

19th - 21th: President Johnson meets in Guam with South Vietnam's Prime Minister Ky and pressures Ky to hold national elections.

March 1968

1st: Clark Clifford, renowned Washington lawyer and an old friend of the President, becomes the new U.S. Secretary of Defense. For the next few days, Clifford conducts an intensive study of the entire situation in Vietnam, discovers there is no concept or overall plan anywhere in Washington for achieving victory in Vietnam, then reports to President Johnson that the United States should not escalate the war. *"The time has come to decide where we go from here,"* he tells Johnson.

1st: Singers Johnny Cash (36) & June Carter (38) wed.

2nd: 48 U.S. Army soldiers are killed during an ambush at Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon.

4th: Joe Frazier TKOs Buster Mathis in 11th round for heavyweight boxing title.

10th: The *New York Times* breaks the news of Westmoreland's 206,000 troop request. The *Times* story is denied by the White House. Secretary of State Dean Rusk is then called before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and grilled for two days on live TV about the troop request and the overall effectiveness of Johnson's war strategy.

11th: Operation Quyet Thang begins a 28 day offensive by 33 U.S. and South Vietnamese battalions in the Saigon region.

12th: By a very slim margin of just 300 votes, President Johnson defeats anti-war Democrat Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire Democratic primary election. This indicates that political support for Johnson is seriously eroding. Public opinion polls taken after the Tet Offensive revealed Johnson's overall approval rating has slipped to 36 percent, while approval of his Vietnam war policy slipped to 26 percent.



14th: Senator Robert F. Kennedy offers President Johnson a confidential political proposition. Kennedy will agree to stay out of the presidential race if Johnson will renounce his earlier Vietnam strategy and appoint a committee, including Kennedy, to chart a new course in Vietnam. Johnson spurns the offer.

16th: Robert F. Kennedy announces his candidacy for the presidency. Polls indicate Kennedy is now more popular than the President. During his campaign, Kennedy addresses the issue of his participation in forming President John F. Kennedy's Vietnam policy by stating, *"past error is no excuse for its own perpetuation."*

16th: Over 300 Vietnamese civilians are slaughtered in My Lai hamlet by members of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry U.S. Army, while participating in an airborne assault against suspected Viet Cong encampments in Quang Ngai Province. Upon entering My Lai and finding no Viet Cong, the Americans begin killing every civilian in sight, interrupted only by helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson who lands and begins evacuating civilians after realizing what is happening.



The massacre at My Lai

23rd: During a secret meeting in the Philippines, Gen. Wheeler informs Gen. Westmoreland that President Johnson will approve only 13,500 additional soldiers out of the original 206,000 requested. Gen. Wheeler also instructs Westmoreland to urge the South Vietnamese to expand their own war effort.

25th: Clark Clifford convenes the "Wise Men," a dozen distinguished elder statesmen and soldiers, including former Secretary of State Dean Acheson and World War II General Omar Bradley at the State Department for dinner. They are given a blunt assessment of the situation in Vietnam, including the widespread corruption of the Saigon government and the unlikely prospect for military victory *"under the present circumstances."*

26th: The "Wise Men" gather at the White House for lunch with the President. They now advocate U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, with only four of those present dissenting from that opinion.

(continued....)



28th: The initial report by participants at My Lai states that 69 Viet Cong soldiers were killed and makes no mention of civilian casualties. The My Lai massacre is successfully concealed for a year, until a series of letters from Vietnam veteran Ronald Ridenhour spark an official Army investigation that results in Charlie Company Commander, Capt. Ernest L. Medina, First Platoon Leader, Lt. William Calley, and 14 others being brought to trial by the Army. A news photos of the carnage, showing a mass of dead children, women and old men, remains one of the most enduring images of America's involvement in Vietnam.

30th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Cochise in Bong Son area through 31 January 1969.

31st: President Johnson stuns the world by announcing his surprise decision not to seek re-election. He also announces a partial bombing halt and urges Hanoi to begin peace talks. *"We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations."* As a result, peace talks soon begin. The bombing halt only affects targets north of the 20th parallel, including Hanoi.

March 1969

March: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby Crest throughout the month in The Crescent of Hoai An District.

1st: NY Yankees' Mickey Mantle retires.

4th: President Nixon threatens to resume bombing North Vietnam in retaliation for Viet Cong offenses in the South.

6th - 10th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Sting Ray in An Khe area.

10th Mar - 24 May: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby Punch in An Khe area.

15th: U.S. troops go on the offensive inside the Demilitarized Zone for the first time since 1968.

17th: President Nixon authorizes Operation Menu, the secret bombing of Cambodia by B-52s, targeting North Vietnamese supply sanctuaries located along the border of Vietnam.

17th: Golda Meir becomes Israel's 4th PM.

20th: US president Nixon proclaims he will end Vietnam war in 1970.

28th: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President, General (WWII), dies in Washington at 78.



General Eisenhower speaks with men of the 101st Airborne Division on eve of invasion.

March 1970

2nd: American Airlines' 1st flight of a Boeing 747.

