



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

September/October 1999 Vol. 17, No. 5



Jack Swickard photo

A Chinook, flying above the clouds, slingloads supplies to the top of Nui Ba Dinh — the Black Virgin Mountain — near Tay Ninh in the III Corps area of South Vietnam in 1967.

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by Joe Kline



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Magic Carpet Ride

New from Joe Kline

To this day, the distant thump of a Huey's rotor blades stirs deep emotions in all those she carried during the Vietnam War. In his latest release, aviation artist and former Huey crew chief Joe Kline has captured this icon of the Vietnam War in one of its most fulfilling roles, bringing a load of grunts back from the bush.

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Chariots of Fire - AH-1G Cobra gunships



Have Guns, Will Travel - UH-1C Huey gunships



Eye of the Tiger - OH-6A LOH



Iron Dance - CH-47 Chinooks

Artist Joe Kline served as a Huey crew chief with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. This background has enabled him to capture such detail, feeling and technical accuracy in his art that some have commented that they can almost "hear the radios and smell the smoke."

Riders on the Storm still available, but almost sold out.

Joe Kline Aviation Art



From the President

The glowing effects and fond memories produced by the Nashville reunion were all but gone for me as the dog days of summer dragged on.

It only took the magic date of Aug. 1 to extinguish them, for on that date, after a few unscheduled startups, the rooms became available at the Washington Renaissance, headquarters hotel for the year 2000 reunion in Washington, DC.

By Aug. 4 or 5, all the rooms set aside for the reunion had been reserved and we were over our allocation by more than 50 rooms.

After a similar incident last year, I was assured no one would be told he would have to leave due to overbooking.

For those of you who were not aware of the situation, it happened in Nashville, where about 40 people were moved to another hotel.

With some fast thinking by Tom Payne and a letter to J.W. Marriott Jr., CEO of the Marriott Corp., which owns the Renaissance hotels, those who were moved got their room free.

The 40 or so people who got their rooms free need to pat Tom on the back and buy him a few rounds in DC.

Hotels filling for Reunion 2000

Now, with more than 650 rooms having been filled at the Washington Renaissance, our second hotel opened. The Marriott Metro Center came on line and filled within about 10 days, going 75 rooms over our allocation. We now have filled 925 rooms.

This brings us to the present.

By the time this newsletter goes to press and ends up in your mailbox, it will be the past.

Our third hotel, as of Sept. 10, has some 60 rooms left. When you read this, it will be filled. Our totals then will be 1,225 rooms filled.

Did we plan for this? Nothing in our history indicated this would happen.

We signed the Washington Renaissance contract back in 1996 with 600 rooms, plus a backup. Everyone thought this would be more than adequate. We were wrong!

Enough of what happened. We are now trying to obtain another 300 rooms. This will not be easy.

Classified ads

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It seems like the hotels in Washington just woke up to the fact it will be the year 2000 and the celebration in Washington will be a "Year 2000 Spectacular," a spectacular no one wants to miss. Our negotiating power is nil and the rooms are getting expensive.

In any case, we hope to have another hotel on line by Sept. 20. Take a look at our website at <http://www.vhpa.org> or call Headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA for information on our room block.

Reunion committee planning well

The planning for Reunion 2000 is going well. Jim "Goldie" Goldthorpe has his committee working hard to make this a most memorable reunion.

Plan on being at our biggest reunion ever in 2000.

What else could happen?

Well, our second Executive Council meeting will take place this Sunday by conference call. At present, we have 15 items on the agenda.

Some EC members think they will miss the reunion if we cover all of them. They may be right!

These are some of the items we are looking at as priorities this year:

- **My number "ONE" priority is "PROJECT 2000."** We have more than 10,000 social security numbers on pilots we have not made contact with.

Our plans are to contact all of them by Reunion 2000. This is an ambitious plan, but with a mail campaign backed up by the Membership Committee calling, a big dent should be put in the number by July 2000.

If you would like to help in some way, contact Don Joyce at [REDACTED], Pappy Jones at [REDACTED] or Chip Brown at [REDACTED]. They will take your name and get back with you when the time is right.

- **Site Selection Committee.** We are going to have in place a five-year plan for reunion sites.

Just for starters the sites must have a minimum of 1,000 rooms we can contract for.

This will take the pressure off of future leadership and give all of you an opportunity to do some long-term planning.

We would like to place the reunions in cities or states where we have a strong VHPA chapter.

See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 4

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From the President

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If you would like to have a reunion in your city, you need to get a chapter up and going.

It also will take good airfare, good hotel space and banquet facilities, and the right price on rooms.

Contact Kenny Bunn at [REDACTED] or Joe Bilitzke at [REDACTED] if you think your town may fit.

Caution! Please do not make any official contacts with the hotels until you are asked to by the committee.

• **Develop an investment policy.** We have over \$600,000 in funds that could be invested with a professional money management firm.

We are looking at a minimum of three companies that could provide this service. On a very conservative asset allocation assumption, we would have enough in returns to buy beer on the house (not a promise) and still have money left over to take care of our long-term commitment to our 914-plus life members.

An extra percentage point or two can make a big difference over our projected life span. We hope to have this in place before year-end.

There are several other projects we have going. I will share with you next time.

Please let me know if you have any questions. This is your association — get involved!

You can contact me at [REDACTED] or through my e-mail at [REDACTED]

— **Bob Smith, President**
"Mavericks Rule"

Found by Aussie Flight helmet's owner located

Just a quick update on the "Long Lost Flight Helmet" which I brought to the reunion in Santa Clara, CA, and which was mentioned in a *Newsletter* in 1994 or early 1995.

Believe it or not, with the help of Dave Barr, Gary Roush and Sir Druid, we finally found Jerry Finney, the owner of the "Long Lost Flight Helmet."

One typically would not think the front-seater in a Cobra would be an enlisted man, nor are we still sure in this case.

Jerry's helmet was beautifully painted and not damaged or scratched on the outside. These facts alone might have given me a hint, but never having served in a Cobra unit, I was not sure of anything.

All we initially knew was Jerry Finney, served in the Raider Platoon of the 334th UTT, and that he presumably was a commissioned officer or a warrant for, as the story goes, he had been in the front seat when the Cobra went down.

In fact, I now find out that Jerry had already rotated home without his "whole baggage" (remember the term?), which included his helmet.

Subsequently, some enterprising young man borrowed Jerry's helmet for one last flight — and it was his last flight as far as we know — for the front-seater wearing Jerry's helmet was involved in a precautionary or, perhaps, a forced landing, a hard one, in which the front-seater's face collided with the gun sight.

He was medically evacuated, while an Australian armored unit surrounded the downed Cobra and provided perimeter security.

One of the Aussie tank drivers later found himself with Jerry Finney's helmet after the evacuation of the helicopter took place, and the remaining trip for this helmet is quite a story.

The good news is that within a couple of months, by late October or early November, Dave Barr, a former Marine doorgunner in SVN who ran into the Aussie tanker while on a round-the-world motorcycle trip, Jerry and I will get together and present the helmet to its rightful owner.

Jerry may choose to donate it to the Mineral Wells Museum or to the Vietnam Veterans Art Museum in Chicago thereafter. That is his choice, for it is his helmet.

In the next edition of *The VHPA Newsletter*, you will get to hear "the rest of the story."

Gil Ferrey

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Life sometimes can be like a joke

Here are some true stories. I was on the receiving end of all three of these.

A note of explanation is in order: I also was one of the 160 retirees recalled to active duty for "Desert Storm."

'School' patch

After leaving the recall Orderly Room, three other CW4s and I decided to walk over to the main club for the evening meal.

One guy was wearing the Cav "Blanket" on his right sleeve, one guy was wearing the 101st "Bird" and two of us were wearing the 1st Aviation Brigade patch.

While walking four abreast across one of the open fields, a young CW3 approached us and addressed me: "Why are you guys wearing the "school patch" on your left sleeve?"

Since I was the only one left standing, my response was: "When did you make W3, this morning?"



Age showing

During a friendly discussion at the club, one of our younger CW2s asked me when I had graduated from flight school and, to insinuate I was getting "older," asked if any of the "relics" I went through school with were around or even remembered.

I said, "Well, you might remember my senior tac at Wolters, guy named Novosel . . . To which this youngster replied, "Wow, did you know his father won the Medal of Honor in Vietnam?"

I know "Little Mike" too, from when we were stationed together at Bragg.

Americal patch

While stationed at Fort Drum in 1994, a young, very respectful E-4 approached me at the post gas station.

Besides the 1st Aviation Brigade patch, I also wear the Americal patch, from my first tour "grunt" days of 1967-68.

While I'm filling up, the E-4 politely salutes and drops his hand and says, "Excuse me, sir, I'm not trying to be disrespectful or rude, I'd just like to ask you what that patch on your right sleeve is? The only other place I've ever seen it is on Gens. Colin Powell and Arnold Schwarzkof."

My brigade commander at the time, Col. Mike Dallas, loved this one!

J. Scott Hill

Museum seeks person who left Wolters pillow

During the Nashville reunion, a piece of Camp Wolters memorabilia was left at the National Vietnam War Museum/Fort Wolters Chapter booth by one of our VHPA members.

We believe it to be originally from the member's dad and we would appreciate being contacted by the donor so we can document the item's history.

The red, white and blue decorative pillow is approximately 15 inches square and believed to be from the World War II basic training era of Camp Wolters.

One side has an Army insignia, Infantry branch crossed rifles and the words "Camp Wolters Texas." The other side is a field of stars on a blue background. A red tassel fringe is around the edge.

