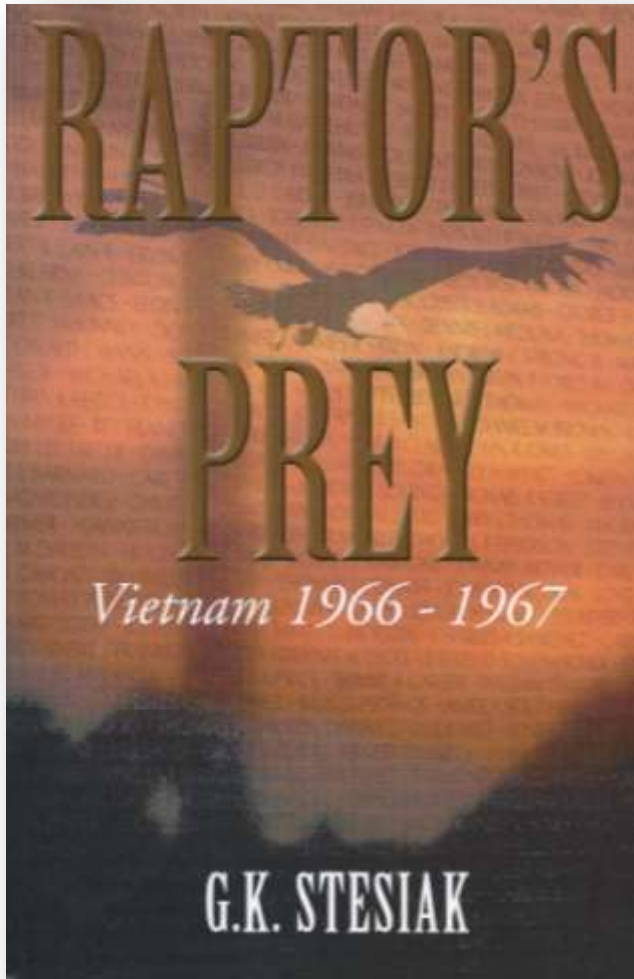


A Sky Soldier's Tale of War

By G.K. Stesiak



Gerry (Doc) Stesiak served as a Medic with A/4/503 in 1966/67. In 1966, he made a promise to his fellow paratroopers. With the publishing of this book, he has fulfilled that promise.

“The Author takes the reader on a journey from the world of the US Army in 1964, to Vietnam aboard ship in 1966. Did our boys know what they were getting themselves into? Did the US Government know what they got themselves into? An unforgettably powerful read destined to become a classic of an era some of us would choose not to remember.”

“This is more than a book. Raptor's Prey is a time machine that puts the reader directly into the sights and smells, feelings and emotions of that incredible war. This powerful work should be read by everyone too young to remember Vietnam – and everybody old enough to think they have forgotten it.”

Jack Lessenberry, former National Editor and Foreign Correspondent, Detroit News

Available on Amazon.com

~ JOB OPPORTUNITY ~

A friend of mine was asked to circulate this notice for an Executive Director role for Transitional Living Services for Veterans in Woodstock, IL. If you have someone who is qualified and wishes to make contact with this group, my friend is willing to provide an introduction. Have them contact me. RAGMAN.

Robert A. Getz

Task Force CO, 2/503d

rgetz173@yahoo.com

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: Executive Director

STATUS: Full-time

REPORTS TO: TLS Board of Directors

SUMMARY: The position of Executive Director is responsible for managing the operations and fiscal activities of Transitional Living Services. This position is ultimately responsible for monitoring, oversight, supervision and appraisal of staff, program implementation and evaluation, marketing, and accounting. The working rapport between the Executive Director and the Board is critical to the success of the TLS agency. The primary difference in scope of responsibility between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors is the Executive Director is primarily responsible for Administration Management and Operations which applies precedent rather than establishes precedent; whereas the role of the Board of Directors is Governance and establishing policy with a long-term duration or impact on the agency.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

include *Public Relations, Program Development and Administration*. Other duties may be assigned.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE: The Executive Director is required to hold a Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education. Appropriate fields of study and/or experience in public or business administration, social work, community development, educational leadership or equivalents are required.

Note: Contact Bob for complete job description and requirements.



AUSSIES LOOKING TO ACQUIRE VIETNAM WAR HUEY

I am the President of the Loch Sport R.S.L. and have been asked if I could put my hand up for one of these Huey's. We have no military pieces of any sort outside the building. I've inquired about a Leopard Tank, and a 105 Howitzer and this Huey. The price they are asking for the chopper is out of our financial reach. But, wouldn't it be great if somehow we could swing this into motion and to have this piece of history displayed for the World to see in such a small community like where I live? My question is, can you please put this out to my brothers and maybe, just maybe, someone can help me?? I'm willing to put up the first \$1000. One can only wish and ask, can't we?? Thanks.

