of veterans.

Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) offered this statement explaining the need for the Advisory Committee on Education: ***"Our service members should have access to a first-rate education that will prepare them to excel in new jobs once they leave the military. The expertise and insight of this advisory committee help our fighting men and women get the opportunities they have earned."***

(continued....)



The new G.I. Bill marks a great victory for our Veterans, but passing that legislation is just part of repaying the debt we owe them. The next step is ensuring that these benefits work for our Veterans, and this committee is a valuable tool in that effort."

Addresses Housing Needs of Disabled Veterans

- Authorize the Secretary of the VA to make grants of up to \$200,000 per year to recipients that develop assistive technologies for use in specially adaptive housing.

In a letter to Chairman Filner, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) National Legislative Director Joe Violante wrote, ***"Overall, the 'Veterans Benefits Act of 2010' makes important improvements to an array of federal benefits that help to compensate and support veterans transitioning back to into civilian life, especially those who return with disabilities from their service. DAV supports approval of this legislation..."***

Invests in Research for Gulf War Veterans

- Allow the Institute of Medicine to carry out a comprehensive review of best treatment practices for chronic multi-symptom illness in Gulf War veterans and develop a plan for dissemination of best practices through VA.
- Extend the review and evaluation of chronic multi-symptom illness by the National Academy of Sciences of veterans of the Persian Gulf War and Post-9/11 Global Operations.

Chairman Filner concluded: ***"This Congress has been extraordinarily productive for America's veterans. Speaker Pelosi's strong leadership has been critical as this Congress passed caregiver legislation, approved advance appropriations for veterans' health care, raised the VA budget to adequately care for veterans during wartime, and passed a G.I. Bill for the 21st Century. I am privileged to work with the Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee who set an aggressive agenda and stood together to ensure that the cost of the war includes the cost of the warrior. They have truly shown love and compassion to America's veterans evidenced by their hard work to keep the promises made to our Nation's heroes of the past, present, and future."***

VA ANNOUNCES \$41.9 MILLION TO HELP HOMELESS VETERANS

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has announced that 40 states will share more than \$41.9 million in grants to community groups to provide 2,568 beds for homeless Veterans this year.



"These grants wouldn't have happened without the extraordinary partnerships forged with community organizers," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "These investments will provide transitional beds to Veterans who have served honorably, but for various reasons now find themselves in a downward spiral toward despair and homelessness."

The Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program provides grants and per diem payments to help public and non-profit organizations establish and operate new supportive housing and service centers for homeless Veterans. The \$41.9 million is broken into two categories.

About \$26.9 million will help renovate, rehabilitate or acquire space for 1,352 transitional housing beds. A second group of awards, valued at \$15 million, will immediately fund 1,216 beds at existing transitional housing for homeless Veterans this year. The awards will cover daily living costs based upon the number of homeless Veterans being served in transitional housing.

A key component of VA's plan to eliminate homelessness among Veterans within five years, the grants and per diem payments helped reduce the number of Veterans who were homeless on a typical night last year by 18 percent to about 107,000 Veterans within one year.

VA's strategy to eliminate homelessness among Veterans is to implement a "no wrong door" approach, meaning Veterans who seek assistance should find it in any number of VA's programs, from community partners or through contract services.

(continued....)



Under the Secretary's action plan to end homelessness among Veterans, VA will continue to offer a full range of support necessary to end the cycle of homelessness by providing education, jobs, health care and counseling.

In addition to housing, VA will increase the number and variety of housing options available to homeless Veterans and those at risk, including permanent, transitional, contracted, community-operated and VA-operated housing. Most importantly, VA will target at-risk Veteran populations with aggressive support intervention to try to prevent homelessness before it starts.

For more information, visit VA's web page for VA's National Homeless Providers Grants and Per Diem Off. at www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp.



How Many Homeless Veterans Are There?

