



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

November/December 2002 Vol. 20, No. 6

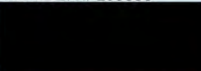


Dave Rittman photo

A Hughes TH-55A trainer rests atop a pinnacle overlooking Possum Kingdom Lake west of Mineral Wells, TX, in April 1966. The photograph was taken by student pilot Dave Rittman during training at the U.S. Army Primary Helicopter Training Center at Fort Wolters. Rittman was a member of Class 66-16.

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MEMBER # L00806



From the President

Another year in the bag. And what a year it's been for the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

The year 2002 saw some monumental strides under the aegis of outgoing president Dave Rittman. We had a fantastic reunion in Las Vegas. We saw the membership numbers exceed 11,000 members for the first time. We saw the financial report healthier than ever before. And, yes, we faced a couple of lawsuits.

All in all, we began our 20th year in outstanding condition.

When I spoke to you at the business meeting during the Las Vegas reunion, I told you I had three general goals.

These are:

- Open Communication
- Do What's Right
- Keep It Fun

Let's see how we're doing within those parameters.



Joe Bilitzke

Open Communication

With the advent of the on-line Commo Corner, I believe members' questions and the Executive Council's answers are reaching the membership.

Quite frankly, the number of questions coming to us is relatively few. I take this to mean the vast majority are reasonably content with their association.

A very few members believe this should be an interactive forum, but that was not the intent. You ask a question, you get an answer. You may not like the answer, but that was never the guarantee.

You may have also noticed a change to the Executive Council Forum on our VHPA website. A member's name and membership number are now required for entry into this section.

This was done on the advice of our legal counsel. (Lawyers, accountants, and women — can't live with them, can't live without them!) The information contained within this website was deemed to be proprietary to our members.

If you know your last name and your member number, you're in. If not, call VHPA Headquarters, and Shari will be happy to fill you in on either one.

Some members have taken advantage of my open commo pledge by calling me directly. That's fine with me. Many of you also have emailed me, using my address:

President@VHPA.org

This address gets your mail to me immediately.

For those of you who availed yourselves of either method, I hope I've been able to answer your questions and helped to alleviate other VHPA "challenges" you've faced.

Another form of communication is the old fashioned kind — pen and paper. You'll see in this issue of your Newsletter, we returned to a paper format reunion registration form. It is hoped, no — requested — that the vast majority of the members use the online reunion registration form.

But for those who are uncomfortable with this method, don't have computer access, or still don't trust using these "newfangled" computer gizmos, paper is being offered. You'll have to agree, that's pretty basic open commo!

This next item falls more into the category of "general announcements," but I'll leave it here in the Open Communication area. We have a new member taking over the role of VHPA legal advisor.

Outgoing general counsel Jim Gunderson received and reviewed resumes from prospective lawyers interested in filling this chair.

Based on Jim's recommendation, your Executive Council unanimously approved the appointment of VHPA member Wally Magathan as general counsel. Wally brings an impressive background to our association:

Graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Distinguished Cadet (top 5 percent) for three years. Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Graduate of George Washington University Law School. Scholarship for academic excellence. Graduated with honors.

Flew Cobras with B Company, 123rd Aviation Battalion (Warlords), Americal Division 1970–1971.

Returned to Fort Rucker and flew for the Army Aviation Test Board for remainder of active duty.

Converted to USAF Reserve and transitioned to C-5

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Classified ads

SEEKING REVOLVER: I am looking for a Smith & Wesson .38 special that most Army helicopter pilots carried in Vietnam. If anyone knows of a source please contact Mike at [redacted] or email [redacted]. Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

E-mail items to Newsletter at:
swickard@vhpa.org

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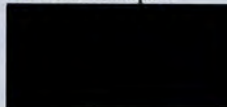
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This information, including but not limited to the VHPA Chapter list, shall not be used for commercial solicitation purposes or for any correspondence related thereto without prior written authorization from the VHPA president.

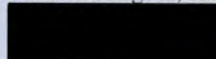
Correspondence relating to commercial purposes or solicitations shall only be sent to those officers, committee chairmen, and staff listed above.

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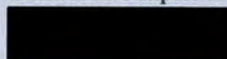
Arizona Chapter



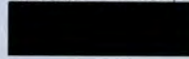
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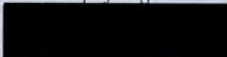


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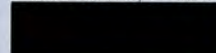


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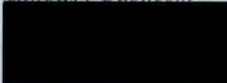


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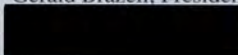


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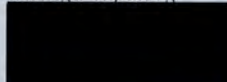


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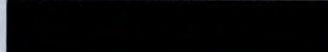


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www.ga-vhpa.org

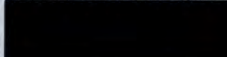


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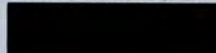


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www.VHPALasVegas.org



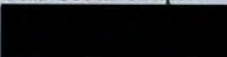
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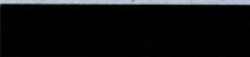
Mid America Chapter

Elections pending

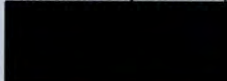
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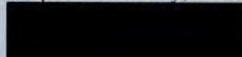
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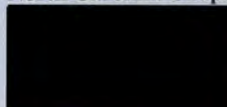
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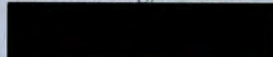
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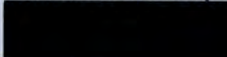
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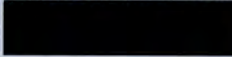
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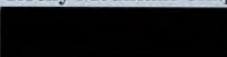
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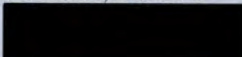
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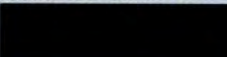
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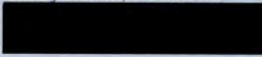
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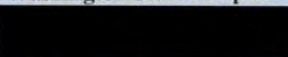
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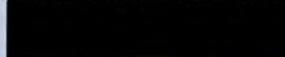
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VHPA Products

You may order past calendars with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-8472 or online at www.vhpa.org

Product	Each	P&H	No.	Total
Bumper sticker	\$1	Free		\$
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2001 Directory	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
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2003 Calendar (Order through Turner Publishing 800-788-3350)	\$12	\$5 ea		\$
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2000 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Calendar	\$3	\$5 ea		\$
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1995 Calendar	\$2	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. II. (Highlights 1966-67)	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
Vietnam Helicopter History CD (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
Grand total				\$

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Credit card (check one):	☐ VISA	☐ MasterCard	
Card number:	Expiration date:		
Signature:			

From the President

Continued from Page 2

transport. Returned to one year active duty flying C-5's during Desert Storm.

Pilot for Eastern Air Lines for five years.

Trial Attorney for FAA and Department of Justice.

Partner in various civilian law firms.

Currently residing in Florida and a partner in a private law firm specializing in civil litigation.

Whew! This guy had no spare time. I almost had to take a nap after writing all that. Welcome aboard, Wally.

As our legal advisor, Wally will assist the Executive Council in maintaining a "straight-and-level attitude" in all legal matters.

His predecessor, Jim Gunderson, leaves his position after serving a three-year term. Many thanks to Jim, for his legal acumen and helping guide us through some pointless litigation.

He has volunteered his continued services on an ongoing basis should it be needed. Thanks again, Jim for those long hours you put forth with the Executive Council.

Do What's Right

This is a tough one. What's right for one may be wrong for another.

I only know that I can sleep soundly at night after every decision made by the Executive Council on behalf of you, the members. Every decision, even those which were agonizingly difficult, was made in the spirit of doing what's right.

Difficult as it was, we had to recommend and vote on the expulsion of two members of VHPA. This was done knowing this prerogative of the EC has never before been exercised. But given the circumstances, it was the right thing to do.

As I write this, we have successfully defended a lawsuit brought by two former life members.

Gary Wineteer filed legal action against your organization together with his legal representative, Tom Elliston. In my personal view, this action was much like going to the Inspector General with a "beef" before going through chain of command. Among other allegations, both individuals insisted that the membership be able to vote in the business meeting using proxy votes.

Our founder, Larry Clark, and his 66 "founding fathers" started this organization with bylaws stating that voting would be done individually by those present at the business meeting. The EC has a responsibility to uphold the wishes and desires of those who began VHPA. It's doing the right thing.

We had to hire a law firm that specializes in this type of litigation. Fortunately, through foresight by previous association officers, liability insurance was purchased that

paid the legal costs associated with this frivolous suit.

What will never be reimbursed are the countless hours, aggravation, and pain of those EC members who volunteer and are elected to serve you. Yes, it comes with the job and no one complained.

However, none of us wanted to engage in a legal battle with fellow members who chose to take such a stand against VHPA. But in the final analysis, I believe we did what's right. The judge dismissed the entire suit.

Doing what's right was also in evidence at the last reunion.

As you know from previous Newsletters, we lost a fellow pilot, David Roessler and his wife, Rosemarie, as they drove to their first VHPA reunion in Las Vegas.