We wish the donor would contact us.

Charles Bogle, Director
National Vietnam War Museum



Navy rescues Army LOH after shootdown

In 1970, the Army jumped in bed with the Navy and spawned a joint operation that placed a Navy submarine detector helicopter with an Army hunter-killer team to try and locate Charlie's arms caches.

The romance didn't work out too well for me and my crew.

A dark, shiny, blue Navy Seasprite with MAD (magnetic anomaly detection) gear, worked with hunter/killer (pink) teams of troops of the 1/9th.

We scouts in Charlie Troop considered it an out-and-out Romeo Foxtrot. I was the last unit Loach pilot to have to accompany them.

My turn finally came.

We pulled pitch at first light: An OH-6A LOH, an AH-1G Cobra, and a UH-2C Navy Seasprite (a blink team?).

My roommate, Mel Wyatt, was the front seat high bird, CRS on his AC. After getting to the assigned AO, we cut doughnuts while the Seasprite winched down that torpedo like thingy. We smoked cigarettes, listened to the ADF, and cussed our bad luck. No KBHs today.

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In no time, they had "a reading." So I spiraled down to the treetops, raced over without expectation toward the smoke, and had just started pulling back on the stick, slowing at the mark, when there was a "pop, pop."

I don't think I'd even stuck my head out to look down yet. It was a little unusual to hear discreet pops, and not the more familiar clackety clack of the AK, that I don't remember even calling "taking fire."

I asked my gunner, Wilkes, if he heard fire, but he wasn't sure. Neither of us had felt a hit. We probably didn't even throw a smoke to mark the spot, as we usually did.

I don't remember exactly why I decided to lift tail and di di away, but I did. Maybe it was a scout's "sense."

Soon I began to feel an unusual vibration, so I started to get some altitude, and asked Mel for a vector to the nearest firebase. It was Garry Owen, I think.

During my ascent, the vibration quickly got worse. The grinding sound in my ear soon transferred to my butt, then to my hands and feet.

Then there was the acrid, white smoke that put the cockpit in IFR. The idiot lights on the dash began blinking and whining (scout pilots didn't normally read their instruments, so that part wasn't so exasperating).

It was the violent vibrations that were getting me a little tense. I hollered up to Mel (he's from Kentucky, and I'm from Mississippi, so we "holler") if he could see any smoke.

That was the last communication between us, as I toggled the battery off, wishfully thinking it a possible source of the white, stinging smoke. I kicked in pedal to clear it, but the vibrations were by then a scream.

The grinding, thrashing, smoking reached a violent crescendo that suddenly, and dramatically, ended with sudden "snap," leaving total quiet; a smooth tranquility.

Stunned at yet another dramatic change in my situation, I noticed my needles had split and one was doing a fast, as the British say, anti-clockwise motion.

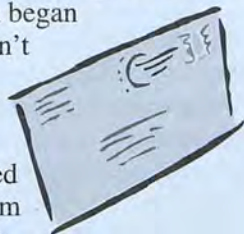
I vividly remember turning my head and staring at my left hand, still holding up the collective, and through some force of will, told that hand to push the damned lever down. Pucker time.

Training took over the rest of the way. The farm was bought and I had seconds to decide which of the million trees below looked softest. This would be my first crash experience.

I've never remembered flaring and pulling pitch (thank you, flight school and Cecil Smith). But I vividly remember the seemingly endless fall through the center of the Earth.

I'd tensed up for the impact after falling through the trees, but it didn't come, just greenery flapping up through the blasted-out plexiglass, endlessly, endlessly, falling and falling.

I finally awoke with JP-4 dripping over my face, and the sound of smoke grenades spewing from right behind me.



Writer wants stories, photos about units

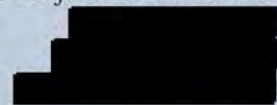
I am interested in communicating with former members of the 33rd Transportation Company/118th Assault Helicopter Company. Also members of the 573rd Field Maintenance Detachment during the period January 1962 through September 1963.

In particular, I am interested in photos and short stories that describe routine and combat assault missions conducted by the unit.

I have some information concerning the loss of Lt. Tim Lang and Capt. Wenzel, but am interested in trying to tell the complete story. I need additional information on the loss of Lt. Rothenbuler.

All information and photos will be copied and immediately returned.

Retired Maj. Gen. Bob Brandt



I yelled: "Get the #*^@ out!" and dived out the open door, only to be rudely reminded I was still buckled in. I popped loose, thinking I'd burn to death, and fell out face first into clear water, maybe a foot deep.

We had flipped and flopped through all the trees and somehow crashed upright in the bed of a creek that was coursing tunnel-like under the jungle, unseen from above.

Later, I'd realize I'd subconsciously headed toward a lighter green area, which evidently was bamboo along that hidden creek shore. The "JP-4" jet fuel all over us was water.

We had fallen through 150 feet of greenery and somehow splatted upright in the middle of that under-jungle creek. We were in the center of a tunnel formed by the creek, that wound through a ravine forged underneath the thick trees higher up and bamboo alongside. Big treetops lapped way overhead.

Mel later said that the jungle "just swallowed ya'll up."

The creek curved out of sight after about 50 meters in each direction, so I sent my gunner and observer to position themselves at the bends in each direction to watch for Ho's guys making their way to us.

But I soon realized it was danged unlikely the dark creek tunnel was an NVA transportation route, and absolutely nobody could penetrate up or down the steep, thick sides.

I relaxed. We shot some pin flares that never penetrated the trees. I yapped in my survival radio On Guard: "Don't drop no danged bombs on us!"

The noise overhead from what sounded like every helicopter in Vietnam was so . . . GREAT!!! That sweet, most comforting sound! That was part of what we now define as the brotherhood.

I stood off to the edge and snapped a picture with the

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Spotmatic. In the foreground was Richard D. Wilkes, his back to me, standing in the dim light and shallow water, looking at the tail boomless, skid-splatted, rotor-bladeless, leaf-filled Loach, one hand on his sidearm, the other on his cocked head, like "Jeez, how did I survive that!?"

The poor Loach was bottom-flattened to my seat. Limbs and leaves filled the cockpit. And really neat rays of parallel light beams were angling in from above. The color marking smokes Wilkes had hung on the wire behind my seat, had jerked loose upon impact and expended themselves.

Each of those jungle penetrating light rays became multi colored laser beams colorful spotlights on the tragi-comedy of this now calm war moment.

We're alive because he had the sense to not hang WPs, frags, superbomb parts, etc. up there, too. The cacophony of every helicopter in III Corps hovering way overhead made transmission on my survival radio impossible.

It was clear our rescuing blues could not rappel this deep and we could not see much sky, so I decided we had to somehow climb through the thick bamboo and trees and make it to higher ground.

Upon moving out, I was stunned by a loud voice saying "Do not move away, stay where you are."

I at first thought I was hallucinating and God was speaking to me. But it was that damned Navy Seasprite with a frigging loudspeaker! Scared the hell out of me.

The Seasprite had managed to open enough foliage to see down some, and soon started deploying its rescue hoist. Subsequently, we each went up in turn, me last, taking pictures all the way.

Our other guys flying overhead later told me the Navy pilots were yelling incredulously that some #!*@ fool down there was taking pictures.

The next day, curly mustachioed CW3 Dave Lawley came over while I was laid out in my hooch and brought me the twisted overrunning clutch that had saved our lives (thank you, Mr. Hughes).

Seems all the fast spinning metal thingies in the transmission had rioted over the abrupt exit of their lubricating fluids, causing a transmission meltdown — and the subsequent violent vibration and smoke. I later quit smoking cigarettes because of that day.

After transitioning to Cobras, I found that when the front seater would light up, I would break out in a cold sweat; I knew it was because the smoke told me I would burn up before I could get back to earth.

I no longer have the photos I took in that jungle creek that day, but I do have a photo of that spit-shined Navy Seasprite on a pad at Song Be, and of old 290, finally slung back, sitting on the tarmac in front of the maintenance hangar in Phuoc Vinh.

Now, a belated thank you, Navy. I sort of regret that I didn't write you up for some medal, as I now realize you

were probably more tense than I had been.

But the job we 1/9th scouts did each day — and others like us — made that little incident just a good club story.

I had insisted it should be classified as a "ditch" because I landed in water and had to be rescued by the Navy. But the "Incident Review Board" in the O Club was never able to come to a consensus. Hey, we're Cav!

Walker Jones
Harlingen, TX
C-1/9th, 1970-71

Ghostrider UH-1Hs sport miniguns, .50-calibers

In late 1970 and throughout 1971, the Ghostriders of C/227th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division — later the 60th Aviation Company (AH), 1st Aviation Brigade — had many of our H-models sporting miniguns on the left and .50-calibers on the right.

The inspiration for this configuration was the Nighthawk ship that was flown by HHC/227th on first and last light perimeter security missions at Phuoc Vinh.

We were a cav-style assault helicopter company — no gun platoon — and, after the cav standdown and the move from Phuoc Vinh, we were by ourselves in the boonies at Ninh Hoa.

The CO indulged our weapons choices, even though the 1st Aviation Brigade management did not especially care for a slick company to be armed in this unauthorized way. (They also disapproved of the 18-inch cav patches on the helicopter tails and our non-subdued yellow patches on right sleeves, but that's another story . . .)

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Lt. Gen. Hugh Smith heads airport division

Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority has named Hubert "Hugh" G. Smith as vice president of air cargo services and special assistant to the president.

He will oversee the development and operations of air cargo facilities and services at Nashville International Airport. In 1998, Smith provided consulting services to the authority.

