

Msgr. ( Colonel US Army) Roy V. Peters

I knew Fr. Peters while a student at Christian Brothers in 1953. He was a young, good looking, "with it" priest assigned to the Cathedral. No five rosary's for a penance priest. He had quite a following.

Father was a very charismatic, down to earth and highly respected priest. Father went to Christian Brothers for three years and then entered the seminary. He would have been in the case of 1942.

I lost track of him when I went away to school and later worked in San Francisco. When I returned to Sacramento I was in Sacred Heart Parish where I met his sister, June Peters. She is the one who gave me the following information about her brother, Father Roy Peters.

Jerry Kirrene '53

Jerry --- We think this is what you want about our brother (probably lots more than you need, but you know sisters!

Monsignor Roy V. Peters / colonel, US Army  
Was in CBS class of 1942 but left for senior year in seminary.  
Also son of a CBS grad, class of about 1913.

Ordained in 1948. Was assistant at Roseville, Angels Camp & at the Cathedral, then pastor in Weaverville until 1961.

In the army from 1962 to 1986 as a chaplain; became paratrooper in 1964. Service included several tours in Vietnam (total 2½ years). Was awarded bronze star six times; also purple heart. Other assignments included chaplain at Arlington National Cemetery, commandant of Army Chaplains School in New York and head chaplain at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii.

After leaving army, was at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Sacramento, then pastor at St. Joseph Parish in North Sacramento until he returned to Honolulu in the early '90s to become pastor of St. Peter & Paul Church. Died in Honolulu in 2006.



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The Battle on Hill 875

November 19th ~ 23rd, 1967 near Dak To, Vietnam

Day One - Sunday 19 November

While on a search and destroy mission during "Operation MacArthur" in Kontum Province Republic of South Vietnam the 2nd Battalion 503rd Airborne Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade while climbing along the ridges leading to Hill 875 came under intense enemy fire. As Company A and D spread out to form a line they came under recoilless rifle fire and rifle fired grenades. The NVA infantry then wave attacked the companies and the fighting became hand to hand at times. Pfc Carlos Lazada held off the enemy long enough for his company to join up with the rest of the 2nd Battalion already further up the hill. For his actions he received the Congressional Medal of Honor. The 2nd Battalion 503rd fought on by itself all of the first day and almost all of the second day, until reinforcements arrived from the 4th Battalion 503rd Infantry, another Battalion from the 173 Airborne brigade. Casualties were very high among the companies of the 2nd Battalion. But never the less they fought off the NVA assaults and even advanced up the slope toward the main NVA perimeter near the summit. They managed to do this despite being hid by a 500 pound bomb from a US Air Force fighter at approximately 2000 hrs on the 19th. I remember being only 25 or 30 meters from the NVA line of bunkers when we finally joined up with them on the 20th of November. That's how close they had fought their way to the main NVA force on the summit.

Day Two - Monday 20 November

While the 2nd Battalion 503rd Infantry remained under intense and close contact with the NVA held up on Hill 875. "A" Company 4th Battalion 503rd Infantry was at forward fire support base 16, which they were securing after their battle with the NVA 66th regiment on Hill 855, and had to close it down before they could get airborne and go to the support of the 2nd battalion. The irony of this was that we had taken over security of this base from the 2nd Battalion only two days earlier. We had to pull in the perimeter because we lacked the manpower to fill all the bunkers left behind by the 2nd Battalion. But now after reaching the vicinity of hill 875 "A" Company 4th Battalion 503rd Infantry, the company I was assigned to, we landed by slicks (helicopter troop transports) on the ridgeline at the northeastern end of the ridgeline leading to Hill 875 not far from FSB 12. We followed the ridgeline to make a link with the 2nd Battalion surrounding ourselves with a ring of artillery fire and close in air support. I recall finding NVA soldier after soldier along this ridgeline that had been killed by this artillery and close in air support. When we got closer to the 2nd Battalion's location, and to the point where they had made their initial enemy contact. The trail became a mix of American and NVA killed from that fierce clash on the 19th. We joined up with the 2nd Battalion late that evening, approximately around 20:00 hrs. "B" Company 4th Battalion 503rd Infantry was set down in a clearing at the base of Hill 875 and climbed up the hill to reach the 2nd battalion. They were the first of the company's from the 4th Battalion to join up with the 2nd Battalion at around 16:00 hrs on the 20th. "C" Company reached the 2nd battalion 503rd Infantry lines sometime around 2030hrs.

Day Three - Tuesday 21 November

As the day breaks the NVA launch their daily mortar attack's on the American's at first light. Most of the morning was spent preparing to assault the NVA position atop the summit of Hill 875 by the 4th Battalion 503rd Infantry. The NVA had prepared their positions very well with earthen over head cover on their bunkers and interlocking trenches to connect each bunker. Some of the cover was as much as two meters deep. In addition the NVA had a very well developed interlocking firing line with slit firing holes. Some time around 13:30hrs the 4th Battalion began to encircle the NVA positions traversing the summit just below the NVA fortifications. A complete encirclement was never achieved due to intense enemy fire. On this day I had the point squad for "A" Company 4th Battalion. Our objective was to come around the eastern slope, advancing south, just below the summit and link with the point element of "C" Company 4th Battalion. Advancing south around the western slope was "C" Company 4th Battalion attempting to link with the point element of "A" Company. "B" Company was in the center of "A" and "C" Company's, on the northeastern slope. They advanced straightforward from the jump off point, which later that evening would become the assembly point for the remnants of the 4th Battalion. As I advanced will never forget climbing over and around the fell and smoldering trees. The jungle floor was still on fire in places. And what was not afire was blackened and charred from having been on fire. The whole time we where running this gauntlet the NVA which where only 25 or 30 yards up hill from us, where throwing all the automatic small arms fire, machine



gun fire and shoulder fired recoilless rockets they had down at us. Not to forget to mention about all the hand grenades they rolled down hill at us also. It was an experience I will never forget. The encirclement of the NVA tried to be concealed with the use artillery smoke rounds from a near by support base 12. I remember those 105mm artillery smoke rounds screaming in just feet above our heads hitting between us and the NVA and some on the NVA lines. When I close my eyes to this day and picture that hill in my mind eye I can only picture it in black and white and shades of gray. Never in color. That's how bad the devastation of the jungle and terrain was.

