

## ABOUT THE DESIGNER

In January 1967, at the age of nineteen, Dick Detra was drafted into the United States Army in Minneapolis, Minnesota and after six months of Infantry training and a 30 day leave he was whisked away by Pan Am Airlines to South Vietnam. During his in-country processing he lucked out and was assigned to the 188<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company where his 11 Bravo MOS was changed after volunteering to fly as a door gunner. There isn't a day that goes by that he doesn't reminisce about those times and the 750 hours he spent riding in the back of a *Black Widow* slick and a *Spider* gunship in the skies above South Vietnam. His Air Medal with 29 Oak Leaf Clusters is his most treasured award from his June 1967 thru June 1968 tour in South Vietnam

## THE RESTORATION OF 66-16779

The Redwood Chapter #223 of the Vietnam Veterans of America received a UH-1 Huey, tail # 66-16779 from the California National Guard and donated the "slick" to the Pacific Coast Air Museum on November 1, 1987. In 2002 Black Widow vets, John Charlebois, Bob Moon, Dick and his wife Karma volunteered to be part of "The Huey Crew". They were there for one reason only; to help restore a Black Widow *slick* that was flown by C/101 2<sup>nd</sup> lift platoon crews in the mountains of northern I (pronounced eye) Corps from April 1969 till March 1970.

Over a period of four years, with the help of the assigned PCAM crew chief, Phil Williams, a two-tour 1<sup>st</sup> Cav crew chief, they completed the restoration project in 2006. If it wasn't for this restoration project I doubt that this art work would ever have happened. It was first used on t-shirts for the 2005 Black Widows and Spiders reunion in San Francisco, California and also to sell at the annual Pacific Coast Air Museum's "**Wings Over Wine Country**" Air Show held at the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa, California.

## THE ARTWORK

Renowned aviation artist Joe Kline, who served as a crew chief with the B/101 Kingsmen, the 188<sup>th</sup> AHC's sister company back in 1968, gave me the OK to use the featured helicopter art from his print **"Riders on the Storm"** ...one of Joe's many Army Aviation works of art.

Colin Birdseye of Studiosolo in San Rafael, California created the air brush art work and all other lettering on the **"LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS"** poster to highlight Kline's Huey.

Previously with Winterland Productions Colin has done work for Santana, The Eagles, Eric Clapton and the Allman Brothers.

**"THE SPIDER PEOPLE"** art work was done by Chuck Johnston and Bill Sexton of Studio 1204 located in Union City, California.

### **LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS**

The art work design for this poster was based on the original 'White Spider" nose art and the "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" door art that I hand-painted in November 1967 on my assigned 2<sup>nd</sup> lift platoon slick 66-16119. I picked the name **"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"** because it was my favorite song off the Beatles' Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band album, which was released in June of 1967. After volunteering for the gun platoon I painted "Satisfaction", "Psycho", "Climax" and "Cold Sweat" on the doors of four Spider gunships.

### **Glossary of Terms**

The 188<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) – the original **Black Widows** and **Spiders** were stationed at Camp Rainier in the Michelin rubber plantation, located next to the village of Dau Tieng in the III Corps area of operation and at LZ Sally in the northern I Corps area of operation, seven miles north of Hue. The 188<sup>th</sup> AHC served only during the Vietnam War and was in-country from late April 1967 till June 30, 1968. They lost 18 killed and 83 wounded in action during combat operations; which included the Tet 1968 communist offensive.

On July 1, 1968 the 188<sup>th</sup> was inactivated and reflagged as the Charlie Company (C/101) Black Widows, 101<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and remained at LZ Sally until April 1969 when the company moved

to Phu Bai, where they stayed until February 1972 when the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Screaming Eagles) returned home to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

**Spiders' dog tag:** with eight Charlie model gunships and 32 men; the **Spiders** gun platoon or "guns" was smaller than the two lift platoons, but the most lethal with its assorted armament systems. The **Spiders** supplied close-in fire support for the 188th slicks (troop carriers) on combat assaults, infantry units, Navy Seals, 5th Special Forces teams and CCN SOG teams.

**66-16779** is the identification number of the helicopter. The first two numbers mean that this Huey was built by Bell helicopter in 1966.

**Army Aviation** - the military branch of the Armed Forces that the *Black Widows* and *Spiders* served under in South Vietnam.