He served in the U.S. Army for 35 years and retired with rank of lieutenant general in 1997.

For those who attended the VHPA Reunion Banquet, you will remember it was Smith who presented VHPA database chairman Gary Roush with his overdue Air Medals.

Congratulations to Mid-South Chapter member Lt. Gen. Smith on this new challenge.

Ross Rainwater
Secretary, Mid-South Chapter



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My CE was a graduate of armory school and was able to "tune up" the .50 from a nominal 550 rpm to about 700-750 rpm. He made his own belts from cans of loose links and loose HE, API, tracer and ball.

This thing could really lay down some fire, but shook the hell out of the airframe. I couldn't read the gauges when he opened up. The .50 also filled the cockpit with a lot of acrid smoke. I couldn't tell if the airspeed went to zero (I'm sure it didn't), since the indicator went crazy with the shaking.

Since .50-caliber ammo is heavy, we generally carried only 750 rounds. This was no gunship, but the HE could do some serious damage and the API started all sorts of fires.

The minigun was a thing of beauty! The high firing rate didn't really shake the airframe. It translated into a very high-frequency vibration that was most noticeable through the pedals.

The noise was very impressive, especially if the CE was firing to 10 or 11 o'clock. (I think my left ear is still ringing . . .)

The best part was firing the minigun at night. A two-foot flame from the front of the gun and a line of tracer to the ground — with four unseen rounds in between — certainly got my attention. I expect Sir Charles was equally impressed.

(Many thanks to our brothers from D/227th — the source of a lot of our minigun requisitions.)

I always enjoyed going to other 1st Aviation Brigade places such as Lane AAF and Nha Trang just to see the looks that we got due to the weaponry. Even the Air Force guys at Phu Cat and Tuy Hoa would do a double-take when we went into POL.

They had twin-engine, tractor tail rotor N-models, but we had the firepower.

Both CE and gunner also would get a real laugh when we did combat assaults with slicks armed with single 60s on each side. They took real pride in our weapons and achieved minor celebrity status when we went anyplace where other crews were able to see the Ghostriders "guns."

T.C. Maley
Ghost rider 00

WORWAC 70-35, 9th WOC

Deans' former commander writes about the early war

My name is Earl O. McConaha. I arrived in VN on April 13, 1964. I was assigned to the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion and spent the first three weeks in a casual status.

On May 11, 1964, I was assigned as the CO. of the 120th Aviation Company, based at Ton Son Nhut. The 120th was known as the "Deans of Army Aviation in VN" or the "Deans" for short, since they were the first helicopter

Committee to make rubbings from The Wall

The VHFCN Family Contacts Committee will be making rubbings of names from The Wall on Veterans Day for those who can't be there.

Send your complete mailing address and the name and enough details to identify the person named on The Wall. Tell us if you prefer a special rubbing paper with wings or other background.

You may request by e-mail to

[redacted], call
Jim Schueckler at [redacted]
[redacted] (leave a complete message, he will not call back)
or write to Schueckler at 8219 Parmelee Road, LeRoy, NY 14482. If you write, please include 55 cents or postage stamps for 55-66 cents for the oversized envelopes. Do not send more money. Deadline is Nov. 8.

The Heli-vets and VHFCN internet groups will pay postage for e-mail and phone requests. The committee plans to do this again next July for the VHPA reunion. Visit <http://www.VirtualWall.org/contacts/>

Jim Schueckler



company to land in VN.

I held the job of CO until my departure from VN on April 6, 1965. I have started to write down some of my experiences there before my memory banks short circuit completely.

I see very little published in *The VHPA Newsletter* of things that happened there before the American combat troops arrived. I thought some of these things might be of interest.

I have forgone the usual blood and gore war stories and thought of some unusual things that occurred that stuck in my mind. I am sending along three stories that I have finished and have some more that I intend to write. I call them "Short Shots From VN."

My radio call sign was SloGin 6. I am still known by that and use it in my e-mail address. With that windy intro out of the way, here goes.

Earl McConaha

A good bullet hole

Summer of 1964. I was flying a "B" model Huey slick from the 120th Aviation Company, carrying the assistant

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

commander and some staff of the ARVN 7th Division. They were engaged with a force of VC by the Mekong River.

My copilot was Capt. Billy Goodall, an old friend of mine from years past at Fort Benning and Germany. The crew chief was named Tsutahara. We called him "Toots" for short. I don't recall the doorgunner's name.

We spotted a clearing with a farm house and large trees around it. The ADC indicated he wanted to land there.

Just as we were leveling off several feet in the air, some VC popped out of a couple of spider holes and cut loose on us from point-blank range. I pulled pitch and started to climb out to the right.

Billy was pulling at the same time and trying to go left.

I looked over at him and said, "Who's flying this thing, you or me?" He said something unprintable and let loose of the controls.

Bullets were flying all over the place. Toots and the doorgunner were returning fire. Billy stuck his elbow out of the left window just as Toots cut loose with a blast, just missing the elbow, but singeing the skin.

Billy let out a yell, yanked his elbow inside and said "Toots, you crazy SOB, what are you trying to do to me?"

Toots just ignored him and kept blazing away.

Thinking I would tease him a little, I looked at Billy and said, "I can get you a Purple Heart for that."

He said, "S—, I wouldn't wear it if you did."

We made it out OK and when we landed at the helipad we inspected the ship for damage.

We found one bullet hole. It was in the center of the step pad at the front of the left skid. It obviously entered from the top. Guess who put it there? Toots.



A rocket with a mind of its own

In the fall of 1964, the VC overran an ARVN outpost north of Saigon and took some prisoners, among them an American medic.

The armed platoon of the 120th, the Razorbacks, was ordered to patrol the area to see if we could spot him. I was flying copilot on the lead ship.

As the company commander, I made it a point not to interfere with the AC whenever I flew with the Razorbacks and just function as the copilot.

We were following a dirt road through a jungle area at a height of about 200 feet. As we rounded a bend in the road, we saw them.

There were a couple of hundred VC and one very tall, very blond American who stood out like a sore thumb. We didn't dare open fire for fear of hitting the corpsman.

Of course, the VC immediately opened fire on us. A round hit the right rocket pod and partially ignited the propellant on one of the rockets. It was just enough to pop the rocket out of the tube.

We heard a "pop" and looked out the right window and saw the rocket flying along just outside the right window, keeping pace with us. It was so close the pilot could have

reached out and touched it. What to do!

We were in danger of being blown up with our own rocket if it should hit the ship. We held our breath while we watched, fascinated.

After a few seconds, the rocket dropped away and we saw it no more.

The VC and their prisoner vanished into the trees and we saw them no more either.

A great grin

The date was late 1964. I was assigned to the 120th Aviation Company and we were in support of an operation on a large island in the Mekong River opposite My Tho.

I had just landed my helicopter in a jungle clearing where the ARVN 7th Division was engaged with a large force of VC. They needed medical evacuation and I went in to get what I could and to see if there was room for VNAF H-34s to land.

I got out and was walking around sizing up the situation. Bullets were cracking through the air, giving off that sound that always reminded me of the sound of a bullwhip snapping.

I suddenly glanced down and saw a young ARVN trooper lying behind a small mound of dirt. He looked up at me with a worried look on his face.

I grinned at him and, after a moment's hesitation, he grinned back. I'll never forget that grin. What an incongruous situation.

OH-6 pilot taken to safety

Who were Cobra pilots wearing red helmets?

On May 16, 1968, Cobra pilots operating near the Parrot's Beak landed at the crash site of an OH-6 and pulled the pilot out.

He was impaled on the cyclic. The injured pilot believes the Cobra pilots wore red helmets.

They apparently were flying some of the first snakes in country. It is believed they were basing out of Can Tho and evacuated the pilot and his observer to Muc Hoa.

In 1968, pilots with "Chicken Man" call sign had a grunt blow a hole through the top of the helicopter and through the blade while cranking.

The mission was the extraction of the 1st Cavalry out of Khe Son.

Also in 1968, I'm seeking any pilots who took part in a very large flight of helicopters at night that flew due north from Northern I Corps for 45 minutes to an hour and then returned to the location from which the mission started. Several birds were lost, most likely to SAMs.

In 1970-71, any pilots who flew into Phenom Phen, Cambodia, no dog tags or aircraft markings, to retrieve aircraft left there several months prior. Several birds were lost during this operation.

Please contact Greg Ross at [redacted] if you par-

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anticipated or have any information on the above.

Greg Ross

Article in VHPA Newsletter draws crew chief's response

The following letter was received in response to an article published in an earlier *VHPA Newsletter*:

Dear John Givhan:

A friend sent me a copy of your article in *The VHPA Newsletter* (I think that was where it was from) and asked me if I recognized any of the people mentioned in the April 12, 1964, mission you talked about.

In 1964, I was with UTT as a crew chief, and I recognize the story very well, but I don't know if it is because the 120th and UTT were so close that the story got around or if we were supporting you people that day.

I did a lot of flying in the Delta and, in fact, was wounded in Camau in February and again in April, right outside of Soc Trang.

In April 1964, I was with the platoon that went to Soc Trang to transition the 121st to Hueys, so if you were supported by Huey gunships, it could of been UTT or possibly the 121st, as I don't remember the call signs we used down there.

I hope I am not bugging you by asking about this; the story is real clear, but the events are not.

I also think I have had some correspondence with you before when you wrote me to answer a question I had asked in the 145th Newsletter about events of the Jan. 17-18, 1964, operation in Camau.

I lost some good friends those days, a couple of them were close.