Once the Company's of the 4th Battalion were strung out and on line as far as they could advance, the up hill assault began. The fighting became intense with most troopers charging into the NVA lines with fixed bayonets on their M16 rifles. Even though there was some success in penetrating the NVA lines, in-groups of ones and two's the assault was stopped at dusk that same day. I was setting in a freshly liberated NVA bunker on the south west end of the hill, waiting for more of my squad to show up when I received that order. The Platoon Leader from the second platoon of "A" Company was there with me. He showed up shortly before my RTO (Radio transmitter operator) did. My RTO managed to stay right behind me until we started the uphill assault into the NVA bunkers. Then the intense enemy fire raining down on us separated us. That is probably also why the 2nd platoon leader had gotten so far separated from his platoon. The order of march for "A" Company on the 19th was 3 platoon in the lead, followed by 2nd platoon then 1st platoon. One of the things I have always regretted was having to run that same gauntlet twice in the same day. First going and then in trying to get back to friendly lines. I have always felt like the 4th Battalion could have overrun the NVA that day. The 2nd Battalion was securing and fighting off NVA attacks around the assembly area while the 4th Battalion was off doing their thing. Since I had managed to advance to the southern point of around the summit it also took some time to return to the assembly area. It was around 2000 hrs when I reached friendly lines and remember everybody being very somber. They were shaken by the events of the day and must have had the next time on their mind. I know I did.

#### Day Four - Wednesday 22 November

The morning begins with continued mortar and small arms fire from the NVA on and around hill 875. Sometime around mid day a decision was reached to withdraw down the ridgeline distance of 100 meters to the north east to form a new defensive perimeter. A safe enough distance from the summit to soften it with artillery and close in air tactical strikes on the NVA stronghold. Preparing it for the next day's assault by the American's. I will never forget the hill shaking like a large molded Jell-O. After that fighter planes came in low and slow dropping their payloads. Sortie after sortie. We would be warned to take cover before each air strike. Before we pulled back that 100 meter safe distance we where so close to the NVA lines at the assembly area I was able to get into a hand grenade throwing contest with one of them on the morning of the 22nd. To give you some idea about how close in most of the fighting in Vietnam was. The remainder of the 22nd was used to evacuate the wounded and refit with much needed supplies and ammunition. We had so much ammunition and other ordinance dropped into us that day, that when we moved our defensive perimeter to the summit after it's capture, it had to be destroyed in place by the combat engineers. The fire works from the ammunition and ordinance's popping off lasted all that afternoon, that night and well into the next day.

#### Day Five - Thursday 23 November

The morning started with the usual mortar fire from NVA on a nearby hill. At 11 AM Company's from both battalions, the 2nd and 4th start the final assault at the summit of Hill 875. The assault was broken into two waves. The second wave covering the rear of the first. I was in the second wave that day. The first wave over ran the NVA so fast we where cleaning up what they missed. During the short time of the final assault the NVA shelled their own positions with mortar and rocket fire from an adjacent hill. What a show that was with litter teams running back and forth picking up the wounded, and doing all this under enemy fire. These guy's were great. However the soldiers of the 2nd and 4th Battalion captured the NVA stronghold by 11:30 AM. The entire final assault lasting less than 30 minutes. At approximately 14:30 hrs the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division reached the friendly lines on the summit of Hill 875. They had been blocking the NVA from escaping around the base of the hill, while the battle for the summit raged above them. The advanced up the southwestern slope to reach the summit.

#### The clean up and transition of power

US Army Nurse's and American Red Cross worker's, which had flown in earlier that morning and even as the assault was under way via helicopter transports came atop the hill to help with the wounded. I remember one in particular who I attempted to warn about the carnage left from the battle. I will never forget the expression on her face as she stepped over a fell tree that concealed three American remains. I often wonder what is in her dreams.

By that afternoon the 2nd battalion started to withdraw from the battlefield along with some of the Company's of the 4th Battalion. On the 24th of November the remaining Company's from the 173rd Airborne withdrew leaving the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division as the new managers of Hill 875. The 2nd and



