



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

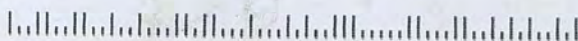
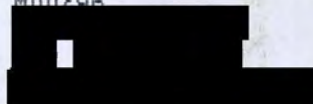
July/August 1998 Vol. 16, No. 4



Bill Junkins photo

An Army Skycrane carries an F-4 Phantom after its crew punched out at night during a heavy rain while returning to Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base from a mission over Hanoi in 1972. The F-4 crew was killed.

67*5*****ALL FOR ADC 360
M00296



From the President

Thank you VHPA members for the chance to serve as your president for the 1998-99 term.

I can think of no better organization I would rather serve, than the VHPA — brothers who I RESPECT for the job we did when CALLED by our country. Sure, we wished we didn't have to go; but we did and we accomplished the job with HONOR.

So, let us NEVER FORGET what we did or those who DIED beside us so that we could enjoy the life we do in the greatest country on God's green Earth, and the most caring nation thus far in human history.

Now that the dust has settled, the hard work of the Fort Wolters Chapter is clearly evident. A salute to each and every volunteer (especially, the spouses) for the great job.

The FTW Reunion was the very LARGEST yet in the 15-year history of our annual get-togethers. Almost 20 percent of those attending were FNGs. This means that, of the 1,200 pilots registering, about 250 were present for the FIRST time.

Perhaps our return to Fort Wolters was the big draw, or perhaps a glimpse of our mortality was the reason. But one thing was very evident, there are a lot of our fellow pilots out there who have NEVER heard of us or never ATTENDED even one reunion. While that may be hard to believe, we heard it over and over again among the FNGs.

As I was sitting on the bus enroute to Fort Wolters, I was struck with the thought that "this could be the last time we ever go to Fort Wolters again as a group." I hope not, because the place has a magical aura about it which is unexplainable except in very personal terms ("my kid was born there" or "my wife and I were married there").

The fantastic job done by all our friends in Mineral Wells was very much appreciated. I was at the 1988 reunion when we went "Back to the Beginning" and many of the same folks were still there this year, telling us how much we mean to them and their town.

I was emotionally touched by how hard they were working in the mess hall and at The Moving Wall to make our visit a joy.

Even Col. Casper was "humping" the ice bags as I went through the food line in the mess hall. Thank you Col. Casper and all the other friends who were there, for

us. I look forward to a return visit in 10 years.

The VHPA is, I believe, poised for large growth in membership over the next 10 years. With all of us having reached, or soon to reach, retirement and more leisurely lifestyles, we will have the time and funds needed to attend the reunions of the future.

We are seeing a growth in VHPA chapters and specific unit mini-reunions at our annual reunions. This is good and we need to be prepared for a swelling in our members.

Do your part by speaking out in your city and neighborhood about what the VHPA means to you and what it can do for the ex-pilot who thinks we are a group of "victimized nuts." Neither you nor I would be members of the VHPA if it were filled with this kind of attitude.

Over the years, VHPA support has been provided by some people and business without noise and fanfare.

I wanted to tell you, if you didn't hear the presentation at the Banquet, that our good friend Tom Pettit and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University continue to support one of the most important cornerstones of our membership benefits — *The VHPA Newsletter*.

Look at the back cover, right now. See the beautiful color ad for Embry-Riddle and you will see just how much their support means. Thanks, Tom Pettit, for all the support and encouragement you and your employer have provided. With you, we look forward to the future.

Many of our kids and grandkids will want to make a career of flying helicopters or airplanes, no doubt.

If you or some business would like to join us and reach a very select audience, see our Newsletter editor, Jack Swickard, for details.

Work is already under way to prepare Nashville for our arrival next year. Our first reunion in the Country Music Capital of the World promises to be VERY different from those in the past.

Mike Haley and his corps of warrior volunteers are sitting down with suppliers and entertainers, as we speak, to hammer out the details.

If you live in the Nashville area and can help them, call Mike at [REDACTED]. You might lose some sleep, but the satisfaction gained will more than make up for the loss.

Have a great rest of summer.

— Tom Payne, President
TomPayne@vhpa.org

Classified ads

POSITION WANTED: Experienced helicopter pilot looking for a position in the areas of EMS, natural resources or public service. Experience: Regular Army, Indiana National Guard, Class 68-27. Call Bill Resor at [REDACTED]

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VHPA serious about members' privacy

Privacy is a very important consideration in today's computerized database/e-mail world. It seems as though nothing can be kept confidential these days.

There is a growing trend to share everything we know with all of those who ask, no matter who they are and no matter what their purpose for asking.

The VHPA is dedicated to protecting the privacy of its members. This was one of the first rules set down by the early members of the association and it is still one of the mainstays of the organization.

When you join, your name is kept confidential. VHPA members' names and addresses are never sold. They are only used for the distribution of materials (Newsletters, membership directories, calendars, historical publications, etc.) which have been sanctioned by your elected VHPA council members.

This association is not and never has been in the business of collecting names for mailing lists.

When vendors are permitted to attend a reunion, they must be vendors of items your elected council members feel will be of interest to

you — a Vietnam helicopter pilot.

No junk, no slacks, no lawn mowers, no solicitors. Just good quality items of interest and in keeping with our theme: Camaraderie amongst those who are Above The Finest, whether they flew for the Army, Navy, Marines or Air Force — U.S. or allied forces.

Vendors are restricted from selling your name as part of a mailing list. If it happens, contact the VHPA Executive Council and let it know the specifics so the situation may be properly addressed.

— Ken Fritz, PR chairman

Missile system predated TOW

You guys keep sending me newsletters and I guess I'll have to join up again.

In the meantime, I was reading the May/June issue and the article by Glenn Brown "Flying SS-11 'Hog' almost punishment."

Well, I used to know a lot about that system and wanted to add my two cents.

The M-22 system was the helicopter version of the ground based SS-11 system. These were pre-TOW, first-generation missiles. To hit anything, the gunner had to guide the missile all the way to the target.

In early 1969, I took over the Department of Tactics' Anti-tank Wire-guided Missile Branch, at Fort Rucker. We trained the M-22 gunnery program for the Army.

Our annual student load was 24 students, four per class, six classes per year. In short, there weren't many school-trained M-22 gunners. Many of those we trained were assigned to non-missile units, which was typical for the personnel weenies of the time.

The "standard" system consisted of two booms, one per side, with three missiles mounted on each boom. There was a fire-control unit, usually mounted on the cargo floor just behind the console; the gunner's sight mounted over the left pilot; and a joy stick mounted to the right arm rest of the left seat.

The missiles were powered by two motors. The booster motor was basically a rocket motor that fired as the missile launched.

The gunner had no control when the booster motor was operating. It was important the pilot in the right seat, who flew the aircraft during firing, had the aircraft in trim and pointed at the target when the missile was fired.

That way the missile would be going in the right direction when the second motor engaged. That was the sustainer motor. It came into play about 200 meters in front of the aircraft.

The gunner could control the flight of the missile by moving the joy stick, which sent signals down the two wires playing out from the two wire bobbins on the missile.

The signals were received by the missile and small fingers were moved in front of the exhaust of the sustainer motor, causing the missile to turn, climb or descend.

If the wires broke or the batteries died or some other malfunction occurred, the missile was programmed to go down and right. Of course, if everything was working and the gunner didn't control the missile (e.g. firing in "stowed mode"), it could go anywhere.

The system that is described in the article was known as

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VHPA Products

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FAX CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (916) 966-8743

New VHPA bumper stickers	\$1/each	_____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Limited availability)	\$10/year (\$5 P&H each set)	_____
1994 VHPA Directory	\$10/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
1995 VHPA Directory	\$10/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
1997 VHPA Directory	\$10/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory — 352 pages	\$15/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
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1995-98 VHPA Calendar set (Limited availability)	\$20/set (\$6 P&H set)	_____
VHPA History Book, Vol. 1 Turner Publishing limited edition. Only a few left.	\$25/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____

GRAND TOTAL

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a "Maxwell" system. CWO Maxwell was a member of the Aerial Rocket Artillery with the 1st Cav.

There was a need for the M-22 in Vietnam, but that need was limited, so it was not prudent to tie up a gunship with this limited use weapon.

What Maxwell and his associates did was to graft the two outside M-22 missiles to the standard 6 by 24 rocket "pod." The 12 outside rocket tubes were not used or removed entirely. So the Maxwell became a dual purpose gunship.

If the system was working properly and the batteries were good, the real critical factor was the gunner.

I was branch chief (call sign "Lonesome Edsel 6") for 13 months from February 1969 through March 1970.

As the resident experts on the system, we would occasionally get requests for information for help with the Vietnam combat systems. Usually the units were trying to use the system, but didn't have a trained gunner or a test set or batteries.

We heard tales of units that decided to fire them in the "stowed mode."

Others were puzzled when we asked if they had tested the batteries. "What batteries? You mean these things need batteries?"

If the system was working properly and the batteries were good, the real critical factor was the gunner.

Systems were issued with firing simulators. The instructors and I would practice on the simulator for hours each day to maintain the needed hand-eye coordination to be able to fire the missile and hit the intended target. Fully one-third of the training program was simulator time. I can only guess if any simulators existed in Vietnam.

By the early '70s the TOW was in production and the M-22 became a hazy memory, along with Bird Dogs, H-13s and orange cotton flight suits.

Art Danby
Major, U.S. Army retired
67-14

Pilot meets instructor on Fort Wolters visit

What are the chances? In 1969, I was being held at Fort Polk after Boot Camp as a drill private because of a lawsuit pending heart murmur EKG reading.

