



# THE DUSTOFFER NEWSLETTER



**DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION**

**JUNE 1994**

**16th ANNUAL REUNION OF THE DUSTOFF ASSN.  
24, 25, 26, FEBRUARY 1995  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**



*Al Khobar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Battle-hardened 498th Medical Company DUSTOFFers prepare to return from the desert combat zone to home in the United States. Top left to right are CPT Randy Anderson, CPT Dave Severence, LT Joe Ponce, LT Larry Fulton, and CPT Pete McHugh. CPT Leonard Leo is in the foreground.*



# DUSTOFF UNITS - LINEAGE AND HONORS

## 54th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance)

The 54th is equipped with UH-1V helicopter ambulances and has, for many years, been a corner stone of excellence in Army Medical Department Aviation from its challenging station of Fort Lewis, Washington. The unit was originally constituted as a Malaria Control Unit in September 1943 and activated that month in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was reorganized and redesignated several times in the next few years prior to its inactivation in December 1945 in the Philippine Islands. The 54th was activated for Korean War service in 1952 and remained in the Far East until 1962 when it moved to Fort Benning, Georgia. The unit was later deployed to the Republic of Vietnam where it earned 11 campaign stars.

Since its return to the United States, the 54th has been an active participant in the MAST Program, specializing in hoist missions in the difficult high country of the Northwest. In fact, although the unit was alerted for service in Operation Desert Shield, the worst flooding this century canceled that move and the 54th spent the early winter of 1990 specializing in night vision goggle rescue hoist missions.

The 54th's campaigns and decorations include:

### CAMPAIGNS

World War II - AP  
New Guinea  
Leyte

Korean War  
Third Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer 1953

Armed Forces Expeditions  
Dominican Republic

Vietnam  
Counteroffensive Phases III-VII  
Tet Counteroffensive

Tet 69/Counteroffensive  
Summer-Fall 1969  
Winter-Spring 1970  
Sanctuary Counteroffensive  
Consolidation I

### DECORATIONS

Meritorious Unit Commendation,  
Korea 1953-1954  
Philippine Presidential Unit Citation,  
October 1944-July 1945

## 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance)

The 159th has had a storied and valiant history beginning with its constitution, activation, and subsequent inactivation as a medical services detachment in France in 1944 and 1945, respectively. The unit was redesignated as a maxillofacial detachment and activated in Korea in late 1951 where it remained until its inactivation in January 1953. Some ten years later, the 159th re-emerged as the 159th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) at Fort Riley, Kansas. It saw considerable service in Vietnam and subsequently in Germany where it was redesignated as a 15 aircraft medical company with UH-60 Black Hawks in October 1988. Recently, the 159th self-deployed 8 aircraft to Turkey for Operation Provide Comfort in 1991 and executed a sea deployment to Somalia to support coalition forces there in late 1992. The 159th is presently collocated with its parent battalion, the 421st Medical Battalion (Evacuation), at Wiesbaden Air Base, Germany.

The 159th's campaigns and decorations include:

### CAMPAIGNS

World War II  
European-African-Middle Eastern  
Theater, Silver Band

Korean War  
UN Summer-Fall Offensive

Second Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer-Fall 1952  
Third Korean Winter

### Vietnam

Counteroffensive Phases III-VII  
Tet Counteroffensive  
Tet 69/Counteroffensive  
Summer-Fall 1969  
Winter-Spring 1970  
Sanctuary Counteroffensive  
Consolidation I and II  
Cease-Fire

### DECORATIONS

Meritorious Unit Commendation  
(Army) - Vietnam 1968  
Meritorious Unit Commendation  
(Army) - Vietnam 1969-1970  
Meritorious Unit Commendation  
(Army) - Vietnam 1970-1971  
Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with  
Palm - Vietnam 1967-1968  
Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with  
Palm - Vietnam 1968-1970  
Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal,  
First Class - Vietnam 1967-1970



*Hoisting still requires practice as evidenced in this shot of a crewmember being rescued from a treeless landing zone.*

**NEED TO CONTACT  
THE ASSOCIATION?  
CALL JOE PONCE AT  
(210) 221-6406/8357.**

# DUSTOFF DATA

*Did you know that...*

- DUSTOFF losses in Vietnam were almost evenly split between officer and enlisted crew members -- 90 vs 121?
- The first female commander of a DUSTOFF unit in combat was Major Pauline Knapp?
- DUSTOFF platoons in divisional medical battalions, the 15th in the 1st Cavalry and the 326th in the 101st Airborne, suffered more crew losses than any other DUSTOFF units in that Vietnam?
- Almost twice as many DUSTOFF units and aircraft were deployed for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm as were in Vietnam at the peak of that over 10-year long war?
- Colonels Bob Romines and Merle Snyder became DUSTOFF pilots as WO1s in the 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), III Corps, Vietnam, in 1968?

- Captain Joe Martin and LT Warren K. Hoen, then with the 57th Medical Detachment at Fort Meade, flew a three hour mission in September of 1958 for a tub of 40 live fish.
- Captains George Hurtado and John Hill were forced to land their UH-1H aircraft one evening in 1968 at Long Binh Heliport in a nest of sand bags and mattresses after bending the skids up around the cargo doors in a less than skillful attempted landing in the Plain of Reeds region along Vietnam's border with Cambodia?
- Captain Frank Novier and CWO Jim Loomis saved the lives of Major General Marshall McCabe, then Commanding General of the U.S. Army Medical Command, Europe, and several of his staff by executing a perfect emergency landing at Stuttgart International Airport following a complete hydraulics failure in their 421st Medical Company helicopter?

# ROTOR WASH

A number of items...Colonel (Selectee) Randy Maschek was recently selected to command a division support command...The 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), Ansbach, Germany, has received the Expert Field Medical Streamer, qualifying over 65% of its medical personnel in the rigorous testing...the 421st Medical Battalion had six soldiers receiving the EFMB in late 1993, including Major Betty Wiley, Captain Iacovetta, LTs Hill and Chesbro, and SGTs Bays and Neel. LT Hill was also selected to spend a day with the Chief of the Medical Service Corps in Washington, DC, as an outstanding junior officer...Several ungracious comments were received concerning a recent grievous injury incurred by the Editor of the DUSTOFFer Newsletter who was mauled by a fiendish house cat, requiring a week's stay at Brooke Army Medical Center for surgery and intravenous antibiotics; something to the effect of "Well, that's not the first he got involved with a bad kitty (sic), but it is the first time he didn't marry it."

## NOTE FROM THE SECRETARY

During our last Annual reunion, several DUSTOFF members stated that they had not received a newsletter in some time. The association has recently purchased a new computer system designed to speed processing with our member database. Since this is our official directory of both lifetime and regular members, it is only as accurate as the information we receive.

We are currently in the process of updating our software and will be doing the same with the database. In order to insure that the information we have on all our members is accurate, we ask that you fill out and return the **Change of Address** portion of the **Membership Form** on the inside cover of this newsletter. Please feel free to copy and distribute this to any potential members and those who fail to receive this newsletter. You may also use the form as a change of address when you relocate.

We look forward to seeing you in February at our next reunion!

