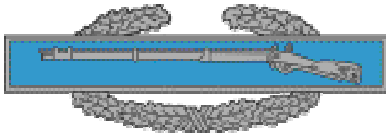


ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



March, 2007



Cover Page

FROM THE TC HATCH

Randy "Doc" Smith, President

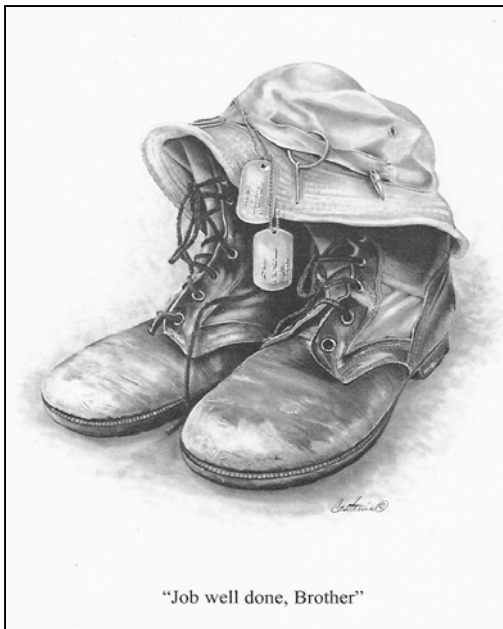
It can't have been two years already but calendars don't lie and time is swiftly approaching for our next reunion. It is time to get the reservations and registrations in and your association needs your support. If your membership is coming due or if you are reading your newsletters online and haven't joined the association, we need the continued support of everyone concerned. Applications are available on the web site so please do your part to insure the continuation of the organization and its benefits including the web site and message board. Thank you in advance for your participation.

I will be at the reunion site a day early and if anyone gets there early as well just look me up at the host hotel and we will get a jump on things. But beware there may work involved. Also remember the auction to be held at the banquet and if you can donate something to be auctioned that would be great. This will help offset the increased price of the buses because of fuel costs and other increases.

This year the families of the KIAs from our battalion are invited to the memorial service at Battalion Headquarters. If you know of any relatives of any of our fallen brothers, please send me their address or e-mail. Also an invitation has been extended to our WWII veterans. John Bolender their Webmaster has said that they don't get many at their reunions and that it is hard for them to travel now. However any will be welcome if they can make it.

Let's remember in prayer our troops in combat zones around the world. Also keep in mind their families who go through much mental anguish.

See you at the reunion and please travel safely.



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Billie McGregor, Editorial Assistant

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2007 REUNION
May 15–18, 2007
Ft. Benning, GA

THE FINAL INSPECTION

Author Unknown

The Soldier stood and faced his God,
 Which must always come to pass.
 He hoped his shoes were shining,
 Just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now young Soldier,
 How shall I deal with you?
 Have you always turned the other cheek?
 To My Church have you been true?"

The Soldier squared his shoulders and said,
 "No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
 Because those of us who carry guns,
 Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,
 And at times my talk was tough.
 And sometimes I've been violent,
 Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny,
 That wasn't mine to keep...
 Though I worked a lot of overtime,
 When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help,
 Though at times I shook with fear.
 And sometimes, God, forgive me,
 I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place,
 Among the people that are here.
 They never wanted me around,
 Except to calm their fear.

If you've a place for me, Lord,
 It needn't be so grand.
 I never expected or had too much,
 But if you don't, I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne,
 Where the saints had often trod.
 As the Soldier waited quietly,
 For the judgment of his God.

"Step forward now, you Soldier,
 You've borne your burdens well.
 Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
 You've done your time in Hell."

