



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

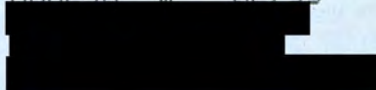
March/April 1998 Vol. 16, No. 2



Dick Detra photo

A flight from the 188th Assault Helicopter Company carries the 3/22 Infantry toward a combat assault in War Zone C during Operation Yellowstone in December 1967. In the background is Nui Ba Den near Tay Ninh.

M00296 * 02/99



From the President

Fort Worth 1998 is rapidly approaching. If you haven't registered yet, do so right away before the good rooms are gone.

The Fort Wolters Chapter has done — and is still doing — a magnificent job in organizing this reunion. This will be a reunion to remember.

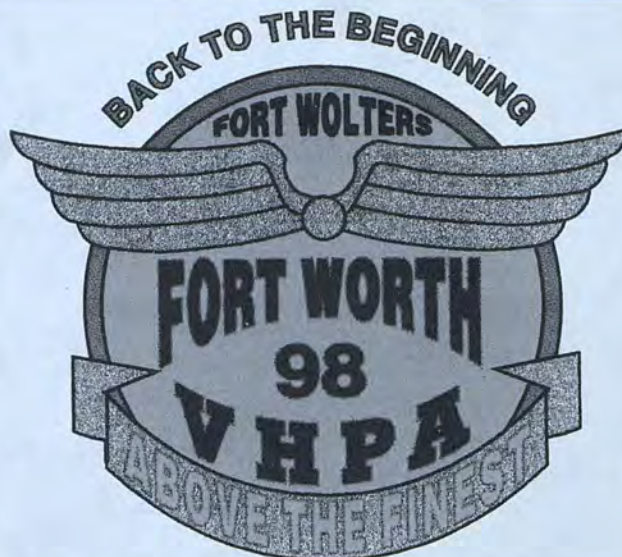
While you are doing your reunion planning, consider running for the Executive Council. As I have mentioned in previous columns, we need quality people willing to devote their time to the association. If you are interested, contact the VHPA Executive Council via Headquarters.

This is my next-to-last column as your president. It's been a hectic year, but the administration of the organization is superb.

And this reunion is the way to go out in style.

Good luck to all of you and I hope to see many of you in Fort Worth!

— Mike Hurley, President



This is the crest that will be used on T-shirts and souvenir items available at this year's VHPA reunion in Fort Worth.

An Easter message

Jesus said: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)



***The
Chaplain's
Office***

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45)

But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.

Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. (Matthew 27:12-14)

— John Plummer, Chaplain

Classified ads

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VHPA brief

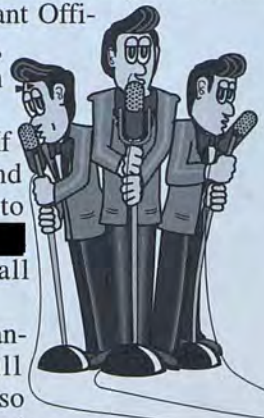
Singers wanted for reunion

We are making plans to present "Winged Soldiers," the song recorded by the Warrant Officer Candidate Chorus in 1966, at the upcoming Fort Worth reunion.

We are looking for singers. If you are planning to attend, and can carry a tune, drop a line to Mike Roulier, [REDACTED], or call him at [REDACTED].

Mike is in the process of transcribing the music, and will make a copy available to you so that you can come to the reunion prepared.

If you are a former member of the WOC Chorus, we would really like to hear from you.



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Marital problems? Ask a helicopter pilot for advice

KENNY BUNN

I read a little snippet giving marital advice the other day that was written by a priest.

Why would anyone ask a priest about marital advice? Sure he's studied what the Bible says, and read what the Pope had to say, but where's his practical experience?

You don't get riding tips from someone who's never been on a horse. You don't learn to fly from someone who's never been off the ground. You don't buy a pair of shoes

before trying them on . . . Wait, that's another story.

If you really want marital advice, the person you should ask is a helicopter pilot. Except for maybe police officers, I don't know of another group of people that has more experience at going to the altar than helicopter pilots.

Harry Reasoner, the noted television news commentator, did a piece once on the difference between helicopter pilots and airplane pilots.

He said: ". . . An airplane, by its nature, wants to fly, and if not inter-

fered with too strongly by unusual events or by a deliberately incompetent pilot, it will fly. A helicopter does not want to fly. It is maintained in the air by a variety of forces and controls working in opposition to each other, and if there is any disturbance in this delicate balance the helicopter stops flying, immediately and disastrously."

". . . in general, airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts, and helicopter pilots are brooders, introspective anticipators of trouble.

See PILOTS, Page 13

Pilot seeks others who knew friend

I'm a pilot out of WOC 67-5 and did six weeks in country with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company out of Duc Pho in June and July 1967, and a life member of VHPA.

My very best friend in flight school and the guy I still think of every day is Robert "Smitty" Charles Link.

We went through flight school together and I spent many weekends with Smitty and his family in his mobile home at Fort Wolters and our families lived side by side in a mobile home park just outside the gate at Fort Rucker. We graduated together on May 8, 1967.

I received orders to go directly to Vietnam, while Smitty, I think, was sent to the 17th Assault Helicopter Company at Fort Riley, KS, and I believe that unit then arrived in Vietnam in September 1967. Smitty, I am told, went MIA/KIA/BNR on a recovery mission near A Shau Valley on April 12, 1968. I received a two-page "After Action Report" from Gary Roush and the VHPA database.

I am looking for someone who personally knew Smitty to get additional information about him while he was in country or the actual "incident" of April 21, 1968.

Max J. Mizejewski

Aussie Vietnam vets welcome Huey pilot

I just got back to the States today, Feb. 1 — my 46th birthday, after spending three weeks in Australia. I am stuck in a hotel in LA overnight due to an overbooked flight to Seattle, but it gives time to collect my thoughts about my visit with some Aussie Vietnam vets, particularly Carey McQuillan.

Shortly after landing in Melbourne, I caught Carey's poignant letter to the A-list commemorating the action of Jan. 8, 1966, (Re: "32 Years Ago Today") while clearing some of the vast tunnel network in Cu Chi, resulting in the deaths of some of his fellow warriors. I sent him a reply which brought about our meeting the following week in Sydney.

Carey served with 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, attached to the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade in III Corps, 1965-6. He has been involved at ground-zero in the national effort to bring recognition to Australia's Viet-

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nam veterans since before the belated Welcome Home parade, becoming one of the official delegates responsible for bringing the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial to life.

Carey's also a retired New South Wales police sergeant with 27 years on the force, so my respect for him goes well beyond the war in Southeast Asia.

After picking me up at the airport, we went to dinner with some friends of his from the battalion; Bob Cockerill and Tom Gosper and their wives.

*After a few
beers . . .*

*I got the
feeling they
had adopted
me as their
official
U.S. Army
helicopter
pilot*

Tom wore a T-shirt showing a Grunt with a UH-1 chopper flying overhead and caption: "We Love Huey Pilots."

After a few beers and much lively conversation I got the feeling they had adopted me as their official U.S. Army helicopter pilot, accepting the compliments and thanks on behalf of all who had resupplied, medevaced, assaulted, extracted them.

It was a magical evening sharing experiences from the longest war in both our nations' history.

They presented me with a gold pin from the "173rd Down Under," making me an official member of the organization, an honor rarely given an outsider, much less a Yank.

The following day, Carey presented me with a white marble slab with a cube of black granite mounted on top, along with a placard inscribed with my name and unit.

It read: "This small piece of granite is certified to be from an offcut of the material used in the floor of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial. Dedicated on 3 October 1992 in Canberra-Australia."



He explained the white marble was from the same quarry in Italy as Michelangelo's "Piata" sculpture where the dead Christ is cradled in the arms of Mary. "It's the only stone in the world worthy of

carrying this," as he eloquently put it.

Later, we drove up to the Blue Mountains above Sydney to visit the Glenbrook Military Museum, an impressive private collection of Australian war archives maintained by Bill Connell, a nationally recognized military historian and research consultant.

I was struck by a letter written by a young infantryman captured in Europe during World War II who was sentenced to death by the Axis powers.

On the day he was to be shot, he was given the opportunity to write a final message to his family. Reading his last words, in his own penmanship, I could not imagine the sheer bravery it took to be so calm and reassuring on the eve of his own death.

Another of Mr. Connell's passions dealt with the U.S.

Medal of Honor award. When he showed me his collection of personal signatures from MH recipients, I declined his offer to hold it in my hands, fearing I would drop or spoil it somehow.

It was enough just to look. Before departing, he asked me to autograph some color images reproduced from my photo gallery on VVHP to be included in the display, as I was the first U.S. helicopter pilot to visit the museum. I was humbled, to say the least, to be included in such extraordinary company.

Still flying high from attending the ceremonies at Granite Falls, WA, last Veterans Day, I was moved beyond words by the whole Australian experience.

Come to find out later, Carey sent a similar marble and granite tribute to the grade school class in Granite Falls, receiving a grateful personal response from their teacher, Debra Howe, thanking him for the honor and thrill it gave her and the class.

The more I get around, the more I realize how small and connected the world has become, and I'm thankful for that.

Mike Austin

Ranking officials met aboard U.S. warship

Very little is known about us in the 1958 to the end of 1964 period, and I have no war stories for you. You know even less of the truth, but I will tell you a story.

We were out a long way and shot up. Needing repairs, we put in to Da Nang. A captain woke me and had instructions for me to go with him.

We got off and flew out to the U.S.S. Ticonderoga and then went into a room. The Navy knew how to live, food galore and even drinks.

At the head of the table was Admiral Felt. After all was done, the doors, steel and sound-proof, slid silently closed. In came Robert McNamara and Maxwell Taylor.

A secret twix was passed around. It said: "You are hereby ordered to combat status. You will log combat time and be paid hazardous duty pay."

