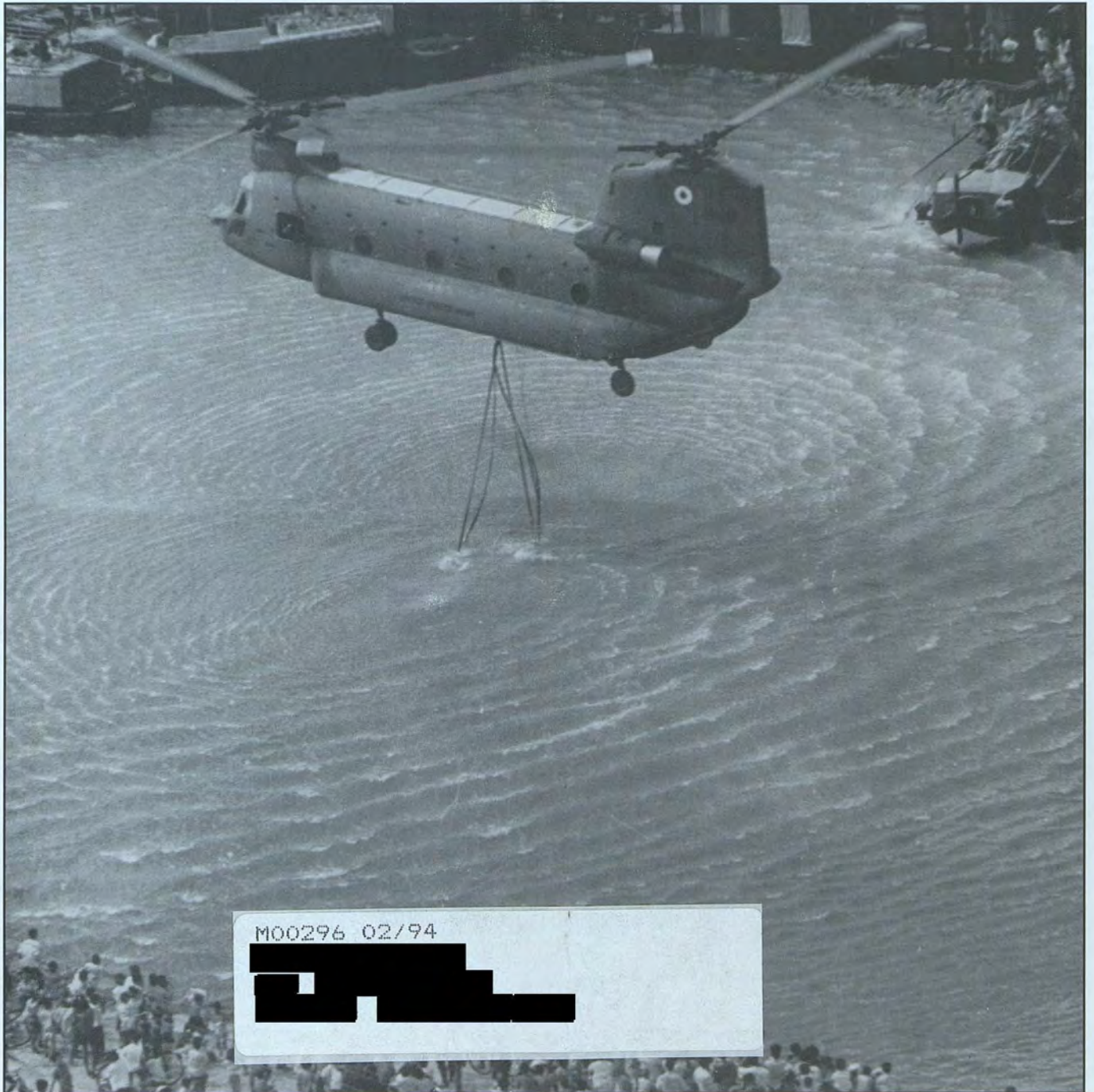




# The VHHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

December 1993 Vol. 11, No. 6



Donivan Earhart photo

A Chinook is the center of attention as it prepares to perform an unusual mission. Story on Page 11.



## From the President

Over the years, many of you have filled out questionnaires for the VHPA. Perhaps at a reunion or maybe when you got your Directory. Regardless of which one (if any!) you filled out, several of us read them and respond accordingly.

By looking at your answers, we see that without question, most of you are members for one or more of four basic reasons, in no particular order:

1. To stay in touch with or find friends.
2. To attend the annual reunion.
3. To receive the Newsletters.
4. To receive the Directory.

This organization really exists only for these reasons. A purely social, fraternal organization. The Executive Council is often approached by well-intentioned individuals and organizations with offers of benefits to the group. Although some may be of value to some of our members, we must decline them because we don't want to "water down" the intent and purpose of this group.

With these thoughts in mind, your council elected to allow Turner Publishing Co. to compile a "History" of our organization and those members who wished to participate. Granted, it has gone on longer than we originally anticipated, but I feel the product will be worth the wait. This past issue of

the Newsletter is the last in which you will see an ad for the book; it will finally be put to bed in the very near future.

As for the Official VHPA Calendar, this is a wholly internal product and will only succeed if we can sell enough copies to pay for the printing, which is NOT cheap. If this project does not fly on it's own, you may never see one again. The photos are absolutely beautiful, in-country pictures. There is one photo of a slick insertion in what appears to be a hot LZ that is a incredible shot. To me, that one photo alone is worth the price of the entire calendar! I've ordered a calendar; have you?

Finally, I want to touch briefly on the 11th reunion, in Philadelphia. Your reunion chairman Ralph Harvey, his wife Peg and I recently spent a few days there "buttoning down" the reunion details. It has been really neat to see the genuine enthusiasm of the hotel staff, the vendors, and the convention and visitors bureau people. They are really excited to have us come to Philly and have gone the extra miles to see that we have the best reunion possible. Yes, they know we are going to spend money there, but the intensity of those involved is real. Even the national sales manager of the Wyndham Hotel chain is coming in from Chicago that week just to make sure everything goes as planned for us. Now that's service! Not bad for a bunch of "combat-hardened" vets from a war long ago.

— Phil Marshall, President

## VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter  
(Update requested)

Ohio River LZ Chapter  
Paul Cotter, President  
[REDACTED]

North Carolina Chapter  
Gary Kimbrell, President  
[REDACTED]

New England Chapter  
(Update requested)

Mardi Gras Chapter  
Don Hunt, President  
Lee Overstreet, Vice President  
New Orleans, LA

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Chapters are responsible for providing the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of chapter officers to the VHPA Newsletter, 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202, for this listing.

