

Retiree COLA Watch

October 7, 2011 • Terry Howell

Our friends at the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) maintain a constant watch on the factors that determine the cost of living adjustment for military retirement pay, VA compensation and pension, and social security benefits.

According to MOAA, the inflation rate rose 0.3% in August. This marks several months of steady inflation increases, which will most likely result in a 2012 COLA rate of 3.7%. This will mark the first COLA increase in two years.

However, there is a proposal to change the basis for COLA to the Chain Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (or C-CPI-U). According to Tom Philpott, adopting the Chain CPI to adjust entitlements has been recommended by every group looking for ways to address the federal debt crisis. The new index could reduce the COLA by .3% with a 2012 COLA rate closer to 3.4%.

Read more:

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/10/retiree-cola-watch/#ixzz1aTfnv7Dz>

[Sent in by Richard "Airborne" Martinez, B/2/503d]

Whodat?

Who recognizes this super, duper 2/503 trooper?



Search and Destroy Mission

0510 Hours

An ocean breeze pushed through the palm trees as the company approached the beach and a fishing village filled with silent people. Hootch by hootch they searched north into a small valley and dug in on a terraced rice paddy encased in spindly grass and vine foliage.

At twilight Hardin was negotiating with Reynolds over a can of pound cake when a bell in the village rang once, and then again. The echoes lingered in the valley.

"Sleigh bells ring, are ya lis'nin'?" Ski's words sounded like they were being forced through a sausage skin.

Music was made smaller by Ski's voice, but he sang anyway. He had started singing after Bucks was killed: Christmas songs and James Brown mostly, and then only snippets. He had a square-wheel sense of rhythm. His voice would boom whenever the square side of the wheel hit the ground. Fish said Sky was a natural entertainer, as if Fish would know.

"Shut up, Ski." The perimeter went silent. The bell rang a third time and a stranger fired an AK in four short bursts, tearing at the tree above Rap's head.

Tennessee keyed the hook, and said, "Just 79's, no sixteens." Five M-79 rounds crashed into the jungle. The stranger was gone.

Ski continued to sing as if there had been no interruption. Fish grabbed his shirt and Ski shut up. Then, as if struck by a thought, he jumped into Hardin's foxhole, nudged his shoulder, and held out his hand.

"Every night, Captain. From here on, with Bucks dead, I gotta hold his dog tag so him and me can talk. We kept each other alive in the mountains. I figure he's still lis'nin'."

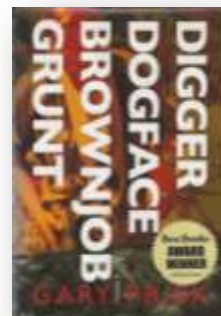
Hardin slipped the chain over his head, handed it to Ski, and said, "The ole tag is my dad's. He landed in Normandy on D-Day."

Ski looked at his captain as if he had met him for the first time, toasted him with Bucks' dog tag, and turned away to read in private. There were several tags: Nuts, Dig-it, Hippie, Bucks, Sam, Hardin, and his father.

Ski gave Bucks' tag a kiss, handed the necklace to Hardin, gave his captain a pat on the back, and sprang from the foxhole. Acting like a revelation had surprised him, as if one of his annoying murmurs had produced an idea, Ski turned and brightened his shirt.

"Big Bucks was a good man, Captain."

[An excerpt from *Digger Dogface, Brownjob, Grunt* by Captain Gary Prisk, CO, C/2/503d, available on Amazon]





~ Sky Soldier Extraordinaire ~



Col. George J. Stapleton Commander, 3/503rd

Colonel (Ret) George J. Stapleton served as the 8th Commander of the 3rd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) from 29 November 1970 to June 1971, in Vietnam.

His education includes the United States Military Academy, B.S. Engineering, 1956; Auburn University, M.A. Political Science, 1970; the United States Air Force Command and Staff College, 1970; and the United States Army War College, 1974.

George was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1932, the son of Colonel (US Army Ret) and Mrs. George A. Stapleton. After graduation from the University of Detroit High School in 1950, he enlisted in the 425th Infantry Regiment, Michigan National Guard, attaining the rank of Sgt E-5. He was commissioned a 2nd LT of Infantry in 1956 upon his graduation from West Point, after which he served in seven paratrooper assignments in the United States, Germany and Vietnam, where he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, Master Parachutist Wings, Ranger and Green Beret Tabs and two awards of the Purple Heart.

In Vietnam, he commanded the 3rd Battalion (Airborne) 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. Other key assignments included duty as a Company Tactical Officer at West Point, a Squadron Air Officer Commanding at the USAF Academy, US Army Program Manager for the MILES Laser Training and Simulation System, Chief of Staff, US Army Training Support Center and Deputy Program Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program.

Retiring from active service in 1984, the Colonel joined Loral Electro Optical Systems, a Defense Aerospace Company, where he served as the International Marketing Manager for Simulation and Training. In 1991, he joined another Defense Aerospace team, Cubic Corp., where he served as Vice President of Cubic Defense Systems and in 1996 as President of Cubic Sales Limited, their Middle Eastern subsidiary. He retired in 2002.

