

Loch Sport R.S.L.



R.S.L. President, A.B. Garcia

At The Going Down Of The Sun I crouched in a shallow trench on the hell of exposed beach.

Steep, rising foothills bare of cover.

A landscape pockmarked with War's inevitable litter, piles of stores, equipment, ammunition and the weird contortions of death sculptured in Australian flesh.

I saw the going down of the sun
on the first Anzac Day.

The chaotic maelstrom of Australia's bleeding.

I fought in the frozen mud of the Somme.

In a blazing destroyer exploding on the North Sea.

I fought on the perimeter at Tobruk.

Crashed in a flaming wreckage
of a fighter in New Guinea.

Lived with the damned in a place called Changi.

Fought in the snow at a place called Korea.

And again in the jungles of Malaya, Borneo,
and South Vietnam.

I was your mate, the kid across the street, the medical student graduate, the mechanic at the corner garage, the biker who brought you the bread, the gardener who cut your lawn, and the clerk who sent your phone bill.

I was a private in the Army, a Naval commander,
an Airforce Bombardier.

No man knows me.

No name marks my Tomb

For I am

every Australian Serviceman.

For I am the UNKNOWN SOLDIER.

I died for a cause I held
just in the service of my land.
That you and yours may say in freedom...

I AM PROUD TO BE AN AUSTRALIAN.

~ ANZAC DAY ~

Firstly, on behalf of the Committee of management, I would like to thank everyone for helping make our ANZAC Day such a success.

Our day began with a Gunfire Breakfast, the March and Service followed by a light luncheon and refreshments back at the Sub Branch.

The Loch Sport Restaurant served sixty-two breakfasts and over one-hundred lunches. What an effort by Duncan and Rhonda.

Our Sub Branch bar staff should also be congratulated for serving and looking after our members and guests, thank you.

Thanks also to Wellington Shire, Sergeant Brendan Mitchell and fellow personnel, Cr. Leo Obrien, Rev. Des Benfield, our Flag Bearers, Flag Marshall, to the Sub Branch Women's Auxiliary, all Committee Members, Peter Marshall and Tracie Bray.

**A.B. Garcia
President
(HHC/2/503d)**



Flag Bearers



**Marching in
Lake Street**



Sergeant Brendan Mitchell



Aussie Speak

Thanks to digger John Arnold, 1RAR, for sending in this primer to help us better understand what Aussies are saying when they speak Down Under.

This will particularly come in handy when we go to the next war, as we know those total bastards will be right by our side. Photos added. Ed



You know you're Australian if...

- * You've made a bong out of your garden hose rather than use it for something illegal such as watering the garden.

- * You understand that the phrase 'a group of women wearing black thongs' refers to footwear and may be less alluring than it sounds.

- * You pronounce Melbourne as 'Mel-bin'.

- * You believe the 'l' in the word 'Australia' is optional.

- * You believe it makes perfect sense for a nation to decorate its highways with large fibreglass bananas, prawns and sheep.

- * You call your best friend 'a total bastard' but someone you really, truly despise is just 'a bit of a bastard'.

- * You think 'Woolloomooloo' is a perfectly reasonable name for a place.

- * You're secretly proud of our killer wildlife.

- * You believe it makes sense for a country to have a \$1 coin that's twice as big as its \$2 coin.

- * You believe all famous Kiwis are actually Australian, until they stuff up, at which point they again become Kiwis.

- * You believe that every important discovery in the world was made by an Australian but then sold off for a pittance.



Australian killer wildlife

- * You believe that the more you shorten someone's name the more you like them.

- * Whatever your linguistic skills, you find yourself able to order takeaway fluently in every Asian language.

- * You understand that 'excuse me' can sound rude, while 'scuse me' is always polite.

- * You know what it's like to swallow a fly, on occasion via your nose.

- * You know it's not summer until the steering wheel is too hot to handle and a seat belt buckle becomes a pretty good branding iron.

- * You've only ever used the words - tops, ripper, sick, mad, rad, sweet - to mean good. And then you place 'bloody' in front of it when you really mean it.



- * You say 'no worries' quite often, whether you realise it or not.

- * You understand what no wucking furries means.

- * You know that some people pronounce Australia like "Straya" and that's ok.

- * You know that none of us actually drink Fosters beer, because it tastes like piss. But we let the world think we do. Because we can.



- * And you will immediately forward this list to other Australians, here and overseas, realising that only they will understand.

