



# The Stand Alone Battalion

...a newsletter for the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 506th Infantry (Currahees)

ISSUE #1

Remembering a time and place as Currahees

October 2003

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## **WHO ARE WE?**

Who are we? We are the "Stand Alone Battalion", aka "The Bastard Battalion", the former members of a proud and battle tested airborne infantry battalion, separate airborne brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Screaming Eagles).

Our battalion was activated April 1, 1967, for the purpose of reinforcing the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. The 3-506th began its Vietnam legacy as a AIRBORNE battalion and ended its tour of duty on May 15, 1971 as an AIRBORNE unit. If you doubt this fact, I invite you to read the Division's May 24, 1971 edition of the 'Screaming Eagle' - [Standdown For 3/506](#). Also, when the Battalion colors were honored by the Commanding General, Major General Thomas N. Tarpley, in a Division-wide ceremony on May 15, he praised the 3-506 by saying, "*We are seeing the departure of one of the great airborne battalions of all times. I chose not to look on this as an inactivation, but rather as a rest or sleep of the battalion, until they are needed again.*"

The Currahee legacy began in World War II in places such as Normandy, Holland, and Bastogne and continued in a new generation of Currahees, who met their "Rendezvous With Destiny" in the infamous Tet Offensive of 1968, Hill 474, Cambodia, and many battles in between these high points of the Vietnam War.

If you were among the many fine Currahees who were later assigned to the 3-506th and not airborne qualified, take pride in your service. You served in the company of the best this country has to offer. Remember the profound words of Colonel Harry W. O. Kinnard, who wrote this statement in the Division's last daily bulletin at the end of World War II--"*To those of you left to read this last daily bulletin--do not dwell on the disintegration of our great unit, but rather be proud that you are of the 'old guard' of the greatest division ever to fight for our country. Carry with you the memory of its greatness wherever you may go, being always assured of respect when you say, 'I served with the 101st.'*"

Similar to the cultural diversity of our great Nation, we were a melting pot of European, African, American Indian, Asian, Australian, Indian, and Polynesian descent--they called us Currahees.

## **OUR BATTALION NEWSLETTER**

The "Stand Alone Battalion" newsletter is intended to keep our members informed on 3-506th happenings, provide information, and to open windows into our military service with the battalion--Remembering a time and place as Currahees! Members will have an opportunity to see photos and read articles about their battalion, some never seen before or seen again since their tour of duty in Vietnam. For those Currahees that lost all their personal belongings or never had the means to collect and save these things during their tour, this newsletter will fill the void left by that time in their lives.

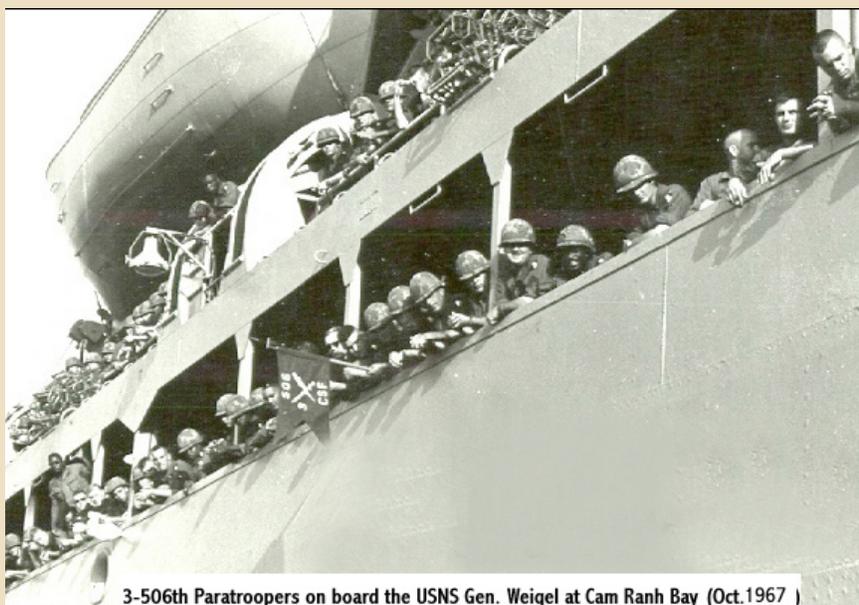
This first edition will provide readers with the format and subject matter they can expect in subsequent editions. Each monthly edition of the newsletter will contain six sections: **Section I** - Editorial & Ramblings. **Section II** - Predeployment--Stories and information related to the days and months leading up to the deployment of the battalion to Vietnam. **Section III** - Vietnam Diary-- Stories and information related to battalion combat operations in the Vietnam War. **Section IV** - Post Vietnam--Stories and information related to Currahees after returning from Vietnam. **Section V** - Real Time--Stories and information related to news of today. **Section VI** - Publication & Assistance Information.

Be sure to click on any **thumbnail photo** to view it in a larger mode or **blue text**, which is a link to another document.

This newsletter will be published monthly, as long as there is enough interest in having it. Members are invited to submit their recollections for inclusion in the newsletter.

## ***THE BOAT PEOPLE***

The first group of officers and enlisted men assigned to the battalion and deployed by ship in October 1967 are commonly referred to as "the boat people". Their journey took 25 days, made stops at Midway Island, the Philippine Islands, Quin Nhon, Vung Tau, and Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam, where they disembarked on October 26, 1967. The article [VIETNAM--THE 3/506 JOINS THE 1ST BDE](#) appeared in the Jan - Feb 1968 edition of 'The Screaming Eagle' magazine.