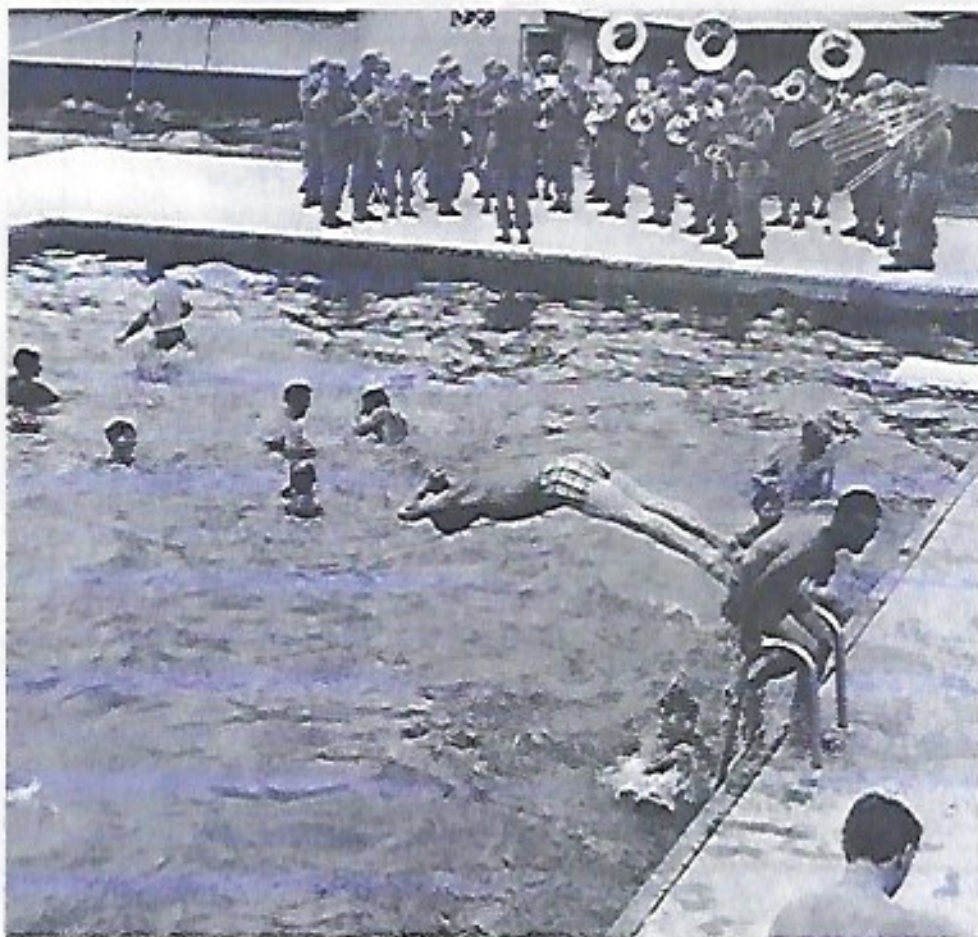
4th Battalion's of the 503rd Infantry suffered 33 Missing in Action, 158 Killed In Action and 411 evacuated wounded, while fighting for Hill 875. During the 21 days of fighting around Dak To that November some 3000 NVA loses were estimated. During that same 21 days of fighting around the Dak TO area the 173rd Airborne Brigade suffered 272 Killed in Action, over 900 wounded and some 60 Missing in Action. Ending some of the bloodiest fighting of the Vietnam War.

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/rdmabe.htm>

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Regards  
mack pl

August 3, 1970



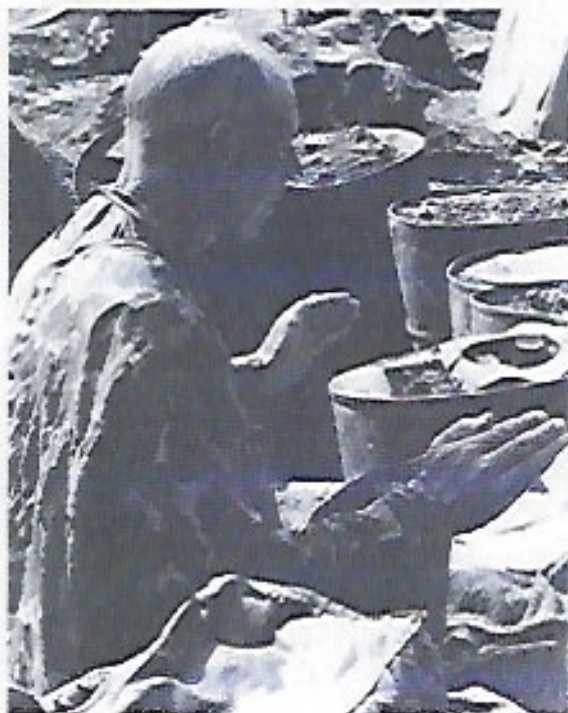
**FIRST PLUNGE**-- Charlie Company, 65th Engineer Battalion splashes in as the band plays on. (Photo by SP4 Joe Loper)

## Chaplain's Choice

**CUCH** - "Most of us prefer to be with combat troops out in the field," explains Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Roy Peters, division chaplain. "You find that in the base camp situation there isn't the urgency or the pressure that there is in the field."

"When you are face to face with the realities of life, your religion





**FIELD MASS** -- Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Roy Peters conducts services for a line unit at Katum. (Photo by SP5 Stephen F. Kroft)

means a lot more to you. You've got the time to think about it, as well as the circumstances that make you think about it," says Chaplain Peters.

"In the field, I feel that the troops appreciate the chaplain coming to them and they show it. They are a little more real and a little more honest with you."

Chaplain Peters, from Sacramento, Calif., recently replaced Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Gene M. Little of Jericho Springs, Mo., as division chaplain. Father Peters has been a priest for 22 years and a chaplain for eight.

Chaplain Peters, like other combat chaplains appreciates the rapport with the men that he finds in the field. Many men who were not churchgoers back in the world are found going here in Vietnam simply because, as one trooper put it, "They say it in English."

## THE AMBUSH

By SP4 ED TOULOUSE

DAUTIENG - "I swatted again - missed, then went back to searching out the darkness. I had been awake sitting in the wet paddy for almost fifty-three minutes - seemed like hours. The only breaks in the silence had been answering the 'sit reps,' (situation reports) called from base on the radio and the occasional snoring from somebody down at the end of the position."

So go the reflections of a 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry soldier on the previous night's ambush patrol.