Col. Stapleton and his wife Lynell reside on St. Simons Island, Georgia. They have 7 children, 11 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.



Mason Branstetter (L) presents salute to Col. Stapleton (C) at LZ Uplift during Change of Command ceremonies at Echo Company circa April 1971

Community service includes leadership roles in the St Simon Land Trust, St William Church, Civil War Round Table of Coastal GA, Military Officers Association of America, and Adopt-A Highway Program. Supporting roles include service with the St Simons Library League, Seafarer's Center, Veteran's Chapters (American Legion, Veterans Of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans), GA Historical Society, Light House Museum, US Army Museum, Civil War

Preservation Trust, and Association of the US Army.

Today, the commander is fighting a new enemy, cancer, which is threatening to overrun his position. Here's the Colonel's email for those who wish to send George good wishes gjs1956@comcast.net

All the way, Sir!





Lt. Colonel Postlethwait commanded the 34th Infantry Regiment on Corregidor, and received the DSC for his actions there. Shortly thereafter, he wrote of his experiences.

E. M. Postlethwait, Lt. Col. (US ARMY)

Corregidor Coordination

THE CORREGIDOR OPERATION WAS AN EXAMPLE OF COORDINATION as it ought to be. The fact that every arm or service has as its final mission, either directly or indirectly, the delivery of John Rifleman to the heart of the enemy's ground with his GI boot resting squarely on the chest of the enemy is at last being recognized.



Map 80 – Recapture of Corregidor, 16 - 28 February 1945

With that recognition the development of true coordination between the arms is getting somewhere. It isn't perfect yet, but we're getting there fast. The mechanics of close air support and naval gunfire support were first worked out in theory, then tried and improved; and they are still being improved.

Like most of us, I first learned the mechanics at informal staff schools out of the "books," and in pre-operation planning. It all sounded good and everyone apparently had the right idea, but something always seemed to mar the picture in actual operation. The weather turned out to be bad for the planes, communications went haywire, the Japs kept the Navy busy somewhere else. It was always something - until the Corregidor show. There, we Doughfeet got the kind of support we had heard about and dreamed about, but which we were beginning to doubt existed. Everything clicked, just the way it says in the book, only better.

The pre-invasion bombardment plans were worked out by the higher staffs. We had no voice in the plans, except by accident. I'll say more on that later. Briefly, the Air Forces dropped around two hundred tons of bombs per day for over two weeks before Corregidor D-Day. And the Navy bombarded the island for several days from cruisers and destroyers.

Luckily, Captain "Tommy" Thompson, my naval gunfire liaison officer, was on the ball. The firing ships for the show were anchored near our staging area, and after studying the tactical plan, Thompson went out to talk things over with their officers. On board one of the cruisers, he found Commander H. L. McCoy who had been stationed on Corregidor at the time of its surrender and later escaped. Commander McCoy came ashore with Captain Thompson to our CP on Luzon and answered a thousand and one questions about the island. The talk was worth an extra battalion. Among other things, we worked out one especially important detail. One of the entrances to the large tunnel in Malinta Hill on Corregidor looked right down on the beach where we could land. A gun in that entrance could have spelled murder for anyone on the beach – might even have stopped the whole show. McCoy knew exactly where the entrance was. I asked him if he could close it for us, or at least neutralize it. His answer was "*Hell, yes. I'll go to the fire control tower and lay some eight-inchers right in there myself.*" What more could we want in cooperation on that important point?



Aerial view of infantry landing on The Rock.

(continued....)



In our landing plan, one rifle platoon, equipped for assault-party operations (flame throwers, demolitions, bazookas etc.) was earmarked to hit out fast for that tunnel entrance and finish the job. When that platoon reached the spot on D-Day, there was no job to finish. McCoy and his eight-inchers had completely closed it. Support? And how!



The invasion fleet heads towards Corregidor

Plan for Corregidor

A quick stretch of the terrain and tactical plan before I continue with the close-in air and naval support will clarify the story. Corregidor is a tadpole stretched out from west to east in the entrance of Manila Bay. The head of this polliwog (the west end of the island) is called Topside. It is a 500-foot high plateau that drops into deep ravines and cliffs to the water's edge on all sides, and this part of the island is 2,500 yards in diameter.

The thin waist of the tadpole is called Bottomside. It is about five hundred yards wide and rises about twenty five feet above the water. Overlooking Bottomside and to the east of it is steep, jagged, 400-foot Malinta Hill. This hill is over 800 yards long from north to south and only 300 yards wide. The main corridor of Malinta Tunnel runs through the base of the hill from west to east with a main entrance at each end. North and south wing tunnels join the main tunnel inside and come out at smaller entrances on the north and south sides of the hill. From Malinta Hill to the east, the tail of the tadpole stretches out for 3,000 yards to its tip.

