



The VHPA Newsletter

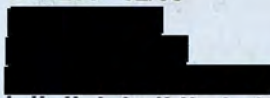
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

July/August 1999 Vol. 17, No. 4



A dustoff ship from the 283rd Medical (AH) Detachment gives a hoist demonstration to 4th Infantry Division soldiers near Pleiku in December 1969. Les Davison, who flew gunships with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company, was visiting the dustoff unit when he volunteered to fly in the right seat during the demonstration. Before the mission, Davison handed his camera to a soldier and asked him to take a photograph.

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From the President

It seems like yesterday that Meta and I boarded a plane and attended our first reunion in Phoenix. It was our first reunion and the first VHPA reunion. We all bonded, we knew we were home and we have not missed a reunion since.

Having attended all the reunions, it is hard to say this or that one was the best: New Orleans and its Bourbon Street; Chicago, what a town; Long Beach and the Queen Mary; Atlanta with the go-cart races; Kansas City with the Fourth of July parade no one will ever forget. Or, my most recent reunion, Nashville and our side trip to the Jack Daniels Distillery.

There I was, with several other pilots. Through my bloodshot eyes and into my sights came Kenny Bunn, trying to drink the distillery dry. Kenny, being the connoisseur of fine whiskies, almost led me astray.

For those of you on my bus going back to the hotel LZ, I was only meditating in the back seat! Ask anyone!

The memories and friendships that have been made over these past 16 reunions will last forever. This is what the VHPA is about: Finding old friends and rekindling the bonds made so many years ago.

This all leads up to a big "thanks" to all the gang from Nashville. Mike Haley "Outlaws Rule" and his crew — Charles Bell, Andy Burleigh, Charles Dyer, Rick Haines, Bob Fladry, Bill Hartbarger, George Neely, Ross Rainwater, Tom Reeves, Rhea Rippey, Rick Roll, Jim Spiers, Danny Spitzer, Mark Stuart, Gary Whitty, Whit Whitworth and Larry Winters.

In addition, the wives of all the above also deserve many thanks. They all performed beyond the call of duty. They made this a fantastic 16th reunion. A reunion that ushered in our 10,000th member. An occasion that saw more than 1,182 pilots and a total attendance of over 2,183.

I was in Mike's shoes in 1995 in Kansas City, so I can say from one who has been there: You did a great job. My observations of Mike during the reunion makes me wonder, though, did he do anything other than smile and have a good time?

Well, it's obvious he did a lot of work and had a good time doing it. Thanks again, Mike!

Thanks — You made it happen!

The smoke has cleared, the last toast made, the last beer drunk, the Nashville party is over. As I drove home to Lee's Summit, MO, the idea of being president of those who are "Above the Best" was starting to sink in. Well, it has been a 16-year journey to get here.

I want to say thanks to all of you along the way who have shown friendship and kindness throughout the years. With such an elite group to be president of, my job will be done by you, the membership, the young pilots who knew no turning back, who truly are "Above the Best."

A special thanks goes out to those who have given of their valuable time to serve this organization.

Tom Payne, a gentleman who has shown great leadership the past year as your president.

Mike Hurley, the past president who plans on working on in a special job.

Bob Johnson and his contributions to the Executive Council.

Charles Holley, our new vice president and a real leader in the Fort Wolters Chapter.

Dave Rittman, my right-hand man in Kansas City and a real pro in business, who will continue on as senior member at large.

Joe Bilitzke, a party planner extraordinaire, and a person I am glad to be working with as our new midterm member at large.

And last but not least, Don Joyce. Don, as you will learn, is two-time winner for recruiting the most new members in the VHPA. If you have a prospect and can't make him a believer, call Don. I heard his pitch in Nashville and almost signed up again.

Not to be outdone by anyone, the backbone of the organization are those who give countless hours serving on the various committees, some as one-man shows and others work in the comfort of having several members on board to help.

Look on the next page, you will see some names that have been there for years: Jack Swickard, countless hours making the newsletter a showpiece; Gary Roush, whose tireless effort has managed to put it all together in a database, a history that lets us know the who, what, when and where of all our members and those who have gone before us.

They are all there, Rayl, Law, Fritz, Jones, Bunn,

See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 3

Classified ads

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From the President

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Sloniker. They are doing our work and, again, I thank them and look forward to working with them for another successful year.

Thanks to all of you who have spent your time making this the best veterans organization in the "U.S. of A."

Step up to the plate. Is it your turn at bat?

Thinking of all the work put in by so few for so many brings up another point: Volunteer!

Many of you have talents that made you presidents of your companies.

Others may have made general or CW5. Others may be specialists in computers, recruiting, training, mechanics,

organizational skills. Whatever your skill is, someone I am sure could use your help. This is a no-rank organization or, should I say, we pull no rank on anyone. That's the way it should be, that's the way it is.

Get involved, volunteer. Call VHPA headquarters now.

Finding them, for they are lost

Now is the time — we need to find them. Where are they? What are they doing? Why can't we find them?

The "them" are our comrades in arms from many years ago. Buddies we fought with, drank with and treated as brothers. Brothers you looked out for and who looked out for you.

Don't let them down. Don't go another year without making the attempt to find them.

Time is short, the hair is graying, the mind is going (mine anyhow) and the eyes may not see as clear.

See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 4

From the President

Continued from Page 3

One thing is for sure, if you don't find that old roommate or stick buddy, you may never again be able to share that friendship forged in fire so many years ago.

Finding these 10,000-plus needs to be a priority and it is. Don Joyce, as our new junior member at large, has been given the detail to work with Pappy Jones and Chip Brown, co-chairs on the Membership Committee.

We added Chip to the committee as co-chair to emphasize the importance of what we want to do to find new members.

Don is also tasked to work with the membership chairmen of each chapter and support them in their efforts.

I will be proposing to the Executive Council that we use some of our excess funds to help in this effort.

Call Don at [REDACTED], Pappy at [REDACTED] or Chip at [REDACTED] and volunteer to be a contact in your state to help in the recruitment.

Or you can reach them by e-mail. Don's address is [REDACTED] and Pappy can be contacted at membership@vhpa.org

Reunion 2000: Washington, DC, July 1-4

When you get this newsletter, several of your friends already will have made their hotel room reservations.

Never thinking the reunions would get so big, we only have 600 rooms at our main hotel.

We tried to get more, but they always hold out a certain percentage for their regular guests.

Stop what you are doing and go to your phone now. Call the Renaissance Washington, DC, Hotel at [REDACTED] and let them know you are with the VHPA.

The price is right (\$84 for a single or double and a little extra for grandma and the kids with normal rates at \$229 up), so don't wait or you will be in the overflow.

Not a bad overflow. It is the Marriott Metro Center with 200 rooms. Give them a call at [REDACTED] if you waited too long for the first hotel.

The overflow price is slightly higher, \$95 for a single or double and \$10 for each additional person. Normal price is \$214 for a double, plus \$25 a person.

Don't be disappointed — we sold out by November at the Nashville Renaissance.

Make your plans now to be in DC for the biggest Fourth of July 2000 celebration ever.

Jim "Goldie" Goldthorpe is the DC reunion chairman. Give him a call if you have a special talent he can use. It doesn't have to be to special, he can use whatever help you can give.

Call Goldie at [REDACTED].

— Bob Smith, president
"Mavericks Rule"

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Nashville reunion first, but not last

This was my first reunion . . . was in VHPA up until 1987 and dropped out and did not rejoin again until '97 when I got on the Internet and the past again became important to me . . .

And I gotta say . . . I will regret all of those that I have missed and I will cherish all of those that are yet to come . . . and the Good Lord willing I will miss not another.

It was awesome.

The Grand Old Opry on Saturday night was a marvelous tribute to all who served with the likes of Porter Wagner, Janie Pruett, John Conlee, Jan Howard and a personal favorite of mine, Little Jimmy Dickens, acknowledging and recognizing us.

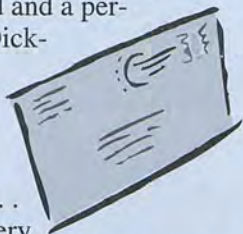
The highlight for me (next to putting faces on all these HV screen names) was the banquet the last night . . . (Sunday) . . . and, in particular, the very moving speeches given by Adrian Cronauer, the original "Gooooood morning, Vietnam" fella and Jan Howard, one of country music's legends and a Gold Star Mom from Vietnam.

I cannot put into words or express in any manner beyond prideful tears the effect on me that these two wonderful speakers had, combined with the camaraderie of the reunion, it was an experience I wish that each and every man or woman who served our country could have.

Those in the Mid-South Chapter who were involved in putting this together deserve a big "hip-hip-hoo-ray" for a job well done.

A hand salute to Rhea Rippey, Ross Rainwater, Mike Haley and the rest of the fellas who made this possible and allowed me one more personal step toward healing.

Bob Bales



Great four days spent at reunion

Words cannot describe the wonderful 16th annual Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Reunion that over 2,000 people attended this past 4th of July weekend, but I'll try.

The job that was done by the Mid-South Chapter was outstanding! Every event went like "clockwork" for those of us who were there to "enjoy." (I know that the chapter members worked "around the clock" to make it seem easy. Thanks, again, guys and gals.)

What a great four days . . . Old and new friends, the Jack Daniels tour, the Grand Ole Opry's sincere welcome and

VHPA recognition, the flight and static displays at Smyrna Airfield brought back vivid memories, the visit to The Hermitage was a historical trip back to America's past, and the final evening's banquet brought many a tear to all eyes as we remembered and honored our friends, both fallen and present.

A special thanks to the banquet speaker, Adrian Cronauer, who brought back "Gooooood Morning" memories of Vietnam, and shared his vision of today's America.

Personally, I was honored to be elected at the membership meeting, as the new VHPA junior member-at-large on the 1999-2000 Executive Council.

My "e-mail door" is always open.

Let me hear from the members . . . help me serve VHPA as we enter the new century.

Don Joyce

Reunion '99 organizers deserve praise for work

This is just a note to compliment you on the organization of the 1999 reunion. Those responsible should be congratulated for their dedication and hard work.

This was really my first reunion (I attended the banquet in Chicago a few years ago) and it was great to see so many people there. I found it to be a rather emotional time.

It is difficult to realize that so much time has passed and that the youngest of us must be about 45.

As I looked around at the graying hair (or lack of it for some of us), the spreading waistlines and the aging profiles, it was sometimes difficult to remember that once these were all slender, brave, young men who placed themselves in harm's way and did one hell of a job.

I am very proud to be able to claim membership in this group.

