

# **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the 173d Airborne Brigade Activation**

**21-24 March 2013**

**National Infantry Museum Campus  
Columbus / Fort Benning, Georgia**

## **21 March Golf Tournament**

**Bull Creek Golf Course, Midland, GA - 0830  
Tee Off - Sponsored by the 173d Airborne  
Brigade Association's Columbus/Fort Benning  
Chapter.**

**Participate in Mini "Unit" Reunions with  
Brothers in Arms:**

## **22 March Tours and Visits**

**Tour the "New" Fort Benning. Return to the  
Jump Towers. Experience the "Last 100 Yards"  
and other exciting displays, activities and  
exhibits in the National Infantry Museum.  
Visit the Walk of Honor Adjacent to the Parade  
Field on the National Infantry Museum Campus  
and view numerous unit Memorials. The Walk  
of Honor is anchored by the 173d Airborne  
Brigade National Memorial.**

## **23 March Ceremonies**

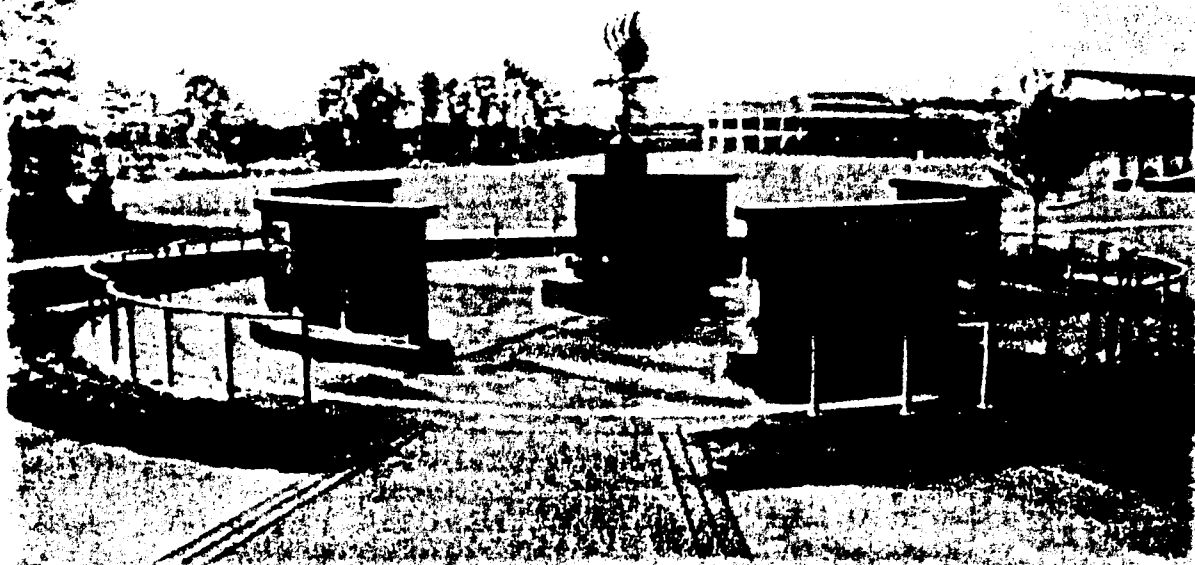
**Participate in the Memorial Cleaning (0930-  
1100); View the Silver Wings Jump and  
Participate in the "Reading of the Names"  
Tribute to our Fallen Vietnam Warriors starting  
at 1300 in the Parade Field Grandstands.  
Return to the Memorial at 1930 for a Candle-  
Light Service and Honors. The Names of  
warriors who fell in Iraq and Afghanistan will be  
read.**

## **24 March Ceremonies**

**Prayer service at 0900 at the Memorial.**

## **Information on How to Participate**

**For information regarding how to sign up for the  
Golf Tournament and to Participate in the  
Reading of the Names of Vietnam Fallen (30-40  
more readers are needed), and for information  
updates for tours and events, visit the 173d  
Airborne Brigade National Memorial  
Foundation website at  
[www.173dairbornememorial.org](http://www.173dairbornememorial.org)**





AIRBORNE

## HISTORY OF THE 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE

by North Vietnamese regiments into the Vietnamese Highlands, and participated in the fiercely contested 1968 Tet Offensive. In early 1969, Brigade elements conducted an amphibious assault against North Vietnamese/Viet Cong forces entrenched in the Bong Son Littoral. The Brigade then transitioned to platoon and company size operations for the duration of its service in Vietnam.

On 26 March 2003, The 173d Airborne Brigade added to its distinguished heritage by conducting a mass parachute assault into Bashur, Northern Iraq. Nine Sky Soldiers died during this year long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. One Sky Soldier was awarded the Silver Star.

In February 2005, The 173d Airborne Brigade deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom VI. One Battalion operated along the Afghan-Pakistani border in the northeast, with the rest of the Brigade operating in the south. 17 Sky Soldiers died during this one year deployment. Five Sky Soldiers were awarded the Silver Star.

In May 2007, the expanded 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team, consisting of six battalions, deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom VIII. The Sky Soldiers were repeatedly tested in battle but prevailed to bring security and economic development to the regional populace. The Brigade returned to Europe in late July 2008. 43 Sky Soldiers died during the 15 month deployment. To date, one Sky Soldier has received the Distinguished Service Cross and 29 have been awarded the Silver Star.

During November 2009, the Brigade Combat Team began its third deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X, with elements assuming areas of operation in Kunar, Logar and Wardak Provinces.

The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was activated on 26 March 1963 on the Island of Okinawa. Commanded by Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson, the Brigade was designated as the Pacific Command Rapid Reaction Force. Chinese Nationalist paratroopers nicknamed the unit "Sky Soldiers" as a result of their numerous parachute jumps around the Pacific Rim between 1963 and 1965. The Sky Soldiers were also nicknamed, "The Herd."

Lead elements of the 173d arrived in South Vietnam on 5 May 1965, the first major U. S. Army ground combat unit to deploy there. From 1965 until June 1967, the Brigade conducted combat operations against heavily entrenched enemy forces in War Zones C and D and the Iron Triangle. On 22 February 1967, Sky Soldiers conducted the only combat parachute assault of the Vietnam war as part of operation Junction City.

During the summer and fall of 1967, the Sky Soldiers blocked repeated incursions

During its six year and four month deployment, the Brigade served in all four South Vietnam Corps areas. The longest serving unit in continuous combat in the history of the U. S. Army, Sky Soldiers earned 14 campaign streamers and numerous unit citations. 13 were awarded the Medal of Honor, 46 the Distinguished Service Cross and 1,736 the Silver Star. Numerous Sky Soldiers received the Bronze Star, and over 8,000 the Purple Heart. 1,641 paratroopers lost their lives. The last element of the 173d Airborne Brigade returned to Fort Campbell, Kentucky on 25 August 1971, and the unit was deactivated on 14 January 1972.

On 12 June 2000, The Brigade colors were again unfurled at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy, as the 173d Airborne Brigade was reactivated to serve as the European Command Airborne Strategic Reaction Force. During the next 30 months, Sky Soldiers conducted numerous training deployments to European Theater countries including Bosnia, Kosovo, Hungary, Morocco, Poland and the Czech Republic.