"A flare went up in the distance. I glanced at my watch and studied the dial - It's time!"

"I touched the guy next to me. He woke with a nervous start."

"What's the matter?" "Shh...! Your guard." "Oh yeah. Okay."

The time is 1:01 am.

Typical American operations in Vietnam center around the nocturnal attempts to surprise Charlie - the ambush.

If a grunt ever forgets anything about this tour, it probably won't be how to set up a claymore or stay awake on guard duty. Fond memories they're not.

"When I think of a 'bush,' all that comes to mind is rain and mosquitoes," said Specialist 4 Paul Engrav, of Rochester, Minn., now a clerk with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry.

The minutes of guard duty often seem endless according to the soldiers.

"When I'm on guard duty, guessing at the time is like a weird game," said Specialist 4 Steve Crider, of Marion, Ky. "I try not to keep looking at my watch," he added. "It really makes time drag."

While the eyes are constantly scanning the night, the ever-tense mind occasionally seeks an escape. Reality can be softened by pleasant thoughts. Perhaps it is something in the letter from a girl or wife; maybe it's an upcoming R&R.

Nevertheless, the grunt never forgets where he is.

Ask these guys who go on a "bush" - Charlie's out there.

# Special Forces Roll Of Honour

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## Archive

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**Surname:** Peters

**Forename:** Roy V.

**Unit:** 503 Infantry Regiment (Airborne) (Chaplain,4 Bn) (173 Support Bn,attached)

**Rank:** Major

**Number:**
**Award:** Bronze Star with V device

**Place:** South Vietnam 1967

**Further Info:**

from Sacramento,California

born Sacramento,California

ordained Roman Catholic priest 1948

entered service 1960

Division Chaplain,25th Infantry Division 1969-70

retired 1986 (Colonel)

awards Legion of Merit (x3),Bronze Star with V (x2),Air Medal,Army Commendation Medal (also awarded Purple Heart)

pastor emeritus,Saints Peter and Paul Parish,Honolulu,Hawaii

Chaplain to Arlington National Cemetery and Tripler Army Medical Center

died 2.7.2006 age 81,Tripler Army Medical Center,Honolulu,Hawaii

buried Sacramento,California

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## RECEIVER OF SIX BRONZE STARS

In 1967, an article was written about a Chaplain who prayed on Hill 875. He said "You ask me what there is to be thankful for on this day, I am thankful that these men here are alive and that we have accomplished our mission." The Chaplain was Major Roy Peters of Sacramento, California. Chaplain Peters was at the front when the paratroopers made four attacks on the hill. He was there when they took it on Thanksgiving Day. "I have always preached a lot about hell but I had never seen it until these last three days". The men made clear how they felt about him. "You can't say enough about that man. He is an inspiration to all of us, Catholic, Protestant or whatever."

Roy Peters a Christian Brothers Alumni in the class of 1942 (but left his senior class to enter the seminary) was ordained in 1948. He served at Roseville, Angels Camp and the Cathedral in Sacramento. He was pastor in Weaverville until 1961 and then became the Chaplain for the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade from 1962 to 1986 and a paratrooper in 1964.

Roy V. Peters served in the U.S. Army with several tours in Vietnam (2 ½ years). He was awarded the Bronze Star six times, the Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 8 Bronze Service Stars, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Parachute Badge, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and the Presidential Unit Citation.

After leaving the Army, he served at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Sacramento, then as pastor at St. Joseph Parish in North Sacramento and then in the early '90s become Pastor of St. Peter and Paul Church in Honolulu. He died while in Honolulu in 2006.

Certainly a tribute to his family, his friends, to CBHS and to God!





## C I T A T I O N

The Secretary of the Army has awarded the Army Commendation Medal to:

CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) ROY V. PETERS, 02281204, CHAPLAINS CORP, United States Army

for Meritorious Service:

During the period 30 November 1966 to 16 April 1967, Father Peters was assigned to temporary duty with the 9th Logistical Command to help meet an urgent requirement for additional Catholic Chaplains within the command. His performance of duty in providing this support was truly outstanding. He became the personification of the ideal Army Chaplain and earned the respect and admiration of the entire command.

Prior to Father Peters' arrival, there was one Catholic Chaplain covering all US Army troops in Thailand. This responsibility was divided after Father Peters' assignment and both priests began an active program of visiting all US Army personnel regardless of their location in-country. Father Peters' devotion to duty was such that the men stationed at various installations throughout Thailand could always depend on him to be present for any scheduled activity. Never did he fail to keep a commitment even though it required hours of driving through all types of weather and road conditions. His reliability became known throughout the command and set an example worthy of emulation by all grades and ranks.

In spite of his demanding schedule, Father Peters actively supported and helped direct the Camp Friendship Catholic Men's Group. He was directly responsible for the planning and operation of a five day Catholic Retreat held at Hua Hin, Thailand. This Retreat was attended by over 200 US Army and Air Force personnel and was considered by all to be an outstanding success. He acted as the principal coordinator between the US Army personnel of his faith and the Catholic population of the local community. His many imaginative yet logical ideas resulted in religious and social programs that greatly enhanced the rapport and mutual understanding between nationalities.

Father Peters' contribution to the officers and men of this command was immeasurable. He gave all that he possessed to provide the personnel of this command the maximum in religious guidance and activities. His genuine concern for the welfare of the soldier and his whole-hearted dedication to serving God and Country have been an invaluable asset to this Command and the United States Army.



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C I T A T I O N

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT  
THE AIR MEDAL  
IS PRESENTED TO

MAJOR ROY V. PETERS, O2281204, CHAPLAIN'S CORPS  
UNITED STATES ARMY

For distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement while participating in sustained aerial flight in support of combat ground forces of the Republic of Vietnam during the period 16 May 1967 to 1 November 1967.