Joe Ponce  
Secretary

## CLOSING OUT THE FLIGHT PLAN

DUSTOFFer Fred Behrens reported the death of Robert L. Pickens, a resident of Beeville, Texas, of pneumonia on 11 January 1994. Bob served as an Eagle DUSTOFF crewchief, 326th Medical Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, in 1970-71. He participated in Operations Lam Son 719 and 720 and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Bob received the Distinguished Flying Cross for rescuing two wounded airborne troopers, a mission for which he volunteered even though he had three fractured vertebrae as a result of a helicopter crash that had killed the medic on the aircraft, Jim Wieler. Learning that several other DUSTOFF helicopters had been severely damaged by ground fire while attempting the night hoist mission, he nevertheless persevered and safely extracted his wounded soldiers who would have most certainly died without his bravery and skill. Bob is survived by his widow, Mrs. Shirley Pickens, 1011 W. Sylvia, Beeville, Texas 78102.

Another DUSTOFFer reported to have passed on is Tom Burroughs who hailed from Illinois and had been a resident of Montgomery, Alabama. Information is a bit scarce, but his death apparently occurred within the last two years.

# LONE STAR DUSTOFF REVISITED

Greg Griffin, who commanded the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, penned the following letter to "The Soldiers of Lone Star DUSTOFF" -

"The 24th of February marked the anniversary of the initiation of the ground war against Iraq. It's hard to believe that three years have passed since the days of blowing sand and black smoke. I think that it is most appropriate to reflect on that period of time that has touched our lives forever.

After being alerted for deployment in August 1990, taken off status the middle of September, undergoing an Aviation Resources Management Inspection in October, and re-alerted in mid-November, we came together as a company the second week in December. As we began to associate each other's names with faces, we almost immediately started to bond as a team. It was certainly that cohesion and individual initiative that got us through challenge after challenge that was to follow.

Those challenges started immediately with our arrival into chaos at the Dhahran airport. After landing, our palletized cargo was dropped at the 'Lost in Space' sand lot, some of which was never to be seen again. The Air Force Operations personnel were demanding that we clear the flight line of our aircraft NOW! We explained that the UH-1 require some assembly and flight testing prior to movement, but they weren't hearing any of that. They wanted to drag them a mile and a half down the ramp to an Army portion of the flight line, but the Army Operations told us that there was no room there either. They stated that the UH-1s had to be flown to a 'bazillion' acre helicopter parking lot three miles away. AF OPNS still wanted their flight line cleared NOW! NO ONE IN CHARGE! NO LIAISON! NO PLAN! Welcome to the tip of the Chaos Iceberg.

We were then transported to the lovely Port of Dammam. We found ourselves a spot in an open-sided ware-

house and made camp. There we enjoyed Christmas as we attempted to coordinate for movement to our tactical assembly area. The commander in charge of the port operations said we needed to clear the port to make way for more units that were in-bound. We asked the quartering party for the 332d Medical Brigade where they wanted us to assemble. Their answer was an area of over twenty square miles, north of Tap Line Road and east of the Wadi Al Batin. We were told just to go find a spot in the desert and then let the brigade know where we were. Our quartering party arrived at our first spot in the desert on New Years Eve 1990. The remainder of the company soon followed to our initial assembly area. The move required 36 trucks and flatbed trailers in addition to our organic vehicles to transport over 120 pallets of cargo, which included 30 days of all classes of supply.

We were now in our Brave New World. It was there that we fine-tuned the true art of convoy operations, formation flight, pin point navigation, building bunkers, physical security, and disposing of human waste. We learned the uniqueness of desert operations, and oh yes, night vision goggle (NVG) operations in Baja, Oklahoma!

We began to figure out our command and control relationships with higher headquarters, and relationships with units we were to support. The 507th was to be in direct support of the 1st Infantry Division, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, and 1st Armored Division/United Kingdom for breach and follow-on combat operations.

As we went over divisional MEDEVAC procedures, we found that we needed a CALLSIGN to distinguish MEDEVAC units from each other, which all used the same frequency. All of the company platoons were from Texas except the Sooners of the 4th Platoon. 4th Platoon decided that they were really from north Texas, so the name LONESTAR DUSTOFF was born.

In the early morning hours of 17 January 1991, our unit was alerted. We

scrambled to our bunkers, donned our chemical gear and listened to 'CNN Live' from Baghdad. At first I was concerned for us, but quickly my thoughts and prayers went out to the Air Force and Navy aircrews, who were more directly in harm's way. The start of Operation DESERT STORM (The Air War) significantly increased the pucker factor and intensified planning, guessing, and anticipation for what was to come next.

As the Big Red One (1st ID) began to move in, our mission responsibilities were further defined. We began direct coordination with their 4th Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division divisional medical units, and medical elements supporting the 1st Armored Division (UK). The OPLAN for Operation DESERT SABER (The Ground War) began to unfold. I made the decision to co-locate with the 4th Aviation Brigade in order to better support the operation. This relationship proved to be invaluable, and without it, we would have never caught up with the war!

The first week in February we were told to move into a forward assembly area some 70 miles to the northwest. We began by moving Flight Operations and all four flight platoons into position. The truck and flatbed support that had been promised by higher headquarters to move the 120 pallets of company equipment forward never came. Service and Headquarters Platoons were left holding the bag, or maybe I should say the pallets. Through ingenuity, tireless dedication, and hours of sweat, those soldiers depalletized, reloaded, and transported that equipment 24 hours a day for two weeks with our 'old tired-ass 2½ ton trucks logging over 3,000 miles.

The company had flightcrews and aircraft pre-positioned forward with the medical companies of the 1st Forward Support Battalion and 498th FSB along Phase Line Cherry supporting across the Forward Line of Troops probing missions. It was on one of these

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## LONE STAR DUSTOFF

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night probing missions that LT Christ's 2d Platoon team responded to an urgent MEDEVAC request across FLOT. A Bradley fighting vehicle and an M113 armored personnel carrier had been hit and taken major casualties. It was later learned that the vehicles had been mistakenly engaged by an AH-64 attack helicopter from the 4th Brigade. Responding to this tragedy was to be the first of many night vision goggle (NVG) missions flown under near zero illumination and extremely adverse conditions. The next morning the 4th BDE Commander thanked me for the job done by our aircrew. He said that he didn't know how they had flown the mission with the visibility so bad. I told him that the crews were well trained in crew coordination and that a little luck never hurt either.

Only a few days before the ground war began, the company was told to attach one of our flight platoons to the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment for support. 2d Platoon volunteered to move with the 2d ACR, as they had established a support relationship earlier in the Operation. 2d Platoon departed without any organic company support, and quickly integrated with the 2d ACR's offensive operation. They were on their own for the duration of the War providing flawless, synchronized lifesaving support to the 2d ACR.

As 1SG Pruett, with Headquarters and Maintenance Platoons and the last of the company's logistical slice, closed on the forward assembly area, we were told to move to vicinity Phase Line Cherry for commencement of ground operations. I only had time to shake the 1SG's hand and leave Headquarters and Service Platoons with him and the Service Platoon leader, CPT Kueter. We did not have the organic vehicles for them to keep up with the Flight Platoons and Company Operations in a fast paced, deep offensive operation.

On 22 February, we moved north with the 4th Brigade into position. We had been in very close coordination with the UK Division during the planning phase for the breach operation. We received a British liaison/commu-

nication team and access to six Puma and six Lynx helicopters, if needed for additional evacuation assets. The breach went much faster and smoother than anticipated. Now, we were off to the races!

I requested and received augmented support from the 236th Med Company for the initial jump into Iraq. 236th aircraft replaced our forward prepositioned crews co-located with the 1st and 2nd FSB's, while our company operations and aircraft moved with the advance elements of the 4th Brigade. As soon as we arrived, some 70 miles north at our new site, we began receiving MEDEVAC requests and flying missions in support of 1st ID combat operations. We had the day crews flying missions and the night crews trying to sleep in their aircraft for a few hours before dark. As darkness set in, the missions became more numerous, the fighting more intense, and determining friend and foe more difficult. Flight Operations was being run out of the back of a M1008 pickup truck, as the main body of the convoy still had not arrived.