Many of you did what was seen as the right thing. A collection was taken and converted into a donation to the surviving Roessler children.

A check for \$1,045 was sent to Patrick, Michael, Gregory and Jacob Roessler, along with letters of condolence from Headquarters and the Executive Council.

This was an extraordinary tragedy and donations can't be expected for every loss suffered by VHPA. But at the time, it was done because it was the right thing to do. Thanks to all of you who contributed.

How about one more example of doing what's right? I'll try to keep it brief.

In November, I received an email from one of our members, John Halvorson. John's message was:

"Got my new copy of the Directory today and read the cover note about what we might know that VHPA doesn't . . .

"A sale on E-Bay was brought to my attention a couple of months ago.

"I saved it and have attached it. Sadly a Purple Heart, DFC and Air Medals advertised as belonging to Donald J. Sprague were for sale . . . There is an individual by that name listed in the Directory as a life member. I don't know for certain if they are the same person. I do find it difficult to understand why a life member would sell his medals unless something had happened to him . . ."

To the best of my knowledge, John didn't know fellow member Donald Sprague. He simply did some research and asked the question. He did what's right.

I sent John's question to another VHPA member, Directory Editor Mike Law. Being in Donald Sprague's State of Colorado, Mike took it upon himself to continue the investigation. Mike's response follows:

"John, thanks again for the wakeup call. Today I physically went to the address we have for Donald — no answer, but the neighbor said that he indeed died about eight months ago and that the people who live at the address were Donald's best, best friends. Donald was indeed a paraplegic as I remembered . . ."

Mike Law took it upon himself to track down a fellow pilot because it was the right thing to do. Donald Sprague, Life Member 00012, will be remembered because these

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From the President

Continued from Page 5

two individuals did what's right. Thanks to you both, the association remains in good hands with caring members like these.

Have Fun

This sounds the simplest to implement. But in reality, we face opinions here, too.

How does a chapter have fun? If you're in my chapter, California Chapter North (CCN), you participate in local parades towing an old Huey and the Mobile Officers Club. You get wet on a white water rafting trip with other members of the chapter. You attend a chapter Christmas party and dance. Almost all chapters carry on in this tradition.

A very few chapters and even fewer members don't want to have fun. They're too busy chastising Headquarters, the Executive Council, or other members of other chapters. Lighten up guys! Let's get back to having fun.

One way to have more fun than you'll ever imagine is to attend our annual reunion.

Come to Orlando and see guys with whom you flew,

drank, and got shot down. Or all of those!

Or, come to the reunion, and don't find a single person you know. Believe me, at the end of four or five days, you'll know quite a few. You just have to make the effort to have fun.

Beer for a dollar and proximity to the place where Mickey Mouse lives — what more fun can there be? See my column about the reunion. You'll be gasping at the brilliant descriptions of fun that awaits you!

With each birthday, we realize fun takes on a far different meaning. To me, I'm having fun just realizing I'm vertical every day. With each passing year, we find fewer of those with whom we flew, drank or consoled.

Let's try to make these years, these reunions, these acquaintances as full and far-reaching as possible. Have fun!

Jeesh, I didn't mean to sound like Father Flannigan. But you get the picture. We're blessed to count Real Helicopter Pilots as our friends and our history. There is no more fun than that.

Okay, I'll jump off the soapbox now. Oooff! It was higher than I realized — had to do a PLF for you old airborne types. I'll "talk" with you in the next Newsletter.

Make your reservation for VHPA's 20th annual reunion in Orlando. Let me know what's on your mind. Do what's right. Have fun!

— Joe Bilitzke, President

Letters

Wife finds letter about reunion 'cute'

I do hope that you publish the following, as I am sure many VHPA wives would be glad that you did!

Below is my comment to the "cute" letter: My VHPA Reunion by Joe Finch — July/August 2002 Issue. Page 10/12.

Good story, Joe. I am very happy for you that you were able to go to the Vegas Reunion after all. Hopefully, you still had a job when you got back. It sounds that you had heaps of fun and a very emotional time with (the pretend) Bette Midler. She must have really touched the button on you and brought the best out of you . . .

My, My, Dear Joe — there was nothing wrong with that, I am glad for you! . . . Buuut, for goodness sake Joe, couldn't you stop there and not mention that this fake performance was better for you than . . . "getting married and watching the birth of your son" . . . My, My . . . Joe, I would recommend you take a close review of your priorities. This fake Bette Midler came and went, I doubt that she even remembers you. The one you married sees (or has seen) you through daily challenges . . . Your son is your

heir — he is the Joe who lives on when you are long gone.

These are very, VERY important Issues Joe . . . You would do well to "sort of" apologize to your Dear ones for such an insensitive comment in writing, for the World to see . . . TA TA TA Joe . . . Not so good at all !!!!!

Just the Wife of an VHPA member . . . Could be yours!

Renata DePierris

Vietnam acquaintance blessed to live in U.S.

Aaron and I flew with the 135th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam, an Experimental Military Unit (Emus and Taipans) composed one-half U.S. Army and one-half Royal Australian Navy.



Here is a letter I received from him.

Don Agren

As you know, sometimes it is real easy for me to think that things are seeming to go against me and to wish that things could be better.

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Letters

Continued from Page 6

Then some event will seem to happen that brings me back to earth and make me realize how fortunate I am and how God has blessed me so much. Such an event happened to me recently while we were on our Caribbean cruise with several of our friends.

I am an early riser and would get up around 6 a.m. and go up to the ship's top deck to walk a few miles before so many others got out and crowded the track.

One morning as I got out on the track, I found myself just behind a small woman, near my age, who was walking very briskly. As I caught up to her, we engaged in conversation. At first, just about the weather. As I could tell that she was Vietnamese, I told her that I had flown helicopters in Vietnam and she told me that she had a brother-in-law who had flown helicopters for the Vietnamese Air Force.

We continued to talk and get to know each other as we walked for several miles together. Her name was "Cam;" she was from Houston and is the chief financial officer for Channel 39 TV station there.

After our walk, I joined her and her husband "Kit" for breakfast. He was a gaunt and hollow man with not much to say, unlike Cam. I learned quiet a bit about her family. They were on the cruise with her sister, a business owner from Orange County, CA, her 91-year-old mother (boy, I bet she could tell some stories, but she spoke little English), and a couple of other friends. She has another sister who works for DOT in Washington and a brother working for Department of Commerce in Orlando.

Cam and her family escaped from Vietnam as refugees in 1975 with the fall of Saigon. They came to U.S.A. and were able to get an education and make something of themselves. They had suffered much tragedy. Her father was killed by the communists in Vietnam. She lost two brothers in the war who were fighting for South Vietnam. She had a brother-in-law who was a POW for 13 years and was finally released and made it to the U.S.A. and his family, but lived only five more years because of poor health from the terrible torture and beatings he had endured.

Her own husband was an army soldier and, after Vietnam fell, he was placed in a concentration (POW) prison for 11 years before he was finally released and got to come to U.S.A. All I could do was look at this poor, frail man, old beyond his years, and tell him how sorry I was for all he had endured. I told him I was so sorry that our politicians had not let us save his country and his people from the Communists.

Then Cam said something that struck me to my very soul. She said how "thankful" they were and how they had been so "blessed." How they felt so grateful to be in the U.S.A. It was hard for me to feature them being "thankful"

after all they had been through.

Sometimes it takes an encounter like this for us to really realize how much we truly have to be thankful for and to see a family who has suffered so much, be thankful for what they do have. I feel honored to have met them. I talked with Cam and Kit several more times before the cruise was over and they got to meet all of our other friends, who were also Vietnam helicopter pilots and their wives.

God bless you all, each and every one.

Aaron Buford

Letter about PTSD offensive to reader

I was wondering if any editorial control is exercised over the letters/articles appearing in *The VHPA Newsletter*. The reason I ask is because I was highly offended by the Bill Ambrose letter in the September/October 2002 issue.

All through the 1970s and much of the 1980s, the Vietnam veteran was stereotyped as being a wacko, an outcast, a person unable to successfully make the adjustment to life back in the States. Now that this stereotype has all but disappeared, Mr. Ambrose comes along to declare that:

- The pamphlet "PTSD Among Military Veterans" described "every VHPA member I know."
- "All combat veterans have some of the (PTSD) symptoms."
- "What I had been experiencing for years was typical for a Vietnam combat helicopter pilot."
- "All combat helicopter pilots react to their war experience every day they live, whether they realize it or not."
- "Of the VHPA members who read this article, I'd say 75 percent or more of you have PTSD."

While it is gratifying that Mr. Ambrose found the counseling center to be a rewarding experience and it is generous of him to share his experience, he should have limited his comments to his personal experiences. He does not have the professional psychological expertise to diagnose others. Nor does he have any basis in fact for making the above statements, statements which perpetuate the terrible stereotypes that probably caused many Vietnam veterans to have adjustment problems in the first place.