Come on! I'm good and healthy. I can shoot the pimple off a fly's rear at 100 meters. I can run, not walk, the mile with full pack in combat boots. The 6-foot-4 first sergeant is still wide-eyed, open-jawed and speechless because some skinny, grinning, no-haired kid "happy danced" with him prior to leaving for Fort Wolters, Texas.

This question popped up again the day I was assigned to

my fifth pre-solo flight instructor.

Maybe I wasn't meant to earn Army aviator wings? My luck with flight instructors kept me wondering and struggling.

My first was a captain who learned that the flight commander could not fly (with students anymore). I had logged maybe four hours when the second went home on emergency leave.

The third fell off a ladder and broke flight status.

On Feb. 26, 1970, the fourth gave up to the fifth because I caused him great anxiety and foul odors during autorotation in my 13th hour of flight. I was still the only dry one leaving the Holiday Inn.

I met "Blacky," a civilian instructor with Southern, on Feb. 27, 1970. I did not know it, but he was the "Mr. Fix-it."

We did more than 100 autorotations in the first hour! OK, maybe 10. It took a man with a 1,000 students, not just a 1,000 hours, to say "No, No, No, look out here, not at that altimeter." "You'll be pulling pitch six feet under."

After an hour with Blacky, I was exhausted, my flight suit was a wetsuit, my head had exploded, my nerves were over-torqued, the controls were embossed with my hand imprints, and the TH-55 skids were worn to the oleo struts.

I remember Blacky saying, "I need a break, set it down over by the tower."

Man, I need a break too! A Coke is a good thing! I rolled to flight idle and started to unstrap. What? Stay strapped in!? Wow! I did it!! I did it!!

I bent both pedals while "happy dancing" on downwind!

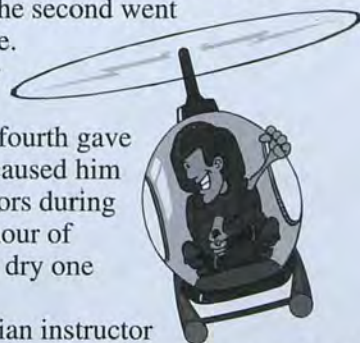
It was a good thing the engine kept running because the skids were worn completely away that day. I never flew with Blacky again.

What are the chances? Oct. 6, 1970, graduation Class 70-31, Camp Evans, I Corps, Vietnam with Thunder Aviation — Eyes of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne, Lam Son 719, 1,133 hours, and great camaraderie. An early DEROS.

I basically came home healthy except for a wild hair that still itches when I hear or feel rotors turning. OH-6 forever! OH-58 Never!

What are the chances? At our 15th Annual Reunion in Dallas/Fort Worth I met up with Dave Chevalier "Thunder 69."

I had told Dave the "Blacky" story and that my last stick time was in 1981. Dave made magic happen with one phone call! Dave and I flew together in Vietnam and, on July 3, 1998, with a great bunch of old real helicopter



I had told Dave the "Blacky" story and that my last stick time was in 1981. Dave made magic happen with one phone call!

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pilots shooting not too wobbly approaches to "Dempsey Field." What an experience!

What are the chances? At The Moving Wall I met an elderly gentleman who asked me when I went through "Wolters." "Early 1970," I said.

"Ya know, I had many students," he said.

I asked if he was military or civilian. "I flew for Southern," he said.

I told him, "Well, I had only one civilian instructor for a very short time and his name was Blacky."

His eyes lit up and, through a huge smile, he said, "That's me."

After 28 years, I felt like "happy dancing" again. "Hey everyone, this is Blacky! I told you all about him last night! 28 years ago, 82 years old, 37 years living in Mineral Wells! What are the chances? God, what a great reunion!

I might be more proud of my solo wings and hoverbug card than my Army aviator wings. If you knew Blacky, write or call him. I will again soon! His "happy dancing" needs a little more practice.

Robert "Blacky" L. Blackburn

He's a great guy! He made it clear that he no longer flies, but he's still on downwind, bending pedals in my heart! Blacky forever! Wash out, never!

Paul M. Cotter
Thunder 70

First VHPA reunion far better than hoped

I walked into the house at about 0200 this morning, and I wish I could capture all the thoughts about my first reunion. It was far better than I hoped.

The "disturbed Vietnam veterans" were conspicuous by their absence, and it was a huge gathering of men who shared and share a largely misunderstood emotional bond, and the women who share us with our friends.

I've heard stories of going to a reunion and meeting only one or two familiar people. Heli-Vets members don't go to reunions where they are strangers, and if there was the slightest disappointment, it was in not meeting more Heli-Vets members than I did.

I met well over a 100 old friends and comrades, and at least that many new ones.

The Crusaders (Apologies for you who were there when they were Blackhawks, but to me, we're Crusaders) really



After-action report needed on Huey

A few issues back in the Directory there was an after-action report that included Rodney Griffin. He was a crew member on a UH-1 that was shot down.

The pilot and some other crew members were captured. The AC or pilot was returned at the close of the war.

Hope this rings a bell with someone there. I live just a few miles from Rodney's hometown of Centralia, MO. I have either lost or loaned that directory to someone.

Could I get a copy of the after-action report for a man in Vermont who is still wearing the MIA bracelet for Rodney Griffin?

Bobby Holtzclaw

made the trip for Karen and me. They were like family.

Since 1972, I have perceived myself as a hunter/killer team leader. I think it was the fact that my troop lost a higher percentage of pilots, and it was in that role that I experienced the intensity of the spring offensive.

I explained my experience level with, "I flew slicks first tour," but I did not really think about how that first tour made me what I am. The Crusaders around us at the reunion brought that back to me.

With them, I felt a tremendous feeling of belonging, acceptance and love. That was confirmed by comments such as, "Well confidentially, none of us ever really liked you." With a memory that would shame an elephant, Jewett made me almost regret allowing him to fly with me when he was sober. I should have bought him off when I was younger, but who would suspect such a memory hiding in there?

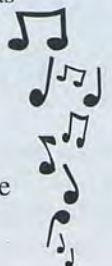
Sometimes I wished I could just say he was kidding about what he was saying, but I sort of remember some of it.

Eric Burdon's appearance was fantastic for me. I never sat through a rock concert until I was about 41. After 1968, I didn't like being around those crowds, and my hair was too short to fit in.

I was having at least as much fun as anyone else, and Karen and I were dancing when Burdon came on, so we got to be a few feet in front of him for his entire performance. It was fun, and it was exciting.

He was well received Saturday night, and he knew he was.

As I yelled out one of his first songs, the words and their meaning hit me solidly. I looked around behind me, and had to face forward quickly to keep the tears from coming down, as they are right now as I type this.



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More than a 1,000 men, and many of the women who actually supported them in the '60s, "singing" at the top of their lungs: "It's my life, and I'll do what I want."

That's the glory and the beauty of who we are, what we are, and how we are.

It was indeed our life, and the lives of our friends, but we did not do what we wanted. We did what was right. That is what defines us, and makes us so different from others. We did what was right.

More later, but for now, consider the impact of what we did, how we did it, how we were treated for doing it, and how we and our dead brothers are remembered for it.

Ronald N. Timberlake
187th AHC "Crusader 18"

Tay Ninh 1968-69

F Trp, 9th Cav, 1st Cav Div "Sabre 20"

Bear Cat and Bien Hoa 1971-72

Fort Campbell battalion seeking Kingsman pilots

If you flew for the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, please read this.

My name is Beau Brumfield. I'm a CW2 assault pilot in the 4/101st Airborne (Kingsman). I'm not a Vietnam vet, but I am interested in Army aviation history.

My battalion commander and I want to continue the relationship started a few years ago at the Vietnam-era Kingsman reunion here at Fort Campbell.

I am attempting to coordinate some support for the VHPA reunion in Nashville next year, but expand it to anyone who flew for the 101st. I'm sure the division commander will go for it, since he is a Vietnam vet, as well.

We plan to work with the VHPA to obtain a mailing list of those who flew for the 101st in Vietnam so we can get the word out in a personal way.

I would also like to extend an invitation to any and all of you to keep in touch. If you're ever in the area, feel free to come by and check out the flight line. Just give me a few days notice so I can make sure I'm here.

We really enjoy talking to you guys. There aren't too many left on active duty anymore.

Thanks for your support and your input.

CW2 Beau Brumfield



Pilots meet in strangest places during reunion

I had to share this one.

I was in the latrine at the banquet. Two guys were taking a leak and they recognized each other. They started whooping, and hollering as they obviously hadn't seen each since flight school.

Another wit says: "Look at this, they've been here three days and didn't recognize each others face, but take a leak together and they recognize each other!!! What's going on here?"

Everybody broke up laughing. About more than I could stand.



Bill Medsker

Member looking forward to 1999 Nashville reunion

We just finished up the 15th annual reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) at Fort Worth, TX. We had 1,148 pilots at the reunion and, with registered guests, there were over 2,000 people.

I'm looking forward to the Renaissance hotel in Nashville next summer; we had to use three hotels in Fort Worth and the convention center for the banquet.

So it looks great for Nashville and being back in one hotel for the first time in five years. It will mean we can reassign the funds we have been spending for a fleet of 15-25 buses.

I'm looking forward to exploring the city, and your websites have been very helpful. I hope you will get our reunion posted on the city activity calendars.

William J. Fitzgerald



Valuable Army aviation history on reel of tape

George R. Garrety added a valuable piece to the history of Army Aviation in Vietnam when he sent me a seven-inch reel of recording tape which contained some "never heard since" songs of the Blue Star Singers of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company recorded in the 1966-67 time period.