A.B. Garcia

HHC/2/503d

abugar2010@hotmail.com



Australian Ministry of Defense RAAF image.

Cost: AU\$10,000.

(Sale is subject to U.S. Government approval)

Persons and/or organizations interested in helping out with funding for the purchase of the Huey should contact A.B. at the above email address. As of the release of this newsletter, \$1300. has been committed.



A wounded digger, hurt by a booby-trap explosion is evacuated to Vung Tau.

Correction



Under "WHODAT?" in last month's newsletter the trooper rendering aid to the child was misidentified in the first batch of newsletters sent out before the error was found. The man is **Capt "Doc" Carter**, Battalion Surgeon.

(Photo by George Dexter)

Our Medics



Plans are still in the works to feature the brave Medics of the 2/503d and all 173d sister units. Please send your medic stories and photos to rto173d@cfl.rr.com

"Give me the strength to strike hard, strike swift, strike true. I am the 82nd and this is as far as the bastards are going to get."



82nd Airborne paratrooper talking to a tank crew during the Battle of the Bulge.



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LOOKING FOR BUDDIES

Sgt. Matthews

I was in Nam '69-'70 and have been desperately looking for an old buddy, Sgt. Matthews of Alpha Company. He served two tours and saved my life several times. I was 19, he was maybe 25. I may be too late in my search. He's an African American. Unfortunately, we all went by our last names or nicknames. I believe he lived in either South or North Carolina. Last year I found my best friend but he died a couple of months after locating him. He never let me know just how sick he was. It's left a hole in my heart. Now I need to find this guy Matthews before it's too late. Would you have any ideas. I could use help to locate him. Thanks for your help in my desperate search for this giant of a man. He stood 6'3" 220 lbs. a muscle man. At LZ English we came in from the field as we did every 30 days. We'd go to the steakhouse and raise hell with the legs (s.o.p.), while kicking back with a few snorts of Jack. Back at the tent, a captain from HQ came in and offered a 3-day pass for anyone volunteering for guard duty riding shotgun on one of the APC's with 20mm cannons and a 50 Cal. I said I'd go if I could work out the 50. No problem. Sgt. Matthews, who cared for all his men in his platoon, talked me out of the offer. I stayed behind and played cards and finished the Jack shared between our squad. The next morning Matthews got us up for chow and that's when he told us of the loss of one of our own from Delta Company being sniped off the very APC I was considering for the 3-day pass. Wow! *Ya dig it?* We'd all say that after every sentence and there were a few more times like that throughout my tour. If anyone has any info or ways to locate this guy please email me. Thanks, and God bless.

Rick Guzman (Guz)

A/2/503d, '69/'70

guzmandrywallinc@aol.com

PFC Benjamin David de Herrera

PFC Benjamin David de Herrera, 3rd Platoon, C Co., 2nd Bn, 503rd Infantry, KIA/MIA on 19 Nov. 67, in Kontum Province. The JPAC in Hawaii would like to get photos of PFC de Herrera and are trying to locate family members. His Home of Record was Colorado Springs, CO. He also attended Brush High School. Please contact:

Ray Rameriz

Recon/4/503d

ramirez173@hotmail.com

LT Ron Rodreick

I've got this guy, Mathew Wittkins, who wants to know if anyone knows his buddy LT Ron Rodreick. If you contact Matt Karguy13@sbcglobal.net it would be appreciated. Thanks.

Steve Welch

C/2/503d

~ Missing Man Table ~



The table is round – to show our everlasting concern. The cloth is white – symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty.

The single red rose reminds us of the lives of these men....and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith, while seeking answers.

A slice of lemon reminds us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears of our missing and their families who long for answers after decades of uncertainty.

The glass is inverted – to symbolize their inability to share this evening's toast.

The chairs are empty – they are missing.....



The Airborne Patch

Most airborne units had a distinct oval cloth insignia worn under the parachutist or glider badge on the left breast. In 1941 when then Captain William P. Yarborough of the 501st Parachute Battalion returned to Fort Benning with the first 350 Parachutist's Badges, there was a concern that the badges were small and did not stand out when worn on the uniform. To remedy this Captain Yarborough designed an oval background trimming to be worn under the badge and frame it on the uniform. The original trimmings used by the 501st were red with blue borders and were handmade of felt.

During the course of the Second World War the original 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion was incorporated into the 503rd Parachute Infantry. Other airborne units were formed then adopted their own oval background trimmings in various color combinations.