I think I have gone on long enough for now, but I would appreciate any info you could give.

Warren Smith

611th (H-37s), June 1963-December 1963

UTT, December 1963-July 1964

119th, February-June 1965

155th, June-December 1965

Thank you, brother! Your inquiry is more than welcome. I appreciate your contacting me so much.

On April 12, 1964, UTT was not used, period. Why not, I do not know. The 120th landed eight ships in the near Camau (Kien Long) LZ without any fire support. There was no artillery or Air Force prestrike, either. And, we got our asses shot off.

The 118th was there, but their gunships supported their slicks in a nearby Camau LZ.

Ted Eisenman was a UTT pilot with the UTT Soc Trang platoon on April 12, 1964. (He and I were in flight school together.) Ted says they — UTT — were alerted, but never used on April 12, 1964.

The 114th at Vinh Long was grounded on April 11, 1964, because of a mechanical structural failure — tail boom separation.

I am told that the 121st was not operational on April 12, 1964, because they had sent their H-21s home and were getting Hueys.

My theory is that the VC knew all this, and they tore Kien Long (Camau) a new one, knowing that copters would have to come all the way from Tan Son Nhut (120th) and Bien Hoa (118th).

Others who may contribute information re April 12, 1964, are as follows: Chad Payne, Duncan, OK, who flew with the 118th on April 12, 1964; Robert Crissman who flew with the 120th that day; Col. Patrick N. Delavan, Montgomery, AL, who commanded the UTT but was on leave to the U.S. on that day.

As for Jan. 17-18, 1964, the 120th and UTT were together at Kien Long in the delta. The UTT did lose some very good men then. I flew on that mission, as well with the 120th.

Thanks so much! Please let me know if I can help more.

John B. Givhan

First lieutenant, AUS (Retired)

120th Aviation Company

September 1963-April 1964

Republic of Vietnam

Brother seeks colleagues of doorgunner, observer

I met a former Vietnam Cobra pilot, Henry "Beau" Lockhart, who directed me to your organization regarding my brother, Raymond Stulz, who served with Troop C, 7th Armored Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry in 1970.

I am searching for anyone who may have known him during his two tours in Vietnam. I only have a Bronze Star Medal letter that was sent to us (his family) in 1970. Ray never spoke of his experiences to anyone except me and I barely remember details since I was a teen-ager at the time.

Ray continued his career with the Army, going for the full 20 years. He was drafted in 1965 and served his first tour in the infantry. In 1969, he went back for his second

Continued on Page 12

Old Holiday Inn to be bulldozed

The Mineral Wells Days Inn (the old Holiday Inn) is closed permanently and will be bulldozed soon. Anyone who wants to see it one last time needs to hurry.

The museum committee is getting the rotor blades from the swimming pool area and they eventually will be on display at the National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells.

Charles Holley

Continued from Page 11

Vietnam tour and started as a doorgunner and ended up as an LOH observer.

In 1983, he was given orders to go to Korea to finish his last two years. Everyone knew that anything Oriental would "freak him out" and it was documented in his medical records, as he also suffered from post traumatic stress syndrome from his Vietnam experiences.

He threatened to kill himself if his orders weren't changed. They were not. In December of 1983, Ray took sleeping pills and parked his car with the engine running in his garage.

Ray's best advice to me was: "If you ever join the Army, I'll kick your ass!" With that, I am now going on 23 years with the Air Force. I can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Thanks for your time and efforts,

Larry Stulz
[REDACTED]

The contents of the general order awarding the Bronze Star Medal to Sgt. Raymond W. Stulz:

For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Sgt. Stulz distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions while serving as observer aboard a light observation helicopter in Bien Dien province.



While searching for enemy locations, his aircraft and the lead ship suddenly received intense ground fire. Sgt. Stulz instantly marked the location and suppressed the enemy position with his machine gun.

As the lead helicopter burst into flames and crash landed, he continued to fire on the enemy. When his aircraft landed near the burning wreckage, heedless of his own safety, he ran to the assistance of the downed crew.

With white phosphorous grenades still exploding within the downed ship, he moved the injured pilot and observer clear of the danger. He then remained in the area to provide suppressive fire on the enemy locations as the wounded were evacuated.

Attending first reunion was a great experience

The 1999 VHPA reunion in Nashville was my first.

After dodging the reunion for years primarily because it is held on the Fourth of July, members of my former unit talked me in to attending this year.

I have to say it was worth it, even though it took me out of Alaska during king salmon season. It was great to see old friends and to make some new ones.

I do, however, have some suggestions about the closing night banquet.

UTT originally assigned to Royal Thai base at Korat

The UTT (Utility Tactical Transport Company) was formed in Okinawa in the early 1960s.

Equipped with HU-1As, the UTT was assigned to Korat RTAFB, Thailand, as part of JTF-116 in mid-1962.

This was prior to 1962, when Hueys were redesignated UH-1As, and that was where the nickname "Huey" came from; HU-1 was an easy GI slang change to "Huey."

The UTT, commanded by Maj. Robert Runkle and equipped with 15 HU-1As with "homemade" machine guns and rocket assemblies, next was assigned to Saigon in mid-August 1962 as escorts for the CH-21 transportation companies in III Corps. There was not a IV Corps in the Delta until later.

"Playboys" were one of the UTT flight platoons. The UTT changed designations several times in later years in Vietnam, the 68th Assault Helicopter Company, the 334th Attack Helicopter Company, etc., but still holds the title of the Army's first armed helicopter unit in Vietnam.

Several VHPA members were assigned to the UTT in 1962 and 1963. They have a story to tell.

Don Joyce
[REDACTED]

I understood the VHPA to be a politically neutral fraternal organization. Although I agreed with some of the points made at the banquet, I do not think the political rhetoric was appropriate. The unity of this organization is based on experience, not political orientation.

The VHPA should not sponsor a particular point of view because not all members of the organization will support any particular point of view, and all members should be welcome at official VHPA functions.

I also suggest that more time at the banquet be allocated to simply letting people enjoy their dinner, visit and converse. I think too much time was spent on unnecessary items such as the hat giveaway, and other VHPA business.

Finally, I suggest that under no circumstances should members again be faced with a choice of missing the Fourth of July fireworks or walking out of the banquet while some VHPA presenter is talking.

The VHPA presentation should end at least 30 minutes before the fireworks start, with an announcement of the starting time of that show. Personally, I think the official VHPA presentation should end much earlier than that.

I thank the VHPA officials for all of their efforts and hope that these comments are not taken in a negative way.

Richard J. Todd

A 2/17, 101st Airborne Division

Assault 10
[REDACTED]

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

Former 1st Aviation Brigade CG discusses earlier years

You asked about aviation courses I attended. The simple answer is, the only established aviation course I have attended that gave a diploma or even certificate of completion was the Navy jet operational course at Olathe, KS, in 1956.

Here is the whole story:

I was a member of the test group for Organic Artillery Aviation in 1942. This group consisted of 20 artillery officers and enlisted men who had civilian pilot licenses.

We spent the first six months flying the tests in the field, but we were not rated.

When Organic Artillery Aviation was approved in June 1942, all of us became the staff and faculty of the Department of Air Training and orders were issued rating us as liaison pilots.

During the period 1940-41, Lt. Col. Ford (later Brig. Gen. Ford) and I taught each other instrument flying in his Rearwin Cloudster.

In 1942, I spent three weekends in Pampa, TX, where a friend of mine was commander of the Air Force advanced flight school, earning my Air Force instrument ticket and twin-engine rating.

By 1949, I had built up the required 200 hours of actual instrument time to get an Air Force Green Card and was placed on the instrument examiners board at Shepard Air Force Base at Wichita Falls, TX.

In May of 1951, while I was commanding the 2nd Artillery Battalion at Fort Sill, OK, I was notified that I was going to Washington to serve on the General Staff.

The Army was just starting to get into the helicopter business.

I felt that in my new job I ought to know more about helicopters, so I asked my group commander to give me two weeks away from the battalion and made a deal with the director of the Department of Air Training for me to check out in helicopters if I would spend half of each day giving instrument check rides to members of his staff.

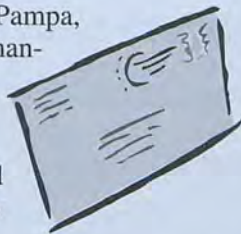
The result of the above was that in 1957, when I completed the required 15 years as a rated pilot, I had the time and qualifications to become the first Master Army Aviator. At the time, I had one of the best flying assignments, president of the Army Aviation Board.

You referred to the mass-produced pilots in Vietnam.

From my personal viewpoint, the young warrant officers were the most magnificent group of men I have known.

I frequently joined up as an additional ship on any good combat assault I found.

I can remember on the final approach listening to the flight commander's voice as he gave directions and called out "trim on, harness locked, tighten up the formation, doorgunners watch for fire at 2 o'clock."



Mid-South Chapter did superb job with reunion

We thought the Mid-South Chapter did a superb job of planning, organizing, being detail-oriented and very thoughtful to all of us during the Nashville reunion. As guests, we found everything accommodating.

We thought it was especially nice to have buses leaving outings at various times so that everyone could stay however short or long they wanted. And we appreciated the nice, new, nicely air-conditioned buses.

It was also very helpful to have volunteers holding up VHPA signs everywhere (especially done well at the Opry).

Thanks, Mid-South Chapter, for doing such a great job. We appreciate it.

Gary and Shana Spooner
C7/17th "Ruthless Riders"

I could visualize the flight commander with some gray in his hair, a world of experience and steely eyes. It gave one great confidence feeling the old man is in charge.

