

## 26 Added to Roll of Honor

Twenty Six men were inducted into the Enlisted Combat Aircrewmen Roll of Honor at ceremonies aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV-10) at the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina last November. ANA member, Naval Aviation historian and guest speaker, CAPT Richard Knott, USN (Ret.), stated in his address, "These Sailors are heroes in the finest sense of the word."



The ceremony was presided over by Mr. David Burnette, Executive Director of the Patriots Point complex. The assemblage on *Yorktown's* hangar deck included many family members of the inductees.

### New Roll of Honor Members

Richard M. Barth  
Bruce J. Boissey#  
James E. Britts  
Richard A. Chaffee#  
Billy B. Chipp  
Garland D. Collett  
Raymond G. Czarnecki  
John J. Demet  
Edward C. Donahue\*

Kenneth S. Fortier  
Richard C. Gadomski  
Eugene J. Gorczyca\*  
Luther E. Gresham, Jr.  
George C. Heady#  
Robert J. Holdman  
Howard W. Jacobs#  
Oliver Little, Jr.  
Norvel P. Moss\*

George Myntti#  
Ernest R. Provencher\*  
James R. Richardson  
Charlie J. Roberson#  
Stanley TG. Sanders, Sr.  
Benjamin V. Smith#  
Gerald L. Tripp  
Francis D. Zuhlke#

\*Denotes Deceased

\*\*Denotes HAL-3

*The following is excerpted from "Fire from the Sky" (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2005) by CAPT Richard C. Knott, USN (Ret.). Twenty year old Airman Norman B. "Norm" Stayton, a previously inducted Roll of Honor member, was the left door gunner manning an M-60 machine gun on the lead gunship in the following dramatic encounter in South Vietnam in 1971. Pilot of his UH-1B Huey gunship was LT O.C. Fowler. Copilot was LTJG Joseph E. Love Jr. The crew chief and first gunner was AE1 Russell Underwood.*

One of the Mike boats (LCMs), laden with jet fuel, had been hit by a rocket and had exploded in a ball of fire. Burning fuel was spewed over a wide area in the water. Three of the boat's four crewmen were killed almost instantly, but one American in the water seemed to still be alive.

Stayton recalls: "We spotted him through the smoke and fire in the water. He was struggling to crawl onto the bank but was not having much success. He was

### "We Need to Help Him"

clearly hurt, although we could not tell the extent of his injuries at that point. Pilot, LT O. C. Fowler, said simply, 'We need to help him.'

The VC barrage from the village was intense. Stayton remembers, 'There was machine gun and B-40 rocket fire coming from everywhere. We made a run at the village to suppress it and then returned over the man in the canal.' It seemed there was not a lot the gun ships could do other than to keep the VC away from him. It was very frustrating for the Seawolf crews, and Stayton recalls, "We weren't doing him much good sitting up there on our butts." The young door gunner volunteered to do something about it.

Stayton: "Lieutenant Fowler brought us in low and slowed down enough for me to jump out with a Mae West. The surface of the water was aflame, but I knew how to splash and keep a path clear ahead of me. I got to the wounded man quickly. Fire from the shore was still heavy, but the gunships were doing their best to hold it down to a dull roar. The man in the water was blistered from his

The new Roll of Honor members included veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Among those selected from the Vietnam era were a number of door gunners and aircrewmen from the HAL-3 Seawolves. The number of missions flown and awards presented to all the inductees were awe inspiring and testimony to the courage and skill of these warriors.

CAPT Knott is the author of a number of well received books on Naval Aviation.

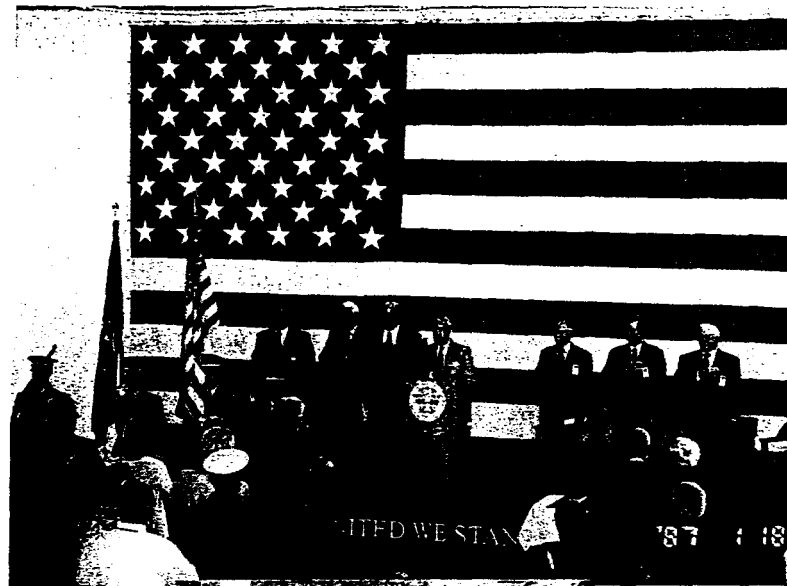
By CAPT Richard C. Knott, USN (Ret.)

feet to his head. There is only one way to describe it: the poor guy was fried. He was awfully gutsy and he was not giving up.