Although accurate numbers are impossible to come by, no one keeps national records on homeless veterans – the VA estimates that nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and nearly 400,000 experience homelessness over the course of a year. Very conservative figures estimate that one out of every three homeless men and women who are sleeping in

doorways, under bridges, in alleys or in a box in our cities and rural communities has put on a uniform and served this country and received an Honorable Discharge. Convergent sources estimate that between 23 and 40 percent of homeless adults are veterans. Recent media accounts highlight a small but growing number of veterans from the Iraq wars are showing up in shelters nationwide. Nearly 1000 in 2008 alone. (Dated report)



HISTORICAL VETERANS DAY MESSAGE TO SOLDIERS

During this Veterans Day, we pause to remember the sacrifices our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen have made in serving our Nation where and when they were needed. From one generation to the next, young men and women have willingly joined the ranks of America's Armed Forces. Aware of their obligations as citizens of the greatest Nation on earth, they answered its call; they served the United States with courage and commitment.

For more than two centuries, American Soldiers have preserved the liberty our forefathers earned by their willingness to fight for it, whatever the cost. Our Army has a long and proud history, filled with tradition and pivotal moments in service to our Nation. From the battlefields of Lexington and Bunker Hill, to Normandy and Manila and beyond, American Soldiers have stood firm against those who would deny basic human dignity to others.

We honor each of you, America's veterans, who served so faithfully and honorably. Through your sacrifices you have secured for millions of others the blessings of freedom, democracy, and the unmatched opportunity that we enjoy in the United States today.

May each of you have a safe Veterans Day. God bless each of you and your families, God bless our Army, and God bless the United States of America.

Peter J. Schoomaker
General U.S. Army
Chief of Staff

R.L. Brownlee
Acting Secretary of
the Army

Note: Army Secretary Les Brownlee was commanding officer of B/2/503d, 173d Airborne Brigade, 1966.



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James A. Thorne, 65, of Wormleysburg, died Sunday, October 17, 2010 in Claremont Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Middlesex Twp.

He was a graduate of University of Scranton, a stockbroker for IFS Investments, Mechanicsburg, an Army veteran of the Vietnam War serving with the 173d Airborne. He was a member of Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Church, Camp Hill and former President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 542. He was a dedicated member of VFW Post 7530, Lower Allen Twp., West Shore Elks Lodge No. 2257, West Shore Knights of Columbus Council, and American Legion Post 730.



Jim received various awards from Toastmasters International for his skill in public speaking. He is survived by his fiancé, Joyce Elfreth of Mechanicsburg; four daughters, Kelly T. Boyle of Wormleysburg, Kerri A. Kenney of Phoenix, AZ, Karen T. Bolus of Lewisburg and Kathleen E. Baddick of Harrisburg; one sister, Maryann Briggs of Allentown; his stepfather, John R. Bellesfield of Allentown; six grandchildren, J.P., Madelyn, Brady, Maxwell, Preston and Katelyn.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Thursday, October 21, 2010 at 12 Noon in Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Church, 3435 Trindle Rd., Camp Hill, with Rev. Paul C. Helwig, his pastor as celebrant. Burial was in Indiantown Gap National Cemetery on Friday at 9:00 am with full military honors. A visitation was held on Thursday from 11:00 am until 12 Noon in Good Shepherd Church. Arrangements were handled by Wiedeman Funeral Home, Steelton. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Veterans Administrative Medical Center Hospice, 1700 S. Lincoln Ave., Lebanon, PA 17042.

Rest well Sky Soldier



~ Letters Home From Vietnam ~

November 1967 Reflections

From: Wambi Cook, A/2/503d, '67/'68

The following are excerpts from letters to my wife and mother:

2 November, **Mother**-----We were called off the last phase of operation (Tuy Hoa) to secure this fire-support base [Black Horst Mt., I believe] It seems the 2 units who replaced us in Dak To have been making heavy contact ever since we left. The 4th Battalion has already moved back. I doubt seriously if the entire Brigade will be moving back, but there's a good chance the 4th batt will alternate between here and there. Right now I'm doing some "wild" babysitting. I'm taking care of a guy's monkey while he's in Tuy Hoa getting paid. He's a real mess. Why, the little @#%#** just peed on my air mattress. I guess I'll have to tie him to my bunker for punishment. [That monkey died soon after ingesting a heating tablet. I'm convinced some asshole poisoned him however].



Wambi with his late heating tablet eating pal.