John Arnold
1RAR



Reunions of the Airborne Kind



517 PRCT Florida Mini-Reunion, January 14 - 16, 2012, Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL.

Contact:

Brenda Verbeck Mortensen

Phn: 813-335-8002

Eml: bverbeck@gmail.com



101st Airborne, 2012 Snowbird Reunion. February 15 - 18, 2012. The Doubletree Hotel, Tampa, FL.
Hosted by the 101st Florida Gulf Coast and Sunshine State Chapters.

Contact:

Web: www.101abnfgcc.org



82nd Airborne Div., Winter Weekend Getaway, February 24 - 26, 2012, Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa, Hilton Head, SC, hosted by Ben Vandervoort Chapter.

Contact:

Bill Eberle

Phn: 843-682-4171

Eml: airborneben#hargray.com



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



Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67 is having a reunion in Lexington, Kentucky the same days as the 173d Association annual reunion next June. So far, about 12 members have indicated they will attend. Watch this space for details to follow.



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



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

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 / January 2011 – Issue 36

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OPERATION CORREGIDOR II

Honoring our WWII Paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT

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 attending our reunion next June and meeting these troopers personally and attending the WWII interactive presentations.

To date, these Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d and 503rd have made contributions getting us to about 2/3 the way to where we need to be. Our thanks to each of you! *Airborne!!*



Steve Aballa, 2/503

Ron Amyot, 2/503
John Arnold, 1RAR
Jim Baskin, 4/503
Bob Beemer, 2/503
Jerry Berry, 4/503
Pat Bowe, 2/503
Wayne Bowers, 2/503
Jim Brookmiller, 4/503
Bob Bruce, 1/503
Bob Carmichael, 2/503
Chapter 27, Australia
Chapter 30, 173d
Bob Clark, 5th SF
Harry Cleland, 2/503
John Cleland, 173d Bde
Dave Colbert, 2/503
Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP
Terry Davis, 2/503
Bruce Demboski, C/2/503
George Dexter, 2/503
Roger Dick, 2/503
Tom Dooley, 2/503
Jim Dresser, 2/503
Frank Dukes, 2/503
Scott Fairchild, 82nd Abn
Pat Feely, B Med
Paul Fisher, 3/503
Craig Ford, 1/503
Joe Franklin, 173d Bde
A.B. Garcia, 2/503
Tony Geishauser, Cowboys
Jim Gettel, 2/503
Johnny Graham, 2/503
Bernie Griffard, 2/503
Larry Hampton, 1/503
Tom Hanson, 3/503
Jerry Hassler, 2/503
Dick Holt, 2/503
Nick Hun, 2/503
Ken Kaplan, 2/503
Ed Kearney, 2/503
Jack Kelley, 2/503
Dave Kies, 2/503
'Bill Knapp, 2/503
Gary Kozdron, 1/503
John Kyne, 2/503
Joe Lamb, 2/503
Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503
Joe Logan, 2/503

Roy Lombardo, 2/503
Bob Lucas, 2/503
Richard Martinez, 2/503
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
Lou Pincock, 2/503
Bill Reynolds, 2/503
Jack Ribera, 2/503
Jim Robinson, 2/503
Lee Robinson, 2/503
Graham Rollings, 2/503
Jack Schimpf, 2/503
Bill Shipp, 2/503 N75
Roy Scott, 3/319
Ken Smith, 2/503
Lew Smith, 2/503
Jerry Sopko, 2/503
Larry Speed, 1/503
Jim Stanford, 2/503
George Stapleton, 3/503
Mike Sturges, 2/503
Bob Sweeney, 2/503
Bill Thomas, 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

We're raising necessary funds to cover the cost associated with inviting between 3 and 5 503rd troopers and their spouses or a family member. 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 to this worthy effort.





~ 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 paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought in the Pacific during WWII as guests of our Brigade.

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, 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)



INCOMING!



~ Unbelievable Sad News ~

Another sad note from the Col. Stapleton family. Mrs. Lynell Stapleton was killed in a South Carolina auto accident while enroute to her husband's funeral that was to be conducted at West Point. His son Greg, who is Chief of Training at the Fire Training Academy in Lexington, KY, is considering visiting with members of the 3rd Batt during the Herd Reunion to be held in Lexington 6-10 Jun 2012.

