



THE DUSTOFFER



DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2001



**DUSTOFF Roots—WWII's
Operation Ivory Soap**

President's Message

GREETINGS TO ALL DUSTOFFers, friends, and family. Being your first enlisted president overwhelms me. To follow in the footsteps of the great aviators is truly an honor. I promise to make this year the best ever and hope that you help by going out and finding more and more members. This is truly a great organization that can be made even better by getting more of the new generation aviators and enlisted crewmembers to share in our legacy. The DUSTOFF Association has made enormous strides since its inception, and we can make it even greater.

I am very proud of our new Hall of Fame and was proud to have stood next to those DUSTOFF warriors. Now we need you to submit names for next year's nominations. This is an imperative so we can process the nominations and make the selections for the 2002 Reunion. The plans for next year's Reunion are moving along.

The future lies with our young men and women deployed to far away lands and always in harm's way; let's not forget them. We have had our hour of glory, let's bring these young people into our organization so they can carry the torch in the new century.

That's about it for now, get those nominations in soon, round up new members, send in your ideas, and I promise to do everything in my power to make this year a growth year!

DUSTOFF!
Jeff Mankoff

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REUNION 2002 UPDATE

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW! The dates of the 2002 Reunion have been set tentatively as 22–24 February 2002. The Army Medical Evacuation Conference is set to coincide with the end of our reunion. The AMEC is tentatively scheduled for 25 February–1 March 2002.

The scheduling of reunions in San Antonio is a real challenge, since this area is a very popular with tourists. As a result of serious scheduling challenges at the Holiday Inn–Riverwalk, the site of our next reunion will be the Marriott Northwest Hotel, the former Holiday Inn NW where we held our past reunions. The hotel has been completely renovated, updated, and it is beautiful. We have met with their staff and seen the facilities. We feel you will be happy with the choice. And the room rates are significantly better than last year's rates. Facility charges are lower, and overall cost will be more favorable.

PLEASE BE PREPARED FOR CHANGE. The Executive Council will be considering some difficult decisions concerning the reunion hospitality suites. An article in the *Reunion Network News* (March/April 2001 edition) cites a U.S. District Court (Washington, D.C.) lawsuit filed against two part-time meeting planners. The case revolves around a get-together, during which a number of attendees had an after-party. According to the suit, the planners were negligent in allowing the event to continue for an extended period of time without "trained bartenders." One of the attendees had too much to drink, got into his car and killed someone. The lawsuit is for \$50 million dollars.

We will follow the outcome of this suit, decide how to handle our liability, and determine exactly how we will proceed. However, the implications for the DUSTOFF Association and the parallels to meeting in reunion hospitality rooms are obvious, and all reunion planners should take heed. More to follow.

Letters to the DUSTOFFer

Billy Hughes, one of the original DUSTOFF flight medics, dropped a note, remembering "... one night they came into our compound and announced that all DUSTOFF personnel were to report to the flight line. We did as ordered. Turned out that an armed plane has dropped on of its 500-pound bombs over at Bien Hoa. It was the only time I ever flew in civilian clothes. Needless to say, all the enlisted personnel were stone sober.

When my pilots arrived, they too were in civvies. One was a young lieutenant named Harris. I believe the other one was LT Shaw (or was it McGowan?). The conversation went something like this: 'You fly this damned thing; I'm too drunk!' 'No! You fly it; I've had more to drink than you!' 'I'm not flying this damned thing!' Meanwhile, I'm in the back wondering what the telegram home is going to say.

When we arrived, the Bien Hoa flight line was just about gone. We weren't permitted to go in and pull out the wounded because just about all the planes had been armed for the next day, and more than just a few had time delay fuses on their bombs. I believe the final clean-up came about three days later. In the meantime, every hour or so a bomb or two would explode.

Guess it was 25-cent night at the Officer's Club, huh? Once again you guys got me there and back home safely. Just like you always did."

Alex Ortolano, a 57th DUSTOFF hero from the 1965 era, shared this vignette: In October 1965 our ship took several hits while loading patients near Trang Bang, Vietnam. The Command Pilot was Jim Truscott, and I was flying the right seat.

Just as I pulled my head back inside the ship after looking to the rear to see how the loading of the patients was proceeding, several rounds came through the window on my door. They struck the center of the windshield post and exited through several sites in the windshield. One of the places was just in front of Jim, just down between his feet. After Jim had taken off and just as we cleared the trees, Jim asked me to take the controls. As I flew out of the area, I noticed that Jim was lifting the lower flaps of his fatigues and looking at and pressing around the lower part of his body and his thighs. The exit damage must have looked like entry damage to him at this moment. He had a puzzled look on his face because he could not understand how all that damage had been done to the aircraft but no damage had been done to his body.

Editors' note: Later examination of the aircraft revealed that effective fire had indeed been received from both sides of the LZ. There were both entry and exit holes from a variety of directions, as well as a number of expended armor-piercing 7.62mm rounds on the floor of the cockpit.

Hello,

I had the great honor and privilege of driving Michael J. Novosel and Michael J. Novosel Jr. in the May 28, 2001, Memorial Day Salute to Veterans Parade, here in Columbia, Missouri. The crowd of over 100,000 heartily cheered and saluted these heros as we passed along the parade route. I am a U.S. Navy nuclear submarine veteran, and meeting the Novosels and learning about DUSTOFF was truly a moving experience for me. I have several photos if anyone is interested. I salute all who participated in DUSTOFF.

Sincerely,
Paul Hobbs
Columbia, Missouri



Michael Novosel Sr. and Michael Novosel Jr. ride in the Memorial Day Salute to Veterans Parade, Columbia, Missouri, May 2001.

Boundless Bravery

Foundation of DUSTOFF History

by Cleo Brennan, Fort Sam Houston Public Affairs Office

From the Fort Sam Houston News Leader, March 1, 2001

THE HISTORY OF DUSTOFF is recorded in the annals of the Center for Military History and at the DUSTOFF Association Web site. They chronicle in detail the drama and developments that heralded the legacy of aeromedical evacuation during the Vietnam War known as DUSTOFF. The seeds of the legacy began long before, however, with little known events from an unlikely quarter. Historians record that, from 1950 through early 1954, French air ambulances in Vietnam evacuated about 5,000 casualties, but the US Army used only a few helicopters for medical evacuation at the end of World War II.

Until recently, little was known of an early secret enterprise between the Army, Navy, and Merchant Marines known as Project Ivory Soap. Among twenty-four ships and some 5,000 men involved in the operation, were six Liberty ships that were converted into floating machine shops and repair and maintenance depots. The mission of the aviation repair units was to repair aircraft damaged on combat missions in the Pacific Theater during World War II. The ships were operated by the Army Transport Service (ATS), all of whose officers and men were merchant mariners. Helicopters based on the Navy ships were used to locate downed planes and rescue their flight crews and passengers, ferry shipwrights and mechanics wherever they might be needed on the islands of the Pacific Campaign, and haul parts. Facilities had to be built into the ships to accommodate R-4B Sikorsky helicopters on board.

These experimental models of Army helicopters are now known to have also effected the first Aeromedical evacuation of wounded soldiers in the Philippine Islands. These facts, buried in the history of the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team and ships' logs, were painstakingly unearthed and presented to the DUSTOFF Association by Fred Duncan, Ivory Soap historian. David Carle, son of the pilot who made the first unbelievably daring rescue, with no medical training and little more than a learner's permit to pilot a helicopter, mesmerized his audience with a narrative of that early escapade, written by his late father, former 2LT Louis Carle.

Carle became one of five pilots to complete a rescue of more than seventy soldiers from the Philippine Theater, flying tiny Sikorsky R-4 and R-6 helicopters, eventually equipped with litters welded to the outside. For the first rescue, Carle had to remove seats to squeeze in his prone passenger with his feet between the steering rudders and his back against the firewall. Carle's commander reportedly had asked if the craft could fly forty miles and return. Humorously, Carle described his arrival with the wounded soldier at the medical facility thirty-five miles away, where he was advised that sick call was over and he would need to return another time. Prevailing on the hospital staff for assistance with what he called "muleskinner language," Carle remarked in his narrative that they weren't accustomed to having patients delivered that way.

Carle is also credited in an article in *Hometown News*, published June 1945, with observing, "Driving an egg-beater is hard work. The control stick shakes like a jack hammer and the pilot must hold it tightly at all times. If he relaxes for a minute, the plane falls out of control. Regular pilots say they can tell a helicopter pilot—they're the ones with a permanent case of the shakes."

During the Korean War, helicopter ambulances were employed on a larger scale, transporting some 17,700 U.S. casualties. Several years later during the Vietnam War, the Army used helicopter ambulances to move almost 900,000 U.S. and Allied sick and wounded, according to documents from the Center for Military History.

The term "DUSTOFF" is traced to the radio call sign given to the first Aeromedical evacuation unit in Vietnam, the 57th Medical Detachment that arrived in-country in 1962. The 57th initially communicated internally on any vacant frequency it could find. In Saigon, the Navy Support Activity, which controlled all call signs in South Vietnam, allowed the 57th to adopt the call sign DUSTOFF.