There was more and McNamara asked if there were any questions. I asked him what the hell he thought we had been doing all the time and pointed out the fact my men and I had not been paid any money at all since being there, some over a year.

Felt told me I had my orders and dismissed us.

The other thing was Gen. Oden's orders to hold I Corps at any cost and, indeed, it was costly.

The date was Jan. 2, 1965.

Charles B. Wells
Navarre, FL

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Nose art photos needed for unit history project

I need help from 188th Assault Helicopter Company "Black Widows" and "Spiders" with a project I'm doing for our unit history.

During our tour from May 1967-July 1968, our unit had two distinct nose arts. I'm hoping a few of you pilots took photos of the helicopters with that distinct logo on the nose.

I need photos of both nose arts for our unit history project. If you only have one good shot, I'd love to get a copy.

Our unauthorized patch collection was a success. It's been published in the American Society of Patch Collectors quarterly magazine. I have copies available for any of you who are interested.

Once again, please dig into those old photos and see if you can locate our unit nose art. One was before the mortar attack and the other came about after we received our new birds.

I'm also locating our unit WIA. Those of you wounded in country, please send me a statement on the incident and it will be added to the unit history I'm writing.

Dick Detra
Spider Doorgunner

J.R. holds a special place in memory of ex-co-pilot

I have had the privilege of flying with several great aviators, many of whom are still with us and some who have gone on to a better place.

With a special place in memory is John Rodgers — J.R. to those of us who flew with the Gambler Guns and Black-jacks in the 4th Aviation Battalion in 1969.

Three of the most notable aircraft commanders I flew co-pilot for were Greg Beck, John B. Morgan (J.B.) and J.R.



J.B. was one of our instructor pilots and it was he who signed me off as an AC and let me log my first hour as such. But it was J.R. who inadvertently gave me the opportunity to log my first real hour as an AC.

We had been on 24-hour standby duty one early summer day in 1969 and were having our morning coffee in the Ops shack when we all heard a loud "wump" sound.

Someone asked "was that divarty" and, with the next "wump," we knew it wasn't. A few other colorful phrases were shouted as most of us ran for the choppers.

I jumped into the left seat as the crew chief untied the



Chapter members attending Tet anniversary party.

California Chapter North celebrates Tet anniversary

The VHPA California Chapter North conducted a 30th anniversary of Tet party Jan. 30 at member Jim Vernon's winery and microbrewery.

Jim supplied some outstanding beer and wine from his operation in Santa Rosa and all chipped in for the food.

Later in the afternoon, the group closed the winery to go to the Flamingo Resort Hotel. But first, member Harry Martin got his car stuck in Jim's driveway. Or was it the lawn?

Anyway, this was due to a combination of the extraordinary rainfall we have had in northern California and Harry's lousy driving. Everyone pitched in and pushed the car out of the hole so we could all go prove to ourselves we could still dance. Or was it walk?

After much partying, joking and dancing, the band quit. Then they closed the hotel and asked us to go home. Anyway, we had a fun time with a couple of dozen in attendance.

The next morning we all met at the local IHOP for breakfast to compare eyeballs, appetites and recollections from the previous night's revelry.

But Harry wasn't there because he had fallen down the night before in an attempt to kill a concrete parking bumper with his head. The concrete won the first round, but 28 stitches later, Harry declared a victory.

If any member is going to Puerto Rico, be sure to look up Harry Martin. He is a very entertaining guy. He is now flying EMS down there. Maybe so he can learn to do his own stitches? He's a good host, so do drop in and see him in PR.

Ken Fritz
Orangevale, CA

rotor. No J.R. I started the aircraft. No J.R. J.C. Taylor and his wingman were pulling pitch. Still no J.R. The crew chief asked where the lieutenant was, but I didn't have a clue. I knew we sure as hell weren't going to sit still while incoming was hitting the base. I shouted back to the crew chief, "Looks like you're the co-pilot, let's get out of here."

We made it out of camp as another "wump" hit the

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perimeter, and joined up with J.C. and his team.

Someone spotted the site where the 122s were coming from, but by then they had all been fired and, of course, Charles was long gone.

Having no valid targets to engage, we came back to camp to top off our fuel and see what the rest of the day would bring.

As I shut down the chopper, J.R. came walking down to the revetment and I asked him where he had gone to. He replied: "To the bunker, you think my name sounds like John Wayne?"

It has been 25 years since I've seen most of the people I flew with back in 4th Aviation Battalion.

Last year was the first Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) reunion I have been able to make it to. As my wife Barbara and I walked up to register, I heard an old, yet familiar, voice ask: "Excuse me, what's your name?"

I turned and said "J.R., it's Mel" and two men with graying hair smiled at each other through the eyes of 20-year-olds.

This was a great reunion, with enough of us from 4th Aviation to have a mini-reunion one evening. We all gathered and swapped old stories, and caught up on what we have done with our lives.

Someone asked J.R. How he was doing, and he replied he had made peace with himself. On his third tour, J.R. was shot down, and for many years was bitter about the ordeal I am about to share with you.

J.R. was the team leader on a mission to a hot spot somewhere near the Laotian border up near the DMZ. They encountered anti-aircraft fire, not small arms, the serious kind that reaches way out, and took a direct hit in the nose of their Cobra.

There were at least two other aircraft there, and to them it must have looked as if there were no survivors in the crash.

But J. R. was very much alive. With a broken nose and jaw, an ear half torn off and three broken ribs, he was still able to break out of the cockpit and rescue his co-pilot, who had taken the worst of the hit. The co-pilot's legs were shredded and his abdomen was torn up quite seriously, too.

The second Cobra flew overhead as J.R. waved frantically, but in the confusion, no one saw. Knowing the area would soon be swarming with NVA, J.R. half carried his co-pilot about 500 meters to a hiding place to try to ride out the inevitable search.

They had a survival pack, several weapons and plenty of ammunition. But neither of them was in any shape for what would have been a pointless fire fight.

The NVA did come and did search, but did not find. Being quite agitated at not having any pilots to show for their kill, they did the only logical thing left: They shot the hell out of J.R.'s Cobra. Like it was ever going to fly again.

J.R. and his co-pilot hid for three days at this location, sending signals over their survival radio. To no avail.

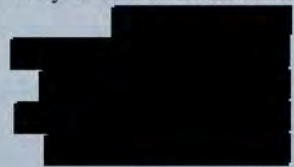
Arkansas city naming its airport after pilot

The city of Arkadelphia, AR, is renaming its airport after Lt. Dexter Florence, KIA 10/29/72 while serving with D/17 Cav. I am looking for any information, details of Lt. Florence's accident and details leading up to that crash.

Information can be sent to me at below address or e-mail at [REDACTED]

The dedication is set for 10/29/98, the anniversary of his death. I am looking for former unit members or fellow flight school, (Class 71-30) students.

Larry Cain
Arkadelphia City Board of Directors



That night, they decided to head back toward friendly territory. By this time the co-pilot was in terrible shape, lapsing in and out of consciousness. When he could walk, he did. And when he couldn't, J.R. carried him.

Late that night, the co-pilot said he heard noises ahead. With his head being injured as it was, J.R. could barely hear and, with some doubts, did his best to hide them both.

Within minutes, a company of NVA was on the trail alongside of them. As they hid in silence, one of the NVA stopped to relieve himself, on both J.R. and his co-pilot. The NVA passed on and some time later our friends struck out again.

At about 4 a.m. that morning, the co-pilot died of his injuries. J.R. carried him for another two hours until he could find a decent place to bury him. And so, in spite of his injuries, J.R. dug a shallow grave for his co-pilot, on the side of a rice paddy, somewhere in the middle of hell.

He continued on, now into the fifth day, mostly at night, always east. The next two days went without event. About the seventh night, J.R. realized he was hearing voices around him and, to his horror, found himself surrounded by NVA again.

In the dark confusion, he was able to quietly slip down into a bomb crater. There was water at the bottom, and sanctuary, and rest. As dawn broke, all was quiet. But at the bottom of the crater, in the water he had drunk, were three dead NVA.

Several days later, hoping to find help, he spotted one of our firebases. As he drew near, he saw it had been over run some time earlier. Cautiously, he looked around and, in the trash pit, found some peanut butter and crackers in old C ration boxes. To a person who had been through this much hell in one week, it was a gourmet meal.

On the 10th night, he came to an active firebase. Having

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come this far and not wanting to get shot in the darkness, he waited until daylight. At dawn, he struggled toward the gate to be met by ARVNs who did not believe he was an American.

Fortunately, the American adviser at the base grasped the situation and took control. A medevac was called and J.R. would soon be on his way home.

In 11 days, J.R. had traveled about 200 miles through enemy-held land. He went from 165 to 85 pounds, and had to be on IVs for six weeks to flush out the dysentery in his system.

Recovery, back in the States took a long time. But recover he did, building a successful career as a cattle rancher along the Columbia River in eastern Oregon.

Some years later, J.R. told us he looked up the parent of his co-pilot, and told them of their son and their ordeal and how he had died. The Army had been listing him as missing in action even though J.R. had brought back his dog tags and reported him as KIA.

J.B. Morgan called me last week to tell me of J.R.'s passing. Cancer, it seems. The details aren't important. We've lost a good man, and that's all there is to it.

From now until the day I die, if anyone asks me if I've every known a John Wayne-type of hero, I'll smile and think of J.R. And say, "Yea, I was one of his co-pilots, a long time ago."

Mel C. Latham
Gambler 37
Tacoma, WA

Japanese student conducts research on Vietnam vets

My name is Kaori Hattori. I am a student of Chugoku Junior College in Okayama, Japan, who is doing a little research about Vietnam veterans.

I'd like to ask you to help me by answering a question I'm working on. If you would be interested in our project, please write us back.

This study is to help us understand the Vietnam veterans when they came back to the United States.