6 November, **Mother**-----Well, I'm back in Tuy Hoa again instead of returning to the fire base. We got in yesterday and are moving back into the Dak To region in a few hours. We'll fly into Pleiku and convoy from there just as we did almost 5 months ago. I convinced myself it just couldn't happen again [referring to the Slopes AO], but "Sam" says different.

(continued....)



I regret returning, but with 101 days left, I'm not worried....Rumors are they can't land planes in Dak To because the VC has its big guns zeroed in them from the mountains. I don't know if there's any truth in it or not.

7 November, **Anita**-----Since we got in, we've been more or less the Brigade's flunkies. We dug got hit pretty bad yesterday and this morning in last night and moved out this morning-dug in again and now we're on ½ hour standby. The 4th Batt.....There's boo coo NVA in the area. No sooner than we left, the 4th Division who replaced us numbers twice our size, caught hell. The gooks were again about to overrun Dak To and surrounding hamlets. We know where they are and they're just as strong (manpower) as us. I expect some pretty hard fighting these next 2 or 3 months. I also expect to make it out of them. No, I don't expect. I know I will!

14 November, **Mother**-----This letter leaves me well, but shaken. Soon after reading your latest letter yesterday, we moved out and hadn't gone 400 meters before we were hit again. B Company was lead and they got hit in the initial contact. My platoon was lead for Alpha and when reaching Bravo's position, you couldn't help to hear their screams of joy. We lined right in front of them, but VC was all over the place—mainly in tall trees.

We couldn't move forward and we couldn't withdraw because of our many dead and wounded. Our only alternative was to stay and fight. Which is exactly what we did. From 12:00 noon until 8:30 the next morning we gave the VC all we could.....I'm sick and tired of this place and war. I could easily extend for 6 months and be home for Xmas on leave, but I'll take my chances till February. I couldn't stand returning to this country I've come to loath.

A & B Companies 11-12 KIAs, 25 MIAs.

24 November, **Mother**-----Yes, I'm all right. I guess the newspapers reported on the 5 day battle for Hill 875. I didn't ask, but had my picture taken by numerous broadcast companies. They asked questions, but I had very little to say. I did want my photo taken because I knew Anita, you, and everybody else was worrying about me. I was informed by one photographer they'd be shown in the world in 2 days.....Mother I've never been so nervous in all my 10 months over here. I jump at every unordinary sound. I don't think I can take it anymore. June 22 took a lot out of me, but I never expected the same thing to happen again. The Lord almighty has seen fit to let me live again.

27 November, **Anita**-----Things are still pretty hot. We're down to 40 men, but with fresh replacements,

we'll be up to 104. I guess we'll be back in the boonies before you know it. Don't worry, I'll make it.

28 November, **Ma**-----We'll I'm still making it. This cold still has me down. But who am I to complain, it took me 10 months to catch it.....I want to be a peace-loving guy. I hope I don't have any trouble with the war protesters or hippies. Knowing me, were I not in the army I'd probably be right with them. I might just grow a beard and play it cool. (Smile)

29 November, **Hey Girl** (Mother) -----It's hard to believe we have 123 men in a company. We left Hill 875 with less than 30. The "cherries" are really, hmmm—uninformed. I was a dumb, dumb when I first got here, but not half as bad as these guys. I give them till February and they should be in the groove.....I should be leaving the field around December 16. (I got a second R&R to Hong Kong]

*******Return to Hill 875*******

If all goes as planned, I and three comrades will revisit Hill 875 this coming February 2011. Our first attempt in 2008 was summarily rejected by the RVN government. However, our travel agent appears to have done the impossible:

Friday, February 22: After breakfast, the luggage will be loaded on to the mini-coach and we will travel to **Tu Mo Rong** which was a site of a major battle of the 1st Brigade in June 1966. For the journey to **Hill 875**, passengers will transfer to a four-wheel-drive vehicle. The road is narrow and subject to frequent flooding and landslides. We will stop at the base of Hill 875, where the famous battle took place in 1967. If guests wish to climb the hill, the round-trip trek will take approximately 4-5 hours, and can be done only if time and weather conditions permit due to the dense jungle terrain.

To the best of my knowledge, we'll be the first American combatants to do so. If this presumption is incorrect, we welcome your feedback.