At approximately 0345, we received an urgent MEDEVAC request from Witch Doctor (2d AD FWD/498th) for 2 URGENT litter, followed moments later upgrade to 2 litter/3 ambulatory, and then upgrading to 4 URGENT litter/5 ambulatory (one of which was a double amputee) with 15 wounded on the ground. The Landing Zone was said to be hot with enemy situation unknown. The first aircraft was launched immediately. The next crew, LT Graybeal and WO1 Hein's, was briefed and launched at approximately 0400. Within a minute after take off and a mile away from base, the aircraft and three of the crew members were lost. LT Dan Graybeal, WO1 Kerry Hein, and SSG Michael Robson died while desperately trying to evacuate the wounded from the battlefield under limited visibility and hostile fire. Only the crew chief, SPC Nick Wright miraculously survived. Shortly after day break, the wreckage was examined for other survivors, but the worst was con-

firmed. I gathered the aircrews at my vehicle and briefed them on the tragic loss of our brothers. We held hands, offered prayer, and cried at their loss. Writing the letters of notification to Dan's mom and Kerry and Mike's wives was the most difficult thing that I have done in my entire life. The deaths of Dan, Kerry, and Mike will remain etched in my mind and heart forever!

Flying MEDEVAC we sometimes desensitize ourselves, as a protective shield to things that we see, and keep our feelings deep inside. Well, the shield was down! The horror and reality of War had just set in! I then told the aircrews that we could say that we were down for crew rest, or we could get back in our aircraft and continue to pick up those soldiers who needed us. We knew the criticality of our missions, and that there was only one imaginable option. So we climbed back in the saddle, buckled up, and continued to fly missions pushing ourselves and our old Hueys to the limit.

At 0800 that morning, 25 Feb, our main Operations Section finally caught up with us. Within an hour, we received orders to move some 90 miles east to the Kuwaiti border. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that we were about to extend our evacuation lines beyond our aircraft's fuel range ability. I met with CW3 Bingham from the 236th at our spot in the desert and explained the situation. I told him that we needed to establish an air ambulance exchange point where we were standing. We then coordinated with the 4th Brigade to co-locate a FARP (refueling point) with his aircraft. We ended up using that critical exchange point for the next two days.

We continued to fly missions and by afternoon, we began to leap-frog aircraft east to our next assembly area. We linked our last aircraft back up with the 4th Brigade just before dark. Heavy fog and black smoke quickly brought flight operations to a halt. We had a few requests for MEDEVAC, but had less than 50 meters visibility. We launched

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## LONE STAR DUSTOFF

(Continued from page 5)

one of the most experienced NVG crews on a mission request. The aircraft was forced to set down less than a mile away due to extremely limited visibility. We still had brigade commanders demanding and generals asking us to fly. I asked the Division Operations Officer on duty if he had any division aircraft flying; he said 'No.' I asked, 'Can your AH-64s launch?' He said 'No.' I responded that 'Neither can I.' It had been a long couple of days, and the exhaustion was visible with the senior commanders as well as the soldiers conducting the fight.

It was during this same period that I had an urgent request for armed assistance come over the MEDEVAC frequency from the 1st ID Division Medical Operation Center (DMOC). They were in the 4th Brigade trail convoy with some of my personnel and vehicles. They had stopped the convoy at the last check point due to the limited visibility. It just so happened that this check point had been an overrun Iraqi bunker complex. What had appeared to have been a blown up, deserted area during the day now had enemy soldiers coming out of the bunkers with unknown intentions. This became a deep concern to the DMOC, as the only weapons in the convoy were M-16s and .45 pistols. After he and I discussed options and explained the only support that could get to their position was by ground, which was a couple of hours or more away, they made the command decision to depart the area. During the haste of their departure, they had to abandon one of my 2½ ton trucks that would not start. A very small price to pay!

Because we were unable to fly that night, the crews finally got some rest. We were exhausted! At first light, the 4th Brigade began to move deep into Kuwait. 4th Brigade left a FARP with the Flight Platoons, while our Operations Section moved into Kuwait with them. We resumed flying missions; today's difference was that the majority of our patients were Iraqi.

By about 1130, visibility had dropped to about 25 meters with blow-

ing sand, black smoke, and winds 35 to 45 knots. We still had crews out flying missions with patients on board desperately trying to find us for critically needed fuel, and searching for the 236th's exchange point. We were guiding them by radio signal (FM homing) in to us, firing pin flares, turning on our strobe lights, and waving panel markers in the air. The aircraft would fly by our location where we could see them, but they could not see us. Miraculously, we didn't lose any aircraft during the ordeal.

At about 1300, I received a Mayday call over the MEDEVAC frequency from a convoy of our sister clearing company. They said they were taking sniper fire and needed armed assistance with MEDEVAC for wounded personnel. By exchanging our longitudes/latitudes, we determined that we were only a couple of miles away from each other. I instructed the unit to drive away from the sniper fire and to our location. The only vehicle at my site was a HEMMT fuel truck, and I still only had 25 meters visibility to launch aircraft in. We prepared our best instrument crew and coordinated with AWACS. We were prepared to launch an aircraft on an instrument takeoff (ITO) directed by AWACS, if the casualties could be brought to us. The casualties never arrived. At 1700, almost mysteriously, the visibility increased to two miles and the winds died down in a matter of minutes. We launched one of our aircraft and located the clearing company. What had been called in to us as sniper fire ended up being a doctor and specialist accidentally blowing themselves up with souvenir cluster bombs. When will we learn from our past mistakes? LT Bolton and CW2 Finley's crew evacuated them to a forward deployed MASH, but to no avail.

We were receiving calls for MEDEVAC from our forward Operations, now due east and deep into Kuwait. I gathered the crews, 15 aircraft, gave a mission brief before dark, and began to launch in three flights. As we flew under NVGs toward the 4th Brigade's new site, the calls for

MEDEVAC increased, as did radio traffic of units in contact with the enemy. We flew east over burnt and blown up Iraqi equipment in previous enemy positions. As we looked on the horizon toward our site, there loomed an orange glow that filled the view of the upper half of the windshield. I just knew this was going to be 'The Big One,' and that we were flying straight into the jaws of Hell. I breathed a sigh of relief as we identified our unit on the ground, and realized that the orange glow was, in fact, oil wells ablaze on the other side of our unit's assembly area. We had aircraft flying missions throughout the night. We were still fortunately evacuating more enemy and Kuwaiti civilians than allied casualties.

We soon got word of the enormity of the coalition's success against the Republican Guard and other Iraqi forces. The next day, there was talk of a cease-fire and negotiations. We prepositioned aircraft once again with the FSBs and two more to a secured airfield at Suwain. Suwain had been chosen as the site for the negotiations, or as the place where Gen. Schwarzkopf said 'I'm going to tell the Iraqis what they are going to do!' We continued to provide MEDEVAC coverage in Kuwait for the next week. Now we were flying U.S. accident casualties daily. The casualties were mostly from stupidity. Soldiers would try to get a souvenir or a photo, and would get blown up by a booby trap or step on a land mine.

