



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

April 2002 Vol. 20, No. 2

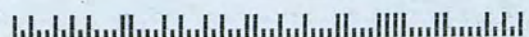
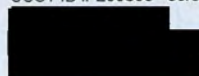


David Rittman photo

A UH-1B gunship belonging to the Tomcats of D/229th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division, takes off at Phan Thiet in December 1966. The insignia on the door was drawn by Walt Disney after one of the unit's members wrote to him and said the unit did not have decent nose art for its aircraft. Disney sent a a full-color rendition, which the unit used in Vietnam for years.

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From the President

We are blessed that there is much good news within our country these days.

As of April 1, the economy appears to be rebounding, our military has prevailed in Afghanistan with relatively few casualties, our transportation system (including the airlines) is back to normal, and there is much reason for optimism that even better times are ahead for most in the months ahead.

Much has been happening within our association, of which a few key subjects are covered in the following paragraphs.

Finding our missing comrades

We have shared with you that our highest priority is the need to find the fellow pilots who flew with us in Southeast Asia, but who we have not heard from since.

Gary Roush, Mike Law, Dana Young and many others have been working very hard on this. Details have been printed in the past few newsletters, and I am pleased to report that just in the month of March more than 300 newly found pilots have signed up and joined our association as a result of these efforts.

Many also have indicated a desire to attend their first reunion this July in Las Vegas.

Add the 32 new members we registered in late February, and our overall membership has risen to more than 11,209 as of April 1.

We're not done yet. Lists of all the newly found prospects were provided to each chapter last month and they also are working on contacting prospective members who reside in their geographical areas.

By the time you receive this newsletter, I anticipate a follow-up postcard will have been mailed to this same list of comrades we have not heard from in more than 30 years to further assist in encouraging this group of newly found pilots to join our association.

Said simply, many new members also will join in the months ahead.



Dave Rittman

Las Vegas reunion — what a time it will be!

As this column is being written April 1, we have just 90 days before our reunion in Las Vegas! Time does truly fly! Are you coming? If so, have you registered yet?

As of today, more than 1,100 pilots and their guests have registered, up significantly from this time last year.

This puts us on track to have more than 2,500 people at our host hotel this year. Add to this the many recently found and new members who will be registering in the weeks ahead, and this reunion is shaping up to be a very special time for us all, with fellow pilots attending who we have not seen in years.

Details on the reunion are contained later in this newsletter, but I would like to mention a few key items of interest.

First, based on current actual hotel registration rates, 96 percent of our membership will be checking in at the Riviera by Wednesday, July 3, in time to attend the welcome reception, at which the original show band Sha-na-na will perform.

It's a major event. If you have already registered, but do not have tickets call or e-mail our HQ at (800) 505-VHPA or hq@vhpa.org and Linda will adjust your registration package.

Advance registrations also reflect there will be 500-600 pilots and their guests will coming in early on Tuesday, July 2, thus many of our comrades will be starting the party early. The same discounted VHPA rates apply up to three days before and three days after the primary dates of the reunion.

One minor change you will note in the schedule of activities is we have moved the business meeting and the ladies brunch from Saturday to Thursday morning, July 4.

This was done to facilitate the need for your Executive Council's involvement in overseeing the massive logistical, technical setup, and rehearsals for our final night banquet Saturday, July 6, at which more than 50 performers, dancers and musicians will present a very memorable and highly patriotic 90-minute stage show just after the dinner and before the dance.

The ladies brunch is a very special event this year. We have hired a complete show with numerous actors to put on a murder mystery, complete with costumes, props, audience participation, all intermingled with a three- or

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From the President

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four-course brunch.

People who have seen the show tell me it is absolutely a hoot. It all starts at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 4, while the business meeting is going on in another part of the hotel.

Guests and older children are welcome, as long as they have tickets. Similar to the Sha-na-na concert above, if you already have registered but didn't sign up for this event, call or e-mail our HQ at (800) 505-VHPA or hq@vhpa.org and Linda will adjust your registration package.

Preceding the 9 p.m. Thursday July 4, casual dance, are two special VHPA discounted shows . . . Splash (Riviera policy is no minors under 18, please), and LaCage.

Both starting at about 7:30 p.m., Splash is limited to the first 900 people who sign up and LaCage is space capacity limited to 575. Be sure to register now, as these heavily discounted shows will sell out early!

The Top of the Riviera buffet dance unfortunately already has sold out. However, we have enhanced the previously planned casual dance running in the Grand Ballroom at the same time by booking a great entertainment package.

This get-together, as well as the shows Splash and LaCage, are tremendous values for the dollar and highly recommended.

You may have noticed we have not pre-sold tours and events outside the hotel this year. This is because there is so much to do, we have made arrangements with the hotel to have its show/tour desk in the VHPA registration area. Most of the tours can be arranged easily for upon your arrival at the hotel.

In summary, it is going to be a great reunion, but book now while the airfares are very inexpensive. Las Vegas has recovered from 9/11; the hotels and flights are relatively full these days, and on the July 4th weekend, the town will be full.

Register for your room and our reunion events on www.vhpa.org now, and lock in your transportation. See you there!

Need more information about VHPA?

Last summer in Denver your Executive Council met with the chapter presidents and, combined with the input from the business meeting, it was apparent we needed to come up with a way to provide more information about our association to the membership.

Communication was one of the priorities identified in our planning work session while at our last reunion and, as a result, Charlie Holley, who heads up our technology committee, went out and purchased a number of new

internet website addresses. You have seen several of them used as part of our new registration system.

I am pleased to announce an additional Internet address for our association members — www.vhpa.info — is up and running as of a few weeks ago (see the article later in the *Newsletter*).

This site is titled "Your Executive Council Forum" and also links directly to our home website www.vhpa.org for your convenience.

The "Forum" contains much information about our association financials, prior year audits, policies, operational statistics, membership counts, chapter membership numbers, and much more.

We view this site as a work in progress; much more will be added in the months ahead.

If you have suggestions for additional information you would like to see added to this website, please send them to your EC. There is a form on the website for "Communicating with your EC."

Volunteers needed for association

Our organization is built upon volunteers who provide many hours of dedicated service to advance and support the goals of our association.

Many of the key projects this year, including our membership drive, investment committee, strategic planning committee, website development, and of course putting together the upcoming reunion were or are being accomplished by volunteers.

Much more could be accomplished with an increased volunteer base to draw from.

If you have special talents in money management, history, writing skills, strategic planning, computer software development/websites, print editing, putting out a newspaper, newsletter layout, marketing ads for the newsletter, CPA skill sets, attorney skill sets, and can spare the time, we could use your help.

Please send you name, talent, and fields of interest to our VHPA HQ at hq@vhpa.org

Alternatively, you can use the "Volunteer Form" at www.vhpa.info, where we also provide a list of committees, special projects, and additional duties.

The Financial Committee currently is looking for CPAs to add to its membership, the Technology Steering Committee is currently looking for CGI/Pearl programming expertise, and the Legal Committee is currently looking for a member to serve on the committee as the chairman and VHPA legal counsel.

Elections for new Executive Council officers

If you are really wanting to contribute and have the time, management skills, and desire to make a difference to advance your association, we are approaching that time of year when we are looking for members to put their hat into the ring for the upcoming election at our annual business meeting for a new junior member at large and a new

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vice president.

A few guidelines do apply:

- You must be a current dues paid member in good standing.
- Formally announce your candidacy and willingness to serve yourself (no third-party nominations, please).
- Provide a brief profile of background, experience and qualifications.
- Declare your candidacy no later than one day prior to the business meeting.
- Physically attend the business meeting.

Those interested in running for these two positions should contact our junior member at large Mike Sheuerman and provide him in writing the items outlined above no later than July 3, 2002. Mike's e-mail address is [REDACTED]

Summary of commitment

As I have mentioned in several newsletters, when we were all "in-country" years ago, we were a quality, dedicated team. We are once again within this organization.

Membership is growing, renewals are up, the association has a positive cash flow, we're planning for our future in the years ahead, and much more.

As this column is written, there are less than 90 days to our next reunion in Las Vegas.

Time does fly, and our association is very blessed we have a highly motivated, committed and hard-working Executive Council, committee chairmen and dozens of volunteers who are working on many key association goals, as well as our next reunion.

To them I say, thank you for all their efforts and dedication to our association.

I am please to report that much has been accomplished by your current council in the past nine months, and more is to come.

