



Serving Sky Soldiers Past, Present and Future

The Herd Word



Walk to the Wall 2017



Walk to the Wall participants. Not all pictured: Jeane and Joe Flesch, Bryan Kennedy Family, Jim Smith, Vickie and Donald Haus, Jennifer and Hank Young, Terry Walsh, Carlos Saladino, Roy Gilmore, Don Blair, George Farris, Roberta Ybarra

It was cooler and windier than what had been experienced to date, but not unseasonable for November Washington DC. The faithful 173^d Airborne Bridge Sky Soldiers, their family members, and friends were undeterred.

Some came from as far away as Texas and New Jersey. Some Sky Soldiers were from the post-Vietnam era. All were there to honor those whose names were carved on the black granite walls of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Chapter President, **Joe Flesch**, brought the American and the Brigade flags. **George Farris** brought the Dunkin Donuts and coffee. The refreshments were much appreciated.

Our usual guide for the Walk to the Wall, **Bill Harris**, could not participate in this year, but his role of guiding our cohort to The Wall was ably filled by volunteer **Don Adams**.

When all appeared ready, Joe Flesch assembled the group. **Mack Brooks**

read a prayer and, afterwards, with the Brigade wreath and color guard at the vanguard, the Herd contingent moved toward The Wall.

Just off the path, but near the apex of The Wall, the wreath, flanked by the National Colors, and the 173^d Airborne Brigade Flag was placed and the assembled group rendered a salute to the Colors and to those whose names are inscribed on The Wall.

Joe Flesch led a responsive reading of the inspirational prayer "We Remember Them" from the Reform Jewish Prayer Book. Afterward, the Brigade wreath was placed nearer The Wall.

A group picture served as the capstone of our annual commitment that our fallen not be forgotten. All were invited to attend a no-host lunch at the Marriott Key Bridge Hotel. Some took advantage of the opportunity to share a meal together, yet all left knowing that we had faithfully met our obligation to those there but in spirit.

AIRBORNE

ALL THE WAY

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The Chapter President's Message



It has been an active quarter for the Chapter.

The 25-member 173^d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion Committee, met on 30

September, 28 October, and 18 November. They were augmented with representatives from the Brigade Association, the Association Concierge, and a Chapter 15 representative. The Chapter 15 rep is monitoring our Chapter's Reunion activities in preparation for the 2019 Reunion in South Dakota. If you want to be on our Reunion Committee, contact me.

On 7 October, I visited and offered Chapter assistance to **SGT Franz Walkup (Ret.)**, at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). On 15 October **Terry Walsh**, my wife, **Jeane**, and I visited Franz and his sister at the Fisher House at WRNMMC. We've stayed in touch with him and provided assistance as needed.

On 9 November, the Chapter supported the Bravo Bulls activi-

ties, at Arlington National Cemetery. On 10 November, our well attended Walk to the Wall honored Sky Soldier KIAs.

My heartfelt thanks to Chapter members, family members, and guests who supported the above events.

The 2018 173^d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion is going well. As of 12 November, 276 Sky Soldiers and guests have registered. If you have not registered, you can do so on-line on the Association website or mail in the registration form and check. The registration form can also be downloaded from the Association website or in the fall edition of *Sky Soldier* Magazine.

The reservations link for the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center in Alexandria, VA has been active since mid-June.

If you have problems registering for the hotel, contact our Association Hotel Concierge Kimberly Hubbard, at 619-884-9571 or email her at kimberly@sandiegoconcierge.com.

Upcoming Events:

Our next Reunion Committee meeting will be on 9 December.

On 16 December, we will participate in Wreaths Across America, at Arlington National Cemetery.

Our Annual General Membership Meeting will be on 27 January 2018, at Marina Towers, 501 Slaters Lane; Alexandria, VA. Hope to see you there.

We need Candidates to run for Chapter Vice President and Chapter Secretary. We will hold election for those positions at the Annual Meeting. Notify the Chapter President and Secretary with a brief statement of your intention to run and your vision for the office.