18th: Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia is deposed by General Lon Nol. Sihanouk, who had been out of the country at the time of the coup, then aligns with Cambodian Communists, known as the Khmer Rouge, in an effort to oust Lon Nol's regime. The Khmer Rouge are led by an unknown figure named Pol Pot, who eagerly capitalizes on the enormous prestige and popularity of Prince Sihanouk to increase support for his Khmer Rouge movement among Cambodians. Pol Pot will later violently oust Lon Nol then begin a radical experiment to create an agrarian utopia, resulting in the deaths of 25 percent of the country's population (2,000,000 persons) from starvation, overwork and systematic executions.

20th: Cambodian troops under Gen. Lon Nol attack Khmer Rouge and North Vietnamese forces inside Cambodia. At the White House, Nixon and top aides discuss plans to assist Lon Nol's pro-American regime.

25th: Concorde makes its 1st supersonic flight (700 mph/1,127 kph).

31st: The U.S. Army brings murder charges against Captain Ernest L. Medina concerning the massacre of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in March of 1968.

(continued....)



March 1971

1st: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Lightning in Binh Dinh Province through April 21st.

March 1971: Opinion polls indicate Nixon's approval rating among Americans has dropped to 50 percent, while approval of his Vietnam strategy has slipped to just 34 percent. Half of all Americans polled believe the war in Vietnam to be *"morally wrong."*

1st: The Capitol building in Washington is damaged by a bomb apparently planted in protest of the invasion of Laos.

8th: Radio Hanoi broadcasts Jimi Hendrix's *"Star Spangled Banner"*.

10th: China pledges complete support for North Vietnam's struggle against the U.S.

15th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Story from 5 February through 15 March in Binh Dinh Province.

17th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Sure through 21 April in 1971 in Binh Dinh Province.

29th: Lt. William Calley is found guilty of the murder of 22 My Lai civilians. He is sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor, however, the sentence is later reduced to 20 years, then 10 years. Out of 16 military personnel charged with offenses concerning the My Lai massacre, only five were actually court-martialed, and only Calley was never found guilty.

March 1972

6th: Jack Nicklaus, passes Arnold Palmer as golf's all-time money winner.

10th: The U.S. 101st Airborne Division is withdrawn from Vietnam. [See 101st report on Pages 9-11]

22nd - Congress approves Equal Rights Amendment (never ratified).

23rd: The U.S. stages a boycott of the Paris peace talks as President Nixon accuses Hanoi of refusing to *"negotiate seriously."*



March-September: The Eastertide Offensive occurs as 200,000 North Vietnamese soldiers under the command of General Vo Nguyen Giap wage an all-out attempt to conquer South Vietnam. The offensive is a tremendous gamble by Giap and is undertaken as a result of U.S. troop withdrawal, the strength of the anti-war movement in America likely preventing a U.S. retaliatory response, and the poor performance of South Vietnam's Army during Operation Lam Son 719 in 1971. Giap's immediate strategy involves the capture of Quang Tri in the northern part of South Vietnam, Kontum in the mid section, and An Loc in the south. North Vietnam's Communist leaders also hope a successful offensive will harm Richard Nixon politically during this presidential election year in America, much as President Lyndon Johnson had suffered as a result of the 1968 Tet Offensive. The Communists believe Nixon's removal would disrupt American aid to South Vietnam.

30th: NVA Eastertide attack on Quang Tri begins.

March 1973

19th: Dean tells Nixon, *"There is a cancer growing on the Presidency"*.

29th: The last remaining American troops withdraw from Vietnam as President Nixon declares *"the day we have all worked and prayed for has finally come."* America's longest war, and its first defeat, thus concludes. During 15 years of military involvement, over 2 million Americans served in Vietnam with 500,000 seeing actual combat. 47,244 were killed in action, including 8000 airmen, over 58,000 died during the war. There were 10,446 non-combat deaths. 153,329 were seriously wounded, including 10,000 amputees. Over 2400 American POWs/MIAs were unaccounted for as of 1973.



March 1974

9th: Last Japanese soldier, a guerrilla operating in the Philippines, surrenders, 29 years after World War II ended.

26th: George Foreman TKOs Ken Norton in 2 for heavyweight boxing title.

(continued....)



March 1975

7th: Senate revises filibuster rule, allows 60 senators to limit debate.

10th: The final offensive begins as 25,000 NVA attack Ban Me Thuot located in the Central Highlands.

11th: Ban Me Thuot falls after half of the 4000 South Vietnamese soldiers defending it surrender or desert.

13th: President Thieu decides to abandon the Highlands region and two northern provinces to the NVA. This results in a mass exodus of civilians and soldiers, clogging roads and bringing general chaos. NVA then shell the disorganized retreat which becomes known as *"the convoy of tears."*

18th: Realizing the South Vietnamese Army is nearing collapse, NVA leaders meet and decide to accelerate their offensive to achieve total victory before May 1.

19th: Quang Tri City falls to NVA.

24th: Tam Ky over-run by NVA.