Corregidor's long standing nickname, "the Rock," is a good one for there is only enough soil over the jumble of rock strata to support the life of heavy undergrowth. The tactical plan, which was followed to the letter, called for the 503d Paratroop Regiment to land two battalions on Topside by parachute at 0830. The 3d Battalion, 34th Infantry, was to land near South Dock on the south shore of Bottomside at 1030, secure the Bottomside area and Malinta Hill. From there on, priority one was to open the road from Bottomside to Topside. Priority two, the 503d would clean up Topside including all its ravines

and cliffs while the 34th held tight on Malinta. Priority three, a drive down to the east tip from Malinta Hill. There are a hundred or more stories to tell of how it all worked out, but I shall stick to air and naval gunfire support.

Air Support Operations

The air support set-up was quite orthodox in organization but outstanding in ability. Captain Gire, the air liaison officer, had one lieutenant and four enlisted men. They were equipped with a radio capable of reaching both the air base and the planes in the air. An air strike would begin with a request to the air liaison officer. Sometimes he got his request twelve or more hours in advance, but a fifteen-minute notice didn't faze him in the least. Next, an OP would be established for the strike. At the OP was a ground troop officer thoroughly familiar with the ground, the tactical situation and the target. That was usually the battalion CO or executive officer of the unit being helped by the air strike. The Air Forces lieutenant was there with a telephone line to the liaison officer at the radio. An 81mm mortar observer completed the group.



16 February, 1945. A destroyer comes in close during preparation for the Corregidor landings.

The procedure usually went like this: Captain Gire called the squadron leader, who was circling overhead with his outfit, and designated the target on their corresponding air support photos. He also gave him the position of the nearest friendly troops and a line of air flight along which overs and shorts would be harmless to us. After the squadron leader had identified the target and instructed his pilots, they made a trial run. For the trial run, we marked our lines with colored smoke and the target with a white phosphorus mortar shell. For the bombing run the target was again marked the same way and in they came. The air officer at the OP watched them like a hawk.

(continued....)



Control was so tight that after one pilot had dropped his bomb, the next plane could be given an adjustment for over or short on the first bomb to make his own release accordingly. If necessary, the second plane could be turned off the target. Such an emergency never arose, but that safety measure definitely could have been taken. That is real air support!



17 February, 1945. LCT's beached on Black Beach.

Our planes were usually P-47s loaded with either two five-hundred-pounders, or two belly tanks of incendiary fuel. A two-hundred-gallon tank of that stuff bursting in the undergrowth of a ravine, flushes out the rodents in it most efficiently.

The infantryman often finds men of other branches standing in awe of his stories of personal contact with the enemy. Some of the bold and adventurous will occasionally ask to go on a patrol or visit the troops in contact in order to get a personal taste of it. Our Air Forces forward observer had the time of his life one day. Company L of the 34th Infantry was scheduled for an attack up a large ravine past the north entrance to Malinta Tunnel. In preparation for it we were running an incendiary strike to burn out the heavy undergrowth and silence a Jap 20mm. in the area. The battalion executive officer and the air observer had a beautiful OP in a small trench overlooking the target area. When the planes passed over on the trial run, a six-foot Jap jumped out of the bushes, ran like mad up the narrow road about fifty yards and popped back into the bushes. The Air

Forces lieutenant's eyes bulged. *"Hey, I could have got that bastard if I'd had an M1!"*

The executive officer smiled, got an M1 from the nearby platoon sergeant and laid it over the parapet. *"OK, there you are. Now, when the first bomb drops, keep your eyes open. He'll probably flush again."*

The bomb dropped near the road. Out came the big Jap like a bat out of you know where. The lieutenant dropped him neatly. The other riflemen, having given the Air Forces officer a visitor's courtesy, made sure that the Jap stayed down. The next plane was coming in, the phone rang madly. The excited lieutenant unconsciously answered it. The voice in his ear was angry. *"What the hell are you doing up there? I've been ringing my head off! The pilots want to know if the bombs are going in OK!"*

"Bombs? Oh, bombs! Yeah, they're all right. Say, I just shot a Jap!"

Frequently and fortunately there were more planes available than we could use on close support targets. Normally, there were requests for about two strikes a day. The air base often sent enough planes for four or five strikes if we happened to need them. The liaison officer would say, *"I've got fifteen planes overhead."*

"Any targets?"

"Nothing right now."

"OK, they've got about two hours of gas. I'll keep them standing by and check again when they have about fifteen minutes left."



The traffic wasn't always one way

If at the end of the two-hour period, no close-in targets moved up, the bombs were used "strategically" on the east end of the island, on likely storage areas and hideouts in ravines where naval gunfire couldn't reach.

(continued....)



After the bombs were dropped, the planes would rat race around and strafe for any Japs flushed by the bombing. One day, the liaison officer was sending a squadron on a "strategic" mission. The squadron commander asked, "Is it OK to strafe in there?" "OK to strafe. Go ahead." "Roger."

Then a strange voice came in. "This is so-and-so right over you. I'm coming home from reconnaissance. I haven't any bombs, but may I join in the strafing?"

"Sure, come along?"

"Roger, Wilco, and thank you."

Cooperation and coordination are wonderful things once everybody gets the idea.



The 317th Troop Carrier Group "Jungle Skippers" deliver their cargo to the landing zones of Topside. The unit comprised the 39th, 40th, 41st and 46th Troop Carrier Squadrons.