Army regulations existed that permitted units to adopt trimmings in addition to the familiar enameled crests distinctive insignia. Today the buff strap of the Third Infantry Regiment is the best-known of these regimental trimmings. In the course of the war the War Department suspended adoption of new trimmings and it does not appear that airborne background trimmings were officially approved by the War Department during the Second World War. Nevertheless, they were manufactured using regimental funds and widely worn. Background trimmings found their way into the official uniform regulations during the postwar period and are still proudly worn by airborne units today.

Airborne oval background trimmings existed for most of the parachute infantry regiments. In addition, ovals in the colors of branches of service existed for other combat branches (such as artillery) and also support troops within the airborne divisions and for headquarters units.

An exacting tally of all of the trimming variations and units of the Second World War has not been published, but a good source of information is Les Hughes' article: "Cloth Airborne Insignia of WWII: A Primer". The Trading Post (LIV Jan-Mar 1995):33-40.

Examples:



503rd First Design
(British)



503rd First Design
Postwar



503rd Second Design
Postwar

A Few More Airborne Pocket Patches



506th



513th



515th



515th



Army Para. Team



Quartermaster



11th Airborne



82nd Airborne



101st Airborne

Some Airborne Cap Patches



Officer



Enlisted



Infantry



Para-Glider Off.



Para Glider Enl.



Inf. Glider Enl.

And, of course, *The Patch*





55 Days

By Lex McAulay
1RAR

In 55 days on operations in November/December 1965 and January 1966, the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was involved in four separate operations in widely differing locations in South Vietnam involving very different techniques in each. The success of these operations demonstrated with a high degree of flexibility it is possible to achieve with well-trained soldiers, experienced NCOs and good commanders.

The first operation required a sudden move by air to a distant area to secure the rice harvest for the people's own use and not have it taken by the enemy; then a further sudden air movement to a different area to search for enemy combat units. There was a return to base for Christmas, followed by an airlift to another completely different type of terrain, with searches in swamp, rice paddies and canals; then a quick move to another location where the brigade defeated the enemy guard force of several battalions and captured a major headquarters, followed by a week exploiting captured tunnel systems while coping with continuous enemy attempts to penetrate the brigade perimeter.

During those 55 days the brigade took part in airmobile operations across several different types of terrain, infantry-armoured advances and attacks, and, perhaps the most demanding on the individual soldier, tunnel exploration and related activity.

Communist revolutionary warfare of the era was prosecuted in three stages, of which the first two were organisation and development of a political organisation and a guerrilla military force, and the third an offensive by 'regular' or 'main force' armed units to destroy the defense forces of the government and bring the Communists to power. The situation in South Vietnam in 1965 was such that large-scale conventional operations were necessary.

As units arrived, the commander of the Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF), General William C. Westmoreland, sent them on sweeps into selected areas to disrupt the enemy, destroy base camps, and buy time, before Westmoreland could go on the offensive. The first US Army formation committed to South Vietnam was the US 173d Airborne Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Ellis Williamson.

In June the 1RAR battalion group deployed from Australia to Bien Hoa, and joined the brigade.

East of Saigon is the La Nga river valley 'rice-bowl', into which North Vietnamese refugees had been resettled after the 1954 division of Vietnam into Communist-ruled North and anti-communist South.



1RAR Diggers board a UH-1D Huey near Bien Hoa during operations with US paratroopers from the 173d.

(Photo by Tim Page)

The 173d Airborne Brigade planned a parachute drop into the valley, but security was so poor that local shops began to stock the parachute badge with star denoting a combat jump. Brigadier General Williamson brought forward the operation, cancelled the parachute drop, and used helicopters, fixed-wing airlift and road convoy to bring his force to the operation area.

The brigade deployed by air to the Binh Tuy province capital, Vo Dat. 1RAR was given the task of opening the road to, and securing the town of Chinh Duc. This town had been captured by the Viet Cong, and feeble government attempts to re-take it consisted of driving up the road to the inevitable ambush, exchanging fire and returning to Vo Dat.

1RAR moved on foot through the bush south of Chinh Duc and prepared an early-morning attack from the far side. This surprised the enemy and a free-flowing series of flanking moves and attacks bounced the Viet Cong back, out into the bush. The battalion's next task was an attack on the town of Vo Xu, further along the road into the La Nga valley. This was another success.

The rest of the operation consisted of securing the valley for the harvest, finding enemy supply caches and civic action events.

Strong enemy forces had been reported south of this area; the brigade flew there, and separated into allocated search areas. A heavy contact was experienced by 2/503rd. Christmas was spent at Bien Hoa.

(continued....)



On 1 January 1966 the brigade flew to a completely different area - the canals, swamps and rice fields of the Mekong Delta, again searching for enemy base areas and armed forces. Here movement and searching techniques across water-logged country required immediate adaptation by all ranks. The enemy had identified possible landing zones in their areas and 2/503rd had a heavy contact on arrival.