"We've got to get out of here," I told him. I grabbed a small sampan that was pulled up along the bank and tried to lift him in. I wrapped my arms around him and his skin peeled off. 'My arm,' he said. I saw it was loose and hanging by a shred of flesh. He had no control over it, but it was his, and he was not about to let it go. I stuffed the arm into his shorts and was able to get him into the sampan. Then I paddled out into the canal so one of the helicopters could pick us up.

"Lieutenant Fowler came around and tried to hover over us, but the rotor wash kept blowing the little sampan away. On one try I was able to grab a skid and hold on.

"Russ Underwood hung out of the helicopter on his long gunner's strap and tried to get hold of the man, who was lying in the bottom of the boat, but he couldn't quite manage it. I shouted at the man. 'You've got to sit up.' Somehow he did, and Russ grabbed him by his good arm.



The skin just peeled off, and he fell back into the canal."

It was decision time again, and it was one that would have taxed the courage of the bravest of the brave. Stayton knew that if he went back into the water, he would probably not be able to save the injured man. He had seen just how badly burned the man was and knew he would almost certainly not make it, even if by some miracle Stayton could get him to safety. By this time, there was even a growing question in Stayton's mind as to whether he could save himself. Meanwhile, they were still being shot at from shore and the hovering helicopter was a big fat target in a shooting gallery.

The gunner still had a firm grip on the skid and could easily have pulled himself back aboard the helicopter. Who could have blamed him? For Stayton, however, that was not an option. "I let go of the



skid and went back into the canal."

The gunships continued to provide cover to hold down the enemy fire. "I managed to get us back to the bank again and found a larger sampan that had a motor. Somehow I lifted the man in and tried to get the motor going, but it wouldn't start. Just then several PBRs arrived on the scene. My God, I thought, they'll think we're VC. I stood up and started to wave my arms.

*Continued next page*

Top, opening ceremonies on Yorktown's hangar deck. Second row, Roll of Honor member and induction official LCDR Bill Hale with photo of CAPT Ray Schultz who passed away earlier this year. Hale paid tribute to Ray who spearheaded the Roll of Honor program, and LCDR Harvey Herzog, also deceased, a main player in the program; inductee Gerald Trip; Patriot's Point Executive Director David Burnette. Bottom, guest speaker CAPT Knott.

## Enlisted Combat Aircrew Roll of Honor

'We're Americans,' I shouted. Of course they couldn't hear me, but I guess they got the idea."

One of the boats now got in close enough to pick up Stayton and the injured man. By this time Fowler was flying on fumes and left the area briefly to refuel. LT Terry Ogle, pilot of the second Huey gunship, now decided to try to pick up Stayton and his charge from the boat. "We dumped all our remaining ammunition overboard so I could hover and maintain control of the helicopter," said Ogle.

Ogle made his approach to the stern of the boat and turned sideways to set a skid on the aft end. The boat was small, and the maneuver was tricky. As he maneuvered into position, he could no longer see the boat beneath him and descended using instructions from his gunners. The problem with the burned man's skin prevented a successful transfer. Anywhere he was touched, it would simply peel away. It is hard to imagine how painful it must have been. Nothing was working, and Ogle was ultimately obliged to break off and try something else. "I felt bad about the situation," says Ogle, "because I knew that time was of the essence."

The boat now put Stayton and the burned man ashore on a dike that ran along the canal so that Ogle would have a better chance at picking them up. "This wasn't that easy either," says Ogle. "As I remember it, I had to straddle the dike, never completely weight down, but in a slight hover." This time, they were able to load the burned man and Stayton aboard. By now Ogle was also critically short of fuel and set down at the Rach Soi PBR base where the burned man was picked up by a waiting Dust-off helicopter and hurried to the hospital in Saigon. He was barely alive.

Norm Stayton put his feet on the ground at Rach Soi and was surprised to find that he couldn't stand on his right leg. He now realized for the first time he had been hit and was bleeding. Moments later, Fowler picked him up and whisked him off to Rach Gia where he received first aid from a corpsman attached to the Seabee detachment there. He was later medevaced to the hospital in Saigon, where he was treated for multiple injuries suffered during the incident.

The Army sergeant Stayton rescued is believed to have died shortly afterward. Considering the fact that the man's burns covered most of his body, his death was not unexpected. Still, there was always hope. He was, after all, an American in trouble, and that is why Stayton would not leave him. It was what Seawolves did. Stayton's wounds were treated, and he was later returned to his detachment.

Norm Stayton was awarded the Navy Cross for his bravery. On August 15, 2003, at a ceremony attended by many of Stayton's fellow Seawolves, a new enlisted berthing facility at the Navy base in Norfolk, Virginia, was named Stayton Hall in his honor. ■



Former Roll of Honor inductee, SCPO William Rutledge, left, escorts Francis D. Zuhlke and his wife at induction ceremony. Both Rutledge and Zuhlke were Seawolves in HAL-3. Rutledge also served in VAH-21 and VO-67 and is an official in the Roll of Honor selection process.



Norm Stayton sporting his TF 116 black beret at the dedication of Stayton Hall more than thirty years after his incredible act of courage. (Norman B. Stayton)