REUNION 2007 SCHEDULE

DTG	EVENT	LOCATION	RESPONSIBILITY
15-May			
1200-1800	Registration	Holiday Inn	Alumni Association
1800-2100	Reception	Dogwood A Holiday Inn	Alumni Association
16-May			
0800-0830	Travel to National Infantry Museum	Bus	Public Affairs
0830-0900	Infantry Museum Update	Chapel	MG White
0900-0945	Tour WWII Company Street	Museum	
0945-1000	Travel to WHINSEC	Bus	Public Affairs
1000-1100	Fort Benning Command Brief	WHINSEC	Public Affairs
1100-1200	Fort Benning G2 Brief	WHINSEC	Public Affairs
1200-1330	Lunch at the Officers Club	Officers Club	Alumni Association
1330-1345	Travel to 1/507	Bus	Public Affairs
1400-1600	Airborne Briefing/Demonstration	Eubanks Field	1/507 PIR
1600-1630	Travel to hotel	Bus	Public Affairs
1630-1730	Personal Time		Alumni Association
1730-1800	Travel to Uchee Creek	Bus	Public Affairs
1800-2000	BBQ w/ 1-50 Cadre	Uchee Creek	Country's Barbecue
2030-2300	Hospitality Room	Dogwood A Holiday Inn	
17-May			
0815-0845	Travel to Battalion HQ	Bus	Alumni Association
0900-0930	Wreath Laying Ceremony	BN Area	<i>Unknown</i>
0930-1015	Battalion Briefings	Battalion Classroom #1	<i>Unknown</i>
1015-1030	Travel to Training Area (TBD)	Bus	Alumni Association
1030-1130	Observe Training	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1130-1230	Lunch with Soldiers	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1230-1300	Lunch with Soldiers	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1300-1330	<i>Travel to ?????</i>	<i>Bus</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1330-1600	Observe Training	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
1600-1630	Travel to Holiday Inn	Bus	Alumni Association
1900-2100	Banquet & Semiannual Business Mtng.	Azalea Rm/ Holiday Inn	Alumni Association
2100-2300	Hospitality Room	Dogwood A Holiday Inn	Alumni Association
18-May			
0830-0900	Travel to Kannel Field	Bus	Alumni Association
0900-1030	Observe Graduation Ceremony (E Co.)	Kannel Field	E Co
1030-1700	Open	Bus	Alumni Association
1700-2400	Open	Individual Preference	
19-May			
0800-1200	Checkout	Holiday Inn	Alumni Association
NOTE:	Items in italics are to be announced later		

"And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Inaugural Address, Friday February 20, 1961

THE AIR MEDAL

By Dennis Driscoll

The Air Medal was established by executive order 9158 by Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 11, 1942 with awards retroactive to September 9, 1939. The Air Medal is a prestigious award with a citation that reads: "For distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement while participating in sustained aerial flight in support of ground forces in the Republic of Vietnam. The recipient actively participated in at least twenty-five aerial missions over hostile territory in support of counterinsurgency operations. During all these missions over hostile territory he displayed the highest order of air discipline and acted in accordance with the best traditions of the service. By his determination to accomplish his mission in spite of the hazards inherent in repeated aerial flights over hostile territory and by his outstanding degree of professionalism and devotion to duty, he has brought credit upon himself, his organization and the military service".

A myriad of experiences will come flooding back to the recipient when recollecting these aerial flights. To the infantryman, the Air Medal encompassed many aspects of aerial flight or air assault missions. As troops readied for aerial flight insertion a series of preparatory procedures needed to be completed. The clarity of the mission, the location of the mission, the insertion coordinates, escape and evade routes, extraction coordinates and alternate extraction coordinates all needed to be determined, coordinated and understood by all concerned. The soldiers of the 1/50th were the counterinsurgency force and supported one another with determination, devotion and sacrifice.

The anticipation of the unknown and the sense of danger could be intense. Subconsciously this weighed heavily on the men as they prepared and completed their aerial flights into and out of combat. Units of various sizes would be sent into unknown and hostile territory. They would be left there for a period of time, several hours, a day, a night, day and night or an extended period of two days or more. They would then be extracted, debriefed and prepare for the next assignment.