3-506th Paratroopers on board the USNS Gen. Weigel at Cam Ranh Bay (Oct. 1967 )  
*The USNS Gen. William Weigel*

## ***THE GLUE THAT BONDS US***

The glue that bonds the men of the 3-506th is said to be something special that many of the other units that served in Vietnam War do not have. That "something special" includes these elements:

- The battalion was born of the elite 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of WW II.
- Its senior officers and NCOs were hand picked and battle tested paratroopers.
- Its ranks were filled by volunteers from other airborne units.
- During battalion combat training prior to deployment, 1st Brigade Cmdr. Brig. Gen. S. H. Matheson (Easy Co. 506th PIR WW II) personally supervised and monitored the six months of battalion training for combat in Vietnam.
- The men of the new 3-506th formed up together, trained together, deployed together, and entered combat together.
- Gen. William Westmoreland, Cmdr. U.S. Army/Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, picked the 3-506th to conduct the 101st Abn. Div. first combat parachute assault in Vietnam. The combat jump was cancelled just hours before boarding the aircrafts.
- Prior to the infamous 1968 Communist TET Offensive, Gen. Westmoreland chose the 3-506th to become the nucleus of a special Airborne-Airmobile Battalion Task Force--an economy-of-force organization, under the direct control of Lt. Gen. William R. Peers, Commander, I Field Force, Vietnam (I FFV). The "Stand Alone Battalion" would serve out the rest of its Vietnam tour essentially as a "fire brigade" to be deployed anywhere in Vietnam on short notice.

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**PREDEPLOYMENT & PRE VIETNAM STORIES****SP4 MICHAEL MULLICAN'S MESSAGE**

This message appeared in the September-October 1967 edition of the 101st Airborne Division Association '**The Screaming Eagle Magazine**'. It appeared in the '**News and Comments From Our Letter Dept.**' section.

*SP4 Michael Mullican (A/3/506) informed us of the formation of the newest unit of the 101--the 3d Bn, 506. "where we are destined and the new breed of American paratroopers will continue to carry on the tradition that made the 101st famous today." We urge all members at Ft. Campbell who may have been transferred to this new unit, to let us know so our address for you can be changed so that you get your Screaming Eagle.*

**1. Operation GOBLIN HUNT I**

The "Stand Alone Battalion" was known as the "Bastard Battalion" prior to its deployment to Vietnam...but that's a story for another edition of the Newsletter. Battalion combat training began one month after activation, even before its ranks were up to full strength. Training began at the squad level in the art of "Quick Kill" under the direction of 2Lt. John E. Harrison (2/A/3-506). During the "Bastard Battalion five-month training program, it participated in or conducted three large war game exercises--Operation GOBLIN HUNT I, Operation CROCIGATOR, and Operation NIGHT EAGLE.

Intensive training for the entire Battalion began on May 22, with the Currahee participation in a war games exercise called Operation GOBLIN HUNT I that took place in "The Lands Between The Lakes" area in Stewart County, Tennessee. LTC Geraci led the 3-506 as the "aggressor force" against the entire 101st Airborne Division and chose the name, Juan Mal Hombre (John the Bad Guy) as his leadership title. Our "Bastard Battalion", the aggressor force, employed guerrilla warfare tactics against the 101st Airborne Division to test the combat effectiveness of the Division.

LTC Geraci sent his paratroopers into the field a week in advance of the scheduled exercise to implement his plan for ambushes and roadblocks against the 101st units. His own training as a Special Forces guerrilla fighter, together with the experience of his handpicked Vietnam Veteran NCOs, made the 3-506 a formidable opponent. LTC Geraci also had Special Forces teams operating with his Currahees during the war game, providing valuable instruction in various guerrilla warfare tactics such as ambush, escape, and evasion techniques. We also did some improvising on our own. For example, Dr. Lovy recalls in his book--Combat Surgeon in Vietnam--one such incident.

*"Germ Warfare and Blue Urine". Dr. Lovy writes "...I decided germ warfare was still a cogent possibility. I borrowed a Colonel's uniform with all of its regalia and went with three of my medics to the main dispensary on the base. I stated that we were from the surgeon general's office and were conducting an on-sight spot inspection to insure combat readiness.*

*We were let in and my men and I gathered up as much of the methylene blue As we could, put*

it into bags, and left. That evening, we made up packets of the methylene blue and the men (I guess the word is sappers) went and threw packets into the various water supplies of the units of the 'opposing forces'.

I then declared the war games over. We had won since we had contaminated the water supply and everybody was dead. This, of course, was scoffed at initially until I asked one of the commanders of the other unit to go to the latrine. Naturally, the methylene blue had enough time to work and he and all of his men were urinating a wonderful blue to aquamarine color. I had alerted the other battalion surgeons so that when they had an influx of people complaining of changes in the color of their urine, they would know what was going on. They were, however, sworn to secrecy.

We were literally chased, and one of my men, Pfc. Ron Ford (2/A/3-506), stated that he was chased for several days and had to hide in garages, open cars, etc. I also had to hide for a few days, and the fate awaiting me, as I have been told, would have permanently turned me into a soprano and resulted in my not having the last four of my children."

The 101st Division utilized helicopters, trucks, and any means available to them as they attempted to put the paratrooper "guerrillas" of the 3-506 out of action. Time after time, the Division failed, as the 3-506 aggressor force (now openly referred to as the 'Bastard Battalion') applied "hit and run" tactics against the units of the 101st. The "Bastard Battalion" were now a force to be reckoned with, as they emerged as the victors in Operation Goblin Hunt I.

## 2. THE USNS GENERAL WILLIAM WEIGEL



On October 2, 1967, the "Bastard Battalion" departed Ft. Campbell, Kentucky for San Francisco, California and eventually Oakland Naval Base, where the paratroopers boarded the USNS General William Weigel for the trip to Vietnam. The General Weigel holds a special place for those of us who traveled to Vietnam aboard her as 18-, 19-, and 20- year old soldiers. Here are some interesting facts about the old girl.