During this time he actively participated in more than twenty-five aerial missions over hostile territory in support of counterinsurgency operations. During all of these missions 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.



File -  
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15 MAY 1968  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)  
APO San Francisco 96250

cbb

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 782

29 March 1968

AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL FOR HEROISM  
(SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

PETERS, ROY V. O2281204 (714-14-6815) MAJOR CHAPLAIN  
UNITED STATES ARMY Company A, (Administration), 173d Support Battalion (Airborne)

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal (Second Oak Leaf Cluster) with "V" Device

Date action: 30 January 1968

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force. Major Peters distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 30 January 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam. On this day enemy forces had conducted a sneak attack against an American artillery compound during the "TET THUCE". Company D of the 4th Battalion was locked in deadly combat with the enemy in pushing the enemy from the compound. When Chaplain Peters arrived in the compound, the withdrawing enemy was laying down an extremely heavy and accurate base of small arms and automatic weapons fire into the compound. Regardless of this, Chaplain Peters moved around, comforting and encouraging the troops. Later in the day Company D was still engaged with the enemy on "Cerstery Hill" when a mortar round landed near the foremost edge of the perimeter, wounding some men. Without hesitation, or regard for his own personal safety, Chaplain Peters rushed to where the stricken men lay, and with enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire crackling all about him, commenced to aid and evacuate the more seriously wounded. He remained in that exposed position until the men were successfully evacuated and receiving proper medical care. Major Peters' outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962 and USARV Message 16695, AVA-S, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

JOHN M. BYRNE  
Major, AGC  
Adjutant General

*Keith B. Wolfe*  
KEITH B. WOLFE

Captain, AGC

Assistant Adjutant General

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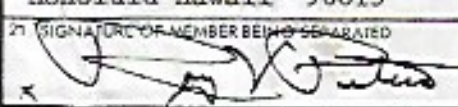
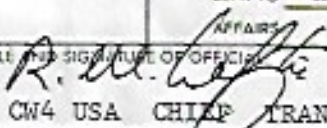
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4a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK COL	4b. PAY GRADE 06	5. DATE OF BIRTH 240830	6. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE DUTY Sacramento California			
7. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND Med Co A Tripler Army Med Cen HSC HS			8. STATION WHERE SEPARATED Fort Shafter Hawaii			
9. COMMAND TO WHICH TRANSFERRED NA			10. SGU COVERAGE AMOUNT \$ 50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NONE			
11. PRIMARY SPECIALTY NUMBER, TITLE AND YEARS AND MONTHS IN SPECIALTY (Additional specialty numbers and rates involving periods of one or more years) 56A Chaplain// NOTHING FOLLOWS		12. RECORD OF SERVICE				
		Year (x)	MON (x)	DAY (x)		
		a. Date Entered AD This Period	62	01	08	
		b. Separation Date This Period	86	08	31	
		c. Not Active Service This Period	24	07	23	
		d. Total Prior Active Service	00	02	14	
		e. Total Prior Inactive Service	07	04	29	
		f. Foreign Service	11	00	12	
		g. Sea Service	00	00	00	
h. Effective Date of Pay Grade	74	11	05			
i. Reserve Oblig. Term. Date	00	00	00			
13. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED (All periods of service) Legion of Merit w/3 OLC//Bronze Star Medal w/5 OLC (2 w/Dev)//Purple Heart (1)//Meritorious Service Medal w/2 OLC//Air Medal (2)//Army Commendation Medal//National Defense Service Medal/Vietnam Service Medal w/8 Bronze Svc Stars//Armed Forces Reserve Medal//Army Service Ribbon//Oversea Service Ribbon (2)//Vietnam Campaign Medal//Parachute Badge (see 18)						
14. MILITARY EDUCATION (Course Title, number weeks, and month and year completed) Chaplain Off Adv (1964)//Airborne (1963)//Chaplain Off Basic (1962)//NOTHING FOLLOWS						
15. MEMBER CONTRIBUTED TO POST-VIETNAM ERA VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		16. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		17. DAYS ACCRUED LEAVE PAID 60		
18. REMARKS Item 18 - Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/Palm (Unit)//Presidential Unit Citation/ NOTHING FOLLOWS						
19. MAILING ADDRESS AFTER SEPARATION 469 Ena Road #3010 Honolulu Hawaii 96815			20. MEMBER REQUESTS COPY 6 BE SENT TO HI DR. OF VET AFFAIRS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
21. SIGNATURE OF MEMBER BEING SEPARATED 		22. TYPED NAME, GRADE, TITLE AND SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN R. W. Loftis CW4 USA CHIEF TRANS PT 				

MEMBER - 1



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)  
APO San Francisco 96250

jb

GENERAL ORDER  
NUMBER 2060

30 December 1967

AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL FOR HEROISM  
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

1. TC 320. The following AARD is announced.

PETERS, ROY V. O2281204 CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) CHAPLAINS CORPS USA Co A (Admin)  
173d Spt Bn (Abn).