Each aerial mission carried with it the potential of receiving hostile fire either enroute to the mission or on the return. The worst scenario the infantryman faced was what was know as a "Hot LZ", landing in an area occupied by the enemy who were firing at the helicopters as they were approaching and landing on the LZ (Landing Zone). The infantrymen were always in harms way. Within minutes after insertion infantrymen could be in intense firefights and might have to call for extraction. Sustained fire fights in the area of operation quickly forced infantrymen to move to different locations away from and along the Landing Zone. Adjustments would then have to be made for the correct extraction points. The thought of being left behind in controlled enemy territory was not without merit. Teamwork and alertness typified the infantrymen of the 1/50th. The battalion had the strength of togetherness.

The infantryman faced an experienced and well-disciplined enemy. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army lived and operated in an area that they knew very well. They knew the trails, rivers and creeks, valleys and all topographical features that could assist them in their mission of defeating the infantrymen of the 1/50th. For many missions it was our first time in a particular area and learned the land features by on the job training. The infantrymen needed to be alert and intent.

Equipment was checked and rechecked. Weapons were cleaned. Ammunition was replenished, cleaned and placed in convenient areas in the fatigues and on web gear. Hand grenades; smoke grenades, claymores, tripwire and C4 were standard fare when going on patrol. The RTO (Radio/Telephone Operator) carried the radio, an extra battery and his weapon. He was an accomplished map-reader, knew the fire support frequencies, and where any fire support was to come from. The fire support might be from firebases, helicopter gun ships, US Air Force or the US Navy.

Canteens needed to be filled with fresh water. C-rations needed to be carried to sustain the troops for the mission. In this harsh environment the infantryman had to always be prepared for the unpredictable.

The medic had to be confident that each soldier was as healthy as possible and could complete the mission. The medic's inventory was essential to the life and death of the assault troops and continuing with the mission. He would bring morphine, bandages, and different types of pills or medicine. The medic kept a watchful eye on the well being of all the men. His response time to any type of wound or injury was critical. Our medics were exceptionally skilled and great morale boosters.

Each soldier dealt with the environment. This was mentally challenging each time he went out. Heat, insects, snakes and vegetation were constants and took their toll. Daytime had one set of obstacles and night another. Consciously and subconsciously each individual had to prepare and learn to respond to the many different physical and psychological situations and obstacles they were presented to and confronted with. It was essential to maintain discipline for the men and the mission.

The distinct sound of the blades vibrating against the air as the Huey comes to extract us. Your combat boots on to the skid stepping up to enter the helicopter - the sensation of lift off and being somewhat out of harms way. The helicopter was our lifeline – not only our transportation but also our sustenance. It brought us food, clothing and other supplies. And it evacuated us when we were wounded. The pilots and their crews brought us in and always brought us out under any circumstances. In many, if not most, insertions and extractions the men received hostile fire. There were very few secure Landing Zones. The helicopters were usually fired on prior to the insertion approach and after the LZ extraction.

Many helicopters were shot down in performing missions. The troops learned to sit on helmets or flak vests going and returning from missions. A hot landing zone meant incoming fire as the helicopters were inserting troops. The citation mentions hazards inherent; the prior description covers some of the hazards inherent. Depending on the individual experience every infantrymen could add to the hazard inherent list.

The insertions and extractions were conducted in all types of topographic terrain. Mountain tops, valleys, landing zones being prepared by incoming artillery or TacAir prior to landing, rice paddies, roads, cutouts in the jungle, the edge of the jungle, on the beach and where ever the pilot could set troops down or pick up from missions and rescues. Many extractions involved bringing home our wounded or killed in action. This remains deeply imbedded with in us. Death was dealt with on a daily bases.

The Air Medal is awarded for twenty-five missions of aerial flight over hostile territory in support of counterinsurgency missions. It took a great deal of dedication and courage to face the unknown in this unique hostile environment. It was emotionally, physically and spiritually draining to the infantrymen, pilots and crew.

Duty is determination to fulfill a promise or obligation - an oath to complete a commitment despite the odds that are placed in your way. It is your word. With determination and a powerful will, the infantryman continued to perform each of his duties with honor, bravery and loyalty towards his comrades in the great tradition of the 1/50th Infantry Battalion and the United States Army.