Mason Branstetter
HHC/D/E/3/503d

~ Still Wondering ~

Here is a pic of me examining enemy medical supplies at a jungle hospital sometime in early spring 1969 around the Bao Loc area. Notice the flag in background. I carried that with me until I was wounded in September along with SSGT Wendell Emmertson and Company medic Gus Ekinovich. I was a medic with LT Terry Rodenhaver's November Platoon, Bravo 3rd Batt. I believe the photo was taken by LT Rob Linscott our F.O. at the time. It was around this time that I was called upon to treat a wounded VC. When I reached the scene it was obvious to me the man was dead but his body was still heaving. As I pulled his body out of the hole in the middle of the jungle there was also another person in the hole, it was a six or seven year old girl attached to him in a sling of some kind. The last I ever heard was she might have been adopted by an officer. Over the years I have often wondered what became of her. Her picture was in the Herd newspaper with Capt. Traut. If anyone up the rank ladder knows anything about her I would appreciate knowing. Thank you much.

Richard "Doc" Guilbeault
HHC/B/3/503d
flatlander173rd@yahoo.com



Doc and his flag.

Note: Paul asked we include this final notice for Battalion coins.

Last Opportunity to Order Your Battalion Coin

I am introducing you to 4 coins I did to honor the service of the combat paratroopers of all 4 Battalions in the Brigade. AVAILABLE NOW.

They are \$10. per coin plus \$2.50 for shipping of one or two coins. Shipping for 3 or more coins is \$4.50 in U.S.

If interested please pass on to your readership the availability of these coins. I only produced 100 of the 1, 3, 4 Battalion coins, and 200 of the 2nd Batt coins. After they are gone I am done.

After expenses ALL profits are donated to the 173d Memorial and to a local Food Bank. ALL PROFITS are given away.

Please send a note indicating which coin(s) you are ordering and include your check payable to:

Paul R. Fisher, LTC (Ret)
3/503d
81 Oak Lane
Eatontown, NJ 07724

If you have any questions please call me:

Cell (908) 489-0366
Home (732) 542-1598

1/503d



2/503d



3/503d



4/503d



(Photos approximately 1/3 of actual size)



A Missing Sky Soldier

My name is Matt Kristoff and I work with the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I posted a message on one of the 173d message boards, but believe contacting you at the newsletter would probably have more chance of success.

I'm retired Army (Desert Storm vet), and am assigned to our section working Vietnam losses. One of my cases is PFC Thomas C. Van Campen. He was with B Company 2/503d, and was on a patrol on 24 June 1965. He became separated from the patrol, and was then hit by sniper fire and the unit was unable to recover his body.

Analysts from our office work hand-in-hand with the field teams from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) in Hawaii -- those are the guys who actually get boots-on-the-ground in country. We have several teams in country every year. But to justify going to a specific area to research a case, we need leads. Some of our very best leads come from the veterans.

I would very much like to speak with veterans of B Co, 2/503d who were on that patrol on 24 June 1965. If you have an appropriate section of your newsletter to print this appeal, it would be very appreciated. Please have people contact me at: Matthew.Kristoff@osd.mil, or by phone at: (703) 699-1240.

Thank You, and Welcome Home!

Matt

Note: Immediately upon receiving this note from Matt, we put him in touch with Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret) CO B/2/503 during that time, and men of the Bravo Bulls from 1965. We asked Matt to inform us on the results of his search so we can share the news with our guys. Roy stated he is making contact with Matt, and the following message was also sent to him by Jerry Nissley of Bravo Co. Ed

Hi Matt,

I'm not sure how much help I can be to you in your search for Van Campen, but I'll tell you what I know... and what I've heard. The "Jungle Telegraph" was typically more false rumor than fact. The guy who can give you the real story is Roy Lombardo. As Smitty mentioned, he was our CO at the time, and lead our mission that day in June, 1965.

I didn't know Van Campen personally. In my short three-month assignment with B/2/503, I was a mortar gunner. At Base Camp my squad staffed a perimeter machine gun position, physically separated from most of the balance of the company.

On that mission in late June, I marched with the column carrying a 60mm mortar. We were choppered into War Zone "D". I believe it was mid-day when word got out that a three-man M-60 machine gun crew had gotten separated from the company. I was told that they had come upon a couple of huts in a small clearing. Two men set up the machine gun to cover Van Campen while he moved forward to recon the huts. Viet Cong then opened fire, wounding Van Campen.