## Mini-reunion

### 128th Assault Helicopter Company

The "Tomahawks" and "Gunslingers" of the 128th Assault Helicopter Company will have a mini-reunion in Philadelphia in conjunction with the VHPA Reunion.

All 128th pilots are urged to bring along their photos, news clippings and assorted memorabilia to display. Unit members are gathering information for a unit history and ask that copies of orders and unit rosters be brought to the mini-reunion to help with the 128th database.

Information: Doc Dougherty at [REDACTED]  
or Jay Riseden at [REDACTED]

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PAST PRESIDENT .....Mike Law  
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Midterm Member .....Charles R. Rayl  
Junior Member .....Mike Hurley  
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Financial Adviser .....Phillip G. Monte  
VHPA Headquarters .....(513) 721-VHPA

## VHPA briefs

### Attention H-34 fans

VHPA recently received a letter from Lennart Lundh, 16236 S. Haven Ave., Orland Hills, IL 60477-5949. He is compiling information for publication on the Sikorsky H-34.

He served as a crew member on the USS Tripoli (LPH-10) during the war.

### MACV-SOG history in works

Harve Saal is compiling the definitive history of MACV-SOG, and is seeking information from "the daring-do pilots and crews" who supported these operations. Four volumes, with the first two ready for the printer.

Saal can be contacted at [REDACTED]

### Commemorative poster available

Coors Brewing Co. has introduced a commemorative poster honoring the 40th anniversary of the Korean War.

This poster is a reproduction of the original painting by George Skypeck. VHPA member Rex Gooch has a limited number of the posters and is offering them free to VHPA members.

To obtain a poster, contact: Rex Gooch, [REDACTED]

or call [REDACTED]

## Seeking

My uncle, Nicholas J. Clericuzio, died on 9/5/93. He was a Spec. 5 while stationed in Nha Trang with the 281st Assault Helicopter Company from October 1968 to October 1969.

I am seeking anyone who served with him in hopes that they may write me with any interesting stories of him or his group. These will be forwarded to his family.

Please contact: Mark J. Gatanas, [REDACTED] 1, or call and leave a message at [REDACTED]. Any info would be appreciated.

**Mark J. Gatanas**

VHPA member Lance Ham is looking for Tom Miller, who was in the 281st AHC in 1967-68. Tom left the Army and was living in the Tampa area about 1971-72.

**Lance Ham**

Richard "Marty" Martinez is seeking John Everhart, who was a CW2 in C/7/17th Cav in 1968-69. John took a direct and served as a captain at Fort Rucker about 1971-72.

**Richard Martinez**

I would like to contact/locate Robert Evans, who was in Battery B, 2nd of 20th Artillery, 1st Cav. during 1967.

**Jim Cronley**

I am looking for Richard Lyle and Paul Mercangetti. Both were Dustoff pilots, and both were at Fort Wolters in 1970-71.

Lyle was last known to live near Boston, Mercangetti also was from the Northeast.

**Phil Marshall**

**1325 Trade Square West, Apt. 5  
Troy, OH 45373**



# Film producer says thanks to VHPA

I would like to thank the VHPA for all of its assistance in the production of my documentary, "Of Heroes and Helicopters: The Life and Times of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot."

We were able to interview close to two dozen pilots, along with a crew chief, two gunners and Observer Vernon Shepard, whose bravery as a POW won him the Silver Star.

I believe this program will be of interest to VHPA members for a number of reasons. First, the broad cross-section of pilots that we interviewed gives a real feel for what life was like in Vietnam. We interviewed pilots who had first flown in World War II to a pilot who had recently returned from Desert Storm.

We heard stories from Congressional Medal of Honor winners Fred Ferguson and Mike Novesel, along with many other slick and gunship pilots who made bold runs every day. Stories that are sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but always exciting and interesting. The common thread is that they flew helicopters in Vietnam and they would risk their lives all over again for their fellow countrymen.

Another reason is that we have truly great archival footage from the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker. We have the Cobra in action, battle scenes involving the First Cav, Hueys involved in daring operations, and battle footage from all over 'Nam. All from original 16mm film footage, edited on BetacamSP, this is the next best thing to being back in action!

We will be attempting to market this program next year to one of the major cable networks. We have already had a few nibbles, so stay tuned. We are also offering it to the VHPA at a special price. As a small way of saying thanks, we will donate 10 percent of any and all profit from this tape to the VHPA, for the life of the program,

**Continued on Page 5**

# Calendar orders being filled

The VHPA 1994 Calendar has been printed and all orders were filled starting in early December.

Extra copies are still available. We already have a few photos for the 1995 edition, but are still looking for more "crowd pleasers."

The Directory Committee plans to prepare Volume 1 of the Historical Reference Directory during January and February. Those who order it should receive their copy during March 1994. Volume 1 will include:

- **After-action reports:** Details concerning any helicopter incident that resulted in POWs or MIAs. Page 239 of the 1993 Membership Directory is a sample.

- **Radio call signs:** A complete listing of the VHPA Call Sign database, which contains more than 1,100 call signs.

- **Army flight class lists:** For five years, the Database Commit-

tee has been collecting rosters and data for all Army flight training classes. This monster database now contains more than 33,000 individuals.

- **Updated unit histories:** Updated versions of all unit histories published in previous VHPA Membership Directories. These include the U.S. Marine Operation SHUFLY units, the U.S. Navy HA(L)-3 Squadron, and these U.S. Army units — the air ambulance units, the 8th, 33rd, 81st TC Cos, 45th TC Bn, plus the early years for the 114th, 116th, 118th Avn Cos. and the 145th CAB.

- **Major equipment losses or loss of life reports:** Mostly new material recently obtained by the VHPA. This data will be printed in two sections: First, helicopters destroyed by type and tail number. Second, details concerning many of these aircraft losses. The report currently is 264 pages.

## VHPA Calendar/Historical Reference Directory Order Form

Mail to: VHPA, 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202  
Signed credit card orders can be FAXed to: (513) 721-5315

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Member No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

	Quantity	Price	Total
VHPA 1994 Calendar		@ \$17.50	\$
Historical Reference Directory, Volume 1		@ \$15.00	\$
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$</b>

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA."  
☐ Please charge my: MasterCard   VISA   Discover (circle one).

Credit card No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Calendar orders are honored while supplies last.



## Continued from Page 4

in memory of those pilots who did not make it home.

Again, we cannot thank you enough for the VHPA assistance in this production. If any of your members would like any more information about this program, they can contact me directly at (303) 440-8873. It has been a pleasure and an honor to produce: "Of Heroes and Helicopters."