Helicopter pickups in dry, dusty fields often blew dust and dirt, and this call sign characterized the nature of the 57th's medical evacuation missions. Throughout Vietnam all evacuation helicopters, with the exception of those of the 1st Cavalry Division, known as Medevac, assumed the call sign DUSTOFF, followed by a numerical designation. Though other call signs regularly changed, both ground and aviation units refused to refer to these evacuation helicopters by any other call sign. By adopting DUSTOFF in those early stages of the Vietnam War, the legend was born. The call sign DUSTOFF, now synonymous with lifesaving Aeromedical evacuation, has taken on added meaning with the application of the Association's motto: "Dedicated Unhesitating Service to Our Fighting Forces."

The source of that boundless bravery is motivation, according to retired Major General Patrick Brady, a DUSTOFF Hall of Fame inductee and Medical of Honor recipient. "DUSTOFF crews save lives. When you're engaged in saving a life, there's a special motivation there. Knowing that the injured person on the battlefield is father, son, husband, brother, you go after him as you would want someone to come after you or one of yours. It's personal," Brady said.

When combat troops are ordered to take a hill or some other strategic objective, the options are weighed, and if the engagement appears more costly in lives or equipment than the probability of success, they regroup and try something else. Brady noted that for DUSTOFF, there is no option, even though that means landing in the middle of boiling turmoil in the

(Bravery, continued on page 18.)

OPERATION IVORY SOAP

Submitted by Fred M. Duncan

ONCE IN A WHILE, the news will carry a 50-plus-year-old untold story of our forgotten heroes of World War II—a forgotten medal not awarded, an army regiment based at a remote outpost in the Pacific, outnumbered and fighting like hell just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and many others. One such story represents the foundation of the DUSTOFF mission. This story begins aboard a Liberty ship on June 16, 1945, in the Philippine Islands. It is one of the great untold stories of World War II.

This is one of those officially never-told declassified stories from the vaults of historical files discovered fifty-five years after World War II. This particular story was uncovered by one of the ship's crew, Fred Duncan, while seeking information for a reunion. Another Navy fleet fighting like hell? No, this fleet was not Navy, but a fleet of twenty-four Army Transportation Service aircraft repair ships made up of highly skilled Army Air Corps technicians, Navy armed guards, and civilian Merchant Marines, all identified only by the nickname Project Ivory Soap.

The largest vessels were six Liberty ships modified with machine shops, repair shops and a 40-by-72-foot landing pad for two Sikorsky helicopters, a model R-4B and R-6A. Few people ever knew that the United States used helicopters in World War II. These early helicopters were actually experimental models and had marginal performance in terms of range, power and lifting capacity. A March 1943 classified Navy report states: "... the U.S. Navy has tested the R-4 and does not consider this machine operational for shipboard use."

This story began when LTC Clyde Grant, Commander, 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team, saw the insect-like helicopters flying from their ships in Manila Bay as a way to transport his wounded soldiers out of the mountains and deep Philippine jungles. His original request was refused because of the uncertain capability of the helicopters. He persisted and pressured his commanding general, who subsequently approved the mission and the evacuations.

From June 16 through 29, 1945, five pilots flew rescue missions. Those pilots were 2LT Louis A. Carle, 1LT John R. Noll, 1LT Robert W. Cowgill, 2LT Harold Green and 1LT James H. Brown. None had medical training nor training in combat tactics. Officially, the helicopters had been limited to only one passenger and pilot.

Second LT Carle flew the first missions. He flew under enemy fire to rescue wounded infantry soldiers. The five helicopter pilots evacuated a total of seventy soldiers to Army hospitals in Manila. These were located over thirty-five miles from front-line battle areas. Four pilots rescued seventeen wounded soldiers each, while 2LT Green evacuated two casualties. These brave pilots were literally flying on a rotor blade and a prayer, as they tried to dodge enemy ground fire in areas near the front battle lines.

Although it is known that Carter Harmon had performed helicopter rescues before, these mark the initial concentrated effort on a larger scale. They reflect the spirit of DUSTOFF. The aviation history books often list the beginning of Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals supported by the use of OH-13 helicopters in the Korean War in 1950. The seventy documented helicopter rescues in June 1945 from the Liberty Ships predate that effort by five years and heralded the dawn of DUSTOFF.

Time has taken its toll on these heroes, and only a few remain to tell the story: one pilot, 1LT Cowgill; two of the rescued soldiers, Army Sergeants Bill Garbo and Perry McCargo; and the officer who initiated it all, COL Clyde Grant. Historical documents are currently being compiled for belated air medals for 2LT Cowgill and a posthumous award for 2LT Carle, who passed away in December 2000 while making plans to attend the 2001 DUSTOFF Reunion. The contributions of these brave pilots are finally being recognized fifty-six years after their heroic flights—flights that forever changed the lives of those seventy rescued soldiers. DUSTOFF has also witnessed another piece of its history.

For more information, please contact Fred M. Duncan, 6630 Greenlee Court, Huber Heights, OH 45424; phone: (937) 236-5229; e-mail: duncanfredm@email.msn.com.

—DUSTOFFer—



Patient is off-loaded from an R-4B Sikorsky helicopter piloted by 2Lt. Louis Carle during Operation Ivory Soap, Philippines, 1945.

57th Med Co Helps USAF Airlift Sailor From Croatia to Germany

IT STARTED WITH a telephone call on the morning of November 1, 2000. The night before, on Halloween, an American sailor had fallen forty feet off of a wall and woke up ten hours later in a Croatian hospital. The sailor's ship, the U.S.S. George Washington, an aircraft carrier, was anchored less than a mile off shore from the coastal town of Dubrovnik, Croatia. The telephone call was from the ship's doctor to an American military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany. The doctor pleaded for help for his badly injured shipmate; the sailor needed medical care beyond what was available from the small local hospital or aboard the ship. After exhausting all other options, the hospital in Germany then called on "The Original DUSTOFF."

The 57th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) is based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The unit is nicknamed "The Original Dustoff" because it was the first helicopter ambulance unit to exist in the U.S. military. The 57th Medical Company has been an Air Ambulance unit since the early days of the Vietnam War. Today the 57th has fifteen UH-60A Black Hawk helicopters and more than 100 personnel. Six of those aircraft, along with crews and support personnel are deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Forge.

After receiving the request for air ambulance support, the 57th Medical Company, part of Task Force Medical Eagle (TFME) on Eagle Base in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, began planning for the mission. Was it possible to send an aircraft to the Croatian

coast to pick up the patient? Was the weather good enough to get there and back? Did the injuries warrant the use of a helicopter ambulance? Had all other options truly been exhausted? Could TFME send an aircraft to pick up a sailor who was not part of the Multi-National Division North (MND-N), or even a part of Operation Joint Forge? Who would fly the mission?

The sailor was lucky to still be alive. He had broken one arm, both legs, and three ribs. He had possible damage to his spine and other internal organs, and had several lacerations on his head. Certainly this twenty-year-old needed to get to a higher-level medical treatment facility, and soon. A helicopter could fly from Eagle Base to the coast of Croatia and return; it had been done before. Medical professionals determined that the sailor needed to get to the hospital in Germany as soon as possible. An Air Force C-130 would fly from Germany to Eagle Base to pick him up. But the sailor needed to get to Eagle Base.

The 57th Medical Company has two MEDEVAC crews on duty at Eagle Base at all times. The "first-up" crew responds immediately to any urgent requests and can usually be in the air within ten minutes of notification. The "second-up" crew steps in when the first-up crew is out on a mission, or when a mission requires more than one helicopter. The second-up crew also handles requests for patient transfers, moving a stable patient from one medical treatment facility to another. This was a job for the second-up crew. On this day the crew consisted of CW2 Michael Phillips (pilot-in-command), CW2 Kevin Smelser (pilot), SSG Richard Rigsby (crewchief), and SFC Donald McMillon (flight medic).

The aircrew began planning the mission like any other, by calling the Air Force Weather Detachment at Camp Comanche. The weather forecaster had bad news. There was a storm moving in, and it would be here for more than twenty-four hours. The forecaster advised against going on the flight and said that low clouds (at the surface) would prevent the helicopter from reaching the injured sailor.

The sailor's only chance of making it to the hospital in Germany this day would be if a helicopter from the 57th Medical Company were somehow to make it to and from Dubrovnik, which is more than 100 miles away. The DUSTOFF crew decided they wouldn't give up without a fight, or a flight. Against the better judgement of the weather fore-

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caster, the crew of EVAC 02 took off for the Croatian coast. The crew knew that if the weather was too bad, they could turn around and come back to Eagle Base or land and spend the night somewhere else. They also knew that if they did not go get this American sailor, nobody would.

The flight would take the crew south past Sarajevo, through Mostar, into Croatia, and down the coast to Dubrovnik. Much of the flight was spent flying through narrow river valleys where mountains rose on each side and disappeared into clouds. Visibility at times was as little as one mile and the clouds as low as 500 feet. On the way, the crew stopped in Mostar to refuel. While flying down the coast, the aircrew noticed the sailor's ship anchored off shore; they knew they were close.

The second-up crew arrived safely at Dubrovnik, where a U.S. Navy SH-60 helicopter awaited with the patient. The Army flight medic and a Navy flight surgeon prepared the patient for the flight and transferred him from the Navy Sea Hawk to the Army Black Hawk. The flight surgeon also boarded the Army helicopter, and the crew of EVAC 02 was off again, this time trying to make it back to Eagle Base.