The **black spider** on the right was the centerpiece of the Black Widow nose art displayed on most of the company's "slicks." In late 1968 the 101<sup>st</sup> said no more art work on Army property and ordered all nose and door art removed. This order was not well-received by the C/101 aircrews and was definitely bad for morale.

**Beats Walkin'** was the catch phrase used on signs that were displayed in plain view for the grunts who rode their slicks into battle in 'NAM. The Black Widows wanted everyone to know who was taking them into battle and who would be picking them up from the battlefield. The original signs read: **BEATS WALKIN' Your Ride Compliments of the 188<sup>th</sup> AHC Black Widows.**" C/101 crews carried on the tradition and thanks to 1<sup>st</sup> lift platoon door gunner Bob Moon that tradition has been revived. Bob sent signs to the *Black Widows* of A/9/101 during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-2004 and to the *Spiders* of A/4/3 and the "new" *Black Widows* of C/4/101 during their 2005-06 deployments to Iraq.

**UH-1H:** The UH means "utility helicopter" and the 1H is the model. HUEY is what everyone called the Bell helicopter. "Slick" was a term used for the UH-1H troop carrier because it had a slick look to it and no external weapon pylons hanging from its sides like the Charlie model gunships. The *Spiders* had a saying that, "**Slicks are for**

*kids.*" There was a healthy interaction between the two lift platoons and the gun platoon. Vietnam was known as the "*Helicopter War.*"

**"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"** was a 188<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> lift platoon slick. The bulls-eye markings on the tail boom and upper surface of the port and starboard tail-planes were used while the 188<sup>th</sup> was assigned to the 269<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion (CAB) "*Black Barons*" for visual identification.

The white spider with the ace of spades nose art and the "***Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds***" door art were used from the original art work on 66-16119.

**Dau Tieng:** a small rubber processing village nestled along the banks of the muddy Saigon River, a major infiltration route and just across the road was the small, isolated base camp of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, who had named it Camp Rainier. The 188<sup>th</sup> was stationed there from April 1967 till mid March 1968.

**LZ Sally:** This small 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division base camp was home to the 188<sup>th</sup> from mid March till July 1, 1968. C/101 was stationed at LZ Sally until April 1969.

**Phu Bai:** C/101 base camp from April 1969 till February 1972, when the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division redeployed back to Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

## THE SPIDER PEOPLE

Unlike veterans of earlier wars, Vietnam vets were never honored or accepted back into the main stream after returning home...there were no parades and there was definitely no "Welcome Home." Their service was viewed by most with indifference and in some cases disrespect. I wanted to create a poster that instilled a sense of pride for my brothers in the 188<sup>th</sup> and to those who have followed in our foot steps. The artwork design for this poster was based on the lineage of the *Black Widows* and *Spiders* from November 1, 1966 to the present. A legacy to be proud of...

## Glossary of Terms

**“The Spider People”** was a term coined by the Special Forces teams that the *Black Widows* and *Spiders* supported during “TOP SECRET” special ops in 1967 till 1972. Once the *Black Widows* and *Spiders* had earned the respect of B-36 (Teams A-361 and A-362) and SOG (Studies and Observations Group) CCN (Command and Control North) teams, the team’s always asked specifically for “**The Spider People**” to fly them “across the fence” into Cambodia, Laos or the DMZ but more importantly, to come and get them out when the *shit* hit the fan.

**“Guns Up”** was the gun platoon’s motto, a term used whenever *Spider* light fire teams were scrambled to provide close-in fire support for ground units, who were in heavy contact with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) or the Viet Cong (VC) and in imminent danger of being overrun. The *Spiders* were taken under enemy fire on a daily basis.

The **188<sup>th</sup> Black Widow Aviation “AIM HIGH”** pocket patch (top left) was worn by the command staff and the **SPIDERS** pocket patch (top right) was worn by the gun platoon crews. Every platoon’s designation was embroidered on the bottom of the patch. The 188<sup>th</sup> and her detachments had a total of 13 different pocket patches. The 188<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company motto was “**AIM HIGH.**”

The **gray oval** pocket patch was worn by C/101 crews from July 1968 till May 1969 and the **blue diamond** pocket patch from May 1969 till March 1976.

The **C/4/101 pocket patch** is worn by the present-day Black Widows.