This operation in the Delta was followed immediately by an airlift to capture an enemy headquarters, which was defended by three main force battalions of Viet Cong – experienced combatants who had graduated from village guerrilla and local force units to the equivalent of regular troops. 1RAR was under fire as it arrived on the landing zone, and soon all four rifle companies were in action.

1/503rd and 2/503rd landed and swept the area, then formed a line with 1RAR and searched their locations. Again, the population had to be removed from the battle area while the Viet Cong units were forced out. An extensive tunnel system was found and exploration went on for the next week. The enemy knew the area and the tunnel system. Rank meant little in tunnel searches – only slim people could pass along the narrow tunnels and men of larger size simply could not enter them. This situation certainly had not been covered in training, but the battalions dominated the area and captured large quantities of material, most important of which were the documents from the enemy headquarters for the entire region.

At no time did the Viet Cong, the ‘home team’ on the home ground, come close to defeating the Brigade in any of these operations.



Australians bring in a suspected VC during cordon and sweep operations in Phuoc Tuy.

(Photo by Tim Page)

Each operation required very different techniques from the troopers, NCOs and officers and each time results were a success.

At no other time in the Vietnam War did a single brigade with supporting arms cope with so many different requirements in such a short time in successive operations over such a large area with different types of terrain against well-armed enemy on home ground. This is all to the great credit of the troopers, NCOs and officers of the Brigade and to the reservoir of experience and commonsense within the unit.

Meritorious Unit Commendation



By the direction of the Secretary of the Army, the Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to the 1st BATTALION, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT GROUP for exceptionally meritorious achievement in the performance of outstanding service:

The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, distinguished itself in the conduct of military operation in the Republic of Vietnam from 5 May 1965 to 16 May 1966 while attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade (separate) of the United States Army. As the first ground combat unit in-country; the 173rd Airborne Brigade and its assigned and attached units conducted extensive combat maneuvers in the Bien Hoa area and in the Viet Cong strongholds of War Zone D and the Iron Triangle during the period 5 May 1965 to 4 May 1967. In every confrontation with the stubborn insurgents, the 173rd Airborne Brigade displayed marked aggressiveness which enabled them to neutralize enemy strongholds and capture thousands of logistical items. In addition to remarkable skill and tenacity in combat, the Sky Soldiers of the brigade carried on an extensive civic action program characterized by sincere compassion for the suppressed local populace. During each of the brigade's combat operations, the Sky Soldiers immeasurably aided the allied counterinsurgency effort by winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 173d Airborne Brigade are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves, the Armed Forces of the United States, and the Armed Forces of Australia and New Zealand.



PLAQUE IN THE MEMORIAL GARDENS AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR



Critical Information for Spouses

The following is a complete and verbatim transcription of the pamphlet from the Office of Survivors Assistance, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Thanks to Bill Reynolds A/2/503d, for hunting it down and sending it in. Ed

Advocating for Survivors of America's Veterans

History

The Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) was established in October of 2008, and is the primary advisory to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters related to policies, programs, legislative issues, and other initiatives affecting Veterans' survivors and dependents.

How We Help

ODA honors the commitments made to our Veterans and military members by serving as a resource regarding all benefits and services furnished by VA to Survivors and dependents of deceased Veterans. OSA ensures that surviving spouses, children and parents of deceased Veterans have access to all applicable benefits and services under the law and serves as an advocate.

- Criteria/Eligibility information
- Assistance in navigating the system
- Resource for families prior to and after immediate need

Please use this guide to learn more about VA benefits for Survivors. Throughout the next few pages you will see a variety of information on various programs, however due to space constraints, not everything is covered. OSA would like to encourage you to investigate further by visiting our web site at

www.va.gov/survivors

Bereavement Counseling

VA Vet Centers provide bereavement counseling to all family members including spouses, children, parents and siblings of Servicemembers who die while on active duty. This includes federally activated members of the National Guard and reserve components. Bereavement services may be accessed by visiting

www.vetcenter.va.gov



Additional Counseling Options:

Bereavement counseling through any Veterans Health Administration medical center to immediate family members of Veterans who die unexpectedly or while participating in VA hospice or similar program, as long as the immediate family member had been receiving family support services in connection with or in furtherance of the Veteran's treatment.

Financial Benefits

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation:

For a Survivor to be eligible for Dependency and indemnity Compensation (DIC), the Veteran's death must have resulted from one of the following causes:

- A disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty or active duty for training.
- An injury, heart attack, cardiac arrest or stroke, incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on inactive duty for training.
- A service-connected disability or a condition directly related to a service-connected disability.