Due to the poor weather, the crew elected to stop and refuel again in Mostar. Soon after departing Mostar, the sun began to set. Fortunately, the aircrew had night vision goggles (NVGs). The weather had steadily worsened. Now, in addition to low visibility, low clouds, and high mountains, the crew was dealing with heavy rain, all while using NVGs with zero illumination.

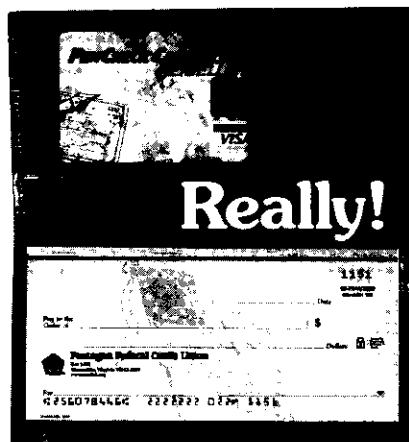
Once north of Sarajevo, the weather began to improve. The crew hurried back to Eagle Base and the now waiting C-130. After landing safely back in Tuzla, the injured sailor was transferred from the Army helicopter to the Air Force airplane and flown to Germany. The four aircrew members of EVAC 02 had spent the entire day seeing to it that an injured sailor was cared for.

This was truly a joint-service achievement. The injured sailor went from the Navy, to the Army, to the Air Force and from Croatia, to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to Germany. The French military provided fuel for the helicopter during the two stops in Mostar. Many people from many nations came together that day to help one injured American sailor; most of those people worked behind the scenes providing support.

The aircrew of the 57th Medical Company had gone above and beyond the call of duty that day. They were not "just doing their job." On this single mission, the aircrew flew more than 200 miles and logged four hours of flight time, 1.4 hours while wearing NVGs. The patient they were helping was not a part of MND-N; he was not even a part of Operation Joint Forge. The crew had been advised by the weather forecaster not to fly and could have turned around and come back to Tuzla after encountering poor weather. But the aircrew of EVAC 02 chose to push on; they chose to continue to provide dedicated, unhesitating service to our fighting forces. DUSTOFF!

—DUSTOFFer—

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DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION

Income and Expenses — Actual

Annual Closeout Report

May 1, 2000, through April 20, 2001

INCOME

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Dues | \$4,737.50 |
| Interest Income | 1,684.17 |
| Memorial Fund | 4,320.00 |
| Sales — Memorabilia/e-mail | 2,998.59 |
| Reunion Income | 15,379.00 |
| Total Income | \$29,119.17 |
| Interest Income Includes \$1,377.52 in the PFCU CD and MM's | |

EXPENSE

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Newsletter Publishing | \$3,832.77 |
| Operating Expenses | 1,476.24 |
| Sales Expense — Memorabilia | 3,991.34 |
| Sales Taxes | 162.47 |
| Reunion Expenses | 14,077.83 |
| Memorial Expenses | 4,244.66 |
| Total Expense | \$27,785.31 |

NET INCOME (LOSS) \$1,333.86

Our balances in the bank/credit union are as follows:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Bank of America, Military Bank Checking Account | \$10,692.93 |
| Pentagon Federal Credit Union CD | \$10,611.17 |
| Pentagon Federal Money Market Savings | \$10,274.84 |

The total money set aside in the checking account for memorials is \$3,490.00, which is just about enough to finish the establishment of the DUSTOFF Hall of Fame Wall at the Museum and one or two plaques for next year.

Store Inventory Balance 30 Apr 01 \$8,677.00

Dan Gower
COL USA (R)
Treasurer

DUSTOFF E-Mail Addresses Offered

It is now possible to have an e-mail address, such as dustoff12@dustoff.org. The DUSTOFF Association is now offering e-mail addresses based on the dustoff.org domain name. For only \$10 a year, you may obtain an additional personal e-mail address that will be forwarded automatically to your current e-mail address.

The BIG ADVANTAGE is, you may use this e-mail address forever; it never changes, even if you change personal e-mail addresses. So go ahead and get transferred, change internet service providers, whatever. When you get a new local e-mail address, just notify us and we'll redirect your DUSTOFF e-mail address to whatever e-mail address you'd like.

It's a great way to have a unique e-mail address and help the DUSTOFF Association prosper. Find out more by visiting the DUSTOFF Association Web site at www.dustoff.org and then clicking on E-mail.

DUSTOFF One-Niner

In a magazine published by the United States Army, *Vietnam*, (USARV) in Autumn 1968, this article, written by SP5 Walt Banks, 44th Medical Brigade Information Office, featured another heroic crew. Sadly, Warrant Officer Timothy Cole, quoted and pictured in the article, died of hostile fire a few weeks after the publication of this article.

Sunday . . . the crew sat at a table eating supper. A runner, panting for breath, appeared in the doorway to the room and gasped one word—"DUSTOFF." Knives and forks dropped to the table, spattering bits of food. The four-man DUSTOFF crew rose as one and hustled to their waiting helicopter.

Warrant Officer James Cassel cranked up the bird, while the aircraft commander, Warrant Officer Timothy Cole, plotted the coordinates to their destination. Specialist 5 Alex Montanez, flight medic, quickly rechecked his medical supplies. Specialist 4 George Goins, crew chief, checked his equipment, glanced outside the chopper and barked "Clear!" into the intercom. The bird shuddered and was airborne.

Unusual? Hardly. Similar scrambles occur whenever a helicopter is needed to evacuate wounded. The location could be anywhere in Vietnam. This particular mission was "DUSTOFF 19." The landing zone was a firebase camp in the Delta that had received a Viet Cong rocket attack. It was only minutes since the call for DUSTOFF was received at Dong Tam, one of ten standby sites operated by the 44th Medical Brigade's 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance).

Contact was established with the LZ on one of the chopper's three radios. It was still daylight. Instructions were given to the troops on the ground. They were told when they should put out a colored smoke cannister. The number and description of casualties, whether litter or ambulatory, was radioed from the ground to the helicopter.

Flying at ninety miles per hour, and at times skimming over the rice paddies at less than fifty feet, the whirlybird was at the scene of the attack within minutes. Radio contact was made with gunships in the area. Small arms fire had been reported, and the area was not yet secure. The gunships provided air cover and swooped into the area on parallel courses before soaring aloft to protect the unarmed DUSTOFF craft.

"Many times Charlie will leave snipers behind in an area where he's inflicted casualties," Cassel explained later. "They know DUSTOFF will be in for the pickup."

"When there is a chance of enemy fire, we take all kinds of evasive action," Cole said. "There are times when we fly miles of zig-zag courses at low altitudes or go way up, depending on the situation. Sometimes we arrive at the area and make a high-speed direct approach to the LZ."

"Our exposure time is about two minutes on the ground. It has to be," Cassel said. "We always go in keeping our tail away from the most likely direction of incoming fire." He explained that on hoist missions, helicopters are extremely vulnerable while hovering in the air picking up casualties by sling and cable.

Cole, a veteran of more than 400 hours of DUSTOFF flights in the Delta, glanced at the LZ and then over his shoulder at the medic, Montanez. Experience had taught Cole that the medic was the most important man aboard, once the casualties were taken on. It would be his job to determine the seriousness of the wounds and decide whether the injured could be taken to the 24th Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh.

Grimly, Cassel eased the chopper into the LZ. Danger was not new to him. Only last May his DUSTOFF ship had been shot down while evacuating casualties from the A Shau Valley. Quickly, the casualties were taken aboard.

"Autoclave 5, this is DUSTOFF One-Niner. We have four U.S. litters . . . two U.S. ambulatory, and one ARVN ambulatory. Will be at your location in zero-four minutes. Exchange will be three litters." Autoclave 5 was the radio call sign for the 3rd Surgical Hospital at Dong Tam.

This mission completed, the crew talked quickly over hot, black coffee, only to be interrupted suddenly when the flying ambulance was needed for another emergency pickup. This time the flight was farther south, almost to the South China Sea, where a patient waited with head and chest wounds. Darkness had fallen over the Mekong Delta, and only the faint outlines of the aircraft were discernible. In the blacked-out ship, the only illumination was the reflection from a star-filled sky and the dimmed lights of the instrument panel.

Maintaining radio contact, DUSTOFF 19's arrival time was relayed, and ground signals were coordinated. Headlights of two vehicles pinpointed the LZ on a narrow dirt road. Seconds after the litter was placed aboard, Montanez began his determined effort to help the wounded soldier. Relying on his training, the flying medic used mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, while staunching the loss of blood from the wounds. The seriousness of the situation was radioed to a surgical hospital in Saigon. An operating room team was alerted immediately.

Minutes after landing, the patient was on the table, where an emergency tracheotomy was performed and the chest wound was treated and closed. It was barely 45 minutes from the time of the pickup before the patient was once again on the chopper, flying full speed north to the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

"This is what we're here for," Montanez said. "We don't like sitting around on these standby operations, but then we know that no one is getting hurt. Usually, if the patient has been stabilized by the combat medics and responds to my voice, I feel it

is better not to begin any treatment unless they are bleeding.” He added, “The crew chiefs on most helicopters have voluntarily learned enough to help the medics.”