To date, there are 83 active Chapter members who have paid their 2017 annual fee. If you did not receive the 2018 Chapter Fee letter, contact me. Your continued support is vital us.

Airborne All The Way,
Joe



**You Volunteered to be Airborne
Volunteer Again to Serve**

**Run for
Chapter Vice President or Chapter Secretary**

**Be There: Annual Meeting 27 Jan 2018, 1100h
Marina Towers 501 Slaters Lane Alexandria, VA**



**I WANT
YOUR STORY**

for the

The Herd Word

**Send Short Articles and Pix
To [Mack Brooks1@gmail.com](mailto:MackBrooks1@gmail.com)**

Chapter 2018 Calendar

Chapter Event	Date	Time	Day	Project Officer	Remarks
Wreaths Across America	16 Dec 2017	0900	Sat	Joe Flesch	Arlington National Cemetery
173d Brigade Association Mid-Winter Conference	11-14 Jan 2018	N/A	Thu - Sun	Joe Flesch	Hilton Mark Center Alexandria, VA
Chapter Annual General Membership Meeting	27 Jan 2018	1100	Sat	Mack Brooks Mark Ludlow	Marina Towers 501 Slaters Lane Alexandria, VA Refreshments will be served
St. Patrick's Day Gathering of the Herd (VA)	10 Mar 2018	1100	Sat	Mack Brooks	Flanagan's Harp and Fiddle 4844 Cordell Avenue Bethesda, MD 20814
Reading of the Names Vietnam and GWOT	5 May 2018	1030	Sat	Ed Anthony	Brigade Marker Arlington National Cemetery Reading the Names Sky Soldier KIAs 1967 & GWOT
173 ^d Airborne Brigade National Reunion	23-26 May 2018	N/A	Tue - Fri	N/A	Hilton Mark Center Alexandria, VA
Gathering of the Herd (PA)	21 Jul 2018	1100	Sat	Bob Read	Troegs Brewery 200 E Hershey Park Drive Hershey, PA 17033
Chapter BBQ	11 Aug 2018	1100	Sat	Joe Flesch	11730 Hawkes Road Clarksburg, MD
Gathering of the Herd (VA)	15 Sep 2018	1100	Sat	TBD	Venue TBD
Bravo Bulls Ceremony	10 Nov 2018	1000	Thu	Roy Lombardo	Start at SSG Larry Rougle's burial site (Section 60, Arlington National Cemetery) Veteran Day Celebrated 10 Nov 2017
Walk to the Wall	11 Nov 2018	1000	Wed	Ed Anthony	Vietnam Memorial No-Host Lunch
Wreaths Across America	TBD Dec 2018	0900	Sat		Arlington National Cemetery
Wounded Warrior Visits	Periodic	N/A	N/A	TBD	DC and Richmond VA Area



2018 173^d Airborne Brigade Reunion To Register

- **See Registration Form Winter Issue Sky Soldier Magazine**
- **Go to Association Website <<https://www.skySoldier.net/>>**
 - ♦ **View Schedule, Make Hotel Reservation, Make Hotel Reservation**
 - ♦ **or Download Form and Send Check, per Instructions on the Form**

Bravo Bulls Ceremony 2017

Annually, the day before Veterans Day, the Bravo Bulls conduct three wreath laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Bravo Bulls are the past and present members of Bravo Company, Second Battalion, 503 (Airborne) Infantry. **Roy Lombardo**, the unit Commander in Vietnam, and other Vietnam-era unit Soldiers form the core of the group.

This year, the Bravo Bulls memorial ceremonies took place on 9 November, with the Tucker Chapter of the 82^d Airborne Division Association.

Other Vietnam and Afghanistan Sky Soldiers, a paratrooper from the 11th Airborne Division, and paratroopers of every other airborne units were present. **Ed Anthony, George Farris, Joe Flesch, Jackie Lofton, Roy Lombardo, Terry Modglin and Terry Walsh** also attended.