John Bercaw
Class 67-13

Reunion organization, camaraderie impressive

I just want to tell you how much I enjoyed visiting some old friends and meeting some new friends when I visited the VHPA fish fry and for a little while at the Renaissance Hotel afterwards.

I was greatly impressed by the organization of the convention and the camaraderie of the men and women I met there.

I will be joining the VHPA and hopefully will be able to be at the future conventions.

Thank you for welcoming me.

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Dan Dantzler
1/9 Cav, B/A 7/17 Cav, F 8 Cav,
170 AHC, 192 AHC and 48 AHC
The Last Blue Ghost 6

Where is Yosemite Sam? Send him home to Juneau

Has anyone seen Sam? Yosemite Sam, that is.

Sam was with us at the reunion in Nashville. This being Sam's first reunion and all, he enjoyed hangin' out at the Renaissance Hotel welcoming everyone to the reunion.

Sam loves to party so much that he hung out in the main lobby for 72 hours straight, outlasting even most of the cav pilots.

Larry Brown wasn't there, however, and he could have possibly outlasted Sam.

Witnesses say that on July 3rd, Sam fell down from the second story banister to the lobby floor below, where he was assisted up by a fair damsel. Sam's trail thins out at this point. Sam being Sam, a true gun driver, he probably assisted her to her room on the assumption she needed his help.

Because of his actions at this point, he missed his port call and DEROS back to Juneau, Alaska, with us.

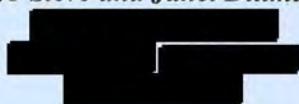
Now we are back home in Juneau, where Sam enjoyed hangin' out above our front door, welcoming guests and showing off for all the passersby.

It won't be long before folks start asking, "Where's Sam?" We don't want to risk spoiling Sam's untarnished neighborhood reputation or have to alibi for his questionable behavior at the reunion.

If you can help, we will be happy to pay his fare, even if he has to go First Class. So, if you have seen our "Yosemite Sam, Welcome" flag, please assist old Sam any way you can, so we can embrace him with a hearty "welcome home!"

Sam's address and phone number:

c/o Steve and Janet Dillman



Steve Dillman
Gunslinger 39

Vietnam combat veterans meet at battalion reunion

He walked with a cane as he approached me. I last saw him on April 12, 1964.

He is Ken Fujimoto from Hawaii. When we last talked in 1964, he was 18. I was 23. We were in Vietnam, at war.

The occasion for our meeting again was a Vietnam veterans reunion of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, the

earliest Army helicopter battalion to fly in Vietnam.

Ken and I were both members of the 120th Aviation Company, "The Deans," of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion.

Ken was a crew chief. He was an enlisted man. I was an officer, a first lieutenant. We were, and are, Americans willing to serve our country.

Ken and I flew aboard a U.S. Army transport helicopter, the CH-21C, "Shawnee."

Its crew consisted of two pilots, a crew chief and a gunner. It carried 10 fully combat-ready troops and 1,800 pounds of fuel.

Ken was a crew chief, and I was a pilot — aircraft commander.

We flew aboard different CH-21Cs on different missions. The CH-21C is 85 feet long.

On April 12, 1964, Ken and I rode into hell together.

Eight CH-21Cs from the 120th Aviation Company were sent to a place called Kien Long near Camau, deep in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam.

Near Kien Long, the eight helicopters landed in formation in a sea of rice paddies to unload ARVN (Army Republic of Vietnam) troops to fight the bad guys, the Viet Cong, who had overrun the village of Kien Long the night before.

Tree lines were around, hiding three hardcore Viet Cong battalions, a full regiment, with automatic and anti-aircraft weapons.

Ken and I were aboard separate helicopters. He was hit in the hip while on the approach to the landing zone (LZ), and I was hit in the right leg while exiting the LZ.

Our wounds came approximately 10 minutes apart. They were very serious. Our blood flowed profusely.

Many of the ARVN troops were killed or wounded — as was Ken — on the approach to the landing zone.

Another 120th crew chief, a close friend of Ken's, was killed in the LZ. He, Alan Matsuura, was aboard the lead aircraft.

Ken left his father's sugar cane fields in Hawaii to go into the Army. I left my father's hay fields in Alabama to go in the army.

On June 18, 1999, Ken and I were together again at long last at Fort Rucker, AL, the home of U.S. Army Aviation. He walks with a cane; I with a prosthesis.

We gave each other a bear hug and sat down alone in a corner to reminisce. We talked of physical and mental pain, of comrades in arms and of days gone by.

We were mere kids in 1964. Now we are old soldiers who are very proud.

The 120th motto was: "We Execute The Plan." And, we always did even if it meant going to hell and back.

We did on April 12, 1964.

John B. Givhan
First Lieutenant AUS (Retired)

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Young Army aviators watch Marine approach

There we were, minding our own business at the end of another long day.

As a young aircraft commander — just 21 years old for three months — of an even younger CH-47 crew, we had finished the day's work and had just shut down in the front row and finished our daily paperwork.

While still in the revetment area, before heading into operations to turn in our stuff, we (my copilot and another A/C and his copilot) heard an approaching aircraft that was not the usual Huey or Chinook.

Turned out it was a Marine CH-46 (Baby Hook) coming in to land at our pad (Liftmaster Pad, home of C/159th ASHB, 101st Airmobile, call sign "Playtex").

With mild curiosity, we gathered at the edge of the revetments housing our CH-47s to take in the sight and stay out of the gyrene's way and his impending approach.

I guess we could have gone back to our aircraft and gathered up our equipment to take back to operations, but being youthful, semi-new aviators, we instead chose to observe the vaunted Marine's graceful entrance into our area and subsequent landing to satisfy our curiosity as to their ability to fly, let alone land.

I throw this last comment in because whenever I flew to or from the A Shau valley, all I remembered seeing was the wreckage of Marine aircraft and most of them were helicopter carcasses.

Up to this point the approaching helicopter seemed to be making a fairly normal approach. As an explanation is needed, I will say that at our pad when you landed to the west, as this intrepid aviator was going to do, you had to make an initial entry up an uninhabited marshy area going more or less northwest.

At the end of the approach you needed to turn to final at the last second, almost 60 degrees or better, to due west which was the landing axis of our tiny 600-foot landing pad. Now, you must remember, we're talking Chinooks here, not OH-6s or UH-1s.

Toward the end of this Marine's approach, someone near the aircraft made the astute observation it appeared this aircraft was approaching at a rate of speed inconsistent with his intent to land at our pad; in other words, he was too frigging fast.

Being all highly trained and intrepid aviators ourselves, my right seater and I agreed this was indeed the case. As we had already shut everything down, including the APU, we had no way to tell him to slow down.

As we were also not in possession of suitable portable radio equipment (this was 1970 and walkie-talkies were large, cumbersome and totally unavailable), it was impossible to tell him to slow down a bit.

So, in rapt stupidity, we stood and watched the

approaching baby behemoth continue its approach.

At the last minute, the CH-46 turned to line up on our runway and, at the same time, realized he was about to overshoot his intended landing spot.

Unknown to him, there was an audience of fellow aviators, which is usually the case when you screw up royally.

His nose angle then went above about 25 degrees; going above 20 degrees in a Chinook or Baby-Hook is a guaran-

teed way of losing all of the lift on the aft rotors).

By the engine noise, you also could tell he had the collective (thrust lever in Boeing helicopters) all the way down and was rapidly decelerating.

What happened

next was amazing!

There it was, about 75-100 feet in the air, standing on its tail, no airspeed and not many options. As we Army pukers would say, he was out of pitch, power and airspeed.

And, to boot, we were all standing there in front of our aircraft within about a 100 feet of this soon-to-be accident. It didn't occur to us at the time we were well within the debris field if it came apart.

Well, to say that God was with him that day was an understatement. As he had no lift on the rear rotors and no airspeed, needless to say, he fell like a waxed brick.

Just — and I do mean just — before impact, he got the aircraft in an almost level attitude and made the hardest landing I have ever been witness to.

He must have pulled pitch just prior to impact because as quickly as he had touched down, he shot back up in the air to 50-75 feet off the deck on this trip.

His second trip earthward was a little more controlled and he only bounced about three feet in the air before coming to rest on the ramp in front of us.

You must remember these vertical aerial gymnastics were made at zero airspeed!

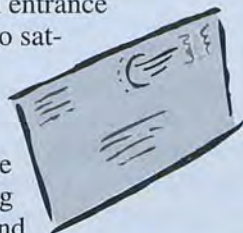
He then taxied off the ramp to the transient area and shut down.

We figured after the aircraft commander wrote up the hard landing, this particular CH-46 would have had to be carried off by us or on a flatbed, and that at least some injuries had been inflicted upon this brave and fearless crew.

We stood in amazement as a couple of minutes later when, after they shut down, the two pilots (a major and a captain) bounded off said aircraft. Then they started looking around like they were lost or had someplace in particular to go, but were afraid to ask directions.

At this point, we had gathered up our stuff and were walking across the runway when we met up with this dynamic duo.

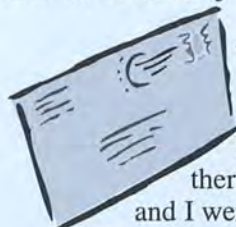
After proper greetings were exchanged, without salutes



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as we were on the flight line, a conversation was struck up among us and the major asked us where the A/Cs were for the aircraft he had just followed into the pad.



Upon learning all of us present were WO1s and myself and a buddy were the A/Cs and the other two wobbly ones were our right seaters, the major and his right seater just stood there in utter amazement that the other A/C and I were only 21 and we could actually be pilots, let alone aircraft commanders.

This all goes to show you that even on our worst day, a 21-year-old WO1 is still a better pilot than any major! Besides, the Army trusted us enough to fly the \$3 million aircraft, so why was he so shook up about it? Or was he jealous? I wonder . . .

P.S. — They did fly that CH-46 away later that day and one of our flight engineers talked to their crew guys and the aircraft had not been written up for a hard landing.

Alex Kelley
Playtex 27
El Paso, TX

Essay describes reunion of aviation warrant officers

Van McIntosh wrote this moving essay after attending the W4/WO Reunion at Fort Rucker on June 12-13.

Don Joyce

Nostalgia in Alabama

Alabama lies in the heart of "Dixie" as surely as Dixie is in the heart of "Alabama."

Fort Rucker, the "Home of Army Aviation" is as much a part of Alabama as any post Civil War addition to the "Deep South." It was Fort Rucker that provided the setting for a recent gathering of many old soldiers who had been there during their time in the U.S. Army.

"Old Soldiers" is much too generic a term, however, to describe the group that assembled there over the weekend of June 12-13. They are Army aviators!

