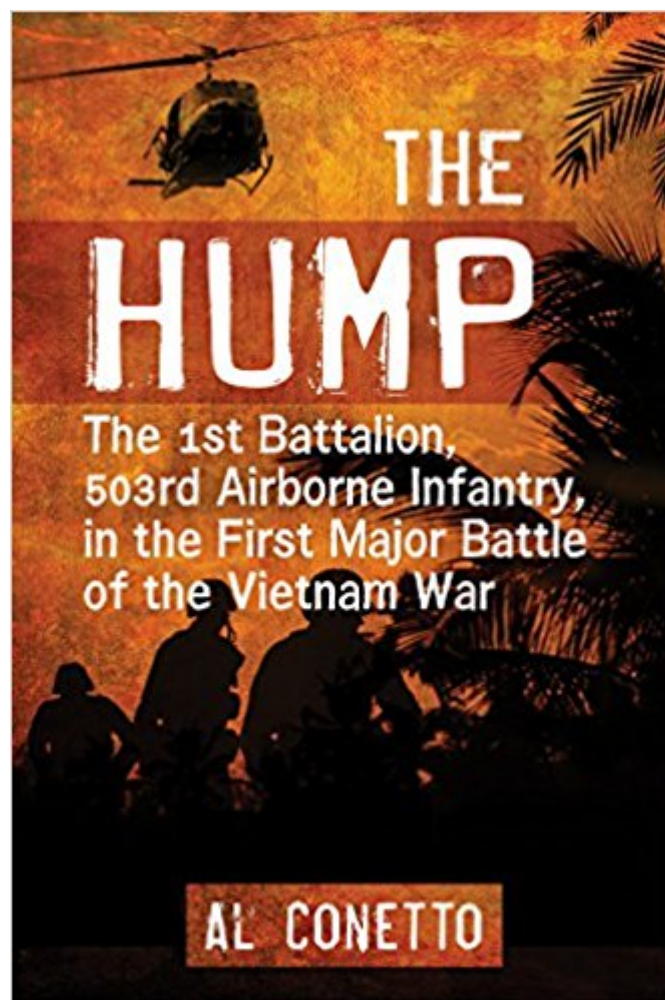




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# **The Hump: The 1st Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, In The First Major Battle Of The Vietnam War (McFarland Health Topics)**



## Synopsis

Operation Hump, the first major battle between the U.S. Army and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, took place November 5â€“9, 1965, in South Vietnamâ€™s War Zone D. Known as “The Hump,” it would change the nature of the war, escalating it from a hit-and-run guerrilla conflict to a bloody contest between Communist main force units and American commands of battalion size or larger. This memoir of an Operation Hump survivor begins with the sequence of events leading up to the battle, from the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Drawing on official Army documents and the recollections of fellow combatants, the author not only describes the battle in detail but explains the war’s basis in fabrications at the highest levels of the U.S. government. His experiences with PTSD after the war and his eventual return to Vietnam in the 1990s are included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an amazing book that chronicles the life and recollections of a soldier in one of the seminal battles of the Viet Nam War. The Hump is an engrossing real life memoir of a man called to duty

who served his country with honor. This book should be mandatory reading for all Americans to understand what it means when we send our young men and women, America's hope for the future, to war.

I was elated to see this book in print after the many years our unit's outstanding history lay dormant in unopened military file drawers. I once told the late Colonel Tyler years ago that I would never rest until the sacrifices and uncommon valor of those who fought on Hill 65 were put into print so all of America could read of their true heroics on a small remote hill in War Zone "D" Vietnam. That hill meant nothing to any of us yet we were ordered to stand and fight no matter the odds and as Al well describes the 1/503d did just that.....Thank You Al This book also clears up some misleading information a very limited few have been relating. One individual has written some articles where he claims to have called in mortar support during the battle yet our weapons platoons fired no such support. Other than machine gun teams our weapons platoons remained within the battalion CP and fired no mortar support onto Hill 65. The individual making these claims was of a lower enlisted rank and I'm sure you read that Captain Lowell Bittrich stated no one below the position of Battalion Commander had the authority to call in any support and that all support during the battle was called in by Battalion Commander Colonel Tyler using coordinates from the hill supplied him by Captain Bittrich. So for assuring the accuracy of the battle as well as the history of our battalion....Thank You Lowell PTSD is something we seldom discuss among ourselves and I'm sure that's not a good thing as we've all suffered from our silence in discussing what hides within our minds and our souls. We all continue to suffer because of such. Most Paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade feel better after attending our annual reunions because we have the chance of once again being among those who walked the same trails into battle and still carry the same fears and guilt instilled on the battlefields. The chapter Al wrote concerning PTSD could have been written about me without changing a word other than names and I know many others agree they also fall into that category. We'll all carry these symptoms to our graves but by making me feel better when in your company....Thank You 1/503d Skysoldiers

