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AVIATION AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Dear Phil,

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Thank you for your letter, I hope you are well. Within a couple of weeks I shall start putting the various stories together for the "Life on the Line" book. Could I ask you to describe how you were sent out on the mission in which you were wounded. I had thought of starting the story like "We were in the standby hooch playing cards when the 'scramble' buzzer went. We grabbed our helmets and ran to our aircraft to find our Crewchief and medic already climbing aboard. Then describe the strapping in and the start-up procedure, followed by a bit of radio talk and then describe lifting off". Do you see what I am getting at? It would add a bit of atmosphere to the story, rather than just starting with you appearing over the battle area. Also, can you remember any of the call-signs used and by the way, what was your pilots name!

Reference the directory. I understand your feelings. My problem is that I still need to track down some more pilots who flew particular types of helicopters and secondly, I have been asked to write a "Vietnam Helicopter War" book. For the latter I will need as many 'war stories' as possible, and because photos from the archives now cost \$10 each! I would like to try to borrow as many as possible from guys like your good self.

How about this. I would like to try to contact some pilots who flew the following:- OH-13, OH-23, OH-58, CH-54, CH-37, CH-53 or HH-53 and any Navy or Marine pilot, particularly ex H-34 pilots. This is for my "Life on the Line" book. Could you look through your directory and see if you can locate anyone in that category. If you can, will you give me their names and the type of helicopter they flew. I will then write to them and send the letters to you for addressing and post (I'll pay the postage of course). That way, I will only find out their addresses, if they chose to write back to me.

Any ideas about the second project? Ideally I would like to send a circular letter to about 100 members selected at random, asking for help with the Helicopter War book. Could I do the same thing, with you mailing the letters so that I don't make direct contact with them initially?

On the one hand I dislike bothering former pilots like yourself, who only want a bit of peace and quiet. On the other hand, I realise that each and every one of you has a story to tell and I would like to make sure that the stories are told and recorded for posterity. There are dozens of books about MiG-killers and the like, but more UH-1s were lost in Vietnam than any other aircraft. Its time people realised that there were actually people in the 4,000 helicopters which were shot down.

So far, no one has told me to 'get lost'. Everyone has been very helpful and I now have another dozen helicopter war stories for my book. Really though, I would prefer twice that, otherwise I'll have to fill it with boring MiG-killer stories!

I trust your family are all well. My boys have both got colds at the moment. It has been very wet lately and it has now turned cold. The birds are now gathering to migrate and the first leaves have dropped off the trees. Its nearly time for me to go into hibernation!

All the best,

Phil.