At the next hot refueling, I would get out and go up to pay my respects to the "Old Man" and usually found he was too young to shave. He would be one of your mass-produced pilots nearing the end of his tour in Vietnam, serious, competent, and self-confident.

This is understandable. The main source of our warrant officers was the men who were educated, smart, ambitious and dedicated, but not old enough to get into OCS.

In 1975, when I became president of Bell Helicopter International and we had a major operation in Iran to build their army aviation, I again met many of these Vietnam veterans.

Many had taken advantage of the GI Bill and gone back to school. They still loved to fly and we were hiring flight instructors. Again they did a great job.

Bob Williams

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter is extracted from an e-mail exchange between retired Lt. Gen. Robert R. Williams, who commanded the 1st Aviation Brigade in Vietnam from September 1967-July 1969, and Gary Roush, VHPA database chairman. Williams was commandant of the Army Aviation School from March 1962 through August 1963.

**VHPA Newsletter letters
can be sent by e-mail to:
*swickard@vhpa.org***

Taps

Stephen Paul Canaday

A man identified as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam was one of two Nashville men who died when their vintage airplane crashed through treetops, skidded across a lawn and hit an unoccupied triplex.

Rick Loudermilk, 52, who owned a software/computer programming business, was pronounced dead at the scene.

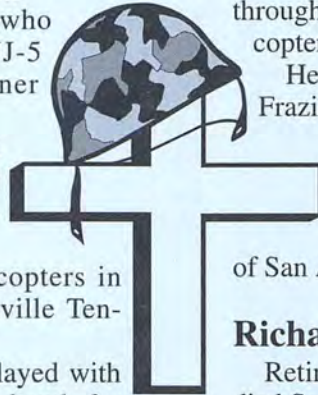
Photographer and musician Stephen Paul Canaday, 55, was dead on arrival at a Nashville hospital.

Officials were trying to determine who was piloting the North American SNJ-5 World War II-era, single-engine trainer plane.

"The pilot had a photographer and was doing some low-level work," said Keith Stem, Federal Aviation Administration investigator.

Canaday was a pilot and flew helicopters in Vietnam, his housesitter told the Nashville Tennessee newspaper.

He also was involved in music and played with the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, a rock band, for years and worked as tour manager for Lee Roy Parnell, a country singer and guitarist, and Marshall Chapman, a Nashville folk-rocker.



Robert Duane Frazier

Robert Duane Frazier, 55, died in Bedford, TX, on Aug. 8 from complications of Burkitt's lymphoma, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

Frazier was born Jan. 6, 1944, in Dodge City, KS. He moved as a baby to San Antonio, where he later graduated from St. Mary's University with a degree in history and government.

He served in the 116th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam in 1966, and retired from the Army Reserve with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Frazier was a member of Class 66-14.

He was in helicopter sales at Bell Helicopter from 1969 through 1995 and was director of sales at American Eurocopter at the time of his death.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Mary Ella Frazier.

Survivors include his wife, Carolyn L. Frazier of Bedford; sons, Michael P. Frazier of Norman, OK; John R. Frazier of College Station, TX; and James M. Frazier of Bedford; father, S.J. Frazier of San Antonio.

Richard Alan Humes

Retired Lt. Col. Richard Alan Humes of Bel Air, MD, died Sept. 2 at Fallston Hospital. He was 70.

Born in Marlette MI, he was the son of the late Frederic Jerome Humes and Lilah Belle Robinson Humes.

See TAPS, Page 15

Looking for a:

- Long-lost stick buddy?

- A classmate from flight school?

Look the easy way. Use VHPA's "Find-A-Friend"

Simply send a No. 10, self-addressed, stamped envelope — and the name of the person you're seeking to:

Phil Marshall
1175 Beaver Valley Rd.
Beavercreek, OH 45434

The National Vietnam War Museum

A Challenge to all Aviation Companies and Associations



For the past two years, the National Vietnam War Museum has been selling memorial bricks, and many of you have purchased one to commemorate your Vietnam tour or Flight School Class. But you may not be aware that we are also offering larger memorial tablets to honor entire units.

Your Aviation Company has the opportunity to demonstrate its unit pride and join with other units who have already purchased one of these large tablets to be displayed throughout the Museum grounds. The 71st AHC, 119th AHC, and 174th AHC have already "pulled pitch," and are challenging the other units to follow suit.

If you are interested in purchasing a unit memorial, or would like more information, contact the National Vietnam War Museum, P. O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068, or on line @ www.nationalmuseumvnwar.org



ETL 4/99

Taps

Continued from Page 14

He graduated from J.W. Sexton High School, East Lansing, MI, in 1946 and from the University of Michigan in 1951 following enlisted service in the Navy aboard the U.S.S. Missouri.

He also held an MA from George Washington University and teaching qualifications from Towson State University.

In 1951, Humes was commissioned in the Army and began a distinguished career, becoming a master aviator.

Foreign assignments included Korea, Germany, and two tours in Vietnam, the latter as the first commander of the "Hornets" helicopter company.

He held two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Legion of Merit, several Air Medals, and many other domestic and foreign decorations.

He retired from the Army in 1970 as a director of TECOM, and then taught mathematics at Aberdeen High School for 15 years, until retirement in 1986. However, he continued to coach the school's tennis team for a total of 21 years.

Humes was active in the local tennis community, the Harford County Community Tennis Association and the U.S. Professional Tennis Registry.

He was also a Mason and a member of the American Legion, past president of the Retired Officers' Association, a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, and other military organizations.

Humes is survived by his wife, Jacqueline Shure Humes; two children from a previous marriage: his daughter, Diane Humes Tremain of Seabrook, TX; his son, Dr. Richard Alan Humes of Troy, MI.; a brother, Frederic David Humes of San Antonio, TX; a sister, Doris Humes Ponitz of Dayton, OH; and four grandchildren.

Robert M. Moore

Retired CW3 Robert M. Moore died Aug. 29 at his Lawton, OK, home after a lengthy illness. He was 71.

Moore was born July 1, 1928, in Annville, KY, to Jesse H. Moore and Zona Riley Moore.

He graduated high school in Annville and attended Cameron University, the University of California, and the

University of Maryland.

Moore retired from the Army on Sept. 30, 1966. He was an Army pilot for 15 years, and was an instructor of helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft.

His duty stations included Fort Knox, KY; Fort Benning, GA; Sandia Base, NM; Japan; Korea; Vietnam; and Fort Sill, OK.

His service awards and commendations included the Purple Heart Medal, Senior Army Aviation Badge, the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters and the Army Commendation Medal.

After his retirement from the Army, he was employed by Hawthorne Aviation as a test pilot for two years.

He purchased the Hertz Rent-A-Car franchise for Lawton and Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1967. He still owned and operated the franchise at the time of his death.

Survivors include his wife, of the home; and a daughter, Janice Gail Wagoner.

Jim Wolfe

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association lost a great member and friend with the death of Jim Wolfe on Aug. 3.

"Wolfeman," as many members know, was a real fighter (ask anybody who ever called him a new guy). He fought pulmonary fibrosis for 15 years to the very end.

He died waiting for a lung transplant at Johns Hopkins Medical Center.

Jim flew Cobras with "B" Troop, 2/17th Cav, 101st Airborne Division in 1971-72.

He twice received the Distinguished Flying Cross and several other medals for valor.

He was a member of Class 70-44

Jim was a giant in the commercial helicopter field as co-founder of Edwards and Associates, Aeronautical Accessories Inc. and Aeronautical Plastics Inc.

He also was co-owner of Rotor Blades Inc.

His organizations successfully developed many safety and performance enhancements in use by commercial industry and military helicopters the world over.

Jim and his contributions to the helicopter, the VHPA and his friends will be missed.

Seven of us from B/2/17th Cav attended Jim's funeral.

John Cully
Indianapolis, IN

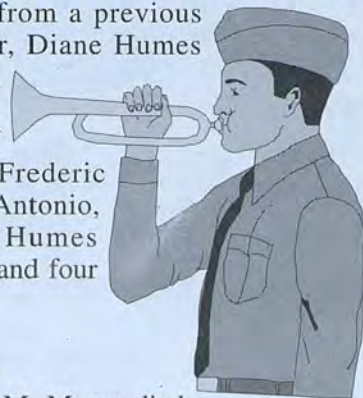
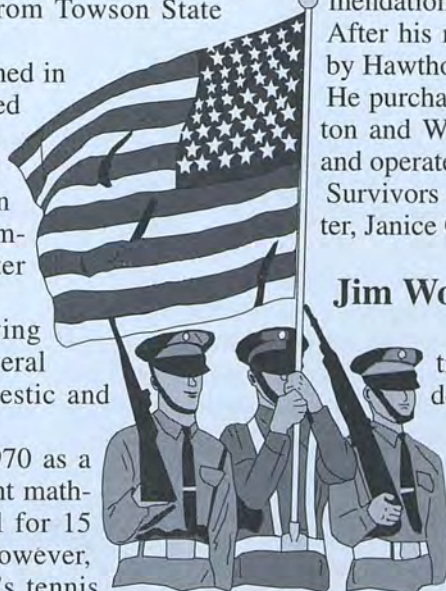
D.R. Woodmansee

I believe my brother, D.R. Woodmansee, was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. He was in Vietnam January 1968-January 1969.

I regret to inform you he passed away Sept. 9 at St. Mary's hospital in Enid, OK.

I know he enjoyed the newsletter and the meetings of various aviation groups he had been able to attend.