Fifty years after the first major battle of the Vietnam War, an extraordinary account of the operation finally provides a first-hand account by an officer engaged in the fight. With vivid personal accounts from individual paratroopers and their officers, Mr. Conetto pays tribute to the hundreds of young paratroopers who for two days in War Zone D, Republic of Vietnam, fought against a reinforced VC/PAVN regiment and destroyed it. He draws into his narrative the

near-simultaneous battle fought in the Ia Drang Valley by the 1st Cavalry Division made famous by the book and movie, *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*. In pulling together both battles, he provides a historical perspective on the origins of America's ultimate failure to succeed in Vietnam and traces it to the current debacle in the Middle East. Mr. Conetto also provides a compelling story of his own journey from a young lieutenant through his continuing struggle with PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome) and its impact on his life. Operation Hump gained its name because it represented the halfway mark of the 12-month tour of duty for individuals and thus the paratroopers were crossing over the hump to the downhill side of their tour. The Operation Order directed the 1st Battalion; Royal Australian Regiment and the 1st Battalion (Airborne); 503rd Infantry to air assault into War Zone D and conduct search operations for the Viet Cong's Q762 Regiment and D800 Battalion. Operations commenced on November 5th, 1965. In describing the search phase over the next two days without contact, Mr. Conetto is at his best capturing the grind of jungle operations through the memories of the young American paratroopers he walked beside and led. The battle began on November 8, 1965 with a squad leader in Charlie, 1/503, encountering a squad of "regulars" in North Vietnamese uniforms. His quick action eliminated the enemy squad, though one of his soldiers suffered the first wounds in a battle that would ultimately claim 49 American lives and 83 wounded. Charlie Company would fight for its life the rest of the 8th and on into the night and following day with elements of soldiers separated by circumstances and the fortunes of battle. Paratroopers take great pride in ensuring that no fellow soldier is left behind on the battlefield and Charlie Company, under the command of Captain Tucker, fought valiantly and suffered to preserve that legacy. Much of the fighting on the 8th of November hinged on Bravo Company, which provided the flexibility and maneuverability to keep the enemy at bay through numerous attacks and counter-attacks. Mr. Conetto affords Captain Bittrich, Bravo Company Commander, particular praise for his indomitable will in sustaining the fight, having a keen sense of the tactical situation and exhibiting great skill in directing aviation assets against the larger enemy force. Alpha Company, in which Mr. Conetto led a rifle platoon, under the command of Captain Walt Daniel, played a key role in the relief of Bravo and Charlie Companies and the ultimate extraction of the battalion from the battlefield. Two of the many heroes in the battalion were a medic, Specialist 5th Class Lawrence Joel, and a chaplain, Captain Jim Hutchens. Both saved countless lives and were wounded multiple times during the battle. Joel was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon Johnson. Weaving the fabric of a complex battle like the one that took place on Hill 65 in War Zone D requires numerous threads. Mr. Conetto's tenacious use of original sources "more than 30 first hand accounts" - provides the reader an exceptional view of the battle as it

unfolded. His research, diligence in tracking down participants and relentless scholarship are all worthy of great praise. Missing from this volume is a much-needed series of maps that would add immeasurably to the reader's understanding of the flow of battle. The most poignant chapters in *The Hump* are those devoted to Mr. Conetto's own life from aspiring childhood where he was entranced with the concepts of honor, sacrifice, daring, courage, glory, patriotism and military tradition to his life long struggle with post traumatic stress syndrome, PTSD. After his initial obligation, he left the Army briefly but then returned guilt-ridden that he had survived Hump while many of his close friends and fellow soldiers had not. Following another three years that included a second tour in Vietnam with the 1st Cavalry Division, Mr. Conetto left the service for good. The second tour in Vietnam only added to the guilt and bitterness that began with Hump and has continued to this day. This book is a remarkable tribute to Mr. Conetto's courageous lifelong battle against a wicked personal enemy, PTSD. From the perspective of 50 years, Mr. Conetto has gathered a serious collection of lessons learned from both the tactical/strategic to the military/political. He cites a number of authorities that highlight American failure to reinforce units that made significant contact in the search phase but then failed to add additional combat power to seek the total destruction of the enemy force. Likewise, the strategic limitations placed on American forces in Vietnam by allowing sanctuary to the North Vietnamese in Laos and Cambodia continue to be repeated to this day in the Middle East. In honoring the enlisted soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers in the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate) and the 1st Cavalry Division with whom he served, Mr. Conetto describes them as "America's finest!" He renders an equally emotional description of the politicians who were not of the same caliber. Many brave men gave their lives only to be sold down the river by those in Washington, D.C. In concluding, the reader finds a mature author, proud of his service and the opportunity to have led American soldiers in combat. You cannot help but be proud of Al Conetto for this significant achievement.

Any thing the U.S Army airborne has to be great. It was big step for the unit in Viet Nam. The war had really changed the way things were done. I was trained the WW11 way and it was lost during the Viet Nam war. The U.S Army adapted and over came and kicked ass. I am proud of all who served in Viet Nam. It was a great read. Karl

the author was an officer and included the history of the war while the French were there a to 1967 when he left. He filled in a lot of higher up info along with what got to the grunts. I really enjoyed

picking up my Ipad and very easy to catch up with the story.

Al Conetto is an excellent writer who has written a superb book. Obviously he did an extensive amount of research in order to put together this history. I felt I was right there with Al living through this significant battle. Conetto also is to be commended for his in-depth, personal account of his own battle with PTSD. This is not a dry, boring description of PTSD but a living explanation of PTSD and its impact on the military person and the family and friends around someone with PTSD. As with all of the book this section is well organized and clearly written. There are many things which contribute to the strength of this book. Mr. (Capt) Conetto majored in history and used this education to advantage in documenting his writing. He has a large bibliography which includes many first-person interviews. Read this book. I don't think you will be disappointed.

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