If it is the policy of the Newsletter to print all letters exactly as they are submitted, then I respectfully suggest that this policy be re-examined. A factually inaccurate, excessively hyperbolic letter such as Mr. Ambrose's should not have been printed, at least not in its entirety.

Rick Curtin

118th Assault Helicopter Company, 1970

EDITOR'S NOTE: The VHPA Newsletter editor does not pass judgement on the validity of opinions held by members who submit letters for publication. The newsletter welcomes all letters by members.

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Ambrose's PTSD letter should be taken to heart

In leafing through the September/October *VHPA Newsletter*, Bill Ambrose's letter on PTSD caught my eye.

One year ago, I would have paid no attention. Last March I received an e-mail from a travel agent who specializes in taking vets and families to Vietnam. He had tracked me down through professional affiliations and had a client seeking information about his father.

He then sent me a copy of a letter I had signed June 19, 1969 — 1 of 13 I had signed that day — and one of only three next of kin letters I had sent to children.

Stated simply, I lost it. I was nonfunctional for two days. It does take 24 hours to relive a day minute by minute and that I did, twice, every little detail, stuff that I had repressed for 33 years. Except for one command I gave that day which has replayed at least daily for 12,650 days, give or take a few. If I live another 33 years, I'll have that recall another 12,000 times.

The highlights of my two tours were valleys: Ia Drang and A Shau, with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company and C/2/17 Cav, respectively. As for most of you, those were private memories not to be shared. I did not want to remember them and others wanted not to be burdened by the blabbering of an aging gunnie. Every decision in life that I have made for 33 years has been molded by the simmering, rotting memories.

I got help. I went to a Condor reunion. I cried when my crew chief hugged me.

Take Bill Ambrose's recommendation to heart.

Bill Zierdt



Marines, other veterans plan to restore UH-34D

A group of air wing Marines and other former military men from the Vietnam-era have formed an organization with the intent to fully restore to flying status a Marine UH-34D (Choctaw in the Army inventory).

The airframe (no engine, no rotor head or blades, no electronics . . . just a shell) of this aircraft (Navy BuNo 150570) was located in Tucson and shipped back to Jamestown, NY, to begin this project.

According to the flight log books, 150570 first flew in Vietnam in 1965 with HMM-361 and flew with most of the

118th was designated an AHC after 1965

I don't mean to be nitpicky, but (ref.: photo and caption on Page 8 of the September/October *VHPA Newsletter*) I believe for future reference when dealing with the correct name of the 118th, I want to set the record straight. In the early days of the 118th, we were called 118th Aviation Company, Airmobile Light. We had gunships even in early '64, but at least through the end of '65 we had not been designated as Assault Helicopter Company.

Time and time again, I see reference to the 118th Assault Helicopter Company, but this name only surfaced after 1965 or later.

Ralph Orlando

Bandit 38

118th Aviation. Co. (Airmobile Light)

1964-65

other Marine 34 squadrons that served in country before being phased out by newer, jet-powered choppers.

At one time there were thousands of these durable and versatile aircraft in service around the world (U.S. Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, commercial . . . and at least 12 foreign countries), but at the present time there are only two certified to fly.

For the history of aviation and other reasons, this is a restoration project that needs to move forward and the project needs help.

The restoration organization is made up of members from all branches of our Armed Forces and many of the volunteers either served with 34's in Vietnam or prior to the war in Nam. Readers of The VHPA Newsletter can get involved in this project in many ways.

First, for more information and up-to-date photos of the 34 under restoration, visit the group's website, www.34restoration.org

Or you can make a tax-deductible contribution to the UH-34D restoration project by sending money to HMM-361 Veterans Association Inc., P.O. Box 429, Cutchogue, NY 11935 or by calling them at (631) 734-7754.

If you are interested in working on this project as a volunteer, your help is needed as are time, parts and money. If you're interested, you can stop by the large barn where the work is being done in New York.

You'll also find on the project website that you can make a substantial contribution to this project by buying a copy of "Snake, Rolling in Hot," a historical-novel about helicopter ops in Nam written by former chopper pilot Bud

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Jones. This soon-to-be Hollywood movie action-packed book is a must read for all chopper crews and the entire royalties from the sale of this book are being donated to this restoration group by the author.

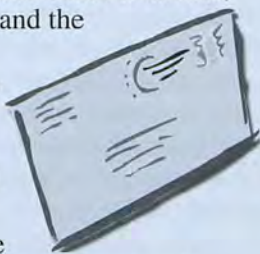
You can also check out the book and order it on line, www.bn.com or www.borders.com and the same donation will be made.

Many Americans owe their lives to the air ops of 34's; resupply of troops or ammo, medevacs, even gun runs when the 34 was outfitted as a gunship in the early '60s.

All of us in military aviation owe something to those who went before us . . . men and machines and this is great way to pay back some of that debt. Visit the www.34restoration.org website and make a commitment to get involved.

I guarantee you, when you see this bird flying at an air-show sometime in the future and you play a part in making that happen, it will be a thrill you'll never forget. (And neither will your kids and your grandkids!!)

Bud Jones



Pilot reads about death of Vietnam-era friend

While waiting in a doctor's office, I picked up *Time* magazine, dated Dec. 2, 2003, and discovered the death of an old friend from the Vietnam-era.

Little known to a lot in this world was a woman by the name of Lynda Van Devanter.

Her obituary read: "... 55, who wrote searingly of her time as a Vietnam nurse of a vascular disease perhaps related to Agent Orange in Herndon, VA. Her book 'Home Before Morning,' told of the horror of combat surgery, of drunk doctors, lost patients and the special loneliness of a female veteran of our most loathed war."

What I can tell you is this, from what I saw in Vietnam (one tour in the Infantry and one tour as a helicopter pilot),

What I can tell you is this, from what I saw in Vietnam (one tour in the Infantry and one tour as a helicopter pilot), I saw nothing in comparison to what an emergency room nurse saw on a daily basis. I have never respected anyone more than this person and all the nurses from the Vietnam War.

Wounded Ranger looks for two medevac pilots

Hello. My name is Thomas Holtey, formerly of P Company, 75th Infantry Rangers.

This is a shot in the dark, but I am going to try anyway.

I was severely wounded and was extracted at night on Dec. 15, 1969. From what I can remember, the pilots who flew the extraction did so at the cost of their bird's engine. This took place somewhere in the DMZ.

I have some vague memories of these two standing at the foot of my bed with grins on their faces. They saved my life with their actions. I would like to hear from them if they can be found.

P Company was located at Camp Carter which, in turn, was located in Camp Red Devil, 5th Mech. Because of these two pilots; I survived to become a Grandfather.

Ranger Thomas R. Holtey
P Company, 75th Infantry
Team 1-5
December 1969

I saw nothing in comparison to what an emergency room nurse saw on a daily basis. I have never respected anyone more than this person and all the nurses from the Vietnam War. Their sacrifices came from an era that is being duplicated by our servicemen/women today in a far-off land that most of us only see and hear a small glimpse of on the nightly news.

If there is a hereafter, I know Lynda is in a good place.

CW4 Cary Mendelsohn (USAR retired)

Traveling U.S. with Huey a touching experience

In my travels over the years, I always knew how, when and where things were going to happen on each trip before I left.

On my way to the airport to begin this adventure, I made the comment to my wife of 35 years that this was the first trip I was about to make without knowing where I was going to sleep that night, let alone what was planned for each day. That sense of adventure stayed throughout the entire trip.

As one of four Vietnam veterans on this crew, I feel an enormous responsibility to pass on to all Vietnam veterans what we experienced. The four of us were very fortunate to see and hear first hand what Americans think of us.

Although the best way for us to pass on to other veterans what we saw and heard is to be sure that the finished docu-

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mentary accurately portrays our experiences, I will try to provide some highlights below. The bottom line is that Vietnam veterans are highly regarded.

To all Vietnam veterans — it was a tremendous honor for me to represent you in front of thousands of people gathered specifically to honor you.

Some examples of these people were children singing patriotic songs in the school auditorium in West Point, MS, students at the Pam Am Flight School in Florida, hundreds of people at the Southwest Airlines

hangar in Texas, the entire community of Liberty County, GA, and veterans at Angel Fire, NM. They all thanked you for your service to our great country.

What meant the most to me on this journey, that began Oct. 2, 2002, and covered some 10,000 miles, was the camaraderie of the crew. In many ways it was like being back in Vietnam. The long hours of hurry up and wait, lack of sleep, unpredictable meals, sleeping in a wide range of accommodations from rustic cabins without hot water or toilet paper and insect-infected cheap motels to private homes and luxury hotels in the heart of a city.

Listening to the hundreds of war stories and deep emotional experiences, and seeing the impact these events had on thousands of lives, made most of us reach our emotional limits on a daily basis.

What meant the most to me on this journey, that began Oct. 2, 2002, and covered some 10,000 miles, was the camaraderie of the crew.