Paul J. Hansen, Producer  
Dane Hansen Productions  
[REDACTED]

## Wieck leaves, bids farewell to members

For the past few years, I have had the experience of performing the accounting function for the VHPA. My most visible responsibility was to run the registration booth at the last three reunions.

As many of you know, my duties for the VHPA have come to a close and I am leaving you in the hands of my very capable replacement, Anne Sweeney.

As you pass the registration booth each year, please stop to ring the bell and maybe someone could raise a glass in my honor. I have always felt that I was a part of this association, and not just an employee, and for that I will always thank you.

You've all touched my life in a very special way. My affiliation with this organization has been nothing but pleasurable and I will miss you all.

Mel Wieck

## Association expresses gratitude

The Delta Raiders of Vietnam Association would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of the helicopter pilots and crews who supported us in the rugged jungle mountains of northern I Corps in

Vietnam between 1967 and 1972.

Somehow, a simple "thank you" seems hardly enough, but we hope that you will all accept our gratitude in the spirit intended.

Without the brave helicopter pilots in Vietnam, many of us most certainly would not have made it home alive. I remember in particular a medevac that hovered over the top of Hill 805 near Fire-base Ripcord at 4 a.m. on July 14, 1970, to extract two severely wounded Raiders. We were on the top of a bald hill in complete blackness and under heavy NVA ground assault when that Dustoff came in. No bravery can match that of those who flew in exposed helicopters under heavy enemy fire to try and save the life of a fellow soldier.

We also very much appreciated the pilots and crews who got us into and out of the jungle during combat assaults and extractions. We went on combat assaults every couple weeks or so, while helicopter pilots and crews had to do it every single day.

There is also a lot to be said for those of you who brought our supplies and mail out to us. I can't count the times when we were low on food, water and ammunition when you guys would somehow manage to bring the stuff out to us, even in questionable flying weather. We also appreciated the rides to Eagle Beach that the Chinooks provided. Without them, our stand-downs would have been much shorter and probably not in such a nice place.

A very special thanks must also go to those of you who gave us some much needed fire support during heavy contact. If it weren't for noise discipline, we most certainly would have cheered the Cobra pilots as loudly as we possibly could have when they came swooping in to save our butts during a firefight.

We don't want to leave anybody out in our thanks, but your efforts spanned such a large variety of support that we know it's impossible to include everyone. Like the flare ships, Loaches, Cranes, Pink Teams, and C&C birds. Bringing artillery to the firebases, lighting up the area, finding the enemy before they found us, and hauling

leadership to direct our units during combat helped provide much needed support for us.

You may not have had the privilege of living with the leeches, sleeping on the ground, eating C rations every day, being wet all the time, or the many other day-to-day luxuries that we experienced while living in the jungle, but you were under fire much more often than most of us, and in most cases more exposed. We "may" have sometimes complained about you having "3 hots and a cot" every day, but none of us would have traded places with you.

Please do not say that you were just doing your job. All the grunts know that simply isn't so. You went far above and beyond the call of duty in many instances while trying to help us out of sticky situations. You are our unsung heroes.

You were our lifeline in Vietnam and we thought that at the very least a simple "thank you" was long overdue.

Sincerely,  
Raymond H. Blackman  
Delta Raiders of Vietnam  
Association  
[REDACTED]

## Life member available to help with reunion

Please find enclosed copies of the DA orders for ORWAC class 69-16 dated 19 May 1969 awarding wings and a copy of the Graduation Exercises/Ceremony for ORWAC class 69-16 and WORWAC class 69-15 dated June 1969, Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Members of these classes may contact me for a copy of these documents. Any members of ORWAC class 69-16 wishing to participate in a future reunion may use me as a facilitator by contacting me to express interest.

As a life member of VHPA, I wish to thank those members who have contributed to the organization in their time and effort as officers, directors, administrators,

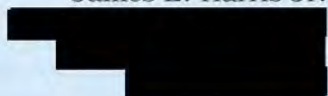
Continued on Page 6



**Continued from Page 5**

and volunteers. VHPA led to my second tour in Vietnam in the spring of 1989 with fellow VHPA members Mike McDonald, Dan Juneau and Robert Keesing, which was more pleasant and far less life-threatening than my original tour in 1969-70.

Well done, VHPA!  
James E. Harris Jr.



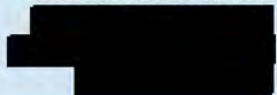
## Childhood friend seeks information

I have been given your address to help me obtain some information about a childhood friend. WO1 Ward Lawrence Hooper was KIA 12/09/69 while flying a UH-1H with the Americal Division. He had graduated from flight school with class 69-23.

We had grown up together on different USMC bases as both our dads were pilots. When it came time to serve, he went Army. I stayed M.C. I made it home, shot up but alive. He didn't. If you can put me in touch with anyone who knows what happened, I would appreciate it.

I went to his funeral, but didn't want to inquire of his family at that time, nor now, because of the pain it would cause. Can you help?

Michael J. Madden



## Author wants helicopter photos taken in Vietnam

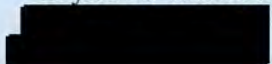
John Slattery of Helicopter Foundation International suggested I contact your organization for assistance. I am at present working on several helicopter projects. Two IN ACTION profiles for

squadron/signal publications, OH-58/206 and CH-46/BV-107, and articles on the CH-46/BV-107 and the OH-6/MD 500 family.

I am contacting you in the hope that you might place a request to the membership in the next VHPA Newsletter.

I am in need of photographs taken in Vietnam through the 1970s of the OH-58, OH-6 and CH-46. My primary desire is to use photos taken by the pilots and crew of these birds rather than "official" shots by the Army, Marines and Navy. All material will be returned if requested.

Bryan H. Wilburn



## Member sheds protective cover after phone call

I have been one of the members who has remained "in the rear" for several years. Yes, a peacetime "strap!!"

I have written a couple items which have appeared in the Newsletter and have received letters and telephone calls over the years, all of which have gone unanswered or unreturned.

Fear of confronting the truth, fear that my postwar bride would not understand my state of mind about Vietnam and living all these years knowing my crew chief was killed shortly after I DEROSed sling-loading a teeter-totter to an orphanage.

Things have changed. First, I would like to apologize to my former stick buddies who have tried to make contact and I have failed to respond.

Second, I would like to tell you all why I have decided to shed my protective cover and come out in the open.

In the December 1992 Newsletter, I wrote an article about the gestation of the call sign "Chicken Man." Since then, I have received several letters and a couple telephone calls from my fellow aviators of A Company.

Today I received a call from Bob Witt of Atlanta, GA. We talked for

an hour. His voice was deepened and, from a few comments he made, his hairline has receded just a tad bit, but by God, it was Bob Witt! We had not talked since I DEROSed in November 1968.