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) with "V" Device

Date action: 21 November 1967

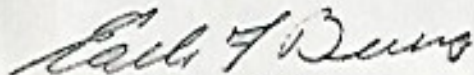
Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Chaplain Peters distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 21 November 1967 in the Republic of Vietnam. On this day, Chaplain Peters entered the forward battle area at hill 875, vicinity of Dak To, Republic of Vietnam. When he entered the area he found numerous personnel who were seriously wounded awaiting evacuation. Both he and the wounded were subjected to heavy volumes of enemy mortar, small arms, and rocket fire. Despite this, with complete disregard for his own personal safety, Chaplain Peters continued to move among the wounded reassuring them and giving them confidence. Chaplain Peters worked with the wounded all day despite extremely heavy mortar attacks which were almost continuous except for short intervals. His presence in the area inspired all, both the wounded and those awaiting to be committed to combat. He contributed materially to the calm and well disciplined evacuation of 148 personnel on this day. Chaplain Peters' outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery were in the keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962 and USARV Message 16695, AVA-S, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:



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STATEMENT

I personally witnessed heroic acts performed by Chaplain Roy V. Peters, Major, 02281204 on 30 January 1968 near Tay Hoa North, Republic of South Vietnam. Chaplain Peters appeared initially in an artillery compound which had been overrun earlier in the day by elements of the 5th Battalion, 95th Air Infantry Regiment. At this time, the 4th Battalion of the 100th Infantry (Airborne) had Company "D" engaged in extricating the enemy from the compound. The withdrawing enemy was placing an extremely heavy fire into the compound, near the forward edge of the perimeter where Chaplain Peters was rendering aid, offering words of encouragement to the troops. A little later in the day, Company "D" was again in heavy contact with the enemy on "Cemetery Hill". A mortar round fell into the forward edge of the company's perimeter, wounding some men. Chaplain Peters rushed to the area where the wounded lay, completely disregarding his own personal safety, with incoming enemy small arms fire crackling around him, and commenced to assist in the evacuation of the more critically wounded. He remained in that exposed position, rendering comfort and aid to the men until they were successfully evacuated and receiving proper medical care. Chaplain Peters' actions were definitely in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and his cool actions under fire provided a distinct stimulant to the combat troops involved.

JAMES B. GARDNER  
Major, Infantry  
A/03 Inf (Abn)  
173d Abn Brigade

G4

C I T A T I O N

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT  
THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

IS PRESENTED TO

MAJOR ROY V. PETERS, 02281204, CHAPLAIN'S CORPS

UNITED STATES ARMY

who distinguished himself by outstandingly meritorious service in connection with military operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. During the period

13 MAY 1967 TO 18 SEPTEMBER 1967

he consistently manifested exemplary professionalism and initiative in obtaining outstanding results. His rapid assessment and solution of numerous problems inherent in a counterinsurgency environment greatly enhanced the allied effectiveness against a determined and aggressive enemy. Despite many adversities, he invariably performed his duties in a resolute and efficient manner. Energetically applying his sound judgment and extensive knowledge, he has contributed materially to the successful accomplishment of the United States mission in the Republic of Vietnam. His loyalty, diligence and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army.



A tribute to three seminarian colleagues...

### A tribute to three Mitty-Men...



When a **Mitty Man** reads the obituaries a treasure of information can be found in a few simple words; first we pause to mourn the passing of two priests who were good and upright men ... and then some thoughts on their persona, yet more on their style of priesthood. A reader may curiously ask "what is a Mitty Man?" and this writer replies "A Mitty man is a who, a living warm blooded human being clothed in black clericalism, created in an era unique from 1932 to 1960." This writer is a **Mitty Man**, an alumnus of **St. Patrick's Seminary**, ordained June 11, 1954.

The sports page of the *San Jose Mercury News*, 4/14/07 reads in bold print "**MITTY TAKES NO PRISONERS**", a reference to San Jose's Archbishop Mitty High School baseball team; their sports logo is MONARCHS. Perhaps it takes a Mitty man to see the irony and humor in the "no prisoners" and the king logo. Today San Joseans would have no idea of who **John Joseph Mitty** actually was but those priests ordained by him knew this empire builder who ruled his diocese with an iron hand. **Mitty's** people came from Balle-mitty, Ireland, **John Joseph** born a first generation native American in Rochester, N.Y.; his American birth and unhappy upbringing are heavy factors in **Mitty's** future attitude toward people, priests and in particular the "FBI", the nickname of the "Foreign Born Irish priests". **Steven M. Avilla** in **CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO: sesquicentennial essays** (Dr. Jeffery Burns, editor) writes of Mitty: "San Francisco's fourth archbishop was by all accounts a shy and somewhat humorless man who disliked public appearances (except liturgies). His language was salty ... he was anything but sentimental ... ecclesiastical trouble shooter ... didn't care about popularity ... more effective than loved; Mitty never inspired warmth among his priests or people; his 26 year tenure left solid finances, a well-trained and respected corps of native clergy and a patrimony of brick and mortar ....." Only a **Mitty Man** can read between the lines. **Jack Shanahan** and **Paul Duggan** knew the drill and remained until death honored members of the aforementioned respected corps of native clergy. (In other essays I address the major problems that were present to the clergy up to the **Vatican Two Council** of 1965.)

My first meeting with the **Duggan clan** was in the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Names, located at the old site near Lake Merritt, Oakland. **Claire** entered the convent on the same day as my blood sister **Thomasine**. I, a 7th grader, met **Billy Duggan**, both shortly destined to follow **Billy's** brothers, **Paul** and **Gene**, to seminary. The **Duggans** were shy, happy people, all with a Duggan lilt of head that I can in no way describe or imitate and always a gentle smile. As much as I search I cannot in any way tell you a single personal experience of **Paul Duggan**; I never heard a clerical story about **Paul**, yet aware he was ever friendly and quiet. **Paul's** military career and resume offer evidence of a clerical job well done; none of



the three **Duggan** priest-brothers ever had their names flashed on a gaudy jumbotron screen, surely nothing negative. I dare to offer that the Irish who came to America during and after the **Potato Famine** were known for their silence and fine ability to adjust to surrounding circumstances. I need talk to **Billy** about his Irish ancestry.