The General Weigel was one of four WWII-era P2 troopships that returned to service as transports during the Vietnam War. She was built in 1944 by Federal Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in Kearny, New Jersey and had an overall length of 622 feet 7 inches and measured 77 feet 2 inches in width, with a maximum height of 142 feet from keel to the top of her rear mast. She was powered by twin turbine engines that were propelled by two four-blade propellers measuring 18 feet in diameter that enabled the ship to cruise at a speed of 21 Knots with a troop capacity of 4,896. Originally named General C. H. Barth, she was renamed the General William Weigel shortly before her launch on September 3, 1944. Her namesake was a prominent U. S. military leader who received the Distinguished Service Medal for his service in World War I.

As the General Weigel entered its service during World War II, she sailed from New York on February 11, 1945 carrying rotation troops bound for Le Havre, France. Throughout the remainder of World War II, the ship was in service in many parts of the world transporting troops and equipment to Europe, as well as ferrying personnel to the Pacific.

Following World War II, the General Weigel was decommissioned in New York on May 10, 1946 and transferred to the War Department for peace time operation as an Army transport, making shuttle runs from San Francisco to garrisons in the Pacific until 1950. On July 20 of that year, she was reacquired by the Navy and was assigned to Maritime Sea Transport Service. During this phase

of her career, she sailed from the Pacific coast carrying troops for duty in the Korean War. General Weigel received seven battle stars for service during the Korean conflict.

After the Korean War, the General Weigel continued to rotate American troops to strengthen United Nations positions in Korea until placed in Readied Operational Status in 1955. Three years later, she entered the National Defense Reserve Fleet at Olympia, Washington. As our nation moved toward commitment of its first military troops to fight the Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, the Navy reacquired the USNS General William Weigel once again on August 18, 1965 to resume the duties she was designed for during World War II. As a troop transport ship in the Military Sea Transport Service fleet, she again carried troops to Vietnam through 1967.

By the time the “boat people” had the privilege to travel on the General Weigel, she had seen service in three wars and had made numerous voyages around the world transporting American troops in the service of our country. She took them to war—and brought thousands of them back home safely. Eventually, she was sold for scrap on April 10, 1987 for the price of \$1,123,100 and was completely scrapped in Kachsiung, Taiwan.

The battle-tested USNS General William Weigel will not be remembered by our country as a great ship, but she will remain a distinct memory in the lives of those American soldiers and seamen who walked upon her decks as she sped them to war and brought them home again.

### **3. THE 'WEIGEL WORD' - The Ship's Newspaper**

How many of you that were passengers on the USNS Gen. Weigel knew or remember that the ship had a newspaper and that it was published daily? The daily newspaper on board the ship was called the 'Weigel Word'. It more or less consisted of a few mimeographed pages produced by several member passengers. Although I did not think to save copies of the 'Weigel Word', I have been successful in obtaining copies published during the Korean War period.

One of the editors of the 'Weigel Word' during our voyage to Vietnam was our very own Sgt. Michael Stuart (2/C/3-506th). Each edition of the 'Weigel Word' usually consisted of some national news off the ship's radio system, sports news, some particular events and onboard training news, PX news, movie schedule, and maybe other small talk. The ship's newspaper was a welcomed break for many on the long voyage [Click for Photo](#). If anyone has a copy of the newspaper that they may have sent home to family or friends, please contact Jerry Berry. Sgt. Stuart's short career as a Gen. Weigel newsletter editor will be featured in an upcoming edition of the Newsletter.

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# VIETNAM DIARY

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### 1. **VIETNAM--THE 3/506 JOINS THE 1ST BDE.**

This article-- appeared in the January-February, 1968 edition of 'The Screaming Eagle' magazine. Some members may remember these small 6" by 9" magazines, which

were fill full of 101st Airborne Division news, both with state-side news as well as from Vietnam. Most of these magazines have some mention of the 3-506th. I wish the 101st Airborne Division Association would return to this format. You can get copies of most all of these collectible magazines that I have collected over the years from our PX, by clicking on this [Screaming Eagle Magazines CD link](#).

### 2. ['Live Nightmare' - GI Almost Sleeps On Trap](#)



This article appeared in the September 30, 1968 edition of the 'Screaming Eagle' newspaper. This incident happened sometimes around July 1968. Articles often appeared in newspapers weeks and even months after the event. Danny and I were close friends and when we got the opportunity, we would play chess. It was unusual for bothers to serve in the same unit in combat, but Danny and his brother Lacy did. Lacy Bridges was a member of Co. B. Danny, a medic had not came over with our battalion, but transferred into the battalion sometimes in April or May from Germany. A few years ago, I located Lacy, who now lives in Chatham, VA. He informed me that soon after Danny returned home to Virginia, he left home and the family has not heard from him since. They believe he went to California. All my searches to locate him have been unsuccessful.



**3. Task Force 3/506 - Hill 474** - The article on the left appeared in the May - June, 1970 edition of 'The Screaming Eagle' magazine.

On January 16, the "Bastard Battalion", commanded by LTC Joseph N. Jagers, Jr and its support units-Delta Battery 2/320 Artillery and 4th Platoon, Alpha Company, 326th Combat Engineers platoon--embarked on a new mission in the Crow's

Foot mountain area of northern Binh Dinh Province. The Currahees operated from Fire Support Bases TAPE and CHALLENGE, as they moved to interdict and thwart enemy plans to destroy the pacification effort within Hoai Nhon and Tam Quan District. Task Force 3-506 was given the mission to seek out the enemy units and spoil their plans for the Tet New Year.