Reasons for Air's Successes

Our air support worked exceptionally well because: The Air Forces had the planes and wanted to use them. Every effort was made to fill all requests. The air liaison officer and his party knew their business and had a desire to produce. No unreasonable or wasteful requests were made by us.

While I'm on the subject, I believe a few general suggestions for better air support are in order: Make five bombers available for close tactical support whenever possible. The average close-support target is either a spot target or a small area target requiring great accuracy to get satisfactory results. Accuracy is important for troop safety on close targets. (The closer we Doughboys can get for a quick follow-in, the better we like it). It's a tough job for a glide-bombing fighter pilot to be this accurate. We'd like more rockets.

Nothing like a sizzling howling rocket for spot accuracy and for making Christians out of Shintos.

When there are plenty of pilots and planes available, why not designate some outfits as ground-cooperation

squadrons? Give pilots special training on it. Teach them some ground tactics and show them how they fit into the picture. Have a few field exercises with Infantry battalion staffs, air liaison parties and the planes flying dummy missions with flour sacks.

We can tighten teamwork by basing the supporting squadrons close to the ground operational area and bringing the pilots to the area after a mission to see the destruction and the dead Japs they have produced. Nothing fosters pride in a job like seeing the results. "I just shot a Jap!" Hell, how about "I got fifty-two on that mission this morning"?

With the decrease of Jap air power and the increase of bitter ground fighting (witness Okinawa), close tactical air support becomes more possible from the Air Forces view and more important and necessary from the Ground Forces view.

The Malinta OP

Before mentioning our naval gunfire support, I'll tell you about the Malinta Hill OP. Before the war, a concrete OP on the top of Malinta Hill, known as base end station B-23 was used for artillery direction. It is dug into the rock, has overhead cover, and affords a grand view of the entire island. Every officer ever stationed on Corregidor knows the spot. I met Major Jules Yates after his liberation from Cabanatuan, and found that he had used this OP to defend Corregidor from Japs. He was happy to know that the same OP had been used to drive them off.



Black Beach, looking towards Caballo Is., occupied the former area of Barrio San Juan. The barrio had been evacuated and leveled pre-war to provide clear lines of fire across the south channel.

Our Company L had an officer on duty there around the clock. After a day or two, they had learned all the most likely places to nail a few Japs. Machine guns were adjusted on road junctions, cave entrances, paths, etc. The 81mm mortar observers did likewise with their guns.

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From there on, it was a game, mostly at night, observing fire by the light of the moon and Navy star shells. One or two Japs moving down a road was a challenge to the mortar observer to fire his gun at the precise instant which would bring Jap and the shell together. A miss of five yards, even though it got the Jap, brought derisive remarks. When a Jap column appeared, school was out and a field day in order. The best Malinta Hill OP field story comes later in speaking of naval gunfire.



This view was taken from high on the northern slopes of Malinta Hill across the North Dock area towards Topside. The three docks are the Lorcha Dock, North Dock, and Engineer's Dock.

Our pre-landing bombardment was copious, well placed and was furnished by cruisers, destroyers, gunboats, rocket firing LCI's and PT boats. On D-Day the fire never ceased from the opening of the heavy guns at daylight until our first wave touched shore amid the dust of the final volleys of five-inch shells.

My best story of naval support concerns our floating artillery. The destroyers which stood offshore day after day giving close support with gnat's-eye accuracy were a main factor in the retaking of Corregidor. The set-up was similar to that of field artillery and air support, a liaison party and a forward observer party. These parties come from the Joint Assault Signal Companies made up of individuals from both the Army and Navy. JASCO is a good outfit and deserves a lot of credit. Their men on Corregidor showed plenty guts and skill.

We had two destroyers available at all times, day and night. During the day, one destroyer sat dead in the water off the south shore firing on any likely looking target east of Malinta Hill, while the other worked around the west end, firing mission for the paratroopers in their clean-up of the rugged ravines and cliffsides in that area. At night, one destroyer lay out west of the island firing star-shell illumination until the moon rose, while the other patrolled outside the bay entrances though still available to fire on call.

Targets on Call

Scheduled fires were requested daily through the liaison officer. Concentration lasting from ten minutes to an hour were fired in preparation for attacks on the day's objectives. At night illumination schedule usually called

for one or two star shells every few minutes until moonrise.

Targets of opportunity were worked all days. If we picked them up, we asked for the fire and got it. Often the ship picked them up. It was quite common to hear from the radio, "*We see what appears to be a gun position at so-and-so. May we fire?*" The Navy's "may-we-fire" attitude was worth a million to us.

A good example of coordination on a target of opportunity happened one night. The normal night schedule was in progress, one ship firing star shells, the other on patrol. From the light of a star shell, the Malinta OP observer picked up a long column of heavily laden Japs coming out of the east entrance to Malinta Tunnel and moving down toward the eastern tip of the island. The telephone switchboard began to snap with business, SCR-300 radios began to talk and SCR-284 generators began to whirl.