Phu Binh, South Vietnam -- March 23, 1975 - Phu Binh, The tail end of the war.

25th: Hue falls without resistance after a three day siege. South Vietnamese troops now break and run from other threatened areas. Millions of refugees flee south.

26th: Chu Lai is evacuated.

28th: Da Nang is shelled as 35,000 NVA prepare to attack.

30th: Da Nang falls as 100,000 South Vietnamese soldiers surrender after being abandoned by their commanding officers.

31st: John Wooden's final game, UCLA, wins 10th NCAA championship in 12 years.

31st: NVA begin the 'Ho Chi Minh Campaign,' the final push toward Saigon.

STARS AND STRIPES

Medical Schools to Increase Focus on PTSD, TBI

January 11, 2012

By Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON -- Medical schools will soon include more course work on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and other common military ailments as part of a White House-led effort to prepare future physicians for the next generation of veteran patients.



First Lady Michelle Obama and officials from the Association of American Medical Colleges will announce the plans Wednesday afternoon. The effort includes more shared research and clinical trials among 130 medical and osteopathic schools around the country, including Ivy League and other major collegiate research institutions.

Officials from the association on Tuesday told reporters the goal is to ensure that young medical professionals are familiar with the signature wounds of war, and able to more effectively treat the millions of veterans who will struggle with those issues for decades to come. White House officials said more than half of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans receiving treatment for mental health issues rely not on Department of Veterans Affairs physicians, but instead on private medical practices.

John Prescott, director of academic affairs for the association, said that while many of the schools touch on military health topics, most don't have them as a core competency for graduates. The new effort will look for ways to better integrate those lessons into schools' curricula, and make sure students are familiar with problems veterans could be facing.

For some students, that will likely mean standalone courses on topics like PTSD and TBI, as well as other common battlefield injuries.

The effort is part of the first lady's *Joining Forces* campaign, designed to highlight the sacrifices and needs of troops, veterans and their families. Program officials said no federal money is being used for the college coordination efforts, but Defense Department and VA officials will assist with planning and information sharing.

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~



A Company 2/327, 101st Airborne, Vietnam Veterans 2012 Gathering. April 26 - 28, 2012, The Marten House Hotel, Indianapolis, IN,

Contact:
Dennis Sheridan
Phn: 817-504-1750



2012 Currahee Reunion, 3rd Battalion 506th Infantry Regiment (Airborne), May 2 - 5, 2012. Hilton Garden Inn, Columbus, GA

Contact:
Hoyt Bruce Moore, III
Web: www.506infantry.org/reunion.htm



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Pages 20-24.

Contact:
Dave Carmon
Eml: dcarmon@roadrunner.com
Web: www.skysoldier17.com



Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67 is having a reunion in Lexington, Kentucky the same days as the 173d Association annual reunion next June. More to follow.

Contact:
Jerry Hassler
Eml: hassler173@juno.com



4/503d Reunion, Friday, June 8, 2012. We're going to do it during the annual 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY. Jerry Downard, Donnie Farmer and Joe Flesch are taking the lead. More later, but mark your Calendar.



Casper Platoon Reunion 2012, June 28 - 30 & July 1, 2012, Hilton San Francisco Financial District, San Francisco, CA

Contact:
Steve Greene, Reunion Chairman
Web: greenaire@mac.com



56th Annual Reunion of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, September 23 - 26, 2012, Holiday Inn, Richmond Intl. Airport, Sandston, VA.

Contact:
Nancy Young, Secretary
youngncy@comcast.net

~ Other Reunions ~

Vietnam Veterans Homecoming Celebration, March 31, 2012, Charlotte, NC. See Page 37 for details.

Contact:
Web:
http://www.charlottespeedway.com/tickets/vietnam_veterans_homecoming_celebration_2012/600589.html

Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, April 26-29, 2012, Wickham Park, Melbourne, FL. See Page 42 for details.

Contact:
Phn: 321-501-6896
Eml: vets2gether@cfl.rr.com

Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne reunions please send details to: **rto173d@cfl.rr.com**



The 2012 173d Reunion

Lexington, KY

June 6 -10, 2012

Hosted By Chapter 17

Room rate 115.00 plus tax per night with Free Parking

New Registration fees:

Sky Soldiers 99.00

Spouses & Guests 75.00

Gold Star 75.00

Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner

The Hyatt is taking reservations now.

Call 800.233.1234

Ask for the 173 Airborne guestroom block or code G-173A.