2002 is going to be a great year! See you in Vegas!

— **Dave Rittman**
President

Letters

Contacts group asks: Take another look

The Family Contacts Committee of the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network was formed in 1997.

Since then we have worked with more than 300 families of KIA/MIAs, helping them find answers to 30-year-old questions, to reach peace with the past and with their loss. Often, it's the small things that do it.

They come to us to learn how someone died, and take away the treasure of knowing how they lived.

More and more, our work is proceeding in the opposite direction: We are fielding requests from helicopter veterans seeking to find family members of the buddies who didn't survive their tour — or who died afterward.

Perhaps it's only to pass along a special memory or a photo. For others, it sparks a long-term connection. While we are sometimes — miraculously — able to provide an immediate connection between a veteran and a buddy's brother, sister, son or daughter . . . at other times, we are only able to take the point-of-contact info. for safekeeping, until a family member should come forward and start asking the questions. We are more than happy to do this.

If there's someone whose memories you have been keeping alive in your heart, and if you'd feel comfortable sharing those memories with his family should they come forth, contact our committee chairman, VHPA member Gary Thewlis.

All you need to provide is your name and your contact info, and the name, unit, and KIA date of the person you knew.

Gary can be reached by e-mail at [REDACTED]

or by land mail at: [REDACTED]

We will keep whatever information you wish to provide and, if his family or friends should inquire of our Family Contacts Committee, we would have a great resource for helping them to learn about his life in Vietnam or flight school: You.

We also encourage you to stop by the Family Contacts Committee table at the upcoming reunion in Las Vegas, and take a look at our case lists, to see if there is someone you remember, whose friends or family are already seeking connections. (If you have contacted us in the past about one of our case names there is no need to do so again.)

And remember that the littlest thing can be important:

- What was his nickname or call sign?
- Do you have a picture of him? Even someone you didn't know well personally?
- Do you recall an anecdote about them? Even second-hand?
- Did you ever fly together?
- Did you ever go on R&R with them?

These sorts of memories can be pure gold to their families, even after so many years.

Let us know. We will record the link and will know to get in touch with you if we are contacted about the KIA/MIA. We will contact you first and let you decide what is appropriate at that time.

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Heartfelt thanks to all who have provided information to date. It means more than you know. Looking forward to a fantastic reunion!

Julie Kink
Honorary Life Member No. 3
Sister of WO1 David Kink
C Trp 1/9th CAV KIA 8-3-69
Family Contacts Committee
Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network

Mason oldest aviator when he retired in July

CW4 James W. Mason (Class 66-19/21) retired from U.S. Army Aviation service in July 2001.

Mason, at 60, was the oldest aviator still actively flying for the Army. He served two tours in Vietnam between January 1967 and June 1970.

For the last 12 years, Mason was senior instructor pilot in Company A/1-114 Aviation Battalion, AR.ARNG. Additional responsibilities included gunnery IP, night vision goggle IP and instrument flight examiner. He is a dual rated aviator.

Interviewed for this letter, Mason said: "Wearing these Army wings has been an interesting and very challenging 36-year experience. The guys coming out of flight school today are just like the ones I graduated with years ago, but their names are different.

"I commented at the retirement ceremony that, except for my wonderful wife and family, no other accomplishment in my lifetime has given more pride and satisfaction than having earned and worn those silver wings."

Two years ago, Mason qualified for and successfully completed the U.S. Navy Underwater Survival Course for flight crewmembers at Pensacola, FL.

After completion, one of the instructors told him that, at 58, he was the oldest individual to have ever earned a certificate.

Mason said later, "Hell, I was mentally prepared to drown, rather than give up. There was absolutely no way those younger Navy, Coast Guard and Air Force pilots were going to see an old Army aviator quit. Almost one-fourth of the younger pilots didn't finish, though."



More recently, on three occasions he has been part of an Army aviation element tasked to support U.S. Navy SEAL teams during their land warfare phase of training.

"Each time, we flew support for about a week or 10 days. Those guys are just simply top-notch. Daylight was spent in mission briefings, detailed planning and walk-through rehearsals. All missions were conducted at night, under goggles. Everything is timed almost to the second and there's no margin for error.

"Live ammo is utilized, both by the SEAL teams and by the Army choppers. Lots of close-in fire support, insertions, extractions, the kind of stuff we experienced in Vietnam," he said. "It's as close to the real thing as you'll see without getting some bullet holes in your aircraft. One of our slicks did have a window blown out though, during an insertion. Pyrotechnics in the treeline. Woke that young

pilot up, that's for sure!

"After each mission we'd have extensive debriefings and often crawl into the sack well after midnight. A few days and nights on that kind of schedule and you're running on pure adrenaline. Not unlike Vietnam."

Last March and April, Mason was part of an AR.ARNG element that went to Hohenfels, Germany, supporting an active duty avia-



James W. Mason stands beside his UH-1C gunship during his first tour in Vietnam with the 128th Assault Helicopter Company "Gunslingers." When he retired last July at age 60, Mason was the oldest Army aviator still actively flying.

tion detachment located there.

He observes that the interface between active duty units and the ARNG seems to be pretty outstanding, unlike it was even a few years ago.

"ARNG flight crewmembers have the same training and annual flight hour requirements as our active duty counterparts," Mason said. "Often, the Guard pilots have a greater

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wealth of flight time and experience, but on both sides of that fence there are outstanding units and some that are not. Leadership makes the difference.

"Mine happened to be a hard-training outfit that set high standards and expected maximum effort from its people. That attitude was instilled, top to bottom," he said. "Fully half of the Army's combat forces today are from the ARNG side of the house. In combination, it makes a hell of a 'can-do-team.'"

Asked about his memories of Vietnam, Jim said, "I'm not much of one for war stories. My best memories of Vietnam are of the guys I flew with. Talk about some heroes . . . you saw gallantry almost on a daily basis out of both the slicks and the guns. It was simply a common occurrence."

"Night scrambles and gunfights were pretty frequent for our gun platoon, too. Most of my first tour was with the 128th AHC 'Gun-slingers.' Every single one of our pilots, crew chiefs and gunners in the 128th was prepared to make any sacrifice necessary if it would buy another American soldier's life."

"Helicopter crewmember losses in Vietnam were horrible. I suspect that almost all of us who made it home alive owe our good fortune to the actions of our other crewmembers. These were guys with huge cojones, willing to die not just for each other, but for that poor grunt on the ground. To one extent or another, I'd bet we all carry a certain amount of 'survivor's guilt' even today."

"There will probably never be a day of my life that, in some small way, a fleeting memory of that war doesn't creep through my thoughts, but it's often the face or the smile or a memorable act of valor associated with a fellow crewmember. Talk about heroes . . . you bet, I've got some."

Mason recalled an experience following the war with Iraq.

"It took years before those of us who went to Vietnam were once again accepted by our own society. We weren't ashamed of our service, but we simply didn't talk about it because it was a highly controversial subject with the public. My own personal feelings about that matter have always been that any young man of the Vietnam era who was eligible to go, but refused, has purchased his manhood too cheaply."

"Every helicopter pilot was a two-time volunteer. We volunteered for flight school and we volunteered for Vietnam duty. Both were hazardous to your health. I suppose we were all probably crazy."

"Back to the story though. In 1991, I was enjoying a cold one in the club at Fort Rucker one evening after a day in the air, when a younger Army pilot walked over to my

table. Both of us were still in flight suits. Usually, when two pilots approach each other they'll take note of three uniform items: wings, right shoulder combat patch (or none) and then rank . . . often in that order.

"His was a Desert Storm patch and he asked about my Vietnam shoulder patch. I briefly mumbled something about the old B model gunships, realizing they were well before his time and then he said: 'Welcome home. You don't know how much we appreciate what all of you did for our country.' It took a little while for me to regain my composure."

Mason's awards and decorations include Master Army Aviator Wings, the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Star Medals, the Meritorious Service Medal, 43 Air Medals (three for valor), two Army Commendation Medals, two National Defense Service Medals, GCM, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, four overseas bars, Arkansas Commendation Medal, two Arkansas Service Ribbons, individual award of the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star, Vietnam Campaign Ribbon for six campaigns and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Unit awards include the Valorous Unit Award, Meritorious Unit Award and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

He and his wife, Marianne, reside at Texarkana, Texas. His son, Derek, and daughter-in-law, Kelly, reside in LaVaca, AR.

