



NEWSLETTER

*"HE WENT WHERE OTHERS FEARED TO GO
AND DID WHAT OTHERS FAILED TO DO. HE
HAS CRIED, PAINED, AND HOPED . . . BUT
MOST OF ALL, HE HAS LIVED TIMES
OTHERS WOULD SAY BEST FORGOTTEN."*

No. 23

A Quarterly Publication for Vietnam Helicopter Crewmembers

December, 1992

*Wishing you Peace,
Health and Happiness throughout the
Holiday Season and the New Year.*

**VHCMA '93
7th Annual Reunion
July 1-3, 1993
Phoenix, Arizona**

Just a reminder that next years reunion will be held in conjunction with the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) in Phoenix. A hotel site for our reunion is still undecided and details will be passed along to you as they develop. Go ahead and mark your calendars and make plans to join us.

From the Editor: Well got the wife and kid to bed and ready to start putting the finishing touches on another newsletter. I want to appolize for this and the last publication being a little late getting to you than expected. My personal schedule has been off the last couple of months with the illness of my father and his passing in September. After the first of the year, I expect to be back in a normal routine.

I want to thank everyone who sends in material for the newsletter and want to encourage our newer members that all contributions are welcome and will be used. Photos are especially welcomed and will be returned.

Hopping a Flight to the Next Century

Hunting for opportunities in the international defense market, Bell Helicopter launched a major upgrade program for its Vietnam War-era UH-1H Huey chopper.

Bell has joined with Textron subsidiary Lycoming to provide a package that would install the new 400 shaft power T-53-L-703 engine and replace the transmission, gearbox, rotor blades, tail boom and drive system.

The upgrade will enable customer to take current in-service Hueys and make them fly faster, higher and farther, while significantly lowering maintenance cost. The cost for the Bell kits would be about \$1 million.

A Bell spokesman said, "When we looked at the value of the UH-1H -- over 3,000 of these aircraft operating in 29 countries -- we decided to provide an upgrade that takes the loyal customers currently flying the Huey into the next century." He added, "...that the Army will be selling about 500 Hueys to foreign governments during the next two years and that Bell hopes to persuade those countries to improve the aircraft." While the U.S. Army could do some of the upgrades, Bell is not counting on it. Bell is looking at the international possibilities where the aircraft is going for its second life.

The Huey dates to a 1950s Army development program, when the service decided it wanted to improve helicopters used for medical evacuation in the Korean War. A decade later, the Huey became the standard for military helicopter, serving in the Vietnam War.

A Belated Heartfelt Thanks

By Jim Groeger

One of my favorite stories has to do with two helicopter pilots from HMM-263. It was the summer of 1967, I was a forward observer for naval gunfire in Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment (A/1/12) attached to the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. We had just completed a search and destroy operation and we were being flown back to the USS Okinawa which was our Special Landing Force home base. The battalion had set up a 270° perimeter circling most of a steep hill with jungle to the front. The rear 90° was open land spotted with rice paddies, which the last people on the ends of the perimeter could observe. As wave after wave of H-34's came and extracted our group the word came down that volunteers were needed for the final wave. Since Cpl John K. March (F.O./F.N.G.), Downingtown, PA and I had been through some tough time we figured we'd be able to survive better than most, so we said we'd stick around for the final wave. As our ranks thinned out we started to receive light fire from out of the jungle about 150 meters to our front. By the time all but the final group was ready to be extracted it was a hot LZ.