I would like to ask you to help us collect information we need by answering the following question. Please feel free to leave it unanswered if you find it offending.

Q. Why the Vietnam Veterans were not welcomed by the U.S. people when Vietnam War ended? What do you think?

Thank you very much in advance for your attention and cooperation.

Kaori Hattori
Chugoku Junior College

Crane at An Khe original CH-54 deployed with Cav

In reference to the February photo of the CH-54A Crane in the 1998 calendar, it is one of the original 4 CH-54s that belonged to the 478th Flying Crane Aviation Company that deployed with 1st Air Cavalry Division from Fort Benning, GA, in August 1965.

The location is the "Golf Course" at An Khe, with monkey mountain in the background. The crew named their ship the "Wooley Booger."

This picture must have been made shortly after our arrival as the "dust particle separators" have not been installed in the front of the 4,500-horsepower Pratt & Whitney engines.

A trivial note, the dome shape "dunce hat" on top of the rotor system became part of the helicopter when, during testing, the factory pilots were unable to pin down a rotor vibration.

Cranking up, the pilots discovered the vibration was gone, taking the "dunce hat" off when the vibration returned. Put it back on, it disappeared.

To make a long story short, it became part of the CH-54A, one of the smoothest flying helicopters made, according to most crane pilots.

James Oden
478th Aviation Company
1964-65
1967-68

Vietnam helicopter pilots in short supply in society

I was recently invited to, and did, join a new organization: The Distinguished Flying Cross Society.

Membership is open to all recipients of the DFC. It is about four years old now, with around 1,400 members so far.

Helicopter people and Vietnam vets seem to be really in short supply in this elite group.

Please extend the invitation to join to other VHPA members through our newsletter.

Contact The Distinguished Flying Cross Society at 34231 Camino Capistrano, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624. Phone (714) 443-2954 or fax (714) 493-DFCS (3327)

The second chapter of the DFCS, the General Ira Eaker Chapter, has just been formed here in Little Rock and will be hosting a national convention in October.

I hope I will not be the only Vietnam Fling-Wing driver there.

Tim Murphy
Little Rock, AR

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Vietnam unit patches would fill out map frame

Guys, now for a most likely impossible request.

I have my Vietnam map ready for framing. Problem is, there is a big (3 by 5-inch) blank space south and east of Ham Tan, where when framed will look strange — out of balance.

What would fit there and look pretty nice would be my 247th Medical Detachment (AA) and my 45th Medical Company (AA) patches to fill the hole and make the layout nice.

Do you have any idea where I could get the patches? Cloth or paper prints would do fine.

Gary Calhoun

Ex-crew chief seeking helicopter snake drivers

Hello, I'm a member of VHCMA, a former crew chief with D Company, 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion, and was looking for any of our "Snake Drivers" between May and July 1971.

It is in regards to a group photo taken when we moved from Camp Evans to Dong Ba Thin, after an overnight lay-over.

I DEROS'ed shortly after and never got a copy, and have been looking for over 25 years. Thought maybe you fellows could help.

Dutch Covert

Information wanted on anyone who served with 191st AHC

I was given your name by Ed Eaton in hopes of getting some information on anyone with the 191st Assault Helicopter Company stationed at Bearcat from June 1967-March 1968.

I have been looking in all of the veterans magazines and publications and have yet to see any mention of the 191st. I thought there may be some pilots or crew members in your organization. Any help would be appreciated.

Harrell Guidry

Work

Korean pilot to help make contact

At HAI, I found a Korean who flew with us in Nam. He said he can contact any and all of the others.

His name is Nam H. Park,

We had a good time and signed up 30-plus members. Good thing is that most of them were past due.

W. Hayden "Pappy" Jones

Taps

James E. Davey

I was a gun pilot with B Troop, 2/17 Cav, 101st ABN in Northern I Corps from August 1970 to September 1971.

One of our slick pilots was a man named James E. Davey. Jim was a warrant officer and one of the best helicopter pilots I had ever seen.

I had talked with Jim about joining VHPA and he had planned to do so at last year's meeting in Orlando.

Unfortunately, Jim was killed in a Boeing V107 crash on Oct. 5, 1996. At the time of his death, Jim was the chief pilot for Columbia Helicopters, located at Aurora Airport in Portland, OR.

William W. Jones
Banshee 29

John F. Kane

John F. Kane of Garland, TX, died Feb. 9 after suffering a massive heart attack. He was 51.

Kane served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1968. During his tour in Vietnam, he earned the Distinguished

Flying Cross, assorted Air Medals and the Bronze Star Medal.

At the time of his death he was employed as a regional operations director for Long John Silver's Seafood Restaurants.

William B. "Huey" Long

William B. "Huey" Long, 66, of Mineral Wells died March 24 at a Fort Worth hospital.

He was born in Phoenix on Sept. 15, 1931, the son of William Baron, Sr. and Dorthea Alida Elliott Long.

He had lived in the Mineral Wells area 40 years, and was club manager of American Legion Post No. 75 in Mineral Wells.

Doyle L. Stone Jr.

Doyle L. Stone Jr., 187th Assault Helicopter Company Crusader from 1970-71, died of a heart attack Dec. 1 in Austin, TX.

He was a master aviator on active duty as a CW4 with the Texas National Guard in Austin, flying with the Reconnaissance and Interdiction (RAID) program.

Doyle was in flight school class 70-20.

He will live on in our memory, always!

— Submitted by his sister and brother-in-law,
Rena K. Stone Glover and CW5 Jodie R. Glover



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by Joe Kline



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



Joe Kline Aviation Art

Directory relies on communication

MIKE LAW
DIRECTORY EDITOR

One of the great joys of being the Directory editor is listening to and working with VHPA members.

Recently I received two telephone calls that are very representative of several dozen I have received in the past few months.

About a week later, I received a write-up of his war story and it is perfect for my needs.

The first was from a VHPA member who had just finished reading the VHPA Newsletter and wanted to talk about an FOB (Flight Over the Board) mission. He wanted to see if his ideas would fit with the Directory Committee's plans

for the 1998 issue.

We talked for a few minutes so we could understand each other's point of view — he had a Vietnam war story that is important to him; I have a history section to pull together.

About a week later, I received a write-up of his war story and it is perfect for my needs.

The bottom line: One VHPA member is happy and one VHPA Directory editor is happy. The Directory editor also is a little smarter on one more piece of the helicopter history of the Vietnam War. Nothing wrong with this picture!

The second was from a VHPA member who was a little unhappy with the way his unit's material was presented in the 1997 Directory.

His point of view goes something like this:

"My unit was (one of) the best in all of Vietnam. It had a long and glorious history. Why is it that I only

read a dozen paragraphs with ideas about the unit in 1969?"

Earlier he told me he served two tours with the unit, from mid-1965 through the early part of 1967, and had flown more than 2,000 hours in Vietnam.

After we talked, I researched my source material on his unit and determined the following:

- The VHPA does not have a copy of any published Vietnam-era history for this unit.
- The VHPA has no knowledge of any current day associations, newsletters or reunions for this unit.

I called the man back, reviewed the five ideas outlined above, and asked for his help in fixing the problem.

The Directory Committee in response to our pleas for input for the 1997 Directory.

- One Saturday morning, I had called a half dozen VHPAers from this unit "panning for information," but this effort did not "mine much gold."

I called the man back, reviewed the five ideas outlined above, and asked for his help in fixing the problem.

A few weeks later he mailed me some very nice material and I am delighted to have it.

The sad fact of life is that the helicopter history of the Vietnam War is HUGE and the VHPA Directory's

goal is to give everyone "a day in the sun" now and then.

In 1997, the "sun shined" on the helicopter history of IV Corps. In 1996, the "sun shined" on the helicopter history of Southern I Corps.

They were good histories, but they were not perfect and they were hardly complete — just a taste, really only an introduction.

The bottom line: One VHPA member disappointed his unit didn't have a better "day in the sun" and one VHPA Directory editor sad that he could have done a better job with a few more hours, a few more letters, and a few more telephone calls.

Gentlemen, now is the time to act!

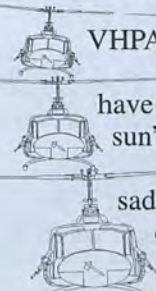
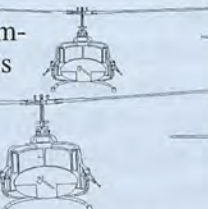
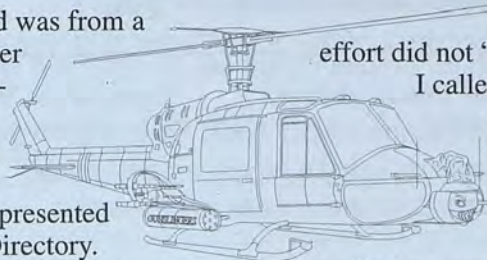
This coming October you too can be happy your unit, your war story, your battle was included in your unit's "day in the sun" in the 1998 Directory.

Or, you too can call Mike Law and say: "My unit was the best in all of Vietnam. It had a long and glorious history. Why is it that I only read a dozen paragraphs in the 1998 Directory and they don't include the famous Battle of XYZ?"

Remember rule No. 1: Only the Lord is perfect; the rest of us need some help. Rest assured — the VHPA Directory Committee is in the "need some help" category!!!

If you were involved in any FOB missions or served in a unit that was not

based inside South Vietnam, please contact Mike Law



Helicopter forced to do zero, zero approach

GLENN BROWN

One of our main missions in 2/20 ARA was flying rocket and mortar patrol at night out over the "rocket belt."

One night while flying out there over the foothills watching for flashes, a heavy bank of clouds rolled in from the sea. This was a bit more than your basic fog bank, but it was that, too.

As the clouds pushed in, it was like a wedge and rose to at least 3,500 feet.

I had no problem staying above them for my hour and a half watch. The problem began when it was time for me to come down.