173rd Airborne Brigade Intelligence indicated that Viet Cong Local Forces in the area were planning to conduct pre-Tet standoff attacks to cover NVA units as they moved into their Tet attack positions at Hill 474. Evidence gathered throughout December 1969 indicated that the 22nd Regiment of the 3rd NVA Division had moved into the southern part of Binh Dinh Province. A POW from the 9th Battalion, 22nd Regiment that was captured on January 2 in the upper An Loa Valley also verified the intelligence reports.



**4. THAT WONDERFUL KOOL-AID** - Do you remember having to mix Kool-Aid with your

drinking water to help kill the taste of the iodine tablets used to purify the water? Here were two of our favorites flavors.

**5. *THE "STAND ALONE BATTALION" WAS WELL COVERED.*** When I returned home from Vietnam, I brought with me nearly 100 of my draft stories, those that were published and those that were

not. I was given the job of battalion PIO in late October 1967, shortly after we arrived in Vietnam and prior to our first combat operation on November 11, 1967.

Our battalion's first two stories with photos--'*Currahees' Bolster 1st Brigade* and *Battalion Arrives--Ready for Action* appeared in the November 29, 1967 edition of the 'Screaming Eagle'. I wish I could take credit for them, but they came from the 1st Brigade's fine PIO staff. My first article--'*Currahees' Complete Training, Laud 'P-School'*' as battalion PIO appeared in the December 20, 1967 edition of the 'Screaming Eagle'. Once our stories and photos began reaching the Brigade and later Division PIO staff, we rarely missed making the 'Screaming Eagle' and/or other major newspapers--*The Stars and Stripes, The Army Reporter, The Observer*, numerous State-side newspapers, and on occasion, the 'boss' of them all, the world-wide circulated *Army Times*.

There was this competition among us 1st Brigade PIOs. The challenge was to see which PIO could make the *Army Times* and to get the 'Bragging Rights'. To get 'Grand Bragging Rights', you had to make the paper's front page. It was rare for a PIO to get credit for his photo or article in the *Army Times*. The credit usually went something like "101st Airborne photo" or "101st Airborne". The editors at the *Army Times* must have liked the ring of my name "Jerry Berry" because we made the front cover three different times--March 27, 1968; June 12, 1968; and one other edition that I can't recall. If we missed a weekly edition of the "Screaming Eagle", we appeared instead in one of the above mentioned newspapers published for U.S. Troops in Vietnam.

Throughout the coming months, I will include these old draft stories, both the ones that made the editors desk, as well as those that didn't quiet make the grade. Some that I thought would surely get me the 'Pulitzer Prize', got me such comments from the Brigade or Division PIO staff as, "What the hell is this!", or "Give me some facts here and you may have something!". For the first six months, it seemed that the 1st Brigade and later Division 'Screaming Eagle' staff could not get enough material from the 3-506th. The more I sent in, the more they wanted. Almost every roll of film and draft story sent in, came back with notes asking for additional details, which usually meant that the photo or story was going to get published.

At the end of my tour of duty, the Division honored our battalion with a full two-page center spread in the September 30, 1968 edition of the Screaming Eagle. The edition also included my stories--'*Live Nightmare*' - *GI Almost Sleeps On Trap*, the photo--'*CONTACT*' on page one, '*Luck, Patience Pay Off As 'Currahees' Trap VC*' on page 3, full two-page spread on pages 4 and 5, '*Trooper Kicks Death Device Twice, Lives*' on page 7, and '*VC Company XO Captured--3/506 Inf. Sets Night Trap*' on page 8 (last). Although I had turned over my PIO duties to another Currahee, I am told that my stories and photos continued to appear in the 'Screaming Eagle' and other 101st Airborne Division publications long after we, the '**boat people**' returned to the land of the big PX.

6. **WHERE WERE WE THEN?** - Have you stopped to wonder where the "Stand Alone Battalion" was in the month of October during your tour of duty in Vietnam? Well, here's your answer.

**October 1967** - The battalion (-) departed Ft. Campbell on 2 October for Oakland Naval Base, where we boarded the Army Transport ship, USNS General Weigel for deployment to South Vietnam. From October 3 to 26, the Currahees (minus an advance team sent ahead to Vietnam to make preparations to receive the battalion), were in route aboard the Gen. Weigel. The Gen. Weigel made stops at Midway Island, the Philippine Islands, Quin Nhon, Vung Tau, and Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam. October 26-31 found the Currahees at their new home at Phan Rang and the 'Eagle's Roost' making preparations to begin P-training. The first of two groups of Battalion Officers and senior NCOs were sent North to I Corps for on-the-job- training with their counterparts in the 1st Brigade.

**October 1968** - The Currahees began the month of October with Operation PHUONG HOANG, a combined U. S. and Vietnamese search and clear operation. During the ten-day operation, the Currahees provided cordon forces for search of selected villages in Ham Thuan and Thien Giao Districts of Binh Thuan Province. The villages of Phu Nhang, Duc Long, Phu Khanh, Phu Sum, and Go Boi were cordoned and systematically searched for enemy elements. Pfc. David Wayne Johnson, 20, of Menominee, Michigan was killed on October 4 during one of the missions. As Operation Phuong Hoang began, the remaining Currahees from the first group to arrive in South Vietnam in October 1967 left LZ

BETTY for final out-processing in Long Binh on October 2. This final group of original Currahees left South Vietnam for their return stateside the following day, October 3, 1968. On October 11, the Currahees commenced Operation LE HONG PHONG (11-24 Oct.). The two-week operation was a combined effort with TF 3-506, elements of the 44th ARVN Regiment, and elements of the 8th (APCs) and 69th Armor (tanks). The operation was named for the densely vegetated region northeast of Phan Thiet known as Le Hong Phong Forest, a Viet Cong stronghold. The forest itself covered approximately 400 square miles of dense thorny undergrowth, which provided excellent concealment for the enemy from both aerial and ground observation by friendly forces.