DIC may also be paid to certain Survivors of Veterans who were totally disabled from service-connected conditions as the time of death, even if their service-connected disabilities did not cause their deaths. The Survivor qualifies if the Veteran was:

- Continuously rated totally disabled for a period of 10 years immediately preceding death.
- Continuously rated totally disabled from the date of military discharge and for at least 5 years immediately preceding death.
- A former POW who died after September 30, 1999, and who was continuously rated totally disabled for a period of at least one year immediately following death.

(continued....)





Payment will be offset by any amount received from judicial proceedings brought on by the Veterans death.

- The Veteran's discharge must have been under conditions other than dishonorable.

Death Pension

VA provides pensions to low-income surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased Veterans with wartime service.

Eligibility:

- Spouses must not have remarried and children must be under age 18, or under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school, or have become permanently incapable of self-support because of disability before age 18.
- The Veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and must have had 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war, or a service-connected disability justifying discharge.
- Longer periods of service may be required for Veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980, or October 18, 1981, if an officer.
- If the Veteran died in service but not in the line of duty, the death pension may be payable if the Veteran completed at least two years of honorable service.
- Children who become incapable of self-support because of a disability before age 18 may be eligible as long as the condition exists, unless the child marries or the child's income exceeds the applicable limit.
- A surviving spouse may be entitled to a higher income limit if living in a nursing home, in need of the aid and attendance of another person or is permanently housebound.

Home Loan Guarantee

A VA loan guaranty to buy a home may be available to:

- An unmarried spouse of a Veteran or Servicemember who died as a result of service-related disabilities.
- A surviving spouse who remarried after age 57.
- A spouse of a Servicemember officially listed as MIA or who is currently a POW for more than 90 days (limited to one loan).

Life Insurance

VGLI/SGLI

- The Veterans Group Life Insurance & Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (VGLI/SGLI) are life insurance products offered to Veterans and active duty personnel. Both programs are voluntary and may be opted out of by the Servicemember or Veteran.
- Not all surviving family members may file a claim on this benefit.
- If your loved one had VGLI/SGLI coverage and you would like to file a claim, or if you have questions about your policy, call the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (OSGLI) at **800-419-1473**.

Department of Defense Death Gratuity

- The Department of Defense extends a death gratuity payment to beneficiaries identified by the Servicemember prior to deployment.
- The DoD Death Gratuity is a total of \$100,000. Paid to the identified beneficiaries of those whose death is a result of hostile actions and occurred in a designated combat operation or combat zone or while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

Education Benefits

For more information please visit www.gibill.va.gov

Dependents Education Assistance

- The spouse or child of a Servicemember or Veteran who either died of a service-connected disability, or has permanent and total service-connected disability or who died while such a disability existed.
- The spouse or child of a Servicemember listed for more than 90 days as currently Missing In Action (MIA), captured in the line of duty by a hostile force or detained or interned by a foreign government or power.

(continued....)





- The spouse or child of a Servicemember who is hospitalized or is receiving outpatient care or treatment for a disability that is determined to be totally and permanently disabling, incurred or aggravated due to active duty and for which the Servicemember is likely to be discharged from military service.

Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship

Children of those who die in the line of duty on or since September 11, 2001, are potentially eligible to use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits of the sponsoring Veteran.

- Are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100% level.
- Have 15 years to use the benefits beginning on their 18th birthday.
- May use the benefit until their 33rd birthday.
- Are not eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Education Benefits for Persons with Special Needs

- Dependents over age 14 with physical or mental disabilities that impair their ability to pursue an education may receive specialized vocational or restorative training, including speech and voice correction, language retraining, lip reading, auditory training, Braille reading and writing, and similar programs.

- Certain disabled or surviving spouses are also eligible.

Montgomery GI Bill Death Benefit

- VA will pay a special Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) death benefit to a designated Survivor in the event of the service-connected death of a Servicemember while on active duty or within one year after discharge or release.

- The deceased must either have been entitled to educational assistance under the MGIB program or a participant in the program who would have been so entitled but for the high school diploma or length-of-service requirement.

- The amount paid will be equal to the participant's actual military pay reduction, less any education benefits paid.

Health Insurance

For more information please call
800-733-8378

Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veteran Affairs (CHAMPVA), certain dependents and survivors can receive reimbursement for most medical expenses:

- Inpatient, outpatient
- Mental health
- Prescription medication
- Skilled nursing care
- Durable medical equipment

Eligibility:

To be eligible for CHAMPVA, an individual cannot be eligible for TRICARE (the medical program for civilian dependents provided by DoD) and must be one of the following:

- The spouse or child of a Veteran who VA has rated permanently and totally disable due to a service-related disability.
- The surviving spouse or child of a Veteran who died from a VA-rated service-connected disability, or who at the time of death was rated permanently and totally disabled.
- The surviving spouse or child of a Veteran who died on active duty service and in the line of duty, not due to misconduct. However, in most of these cases, these family members are eligible for TRICARE not CHAMPVA.