New VHPA Directory amazing, best one yet

I just received the 2002 VHPA Directory, and it's absolutely amazing. Who do we thank for finding the names and addresses of all those guys who have never been in contact with any of the organizations?

This edition is the best one yet. I can't wait to try to contact some of those guys who have been "missing" for so long.

How did they find Jimmy Bowen's name and address in Rhode Island or Tom Kline's in upstate New York? Can someone near Arlington, TX, do me a favor and check to see if Tom Ridley really lives there?

Well done, Gents

Bob Paine

119th Assault Helicopter Company, 1969-70

Gator 14

Victoria, Australia

Like in Vietnam, the stress relief was lots of good-natured teasing and bantering that went on among the crew. We were generally together for meals, whether they were sandwiches under a shade tree, a barbecue provided by our local host, leftovers from a church luncheon, or breakfast burritos from the back of a pickup truck. The bantering was always there, helping all of us to get to know each other like we did in Vietnam. This was especially true while flying in the Huey.

Why the Huey? The Huey is the indisputable icon of the Vietnam War. It stands out more than any other thing as representing the Vietnam War and its veterans.

The unmistakable wop-wop sound of its main rotor blades as it approaches and the familiar buzzing sound of its tail rotor as it leaves is forever burned in Vietnam veterans' minds. Unlike Vietnam veterans, the Huey is accurately portrayed by the news media, so it is truly a fitting icon for us.



This project, "In the Shadow of the Blade," is the most significant event for Vietnam veterans since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated 20 years ago. It is of that magnitude, but there is a significant difference.

The Wall honors our dead, while the Huey honors those of us who survived. The Wall is primarily about death, sorrow, guilt and pain, while the Huey represents our youth, with its exuberance, joy excitement and love of life. The Wall is a black gash in the earth, representing to some, embarrassment and shame, while the Huey flies freely in the sky, representing what it is to be an American with freedom, pride and strength. Both The Wall and the Huey have sacred places in our hearts.

Why is it that the Huey so accurately represents us? I think it is because the Huey did what we did.

Why is it that the Huey so accurately represents us?

I think it is because the Huey did what we did. Like the cooks and mess hall crews, the Huey fed us. Like the clerks and AG personnel, the Huey provided us with administrative support. Like the drivers and mechanics in the motor pools, the Huey gave us transportation. Like the doctors, nurses and orderlies in medevac units, the Huey saved our lives. Like the engineers and Seabees, the Huey provided us with protection from the elements. Like the grunts and the Marines, the Huey took the fight to our enemies. Like our chaplains, the Huey gave us peace of mind.

The Huey was reliable and strong and rarely failed to bring us home. We truly were in the shadow of the blade.

B.G. "Jug" Burkett has authored one of the most important books ever written for Vietnam veterans — "Stolen Valor." As he describes in his book, our valor has truly been stolen and continues to be stolen by the news media, fakes and wannabes.

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This Huey and the documentary "In the Shadow of the Blade" is about returning our valor. On this journey, we heard over and over from people from all walks of life: "Thank you for your service, we are proud of you, welcome home!" We proudly served our country and it is finally being recognized, with the help of this project.

Of course, the Huey did not fly alone, but was coaxed into the air by a special breed of madmen described by Joe Galloway as "God's own lunatics."

Who are these lunatics who would expose themselves to the withering fire aimed at destroying our beloved Hueys? They are men like Bob Baird, Mike Venable, Bill McDonald, and nearly 100,000 other pilots, crew chiefs, flight engineers, medics and gunners — made up of America's finest.

Like other veterans of all American wars, these men are ordinary people who have demonstrated their extraordinary ability to get the job done under extremely adverse conditions. This tradition continues with men like Bruce LeMoine and Jim Palmersheim, who are willing to make huge personal sacrifices to continue the tradition of protecting our freedom and way of life.

Vietnam veterans are neighbors, cab drivers, school teachers, lawyers, doctors, carpenters, mechanics. In all, we are more successful than our peers. We are not homeless wackos or in prison in any greater numbers than our peers. We have not committed suicide in higher numbers than our peers. And we were not and are not baby killers.

Vietnam veterans are neighbors, cab drivers, school teachers, lawyers, doctors, carpenters, mechanics. In all, we are more successful than our peers.

I had an interesting conversation with one of the camera crewmembers who is not a veteran.

In describing to me a conversation he had with one of his peers about this assignment of traveling with Vietnam veterans making a documentary about the Vietnam War, his friend expressed concern about how he was going to deal with the Vietnam veteran wackos and asked if he was concerned about his safety. Thanks to the news media, this is a common image the general population has about Vietnam veterans.

In fact, the image of a bearded, dirty-looking wino in a tattered uniform with random medals and insignia is so prevalent that normally clean-cut veterans think they have to look this way to play the part to fit the image.

Members of the news media are naturally drawn to those things that fit in their mind's eye what is typically a Vietnam veteran.

I can illustrate this point. We had one Vietnam veteran on this trip with a bushy, gray beard with extra insignia on his uniform. The other three of us were clean-shaven and "normal" looking. The one with the beard, by his own count, was interviewed by TV and news media reporters between 40 and 50 times during our trip. The rest of us probably had 10 interviews among us. So the distorted image continues to be reinforced by our news media 30 years after the end of the war.

One thing we did not see on this journey was protesters.

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At least, if they were around, they did not identify themselves. I wonder why? Could it be the realization that history now shows they prolonged the Vietnam War?

North Vietnamese soldiers now tell us that because of the overwhelming defeat of the Viet Cong during Tet 1968, they were looking for a way to end the war until they heard Walter Cronkite and the peace movement telling them they were winning. So tens of thousands of American soldiers and millions of Southeast Asians died needlessly because of the peace movement and its supporters.

In fact, more people were killed in Southeast Asia after the fall of Saigon in 1975 than during the entire 10 years of U.S. fighting there. While we can hold our heads up high and be proud of our service, the peaceniks should hide their heads in shame.

The last LZ, at the Texas Air Command Museum, was sponsored by the Allied Pilots Association. I hope someone passes on to American Airlines that they got some priceless, free advertising on this journey.

At nearly every LZ, Bob Baird, Bruce LeMoine and Jim Palmersheim were introduced as American Airlines pilots who had volunteered their time to accomplish this incredible service. The implication was that American Airlines was a major sponsor of this journey despite the fact it was not.

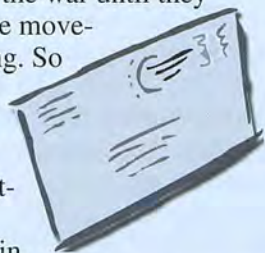
American Airlines should be very proud of these three men because they represented their company in a very professional manner, treating everyone with the utmost respect and compassion. They helped with a tremendous amount of healing for hundreds of veterans and their families. They are truly ambassadors on the highest order and it has been an honor for me to be a member of their crew.

I wish you could have observed Bruce and Jim going into their routine when they spotted a veteran hanging back. Generally these events took place without any cameras around.

"When was the last time you rode in a Huey?" they asked the unsuspecting veteran.

"In 1968, when I was medevaced out of the bush," was a typical reply.

"How would you like to ride in one again?" they would ask.



I wish you could have observed Bruce and Jim going into their routine when they spotted a veteran hanging back. Generally these events took place without any cameras around.

This would then begin a thrill of a lifetime or finally closure after 30 years for that veteran. We will never know the complete impact of events like this. But having witnessed many of these, I can tell you the result was extremely powerful. Bruce and Jim are perfectly suited to accomplish this.

Here is one example. A taxi driver who approached the Huey at one of our refueling stops said to me, with tears in his eyes after taking his unexpected ride in a Huey: "You have no idea what this has meant to me . . . you have no idea."

But you know what? I do have an idea. It means that someone out there cares about his service in the Vietnam War. It is the feeling of not being alone, that there are other Vietnam veterans who feel just like he does and that what he did was honorable and respected.

He no longer feels out of place because he does not fit the news media's depiction of a victim from an unpopular war. He realizes Vietnam veterans are normal, respectable members of society just like him. It is recognition by other veterans of a job well done.

A special thanks to Pat and Cheryl Fries and their crew at Arrowhead Films for making this project happen. They now have the difficult task, over the next year, of condensing more than 200 hours of film into a 90-minute documentary.

They also need to make a living while doing this, so if someone would like to help them out financially, now is the time to do it.

Also, we would like to be able to continue to fly the Huey across America. It would be nice to be able to make a journey to the Northeast and one to California with many LZs along the way. Any future trips require financial sponsors so if you can help, please let us know.

Hotlinks:

- In the Shadow of the Blade — www.intheshadowoftheblade.com
- Texas Air Command Museum — www.texasaircommandmuseum.org/
- Arrowhead Film & Video — www.arrowheadfilms.com

Gary B. Roush
242nd Assault Support Helicopter Company
Muleskinners
Cu Chi, RVN May 1968-May 1969
webmaster@vhpa.org
<http://www.vhpa.org>

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Shadow Bird's arrival stirs thoughts of days past

It's taken me a while to understand what happened last weekend, I just wanted to share some thoughts with you all

...
Anticipation; waiting for the Shadow Bird to arrive, wondering if I really could fly it after all these years, nervousness, pacing, sweating ...

