

January 28, 1996

Mr. Dick Detra  
Unit Historian

[REDACTED]  
Brisbane, CA 94005-1329

Re: Black Widows

Dear Dick:

Not sure what kind of information you are looking for regards the 188th AHC but I may be able to provide some assistance.

I joined the 188th shortly after they had arrived in-country and prior to their receiving their own helicopters. I came to them from Cu Chi where I had served with the 116th AHC, Hornets, for several months. My immediate assignment prior to moving to the Black Widows was with the battalion as an assistant S4. This was a position that I was not overly thrilled with and when the 188th came in-country, I saw a chance to get my own platoon. This position called for a captain by TO&E but majors mostly filled them due to the number of aviator majors in the pool.

I was successful in getting transferred as the 188th had a quartermaster captain who was more qualified than I for an S4 job and he wanted it. Since I was an experienced Flight Lead with over 1000 hours of helicopter time, the company was glad to "trade". It took about a month after my arrival and I finally became "Black Widow 16", First Platoon Leader.

My only claim to fame was that I was the guy who named our helicopter parking area "the Web"; don't know if the name ever stuck but it was used by all while I was there.

My moment for glory came about when we had to fly down to Vung Tau to pick up the helicopters. Since I was experienced with the III Corps area, I was delegated flight lead for the return. Shortly before arrival at Dau Tieng, I radioed the company commander who was elsewhere in the flight and suggested he take over the lead position and lead the choppers in. He did so and we were proud as hell to bring our birds home.

I was one of the first to complete refueling and called the tower for permission to hover to the Web. The others picked up on it and it stuck. Perhaps you remember that this was a common practice for all the AHCs. The Hornets returned to the Nest and the Robin Hoods to the Forest if I remember correctly.

2.

We had a lot of fun when we started flying missions as we were one of the first companies in the area to fly H model Hueys. We could lift a lot more than the others with the D models and the people we supported on the ground thought we were just better pilots than the others. We did nothing to discourage that opinion.

I left the Black Widows around October 1967 for my DEROS to the States. I remained in the Army and retired in 1987.

Hope you find the above helpful. Feel free to contact me if you need any other information.

Sincerely,

*Maurice E. Charbonneau*

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Amarillo, TX 79109

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