As the final wave came in we felt a great sense of relief. Our focus was on the enemy in the jungle as we tried to return accurate fire. Had we looked up at the wave of birds coming in we would have seen that they were one bird short. Needless to say it was gut-check time. The call went down for volunteers again. Cpl March, myself and five infantrymen decided to stay and wait for the final helo. The enemy's numbers had grown to where they would break cover to get to us. As this was unsuccessful they kept us pinned down with heavy fire, trying to pick us off. After what seemed like an eternity (but was probably only 10-15 minutes) we could hear the "thwop-thwop-thwop" of the H-34 coming in. We had dug in positions as the base of the hill but now it was time to go. The helo landed at the top of the hill about 100 meter away. We broke cover and ran up the hill shooting as we went. The enemy came out of the jungle as we retreated. As the last marine got into the H-34 the pilot revved up the engine to whisk us away. A problem developed, one too many passengers for the aircraft to lift off. I looked up noticed holes appearing in the fuselage. I then leaned out the aft port side window and started returning fire. Repeatedly the pilot tried to take off but the only thing that happened was the landing gear oleos would extend, but the wheels would not quite come off the ground. My next thought was, who would be the one to get out or would we all stay and make a fight of it. If something wasn't done quickly the decision would be made for us as we were sustaining a lot of hits. The pilot was thinking along the same lines. Down the back of the hill he swung the bird, and as fate would have it a path was there for us to drive down. Each side of the narrow path was covered with small boulders making it imperative to stay on it. We finally got away from enemy fire as we rolled down the hill. What happened next still amazes me. I looked forward to see a four-foot boulder in our path that blocked our way to freedom. The pilot rolled up to it and hit the brakes causing the landing gear oleos to compress, then in the next split second he revved the

engine to maximum power and released the brakes, causing us to crow-hop over the boulder. This was our 1st obstacle as we continued down the side of the hill. The path led to a flat road which we cruised down for about a quarter to half mile until we built up enough speed to shudder into the air. The flight to the ship was uneventful, we touched down and jumped out. Another day flying with HMM-263 -- I'd like to express a belated heartfelt thanks to those pilots and the fine job they did.

OSCAR

Reprinted from the VIETNAM VETERAN

The men who performed this mission were called OSCAR by the helicopter pilot buddies with affection because this was also a dangerous and difficult job. The Scout or OSCAR, was a trained combat infantryman who came from the field or special Scout Observer Course at Fort Eustis, Va.

Once in the air OSCAR observed the area below searching for signs of the enemy. OSCAR marked his target with either white phosphorous or colored smoke. He also had his choice of an M-16 or M-60 machinegun, an M-79 grenade launcher or CAR-16.

LOH's usually flew in teams of two. The lead ship finds and fixes the enemy. The other LOH or wind was responsible for spotting enemy fire directed at them.

Two well armed AH-1G Cobras flew overhead as support. OSCAR also monitored the radio frequencies and was able to land the LOH in of an emergency.



THE WALL: REMEMBRANCE & REFLECTION

By Dick Detra

It only took 24 years for three Vietnam veteran door gunners to make the journey from San Francisco, Olympia, Washington and Minneapolis to our nation capital. Emotion ran high reflecting on what this journey actually meant to Dave Huggins, Dennis Pierpoint and Dick Detra. The "WALL" draws you near when casually walking toward it from the Washington Monument, Lincoln Monument on Constitution Avenue. Today, it is the most visited monument in Washington D.C. Our purpose was to leave a personal memento at the "WALL", so that our unit in Vietnam and the men that gave the ultimate sacrifice would never be forgotten. That unit was the 188th Assault Helicopter Company "BLACK WIDOWS," which only existed from 11/66 to 7/68. The original company came over from Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in early 1967 and set up operations at Dau Tieng, in the midst of the Michelin rubber plantation in the III Corps Area of Operation. The 188th existed only in the environments of combat in South Vietnam. There are 58,183 names on the black granite Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We could feel the inner power of the "WALL" as we walked into view. The knoll blends in perfectly with the surrounding landscape. The "WALL" was dedicated on November 13, 1982. It just so happened that we would be caught up in the memorial Day activities dedicating the ten year anniversary of the "WALL".

Continued on Page 3

1992 has been proclaimed The Year of the Vietnam Veteran. It was hard for the three of us to understand after so many ears of feeling like outcast of our own society. It was also our first experience with ROLLING THUNDER V, which brought together 35,000 Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club members to the "WALL". We were fortunate to get most of the event on video and the emotional levels can't be put on paper. It is something that one has to experience in person to feel the full impact of emotions. It took 20 years for Americans to realize that it was all right to hate the war, but not to hate the warriors!!! On November 11, 1992, President Bush has been invited to give the key not address and Mrs. Bush has agreed to serve as Honorary Chair of the "Remembrance and Reflection" Advisory Board. About 2.5 million people from all walks of life visit the "WALL" annually. 2.9 million men and women served in Vietnam during the war years of 1959-73.