While one teammate provided cover fire with the M-60, the other moved forward to assist Van Campen back to the gun position. They then grabbed their gear and tried to carry Van Campen from the area, being pursued by the Viet Cong. The VC were gaining fast, and Van Campen apparently talked the other two (I wish I could remember their names) into concealing him in some heavy vegetation while they tried unimpeded (they were carrying him, apparently) to hook up with the company and return for him.

Once the two soldiers regained contact with the company, we remained in position while sending out patrols to find Van Campen. We remained in the area until very late in the day, but finally had to hustle to the LZ for extraction, without Van Campen. Capt. Lombardo got permission from Brigade to return the following day with the company and perform a search mission specifically for Van Campen. That effort, as thorough as it was, also proved fruitless. Huts were found and burned, but no VC contacted.

In August, I was reassigned from B/2/503 to D/16th Armor as a gunner on a mounted 4.2" mortar. It was a few months later when I was told that in July, the web gear and belongings of Van Campen (apparently verified by serial numbers on munitions) was found several kilometers from our original position on 24 June. I had heard later that his mutilated body had been discovered. Well, that apparently is not the case either. I had just discussed this issue with some friends at our Veterans Day Reunion in Las Vegas, and others had heard similar rumors. I am deeply saddened to learn that Van Campen is indeed MIA. I pray for him and his family, and for a successful search to recover his remains.

I wish I could be of more help to you. But as I mentioned, Roy Lombardo could give you specifics as to our location and our situation. I was pretty far down on the food chain, and like so many others, simply followed orders and followed the guy in front of me until the schidt hit the fan. Then it was teamwork...cover yourself and your buddy and destroy the enemy. I'm sure you know the drill.

(continued....)



I sincerely hope your search is successful. I really appreciate the diligent efforts to locate Van Campen and so many other MIAs. It must be rewarding to successfully close the cover on MIA victims. If you need to contact me for any reason, please feel free. I would really like to know the whole story once it's known. Like I say, the "facts" I recall and learned may be far from fact. I know that all of my Bravo Bulls buddies would like to know as well. Please contact us when you know the rest of the story. It would be a big help to us all.

Best of luck to you in your search.
Airborne ATW,

Jerry Nissley
B/2/503d

Note: Jerry has since learned it is likely Thomas was KIA before his body was hidden in the brush. Ed

Thomas Charles Van Campen
Private First Class
B CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173D ABN BDE,
US ARMY SPT CMD VIETNAM, MACV
Army of the United States
Oroville, California
December 28, 1945 to June 24, 1965
THOMAS C. VAN CAMPEN is on the Wall
at Panel 02E Line 017



About DPMO

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation.

More than 83,000 Americans are missing from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War. Hundreds of Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. The mission requires expertise in archival research, intelligence collection and analysis, field investigations and recoveries, and scientific analysis.

Southeast Asia Analysts Case Coordination Conference

On November 17, analysts from DPMO's Southeast Asia (SEA) Division and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) participated in a Video-Tele-Conference (VTC) to review 165 cases of personnel loss, share research, and come to an analytic consensus as to what to do next on each case. The team identified recommended leads for each case during the four-hour VTC. Through this coordination process specific leads for JPAC field teams were selected, and information to support site surveys and excavations was shared. These analytical meetings ensure that the accounting community is working as a team towards the same goal - the fullest possible accounting of our service members lost from the Vietnam War.



Recently Accounted For

The families of these service members recently were briefed by their respective Casualty or Mortuary Offices. The highlighted names are linked to a more detailed news release on that serviceman's identification.

Pfc. Maximo A. Troche, U.S. Army, I Company, 3rd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, was lost on Feb. 4, 1951, during a battle near Yangpyeong, South Korea, and died as a POW in 1951. His remains were identified on Oct. 21, 2011.

Staff Sgt. John J. Bono, U.S. Army Air Forces, 327th Bomb Squadron, 92nd Bomb Group, was lost on Sep. 13, 1944, when his B-17G was shot down near Neustaedt, Germany. His remains were identified on Sep. 27, 2011.

(continued...)



Sgt. 1st Class Benny D. Rogers, U.S. Army, I Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, was lost on Nov. 2, 1950, during a battle south of Unsan, North Korea. His remains were identified on Sep. 26, 2011.