Also use this code when making reservations on-line
at the Lexington-Hyatt website - www.lexington.hyatt.com

Information and Forms will be posted soon at www.skysoldier.org and www.Skysoldier17.com



~ REUNION PROGRAM ~

Hosted by Midwest Chapter 17



June 6 - Wednesday

0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby
0900 – 2230 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room
1800 – 2000 President's Reception @ Jasmine-Franklin

June 7 - Thursday

0700 – 1230 Golf Outing TBA GC
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room
0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar
1300 – 1600 Operation Corregidor II, Kentucky Theatre



June 8 - Friday

0830 – 1030 Gold Star Reception & Breakfast @ Regency 1
0900 – 1100 Board of Directors Meeting @ Regency 3
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby
0900 – 2200 Vendors @ Kentucky Room
1000 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar
1100 – 1500 Kentucky Veterans Memorial – Frankfort – VFW Lunch

June 9 - Saturday

0830 – 1000 Ladies Brunch @ Bluegrass Pre-function Area
0900 – 1130 General Membership Meeting @ Regency 1&2
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Regency 1 Foyer
0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room

Banquet

1800 – 1845 Cocktail Hour @ Bluegrass Ballroom
1845 – 1900 Post Colors/Convocation @ Bluegrass Ballroom
1900 – 2035 Dinner @ Bluegrass Ballroom
2035 – 2115 Speakers & Awards @ Bluegrass Ballroom
2115 Retire the Colors

June 10 Sunday

0800 – 0900 Memorial Service @ Regency 1
1130 Reunion Closing

BE SURE TO ATTEND OPERATION CORREGIDOR II



173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION 2012 REUNION



JUNE 6-10, 2012, LEXINGTON, KY

~ Registration Form ~

Please print. Copy form for additional guest(s)

My Name: _____

Guest: _____

Guest: _____

Guest: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Brigade Unit Served With: _____

Dates served: _____

Registration/Event Fees (Check boxes)

Per Sky Soldier Association Member ☒ \$99.
Per Each Guest. (Number of Guest(s) _____) ☐ \$75.
Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner
Per Child or all other extra dinner only guests ☐ \$40.
Per Gold Star Family Member ☐ \$75.
Per Active duty Soldier (Not on Orders) ☐ \$75.
Per Active Duty Soldier on Orders ☐ Free
(i.e. Command, Color Guard)
Per Vendor Table ☐ \$75.
Ladies Brunch (Number attending _____) ☐ Incl
Per player in Golf Tournament (No: _____) ☐ \$45

Enclosed is my check for this Total Amount: \$ _____

Please make Check Payable and Mail to:

Midwest Chapter 17
P.O. Box 09640
Columbus, OH 43209

Hotel Reservations:

Hyatt Regency – Lexington, \$115.00 + tax per night.
Reservations: 1-800-233-1234
Request group rate for 173d Airborne Assn. guestroom block or code G-173A. This is also the code to use if making reservations on-line at - www.lexington.hyatt.com

Overflow Hotel:
To be announced

"HISTORY, HORSES & HOOCH"



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 38

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OPERATION CORREGIDOR II

Midwest Chapter 17 is proud to announce we will be inviting paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought throughout the Pacific during WWII to attend next year's 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY as guests of the officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade. This is *troopers honoring troopers* and is not sanctioned by either the 173d or 503rd Associations. *It's a paratrooper thang.*

In 2010, at the annual reunion in N. Myrtle Beach, SC hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30, five (5) troopers of the 503rd attended as guests of men of our Brigade and friends of the 173d and 503rd. As honest Abe once said,

***“Any nation that does
not honor its heroes
will not long endure,”***

and that's just what we'll be doing in Lexington, honoring these men.

Of the over 3000 men who served with the 503rd during WWII, sadly, less than 100 troopers are still with us. We hope you'll join in not only helping out with the funding (until sufficient funds have been raised), but also attending our reunion this coming June and meeting these troopers personally and attending the WWII interactive presentations.

To date we've raised about 2/3 of the funds needed to cover the cost associated with inviting between 3 to 5 503rd troopers and their spouses or a family member to the reunion. For information about donating to this worthy effort, please contact rto173d@cfl.rr.com for details, or use the form on the following page to send in your donation -- please don't contribute if you're having financial difficulties.

As of now these Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d and 503rd have made contributions. Our thanks to each of you! *Airborne!!*

Steve Aballa, 2/503 Ron Amyot, 2/503
Ed Anthony, 172d Mid John Arnold, 1RAR
Jim Baskin, 4/503 Bob Beemer, 2/503
Jerry Berry, 4/503 Pat Bowe, 2/503
Wayne Bowers, 2/503 Bravo Bulls, 2/503
Jim Brookmiller, 4/503 Bob Bruce, 1/503
Bob Carmichael, 2/503 Leta Carruth, 2/503
Mark Carter, 173d LRRP Chapter 27, Australia
Chapter 30, 173d Bob Clark, 5th SF
Harry Cleland, 2/503 John Cleland, 173d Bde