I met George at the Orlando VHPA reunion and he

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promised he'd send me the reel that he had not been able to listen to in 30 years.

Tapes recorded in VN are the real McCoy, not subject to memory loss or enhancement. George's tape (3 hours worth) validates that Army aviators created and sang songs, but also tells future generations what commercial music interested them. In this case, it was the New Christy Minstrels and "Warrior" songs by Oscar Brand.



Those of us who are interested in preserving the history of our efforts over there salute George for caring and sharing. His tape will now be digitized and archived in the Library of Congress. And the benefit for George is he can now listen to the music anytime he wants.

How about you? If you have a tape of historical value, please consider putting it where it will contribute and endure.

Thanks George,
Marty Heuer

174th Assault Helicopter Company
Member "The High Priced Help"

(Book in progress: Songs of Army Aviation in VN)

Reunion at Fort Worth extremely well done

I am not sure who to address this to, but I am sure it will find its way to the right place.

My wife and I just returned from Fort Worth and I must



TAC Phil Marshall, former VHPA president, "braces" a candidate at Fort Wolters.

give you and all the staff a hearty "WELL DONE."

I was one of the FNGs this year and, at first, I felt some offense. But not too much later (just seconds, I think) I saw the wisdom in your madness. I felt so at home everyone was a brother and a friend. My wife, who has no idea of what this is all about, felt like a sister.

I know there are going to be many stories to tell, but I must relate to special ones for me. I met an old classmate I haven't seen in 32 years. This alone made the trip worth it all. I was "braced" by the TAC in the mess. This also hasn't happened for over 32 years.

Most of all, I met people coming and going, and the trip was more than I ever imagined. I have no idea why I never did this sooner.

I became a member many years ago, but let it lapse because of God knows why. I won't let it happen again. I would like to trade my current annual dues for a life membership, if that is possible. However, as I heard at the convention, "at my age I don't even buy green bananas."

Most of all I just want to join with the over 1,000 pilots who are going to say some of the same things I have.

You guys and gals done well. Thanks.

Greg Smith
WORWAC 67-11

Minutemen of 176th AHC now have a unit webpage

Any Minuteman aircraft! Did you fly with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company? We now have a Minuteman webpage.

We need your names, pictures, stories, and memories placed on it.

Visit the site at <http://www.americal.org/176> or send e-mail to [REDACTED]

If we don't write our history, who will?

John Johnston
Minuteman 21
July 1968-July 1969

E-mail helps Army buddies get together in Alabama

I recently wrote and voted for e-mail. In that letter I noted that an old Army buddy had gotten a hold of me via e-mail.

Well, several weekends ago, I was in Talladega for the NASCAR race and stayed over to visit Southern Alabama. Ronald Donakowski is the one I am talking about and we had a great time.

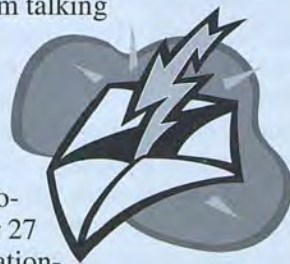
He is a DAC at Fort Rucker teaching NVD's. That is "night vision devices" for those who didn't continue their Army flying. We had many war and post war stories because I continued with over 27 years with the Army and Army National Guard (Arizona, California and Minnesota). He is still in the Alabama National Guard.

Ron and I went further south to Panama City and, like everywhere, everything has changed.

A very interesting note is that Ron has a VCR tape of the Army removing the last of the WOC barracks.

My only disappointment was that the Fort Rucker aviation museum is closed due to storm damage to the roof.

Walter J. Ellis
CW4 Retired
P.O. Box 6052



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Aviator seeking former warrant who served with him in Vietnam

My name is David Blackburn. I'm an Army aviator currently assigned to V Corps in Germany. I would like to put the info below in *The VHPA Newsletter*.

I'm looking for WO1 Bob Mitchell, with C Trp 7/17 Cav in January 1969. He retired as a colonel in 1996. It's in reference action on Jan. 15, 1969, with First Lt. Sterling Cox and WO1 Jim Petteys (both KIA). I have commissioned a painting honoring the actions of these aircrews, as well as the Blues.

I have attached a file containing a picture of the painting. I would like his input. I lost touch with him when he retired from the Army at Fort Rucker. I believe he is a VHPA member.

I'm also looking for First Lt. Charles L. Campell (Blues platoon leader) in C/7/17 Cav. I have no idea where he is. He's not an aviator either.

Thanks for anything you can do.

Dave Blackburn

Cav pilot reports reactions different from those expected by writer

I spent a year in RVN with D Troop, 3/4 Cav and F Troop 4th Cav in the same environment and probably the same AO as John J. Jewett, who would have me believe that I don't have a heart or a brain because I didn't throw myself down at The Wall.

I was in DC just after Memorial Day 1998 and made a specific trip to go to The Wall and find the three pilots and one crew chief who made the ultimate sacrifice.

I didn't cry, but view things that happen as something I don't have any control over. I had a vasectomy in 1984 and Sept. 18, 1989, our third child arrived. Yeah, he's something real special for me.

I went to the same Vietnam that we all went to and sleep well at night, even though it's figured that I don't have a heart or brain.

Ken Kloppel
Centaur 27

Maui, HI

Taps

William R. Boatwright

William R. Boatwright, who died Feb. 4 in a Huey crash in Tennessee, was a member of class 68-3 at Fort Wolters and graduated in class 68-505 at Fort Rucker, Ron Dawe of the Florida LZ Chapter reports.

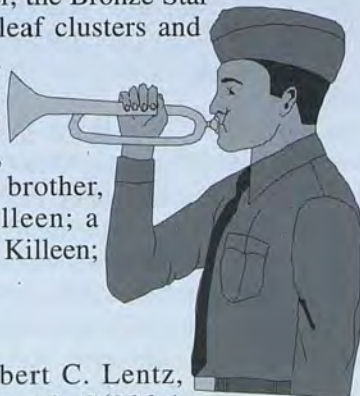
James S. Byrd Jr.

Retired Maj. James S. Byrd Jr. died May 12 in his Killeen, TX, home. He was 55.

During his 20 years in the Army, he served three tours of duty in Vietnam.

Byrd was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star Medal with three oak leaf clusters and the Purple Heart Medal.

Survivors include two sons, James Byrd III and John E. Byrd, both of Fort Worth; a brother, Danny R. Byrd of Killeen; a sister, Jane Morrow of Killeen; and two grandchildren.



Robert C. Lentz

VHPA member Robert C. Lentz, commanding officer of C/229th Assault Helicopter Battalion and flight class 67-20, died July 15 after a 10-year battle with Agent Orange-related conditions.

Lentz, also known as "Rusty Wings," lived in Spring Valley, IL, with his loving family when he received his final mission statement.

He will be truly missed by all who knew him. For those of us who had the privilege to fly with him, it was an honor. He accepted all missions and always got the job done. May he now rest in peace.

Alan Rhoades

Robert W. Maxwell

Col. Robert W. Maxwell died July 12 from congestive heart failure.

Services were held July 17 at Forest Lawn in Long Beach, CA. Interment followed with full military honors at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, CA.

Donations may be made in memory of Maxwell to the Memorial Foundation, 2801 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90806.

John B. Morgan

John B. Morgan died in an aircraft accident May 24 near Blythe, CA.

He was flying factory-built RV-8 as a factory demo pilot for Van's Aircraft when the left wing separated from the aircraft in flight. The exact cause of the accident is not yet known.

John was a member of Class 66-11 and served in A and B companies 4th Aviation, 4th Infantry Division; the 170th Assault Helicopter Company; and the 57th Assault Helicopter Company. After leaving the Army in 1969, he worked for many years as an agricultural pilot.

See TAPS, Page 10

Taps

Continued from Page 9

John was one of the VHPA's founding members and attended most of the reunions with his wonderful family. His foresight and willingness to travel great distances to be with his friends and loved ones helped make the VHPA the outstanding organization it is today.

He was a special person and will always be remembered and loved by his family and all who knew him.

The afternoon of the Banquet at the Fort Worth reunion some of his buddies collected more than \$850 and donated it to the new VHPA Scholarship Fund in his name. Any further contributions to this cause should be sent to the VHPA Scholarship Fund in the name of John B. Morgan.

Ray and Mary Alice Pollok

Charles Perry Shank

Charles Perry Shank, a Fort Worth neurosurgeon, died July 26 at his Fort Worth home after a hard-fought struggle with pancreatic cancer. He was 50.

Memorial services were July 28, with interment in Greenwood Memorial Park, Fort Worth.

Memorials may be made to Ridglea Presbyterian

Church, 6201 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, TX 76116 or to the Charles P. Shank, M.D., Memorial Fund, c/o the University of Florida Foundation, 2012 W. University Ave., Gainesville, Fla. 32603.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Dr. Shank served seven years in the Army. He drew tours of duty in South Korea and Vietnam, where he piloted Chinook helicopters.

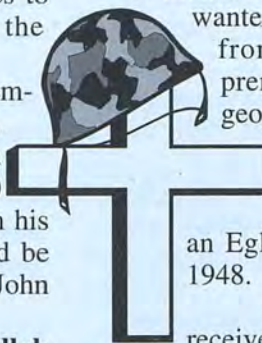
Dr. Shank's wartime experiences convinced him he wanted to be a physician. Thus, on his release from active duty, he moved to Austin for premed studies and to complete a degree in geophysics.

Dr. Shank's interest in military service was inspired by his father's career in the Air Force. He was born at an Eglin Air Force Base hospital in Florida in 1948.