It was about the 9th of March that the company was reconsolidated in the vicinity of Al Qasumah, just south of Tap Line Toad in the 332d Med BDE's Rear Assembly Area. We still had aircraft and crews prepositioned with the FSBs, as the combat units conducted mopping up operations and secured the newly defined cease-fire boundaries. Crews were rotated back to our rear assembly area, where they got at least one hot meal a day, a shower and some good sleep. Everyone who rotated back from the front went to kiss SFC Sam, the Mess SGT, and his crew

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## LONE STAR DUSTOFF

(Continued from page 6)

for the great chow that they made up out of almost nothing. I can taste SFC Sam's biscuits now! No matter the intensity or duration of a war, the things that keep soldiers happy are: A hot meal, a hot shower, and a dry cot.

We were finally released from our forward deployed coverage by the end of April and immediately began preparation and movement for redeployment home. We began to shuttle aircraft personnel, and equipment to King Fahad airport.

There again began the chaos; who's on the wash rack?; what's the deal with chow?; how about those latrines?; where's my name on the manifest?; when do we go home?? Once again, no one in charge!

I'll never forget the feeling as I saw Saudi Arabia in the rear view mirror

during our departure on the freedom bird. It was exactly the same feeling I had almost twenty years earlier when I left Vietnam. It's difficult to adequately describe that emotion. It's much more than just knowing you're going home. It's a feeling of being safe, being 'outta there' and leaving the chaos and horror behind. 'Hasta La Vista, Baby!'

I think that I speak for all of us in saying that the memory Desert SHIELD/STORM will remain with us forever. I know that I've only scratched the surface in the memory banks of all of you, the Soldiers of LONE STAR DUSTOFF. What I hope you remember is that we succeeded by working together as a team. That each one of you was an important member of the team, and because we truly were a team, we succeeded! From the unsung heroes of

Fuels (POL); Maintenance, Mess, Supply, to Operations, and the Aircrews, each one of you is a HERO! And let us never forget the loss of our friends Dan Graybeal, Kerry Hein, and Mike Robson, and the families they left behind. They paid the ultimate sacrifice and epitomize the motto: 'WHEN I HAVE YOUR WOUNDED.' "



*Intrepid DUSTOFF pilot LT Tom Milner, 57th Medical Detachment, skillfully guides his UH-1B into the site of a downed helicopter in a daring 1965 rescue effort. Note the severed tail boom lying in a rice paddy. Footnote: Moments after the DUSTOFF helicopter touched down, the perpetrators whose fire had brought down the first helicopter attempted with only moderate success to do the same with the "Original" DUSTOFF aircraft.*

## The "Bear's" Comments on DUSTOFF: The Early Years

Paul Bloomquist, then commanding the 45th Medical Battalion, 3d Armored Division in Germany, provided historical information to Dick Scott, then the Aviation Consultant to The Surgeon General, in a February 1971 letter, excerpts of which follow:

"Vince Cedola was one of the first Army Aviators to be awarded Vietnamese Air Force wings for a rescue operation while he was with the 82d Medical Detachment."

"Pat Brady always went out armed to the teeth -- at least 20 pounds of arms and ammo."

"Support of the early stages of defoliation operations was given to the Air Force (Ranch Hands) by the 57th -- on and off duty."

"57th Medical Detachment had 5 UH-1A helicopters in early 1964...under the operational control of the Army Support Group, Vietnam. Three aircraft were in Saigon, one in Pleiku, and one in Qui Nhon. 82d Medical Detachment arrived in late 1964."

"TOE change gave the units 6

UH-1B aircraft each."

"Arrival of the 173d Airborne Brigade and the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions stretched air ambulance capability critically until the arrival of the 254th and 283d Medical Detachments."

"Major Chuck Kelly first used the call sign 'DUSTOFF 6' on 1 July 1964 on his first mission of that day. He was killed on that mission."

"Serious shortage of pilots, especially MSC pilots as the early TOE's called for only MSC aviators. At one time, there were two Armor and one Infantry Branch aviators flying with the 57th in 1964."

Lots of controversy as the amounts and types of armament to be carried on medical evacuation helicopters. Impression that, in the early stages of the war, armed helicopters hindered medical evacuation operations, slowed them down, and brought unnecessary fire on the DUSTOFF aircraft."

"Had the thrill of eating their first Vietnamese combat ration -- rice, fish and warm beer."

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

#### ACCOUNTING PERIOD:

6 MAR 94 - 6 JUN 94

#### BEGINNING BALANCE:

17640.10\*

\*This amount includes Reunion fees, dues, donations, T-shirt sales and coin sales.

#### EXPENDITURES:

Holiday Inn .....	5709.20
Circuit City/computer .....	2738.80
Refreshments .....	826.43
Scholarship .....	500.00
Spouses' Luncheon .....	240.00
Ft. Stewart	
DUSTOFF Memorial .....	238.50
Bank Research Charges ..	208.00
Member Refund .....	126.00
Fax Service .....	38.79
Awards Unlimited .....	14.13

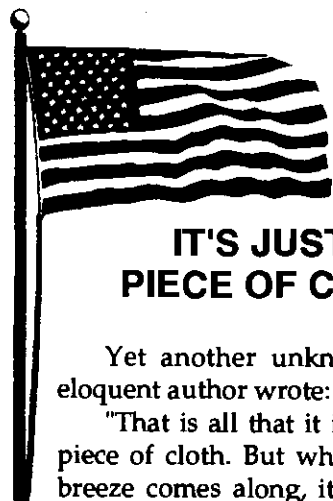
ACCOUNT STATUS ..... 7000.25

## THE COMBAT MEDIC... SOUL OF THE TROOPS

Author unknown, the following volumes legions about that marvelous legend we all know as the Combat Medic:

"...without sophisticated medical technology, without degrees in psychology and philosophy, the medic has been required to function with the versatility of no other enlisted man. The medic has been the soul of the troops; their physician, their nursemaid, their conscience. Whenever the troops are engaged in combat, the ever-present medic -- sweat rolling down his cheeks, blood and bits of tissues splattered across his shirt and pants -- is often physically exposed. Amid screaming and shouting and crying, surrounded by death, he passionately tends to the injured and dying, even as the plasma bottle shatters in his hands.

As warriors convulse around him, the medic, his throat swollen dry, gently cradles yet another dying man in his arms. When the battle has passed and the battlefield becomes graveyard quiet, the warrior is at rest, while the ragged and dusty medic, his clothes reeking of blood and sweat, continues his battle against the angel of death, mending gaping wounds and consoling the aching hearts of his charges. And, unlike a movie or TV program, the blood never leaves a medic's boots; the stench never leaves his nose; the piercing screams never leave his ears; and the taste of war never quite leaves his soul..."



### IT'S JUST A PIECE OF CLOTH

Yet another unknown, but eloquent author wrote:

"That is all that it is -- just a piece of cloth. But when a little breeze comes along, it stirs and

## THE GAMEST BASTARDS OF ALL

A classic article of its kind, entitled as above, appeared in Time magazine in 1965:

"Each week, US Army Major Paul Bloomquist writes his parents in Salt Lake City the same kind of letter. 'The surf's good,' he tells them. 'The weather's fine. The beaches are beautiful.' All the same. 'Big Bear' Bloomquist will hardly miss the swimming when his turn comes to go home.

**No Place For Sentiment.** With 40 other pilots and crewmen of MEDEVAC (for medical evacuation team), Bloomquist has one of the most taxing and perilous assignments in South Vietnam. Cruising above the battlefields in search of the wounded, MEDEVAC's helicopters fly a twelve hour day, seven days a week, every day of the year. In 18 months of duty in South Vietnam, burly, green-eyed Major Bloomquist, 32, has flown 750 combat missions, been wounded three times, won 27 citations.