CHAPLAIN'S

Parker Pierce

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Hello, to all of our 1/50th family, I pray that things are well with each of you. Since our last newsletter we have celebrated the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ. We have completed another God-given year of our lives, and we are privileged by God to have started a New Year in 2007! I hope and pray that these events have been a blessing in each of your lives. Another wonderful and important time of the year is about to take place. We will celebrate Easter on April 8th, which is as exciting and significant, if not more significant to mankind than Christmas, because we will celebrate the crucifixion, but most importantly the Resurrection! There is no hope for anyone without this most historical event taking place, and it occurred because of God's eternal love for the world! I'm also looking forward to seeing and being with hopefully all of you the middle of May at Ft. Benning, for our 1/50th reunion. I know it will be an exciting and memorable time. I'll continue to pray for God's special blessings for each of you and your families, and let's all continue to pray for our President, our troops, and our nation. Please call me or email me for prayer requests. My phone number is (904) 396-6121 and email is pbpjr@bellsouth.net.

UPDATES from LTC Frank Burns - Somewhere outside Baghdad

4 March 2007 Another month down...Let's see - One of the officers whom I advise, Brigadier General Muzzher, has been selected to be a Division Commander of the newly formed 11th Iraqi Army Division. Have actually spent some long hours with him the past few weeks out here. I am sure that he will do well, as he seems to be non-sectarian in nature, is no-nonsense but has a sense of humor, and is very levelheaded. Very happy to see him receive the promotion and advance, yet personally, it will try my patience, as I now must "start over" with someone new. It really took about 3-4 months to be able to develop a good rapport and credibility with him and to contribute value to the overall mission. Time spent with him included lots of chai (getting jacked on chai) and times just talking, albeit through an interpreter. He asked me to come with him (flattering) to the new position - will see what the plan is for their advisors. As I await his replacement, will continue to try to build a relationship with the Chief of Staff, a staff Colonel. He is not trustworthy, tends to be flamboyant to try to make a point (more so than other Arabs), does not treat others well (is demeaning in manner), and wants and expects lots from the coalition (mostly \$\$ to buy things for which they have to plan and do not). Bought him as a gift a coffee pot and some Dunkin Donuts coffee, so now he wants and constantly hints for more (please don't send any). Needless to say, working with him, developing a working relationship will be a challenge. On a positive note, where we are, we can run around some of the perimeter - it's just over a 1 1/4 miles loop. Ran without the knee brace (tibia plateau fracture), some mild soreness in the left knee afterwards, but not that much (feels fine today). Sincerely appreciate the letters, the care packages with all the lickies & chewies (shared with all), the St Patrick's Day paraphernalia, as well as all thoughts and prayers. All the best. R/FB

11 March 2007 Getting settled in here at new location, although I was not here most of the week. In a way it was break, although email and phone calls continued. I had to go back to my parent unit from Fort Hood to conduct an investigation. After taking over 20 sworn statements and reading people their rights, fortunately there was not too much of significance to report. Basically it was perceptions and a general lack of open communication about events that have occurred within the unit; impact vs. intent of statements said/ made; and that we have two eyes, two ears and only one mouth for a reason. It was an odd feeling being the outsider at your parent unit, all the while not telling everyone why I was there. Perhaps that is because the job that I currently have is because I am tasked out, or traded away. Am I controlling my attitude, or letting events control me? I found it difficult to be there because I had actually spent more time on the MiTT than with the unit. Back to developing "new" relationships. The division now has a new Deputy Commanding General, whom I will get to know in the next few weeks. Will get going and get caught up on things here. The combined U.S. and Iraqi forces are making headway in Sadr City, which is very positive. We are doing good things south of Baghdad by providing protection for the pilgrimage (they have many here). As far as GEN Petraeus making a significance difference - he is just executing GEN Casey's plan. He does brief well, and is fully aware of what needs to be done. I believe he's doing well. All for now. R/FB