Battle Company 2/503d Combat Veterans

Ceremonies began at **SSG Larry Rougle's** Gravesite. His military service is described briefly in Sebastian Junger's book "WAR." SSG Rougle was a scout, leading an element known as Wildcat. He was killed, on patrol, outside the Battle Company (2-503) perimeter. Eight other Afghanistan Sky Soldiers KIAs are buried near his grave site. Sky Soldier Gold Star mother of **Sergio Abad** briefly

spoke of her son's loss.

The procession next moved to **MG and Mrs. Ellis W. Williamson Gravesite**. His military service is described briefly in **Alwyn Featherston's** book "Saving the Breakout." MG Williamson was the first 173^d Airborne Brigade commander and led Brigade from Okinawa to Vietnam in May 1965.

The last and largest tribute was held at the 173^d Airborne Brigade Marker.

Attendees placed small American flags near the wreath or Marker as the B/2-503 Sky Soldier KIA names were read.

Everyone was invited to the Airborne Banquet at the Sequoia Restaurant in Georgetown, which was the conclusion of the ceremonies.

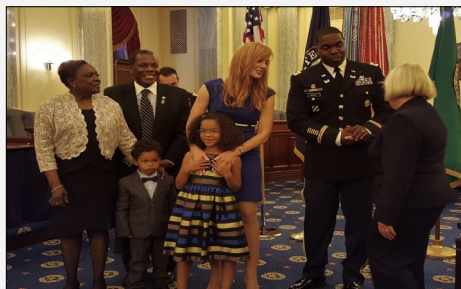


Chapter Secretary's Son Promoted

On 4 October, **Joe and Jeane Flesch, George and Ginny Farris, and John Foley** attended **MAJ Eric Brooks'**, son of Chapter Secretary, **Mack Brooks**, promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, by sitting **Senator Patty Murray**.

Major Eric Brooks had worked for Senator Murray as a Congressional Fellow two years ago. He and his family, his wife, **Andrea**, and children **Annika and David**, came back to the United States for the Senator to promote him.

The ceremony was held in the ornate Commerce Committee Room, in the Russell Senate



Jannie Williams, Mack Brooks, David Brooks, Annika Brooks, Andrea Brooks, and Senator Patty Murray

office Building.

Senator Murray spoke glowingly about Eric's personal integrity and contribution to her office. After taking the oath, Eric's family, in turn, exchanged his former major

insignia for silver oakleaves. Only his father, Mack, had trouble replacing the shoulder boards.

As Eric's mother, **Jannie**, and father proudly looked on, early in his promotion speech, LTC Brooks recognized the Chapter members present and the impact the Herd legacy had made on him when considering a military career.

At the end of formal ceremonies, all were invited to congratulate the newly minted Lieutenant Colonel and partake in the catered food.



Gene Cartier: Back to Vietnam 2017

I had two objectives in returning to Vietnam: to visit locations the Brigade had been and to see the cities and Vietnamese people. Nine of us went: **Mike Jeakle, Leo Hill, Tim Shook, Gary Shindel, Gary Cucinitti, Charlotte Cucinitti, Gary's Wife, John Dewing, Rodney Walton, and 1SG (Ret) Mary Hampton** (My Daughter).

We departed San Francisco on 6 Nov and arrived in Saigon the next day. The change in Vietnam was astounding. Saigon, aka Ho Chi Minh City, now has a population of 8.5 million, compared to 800,000 during the War. Modern skyscrapers, multiple bridges across the Saigon River, and two traffic tunnels punctuate the cityscape. They are building a subway to Ton Son Nut Airport.

After arriving, we went to Vung Tau to see the beaches and visit the 1/503d initial base camp, at the airfield. En



Toasting the fallen on Hill 875 : G. Cucinitti, G. Cartier, L. Hill M. Jeakle, G. Schindele, T. Shook

route to Vung Tau, we visited the Australian War Memorial at Long Tan. On the 8 November, we visited the Saigon war museum. The propaganda says the items were captured from US Forces. In reality, they were captured from RVN forces in 1975. One could easily see where they had been repainted with US markings.