In the process, he has rescued 800 wounded soldiers and carted home more corpses than he cares to remember. To help counter the pervasive stench of death and mutilation, MEDEVAC pilots and crewmen stuff their nostrils with Vicks VapoRub. And they are curiously unwilling to make friends with infantrymen. 'You don't want to get too close to people when you know tomorrow they may be dead,' Bloomquist explains. 'There's no place for sentiment in this business.'

Yet the job takes plenty of heart as well as guts, and the MEDEVAC teams are known throughout South Vietnam as 'the gamest bastards of all.' Their deep-chested, \$250,000 'Huey' choppers

(capacity: ten patients each) have evacuated 8,864 wounded troopers -- Vietnamese and American -- since 1962. Through the end of last year, fully 20% of the personnel in Bloomquist's detachment had been killed in action and another 45% wounded, even though their unarmed, unarmored ships are clearly marked with red crosses on their noses. As Bloomquist grimly says, 'The red cross makes us that much better a target.'

**No Time For Leave.** Losses would have been higher but for the consummate skill of the MEDEVAC pilots. During one recent battle, Bloomquist found himself swooping in behind four fighter-bombers to pick up seven wounded Americans. Suddenly one of the escorting Skyraiders burst into flames from a ground hit, and its partners peeled away to protect it. All alone, Bloomquist's chopper -- call sign 'DUSTOFF-74' -- touched down amid withering crossfire from Viet Cong .50 caliber machine guns. Bloomquist ordered his crew to load the wounded, calmly polished his sunglasses, then rotated out in a hail of tracers.

Though he volunteered for another tour of duty last December and refused to take a leave during the first 15 months he was in Vietnam, Big Bear Bloomquist admits: 'I've been here too long.' Why does he stay? 'Because,' he admits slowly, 'I like the excitement. And because I think that my crew and I can do this job better than anyone else. It's the job that counts above all, and it's a job that somebody has to do.'

An accompanying photo of various DUSTOFF crew members was captioned: 'Who else could stay excited for 18 months?' "

comes to life and flutters and snaps in the wind, all RED, WHITE and BLUE! And then you realize that no other piece of cloth could be like it!

It has your whole life wrapped up in it -- the meals you eat; the time you spend with your family; the kinds of things your boy and girl learn in school; the strange and wonderful thoughts you get in church, cathedral, temple, synagogue or mosque.

Those stars in it -- they make you

feel just as free as the stars in the wide deep night. And those stripes -- they are bars of blood to any dictator who would try to change this way of life.

Just a piece of cloth, that is all -- until you put your soul into it and give it meaning. Then it is a symbol of liberty, and decency, and fair dealing for everyone. It is just a piece of cloth until we breathe life into it; until we make it stand for everything we believe in and refuse to live without it."

# DUSTOFF LEADING THE WAY FOR ARMY AVIATION...AGAIN

The MEDCOM Examiner, command publication of the 7th Medical Command in Heidelberg, Germany, featured the following story about the 421st Medical Battalion (Evacuation) and one of its premier units, the 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance):

"Shakespeare once wrote that 'readiness is all.' Members of the 7th Medical Command's 421st Medical Battalion (Evacuation) proved Shakespeare right as they successfully deployed to Saudi Arabia in August 1990 to provide aeromedical evacuation support to Operation Desert Shield forces.

The 421st had to prepare for what may be the longest unit self-deployment of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters in the history of the U.S. Army. Each aircraft was checked and tested until the mechanics were sure they would be able to fly the 3500 statute miles. They would be flying over Italy, Greece and Egypt en route to their final destination in the desert of Saudi Arabia.

Workers spent between 16 and 20 hours each day working on the aircraft for seven days before the first element of aircraft was ready to leave. The pace continued as they prepared the remaining deploying aircraft for their flight, according to Lt Col Ray Keith, commander of the 421st.

Because the flight would take the aircraft over long stretches of water and because of the long distances between refueling points, several of the aircraft were fitted with external store support systems (ESSS) with extra fuel tanks. Survival gear for aircraft personnel included rafts, as a precaution since at least nine hours of the flight were over water, Keith said.

At one point in the journey, the crews landed the aircraft on a Greek island where fuel was not available. The Southern European Task Force (SETAF) sent CH47 'Chinooks' loaded with fuel to meet the Blackhawks and perform what the aviators call a 'hot refueling.'

One stop in their journey required the soldiers of the 421st to provide their own refueling station. The airport at Port Said, Egypt, did not have the fuel needed for the aircraft. The soldiers modified a hand pump used to pump fuel from 55 gallon drums. With the modified pumps they fueled the 'slick' aircraft (without extra tanks) from the ESSS. This allowed them to proceed to the next stop where they could fill up all of the tanks.

The first group made the trip in six days. The second group, accompanied by Keith, arrived in just five days.

'We would get up at about 4 a.m. each morning to get ready to be out at the airfield by 6 a.m. Then we had to do a check of the aircraft. By 7 a.m. we would be in the air. We usually finished for the day about 10 p.m. Then, because we were not permitted to sleep at the airfields, we traveled to hotels. Most nights we managed to get to sleep about midnight,' Keith said.

'It made for some very long days, but not one person complained,' Keith added. 'We were extremely fortunate on our trip. Everywhere we landed we met very helpful people. We stopped to refuel 20 times during the trip. Sometime the people on the ground would meet us with cold drinks and, in a few places, people brought out food for us.'

'The crew chiefs took care of the aircraft repairs themselves,' Keith noted. 'That was one thing I was very impressed with. The ability of the NCOs was evident -- they are trained professionals. I did not have to worry about the job because I knew I could rely on the troops to do the job right.'

During a stopover in Italy, crew members had to remove a rotor blade from one of the Blackhawks for repair before continuing their odyssey, Keith said.

'Saudi Arabia presents some special challenges,' Keith remarked. 'The temperature is so hot that the exposed areas of an aircraft will burn unpro-

## UPDATE FROM THE NATION'S CAPITAL

Notes from semi-brand-new Colonel Rich Beauchemin, The Surgeon General's Aviation Consultant:

"As Yogi Berra said, 'The future ain't what it used to be and it never was.' While the past year has seen turbulence, excitement and change, I think the future will see even more. One thing, however, that hasn't changed is the superb quality of the DUSTOFF Reunion. Ed Bradshaw, Bob Romines and all the others who worked so hard on the 1994 Reunion have my sincerest gratitude for a job well done! It was a great weekend! For those of you who couldn't make it this year, mark your calendar for next year. You can bet that it will be another truly super time.

DUSTOFFers continue to do great things out there. DUSTOFF units are an integral part of combat rotations at both the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk and the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Germany. Our units are getting the most realistic training available. A second order effect has been that our crews are educating the 'Gun-fighters' on our capabilities and how we are truly a combat multiplier. The units have been learning a lot and are doing a tremendous job. The 421st Evacuation Battalion was honored recently as the best CSS Aviation Battalion and best Aviation Battalion overall in USAREUR; best CSS Aviation Battalion in the Army and USAREUR AAAA Outstanding Aviation Unit of the Year. LTC(P) Charles Davis and his great soldiers are leading the way in the finest DUSTOFF tradition.

You may have read in your local papers about all Reserve Component Aviation being transferred to the National Guard. This 'off-site agreement' is a fact (at least for now) and includes medical evacuation. In the near future (the transition is starting as you read this) all Reserve Component DUSTOFF units will belong to the Army National Guard.

DUSTOFF!"