Activities will be held between November 7-11, 1992 for Veterans Day. It is expected to be the largest gathering of Vietnam veterans held in the U.S. We found the D.C. area to be very expensive and so I regret to say that I will not be able to make a second trip to the "WALL" for this historical gathering of brothers-in-arms. I feel sorrow in my heart that I can not financially make this journey East and for the rest of you who won't be there in person. It's a real shame that most of us live so far from the nations capital and our "WALL".

I had contacted two old service buddies, Dennis Pierpoint and Dave Huggins months before Memorial Day 1992. They were excited about going and we made our arrangements for the trip. We spent six days in the D.C.-Alexandria area and enjoyed the beauty of the historical east coast. The area consisted of lush green rolling hills, hot, humid, and could turn cold in a moments notice. It even rained during our visit, which reminded all of us of the Monsoon rains while in Vietnam. We experienced elation and pride being with so many Vietnam Veterans, our first since returning home. There was a miniature copy of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, which is scheduled for dedication on Veterans Day, 1993. In 1984, a flagpole and Frederick Hart's seven-foot bronze statue, The Three Servicemen, were added to the memorial. The Memorial Day Ceremony was very moving as was the Joint Armed Services Color Guard and the U.S. Park Police Honor Guard. The musical interlude was performed by County Joe McDonald. Guest speakers included, Jan Scruggs (President, Vietnam Veterans Memorial), James Ridenour (Director National Park Service), Rose Lee (Gold Star Wives), Dr. Doris Lippman (Vietnam Women's Memorial Project), Patty Crawford (Daughter of a Vietnam Casualty), Lewis B. Puller, Jr (Pulitzer Prize winner, *Fortunate Son - The Healing of a Vietnam Vet*) and the Honorable George McGovern. We had planned on seeing a whole lot of sight but kept being drawn back to the "WALL". The polished black granite actually reaches out to those looking into it for the names of fallen friends from the Vietnam War.

Partially Personal... Wedding Belles

Ken San Sovcie, formerly of the 114th AHC, was married recently... however, he failed to mention his bride's name or date. His new address is P.O. Box 288, Gilsum, NH 03448, phone 603-357-4812



179 "Satisfaction" of 188th AHC, 1967-68
SP5 Greg Allen, SP4 Dick Detra

Wisconsin Museum Huey Gunship

The State of Wisconsin, Dept of Veterans Affairs, will open a military museum in the state capital in 1992. Included in the displays will be a Huey gunship donated by the government. A mannequin will be cast as a door gunner, complete with M-60. VHCMA Life member, Tim Staats, has become a source of information for the curator on the door gunner aspect of the display. Since Tim does not consider himself the best expert, he thinks the best source of information can come the men who flew "guns". This would be an excellent opportunity for our membership to pass on their knowledge in a way that will be preserved. How many gunships in museums do you know of?

The Department needs first-hand information on the technical aspects of being a door gunner on a Huey gunship such as, but not limited to:

Was your M-60 modified? If so, how? (i.e. removal of flash hider, bipod, compensator, shoulder stock, ect.) Did you use the traditional C-ration feed can?

Was the bungi cord that held the M-60 tied in any particular method? What were the attaching points?

What clothing did you wear? (i.e. jungle fatigues, Nomex, flack jacket, "chick plate", ect)

What did you use as a feed box for the M-60? Wood ammo crates, mini-gun can? How was the box attached to the floor?

Where did you store your smoke grenades? How many? How attached?

Did you carry a personal weapon in the chopper? What type? Where did you store it? Did you carry other types of weapons or explosives: i.e. hand grenades?

Did you use the seat belts or safety straps? If safety straps, where were the attaching points? Were the straps regulation or jury-rigged?