A highly decorated Army pilot, Dr. Shank received numerous medals, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf clusters, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with palms and bronze star, a Korean Service Medal and an Army Expeditionary Medal.

Survivors include his wife, Dr. Rebecca S. Shank, son Christopher Shank, 10, and daughter Megan Shank, 8.

**Pat Richardson
Tomahawk 29**



California Chapter North attends reunion

The new chapter banner, donated by George Larson, was first hung at The Worthington Hotel Lobby Bar amidst cheers from pilots and guests who were hoping Ken Fritz and others would fall into the reception area below.

Many new members joined the chapter during the VHPA reunion in Fort Worth and, according to Mike Rathbone, treasurer of the CCN, most wanted to know how to obtain a CCN polo shirt or cap.

The chapter is rightfully proud of its logo, designed by Jay Riseden, with silver wings and an armed Huey.

Mike just said that all one has to do to qualify is to "Be a member of VHPA and gimme \$10 and I'll give you a form so you can order a shirt or cap." He really meant: Pay \$10 to the chapter, but we'll forgive him.

Chapter report

CCN member Bud Martin, now in Puerto Rico, didn't make it to the reunion, but we made sure he wasn't forgotten. We all stumbled out of Billy Miner's to uphold his tradition.

He's a pretty enthusiastic guy. What do you expect from a LOH pilot who was allowed to attend his first VHPA reunion while his daughter was expecting his first grandkid? He got a cell phone call while in a cab at DFW Sunday afternoon that he was a grandpa!

The California Chapter North of the VHPA had a wonderful mini-reunion at Billy Miner's saloon in Fort Worth on Saturday, July 4th, with about 30 members in attendance.

We hung the banner, Curt Knapp showed his video of the WOC training at Fort Wolters, while we all had some good Texas barbecue and beer to go with the friendships that are so special to all of us.

CCN member Bud Martin, now in Puerto Rico, didn't make it to the reunion, but we made sure he wasn't forgotten. We all stumbled out of Billy Miner's to uphold his tradition.

You may recall Bud is the guy who tried to subdue a concrete parking curb with his skull after our last meeting. Since then, member Don Warner and his wife Connie visited Bud in San Juan.

Bud came through like a champ. Problem was, he showed up with three girls on his arm and now Don can't visit Bud without his wife. No unsupervised solo for Don.

All of us hereby say a big thank you to all of those fine people who hosted the reunion! Fantastic job!

— Ken Fritz

Chapter holds pre-reunion tune-up party

The chapter's pre-reunion "tune-up" at Mike Rathbone's featured his famous margarita machine (a surplus slurpy machine) working away making 10 gallons of his killer margaritas per single load in the normal nonstop-two-spigots-no-waiting-in-line mode.

It only took 20 gallons (2 loads) plus copious quantities of grilled burgers, potato salad and fixins' and about four cases of beer and a couple six packs of sodas to keep everyone under control (control? Say What!?)

Rathbone's wonderful wife Shelly worked hard as the hostess and her employer provided (not sure he's

aware of it yet, though) a neat contractor-style, gasoline generator-powered light tower for the "daylight at night" dancing around the pool to our favorite tunes.

Mike's big Sansui speakers just about blasted the plaster off the walls in the den!

The CCN's beat-up/awaiting restoration Huey was the main attraction with lots of round eyes dancing on the roof and in the cargo bay while the pilots cheered them on.

Chapter report

We are lucky to have Mike Nord. He has a truck school with a low boy trailer to haul the Huey and he's helped us get it where it's needed. Bob Hope should have been so lucky!

The business meeting lasted about 20 minutes in spite of the festivities, which lasted from noon 'til 2300.

New president Bill Lang will be on the go, keeping us all straight for a year, but he's not sure how to do that, so we aim to tell him.

The CCN's motto: Come party with us and we'll help you join VHPA!

— Ken Fritz

Mid American plans mini for Veterans Day

The VHPA Mid America Chapter will hold its first official mini-reunion over the Veterans Day holiday in November at Branson, MO.

I have secured 40 motel rooms for the mini-reunion. However, reservations must be booked before Sept. 10.

Branson is expecting 3,500-4,000 veterans over the holiday.

The chapter was formed last year at the Orlando reunion with 23 charter members from the Central States

of Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Iowa.

Any VHPA member in good standing is eligible and welcome to join the chapter. In fact, anyone who has flown over, driven through, or has relatives, friends, ex-wives, or has heard of the above states can become members by sending \$10 for annual dues to Jeff Pepper, 1301 Business 63 South, No. 901, Columbia, MO 65201. Jeff is our treasurer.

Chapter Officers are Gary Wine-
teer, president; Jeff Pepper, vice president/treasurer; Tom Elliston, secretary and legal adviser

We will be moving mini-reunions

from area to area to accommodate the most members and will try to have at least two per year, most likely in the Kansas City area in the fall, Branson in November, St. Louis next spring. After Nashville, we will try for Oklahoma City or Omaha.

The chapter was incorporated in Missouri on Sept. 1, 1997. Copies of the constitution, articles of incorporation and bylaws are on file with VHPA Headquarters or contact me.

Gary Wine-
teer
2800 W. North Shore Lane
Columbia, MO 65202

Chapter report

VHPA briefs

E-mail addresses to be published

The Directory Committee is preparing to publish e-mail addresses in the 1998 Membership Directory.

Anyone who would like his e-mail address published, along with his snail mail address, in the directory should send an e-mail message from the address they want published to Gary Roush at [REDACTED]

Historian seeking UH-1 pilots

I am a historian with the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, DC.

The Defense Department is putting together a report on

Operation Tailwind in the wake of the CNN nerve gas story. My job is to interview a select list of participants.

I'm looking for UH-1 pilots who flew SOG Pathfinder teams on the day of the Tailwind insertion (Sept. 11, 1970) or a few days before.

My e-mail address is: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] my phone number is: [REDACTED]; and
my fax is: [REDACTED] — Dale Andrade

Newsletter deadlines listed

The following are deadlines for *The VHPA Newsletter*:

- September/October 1998 — Sept. 8
- November/December 1998 — Nov. 3
- January/February 1999 — Jan. 5
- March/April 1999 — March 2
- May/June 1999 — May 4
- July/August 1999 — July 6

Reunion draws record attendance

JOHN GROW
REUNION VICE CHAIRMAN

The dust has settled in Fort Worth. After more than a year of planning, "Back to the Beginning" is now history, and what a history it is.

Registration figures as of 3:49 p.m. on July 4 were 1,154 pilots and 837 guests registered. This does not include children under the age of 18 nor the many pilots and guests who live in the Fort Worth/Dallas metropolitan area who did not register, yet came down to meet new and old friends.

All in all, the numbers had to exceed 1,200 pilots and 2,000 total attendees.

Of course, like they say in the real estate business: Location, location, location.

We had the benefit of holding the 15th Reunion in the Fort Worth/Fort Wolters area. Many in attendance have not been back here in 25-30 years and were truly "Coming Home."

One of the best things to happen was the number of FNGs who were here. I estimate about 20 percent of the attendees were first-timers. That is the name of the game, come once, come often.

If we are to grow as an organization, we must have new members join VHPA and what better way than to have them come to a reunion and enjoy themselves.

We tried to provide enough activities for everyone. Rather than plan too few events or entertainment, we felt it should be left up to the attendees to pick and choose those in which they wanted to participate.

The only complaints we heard had to do with the weather and, try as we may, we were unable to control the heat.

Last year, Jim Basta was gracious enough to let me tag along in Orlando to learn firsthand some of the things I could expect to encounter this year. That definitely saved us from trying



John Grow (left) sells a raffle ticket to Bob Smith, VHPA vice president, during the Fort Worth reunion.

to reinvent the wheel.

Jim, I thank you and your Florida LZ people for their kindness and consideration, not just while we were in Orlando but throughout this past year. Every time I asked a question or for help, you all were there. I hope we will be as much help and as responsive to the folks in Nashville.

The reunion can never be a success unless you have the better halves helping you. The wives did the lion's share of the work.

You also need to have good people in charge of each event. There is so much work that goes into putting this together that if you do not parcel it out to many, things will fall into the cracks and people will get burned out.

I would like to encourage all members to volunteer to help out at the reunions, even if only to help for an hour or so in the registration area. You do not even have to be a member of the chapter, your help will be much appreciated.

We had Chris White from the VHCMA; Rachel Torrance, a former Red Cross volunteer in Nam; and Art Cline, a VHPA member from Spokane, WA, who put in many, many hours helping us out. Thank you Chris, Rachel and Art.

I am sure there were many, many others who were helping in other areas I have missed and I wish to extend our thanks to you all.

One major improvement in this year's reunion was the staff of Fritzco, Marcia, Debra, Tina and Lindsay. They were totally efficient and unflappable.

The pre-reunion work they did helped the registration committee immensely, and the information and name tags were already prepared when sent to the committee.

Many kudos to our member, Chuck Carlock, for his outstanding display of aircraft and other rare memorabilia. What a fantastic collection and what a gentleman to share them with us all.

He was up and moving aircraft at 3 a.m. to avoid tying up traffic. He also lives several miles from downtown Fort Worth.

We hope you all enjoyed the reunion and Fort Worth. Much has changed downtown since most of you were here. The Sundance Square area is certainly a fantastic place to visit.

Fort Worth is a very cultural city, as well, with some of the finest museums in the United States.

Ya'll come back, ya hear?

All reunion events well attended

ANGELO SPELIOS
REUNION CHAIRMAN

The 1998 reunion — “Back to the Beginning” — was the biggest in our 15-year history, with 1,991 registered pilots and guests attending.