Arrival; the familiar sound of a UH-1, first sight of the Bird, immediate déjà vu, no flash back, just memories of a time long ago and far away ...

Preflight briefing; carefully planned route to LZs briefed to Apache pilots and Bruce LeMoine, load Connie Mack Pearson into aircraft (he's a paraplegic from wounds suffered) then wait for a call from Pat Fries, call comes in, hurry up get into the aircraft, already late for arrival at the Church Reunion LZ, have to forego planned over flight of Johnson Space Center ...

En route; crank up using checklist, wait for Apaches to crank, depart Ellington as a flight of four, Shadow Bird, chase aircraft, two Apaches, immediate right turn out, set course for Church LZ, oh s . . . t, left map in car, hope I can find the church ...

Arrival at Church LZ; manage to find Church, remembered preflight brief, this ain't so bad, overfly Church in formation with Apaches, large crowd awaiting our arrival, a sea of upturned faces, two passes over LZ, Apaches break off, very windy, land to the south, short final, pick up Keith Bodine in LZ acting as landing guide, land to Keith, looking good!

Reunion; Keith and Connie Mack Pearson (a WIA grunt) finally meet after 30-plus years, tears, emotions plain on all faces, film crews taking pictures, people milling around admiring the aircraft, many "thanks for your service" and "welcome homes," look around for wife and family, instead find Ed O'Quinn whom I have not seen since 1966, hugs and "how ya doin, you look great"!

Many pictures taken, lunch for crew, then rides for vets and a "Doughnut Dolly" and her Granddaughter, surprise, my son gets a ride with his old man at the controls, his face lit-up, scrambled aboard and off we go (yes, I have pictures), my big moment ...

Departure; Load up Keith and Connie, along with John-

ny Hubbs, Tom Halligan, full crew, one CE, one DG, two pilots plus pax, join with Apaches, chase bird, joined by three TV news ships en route, off to the VA Hospital in Houston . . . geez, hope I can find it????

En route; TV birds film our formation, flitting in and out as we progress to the VA Hospital, cross Hobby Airport at 500 feet, right over the tower, Bruce very busy with the radios, everybody looking for traffic, Guard pilots nervous about the TV ships, all clear, continue en route, manage to find the hospital, over fly three times in formation, Apaches break off, we land, small LZ, Bruce handles landing, once more a large crowd, upturned faces . . . waves . . . Apaches handling security (the Apache pilots were both Vietnam vets), went into Hospital LZ just like we used to in Vietnam, one gunship providing protection on each wing), LZ was too small for Apaches to land, so they were making simulated gun runs while we landed . . .

In LZ; once again many people milling around, film crews interviewing anyone who looked interesting, even me! Many Vets of all eras, met a gentleman who flew B-24s in World War II out of Burma, said he was a "Vietnam Vet" also, he bombed Saigon, Hanoi and Haiphong, watch vets touch the aircraft sit in the seats, watched tears, smiles, pride, talked to an Infantry Man who cried as he touched the Huey.

Met two more Comancheros at this LZ, Michael Gouch and Curt Boudin. Curt reunited with Tom Halligan, his CE in Vietnam, sat in the pilot's seat and reminisced about the old days . . . more embraces and tears . . .

Return; after 2.5 hours in the VA Hospital LZ, we once again departed, this time returning to Ellington field, we made several orbits of downtown Houston to allow the chase bird to film us against the skyline, the sun was just starting to set, what a beautiful sight, Bruce turned the aircraft over to me and we turned for home at 500 feet and 60 knots, why 60 knots? Bruce said it was so the bird could sing her song, he calls it a "time machine," singing songs

of the past and her proud service, like us, a survivor. Once again a full crew and pax, one of whom was 1st Lt. Randy Stillinger, OIC for the Apaches, the guys in the back were taking bets on one, could I find the airfield and two, could I get us down safely, well I fooled 'em on all counts, I not only found the airfield, but I executed a textbook approach

Once again many people milling around, film crews interviewing anyone who looked interesting, even me! Many Vets of all eras, met a gentleman who flew B-24s in World War II out of Burma, said he was a "Vietnam Vet" also, he bombed Saigon, Hanoi and Haiphong . . .

Keith and Connie Mack Pearson (a WIA grunt) finally meet after 30-plus years, tears, emotions plain on all faces, film crews taking pictures, people milling around admiring the aircraft, many "thanks for your service" and "welcome homes" . . .

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to the parking ramp, some things you never forget

I know this is long and rambling, but I finally got to the point where I could collect and express some thoughts on a wonderful day, a wonderful bunch of people, a wonderful aircraft and a wonderful experience, God Bless them all . . . thanks guys . . .



Jerry Turner
Warrior 25

A Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, 1965-66

'Man in doorway' important crewman

They came in low and hot, close to the trees and dropped their tail in a flare, rocked forward and we raced for the open doorways.

This was always the worst for us, we couldn't hear anything and our backs were turned to the treeline.

The best you could hope for was a sign on the face of the man in the doorway, leaning out, waiting to help with a tug or to lay down some lead.

Sometimes you could glance quickly at his face and pick up a clue as to what was about to happen.

We would pitch ourselves in headfirst and tumble against the scuffed, riveted aluminum, grab for a handhold and will that son-of-a-bitch into the air.

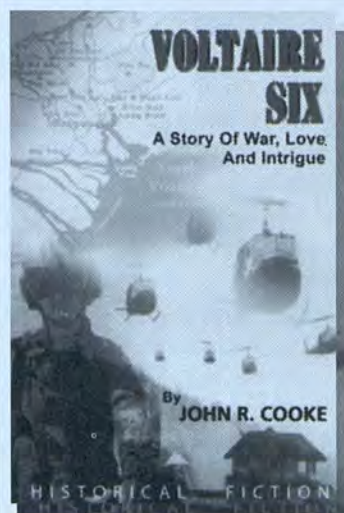
Sometimes the deck was slick with blood or worse, sometimes something had been left in the shadows under the web seats, sometimes they landed in a shallow river to wash them out.

Sometimes they were late, sometimes . . . they were parked in some other LZ with their rotors turning a lazy arc, a ghost crew strapped in once too often, motionless, waiting for their own lift, their own bags, once too often

Sometimes the deck was slick with blood or worse, sometimes something had been left in the shadows under the web seats, sometimes they landed in a shallow river to wash them out.

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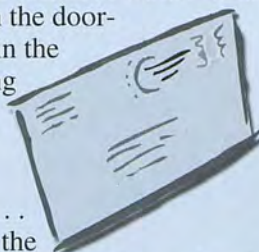
E-Mail: GandMReese@Earthlink.net

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into the margins.

The getting on and the getting off were the worst for us, but this was all he knew, the man in the doorway, he was always standing there in the noise, watching, urging . . . swinging out with his gun, grabbing the black plastic and heaving, leaning out and spitting, spitting the taste away, as though it would go away . . .



They came in low and hot, close to the trees and dropped their tail in a flare, rocked forward and began to kick the boxes out, bouncing against the skids, piling up on each other, food and water, and bullets . . . a thousand pounds of C's, warm water and rounds, 7.62 mm, half a ton of life and death.

And when the deck was clear, we would pile the bags, swing them against their weight and throw them through the doorway, his doorway, onto his deck and nod and he'd speak into that little mike and they'd go nose down and lift into their last flight, their last extraction.

Sometimes he'd raise a thumb or perhaps a fist or sometimes just a sly, knowing smile, knowing we were staying and he was going but also knowing he'd be back, he'd be

back in a blink, standing in the swirling noise and the rotor wash, back to let us rush through his door and skid across his deck and will that son-of-a-bitch into the air.

They came in low and hot, close to the trees and dropped their tail in a flare, rocked forward, kicked out the boxes and slipped the litter across the deck and sometimes he'd lean down and hold the IV and brush the dirt off of a bloodless face, or hold back the flailing arms and the tears, a thumbs-up to the right seat and you're only minutes away from the white sheets and the saws and the plasma.

They came in low and hot, close to the trees and dropped their tail in a flare, rocked forward and we'd never hear that sound again without feeling our stomachs go just a bit weightless, listen just a bit closer for the gunfire and look up for the man in the doorway.

Michael Ryerson

We know of one investment that always does well.

We believe one of the most profitable investments is an investment in relationships. At times like these, when the market can be volatile, that investment really pays off.

- Now is the time you need someone who understands your goals and risk tolerance.
- Someone who can help you adjust your portfolio in a changing investment environment.
- Someone who takes the time to ask the right questions, so together you can come up with the right answers.

If you want to talk to a Financial Advisor that truly understands the importance of a long-term relationship, call us at UBS PaineWebber.