Even that does not adequately quantify this group of men. These aviators fought or flew in every corner of the world for many years, some as far back as World War II. Many of these old aviators had their wives with them or the widows of some of them were there.

Many of these aviators started their flying careers more than 50 years ago and, if the hours in the air were to be totaled by this group, they would measure into the hundreds of thousands. Even those kind of mind-boggling figures cannot portray the true picture of these individuals; there is at least one more factor that must be remembered.

This gathering is the annual meeting of some of the warrant officers who were the backbone of Army aviation. They filled the cockpits of all of the many and varied kinds

and shapes of aircraft one can see in the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker and some that are not there.

If I sound as if I am in awe of this group, I am.

Among the group there was more than a few who took me under their wing and taught me how to fly, taught me how to lead, taught me a few other things that had nothing to do with flying, but was a part of the life as an Army aviator.



Many more that were not there added to my store of knowledge and ability to do my job in the Army. They have passed away from the ravages of war, the insipid killers of good men and women, cancer or heart attack or aircraft accidents or just plain

old age, in some cases.

I was invited to attend this reunion of the warrant officers several years ago by Callum Flynn (CWO, retired), and several others had urged me to attend, but I put it off for one reason or another.

But in the back of my mind was the fact I had not been a warrant officer. I had served my time as an Army aviator as a commissioned officer and did not want to intrude on the sacred ground warrant officer aviators have held as their realm in aviation for as long as they have been part of the U.S. Army.

The reunion this year was the 33rd of these gatherings. The ranks of those who served in World War II are thinning, the ranks of those who served in all the wars including Vietnam are thinning.

It was this factor that put me over the hump to accept the invite to attend this year, I wanted to see and visit with some of those who had been so important to me as fellow aviators over the 38 years that I served in the U.S. Army.

I should have attended years ago when I was first invited. The reception was one I will not soon forget. It was the same reception that I got as a green officer in the 18th

Transportation Company (Light Helicopter by WOs Chester Cook, Micky Keys, Callum Flynn, Loren Foster, Howard Eubanks and many others 40 years ago in Munich, Germany.

For some reason, they took me in and kept me out of trouble over the years — and they are still doing that in one way or another.

There is not much of a formal program for this gathering; that just would not work.

These men and women are there to see and visit with old friends, and any kind of interruption would have met with about as much enthusiasm as a tail rotor failure.

In fact, the entertainment was the conversations that took place over the course of the weekend at three events in the Officers Club at Fort Rucker.



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Those conversations are some that covered the gambit from flying experiences to where the families are, kids were always a big part of the deal when these aviators and their wives were younger. My son like to bawled his head off the first time I sat him in the door of a CH-34 helicopter when he was a few months old. He is 39 years old now.

The tales of flying experiences have been told before, to be sure, but they are always new to someone or some part of an experience is news. Even after many years, you will hear the expression: "I didn't know that!"

The faces have aged, the waistlines have expanded, hair has receded or turned gray, but the sparkle in the eyes is more than evident in this group when the tales of derring-do are related.



Oh, there are the pills to be taken, diets to watch, the occasional yawn as 2200 hours is reached. There is less intake of Budweiser and an increased intake of coffee (decaff, please) or the slowness of step to the next table to visit with someone who shared a harrowing experience in a Chinook or Huey halfway around the world years ago.

Pictures of kids come out, albums of pictures of previous reunions get a lot of action.

"Where is (here comes a name)?" and the news of another warrant officer or the family of that warrant will be spread as if they were closely related kinfolk.

In reality, the families of the aviators were closer than relatives in many cases. Plunked down in foreign lands, the communities that comprised the aviation units were closer than any blood relationship. Life's events were shared, both the good and bad on a day-to-day basis for years among these families.

Yes, I am in awe of these people. I am proud to have been included in their gathering this year. I am going to write to some of those I had lost contact with over the years.

If you see an Army aviator, it might be a good idea to thank him for his service. I do.

Van McIntosh
Major, USA (Retired)
Portland, OR

Why didn't I receive a Purple Heart Medal?

I have esteemed regard for those who have earned the most sacred and prestigious Purple Heart.

This is just a humorous story that happened to me which may give you a laugh or two. It is not my intention to hurt anyone's feelings, especially those of you who earned the medal. If I have, I herein sincerely apologize.

In 1962, I flew Otters for the 18th Aviation Company the length and breadth of Vietnam. There was no armor protecting us except for our issue flak jackets.

There wasn't too much shooting going on as yet and the

enemy's aim was particularly poor in the early war stage. But every so often ships landed with bullet holes the crew didn't usually know about until post-flight inspections.

I was able to purloin an extra flak jacket to sit on, thinking that protecting that part of the lower anatomy that lay between the flak vest and me was a high, personal wartime priority.

Fast forward to 1967. There was a lot more shooting going on and the enemy's aim had improved considerably. I was determined, again, with much more reverence than in 1962, to protect "My Boys", as Seinfeld's Cosmo Kramer has humorously called "the family assets."

It wasn't long after my arrival that I "found" the extra flak jacket. Even though the Hueys had much improved armor plating, including the seats, I was determined to provide myself, and my spouse, with the extra protection.

My assignment was flight platoon commander, 281st Assault Helicopter Company. My platoon was split into four detachments, each supporting the Special Forces A camp commanders in each of the four corps.

My job was to hop on Army and Air Force aircraft to get to my split-up crews and provide some flying relief so they could get some rest. I always suggested that my crews purloin extra vests for the very same purpose I have explained, thereby doing my duty to provide the greatest protection I could for my troops. I never surveyed them to determine if what happened to me happened to them.

Now, as you can visualize, sitting on a flak vest in a fixed-wing provides an altogether different effect than sitting on one in a rotary-wing.

In the fixed-wing, your buttocks may slide a little bit back and forth as you decelerate and accelerate. This does not appear to provide any unpleasant problems, as proven by the year I flew the Otter while sitting on a vest. Fixed-wing pilots who sat on extra jackets never complained of any problems to my recollection.

However, not so in a Huey helicopter. I flew hour after hour after hour, like so many of you, but I sat on my flak jacket with the knowledge that I gave my "Boys" the utmost extra protection that either the Army, or I, could afford.

The problem with sitting on a flak vest in the Huey is that you get a perpendicular movement in relation to your direction of travel and my buttocks wasn't up to withstanding that circular motion, unlike that direct back and forth which the fixed-wing provides.

After many days strapped to Huey cockpits in one corps area or another, the friction from the metal in the vest, against my soft baby-skinned behind, caused, over time, a golf ball-sized boil to eventually form on each cheek, almost perfectly placed one to the other.

I stayed out at the detachments apparently longer than I should have and the boils became abscessed. My butt hurt!

As soon as I got back to Nha Trang, I went immediately to the 5th Special Forces Group surgeon. Now this is when I got hit.

He "shot" the surrounding area of each wound with a

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needle full of local anesthesia and, when that took effect, he lanced the affected areas. He grounded me for two weeks and issued a regulation doughnut pillow for my seating comfort.

To this day, 32 years later, I still carry a rounded wound on each buttock. They look like repaired bullet holes' entry markings.

In summary, I have two wounds that occurred while I was in a combat or combat support mode flying Hueys in support of the war effort. Even though, so they tell me, I'm not entitled to a Purple Heart, I can show my grandkids where I was "wounded" during the war.

Jack Serig Sr.

'Rattlers,' 'Firebirds' decorated 26 years late

In March 1997, twenty-six years after the action, several members of the 71st Aviation Company (AHC), "Rattlers and Firebirds," were decorated for heroism in Vietnam and Laos during Operation Lam Son 719.

The recommendations were signed by Lt. Col. Robert J. Harmon, USA Retired, and submitted under the authority of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 97.

Harmon was the last commander of the 71st before it was deactivated in October 1971 and was a participant in Lam Son 719, receiving a Distinguished Flying Cross when the 71st led the assault at LZ Lolo on March 3, 1971.

During his tenure as commander, many award recommendations were submitted for members of the 71st who had distinguished themselves in one of the most significant operations of the Vietnam War.

Unfortunately, some of those recommendations were lost and never acted upon.

The National Defense Authorization Act provided a one-time window of opportunity to recognize acts of heroism during the Vietnam Conflict, and the success achieved in this case was largely due to VHPA Historical Committee Chairman Mike Sloniker.

Although much research had been done and many supporting documents had been accumulated, Mike, by way of Gary Roush, provided a key piece of evidence that linked much of the documentation together.

A single page of the All Loss Aircraft Report unraveled a mystery and confirmed many different aspects of events that occurred on March 12 and 24, 1971.

While doing research to initiate a congressional recommendation for awards for some of our members who had not been previously identified, I had occasion to speak with David Avey, another "Rattler" Lam Son veteran.

Dave related that he had received a Distinguished Flying Cross for March 24, 1971, when he was shot down with Ed

Albrick. Ed, "Rattler 11," the aircraft commander that day, was among those who were recognized in 1997.

When they abandoned their burning helicopter, they were picked up by Roger Theberge. Roger is among those whose recommendations were lost.



Dave's DFC was the first decoration that I learned of which was received for that action in a timely manner. All recommendations for that date were thought to have been lost as the 71st prepared to stand down.

Dave was kind enough to send me a copy of his award and I used the general order number to conduct research at the National Archives in Adelphi, MD. I was happy to learn of Dave's DFC and then amazed to find 13 other awards for that date, a total of four more DFC's and nine Air Medals with "V" device.

These awards were made based on the original recommendation of Maj. Tommy C. Stiner, brigade aviation officer, 1/5 Mechanized Infantry, for impact awards of the DFC for heroism by members of the 71st on March 24, 1971, in the tri-border area below the DMZ.

They performed emergency insertions and extractions to reinforce and recover downed crews from D Troop, 3/5 Air Cavalry, and reinforce and resupply elements of the 4/3 Infantry, who were under NVA attack.

Part of the mystery solved was that Maj. Stiner's original statement, which described "Rattler 11" being shot down in flames, had erroneously identified the Air Cavalry unit as C-2/17.

The following individuals were recognized in the orders found: Capt. Thomas Flanagan, DFC; WO1 Michael McGraw, DFC; Capt. Thomas Pearson, DFC; First Lt. Donald Wolcott, DFC; Pfc. Willie Cambell, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 4 Anthony Catalina, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 5 Riley Clayton, Air Medal with V device (12th award); Spec. 5 William Drewry, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 5 Thomas Semmes, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 4 Milton Shaw, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 5 Randolph Spencer, Air Medal with V device; Spec. 4 Douglas Starkey, Air Medal with V device; and Spec. 4 Robert Vandenbos, Air Medal with V device.

To date, David Avey is the only member known to have received his decoration.