In the first three minutes, four machine guns were set to cover the column from head to tail, four 81mm mortars were likewise shifted, star-shell illumination was increased to continuous lighting. All machine guns and mortars opened fire together. The initial bursts caused heavy casualties and pinned the Japs down. Seven minutes later, the destroyer on patrol had reached its firing position and had fired the initial round for adjustment. For the next thirty minutes, five-gun broadsides raked those monkeys from tip to tail. If any of the 150-odd Japs in that party lived through it, I don't know how. Smooth teamwork that night saved the lives of quite a few Doughboys who would have to dig those Japs out of a hole the hard way later on. The Navy got a "well done" from us for that one and we weren't just being polite.



Engineer's Ravine is swathed in smoke as men of the 3d Bn., 34th Inf. Rgt. crouch down low and observe for any potential movement across the North Dock area. They are positioned on the slopes of Malinta Hill, near Malinta Point.

(continued....)





Too many of us left Corregidor behind by means of Hope.

In addition to scheduled fire and targets of opportunity, we had several special targets. The east entrance to the main tunnel was a tricky one. While the 503d was working on their Topside job, my 34th Infantry force held Malinta Hill. But there just weren't enough troops to maintain control of the east tunnel entrance at night. At the same time, both Colonel George Jones, commanding officer of the 503d "Rock Force," and I wanted to stop this nightly business of Japs bringing supplies out of the tunnel down to the east end of the island. We knew exactly where the entrance was, but we were leery about firing on it. It was right below our own men on the hill, but it couldn't be seen from there for adjustment. Firing from our verbal descriptions wouldn't do because it was hidden under heavy bushes and hard to locate. Our patrols visited the area almost daily, so we had several officers who had seen it. But there was no place on the island from which they could adjust fire on the tunnel entrance. The Navy gave us a simple solution by invitation. "*Come out to the ship and show us,*" they said, so we did.

Colonel Jones, Lieutenant John Bierne, who had patrolled the area, and I went out one afternoon. Bierne laid the fire control cross-hairs right on the entrance. The fire of one gun was adjusted and then the ship poured in a hundred more rounds of APC. Our patrol the next morning reported the entrance closed. Our visit

to the destroyer not only accomplished an important mission, but fostered mutual esteem and friendship which made for even better teamwork in the future, if that were possible.

The coordination between the higher planning staffs of the Army and Navy is excellent and produced first-rate results. I'd like to see more opportunity for the men *doing* the job to get together and work out details. Skippers of destroyers and gunboats should have at least one conference with the staff of a landing team before the show, and several more during the show if possible.

I have probably made the Corregidor operation sound like a picnic. It wasn't. The troopers took their share of casualties in sweating out the extermination of six thousand Japs and there are hundreds of stories to be told about it. It would, however, have cost many times the price in blood if Air, Navy, and Ground Forces coordination had not worked so magnificently. Anything we can do to foster and improve our teamwork will always be of prime value in finishing this war as cheaply as possible.

E. M. Postlethwait

[Source: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion web site]



~ Corregidor History ~

I have passed the following along in your direction so as to obtain your views. It was published in a blog by Steve Kwiecinski, who lives on Corregidor as a "guest ranger". Regards,

Paul Whitman

503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion web site

THE ORIGINAL 16 FEBRUARY 1945 FLAG POLE



OLD GLORY FLIES OVER CORREGIDOR AGAIN -
The American flag flies over Corregidor for the first time in 2 1/2 years as it is attached to the tallest remaining pole on the Rock by Pfc. Clyde I. Bates of Evansville, Mis. and T/5 Frank Guy Arrigo of East Chicago, Ill.

(503rd PRCT photo archives)

We wish to bring your attention to an artifact which is slowly disintegrating here on Corregidor, and want to know your opinions on whether or not anything can and/or should be done about it.

On February 16, 1945, the Americans landed on Corregidor to recapture the island from the Japanese. Members of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team first landed at Topside. The first American flag raised that day was not at the historic Spanish Flagpole, the site of the ceremonial flag raising upon MacArthur's return on March 2nd, which stands at the southeast corner of the Topside Parade Ground. It occurred on a telephone pole that stood near the Post Improvement

Building, down the hill and across the trolley line which ran west of the Parade Grounds. Arrigo and Bates climbed the pole, and the flag that they affixed stayed there during all the fighting.

Several of our explorer/history-nut friends are certain that they have located that pole -- or at least what little remains of it. As you can see from the picture below, it now consists of several pieces of wood in the concrete-lined 14-inch hole which formed the flagpole base. Our friend Karl is standing next to it. It appears to have been burned down to around two-feet high. Should something be done to preserve what is left of the pole?

One suggestion would be to remove the few pieces of wood that are left and exhibit them, maybe in the museum or near the Spanish Flagpole. We also wonder if folks with ties to the 503rd PRCT might wish to sponsor a permanent marker to be placed in or beside the actual flagpole base.

Steve Kwiecinski



Little remains of the original pole from the first raising of the American flag on Corregidor. Karl Welteke, is one team member of the Corregidor Historic Society which researched and relocated its remains in 2010.