Derek Mason
LaVaca, AR

People still remember 1995 Parkville Parade

I thought you might be interested in this exchange of e-mails. I've always had a good feeling about that day, and to hear about it more than six years later is a special treat.

I do hope the Rays (a VHPA member) do come to town again.

Barbara Lance
City Clerk
City of Parkville, MO

Parkville held a 4th of July parade a few years ago and the Lions Club sponsored a breakfast for the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association in which they marched in the parade.

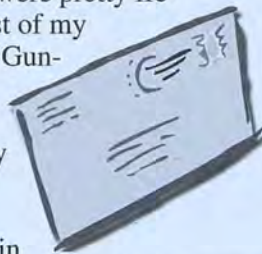
It was a very emotional day for most of us who were there.

While visiting the shops we saw an art print on the back of one of them regarding English Setter Dogs . . . I would like to know the name of the shop . . . I hope you can help.

Thank you,
Kathy Ray

Parkersburg, WV

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Letters

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Dear Kathy:

That 4th of July was a very emotional day for me, too. I am the city

clerk, a Parkville Lion, a member of the Parkville Chamber of Commerce, and the mother of a Vietnam veteran, so I was involved in many ways with this event.

Some time before the 4th that year, Dave Rittman, one of our aldermen, attended a chamber meeting and said the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

would be holding its annual meeting in Kansas City, and maybe their spouses would like to visit Parkville (while the annual business meeting was being conducted).

My daughter was in charge of the parade that year and said, "If the spouses can come, why not the veterans? We'd



Members of the VHPA, led of Charlie Rayl in a cavalry hat, and a color guard march through downtown Parkville, MO, during the 1995 VHPA Reunion in Kansas City.

Dave Rittman photo

to come to town to participate. My son was a crew chief on a Huey in Vietnam in 1970-71, and is now in charge of the electronics unit at the Air National Guard in Stockton, CA. He is also still in the Army Reserve.

So on that fateful day, I was gratified to see the townspeople cheering for not only the Vietnam pilots, but also for my son. It was a

like to have them march in our parade."

We extended the invitation, and we sent three letters — one from the mayor, one from the Lions Club president, and one from my daughter as parade chairman — and we got an acceptance.

Unbeknownst to me, my daughters (I actually have two daughters working on the parade) got my son and his wife

very special day for our family. Curt was surprised to see some of his California helicopter pilot friends here.

You may not have heard an interesting story about that day — some of the pilots were surprised to see one of their old friends in the parade. They thought he died in combat in Vietnam. What a day!

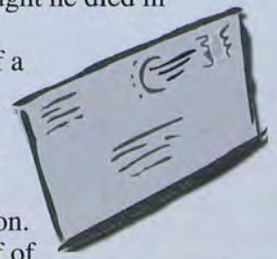
Dave Rittman gave me a copy of a picture he took, and I copied it for you in case you don't have it. It is enclosed. A larger version is on the wall in the lobby of City Hall.

That doesn't answer your question.

Most of the stores on the lower half of the block on the east side of Main Street have changed. I am asking around, and if I find a shop that has what you're looking for, I'll let you know.

Thanks for writing.

Barbara Lance
City Clerk
Parkville, MO



Pilot helping family of KIA get information

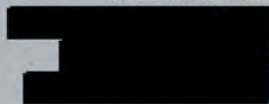
I promised a family of a KIA that I would get information regarding his last mission.

Anyone having information regarding Spec. 4 Michael R. Seibert, crew chief, Scout section, A Troop, 1/9 1st Cav KIA 8/9/69. OH-6A No. 67-16269 while flying in the area north of Nui Ba Dinh (flying out of Tay Ninh) between LZ Beverly and Cambodia.

A/C reported taking fire and having fire on board. Crew: WO1 Stephen A. Young, KIA; Spec. 5 James C. Dine, KIA.

I flew with the 187th AHC "Crusaders" out of Tay Ninh during 1968-69.

John J. Jewett



EDITOR NOTE: The Parkville Parade, to our knowledge, was the first welcome home parade held for Vietnam veterans, certainly our association. More than 1,000 members and their guests marched in the small community adjacent to Kansas City that year, an emo-

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Letters

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tional event that is still talked about today within our membership and the Parkville community. We again thank all the Parkville residents who helped make that day so special.

Scholarship Fund shares in profits from book sales

Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Sidney R. Slagter, authors of "Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul," sent a check for \$1,250 to our VHPA Scholarship Fund, recently.

Their donation is based on their promise to share a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the book.

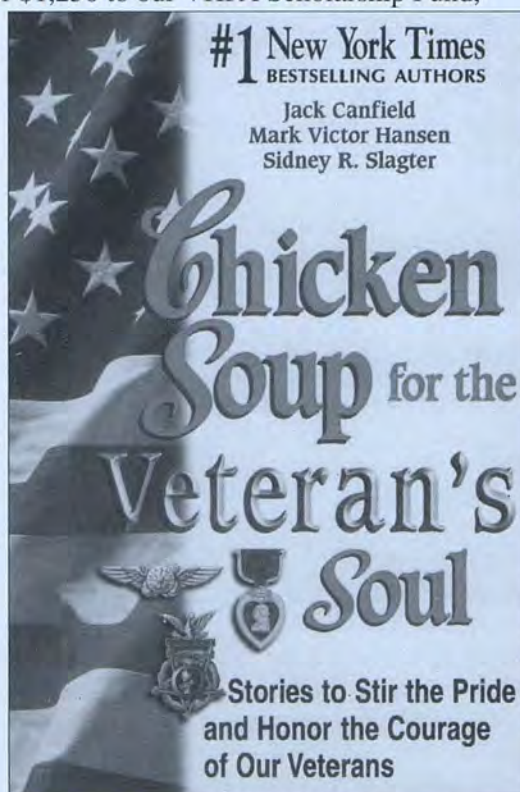
Subtitled "Stories to Stir the Pride and Honor the Courage of Our Veterans," the book is composed of nearly 100 short stories by veterans about war.

It was released on Memorial

Day, last year, and has been fairly successful due to the increased focus and interest in our military by the American public over the past six months.

There was a piece about the book last year just prior to Denver in the May/June 2001 Newsletter.

Helicopter pilots who contributed stories and should be



New VHPA member found during mailing

Thanks a ton for contacting me. I've spent the last 30 years living under the proverbial mesa rock, having long ago thrown everything away related to the Army/Vietnam era.

I heard about VHPA years ago and have been urged to join by friends and family, but haven't. As a group, we're senior citizens or nearly there, and the door is beginning to close on opportunities to reunite.

In that spirit, I'd like to join VHPA, and I intent to be at this year's reunion. Much gratitude to those members and their families for volunteering lots of time and effort to make all this possible.

J. Brieske
Cougar 31

EDITOR'S NOTE: This new member was one of 400 new VHPA members who were enrolled during March as a result of the new membership mailing that went out at the beginning of the month to pilots we recently had obtained current addresses by cross-referencing old military orders with updated public databases.

mentioned are: Bill Walker, "The Harbinger;" Bob Brooks, "The Rescue;" Jim Morgan, "Boom Boom;" Bill Walker, "The Watch;" Ray Robbins, "War is Hard;" Jerry Ewen, "Party Animal," "I Will Not Forget" and "Reunion."

Additionally, stories by folks familiar to Vietnam helicopter pilots and crew members were submitted by George Miller, "A Daughter's Letter" by his daughter, Rani Nicola; Julie Kink, about her brother, David, a pilot, "You're Never Alone on a Mission;" and Joan Morgan, wife of Jim Morgan, a pilot, "The Broken Medal."

In all, more than 3,000 short stories were submitted, but only 101 were selected for the book.

Because of the War on Terrorism, being waged by America, and the continued focus on our military around the world, the book could continue to be successful and further donations from the authors will be received.

You can help by going to your favorite bookstore and purchase the book for your veteran friends.

Tom Payne
Tulsa, OK

Register for Reunion 2002

online at: www.vhpareunion.org

Taps

Steven R. Erickson

Steven R. Erickson of Mt. Horab, WI, died March 8 after a lengthy battle with emphysema.

Erickson served with the 361st Aviation Company Escort "Pink Panthers" from late 1970 to late 1971.

He was an AH-1G pilot early in his tour, operations officer during the middle part and maintenance officer at the end.

He received the Distinguished Flying Cross, several Air Medals and the Bronze



Star Medal.