No holes in the overcast anywhere. It was very dark and got even darker

The GCA controller said,

"Turn right for radar identification."

A wholly unnecessary request; I was the only idiot up there.

when I entered the clouds. I had in mind to descend to about 1,000 feet above the ground and, if I had not broken out by then, I would call GCA (Ground Controlled Approach) out of Evans.

So, down we came.

At 1,500 feet, still in the clouds, I began to worry about the altimeter.

Had I set it correctly before take-off? Had the barometric pressure changed greatly since then? Hundreds of other questions rattled around in my head.

I pulled in power and started climbing back up on top. In the patchy stuff at the top of the cloud layer, I could see some stars and felt much safer. I called Evans GCA and told him of my predicament.

The GCA controller said, "Turn right for radar identification." A wholly unnecessary request; I was the only idiot up there.

"Roger, turning right," I said.

"Quebec One, say altitude?"

"Roger, we are at 3,500 feet on top, over."

"Quebec One, this is Evans GCA, See GCA FAILS, Page 13

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GCA fails to get helicopter on the ground

Continued from Page 12

we have radar contact. Turn right to 160 degrees and descend to 2,000 feet."

"This is Quebec One, Roger."

And, with that, the commands were executed.

"OK, Quebec One, in just a minute I want you to start a standard rate descent . . . Start descent now."

"This is Quebec One, Roger."

"Very good, now start a standard rate turn to the right to 250 degrees, continuing your descent."

"Quebec One, Roger."

"OK, Quebec One, from here on just listen and do as you are instructed. There is no need for you to acknowledge each transmission. You

Turning on the landing light would have been a disaster, like shining a bright light on a snowbank. It would blind you instead of helping.

are slightly above glide slope, adjust your rate of descent . . . You are drifting slightly left, turn right to 253 . . . You are slightly below glide slope, adjust your rate of descent . . . Now you are slightly right of approach path, turn left to 251 . . . Slightly below glide slope, adjust your rate of

descent . . . On glide slope and on approach angle, looking good . . . You are at 100 feet over the end of the runway; take over visually and land your aircraft."

"Negatory, we do not have a visual on the ground!" I responded quickly.

All I could see was the eerie red glow of the instrument lights reflecting off the inside of the canopy.

Turning on the landing light would have been a disaster, like shining a bright light on a snowbank. It would blind you instead of helping.

"Make missed approach. Climb to and maintain 2,000 feet. Continue to your alternate," he said matter-of-factly and exactly by the book as he

See FUEL, Page 14

Late VIETNAM-Era Pilot in Porcelain

I now only cast this figure in porcelain and it only comes painted. Stands 6 1/2 inches tall and weighs less than a pound. It depicts a late era pilot wearing a soft cap, two-piece Nomex flight suit, chicken plate, survival vest, .38-caliber pistol with holster, while carrying an APH-5 helmet in one hand and a CAR-15 in the other.

The cost for each figure is \$45.00 and shipping charges within the continental U.S. is \$5.00. Outside the U.S. the shipping charge is \$10.00. All figures are shipped priority mail. Please allow three to four weeks, as I paint each figure and it takes me approximately 12 hours to complete each figure.

If you desire, I can personalize your figure. I can paint 101st, 1st Avn Bde, 1st Cav and 4th ID patches on the sleeve.

Please send your checks to: Steve Pullen, [REDACTED]

If you have any questions, please call me at [REDACTED]

Later this year I will have an early era pilot wearing jungle fatigues, jungle boots and carrying an M1 carbine.

This figure and the figures to follow will make excellent gifts and a welcome addition to your office or den. When you look at the figure, you will remember another time when we flew helicopters and made aviation and Army history during the Vietnam War.

— Steve Pullen/Banshee 11



Pilots approach marriage like flying helicopters

Continued from Page 3

They know if something bad has not happened, it is about to."

It appears that many helicopter pilots go into their relationships in much the same expectation.

You see, a lot of helicopter pilots enter into marriage with eyes glued to the marital instrument panel, wondering where the whole thing is going to come apart.

When this detail is combined with the fact most helicopter jobs are in remote areas, the occupation is not noted for continuous, happy relationships. This little slice of reality does not keep them from trying, though.

I know one pilot who's been married nine times. You can bet your sweet tail rotor there are no expectations when he goes to the altar. I can hear the minister now.

"Robert, do you promise to love, honor, cherish, in sickness and in health, until the freezing level rises above 10,000 feet?"

"Naomi, do you promise to love, honor, cherish, in sickness and in health, until he finds a job where it's warmer?"

All it takes for true love to flourish in a helo head is for your company to hire a new secretary/radio operator.

I think my Mama said it best.

"Son," she said when I was in high school, "if you marry a girl that was raised the same as you, she won't ever wonder what the hell you're talkin' about."

Since I've been married to Dammitlane for 29 years this April, I guess that dog'll hunt. If you don't know what that means, ain't you glad you didn't marry me.

Fuel may have been too low for go-around

Continued from Page 13

was taught back in the world.

"Negatory on that also. We are low on fuel. We may not even have enough fuel to go around. Get us on the ground!" I said with a bit of urgency in my voice.

The 20-minute fuel light may have been on, but I really do not remember with all the other things to watch and take care of.

I do know we were too low on fuel to be trying another approach attempt at any other LZ.

This shroud of weather was like a blanket covering every LZ in the area, the same as Evans.

"Roger, understand. Your altitude is now about 50 feet. We are starting to lose the contact; you are fading into the background . . . Continue with what you've got except reduce your rate of descent to 100 feet per minute."

"I'm ahead of you on that," I

*I do know we were
too low on fuel
to be trying another
approach attempt
at any other LZ.*

responded.

"You are off my screen, but you should be only about 10-15 feet off the ground now. Good luck."

He had done all he could do and then some.

All of my senses heightened to the point my body felt like I was about to explode. Seconds later, with the aircraft slowed to the point that I was losing my airspeed indicator (below 20 knots) and virtually zero rate of descent, I felt the heel of the left skid touch.

Immediately I slammed the collec-

tive down and planted the aircraft firmly on the ground. When I turned on the landing light, I could see the centerline of the runway in front of the aircraft. We were almost dead center on the runway, about two-thirds of the way down the strip.

I was so glad to be on the ground alive that I just left the aircraft right there in the center of the runway. I told the tower that if it wanted the aircraft moved that night, it could send a tractor and a maintenance crew with ground handling wheels and move it that way, and I shut it down right there.

The adrenaline left me and I felt so weak I could hardly walk when I got out of the aircraft. For that mission, I should have received a medal of some kind, but I didn't get a reprimand either, so what the heck?

EDITOR'S NOTE: N.G. (Glenn) Brown served with C/2/20 ARA, 1st Cavalry Division, in 1968-69.



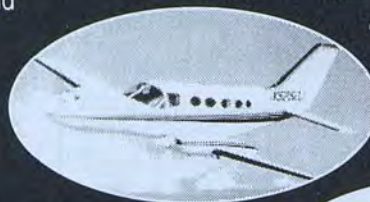
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Helicopters had various purposes

JOHN B. KONEK

For several years I have been researching some of the more unusual uses of helicopters in Southeast Asia.

Even though I was trained by the Army and flew Army helicopters, I am interest in helicopters from other services, other countries, and even civilian operations.

My "Air America helicopters active early in war" article in the January/February VHPA Newsletter showed the results of some of this research.

In this article, I'd like to review some other helicopter organizations.

For example, I assumed the major oil companies had helicopter assets in Southeast Asia and recently wrote Shell Oil headquarters in London, which confirmed this.

Its American subsidiary, Pecton, had a Sikorsky H-34 based offshore as part of its drilling platform.

It also was used to evacuate some of Pecton's U.S. staff from Saigon.

Its American subsidiary, Pecton, had a Sikorsky H-34 based offshore as part of its drilling platform. It also was used to evacuate some of Pecton's U.S. staff from Saigon.

Another subsidiary, Brunel Shell Petroleum (BSP) used its helicopters to evacuate other U.S. nationals. This evacuation was coordinated between

London, Singapore and Seria in Brunel.

I also have learned Shell Vietnam had Shell Aviation Depots at Saigon, Dalat, Da Nang, Hue, and Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Its Vietnam subsidiary was established in 1965 under the name "Cong-Ty Shell Vietnam."

The recent Vietnam magazine article covering the history of IBM's attempt to evacuate its employees from Saigon shows the benefit of having helicopters, especially when Tan Son Nhut was closed to fixed-wing operations by the NVA.

I hope anyone else interested in this subject will contact me.

In Thailand, the Royal Thai Air Force and the National Police also had helicopters.

The 6,800-man BPP (Border Patrol See **THAI**, Page 16

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Army's first helicopter class had 8 students

The Army's first rotary wing instructor pilots were three officers — Lts. Rodney J. Collins, Norman Goodwin and Marcus Sullivan — and two civilians — James K. Knox and Charles L. Martin.

These men were trained by the Air Force or Bell Helicopter. They instructed the Army's first tactical helicopter training course, which consisted of eight students, who were graduated on Dec. 3, 1948.

In July 1949, this course was renamed the Army Field Forces Helicopter Pilot Course and, in August 1951, it was changed to the Army Helicopter Aviation Tactics Course.

In the summer of 1953, the Army established a course which graduated warrant officer cargo helicopter pilots for Transportation Corps helicopter companies.

Applications came from enlisted men or warrant officers, and the prerequisites did not require prior aviation training.

The Army had negotiated with the Air Force to conduct this course, but the Air Force refused, stating helicopter flying could not be taught to individuals who were not already pilots and teaching enlisted men to fly was against policy.

Bell Helicopter Corp. also required prior fixed-wing training before it would accept students in its rotary wing course.