Note: Persons interested in such a project can reach Steve by contacting Paul Whitman at exo@503prct.org





INCOMING!!



Robert Stack

In 1967 Robert Stack visited C/2/503 in Dak To. We had just returned from a 30 or 45 day hump. He visited us at our base camp. He was very nice to everyone and very respectful.

Needless to say, even our base camp was not 'safe' from mortar/rocket fire and he was risking his life visiting us. This was not a 'photo-op' and I don't remember any press people at all.



I always admired him for that visit which really meant a lot to us, given all the hate spewing shit toward us going on back in the world. I followed his career after that.

He served in the US Navy in WWII as a gunner instructor. He played Eliot Ness in the hit TV series, *The Untouchables* ('59-'63). He later was in the movie *Airplane* and hosted the popular TV series, *Unsolved Mysteries*.

He died of a heart attack on 5-14-2003 at the age of 84.

Instead of sitting on a NVA (photo-op) tank; kissing ass to the commies, like Jane Fonda, Robert Stack visited C/2/503 in Dak To in the Central Highlands in the Summer of 1967, despite heavy units of NVA known to be in the area.

Steve "Sgt. Rock" Vargo
C/2/503d

Newsletter Cover, October 2011

The front cover picture, of Hill 875, the soldier off to the right by himself, looks like my husband, Raymond Lockman. Do you have any names of those men?

Vicki Lockman

(please contact Editor rto173d@cfl.rr.com)



Red Flags

I did receive the most welcomed Newsletter and, WOW, did it bring back red flags. See I joined A Co. 2/503 on the 18th of May 1965, shortly after the Battalion was moved from the Rubber Tree Plantation. Very much mud, from day to day and formation to formation, until we got all the PSP to arrange our company street.

Jim "Top" Dresser
A/HHC/2/503d



Jim waiting his turn for bomb casing shower circa '65/'66
[Hope you're feeling better following surgery, Top!]

DC vs. Iraq

An interesting letter in the *Australian Shooter Magazine*, which I quote:

"If you consider that there has been an average of 160,000 troops in the Iraq Theater of operations during the past 22 months, and a total of 2112 deaths, that gives a firearm death rate of 60 per 100,000 soldiers.

The firearm death rate in Washington, DC is 806 per 100,000 for the same period.

That means you are about 25 per cent more likely to be shot and killed in the US capital, which has some of the strictest gun control laws in the US, than you are in Iraq."

Conclusion:

"The US should pull out of Washington."

[Sent in by a Digger]



Vietnam in HD

Premiers Tuesday, November 8th at 9/8c
on History Channel



Interesting Veterans Statistics of the Vietnam Memorial Wall

"Carved on these walls is the story of America, of a continuing quest to preserve both Democracy and decency, and to protect a national treasure that we call the American dream." ~ President George Bush

There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010. The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.

Beginning at the apex on panel 1E and going out to the end of the East wall, appearing to recede into the earth (numbered 70E - May 25, 1968), then resuming at the end of the West wall, as the wall emerges from the earth (numbered 70W - continuing May 25, 1968) and ending with a date in 1975. Thus the war's beginning and end meet. The war is complete, coming full circle, yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side and contained within the earth itself.

The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass., listed by the U.S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.

- There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.
- 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.
- 8,283 were just 19 years old. The largest age group, 33,103 were 18 years old.
- 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.
- 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.
- One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.
- 997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam.
- 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam.
- 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall.
- Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons.
- 54 soldiers on attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia. I wonder why so many from one school.
- 8 Women are on the Wall. Nursing the wounded.
- 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.
- Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons.

- West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall.

- The Marines of Morenci -- They led some of the scrappiest high school football and basketball teams that the little Arizona copper town of Morenci (pop. 5,058) had ever known and cheered. Their service began on Independence Day, 1966. Only 3 returned home.

- The Buddies of Midvale - LeRoy Tafoya, Jimmy Martinez, Tom Gonzales were all boyhood friends and lived on three consecutive streets in Midvale, Utah on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh avenues.

They lived only a few yards apart, and they all went to Vietnam.

In a span of 16 dark days in late 1967, all three would be killed.

- The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968, 245 deaths.

- The most casualty deaths for a single

month was May 1968 - 2,415 casualties were incurred.



For most Americans who read this they will only see the numbers that the Vietnam War created. To those of us who survived the war, and to the families of those who did not, we see the faces, we feel the pain that these numbers created. We are, until we too pass away, haunted with these numbers, because they were our friends, fathers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters. There are no noble wars, just noble warriors.

[Sent in by Lonnie Mitchell, B/2/503d]



LISTEN TO THE NCOs

While at West Point in June of 1965, we put on a show of firepower for the Plebes. My role was to fire a rifle grenade which was mounted (if my memory serves me correctly) on an M-14 rifle. Of course, the NCOIC told me to put the rifle butt on the ground because it'll kick back pretty damn hard. Well, at 18 years of age, I thought to myself, *how bad could it possibly kick back at me? It was after all, just a rifle with just a grenade attached to it.* I decided then to fire the weapon like a man, a U.S. Paratrooper. *Airborne!*

When I got the signal, I fired that damned rifle grenade, and it literally kicked the shit out of me. And of course, knowing I was told how to fire the weapon correctly, I was too embarrassed to say anything about my injury. However, after many years living silently with shoulder pain, I decided it was time to correct the damage I had rendered on to myself on that fateful summer night back in 1965. I submitted to shoulder surgery in October of 2004. The verbiage from an old song comes to mind, *"You will come to know when the bullet hits the bone."* Damn, that hurt!

