

TREASURES OF THE ARMY MUSEUM

Vietnam "Jungle Boots"

When the U.S. Army deployed to Southeast Asia beginning in the mid-1960s, Soldiers faced some of the most difficult conditions on earth. Heat and high humidity meant their feet were always wet. Additional hazards were punji stakes – sharpened bamboo sticks, often coated with toxins to produce an infection – hidden in the ground and capable of penetrating boots.

The solution was to produce a tropical combat or "jungle" boot made of fast-drying nylon and leather, treated to withstand the conditions. These boots had lugged soles for negotiating slippery, muddy terrain and vent holes for air circulation. Later versions featured an internal plate to protect against punji

These Vietnam "jungle boots" belonged to Army Capt. Philip Gioia, a platoon leader in 505th Airborne Regiment and later a company commander in 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

stakes. Field Soldiers in Vietnam often laced a dog tag into one boot for quicker identification of blood type.

The "jungle boots" pictured here belonged to Captain Philip Gioia, a rifle platoon leader in 505th Airborne Regiment during the 1968 Tet Offensive in and around Hue, and a rifle company commander in 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, in 1969. Captain Gioia recalled, "The monsoon rains, heat and dust of two combat tours just wore all the



dye out of my boots ... the red laterite soil so prevalent in the III Corps zone in Vietnam – it got into everything. That's why the boots and dog tags are so ingrained with it."

Gioia, who was awarded two Purple Hearts and two Silver Stars, packed away his boots in

1970. They remained in storage for 41 years, until he donated them to the Army in 2011. Now they are part of the Army's story.

– Colonel (Ret.) Robert J. D Alessandro, Julia Simon, Philip Gioia and Walter Bradford, U.S. Army Center of Military History.

For information about the National Museum of the U.S. Army, slated to open in 2015, visit armyhistory.org.

Gettysburg Staff Ride



Norwich University, America's first private military college, has an acclaimed Master of Arts in Military History program (militaryhistory.norwich.edu/) featuring innovative courses that really "bring history to life" for students. One of these courses is on

the Civil War Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863), and it culminates in a trip to the battlefield known as the "Gettysburg Staff Ride." Students spend nine weeks studying the battle, interacting online with their professor and fellow students, before traveling to Gettysburg

for three days of walking the historic battlefield.

Recently, we had the opportunity to send ACG author Jeffrey Paulding along on Norwich's Gettysburg Staff Ride. Visit armchairgeneral.com/norwich-universitys-gettysburg-staff-ride.htm to read his report

Participants in Norwich University's Gettysburg Staff Ride pose for a snapshot during their visit to the battlefield: (kneeling, left to right) Bill Spoehr, Jeffrey Paulding, Terry Freese, Johannes Allert, [standing on the near side of the fence, left to right] Jim Ehrman, Charles McDonald, Bill Barron, Tom Bottom, Ed Svaldi, Bill Utley, Fred Wieners, Will Windhorst, Judy Christrup, [standing behind the fence, left to right] Janet Mara, Shellie Garrett, John Votaw, Drew McElroy and Bill Kelly.

(and to see photos) on what he concludes was "a fascinating and educational experience that [he] recommend[s] to any serious student of military history."

– "ACG" thanks Daphne Larkin, Norwich University Media Relations Manager, for making it possible for Paulding to participate in Norwich's Master of Arts in Military History Gettysburg Staff Ride.