Honoring Our WWII 503rd Troopers

Dave Colbert, 2/503 Jim Cole, 2/503
Art Coogler, 1/503 Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP
Gary Davidson, 2/503 Terry Davis, 2/503
Mike de Gyurky 2/503 Bruce Demboski, C/2/503
George Dexter, 2/503 Roger Dick, 2/503
Tom Dooley, 2/503 Joe Drabin, 2/503
Jim Dresser, 2/503 Frank Dukes, 2/503
Tony Esposito, 2/503 Scott Fairchild, 82nd Abn
Pat Feely, B Med Paul Fisher, 3/503
Craig Ford, 1/503 Joe Franklin, 173d Bde
Jim Frelak, Cowboys A.B. Garcia, 2/503
Tony Geishauser, Cowboys Jim Gettel, 2/503
Johnny Graham, 2/503 Jim Green, 2/503
Bernie Griffard, 2/503 Frank Guerrero, 4/503
Eddie Hair, 1/503 Larry Hampton, 1/503
Tom Hanson, 3/503 Mike Harris, 2/503
Matt Harrison, 2/503 Jerry Hassler, 2/503
Hank Hatch, 2/503 Eng. Dennis Hill, 1/503, 3/503
Vince Hoang, SVNAF Dick Holt, 2/503
Nick Hun, 2/503 Johnny Jones, 2/503
Ken Kaplan, 2/503 Ed Kearney, 2/503
Jack Kelley, 2/503 Dave Kies, 2/503
Bill Knapp, 2/503 Bobby Kohaya, 2/503
Gary Kozdron, 1/503 John Kyne, 2/503
Joe Lamb, 2/503 David Leung, 1/503
Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503 Joe Logan, 2/503
Roy Lombardo, 2/503 Bob Lucas, 2/503
Richard Martinez, 2/503 Pat McShane, 173d
Jim Montague, 2/503 Butch Nery, 4/503, N75
Hal Nobles, 3/503 Bill Ostlund, 173d
Jack Owens, 2/503 Larry Paladino, 2/503
Ed Perkins, 2/503 Lou Pincock, 2/503
Jack Price, 2/503 Gary Prisk, 2/503
Dan Reed, 2/503 Bill Reynolds, 2/503
Jack Ribera, 2/503 Jim Robinson, 2/503
Lee Robinson, 2/503 Graham Rollings, 2/503
Marjorie Royer, 173d Friend Jack Schimpf, 2/503
Roy Scott, 3/319 Bill Shippey, 2/503 N75
Steve Skolochenko, D Maint Ken Smith, 2/503
Lew Smith, 2/503 Jerry Sopko, 4/503
Larry Speed, 1/503 Jim Stanford, 2/503
George Stapleton, 3/503 Mike Sturges, 2/503
Bob Sweeney, 2/503 Marc Thurston, 2/503
Alt Turner, 2/503 Steve Vargo, 2/503
Jerry Wiles, B/2/503 Ron Woodley, 2/503
Bill Wyatt, 2/503

All The Way!





~ OPERATION CORREGIDOR II ~



Honoring our WWII 503rd Paratroopers at 173d Reunion in Lexington

Yes! I am honored to support bringing to the 173d Airborne Brigade Association's annual reunion in Lexington, KY as guests of our Brigade, paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought in the Pacific during WWII.

My name: _____ Unit: _____

To help offset the cost for this, enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____.

Please add to note line *"503rd Guest Donation"* and mail check payable to:

Midwest Chapter 17
P.O. Box 09640
Columbus, OH 43209

Note: Your donation, not to exceed \$100., will be used to help defray the cost of hotel rooms, reunion registrations and special gifts to our 503rd PRCT guests on behalf of the officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep).



L-R: WWII 503rd PRCT troopers who attended the Myrtle Beach Reunion in 2010 as guests of our Brigade: Chet Nycum, Chuck Breit, Charlie Hylton, the late Paul Hinds and John Cleland.



Chuck teaching lyrics to *Blood on the Risers* to 1st Bat's Craig Ford in SC.



Charlie ready to burst out in song before doing a mean Texas 2 Step.



You could hear a pin drop as **Chet** told of his PLF on *The Rock*.



Honoring those 503rd super troopers at 173d reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC, 2010.



"Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure"

~ President Abraham Lincoln





~ Operation Corregidor II ~

During our 173d reunion next June in Lexington, KY, the Chapter 17 reunion steering committee has secured the *Kentucky Theatre* just a couple blocks from reunion central at the Hyatt Hotel, to serve as site for *Operation Corregidor II*, the interactive meeting with WWII 503rd troopers; *Operation Corregidor I* having been held in N. Myrtle Beach at our 2010 reunion, and *Operation Corregidor* having been held in Corregidor in 1945. This historic building will be ideal for this gathering of paratrooper warriors and their families. Chapter 17 is even providing popcorn and cold drinks!

More than just a movie house...

The Kentucky Theatre is a familiar Landmark to generations of Lexingtonians. It's richly ornamented walls and glowing stained glass fixtures have hosted gala events and entertained overflowing crowds. They have also endured hard times and disasters, both natural and manmade. And so it stands today, a true palace of memories, a hall full of comedy, tragedy, drama, adventure, and just plain fun.

We hope you enjoy this brief look at her history and join us soon to continue the tradition by making some memories of your own.



April 24, 1927

Enter the "talkies". In a major marketing coup, the Kentucky was the first to introduce Warner Brothers' vitaphone sound films to Lexington.

October, 1921

Construction plans announced. The Builder, Lafayette Amusement Company offered \$20 in gold to name Lexington's "palatial new photoplay house".