The crew summed up their feelings and those of all men flying DUSTOFF operations when they said, “It gives us a real feeling of accomplishment knowing that we helped to save a life.”

The dangers of DUSTOFF operations? Goins answered for the crew, “When I see a guy wracked with pain that many of us will never know, and he can still manage a smile that means ‘Thanks’ . . . well, that makes it all worthwhile.”

—DUSTOFFer—

Abu Dhabi DUSTOFF

The first mission of the United Arab Emirates Military Health Care Upgrade Program’s aeromedical evacuation effort is chronicled by Sean L’Huillier, a flight paramedic charged with operation and training of UAE Air Force crews for the nation-wide program.

At 1100 on October 12, 2000, the duty search and rescue/aeromedical evacuation (SARF/AE) crew was notified of a mission to a hospital on the other side of the country in Fujairah, on the shore of the Sea of Oman in the Indian Ocean. The duty team consisted of the two UAE AF pilots, paramedic Darren Botes, Dr. Ajaz, and Sean L’Huillier. Arriving at the Fujairah Hospital at 1200, there was no one to meet the aircraft, although numerous civilian onlookers were in and on the pad. Five minutes later, hospital staff arrived and requested that the crew bring a ventilator, oxygen, and a scoop litter.

The medical crew were led to the ICU ward, where they were briefed on the patients, who had been involved in a very serious traffic accident late the night before. Both patients were on ventilators, had bilateral chest tube drains, foley catheters, numerous lacerations and abrasions. Neither patient had been conscious since the accident, and both were given GCS scores of 3.

The Fujairah doctor recommended that we take only one patient at a time, due to their condition. The crew agreed, given the limited working conditions inside the Super Puma helicopter and the limited amount of equipment aboard the aircraft. One of the helicopter pilots indicated that we would take both patients on the same trip. He stated that we could take additional staff and equipment from Fujairah to facilitate the transit. The doctor finally stated that the correct medical procedure involved taking the original plan with one patient per trip. He accepted this, and the discussion ended.

The patient transfer to the aircraft and on to Zayed Military Hospital in Abu Dhabi was relatively uneventful, as was the return to Fujairah and the subsequent return to the Zayed facility. There was virtually no control of the landing site at Fujairah and no crowd control. In the hospital, family members were allowed to wander about in the ICU rooms during the transfer evolutions. Crowds were allowed free access to the operating helicopter. Also, it appears to be standard policy to allow family members to ride inside the helicopter to the receiving hospital. This allows for possibility of interference during the flight.

—DUSTOFFer—



Local Thai school children supervise 54th Med. Co. maintenance, Phitsanulok, Thailand, during Cobra Gold 2001 deployment



A 54th Med. Co. crew departs TF 62 Med. area on a mission, Phitsanulok, Thailand, during Cobra Gold 2001 deployment

DUSTOFF Assn. Honors Eminent Courage

by Cleo Brennan, Fort Sam Houston Public Affairs Office
From the Fort Sam Houston News Leader, March 1, 2001

DUSTOFF—a word that meant first aid wasn't the last hope for wounded soldiers on the battlefield. It is also the name and glory of a national association of current and former Army Medical Department enlisted members and officers, aviation crewmembers, and others engaged in or actively supporting Army aeromedical evacuation in any capacity. The essence of courage that epitomizes DUSTOFF permeated the atmosphere at a banquet for members of the DUSTOFF Association.

The DUSTOFF Association met in San Antonio for its annual reunion, gathering for a special ceremony of recognition Saturday night. It was a night for memories of courage and tales of daring. There, they recognized those who rose from the field of glory and battle to the pinnacle of courage and commitment and therein laid the foundation of the DUSTOFF legacy.

Keynote speaker, Major General Kevin Kiley, Commander, Army Medical Department Center and School and Fort Sam Houston, participated in recognizing five legendary figures in the ranks of DUSTOFF, who were inducted as the first to be named to the DUSTOFF Hall of Fame; three Medal of Honor recipients were among them.

Hall of Fame inductees included Major Charles Kelly, represented by his son, Charles Kelly Jr.; retired Major General Patrick Brady; retired Major General Spurgeon Neel; retired Chief Warrant Officer Michael Novosel; and retired Chief Warrant Officer Louis Rocco. Brady, Novosel, and Rocco are Medal of Honor recipients.

The Association also recognized the exemplary performance of the DUSTOFF Crewmember of the Year, SGT Glenn Fryer, 236th Medical Company, Landstuhl, Germany. They presented the award for the DUSTOFF Rescue of the Year to the 571st Medical Company, Fort Carson, Colorado, for the actions of crewmembers CPT Jeffrey Mosso, CPT Edward Mandril, SSG Lisa Dixon, and SGT Phillip Smith.

Fryer is a UH-60 helicopter repairman, whose duties primarily involve superior maintenance and crew coordination as a crew chief. However, he is also lauded for setting himself apart

from his peers by employing his medical knowledge and patient care skills during numerous deployments and missions.

The 571st crew was selected for the honor for performing a harrowing and complicated high-altitude rescue of an injured hiker who was literally freezing to death. The hiker was lost for two days on Mount Elbert, near Leadville, Colorado. Overcast weather and a low ceiling in the mountain passes added to the complication of life-and-death timing. Over steep, rugged mountainside terrain with no safe place to land, the UH-60 Blackhawk maneuvered against gusting wind and blowing snow to lower Smith, the flight medic, seventy-five feet to the patient below, who was then hoisted to safety.

CPT Edward Mandril accepted the award and noted, visibly moved by the honor, that every rescue is important and theirs was just one of many others, perhaps not as well recorded or reported, but no less worthy. To all of those other crews, he offered his salute and accepted the honor in their names as well.

The Hall of Fame plaques honoring Kelly, Brady, Neel, Novosel, and Rocco will be on display at the AMEDD Museum as a permanent part of the museum collection.

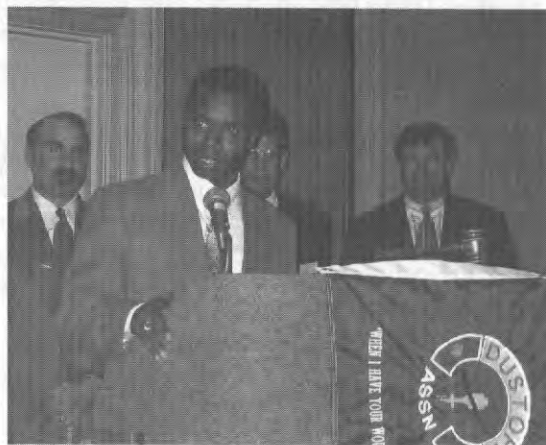
—DUSTOFFer—



DUSTOFF Hall of Fame inductees: MAJ Charles Kelly, represented by his son, Charles Kelly Jr.; MG (R) Spurgeon Neel; MG (R) Patrick Brady; CWO (R) Michael Novosel; CWO (R) Louis Rocco.



CPT Edward Mandril accepts DUSTOFF Rescue of the Year Award for the 571st Med. Co., Fort Carson, Colorado.



SGT Philip Smith, 571st Med. Co., describes the Rescue of the Year.

Kids, Rescuers Recount Drama for TV Network

The Associated Press

From the Killeen Daily Herald, February 18, 2001

China Spring — The grandmother of three children plucked from a school bus by an Army helicopter spent some anxious moments as she watched news footage of the youngsters' perilous rescue. "It was pretty frightful; I just couldn't believe it," Barbara Vana said from her home in Waco. "I just thank the Lord that they are okay. I talked to them tonight. They are still pretty wound up."

Soldiers from Fort Hood used the helicopter to lift the three siblings and their driver from the roof of their school bus as flood waters swirled around the vehicle Friday. One by one, the students and the driver from the Valley Mills school system were strapped into a harness and airlifted to safety in the arms of an Army medic.

"I thought we were going to drown," seven-year-old Joshua Collins said on NBC's "Today Show" Saturday. "Whenever the helicopter got there, they saved us."

The rescus was one of the most dramatic Friday as Texans struggled with high waters from a night of heavy rains and flooding that washed out at least one bridge. Fire from a lightning strike destroyed a century-old Plano church.

Officials said no one was injured in the bus rescue near China Spring, 83 miles southwest of Dallas. The three children were taken to a Waco hospital as a precaution and then sent home with their parents.

"I kept saying, 'It's going to be okay; it's going to be okay,'" said Scott Vana, one of the kids rescued from the bus. Joshua, the eleven-year-old's brother, and Tammara Mills, 5, were also hoisted from the bus.

"I was thinking, 'Please don't let her fall; please don't let her fall,'" Scott said of his sister.

PFC Brent Towne, the helicopter crew chief, said a rope that rescue personnel snaked over the vehicle kept it from being swept downstream. He watched his medic from the side door of the Blackhawk.

"As I was looking down on the rushing water, my biggest concern was to get him onto the bus safely and close enough where he could get the patients on the jungle penetrator and then bring him up without him coming through any debris," Towne told the *Killeen Daily Herald*.

Valley Mills School Superintendent Arvell Rotan said the bus driver, Art Aguilar, was driving over a low-water crossing when the bus was swept into the water of Childress Creek. "It was dark, and I think he was caught by surprise," Rotan said.