Staff Sgt. John E. Hogan, U.S. Army Air Forces was lost on Sept. 13, 1944, when his B-17G Flying Fortress bomber crashed near the German town of Neustaedt-on-the-Werra. His remains were identified on Sep. 17, 2011.

Staff Sgt. Meceslaus T. Miaskiewicz, U.S. Army Air Forces, 347th Bombardment Squadron, 99th Bombardment Group, was lost on May 18, 1944, when the B-17G he was aboard crashed in Yugoslavia. His remains were identified on Sep. 15, 2011.

2nd Lt. Hilding R. Johnson, U.S. Army Air Forces, 9th Air Force, 366th Fighter Group, 391st Fighter Squadron, was lost on Dec. 25, 1944, when his P-47D Thunderbolt crashed while he was attacking enemy targets near St. Vith, Belgium. His remains were identified on Sep. 15, 2011.

Pfc. Jimmie J. Gaitan, U.S. Army, Clearing Company, 2nd Medical Battalion, attached to the 17th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, was lost on Feb. 13, 1951, and died in POW Camp 1 near Changsong, North Korea. His remains were identified on Sep. 13, 2011.

A complete listing of recently accounted-for servicemembers can be found on the [Recently Accounted-For](#) page of our web site:

http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for/

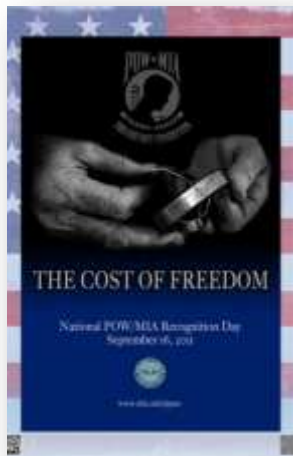
Let us not forget....

National POW/MIA Recognition Day

The President issues a proclamation commemorating the observances and reminding the nation of those Americans who have sacrificed so much for their country.

Observances of National POW/MIA Recognition Day are held across the country on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, schools and veterans' facilities -- it is traditionally observed on the third Friday in September each year.

This observance is one of six days throughout the year that Congress has mandated the flying of the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag. The others are Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day.



The flag is to be flown at major military installations, national cemeteries, all post offices, VA medical facilities, the World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the official offices of the secretaries of state, defense and veterans affairs, the director of the selective service system and the White House.

A Pentagon ceremony for National POW/MIA Recognition Day was held on Friday, Sept. 16, 2011. This ceremony featured troops from each of the military services.

History of the National League of Families' POW/MIA Flag

In 1971, Mrs. Michael Hoff, an MIA wife and member of the National League of Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, *Florida Times-Union*, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company which had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China, as a part of their policy to provide flags to all United Nations members states. Mrs. Hoff found Mr. Rivkees very sympathetic to the POW/MIA issue, and he, along with Annin's advertising agency, designed a flag to represent our missing men. Following League approval, the flags were manufactured for distribution.



On March 9, 1989, an official League flag, which flew over the White House on 1988 National POW/MIA

Recognition Day, was installed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly during the 100th Congress. In a demonstration of bipartisan Congressional support, the leadership of both Houses hosted the installation ceremony.

The League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever displayed in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda where it will stand as a powerful symbol of national commitment to America's POW/MIAs until the fullest possible accounting has been achieved for U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

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On August 10, 1990, the 101st Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it *"as the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation"*.

The importance of the League's POW/MIA flag lies in its continued visibility, a constant reminder of the plight of America's POW/MIAs. Other than "Old Glory", the League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the White House, having been displayed in this place of honor on National POW/MIA Recognition Day since 1982.

With passage of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act during the first term of the 105th Congress, the League's POW/MIA flag will fly each year on Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day and Veterans Day on the grounds or in the public lobbies of major military installations as designated by the Secretary of the Defense, all Federal national cemeteries, the national Korean War Veterans Memorial, the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the White House, the United States Postal Service post offices and at the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense and Veteran's Affairs, and Director of the Selective Service System.

Source: 1998 National League of POW/MIA Families

Whodat?

Who is this strack 2/503d Sky Soldier?



Agent Orange

Agent Orange is the code name for one of the herbicides and defoliants used by the U.S. military as part of its herbicidal warfare program, *Operation Ranch Hand*, during the



U.S. Army Huey helicopter spraying Agent Orange over Vietnamese agricultural land

Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971. Vietnam estimates 400,000 people were killed or maimed, and 500,000 children born with birth defects.