The Reunion Committee originally planned for 1,500 people, but what a great surprise at this large turnout.

All events were well attended by our members.

The Bell Helicopter tour was planned for just a few hundred people, but we had to cut it off at 800.

Bell put on a great tour of the AH-1W Cobra production line, a static display of the company's helicopters and an excellent aerial display of the XV-15 Tiltrotor and the AH-1W.

Many thanks to Bell Helicopter Textron and to the company's employees for a great tour.

Western night also was a success. The Mineral Wells tour also was well attended.

The static display of helicopters and ground vehicles at the former Fort Wolters was well received by our members. Most memorable was The Moving Wall.

More than 1,600 people attended the Banquet. Later that evening, The



Don Joyce photo

VHPA members join other visitors at The Moving Wall, a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. The Moving Wall was a highlight of the tour to Fort Wolters and Mineral Wells.

Worthington Hotel rocked to the songs and music of Eric Burdon. It was Eric Burdon and the Animals who recorded “We Gotta Get Out Of This Place,” which has become the anthem at VHPA reunions.

The most important part of this and every reunion is to meet with fellow helicopter pilots, many of whom we haven't seen since our Vietnam tours or flight school.

This is what the VHPA reunions are all about. We need to spread the word about our organization to all helicopter pilots who flew in Vietnam.

Many thanks go out to our members and guests who thanked Reunion Committee members and me for this year's reunion. The work was worth it when we saw how much members enjoyed the Fort Worth reunion.

WOC Chorus performs at VHPA Banquet

MIKE ROULIER

It's not exactly the Beatles getting together again, but for the first time in nearly 30 years, the Warrant Officer Candidate Chorus performed live at the 1998 Fort Worth Reunion.

As those of you who attended are aware, we performed from the floor of the Convention Center rather than on stage. If you had not sung together for 30 years, would you want to look out at that crowd? Particularly after Mikaila's performance?

I want to thank all of you who attended for your warm reception and applause.

You may be surprised to find this out, but we did not have a chance to rehearse until the night before. The guys got a copy of sheet music and a tape from me in the mail, had one shot at rehearsal, and then performed for all of you.

I think they did a great job.

Tom Payne informed me at breakfast the next morning that we are definitely on for next year, so those of you who would like to join us, please let me know [REDACTED].

We will be working with the committee to see what's doing at the Nashville reunion, but of one thing I am certain: We need tenors!

My wife complains that wearing my shorts that tight is cause for a “loss of consortium” suit.

Just for the record, I want to publicly acknowledge our singers: Dale Berry, Sam George, Steve Harper (also on piano), Tom Percy, James DeVitt and Jim Schueckler.

If you enjoyed our rendition of “This is My Country” at the banquet, you need to know they worked out the harmony backstage immediately before they came on. Great job, guys.

We'll see you in Nashville.

Fort Worth Reunion '98

Photo scrapbook



Photos by
Don Joyce



- Top Photo: Former VHPA president Kenny Bunn (left) shares a laugh with John Hargleroad at the reunion.

- Above: Mike Law (left), former president and retiring Directory editor; Mike Hurley (center), 1997-98 president; and Tom Payne, 1998-99 president, visit.

- Right: Members of the 120th Aviation Company and guests wait for dinner at the Banquet.



Back to the Beginning



- Top photo: WOC Chorus entertains after the Banquet on the last night of the reunion.
- Middle left: A TH-55A was among helicopters on display at reunion headquarters.
- Middle right: The 1st WOC Company barracks at Fort Wolters now house prisoners.
- Above: Reliving solo dunking at the old Holiday Inn pool in Mineral Wells.

Business meeting covers wide range

The VHPA Annual Business Meeting was held on July 4, in Fort Worth.

VHPA President Mike Hurley called the meeting to order and delivered the general greeting and made administrative announcements.

ELECTIONS: Dave Rittman gave an overview of the election procedures for the offices of vice president and junior member at large. Bob Smith was elected VHPA vice president and Joe Bilitzke junior member at large.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Secretary/Treasurer Dan Ferguson presented the various annual financial reports, including income and expense reports and dues allocation chart. The financial reports were accepted as presented.

NASHVILLE REUNION: Vice President Tom Payne introduced Mike Haley as the Nashville Reunion Committee chairman. He also said Haley may also start a Mid-South Chapter. Tom gave a brief overview of the proposed Nashville reunion.

DC in 2000: Hurley gave a brief description of the planned reunion in DC in year 2000 and called for help in establishing a reunion committee. The North Carolina Chapter has expressed interest in helping with this reunion.

SITE SELECTION COMMITTEE: Kenny Bunn gave a brief overview of the Nashville and DC reunion layouts and indicated the committee is close to a proposed contract for Denver. Kenny said the plan is to go to Denver after DC, then the West Coast, the East Coast and then South.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND: Jack Jordan gave a brief history of the formation of the fund, which currently has \$2,100. Jack reported Mike Sherman is donating \$1,000 to the fund. Jack said a committee is being formed to draft the fund administration guidelines.

He announced Justin Miller said he would donate \$100 for each \$150 donation, up to \$1,000. There were

numerous donations made throughout the meeting, with individual and group challenges for donations.

MEMBERSHIP: Chairman Hayden "Pappy" Jones presented a membership foil prepared by Gary Roush which showed a pronounced growth in paid memberships and a decline in unpaid membership.

Currently, there are more than 4,500 paid current members.

Pappy attributed this growth pattern, in part, to the work and timely mailing of membership renewal notices by the new management company.

DATABASE: Chairman Gary Roush announced the membership graph was posted on the VHPA website. He said 16 separate databases are maintained by the Database Committee.

Gary said he could provide specific geographical database information to local chapters to help them locate potential members.

E-mail address will be included in the next Membership Directory upon receipt of an e-mail request by members who wish their e-mail addresses included. Instructions for sending the request are posted on Page 15 of the current newsletter.

All of the VHPA databases have not been made available on the web to protect the privacy of the members.

Gary also indicated all the VHPA e-mail addresses are posted in the newsletter.

NEWSLETTER: Editor Jack Swickard said the newsletter is an all-volunteer effort until it reaches the printer and mailer.

The newsletter has 28 pages, with \$1,200-\$2,000 in advertising revenue, per issue. Tom Pettit of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University buys six full-page ads per year in the newsletter, and will be buying full-page color ads.

There was a question concerning postage and how to mail newsletters to members living abroad. It was suggested to change the

membership/renewal form to allow the member the opportunity to pay the higher postage to expedite delivery. The Executive Council will address this when it meets.

There also was a question about sending the newsletter by e-mail. Ken Fritz responded this would be an administrative nightmare for the management company. It was suggested from the floor that all such ideas be sent to the Executive Council for consideration.

DIRECTORY: Editor Mike Law announced his retirement from the Membership Directory. Mike said the 1998 directory will be much like directories during the past several years.

MISCELLANEOUS: Hurley appealed for volunteers to help with the work of the organization.

Payne asked representatives from the chapters to meet with the Executive Council at 1 p.m.

Bob Davies was recognized as the outgoing Historical Committee chairman and Mike Sloniker was announced as incoming chairman.

Payne gave the closing benediction.

There was a question from the floor asking why the reunion is held on July 4 and could some other date be considered.

Bunn responded this issue had been considered several times in the past and it was determined costs for reunions would double.

There also was a suggestion from the floor to open membership in the VHPA to other crewmembers.

There were responses from the floor stating the association is the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and members can bring friends, family and crew to reunions as guests.

A member of the Fort Worth Chapter gave a short briefing on the continuing efforts on the chapter museum.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Charlie Rayl.

Committee operates 16 databases

We now have 16 databases, ranging from call signs to battles.

The battle database, maintained by Mike Law, has created a great deal of interest on the Internet.

You can see some of Mike's work by going to the VHPA website at <http://www.vhpa.org> and follow the links to the KIA panels.

One database is growing. That is the died after tour database. Currently it has 1,190 names.

To add names to this database, please send information to Steve Bolling in Las Vegas, NV.

The biggest database project in progress right now is deciphering four IBM computer tape reels supposedly containing the names of some 2.6 million people who served in the Vietnam War.

Several people have asked when the next historical reference directory will be published. Right now there

are no specific plans because of cost.

It appears the best approach to making this information available is to use CD-ROM or the Internet. We continue to work on programming suitable for some future form of electronic publishing. Stay tuned.

During the VHCMA and VHPA reunions this year, I used more than two reams of paper printing out flight class lists, helicopter incident and accident reports, and unit lists.

During the year, I estimate I have responded to more than 3,000 requests for information using e-mail. These requests range from a KIA's daughter trying to learn more about her father to the Joint Services Task Force in Hawaii looking for information to help find remains in Southeast Asia.

The 1998 Membership Directory will contain e-mail addresses. To get your e-mail address added, you must

send an e-mail from the address you want to use to webmaster@vhpa.org no later than Aug. 12. Include your name and member number as they appear on the mailing label of this newsletter.

Since you will most likely read this after the Aug. 12 deadline, send your request to HQ@vhpa.org for the 1999 Directory.

June saw a record number of hits on our website of 79,102 from all over the world. (In May, 1,899 of the 56,840 hits came from Vietnam.) The most popular site in June was the reunion morning report, with 2,154 hits.

Reunion registration had 352, membership statistics 324, and VHPA application 226. There also were 104 comments from the website.

Gary Roush
Database chairman
webmaster@vhpa.org



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Jerry Temple, Worwac 66/15-17, C/D, 227th AHB, First Calvary '66-67 (Rattlesnake 39) is the owner of **JERRY TEMPLE AVIATION**, an aircraft brokerage firm specializing in the marketing and sales of quality Cessna twins.