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## DUSTOFF LEADING THE WAY...AGAIN

(Continued from page 9)

tected skin. It is between 45 and 50 degrees Centigrade each day. In the afternoon it is possible to cook an egg on the aircraft rotor in just a few minutes. I stood on the tarmac for about 10 minutes and melted the soles of my boots! Until I went to Saudi Arabia, my boots had ridges on the sole.'

'I had to come back to Darmstadt after spending three days with the troops,' said Keith. 'I found the whole operation exciting. It was great to watch the soldiers work. This deployment gives us a chance to put into action all of the training we have received in the military.'

'We had a lot of support getting ready for this,' said Keith. 'The soldiers in the 421st worked very hard to get everything ready. We received support from the whole USAREUR community. We needed parts, equipment, tools, and other supplies that were provided by many different units.'

'We also received a lot of help from the Darmstadt Military Community during this time,' Keith added. 'They were very helpful in getting the thousand little and many big things done for soldiers who are leaving country. They and the 32d Army Air Defense Command provided bottled water, equipment, and supplies for our use while on the tip.'

'Now, my job is to help with the challenges of the people left behind,' Keith added. 'The spouses have been wonderful. The Nelligen, Darmstadt, and Landstuhl Military Communities are giving them all kinds of assistance and we are relying on the support groups within the battalion to help.'

'Some of the spouses will be faced with doing things they've never done before,' Keith noted. 'I'm not saying they aren't capable of handling anything, but in a marriage there are just so many things to handle, it takes two. When one person has one thousand things to do, it's much more difficult to handle all of those things alone. These people who are left behind have a difficult job and we intend to help make it easier.'

## FLY IN, FLY OUT...IT'S A RACE WITH DEATH

Associated Press reporter Holger Jensen filed this 1971 story on several DUSTOFF heroes from Red Beach, Vietnam:

"An ammunition box falls on a GI's head at a dirty little fire base called Rawhide. Twenty miles away four young men, dragged from sleep by a whistle blast, steer their helicopter through rain squalls. It is after midnight, a lonely time to fly.

Running lights are doused as the chopper approaches Rawhide. Two 'Nighthawk' gunships are circling the fire base and the danger of collision is very real. But lights make a target for Viet Cong sharpshooters in the surrounding hills.

The aircraft drops blindly into an inky void and someone mutters on the intercom, 'Christ, it's dark.'

Suddenly light flickers thinly on the ridge top below. Rawhide has switched on the truck headlights beside the small landing pad and the chopper homes in. Before the skids touch earth, stretcher bearers are running forward.

The patient is given first aid as the helicopter claws skyward again. Fifteen minutes later he is at the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Da Nang and the aerial ambulancemen of DUSTOFF 608 are homeward bound to Red Beach.

They will never know the patient's name nor if they saved his life. But they will go to sleep satisfied, mission accomplished.

What the U.S. Army calls 'DUSTOFF' is one of the most awesome developments in modern warfare. Medical evacuation by helicopter assures hospital care for every soldier in Vietnam within 30 minutes of sickness or injury.

Men who fly this lifeline see the worst side of the war -- the wounded, the fever-ridden, the maimed, and the dead. They take risks that become magnified as the war winds down.

But there is never a shortage of volunteers to fly the unarmed birds with the red crosses.

LT. Scott Livingston, 24, of Cody, Wyoming, is the aircraft commander of 'DUSTOFF 608.' Eleven months and 600

combat missions have hardened him to the horrors of war, but he still gets 'the greatest feeling in the world' when a wounded patient gives him a smile or a thumbs-up sign.

A sociology graduate of the University of Wyoming, Livingston was shot down last April near Pleiku. He has only a month left in Vietnam and he worries every time he flies. But he goes on flying because 'you know someone down there needs help.'

At 29, pilot WO Walter Meeks, of Danville, Va., is the oldest crewman. He entered the Army as a 17-year old high school dropout and spent one tour in Vietnam as a combat infantryman before taking flight training. He is married with two children.

'I know what it's like fighting on the ground,' he says. 'When some of my people got hit and a DUSTOFF came in, I'd get tears in my eyes I was so thankful. I wanted to be one of them. I wanted to arouse that emotion in others.'

Crew Chief Willert Wills, Kilgore, Texas, is only 21 but he has grown up in Vietnam. Wills enlisted in the Army straight out of high school, extended three times to remain in the war zone, has been shot up three times in flight and shot down once. Recently he signed up for six more years because of the 'bad job situation back home.'

'I've got plenty of time, I'm still young,' he says. 'When I go home on leave now I feel like a stranger. But Kilgore is a quiet, friendly place. I guess I'll go back and settle one day.'

Medic Anthony Lopez, 27, Dallas, Texas, entered the Army with an anthropology degree from Southern Methodist University. He calls himself a pacifist, refers to the Viet Cong as 'individuals' rather than the enemy, and volunteered for a second tour in Viet Nam because 'someone with my experience is needed here.'

Twice Lopez has risked his life by jumping off his helicopter into enemy terrain to search for wounded GI's. One time he bumped into two men who appeared to be Viet Cong.

'I was unarmed and they didn't shoot me,' he says. 'I like to think they

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## FLY IN, FLY OUT...

(Continued from page 10)

showed compassion, just as I would have.'

'I've never fired a gun at anyone in Vietnam. I'm not here to hurt anyone. I consider DUSTOFF a different part of the war, something I can participate in with a clear conscience.'

Lopez doesn't approve of American involvement in Vietnam. Livingston feels the United States 'had a job to do here, but the time to go home was two years ago.' Meeks concedes the war 'hasn't been fought right, but those demonstrators burn me up.' Wills wears an American flag on his flying suit and declares, 'We've done the right thing and we're getting out the right way.'

As the war abates, the men of DUSTOFF 608 find themselves picking up fewer combat casualties and more victims of accidents, illness, and drug overdoses. In one 36-hour period, they evacuated the injured GI from Rawhide, another GI suffering burns, and five Vietnamese, two soldiers with suspected typhoid, a civilian injured in a traffic accident, a soldier with suspected meningitis, and a woman with chest pains.

'I can remember when one chopper averaged six to eight wounded a day,' said Meeks. 'Now it's more like twelve a week, sometimes less when there aren't any operations going on. Most of our combat casualties are caused by booby traps now -- they're the worst kind.'

The 236th Medical Detachment, based at Red Beach, 109 miles north of Da Nang, has seven helicopters serving three critical northern provinces. Last January the unit carried 918 patients and, in September, 393. But air crews spend more flying time covering greater distances and thus take more risks. The closest thing to a milk run is a blood run -- ferrying blood to where it is needed -- fast.

So far this year, eight helicopters flying out of Red Beach have suffered damage from ground fire or mines that detonated under their skids.

'You're damned right we're proud,' said Livingston. 'We consider ourselves special because we fly missions others don't fly.'

## ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT BATTLEFIELD SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION

Operations Just Cause and Operation Desert Storm again pointed out the need for change -- needed change -- in the way to conduct combat health care. Lessons learned showed the need and benefits of high speed aeromedical evacuation when coupled with far forward surgical care. Modernizing the Army's aeromedical evacuation fleet and expanding the far forward surgical capability of the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) can decrease Army force structure, strategic deployment time and cost, and improve medical tactical mobility. The return on the investment will far surpass other modernization efforts under consideration by the Army.

The Army Medical Department revamped its concept of combat health care to support the Army's power projection force. The basic assumptions that guided change were that medical care on the battlefield must meet peacetime standards, and the medical care system had to be as dispersed and mobile as the soldiers it supported.