18 March 2007 A belated Happy Saint Patrick's Day to all! Please be sure that if you didn't have any Guinness yesterday, feel free to take part in imbibement today unless, of course, you have given it up for Lent or are on the wagon. The McGloine clan (& an Italian, Julie Derrigo) sent me some Irish CDs, hat, Coleman's Corner rugby shirt, some other stuff, and I also had a hat from Darlene to wear. To close the night I listened to some DropKick Murphy's recorded live on St Patrick's Day in Boston, MA. Did not get to taste any Guinness, though. Was glad to see the people across the river in Sadr City participating in their St Patrick's Day Parade. The press claimed it to be a protest of coalition and Iraqi forces in their city - C'mon, who's kidding who? I can see the Celtic pride rubbing off on them. They were trying to be like South Boston, NYC or Chicago. We were actually a little disappointed in the turnout, as there were only a few hundred, and the media initially reported that there would be million-man march, and then reported 20,000 were there. There was not even enough to fill a street intersection. AP wire services have got great stringers reporting the story for sure. Understand that there may be a positive spin on the news in Baghdad - that's great to read. We really need this surge to clear and then retain the places that we cleared, while providing essential services- sewerage, water, energy, academics, trash removal, medical, unemployment, security, etc - to the people. It may seem basic; however, last couple of times that we cleared, we did not retain, and essential services did not follow. It's only been 30 or so days - believe enemy has been laying low, checking out what we're doing, and now will come after us. It's good to be able to eat in the chow hall with Iraqis. Food is hot; utensils are clean, eating vegetables, and delectable Iraqi cuisine. The important thing is being able to sit down with the Iraqis and share a common meal. As Tony Cataldi (my sister-in-law Laura's father) would say, "It's nice, you know?" as he pressed his tongue between his front teeth and upper lip and made that "squeak" sound, as he cleaned his front teeth and inhaled. I actually think of him over here quite often, as I often see Navy SeaBees, and the Iraqi Army Engineer Company doing their construction work. Definitely government jobs on the shabbiness of construction - he'd be beside himself if he saw their skills ("My G*^!"). Working on the relationship thing again, this time with the new Deputy Commanding General. He actually does not have orders assigning him here; however, he stated that he is here to help out his dear friend, the commanding general. His English is decent having learned it the past few years from US Soldiers and Marines; he says the right things, and follows through on things (in Iraqi time, not US). Allegedly his family has been threatened - when son was 11 (now 14), was tied up and held for a short time because his dad was in the Iraqi Army; moved from house to house. Difficult to trust 100%, as he was a Battalion Commander during OIF in 2003, and fought vs. the US here in Baghdad. Now he is working with us. He is quizzing me on my Arabic and I have an exam on TUE. Slainte! R/FB

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

ALCON Guess some news over there is the seemingly increased number of car bombs (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, VBIEDs), suicide vest borne IEDs (SVBIED). Yesterday, a truck laden with explosives blew up on an Iraqi Police station than was being re-built. The truck looked like other trucks coming in, although some speculate that it was inside job. Another Inside job, was the targeting the Deputy Prime Minister (a Sunni) by a SVBIED, inside his residence, after Friday prayers. Lastly, a new technique for VBIEDS is for the bombers to leave children in the back seat of the car when it detonates. By having the children in the car, it allows them through the check points as non suspicious. Trying to figure out a defense for that. Fortunately, all casualties from these three events were Iraqi citizens, Iraqi Police, Iraqi Government workers. I went to the Iraqi Ministry Of Defense Building (equivalent of their Pentagon) this week. It seemed as if I was walking back in time, much like crossing over to East Berlin before the wall fell. It was very dark, men in old suits, hallways jammed with people, doors closed, people waiting to get inside, a foreign language being spoken, everyone smoking; yet, I was there with in helmet, body armor, wearing gloves, knee pads, and sporting a couple of weapons. Most, if not all, correspondence is still done in hard copy, with signatures, official stamps, etc – almost going back in time to the 1930s or 1940s mindset. They do use cellular phones a lot, thanks to us establishing a network for them. I brought the new Deputy Commanding General and his security personnel some apples from Washington (we were able to get some fresh fruit from a U.S. FOB). I told him about Johnny Appleseed and how I dressed up passed out apples, and then had them draw, and read the story to different classes. I also told him about the Partners in Education program that the military has. Around military bases, units sponsor a school. Soldiers come in and read, tutor, mentor young children. He was amazed that the military were integrated into society like that. Used the passing out lead and passing out bread analogy, and that we have to be prepared to do both, sometimes simultaneously. He seemed to understand the concept. All the best. R/FB