Sgt. Frederick G. Jackson, Jr., 20, of Las Cruces, New Mexico was killed on October 22. The Currahees ended Operation LE HONG PHONG on October 24, and refitted for their next operation.

**October 1969** - The "Stand Alone Battalion" was finishing up Operation HANCOCK FLAME, which began in late September and terminated on October 4. Throughout the remainder of the month, the Currahees continued to operate in company- and platoon-sized strength in search of enemy cultivated areas within the Le Hong Phong Forest. The enemy maintained numerous large garden plots containing vast quantities of staple food crops that were essential to VC/NVA existence. Defoliation (Agent Orange) efforts were stepped up. Following a well-deserved stand down, the Currahees commenced Operation SOUTHERN FREE STRIKE on October 9. Their mission was to hunt down and kill the enemy within the vast stretch of territory along the border of II and III Corps, known as the Free Strike Zone. On October 10, the Currahees conducted the Battalion's amphibious combat assault as part of the operation. The Currahees of Company D were shuttled from the LZ BETTY port facilities on a LARC (Light Amphibious Resupply Craft) to another offshore watercraft called an LCU (Army Landing Craft Utility), which ultimately delivered them to their beachhead assault. Sgt. Patrick Martin Grella, 22, of Wheeling, WVA was killed on October 20. First Lieutenant Walter Murrah Gibson, Platoon Leader of 2nd Platoon, Company D was killed in an enemy contact during the Operation on October 28. The operation terminated on October 31.

**October 1970** - This would be the last October that the "Stand Alone Battalion" would spend in South

Vietnam. The Currahees were now up north in I Corps involved in Operation JEFFERSON GLEN/MONSOON PLAN 70. The Currahees remained at Fire Support Base PISTOL until October 4, when the Battalion terminated operations and moved by air to Phu Bai Combat Base for refresher training and to assume the mission of Division ready reaction force. On October 13, the 3-506 became OPCON to the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, terminating its status as a division ready reaction force. The Battalion immediately moved by truck convoy to Fire Support Base BIRMINGHAM, where the Currahees commenced search and destroy operations in the area surrounding the Fire Support Base. During the remainder of the month, the Currahees experienced resupply, combat movement, and tactical difficulties due to the monsoon weather. Helicopter traffic was constantly put on hold, causing schedule delays, which in turn prevented the rifle companies and reconnaissance teams from accomplishing their missions.

Major typhoons dominate the entire AO and cause severe weather conditions for several days. On October 15, Typhoon JOAN moved over the coast causing heavy rain and winds up to 50 knots throughout the AO. The Division implemented the Storm Contingency Plan once again on October 25, in preparation for severe weather expected from Typhoon KATE. The remainder of the month was relatively quiet for the Currahees, as the monsoon season continued.

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## POST VIETNAM

### STAYING IN TOUCH

How many of us made that promise to a buddy or close friend to stay in touch after we left Vietnam and returned Stateside? I would wager that most all of us did. Why didn't we keep those promises. I had good intentions, but I also fell into that river of excuses. I distinctly recall making promises to two individuals--my platoon leader, Joe Alexander and close friend, Jerry Stansel in Recon--that took nearly 30 years to honor.

When I arrived at the 3-506th fresh out of Jump School, I was assigned to 2Lt. Joe Alexander's 3rd Platoon. It wasn't long before the two of us found out that we were staunch rivals...academically speaking, that is. I had been a student at the

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University of Alabama (Bama) and Joe Alexander had been at the University of Tennessee (Volunteers) when Uncle Sam came calling. We both dearly loved our college football and there is no greater rivalry than 'Bama' and the 'Vols'. The combat conditions in Vietnam were made a little more tolerable with those special discussions and small talk that occurred between the two of us.

When it came time to derose, Joe and I promised to rendezvous at that very next meeting between 'Bama' and Tennessee. I was unable to attend that fall 'Bama' and Tennessee' game, and I have regretted it ever since. Each and every time that our two schools met on the football field, I would wonder if Joe was there searching for me. It wasn't until 1997, nearly 29 years later, while attending my first 101st Airborne Division Association reunion at Knoxville, TN that I reunited with my former platoon leader and close friend. It was an emotional and special meeting. I had stayed young, healthy and good looking, while Joe had grown out of shape and couldn't remember his home address.

Joe Alexander had entered the US Army as a Private in 1966, graduated from Infantry Officer Candidate School in 1967 and was the first officer assigned to Company A, 3-506th. 2Lt Alexander served as Platoon Leader for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Platoon and prior to deploying to Vietnam in Oct 1967, was assigned as Platoon Leader of the 4<sup>th</sup> (Weapons) Platoon. In addition to Company A, he also served in Headquarters Company as the Battalion Liaison Officer (Operations) and in Company E as the Executive Officer and the 4.2 inch Mortar Platoon Leader. After his tour in Vietnam, the highly decorated 1LT continued his military service with the Tennessee Army National Guard, retiring in 1996 as a colonel with the 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment in Knoxville Tennessee. Joe is the Secretary/Treasurer of Off Road Equipment Parts, Inc located in Alcoa, Tennessee. Also, Joe and his father, Ralph Alexander have a beef cattle farm near Lenoir City, Tennessee. Hardly a day or week goes by now that we don't correspond with one another. And, we are still staunch football rivals..."Roll Tide"!