Robert F. Potvin

Account Vice President, UBS PaineWebber
"Stingray White 25"



UBS|PaineWebber

202 East State Street, Suite 300, Traverse City, MI 29684
(800) 235-9031

www.ubspainewebber.com

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Ride with the Outlaws of the 175th Aviation Co. in the Mekong Delta during 1966-1967

"If you are looking for a complete book dealing with the lives of helicopter pilots in Vietnam, look no further. This book is it!"

— Tom Payne, Secretary/Treasurer
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

To order send \$25 by check or money order, to: Dave Eastman, P.O. Box 59, Center Sandwich, NH 03227 Order online at www.elgringoviejo.com

Taps

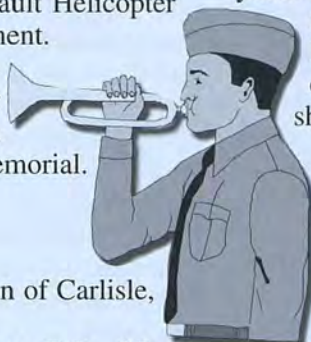
Steven Adee

CW4 Steven Adee of Arlington, VA, was buried Dec. 19 at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

He served with the Army National Guard.

Adee was in flight school Class 69-37 and served in Vietnam in 1970-71 with the 336th Assault Helicopter Company and the 82nd Medical Detachment.

Shortly before his death, Adee participated with the National Capital Chapter in reading the names as part of the 20th Anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



Dwane C. "Duke" Watson

Retired Col. Dwane C. "Duke" Watson of Carlisle, PA, died Sept. 19 of cancer. He was 69.

Watson was born June 9, 1933, in Sioux Falls, SD, the son of the late Everett "Shorty" and Frances Watson.

Watson served in the Army for 30 years. He graduated from flight school with Class 56-14.

Among his Army career highlights were his two tours in Vietnam as an Army aviator, first as operations officer and executive officer of Company A, 501st Aviation Bat-

talion from September 1964-September 1965, and as the executive officer of the 121st Aviation Company from June 1967-June 1968.

After his second tour in Vietnam, he was assigned to the 55th Aviation Battalion at Robert Gray Army Airfield, Fort Hood, TX. He later commanded the battalion from February 1971-July 1972.

Watson also served four years in the Pentagon.

After graduating from the Army War College in 1977, he remained at the college as a faculty member for nine years as director of Force Readiness Systems Management, DCLM. During this time he was honored as a Distinguished Fellow and as the original recipient of the Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway Chair of Leadership.

His awards include the Legion of Merit with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star Medal with Valor Device and Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, 37 Air Medals and the Army Commendation Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters.

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, DeElda Watson of Carlisle, three sons, Delane C. Watson of Denver, Daryl C. Watson of Bradford, PA, and Maj. Dale E. Watson, stationed in Germany; one daughter, Denise M. Watson of Denver; 10 grandchildren; and 2 great-grandchildren.

Vietnam Helo Pilot

This pilot figure is made of porcelain and stands 6½ inches high. The pilot is wearing a soft cap, two-piece Nomex flight suit, chicken plate, survival vest, .38-caliber pistol with holster, while carrying an APH-5 helmet in one hand and a CAR-15 rifle in the other.

Each figure is hand-painted by me, with your rank and shoulder patch added. The cost of the figure is \$55, plus \$5 shipping.

Send checks or money orders to:

Steve Pullen
86 Lake Laurel Drive
Dahlonega, GA 30533

If you have any special requests, I can be reached at cspullen@alltel.net



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Membership*

New
VHPA patches
with your wing

\$6.00 each, plus S&H = \$7.00

Not designed to replace Official VHPA Patch

Reunion 2003

Orlando return marks 20th anniversary

JOE BILITZKE

NATIONAL REUNION CHAIRMAN

Mickey Mouse events, humidity matching high temperatures, and really, really low beer prices.

No, you're not pulling another tour "in-country." It's Orlando and VHPA Reunion 2003 — our 20th anniversary!

We have some outstanding events to choose from this year:

- An opening night reception for all of you joining our reunion tradition for the first time.
- There's a business meeting to which I invite all dues-current members to attend and participate.
- A Fourth of July pool party with our own fireworks (weather permitting) is on the schedule.
- A choice of two all-day tours is offered.
- Golf couldn't be better than the VHPA tournament you'll find on the itinerary.
- The ladies and guests will have another fun-filled brunch much like the successful "Mystery Show" held last year.
- Twenty-four rooms are available for mini-reunions.
- A banquet, entertainment, and rockin' good dancing close the reunion.
- And, of course, the primary reason for our annual affair, getting together with those who share a common heritage: Flying helicopters in Vietnam.

It's easy to partake in any, some, or all the events being offered. Just crank up the trusty computer, get on line, direct your browser to www.vhpareunion.org/ and find the registration link. From there, you'll be walked through a painless process to register, choose your banquet meal, reserve your spot for any activity, book your room, buy T-shirts, and pay for it all using a secure credit card link. It couldn't be easier.

Realizing there are a very few of you who either don't have access to the Internet, never did trust giving out your credit card number, or — yeech — simply refuse to touch a keyboard, there is a paper form in the back of this Newsletter.

Grab that equally trusty No. 2 carbon-marking device (pencil) and fill it in. Use snail mail to get it to VHPA Headquarters and there it'll be converted into "ones and zeros" so the computer can digest it.

Headquarters then will mail you a form to send to the hotel so you can book your hotel room at the Orlando

Rosen Centre.

Last year, ticket-takers were used at the Las Vegas reunion. Some members saw these individuals as "armed guards." (Of course, these are the same people who say a helicopter can really fly!)

I caught some flak for using these folks, but they're back again this year. They're on duty for a simple reason: You pay for an event and hold a ticket for that event. Those who don't pay shouldn't get in; you're not in the subsidizing business are you?

So again, all proceedings that are paid admission events must be monitored by uniformed ticket-takers. For those of you who feel put out by the phrase, "uniformed ticket-takers," pretend they're "ushers" collecting tickets. There, that doesn't hurt so bad, does it?

After a nonstop, fun-filled reunion, what do we do to wind down and relax? We take a cruise! This year, on the day following the closing banquet (Sunday), we hop on buses at our hotel and a short drive later face the expanse of the Atlantic.

The Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL) has brought out its "Sovereign of the Seas" cruise ship just for VHPA. Well, not really just for us. They're going to take it out regardless. But it would be better if you were on board. The "fun meter" will have an over speed on this one.

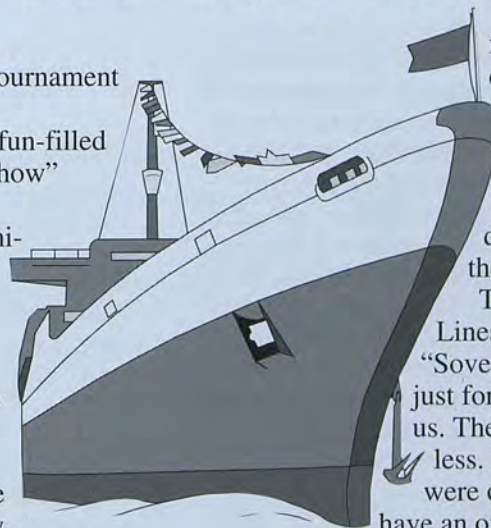
From Port Canaveral, we float out to Coco Cay, a private island owned by RCCL. There you'll have a day in the sun, on the sand, with food and libations. During the night, the captain aims for Nassau, Bahamas. If no helicopter pilots are on the bridge helping him, we'll be there by the next morning.

Nassau is a fun-filled city with some great shopping. Take your significant other and watch your credit card melt. From the Bahamian island, it's time for a spin on the open ocean. You'll be at sea on Day 4.

Gee, I wonder if there's anything to do on a ship besides drinking?

For those of you who went to Vietnam in the hold of troop ships, this is a lot different. You actually have your own "head" for those uneasy moments. Go to www.royal-caribbean.com/asp/onboard.asp?s=36D1CCA637 and

See CRUISE, Page 18



Reunion calendar

Friday, Jan. 10

- Online registration begins for Reunion 2003 in Orlando. Visit the VHPA website at www.vhpa.org

Wednesday, July 2

- 9 a.m.-7 p.m. — Registration.
- 5:30-7 p.m. — Welcome reception for first-time reunion attendees and their spouses/guests (Open to all first-time reunion attendees at no admittance cost).
- 7-10 p.m. — Welcome reception and party for all members and their guests.

Thursday, July 3

- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration.
- 9 a.m.-noon — Annual Business Meeting (dues current members only).
- 9:30 a.m.-noon — Brunch for spouses and guests at the Rosen Hotel, including the comedy show "Kim and Scott Tie the Knot," a hilarious Italian wedding celebration with many twists, plus containing a mystery element and audience interaction.
- 1-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions
- 6:30-10:30 p.m. — Spectacular dinner theater with major show "Arabian Nights" theme; cast of more than 100, horses, great action, special effects, and much more (100 percent, private VHPA show extravaganza and reception includes all you can eat, all the beer and wine you can drink, and transportation to/from the theater) Limited to 1,200 attendees.
- 5:30-9:30 p.m. — Alternative dinner theater with major show "Pirates Adventure" for those who prefer a theme other than Arabian nights or upon sell out of Arabian Nights Show (a private, 100 percent VHPA event). Pirates Adventure is not anticipated to be an exclusive VHPA event. Children often are invited to participate in show. Includes all you can eat, all the beer and wine you can drink at dinner, drink coupons for predinner reception, and transportation to/from the theater.