Aguilar, who has worked for the district eight years, called 911 on a school district cellular phone. Emergency crews secured the bus in the water, which was several feet deep and rushing. The driver and students climbed through the emergency exit and waited on the roof.

"It was coming very fast, and we didn't know if it was going to rise anymore," said Rotan, who was at the scene.

SGT Michael Thomas said the children were pretty calm. "That surprised me," the medic said. At one point while being hoisted, one of the children was temporarily caught in some tree limbs. But he was freed moments later.

Rotan said the district will investigate whether the driver was at fault in the accident. "The bus driver did a super job of keeping the kids calm," Rotan said. "He was like a mother hen, cuddling them."

—DUSTOFFER—

Edwards Praises 'Copter Crew

by Kevin J. Dwyer, Herald staff writer

From the Killeen Daily Herald, February 22, 2001

Fort Hood — Taking time out from a busy tour schedule of the post Wednesday, U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Waco, met with three members of the Blackhawk crew that rescued three schoolchildren and their driver from flood waters Friday. In recognition of their actions last week, Edwards is going to present each of the crew members with a flag that has flown over the U.S. Capitol.

"I was so proud when I saw Fort Hood soldiers on national television being interviewed about saving three schoolchildren and their bus driver," said Edwards. "To me, it showed the professionalism and the first-class training of these soldiers. On a second's notice, they moved into action, and without hesitation saved the lives of those children."

During the meeting in front of III Corps headquarters, 1LT Angie Presnell, co-pilot of the UH-60 Blackhawk, presented the congressman with a souvenir coin from her unit, the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance). "He wanted to thank us," said Presnell. "He's a parent himself, and it just astounded him, our ability to go and rescue the children. He was amazed, surprised and very grateful."

Following a quick helicopter tour of the post's new railhead and the joint-use terminal at Robert Gray Army Airfield, Edwards and LT GEN Leon LaPorte, commanding general of III Corps and Fort Hood, visited the Command SGT MAJ Walter Kruger Soldier Development Center that opened Tuesday.

"You can't compare it to anything," Edwards said after viewing one of the center's computer labs. "This facility will become a flagship for training and education."

After a tour of one of the post's newest facilities, Edwards got an up-close look at one of its more elderly buildings, the 15th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, barracks. The barracks, one of about twenty percent of Fort Hood's barracks that has not yet been remodeled, is plagued by leaky showers and toilets, cramped rooms with insufficient power and lighting, and inadequate space for the battalion's offices.

"I have two impressions. It's exciting to see a quarter of a billion dollar worth of construction and modernization going on to help better train and deploy and provide housing for our soldiers," Edwards said. "At the same time, I see the needs in areas to upgrade barracks that are totally inadequate."

Edwards said that the country is asking the men and women in the armed services to serve and sacrifice for the country, while they are living in quarters where very few people would volunteer to live. "We have to continue moving forward with the progress that we're making," said Edwards. "It is good to see all the tremendous things that are going on at Fort Hood."

In addition to the problems Edwards saw at the 15th FSB's barracks, he said that an immediate increase in operational funding for the military is needed to maintain its current level of readiness. The congressman said that he hopes that in the next few months congress can pass an emergency funding bill to pay for operations and training in the United States and around the world.

"We don't need to wait for a long-term study to let us know that we need more money for training, base operations, and quality of life issues," said Edwards of President George W. Bush's directive to study the current and future needs of the military. "I'm hopeful that we can move very quickly."

Edwards also said he expects that during the next few years there will be greater appropriations for defense spending. "We need to do that and in the quality of life area our soldiers and their families deserve quality education, housing, health care and pay," Edwards said. "Those are things that have to be priorities for congress."

—DUSTOFFer—

Fort Hood Unit Shows off New "Birds"

by Kevin J. Dwyer, Herald staff writer

From the Killeen Daily Herald, March 2, 2001

Fort Hood — With the "new helicopter" smell still seeping from the cockpits Thursday, the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) rolled out the newest additions to its fleet of Blackhawks.

The two helicopters, HH-60L Blackhawks, are the latest members of the almost twenty-year-old Blackhawk family of utility helicopters. Specially designed for medical missions, the HH-60Ls are better than their predecessors at retrieving and caring for wounded soldiers.

"The HH-60L and the UH-60A that we have currently are vastly different," said COL Johnny West, commanding officer, 1st Medical Brigade, 13th COSCOM. "The new HH-60L has more powerful engines, and the medics have full access to the patients en route, which has never happened before. This aircraft is designed for medical evacuation."

Flight medics can simultaneously be strapped in and care for patients, thanks to the helicopter's interior design. Six patients can be loaded into the electrically operated litter platforms attached to the inside of the fuselage. These platforms can be raised, lowered or tilted, allowing medical personnel easier access to the wounded. Meanwhile, the medics' seats can move the length of the cargo bay and rotate 360 degrees.

MAJ Bob Mitchell, commanding officer of the 507th, said the UH-60A has a bulky carousel where the patients' litters were mounted. The helicopter's internally mounted rescue hoist also presented an obstacle.

"The medics and the crew chief have a much better operating platform with more space, improved lighting and an environmentally controlled area where we can climatically control the cabin," Mitchell said.

Other significant improvements incorporated into the back of the HH-60L are its external rescue hoist, built-in oxygen generator and a suction system to help medics when they are clearing a patient's airway.

"(The oxygen generator) allows (the crew) to provide hospital-grade oxygen to six patients at one time without having to carry bottles of oxygen onboard," said Chief Warrant Officer-2 Haskell Lutke, 36th Medical Evacuation Battalion's aviation officer and HH-60L project officer.

In addition to the changes made in the cargo area of the helicopter, the cockpit has also been upgraded. The dials and gauges of the UH-60A have given way to the HH-60L's multifunction video displays where most of the flight crew's information is displayed. The helicopters also have a forward-looking infrared system that gives the pilots greater capabilities when flying in bad weather and darkness.

When the HH-60Ls finish their field testing and funding is appropriated to mass produce them, sometime in 2002, each of the 1st Medical Brigade's three air ambulance companies will receive fifteen of the new aircraft to replace their current helicopters.

—DUSTOFFer—

DUSTOFF Europe Wins “Best in Army” Award . . . Again

by SGT Cassie McNaughton, 30th Medical Brigade, Public Affairs Office

The best Department of the Army Aviation Battalion for Combat Service Support held its Spring Formal on 27 April at the Mainz Schloss with an evening of dinner and dancing. The 421st Medical Evacuation Battalion, headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany, had reason to celebrate, with its recent acceptance of the Lieutenant General Ellis D. Parker Aviation Award as the best Department of the Army Aviation Battalion (Combat Service Support) for Fiscal Year 2000. This is the fourth consecutive year and the sixth time the battalion has received this prestigious award, beginning in 1993 and repeating in 1995 and 1997–2000.

The Parker award is given to aviation units, based on achievements in the areas of leadership, safety, training, and maintenance. The award is a Department of the Army award given annually since 1993. LTG James C. Riley, V Corps Commander, presented the award to the battalion in a ceremony 20 March at Wiesbaden Army Airfield.

The guest speaker for the evening was Major General (Ret.) Patrick Brady, who received the Medal of Honor as a medical evacuation helicopter commander during the Vietnam War for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

“It wasn’t an unusual day,” Brady said, describing the day for which he was recognized. “Every day all day long, that’s what we did. We went out to the battlefield and gathered the wounded and we put them in hospitals. I wasn’t alone. All the other DUSTOFF (Air Medical Evacuation) pilots were doing the same thing. We evacuated close to one million patients during Vietnam, both enemy and friendly. That day somebody saw what I did, and they sat down and they wrote it out. From there, it went through the chain and ended up as a Medal of Honor.”

According to Brady’s citation, he rescued numerous casualties throughout the day January 6, 1968, near Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam. He used three different aircraft, two of which were damaged by enemy fire, to evacuate fifty-one seriously wounded men from areas that were both heavily guarded by the enemy and blanketed by fog.

“Most heroes are never known,” Brady said. “Some of the greatest heroes have never been recognized, and they really don’t care. That’s what makes them heroes. They’re doing the same job day-in and day-out. I was just one of the lucky ones who had someone see what I did.”

“Having a DUSTOFF legend in their presence made the formal a night to remember for the soldiers and spouses of the 421st Medical Evacuation Battalion,” said LTC Dennis Doyle, Commander. “Our Spring Formal was a golden opportunity for soldiers and family members to celebrate their tremendous success and sacrifice in medical evacuation around the world this past year. I was very impressed with the large number of young soldiers present and also with the overwhelming esprit de corps, enthusiasm, and camaraderie of the event.

“Major General Brady is a DUSTOFF legend, a great American, and a gracious gentleman; his presence and eloquent remarks on leadership made this a night to remember. As the first DUSTOFF pilot awarded the Medal of Honor, MG Brady was a truly exceptional guest of honor. During the three days he spent with us, he observed our soldiers who inherited the DUSTOFF legacy, and he left here confident that our ability to conduct air or ground evacuation justified our battalion motto: Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime—DUSTOFF!”