The **A/4/3 pocket patch** is worn by the present day *Spiders*. After the Black Widows of A/9/101 were re-flagged in May of 2004 as A/4/3, their commander, Captain Jason Blevins, adopted the *Spider* gun platoon call sign in order to maintain the 188<sup>th</sup> AHC Black Widows lineage with the new unit. To honor the 188<sup>th</sup>, SSG Tony Alvarado, formerly with A/9/101 and now with A/4/3, designed this new **Spiders** pocket patch. Alvarado added “**188<sup>th</sup> AHC EST. 1966**” at the bottom of the patch.

“**Mate and Kill**” has been the motto of the *Black Widows* since December 1989. The term is used to describe the mating habits of the female black widow spider, which after mating always eats the male.

The center piece for this art work is the female black widow spider and the web connecting the Vietnam era veterans and the present day **Black Widows** and **Spiders**...a band of brothers and sisters-in-arms.

**“IF YOU CARE ENOUGH TO SEND THE VERY BEST”** was a phrase used on Black Widow calling cards during the Vietnam War. It’s what the **Black Widows** and **Spiders** are all about.

### **BLACK WIDOWS AND SPIDERS LINEAGE**

The lineage of the **188<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company** goes back to World War II. On October 1, 1943 the United States Army activated the **2026<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Truck Company, Aviation** at Lockbourne Army Air Base in Ohio. During World War II the **2026<sup>th</sup>** participated in the New Guinea campaign in the South Pacific and was inactivated in Japan after the war on April 15, 1946. On August 1, 1946 the **2026<sup>th</sup>** was converted and re-designated as the **2026<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Truck Company**. On November 1, 1966 the **2026<sup>th</sup>** was redesignated as the **188<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company, Air Mobile Light Aircraft (AML)**, allotted to the United States Third Army at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

**188<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division**, Fort Campbell, Kentucky - Dau Tieng, South Vietnam – III Corps Area of Operation (AO) (11/66-5/67).

**188<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company “Black Widows”, 269<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion “Black Barons”, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade**, call sign: “**Hawk**”, Dau Tieng (Camp Rainier), South Vietnam (5/67-3/68) Motto: “**AIM HIGH**”

**188<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 308<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion “Black Adler”, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade, LZ Sally, South Vietnam – northern I (pronounced eye) Corps AO (3/68-7/68).**

**Spiders gun platoon** (11/66-7/68), Motto: “**GUNS UP**” The Spiders were reassigned to **Delta Company** (call sign: “**Hawk**”), **101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Air Cav Division** and became the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon.

**Charlie Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Air Cav Division - LZ Sally, South Vietnam – northern I Corps AO (7/68-8/68).** The **101<sup>st</sup>** didn’t like being referred to as the “**Air Cav**” so their commanders quickly changed their designation back to “**Airborne**” in August 1968.

**Charlie Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile), LZ Sally (8/68-4/69).**

**Charlie Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile), Phu Bai, located just south of Hue, South Vietnam (4/69-2/72).**

**Charlie Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile), Fort Campbell, Kentucky (2/72-3/76).**

**Charlie Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion (Wings of the Eagle), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky (3/76-10/81).**

**Alpha Company, 158<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky (10/81-10/87).**

**Alpha Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Eagle Assault), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky (10/87-7/89).**

**Alpha Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky (7/89-12/89).**

**Alpha Company, 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Eagle Strike), 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Afghanistan, Iraq (12/89-5/04). Motto: "Mate and Kill"**

**A/9/101 "BLACK WIDOWS"** were re-flagged **A/4/3** in May of 2004 after returning to Fort Campbell from their 2003-2004 tour in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Alpha Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Marne Assault), 3<sup>rd</sup> Aviation Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division** adopted "*Spiders*" as the companies call sign. They were first deployed to Iraq from February 2005 thru 2006. The company deployed again to Iraq in May 2007 and is based at Camp Striker under the command of Captain Sean O'Connell. The majority of A/4/3 aviators were former Black Widows from A/9/101. Motto: "**GUNS UP**" (5/04 to the present)

**Charlie Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment (Wings of the Eagle), 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) C/4/101**, the new "**Black Widows**," deployed in Iraq from October 2005 thru 2006 under the command of their first female commander, Black Widow 06, Captain Melissa Jones. Motto: "**Mate and Kill**" (5/04 to the present).

On a historic note: the **Comancheros, Kingsmen and Black Widows** of the present day **4<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment (Wings of the Eagle)** also served together in 101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion in South Vietnam from July 1, 1968 till February 1972.