I invite any of these men who has not received his award to contact me. I will be happy to assist in getting copies of the orders, certificates and decoration sets.

I would also like each of these men to contact me with the names of any other members of the unit who participated in this action.

From the names listed, I know that not all of those involved have been identified.

Sadly, I was informed by Roger Theberge that Anthony Catalina passed away a few months ago. An effort will be made to have his medal made available to his family.

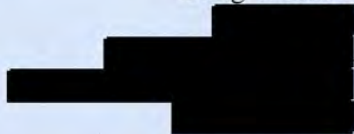
I would also like to hear from any members of D-3/5 who were involved in the incident on March 24, 1971, to

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gain their perspective on that action.

Doug Womack



Pilot enjoys remarkable time at Nashville reunion

I was sitting here slaving away over a hot keyboard and reading the more than 1,300 messages which accumulated while I was at VHPA/Nashville and realized what a great time I had.

Last year I sorta stayed in my room, saw a couple of exhibits and did little else. This year, with both feet and eyes as open as they could be while anesthetized by the prolific amounts of beer I consumed, I jumped in and had just about the most remarkable time I can remember.

It seemed that for one brief, shining moment, the troubles of these times were nowhere within sight, sound or memory.

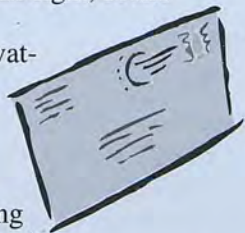
I renewed old friendships and cultivated some that had nearly passed into the deeper recesses of my pitiful and rapidly declining memory.

From the fun I had with Asa to the most valuable part of my trip, that being able to talk with my old friend Jim Ray, to the warmth and relative safety that I felt then as I did in VN when Maj. Gaffney was in command, I enjoyed a rewarding experience that was certainly one I shall cherish for some time to come.

From Roade, to "Flower Child Donovan" to Bess of the Best, to "Jew Boy" to Eric, and all the rest, I felt inspired to a camaraderie which I thought long gone.

Someone mentioned the fact, almost as an aside, that many of us had two or maybe three tours and had been in several units, yet none of those subsequent units had that same pull, that same seemingly unending grace of true friendship which was afforded by those bold and brave of the 187th and which attends each of us as steadfastly as it were but a blink of the eye since we last flew together.

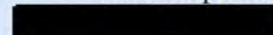
I am still in awe of what I saw and felt those four days, of which I only intended staying two. I sat in the parking lot, before leaving, and even with all the fun I had shared, nonetheless I did so with a sadness emanating from the fact



I had to turn loose for a year of those I admire so greatly.

May God bless and speed each of you until next we meet and again share what we all have in common!

Jack Carpenter



E-mail address jumbled in letter about TCCA

I received my *VHPA Newsletter* this date and wanted to thank you for putting in the information I provided. There is one problem, however. Somehow my e-mail address got messed up and instead of [redacted] it came out [redacted]

As you can understand, anyone sending an e-mail to the wrong address will get a rejection from Juno.

I mention this for two reasons: Request a change be placed in the next issue, and alert anyone who might get an e-mail query at VHPA about the mixup and please reply to the sender with the proper "hartertr" address.

We're still pushing our folks for membership in the VHPA and all who are currently members are very pleased with the newsletter, annual book, and the existence of the association in general. Keep up the good work!!

Richard Hartert



Notice of death saddens friend from Glasgow

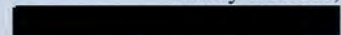
Just a note to say how sorry I was to see the mention in Taps in the May/June *Newsletter* that Larry Tweedie had died.

Through a common interest in American cars (unusual in the UK) and drag racing, I first met Larry about 10 years ago, and sadly have not seen him for several years, although just recently he bought his dream car, a 1968 GTO convertible, from a friend of mine here in Scotland, just days before he went into hospital.

I heard he had gone into a coma after the operation, but the VHPA was the first confirmation I had that he had passed away.

I am deeply saddened by this, as he was a fine man, enthusiast and ambassador for your country.

Sandy Mercer,



Glasgow, Scotland

Share your Vietnam memories with fellow pilots!

The VHPA Newsletter is seeking letters and articles.

E-mail material to: swickard@vhpa.org

Taps

Allen Barklage

Allen Barklage, a traffic helicopter pilot for KSDK-TV and two radio stations in St. Louis, died Sept. 25, 1998, of injuries suffered in the crash of his own small helicopter, a Revolution Mini-500, on Sept. 19.

A VHPA member, Allen trained with Classes 67-21 and 67-23, then flew with the 192th Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69 and with D/1/10th Cav in 1971-72.

His brother, Larry, also a VHPA member, said Allen suffered severe head injuries from the crash and never regained consciousness.

Larry said, "We often hear about people who live every day like it was their last, but Allen was the only person I've known to really do that."

Allen, who built the Mini-500 from a kit, took off from St. Louis Downtown-Parks Airport, heading for a promotional appearance in St. Peters. Federal accident investigators believe the Mini-500's two-cylinder engine failed. The helicopter plunged into a soybean field near the airport.

Allen had about 32,000 helicopter hours. He was employed by Helicopters Inc. to fly their Bell Jet Ranger for traffic reports.

Steve Lieber, president of Helicopters Inc. called Allen a natural who loved to fly.

Allen was honored in 1979 by the U.S. Department of Justice for foiling a prison escape in May 1978 by killing a hijacker who wanted him to land the chartered helicopter in the Marion, IL, Federal Penitentiary.

The hijacker pulled a .44-caliber pistol on Allen, but on his low-level approach to the prison, Allen grabbed the pistol. When the hijacker reached for another pistol, Allen shot.

Allen is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a son, as well as his parents and two brothers.

Billy A. Davidson

I just received a phone call from Lois Davidson informing me her husband, Billy A. Davidson, died April 16 at their home in Missouri.

Billy will be remembered as a platoon commander in the 187th Airplane Company (Caribou) at Fort Benning in 1963-64. He went to Vietnam as a helicopter pilot with the 1st Cavalry Division when the division deployed in 1965.

A good friend, a fine officer, an excellent aviator, a great soldier. Let's all have one for Lt. Col. Billy A. Davidson.

— Willard Onellion

John L. Freeouf

John L. Freeouf and the five passengers aboard his All-

outte III helicopter died when the aircraft crashed Oct. 31, 1998, some 40 miles east of Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

I first met John in March 1975 in Grants Pass, OR, where we were both employed with Inland Helicopters. We were working U.S. Forest Service fire contracts throughout the West.

I remember John wore his old APH-4 military helmet that had a bullet hole in it. The round had entered above his right eye, exited out the top, and had taken some of his hair on the way through. His neck had taken such a wrench, he never stopped complaining about it. According to John, the incident occurred on his first combat assault while riding pater pilot.

John always had a good story to tell and was a good "stick" to fly with. John's flight class was 68-503/68-1.

I am not sure of the units he served with or when he was in country. I believe he was up north in I Corps.

John never joined the VHPA, but we will miss him. We send our condolences to his family and friends.

Steve Dillman
Gunslinger 39



John G. Hill Jr.

John G. Hill Jr. died March 28 after a four-year struggle with brain cancer.

Gerald E. Porter

Retired Lt. Col. Gerald E. Porter, 65, died June 3.

After graduating from college, he enlisted in the Army and served in West Germany in 1955-58.

He completed Officer Candidate School in 1959.

Porter attended flight school in Fort Wolters and Fort Rucker in 1964, and served as a helicopter pilot in Korea 1965 and in Vietnam from February 1967 to February 1968.

He left active duty in 1969 and retired from the 104th Army Reserve in 1981.

— Art Ashton

James D. Wallace II

James D. Wallace II died from complications due to multiple sclerosis.

He served with C Company, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). His call sign was "Black Widow 25."

Services were June 29 in McKinney, TX.

Freddie L. Waters

It is my sad duty to report retired CW4 Freddie L. Waters died Feb. 9 at his Level Plains, AL, home.

Freddie served in the Army for 27 years, retiring in 1977. He was a contract instructor pilot for 12 years.

He was a member of Class 62-10A, and served in Vietnam with the 117th Airmobile Light in 1964-65, the 134th Aviation Company in 1969-70 and the 610th Transportation Company in 1971.

Rest in Peace, Freddie.

— George Miller

Ohio River chapter planning reunion

The Ohio River LZ Chapter announces the Y2K mini-reunion in Louisville, KY, is ready to accept reservations.

If you are interested in trying your hand at flying a full-motion simulator or touring the new air traffic control tower or making a midnight visit to the international hub of UPS and having you escort her to a unique dinner setting in the Louisville Slugger Museum, you have to make plans today!

The Ohio River LZ Chapter is a local Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky chapter of the VHPA.

Planning for the upcoming reunion on Feb. 25-27 started as soon as our last reunion in Dayton ended. To date, more than 200 letters have been sent out announcing the reunion in Louisville.

The next meeting in February will result in the largest gathering the group has seen. We are expecting nearly 150 to attend the February weekend.

On Friday night Feb. 25, the hospitality room opens at 6 p.m. Later in the evening there will be a tour of the UPS hub in full operation. The tour takes place as 90 aircraft are arriving and one-half million packages are being sorted. The tour begins at the visitor center and proceeds to the domestic and international hub and ramp operations.

In addition to the UPS tour Friday night, tours of the new, 200-foot FAA control tower are scheduled Friday night and Saturday morning.

In addition to the UPS tours, we will be giving a number of attendees the opportunity to fly a 727, DC-8 or 757 full-flight, full-motion simulator.

Training requirements will dictate the availability and times the simulator tours will take place.

Dinner will be held Saturday, Feb. 26, at the Louisville Slugger Museum in downtown Louisville from 6-10 p.m. It is easy to say this setting for dinner will be a most unique.

Tables will be set up in the middle

of the museum display area. All displays and movies are open to everyone for the evening. After dinner, buses will return the group to the hotel.

An informal brunch at 10 a.m. Sunday will precede the standard noon hotel checkout.

A \$58 rate has been obtained for the group at the Executive West Hotel, across from the airport.

This rate is secured by calling (800) 626-2708 and making the reservation in your name under the VHPA \$58 rate. Please e-mail Bob Hamilton when reservations are made so he can assure the proper rate has been applied and adequate rooms have been set aside for the group.

As of the end of July, 50 rooms have been held for the group.

The Ohio River LZ Chapter now has a website that contains updated information on the February reunion. It is easily reached via a link on the VHPA main webpage.

Bob Hamilton

Looking for a:

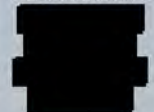
- Long-lost stick buddy?