Next day, we toured the Củ Chi tunnel complex site. It was fascinating to see how ingenious the Viet Cong were at hiding and converting dud bombs and other items into weap-

ons.

The next morning, we headed for Kontum and the Central Highlands. The Central Highlands have changed a lot. The trees have been cleared and the hills mostly covered with rubber and coffee trees.

On Nov 11, we drove from Kontum to Dak To and Hill 823. After bribing local officials, we got permission to climb Hill 823. The hills were a lot easier to climb when

we were in our twenties. Hill 823 is significant because both the 1st and 4th of the 503d fought a series of battles there in November 1967. At the top of the hill, we could still see NVA fighting positions and bunkers. We made two crosses and held a brief service for the fallen on both sides.

On the way back to Kontum, we stopped at the old Dak To airstrip. It is now it is used for drying coffee. We looked for remnants of two C-130's

Continued on Page 7, Back to Vietnam

Chapter 1 Financial Report

As of 20 November, 2017

Balance as of 30 August, 2017	\$9,309.29
Receipts (fees and donations)	\$40.00
Disbursements	(\$860.02)
Balance as of 20 November, 2017	\$8,489.27
Receipts:	
Fees – 2 Chapter	\$40.00
Disbursements included:	
Staples: Herd Word production (22 copies)	\$21.97
USPS stamps	29.40
Virginia Corporation Commission Annual Registration	\$25.00
Walk to the Wall Wreath (Caruso Florist) Florist	\$206.21
Bravo Bulls Wreaths	\$300.00
173d Magnets (Terry Modglin reimbursement)	\$263.00
Honor Set: MSG Okendo (Postage and packing)	\$10.94
Non-email Annual Fees Letter (10 sets)	\$3.50

Picture Gallery

Bravo Bulls Ceremony



Flags flanking
Brigade Marker



Roy Lombardo Reading the
B/2-503 KIA Names



Bravo Bulls
Past and Present



Past Chapter 1 Presidents

Walk to the Wall



Carlos Saladino



GWOT Sky Soldier



Cherishing the Flag



Flags at Parade



Joe Flesch

No Host Lunch After the Walk to the Wall



Don Haus



Ed Anthony



Sam McKoy



George Farris



Vicki Haus

Return to Hill 823



Fiftieth Anniversary Memorial Service on Hill 823

Wounded Warrior SGT Franz Walkup (Ret.)



Terry Walsh, SST
Walkup and Joe
Flesch

On 4 Oct, the Chapter was informed that **SGT Franz Walkup (Ret)** was back in Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) to have his right leg amputated, below the knee. SGT Walkup had been wounded in Afghanistan and had spent several years in the hospital. They had attempted to save his leg. But due to complications, he elected to have it amputated this October.

Joe Flesch met with SGT Walkup on 7 October. SGT He and his family were assured of Chapter support. Shortly after the initial visit Franz was released from the ward and returned to the Fisher House, where he and his sister are staying during his long recovery and physical therapy.

Chapter member **Terry Walsh**, **Honorary Member Jeane Flesch** and Joe visited Franz and his sister on 15 Oct in the Fisher House. Jeane presented Franz with a prayer blanket made by and prayed over for him by the Women of Faith Group of Christ Lutheran Church in Germantown, MD. Chapter 1 is committed to supporting all Wounded Warriors, especially Sky Soldiers. Keep Franz and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Hero of Three Wars Buried in Arlington

On October 24, 2017, an extraordinary paratrooper was buried at Arlington National Cemetery: **MSG Larry Okendo**. "Okie," was an iconic figure in the 173^d Airborne Brigade. It was said he was 95 when he passed away. His age was a matter of speculation because he lied about his age to get into the Army during World War II.