Prior to launching JTA in 1994, Temple held marketing and sales positions with the Cessna Aircraft Company, its distributors, retail dealerships, and modification centers.

Today, JTA professionally supports both buyers and sellers of Cessna 310/320, 340/340A, 401/402, 414/414A, 421B/C aircraft. Turboprop sales and acquisitions are planned for 1998.

Having marketed Citation jets for the factory and a major modifier, JTA's mission is to provide the Cessna twin customer with the same level of sales expertise and professionalism as they would expect with a new jet sales firm. It's working. JTA is today recognized for honesty, integrity, product knowledge and attention to detail.



jta Promises Kept. Expectations Exceeded.

Law thanks VHPA for years served

Directory Editor Mike Law presented three ideas to the membership during the Annual Business Meeting in Fort Worth.

First, he thanked the VHPA for allowing him to serve in various offices for almost 15 years.

As mentioned in the Newsletter, he and his wife plan to retire next spring and hope to be serving on a mission for their church when the 1999 Directory is due out — hence the need to have someone else take the job of Directory editor.

Mike assured everyone he wasn't quitting the VHPA. He has attended all 15 VHPA reunions and plans to continue doing so.

He said that at the first VHPA reunion, he was elected to the Executive Council and told Larry Clark he had a computer and thought he could help.

After more than a decade of service that included being the executive director after Larry, being president of the VHPA, and being involved directly as editor or providing database information for every Directory the VHPA has published, he hopes people will view him as a person who kept his word.

Second, he thanked the hundreds of VHPA members who have answered his letters and phone calls over the years.

"I've learned a lot from each one of you — believe me! While I've written a lot for the VHPA, I've always had the attitude: If a subject is



Don Joyce

Mike Law addresses Annual Business Meeting in Fort Worth.

important to a VHPA member, it is important to me.

"I was an air cav pilot in Vietnam, but I know a lot about Sky Cranes, Chinooks, assault helicopter companies, Dustoff, and CH-21s — to name just a few — because of all the people who took the time to talk with me and teach me."

Along those lines, he encouraged all members to send in the names and addresses of Vietnam-era helicopter pilots who do not appear in the 1997 Directory.

"I have talked to members at this reunion who mention getting a Christmas card from a Vietnam buddy. When I ask if his name is in the Directory, too often I hear, 'Well, no.'"

Law said, the VHPA also needs information on those who died after Vietnam.

He joked that while he and Gary Roush were getting pretty good at publishing from databases, "We aren't mind readers. We need the information you have to make the VHPA better. You need to tell me, for example, if your flight class number isn't correct in the Directory."

Third, he reported that plans for the 1998 VHPA Membership Directory are proceeding as per the schedule announced in the Newsletter and will have about the same costs to the VHPA as last year.

He said the input he has received from all sources for the history section — the history of helicopter activities that took place in Southeast Asia, but outside of South Vietnam — is at least twice as good as the support he received last year for the history of IV Corps.

He talked about the pictures that will appear on the covers. He reminded members who want to have their e-mail address printed in the Directory to send an e-mail to Gary Roush, as mentioned in the Newsletter.

In closing, he said even when he is on his mission, he plans to continue adding unit histories and other items to the VHPA databases that collectively make up the Historical Reference Directory.

He and Gary have plans to publish more of this on the web and possibly via CDs.

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.

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Plan now for '99 Nashville reunion

While we're all basking in the afterglow of the Fort Worth '98 VHPA Reunion, one truly for the record books, start making plans now to attend VHPA '99 in Nashville, next July 1-5!

Highlights:

✓ Tour of Jack Daniels Distillery, Lynchburg, TN. (A natural followup to the Bell Helicopter tour, since so many of us have supported both for so many years!) There may be a limit to the number who can be accommodated, so sign up early!

✓ Grand Ol' Opry: We expect a big block of tickets to be set aside, and also expect we just might be introduced from the stage — that ought to be something to see!

✓ Banquet Guest Speaker: Adrian Cronauer of "Goooooooood Morning, Vietnam" fame!

✓ A few surprise country and western music artists at various times.

✓ Picnic and aircraft displays, featuring support from Fort Campbell's 160th "Night Stalkers!"

✓ 5K run, golf tournament, ladies social (city tour), and all the other events we've come to expect and love!

Headquarters is the Renaissance Hotel at 611 Commerce St. in Nashville. It is one block from the historic, original home of the Grand Ol' Opry, the Ryman Auditorium.

Historic Second Avenue, with all its lures — including the Wildhorse Saloon — is four blocks away.

The Convention Center is attached to the hotel, and the new arena is two blocks away! We will be centrally located in the heart of Nashville.

If you'll be driving to the reunion, there are a wealth of interesting stops enroute, such as the Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, KY (visible from I-65, so "you cain't miss it"), Space and Rocket Center (Huntsville, AL), Elvis's Graceland (Memphis), Dolly Parton's Dollywood (Pigeon Forge, east of Knoxville on I-40), Fort Campbell, etc., etc.

NOTE: The Opryland Theme Park

is under conversion to a new entertainment and shopping complex and will not reopen until 2000.

(Stories abound of folks who've stopped off enroute to Florida to let the kids ride the rides, only to find out it's closed, much like "National Lampoon's Vacation," where Wally-world was closed!)

However, the Opryland Hotel is thriving and is one of the largest in the Western Hemisphere.

It is not convenient to downtown Nashville, if you're thinking you'd like to stay there for the reunion, but is well worth a look-see.

We're certainly expecting to have a Grand Ol' Time in '99. We've got a good core reunion committee working hard for you, but we're looking for more volunteers!

See you in Nashville!!

Ross Rainwater

C-1/9, 1st Air Cav, 1970-71

HHC, 12th CAG, 1971

ORWAC 70-24

Orange Hats

Toast honors 'Missing Man' at banquets

Several members approached me at the Fort Worth Reunion and asked for a copy of "The Missing Man" toast.

Below is the one I read at the Banquet.

There is no "official" version; each president is free to modify his presentation to fit his own personality and how he feels it can best be conveyed to the audience.

I do not know who the original author is or how close this one is to the first version.

Future versions may not closely resemble this one. That is not important; what is important is it comes from the heart, not an official format.

— Mike Hurley

The Missing Man

Your attention is directed to the small table located in a place of honor near the head of the banquet hall. It is a way of symbolizing the fact some of our friends are missing from our midst.

They are unable to be with us this evening and so we remember them.

The table, set for one, is small — it symbolizes the frailty of us all.

The tablecloth is white — symbolic of the purity of their intentions to

respond to their country's call to arms.

The single rose displayed in a vase reminds us of the families and loved ones of our comrades who will not return.

The red ribbon, tied so prominently on the vase, is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn upon the lapel and breast of thousands who bear witness to the tragedy of POWs and MIAs and, with unyielding determination, demand a proper accounting for our missing.

A slice of lemon on the plate — to remind us of their bitter fate.

There is salt upon the plate — symbolic of the tears of families and loved ones.

The glass is inverted — they cannot toast with us tonight.

The chair is empty — they are not here.

Tonight we take time to recall those who were our comrades in arms, we depended on them for aid and support.

Let us remember all of our missing crewmembers and honor them as we stand for a moment of silence.

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Wife reports death of Felipe Lariosa

The call came from Hawaii: Felipe is dead.

The voice was Bonnie, his wife.

He was a young Polynesian — barely a man when I knew him in 1963-64. His smile was radiant. He could have starred in the movie *South Pacific*. His name: Felipe Lariosa.

He named his machine: Tiki. His machine was a CH-21C cargo- and troop-carrying helicopter of the 120th Aviation Company that flew in the Vietnam War in 1963-64.

Felipe was her crew chief. He took care of her every need, babied her, maintained her tired ol', bullet hole-riddled body and flew with her everywhere she went in Vietnam.

On a huge helicopter combat assault mission in the Mekong River Delta on Jan. 17, 1964, a bullet struck Felipe in the head while his helicopter was in flight.

He fell face down on the cargo floor of Tiki.

He lay there unconscious while his

pilots landed back at the mission staging field so that he could receive medical attention if he were alive.

Our 145th Aviation Battalion flight surgeon, Dr. James W. Ralph, jumped aboard Tiki in order to examine Felipe.

There was a groan from Felipe: "My head hurts." He was still lying face down. There was one bullet hole through the flight helmet he was wearing.

"Doc" Ralph helped him sit up. There was no blood. "Doc" took his helmet off — very carefully.

One single bullet had grazed Felipe's skull. He was very much alive but just didn't feel very well. His scalp was burned where the bullet grazed his skull, and did he ever have a headache. He wanted to rub his head, but it hurt too badly.

There was about an hour break until the helicopter left on the next troop-carrying mission. Tiki went. Felipe did too — aboard Tiki — and

not as a medical evacuation patient, but in his usual role as her crew chief. Of course, he had a bandage on his head under his flight helmet.

He — and Tiki — flew the remainder of the combat assault missions that day. Felipe had earned his first Purple Heart.

Bonnie, your husband was all of 19 years old then, but he was a man. Let there be no doubt about it.

Somewhere Tiki lies in an old aircraft cemetery — discarded by Uncle Sam. Tiki, I know that you have shed a tear. But hold your rotor blades up high and be proud.

May God rest your soul, Felipe Lariosa. You and Tiki were the very best. I'm proud to have served with you — both of you.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was submitted by VHPA member John B. Givhan, who originally wrote it for his June 25 weekly column in *The Democrat-Reporter of Andalusia, AL*.