The winner, of course, was the "Kentucky."



Publicity stunt for an early "talkie" featuring The Marx Brothers. (Courtesy, University of Kentucky Photo Archives)

1965

The Sound of Music. Thousands lined up daily to see this summer's timeless hit.



The present Kentucky Theatre auditorium

(by Lee P. Thomas)



Operation Corregidor II

coming soon to the Kentucky



The concession area


(by Raymond Adams)



~ My First Combat Patrol ~

By Don Abbott

“E” Company, 503rd PRCT, WWII

 I don't know if I have ever mentioned this little experience at Nadzab. As you know I was a young Second Lieutenant, Assistant Platoon Leader at Nadzab. Assistant Platoon Leaders really had only one job, stay alive and take over the Platoon when the First Lieutenant Platoon Leader is killed.

For some reason, however, I was tagged to take a six-man detail on a patrol to the North and West of the Regimental perimeter. After patrolling to a small native village, which showed on aerial photos, we were to set up a listening post and outpost to warn against an enemy encroachment from that quarter. The patrol reached the small (only a half-dozen, or so, huts) village, we found it had been abandoned in a hurry as the natives heard us coming.

The natives never did return during our day or so, occupation. At least the huts got us out of the nightly rainstorms even if they were very dirty. Oddly enough there were interesting wood carvings left behind which showed they had some artistic skills. If we had not been loaded down with equipment I might have carried some of them with me. The small village had a substantial (several acres) plantation of what looked like banana trees. We very carefully checked every tree, however, and never saw anything looking like a banana. We understood banana stems needed to be cut green and ripened by hanging the stem but that would have taken days we didn't expect to have. Since that experience I learned of Plantains, which look like green bananas but never get to a yellow stage. I, now, believe this was just a large Plantain plantation.

In addition to setting up the outpost for the Regiment, I placed two men at a time on an outpost designed to alert us if a Jap patrol came along our track to the front. We never caught sight of a single Jap but, since that was our first combat patrol I was scared to death all the time we were out there that we would be attacked and wiped out.

After a couple days we received word we were being withdrawn and flown back to Port Moresby. We could not have been happier. When we got back to “E” Company, I learned that Lindsay Milikin had been badly wounded when one of our nightly grenade booby traps had been tripped by him and set off. I managed to visit Milly in the small hospital which had been set up. He



Trooper Don

seemed in fair shape to me but he died only a short time later.

It seems that the reason for having an assistant platoon leader was justified since I took over the platoon for the months that followed, including Noemfoor. And a great platoon it was!

As told by Don Abbott to 503rd PRCT trooper John Lindgren, 12 August 2001. (503rd Heritage Battalion web site)

~ Our Own Milly ~

In reading Don's account of his first combat patrol as a young Lieutenant, and his buddy Lindsay Milikin tripping a 'friendly' booby-trap and later dying, I immediately thought of good buddy Dave Kies and his buddy Eric Zoller, both of Recon Platoon '66/'67.



The young Mr. Kies

Dave's and my hooches were right next to one another at Camp Zinn, and while we weren't close friends then, thanks to the internet we've become friends since. After trading notes with the trooper for quite a while, I was looking forward to seeing Dave at his and my first 173d reunion in Rochester, MN in 2000.

It was January, 22, 1967, when Dave and Eric were retrieving claymores set in front of their ambush position the night before. As the gods of war dictate, one of the claymores exploded, killing Eric outright and taking off both of Dave's legs below the knees. Somehow, this giant of a man survived, and following many months and years of rehabilitation, he rebounded from that tragedy and went on to a fulfilling career and family life. We both were looking forward to hooking-up at the reunion.

There were a few of our guys at Rochester pushing themselves around or being pushed around in wheelchairs, but none were Dave. Then, walking toward me in what I've described as a kind of 'Frankenstein monster' gait, but not quite that bad, was the tall, good looking and smiling Mr. Kies. Dave, the late Jim "Skid" Skidmore, also of Recon, and I spent most of the week together, and it was a great reunion and an honor to tag along with these guys.

Dave and I make a point to spend some time together at 173d or 2/503d reunions. He and his bride visited our home here in Florida, and we continue to keep in touch.

The gods of war are a fickle bunch, as Milly, Dave and Eric might attest. Ed



A Combat Jump

By Chaplain Conrad “Connie” Walker

(Excerpt from Connie’s book “*The Leapin’ Deacon*”)

22 February: Operation Junction City. The 2nd/503rd Infantry Task Force spearheaded Operation Junction City by jumping into combat deep in war zone “C,” near the Cambodian border. It was the first and only major American combat jump in Vietnam and the first anywhere since Korea.

The 1st and the 4th battalions came into adjacent landing zones by air/mobile assault. The objective was to locate and destroy the Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), the supreme headquarters of the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam. Within a short time, the 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Airborne Infantry, as well as artillery, and the central and support teams were ready for full-scale combat. The combat jump was a success!