He was an avid poker player and a good guy to be around.

He is survived by his wife Carla and several children.

Mike Sheuerman

361st ACE/AWC

Panther 15

Charles "Chuck" Getchell

It is with deep regret that I have to tell the VHPA of the death of the best slick pilot I ever knew.

Charles "Chuck" Getchell, 56, of Pace, FL, died as the result of a helicopter accident on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico on March 23.

Chuck was an original "Condor" of C Troop, 2/17th

See TAPS, Page 12

VHPA business directory

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Taps

Continued from Page 11

Cav, 101st Airborne. He helped form the troop at Fort Hood, TX, and deployed with the unit as the UH-1 instructor pilot.

He flew slicks for the troop for the first year in country as "Condor 43." Chuck flew rescue missions for the grunts on the ground in the A Shau Valley at night, when even the dustoff pilots wouldn't fly.

Then he extended his tour to fly with a VIP unit in Vung Tau. He was the IP and/or SIP at every unit level he served.

In flight school, we were taught that if the worse case scenario happened and the main blade came off, fly the aircraft to the ground because you never know when divine interference would help you to land safely.

Chuck's hands were still clutching the cyclic and collective as he lay in his coffin. The coroner could not straighten them out. He flew the helicopter all the way to the water, and was trying his best to fix things that were unfixable.

"Squeaky," you will be missed always.

Survivors include his wife Anita, daughter Hollie and three grandchildren.

Rod McClellan



Robert L. Hamilton

Robert L. Hamilton died in Los Gatos, CA, on March 19. He was 65.

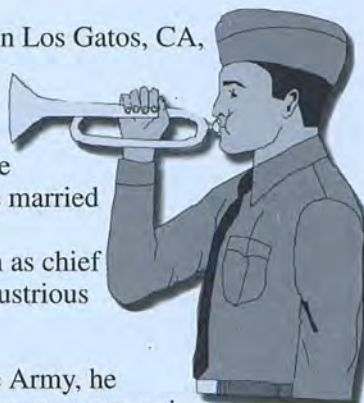
Hamilton was raised in Merced, CA, where he met his wife, Carol. He joined the Army in 1954 and they were married in Germany in 1956.

He retired at the Pentagon as chief warrant officer 4, after an illustrious career in Army Aviation.

During his 21 years in the Army, he served two tours in Vietnam as a master aviator, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Star Medals, 30 Air Medals and the Legion of Merit.

Upon his retirement from the Army, Hamilton and his family returned to California, settling in Los Gatos, where they took over the family business, the Los Gatos Shade Shop.

His love of flying led him again to aviation, where he was a pilot for Saratoga Savings and Loan, Terra Commercial and head of operations for Aris Helicopter.



Hamilton became involved in the Los Gatos community, serving on the Los Gatos Town Council, as president of Los Gatos Boys Baseball, YMCA Board member, president of the Kiwanis Club, president of San Jose Airport Rotary and board member of Saratoga Men's Club.

He also was on the Board of Los Gatos Museum, secretary of Northern California Aviators Club and was a board member of the Santa Clara County Republican Central Committee.

He is survived by Carol, his wife of 45 years; two daughters, Susan Dias of Los

Gatos and Barbara and her husband Brad Fralick of Auburn; a son, David and daughter-in-law Eily of Chicago; six grandchildren, Lacey, Sarah, Amanda and Madison Dias of Los Gatos, and Charlie and Ashley Fralick of Auburn; a brother, Dick and sister-in-law Mary Ann Hamilton of Auburn; and a sister, Jo Ann and brother-in-law Jim Washburn of San Jose and sister-in-law Sandy King of Merced.

Jim Hart

Jim Hart of Plymouth, MA, died on March 23 after a brief fight with cancer.

Hart served with the 128th Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-71.

He is survived by his wife Barbara and three children.

Gary Bill Hayes

Gary Bill Hayes, 61, of Nixa, MS, died Feb. 15 after a three-year battle with cancer.

Hayes, who was a member of the class of 65-3, served in Vietnam with C/1/9 Cav in 1965-66.

His early aviation career was as a pilot with the Missouri Highway Patrol.

He moved on to become a well-know legend with the Missouri National Guard, serving as an instructor pilot and safety officer.

After retirement, he continued to work as a state safety inspector.

His wife of many years, Velda and his three daughters, Lisa, Kim and Jana survive him.

John D. Jankowski

I have some sad news to pass on and to underline the importance of re-establishing lines of contact with those close friends we made while in A/3/17th Air Cav.

One of the many friends I had the opportunity to serve

See TAPS, Page 13

Taps

Continued from Page 12

with was CW2 John D. Jankowski.

He was a slick pilot like myself. John was always cheerful and would pass on his humor to the rest of us. A great pilot as well as a great friend. His constant grin was always there!

As with the rest of my friends from that period, I've always wondered "Where is Ski, (our nickname for him) and what's he been up to? When Bill Barber took the reigns to put together a reunion, John was one of many I tried to re-establish contact with. Sadly, I didn't try hard enough.

As we closed our conversation, she said John was not able to talk "right now," but that as soon as he woke up, she would tell him I had called.

I called and spoke to John's wife on March 4. She was on her cell phone, by John's bedside in the hospital, and mentioned John "was not doing well." We spoke for some time about John and our friendship in Vietnam.

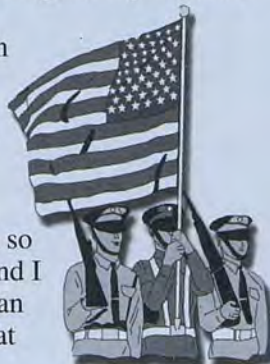
She mentioned his humor and through his battle with cancer he always remained upbeat. As we closed our conversation, she said John was not able to talk "right now," but that as soon as he woke up, she would tell him I had called.

She would also have him call me right away. I hadn't spoken to John in 33 years, so I was hoping to hear from him.

This evening (March 5), I received a phone call from John's wife. She said John had passed away this morning.

He never knew his friends from so long ago had finally found him. And I didn't get to renew a contact with an old friend. I'll have to live with that forever.

Thanks to the perseverance of Bill, he did an Internet search for John and finally found him. Since I had been telling Bill many times about "Ski," Bill called me as soon as he located him. Sadly, John was diagnosed with liver cancer 18 months ago.



Jim Longworth

Marvin Lee Marchman

Dr. Marvin Lee Marchman, 61, died the night of April 1 at his home on Lake Lanier in Buford, GA.

Marchman was born and raised in the Copperhill, TN, area. He graduated from the University of Tennessee

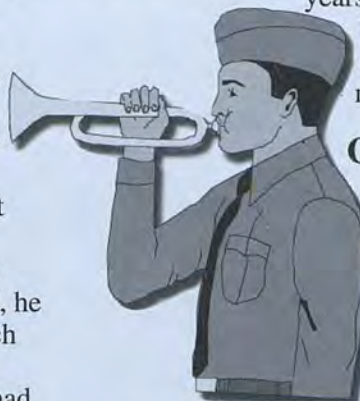
Medical School and Emory University.

He served in the U.S. Army as a flight surgeon. In Vietnam, he was assigned to the 118th Assault Helicopter Company, where he was greatly admired by unit aviators.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and an Air Medal.

Marchman was a family practice physician and FAAFP flight examiner in the metro Atlanta area for the past 35 years.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra, and his mother, June Marchman, McCaysville, GA.



George Donald Pfromm

George Donald Pfromm recently died of cancer while stationed in Europe as a Federal Aviation Administration security special agent.

He flew with A Company, 123rd Aviation Battalion, Americal Division in Vietnam and was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Pfromm was born Dec 23, 1943, in Akron, OH. He attended Troy State University, Troy, AL; Fort Stellacoom Community College, Tacoma, WA; and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, where he graduated with honors in May 1984.

Pfromm's major field of study was marketing design and technical illustration.

Pfromm served in the Army from 1968-79. He obtained a commercial pilot's license and had over 1,400 hours of fixed- and rotary-wing flight time.

His military career took him throughout Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central Europe.

Pfromm began his service with the FAA in 1987 as a domestic civil aviation security special agent in Seattle. He also served as a civil aviation security special agent in Germany after the Pan Am 103 crash.

He later became civil aviation security liaison officer for Germany.

Pfromm then worked in Washington headquarters.