- 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



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



Officers elected, committees report

The VHPA annual business meeting began on July 4 at the Renaissance Nashville with a welcome from president Tom Payne.

Payne said that during his year as president, the VHPA began awarding certificates of appreciation and letters of condolence to the families of deceased members. During the year, two new chapters were formed and a third was forming.

The VHPA financial records and contractor procedures was completely audited and found to be complete, accurate and in compliance with generally accepted accounting practices, Payne said.

He said he enjoyed serving as president.

During elections at the meeting Charles Holley was elected vice president and Don Joyce was elected junior member at large.

Holley thanked Gary Roush, Database Committee chairman, for his work. "A real 2YK compliant guy," was how he described Roush.

He also recognized Hayden "Pappy" Jones and others on Membership Committee. "We need to get the missing 20,000 members; bring two new members into the organization during the coming year," Holley added.

Joyce, a retired CW4, said he has ideas on recruiting new members. He signed up 30 members, with help, at the CW4 reunion at Fort Rucker earlier.

Gen. Carl McNair, president of the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA), spoke about common objectives of AAAA and the VHPA.

He is former commanding officer of the Soc Trang Tigers. He also commanded 145th Combat Aviation Battalion at Bien Hoa.

McNair said many AAAA members are VHPA members.

During the membership meeting, it was announced 1,160 pilots attended the Nashville reunion.

Payne spoke on the good job being done by Marcia Fritz & Associates, the VHPA management company. He

Reckner said he wants to put the entire archive online and has requested federal funds to do so.

"To preserve documents and not make them accessible is like throwing them away," he said.

recognized Fritz's employee Deb Cavoto for her work with VHPA members.

Dan Ferguson, VHPA secretary/treasurer, reported on the financial status of the organization. He said the VHPA is strong and viable.

Revenue is up from previous year.

Dr. James Reckner, director of Vietnam Center Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, addressed the membership.

He served two tours in Vietnam as Navy advisor.

Vietnam continues to influence how Americans look at foreign affairs, said Reckner, showing newspaper political cartoons with Vietnam themes.

"In the past few months, we've had a partnership with the VHPA."

Reckner said he wants to put the entire archive online and has requested federal funds to do so.

"To preserve documents and not make them accessible is like throwing them away," he said.

The center also has collections of antiwar newspapers and other documents, as well as from those who served in Vietnam.

Reckner asked for personal letters from Vietnam and other documents from VHPA members.

The State of Texas supports the center and archives, and they are a line item in the Texas state budget.

Database chairman Gary Roush gave the VHPA website address to

members: www.vhpa.org

He reported that of the 12,000 helicopters that flew in Vietnam, about half were destroyed. By aircraft, 69 percent of LOHs were destroyed, while 56 percent of Hueys were destroyed in Vietnam.

Roush said some 40,000 helicopter pilots served in Vietnam, rather than the previously believed 23,000-33,000 pilots.

Hayden "Pappy" Jones, Membership Committee chairman, said membership has been climbing the past couple of years, with considerable help from Marcia Fritz & Associates.

Unpaid memberships are at an all-time low.

Membership contest winner this year and last is Don Joyce, Jones said.

Directory chairman Ken Fritz said Mike Law will continue to help with the directory. He is not going to Africa, as he planned earlier.

The late Ron Timberlake was recognized for his work on VHPA records and historical research for the year 2000 Membership Directory. The first compact disk containing historical records will be dedicated to Timberlake.

Newsletter Editor Jack Swickard reported Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University will be purchasing full-page, full-color ads on the backpage of The VHPA Newsletter for the next year. He asked members to recognize VHPA member Tom Pettit who is an Embry-Riddle executive.

Swickard urged all VHPA members to submit letters, articles and photographs for publication. "This is your newsletter," he said.

Kenny Bunn of the Site Selection Committee said the Nashville reunion headquarters hotel was sold out last November.

He said the VHPA needs hotels with 1,500 rooms to keep everyone in the same hotel.

The Renaissance will be the headquarters hotel in Washington, DC, for the year 2000 Reunion. In 2001, the

See WEST COAST, Page 15

California chapter treated to flights

On June 12, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association-California Chapter North (CCN) was provided with a special treat during the annual meeting to elect officers for the chapter.

Helicopter Adventures Inc. of Concord, CA, allowed a discount on the flying time in a Schweizer 300-CB (like our TH-55A, but newer, better and certainly cleaner and better maintained).

Member Barry Lloyd ("Dragon 32," 197th Armed Helicopter Company, 1965-66; "Skeeter 6," Company B, 123rd Aviation Battalion, 1968) worked out the deal and flew the aircraft to Mike Rathbone's place north of Roseville, CA.

Barry is to be commended for his work on this and for flying all day with us. He must have a daredevil streak to volunteer to ride with all these guys! Actually, he did comment to the effect that this was better than riding with new guys for their FAA check rides!

Mike Rathbone and wife Shelly did their usual outstanding job as host and "hostess with the mostest" for the meeting.

Mike had prepared a small corral as our LZ by watering it to keep the dust down.

With a U.S. flag on a pole nearby as a wind indicator and clear sunny skies, Ken Fritz shot a good approach



Barry Lloyd hovers back to the VIP pad at LZ Rathbone after a successful demonstration flight with one of Ross McCoy's sons.

to touchdown in the LZ. He was even wearing his old cotton flight suit with patches from Fort Wolters and his 28-year-old Primary IP cap.

After a short business meeting and a safety briefing, the fun began with Barry giving a ride to the unofficial helicopter momma of the CCN, Agnes Fritz. She celebrates her 76th birthday June 20th and she really enjoyed the ride!

The guys were all lined up and had paid their money to go for 10-minute hops with Barry as AC/IP/SIP/HMFIC. For a bunch of pilots who were at one time the Finest Helicopter Pilots in The World, this was a chance to show they still had the old PT, and it was a complete success.

Up to a hover, pedal turn and take-off to the west over the fence was the order of the day.

Barry was given a hot dog prior to the first takeoff, then he hot refueled

the rest of the day with typical pilot fare (Pepsi chugged down with the blades turning during copilot changes). The only time he shut down was over at the nearby Lincoln Airport for fuel.

The guys were all given red poker chips at the safety briefing.

When you wanted anything stronger than a soda pop or water to drink, you had to turn in your red chip. When it was your turn to fly, you had to

show the red chip to get onto the LZ.

Incredibly, but as expected, only a few guys were willing to give up the chip and forego the flying.

One was Joel Dozier, but he flies his own H-23s and B206s as a crop-duster (oops, it's aerial applicator these days).

Another guy who didn't fly was "Always Smiling" Jim Gunderson. But as an RLO and a lawyer, maybe he had some ulterior motive in case of a crash? Come to think of it, RLO Jim Cunningham didn't fly, either. Hmmm.

The wives and the kids got rides with Barry, too, and the last ride of the day began as the trip to return the machine to Concord.

Oh, yes, Ken Kinne is the new president and George Larson is now vice president of the VHPA-CCN.

— Ken Fritz

West Coast may host 2001 VHPA reunion

Continued from Page 14

reunion will be in Denver at a hotel that will house all attendees in one building. The Site Selection Committee is looking at the West Coast for the 2002 reunion.

Incoming President Bob Smith said reservations may be booked at the Renaissance in Washington by calling: 800-HOTELS1. The local

telephone number is: (202) 898-9000. The hotel will start taking reservations on Aug. 10.

A contract was signed in 1996 for 500 rooms at the Renaissance, and the VHPA just renegotiated for another 100 rooms, he said. Rooms are \$84 a night for a single or a double. Regular price for the rooms is \$220 per night.

The early bird reception will be on Friday, June 30, 2000. It will be an "outside-type" reunion, with lots of options for sightseeing and shopping. The Banquet will be on July 3 and there will be a wreath-laying at The Wall.

The National Fireworks Display and Concert will be on July 4, a Tuesday.

Tips on recruiting VHPA members

Here is an easy way to recruit new VHPA members . . . it works!

1. Print the following short notice:

MILITARY REUNION NOTICE

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) will hold it's 17th Annual Reunion in Washington, DC, July 1-4, 2000. For information, call: (your name) (your home telephone number, with area code).

(Use your phone number, not your e-mail, as you want to talk directly to the caller)

2. Mail or deliver this notice to all your local newspapers. Most will have a "Reunions" column, but NOT a "Recruiting or Information" column.

3. Most of the VHPA members who see the notice in the paper will not call, as they already have the reunion information. But the non-members will call. That is the "secret" to this method.

4. When a non-member calls and talks with you about Vietnam and helicopters, make notes of his name, address, phone number, unit and dates "in-country", and his e-mail. Tell him about VHPA, the reunions, the Newsletter and especially the Membership Directory.

5. Tell the non-member that VHPA is having a membership contest and you would like to get credit for recruiting him.

6. Send him a VHPA membership application (photocopied from a recent Newsletter), AND a self-addressed envelope, so he can mail

the application back to YOU for "processing" to VHPA. (when received, mail it ASAP to HQs)

7. If the non-member does not send the application back to you soon, follow up in a month, by e-mail or phone, saying that you are "standing by" to hear from him.

8. The other "secret" to this recruiting method is the self-addressed envelope back to you, it personalizes the contact and the "bond" that you formed during the initial phone call.

Try it . . . it has worked for me for two years. Please contact me with any questions or if you have other recruiting ideas.

Don Joyce

Junior member at large Meet VHPA

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Database Committee busy at reunion

What a great reunion in Nashville! I was constantly busy helping people answer 30-year-old questions and helping them improve the accuracy and expand the volume of our experiences as recorded in our databases.

New this year was the KIA banner. This 3-by-10-foot, laminated banner contains all 4,896 helicopter crew members (2,202 pilots) who died as the result of the Vietnam War.

Each name, with rank and unit, is listed in order by the incident date which caused the crew members' death. It was prominently displayed at the VHCMA reunion in Denver and the VHPA reunion in Nashville, and was mentioned in both business meetings.

It also was used for the VHPA church service on Sunday morning. It shows the enormity of our sacrifice. This banner is available for loan to any member hosting a mini-reunion or membership recruiting event.

Each year is a wide swing of emotion from having to inform someone his best friend from Vietnam died recently to helping a company commander discover that one of his pilots whom he thought for 30 years was killed in Vietnam actually survived and is alive and well today.

To providing a phone number for a long-lost buddy or an accident report to a still grieving mother looking for a reason why her son's coffin was sealed.

The joy of meeting Lisa Vad who got her father's stolen ring returned because of our databases and extensive communications' network.

And listening to two crew chiefs meeting for the first time in 30 years, describe how one rescued the other in Cambodia.

Life is good!