Crane mini-reunion draws 19 pilots

Let me tell you about the best reunion in the world up until now.

I was volunteered to put together a mini-reunion for CH-54 pilots. Several have been tried before, but attendance and interest has been low.

Not this year! I've got 19 names and addresses of attendees and most of these guys were first-timers. (There were about a dozen others who attended and didn't make my list but were on the other list being circulated).

If you think that's not a great turnout, you don't know anything about Crane pilots; most of them are dead.

My transition IP, my TAC officer and the SIP who gave me my acceptance checkride in CH-54s were all at the reunion and I didn't know it until we got into the room and started introductions.

I finally made my wife attend a reunion and she met a half dozen wives she had lost track of. I told her she would see some "old" guys and we did.

One lady we were especially proud of was Judy Montgomery. Her husband Bill was well known by all the Crane pilots. (Shoot, I flew Hueys with the guy in the spring of 1967 when he was a short-timer with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company.)

Bill left us a while back and some friends suggested

Judy come to the mini-reunion — and what a great reunion she had. Everyone was glad to renew her acquaintance and she might be back in Nashville in 1999.

Another success story is Paul Clement. Paul had a stroke some years ago and has some difficulty talking. He was a little hesitant to come, but his wife Barbara insisted and came along to interpret for him.

They had a great time and barring health problems, we hope to see them in Nashville.

Guys, you've got to come to these reunions, bring your wives or send your wives. I guarantee there is someone who's going to be in Nashville who would like to see you.

My neighbor Bruce Smith said he was tired of these reunions and Fort Worth would be his last because he never met anyone he knew. Well, at the Banquet the last night, up popped three of his old classmates he hadn't seen in 30 years.

So Bruce will be in Nashville. Right, Bruce?

If you're a CH-54, Tarhe or Skycrane pilot, we definitely want to see you in Nashville. Many of us are old and may not make too many more reunions, so get out and join in before it's too late.

Jim Messinger

Mission draws chopper into Laos

HARRY R. NEVLING

Feb. 28, 1969, was a normal day in northern I Corps. "Normal" at that time of year means marginal weather. Cloud cover from broken to solid overcast. Flying conditions were questionable.

The 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division was assigned support for the Marines during Operation Dewey Canyon.

The Marines had moved west from Dong Ha to the area of LZ Vandegrift. This operation took them south to the northern edge of the A Shau Valley and west to Laos.

They moved past the closed base at Khe Sanh, the scene of so much activity the previous year. They moved southeast toward the upper end of the A Shau.

Just northwest of the head of the valley they set up two fire support bases: Erskine and Cunningham.

Erskine was the smaller of the two, situated on a low ridge southwest of Cunningham.

Cunningham sat on a ridge that sloped to the west and dropped off sharply to the east.

Both bases were there to provide interdiction and support for activity along the Laotian border.

The border in this area runs generally from the northwest to the southeast. South of the two FSBs it turns to the east before continuing its southeast meander.

Erskine and Cunningham were continually firing to the west and southwest. They were to cut "Charlie's" supply line into the north end of the A Shau along Route 922. This route paralleled the Laotian border on the Laos side until crossing into Vietnam below Tiger Mountain directly into the A Shau.

We didn't know Route 922 existed on the morning of the 28th.

Capt. William "Bill" Ailes, aircraft commander, and WO1 Harry "The Rat" Nevling of A Company, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, ("Pachyderm") were assigned to fly support in this area — again.

Although an RLO, Bill was a great pilot and a real "good guy." Harry had transitioned into "Hooks" at Fort Sill, OK, after completing flight school in April 1968.

While Harry had a fair amount of flight time while forming up at Fort Sill with what became C Company, he

Both bases were there to provide interdiction and support for activity along the Laotian border.

still had a lot to learn. Bill was a terrific teacher. Bill and Harry had been flying a lot together, most of it in support of the Marines.

Early that morning they had preflighted their CH-47C Chinook at "Pachyderm Beach" their "home" at Phu Bai. This was actually a C minus — the C model with three hours' fuel endurance, but lacking the engines designed to power the full C model.

After flying up to Camp Evans to pick up their first load of the day, they found the resupply pad was not ready. They decided to put the delay time to good use and make a weather check over the mountains to the area of Cunningham.

The weather over the coastal plain was broken clouds. However, experience and visual inspection told another story. Flying over the first ridge line showed a mass of cloud cover extending far back into the mountains.

They continued on to see if there were any holes they could use to drop down through, rather than trying to fly out the valleys. This choice was common at that time.

The Marines were way out there in "Indian Country" and the only possible way to them was helicopter.

The choice was whether to go out under the cloud cover by flying the valleys or go on top and try to find a "sucker hole" that looked like it would be there to come back up through.

The "sucker holes" were preferable because you could get the sorties accomplished faster, and "Chuck" couldn't shoot at you from the valley sides like he did if you were under the clouds.

This morning we found a large hole just to the east of Cunningham — and it looked like a "keeper." This was going to be there for awhile.

He asked if we could help out by picking up some wounded Marines and take them back to "Charlie Med."

We radioed back to tell the other ships to get a load and come out; they could get in from above the clouds.

We then radioed the pathfinder at Cunningham and told him what was going on.

He asked us if we had a load and we told him no, there hadn't been any ready and we were empty. He asked if we could help out by picking up some wounded Marines and take them back to "Charlie Med,"

the marine Evacuation Hospital at Vandegrift.

We said, "Sure, we'll be right down."

He told us they were not at his location. There were a pair of Marine gunships that would take us to them.

We asked for the location of the wounded and again were told the "guns" would take us.

He gave us their call sign and told us they were on his

See MARINE, Page 23

Marine gunship didn't give location

Continued from Page 22

"push." We contacted the Marine guns and again asked for the location of the wounded Marines. They told us they were south of Cunningham and they'd come and get us and lead us in.

We again asked for the location as we headed south. Once again we were told the guns would lead us.

By this time we probably should have been a bit suspicious. However, we had a great deal of respect for the Marine gunship pilots. They would do about anything to help the "grunts."

Soon the gun pilot called and pointed out a small "sucker hole" off to our right front.

We spotted each other and fell in behind one of the ships, with the other following.

He led us around several cloud formations in what became an obviously circuitous route.

We discussed on the intercom whether he didn't know where he was going, unlikely, or if he was trying to get us lost, likely.

Harry got out his map to try and find a landmark, but with the cloud cover, this was impossible. So we followed the gunship, not knowing where we were or where we were going, but convinced we were "lost" intentionally.

Soon the gun pilot called and pointed out a small "sucker hole" off to our right front. He said he'd drop down through and go west along a road. We were to follow.

We both knew there were no roads south of Cunningham.

We followed the gunship down through the hole and were right over the road. We contacted the ground commander on the FM radio and hovered under the low, really low, cloud cover to a small hill just north of the road.

We hovered around the hill to see if there was a different access.

There was a small clearing with red smoke.

The Marines liked to use red smoke, while the Army used it as a "do not land" warning. We called the smoke and it was confirmed.

We proceeded up to the clearing from the southeast, but couldn't fit in the opening to land.

We hovered around the hill to see if there was a different access. We were going around the hill counter-clockwise and had gotten southwest of the opening when the ground told us not to go north or west of the hill, that's where "Charlie" was.

Oops, too late! We had not taken fire and can only credit this to the two Marine guns with us.

We finally found an access from the south and eased into the small clearing and set our ship down.

While the Marines were getting their wounded on

board, a major appeared under the right front with his hand up and together as if praying or begging and pointed to four body bags right under the chin bubble.

We told the flight engineer and said we really wanted to take them out. If any leaked, we'd help him clean the ship.

He went out and got the Marines to bring their dead on board with the wounded. We had picked up four dead and about a dozen wounded.

The flight engineer pulled up the ramp and cleared us to leave. We pulled up and backed off the hill.

A right pedal turn headed us back down the road and then up through the hole. We were off and headed for "Charlie Med."

The Marine guns called and asked where we were. We told them we'd picked up the wounded and were getting them to "Charlie Med" as fast as we could. They said there were more.

When asked where, they told us back on the same road, but about a half "click" to the east. We headed back.

After dropping down through the same hole, we hovered up the road to the east, calling the Marines on FM again.

We had just come around a curve to the right in the road. There was a burned-out enemy truck on the left side of the road.

We were approaching the truck when a whole bunch of things happened.

The guns called and asked where we were. We told them on the road headed east. They replied to come back up and let them escort us.

We were about to turn when an NVA soldier with an AK-47 holding a 30-round "banana" clip jumped up from behind the truck and started firing at us.

This guy was so close you could tell he needed a shave! Harry grabbed for his .38 to shoot through Bill's chin bubble, but thought better of it. This was not the time for loud noises in the cockpit. We were scared enough.

Harry then called on the intercom for the left gunner to shoot. No outgoing rounds were heard.

Bill wisely pulled pitch and we disappeared into the clouds. We knew the cloud cover was only about 100 feet thick and fairly even above us.

As we came up through the clouds Harry asked why the gunner hadn't fired. The response was his gun wouldn't traverse back that far. Harry asked what he was

We were about to turn when an NVA soldier with an AK-47 holding a 30-round "banana" clip jumped up from behind the truck and started firing at us.

See CREW, Page 24

Crew follows gunship through hole

Continued from Page 23

talking about, the guy was just off the left front.

The gunner responded he was trying to shoot at the .51-caliber machine gun firing from the ridge behind us. He hadn't seen the man with the AK-47.

We contacted the gunships and related where we had taken fire and what type. They asked if we'd be willing to go back down with them as escort and try for the other wounded.

Now there's a decision for you.