Three chaplains made the jump from three different aircraft and in three different places in the jump stick. One chaplain was toward the front, one in the middle, and one near the end--pushing the stick. That way if any aircraft, for some reason aborted, two chaplains would make it in with the troops. The placement also assured that the 173rd would have chaplain/pastoral coverage throughout the drop zone; one at each end of the DZ and one in the middle. The wise plan worked perfectly. Chaplain pastoral coverage was complete throughout the drop zone.

Make no mistake; it was a combat jump--dropping the Airborne troops near the 700-foot level so that not too many shots could assail the Sky Soldiers on the way down.

Humor once again manifested itself. Coming close to landing with a parachute landing fall, I was audibly laughing as if I were having a good time. A tremendous young sergeant crawled over, asking, “*Chaplain Walker, did I hear you laughing as we landed?*” My smiling face answered, “*Yes, indeed. The thought entered my mind that the VC had to be pretty poor shots to miss me!*” (Co-author’s note: Remember that Connie was a large lineman and a heavyweight boxer).

He joined me with a quick laugh, then asked, “*Don’t you have a weapon?*” I said, “*Yes, son, I have the mighty Word of God and the Sacraments with me.*”

“*Wow! Thank God for your trust in the Lord,*” he said, “*but I’m telling you that I wouldn’t be out here without a weapon and hand grenades.*” I blessed him and he was on his way as a bold and courageous leader.

I would have the world remember: Chaplain (LTC) Xavier J. Gigliello and Chaplain (Major) Fr. Charlie Watters. Three chaplains participated in the combat jump for Junction City, and only one is living this day. The two that are with the Heavenly Father were absolutely phenomenal pastors and priests with the most gallant of spirits--and a deep willingness to lay their

lives on the line to help, save, and assist our beloved soldiers in their walk with the Lord.

And history records just that.

Chaplain Charlie Watters was awarded the Medal of Honor (posthumously), caring for, and ministering to soldiers at Dak To.



Chaplain Walker in the boonies, giving comfort and hope to his Sky Soldiers, circa ‘66/’67.

The Sky Soldiers would deeply feel the loss of our dear friend, Chaplain Gigliello, as he had fallen prey to wounds from a punji stick on one of our many river crossings. He would leave this earthly existence at Walter Reed Hospital (from other causes) several months after I returned to the States. I was honored to be with him at the time. God truly blessed all that knew him. Fellow priests were at his bedside, blessing, anointing and preparing him to meet our glorious Father face to face in heaven.

The day prior to the jump (21 February), we celebrated with the Word of God and holy communion together. I used, often, messages based on the Jump Commands and the Paratroopers’ Prayer (see both elsewhere in this book). We had three marshaling worship services and private prayer with many Sky Soldiers who were deepened in faith and came to a living faith with our Lord Jesus for the first time. Two special messages were “*Our Good Shepherd;*” Scripture: St. John 10 (“*I am the door*”), and St. Luke 23:39-43; Theme: “*Three Crosses, Representing All of Humanity.*”

All people--all soldiers--are represented here; Jesus is the center, one scoffing and insulting to the end, and one came to Jesus in faith and received the promise: “*Today, you will be with me in Paradise.*” The response was most positive and heartening. Born anew and renewed relationships with our Lord, were grandly experienced.

Some of our “elite” soldiers were on escape and evasion from our Lord but marvelously and miraculously became dedicated and committed to our crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

(continued....)



Thanks be to God! Human urgency and a sense of one needing help does indeed usher a person to and closer to the Lord, our Redeemer and Comforter.

Special recognition should be given to my jump master on that historic day 22 February 1967. Major Jerry Bethke (MG Ret.) was and is a dear friend. I thankfully am able to visit, even to this day, he and his cherished wife, Phyl, in the San Antonio area. He is a great leader, commander, and servant of Christ Jesus.

2 March: My 35th birthday. On this date, I was awarded the Silver Star presented by General John Deane. I praise God to just be alive and pastoring soldiers. To God be the glory.

3 March: Heavy contact and the fire fights on 3 March, Alpha and Charlie Companies were hard hit with many soldiers killed and wounded, and still the chaplain/shepherds were there with the dear soldiers.

On 12 March the Scripture was Numbers 13, John 3:14 and following.

Theme: *"The Cross--The Way Home"*

Hymns: *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"* and *"My Faith Looks up to Thee"*

On 13 March we returned to home base, Bien Hoa, for a well-attended service of Thanksgiving. We had a cluster of commitments to the Lord and several baptisms. Notably, we had a luscious steak dinner of Thanksgiving with the troops.

26 March: Easter Day. The Resurrection of our Lord! Scripture: Mark 16

Theme: *"The Great Gospel Day"*

Hymns: *"Jesus Christ Is Risen Today," "Children of the Heavenly Father,"* and *"Christ the Lord is Risen Today--Alleluia."*

We had twelve services from early morn to late evening--and had four more on Easter Monday with a tremendous Resurrection response and bold action of love and faith with the Sky Soldiers through the command.