A new database this year consists of 2.7 million names of people who served in the Vietnam War. It was compiled by the Pentagon at the request of Congress.

I have received a subset of this database by helicopter pilot MOS



Don Joyce photo

Gary Roush stands at attention as his daughter, Gretchen, an Army JAG captain stationed at Fort Hood, TX, reads orders conferring missing Air Medals on Roush 30 years after he earned them. Beside Gretchen is retired Lt. Gen. Hubert G. Smith.

codes from all services. This subset consists of about 40,000 names with 86 percent being Army pilots consistent with the percent killed (1,884 Army out of 2,202 total pilots killed).

Not only will this new database help us find more members, but it also helps to cull out the fakes and wannabes.

A question I am asked frequently is how many helicopters flew in Vietnam (12,000) and how many were destroyed (about half or 6,000). You LOH drivers had 69 percent of your helicopters destroyed. More on this will be published in future newsletters as I get through the analysis of nearly 500,000 records.

One place we need help is recording stories. Everyone who served as a helicopter crew member has at least one experience that should be recorded as part of our history.

While nearly everyone is willing to tell their story, very few people take the time to actually write them down. If they are not written, they will be lost forever.

What we need are a few good men like Mike Law, Walker Jones and Mike Sloniker who are willing to take the time and make the effort to write down these stories.

You can focus on a battle like Sloniker is doing on the Easter Offensive or you can focus on shoot-downs like Jones has done or specific areas of the country like Law has done.

Picture yourself as a storyteller or editor recording history. If you are willing and able to help with this important effort, please contact Sloniker or me.

We have an enormous amount of information that has not been published. So members can have quick and easy access to it, we have begun an effort to figure out a way to make it available in searchable format on CD-ROM or on the Internet.

Some of the information related to KIAs already is available on our website at <http://www.vhpa.org> and many of the helicopter history records are available on individual unit websites.

Our first attempt at a CD-ROM will be made with this year's membership directory.

The intent is to publish a flight class list which consists of about 36,000 names.

None of these efforts will include current contact information so as to avoid unwanted mailing lists.

My daughter and her husband, both Army JAG captains at Fort Hood, TX, have attended the past three VHPA reunions.

When they asked me to be sure to include them next year, I asked them why they come to spend time with us old folks. Their answer, without hesitation, was they want to learn first hand America's military history.

Where else can they meet and

See JAG OFFICERS, Page 18

JAG officers wanted to meet heroes

Continued from Page 17

speak to genuine American heroes — men who were awarded the Medal of Honor or Distinguished Flying Cross, spent time as prisoners of war, and/or felt first hand the intense fears and horror of battle. Men who are very generous with their stories (as well as their money).

Where else can they experience, feel and hear the enormous patriotism that Vietnam War veterans have for America than to experience this year's banquet.

I would like to thank Dave Rittman for the great job he did in organizing the vendor space this year. Everything was set up and ready to go without a hitch and he was readily available to troubleshoot the few problems that did arise. Also, Dave, thanks for the ride to the airport.

And the reunion committee, Mid-South Chapter led by Mike Haley "who threw a party for 2,000 of their closest friends who were willing to come 'dutch treat.'"

I especially want to thank Tom Payne for all of the recognition I received this year. Not only at the business meeting, but also at the banquet where he provided the opportunity for Lt. Gen. (retired) Hubert G. Smith to present my 30-year overdue Air Medals. Thanks, Hugh.

In part, Gen. Smith said: "Heroes are people willing to stand up and be counted when their country calls. Those willing to put their lives on the line for their country. Those who display valor through service to country . . . You Vietnam-era helicopter pilots are heroes. All of you are very special — my heroes. I thank you for your

service. Please share your experiences and stories so our youngsters will know how good you really were . . . and are. Welcome home."

This made wife Susan's and a lot of other eyes "sweat."

Then came the order from Gen. Smith, "Post the order" and my daughter, Capt. Gretchen in her dress blues, called for attention and read the order.

What an honor!

I am proud to be a member of such an honorable, patriotic organization! I am proud to be one of you. I am proud to be a Vietnam veteran and proud to be an American.

It is an honor to collect, record and preserve your history.

Gary Roush

Chairman, Database Committee
webmaster@vhpa.org

VHPPA briefs

Deadline near for renewals

Members who have received their dues renewal notices for June, July or August need to pay their dues and have it at the VHPPA Headquarters office so it can be posted before Aug. 15.

That is the cutoff date for the gathering of information to be used in the 1999 Membership Directory.

Ever heard the saying, "Ya' snooze, ya' lose"? Well, get your dues in ASAP so you will be shown as current

and so you will automatically receive your 1999 Directory.

Gettin' short? Call headquarters at (800) 505-VHPPA and read off your Visa or MasterCard number. Or use e-mail and send the info, including full name, mailing address, card number and expiration date to *hq@vhpa.org* to beat the mailman.

Reservations available in August

After Aug. 10, you may call the Renaissance Hotel with your reservations for next year's reunion in Washington, DC. VHPPA rates are about 33 percent off the regular rate.

Do you have a D.F.C.?

Call or write us for information

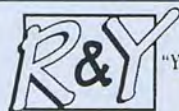
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Meet VHPA member No. 10,000!

TOM PAYNE

Sixteen years and 10,000 members is pretty impressive for an organization that has never really advertised its existence, but instead has relied mainly on word of mouth.

About 3½ weeks before the Nashville reunion, a registration arrived at VHPA Headquarters in Sacramento which included an application for membership.

The applications was from Allen G. Wilfley of New Palestine, IN. Gary, as he is known by his friends, had heard about the VHPA for about 10 years and had considered joining several times.

Some of his fellow pilots and friends from National Guard days had insisted it was a good and fun group. However, Gary put off the decision, mainly because of other things in his life such as family, work and hobbies.

"I knew that my friend Dan Pegg, VHPA Life member from Jasper, TN, had been a member for a long time and he kept encouraging me to join and showing me the Newsletters."

When Gary was in the Indiana National Guard as a pilot, there was a real closeness between the pilots who had flown in Vietnam and he saw that.

However, family and work took precedence, but Gary continued to

read copies of The VHPA Newsletter when friends let him see them on Guard weekends.

Allen Gary Wilfley grew up in the Indianapolis area near Fort Benjamin Harrison. He attended one year of college and worked to help put himself through school.

Finding he was not really ready for college, Gary joined the Naval Reserve and was supposed to attend Naval Radar School, but funding dried up. He enlisted in the Army and qualified for flight school in 1969.

He was assigned to the WOC program and arrived at Fort Wolters to be assigned to Class 70-1, training in the TH-55.

Completing flight school, he arrived in RVN in April 1970 and was assigned to the 116th Assault Helicopter Company, known as the "Hornets." After about two months Gary became a gunship pilot with the 116th "Stingers" and flew for the next 20 months as a Stinger in mainly III and IV Corps.

Late in his tour, the 116th was redeployed to Chu Lai in I Corps to support the Americal Division.

In all, Gary Wilfley served 21 months straight, extending several times. He returned to the United States and Fort Lewis in November 1971 where he ETS'ed from the Army.

After ETS, Gary returned to his beloved Indiana and the Indianapolis area, where he worked as an electrician apprentice. He eventually was able to earn a job with a Ford Motor Co. parts plant and has been there for more than 22 years.

Gary and his wife Sandy have two children, Mathew, 24, and Beth Ann, 22, a recent graduate of Ball State University.

Gary loves to do woodworking in his own shop and builds furniture for his family and friends. He also is a golfer and tries his hand at it when ever he can.

"A couple years ago, I met a guy who came to our plant with a contract company from Michigan. Robert Dawson and I discovered we each had flown helicopters in Vietnam. Robert began to encourage me to join the VHPA, so I once again heard about and was interested in the organization. I owe my eventual joining to Robert and I am glad I joined.

"My first reunion was Nashville and I had a great time. I met several flight school buddies and former 116th Hornets. I'm hooked and plan to be at as many future reunions as I can."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Payne is the immediate past president of the VHPA. His e-mail address is:

[REDACTED]

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 briefs

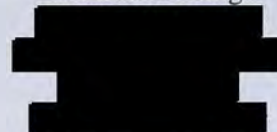
California members sought

According to VHPA, there are over 400 active members residing in the greater Los Angeles area. It would take 30 members to start a Southern California Chapter of VHPA.

We identified a few prospective members at Nashville, we need more.

If you are interested in actively helping to start a chapter or just in participating, please contact:

Dana M. Young



Members support history of 1972 Easter Offensive

I want to thank all those who have responded to my request for information from the last newsletter concerning the Easter Offensive '72 history.

I have received huge loads of information via e-mail, fax, letters, pictures, slides and audio tapes. Many folks stopped by the table I shared with Gary Roush at Nashville.

It was extremely rewarding to hear the participants tell their stories. When an issue of accuracy came up, they would go search around the AO, drag the other participant in, and we were really get some detail.

I am still in awe of George Kerr's story with the Joker Cobra's of the 48th, and how the F/4 Cobras on the opposite side of the battle, recalled with great accuracy, the valor displayed by Kerr. You have to read the VHPA Directory to get the detail.

Many thanks to all who stopped by. Some of whom were:

- John Parker of F/79 Aerial Rocket Artillery and H/17 Cav.
 - Mike Austin and Tim Sprouse of F/8 Cav.
 - Buffalo Bob Monette of F/9 Cav.
 - Mike Sheuerman, Forrest Snider and Bill Reeder of the 361st Aerial Weapons Company.
 - George Kerr of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company.
 - Scott Fenwick of the 1st Aerial TOW team.
 - Jim Hesselbein of H/17 Cav.
 - Mike Woods, Pappy Jones and all the F/4 Cav folks.
 - Rock Rhoads of the 62nd Aviation Company.
 - Tony D'Aguillo and Dan Fox of D 229 Cav.
 - Dale Kemp and John Wyatt of the 478th Heavy Helicopter Company.
- Mike Sloniker, VHPA historian

VHPA briefs

191st AHC plans reunion

"Boomerangs" and "Bounty Hunters" of the 191st Assault Helicopter Company will have their third reunion Sept. 17-19 at the Galt House in Louisville, KY. Hotel reservations may be made by calling ([REDACTED]).

Contact: Jack E. Tiesing, 341 Chanda Lane, New Albany, IN 47150. Phone: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Did you have Seabee experience?

I am seeking experiences other service members had with Seabees.

David W. Schill
[REDACTED]

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Federal law prohibits the payment of fees by a veteran to an attorney prior to the veteran receiving a final, negative decision from the Board of Veterans Appeals, so I am unable to take such cases unless my fee is paid by someone other than the veteran.