Wayne Woodmansee



CD-ROM comes with '99 Directory

GARY ROUSH
DATABASE CHAIRMAN

This is our first time to offer electronic features with a Membership Directory.

In order to publish everything we wanted to provide in the directory this year, such as the complete flight class database and unit indexes, we had to devise an alternative to the standard paper directory.

We had reached the practical limits on space in paper form and elected to experiment with the new CD-ROM technology that is available.

In a straw poll at this year's reunion business meeting, nearly everyone indicated they have access to a computer, so we felt it was worth an attempt to expand our publishing capabilities in this cost-effective way.

There is no current contact information provided on the CD. That information exists only in the paper directory.

The indexes on the CD can help you find someone in the paper directory, using the person's name, unit(s) in Vietnam, or flight class number(s).

In addition, we have included call sign information to demonstrate additional capability of our databases and the CD-ROM technology. The only current information that is included on the CD is the person's status, i.e. VHPA member, died after tour, etc.

We estimate these databases



account for about 70 percent of the more than 40,000 helicopter pilots who served in the Vietnam War.

There are six primary sources of this information:

- The membership database maintained by VHPA Headquarters.
- The flight class database built by many volunteers and maintained by Gary Roush.
- The combat unit database maintained by Mike Law.
- The call sign database maintained by Mike Law.
- The died after tour database maintained by Steve Bolling.
- The KIA database maintained by Gary Roush.

Updates and changes should be sent to the person maintaining the specific database affected.

See **ORDERS**, Page 17

Still Dreaming with Your Head in the Clouds?

You've often thought about purchasing a Twin Cessna. You've dreamed of owning a 310, 340, 414 or 421. But the time was never right. The realities and priorities of your business, professional practice and family came first, and one day you're in your fifth or sixth decade of life.

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Orders for wings take precedence

Continued from Page 16

The flight class database was built from graduation programs and orders assigning wings. Orders assigning wings (and MOS) take precedence over graduation programs since the orders are typically more accurate.

As an example, a pilot may have spent his entire time in flight school in Class 67-23, but because of a missed test or check ride, he may not have been awarded wings until two weeks later, with Class 67-25.

Since we have no way of knowing why a person is shown in more than one class, we simply take the highest number and use it.

Also, this database is almost all Army because 87 percent of the helicopter pilots who served in the Vietnam War were Army aviators.

The Air Force and Marine pilots who were trained by the Army, along with most of the Vietnamese pilots, also are included where we have the information.

Although we have more than 36,000 names in the flight class database, we know some pilots never went to Vietnam and there are still many names missing, especially those who were fixed-wing rated first, then went through a helicopter qualification course.

To get names added to this database, please send copies of orders assigning wings or helicopter pilot MOS to Gary Roush or VHPA Headquarters.

We especially need orders awarding helicopter status (MOS) to fixed-wing pilots from the Air Force, Marines and Navy, since most were fixed-wing rated first.

There are about 2,000 Army names in the membership database that do not match names in the flight class database.

The reason for this is many people have changed the names they use or have asked Headquarters to use their nicknames or middle names instead of the names the Army knew them

The history, as well as five past randomly chosen copies of The VHPA Newsletter, are in pdf (Adobe Acrobat's portable document format) on the route directory of the CD-ROM.

by.

In cases where we have SSNs or other reliable information to match these names, we have done that. If your name appears in a flight class list in two different forms, please notify Gary Roush or Headquarters so we can delete the duplicate.

The directory program, including the indexes and flight class information, requires 10 megabytes of space on your hard drive. The Adobe Acrobat Reader requires 32 megabytes of space on your hard drive.

To install the VHPA program, follow the directions on the CD. If the program increases the FILES parameter on your PC, you will have to reboot before you can use the program.

There are a couple of errors in the README.TXT file on the CD.

The first one is that the program does not create an icon. To run the program, select DIRVH.EXE from the program list.

The second one is the name of the Adobe Acrobat file for installing Acrobat

Reader 4.0. The documentation says *Acrord32.exe*, while the actual name on the CD is *Acrd4enu.exe*.

If you have an older version of Adobe Acrobat Reader, you will need to upgrade it to 4.0 in order to see all of the pictures. The front cover pictures on all of the newsletters are not

included.

The program will not run without the CD in the CD-ROM drive. This will help to avoid unauthorized use.

When using a program such as Microsoft Word, other than the built-in browser to view search results, you have to close the Word window before doing another search or use a different file name for each search. Otherwise the program will get a fatal error.

The CD also contains an expanded version of the history of the Easter Offensive, written by Ron Timberlake and Mike Sloniker specifically for the 1999 VHPA Membership Directory. This expanded version includes pictures and is written in four parts.

The history, as well as five past randomly chosen copies of *The VHPA Newsletter*, are in pdf (Adobe Acrobat's portable document format) on the

route directory of the CD-ROM.

Though they are optimized for printing, they also can be

read on your computer screen.

If you already have an Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer, all you have to do is double click on any of the pdf files and you will be able to read them.

If you do not have the reader installed or have an older version than 4.0, you can install it from the CD or download it free over the Internet.

The Adobe Acrobat Reader and the program built-in text editor provide the capability of full text search of the history and newsletter documents.

To search for a word or phrase, select Edit, Find then type in the word or phrase.

A special thank you to Art Cline, Dennis Lockard, Mike Law and Ken Fritz for their helpful feedback on the first prototype.

Enjoy the CD.



Greetings:

New Members Corner



[REDACTED]

Florida chapter represents VHPA

For the third year, VHPA of Florida was represented at the Vietnam Veterans of Brevard County reunion, the largest in the country.

Our chapter joined thousands of vets from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War and all recent military actions, as they met with friends and families to celebrate the U.S. military and to honor our missing and fallen comrades.

Our chapter OH-6, in full camo markings, was displayed near the "Moving Wall," where it was pho-

The Florida chapter gained six new members.

tographed and viewed by everyone en route to The Wall. Jim Basta and Fred Breuche answered questions and provided information about Army Aviation's role in Vietnam.

The VHPA of Florida's booth, with the red and yellow tent, VHPA signs and banners, was easy to find in the main vending area.

Our chapter T-shirts, patches, cups and stickers were fast-selling items. Helen Joyce again was responsible for the paperwork and money. Bob Buchanan, Marie Basta, Jim and Linda Kirkley and Mott Stanchfield

spent time at the "tent," greeting visitors.

The Florida chapter gained six new members over the weekend, including ex-VNAF Capt. Phung Hung Le, president of the Veterans of Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Association in Central Florida. "Dai Oui" Le is the third U.S.-trained VNAF helicopter pilot in our chapter, joining Lang Vang and Ky Nguyen.

Mark your calendars for next year's Reunion, at beautiful Wickham Park in Melbourne, FL, April 7-9, 2000. Visit the reunion webpage at:

<http://members.aol.com/FLVietVets/reunion.html>

Don Joyce

Chapter report

VHPA business directory

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Mid America hosts veteran reunion

The Mid America Chapter will host its annual Veterans Day mini-reunion Nov. 5-7 in Branson, MO.

Branson has one of the largest Veterans Day celebrations in the country, with more than 30,000 people attending during the seven-day event. A parade is held Nov. 11 each year.

Those wishing to meet and socialize can get reservations at the Surf Inn, (800) Surf-Inn, or next door at Sav-A-Dollar, (800) 880-6814. I have

15 rooms at Surf Inn at \$38.95 per night. Mention you are with Gary Wineteer.

You can always make arrangements of your own, as there are many motels in the area, as well as many attractions and shows.

We will have a table/booth at the 76 Music Hall again to try and find lost members.

There will be one official meeting, at the Golden Corral, and unofficial meetings every night at Roy Clark's bar, which is within walking distance of the motels.

Anyone wishing to join us is more than welcome. You don't have to be a

member of the Mid America Chapter to attend.

We had a great time last year and Bill Medsker will be bringing his "helicopter." Max Hall may be able to make it with his flying H-21 and may have his other one flying by then.

The motels are just north of the only helicopter tourist ride facility at Branson.

Most of you still work and can't get away for the entire week, so we try to have our mini over a weekend. Those wanting longer stays can arrange them.

Gary Wineteer
Mid America Chapter

Chapter report

Rocky Mountain Chapter meets in Denver

The Rocky Mountain Chapter of the VHPA was organized this summer. Walt Winters, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], was elected president.

The chapter usually meets the third Saturday of each

month at VFW Post No. 1 in Denver at 10 a.m. Twenty-five pilots, including three who had not previously

joined the VHPA, attended the August meeting.

At the meeting, they approved a chapter logo. Later, the VHPA Executive Council approved the use of part of the VHPA logo in the chapter logo.

The September meeting was a family barbecue at a member's home.

About half the members served in the Colorado National Guard, are currently employed as helicopter pilots,

or work for the FAA.

Several members are building a chapter website and have established the e-mail address RMCVHPA@aol.com.

While most of the members live along the front range, some travel from Grand Junction, Cheyenne and even Nebraska and western Kansas to participate.

Additionally, the chapter began planning to support the 2001 VHPA Reunion scheduled for July 2-7, 2001 in the Adam's Mark hotel.

Mike Law

Several members are building a chapter website

Chapter report

Advertising rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

- Full page, \$500.
- One-half page, \$250.
- One-quarter page, \$125.
- Business card size, \$45.

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

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

VHPA brief

VHPA FTX

Do you own a camper, motor home, pop-up or pup tent? Would you like to go on a FTX in the fall of the year somewhere in the United States?

Say the Ozarks or maybe do a leaf-peeping tour of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont? Or maybe visit the River Walk in San Antonio or South Padre Island?