We visited all troops in the hospital. I was also able to visit with a dear mentor and friend (from 101st Airborne Ft. Benning days) in the II Field Forces Command, Chaplain (Col.) Holland Hope, a chaplain's chaplain, but mainly the soldiers' chaplain, also now in the bosom of our Lord.

2 April: First Sunday after Easter. Scripture Proverbs 7:1-3, Mark 16;

Theme: *"God's Word to Us—Jesus Christ is Lord!"*

Hymns: *"Rise Up O' Men of God"* and *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."*

~ Editor's Note ~

March 2 marks Connie's 80th birthday, and he has informed us his final message to the troops in our newsletter's *Chaplain's Corner* will appear next month. On behalf of all paratroopers of the 2/503d, we send best birthday wishes to our Leapin' Deacon and a hearty *JOB WELL DONE in Vietnam and beyond!! All the Way, Sir!*

Award of the Silver Star

Walker, Conrad N., Col. (Ret)

Republic of Vietnam

"For gallantry in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Major (then Captain) Walker distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 29 June, 1966 while serving as chaplain with a unit engaged with a large Viet Cong force near Xuan Loc. Chaplain Walker accompanied a relief platoon to the site of a vicious firefight where many men were dying or wounded. He ignored the hostile rounds striking all around him, to bring spiritual aid to the casualties. He also helped the medic to bring the wounded men back from the direct line of fire, despite the machine gun fire, which intermittently raked the area. When the Viet Cong were driven from the crucial positions, Chaplain Walker further exposed himself to incoming fire to prepare a landing zone for evacuation helicopters. He tied ropes onto the trees being chopped down and stood in vulnerable places, to pull the trees away from the wounded, as they fell. Without a thought for his own safety, he then carried wounded men to the aircraft. Throughout this firefight, Chaplain Walker gave no heed to the unexploded, but highly dangerous grenades littering the zone, or the deadly sniper fire. Major Walker's gallantry in action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."



~ By direction of the President ~

"And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"

Mark 9:1



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Together they grow to see the light...



Col. Bill Thomas

My favorite story about my days in Vietnam with Charlie 2/503 has nothing to do with the blood and guts that we all try in vain to forget.

I had an airborne brother named Robert Mason who was the son of an Alabama black Baptist Minister. Bobby wrote a letter to Robert Shelton who was at the time the Grand Imperial Exalted Lizard of the KKK International. He was the head bed sheet boy for the whole deal.

Bobby wrote that he was a southern boy and was raised with Christian values. He said that back home in Alabama you would never see blacks and whites eating at the same table and sleeping in the same quarters. Bobby informed the head of the pointy-heads that he was very uncomfortable with the practice of racial integration practiced by the Army. Obviously, the young black trooper did not enclose a photo of himself.

Shelton sent Bobby a return letter sympathizing with his plight. He authorized Bobby to open a Klan Cavern in Charlie Company.

Bobby was delighted and recruited every black guy in the company, short of the NCO's, to join his Klan Cavern.



In retaliation, I sent a similar letter to Huey Newton in Oakland, the founder of the Black Panthers. I did not include a photo either. Mr. Newton returned my objection to whites and blacks being integrated. Like Shelton had been with Bobby, Newton was very sympathetic to my cause and authorized me to open a chapter of the Black Panthers in Charlie Company. I was of course delighted and promptly got all the white troopers to join the Black Panthers.



While we were out on patrol my squad tent was visited by a MACV inspector. He saw the black power sign above my bunk and Bobby's picture of a Klansman on a horse with a burning cross in his hands. We were of course reported to MACV and told to report to the AG in Saigon.

Bobby was in the hall outside the Colonel's office as I was the first to be called in by the investigating officer. The Colonel took one look at my tanned but obvious white skin. He was of course taken aback and looked at the paperwork on his desk. *"I needed to see Sp/4 Thomas not Mason first"*, he stammered. *"I'm Sp/4 Thomas, Sir"*, I replied.

All of a sudden the clouds seemed to part in his confused little head. He got a more relaxed look on his face and almost smiled when he asked, *"Let me get this straight Thomas. You are the head of the Black Panthers in your company and Sp/4 Mason is the head of the Ku Klux Klan?"* *"Yes Sir"*, I replied in my best airborne fashion.

The smile on the obviously amused Colonel's face broadened. *"Thomas, is Sp/4 Mason by any chance one of our black paratroopers?"* *"As the Ace of Spades"*, I answered. At this point the Colonel totally lost his composure and cracked up laughing. *"You two airborne clowns get the hell out of my office and you will cease and desist your political activity in my Army, trooper!"* *"Airborne!"* I replied.

Bobby and I then hit a couple of bars. We were not due to catch a ride back to Bien Hoa until 0700 the next morning.

Bill Thomas
C/2/503d, '65/'66

Note: Bill served three tours in VN, one each with the 173d, 82nd and SF. On all three tours he was wounded as a short-timer and evac'd to the U.S. Upon arrival in-country to begin his third tour, he got off the plane and yelled, *"Hit me now damn it, don't wait till I'm about to go home anyway!"*