See **WOCS**, Page 17

Thai border police used UH-34Ds

Continued from Page 15

Police) was responsible for patrolling the Thai border to a depth of 15 miles to prevent smuggling, along with

The police helicopter assets were controlled by the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), which owned 43 helicopters.

other activities, including intelligence-gathering, counterinsurgency, counter-subversion and civic action in and around the border areas.

Sources indicate that before 1967, the BPP was considered inadequate in terms of effectiveness in conducting its

multi-purpose missions.

In early 1967, the BPP underwent a period of reorganization and expansion, including the addition of 50 men, quick reaction forces called Mobile Reserve Platoons, which were equipped with three UH-34Ds per platoon. Thirteen platoons were activated in 1967 and an additional 54 were planned for activation after 1967.

The Thai National Police Aviation Division had 39 UH-34Ds in early 1967.

A 500-man Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit, known as the Special Battalion, was activated with the mission to provide an airborne guerrilla

strike force. My sources rated this unit's training as very effective and it had a very creditable record of air rescue actions along with border security actions.

At this time, the police helicopter assets were controlled by the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), which owned 43 helicopters — 41 UH-34Ds and 2 HH-43As. Like the U.S.A.F., the RTAF used Kaman Huskies for local air base rescue operations.

The March 1968 issue of Air America Log, the company newspaper from Air America provides additional information about Thai helicopters.

The article is titled "Air America Participates in Thai Police Ceremony" and was written by M. Forrest

who was the supervisor, Thai Police Contract. Excerpts from the article read:

Air America advisors in Bangkok were honored by being invited to participate in Hiller presentation ceremonies.

Air America advisors in Bangkok were recently honored by being invited to participate in ceremonies marking the presentation of 22 Fairchild Hiller Model 1100 helicopters to Thailand by the United States. This is another example of the rapport resulting from joint Royal

Thai Police and Air America efforts to build an efficient Thai air arm under the sponsorship of the United

States Operations Mission (USOM), now referred to as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Thai National Police Aviation Unit is not a new project; it has progressed rapidly in the few years since it came under the

Royal Thai Police aviation traces its beginnings to 1950, when it was first established as part of the Metropolitan Police.

USAID assistance program.

Royal Thai Police aviation traces its beginnings to 1950, when it was first established as part of the Metropolitan Police. This early unit consisted of but one Hiller 360 helicopter with a pilot and mechanic as its entire staff.

Realizing the value of helicopters, the Ministry of Interior inaugurated a kingdom-wide Transport and Communications Command in 1953 which included the Royal Police Aviation Unit.

A hangar was obtained from the Royal Thai Air Force and 10 Hiller 12B helicopters were purchased along with three Cessna J15 aircraft,

See AIR, Page 17

VHPA brief

Mystery Cobra

The August photo in the 1998 VHPA Calendar is of a Cobra.

An unidentified VHPA member called VHPA Headquarters to tell us the unidentified Cobra in the photo is from the Dutch Masters, B/7/1 Air Cav, based at Vinh Long.

Do you agree? There's no prize, but we would all like to know for sure whose Cobra is in the calendar.

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.

Air America helped with training

Continued from Page 16

one 180 and two 310s. During this interval, the unit was known as the Communications Aviation Division.

In 1954, Royal Thai Police aviation added more 12Bs and two Douglas C-47s and in 1956 two Cessna 310Fs were obtained and more C-47s joined the growing fleet.

The unit then became closely associated with the Border Patrol Police and was placed under their supervision.

The year 1967 brought many changes for the aviation wing among which was its elevation to Division status. The unit, under the command of Col. Pichit, reports directly to the Headquarters of the Thai National Police Department (TNPd) and provides air support to all Royal Thai Police elements.

About a year ago I had some good leads on North Vietnamese helicopter activities via some Russian sources, but I am sad to say that nothing new has come to light of late.

The article states that Air America had a staff of 14 who worked closely with Air Asia's Technical Training Division in Taiwan where many Royal Thai Police mechanics undergo training.

Air America also assisted in helicopter instructor-pilot training in con-

junction with TNPd personnel. Air America Capts. F.N. Smith and W.J. Fraser regularly train Royal Thai Police and Civil Aviation Technical Center (CATC) pilots in Hiller 2Es.

There are 11 captioned photos printed with this article. One shows all the new FH1100s lined up for the ceremony with three Bell 204Bs (the civilian version of the Army UH-1B) in the foreground.

I hope anyone else interested in Thai helicopters will contact me.

I am also corresponding with VHPA member James Michener who lives and works in Vientiane, Laos to research Lao Air Force helicopters.

About a year ago I had some good leads on North Vietnamese helicopter activities via some Russian sources, but I am sad to say that nothing new has come to light of late.

WOCs subjected to intensive hazing

Continued from Page 15

Nevertheless, the Army took a bold, unprecedented step and established the course.

Candidates in the enlisted men's portion of the course underwent intensive OCS-type training. They were given a sergeant's pay while in the course and wore no insignia.

The candidates were subjected to an intensive hazing program and stood rigid personal inspections.

For example, it was not uncommon to see a candidate standing at attention and continuously saluting a telephone pole and addressing it in the proper military manner.

The students were trained in flight fundamentals, advanced flight techniques, theory of flight, navigation, meteorology, maintenance, map and photograph reading, helicopter transport subjects, and transition flight training.

The Army's decision paid off.

The course proved most successful and still is a part of the program.

In August 1954, when the Army Aviation School was moved to Camp Rucker, the rotary wing course was changed from a section of the flight department to a department of its own.

Lt. Col. James W. Hill was made director of the

Department of Rotary Wing Training at Rucker and Maj. Gaddis the deputy director.

Memo also initiated action to obtain Wolters Air Force Base at Mineral Wells, TX

As a result of the move, Army Cargo Helicopter Pilot Course 55-E was canceled and ACHPC 55-F ordered to report to Rucker on Oct. 18, 1954. This class, made up of 25 officers and officer candidates, was the first rotary wing class to begin instruction at Rucker and on April 30, 1955, it was the first to be graduated.

Army Helicopter Aviation Tactics Course 55-H reported to Rucker on Jan. 11, 1955, for advanced training after having been graduated from the basic course at Gary Air Force Base

on Jan. 7, 1955. AHATC 55-G was canceled.

The Department of Defense memorandum of April 19, 1956, directing the Army to assume all aviation training and command of Gary Air Force Base also initiated action to obtain Wolters Air Force Base at Mineral Wells, TX, for use as the Army primary helicopter school.

Basic rotary wing training at Gary and was subsequently moved to Wolters.

And as they say, the rest is history.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Compiled by Gary Roush (webmaster@vhpa.org) from the Army Aviation Story.

Moving Wall finds new Mineral Wells site

EDWARD T. LUTTENBERGER

Because the Vietnam National Museum is currently searching for a new site in Mineral Wells, it was necessary to find a new location for The Moving Wall, as well.

The dates for the Moving Wall's visit to Mineral Wells remain the same as originally announced: June 28-July 5.

The new location for The Wall will be on a piece of property just west of the old Fort Wolters Main Gate, along Highway 180.

The Wall visit has the backing and support of the City of Mineral Wells and the Chamber of Commerce, and has a long list of local organizations who are working in support of the project.

Local co-sponsors include the Mineral Wells Index; the Optimist Club; the Rotary Club; the Noon Lions; American Legion Post 75; Company B, 111th Engineers; Kiwanis; AARP; the Retired Officers Association; Mineral Wells Volunteer Fire Department; LULAC; VFW; Zonta; Methodist Men; Citizens Police Academy; the Mineral Wells Tourism Committee; Methodist Church of Cool,

TX; and the Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, as well as the Fort Wolters Chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

The Wall will be dedicated on June 28 and will be staffed by volunteers during the daylight hours through July 5, when it will be disassembled for transport to its next display city.

July 3 has been reserved for a visit by members of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), who are holding their 15th annual reunion in Fort Worth during that week.

The Fort Wolters Chapter of the VHPA is the host organization for both the reunion and the Moving Wall.

Chapter member Jim Messinger of Grayford, Texas is the sponsor for the Moving Wall. Messinger, an instructor at Weatherford College, has worked tirelessly for months to bring about the Wall's visit to Mineral Wells at the same time as the reunion.

For more information about the Moving Wall, the Fort Wolters Chapter or 1998 Reunion activities, you may visit their website at <http://www.fwcvhpa.org>

Reunion events

Wednesday, July 1
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Reunion setup
1-5 p.m.
- Early registration
- Vendor displays
6-9 p.m.
- Early Bird Reception

Thursday, July 2
7 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Golf tournament (\$60)
8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Registration
- Vendor displays

8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Mini-reunions
1-4 p.m.
- Bell Helicopter Tour (\$5)
6-8 p.m.
- Fort Wolters Chapter welcome
9 p.m.-2 a.m.
- Dance at The Worthington Hotel

Friday, July 3
8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Registration
- Vendor displays
- Fort Wolters Extravaganza (\$20)
- Mini-reunions
6-9 p.m.
- Western Night dinner (\$25)
9 p.m.-2 a.m.
- Country & Western Music/Dance

Saturday, July 4
7-8:30 a.m.

- 5K run
8 a.m.-noon
- Registration
8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Vendor displays
- Mini-reunions
9 a.m.-noon
- Business meeting
- Ladies social (\$20)
6 p.m.-2 a.m.
- Banquet (\$35)
- Dance (Eric Burdon)

Sunday, July 5
8:30-9:30 a.m.

- Chapel Services

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Directions to hotels at the reunion

There are several means of travel between DFW Airport, The Worthington and Radisson hotels in Fort Worth, including Super Shuttle, Fort Worth Airporter and rental cars.

The **Super Shuttle** is offering a one-way fare of \$10 per person, which is a \$2 discount off its regular rate of \$12. You must present a coupon, which will be printed in the newsletter, to the driver to receive the discount.

Each person will need a coupon for the trip upon arrival from the airport and back to the airport (the coupon may be photocopied and will be good from June 28-July 9). Without the coupon, full fare will be charged.