Let's make it happen! Contact Hayden Jones at membership@vhpa.org and get your name on the list. We want to make it an annual event, move around, visit a different place every year with no formalities and no scheduled organized events.

And, we won't have to worry about airports or hotel reservations.

Veterans stories wanted for book

Do you have a true story about yourself or someone you knew during their time at war or in the years that followed?

A story that would uplift or inspire people all over the world?

If so, we invite you to share your story with us! The bestselling book series, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, is now collecting stories for an exciting new book, *Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul*!

Veterans have many stories to tell. It is important to capture this time in the lives of the many men and women who fought to defend our Freedom. We invite stories from every war and every branch of service.

The goal of this book is to offer acknowledgment to all veterans and raise the level of appreciation that

they deserve. We urgently need your help to make this happen.

What a Chicken Soup story is: It is true, motivational, inspiring, heart-warming, and heartfelt. It's a story that happened in one's life that can bring joy and awareness to our chicken soup readers.

What a Chicken Soup story isn't: It's not a term paper, thesis, or fiction story. It is not a memoir or reminiscence.

We value the special talents of our contributors and welcome new contributors to our Chicken Soup family.

We also will be contributing a percentage of all profits to associations benefiting veterans.

If you have questions or doubts about your story, send it anyway and we'll be the judge.

Submissions up to 1,200 words accepted. Compensation offered for selected stories. We will also be contributing a percentage of all profits to associations benefiting veterans.

Deadline for submission is Dec. 31, 1999 — but we will welcome stories after this date for a sequel book being planned.

For story submission guidelines, visit our website: www.vetstories.com or contact us ASAP toll free (888) 387-6373/e-mail: remember@vetstories.com

Mail stories to: *Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul*, 607 W. Broadway, Suite 335, Fairfield, Iowa, 52556 or fax to: (515) 472-0719.

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VHPA launches recruiting contest

As we enter the new century, the VHPA needs to find and recruit the additional 10,000-plus Vietnam-era helicopter pilots who flew with us in Southeast Asia.

VHPA membership increased by about 1,000 this past year. There is no reason we cannot double or triple that gain by Reunion 2000 in Washington, DC.

As an incentive, VHPA announces the following prizes for the "Top-Gun 2000" recruiters:

1st Place: Reimbursement for four nights hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2000.

2nd Place: Reimbursement for three nights hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2000.

3rd Place: Reimbursement for two nights hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2000.

4th Place: Reimbursement for one night hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2000.

5th Place: Reimbursement for two tickets for the VHPA Reunion 2000 Banquet.

Contest rules:

- Minimum of 10 new VHPA members to receive any prize.
- Applications must have been received by VHPA from July 5, 1999-June 30, 2000.
- Winners will be announced at the VHPA Banquet and in the next newsletter.

— Don Joyce, membership chairman

VHPA filling rooms at Reunion 2000

JOHN POWELL

The Year 2000 Reunion in Washington, DC, already has grown so large VHPA members have almost filled three hotels.

So far, 200 more hotel rooms have been reserved than were taken during this year's reunion in Nashville.

I've received phone calls and e-mails concerning hotel rooms in the past couple of weeks, so here is the latest information:

- The Washington Renaissance, the reunion headquarters hotel, guaranteed 600 rooms. There are 634 confirmed reservations.

- The Metro Center guaranteed 250 rooms and we have 285 confirmed there.

- The Grand Hyatt gave us 300 rooms and 232 have been reserved.

When the original contract for

rooms was signed, the VHPA had adequate space for the number of people expected at the reunion, but we've really grown.

We are still looking for more space, but don't let not staying in the main hotel stop you from coming. The hotels are near one another.

But you are coming for the camaraderie . . . you shouldn't be

sleeping that much, anyway! We also are looking for a larger facility in which to hold our banquet, in order to have everyone in the same place. It may not be possible, but we are giving it our best shot.

The committee will attempt to accommodate any event you wish to attend while you are in Washington. There are many things to do and



see in Washington and a listing will be included, along with the registration form, in the next newsletter.

You may obtain information about the District of Columbia on the Internet by going to yahoo.com

On Yahoo's front page, go to "Regional" and click on "States," then click on "Washington, DC."

If the event you want to see/go to is not on our listing, call me at [redacted] or e-mail me at [redacted] and I will assist you.

There already are plans for tours around town that include everything from A (Arlington) to Z (zoo). Please try to stay through July 4.

The events on the Mall that day will be as good as your first solo flight, without the dunking.

Until next issue, clear left, right and above.

VHPA briefs

VHPA promotes chapter websites

President Bob Smith has established a goal for each VHPA chapter to have a website/webpage that is linked to our national website: www.vhpa.org

To assist chapters in achieving this goal, he has made arrangements with a company that will design and/or host your chapter's website for as little as \$9.95 per month.

Please contact me for details if your chapter is interested in taking advantage of this opportunity.

If your chapter already has a website and is not linked to www.vhpa.org, please provide your web address to Gary Roush (webmaster@vhpa.org).

— Charles Holley, vice president

Poston colleagues wanted

Shirley Poston, widow of Robert E. "Pete" Poston, is seeking pilots who flew in Vietnam with her late husband.

Poston flew with me in the 118th Assault Helicopter Company at Bien Hoa in 1964-65. His second tour was October 1968-October 1969.

Contact me at [redacted] or [redacted], or Shirley Poston at [redacted].

Jack Islin

Help needed with reunion

Jim "Goldie" Goldthorpe, chairman for Reunion 2000 in Washington, DC, could use some local help.

Please contact him soon and see what you can do to join in on the VHPA reunion planning and execution.

He can be reached at home at [redacted] in Silver Springs, MD, or by e-mail: [redacted]

Seeking:

If anyone knew WO Carl Nacca, Jr, please contact his mother, Ms. Carl Nacca Sr. at [redacted]. Carl was KIA in RVN on Feb. 20, 1971.

— Charles Holley

. . . We loved him so much. We lost Carl Sr. shortly after the completion and dedication of the local memorial. I am so proud of the men who answered this country's call. — Carl's Mom



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Singing group member visits reunion

MIKE LAW

Luckily for the VHPA, Keith Carpenter attended the Jubilee 1999 activities in the Nashville Convention Center and happened to notice the VHPA Reunion signs.

He recalled two of his sisters, Linda and Jeanie, had served two USO tours in Vietnam. Since he was staying at Linda's home, he mentioned the VHPA Reunion to her.

Linda, her last name is now Deshon, called the reunion hotel and later met with Bob Johnson and Mike Law with the hope of maybe finding someone who had known The Hilltop Singers during their USO tours. Here is the story of The Hilltop Singers.

Pat Starkey (now known as Trish) and sisters Linda and Jeanie Carpenter formed The Hilltop Singers, a coffee-house type folk singing group, while they were students at West Virginia University.

After meeting with some local success in the Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia area, they performed for casualties staying in the hospital at Scott Air Force Base in May 1969.

Letters from the patients and staff, plus local newspapers articles, carried heartwarming stories of how well they were received. Some made it all the way to Washington. The group was contacted about future service for the USO.

Linda says: "Basically, we loved doing coffee house singing, where the audience can request their favorite folk song and we'd do it. Clearly the young soldiers in the hospital at Scott really liked it. So we thought, well, 'if they can't come to the coffee house, we'll just take the coffee house to them.' The USO administrators thought that was a good idea, so they arranged a six-week tour starting May 8, 1971, to military bases in Korea, Japan, Guam and the Philippines."

A letter from the Department of the Army in August 1971 summarized the outstanding job of singing,



Pat Starkey and sisters Linda and Jeanie Carpenter are shown in a publicity shot made during the 1970s when they were known as The Hilltop Singers, a folk singing group that toured South Vietnam with the USO.

sent them comments their first tour generated and asked if they would be interested in another tour, possibly to Vietnam.

Linda continues: "Trish, Jeanie and I were (still are) very patriotic and dreamed of being of service to our country during the Vietnam War. We'd made cookies and written letters to GIs, but when we saw how the soldiers responding to our singing — well, we knew our dream had come true."

Their first Vietnam tour began in October 1971 for five weeks. They stayed at the Meyerkord Hotel in Saigon part-time and performed from Monkey Mountain to Conson Island. They also were at Hoi An, Tam Key, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, and Long Binh.

Linda says on their second Vietnam tour, in May 1972, they visited Conson, the Cua Nhan Benh Army Hospital in Saigon, FSB Grunt, FSB Enus, Hill 200, and Danang AB.

"We would do two shows a day, so we were always on the move. We had our own sound system that was packaged so everything we owned fit into a Huey. We also walked through hospitals with our guitars, singing and smiling. Many times they dressed us

in fatigues, put us in a couple of Jeeps and drove us to some small base.

"I remember putting on my make-up as the Huey was landing so we would be ready for the show. We were always treated very well and given the best that could be offered."

Law asked if she has any pictures of them with a helicopter in the hope that maybe we could see some unit markings with a date.

Linda laughed and said, "I have a slide of a helicopter that has some insignia on it, but it shows Jeanie's skirt is blowing up."

Linda summed up the feelings for her group by saying:

"Our dream came true as The Hilltop Singers sang their way into the hearts of the servicemen in Southeast Asia. We are grateful to you who were such loyal supporters of us and our dream. The spirit of the group lives on in our quest for self-actualization and, yet, the excitement of that time is still very real in our hearts. Thank you for believing in us."