Committee seeks more rooms in DC

JOHN POWELL

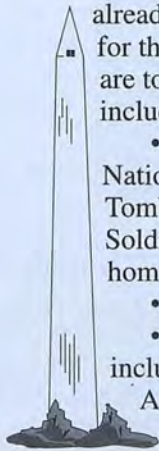
I know that everyone is still in recovery from Nashville, but it's time to look ahead to Washington, DC — 2000.

In his *From the President* column, Bob Smith mentions the room problem. We have only 600 rooms in the Renaissance (202) 898-9000 at \$84 and 200 rooms in the Marriott Metro (202) 737-2200 at \$95.

The committee is trying to find more, but there are no guarantees. Don't wait to make reservations!

Several events already are planned for the reunion, and more are to come. They include:

- Tours of Arlington National Cemetery, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Robert E. Lee's home.
- Tour of Mt. Vernon.
- Smithsonian tour, to include the National Archives.
- Tour of local sites such as the National Zoo, The Holocaust Museum, The Treasury, etc.
- Shopping tour at Potomac Mills (the largest outlet mall).
- Golf tournament.



One of the special events scheduled is a wreath-laying ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial.

The date is still undecided, but probably will be July 4.

One of the things we can do at the 2000 Reunion is book members into non-scheduled activities such as plays

and concerts at the Kennedy Center, Constitution Hall and Ford's Theater. The committee also is planning some surprises that will make this the most memorable reunion ever.

In the past, there has been an interest in purchasing limited edition prints.

This year the DC gaggle would like to produce one that is VHPA specific and would allow us to donate the original oil painting to the new museum.



If anybody likes this idea, please let us know;

also, if you have a suggestion as to what the painting/print should depict, let us know.

As a last item, to those who will arrive before July 1, there will be a complete schedule of things to see and do from June 28-30, so come early!

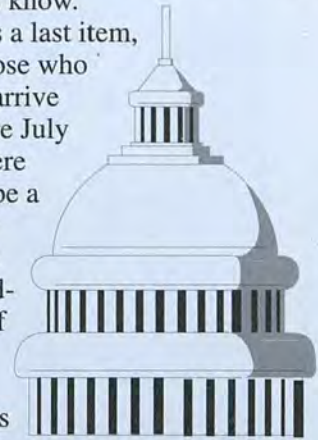
I did not mention the Fourth itself, but for those who stay, the fireworks display here is beyond spectacular (4,000-5,000 rockets). It is better than when the ammo dump blew up at DaNang.

Additionally, the concert on the mall that precedes the fireworks display is the best patriotic musical program you'll ever see.

Anyone is welcome to offer suggestions to us.

Jim "Goldie" Goldthorpe, our 2000 chairman, can be reached at [redacted] or at [redacted]

I can be reached at [redacted] or [redacted]



VHPA briefs

Huey part of Labor Day parade

The California Chapter North again will be riding on the Huey in the Labor Day parade in East Nicolaus, CA.

Contact Ken Kinne, [redacted] m or [redacted] details on this old time, small town, farm community parade and barbecue.

To get the info and sign up for a really fun whitewater raft trip in the Sierras during September, contact Ken Fritz, [redacted], [redacted].

Even if you haven't joined the chapter, come and join us for some clean, family fun and a barbecue in the mountains after the trip. Maybe it won't rain on us this year!

The Christmas party probably will be at the same place in Sacramento this year and we need to begin getting it together with the same great DJ.

To help George Larson get it together, please offer some help. [redacted], [redacted]. He really needs some help.

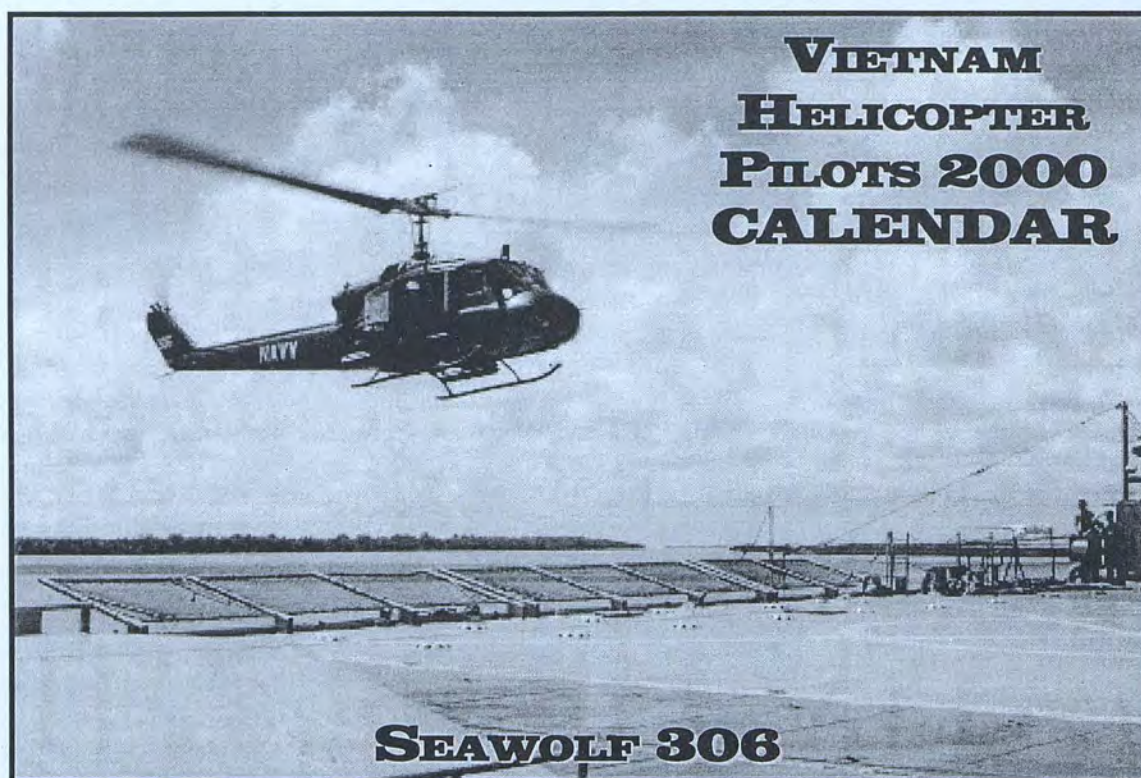
Price drops on 1999 calendars

Now only \$8 each. Shipping and handling of \$5 will cover up to two calendars.

Call (800) 505-VHPA now to order and get a collector's item that is useful and worth keeping.

Check the product order form in this newsletter for other items VHPA has made available so you can keep the world straight on how you were Above The Finest doing a great a job every day as a Vietnam Helicopter Pilot.

VHPA 2000 CALENDAR



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- Feature photos submitted by VHPA members
- Annual VHPA Reunion listed in red
- VHPA Calendars become collectibles!
- Includes the names and units of the 2,173 helicopter pilots killed or declared MIA from 1961-75; each is listed on the date of death or disappearance
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VHPA pilot saluted as national hero

Monday, April 12, started out like any other workday for Boyd Clines. Boyd, 52, is a VHPA member and helicopter pilot for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

By the time Boyd was donning his gray and green DNR captain's uniform to go to work Monday morning, Ivers Sims, 49, was already in the cab of his 220-foot Paco crane.

Sims is an operating engineer and, for the past six months, had been operating the huge construction crane at a renovation site in the old milltown district of downtown Atlanta known as Cabagetown.

The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill was undergoing a \$45 million renovation to be converted into 150 loft apartments. The five-story mill is a rambling complex of buildings that was built in 1881 and closed down in 1977.

Across town, Matt Moseley, who is 30 but looks much younger, had signed in for his 24-hour shift at Station 4 of the Atlanta Fire Department.

Matt is something more than a firefighter. He is a member of the elite Squad 4 — specialists in hazardous materials and what is euphemistically known as "heavy rescue."

In addition to fighting fires, the men of Squad 4 undergo intensive training in their specialties. They are considered the Navy Seals of the Atlanta Fire Department and are called into action for the most dangerous fire rescues.

Sims controls the enormous tower crane with a little joystick. Getting his signals by radio, Sims can swing the crane around in a 180-degree arc in less than 30 seconds. He can trolley the crane's arm forward and back-



Boyd Clines, a pilot with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

ward and, of course, raise and lower the cable with the enormous hook on the end.

On this Monday, workmen had been removing the tar paper-and-gravel roof of Mill No. 1. They shoveled gravel and debris into a 4 by 10-foot skid pan. When the pan was full, they would attach the crane's hook to it and signal Sims to guide it to a trash bin.

Sims stayed in the crane for lunch rather than make the arduous 220-foot climb twice in one day. After lunch he went back to hauling skids.

He hauled five more loads and the gravel portion of the roof was almost gone when Sims noticed white smoke coming from a three-foot hole in the tarpaper. He watched as workmen grabbed hoses and began squirting water down the hole.

The smoke was getting worse and Sims saw the men were trying to get the hose down a stairwell.

Just as the last man disappeared, he heard a sudden "whoosh" as orange flames erupted through the rooftop. Sims keyed the radio mike

and said, "Y'all got a fire on top of the building."

There was no answer.

Sims decided it was time to make that 220-foot climb after all, but when he looked down he saw his crane tower enveloped in flame. He was trapped.

At 2:35 p.m. all hell broke loose at Station 4. It seemed like the alarms would never quit.

The detached voice over the loudspeaker began dispatching. First it called for three engines and two truck companies, standard for a large, building fire. But there was more.

"Air 7" the voice called out. Air 7 is the truck that fills the firefighters' breathing apparatus.

"Medical engine" the voice crackled. This is the unit that carries advanced lifesaving equipment.

"Squad" came the command.

Matt Moseley and the other members of Squad 4 sprang into action, throwing their gear aboard the engine and hopping on. As the engine sped across the freeway overpass with siren screaming, the men could see clouds of smoke billowing up between two towering smokestacks.

"We got one," the men told each other. "Damn, we really got one."

They were right. Within minutes this would become Atlanta's biggest fire in 15 years. Before it was over, 110 firefighters, 35 engines and 10 ladder trucks would battle the blaze.

The Atlanta Police and Fulton County sheriff's departments also sent dozens of officers. And, on this day, Boyd Clines and Matt Moseley would become heroes.

Squad 4 arrived at the scene and entered the burning building. When

See 'MANAGEABLE,' Page 24

'Manageable' fire found in room

Continued from Page 23

they reached the fourth floor, they found what appeared to be a large trash fire in the cavernous, 50-by-75-yard room. It looked manageable, and they called for a ladder truck to extend its ladder to the window to provide water to extinguish the blaze.