He returned to Europe in October 1999 as a civil aviation security liaison for Russia and Eastern Europe. He later became the CASLO for Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

While working in the Brussels Office of Security, he began a renewed interest in his passion of aircraft military

See TAPS, Page 14

Taps

Continued from Page 13

history.

Pfromm spent hours with friends, combing the ruins of former military battlefields throughout Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany, obtaining military aircraft memorabilia. He had an extensive collection of military artifacts.

Additionally, he had an extensive collection of books on past military aircraft specifications that he guarded like they were his children.

Also in Brussels, Pfromm began collaboration on a book with his friend Chris Vanhee on German World War II night fighters.

Even during his illness, he spent hours working on the technical illustrations of these aircraft.

He is survived by his mother, Margaret Pfromm; a son, George Pfromm II; two brothers, Carl and Richard Pfromm; and his fiancée, Sandra Rohrbach.

Clarence H. "Clancy" Woliver

Retired Army Col. Clarence H. "Clancy" Woliver died

April 19 of a heart attack in San Antonio while being treated for cancer. He was 69.

Woliver was awarded the Silver Star Medal for refusing to abandon eight U.S. Marines who were surrounded by enemy fire in Vietnam during Woliver's tour of duty as a helicopter pilot in 1968-69.

Though his aircraft had run out of ammunition, Woliver stayed in the area where the Marines were stranded, taking enemy fire while other aircraft rescued the Marines.

Though wounded by shrapnel, Woliver flew his damaged helicopter back to base.

He also was recipient of two Legion of Merit medals, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Purple Hearts, nine Air Medals and two Bronze Star Medals.

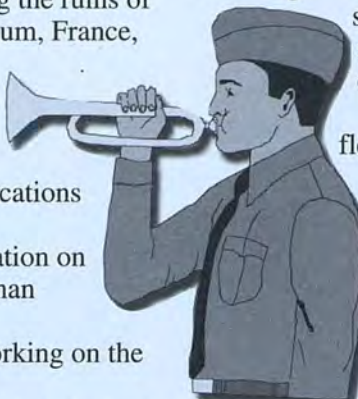
Born in Goose Creek, TX, Woliver graduated from Lamar High School in Houston.

At Lamar, he also met his future wife, Lois Saunders. She died after 40 years of

marriage.

He joined the Army in 1955, retiring in 1986 after serving for two years as commanding officer of Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Woliver is survived by his second wife, Jo Ann Ansley Woliver of San Antonio, and two sons.



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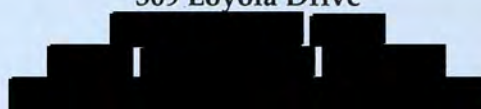
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Pi'-o-neer' a noun meaning: "One who goes before, preparing the way, for others to follow."

There is no other way to define the original members of the 33rd Transportation Company (Light Helicopter)(CH-21), except as pioneers in U.S. Army Aviation history.

All original members of the 33rd left their families in the United States and quietly departed Fort Ord, CA, with their destination as — "unknown."

The move was classified as Top Secret and no one was able to tell anyone, including families, where they were going under penalty of court-martial.

Vietnam was not classified as a combat zone in 1962, but as an advisory zone . . . but no one told the VC.

Thunderbird Lounge is a very good historical book

written by a man who experienced it all.

First Lt. Robert J. Brandt, a National Guard officer newly assigned, became the commander of the 573rd Maintenance Detachment. He would be the only commander of the 573rd Maintenance Detachment for the entire

Book review



year.

The 33rd originally was to deploy to "unknown" locations in March of

1962. The orders were delayed and many of its helicopters were transferred to two other transportation companies — the 8th and 57th — which did deploy.

Then the United States was scoured for low-time CH-21s to replace the ones given up by the 33rd. The unit again was alerted to move in August 1962. All aircraft and all other equipment finally departed for Hawaii by ship, scheduled to stop in Hawaii to pick up the aircraft and equipment of a sister unit, the 81st, before continuing on.

See BRANDT, Page 16

Book airline reservations for Reunion 2002 in Las Vegas

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Brandt diagnosed with pneumonia

Continued from Page 15

Then, the day before the main body of personnel was to depart Travis Air Force Base, Brandt was diagnosed with pneumonia.

After spending a night in the Fort Ord hospital and receiving a massive dose of penicillin that led to a rapid improvement, Brandt told the Army doctor he HAD to go with his unit the next day.

Convinced by his improvement, the doctor loaded Brandt up with more penicillin and off he went. He recovered en route with no ill effects.

The arrival at Tan So Nhut and Saigon was exactly as anyone who has been there remembers: A sensory shock and memorable.

The year was 1962 and Saigon was "unspoiled" by Western influences; full of interesting, foreign sights, sounds and smells.

The USNS Croatan, carrying 40 cocooned helicopters and equipment, arrived within 48 hours, on schedule. After unpacking, unwrapping and assembly, the 33rd's 20 CH-21s were flown to Tan So Nhut and, ultimately, to their new home on Bien Hoa airbase about 30 miles north of Saigon.

The time was the monsoon season and no member of the unit had experienced the tropics or the problems the heat and moisture would ultimately bring to their aging CH-21 helicopters. The 33rd had arrived and "Wow," were the conditions primitive!

Throughout the remaining pages of Thunderbird Lounge, Brandt tells a complete story of the first year of the 33rd in Vietnam. People, places and incidents are described in vivid detail.

Almost every pilot is mentioned, as well as many of the key enlisted men and NCOs.

Using letters sent home to his wife, along with the help of several comrades, he is still in contact with, Brandt reconstructs many events that tell the story of their first year.

Combat assaults, resupply and medical evacuations are carried out in two-aircraft flights because of engine and maintenance concerns. The red soil and extreme moisture conditions made maintenance of the CH-21 radial engines and wooden rotor blades very, very difficult. Brandt estimates his engine shop rebuilt a CH-21 radial engine every eight days!

Thunderbird Lounge is a story of missions, maintenance and mayhem.

Never has a book been written after 40 years that is more complete with dates, names

Book review



and locations. Every page is brimming with tales relating the many humorous incidents and events that made life in combat and the poor living conditions of Bien Hoa airbase bearable.

Great photos are placed at the end of each chapter that complement and highlight the people and incidents within the chapter. Brandt carefully remembers some of the sad events of the year, concluding with the loss of the first two 33rd pilots just after his return home.

Thunderbird Lounge is truly a wonderful book. It tells a positive story about men as pioneers overcoming adversity, boredom and the enemy.

Some of the participants may have seen things differently than Brandt, as he looks back after 40 years. However, no one can say he didn't tell it candidly, and fairly, as he saw it. After all, 40 years is a long time.

The year 1962 was truly a time when real men pioneered the use of helicopters in combat and developed the textbooks for U.S. Army Aviation airmobile operations. Those textbooks, as well as the lessons learned, were effectively used by thousands of pilots over the next nine years in that "unknown" location so very far away.

— Tom Payne

VHPA briefs

118th Assault Helicopter Company

The 118th Assault Helicopter Company will have a reunion of all pilots who flew in that unit. It is being held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on the DFW airport in Dallas on Oct. 4-6

Anyone needing information on the reunion can contact me at JimThorne1@aol.com

4th Infantry Division

The 4th Infantry (IVY) Division Association will host its National Reunion, Sept. 25-29.

CONTACT: Roger Barton, 2 Spring Drive (R-32), Walkersville, MD 21793. Call (888) 845-4040 or go to: www.4thinfantry.org

Seeking information

The VHPA seeks information about Capt. Leo J. Asselin, a pilot with C/7/17th Cav from late 1969 until some time in 1970.

One other former C Troop captain is believes Asselin died of cancer some time after the war.

What we know is he became weapons platoon leader on Dec. 28, 1969, succeeding Capt. John E. Jennings.

Asselin later served as C Troop's operations officer and XO. Please contact Mike Law (redacted) if you have any additional information.

Reunion begins with rock'n'roll act

JOE BILITZKE

CHAIRMAN

NATIONAL VHPA ANNUAL REUNION

The 2002 Las Vegas Reunion opens on Wednesday, July 3, with Sha-na-na, the rock'n'roll original.

We've concluded the contracts and agreements for the group and they're excited to be performing for a group of party pros. They'd expect nothing less from real helicopter pilots!

The party and reception begins at 7 p.m. and show time at 8:30. You won't forget opening night this year.

- Our Business Meeting will be held earlier this year at my request. Reunions in the past have seen the pilots' business meeting held the morning of the final banquet.