You've got a helicopter the size of a boxcar that makes enough noise to wake the dead and is armed with only two 7.62mm (.308-caliber) machine guns.

You know there's at least one man with an AK-47 right in the middle of where you have to go and a .51-caliber machine gun with an open field of fire for your route.

You've got wounded Marines on board and a crew of five.

Yeah, we were stupid, too. We said, "Sure, lead on."

We followed the gunship down through the hole, with his wingman following.

We hovered up the road without incident and found the

Marine element.

After we picked up another eight or so wounded, we headed back toward the hole to get back to "Charlie Med." The Marine pathfinder thanked us.

The flight engineer said there were four cases of C-rations on board. We asked the pathfinder if we dropped them on the road if they could get them.

He said affirmative and we dropped them near the truck.

As we were pulling up through the hole, we told them we'd get the resupply people at Vandegrift to get them food and water.

Their only other request was for small arms ammo and grenades.

Bill had been in-country more than six months, Harry about two. Neither had ever heard a Marine ask for anything but ammo. Three days out there without resupply, or medevac, is a very long time.

We called the gunships and told them we were headed for "Charlie Med."

They thanked us profusely and wished us well.

See ON FLIGHT, Page 25

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One person common to both Nam tours

THOMAS PAYNE

VHPA PRESIDENT

Vietnam was a place of many stories. I have thought about this story more than once over the past 32 years. I wonder how many multiple tour guys have a similar story.

Most aviators had two tours in Vietnam and no doubt the tours were as different as night and day.

Normally, 2-3 years separated the tours. And, the people you served with as well as the area you flew in was completely different. So were my two tours; one in 1966-67 and again in 1970-71.

However, I did experience one person common to both tours.

Arriving in Bien Hoa in August 1966, my flight school classmate, Reed Kimzey and I were assigned to the 118th Assault Helicopter Company and ended up as roommates in the "villa" on Cong Ly street, a civilian neighborhood within the city of Bien Hoa.

Golly, this wasn't so bad! A clean room, mess hall with COLA and a neat bar. Trips to the flight line at the Bien Hoa Airbase was via "acquired" U.S.A.F. bus.

Our room was about the size of a motel room and had a private shower and commode. Clothes were stored in

See MOT KHA, Page 26

On flight back, pilots looked at map

Continued from Page 24

We thanked them for their cover that made the difference. (We do not know who these Marine gunship pilots are, but I'd like to buy them a beer!)

We called Cunningham and told them we had the wounded and were on our way in.

We also told them the guys in the bush needed food and water along with small arms ammo. Then we called "Charlie Med" and advised them we were coming in with wounded.

So, with the fire from the AK and the .51 caliber, we didn't even have a skin patch to show for it!

We also notified resupply at Vandegrift of the requests for food, water and small arms ammo.

It's interesting to note the food and water weren't delivered until about 4 p.m.

It was delivered by an Army Chinook, commanded by CWO Harold "Weird Harold" Eckert, who had landed at Vandegrift and physically threatened the resupply people if they didn't get a load together for their Marine "grunts."

It's also interesting to note it wasn't until our flight back to the evac hospital that we had time to look at the map and find where we had been.

By then it wasn't much of a surprise to learn the reason we didn't know that road was there was because it was in Laos, not South Vietnam!

Most amazing was when we shut down the aircraft to check for damage, there were no bullet holes. The guy with the AK-47 had missed us completely.

He was close enough that had he thrown his weapon up in the air, he surely would have gotten a rotor blade.

So, with the fire from the AK and the .51 caliber, we didn't even have a skin patch to show for it! In reflection, that's OK.

Had the man with the AK been a better shot, he would have hosed the cockpit.

Had the .51 caliber hit us, it would have been in No. 1 engine or the aft transmission. It's really OK they both missed!

As no good shall go unpunished, Bill and Harry, as a direct result of this mission, were sent into northern Laos in March to assist with relocation of Hmong natives from

the edge of the Plain of Jars. But that's another story.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Harry R. Nevling "The Rat" flew with C Company, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, in 1968-69; A Company, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, in 1968-69; the 242nd ASH Company, 1969. He also served a non-flying tour with A Company, 124th Signal Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, in 1966-67.

He lives in Longmont, CO.

In the official USMC History for 1969, Chapter 4, The Raid into Laos, there is a nice piece titled Ambush Along 922, which starts with these words: "The heaviest fighting of the Dan Krong campaign took place from 18 to 22 Feb."

It goes on to describe how elements from the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines went into Laos, captured two 122mm field guns and a five-ton, tracked prime mover as they pursued more and more lucrative opportunities.

This is followed by two pages that described what happened when the 3rd Marine Division reported that American infantry had crossed into Laos. Washington "flashed" and finally Gen. Abrams praised the Marines for their aggressive actions, but said that only SOG was authorized to operate there.

While all the high level messages were being exchanged, the Marines ambushed a small NVA convoy on Route 922 and then moved back across the fence. Cpl. William D. Morgan was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor during this action.

The H Company commander is quoted as saying: "morale zoomed way down because the company was extremely tired and we were afraid that we were going to have to go off and leave our supplies . . . including half a pallet of 60mm mortar ammo, quite a few C-rations, and of course not the beer, we consumed that."

The USMC history ends this narrative with these words: "The battalion, while in Laos, sustained eight killed and 33 wounded, 24 of whom required evacuation. All dead were officially reported to have been killed 'near Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam;' no reference was made to Laos for political reasons."

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Phil Marshall, [REDACTED]

Mot Kha was like a shadow in room

Continued from Page 24

the wooden clothes closet with the ever-burning lightbulb which had to be replaced often due to the varying house voltage provided by the generator down the street. But, at least we had electricity and sun-heated water (eat your hearts out, Cav guys!).

Probably the greatest luxury Reed and I had was a "hooch maid!" She was typical: Black pajamas, white, long-sleeved top, barefoot with thongs and, of course, the most beautiful black teeth!!

I never really knew her name, except Mamma-san, until around Christmas.

She left Reed and me a Christmas card on our pillow which was signed very carefully with the name, "Mot Kha."

I still have it in my memorabilia box.

Mot Kha was like a shadow as she arrived and quietly glided around the room making the beds, sweeping the floor with the usual bound-handle grass broom.

She never talked or showed an expression, unless you said something. Then she would always grin with a big smile of those black teeth.

Her day involved cleaning about 5-6 rooms, washing clothes and shining boots. Our fatigues (before jungle fatigues and flight suits) were taken out by Mot Kha and over a couple days were washed and starched (rice starch and washed in rice paddies, no doubt). They looked clean and pressed but, UGH! they smelled terrible!!

Her highlight of the day was sitting with the other hooch maids in a small group outside shining boots, visiting and chewing beetle-nut. Remember how they would listen to some guy's radio and talk and talk and talk all squatted about?

Right after Christmas, I transferred to the gun platoon, the Bandits, and lived in another part of the villa. I had a different hooch maid, but I don't remember her name.

Probably the greatest luxury

*Reed and I had was
a "hooch maid!"*

*She was typical: Black
pajamas, white,
long-sleeved top,
barefoot with thongs and,
of course, the most
beautiful black teeth!!*

Prior to my second tour in 1970-71, I spent several years performing the obligatory instructing at Fort Wolters, TX.

I attended several schools prior to the return to Vietnam, including Air Traffic Control Officers Course.

Arriving in Bien Hoa and Long Binh in June, I was assigned temporarily to the 120th Assault Helicopter Company at Long Binh for a couple months.

A transfer to the 125th Air Traffic Control Company came through because of my between tour schooling and I soon arrived at the 125th Company area on the north side of the Bien Hoa Airbase.

I was assigned to quarters with an old hand who was short and things were going well.

After I had been in the 125th Air Traffic Control Company for about a week, I was walking to the mess hall which was about two blocks away. Walking past several groups of boot shining hooch maids, the sight was familiar and almost unseen.

Just before arriving at the mess hall, I glanced at a group of hooch maids and guess what? I recognized one of them — it was Mot Kha!!

Shocked, I stopped and walked up to the group and said, "Mot Kha!"

She looked up and her face went white as she yelled, "Di We," and jumped up, grabbing me around the neck. She jabbered loudly and obviously was as excited as I was to see a familiar face from the past.

The last thing I ever expected was

to see someone like her from the first tour.

I was, obviously, very glad she didn't try to kiss me with those black teeth!

Well, while I was at Bien Hoa, Mot Kha had to be my hooch maid. Everyday after she finished her usual hooch maid duties several blocks away, she came to my room and did my work, too.

The regular hooch maid was not happy, because there were two of us in the room.

She usually arrived late in the afternoon and things seemed like old times. But the three years had brought changes not only in the war, but in the atmosphere of the Vietnam wartime society.

Several times before I left Bien Hoa to transfer to Phu Bai and take over the 1st Platoon (later A Company) of the 125th Air Traffic Control, Mot Kha tried to sell me cocaine and heroin, which she had never tried to do before. I declined, of course, and tried to ask her why she was peddling drugs.

She never seemed to understand or acted like she didn't. I never got an answer from her and decided not to press her for one.

It was, however, still good to see Mot Kha and, she did the same good job as my hooch maid three years before.

Vietnam had changed in the three years between my tours. The people were different. We were different, too. The society and the people had changed. Free enterprise had taken over and drugs were rampant. An innocence was gone and I was sad.

Over the years, I have wondered if Mot Kha is still alive and what she might be doing.

Maybe, someday I can go back and walk the streets of Bien Hoa to see if she is still there — black teeth and all!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thomas Payne flew with the 118th Assault Helicopter Company in 1966-67.

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