Another individual that I had promised to stay in touch with was my close friend, Pfc. Jerry Stansel, a member of the LRRPs. Whenever we had the opportunity to get together at my Connex back at LZ BETTY, we would talk about home, girls, what we wanted to do with our lives after we completed our military service, and listen to Jerry's guitar playing, which by the way was terrible! Jerry was from Utah, and I was from Mississippi. Utah has probably the finest snow skiing in the United States, and Jerry enjoyed skiing. If I remember correctly, he had worked at a ski resort near Salt Lake. He and I decided to go into the skiing business! He claimed to know enough about the business that the two of us could make it work. All we had to do was get together after we both got out of the service, find a slope, stretch some cable and start collecting the money!

Like with other Currahee buddies, we lost touch with one another. I left the service after returning State-side, while Jerry got reassigned to another unit and location. I never forgot Jerry and our big plans to become ski resort operators. In the late 80s, while working for the U.S. Forest Service, I transferred to the Southwest in Arizona. I had the opportunity to travel through or to visit Salt Lake City numerous times. While in the area, I made attempts to locate Jerry, expecting him to return there. All my searches were unsuccessful. In 1991, I transferred back to Montana and the Kootenai National Forest. While sitting at

my desk one day in 1997, I decided to run another search, this time nation-wide for a Jerry Stansel. When I ran the search, only one such name came up...in Fairbanks, Alaska! I decided to call. I asked the person who answered the phone, "did you by chance serve with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam?" There was a long pause and he said, "yes, I did, who is this?" I decided to have some fun with him now that I was certain it was him. Did you serve with the 3-506th, I asked? "Yes!...who is this?" I could not stop myself from laughing out loud at this point. Finally, I asked, "who was one of your best buddies in Vietnam that you made plans with to be your partner in that ski resort in Utah?" "Jerry Berry", he says. "You son-of-a-gun, you"! After 29 years, we were reunited and picked up where we left off on that dusty airstrip and temporary home away from home known as LZ BETTY.

Jerry Stansel had ended his military service in Alaska and stayed there to build a very successful business of Outfitting and Guiding and to raise a wonderful family. He even had a movie made for TV about him. His story will appear in an upcoming edition of this Newsletter. Jerry's address information can be found on the Currahee Roster at our website.

## TRAILS, CAREERS & FAMILIES

In the 16 years that I have been actively involved in communicating, searching for, and working with former members of our "Stand Alone Battalion", I have had the opportunity to learn of the careers and families of our Currahee brothers. In future editions of our newsletters, I hope to tell a number of these 'up close and personal' stories. It would be only fair to begin with this section with myself, SP4 Jerry Berry. I do this in hopes that it will encourage others to participate.

### 1. SP4 Jerry Berry, 3/A/3-506th & Bn. PIO (1967/68).

I completed my one-year tour of duty in Vietnam, derosing along with the rest of the 'boat people' around the first of October 1968. With less than 90 days left in my two-year obligation, I was given an early out. I returned home to the Mississippi Delta and my sweetheart, Miss Donna Murphy, to await the start of second semester at Mississippi State University to continue my college education that Uncle Sam had disrupted. In the meantime, I took a job as a seed clerk at Freeman Cotton Gin in Greenwood, MS. When that job ended in mid-December, I took a job with J.C. Penney in Greenwood, working as a salesman in the men's clothing department. In January 1969, I reentered college and on June 1, Donna and I were married. We left immediately following the wedding for a honeymoon adventure manning a fire lookout in a remote area of Idaho's Clearwater National Forest. We both spent a three-month honeymoon on a fire lookout, and we both got paid for it! I highly recommend that job for all newlyweds.

We returned home to Mississippi that fall and went back to MSU for another semester of college. At the end of the fall semester, my boyhood friend, Larry Martin and I loaded up our two families' belongings and headed back to Idaho, where the U. S. Forest Service offered me a district range and wildlife position on the Lochsa Ranger District, Clearwater N.F. Donna was beginning her student teaching and would join me in Idaho several months later.

I continued to work at my range and wildlife position on the Lochsa Ranger District until January 1976, when I accepted a wildlife/forester position with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Dworshak Dam & Reservoir near Orofino,

Idaho--the first wildlife biologist at Dworshak. I left the Corps of Engineers in May 1980 and moved back South to Arkansas to build and operate a commercial rabbitry. I had obtained all the required licenses, made the final arrangements for obtaining my buildings, equipment and breeding stock, when the South was hit with one of the worst heat waves seen in nearly a century. While waiting for the heat wave to subside, I became discouraged and decided to give up my foolish idea and return to the mountains of the northwest and continue my career as a wildlife biologist. In October 1980, I got a job on the Rexford Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, in NW Montana, where I stayed until May 1984. At that time, I transferred to a wildlife biologist position on the Wisdom Ranger District, Beaverhead N.F. in SW Montana--the first district wildlife biologist on the Beaverhead N.F

In September 1986, I accepted a wildlife/resource staff position on the Red River Ranger District, Nez Perce N.F. in central Idaho. While there, Eddy Blanco, Brooklyn, NY (2/A/3-506, 1967/68) located me in May 1987 through a newspaper ad that he had placed in a number of newspapers out west to find me. I received a phone call one evening from a friend back in Orofino, Idaho, informing me about the ad. [Click Here to see the ad.](#) This was the first time that I had made contact with anyone from the battalion since leaving the service twenty years back. This was the beginning of the labor of love that would bring me to where we are today.

From the Nez Perce N.F., I transferred to the North Kaibab R.D., Kaibab N.F. in northern Arizona to manage the world famous North Kaibab Mule Deer (NKMD) population for four years. The NKMD was made famous by President Teddy Roosevelt , when government hunters removed all large predators of the mule deer on the North Kaibab Game Preserve in the late 20s and early 30s, resulting in a record wildlife management disaster. The mule deer population grew beyond its habitat capacity and in turn destroyed its habitat and eventually its population numbers. The habitat has yet to fully recover to this day.