1 April 2007 Things seem to be picking up here. The insurgents have observed us for about 6 weeks, and are attacking our patterns or complacency, callousness or carelessness. As you may have read, see/ heard on the news, vehicle borne IEDs are used to gain entrance into a facility, then a complex attack ensues. For us on an Iraqi FOB, that remains our biggest threat. Out in Baghdad, the clearing and retaining phases continue, block by block. It's very tedious, time consuming, but has to be done. The unit next to us, a company from the 82nd Airborne, received word that they will be extended until JAN 08 or until mission completion. They thought that they would be here for six months, as they were here from JUN 06 to DEC 06; then to Afghanistan before that from APR 05 to DEC 05. So, when they go back next JAN, they will have been deployed 23/ 30 months. More sacrifice, the Soldiers don't complain; but, it has affected their re-enlistment numbers. This past week I received a nice card from Sr Mary Virginia, in perfect Palmer handwriting. She had taught for over 40 years; then went back to Boston University, where she had received her BA and PhD, to work with students on their theses; then for a few years at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. She did some tutoring in Latin for a few years as well. Talk about a lifetime of service to others! I wrote back to her, and told her that still have my Latin III notebook from high school, and have taken it out to help me translate Latin terms and prose. Of note, I wrote to her that I often used Catullus' poem, Ave Atque Vale (Hail and Farewell) at many (Darlene says too many) Army Hails and Farewells. It was great to receive something from someone to whom I hold in such high regard, and served as a mentor to me. I sent here my translation of Ave Atque Vale, as it was written just north of here in modern day Turkey. The new Iraqi General with whom I work is currently on leave. He still has no orders assigning him here and has not received his pay this month; nonetheless, is still working to improve the division, and as he said, "To help out my friend, Major General Abdul Ameer." Attached is a photo of him. I entitled it, "They're always after me Iraqi charms!" Trying to win friends and influence others. All the best. R/FB

Vice-President's Column

Jimmy Segars

Recently, in our local paper, an article appeared about the son of a friend of our family. He is currently serving as a technical sergeant in the Air Force, but he recently served in Kandahar, Afghanistan, during Operation Enduring Freedom. He served with the 33rd Expeditionary Squadron doing 370 flights to bring supplies and support to military units in Afghanistan. While there he wrote his mother and sent her a special flag with the following words: (I feel as if he would not mind if I shared them with you.)

"I was carrying it for you. My flag was with me when insurgents tried to run over our base, shooting holes in buildings and trying to kill those around me. It was with me during the 60 mortar attacks that tried to destroy me, my flag and what I believe in. It was also with me when I would receive news that 67 heroes from Kandahar lost their lives while we were there. I also had this flag for support when I received the news that my father had died so far away in Arizona."

The article said his flag was also 'proudly' with him on many of the 103 rescue missions – without which he further wrote, *"The individuals would have died had it not been for our helicopters flying into harm's way to save their lives."* The young man continued, *"My flag flew on board many of these missions, to include being draped over an Army hero in the back of one of our helicopters who had been killed in action."* When the crew chief returned from the mission and told me he was sorry but my flag went with the sergeant, I said that I knew my flag was with him, surrounding him with love and honor. He added, *"Years ago, during my time in the Honor Guard, I had the distinct privilege to present 30 flags to grieving widows, sons, and daughters. I always felt a great deal of pride knowing that I was honoring that person with the best gift our country has to offer - the gift of the red, white and blue.* For a service member to give a flag to someone is the highest honor that they can bestow on them. *"It is giving all my experiences, pride, beliefs, and my love of my country to you. I know you are a true patriot, and you believe in the flag the same as I do. Please accept my flag as I give it to you, because now it is your flag to honor and display with pride. Please never forget the sacrifices of the military members, past, present, and future that have, and will continue to protect our nation with pride. "With all my love!"* His mother certainly did! Wow!