Please visit www.va.gov/survivors to learn about additional VA Benefits for Survivors.

Burial and memorial Benefits

For more information visit www.com.va.gov or call **800-827-1000**

Veterans discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and Servicemembers who die while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, as well as spouses and dependent children of Veterans and active duty Servicemembers, may be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits.

VA Burial and Memorial Benefits

Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC)

VA will provide a PMC to recognize the United States military service of honorably discharged deceased Veterans.

(continued....)





Burial in a VA National Cemetery

VA will provide burial service for eligible Veterans, their spouses, and dependents, at no cost to the family, including the gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine.



Headstone/Markers and Medallions

VA will provide an inscribed headstone or marker at no cost to the family for:

- Eligible Veterans, active duty Servicemembers, and retired Reservists and National Guard Servicemembers buried in any cemetery worldwide.
- Eligible spouses and dependent children buried in a national or State Veterans cemetery.



For eligible Veterans who died on or after November 1, 1990, VA may provide a headstone/marker or medallion even if the grave in a private cemetery is already marked with a private headstone or marker.



For information visit www.cem.va.gov or call **800-827-1000**.



Outside Agencies and NGO's Offering Support to Survivors

Department of Defense

Offers extensive services to the surviving family of Servicemembers who die on active duty.



<http://usd.dtk.mil/mapcentral/casualty.html>

Social Security Administration

Offers benefits to surviving family based upon the earnings history of the deceases. www.ssa.gov

Office of Personnel Management

Extends Veterans preference hiring status to the spouses and surviving spouses of 1) Active Duty military, 2) 100% Disabled Veterans and 3) Veterans killed in action or who have passed due to a service-connected injury or illness. www.fedshirevets.gov

Internal Revenue Service

The majority of VA benefits available to Survivors and dependents are tax exempt. www.irs.gov

HOW TO REACH US

Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA)

202-461-1077

officeofsurvivors.va.gov

www.va.gov/survivors

Help is Available to Our Spouses

My name is Joseph Armstrong, I am the Veterans Service Officer for the John A. Barnes III (MOH) New England Chapter 9, 173d Airborne Association.

I can certainly understand widows' frustration and confusion but the information provided above is excellent. What a surviving spouse needs to do is contact her local **Veterans Outreach Center** and set up an appointment with a **Veterans Service Representative**. They have all the necessary forms that will be required for her to file for (DIC) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation if she is qualified. If the veteran's death was from complications of his service connected disability the spouse may be eligible to receive this benefit.

If any surviving spouse has a question they should not hesitate to contact me at the email address or phone number below. If I do not know the answer immediately I promise I will find the answer and/or refer the spouse to someone who does know the answer.

There must be other Herd members who are **Veterans Service Officers** across this wide nation of ours. Maybe an article in the next edition of the newsletter can ask that members who are advocates to come forward with their contact information for future references?

Airborne,

Joseph Armstrong
B/4/503d

Veterans Service Officer
207-490-2094

cwomaine@myfairpoint.net

Call for Veterans Service Officers Within the 173d Ranks

Joe's idea to compile and report a list of Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) within the 173d Airborne Brigade is excellent. When one of us falls our spouses are faced with a cumbersome and daunting task of maneuvering through the VA paperwork and process to receive applicable survivor benefits, and are oft times in desperate need of guidance during the most difficult of times.

If you are a Sky Soldier VSO please send in your name, unit served with, phone number and email address for inclusion in an upcoming issue of our newsletter, to rto173d@cfl.rr.com

(continued....)



Survival Assistance – by the numbers

The following report was produced by Bill Reynolds, A/2/503d, following extensive research he conducted on survival assistance. Thank you Bill.

The last notes of Taps are drifting away, the Honor Guard is climbing back into their vehicles, and you're left sitting there with the folded flag in your lap. After the absolute worst day of your life you are left alone and wondering, "What do I do now?"

You and your spouse have prepared for this day, and you have a checklist to help you eliminate confusion and ensure your well being.

By the numbers:

1. Determine what benefits are available to you as a surviving spouse of a veteran.
2. Gather the supporting documents
3. And, apply for those benefits!

If you have access to the Internet you go to www.va.gov/SURVIVORS and download the VA's one-stop Form 21---534, dated Mar 2009. This form will enable you to apply for:

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Or Death Pension Benefits, or Social Security.

There are also healthcare benefits for which you may be eligible: TRICARE or CHAMPVA benefits.