Given all the activities on the day of the final banquet, I asked the Executive Council to move the meeting to an earlier day. So this year, we'll begin the meeting at 9 o'clock on the morning of Thursday, July 4.

All pilots with a current, active membership are encouraged to participate in the decision-making that affects your association. We'll hold elections for junior member at large and vice president.

Both of these officers will sit on the Executive Council for the next three years, so it's important you have a voice in their election.

- A murder mystery runs concurrently with the Business Meeting, but not to worry guys, this involves the ladies.

While we're busy with the complexities of Robert's Rules, the ladies will be busy solving a murder staged during the Ladies Brunch. This should be a fun time for the participants and is produced exclusively for the VHPA "significant others."

NOTE: This event has also been moved to Thursday beginning at 9:30 a.m. to coincide with the Business Meeting.

Tickets are available on our website, so be sure to add this event to your reunion package.

Reunion events

Wednesday, July 3

- Most members arrive; check in
- Welcome reception — 7-10 p.m.
- Sha-na-na performs — 8:30-10 p.m.

Thursday, July 4

- Business meeting — 9 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
- Murder Mystery Brunch — 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- LaCage Show — 7-8:30 p.m.
- Splash Stage Show — 7:30-9 p.m.
- Top of Riviera Buffet Dinner Dance — 9 p.m.-midnight
- Casual Dance with great band — 9 p.m.-midnight

Friday, July 5

- Golf Tournament at Rhodes Ranch — 6:30 a.m.
- Pool Party with Kokomo Beach Band — 8-11 p.m.

Saturday, July 6

- Final Banquet — 5:45 p.m.-1 a.m.
- Presentation of colors — 6:30 p.m.
- Dinner — 7-8:30 p.m.
- Stage show — 8:30-10 p.m.
- Dance — 10 p.m.-1 a.m.

Sunday, July 7

- Most members depart
- All times subject to minor changes.

- The Golf Tournament still has a few slots open for all you Tiger Woods wannabes.

You can get more information from our resident pro, Mike Whitten (WRNGANS@aol.com) or see the website (<http://www.vhpareunion.org/register.htm>) and add golf to your registration form. We've booked a great course, Rhodes Ranch Country Club, and have it all to ourselves the morning of Friday, July 5.

- We promised you a complete day to yourselves on Friday, but couldn't resist throwing in a pool party.

A fun band, Kokomo, will entertain you and the hotel has agreed to sell poolside "munchies." So, as you return to the hotel after a day on the town, or a morning of golf, join us at the Riviera outdoor pool starting at 8 p.m.

The cost? Nothing — except the food and drink. It will be a hot evening, figuratively and literally.

- Units and chapters can still have a TOC of their very own by signing up for a skybox.

The skyboxes the main ballroom and are a great place to meet and greet. Included in the cost is a "starter supply" of drinks — beer and soft

drinks.

If you wish, your banquet meal can be served there as you overlook the festivities of the final night.

And by reserving a TOC for Wednesday, you'll have a great seat for Sha-Na-Na. The website is the place to reserve your TOC.

- We're expecting maximum attendance at Blast 2002, so make your reservations now. It's easier than ever to check out all the great activities, book your room, and choose your events.

Just go to the main reunion website at <http://www.vhpareunion.org/index.html> for the updated schedule and forms.

If you prefer or still have a dial telephone, call VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA and Linda will be more than happy to grab her quill and make the necessary reservations for you.

- The role of the national reunion chairman was instituted to centralize the coordination of our big, annual event. In that position, I'm available for questions, problems, suggestions, gripes, etc. You can write to me at: NationalReunion@vhpa.org

Looking forward to seeing you all at Blast 2002 in Las Vegas.

Luxurious digs

Riviera has \$150 million in enhancements

Our host hotel for this years reunion is the Riviera, right in the heart of the "strip" in Las Vegas.

It has a proud history, including the home for Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and the rat pack while they filmed *Oceans 11* in the hotel, and performed nightly in their showroom.

More recently, the movie "Casino" was also filmed in the hotel.

If you haven't been to the Riviera in the last year or two, you haven't seen the massive expansion and upgrades that resulted from investing more than \$150 million in the property.

There are the Monte Carlo Tower in which 1,000 members and their guests will be staying, 100,000 square feet of banquet area, the new 46,000-square-foot Royal Pavilion complete with skyboxes, the expanded restaurants and modest-cost, but high-quality "all you can eat" breakfast, lunch and dinner buffet areas, the pool/recreation areas, the four in-house

showrooms for nightly high-quality entertainment, and renowned casino operations.

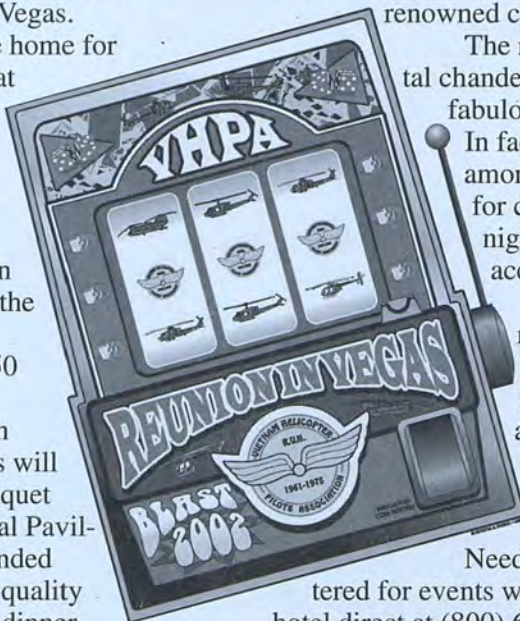
The reunion lobby area features cut-crystal chandeliers, Italian marble columns, and a fabulous decor to match.

In fact, the Riviera recently was voted among the top five hotels in Las Vegas for convention services, restaurants, nightly entertainment and overnight accommodations.

All this at a special discounted rate of \$76 per night plus tax.

Not registered for the reunion yet? Book VHPA events and hotel all at once now while you think about it — and before the rooms sell out by going to www.vhpa.org and clicking on our 2002 reunion prompt.

Need an extra room or have already registered for events without booking a room? Call the hotel direct at (800) 634-6753, identify yourself as a VHPA member, and make your arrangements.



UH-1



Apache

Listen Up!

Here's a great opportunity to receive hand crafted rosewood models commemorating your military service. All models are unique collectables that can be personalized with your military affiliation coins, badges, and honors, with an engraved plaque.

These beautifully finished models are made to enhance any office or home decor. Check out our military models: aircraft, tanks:

www.modelsmilitary.com

Call [redacted] Visa, Master Card, Amex.

Register for Reunion 2002

Outlaws in Vietnam



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

ARVN squads getting out of the Hueys were being mowed down in the deep, blond rice paddy grass as if a giant piano wire were sweeping through the LZ, cutting them off at the knees. Whole squads of ARVNs were losing their lives due to the grazing fire. The radio was full of guys screaming, "I m hit. I m hit! I m HIT!"

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

Reunion could be the largest ever

As this newsletter goes to press April 29th, there are over 1,575 pilots and guests now registered for the Las Vegas reunion, up 21 percent from this time last year.

If the current pace continues, attendance will exceed 2,500. This is the year to meet the many new members we have not seen for over 30 years . . . make sure you attend if at all possible. Register now at www.vhpareunion.org

July 4th Casual Dance upgraded

The Casual Dance from 9 p.m. to midnight on July 4th — following the shows “Splash” or “LaCage” — has been significantly upgraded with the signing of the band “Love Shack,” voted the best band in Las Vegas for several years running.

Admittance is only \$20, and this very special evening will be well worth it.

If you already have registered and did not include the Casual Dance, we’ve set up a special webpage where you can immediately add it to your registration package. Just go to www.vhpareunion.org/CasualDance.htm

A Visa or MasterCard will be required.

Top of the Riviera July 4 sold out

The upgrading of the Casual Dance will not take away from the already sold out “Top of the Riviera” dinner dance running at the same time on July 4th in a different part of the hotel.

The well-know Susan McDonald and her entire band and dancers will provide great entertainment while you dance, view the fireworks, and experience the great view of Vegas at night from the top of the hotel.

For those of you who did not sign up in time to get a ticket, please remember there are lots of places to view the fireworks display other than the “Top of the Riviera.”