I gave Bob Witt his aircraft commander check ride on June 6, 1968. At the time he hadn't flown in the right seat since flight school, but he was one of those guys who was going to do just fine.

He could fly the crate the rotor heads came in and had a level of self-confidence that was just right. He was not going to do something stupid and get his crew killed, but he had the potential to accomplish any mission.

At O'dark thirty, we flew with two other slicks to Khe Sanh for a Special Force mission out of FOB CCN North. The flight leader was the platoon leader, Capt. Durinberger.

Everyone in the flight knew we were going to Laos or North Vietnam, and everyone knew it would be a long day.

As an IP, I instructed Bob that he was the aircraft commander and I was just another Peter Pilot for the day, except I wanted him to do most of the flying.

He flew the "H" model to Khe Sanh, where we received a briefing for a mission 40 miles into Laos. Our aircraft would be the high rescue aircraft in case there was a need. Lead and two would drop off the team.

After the briefing, Bob flew to LZ Stud to brief the gunships of D Company.

On takeoff from Stud, the lead gunship crashed in tall elephant grass.

Bob landed and our crew tried to free the gunship crew from the inverted, burning helicopter. We then flew the surviving pilot and crew chief to Quang Tri Field Hospital. A few minutes later, we flew the pilot to the USS Repose, a Navy hospital ship offshore.

The flexgun sight had hit him in the face on impact. He was a mess. Back to Stud for fuel to fly the CCN mission. Just as we lifted off, a call came over guard that a Marine helicopter had crashed south of LZ Loon.

The LZ was hot, very hot. The

**Continued on Page 7**



**Continued from Page 6**

Marine CH-46 was on an emergency extraction when it was shot down.

The call came from Fingerprint 22, a Marine Bird Dog.

In my IP/Dumber Peter Pilot role, I asked Bob what we should do and he said we would look the situation over.

I answered the guard call, and seven minutes later we were there.

With no place to land for a pick-up because of trees, Bob volunteered to leave the helicopter and carry the wounded Marines to safety.

Ken Combs, the crew chief, and Caylon Reeves, gunner, immediately objected on the grounds that if I was shot, we would all crash and die. Combs and Reeves then volunteered to fetch the wounded Marines.

Bob landed on the steepest slope I had ever encountered and dropped off the crew chief and the gunner. The main rotor blades were just inches from the dirt.

They worked their way to the Marines under extensive rifle and machine gun fire, while dodging the incoming artillery and mortar rounds impacting all over the area.

They then carried two of the Marines back up the ridge line to our steep LZ, more than 100 meters each way. Bob landed and the two Marines were placed aboard.

Combs and Reeves then worked their way back to the remaining two Marines and then carried them to safety.

While all the ground action was going on, Bob and I alternated control of the helicopter so we could provide covering fire with our M-16s and .38s.

In the heat of battle, we had decided that we should try to draw all the fire we could from the enemy so the crew chief and gunner would be safer.

Fingerprint 22 also provided excellent cover in his FO-1 with his M-16.

About halfway through the rescue, a pair of Air Force A1-Es showed up and mowed down dozens of NVA troops who were converging on our little rescue effort.

## German woman offers friendship

I caught your address from a friend in California and my request will be strange for you, but I hope for your understanding.

A few weeks ago, I saw the movie "Dear American — Letters Home from Vietnam" and I was very impressed by that; I am pained by veterans destiny. During the movie, someone asked, "Will people remember or will they forget?"

I was born in 1968 and I can't remember what happened in Vietnam, but I want to help to preserve the awareness. It's my dearest wish to give veterans my friendship. You see, my English is not the best but maybe enough for having a real good friendship by writing letters.

Is there any possibility to make my wish come true? I would be very grateful for your help and I hope to get more information about your organization.

Andrea Marzahl  
Hans-Böckler-Strasse 93  
[Redacted Address]

The Marines were deposited at Quang Tri Field Hospital. We never even got their names, call sign or unit because they were so badly injured. To this day, I don't know if they lived or died.

We then returned to Stud, refused and called "up" for the CCN mission. The replacement gun team was in place at Khe Sanh.

The guns and slicks cranked and we joined up as we crossed the Laotian border west of Khe Sanh. The insertion went without a hitch.

Halfway back to the border, a gunship was shot down. Bob executed one of the best cross-controlled spirals I have ever seen to a short final and landing.

The NVA were everywhere. One was even on top of the gunship trying to stop the rotor blades as they coasted down.

When we landed, the four gunship crew members jumped on board and we "didi maued" out to the east low-level across the border.

Not bad for Bob's first day as an aircraft commander.

Now here's the problem. I tried to put Combs and Reeves in for a well-deserved Medal of Honor for the rescue of the Marine crew, but our commanding officer would not agree.

He apparently couldn't believe that with all which had happened, Combs and Reeves were not wounded. He recommended the Distinguished Service Cross. But this later was downgraded to a Sil-

ver Star when it got to division headquarters.

As two WO1s in Vietnam, Bob and I were in no position to try to right this injustice.

During our telephone call, Bob was the first to bring up the subject which has haunted me for years, and we decided to work together to right this injustice.

Ken Combs' first child was born while he was in Vietnam. Ken never saw the child before he died. His son needs to know that his father was one of the bravest Americans who served in Vietnam and not just another name on The Wall.

We need your help! First, we need to know who the Marines were we picked up. Unit, call sign, name, service number and blood type, if possible, plus their current address and telephone number would be most helpful. I am sure these guys would finally like to say thanks.

Second, we need to find Caylon Reeves. He was at Fort Eustis in 1969.

If you can help with any information, call me at (800) 697-8266 day or night. If the answering machine catches the call, please leave a message. I will get back to you as soon as I can. It may be a few days because I travel in my work, but I will get in touch with you.

Thank you,  
James L. Kaufman  
Life member  
Brandon, MS





Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau

Independence Hall is one of the many historical landmarks in downtown Philadelphia.

# Philadelphia site of 1994 Reunion

**RALPH HARVEY**  
**REUNION CHAIRMAN**

With 1994 just around the corner, it's time to start thinking about the 11th annual VHPA Reunion June 30-July 3 in Philadelphia.

Come celebrate the culture and beauty of one of America's most exciting and historic cities. "Philly" is famous for its many world-class restaurants, shopping, sports teams and nightlife, including jazz, comedy and rock 'n' roll.

Philadelphia is the largest city in Pennsylvania and the second largest on the East Coast. It's proud to have the world's largest landscaped city park and America's first zoo.