Any and all information of this type is needed. Be expansive. This data cannot be found in any TM manual, particularly all jury-rigged devices or things distinctive to just one unit. Be sure to include your unit, area of operations, and the year you were Vietnam. You may be assured that all responses will be preserved in the archives of the museum for historical purposes. It can only come from combat veterans. Send any information to:

Richard Zeitlin, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, WI Department of Veterans Affairs, 30 West Miflin Street, Madison, WI 53703

Introductory Eassy on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Editors Note: VHCMA member, Greg Offringa, received his Graduate degree from Boston University in 1979. In 1983, he graduated from the Boston Institute for Psychotherapy's 3 year Clinical Fellow program and is a Diplomat in Clinical Social Work. He is currently in private practice, is on the admitting staff of Westwood Lodge Hospital, is a contract psychotherapy provider for the VA, and serves on the Professional Health Advisory Board for the Town of Sharon, MA. He is also finishing his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology through the Fielding Institute. The following information appeared in the VHPA/VHCMA New England Chapter Newsletter.

Over the last 18 years there has been a flood of papers, articles, and discussions on the subject of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) within the professional community and general public. The Vietnam war and its veterans have aided and even created the impetus for this country and for the world mental health community to articulate what the psychic effects of combat are on mental functioning. Prior to the Vietnam war this information was not available to the public unless you sought it out in the psychological literature. The concept of trauma begins with the understanding that there is an event which takes place which is out of the normal realm of everyday experiences. Some of the following array of psychological phenomena has been associated with psychological trauma:

1. The Traumatic event is persistently reexperienced.
 - a) Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections (daydreams/associations) of the actual traumatic event or thematically similar to the original traumatic event;
 - b) Recurrent dreams of the event or again thematically similar;
 - c) A distinct feeling or behavioral acting as if the original traumatic event is recurring;
 - d) A psychologically distressing response to sensory experiences which may resemble the traumatic event.
2. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma or numbing of general responsiveness which were not present before the traumatic event.
 - a) Efforts to avoid thoughts or feeling associated with the trauma;
 - b) Efforts to avoid activities or situations that arouse sensory recollections of the trauma;
 - c) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma, this is sometimes referred to as psychogenic amnesia, psychic blocking, ect.;
 - d) Markedly diminished interest in significant activities;
 - e) Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others;
 - f) Restricted range of affect;
3. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal.
 - a) Difficulty falling or staying asleep;

- b) Irritability or outbursts or anger;
- c) Difficulty concentrating;
- d) hyper-vigilance;
- e) Exaggerated startle response;
- f) physiologic reactivity upon exposure to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

4. Duration of the above psychological/physiological disturbance for at least one month after the traumatic experience.

I have just given a list and description of symptoms that people can experience after a traumatic event. What is symptom? A symptom is any sign, physical or mental that stands for something else. For instance, hunger can be a physiological symptom of your body not having enough nutrients to maintain its current nutritional needs. Psychologically the root(s) or cause(s) of a symptom are not always very clear because psychic symptoms are generally seen as a symbol of an internal psychic process.

The DAV published an article on PTSD (January 1992 V:34 1:1). Some years ago the DAV also published a booklet titled *Readjustment Problems Among Vietnam Veterans*. Both publications are good introductions to understanding the effects of war trauma. I want to emphasize that all people who experience war zone life are affected in some way. How people are affected by war depends on a number of internal (psychic) and external (environmental) factors. It is very important to note that even though war veterans may share some similar symptoms, the causes for those symptoms and how one suffers with and/or how clinicians address these symptoms may vary from one person to another.

Some very important thoughts about trauma. Any traumatic event effects how a person feels about himself, other people and the world or environment. Most people think about the word or concept of "trauma" as to mean that something happens (physical event) to us that creates an overwhelming feeling of helplessness - a physical trauma - and this trauma has to do harm to our body in some way. However, trauma can also occur in other ways, such as, when there is enough feeling(s) or emotions present in (an affective event) which a state of being helpless or of being overwhelmed is created. Lastly, trauma can occur when we participate in actions, behaviors (mental or physical) which are later personally seen as out of character. War is full of extreme situations and emotions. We all enter war with our own individual strengths and weaknesses in the way we psychologically deal with life. This is generally a fertile area for difficulties in resolving internal conflicts, feelings, etc. which originate in combat.

There are two classifications of PTSD. They are: 1. Acute PTSD and 2. Delayed PTSD. The former distinction is used when the above symptoms are evident immediately after the occurrence of the traumatic event. Delayed is referred to when the symptoms occur months or years after the traumatic event. When the PTSD symptoms appear and how people approach the resolution of those symptoms in their lives is very much an