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with him and traveling with him to foreign ports. All clergy knew of **Sean's** meticulous ways of cleanliness, hygiene, and neatness, and particularly the wonderful Jerusalem story **Cox** tells of their eating with bare hands on the floor of their Arab guide's home. **Mitty Men** had close bonds of friendship as well as a good sense of humor — both sound tools of clerical survival. Again, time and distance kept me from knowing the clerical style of **Jack Shanahan**. I did know he was smart, a fine historian and a well read gentleman. I see **Jack** as *"the classical Mitty man, always in the background and one who hid his talents under the bushel basket"*. His obituary gives evidence of his life long pursuit of knowledge; that's the way Mitty would have it.

Saturday I sat in the chapel stalls of **St. Patrick's Seminary**, listening to the Alumni Choir under **Don Osuna** as they practiced Latin hymns for the Alumni Day mass. I reminisced the hundreds of Mitty men who sat in these venerable seats, singing Gregorian chant and preparing themselves prayerfully for the ministry to people that lay ahead: rising at 6am, meditation and Mass before breakfast in silence, sons of wonderful and generous parents they purged themselves of selfishness and after watching 5000 Masses over a period of 12 years (for some less time) a bishop ordained them to be Mass priests and to bring to the people sacred signs that would lead them to heaven. That **Mitty Man-type** of priest that **Tim Unsworth** describes ('95) in **CATHOLICS ON THE EDGE** as *"A PRIESTHOOD FAST BECOMING A MEMORY"* (Chapter 13), and beloved **Fr. Bernard Haring** writes of in **PRIESTHOOD IMPERILED** ('96), dies a little bit more with the death of **Father Duggan** and **Father Shanahan**. **Andrew Greeley** in **CRUCIBLE OF CHANGE** ('68) predicted that the worst would come in the years after 2000. I had tears of mourning as I sat in my accustomed seat at **St. Patrick's Seminary** on an Alumni Day that had little relevance to the crisis that the People of God face today. I thought of **Jay Barry**, a great Mitty man and his oft repeated comment *"who is going to mind the company store?"*. It is obvious if the "store" is to remain open the people better get on board.

I take this opportunity to divert from Mitty men to pay tribute to a great priest and army chaplain, **Roy Peters**. My heart was heavy as I read of his death in Hawaii. Out to play basketball behind the Cathedral in Sacramento a young **Roy** is complained about by some little old ladies for a priest wearing shorts and a t-shirt. This handsome devil says "screw it" and joins the army. My best times in service were with **Roy Peters**, friend of the non coms and priest to all. Fort Ord bulletins frequently carried notice of proper insignia to be worn on military caps, while **Ron** continued to wear his paratrooper badge in place of chaplain's cross. I tear up when I recall a front line story of **Roy** (four tours in Vietnam) cradling a badly wounded G.I. and searching for his dog tags to see his religion; the 19 year old says *"Padre, I'm not Catholic; please do your thing on me as I am going to meet God"*. **Roy** anointed the lad and the boy died. Were **Roy's** arms those of **Jesus**? **Roy** himself was good reason for a priest to be involved in the military for the sake of American's young. I salute **Colonel Roy Peters**, SPS alum and priest of **Jesus the Christ**, fine person and wholesome man.

**The Church can take a man out of the institutional priesthood, but it has**



**no power to take the priesthood out of the man, nor put a Jesus priesthood into a man.** I personally enjoy a priesthood today that I fantasized in my seminary days. Recently a Roman Catholic said to me "*nothing has changed*" and I replied that since before Pearl Harbor when I was an 8th grader I have witnessed change in every year of my life, with a big whopper called **Vatican Two** in 1965. **D. Michael Rivage-Seul PhD** in his book ***THE EMPEROR'S GOD Misunderstandings of Christianity*** likens the church on a pilgrimage — a caravan marching toward truth; the bulk of people are in the middle, moving blindly along, while a rear guard defends against those pesky oppressors and a forward visionary cadre scouts new terrain. When five years old my father hiked in 1886 with my grandfather from Virginia City, Nevada to Butte, Montana, grandpa seeking work in the Anaconda after the Comstock failed. I know genetics and my place in the forward cadre, while very much aware of the valuable places others play in the caravan trek. The brotherhood of brothers who spent time at **St. Joseph's College** and **St. Patrick's Seminary** is a community of followers of **Jesus**, truly a presence of **the Risen One** in modern culture. **What a privilege I have had to know and serve with the likes of Roy Peters, Paul Duggan and Jack Shanahan.**

*...Tom McMahon, San Jose, Ca. 06/07/2007*



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## Roy V Peters

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**Birth:** Aug. 30, 1924  
Sacramento  
Sacramento County  
California, USA

**Death:** Jul. 2, 2006  
Honolulu  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii, USA

The life of Monsignor Roy V. Peters stretched across several fronts, from the jungles of Vietnam to the churches of Sacramento. He was at times a soldier's comfort, at others a welcomed source of laughter at his parish.

The retired Army colonel, who completed two tours of duty in Vietnam and served several churches in the Sacramento region, died July 2 at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu after battling an illness stemming from a heart condition. He was 81.

"He was a man for all seasons," said Monsignor James C. Kidder of Holy Trinity Church in El Dorado Hills, a friend of Monsignor Peters' since the time the two attended Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento. "He always said that he wanted to be a bishop in the winter and play baseball in the summer. He was an unusually charismatic person."