The **Super Shuttle** runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and leaves the airport about every 30 minutes. However, you will need to call from a courtesy phone located in the baggage area and lower level to give **Super Shuttle** your location and receive the exact pickup time. The wait is usually 15 minutes.

For your return trip to DFW Airport, call **Super Shuttle** reservations at (817) 329-2000 the day before your departure to schedule a specific pickup time.

You will need to provide your flight information.

The **Fort Worth Airporter** offers a one-way fare of \$8 per person. No discounts are available.

Upon arrival and after retrieving your luggage, go to the lower level and locate the purple sign for "Scheduled Transport."

The **Airporter** departs about every 30 minutes, but you will need to use a courtesy phone to contact the **Airporter** with your terminal location and to receive your exact pickup time.

The last bus departs the airport at 11 p.m. The bus makes one stop at its park-and-ride location in downtown Fort Worth before proceeding to The Worthington and then the Radisson hotels.

For your return to DFW Airport, the **Airporter** recommends you leave at least two hours prior to your departure time. The first buses from The Worthington to DFW Airport depart at 5, 6 and 6:15 a.m. Thereafter, the buses depart every 15 and 45 minutes past the hour. The last bus picks up at 9:45 p.m.

The first bus departs the Radisson for DFW Airport at 6:20 a.m. and then every 20 and 50 minutes past the hour. If you need to leave the Radisson prior to the first bus, call the **Airporter** for a scheduled pickup time.

The last bus departs the Radisson at 9:50 p.m.

Below are the directions to the Fort Worth hotels for those renting a car at the airport and needing directions from DFW Airport:

To The Worthington Hotel:

Take south exit out of airport to Highway 183 West, which will merge with 121 Highway (Airport Freeway). When you reach Loop 820, go south, stay in the left two lanes, this will lead you to downtown Fort Worth (Spur 347/Belknap).

At the courthouse, turn left on Houston. The Worthington is located at the corner of Houston and Second Street.

To Radisson Plaza Hotel:

Take South exit out of the airport to Highway 183 West. It will merge with 121 Highway (Airport Freeway). When you reach Loop 820, go south, stay in the left two lanes, this will lead you to downtown Fort Worth (Spur 347/Belknap).

Once downtown, turn left onto Calhoun, then right on Eighth Street. The Radisson is adjacent to the Convention Center at 815 Main St.

Honor & Pride

6100 Tradewinds Court • Virginia Beach, VA 23464 • Fax: (757) 424-7799

We are now taking orders for MA1 Flight Jackets and Baseball Jackets for delivery at the 1998 Annual Reunion

BLACK jackets with 10½ by 10½ -inch embroidered VHPA LOGO on back

Left chest included in cost (2) lines sample: *Jim Jones*

Texas Chapter (or call sign)

MA1 \$75.00 each. 2XL \$85.00 each. BASEBALL JACKETS \$65.00 each. 2XL \$75.00 each.

If not able to attend reunion this year, we will ship. Add \$7.00 for S&H

CUTOFF DATE FOR ORDERS IS MAY 20, IN OUR OFFICE

Please place any other special orders now!

ALL SPECIAL ORDERS MUST BE PAID FOR WHEN YOU PLACE THEM

See you in Fort Worth!

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

15th Annual Reunion Fort Worth, TX July 1-5, 1998

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7621

FAX signed credit card registration to: (916) 966-8743

Name:	Member No.:	Arrival date:	Departure date:
Wife/Guest name:		No. of children*:	Is this your first reunion?
Names of additional guests:		How many reunions have you attended?	
Address:		Check here if notifying VHPA of an address change []	
City:	State:	ZIP:	Phone: ()

REGISTRATION FEES

	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration before 6/1/98*		@ \$ 25.00	
Registration after 6/1/98*		@ \$ 35.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	
Early Bird Reception (July 1)		No host	
Bell Helicopter Tour (July 2)		@ \$ 5.00	
Fort Wolters Chapter Welcome Reception, Entertainment/Dance (July 2)		No host	
Fort Wolters Extravaganza Tour and Barbecue Lunch (July 3)		@ \$ 20.00	
Western Night Dinner/Dance Featuring Don Edwards (July 3)		@ \$ 25.00	
Ladies Social (July 4)		@ \$ 20.00	
Banquet & Dance (July 4)			
Special program planned		@ \$ 35.00	
Dues (if included)	1 year	@ \$ 30.00	
You can make 3 payments over 6-month Installment period if you wish	Life installment No. 1	@ \$ 150.00	
Complete Life Membership		@ \$ 450.00	
	GRAND TOTAL		

INDICATE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE

Golf Tournament:

(July 2 — 7 a.m.)

Cost: \$60. Limit: 72 players.

5k Run:

(July 2 — 7 a.m.)

T-shirts:

Qty.	Size	Price
	S	@ \$15.00
	M	@ \$15.00
	L	@ \$15.00
	XL	@ \$15.00
	XXL	@ \$15.00
	XXXL	@ \$15.00
	Sidebar total	

Entree choice	July 3	July 4
Beef		
Chicken		
Pasta/Vegetable		

* Each adult 18 and older must pay the registration fee.

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '98"
- ☐ Please charge my MasterCard or VISA card (circle one)

Credit card No.: _____ Expiration date: _____

Signature: _____

REUNION NAME TAG INFORMATION

Name you want on name tag: _____ Call sign: _____

Name of wife/guest: _____ Flight school class: _____
(Number or year for Army; branch and year for other services.)

1st combat unit: _____ Year(s): _____

2nd combat unit: _____ Year(s): _____

3rd combat unit: _____ Year(s): _____

Hometown or current residence: _____

Refund policy: No refunds will be granted before reunion. All refund requests must be submitted to VHPA Headquarters no later than Aug. 7, 1998, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events that lose money unless the entire reunion has a positive cash balance. VHPA headquarters will process and pay all refund requests within 10 days of completing the reunion account balancing.

Entertaining program scheduled for ladies

Women attending the Ladies Social this year will enjoy an entertaining and amusing program.

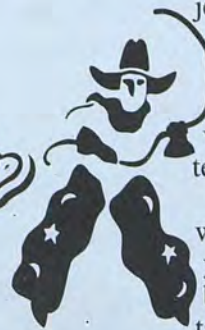
As you are enjoying your continental breakfast, you will experience a fashion show featuring upscale and crossover Western apparel from the Split Rail.

The Split Rail is owned by Nancy and Dean Nebeker. The Nebekers established their store some seven years ago in the Stockyards, but moved 18 months ago to the Fort Worth Outlet Square, directly across the street from The Worthington Hotel.

The store carries a variety of clothing for men, women and children, plus accessories, including belts, boots, purses, and western/sterling silver



*Southwestern
Style*



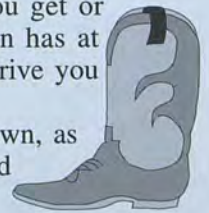
jewelry.

After the fashion show, you will be enlightened by a humorous and thought-provoking program on the mysteries of human relationships.

Ladies, have you ever wondered why the men in your life can fly helicopters, but can't figure out how to take clothes out of the wash-

ing machine . . . or why every job you get or every organization you are involved in has at least one person whose mission is to drive you crazy?

Join our keynote speaker, Paula Brown, as she leads us through the amusing world of "other people."



What's cooking at VHPA Reunion

Wednesday, July 1

• *Early Bird Reception at The Worthington Hotel:* Prepared deli sandwiches and accompaniments.

Thursday, July 2

• *Fort Wolters Chapter Welcome at Sundance Square Restaurants:* Dinner on your own at various restaurants in the Sundance Square area.

Friday, July 3

• *Fort Wolters Extravaganza at the Fort Wolters Mess Hall:* Barbecue and

beer. Includes brisket, sausage, chicken, turkey and the usual Texas accompaniments.

• *Western Night Dinner at the Radisson Hotel:* Beef, chicken, or pasta/vegetable selection, with salad and desert.

Saturday, July 4

• *Banquet at the Tarrant County Convention Center:* Beef, chicken or vegetable selection, with salad and dessert.

Important fax numbers for reunion planning

• *Mini-reunions:* Fax preferred when sending date and time for mini-reunion to Gerald Brazell at [REDACTED]

• *Vendors booth registration:* Please fax name, address and fax number to Gerald Brazell at [REDACTED] to receive vendor registration information.

Fort Wolters/Vietnam National Museum

If you flew helicopters in Vietnam, it's a pretty good bet that your "birth" as a helicopter pilot took place at Fort Wolters, Texas. Whether you were a WOC or RLO, whether you flew TH-55s or OH-23s, you still remember the stage fields, the heliports, red, yellow, and white tire areas, and the Holiday Inn pool.

In an effort to preserve your memories, the Fort Wolters chapter is working to develop a permanent museum in the Mineral Wells area honoring Vietnam veterans, and to tell the real story of our involvement in this piece of American history. If you would like to support this effort, and leave a lasting memory of your time "Above the Finest," purchase one of our Memory Garden bricks commemorating your flight school class or Vietnam unit.

For those wishing to purchase a larger unit memorial, please contact the Fort Wolters Chapter for details.

Your brick purchase includes a 1 year membership in the Fort Wolters Chapter and a copy of the quarterly newsletter as an added benefit.

Please use the attached order form and mail your brick order to:

Ft. Wolters/Vietnam Museum, 450 Coronados Trail, Graford, TX 76449

Fort Wolters/Vietnam National Museum

Picture your name and unit or class on one of these bricks. Be part of the legacy and leave a lasting memory of your time as a Vietnam rotary wing aviator.

Yes, I want to be part of the legacy and purchase a memorial brick.

☐ Enclosed is my check/money order for \$100.00.

FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENT: Visa ☐ MC ☐

Enter your card number in the boxes below:

Expiration Date:

Signature:

Please engrave my brick as shown below:

PLEASE PRINT. ONE LETTER/SPACE PER BLOCK PLEASE

Visit our web site at: <http://www.fwcvhpa.org>

The first Sky Crane on the DMZ

GEORGE GAGNON

In July 1967, the 478th Heavy Helicopter Company, 1st Cavalry Division was still the only crane company in Vietnam, since the 273rd would arrive on Dec. 22, 1967 and the 355th on Jan. 13, 1968.

As has been mentioned in other VHPA articles, the 478th HHC arrived in Vietnam with only four birds and we lost one when Shady Lane and Al Gajan went down on Jan. 5, 1966.

For a long time after that we only had three aircraft. When I joined the company as part of their first replacements in August 1966, they still had just three Cranes.

Needless to say, we were a scarce resource, so our mission assignments were heavily reviewed by all the commands.

We were still officially attached to the 1st Air Cav Division but were given missions all over Vietnam from time to time that had to be approved, I believe, at the MACV level.

Carrying replacement tubes for the 175mm howitzers positioned at remote Special Forces camps was a popular item in those days. Additionally, we were the only ones who could move 155mm howitzers by air, so the 1st Cav always needed at least one CH-54A when they were moving into or out of a major Fire Support Base.

Anyway, the Marine Corps units working on the famous McNamara Line had enough priority to have a Sky Crane mission approved and I was told to take an aircraft to the top of I Corps to help install some towers along the DMZ.

CWO Paul Cotton and I left An Khe and reported to a Seabee battalion at Dong Ha. I recently learned it was



Navy photo provided by Ed C. Hanby

A 50-foot observation tower is flown by a Sky Crane helicopter to the demilitarized zone. The towers were built by Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11, stationed at Dong Ha. Seventeen towers were built by the battalion for U.S. units at Gio Linh, Camp Carroll and along the DMZ.

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11 (NMCB-11).

During our briefing, the battalion commander said the area was secured by Marine infantry and that the holes were already drilled for the tower's legs. They had constructed about 14 towers.

The Seabee lieutenant commander rode on the jump seat between the pilots. He showed us the locations for the towers, which depending on the terrain features, could be a half to one mile apart.

It only took a few minutes to fly the eight miles or so from Dong Ha to the DMZ and the first three towers went in without a problem.

En route with the fourth, we noticed the previous three were on fire!

As we were arriving with the fifth tower, I could easily tell that this idea wasn't going to work — now the fourth towers was on fire!

It seems that the local NVA artillery and mortar units didn't have any problem at all with these towers.

Officially we were instructed to cease the operation and return to An Khe pending evaluation of the project. To my knowledge, the 478th never heard of that mission again!

I think the VHPA needs to give a special thanks to the Vietnam-era Seabees association for putting a small article in their most recent issue of *Seabee News* which asked for any information about helicopters lifting towers onto the DMZ.

David Schill, a longtime VHPA friend, is the editor of the *Seabee News*.

To date three Seabees have contacted the VHPA. Ed

See WATCH, Page 24

Watch towers erected along DMZ

Continued from Page 23

Handy was the command sergeant major (in Army terms) of NMCB-11.

He sent us the pictures, copies of the press releases, and even a copy of their monthly Family Gram that they used to mail home from Vietnam. All great stuff!

The Aug. 11, 1967 press release from NMCB-11 said: "The 50-foot watch towers at Gio Linh are two of the handful that were erected all along the DMZ. Most have been destroyed by the NVA. In early July, one of the towers at Gio Linh took a direct hit on one of its four legs about 30 feet up."

One of the photos Ed Handy sent the VHPA shows one of his men making repairs to this three legged tower.

Anyway, as we passed Da Nang, we were instructed to stop at Chu Lai to recover a Marine CH-46. At Chu Lai, we picked up two Marine gunships and were informed that the CH-46 was on the inside of a horseshoe-shaped hill.

It had been shot down during a combat assault and the firefight was still going on. We also were told that Charlie had .50- and .51-calibers covering the only way in and out of the area.

We got to the CH-46, hooked up and started out without receiving any fire. Charlie wasn't stupid — he knew when we were the most vulnerable; and opened fire.

Bless those Marines! I can still see them in my mind. Those two gunships started to daisy chain in front of us and blasted everything in sight!

The terrain was very confining and the Crane with the CH-46 took up some room.

We finally got to altitude and picked up jet escorts but they kept crossing in front of us. Their jet wash was something else.

After landing at Chu Lai, we were told to go back north toward Da Nang and deliver a 5-ton dump truck to a Special Forces camp at the end of a valley near Laos.

We had two Marine gunships again and headed west after picking up the dump truck.

We had less than 1,000 foot ceilings and started taking fire. So we told the guns we were climbing into the clouds and would make a 15-degree heading change for about 10 minutes. They said fine.

Well about 10 minutes later we let down and to my amazement, on looking back, the Marine guns were still flying in the same position on us!

We asked them "How'd you do that?" and I'll never forget their answer as long as I live.

"You went into the clouds, but that truck didn't — so we just flew formation on it."

I have often wonder what Charlie thought of a "V" of three with a dump truck lead!

We delivered the dump truck and after they inspected it, they told us to take it back — the underside was all shot up.

We asked if they had any fuel — no. OK, you keep the truck because we only had enough fuel to get back without a load.

With that we headed east for the coast, refueled and returned to An Khe.

These are but a few of the untold crane stories.

I also have a vivid recollection of watching an RPG come under the nose, go up between the gear, then arch down past the tail skid and away — but that is another day.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim Messenger is setting up a Crane mini-reunion at this summer's VHPA Reunion. This will be a great opportunity to tell some more.

'Carrier' pilot dislikes bodies of water

IRA WILL McCOMIC

I tell people I am one of the few carrier-qualified Army helicopter pilots in the world.

That's because the Army made me participate in a training exercise to qualify me to land and take off from an LST. And, as far as I'm concerned, all Navy vessels that have a landing area are the same.

Therefore, an LST is close enough to a flat top for me to call it a carrier.

In any case, it's more challenging to land and take off from an LST than it is from one of those waterborne airfields. That's because an LST is

smaller, it bounces around more, and, with an LST, the Navy is more intent on killing Army pilots.

I speak from some experience on this issue.

First, let me give you a little background.

At one time in my young life, I wanted to be a naval aviator, and for plenty of good reasons. I thought I would look good in one of those white dress uniforms, it was my observation that sailors invariably had their choice of women, and I understood the Navy had the best food of all the services.

I could just see myself in a spotless

uniform, Miss April clinging to me, while I dined on lobster and clams.

Then, my dream was shattered. Someone (I believe it was my Amarillo Army recruiter) pointed out to me that naval aviators often spend a great amount of their career flying over large bodies of water.

I do not like bodies of water. As far as I am concerned, they are unnatural and something to be feared.

You see, I grew up in Texas, and in my formative years, was heavily influenced by my West Texas relatives.

In West Texas, large collections of
See OLD, Page 24

Old codgers tell about 2 rainy days

Continued from Page 23

water usually exist only as mirages.

In West Texas, it precipitates only every third May and children marvel when old codgers in rocking chairs tell them about the one time they remember when it actually rained two days in a row.

Since water there is such a precious commodity, children are not taught how to swim; there is no need. Furthermore, in order to prevent youngsters from polluting the few small bodies of water that do exist there, they are encouraged to avoid those bodies.

Adults tell them stories of drownings and other watery hazards that convince youngsters bodies of water are more dangerous than rattlesnakes. I simply explain all this to help you

understand my mind set. To me, flying over water was as terrifying a thought as prohibition.

Eventually, I became an Army helicopter aviator, but I don't intend to imply this was a second-rate outcome. On the contrary, I am eternally grateful fate placed me in this position of superiority among all aviators.

Parenthetically, let me add, I used to take specific pride in being a gunship pilot. Used to, when someone asked me what I did, I would lift my head and say with some haughtiness, "I, sir, was a gunship pilot."

However, in recent years, it has come to my realization I was made a gunship pilot because the Army conceded after numerous attempts that it was never going to teach me to fly in formation (a prerequisite, I under-

stand, for slick pilots) and it didn't know what else to do with me. But, that is another story.

As fate would have it, I came to be with the 235th Armed Helicopter Company in Vietnam, an all-Cobra gunship company. We were hired guns, supporting anybody in the Delta who wanted gunships to come and shoot up stuff.

It was in the summer of '69 when the 1st Aviation Brigade decided that, since our unit was supporting Navy gunboat operations around the Delta, there might be some occasions when we would have to park a Cobra or two on an LST to support those operations.

Then, as I recall, some braid-wearing rules-monger found a regulation requiring that pilots had to be trained

See TRAINING, Page 25

VHPA LOGO ITEMS

(DAVE GRIEGER, L-66)

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VHPA T-SHIRT (LT BLUE)	\$16.95 (L, XL)
	\$19.95 (XXL, XXXL)
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VHPA at HAI



VHPA volunteers worked the booth at HAI (Helicopter Association International) this year. The volunteers, some of whom are shown in this photograph, included Russ Janus, Dan Bresnahan, Chip Brown, Will Gibbons, Pappy and Susan Jones, Ken and Marcia Fritz.

The VHPA Newsletter depends on members for letters, articles, announcements and other items for publication.

If you don't send it, no one else will.

E-mail items to: [REDACTED]

Training was a terrifying experience

Continued from Page 24

and qualified in order to perform this feat. Thus began one of the most terrifying experiences of my young life.

We had to be trained to land to, and take off from, an LST. Only a

It was during this school I learned the principle difference between an LST and an airfield: An LST moves.

few of us were selected for this training.

The Army selected us because we were the ones who had the most flying time. That is, we were the ones nearing the end of our tours and had not yet been killed. The

Army, holding that against us, thought there might still be an opportunity to get its money's worth out of us.

And, since we were so resistant to demise, the Army obviously felt it necessary to enlist the aid of its sister service, the Navy, to accomplish its purpose.