A 50:50 mixture of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, it was manufactured for the U.S. Department of Defense primarily by Monsanto Corporation and Dow Chemical. The 2,4,5-T used to produce Agent Orange was later discovered to be contaminated with 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzodioxin, an extremely toxic dioxin compound. It was given its name from the color of the orange-striped 55 US gallon (208 L) barrels in which it was shipped, and was by far the most widely used of the so-called "Rainbow Herbicides".

During the Vietnam War, between 1962 and 1971, the United States military sprayed nearly 20,000,000 US gallons (75,700,000 L) of chemical herbicides and defoliants in Vietnam, eastern Laos and parts of Cambodia, as part of Operation Ranch Hand. The program's goal was to defoliate forested and rural land, depriving guerrillas of cover; another goal was to induce forced draft urbanization, destroying the ability of peasants to support themselves in the countryside, and forcing them to flee to the U.S. dominated cities, thus depriving the guerrillas of their rural support base and food supply.

The US began to target food crops in October 1962, primarily using Agent Blue. In 1965, 42 percent of all herbicide spraying was dedicated to food crops. Rural-to-urban migration rates dramatically increased in South Vietnam, as peasants escaped the destruction and famine in the countryside by fleeing to the U.S.-dominated cities. The urban population in South Vietnam nearly tripled: from 2.8 million people in 1958, to 8 million by 1971. The rapid flow of people led to a fast-paced and uncontrolled urbanization; an estimated 1.5 million people were living in Saigon slums, while many South Vietnamese elites and U.S. personnel lived in luxury.



~ This Month in History, 1965-1975 ~

January 20, 1965

Lyndon B. Johnson takes the oath as president and declares, *"We can never again stand aside, prideful in isolation. Terrific dangers and troubles that we once called 'foreign' now constantly live among us..."*



January 27, 1965

General Khanh seizes full control of South Vietnam's government.

January 27, 1965

Johnson aides, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, send a memo to the President stating that America's limited military involvement in Vietnam is not succeeding, and that the U.S. has reached a 'fork in the road' in Vietnam and must either soon escalate or withdraw.

January 1965

Operation Game Warden begins U.S. Navy river patrols on South Vietnam's 3000 nautical miles of inland waterways.

January 30, 1965

State funeral of Winston Churchill



2/503d Bn CO LTC George Dexter and RTO Tom Conley on 2 Jan 66 during Op Marauder

January 1-8, 1966

Operation MARAUDER, Hua Nghia Province. The New year began with the 173d deploying from Bien Hoa to the swamps and canals in the Plain of Reeds, west of Saigon. Both the 1/503rd and the 2/503rd air assaulted into hot LZs; but the Vietcong found that the US Paratroopers were not so easy to push around. 2/503 reacted strongly on the hot LZ, counter-attacked, outflanked the enemy and killed at least 114 VC by body count and captured most of the important documents of the VC 506th Battalion. 1/RAR being airlifted into adjacent positions along the Oriental River in the Plain of Reeds area of the Mekong Delta. The next morning, the 2/503rd fought through a series of fortified enemy positions using air, artillery and tear gas to rout the VC. 326 VC suspects were rounded up along with large numbers killed in the actions decimating the VC 267th battalion.



An Australian sapper inspects a Viet Cong tunnel discovered during Operation Crimp, South Vietnam 1966.

January 7-14, 1966

Operation CRIMP, Binh Buong, West of Hobo Woods. The Australians made contact first, and after heavy fighting, the RAR and the 173d unmasked an extensive set of underground tunnels, captured several 12.7mm antiaircraft guns, killing over 128 VC and capturing another 91 while detaining 509 suspects. Operation CRIMP began on January 7, 1966 with the 1st Infantry Division being airlifted southwest of the Iron Triangle to Phu Loi. The mission was to destroy the Viet Cong Military Region political-military headquarters.