Regardless of which function you attend, it is going to be a great

Motorcycle rides planned at reunion

There will be two motorcycle rides in conjunction with the Las Vegas Reunion:

- One on Friday, July 5, up Mt. Charleston. There will be a lunch or brunch.

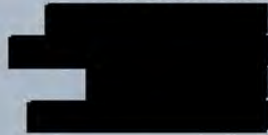
- The other on Saturday, July 6. The route will be to the Valley of Fire, then to Lake Mead and around to Hoover Dam, with a couple of group photo opportunities at Red Rocks and at the Dam.

Both rides will start after the sun comes up to catch the coolest time of the day. A special ride pin has been designed.

There are some special ride pins left from last year’s Rumble in The Rockies. Contact me at the address below.

So far, we have a couple of dozen riders registered this year. A database of some 100 riders has been compiled.

Ken Lindstrom



evening, and after 11 p.m. if you have a ticket to either event, you can walk between the two areas, if you would like.

Sha-na-na performs July 3

The Welcome Reception our first night Wednesday, July 3, starts at 7 p.m., complete with music.

However, to accommodate some later flight arrivals, we have arranged for the Sha-na-na performance to start later in the evening — about 8:30 p.m.

Registration will be open until at least 8:15 p.m. the first night to accommodate everyone, but we recommend you plan to arrive as early in the day as possible. It is going to be a great evening!

TOC/Skyboxes still available

As of April 28, we have a few TOC/Skyboxes available for rental for the entire reunion . . . \$600 for a single, and \$1,200 for a double.

These Skyboxes can serve as your unit or group TOC (or whatever) and have the best view in the house for Sha-na-na and for the Banquet show and entertainment. You can even have your banquet meal served there if you choose.

If you want one, act fast, as there are only a few left. Go to www.vhpareunion.org and click on “Get a TOC.”

Book room at Riviera by June 2

The airplanes are full again to Las Vegas, and the town will be sold out over the 4th of July weekend.

After June 2 we lose our exclusive hold on our very deeply discounted room block . . . only \$76 per night (and that includes the weekend nights!).

Don’t risk a higher rate or having to stay elsewhere (our room block will sell out). Book before June 2 at www.vhpa.reunion.org

If you have registered for our events, but didn’t get a room at the Riviera (or need an additional one) . . . call toll free (800) 634-6753, identify yourself as a VHPA member, and make your reservation with them direct.

Check Morning Report

You may think you’re registered for the Las Vegas reunion on-line after checking “yes” when you entered your credit card information, printed your registration form, and exited before hitting the “send” button.

If you did not receive a confirming e-mail from us, we did not receive your registration.

Please check the Morning Report at www.VHPA.org. If your name is not on the list, call headquarters immediately at (800) 505-VHPA to complete the process.

Reunion refund information

Reunion fees and events

No refund will be given for any reunion fees (dinner, event, registration fee, golf, or other activity) unless the member cancels the registration by fax at (916) 966-8743, e-mail at hq@vhpa.org, or calling VHPA Headquarters (800) 505-VHPA no later than 5 p.m. Pacific time June 25.

Requests sent by U.S. mail must arrive by June 25. 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.

There will be a \$10 cancellation fee charged for each refund request, regardless of the number of items 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 who 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.

Hotel room charges

Notice of hotel reservation cancellations must be made direct to the Riviera hotel reservations system at (800) 634-6753 by June 25.

If this becomes necessary, please ensure you get and keep a cancellation number for your records. Also, as a courtesy and to avoid any potential non-reimbursed reunion fees (see above), please also let our Headquarters staff know you have canceled.

Please note that members who check out earlier than scheduled will incur a penalty of 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 a penalty of one's room and tax.

Sheuerman named chapter liaison

MIKE SHEUERMAN
JUNIOR MEMBER AT LARGE

In preparation for our 2002 Reunion and the pending rotation of Executive Council positions, I have been asked to assume the role of Executive Council representative to the VHPA chapters for the upcoming year.

The title is chapter coordinator/ liaison.

I'm excited about the opportunity. I believe strongly in the future of chapters, local and unit, in the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Local chapters continue to provide VHPA members with the opportunity to gather socially throughout the year, make new friends with that "special bond," educate people in their area about our significant role in the Vietnam War and find new members for our association.

Many of the existing chapters have monthly or quarterly social functions. They go to schools, civic groups and public events to tell our story.

The new unit chapter gives VHPA an excellent opportunity to grow the membership as they seek out the men that served in that specific unit.

Several units plan to have active chapters by the Las Vegas Reunion.



Mike Sheuerman

In checking with VHPA HQ, I am surprised to find out that only 15-16 percent of our current dues paid members belong to chapters. More than a third of those belong to the Florida Chapter.

If you are not a member of a local chapter, see if there is one in your area. If there is, join it. If not, find some guys and start one. Don't wait for somebody else to do it. You do it.

If you have wondered what happened to a guy or two you flew with 30 some years ago, start a unit chapter and find them.

You can be a member of local chapters and unit chapters at the same time.

Let's double the number of chapters and the members in them by the 2003 Reunion.

The "New Chapter Kit" soon will be available for download at the newly created "Your Executive Council Forum" at www.vhpa.info

E-mail me if I can be of any assistance with any chapter matter. I look forward to serving VHPA as the chapter coordinator/ liaison.

If you have wondered what happened to a guy or two you flew with 30 some years ago, start a unit chapter and find them.

You can be a member of local chapters and unit chapters at the same time.

Staying up to date:

VHPA forms Technology Steering Committee

CHARLES HOLLEY

CHAIRMAN

TECHNOLOGY STEERING COMMITTEE

A Technology Steering Committee was established last July to provide continuing review and recommendations regarding the VHPA's technology and office automation needs, and the best ways to implement them.

The purposes of this committee are to:

- Review the organization's technology, automation, hardware, and software needs.
- Develop plans, requirements and specifications, schedules, budgets.
- Update our association technology at our Headquarters operation to enhance operational efficiency.
- Allocate tasks to ensure the implementation of EC-approved plans and budgets.

Members of the Committee are: Dan Ferguson, Marcia Fritz, Charles Holley (Chairman), Mike Law, Gary Roush and Dave Rittman.

The first priority of the Committee was to have automation needs in place to support R2002 in Las Vegas, along with the development and integration of the online reunion registration and hotel reservation process.

Those of you who have used the online registration process are aware it has been reasonably successful for a "first-pass" implementation (for those who read the instructions) and we're now experiencing about an 80 percent-90 percent success rate.

We are aware of a few glitches that we will be working on and correcting for next year.

For example, some members with older versions of web browsers occasionally had difficulties with the new technology, and some of the user-interface aspects need to be improved for less-experienced internet users.

For Reunion 2003, we will be striving for a 98 percent success rate for the online system, along with complete integration with the Headquarters office system. When completed, it will really make a difference for all involved.

Through the efforts of the committee, most of the issues with the vendor provided online software that surfaced in the first few weeks were corrected. Some

enhancements (such as automatically pulling up your current address and database information when you log on to the system) will need to wait until after the reunion so that we can change some of the technological approaches.

A second priority of the committee has been to move the entire VHPA membership-related business processes (for example, renewals, address changes, directory information updates) into the e-commerce areas.

This task has also been progressing well, and as the reunion workload becomes less will receive even more emphasis.

A third priority has been to assist the Executive Council in better dissemination of information about the VHPA as an organization; for example business-related reports, and EC meeting agendas and minutes.

We have established <http://www.vhpa.info> as one means for accomplishing this objective (see related article: "Your Executive Council Forum").

We also continually strive to update the e-mail database for our membership so that we can immediately alert them to particularly time-critical information, such as the deadline for the AAAA/VHPA Scholarship Fund that occurred last year, wherein we received a short notice notification for applications.

You can help in this regard by ensuring that we have a current e-mail address on file for you (e-mail addresses are published in the membership directory). There is a form at <http://www.vhpa.info> you can use to send us your e-mail address if it has changed or you have not previously provided it.

Remember, we protect the privacy information of our members! If anyone has any special skills in the technology domain and would be interested in serving on the committee, please contact me. We would be particularly interested in members with professional-level skills in IIS/asp, Unix/Apache/Pearl/CGI, Visual FoxPro, and MS Access.

A third priority has been to assist the Executive Council in better dissemination of information about the VHPA as an organization.

Those of you who have used the online registration process are aware it has been reasonably successful for a "first-pass" implementation.