To meet peacetime standards the AMEDD determined effective health service support must start from a clinical base and adapt to military mission

needs. While apparent conflicts between military mission standards of care are inevitable, these conflicts resolve when planning parameters exist in orders of precedence. The medical planning parameters are known as the AMEDD Battle Rules and range in precedence from one to six. The number one battle rule is BE THERE. Medical presence with the soldier is key to saving lives and decreasing recovery time from injury or wounding.

To BE THERE requires a change in the way medical support is conducted. A power projection force moves quickly strategically and tactically. By design a hospital's mobility is limited. Army hospitals are heavy, bulky, and labor and equipment intensive to move. Priority for deployment goes to combat forces. To overcome the inherent problems in supporting a force projection Army, the AMEDD is designing highly mobile forward surgical teams. The teams will have the capability to provide the forward resuscitative surgery needed as far forward as the maneuver brigades and will be transported by AMEDD aeromedical evacuation platforms strategically and tactically.

### AMEDD BATTLE RULES

**In order of precedence when rules conflict we will:**

- 1. Be There**
- 2. Maintain Health of the Command**
- 3. Save Lives**
- 4. Clear the Battlefield**
- 5. State-Of-The-Art Medical Care**
- 6. Return To Duty**

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# THE LATEST FROM MEDEVAC PROPONENCY

The UH-60 program is on life support in the latest budget cycle. The Surgeon General will fight hard for this program prior to the Program Objective Memorandum (POM) lock. The UH-60Q is struggling for funds, competing against other high priority Army programs. The final configuration for the medical and avionics will be determined from the results of a joint study/economic analysis co-sponsored by the Aviation Center and the AMEDD Center and School. HQ TRADOC will be the arbitrator and approval authority.

The High Capacity Air Ambulance (HCAA) program is proceeding in concert with the Army's Fixed Wing Modernization Strategy. The Mission

Needs Statement and Requirements Document for the HCAA have been merged with the cargo and special electronic mission requirements with the goal of obtaining a single airframe to do the three missions. This Multi-mission Medium Tactical Transport (M3T2) will meet the AMEDD's need and provide the MEDEVAC community with an awesome aircraft. Program has strong support and is proceeding on track through the documentation and procurement process.

The 247th Med Det recently participated in a joint Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) exercise. They were the only Army unit participating and did an excellent job. CSAR will be a growth industry for MEDEVAC units.

The MEDEVAC Proponency Directorate will host the next DOD Process Action Team for Combat Search and Rescue the last week of July in San Antonio, Texas. For additional information, contact LTC Rogers, DSN 558-1170/1170 or AC (205) 255-1170/1179.

On the personnel side, MG Moore is retiring after a long and distinguished career. The MEDEVAC community will miss his support. MG Robinson, the Aviation Center Commander, is retiring and being replaced by MG Adams coming from the Pentagon. Congratulations to LTC(P) Randy Maschek for being selected for command of the DISCOM of the 4th Inf Div.

— Colonel Frank Novier

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## COPTER PILOTS FIND IT TOUGH TO AID WOUNDED GIs

With a date line of November 1967, the Associated Press reported the following DUSTOFF perspective from Dak To, Vietnam:

"Warrant Officer Pierre Lefebvre, a U.S. Army helicopter pilot, said Wednesday it's hard to wait to pull out wounded Americans, though sometimes delay is imperative.

'We know they are our guys down there and we want to go in and bring them out, but we know that if we get shot down we won't be able to help anyone,' he said.

Lefebvre, from Campton, NH, described the feeling of medical evacuation fliers who had a hard time earlier this week in lifting wounded troopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade off the bloody slopes of Hill 875.

He and WO Edward M. Fisher, 26, of Chicago, were in on the effort from the start Monday. The paratroopers had been hit badly on the hill south-

west of Dak To and the call went out for the DUSTOFF choppers.

Fisher worked his helicopter between the towering trees and touched down to pick up five seriously wounded men.

'The ship took a bad hit from small arms fire only 20 meters (22 yards) away,' he said. 'I managed to land and stayed there a couple of minutes while the paratroopers loaded the wounded. They were the longest minutes of my life. As we were loading, the Communists started shooting at the chopper again. It was a real tight spot.'

Lefebvre started to drop onto the landing zone when a 500-pound bomb exploded about 60 feet away. Still he hovered, but North Vietnamese troops jumped out of hidden positions and his chopper took 10 to 12 hits and began losing fuel. He knew it might catch fire at any time, but he managed to fly to a fire support base about a

mile and a half away and land safely.

'I was scared,' Lefebvre said. 'But when I started to go in I was too busy to be scared as I wanted to keep everyone alive. There was an awesome look on the face of the dozens of wounded waiting to be picked up as the helicopters had to pull out again.'

Tuesday afternoon the helicopters were finally able to go in to bring out the rest of 140 wounded, running a continuing shuttle. On that day, Fisher and Lefebvre teamed up as pilot and copilot and brought out 36."



# THE DUSTOFFER READING LIST

*William York Booth, screen writer and Hollywood liaison for the DUSTOFF Association, has provided the following information and listing of books in which many DUSTOFFers would be interested. If you need the author and publisher information, ISBN, and general subject matter description, or if you'd like to add to the listing, call Jim Truscott at (210) 524-7790.*

Many books have been written about the Vietnam War, from numerous angles and viewpoints, but few have been written from the perspective of helicopter pilots and crew members. And, unfortunately, not one book in the form of a personal narrative has yet come forward from any member of the Vietnam DUSTOFF community (yup, that was a hint).

Two books that have been written with the specific focus on Vietnam DUSTOFF were done with emphasis on the origination and development of Army aeromedical evacuation. Neither is still in print, but copies can be located with a little effort. For those of you unfamiliar with these titles they are:

**DUSTOFF: Army Aeromedical Evacuation in Vietnam**

**The Illustrated History of DUSTOFF: The Vietnam War**

One book which prominently features the subject of aeromedical evacuation programs in Vietnam in one of its chapters is:

**Medical Support of the U.S. Army in Vietnam 1965-1970**

Several books have been written by and/or about helicopter pilots in Vietnam, and the aircraft they flew. Though these do not relate directly to the DUSTOFF experience, they do depict various aspects of the helicopter war in Vietnam, and thus, might be of interest to some of you. While a few of the earlier published titles may only be found in libraries or used book shops, most of these books are now in bookstores or can be ordered through the publishers.

**Brandywine's War**

**Gunslingers in Action**

**Chickenhawk**

**Huey**

**Airmobile: The Helicopter War in Vietnam**

**Anatomy of a Division: 1st Cav in Vietnam**

**Brotherhood of War. Book VIII. The Aviators**

**The Illustrated History of AIR CAV:**

**The Vietnam War**

**Pleiku: The Dawn of Helicopter Warfare in Vietnam**

**Vietnam Helicopter Handbook**

**CWS**

**Fifteen Hundred Feet Over Vietnam: A Marine Helicopter Pilot's Diary**

**Hunter Killer Squadron: Aero-Weapons, Aero-Scots, Aero-Rifles**

**Jackson's Mountain**

**Maverick: The Personal War of a Vietnam**

**Cobra Pilot**

**Few Die Well**

**NORTH SAR**

**Vietnam: The Helicopter War**

**Aero-Scouts**

**Cleared Hot: A Marine Combat Pilot's Vietnam Diary**

**Dear Mom. I'm Alive: Letters Home From Blackwidow**

**Low Level Hell: A Scout Pilot in the Big Red One**

**Snake Driver! Cobras in Vietnam**

**Wings of the Eagle: A Kingmen's Story**

**Chopper 1** (series of action novels)

Many Vietnam DUSTOFF pilots became familiar with the forward air controllers that routinely worked in their primary area of operations. One of the things that DUSTOFFers and FACs had in common was the fact that they both spent a great deal of time as "unescorted" aircraft in remote locations. Several FACs have written personal narratives which might be of interest.