THE TRUTH ABOUT WALTER REED
Friday, 16 March 2007

By Chaplain John L. Kallerson, Sr. Chaplain Clinician
Walter Reed Army Medical Center

The following was forwarded by a friend of the Editor:

In response to the media frenzy, initiated by the Washington Post, regarding the treatment of our soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I wish to give my perspective. Please understand that I am speaking for myself and I am responsible for my thoughts alone. The news media and politicians are making it sound like Walter Reed is a terrible place and the staff here has been abusing our brave wounded soldiers. They are lying. I am completing my 24th year of service in the Army next month. I am currently the senior clinical chaplain at Walter Reed and have been so for the last four years. I will leave to go back to the infantry this summer. I supervise the chaplain staff inside Walter Reed that cares for the 200 inpatients, the 650+ daily outpatients from the war who come to us for medical care, the 4000+ staff, and over 3000 soldiers and their families that come for clinical appointments daily. Walter Reed has cared for over 5500 wounded from the war. I cannot count the number of sick and non-battle injured that have come through over that timeframe. The staff at this facility has done an incredible job at the largest US military medical center with the worst injured of the war. We have cared for over 400 amputees and their families. I am privileged to serve the wounded, their families, and our staff.

When the news about Building 18 broke I was on leave. I was in shock when the news broke. We in the chaplain's office in Walter Reed, as well as the majority of people at Walter Reed, did not know anyone was in Building 18. I didn't even know we had a building 18. How can that happen? Walter Reed is over 100 acres of 66 buildings on two installations. Building 18 is not on the installation of Walter Reed and is believed to have been closed years ago by our department. The fact that some leaders in the medical brigade that are in charge of the outpatients put soldiers in there is terrible. That is why the company commander, first sergeant, and a group of platoon leaders and platoon sergeants were relieved immediately. They failed their soldiers and the Army. The commanding general was later relieved (more about this) and his sergeant major has been told to move on--if he gets to. The brigade sergeant major was relieved and more reliefs are sure to come and need to. As any leader knows, if you do not take care of soldiers, if you lie and then try to cover it up, you are not worthy of the commission you hold and should be sent packing. I have no issue, and am actually proud, that they did relieve the leaders they found who knew of the terrible conditions some of our outpatients were enduring. Yet the media is making it sound like these conditions are rampant at Walter Reed and nothing could be further from the truth. We need improvements and will now get them. I hate it that it took this to make it happen.

The Army and the media made Major General George Weightman, our CG, out to be the problem and fired him. This was a great injustice. He was only here for six months, is responsible for military medical care in the 20 Northeast states, wears four "hats" of responsibilities, and relies on his subordinate leaders to know what is happening in their areas of responsibilities. He has a colonel that runs the hospital (my hospital commander), a colonel who runs the medical brigade (where the outpatient wounded are assigned and supposedly cared for), and a colonel who is responsible to run the garrison and installation. What people don't know is that he was making many changes as he became aware of them and had requested money to fix other places on the installation. His leaders responsible for outpatient care did not tell him about conditions in Building 18. He has been an incredible leader who really cares about the wounded, their families, and our staff. I cannot say the same about a former commander, who was my first commander here at Walter Reed, and definitely knew about many problems and is in the position to fix them and he did not. Maj. Gen. Weightman also should not be held responsible for the military's unjust and inefficient medical board system and the problems in the VA system. We have lost a great leader and passionate man who showed he had the guts to make changes and was doing so when he was made the scapegoat for others.