If the veteran was eligible for either program; as the veteran's spouse you become eligible also.

Survival Tips:

Gather all documents you'll need to support any application for benefits:

- ☐ DD214
- ☐ Marriage Certificates
- ☐ Birth Certificates
- ☐ Records of Divorce(s)
- ☐ VA Disability Award Letters

It is a good idea to gather this information together beforehand and scan it to a digital file. When you prepare the application packet include a copy of the death certificate and a physician's statement showing a connection between the veteran's service-connected disabilities and the cause of death. Ensure the statement contains the phrase showing the veteran's death was, "as likely as it is not," linked to the service connected injuries. The phrase, "**as likely as it is not,**" is critical in VA's decision to grant DIC or other benefits.

Scott Bell, Program analyst, Office of Survivors Assistance, Department of Veterans Affairs, also suggests you prepare a cover letter describing the contents of the application package. He says a cover letter will assist VA staff in routing your application to the right office.

***Sky Soldiers helping
Sky Soldiers....
All the Way!***

***The only harder thing
than being a soldier...
....is loving one.***

~ Unknown



2/503d TROOPERS ON VETERAN'S DAY 2011



“Here's a pic taken Veterans Day of five former 1LTs who served in 2/503 during the Dak To era in second half of 1967. The sixth guy, Al Cito, served as an aviator with two of the 173d guys during their second tours. We met for the weekend at Nick Hun's condo at Sunset Beach, NC. From left to right: Walt Brinker, Bart O'Leary, Nick Hun, Al Cito (not 173d, but great guy), Matt Harrison, Phil Bodine.” *I haven't seen this much brass together since the band marched by in 'The Music Man'.* Ed



Capt. Bill Vose, A/2/503d, with his beautiful CO, Roberta, driving his cammo'd jeep in the Orlando, FL Veteran's Day parade. As we watched the parade march by, my wife remarked, “*Bill looks cute in his little French beret.*” Ed



Les Fuller A/2/503d and Gene Counselman A/1/503d at *The Wall* in DC honoring our fallen. Inset is a baggie of dirt from Hill 875 left for Leonard Carter & Jeffery Barker, A/2/503d KIA. Both men were Les' machine gun team.

(continued....)



Bravo Bulls - Las Vegas Veteran's Day Parade



Company Commander: LTC (Ret) Roy S. Lombardo, Jr.

Guidon: David Glick

First row: L-R, Bryan Bowley, Jerry Nissley, Art Martinez, Paul Dinardo, Barry Herbison, Phil Farrow (mostly hidden behind the guidon) & MAJ (Ret) Joe Logan

Second row: Jim Jackson, Phil Moulaison, Ken (Doc) Eastman, Leon Cooley, Jack Schimpf and Jim Robinson

Third row: Ed Johnson, Cave Harris, Gary Davidson, Roger Flowers and Bob Warfield.



*Everywhere we go - oh People wanna know - oh Who we are Where we come from So we tell them
We are the Airborne! The mighty, mighty Airborne!*

(continued....)



Brides of the Bulls in Vegas.....*Sky Soldierettes*



Now here's some pretty ladies, all except for that ugly one with the beard! Jack Schimpf, how did you get in there???

(Thanks to Ed Kearney B/2/503d, for these photos of the Bulls and their CO's)

Boots and Chutes All Paratrooper Association on Veteran's Day in Santa Maria, California



Third trooper from left is our own Jimmy Castillo C/2/503d. Jimmy and his buddies perform Honor and Color Guard ceremonies. Sharp lookin' troopers!

(continued....)



MEMORANDUM FOR: Spartan Club Members
FROM: 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial
Foundation Board of Directors

Date: 15 November 2011

On behalf of the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation, it is my pleasure to tell you about coming events for your information and planning. The Celebration and associated Ceremony, described here are a “work in progress” but a few comments are in order.

The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) was activated by the Department of the Army on 26 March 1963 on the Island of Okinawa. 26 March 2013 is the 10th Anniversary of the 173d Airborne Brigade’s parachute assault into Iraq. It is fitting to recognize these seminal events that later impacted and defined who Sky Soldiers are and what they have accomplished.

Periodically, members of Platoons, Companies and Battalions gather to remember and reflect on the life altering events that defined their service with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation believes this Anniversary Celebration is an excellent venue for these gatherings and urges any group of veterans to take advantage of this opportunity to plan and conduct their own unit “mini-reunions.”

Fort Benning is one common thread that unites Airborne soldiers of all generations. The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation is working with the Columbus / Fort Benning Chapter to hold a Golf Tournament and to plan and conduct Post tours including a visit to the Airborne School. Specific details will appear on the Memorial Foundation website (www.173dairbornememorial.org) in 2012.