If anyone has any special skills in the technology domain and would be interested in serving on the committee, please contact me.

Spotter sees boxes scattered in area

EDITOR'S NOTE: A Battle in the Renegade Woods was documented by the 25th Infantry Division's 18th Military History Detachment. This action occurred April 2-6, 1970, in Tay Ninh Province. The source documents were obtained and provided to the VHPA by former crew chief Ron Leonard, Diamondhead 085, who also is webmaster for the 25th Aviation Battalion Association.

RON LEONARD

An artillery spotter in an LOH made a visual reconnaissance of the area and saw numerous boxes scattered on the ground, leading to the assumption a supply bunker had been destroyed.

In the afternoon sweep, Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, moved northwest to establish a line, and then began sweeping southwest toward two large clearings.

Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry provided security for them and then continued toward PB Blue for the night. During the sweep, B/2-27 Infantry located several bodies and miscellaneous equipment.

At 12:20 p.m., they located 10 KIA (BC), of which six were credited to their small arms fire, two to the artillery, and two to air strikes.

At 12:30 p.m., two bodies were located which had been killed by D/3-4 Cavalry, and one RPG-2 launcher was evacuated. Fifteen minutes later, one pound of documents, 660 small arms rounds, nine 82 mm mortar rounds, and one RPG round were evacuated to Cu Chi.

Troops of A/B/2-27 Infantry halted at 4 p.m. in the large clearings to eat their evening meal, which was brought in on resupply helicopters. At this time the evening rainstorms set in.

During this meal, A/B/2-27 Infantry used binoculars to select sites for platoon-size ambush patrols which would be sent out that night.

At 7:30 p.m., the patrols moved out. Company B selected locations for its platoons along the northwest edge of their clearing.

The 1st Platoon set up an L-shaped ambush at the clearing entrance, the 2nd Platoon chose an area to their northeast, and the 3rd Platoon with the command element

remained between them.

By 8 p.m., the 1st and 2nd Platoons had become established but the 3rd still had not found a suitable site.

Just after dark (about 8:10 p.m.), 1/B/2-27 Infantry saw an unidentified element moving toward its positions from the southwest. A platoon leader, Lt. Dennis Heitner, wanted clearance before engaging the estimated 20 men because there were indications they might be allied troops.

Before he could contact the company commander, his men told him the force was composed of 200-250 heavily equipped NVA.

Heitner ordered his men to lay down and let the enemy pass. The column, which had no forward or flank security and was observing lax route discipline, passed in so close to the platoon's position they walked over the wires strung out to the platoon's Claymore mines.

The enemy force paused for about 45 seconds near the platoon's position to allow stragglers to close up, and the AP saw they were heavily loaded with LMGs, mortars, and large quantities of ammunition on stretchers.

As the two-man rear security element of the 300-meter-long column came abreast of his position (about 8:35 p.m.), Heitner told his men to get on the other side of their berm and open fire on the enemy who were disappearing into a large wooded area to the east.

He initiated fire with his M-60 machine guns and M-79s, followed by a general engagement with small arms. The enemy replied with small arms and RPG fire.

The other two platoons, concentrated at the 3rd Platoon location, set up a crossfire.

Company A, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, was recalled to the scene and helicopter gunships, flareships and artillery were brought in.

A/2-27 Infantry never saw the enemy, most of whom had escaped into the woods when contact was initiated.

B/2-27 Infantry gathered at the 3rd Platoon site, where it was joined by A/2-22 Infantry (M).

The mechanized company had taken sniper fire, which wounded two men in its effort to join B/2-27 Infantry, but had seen few enemy.

Resupply was brought in to the consolidated NDP, but no further activity occurred that night.

It was the opinion of the officers of Company B that the element they engaged was returning to its base camp

See COMPANIES, Page 23

Part 3 *Continued from the last Newsletter*

Before he could contact the company commander, his men told him the force was composed of 200-250 heavily equipped NVA.

He initiated fire with his M-60 machine guns and M-79s, followed by a general engagement with small arms. The enemy replied with small arms and RPG fire.

Companies continue reconnaissance

Continued from Page 22

and was unaware of the presence of any allied units in the area.

It is possible this unit was part of the force which attacked FSB Jay on March 30.

April 5

Companies A and B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, and Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry were ordered to continue their ground reconnaissance of the contact area, concentrating on the vicinity of the previous night's encounter.

Company A, 2-27 Infantry, would go to Cu Chi Base Camp for a 24-hour maintenance standdown and be relieved in place at noon by Company C.

At 9:25 a.m., an LST from D/3-4 Cavalry located two enemy KIA which were credited to A/2-22 Infantry (M) from the previous evening's action.

At 3 p.m., Lt. Col. Custer's C&C ship engaged and killed one enemy with three flame baths. There was no return fire.

At 3:45 p.m., a UH-1H from the 25th Aviation Battalion, flying at 500 feet and 50 knots, received small arms fire from an unknown location.

No damage occurred and there was no return fire.

April 6

Plans for the final day of the action called for Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, to return to Cu Chi for a 24-hour maintenance standdown.

The remaining companies (C/2-27 Infantry and A/B/2-22 Infantry (M)) were to make a sweep through the area and move west to NDPs.

Results: This action was a successful ground reconnaissance operation carried out by 3rd Brigade elements.

Enemy personnel losses during the five-day operation were 101 KIA (BC); one prisoner-of-war captured, and two Hoi Chanh received by U.S. forces.

Large amounts of enemy equipment also were captured or destroyed.

U.S. forces suffered 11 men killed and 35 wounded, of whom 18 were treated and returned to duty immediately, but one of whom subsequently died of wounds.

The Army Aviation assets used: Company A, 25th Avn Bn: two Night Hawk per day; 17 flamebaths; C&C helicopters; Resupply. Co B. 25th Avn Bn: night LFT per day; two Flaeships per day; Resupply. D/3-4 Cav three LST per day; Lift for Rangers. 116th AHC Lift, 187th AHC Lift, 118th AHC one lift (April 2).

Members of D/3-4th Cavalry received 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 6 Bronze Star Medals with V.

Council attempting to stay in touch

During the past year, the Executive Council has been exploring more ways we can keep the membership better informed about what is going on inside the organization, particularly from a business perspective.

One of the major efforts we've instituted in this regard is to establish "Your Executive Council Forum" at <http://www.vhpa.info>

The purpose of this website is to keep our membership better informed about activities within the organization and the Executive Council, and to establish a medium by which you can communicate more easily with the Executive Council, or a particular EC member.

In addition, to various communication forms — such as the "Communicate with your EC" — here are just a few of the things you'll find at <http://www.vhpa.info>:

- VHPA Constitution and Bylaws
- Selected VHPA policies

Your Executive Council Forum

- EC meeting schedule and agendas
- Minutes of meetings
- VHPA financial reports
- Membership Information
- Committees, contacts
- VHPA committees, special projects and additional duties

- Current search for volunteer positions

- Interim, time-sensitive Newsletter articles

- Related links:

Visit <http://www.vhpa.info> and let us know your suggestions for any additional information or changes you would like to see there.

Visit <http://www.vhpa.info> and let us know your suggestions for any additional information or changes you would like to see there. . . We're here to serve you.

We're here to serve you and whatever we can do to make improvements in that regard or in the organization, please let us know!

— Your Executive Council

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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

(800) 505-VHPA (voice) • (916) 966-8743 (fax) • HQ@vhpa.org (e-mail) • www.vhpa.org (website)

Membership application/change of address

☐ New application

☐ Address change

☐ Directory correction

Membership dues:

☐ Annual: \$36

☐ Three years: \$90

☐ Life: \$450*

Newsletter subscription only: ☐ Annual: \$36 ☐ Three years: \$90

Add \$ _____ as my contribution to: ☐ Membership Fund ☐ Scholarship Fund

NAME

DATE OF BIRTH:

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CITY:

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HOME PHONE: ()

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E-MAIL ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

☐ Please charge my MasterCard/Visa credit card.

☐ Enclosed is a check/money order payable to VHPA.

☐ Add \$15 for current Membership Directory, plus \$5 for postage and handling

Credit card No.:

Expiration date:

SIGNATURE:

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS:

SERVICE BRANCH:

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS:

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:

Information about each Vietnam tour:

Date of tour		Unit	Location	Call sign
From:	To:			
1st				
2nd				
3rd				
4th				

Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

**NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$150 each.*