What I am furious about is that the media is making it sound like all of Walter Reed is like Building 18. Nothing could be further from the truth. No system is perfect but the medical staff provides great care in this hospital. What needs to be addressed, and finally will, is the bureaucratic garbage that all soldiers are put through going into medical boards and medical retirements. Congress is finally giving the money that people have asked for at Walter Reed for years to fix places on the installations and address shortcomings. What they don't want you to know is Congress caused many problems by the BRAC process saying they were closing Walter Reed. We cannot keep nor attract all the quality people we need at Walter Reed when they know this place will close in several years and they are not promised a job at the new hospital. Then they did this thing called A76 where they fired many of the workers here for a company of contractors, IAP Worldwide Services, to get a contract to provide care outside the hospital proper. The company, which is responsible for maintenance, only hired half the number of people originally assigned to maintenance areas to save money. Walter Reed leadership fought the A76 and BRAC process for years but lost. Congress instituted the BRAC and A76 process not the leadership of Walter Reed.

What I wish everyone would also hear is that for every horror story we are now hearing about in the media that truly needs to be addressed, you are not hearing about the hundreds of other wounded and injured soldiers who tell a story of great care they received. You are not hearing about the incredibly high morale of our troops and the fact that most of them want to go back, be with their teammates, and finish the job properly. You should be very proud of the wounded troopers we have at Walter Reed. They make me so proud to be in the Army and I will fight to get their story out. I want you to hear the whole story because our wounded, their families, our Army, and the nation need to know that many in the media and select politicians have an agenda. Forget agendas and make the changes that have been needed for years to fix problems in every military hospital and the VA system. The poor leaders will be identified and sent packing and good riddance to them. I wish the same could be said for the politicians and media personalities who are also responsible but now want it to look like they are very concerned. Where have they been for the last four years? I am ashamed of what they all did and the pain it has caused many to think that everyone is like that.

Please know that you are not hearing the whole story. Please know that there are thousands of dedicated soldiers and civilian medical staff caring for your soldiers and their families. When I leave here I will end up deploying. When soldiers in my division have to go to Walter Reed from the battlefield, I know they will get great medical care. I pray that you know the same thing. God bless all our troops and their families wherever they may be. God bless you all.

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association
 Reunion 15-18 May 2007
 Fort Benning, Georgia
Registration Form

Member Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

Guest Name _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

(Use separate sheet for additional guests)

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____ Hotel Name _____

(Host Hotel is Holiday Inn North)

Host Hotel is the Holiday Inn North 706-324-0231 for reservations (Michelle Spivey). YOU MUST make your hotel reservations DIRECT with either the Holiday Inn or hotel of your choice. Submitting this registration form does NOT cover your hotel reservations. (Hospitality and Archives will be at the host hotel.) Ask for 1/50 rate of \$78 – cutoff for this rate is 19 April 2007.

Registration Procedure:

Registration Cutoff Dates:

Registration Costs:

(Per Person)

Early Registration: **(Before 1 May, 2007) \$175**

After 1 May:\$190

Mail this form along with check to:

Gary Quint, Secretary
 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Association
 438 Fairway Lane
 Kirkwood MO 63122

Please make check payable to: 1st Bn 50th Infantry Association

Registration Fee Includes:

15 May Evening Reception
 16 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses
 17 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses

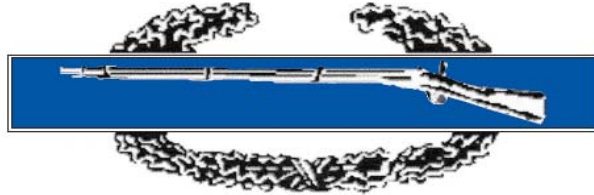
18 May Buses
 Gifts for Hosts
 Event Shirt

Dinner for Guests
 Auction Items
 Door Prizes



Gary Quint
438 Fairway Lane
Kirkwood, MO. 63122

On The Right Track



1st Battalion 50th Infantry Mechanized