**Gerry "Doc" Stesiak, Medic
A/4/503d**

[I don't feel so bad now about breaking my ankle while attempting a *standing-landing* with the 509th in Germany in '68. That sucker never healed right either. *Young, dumb, etc.* Ed]

It's Not The Medals...It's The Man

(From a letter by Gerry "Doc" Stesiak to the family of SGM Robert Cruz, Doc's first SGM, after his death in January 2008):

I served in the same unit as SGM Cruz and I've never forgotten how he positively affected me. Let me explain:

During a parade at Fort Campbell, we all had our Class 'A' Dress uniforms on. When I saw the number of rows of ribbons SGM Cruz had on his uniform I was stunned. So, I asked him why he never told us how many citations and ribbons he was awarded. To this day I remember his remarks in response to my query:

"Son, it is not that important to show what you earn as a result of soldiering. Rather, it is far more important to be a soldier first and let your actions dictate who you are, not the awards you may receive."

Years later I became a Detroit Fire Chief. Like the old Sarge, I too had earned many citations for bravery and what have you. But, because of SGM Cruz' statement to me, I took it a step further. I never wore the ribbons on my uniform. He made that much of an impression on me.

The M14 Rifle



Development of the M14 Rifle began in 1944 when Army Ground Forces identified the need for a weapon of the M1 Garand's size and weight that was capable of both automatic and semi-automatic fire. After years of research and testing by the Springfield Armory, the resulting rifle fired the NATO 7.62mm cartridge and was fed by a 20-round magazine, which was a considerable improvement on the 8-round clip of the 0.30 caliber M1. It was also equipped with a chrome-lined barrel and chamber to resist corrosion, a prong type flash suppressor, and could accommodate the M6 bayonet. Adopted by the U.S. military in 1957, the M14 replaced not only the M1 Garand, but also the M2 Carbine and M3A1 submachine gun, simplifying both training and logistical procedures.

Though generally regarded as reliable and accurate, the M14 did suffer from excessive recoil when fired in automatic mode. Consequently, the majority of rifles were issued with a selector shaft lock that ensured that only semi-automatic fire could be employed.

The M14 was the primary U.S. infantry weapon in Vietnam until it was replaced by the shorter and lighter M16 rifle. However, the M14 was still being used by some Army and Marine Corps units as late as 1968.

General Data, M-14

Weight (with 20 round magazine):	10.1 lbs.
Length:	44.3 inches
Barrel:	22 inches
Rifling:	1 turn in 12"
Ammunition caliber:	7.62mm
Muzzle velocity:	2,800 fps
Cyclic rate of fire:	700/750 rpm
Maximum effective range:	460 meters



Mike Ludas, A Bravo Bull

Michael "Mike" B. Ludas, 64, passed away, Saturday, October 1, 2011, surrounded by his loving family and friends.

Mike was born September 14, 1947, in Waukegan, IL and graduated from Waukegan Twsp. High School in 1965. He enlisted into the U.S Army in 1966 and chose to become a paratrooper and served with the 82nd Airborne. He was assigned to Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP). His bravery during the Vietnam War earned him three Purple Hearts, two Army Commendation Medals with "V", a Vietnam Service Medal w/Bronze Service Star, Unit Citations, a Parachutist Badge with Gold Battle Jump Star, and a Combat Infantryman's Badge. During the battle on Hill 875, while wounded and waiting for evacuation, Mike survived a bomb that landed next to him which tragically killed Fr. Watters who was administering last rights to many of his comrades who also died. Mike always questioned why he was a chosen to survive.

Mike proposed to his high school sweetheart, Geraldine "Gerrie" Smith in 1966, and was to be married in 1967 while in Hawaii on R&R from Vietnam, but because he had been wounded they had to wait until returning home. Mike and Gerrie married January 29, 1968, and he finished his tour of duty in Fort Carson, Colorado as a SP4.

Mike retired as a route delivery and sales driver. He was a devoted Green Bay Packers fan. Hobbies he enjoyed were bowling, fishing, deer hunting, cribbage, golf, cards, computers and most of all spending time with family and friends around the pool.

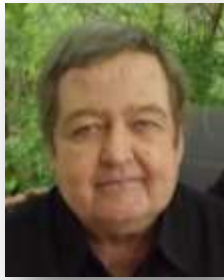
Mike was a Life Member in the Society of the 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP), Sky Soldiers, and many other military organizations.

Mike is survived by his beloved wife "Gerrie" of 43 years; daughters Lynn (Mark) Eberle of Salem, WI, and Lori Ludas (Dr. Melissa LoPinto) of New Hartford, NY. He was also "Grandpa" to Ryann and Jason Eberle and "Papa" to Charlotte and Dylan LoPinto-Ludas, and left an extended family.