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The 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment deployed as the lead element of the 173d Airborne Brigade and quickly made contact with the enemy and captured many weapons including four new 12.7mm anti-aircraft guns. The 173d Airborne Brigade operation in the Ho Bo Woods resulted in close to 130 VC killed, 90 captured and well over 500 suspects detained. A major operation, Crimp, the biggest American assault of the Vietnam conflict, had discovered what the French and Vietnamese knew years ago and could do nothing about a modern catacombs that took years to build. Paratroopers and infantrymen pushing about 25 miles north of Saigon failed to entrap Viet Cong insurgents who have lived there *in comparative comfort and safety underground* but they did find *what one soldier described as the New York subway*. "As we moved forward, we saw one trench and tunnel after another. Some of the trenches were at least 6 to 12 feet deep. Some of the tunnels were 1,640 feet long. There were side tunnels leading from the main ones. There were enough holes in the ground to house a division. The soil is hard clay, real hard. It just about puts a granite roof on the tunnel complex. The whole thing runs northwest toward the Cambodia border, probably stretching 35 or 40 miles. It was empty. Tear gas attacks only brought out some women and children and an old man. The complex is so built that it is easy to imagine the Viet Cong moving a lot of people a long distance without ever being exposed to attack for very long. We could see the Viet Cong from time to time but they couldn't be caught. They leaped into ordinary holes but the holes always had a corridor to a main tunnel and an exit. It's like trying to catch moles that have and a safe exit." To destroy the entire complex would take a month and enough explosives to dynamite a mountain. But that's what the American force is determined to do. This operation revealed the extensive tunnel complex in the Iron Triangle and the Cu Chi area. Cu Chi in Hau Nghia Province west of the Iron Triangle is one of the most heavily fortified enemy redoubts in the Saigon area.



Photo taken in 2001 of wall outside cemetery in Cu Chi cemetery of "Big Noses" battling VC. They called us Big Noses. See "U.S." on helmet of soldier pointing.

Its population, with the exception of a number of Catholic hamlets, was controlled by the VC. "Over time we found the tunnels contained headquarters and command and control facilities, hospitals, weapons factories, living and training facilities, kitchens, wells, caches of food and supplies, air-raid and bomb shelters, and even latrines and graveyards." The tunnels would continue to be a problem and serve as a staging area for the attack on Saigon during the January 1968 Tet Offensive. The problem would not be solved until 1970 when B-52s, using ground penetrating delayed-fused bombs, destroyed the tunnels by creating 30 foot deep craters in the laterite clay.

January 12, 1966

During his State of the Union address before Congress, President Johnson comments that the war in Vietnam is unlike America's previous wars, *"Yet, finally, war is always the same. It is young men dying in the fullness of their promise. It is trying to kill a man that you do not even know well enough to hate...therefore, to know war is to know that there is still madness in this world."*

January 17, 1966

Carl Brashear, the first African American United States diver, is involved in an accident during the recovery of a lost H-bomb which results in the amputation of his leg.



Chief Brashear
1931 - 2006

January 28 – March 6, 1966
Operation Masher was a combined U.S., ARVN, and ROKA operation that began on January 28, 1966. The name "Operation Masher" was changed to "Operation White Wing", because the name was deemed too crude for 'nation-building'.

January 31, 1966

Citing Hanoi's failure to respond to his peace overtures during the 37 day bombing pause, President Johnson announces bombing of North Vietnam will resume.

January 31, 1966

Senator Robert F. Kennedy criticizes President Johnson's decision to resume the bombing, stating that the U.S. may be headed *"on a road from which there is no turning back, a road that leads to catastrophe for all mankind."* His comments infuriate the President.

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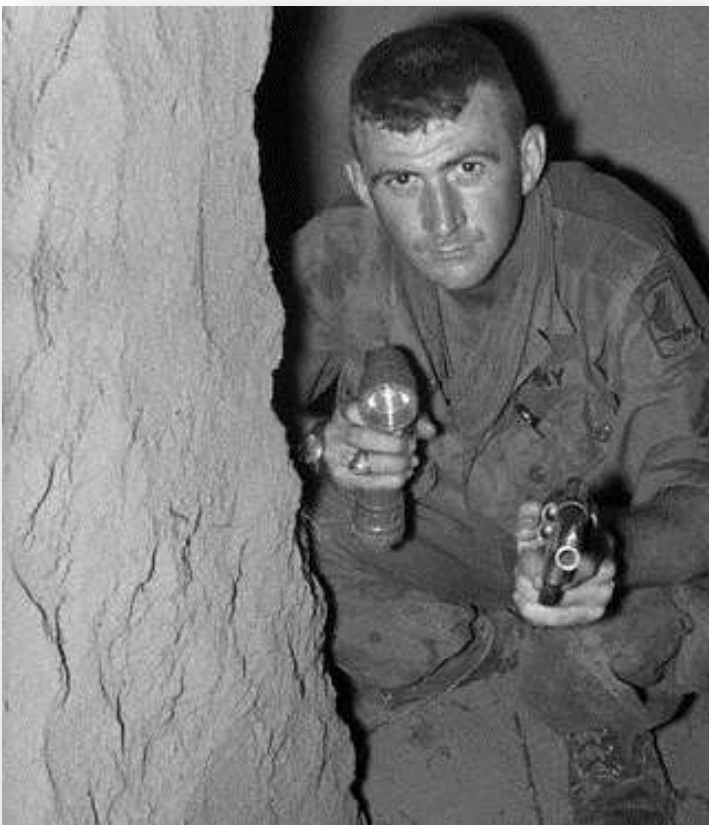