My family an I left Arizona in February 1991 and returned to the Kootenai N.F. here at Libby, MT, where I retired in December 1997 as a District Wildlife/Resource Staff on the Three Rivers R.D, after 30 years of Federal service. Donna and I will celebrated our 35th anniversary this coming June. We have four grown children--Stephanie (30), Jennifer (23), Heidi (21), and Christopher (19)--and one special black lab named Molly.

## **2. Cpt. Robert B. Clemens - Platoon Leader & Co. CO (1970/71):**

After serving as a platoon leader in Bravo and Delta Companies, Bob commanded Charlie Company from December 1970 to "stand down" in May 1971. He returned to the states to attend grad school at the Army's expense, and met and married Carol Cromer Clemens less than four months after arriving on campus. (Paratroopers are mission-oriented.) After receiving his Masters degree, Bob returned to Benning School for Boys for more training, and his daughter Rebecca was born at Martin Army Hospital one year after the wedding. (Paratroopers are mission-oriented.)

From 1973 to 1976, Bob was stationed with the 193d Infantry Brigade in Panama, where he served as a battalion adjutant, then on General Staff with Gen. Wm. R. Richardson, followed by command of Charlie Company of the 4-20

Mech for 16 months. (Garrison command is harder than combat command!)

From 1976 to 1980, Bob was an Assistant Professor and Commandant of Cadets at Notre Dame ROTC, and in 1978 was ROTC Instructor of the year for the ROTC Region. In 1980 he resigned his RA commission, took a reserve commission, and entered Notre Dame Law School. He finished law school in less than two years, then attended the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth as a reservist.

Bob is now completing his 21st year as a trial lawyer in Indianapolis Indiana, with Bose McKinney & Evans LLP. (Go to [Boselaw.com](http://Boselaw.com) to review his legal battles and accomplishments.) He completed another dozen years in the Army Reserve and retired as an LTC in 1993. Bob is in the Syracuse University Army ROTC Hall of Fame.

That "marry in haste" axiom isn't always right, as Bob and Carol have been married for 31+ years, raised a wonderful daughter (one grandson) and parented 14 other young people, including 11 foreign exchange students. Despite many later accomplishments, Bob will tell you that commanding three platoons and a rifle company in Viet Nam was the most important thing he's ever done. You can reach Bob Clemens at: [RClemens@boselaw.com](mailto:RClemens@boselaw.com) or get his address and phone # by visiting the Currahee Roster on the website.

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## EAGLE-GRAM

Lt. Henry Parker (5/27th Arty FO (TF 3-506, 1968/69)) and wife Susan sends post card from Singapore, dated September 20, 2003. Hank wrote: "Hello from Singapore. Before we left San Francisco I took Susan to Terminal One at the USO where 'us none boat people' shipped out. They still maintain the books where we signed to depart for or arrived from Vietnam. Next week we head to Malaysia and visit with Susan's family. We joined her sister, husband and daughter in Japan and traveled together. We have booked a flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Kip and Jose have been very helpful with information. I will try to get you a genuine pit helmet. We will lay flowers at the river ambush [Battle at Ca Ty River], LZ Betty and Sherry if I can locate the old FSB. Will keep you posted of our travel and adventures. Currahee - Henry & Susan."

Sgt. Lewis J. "Harper" Oswald and Jan Pearson tied the knot at Reno, NV, during the 7th Annual 3-506th Reunion. [Wedding Photo](#)

## REUNION 2004

The "Stand Alone Battalion" will hold its 8th Annual Reunion in 2004. The

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dates and location for the 2004 have not been decided on yet by active members. Two or more proposed locations are recommended by members at each previous year's reunion. A poll has been posted on the Currahee Website for members planning to attend the 2004 reunion to cast their vote. Once the location is chosen by most votes, a second poll will be put up to decide on the dates for the reunion. The second poll is very important to help meet vacation schedules, spouse's work, and family needs.

There continues to be a large amount of interest to return to Fort Campbell, KY during the 101st Airborne Division's 'Week of the Eagles'. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell, Kentucky conducts Week of the Eagles every other year during the month of June at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to display the Division's capabilities, pay tribute to all Division veterans, and foster the competitive spirit through soldier stakes and sporting events. Many 3-506th members feel that this provides an opportunity to rendezvous with veterans and former teammates from other 101st Airborne Division units.

One of the main events is a dinner in the field house for about 1,000 officers, enlisted and retired, along with the City of Clarksville and Hopkinsville mayors, etc. There are displays by all the units, Air Assault and even a carnival with rides for the children. The finale for the week is the Division review. It combines family time, as well as a chance for the local community to see what the Division can do. It has been reported to me that 2005 will be the next Week of the Eagles and change of command at Fort Campbell.

Another suggestion for the 8th Annual 3-506th Reunion is Hampton, VA, since that is where the 101st Airborne Association 59th Annual Reunion is to be held on 4-8 Aug 2004. Joe Alexander has made a valid argument in a message posted on our website in favor of holding the 2004 Reunion at Hampton, Va. It is well worth the time to read his rationale.

## **THE 'CURRAHEE' BOOKSTORE**

The 3-506th PX currently lists seven publications authored by or about Currahees. Six of which are by or about 3rd Battalion members - both WW II and Vietnam.

