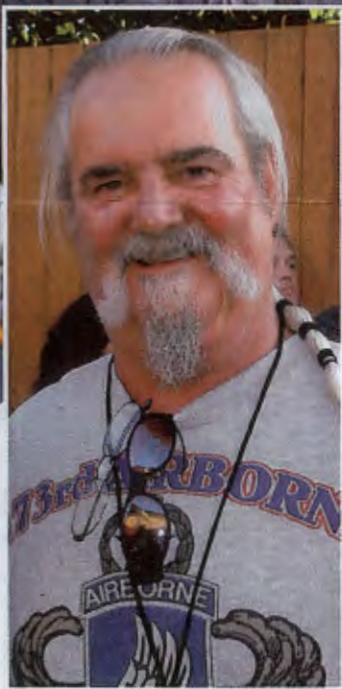


# 173d Airborne Brigade

## *Memorial Dedication*





Main Force Viet Cong Regiment of more than 1200 men and was outnumbered by nearly a 3 to 1 margin.

The song, "The 8th of November" was written and sung by Big Kenny Alphin and John Rich, better known as "Big & Rich" in Country Music circles. It is the story of Master Sergeant (R) Niles Harris and those that fought along side him on Hill 65, and those who gave their lives that day for their fellow Sky Soldiers.

Niles Harris met Big & Rich in 2002 while working as a bar tender in the Buffalo Saloon in Deadwood, South Dakota. During this time, Big & Rich were playing the Saloon and had not yet achieved notoriety in the Country Music industry.

One night, between playing sets, Big Kenny noticed the top hat that Niles was wearing and asked if he could wear it while playing the rest of the night. Niles told him he could have it. At the end of the night Big Kenny came back to Niles to give his top hat back. Niles told him to keep it. A friendship started. Over a beer Niles asked Big & Rich if they had ever toured around the Deadwood area to see the old gold mines. Both said no so Niles said he would pick them up the next morning for a tour.

The next morning Niles picked Big Kenny and John Rich up in his 1973 Ford Bronco. Upon entering his Bronco, they noticed all the 173d memorabilia that Niles had affixed to the inside. Over the course of that day and many others, Niles told them about his time

The 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), fought a battle on the 8th of November, 1965, during "Operation Hump" in War Zone D, Republic of South Vietnam. The fighting took place on a nondescript hill known as Hill 65 under a jungle canopy that in places was 250 feet tall. The 1-503rd fought a

in the service, about the 173d, and the 8th of November Battle during which Niles was badly wounded.

Over the next two years, Big Kenny and John Rich discussed writing a song about Niles and the 8th of November Battle. In 2004 they started writing. As the songs they had written before were about their own experiences, this was uncharted territory for them.

In September of 2005, Big & Rich took Niles back to Vietnam and visited Hill 65, the site of the 8th of November Battle. Niles buried the jungle boots he had worn that fateful day 40 years before on the battle site.

By 2006, Big & Rich had become an extremely well known Country Music Duo. They released their 8th of November song that year. It climbed the country music charts and made the 173d Airborne Brigade a household name.

At the 40th Annual Country Music Awards in 2006, Big & Rich and the 8th of November song were nominated for Vocal Duo of the Year, Song of the Year and Video of the Year. In 2007, the fifty-one minute video that Big & Rich made of Niles and their trip to Vietnam was nominated for a Grammy as Best Short Video of the Year.

The Battle for Hill 65, that took place on the 8th of November 1965, was one of many fiercely contested engagements in which the 173d Airborne Brigade participated during its period of service in the Republic of Vietnam. While the Sky Soldiers who fought on that day were singled out for particular praise by Big Kenny and John Rich, the valor that they displayed was characteristic of the uncommon valor demonstrated by Sky Soldiers who served in the 173d Airborne Brigade throughout its almost seven year deployment in Vietnam.

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation is deeply indebted to Big Kenny Alphin and John Rich for honoring the Sky Soldiers who fought on the 8th of November on Hill 65, and for their sustained support for the Memorial Foundation effort.

## THE BATTLE ON THE 8TH OF NOVEMBER