January 2, 1967

Operation Bolo occurs as 28 U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom jets lure North Vietnamese MiG-21 interceptors into a dogfight over Hanoi and shoot down seven of them. This leaves only nine MiG-21s operational for the North Vietnamese. American pilots, however, are prohibited by Washington from attacking MiG air bases in North Vietnam.

December 7, 1966 - 5 January 5, 1967

Operation CANARY/ DUCK, Phu My to Bear Cat. The 173d conducted a two phase highway security operation along Highway 15 from Phu My to Long Binh and from Phu My to Bear Cat for elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 9th Infantry Division.



American Soldier Canvassing Tunnel by Flashlight (Original Caption): Iron Triangle, South Vietnam. Flashlight in hand and pistol at the ready, Cpl. Charles Patchin, 23, of Auburn, New York, a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, searches a Viet Cong tunnel which his unit came across. The brigade is taking part in operation Cedar Falls, a drive to rid the Iron Triangle of the Viet Cong who have controlled it for years. (Corbis/Images)

January 5-25, 1967

Operation NIAGARA/ CEDAR FALLS Cau Dinh Jungle Iron Triangle. With most of the other units occupying blocking positions, the 173d's three infantry battalions swept and cleared the Iron Triangle locating and destroying small troop concentrations and tunnel systems. The 51st Chemical Detachment, 173d Engineer Company, as well as infantry volunteer "tunnel rat" teams, fearlessly explored the VC tunnels, bringing

out large caches of weapons and supplies and VC captives. The combined effort resulted in over 1,000 tons of rice and 200 crew-served and individual weapons captured. Sixty-five enemy were taken prisoner of war; many were routed out of the extensive tunnel and bunker systems. The Brigade left 85 enemy dead in the rice paddies and jungle of the Triangle. "E" Troop of the 17th Cavalry alone accounted for 73 VC killed in action.

January 8-26, 1967

Operation Cedar Falls occurs. It is the largest combined offensive to date and involves 16,000 American and 14,000 South Vietnamese soldiers clearing out Viet Cong from the 'Iron Triangle' area 25 miles northwest of Saigon. The Viet Cong choose not to fight and instead melt away into the jungle. Americans then uncover an extensive network of tunnels and for the first time use 'tunnel rats,' the nickname given to specially trained volunteers who explore the maze of tunnels. After the American and South Vietnamese troops leave the area, Viet Cong return and rebuild their sanctuary. This pattern is repeated throughout the war as Americans utilize 'in-and-out' tactics in which troops arrive by helicopters, secure an area, then depart by helicopters.

January 10, 1967

U.N. Secretary-General U Thant expresses doubts that Vietnam is essential to the security of the West. On this same day, during his State of the Union address before Congress, President Johnson once again declares "*We will stand firm in Vietnam.*"

January 14, 1967

The New York Times reports that the U.S. Army is conducting secret germ warfare experiments.

January 23, 1967

Senator J. William Fulbright publishes *The Arrogance of Power* a book critical of American war policy in Vietnam advocating direct peace talks between the South Vietnamese government and the Viet Cong. By this time, Fulbright and President Johnson are no longer on speaking terms. Instead, the President uses the news media to deride Fulbright, Robert Kennedy, and a growing number of critics in Congress as "nervous Nellies" and "sunshine patriots."

January 30 – February 16, 1967

Operation BIG SPRINGS War Zone D. Twenty-six base camps were discovered in "D" Zone, and enemy troops were often encountered during the search of these camps by the 173d. Brigade elements located and destroyed over 1,000 bunkers, 78 huts, more than 24 tons of rice and 24 weapons. Brigade ground units with air support accounted for 79 Viet Cong dead.

(continued....)