**A Lonely Kind of War: Forward Air Controller, Vietnam**

**Vietnam Above the Treetops: A Forward Air Controller Reports**

**Ground Attack Vietnam: The Marines Who Controlled the Skies**

The subject of combat medicine has been addressed through several personal Vietnam narratives that have been published over the years. This list of books is offered for those DUSTOFFers having an interest in the topic.

**365 Days**

**12, 20 & 5**

**Soc Trang: A Vietnamese Odyssey**

**Home Before Morning**

**A Forgotten Man**

**Nurses in Vietnam: The Forgotten Veterans**

**Care of the Wounded in Vietnam**

**The Fighting Strength: Memoirs of a Combat Nurse in Vietnam**

**Combat Medic: Vietnam**

**American Daughter Gone to War**

**Vietnam 1968-1969: A Battalion Surgeon's Journal**

# A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

The October 1990 issue of EurArmy Magazine featured the following article on those brave and dedicated soldiers of DUSTOFF Europe:

"Accidents can occur anywhere at anytime. Soldiers of Europe's 421st Medical Battalion (Evacuation) are prepared to respond at a moment's notice.

'Saving a life is the most rewarding aspect of the job,' said Maj. Bradford Caldwell, battalion executive officer, 421st Med. Bn. (Evac.), 7th Medical Command. 'We provide the aeromedical support for all of Europe.'

The 159th Medical Company in Darmstadt, the 45th Medical Company in Nellingen and the 236th Medical Company in Landstuhl provide this DUSTOFF aeromedical support.

Fifteen UH-60A (Black Hawk) helicopters, converted for medical configuration, are assigned to each company with at least a total of eight aircraft always fueled and ready to fly. An additional four aircraft are always on standby for contingency purposes in case of disasters.

'The nature of our business is to be on call 24 hours a day,' said Caldwell. 'There's no better feeling than to pick up someone who has hurt himself very badly, provide medical care en route and basically save his life.'

The term DUSTOFF dates to the Vietnam conflict where it was the common communications call sign for aeromedical support. Red Cross helicopters rescued the sick and wounded from remote areas and transported them to hospitals. This earned them the unique nickname.

Since flying is the fastest means of getting from one point to another, using this mode of transportation is an emergency is the preferred method, according to Caldwell.

The operations center, which handles emergency calls, is considered the 'nerve center' of the unit's operations.

'Aircraft are launched to respond to lifesaving rescues,' said Capt. Chris Kieffer, 159th Med Co. operations officer. 'Our response time to a crisis is 10 minutes during the day and 15 minutes at night.'

'When you pick up the phone and

have an incident where the crew flies out and picks up a guy who got his head severed and it's only hanging on by the neck and you know that guy lives, it makes you feel good that you were there for him, doing your job,' said Sgt. Billy James Arnold, assistant operations sergeant.

'It's hectic, but we have the right kind of people up here who can deal with the situations when they arise,' said Arnold. 'Quite frequently we get life-or-death missions here.'

I also have the satisfaction of knowing that we are here for all the people in Europe, not just the military,' said Arnold. 'If the German rescue people can't do it, we can. We fly at night and they don't.'

The company has three basic missions, said Caldwell. The medical evacuation of military members and family members is its peacetime mission. The unit's wartime missions is continually developed through its support of NATO and other military exercises. Responding to natural disasters is its third mission.

The DUSTOFF battalion also transports medical personnel and supplies routinely.

Soldiers of the battalion have responded to emergency calls from all over Germany and other parts of Europe, including emergency flights to Turkey, Great Britain, France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands.

'It helps if you can speak the language a little bit, because at times there is a language barrier,' said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John North, a DUSTOFF pilot. Every second counts when responding to a call for help, he said. Having a clear understanding of the situation is critical.

'We always have two pilots, a crew chief and a medic who are on standby,' said Capt. Steven Euhus, flight platoon leader. 'There is always a second crew ready to follow them up if needed.'

Sometimes tragedy can hit close to home, said Caldwell. During the 1988 Ramstein Air Show disaster, a DUSTOFF aircraft was destroyed and a unit soldier killed.

'The Ramstein Air Show was the worst emergency call that I have ever

had to respond to,' said Sgt. 1st Class Sherrill Smith, a DUSTOFF medic. 'The magnitude of the disaster itself, as well as not knowing what we were going to find once we got there, stands out in my memory.'

'There was sheer panic when we got there,' he said. 'We evacuated about 12 people that day to Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center.'

At the time of this interview, Smith, having come off a 24-hour shift, said he was beat but never tires of the service he provided. 'On several occasions, we have received thank you letters and letters of appreciation.'

Keeping patients alive is the goal of DUSTOFF medics during the flight and before the injured can receive intensive care at a hospital, explained Euhus.

Maintenance also plays a large role in the readiness of DUSTOFF aircraft. Helicopters are serviced regularly between missions.

This work is performed at a large hangar which is also a historical landmark. Caldwell said that Baron Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the 'Red Baron,' flew missions from the Darmstadt Air Field -- now home to the battalion headquarters.

'Every 500 hours an aircraft undergoes a complete teardown and inspection,' said 1st Lt. Peter Smart, maintenance officer.

'We diagnose, treat and cure sick machinery here,' Smart said. 'Doing the best job we can to get the machinery running smoothly again is our goal.'

'It's very important with our mission to have our equipment up and ready,' Smart said. 'Our goal is to keep 75 percent of our assets up at all times.'

'I enjoy the challenge of working on the aircraft -- keeping them ready to fly,' said Spec. Eddie Miller, assistant section chief. 'There's no room for mistakes here.'

'People's lives are in our hands,' added Smith.

Euhus said the unofficial meaning of DUSTOFF to soldiers of the 421st is 'Dedicated, Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces.'

These soldiers take that mission as seriously as life and death."

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# NEW\* ENTRIES ON THE FLIGHT MANIFEST

Mark Shipp - Chattanooga  
Marvin Pruitt - Westminster  
Ted Coukolis - Killeen  
Timothy Cooper - Daleville  
Bobby Deiss - Conroe  
Danny McFadden - San Antonio  
Donald Dorsey - Overseas  
Howard Danforth - Wenatchee  
Jeff Reed - Daleville  
Scott Avery - Fort Irwin  
Jim Culveyhouse - Gulfport  
Mark Feuerherdt - Fairbanks  
Paul Harpole - Amarillo  
John Labansky - Arlington  
David Litteral - Colorado Springs  
Scott McCann - Fair Oaks  
Harry Patrick - Melrose  
Helga Venus - Overseas  
Dale Wilson - Walden  
Neil Hutchinson - Fargo



Peter Garibaldi - San Antonio  
Thomas Ohlson - Daleville  
Victor St. Germain - Coffee Springs  
Carl Martin - Overseas  
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J. C. Dodd - Novato  
Joe Rozzel - Fayetteville  
Marcus Cox - San Antonio  
Paul Debree - Lincoln Park  
Lawrence Fulton - San Antonio  
William Lachance - San Antonio  
Peter Lehning - Daleville  
David McDonald - Woodbridge  
Steven Millward - Overseas  
Michael Sullivan - Portland  
David Wik - Corpus Christi  
Jim Wingate - El Paso  
Laura Yeager - San Antonio

\*Includes some renewing previous memberships.

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