Mike was loyal to his family and friends and will be remembered for his sharp wit, humor and his life's interesting views. He will be missed more than he could have imagined.



Memorial services with Military honors were held at Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Union Grove, WI. Please sign the online guest book for Mike at www.strangfh.com



Norman Dwain Samples

Norman "Tex" Samples, 60, of Monahans, Vietnam combat veteran of Charlie Company 2/503d, 173d Airborne Brigade '69-'70, passed away at Medical Center Hospital in Odessa, Texas on Sunday, October 2, 2011. He worked in the oil field industry in transport. Services were held at Acres West Funeral Chapel.



Norman married Carolyn Wood in Monahans on April 30, 1998. Those left to cherish his memory are his wife: Carolyn Samples of Monahans; three sons, Michael Samples of Monahans and Robby Samples and Jeremiah Samples, both of Wink; two daughters, Megan Samples and Kiesha Tucker, both of Monahans; one brother, Stacey Thate of Palmer, TX; four sisters, Lucy Adams of Tuscola, Diane Myers and Cathy Lynn, both of Abilene, and Glenda Crocker of Richmond, TX; and six grandchildren.

Graveside services with military honors were held October 5, at Monahans Memorial Cemetery, officiated by Rev. Gordon Cox.

[Send in by Wayne C/2/503d & Iva Tuttle,]

Rest easy Chargin' Charlie



Martha Raye Visiting One of Our Own



2/503d trooper Pat Bowe visited by Martha Raye

Because you asked about the photo: We were on patrol in Tuy Hoa during an operation in October of '67 when we were ambushed. As with most ambushes all hell broke loose and I was "gut-shot" and in pretty bad shape. The round hit me in the stomach, but also took out a chunk of my large intestine, collapsed a lung, and blew out a rib in my back. Having lost a considerable amount of blood I was very lucky to have survived. I was finally medivac'd to a field hospital in Tuy Hoa and spent about a month there before I could be transported back to the States. I was then flown to Madigan Hospital in Ft. Lewis, Washington and spent the next 8 months recovering.

An Army nurse took the picture of Martha Ray and I when she was visiting the troops. As I recall Martha was a honorary Captain in Special Forces at the time. She was a really special person and deserves a lot of credit for the work she performed. She may have not done as much as a Bob Hope, but nevertheless she gave much of her time visiting the wounded and being an inspiration to them. God Bless her.

Pat Bowe
HHC/Recon, 2/503d '66-'67



Downtown Tuy Hoa, RVN

Excerpt from Remarks by Secretary Eric K. Shinseki at Vietnam Veterans of American National Convention in Reno, NV

Sergeant Kapacziewski is a member of the "9/11 Generation." More than five million Americans have served in the military during the past decade. Three million of them joined after 9/11, knowing full well that they would be deploying to combat. Their accomplishments are extraordinary – unseating the Taliban, pushing al Qaeda from its sanctuaries, capturing Saddam Hussein, delivering justice to Osama bin Laden, and training Iraqi and Afghan forces to defend their own countries.



The 9/11 Generation includes more than a million spouses and two million children of service members, many of whom have lived their entire lives in a nation at war. More military women have served in combat than ever before. Hundreds of thousands of troops have deployed multiple times. They have all borne a heavy burden on behalf of the nation, but despite the enormous strains of 10 years of continuous operations, our military remains as strong as it has ever been.

Sergeant Joe Kapacziewski's 9/11 Generation is defined, just as Rocky Versace's Vietnam generation, and every previous generation of America's Veterans has been defined, by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice, and devotion to duty. These men and women who serve and have served are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism -- the living, breathing embodiment of our national values and our special place in the world. God bless our men and women in uniform; God bless our Veterans -- welcome home, VVA; and may God continue to bless our great Nation of ours. Thank you.

Eric Shinseki

"When all else fails, lower your standards."

Mike Sturges, A/2/503d



golden corral

MILITARY APPRECIATION MONDAY

Thank You Veterans....JOIN US

Golden Corral and the DAV are partnering for another great Military Appreciation Monday on November 14, 2011, between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. 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. Last year, DAV Departments and Chapters raised more than \$1 million in donations as a result of this decade-long annual tradition.



DAV

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 with members of Chapters in your area and check out the free DAV information.

Source:

<http://www.goldencorral.com/military/default.asp>

~ Correction ~

This photo was sent in by Bob Fleming, A/D/2/503d and appeared in last month's issue. We were under the impression Bob thought the guy's face was worthy of recognition but, in actuality, Bob wanted us to see the man's *BOOTS*! Ya still gotta love that face. Ed

"You should have shown the boots on that photo I sent of that guy with the wrinkled up face. Perfectly clean, brown, possibly old brown army jump boots. Plus the guy had them bloused in his trousers, and correctly."

Bob Fleming
A/D/2/503d

Da boots



lski, <http://www.digital-photo.com>

"Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys. Look on them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death."

- Sun Tzu, the Art of War