The history of our nation will be in your backyard. You can travel from the hotel by foot, trolley or bus. It's exciting to be right where America's history happened.

Ladies, a visit to Philadelphia wouldn't be complete without a

visit to the famous Franklin Mills Outlet Mall.

The official LZ will be the Wyndham Franklin Plaza. The Wyndham has three restaurants, a lobby bar, sidewalk deli, indoor pool, private health club, tennis, racquetball, squash, and a running track.

The Wyndham is really trying to make this reunion extraordinarily special.

You can call for reservations at (800) 327-8321 or (215) 448-2000.

Here is the schedule of events:

## **Thursday, June 30**

- Early registration.
- On your own.
- Entertainment at night.

## **Friday, July 1**

- Registration.
- Trip to the Philadelphia Naval Yard, with a static display. A tour of an aircraft carrier or a battleship is being negotiated.
- Entertainment at night.

## **Saturday, July 2**

- Registration.

- Luncheon with a speaker (stay tuned).

- Entertainment at night.

## **Sunday, July 3**

- Business meeting (and ladies function).

- Banquet and entertainment.

## **Monday, July 4**

- Return home — or stay and be a part of the big Fourth of July Parade. Join the celebration with the North Carolina Chapter and its UH-1. Walk with pride and pleasure, and fellow VHPA members down Chestnut Street.

There will be a bus trip to The Wall in Washington and a trip to Atlantic City casinos, so sign up early!

Also, while you are in Philly, there will be tours offered to you through a tour company on a pay-as-you-go basis.

So, mark your calendar! The reunion will be here before you know it and you don't want to miss this one.

Come to Philly, join in the fun and catch . . . Philly Pfever!!



# Philadelphia's roots deep in history

Philadelphia, site of the 1994 VHPA Reunion, is a city with roots deep in our nation's history.

Quaker William Penn founded Philadelphia — the "City of Brotherly Love" from the Greek — in 1682 as part of his "Holy Experiment" of religious freedom in the New World.

King Charles II of England granted Penn a parcel of land that included 1,280 acres on a peninsula between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers.

Penn's chief surveyor, Capt. Thomas Holmes, devised a grid pattern for the city that included five public squares — all of which remain — to realize Penn's vision of a "greene countrie towne."

Primarily due to its excellent location on the Atlantic Coast and accessible port facilities, Philadelphia grew rapidly in the 18th century until it was the second largest English-speaking city in the world.

The city's history from 1774 to 1800 is inextricably linked to that of the American Revolution and the newborn nation.

That fight for freedom can be experienced today at "America's most historic square mile," Independence National Historical Park.

There, visitors can see two of

the nation's most precious monuments to freedom:

- The Liberty Bell, which rang the cry of freedom.

- Independence Hall, where a group of dissatisfied colonists adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and where 55 delegates developed the Constitution of the United States in 1787.

Also in Independence Park, one can hoist an ale at the City Tavern, as did Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin; sit in the seats of legislators at Congress Hall, where the House and Senate met when Philadelphia was the nation's capital; or print a slogan for freedom as Franklin did at his Print Shop and Post Office.

A variety of delightful homes on nearby Society Hill show the style of colonial urban living. The cobblestone streets near Head Square, the Powell House and the Hill-Keith Physick House help to retain the original character of the 18th century.

Several blocks away is Olde City, the first commercial area of Philadelphia.

Although most of the buildings now date from the latter part of the 19th century, the area still features Elfreth's Alley, the oldest

continuously occupied residential street in America; the Betsy Ross House where, legend has it, the seamstress created the first American flag; and Christ Church, where mass is said today as it was when Washington, Franklin and other colonial leaders worshiped there.

During the 19th century, the city grew, annexing parts of the countryside and consolidating with the county in 1854.

The annexation included Fairmount and Fairmount Park, now the world's largest landscaped urban park. In the park, history lives with a dozen 18th and 19th century mansions, the nation's first zoo, the Victorian-era Boat House Row, and even an authentic Japanese Samurai warrior's house.

At Penn's Landing along the Delaware River are the USS Olympia, Adm. Dewey's flagship from the Spanish-American War; the USS Becuna submarine; and the Gazela of Philadelphia, a fishing vessel more than a century old.

Nearby is the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau provided information for this article.**

## HAI, 'The Gathering' will be in Anaheim

**JACK JORDAN**

The Helicopter Association International Convention will be held at the Anaheim (Calif.) Convention Center Jan. 30-Feb. 1.

Thanks to the continued support of HAI, the VHPA will again staff a booth during the convention.

If you have plans to attend HAI and would have any time available to work the VHPA booth, we need your assistance.

"The Gathering," an evening for members and prospective members to renew friendships and share experiences, will be held on Jan. 30, starting at 6 p.m., at the Anaheim Marriott.

For those whose schedules do not allow them to attend the summer reunion, this is an opportunity to get away for a mid-winter holiday and see some old friends.

Come out and participate and help us make this

get-together even better than those of the past.

Hey kids, Disneyland is a block away.

The expense of "The Gathering" is defrayed by corporate sponsors. We are fortunate to have Aviation Spectrum Inc., SAFT America, Honeywell Inc., Aris Helicopters Ltd. and D&G Enterprises as sponsors of our past functions.

If anyone has knowledge of companies which might be willing to provide additional sponsorships, please let me know. For the tradition of "The Gathering" to continue, it must be self-supporting, which means we must have additional sponsors.

If you are interested in attending the HAI Convention and have further questions, or would like to offer to help work the VHPA booth, let me hear from you.

For further information, contact: Jack Jordan, P.O. Box 395, Mt. Vernon, TX 75457. Or call

evenings

fax.



# Directory had problem with shrink-wrap

There was a problem with the shrink-wrap — the plastic mailing envelope — which covered the 1993 Membership Directory:

It was not sealed properly by the printer and came apart during mailing.

The Wichita Post Office received the entire shipment in early October, so everyone should have his copy by the time you

read this.

Several members received the letter, the bumper sticker, and the Directory held together with a rubber band. Several received only the letter. We suspect several received nothing at all.

If you did not receive your copy of the Directory or a bumper sticker, please call, write or fax VHPA Headquarters.

The printer has promised to "make things right" and has instructed the VHPA to subtract the extra expenses we are incurring from the firm's invoice. We encourage anyone who is entitled to receive a 1993 Directory but who has not yet received one to contact VHPA ASAP. We have extra copies of the Directory to address this situation.

## Taps . . .

### Ronald A. Gischel

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ronald A. Gischel died June 21 after suffering a heart attack.

Gischel graduated with Class 70-26 and served with the 174th Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-71.

"He was very proud of belonging to your organization," Gischel's wife Carlene said.