For our training, we were told we would receive a ground school (or was it a water school?) on Navy aviation operations, followed by flight instruction involving landing and taking off from an LST.

True to its word, the Army gathered us together late one afternoon and had some Navy officer, not even an aviator, conduct a two-hour school on Navy terminology, explaining things like "port," "starboard" and "poop deck."

It was during this school I learned the principle difference between an LST and an airfield: An LST moves.

Unlike an LST, land-based airfields do not try to run away from you when you are attempting to land on them.

And, generally, airfields stay in one place when you leave them and don't tend to move someplace else, the minute you turn your back. You can usually find an airfield right

where you left it. Not true of an LST.

This whole concept of a moving landing site was an eye-opening revelation to me. Oh sure, just like any other helicopter pilot, all of whom are genetically inclined to being lost, I had on a few occasions misplaced an airfield or two, but I had never had one get up and move of its own volition.

In the school, the Navy officer said some of the communications protocol in contacting an LST. For example, a typical radio contact might be, "Navy LST 123, this is Satan 13. I would like to land now and, by the way, where are you?"

He also informed us an LST deck could hold two helicopters. Then, as an afterthought, he mentioned that if, as we were making an approach, we happened to observe there already was a helicopter on the deck as we were attempting a landing, we should take an interest in observing whether that aircraft's rotor was still turning, or tied down.

If it was tied down, we could proceed with the landing. If it was still turning, we might consider not landing since there was not enough room

After a few drinks, the unanimous conclusion was that if Navy helicopter pilots could do it, it couldn't be that hard for us.

on the deck of an LST to accommodate the diameter of two turning rotors; that is, without causing vital parts of both helicopters to be cast upon the waters.

In the last five minutes of the school, with time running short (the club was about to open), he flut-

tered his hands in the air, simulating how to enter a pattern for a landing to an LST, how to approach it (you come in at 90 degrees to the length of it), and how to come to either a three-foot, or a 25-foot, hover above the

deck, depending upon the depth of the swells that make an LST bob up

A key component of this plan was that the person who initially flew the Cobra out to the LST would be able to land on the LST.

and down like the fishing cork on a line with a caught turtle. The actual termination of the landing (that is, putting the skids on the deck and making them stay there, all without bending something), he left to our imaginations.

Finally, he assured us all there was really nothing to it, citing the statistic that almost half of those who attempt a landing to an LST do, in fact, make one.

The school ended, we chosen few retired to the club. There, we discussed the perils of LST operations. After a few drinks, the unanimous conclusion was that if Navy helicopter pilots could do it, it couldn't be that hard for us.

The next morning, we were up early for our flight instruction.

All but one of us selected for the training were picked up by a Navy slick, hauled out and deposited on an LST in the ocean off the coast near Ca Mau. The plan was these people would wait there and then, one by one, take turns making landings and takeoffs from the LST in the Cobra which the one other person would fly out to the LST.

A key component of this plan was that the person who initially flew the Cobra out to the LST would actually be able to land on the LST to begin with. And it was me who was to fly the Cobra out to the LST and, supposedly, make the first landings and takeoffs.

I had wished for a nice day; however, the day was full of rain and the wind was gusting. In fact, I'm sure the Army selected this day for our

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Aircraft behaved differently at sea

Continued from Page 25

LST training because it was too miserable a day for Charlie to be out. With an instructor pilot in the front seat, I departed Can Tho.

I found my way to Ca Mau, passed

I had never noticed before so many twitches of the needles; each one, I was sure, a prelude to an engine failure.

over it, and headed out over the gray watery expanse where, the instructor assured me, there was an LST somewhere over the mist-shrouded horizon.

Flying out over the ocean like that, I discovered aircraft behave differ-

ently than when flying over the ground. I found myself hearing surges in the engine, grindings in the rotor, whistling in the cracks of the canopy that I had never noticed before. I had never noticed before so many twitches of the needles; each one, I was sure, a prelude to an engine failure and a plunge into the eternal sea.

Eventually, the LST appeared straight ahead, right where I was told to expect it. I keyed the mike and made contact with the LST radio operator. I identified myself and asked for landing directions. He replied with some nonsense about "stern" this and "port quarter" that, which I suppose was somehow related to landing on the LST.

I simply set up roughly a left-hand landing pattern, flying toward the tail end of the LST, then turning away from it downwind, and eventually rounding off the corners to do a 180-degree left turn back toward the vessel, trying to maneuver the aircraft to end up perpendicular to the LST's length.

This actually worked out better than I anticipated and I found myself pretty well lined up for the deck. I began a descent to the deck and, then,

something unexpected happened. The spot on my sight picture to the deck began slipping away. I turned the aircraft to line up again and, just when it looked right once more, the spot moved away again.

That's when reality met theory; I realized the LST was moving. Oh sure, I knew that it could move, but I had assumed they would start me out on this training by at least anchoring the thing down.

I was a little aggravated with the Navy for this oversight on their part.

I soon discovered, though, that I really didn't have to re-aim the aircraft at the deck. I could set up the approach, get the sight picture, and just let the aircraft drift sideways with the moving LST. With this discovery, the rest of the approach went well.

I was lined up on the deck, sliding along sideways at the same rate as the LST was moving forward, and at just the descent angle to clear the railings around the deck.

I was feeling pretty good about the whole thing until I got to about 50 feet from the deck.

That's when I noticed that either my helicopter, or the deck, was moving up and down faster than the express elevator of the Southland Life

Building in downtown Dallas.

But before I could light, the deck plunged down again, leaving me suspended in the air.

I came to the highest hover I could maintain just over the deck and waited for the deck to come meet me at its earliest convenience. Shortly, the deck rose to the occasion, pitching up toward me. It stopped briefly and I pushed down on the collective to touch down. But before I could light, the deck plunged down again, leaving me suspended in the air.

Then, I saw the deck coming back

up toward me faster than I could spend money on pay day.

In a panic, I pulled as much collective as I could to escape it and, by the time I looked down again, the deck

I could see money was exchanging hands between them regarding the outcome of my predicament.

had fallen away once more as the LST hit a trough, and there I was suspended so high above the deck, I could barely see the sailors there. However, I could still see them well enough to determine that, for some reason,

they thought my predicament was terribly funny.

And I could see money was exchanging hands between them regarding the outcome of my predicament.

Just when I thought I would never get the skids of my aircraft and the deck to agree upon a common altitude, I felt the deck knock gently on the skids.

Quickly, I seized the opportunity, plunging the collective to the bottom and latching onto the deck before it could escape again. Immediately, I felt the aircraft falling as the LST plunged into another trough, but, this time, the skids were on the deck and we were all, man and machine, riding the waves together.

At this point, I had logged one LST landing and there was so much sweat in my flight gloves they were sloshing. But I had done it. I let out a sigh of relief and rolled off the throttle to flight idle in preparation for letting another victim have a shot at this torture.

That's when the instructor said, "Let's do a takeoff now."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ira Will McComic flew with the 235th Armed Helicopter Company out of Can Tho in 1968-69.

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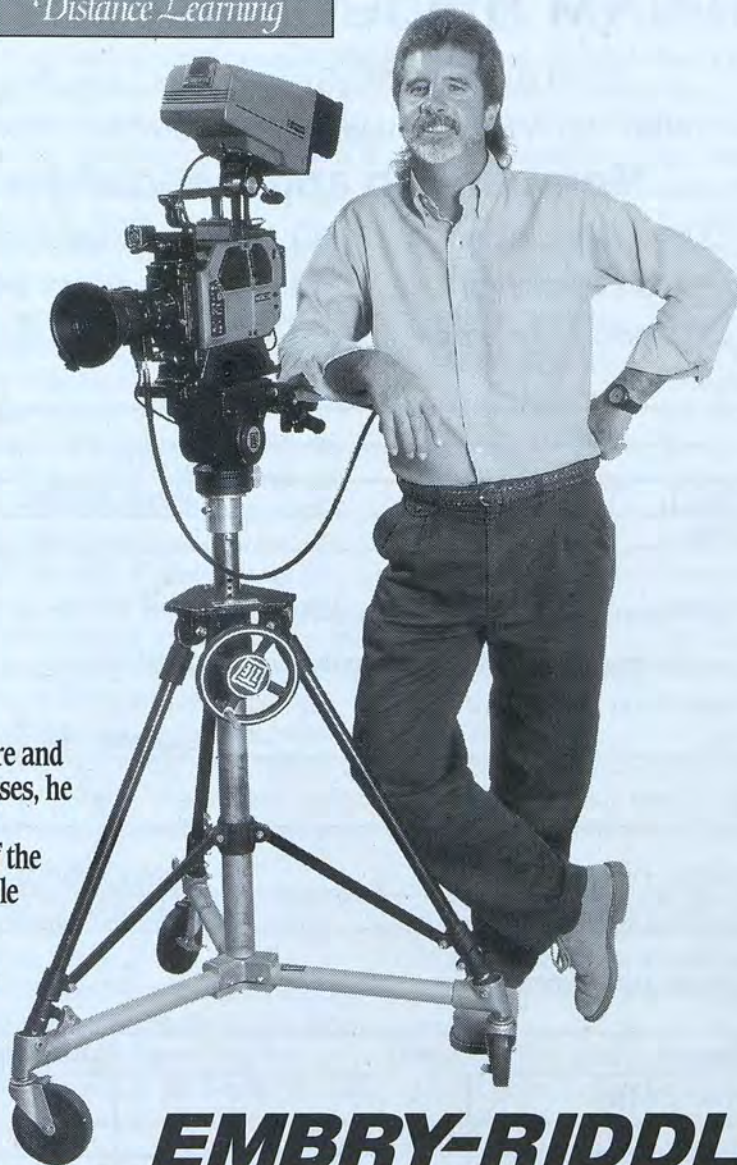
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