If you heard this group or helped fly them around Vietnam and want to chat, contact Linda at ldeshon22@aol.com or Jeanie at daviesea@aol.com

What became of first Sky Crane?

MIKE LAW

It was a pleasure to finally speak with Dan Wall, 478th HHC commanding officer in 1971 and someone I had been hoping to find for a number of years.

During one of our telephone conversations, Dan related a story he had heard from the late Billy Lamb about crashing in a Sky Crane while flying with a pilot named Jack Brown.

Sadly, Jack Brown was not in the VHPA database. However, when I mentioned to Jim Oden at the Reunion that I really needed to speak with Jack Brown, Jim said he had Jack's address and phone number at home.

Soon I was speaking with Jack and this is what I learned.

It had been a long day for the crew of a CH-54A from the 478th Heavy Helicopter Company, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

It was flown by CW3 Carl Burhanon and CW3 Jack A. Brown, with Spec. 6 Hennson as FE and Spec. 5 Berry as the CE.

At the end of the day after several resupply missions sling loading 155 mm and 105 mm ammo into and around the vicinity of Plei Me near the Cambodian border, we were en route home to Pleiku when we received a call that one of the 105 units was in desperate need of additional ammo.

We had been resupplying these units for the last two or three days. It was getting dark and the weather was deteriorating.

We diverted into Camp Holloway to refuel and eat prior to picking up a sling load of 105 mm ammo and attempting to complete the mission.

While on the ground at Holloway, Burhanon received a call stating that he was being replaced by CW3

William T. Lamb.

Burhanon was told to return to our base to correct some communication problem since he was the unit commo officer.

After refueling and chow, we cranked up and headed for the Turkey Farm, a resupply dump, to pick up our load of fuzzed 105 mm ammo,



The wreckage of a CH-54A Sky Crane litters the ground after it crashed in South Vietnam.

about 18,000 pounds more or less.

Holloway tower was contacted for a verbal weather report and for take-off.

At this time, Brown was flying the right seat and Lamb was in the left seat. Lamb was just as qualified to fly the right seat, but was in the copilot seat on this flight.

On takeoff, visibility was poor and a misty rain was falling. We talked about aborting the mission while en route to Charlie beacon, a radio fix we would use to establish a time-distance to the LZ which we would not, in all probability, find in this weather.

After departing Charlie beacon, we climbed straight out to 3,500 feet. We were going to fly the time-distance and attempt to make ground contact; if not, we would return to the Turkey Farm, drop our load, and then head for home.

We had not turned our position lights off as we generally did flying in

this area at night. All at once, it seemed like another aircraft, with its landing lights on, was about to enter our cockpit out of the scud and rain.

My reaction was to put the CH-54 into an extreme, climbing left turn, which should have given me the most control over the aircraft and the sling load.

As the good book and experience dictates, I attempted to slide back over the load to dampen the oscillation. However, in this case, the load weighed as much as the aircraft, which made things a bit more difficult to control.

After a very short time, the aircraft began to have severe vibrations and all the instruments became very difficult to read.

I told Lamb the aircraft was very hard to control and we had to drop the load in order to regain control. He told me he was unable to electrically open the hook

which would drop the load.

I attempted to open the hook from my side, but this did not work, either.

I asked the crew chief to try from the back seat; same results.

We then tried to fire the cable guillotine system from all three positions, but that did not work.

At this point, it was apparent to me we were losing the aircraft. It was impossible to read any instruments and the vibrations had become even more severe.

Berry asked permission to attempt to cut the cable by firing his M-16 from the back seat. I told him: "hell, Yes! Have at it!" This didn't work either.

Lamb said: "Jack, is there anything else we can try?"

I said: "No, I think we've had it. It feels like the aircraft is coming apart in the air. I don't know what to do."

Lamb later told me that at this

See CREWMEN, Page 25

Crewmen don't remember impact

Continued from Page 24

point he scrunched up into a little ball in his armor-plated seat. None of us, as I understand, remember the impact. I certainly don't.

The first thing I recall when regaining consciousness was lying upside down in a huge pile of wreckage and the smell of JP-4 was very strong.

I had no idea what I was in or who I was with, if anyone at all.

I tried to get up and move away from the wreckage, realizing I must be in an aircraft crash and the smell of JP-4 meant a fire was about to happen.

As I tried to move, I started to discover my injuries. My right leg was broken in three places, one of the bones in my right arm was sticking out, there was a large deep cut in the back of my neck, my right ear was nearly severed and I had many cuts on my face and limbs.

To make matters worse, it was raining in my face!

After a while I began to realize where I was and who was with me. The main rotor blades had destroyed and nearly cut off the cockpit. In the process, they had nearly destroyed the crew.

When I finally realized where I was and Lamb was near me, we had a short conversation.

He said he couldn't move and his ribs hurt really bad. He had broken ribs plus lots of cuts and bruises. He said he was in a lot of pain.

I later learned Hennson was severely injured with a broken back plus a lot of facial damage and internal injuries.

Berry had several broken bones plus cuts and bruises.

Both enlisted men were still under the helicopter wreckage.

The time of impact was about 9:30 p.m. The rescue force got to us about

2:30 p.m. the following day.

I was told bad weather, with very little visibility and low ceilings, was the reason for the delay. I, as well as the others, had lost a lot of blood and was very lucky to still be alive.

I was unconscious most of the time and remember very little about the



A Sky Crane slingloads the remains of another after a crash in South Vietnam.

night or the following day. I do recall trying to drain the canteen from one of the GIs who rescued us.

I understand that Lamb was able to communicate with the search-and-rescue effort in some way.

I never saw Lamb again after that day. Sadly, he was killed test flying a T-42 fixed-wing at Fort Sill, OK, on Dec. 23, 1987.

Another 478th pilot, Jim Ervin, took pictures of the crash and gave them to me some months later.

When I asked why there wasn't a fire, Jim told me the right engine had severed on impact and was forced over to dislodge the left engine.

It was a blessing they both quit running. So, even though the fuel cells ruptured and spread the JP-4 all around, the engines didn't ignite it.

The fuzzed artillery rounds might have gone off as well, but didn't.

I was flown to the hospital at Qui Nhon and remember seeing Hennson there.

In a couple of weeks, I was fit enough to be evacuated to the 105th General Hospital in Yokohama, Japan. I stayed there for a couple of months and had a couple of operations.

From there I went to the U.S. Army Hospital at Fort Gordon, GA, and finally to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Charleston, SC, where I stayed for the next several months.

After being off flight status for nearly a year, I was assigned to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah. I was finally able to return to flight status and became the chief test pilot for Quality Assurance at Hunter.

I did see Berry later at Fort Rucker and learned he was injured on the left side of his body.

I believe Hennson received the worst injuries of the four of us. His back was broken and his face was

smashed. I believe he was medically discharged from the Army and heard he is living someplace in Pennsylvania.

— Submitted by Jack Brown
August 1999

In other documents, Brown included photos of CH-54A No. 64-14202 with notes saying it was the Army's first Sky Crane.

The VHPA's helicopter databases support Brown's notes because it is the lowest serial number for the CH-54A.

Lamb not only returned to flight status, but served again with the 478th HHC in Vietnam when Dan Wall commanded the company.

Wall recalls that Lamb often talked about this accident. Lamb was especially animated on the point that one of the blades had actually scraped the top front of his flight helmet.

— Submitted by Dan Wall,
June 1999

Bell Helicopter backs documentary on pilots

Bell Helicopter announced it will be a major backer of the television documentary "Flight Line: The Helicopter Pilots of Vietnam."

The program, which is being produced by author Robert Mason and Washington, DC-based Maelstrom Media Works, will tell the story of the more than 20,000 pilots who flew helicopters in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975.

Chris Fetner, a partner in Maelstrom Media Works and one of the producers of "Flight Line," said:

"Bell's UH-1 Huey is probably one of the most universally recognized symbols of the Vietnam War. To have Bell support this project and help us pay tribute to the pilots who flew those helicopters is just a very good thing. We really couldn't be more grateful to the people at Bell."

The support comes after Mason and Fetner met with key individuals at Bell and presented the proposal for the project.

"Our helicopters played such a key role in Vietnam that it wouldn't make sense for us to not be involved in this project," said John Wright, Bell Helicopter's executive director of sales for North America and himself a former Vietnam helicopter pilot.

The two-hour documentary will chronicle the experiences of pilots, using more than 100 hours of interviews.



Daughter receives wings

VHPA member Ron Wecas was on hand when daughter Ensign Amy Wecas Powell received her wings after completing Joint Undergraduate Navigation Training at Randolph Air Force Base, TX.

In November 1997, Amy Wecas graduated from the Naval Officer Candidate School at NAS Pensacola, FL. Her dad, retired Maj. Ron Wecas, did the ceremonial swearing in. She then went on to complete aviation preflight and primary flight training.

Ensign Wecas Powell currently is stationed at NAS Jacksonville, FL, preparing to join a P-3 Orion squadron.

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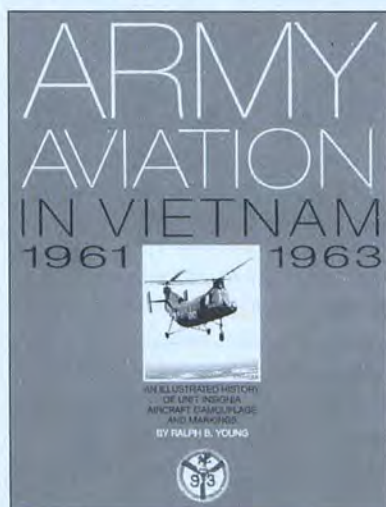
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