### Joe Tobin

Retired officer Joe Tobin died on Nov. 5, 1992, in Shallmar, FL.

Initially, he was a fixed-wing pilot, but served in B/7/17 Cav in 1969 as a helicopter pilot.

He had been in poor health for some time before his death.

Anyone who knows of other Vietnam units in which Tobin served or his flight school class numbers is encouraged to send the information to the VHPA Database Committee.

## Calendar

### May 27-29, 1994

HAL-3 Seawolf Association will meet in Pensacola, FL.

Contact association at 11306 Sunco Drive

Or call

### July 1995

A Kham Duc reunion will be hosted by the A Company, 1/46th Infantry Vietnam Alumni Group at the Holiday Inn-Beach Motel in Key West, FL.

This reunion is for members of all service branches who fought in the Battle at Kham Duc on May 10-12, 1968.

Information:

- Fred Cowburn, or call (315) 432-4130.

- Bill Schneider,

or call

## Committee seeking help

**GARY B. ROUSH**  
DATABASE CHAIRMAN

We are looking for a few good men — or women, for that matter — who live near Fort Rucker, AL, and are willing and able to help with some research and writing.

Regina Burns at the Army Aviation Museum needs help with unit histories, identifying pictures, organizing, filing, etc.

The museum has agreed to assist the VHPA with our history if we will provide the labor.

The results of this effort will be published by the VHPA in future Historical Reference Directory volumes.

So, if you want to help record

our history, contact Regina Burns at the museum and tell her Gary Roush asked you to call.

If you would like more information or have an idea you would like to pursue, contact Gary Roush at or Mike Law at

Also, the Database Committee is looking for anyone who can help decipher unit codes used by the Army to identify units on accident investigation reports in Vietnam.

These typically started with a "W," followed by four more letters.

If you can help, please contact Roush.

## VHPA Newsletter Ad rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

- Full page, \$500.
- One-half page, \$250.
- One-quarter page, \$125.

### Classified ads

Classified advertising is \$1 per line or \$7 per inch, whichever is higher.

Advertising revenue is used to help produce the Newsletter and limit the publication's dependence on membership dues.





Donivan Earhart captured these aerial photographs of a Chinook from the 213th Assault Support Helicopter Company after it filled its two "helibuckets" with water in the Saigon River. In photo on left, the CH-47 flies toward a fire, while in photo on right, the Chinook empties its buckets onto a fire in the Cholon area of Saigon. Earhart, a crew chief with the 213th ASHC at Phu Loi, shot these photos from an OH-58 in 1971.

## Chinook crews join bucket brigade

"Extinguishing a raging fire in Saigon, putting out grass fires in minefields, and even releasing water on a fire on top of Nui Ba Din (Black Virgin Mountain) have become routine for pilots of the 213th Assault Support Helicopter Company."

This was how Spec. 4 Irwin Polls described — in an article he wrote for the 1st Aviation Brigade's "Hawk" magazine some 22 years ago — how the "Black Hawks" of the 213th ASHC used a CH-47 Chinook to fight fires.

"Refilling the water buckets in the nearby Saigon River, the helicopter made 30 sorties in 30 minutes and dumped 12,000 gallons of water before the fire was finally brought under control," Polls wrote of battling the fire in Cholon.

The 213th, stationed at Phu Loi, was the only company flying helibucket missions in Vietnam, Polls wrote. "We fly helibucket

missions throughout III Corps and have gone as far as Song Be to fight a fire," said Capt. James C. Hendricks, operations officer at the 213th.

"Almost everyone at the 213th on flight status, excluding maintenance personnel, fly helibucket missions. Every day, five crew members are put on alert status. One pilot, CW2 Lawrence L. Snyder, commented, 'Each aircraft commander pulls it about every five days. We fly about six actual missions a month.'"

Polls described the 350-gallon fiberglass firebuckets as "conical in shape," with two hydraulically operated butterfly doors.

"Hovering over any river, pond or even a shell crater deep enough to accommodate them, the buckets are filled by lowering them into the water with the doors open. When the desired amount is attained, the flight engineer closes the doors, and

the Chinook lifts it out of the water. It takes approximately 15 seconds to fill both buckets," Polls reported.

"New pilots who have never flown a helibucket mission are given a practice run before they go on an actual alert. WO1 Charles R. Foist explains, 'They take the ship out to the local Phu Chong River and practice filling and unloading the buckets with water.'"

The Hawk writer said, "Added to the ever-present danger of the actual fire is the possible occurrence of exploding ammunition, fuel and gasoline."

"The Chinook drops the water from 50 to 300 feet, depending on the type of fire. 'On a grass fire, you can drop the water from as low as 50 feet, but in a minefield, you have to fly much higher. The water was released from 200 feet in the Saigon-Cholon fire,' WO1 Foist explained."



# Maneuver takes gunship into a tree

B.C. "SKIP" BUDNY

The picture accompanying this article was taken in August 1964 on an armed B model Huey which belonged to the UTT (Utility Tactical Transport) Company-Armed of which I was an aircraft commander.

The crew chief in this picture belonged to a very elite organization because the UTT was the first and only fully armed and

**Close call** combat operational helicopter company in Vietnam, or the world for that matter, until mid-1965.

We flew air support for every major ground operation until the big buildup in 1965.

We were flying air support over a large eagle operation southwest of Saigon. After the ground troops were dropped, they were to sweep a mangrove swamp and village which G-2 had reported the VC to be occupying.

The ARVN troops, with American advisers, received no fire on landing. We also received no fire as we flew the area. The American adviser asked us to do a recon around the operational area. We started a circling spiral type of recon, working outward from the friendlies' position.

On one of the circles, we came across a road with some zigzag trenches along one side. Wanting to get a better look, I called my fire team leader and told him we were going to run the trenches.

We set up so the doorgunner on the left side and the copilot operating the flex guns could see into the trenches. At this point, I was about 10 feet off the ground and flying about 105 knots airspeed. As I proceeded down the road, I looked out in front of me and could see the road went between a group of trees, and beyond the trees were about a half dozen hooches.

The trees, at first glance, looked wide enough to get between, so my attention went back to the trenches. Several sec-

## Articles sought on close calls

The VHPA Newsletter is seeking articles from members about their close calls while flying helicopters in combat during the Vietnam War.

To share your close call with other VHPA members, write about it and mail the article to:

**Close call**  
**VHPA Newsletter**  
**7 W. Seventh St.,**  
**Suite 1990**  
**Cincinnati, OH 45202**

onds later, I looked up at the trees again and realized they were closer together than I had thought. I had just screwed up and needed to come up with a plan quickly.