Moseley walked around to the side of the fire with his lieutenant to assess the situation and glanced up.

"Look up there," Moseley shouted. "It's coming through the floor!" Burning embers were coming from a fire that was raging on the fifth floor.

"Get up there and check it out," The lieutenant ordered.

Moseley and another firefighter pounded up the stairs, rounded the corner and entered the room where they were stopped by a blast of intense heat.

Behind a cloud of thick black smoke that filled the room, they could see a menacing, orange glow.

Without a word, the two men turned and raced back down the rotting wooden stairs. On the way, they met other firefighters running toward them.

"Get off the floor!" they yelled. "Everybody out!"

By the time the men had reached the third floor, they could hear the fifth floor collapsing onto the fourth floor, where they had been seconds earlier. With no chance now of saving the mill, the men of Squad 4 could only hope to save themselves as they poured out into the street to escape the crumbling inferno.

It was about this time someone noticed Sims stranded on top of the crane. The rescue call went out.

Sims' crane had lost its electrical power and the wind had whipped the crane around like a giant windsock until it was pointed south. The cab



WO Boyd Clines stands beside a Huey during his tour as a slick pilot in Vietnam.

was getting hot.

Sims said a small prayer. The radio crackled, "Ivers, just hang on." The site superintendent told him, "We're gonna have to get a helicopter to get you down."

"OK," Sims grunted.

It was now almost an hour since Sims had noticed the first puffs of white smoke. It was getting too hot to stay in the cab and the heat forced him to climb up several steps to the counter deck above. Below, the metal structure of the crane was beginning to melt.

At the Fulton County/Charlie Brown Airport, Clines had spent the morning doing routine paperwork. His crew chief and mechanic, Larry Rogers, had already done a preflight inspection of the helicopters and Boyd was just finishing his own visu-

al check when they got the word.

Someone was hollering on WSB Radio for a helicopter to get a man off a crane. Rogers ran to get Clines. DNR owns the only rescue helicopter in the state.

"Get ready," Clines said. By the time he pulled his flight suit on over his uniform, Rogers, moving with the ease born of countless hours of training, had taken the doors off the Bell Long Ranger L-4. Clines and Rogers were pulling pitch 10 minutes after getting the rescue call.

As soon as Moseley spotted a man peering over the crane's railing, he and another squad member began putting on their rescue harnesses.

On the crane's counter deck, Sims feet, protected only by light boots, were getting hot. He keyed his mike to talk to the superintendent. "Hey, Keith, when's that helicopter coming?"

"They're gonna get it here quick as they can," Keith

replied.

The heat was intense and forced Sims away from the edge and on to the pile of concrete counterweights. Lying on his stomach, he decided it was time for another small prayer.

When Sims looked up, he saw three helicopters circling. Two made hesitant runs, but then backed off.

The third, a news chopper, tried to come close enough for him to climb aboard, but the heat was too fierce. Sims could not even bear to extend his arm over the edge of the concrete weights.

Looking back down, Sims faced the probability he was about to die.

Once airborne, Clines tuned the VHF radio to 123.02, the common helicopter frequency.

"35NR is off from Fulton County

See BLAZE, Page 25

Blaze created its own turbulence

Continued from Page 24

headed toward the fire," he transmitted. Four minutes later, he was overhead and made a recon pass over the inferno.

It was a cool, windy day with gusts up to 40 mph, and the fire was creating its own turbulence. He circled briefly to gauge the wind, heat and turbulence.

Clines and Rogers watched as the gondola of the crane suddenly burst into flames.

Clines brought 35NR down on the grass of a make-do LZ where the rescue firefighters were getting ready.

"Let's go," Clines said. "Time's wasting."

Rogers laid out a 50-foot, one-inch, nylon rope and attached it to another 30-foot length with half-inch, steel carabiners. One end of the rope was connected to the Long Ranger's belly band and then to the rescue hook. The other end was hooked to

Matt Moseley's harness.

This was not the first "hot extraction" Clines had made. He had done a lot of "string" rescues of Special Forces teams in Cambodia and Laos.

Three years earlier, he had used the same long-line technique to rescue a rafter stranded on an island amidst the rising floodwaters of Sweetwater Creek.

Seven minutes after landing, Clines lifted off. At an 80-foot hover, he felt the slight tug as the line came taut and lifted Moseley off the ground.

Clines rose slowly to 300 feet until Rogers, leaning out the open cargo door, attached by straps to his seat, told him he was high enough to clear all obstacles. Clines had to fly slowly to keep Moseley from swinging like a pendulum.

As they came over the mill, Rogers had to lower his helmet visor to protect his face from the heat. Eighty

feet below, Moseley turned his face into his shoulder for protection.

Clines guided the Long Ranger through the worst of the turbulence before positioning over the crane into the wind. Although gusting strongly, the wind gave added lift. At that point, Clines could no longer see below and was totally dependent upon his crew chief.

Rogers kept up a steady stream of instructions. "Up, up a little more . . . good, good . . . left now, more to the left . . . ah, little too much, come right a bit, right, right . . . good, that's good, lookin' good . . ." He gingerly talked Clines down until Moseley could grab a cable on top of the crane and get aboard.

"I'm coming to get you," Moseley called out to Sims.

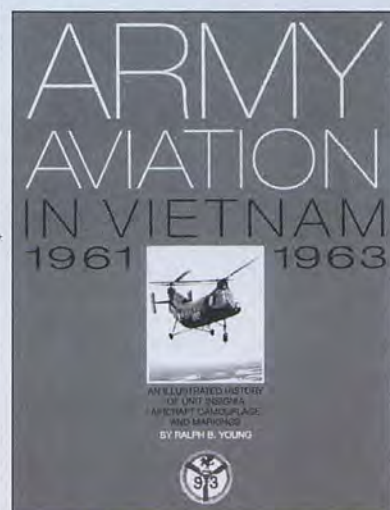
"He's on the crane! He's on the crane!" Rogers told Clines. "Careful, he's still hooked up!"

See CLINES, Page 26

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Clines held steady, 300-foot hover

Continued from Page 25

Clines blinked. He had expected Moseley to unhook himself while he was preparing Sims. Remaining connected meant Clines had to give him just the right amount of slack to move around, but not enough to get entangled in the crane.

Any sudden movement could send Sims into the fiery inferno raging below. Moseley got hold of Sims. As hot as it was, Clines seemed to have ice water in his veins as he held a perfect 300-foot hover for long moments. The chin bubble started to melt.

Moseley cracked a joke to Sims about getting off work early to relax him as he rigged the rescue harness. Sims got into the harness and Moseley attached it to a carabiner above his head.

Finally, the firefighter looked up to Rogers and gave a thumbs up.

"They're ready," Rogers called. "Bring 'em up now. We got 'em."

Slowly, Clines pulled the Long Ranger up, then carefully maneuvered around the blaze. Dangling 80-feet beneath the chopper, Moseley and Sims could hear the cheers of the

crowd below.

Clines carefully deposited his fragile cargo on the grassy LZ, then landed the Ranger. Quick hands unhooked Sims and rushed him to a stretcher. At the hospital, doctors pronounced him unharmed. The first thing he said was he wanted a Coca-Cola.

Moseley's hands began to shake as the adrenaline rush faded. Hands pounded his back, but all he wanted was a drink of water.

Clines merely raised his right eyebrow and grinned his small, ironic grin when the media descended upon him. Clines told everyone how smooth it had gone and that it was no big deal. Perhaps not for a man who had begun his flying career in Hueys, rescuing shot-up Ranger and Special Forces units from hot LZ's in Southeast Asian countries they weren't even supposed to be in. Compared to that, the now-famous Atlanta mill fire was just a piece of cake.

"Nobody was shooting at me," he explained quietly.

This event captured the attention of the nation. CNN picked up live coverage by local Atlanta stations and broadcast the daring rescue live to

hundreds of thousands of viewers.

In addition to extensive coverage in major newspapers by the Associated Press and United Press International, it became the feature segment on Dateline and was covered by the Today Show, BBC, the Tonight Show, People Magazine and Reader's Digest, among others.

Boyd received calls of congratulations from the mayor of Atlanta, the governor of Georgia and Vice President Al Gore, and has received numerous honors.

Although it was Boyd Clines who got the call and flew into harm's way to make a dramatic rescue, he flew for all of us. On that day, he represented every one of us who answered the call. He was every pilot who ever landed in a hot LZ, took fire or made a hot extraction.

On April 12, he flew for us that came back alive as well as for those who didn't. Boyd is a credit to all Vietnam helicopter pilots. We salute you Boyd Clines.

Anthony J. Gonzalez
Black Widow 11

Clines flew with 'Ghostriders' in Vietnam

Boyd Clines was born Jan. 17, 1947, in Walnut Ridge, AR, where he lived until he was 12 before moving to Mendota, IL.

He entered active duty in April 1966 and attended flight school at Fort Wolters and Fort Rucker with Warrant Officer Candidate classes 67-3 and 67-5.

Boyd served in Vietnam from June 1967 to June 1968 and flew slicks with the 189th Assault Helicopter Company "Ghostriders" at Camp Holloway. He flew 1,100 combat hours and is the recipient of 28 Air Medals and the Purple Heart.

Boyd was shot in the ankle after touching down in an LZ where they were ambushed by heavy AK-47 fire. The A/C was severely wounded and,

although badly wounded as well, Boyd managed to fly the shot-up aircraft out of the hot LZ and was able to get to the closest surgical unit, where the pilot was saved.

After Vietnam, Boyd was a tactics IP at Fort Stewart for two years. In 1970, he joined the National Guard and moved to Winder, GA, where he attended the University of Georgia and graduated with a business degree in management.

While in the Guard, Boyd became qualified in fixed-wing and multi-engine, and attended the Mohawk transition course.

After leaving Winder in June 1973, Clines flew for the Atlanta Police Department and, in May 1976, started flying for the Fulton County Police

Department.

In 1979, Boyd joined the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, where he is a conservation captain and pilot. Boyd retired as a CW4 after 5 years active duty, 22 years National Guard service and 2 years IRR.

Boyd has logged 17,000 hours flight time, over 12,000 of which is rotary wing.

He lives in Douglas County, GA, with his wife, Deidre, and daughters Amy and Emily.

Boyd also has a new nickname. They used to call him "Rambo," but after the daring fire rescue on April 12 and the subsequent recognition, he is now affectionately known around the hangar as "Hollywood."

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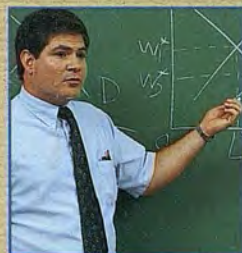
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