The “Memorial Cleaning Ceremony” is both a practical and a symbolic event. The granite panels periodically require cleaning but only under the supervision of an expert. The Foundation is pleased to announce that Ms. Lynn Evans of the Columbus Monument Company and a member of our Foundation Advisory Board will supervise this effort.

The “Reading of the Names” Ceremony is a tradition that spans all generations. In 2012, the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation will post on its website opportunities for Spartan Club Members, Sky Soldiers and their families, and our Gold Star “families” to participate in this sacred ceremony.

Periodically, please check our website and watch for emails and letters for more updates regarding this event.

Ken Smith
Memorial Foundation President

173d Airborne Brigade 50th Anniversary Celebration and “Reading of the Names” Ceremony



Hosted by:

The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation

Thursday, 21 March – Sunday, 24 March 2013
Fort Benning / Columbus Georgia Area

~ Tentative Program ~

Thursday 21 March

Arrival and Golf Tournament (Tentative)

Friday 22 March

Museum Visits

Tours of Fort Benning (including Jump School)

Mini-Reunions conducted by Unit Organizations

Saturday 23 March

Memorial Cleaning Ceremony

Silver Wings Jump

10th Anniversary - Iraq Parachute Assault

Commemoration

Reading of the Names (Vietnam Era)

Candlelight Ceremony with Honors and Reading of the
Names (Iraq/Afghanistan)

Sunday 24 March

Prayer Service at Memorial

Departure

Lest we forget....





Lt. Col. William G. Hall, 38, gave wise counsel to all

By Sara Jean Green
Seattle Times staff reporter

Maj. William G. Hall had a wisdom, a maturity beyond his years that enabled him to provide sound counsel to his elders and, at the same time, guide those far younger than himself. ***"He could be having a conversation with me and then my 10-year-old niece could walk in the room and he'd capture her like he'd just captured me,"*** said Maj. Hall's eldest sister, Dolores Perry, 56, of Seattle. ***"He could talk to anyone — from the minister to a drug addict. He was just that kind of person."***

Maj. Hall, a 1987 graduate of Seattle's Garfield High School, embodied a quiet strength and respect for tradition — both the traditions of the Marine Corps, where he moved up the ranks over the course of his 15-year career, and his family's traditions. Like coming home at Christmas and calling his mother at Easter, which he did this past Easter Sunday.

It was 1 a.m. in Iraq, and his voice sounded tired, Perry said. ***"He didn't say a lot. He just gave us the reassurance he was OK,"*** she said. It was their last conversation. Maj. Hall — who was called "Billy" by those closest to him — was injured in Iraq's Anbar province by an improvised explosive device on Saturday (March 29) and died the following day. He was 38.

Before his unit deployed to Iraq in mid-February, Maj. Hall was selected for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, said Maj. Jason Johnston, who is based at Marine Corps Airstation Miramar in San Diego. Though Maj. Hall's unit — the 3rd Low Altitude Air

Defense Battalion, Marine Air Control Group 38, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, I Marine Expeditionary Force — was based at Camp Pendleton, it was attached to the Miramar air station, Johnston said. ***"We went through basics school together, and we were off and on in touch throughout our careers,"*** Johnston said. ***"I talked to him just before he left."***

Maj. Hall would have been promoted to his new rank sometime this year, Johnston said. After graduating from high school, Maj. Hall earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from Washington State University in 1992. While at WSU, he enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, later joining the Marines. He met his future wife while assigned to a base in Florida, and he later served in Georgia, California and Japan.

According to his family, this was Maj. Hall's second deployment to Iraq, where he was training Iraqi troops to take over the duties of American soldiers. And while he didn't try to downplay the danger he faced, Maj. Hall also spoke of the good things happening in the war-torn country.

"I know most of what you hear on the news about Iraq is not usually good news and that so many are dying over here," Maj. Hall wrote in a March 27 e-mail to his family, two days before he was fatally wounded. ***"That is true to an extent but it does not paint the total picture, and violence is not everywhere throughout the country. So please don't associate what you see on the news with all of Iraq."*** He ended his e-mail with: ***"Love you and miss you. I'll write again soon."***

In addition to his sister, Maj. Hall is survived by his wife, Xiomara Hall; daughters Tatianna, 6, and Gladys, 3; stepsons Xavier, 13, and Xander, 9, all of Temecula, Calif.; his mother, Mildred Hall, of Seattle; his sister Margie Bell, of Renton; his aunt, Alberta Hall, of Seattle; his uncle, Howard Berry of Kent; and several nieces and nephews.

LTC Hall was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

[Source: *The Seattle Times Company* 2008]

**An Airborne salute to this Marine
*Semper Fi brother, All the Way!***