Friday, July 4

- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration.
- 7-8:30 a.m. — 5K run.
- 8 a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
- 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. — Kennedy Space Center Tour. Limited to 500 attendees.
- 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. — Offshore gaming ship Sun Cruz

Casino departs from — and returns to — Port Canaveral. Bus transfers provided to and from the Rosen Center Hotel. Must be 18 years old or more to go on this trip. Limited to 500 attendees.

- 8:00 a.m.-6: p.m. — Other tours and events available on your own. Book through tour desk at hotel.
- 1-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions.
- 7-11 p.m. — Major theme pool party, quality live entertainment starting at 8 p.m., our own private fireworks and laser show at about 10 p.m.; pool food and munchies available from hotel on a cash basis. Bring swimwear — large pool will be open.
- 11 p.m.-1 a.m. — Party, with different band, continues inside in hotel lounge area, due to noise abatement codes outside the hotel after 11 p.m.

Saturday, July 5

- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration.
- 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. — Golf Tournament.
- 8: a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
- 1-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions.
- 5:45 p.m.-midnight — Final Banquet (Historically this is a coat-and-tie event. Some members prefer to wear military dress uniform. Ladies wear cocktail dresses.)
- 6:30 p.m. — Presentation of colors.
- 7-8:30 p.m. — Dinner.
- 8:30-9:30 p.m. — Live Entertainment. Stage show.
- 9:30 p.m.-midnight — Dance.

Sunday, July 6

- 7 a.m.-1 p.m. — Hotel checkout for majority of reunion attendees.
- 11-11:30 a.m. — Buses depart Rosen Centre Hotel en route to Royal Caribbean Sovereign of the Seas for five-day, four-night cruise.
- Noon-12:30 p.m. — Arrive at Port Canaveral for Royal Caribbean Cruise.
- 1-1: 30 p.m. — Board Sovereign of the Seas cruise ship.

Thursday, July 10

- 7:30 a.m. — Sovereign of the Seas cruise ship docks at Port Canaveral.
- 9-10:30 a.m. — Buses depart Royal Caribbean Sovereign of the Seas for Orlando airport for those who purchase the cruise transfer option. Bus ride takes about 50 minutes.
- 10:30 a.m. — Special VHPA bus departs ship en route back to Rosen Centre Hotel. This bus is for members and guests who will be leaving their cars at the Rosen.

Cruise completes exciting reunion

Continued from Page 17

check out the activities.

On Day 5, it's the pointy end to the west and we're back at Port Canaveral.

There, don't you feel refreshed now? What a way to end an exciting reunion.

So walk, no run (but not with scissors!) to the phone and dial (800) 869-6806. JoAnne Weeks will talk with

you and help you book your cabin. It'll be the most fun you've had wearing clothes. Welcome aboard!

Well, that ends your second week on Florida. We sincerely hope you will be with us for the 20th annual reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Who would have thought those guys in Scottsdale would have created such a viable and outstanding organization? Come to Orlando and help us celebrate!

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

20th Annual Reunion • Orlando, FL • July 2-5, 2003

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

Register online at www.vhpareunion.com or mail completed form to:

VHPA Headquarters, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

Fax signed credit card authorization to: (916) 966-8743

Member name:	Member No.:	Hotel room? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Flight class:	Chapter:	
1st combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
2nd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
3rd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
Address:	Address change? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
City:	State:	Zip:
E-mail address:	Telephone: ()	Fax: ()
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No

A hotel registration form will be sent to you with your registration receipt. The hotel registration form must be completed and mailed to the Rosen Centre. Telephone and fax requests will not be honored.

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration through 4/30/2003*		@ \$45.00	
Registration after 4/30/2003*		@ \$55.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	
New attendee reception (July 2)		Free	
Welcome reception (July 2)		@ \$20.00	
Business meeting (July 3)		Free	
Ladies Brunch (July 3)		@ \$25.00	
Dinner Theatre/Arabian or		@ \$40.00	
Dinner Theatre/Pirates (July 3)		@ \$40.00	
5k Run (July 4)		@ \$10.00	
Kennedy Space Tour or		@ \$35.00	
Sun Cruz Casino (July 4)		@ \$15.00	
Evening Pool Party (July 4)		@ \$20.00	
Golf Tournament (July 5)		@ \$95.00	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 5)		@ \$55.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$36.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	3 years	@ \$90.00	
Life membership		@ \$450.00	
GRAND TOTAL			

REUNION T-SHIRTS		
QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$15.00	
	M@\$15.00	
	L@\$15.00	
	XL@\$15.00	
	XXL@\$17.00	
	XXXL@\$19.00	
SIDEBAR TOTAL:		

QTY.	BANQUET MEAL
	Filet Mignon
	Florida Grouper
	Vegetarian

Membership Fund contribution:	\$ _____
Scholarship Fund contribution:	\$ _____
General Fund contribution:	\$ _____
Vietnam War Museum contribution:	\$ _____

*Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

MC or Visa No: _____ Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2003" with form.

Orlando 2003 Reunion to have optional Caribbean Cruise Extension - July 6-10, 2003- Enroll before Feb 8th!!

Our next annual reunion is at the Rosen Center in Orlando Florida Wednesday July 2 through Sunday July 6th. Enrollments will begin on www.vhpareunion.org starting January 10, 2003. We start with a welcome reception Wednesday evening July 2nd, and the final banquet is Saturday evening, July 5th. Details are contained elsewhere within this newsletter and on the web site.

When we surveyed members about various future reunion preferences at our Denver reunion, the results indicated that a cruise option would be of significant interest by a portion of the membership. Our proximity to Port Canaveral near Orlando provides us an unique opportunity to offer a optional add on cruise to your reunion experience on the fabulous Royal Caribbean "Sovereign of the Seas" from Sunday July 6th to Thursday July 10th. The itinerary is as follows:

Itinerary: 4-Day Bahamas

Day 1 - Sunday	Port Canaveral	departs 5:00pm
Day 2- Monday	Coco Cay (Private Island)	8:00am 5:00pm
Day 3 - Tuesday	Nassau, Bahamas	7:00am 1:00am
Day 4 - Wed	At Sea	
Day 5 - Thursday	Port Canaveral	Disembark approx. 9:00am

Reservations would need to be made separately from our reunion registration directly with our cruise vendor within the next few weeks to ensure you get a cabin at the below special discounted rates:

Category	Special Cruise Rates
Interior Stateroom	From \$430 per person
Ocean View Stateroom	From \$450 per person
Superior Ocean View	From \$670 per person

All rates are per person, based on double occupancy; taxes and fees are subject to change.

Single person rate is 200% of category rate.

Optional travel insurance available and is recommended. A signed waiver is required to decline insurance.

Port charges of \$99 per person and government taxes of \$25.55 per person are additional and not included in the above rates. Transfers direct from the Rosen Hotel (VHPA reunion HQ hotel) to the ship, and back to the Orlando airport after the cruise are available for \$38 per person round trip. Included in the package is a bottle of champagne per cabin, and a get-together cocktail party our first night. In addition, dollar credits the VHPA will receive from Royal Caribbean on the cruise cost (excluding taxes) will be put into our overall reunion budget and be used to fund special activities for members while on the ship.

To reserve your cabin, all that is needed is a \$100 deposit per person by **February 8, 2003**. Final payment would be due April 23, 2003. On the next page is an enrollment form with additional details. To book, all you need to do is call toll free, or fax-mail the enrollment to:

JoAnne Weeks, our VHPA reunion cruise vendor



7000 N.W. PRAIRIE VIEW ROAD (816) 741-7417 or (800) 869-6806
AMERICA'S LARGEST AND OLDEST CRUISE VACATION STORE.

Make your reservation now!!

ATTN: Jo Anne Weeks, Ext. 250
E-mail: joanne@cruiseholidayskc.com
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

YOU MAY CALL IN THIS INFORMATION TO
JOANNE @ (800) 869-6806 OR
IF YOU PREFER YOU MAY MAIL THIS FORM IN TO
Cruise Holidays Kansas City 7000 NW Prairie View Rd., Suite 200
Kansas City, Mo. 64151

LEGAL PASSENGER NAMES (First and Last) AND DATE OF BIRTH (MM/DD/YEAR)

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

ADDRESS FOR INVOICE PURPOSES:

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE () _____ BUSINESS PHONE () _____

CELL PHONE () _____ E MAIL _____

CATEGORY REQUESTED: RCL Cruise – Sunday July 6th – Thursday July 10th; 4 nights

Superior ocean view _____ ocean view _____ Inside _____

From \$670 From \$450 From \$430

Government taxes of \$25.55 and port charges of \$99.00 per person are additional.