1. VIETNAM DIARY - Dr. Andrew Lovy, former 3-506 battalion surgeon (1967/68) will soon have a revised version of his 'Vietnam Diary' available in very near future.
2. THE STAND ALONE BATTALION (3-506) - by Jerald W. Berry & Joe R. Alexander
3. GOD'S SQUAD - by James L. Burnham (3-506).
4. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE LEAFLETS OF THE VIETNAM WAR - by Jerald W. Berry (3-506) & Donna Berry.
5. THE STORY OF A SOLDIER - by Ivan Paul Mehosky & Edward S. Mehosky (H/506 PIR).
6. THE SIMPLE SOUNDS OF FREEDMAN - by Thomas H. Taylor & Joe Beyrle (I/506 PIR).
7. THE COW SPOKE FRENCH - by William True (E/506 PIR) and Deryck Tufts True

## **THE CURRAHEE PX**

The 3-506th PX or Gift Shop has a large selection of items that are related to Currahees, the 101st Abn. Div., Vietnam, etc. Many of the PX items can be personalized with 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Battalion information, as well as with the 101st

Airborne Division (Screaming Eagle) crest/patch. Contact Jerry Berry: [jerryberry@currahee.org](mailto:jerryberry@currahee.org), if you have questions or wish to order over the phone or by E-mail. You can order directly off the website as well. The proceeds from PX sales goes for maintaining the website, office supplies to operate, search for former Currahees, and to locate the families of our KIAs.

## BATTALION AID-STATION

Dr. Andrew "Shotgun" Lovy gave two informative 90-minute slide/lectures on PTSD to members and guests at the 7th Annual 3-506th Reunion in Reno. This will likely become a regular event at future 3-506th reunions. If you have questions concerning PTSD, you may contact Dr. Lovy at: [ncafodla@socket.net](mailto:ncafodla@socket.net). You will hopefully find various medical advice and articles from Dr. Lovy here in future newsletters.

## TAPS

**Robert A. Pulcini**, Co. B/HHC 1969/70 died of a massive heart attack in August, while visiting his son in Houston, Texas. He is interned in Arlington Cemetery.

**Michael V. Stratton**, HHC/S3-Air 1971 [LTC USA, RET] killed in an electrical accident on July 9, 2003. He was interned in San Diego, CA.

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## POST SCRIPT

The "Stand Alone Battalion" Newsletter is published monthly by: Jerry Berry 438 Manor Dr Libby, MT 59923 Editor: Jerry Berry Assistant Editor: Donna Berry Layout/graphics: Jerry Berry & Stephanie Berry

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The "Stand Alone Battalion" Newsletter is written for 3-506th members, Task Force unit members, KIA families. We solicit your suggestions and articles. Photos may be sent hard copy or e-mail, preferably in JPEG files. If you have questions, contact Jerry Berry (406) 293-7678 or by e-mail: [jerryberry@currahee.org](mailto:jerryberry@currahee.org).

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## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### MILITARY RECORDS

#### **Subject: DD 214**

Here is a web site: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov> many of you may find beneficial if you need a copy of your DD Form 21, Discharge from the military. If you do not need it now, you may want to book mark it for future reference. It is a good idea to make several copies and put them in various locations, just in case.

#### **Subject: Access DD-214 online**

You can now access your DD-214 on-line. FYI. The National Personnel Records Center has provided the following website for veterans to access their DD-214 online: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment or other purposes. Please see the details below. Point of contact is: [linda.krout@us.army.mil](mailto:linda.krout@us.army.mil) - (410) 306-1755.

#### **NPRC initiates online records request procedures**

The National Personnel Records Center is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files. Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents. Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the **Standard Form 180** which can be downloaded from the online web site.

The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records center's mailroom processing time.

Also, because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. Veterans and next of kin may access this application at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>.

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## VIETNAM—THE 3/506 JOINS THE 1ST BDE

In October-November, the 3/506th Inf were welcome to Vietnam by LTC John P. Garaci, CO, upon arrival via the USNS General William Weigel as they joined the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div., APO SF 96347. Co B is shown marching off the deck en-route to Phan Rang and being greeted by the Red Cross. "Currahee's" All The Way.



☆ ☆ ☆

## CONG KILLERS

In the Mts Around Phan Thiet  
17 March '67

The Capt said, "We've left Phan Thiet,  
But we know Charlies around here yet,  
He's up in the mts in his hidden lair,  
To get him now we must trap and ensnare!"

Charlie's been shooting at choppers again,  
It's been about one day ago when,  
He opened with his automatic gun,  
We've got to get him on the run!

I want these Cong snipers real bad,  
Because I'm teed off and really mad,  
One round missed my head by one inch,  
But I ducked that shot and didn't flinch.

Cobra Company then fanned out  
Into Charlie's hidden jungle redoubt,  
The squads and platoons climbed the highest  
peak

From all sides to get Charlie the sneak.  
The company received automatic fire from  
an adjacent hill,  
And merged into that zone for a final kill,  
But Charlie was gone—it was quiet and still,  
But we'll get Charlie for our Capt—  
We know we will!

We finally settled down for rest,  
When one of our men whispered to the best,  
I see two Charlies—there may be more,  
Right to the left of that valley floor."

One squad to the left started out for them,  
Another squad to the right to get these  
Cong men,  
Charlie was caught right in this trap,  
He practically fell into our lap.

One of the Cong had a Thompson sub-  
machine gun,  
Spitting out bullets and fire while on the  
run,  
He tried to kill many of our men,  
As the bullets kept flying in all this din.

"My men I'm here to say that I'm proud  
of you,  
It's got to be Charlie and none of my crew,  
This will teach him to stay away;  
From 'Cobra Company'—  
From this very day!"

By Seuff Gordon  
Dedicated to Capt. Northquick, C Co, 1st  
Bn, 327th Inf, 101st.