Wambi



From John "Top" Searcy, HHC/2/503d, '65/'66



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

The 503d Australians



33 Artillerymen of the 2/4th Field Regiment, under the command of Lt. Pearson, participated in the paratroop drop over Nadzab, 5 September 1943. AMW 030141/24

Remarkably, the Heritage of the 503d includes the 1st Royal Australian Regiment, which joined the "Herd" in May/June of 1965 when the two line Battalions of the Brigade were the 1/503d and 2/503d. When 1st R.A.R. joined up, it became the THIRD battalion of the Brigade and remained so till it returned to Australia. It was replaced by the 4/503d, although it was not until the following year that 3/503d was created to fill the gap in the Brigade. The lineage of the line Battalions of the Brigade were: 1/503d, 2/503d, 1st R.A.R., 4/503d, and 3/503d. Then of course there were the later US Infantry units that were attached.


1st R.A.R.'s lineal history goes back to the 65th Battalion, 2nd Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.)

of WWII. In 1943, prior to the attachment of the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, the absence of artillery became critical to the 503d P.I.R. combat jump on a Japanese fortified area at Nadzab, New Guinea.

Elements of the 7th Australian Division, A.I.F. were hastily chosen to jump - in the form of 33 men of the 2/4th Artillery Battery under command of Lt. Pearson.

After two days of hasty parachute training, two of the originals were injured and ruled out. On 5 September 1943, when the 503d P.I.R. went through the door over Nadzab, the 2/4th Artillery Section went out the door with them. Making up for the two injured were two men who made their first jump their combat jump.

After hitting the field, they had one of their 25 pounder guns up and firing within 2 hours. Those gunners of the 7th Australian Division, A.I.F., didn't know then that they were setting the pace for another Australian unit to join with

the 503d, some 22 years later on another foreign airstrip when 1st R.A.R., whose lineal history goes back to the 7th Australian Division, A.I.F., were to join with the sons of the 503d P.I.R. at Bien Hoa, Vietnam. 



Sgts. 1RAR, 1965



HISTORY OF VETERANS DAY

World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” - officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles outside the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of

“the war to end all wars.”



Soldiers of the 353rd Infantry near a church at Stenay, Meuse in France, wait for the end of hostilities. This photo was taken at 10:58 a.m., on November 11, 1918, two minutes before the armistice ending World War I went into effect.

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: *"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..."*



The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m.

The United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I when it passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926, with these words:

Whereas the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed, and



Whereas it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nationals; and

Whereas the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday: Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U. S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday—a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as "Armistice Day." Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in its place the word "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.



(continued....)



Later that same year, on October 8th, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first "Veterans Day Proclamation" which stated: *"In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose. Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible."*



applied to all subsequent VA Administrators. Since March 1989 when VA was elevated to a cabinet level department, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has served as the committee's chairman.

The Uniform Holiday Bill (Public Law 90-363 (82 Stat. 250)) was signed on June 28, 1968, and was intended to ensure three-day weekends for Federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays: Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day. It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel, recreational and cultural activities and stimulate greater industrial and commercial production. Many states did not agree with this decision and continued to celebrate the holidays on the original dates.

The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 25, 1971. It was quite apparent that the commemoration of this day was a

matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so on September 20th, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978. This action supported the desires of the overwhelming majority of state legislatures, all major veterans service organizations and the American people.

Veterans Day continues to be observed on November 11, regardless of what day of the week on which it falls. The restoration of the observance of Veterans Day to November 11 not only preserves the historical significance of the date, but helps focus attention on the important

purpose of Veterans Day: A celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.



President Eisenhower signing HR7786, changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day. From left: Alvin J. King, Wayne Richards, Arthur J. Connell, John T. Nation, Edward Rees, Richard L. Trombla, Howard W. Watts.

On that same day, President Eisenhower sent a letter to the Honorable Harvey V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs (VA), designating him as Chairman of the Veterans Day National Committee.

In 1958, the White House advised VA's General Counsel that the 1954 designation of the VA Administrator as Chairman of the Veterans Day National Committee





~ Some Veterans of the Sky Soldier Kind ~



Airborne.....All The Way!



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