AIR TRANSPORTATION:

I'd like Cruise Line Air _____

OR

I'll make my own arrangements to the ship: _____

I'll need Cruise Line Transfers: _____ ***
(\$38.00 from Rosen Hotel to ship Sunday 7-6,
and ship to Orlando airport Thursday 7-10)

*** Cruise transfers strongly recommended

SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND SPECIAL NEEDS

BIRTHDAY _____ NAME _____ DAY TO CELEBRATE _____

ANNIVERSARY _____ DAY TO CELEBRATE _____

SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS _____

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS _____

OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS _____

DINING PREFERENCE: EARLY _____ LATE _____ XXX (unless requested otherwise, VHPA group will be seated in same dining area during late seating if possible)

WE WOULD LIKE TO DINE WITH _____

DEPOSIT REQUIRED: \$100 PER PERSON due February 8, 2003 (FINAL PMT DUE: 4/23/03)

• PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CRUISE HOLIDAYS OR

• CREDIT CARD INFORMATION:

NAME AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR CREDIT CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRATION DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____ AMT. TO CHARGE _____

It is going to be a great cruise to finish up a truly memorable reunion!

***VHPA 20th Anniversary Reunion, Orlando Florida July 2-6th;
Cruise Extension July 6-10th***

Procedure given for reunion refunds

Reunion Fees and Events

(excluding Royal Caribbean cruise extension)

No refund will be given for any reunion fees (dinner, event, registration fee, golf or other activity excluding the cruise extension) unless the member cancels the registration by faxing (916) 966-8743, e-mailing hq@vhpa.org or calling VHPA Headquarters (800) 505-VHPA no later than 4 p.m. Pacific time, Tuesday, June 24, 2003.

Requests sent by U.S. mail must arrive by June 24.

After this date we have given firm commitments and guarantees to the hotel and others in your name that generate nonrefundable expense to our association.

The Royal Caribbean cruise extension refund policy contains separate timetables/terms, and is provided to each participant upon booking with Cruise Holidays.

There will be a \$10 cancellation fee charged for each refund request, regardless of the number of items (dinners, events, golf, registration fee, etc.) included in the request.

Each refund request received prior to the above time and date will be assigned a refund request confirmation number on the day the request is received by VHPA Headquarters, and a credit issued to your credit card by the third week of July (two weeks after the end of the reunion).

Members eligible for a refund originally paid by check will be reimbursed by check timed to arrive by the end of July (three weeks after the end of the reunion).

Rosen Centre hotel room charges

Notice of hotel reservation cancellations must be made directly to the Rosen Centre hotel reservations system at (800) 204-7234 by Tuesday, June 24, 2003.

Cancellations after this date will result in hotel charges to you equivalent to one night's room charge, plus applicable taxes.

Should you need to cancel your reservation, please ensure you get and retain a cancellation number for your records. Also, as a courtesy and to avoid any potential non-reimbursed reunion fees (see above), please also let the VHPA Headquarters staff know that you have canceled.

Please note that members who check out earlier than scheduled will incur a \$50 administrative fee penalty, plus one night's room charge and tax, payable to the hotel.

The hotel policy is that you may shorten the length of your stay by requesting so at the time of check-in without penalty. However, an early checkout after that time will result in you being charged the \$50 fee, plus a penalty of one's room and tax.

Riseden designs reunion T-shirt logos

The reunion T-shirt design for 2003 is done!

Longtime member Jay Riseden, WORWAC Class 67-5 and ex-128th Assault Helicopter Company Gunslinger, designed the logo.

Jay really did an outstanding job providing silhouette images of 16 different helicopters flown in Vietnam by pilots from the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force:

CH-54, OH-13, OH-6, OH-23, OH-58, AH-1, UH-1D/H, UH-1A/B/C, H-53, H-3, CH-34, CH-37, HH-3, CH-47, H-21, CH-46.

This is the first time we have had all of them together on a reunion shirt.



The shirts again will be available on a pre-buy basis in The VHPA Newsletter for delivery at the reunion in Orlando.

In addition, the supplier will be on-site in Orlando with some spares for those of you who fail to order by June 10.

We need those of you who wish to own one of these high-quality shirts to order early, so we have enough of this 20th Annual Reunion T-shirt.

In the past, many of you have over-estimated your size or under-estimated the size of the shirt. These are pre-shrunk, true-size shirts, not a cheapie from the flea market or made for small people. Order the size you need, not the size you guess it'll be after you wash it.

This is one of the very best designs we have ever had and it is unique:

- Front pocket with design commemorating our 20th Annual Reunion — 2003 — Orlando.
- Right sleeve with VHPA 20th Annual Reunion on it.
- Back with VHPA logo surrounded by all 16 helicopters, a five-color design.

— Kenneth Fritz



Sole survivor seeks rescuers' names

CHARLES "RAY" LIVERMONT

I am the sole survivor of the Dec. 4, 1967, crash of UH-1H tail number 66-16587 from Company A, 4th Aviation Battalion, 4th Infantry Division southwest of Dak To.

We were flying a sniffer mission south-southwest of the famous Hill 875 near the Cambodian border. We had received our mission briefing and refueled at Dak To.

We were escorted by a pair of UH-1C Gambler guns from my battalion. I have some memory of the briefing and flying over the trees on the mission.

Prior to starting the day, Lt. Allen had told me that I was flying as the pilot in charge for this mission. I do not recall being shot down or the rescue or the first few weeks in the hospitals.

Later I talked with Al (his real name was James) McGowan, who served on the investigation team for my aircraft. He died in 1993. He gave me some photos of the aircraft after I had been taken out.

The four men who died in this crash are Lt. William Terry Allen, the other pilot, flight school Class 67-10, who started his tour on Aug. 13, 1967; Spec. 5 Wolfgang Tony Otto Mohl, the crew chief; Spec. 4 Clyde Marvin Lee, the gunner; and Spec. 4 Thomas Paul Ciecura, the sniffer operator, from the 4th Infantry Division's chemical support unit.

In the past few years, I have learned the following details of my rescue from VHPA member Tom Roy who was flying for the 170th Assault Helicopter Company.

WO Tom Roy, Bikini 27, and WO Reed Hight, Bikini 25, were both on the ground at Dak To.

They scrambled in response to the sniffer ship down, radio calls from the Gambler Guns who were still on-station when they arrived and were able to hover over the crash site.

The two Bikinis surveyed the area around the downed aircraft. The Huey lay deeply entangled in bamboo under dense, triple canopy vegetation. They found a small hole that would accommodate a single bird to hover down within 30 or 40 feet from the ground and insert a team by ropes or ladders.

They reported this and returned to Dak To, where they

The two Bikinis surveyed the area around the downed aircraft. The Huey lay deeply entangled in bamboo under dense, triple canopy vegetation. They found a small hole that would accommodate a single bird to hover down within 30 or 40 feet from the ground and insert a team by ropes or ladders.

met up with a team from Company E, 20th Infantry — one of the 4th Infantry Division's Long Range Patrol units temporarily stationed at Dak To, working with the Special Forces.

They decided to insert a LRRP team, using a bamboo ladder they had with them, and the crew could be removed by the ladder or by litter.

At some point, at least one set of 189th Assault Helicopter Company Avenger gunships replaced the Gamblers. Roy and Hight flipped a coin; Roy's ship won and was the primary aircraft for the rescue.

WO Jack Tidball, first mission in country, was the other pilot; Spec. 5 Paul Wilson was the crew chief, and the name of the gunner is still unknown.

As the light was beginning to fade, the LRRPs reached the ground and started hacking through the thick bamboo to get to the wreck. The Bikinis returned to Dak To and contacted the medevac on stand by.

Finally, the LRRPs radioed they were ready and I was still alive, but just barely. The sun was already starting to set as the medevac and the Bikinis returned.

With Avengers still circling, the ground becoming darker by the minute, and the ground leader's voice showing signs of fatigue, the medevac slowly dropped a basket that would rescue me.

After some time, the medevac reported he had me on board and was coming out.

The second medevac appeared with a pair of Gambler guns. The LRRPs loaded the four bodies into baskets and this medevac departed.

Tom has written several paragraphs about the crew's tension while getting the LRRPs out. The wind had changed directions. They did some serious tree limb chopping. The center of gravity changed suddenly as a LRRP crawled up and into the Huey.

Finally, the LRRP team's commander radioed that he was on the ladder, but could go farther. They had him snap link to the ladder and pulled him up out of the hole. They slowly flew to a nearby firebase, where he was safely removed from the ladder.

These were truly brave and dedicated people who rescued me and recovered the bodies of my crew. I would like to know the names of the crews in the medevac ships, the other gunships and, of course, the LRRPs. I am asking any other eyewitnesses of these events to please contact me: Charles "Ray" Livermont, [REDACTED]

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VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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