At this point, I was too close to the trees and my airspeed was too fast to cyclic climb over them. The "G" load that would be put on the rotor system at the weight and speed we were at could have caused the rotor blades to be shed. Of course, that would have ruined the rest of the day and probably most of the following week!

In a split second, I devised a brilliant plan. In fact, it was the only thing I could do to keep from hitting the trees. As I approached the trees, I started a climb, even though I knew I couldn't get over them. As I started into the trees, I rolled the aircraft over on its right side and pulled back on the cyclic stick to circle around the tree on the right.

Well, the plan worked great — except for one minor detail. As I curled around the first tree, missing it five to eight feet, it happened. There was another, smaller tree hidden behind the one I had just missed. It happened so fast I didn't have time to do anything to avoid it, and we hit it doing about 95 knots about 10 or 15 feet from the top.

As we penetrated the top of the tree and, being in a 60- or 70-

degree bank to the right to get between the first two trees, the right side of the fuselage and the right gun pylon were dragged through the top of the tree. This caused the aircraft to rotate 40 or 50 degrees around its vertical axis, which was now horizontal from the 70-degree bank. This put us in a very unusual attitude for a helicopter with the right wing down, so to speak, and the nose of the aircraft pointed toward the ground.

As we came stumbling out of the top of that tree, we must have looked like a wounded duck to the VC because they opened up on us with automatic weapons from the hooches near the trees. I instinctively called, "Dragon 32 receiving fire." Out went the smoke.

Well, I don't mind telling you now that I was running out of ideas, altitude, airspeed and rpm all at the same time. The only saving grace in this whole thing was the fact the momentum upward from the climb we had started just before passing between the trees kept us moving upward even though the old Huey was going sideways.

I didn't take time to think. I just reacted. I pushed the left pedal all the way to the stop, trying to get the nose up and, at the same time, full left cyclic to level the aircraft. At this point, everything seemed to be moving in slow motion. The aircraft shuddered and shook as it tried to respond to my control inputs. I thought it was going to come apart, but very slowly it started leveling itself and it was back under control again.

My fire team leader called and asked if I was OK and I told him I thought so. We then set up for a strike on the hooches.

As I rolled in on the target and the doorgunners started firing on target, I put the rocket sight on the biggest hooch and fired three pairs of rockets. The copilot put the flex gun sight on the hooches and pulled the trigger. Each flex

**Continued on Page 14**



# Marines set up artillery with CH-53s

RICK PHILLIPS

I enjoyed reading the VHPA Newsletter and Directory material in the "Open Letter to fellow USMC Vietnam helicopter pilots," so I joined the VHPA.

I have good memories of several things we did in Vietnam and hope others will find them interesting.

During the summer of 1966, I was assigned to HMH-463, the first squadron to receive the CH-53. We were all rated helicopter pilots and went to the Sikorsky plant in Connecticut to learn to fly this airplane.

At that time there were no Marine Corps instructor pilots, standards pilots, or military test pilots. The ones training at Sikorsky were to fill those billets.

Every few weeks, the Corps would receive another new bird and we'd fly it home to Marine Corps Air Station Santa Ana, CA. I think I signed for No. 6.

At Santa Ana, we worked on the techniques and procedures required for the Marine Combat Heavy Lift role such as moving large external loads and determining how this bird would be maintained within our fleet.

The Marine commanders had a strong sense of urgency for a downed aircraft retriever helicopter and aerial prime mover for our towed 155 artillery pieces in Vietnam.

In late December 1966, I was part of then-Maj. Beeler's detachment of four CH-53s from HMH-463 sent to Vietnam. MAG-16 had six or more CH-37 "Deuces" at Da



Marine Corps photo

**A Marine CH-53A leaves Con Thien with a disabled UH-34.**

Nang that did some light aircraft retrieval, but their story is for another day.

After five months in country, we had retrieved 72 UH-34s, 13 CH-46s, 13 UH-1Es and two O1 fixed-wing aircraft. I remember one fixed-wing recovery vividly:

Things were going along fine until the crew chief noticed that it was starting to "fly wing" on us! Luckily, it was off to one side and still below us, but it was flying because the cable had a very nice arc to it! It was definitely time to decrease airspeed.

One of the innovative things done with the CH-53 was called an "artillery raid." In I Corps, many will remember that some mountains had steep slopes that would be difficult for the NVA to scale with a large attack force.

LZ Dagger, about 40 miles southwest of Da Nang, was a good

example. The CH-53 could haul the gun crews and equipment internally and the tube and ammo externally. A small team was inserted to prepare the site.

The guns were placed to the team's liking by the CH-53 and, finally, the crew and its gear left off.

These bases required a much smaller security force and were above the jungle that impaired operations in the valleys and lower areas.

Clearly, we were not the only ones to lift artillery for a "raid," but the CH-53 certainly got the job done quicker and with less aircraft than others might use.

Another tool we had was our version of "napalm bombing."

Naturally, the jets could deliver a nap strike on many targets. We specialized in hard-to-hit targets like a thin ridge line or small positions.

We would sling load about 10,000 pounds of napalm in 55-gallon drums. Once the drums burst on the ground and the nap seeped into the caves and holes, we'd light it with a Cobra gunship firing all tracers.

These were some very effective multi-aircraft operations.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Rick Phillips, who served with HMH-463 in 1966-67 and 1970-71, was a captain and a major in Vietnam. He and almost 100 other Marine pilots responded to the VHPA's recent membership promotion mailing. Today, Maj. Gen. Phillips is Marine Corps inspector general.**

## Combat assault starts exciting day for crew

JACK TIESING SR.

KIWI 27 & BOOMERANG 00

I had been flying with the 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, attached to the 101st Airborne around and about the I Corps area called Camp Eagle/Rodriguez.

The 82nd Airborne was DEROS-ing home after being called to Vietnam in February 1968 to participate in the remaining fun called

the Tet Offensive.

I still had four months to serve to complete my year's tour and was transferred to the 191st Assault Helicopter Company,

***Close call***

214th Combat Aviation Battalion in November 1968.

At this time I thought I was on the short side of time and the long side of experience. I was never so wrong.

I had never flown straight combat assaults before, but had done about everything else around the A Shau Valley neighborhood.

Flying in a "herd" of "D" models in III Corps both day and night was a new and uplifting experience, not to mention a real ego-builder. I was flying right seat again!

On a gorgeous, misty tropical morning around the last week in

**Continued on Page 15**





The crew chief aboard the UTT's UH-1B gunship works on a jammed ammunition belt.

## Flex guns fail to fire after tree strike

*Continued from Page 12*

gun fired about three or four rounds and jammed (all four of them).