—DUSTOFFer—

Bobby's Wisdom

- If you are wearing body armor, they will probably miss that part.
- It hurts less to die with a uniform on than to die in a hospital bed.
- Happiness is a belt-fed weapon.
- If something hasn't broken on your helicopter, it's about to.
- Eat when you can. Sleep when you can. Shit when you can. The next opportunity may not come around for a long time—if ever.
- Combat pay is a flawed concept.
- Having all your body parts intact and functioning at the end of the day beats the alternative.
- Air superiority is NOT a luxury.



Order of St. Michael awardees



MG Pat Brady addresses the banquet.

421st
Medical
Evacuation
Battalion—
Best
Aviation
Battalion
for Combat
Support



421st Soldiers of the Year awardees

Spring
Formal
2001,
Wiesbaden,
Germany



MG Brady awards CSM.



MG Brady with the soldier awardees

Aviation Terminology

The following definitions are appropriate in the event of any controversy over "flying terms," particularly when telling war stories at the local pub.

Airspeed—Speed of any airplane . . . deduct 25% when listening to a Navy pilot.

Angle of Attack—Pickup lines that pilots use.

Bank—The folks who hold the lien on most pilots' cars.

Barrel Roll—Sport indulged in battalion picnics, usually after the barrels are empty.

Carburetor Icing—A phenomenon happening to Aero club pilots at exactly the same time they run out of fuel.

Cone of Confusion—An area about the size of New Jersey, located near the final approach beacon of an airport.

Crab—The battalion operations officer.

Dead Reckoning—You reckon correctly or you are.

Engine Failure—A condition that occurs when your fuel tanks mysteriously become filled with air.

Firewall—Section of the aircraft especially designed to let heat and smoke enter the cockpit.

Glide Distance—Half the distance from an aircraft to the nearest emergency landing field.

Hydroplane—An airplane designed to land on a jet runway, 20,000 feet long.

IFR—A method of flying by needle and ripcord.

Lean Mixture—Non-alcoholic beer.

Nanosceond—Time delay built into the low oil pressure warning system.

Parasitic Drag—A pilot who bums rides and complains about the service.

Range—Usually about 30 miles beyond the point where all fuel tanks fill with air.

Rich Mixture—What you order at the other guy's promotion party.

Roger—Used when you're not sure what else to say.

Service Ceiling—Altitude at which cabin crews can serve drinks.

Spoilers—Those who holler "Last Call!" just when the party's at its loudest and most enjoyable.

Stall—Technique used to explain to the bank why your car payment is late.

Steep Bank—Bank that charges pilots more than 10% interest.

Tactics—What a clock sounds like when it needs fixing.

Tail Wind—Results from eating beans, often causing oxygen depletion in the immediate vicinity.

Turn and Bank Indicator—An instrument highly ignored by pilots.

Useful Load—Volumetric capacity of the aircraft, disregarding weight.

VOR—Radio-navigation aid, named after the VORtex effect on pilots trying to home into it.

Yankee—Any pilot who asks Houston Tower to "Say again."

Zero—Style and artistry points earned for a gear-up landing.

Son of Santini—Passing Judgment on a Generation

Pat Conroy, whose novels include *The Prince of Tides*, *The Great Santini*, *The Lords of Discipline*, and *Beach Music*, included the following essay in his new book, *My Losing Season*.

Thirty years of one man's truth are up for reconsideration . . . the true things always ambush me on the road and take me by surprise when I am drifting down the light of placid days, careless about flanks and rear guard actions. I was not looking for a true thing to come upon me in the state of New Jersey. Nothing has ever happened to me in New Jersey. But come it did and it came to stay.

In the past four years, I have been interviewing my team mates on the 1966–67 basketball team at the Citadel for a book I'm writing. For the most part, this has been like buying back a part of my past that I had mislaid or shut out of my life. At first, I thought I was writing about being young and frisky and able to run up and down a court all day long, but lately I realized I came to this book because I needed to come to grips with being middle-aged and having ripened into a gray-haired man you could not trust to handle the ball on a fast break.

When I visited my old team mate Al Kroboth's house in New Jersey, I spent the first hours quizzing him about his memories of games and practices and the screams of coaches that had echoed in field houses more than 30 years before. Al had been a splendid forward-center for the Citadel; at 6 feet, 5 inches, and carrying 220 pounds, he played with indefatigable energy and enthusiasm. For most of his senior year, he led the nation in field-goal percentage, with UCLA center Lew Alcindor hot on his trail. Al was a battler and a brawler and a scrapper from the day he first stepped in as a Green Weenie as a sophomore to the day he graduated.

After we talked basketball, we came to a subject I dreaded to bring up with Al, but which lay between us and would not lie still.

"Al, you know I was a draft dodger and an anti-war demonstrator."

"That's what I heard, Conroy," Al said. "I have nothing against what you did, but I did what I thought was right."

"Tell me about Vietnam, Big Al. Tell me what happened to you," I said.

On his seventh mission as a navigator with Major Leonard Robertson, Al was getting ready to deliver their payload when the fighter-bomber was hit by enemy fire. Though Al has no memory of it, he punched out somewhere in the middle of the ill-fated dive and lost consciousness. He doesn't know if he was unconscious for six hours or six days, nor does he know what happened to Major Robertson (whose name is engraved on the Wall in Washington and on the MIA bracelet Al wears).

When Al awoke, he couldn't move. A Viet Cong soldier held an AK-47 to his head. His back and neck were broken, and he had shattered his left scapula in the fall. When he was well enough to get to his feet (he still doesn't recall how much time had passed), two armed Viet Cong led Al from the jungles of South Vietnam to a prison in Hanoi. The journey took three months. Al Kroboth walked barefooted through the most impassable terrain in Vietnam, and he did it sometimes in the dead of night. He bathed when it rained and he slept in bomb craters with his two Viet Cong captors. As they moved farther north, infections began to erupt on his body, and his legs were covered with leeches picked up while crossing the rice paddies.

At the very time of Al's walk, I had a small role in organizing the only antiwar demonstration ever held in Beaufort, South Carolina, the home of Parris Island and the Marine Corps Air Station. In a Marine Corps town at that time, it was difficult to come up with a quorum of people who had even minor disagreements about the Vietnam War. But my small group managed to attract a crowd of about 150 to Beaufort's waterfront. With my mother and my wife on either side of me, we listened to the featured speaker, Dr. Howard Levy, suggest to the very few young enlisted Marines present that if they get sent to Vietnam, here's how they can help end this war: Roll a grenade under your officer's bunk when he's asleep in his tent. It's called fragging and is becoming more and more popular with the ground troops who know this war is bullshit. I was enraged by the suggestion. At that very moment my father, a Marine officer, was asleep in Vietnam. But in 1972 at the age of twenty-seven, I thought I was serving America's interests by pointing out what massive flaws and miscalculations and corruptions had led her to conduct a ground war in Southeast Asia.

In the meantime, Al and his captors had finally arrived in the North, and the Viet Cong traded him to North Vietnamese soldiers for the final leg of the trip to Hanoi. Many times when they stopped to rest for the night, the local villagers tried to kill him. His captors wired his hands behind his back at night, so he trained himself to sleep in the center of huts when the villagers were sticking knives and bayonets into the thin walls. Following U.S. air raids, old women would come into the huts to excrete on him and yank out hunks of his hair. After the nightmare journey of his walk north, Al was relieved when his guards finally delivered him to the POW camp in Hanoi and the cell door locked behind him.

It was at that camp that Al began to die. He threw up every meal he ate and before long was misidentified as the oldest American soldier in the prison, because his appearance was so gaunt and skeletal. But the extraordinary camaraderie among fellow prisoners that sprang up in all the POW camps caught fire in Al, and did so in time to save his life.

(Son of Santini, continued on page 18.)

(Son of Santini, *continued from page 17.*)

When I was demonstrating in America against Nixon and the Christmas bombings in Hanoi, Al and his fellow prisoners were holding hands under the full fury of those bombings, singing "God Bless America." It was those bombs that convinced Hanoi they would do well to release the American POWs, including my college teammate. When he told me about the C-141 landing in Hanoi to pick up the prisoners, Al said he felt no emotion, none at all, until he saw the giant American flag painted on the plane's tail. I stopped writing as Al wept over the memory of that flag on the plane, on that morning, during that time in the life of America.

It was that same long night, after listening to Al's story, that I began to make judgments about how I had conducted myself during the Vietnam War. In the darkness of the sleeping Kroboth household, lying in the third floor guest bedroom, I began to assess my role as a citizen in the '60s, when my country called my name and I shot her like a bird. Unlike the stupid boys who wrapped themselves in Viet Cong flags and burned the American one, I knew how to demonstrate against the war without flirting with treason or astonishingly bad taste. I had come directly from the warrior culture of this country, and I knew how to act. But in the twenty-five years that have passed since South Vietnam fell, I have immersed myself in the study of totalitarianism during the unspeakable century we just left behind. I have questioned survivors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, talked to Italians who told me tales of the Nazi Occupation, French partisans who had counted German tanks in the forests of Normandy, and officers who survived the Bataan Death March. I quizzed journalists returning from wars in Bosnia, the Sudan, the Congo, Angola, Indonesia, Guatemala, San Salvador, Chile, Northern Ireland, Algeria. As I lay sleepless, I realized I'd done all this research to better understand my country. I now revere words like democracy, freedom, the right to vote, and the grandeur of the extraordinary vision of the founding fathers. Do I see America's flaws? Of course. But I now can honor her basic, incorruptible virtues, the ones that let me walk down the streets screaming my ass off that my country had no idea what it was doing in South Vietnam. My country let me scream to my heart's content—the same country that produced both Al Kroboth and me.