That venture proved to be the beginning of a warrior's trek through World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, which resulted in him being awarded the Bronze Star Medal, with five oak leaf clusters; the Purple Heart Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters; and the Silver Star, with two oak leaf clusters. These awards clearly demonstrate heroism and sacrifice for the nation.

With the Brigade, Larry played a key role in rallying his company at Dak To. He also led his men in other tough battles, in 1967 and 1968.

A fellow Sky Soldier opined about "Okie" in the eponymous book on Dak To that, "I served with MSG Lawrence Okendo in 1967, during the hill battles around Dak To in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. He was one



Laurie Tucker, with flag, and friends

of the most aggressive and hard charging paratroopers from the old days of brown boot paratroopers I ever met. One hell of a good Soldier and he really cared for his men, being with the 173^d Airborne Brigade during the Hill Battles. If you're interested in how we fought the NVA, then this book should be in your library. I will miss MSG Lawrence Okendo.

do. He taught me a lot as a Soldier, a man, and as paratrooper!!!"

MSG Okendo's ashes were buried with those of his wife, **Claire Latham Okendo**, who died just two weeks prior to his death. They were described as a super-close couple.

Larry's daughter, **Laurie Tucker**, her friends in faith, and grand-nephew **Esteban Serille**, who recently served in the U.S. Navy, witnessed the military tributes to this beloved paratrooper.

Because of late notice, only two Chapter Members were present, **Colonel Al Phillips** and **Terry Modglin**. Each expressed their condolences, on behalf of the Chapter.

When the rifle volleys fired, taps played, prayers offered, and flag presented on that glorious October morning, a formation of four F-18 fighters flew overhead. Coincidence? Providence? Perhaps well deserved recognition for the life of sacrifice to the nation.

The Chapter provided Laurie with an Honor set.

Back to Dak To (Continued)

destroyed in late November rocket attacks. They must have been completely salvaged.

The next day, we humped up to Hill 875. Once there, we opened a bottle of Scotch and toasted the fallen and left a Brigade Flag.

The hilltop still had lots of bomb craters and trench positions, and signs of body recovery efforts.

The next day, we headed to Qui Nhon, which we used as a base to see An Khe.

An Khe was established by the 1st Air Cavalry Division, in 1965. The 173^d had a base camp there from Aug 67 to Apr 69. Nothing much is left and Hon Cong Mountain, where there was a big 1st Cav patch, is now overgrown.

On 15 Nov, we drove to Tuy Hoa to find the site of the 4/503d Tet 1968 battle around the Tuy Hoa prison. Thanks to Google Earth and some old 1:50000 maps we found the prison and cemetery just down from it. To our amaze-

ment, the prison is still a prison! We stopped to take pictures, but were chased off by the local security forces.

remain.

We stayed overnight a Hoi An. Hoi An was not damaged during the war and

has become a Vietnamese version of Williamsburg. Vehicles are not allowed in the center city.

Next day, we headed for Da Nang, to catch our flight back to Saigon. Da Nang, like Saigon, has grown so that its population is now about 2 million. After a quick stop at China Beach, we took a quick flight to Saigon, followed by a 16-

hour flight back to San Francisco.

Upon reflection, we revisited some memorable places of our youth, paid homage to our fallen, came to terms with some inner demons, saw things that we missed as Soldiers tromping the jungle, and for most of us, checked off one key item on our bucket list.

Gene Cartier



The 173^d Airborne Brigade Reoccupies Hill 823

Back in 1968, the prison was a key NVA objective because he held over 600 NVA and VC POW's.

The next day, we headed to Hoi An and stopped at My Lai, where the Vietnamese have set up a museum-memorial. It was a sad reminder of some of the stupid things some Soldiers do. We stopped by LZ English. Like Dak To, the airstrip is intact, but it is being used to dry coffee and rice. The large ramp and helipad are identifiable, no buildings



Address Label

Stamp

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FOLD

Merry Christmas



Happy New Year



2018