Our little excursion through the tree limbs and branches had jammed the ammo chutes so, in the break, the crew chief and gunner worked feverishly to clear the chutes of leaves and limbs. As we rolled in on our second firing run, I fired the last three pairs of rockets. But the flex guns still would not fire, so we decided to return to the airfield to rearm.

As we were on our way back to the airfield, we got a call from the American adviser saying they had just been hit by a very large VC force and they were taking heavy fire and heavy casualties, and that he needed our fire support very badly. Dragon 31 called the airfield and told the command post to scramble Dragon 33, 34 and 36, and we would stay with the ground troops until they arrived on target.

I called Dragon 31 and told him I only had door guns and that we wouldn't be much help to them because our flex guns were jammed and we had expended

our rockets on the hooches. The crew chief advised me the chutes were clear and the ammo was loose in the chutes so we tried to fire the guns. None of them fired.

We suspected that when the chutes jammed, the M-60s tried to pull the ammo, allowing the guns to fire three or four rounds until the metallic link belts stretched and jammed the guns in the breech. Now, if you are standing on the ground, it's no big deal to clear the breeches. However, because of the way the M-60s were mounted on the flex kit — the guns are mounted on their sides so the breech opens outward and forward — it doesn't allow the breech to be reached and opened while you are in the air.

Well, we had to land or go back to the airfield to clear the weapons. I really didn't want to land in an unsecured and hostile area.

At this point, the crew chief and the gunner keyed their intercoms and said they would take care of it. Before I could determine what they were going to do — or do anything to stop them — they had removed their helmets

and their monkey belts. Now I couldn't even tell them to get back in the aircraft. I would not be willing for them to take the risk.

They both crawled out onto and straddled the gun pylons with their feet on the rocket pods. This allowed them to steady themselves so they could lean out over the guns to open the breech.

As you can see, we were at about 500 feet and 90 knots when they took it upon themselves to clear the guns and take a chance of being blown off the pylons. The air was catching their flak vests, so we slowed the aircraft to about 50 knots.

We were able to stay on target to support the ARVN troops until the rest of the Dragon platoon could get on station. We were able to make the VC break off the attack and run.

Both of these guys should have been written up for medals. They were not because this was the type of thing our crew chiefs and gunners did without hesitation on many occasions.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: B.C. "Skip" Budny currently is a DC-9 captain for USAir.**



# Mains does superb job with book

**"Dear Mom, I'm Alive" by Randolph P. Mains. Published by Avon Books. 25 pages. List price: \$4.99.**

"Dear Mom, I'm Alive" is VHPA member Randy Mains' exceptionally well-told story of his year in Vietnam. It's so authentic I could almost smell the JP-4

Randy spent his tour with Charlie Company (Blackwidows) of the 160th Aviation Group in LZ Sally and Phu Bai in I Corps.

The book starts with his arrival in country in October 1968 and includes only a brief mention of his civilian life and flight school. It ends rather abruptly just after his freedom bird lands in California a year later. For instance, he describes his split with his one true stateside girlfriend in one brief paragraph.

Twenty years after his return, his mother gave him all of the letter he had sent from Vietnam and, as he explains in the introduction, he wrote this book to answer the question: "What was it really like over there?" He certainly

ly accomplishes this goal.

"Dear Mom, I'm Alive" makes no attempt to glamorize either the war or the helicopter's essential ubiquitous role. It is a straightforward, accurate portrayal of flying, living and dying in a hostile environment. It will appeal to anyone who wants to understand how helicopters were used in Vietnam and the lifestyle of the pilots who flew them.

Time and time again, I found myself thinking, "Yeah, that's what we were doing" as I read Randy's tight descriptions of numerous missions.

Early in the book there is a great report of an actual IFR approach that will ring true with anyone who has ever landed any aircraft in minimum instrument conditions. This is just one example of Randy's ability to put the controls in the reader's hands so he can feel the tension, the exhilaration, and the relief of difficult

and dangerous flying.

This book makes no political statement and no judgments about American involvement in Southeast Asia. If you are looking for an explanation of how we became involved, why our policies failed, or what false assumptions led to our flawed strategy, you won't find it here. This book is a lot closer to the action, and does a remarkably good job of letting the reader get the feel of flying a helicopter in Vietnam and living as a pilot.

It is all there — the frustration, the antics, the thrills, the profanity, the humor, the bravery, the incompetence, the anger, the drinking, the personal loss, the routine, and the dangerous.

I would call it "a must read" for any pilot who wants to reflect and remember, and I also would highly recommend it for spouses and children. My wife, who was just starting high school when I went to Vietnam, found Randy's book both entertaining and enlightening.

— Alan Fry

## Book review

# Grunts unload; hell breaks loose at 800 feet

**Continued from Page 13**

November, the "herd" was lifting elements of the 9th Infantry Division into Ben Tre.

The grunts unloaded, we departed, no ground fire, no sweat, a fine day to fly until about 800 feet, when all hell broke loose.

One round entered the left-seater's chin bubble, bounced off the pedals and ventilated his left, upper leg and his wrist.

I reported we were hit, everything was in the green and I was headed to the hospital at Dong Tam.

I had no idea how badly we were hit, or where.

Another ship looked us over, and our bird seemed to respond OK to very gentle coaxing.

With the left-seater slumped down in his armored chair, I began my approach to the hospital pad.

There already was an aircraft on the pad and the squeeze might be tight, so I opted for a ditch.

The steep approach became steeper and, at the moment of truth at the bottom, I had all the left pedal the aircraft had to give, and she began a truly unexpected yaw to the right.

I had no room to maneuver. Splitting the needles over the ditch next to the hospital seemed chancy at best. I was also surrounded by two-story buildings.

I then decided, as the world went rotating by, that I would screw me and the crew back into the blue and find a rice paddy.

The tower had an inkling all was not right and inquired as to our problem.

At this time, the guy with the hole in his leg decided to wake up.

Grabbing the controls, he yinged and I yanged. My feet were

hammering away at the useless pedals and I know I saw our tail number go by at least twice.

My left hand was pumping the collective for all it was worth, rolling the throttle on and off.

This aerial circus went on for what seemed like an eternity.

Suddenly, the nose of the UH-1 lined up with a parking place on the hospital helipad, and the aircraft fell next to the other aircraft on the pad.

When maintenance inspected the aircraft, the inspectors noticed two distinct new features: One neat little hole through the tail rotor drive chain and a rather large hole in my seat cushion.

It's 25 years later and I sometimes wonder, how did that Huey land after all?

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Jack Tiesing Sr. currently lives in New Albany, IN.**



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990 Cincinnati, OH 45202 (513) 721-VHPA

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