Now, at this moment in New Jersey, I came to a conclusion about my actions as a young man when Vietnam was a dirty word to me. I wish I'd led a platoon of Marines in Vietnam. I would like to think I would have trained my troops well and that the Viet Cong would have had their hands full if they ever entered a firefight with us. From the day of my birth, I was programmed to enter the Marine corps. I was the son of a Marine fighter pilot, and I had grown up on Marine bases where I had watched the men of the Corps perform simulated war games in the forests of my childhood. That a novelist and poet bloomed darkly in the house of Santini strikes me as a remarkable irony. My mother and father had raised me to be an Al Kroboth, and during the Vietnam era, they had watched in horror as I metamorphosed into another breed of fanatic entirely. I understand now that I should have protested the war after my return from Vietnam, after I had done my duty for my country. I have come to a conclusion about my country that I knew in my bones but lacked the courage to act on: America is good enough to die for even when she is wrong.

I looked for some conclusion, a summation of this trip to my teammate's house. I wanted to come to the single right thing, a true thing that I may not like but that I could live with. After hearing Al Kroboth's story of his walk across Vietnam and his brutal imprisonment in the North, I found myself passing harrowing, remorseless judgment on myself. I had not turned out to be the man I had once envisioned myself to be. I thought I would be the kind of man that America could point to and say, "There. That's the guy. That's the one who got it right. The whole package. The one I can depend on." It had never once occurred to me that I would find myself in the position I did on that night in Al Kroboth's house in Roselle, New Jersey: an American coward spending the night with an American Hero.

—DUSTOFFer—

(Bravery, *continued from page 4.*)

most intense part of the battlefield.

"When DUSTOFF is called, you can't not do it when somebody is hurt. You've got to give it everything you've got because you're saving a life. It's just that simple. There's no mission more noble, nothing more motivating. To overcome obstacles of enemy, terrain, and weather to get the wounded and get them to a hospital—you can't match that in life—the feeling of doing the best you can and the result being the saving of a human life. That's what motivates DUSTOFF. You just do it," Brady said.

—DUSTOFFer—



From the Wiregrass

by COL Scott Heintz

GREETINGS FROM THE Wiregrass! There are a lot of great people doing a lot of hard work for the MEDEVAC world and a lot of real and potential changes on the horizon. We still have no resolution on how or if the aviation transformation initiative will affect our air ambulance resources. As of today, the Chief of Staff of the Army has not made a decision. The good news is that the Commander, Forces Command has come out strongly in support of FORSCOM air ambulance units retaining their current resources. He has stated, in every meeting on the subject, that he will non-concur with any proposed reduction of air ambulance aircraft for support of the aviation transformation initiative. The office of the Surgeon General has lead on this action. LTC Dave MacDonald, who has been the lead on this issue, will take command of the 56th Evacuation Battalion this summer. LTC Randy Anderson will assume Dave's work on this critical action. As information becomes available, we'll put it out to the field.

Tied to the aviation transformation initiative is the UH-1 divestiture. The Chief of Staff of the Army has said that all UH-1s will be out of the force before FY04. The Army DCSOPS has not yet provided a solution with regard to how the mission underlap created by the divestiture will be addressed. KPMG continues their study for the AMEDD on how best to support not only those installations currently supported by UH-1 MEDEVAC, but all installations with a MEDEVAC requirement. One victory for the MEDEVAC community in this aviation transformation initiative is that the Army DCSOPS mandated that the MEDEVAC unit supporting JRTC would be resourced with UH60s.

LTC Gene Pfeiffer is staying busy at AMCOM. He provides the following update on the HH60L and M. The contract for production of the next 5 HH-60L helicopters was signed. Four HH-60Ls are now owned by the Army. Two are in the 507th at Ft. Hood. One is assigned to ATTC. One is at the plant and will go to Ft. Hood in the next couple of weeks. The UH-60M Integration and Demonstration Contract has been signed. That contract called for four prototypes, including one HH-60M, based on the UH-60Q developed Mission Equipment Package. This provides the test asset and paves the way for HH-60M production beginning in FY06. The plan is for eight HH-60Ls to be procured each year in FY02-04 and fifteen in FY05. Starting in FY06 fifteen HH-60Ms should be procured IAW current POM numbers. Finally, the contract for the UH-60Q medical equipment package training device for USASAM is taking shape and should be signed before the end of the year.

USAARL continues to make progress on obtaining AWRs for our medical equipment. LTC Wilson and his staff are closer to having blanket AWRs on our MES than we've ever been. Currently, we have fleet-wide AWRs on the following equipment: Lifepack 10-59/10-62; BCI 3303 pulse oximeter; Impact 754 ventilator; 106EL and 206EL Propaq vital signs

monitors; Alaris MS III 2863B infusion pump; and Impact 325 and 326 portable suction units. Limited AWRs are in effect for the LSTAT; LSTAT wireless system and the Heartstream Forerunner AED. If you have specific questions regarding these items, go to the MEPD web page (which is currently under revision) or drop LTC Wilson an e-mail.

USASAM has a new web page <<http://usasam.amedd.army.mil/Index/index.htm>> with a good deal of information for MEDEVAC units. They have posted lessons learned from aviation resource management surveys (ARMS) inspections of MEDEVAC units, and also provide the latest in policy changes and other hot topics pertaining to our community.

The Safety Center has issued an aviation life support equipment advisory message that addresses the use and inspection of the "Monkey Harness." The message is AM 95-11. If you don't have, it call MEPD at DSN 558-1166 and we'll get it to you.

AMEC

We are gearing up for the 2002 AMEC and welcome your help as to subjects you'd like to see on the agenda. We will use the after action reports from the 2000 conference as a baseline for topics to be presented but would appreciate your input.

DUSTOFF Kudos

Congratulations to the following MAJ(P) MEDEVAC folks who were picked up on this last promotion board: John Alvarez, Jose Berancourt, Kyle Campbell, Vinnie Carnazza, Larry Connell, Greg Malvin and Phil Pemberton. Big whooah to you guys! As I mentioned earlier, LTC Dave MacDonald will take the colors of the 56th Evacuation Battalion from LTC Pauline Knapp in July. A big whooah to Pauline, and best of luck to Dave. Thirteen of our air ambulance companies will change out in 2002. Those selected for command include: LTC Haun, MAJ Drennon, MAJ Hallstrom, MAJ Jackson, MAJ Kerkenbush, MAJ Knapp, MAJ LaChance, MAJ Lamoureux, MAJ Lankowicz, MAJ Merkle, MAJ Pecor, MAJ Perry, MAJ Rustan and MAJ Schwartz. The slate will be announced before the end of June. Congratulations!

Farewell

Sadly, we are losing SFC Marroquin this month, as he is PCSing to Korea. He has done a truly wonderful job during his tenure here at MEPD as the NCOIC. We will miss him and wish him the best of luck in the "Land of the Morning Calm."

That's all for now. As always, if you're in Ft. Rucker, lunch at Larry's is on me. Fly safe, and DUSTOFF!

Colonel Scott Heintz
Director, MEDEVAC Proponency Aeromedical Evacuation Consultant

—DUSTOFFer—

A Floating Pad

In a 1968 issue of Time Magazine, an article appeared that should bring back memories to DUSTOFFers who flew the Mekong River Delta in support of the 9th Infantry Division.

When the U.S. Navy launched its Mobile Riverine Force in South Vietnam's canal-laced Mekong Delta, it soon became obvious that servicing the mini-flotilla was a maxi-headache. Riverine's little boats would slip into the maze of marshlands for long patrols, far from the medical and military aid of the mother ship anchored in one of the larger rivers. The most obvious means of supply was by helicopter, but most of the Delta is too wet and soft to support the weight of a chopper.

The solution, worked out by a civilian in the Navy's Research and Development unit in Saigon, is as inexpensive as it is uncomplicated. After a brief visit to the Delta last summer, Beringer Shepard, who usually develops mines for the Navy, designed and built in just four days the world's smallest aircraft carrier. Constructed from pipes and a 16-foot by 16-foot steel mat (total cost: \$300), the helicopter landing pad was fitted atop the foredeck of a 56-foot Armored Troop Carrier, a standard craft in the Riverine fleet. The device was an immediate success, and in the past year eleven more have been rigged.

Landing on the makeshift flight deck is a ticklish operation demanding split-second timing by pilot and boat crew. As a UH-1 chopper hovers over the mini-carrier, the landing area is invisible to the pilot, who must rely on hand signals from one of the boat's seven-man crew. Meanwhile, the boat's captain maneuvers his vessel under the skids of the descending helicopter. The air-sea mating has become a smooth routine. In more than 2,000 landings, there has yet to be a serious mishap.

The converted ATCS, called "Aid Boats" by Delta GIs, puff along at eight knots behind the Mobile Riverine's speedier patrol boats, whose missions are to inspect sampans for smuggled arms and materiel and attack Viet Cong strongholds. The little flattops serve as refueling depots for support helicopters and as supply ships. But their most important duty is to serve as floating Medevac stations for the attack ships.