Born and raised in Sacramento, Monsignor Peters was ordained at age 23 and served parishes in Roseville, Angels Camp, Sacramento and Weaverville until volunteering for the Army in 1960, said his sister, June Peters of Sacramento.

He completed airborne school two years later and, after assignments in Japan and Thailand, went to Vietnam soon after the start of the war.

"That was by his own insistence," Kidder said.

"He would see those soldiers go out there every day, and some of them didn't come back and he thought he should be with them. He had great qualities of leadership and it certainly showed in the military."

Kidder recalled a photograph in which Monsignor Peters is pictured giving communion to a soldier in the Vietnam jungle.

In a 1969 letter to former Bishop Alden Bell of Sacramento shortly before his second tour began, Monsignor Peters wrote: "I have been anxious to return since early this year and I am so grateful for this assignment. As you know, there is nothing as satisfying as combat ministry."

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Rest in peace, Father Roy...You will always have a place in my heart.

- [Roxanne](#)

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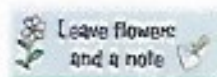
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Added: May. 6, 2012

Monsignor Peters completed more than 120 jumps during his highly decorated military career, breaking his neck in his final jump while on a training mission in Kentucky.



He served as chaplain at Arlington National Cemetery and as president of the priest senate for the Archdiocese for the Military Services.



"He became a full colonel well before his time," Kidder said. "He was very proud of the soldiers who were not distracted by the (Vietnam War) controversy and what they saw was the purpose of defending our freedom."

After retiring from the Army in 1986, Monsignor Peters served at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Sacramento and was later pastor of St. Joseph's Church in El Monte.

John Hamey, whose marriage ceremony to his wife, Monica, was conducted by Monsignor Peters at St. Joseph's in 1990, recalled the monsignor would often keep his homilies short during the NFL season so parishioners could get home to watch the games.

"He brought a lot of people to the church," Hamey said. "He was just a good, happy priest. He had a great sense of humor, and he was always ready to hear a great joke."

In 1990, Monsignor Peters moved to Honolulu to serve Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

He was also the chaplain at Tripler Army Medical Center and, as Kidder said, "loved Hawaii."

"He initiated a Mass at Waikiki Beach, defending it as God's cathedral, more beautiful than anything man had made," Kidder said.

**Monsignor Roy V. Peters**

Born: Aug. 30, 1924

Died: July 2, 2006

Remembered for: A chaplain who retired from the Army after 26 years and served two tours during the Vietnam War. The Sacramento native also served parishes in Roseville, Sacramento and Weaverville, and was a pastor at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Honolulu

Survived by: Sisters Marge Ellen Albouze and June Peters, both of Sacramento, and several cousins

Memorial services: Memorial Mass, 10 a.m. Friday at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 1017 11th St., Sacramento, and funeral Mass at 7 p.m. Friday at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Honolulu. Private burial service at St. Mary's Cemetery, 6700 21st Ave., Sacramento

Remembrances: In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his memory to the Sts. Peter and Paul building fund or to a charity of the donor's choice.

-Sacramento Bee, July 13, 2006

Family links:



## Parents:

LeRoy Victor Peters (1893 - 1969)

Ellen Mary Nelson Peters (1902 - 1993)

## Burial:

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Posted on: Sunday, July 9, 2006

## Combat chaplain Msgr. Roy Peters, 81

Advertiser Staff

Combat chaplain, parish priest, retired Army colonel — Monsignor Roy Peters, a longtime chaplain and retired Army colonel, wore a lot of hats in his 81 years.

A colorful storyteller with a Hemingwayesque turn of phrase, Peters was known for his quick but entertaining sermons and succinct Masses, a skill he learned after years of jumping out of planes with his ceremonial gear to hold services for soldiers in the Vietnamese jungles.



Peters

He died July 2 at Tripler Army Medical Center.

As a combat chaplain in Vietnam, he served two tours of front-line combat duty, including one of the most notorious battles of the late 20th century, the Tet offensive. A decorated chaplain, he won six bronze stars; a Purple Heart; three meritorious service medals; a commendation medal and three Legions of Merit.

He always wanted to be a priest. But as a young boy, he'd play ball in the street with his dad. That led to split affinities.

The family story is that when asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, Peters would say he was going to be "a bishop in the winter and a ball player in the summer," recalled his sister, Marge Ellen Albouze.

Born the eldest of three children Aug. 30, 1924, in Sacramento, Calif., to a nurse-turned-homemaker mother and auditor father, Peters heard a lot about Hawaii, because his father had been stationed at Schofield Barracks in World War I.

Peters was ordained at age 23 and served in the Sacramento Diocese until 1960, when he volunteered for active duty in the Army. He completed Airborne School in 1962 and served as a "paratrooper padre" in Okinawa, Thailand and Vietnam. He also served as a chaplain at Arlington National Cemetery, commendent at the Army Chaplain School in Fort Monmouth, N.J., and chaplain at Tripler.

After retiring in 1986, he served at churches in Sacramento until 1990, when he came to Honolulu to serve at Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

But those many years in the military never made him hard.

"He was generous," remembered Patrick Downes, spokesman for the Honolulu diocese. "He never said a bad word about anyone."

"He was a fun guy," said his other sister, June Peters. "We were blessed to have him as brother."

He leaves his two sisters.

Visitation will be 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, 800 Kaheka St., followed by a funeral Mass at 7 p.m. Inurnment will follow at a later date in Sacramento, with arrangements by Williams Funeral Service.

His casket will bear the inscription "Alpha and Airborne" in reference to two of his great loves: his

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sisters said; Hawaii and his fellow paratroopers.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his memory to the Sts. Peter and Paul building fund or a charity of choice.