Last year, for example, over one-fifth of the 2,000 soldiers and 1,800 sailors in the flotilla were killed or wounded, as their craft, weaving through the narrow canals, were targets for snipers and mortar and rocket attacks. Navy personnel, who regularly man the Delta craft, stand a 70% chance of being wounded during a year's service with the Riverine Force. The Aid Boats, bristling with machine guns, grenade launchers and a cannon, are able to go to the rescue. Wounded are picked up and shuttled away from enemy fire, then quickly evacuated on DUSTOFF helicopters to the nearest U.S. hospital. In the festering Delta, such swift care of combat wounds often spells the difference between life and death.

—DUSTOFFer—

DUSTOFF Reunion—February 2001



Jeff Mankoff, assisted by Mike Riley, presents DUSTOFF Crewmember of the Year Award to LTC Dennis Doyle on behalf of the awardee, SGT Glenn Fryer.



MG Kevin Kiley delivers keynote address for DUSTOFF Hall of Fame induction.

Top of the Schoolhouse

by 1SG Dave Litteral

Hats off to Jeff Mankoff for his recent election as president of the DUSTOFF Association. I went to Jeff with an informal suggestion to award Distinguished Honor Graduates (DHG) of USASAM resident courses (Flight Medic and Aeromedical Evacuation Doctrine [2C-F7] Courses) honorary one-year memberships. Jeff and the members of the executive committee took care of business and made it happen.

I am proud to announce the following Distinguished Honor Graduates. The DHG of Flight Medic Class 01-1 was SGT Alana Klase. She was en route to Flat Iron, where she is currently working on her Readiness Level (RL) progression. The DHG of Flight Medic Class 01-2 was SGT Tony Hayes. He is now working on his RL progression at the 571st Med Co (AA), Fort Carson. The DHG for 2C-F7 Class 01-01 was 1LT Jeremy McKenzie. Class 01-02 DHG was WO1 Jason Penrod. The DHG for 2C-F7 01-03 was 1LT Johnathon Deeter II. Unfortunately, I do not have the units that these future great DUSTOFFers hail from. I had the distinct honor of presenting each of the DHGs with DUSTOFF Association coins.

Spring is always a time of change in the Army. USASAM will have its share of changes. Majors Henschel and Mattner will be departing for Korea to take command of the 377th and 542nd Med Co's (AA), respectively. CPT Prescott will be heading south to Honduras, where he will take the reins of the DUSTOFF Detachment there. These troops have made a lasting impact on our mission and they will be greatly missed. We wish them all the best in their commands.

The USASAM Web site address has been changed. It is now <<http://usasam.amedd.army.mil>>. If you have not checked out the Web site, please take the time to do so. Putting that site together has been no small task. I would be remiss if I didn't mention our computer specialists, Don Rawlinson and Rob Nand, Mike Moran, our instructional systems specialist, and frequent Rx's from the Dean, as being the driving force behind the our Web site. It just keeps getting better. It even has a link to the DUSTOFF Association Web site!

I will be posting "Mission of the Quarter" as part of the 1SG Web page. The mission I have chosen for the past quarter is a hoist mission involving a communications worker, a 200-foot tower, and the dedication and skill of a crew from the 498th Med Co (AA). Log on to our Web site for the full report.

In the last issue of DUSTOFFer I mentioned that USASAM is the proud owner of the Army's only hypobaric chamber. I am happy to announce that civilians needing altitude physiology training and a chamber ride can get that service here at USASAM. All you have to do is contact FAA (<www.faa.gov>). They will give you a list of chambers and the required documentation (FAA upslip and a \$35 check payable to FAA). You can then come to Fort Rucker for your chamber training. Be sure to give yourself time to visit the U.S. Army Aviation Museum. It is among the best in the Army.

I recently attended the MEDCOM CSM/SGM/Senior Conference. A great deal of information was given out regarding the new medical force structure. There is no area in the force that won't be affected by the changes in the enlisted medical structure. We are working on an Additional Skill Identifier for Flight Medics, as well as a career model to help mentor our younger soldiers.

I look forward to hearing from you. We are here to support you; please email me at: <David.Litteral@se.amedd.army.mil>.

—DUSTOFFer—



Perry McCargo, one of the soldiers rescued in Operation Ivory Soap, attended the reunion and shared his experiences.



John Soehlein, Sikorsky Helicopter, Inc., presents Winged-S Awards to Judy Noll, widow of 1LT John Noll, and David Carle, son of 2LT Louis Carle, for their rescues in WWII.

You Might Be a Soldier (or Related to One) If:

- . . . the day after payday you realize that you've spent half your pay on champagne for a woman who speaks broken English and pretends to be interested in your war stories.
- . . . instead of a gold chain around your neck, you've got a stainless steel beaded chain with a P38 threaded on it—and you know what a P38 is.
- . . . your street addresses have been Infantry Boulevard, Howitzer Lane, and Helmet Drive.
- . . . all your civilian friends back home wonder where the town of Apo, New York, might be.
- . . . your wife responds to "Hooah!" and understands exactly what it means, regardless of the context you put in.
- . . . you ask the waiter in a strange place where the latrine is.
- . . . when you go camping, you first check for avenues of approach and fields of fire before setting up your tent.
- . . . you take the family camping and do not bring a tent or sleeping bags.
- . . . you ridicule other campers for setting up downwind and down slope from the latrine.
- . . . you're the only one at a party who doesn't complain about standing and eating at the same time.
- . . . when you're stopped by the police for speeding, you give the excuse that you've just returned from Germany where there are no speed limits.
- . . . you're always conscious of your per diem spending limits when in a night club on TDY.
- . . . you've used your poncho liner as a bedspread.
- . . . you have a bottle of Tabasco Sauce ready at every meal.
- . . . you have the urge to line up your shoes under the bed.
- . . . either you or your spouse have at least one set of camouflage underwear.
- . . . you have ever answered the phone at home as if you were the Charge of Quarters, Sir or Ma'am.
- . . . the only time you and your spouse eat without the kids at the table is at the unit Dining-Out.
- . . . you always back into parking spaces.
- . . . you have to look up your parents' telephone number but can dial the CQ, Staff Duty NCO, your battalion, and brigade by memory.
- . . . each page of your vacation atlas has two routes marked.
- . . . your favorite author is Harold Coyle, Mike Malian, or Tom Clancy.

—DUSTOFFer—



Closing Out the Flight Plan

Stuart S. Roberts, Peoria, Illinois, was a Lifetime member since 1980. He is survived by Letitia "Tish" Roberts. Roberts established the first helicopter care and transport of the state of Ohio; the first flight was 1967.

He was awarded the Sikorsky Winged-S Award and served as a consultant to Sikorsky Aircraft Co. for more than twenty-five years. Roberts was LTC and chief surgical consultant during Vietnam 1970-71 and participated in eighty helicopter rescues. He was awarded the bronze star and legion of merit.



"The sights of war are spectacular. Shells bursting, buildings blazing, tracers filling the sky. There is nothing in civilian life to compare."

Stephen Ambrose
Citizen Soldiers



DUSTOFF Association Membership Report June 22, 2001

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Honorary Life Members | 14 |
| Life Members | 771 |
| Current Annual Members | 154 |
| Units | 64 |
| Corporations | 5 |
| Inactive | 639 |
| Other | 2 |
| Totals | 1,649 |

New Members This Year

| | |
|------------------|----|
| New Life Members | 10 |
| New Members | 15 |
| Total | 25 |

New Entries on the Flight Manifest

(Since February 2001)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----------------------|
| Steve Adece | M | Arlington, VA |
| Robert Arbaugh | M | Roseville, CA |
| David Bibb | M | Las Vegas, NV |
| James Bibb | M | Santa Fe, NM |
| Stanley Buck | M | Colorado Springs, CO |
| Kevin Burgess | LM | Ft. Polk, LA |
| Laura Castle | M | CMR 402 APO, AE |
| Roger Connor | M | Alexandria, VA |
| John Garofalo | M | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Don Goody | M | Midland City, AL |
| Lorane Green | M | Yorktown, VA |
| Michael Hughes | LM | San Antonio, TX |
| James Kepley | LM | Alcoa, TN |
| Brian MacPhee | M | Newport, WA |
| Edward Mandrill | M | Colorado Springs, CO |
| John McMahan | M | Smiths, AL |
| John Meeks | M | Sanford, FL |
| David Molina | M | Skokie, IL |
| John Moon | M | Clarksville, TN |
| Pentagon Federal Credit Union | CM | San Antonio, TX |
| Dennis Philapavage | LM | APC, AE |
| Scott Putzier | M | Schertz, TX |
| James Ruediger | LM | Killeen, TX |
| Joseph Seibert | M | CMR 430, APO, AE |
| Bill Strong | M | Roundup, MT |

CM = Corporate Member
LM = Life Member
M = Member

How to Contribute Articles to *The DUSTOFFer*

The DUSTOFFer would like to publish your article. If you have a recollection of a particular DUSTOFF or MAST mission, please share it with our members. If your unit has been involved in an outstanding rescue mission or worthwhile program, please submit your essay about it to *The DUSTOFFer*. Send photographs with your article or attach them electronically to your e-mail.

Send typed, double-spaced hard copy to the address below or e-mail your article to secretary@dustoff.org or jtrus5@aol.com.

Please send your contributions to:

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