



THE DUSTOFFER

MAY 1987

DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION, P. O. Box 8091, Wainwright Station, San Antonio, Texas 78208



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First of all allow me to express appreciation on behalf of the officers and the members-at-large, for your confidence in our stewardship of your Association during the past year.

Next, let me share with you our sincere and honest desire to make your Association the best it can be and to leave no stone unturned in that endeavor.

Finally, as my position in the Association comes to an end and I pack my bags for yet another PCS--this time to Panama--I wish to thank the countless number of people who were only too willing to help me during my tenure as Treasurer, Secretary, Vice-President and acting President. While I am leaving the Association as an active participant here in San Antonio, I will always be a DUSTOFFER and will wear my pin and display my bumper sticker with a great deal of pride.

Jim Ritchie
President

1988 ANNUAL MEETING/REUNION

The 1988 Annual Meeting/Reunion will once again be held at the Holiday Inn Northwest Loop Hotel on February 19, 20, and 21. Plan now to attend and put those dates on your calendar. As in previous years, the AMEDD Aviation Safety and Standardization Conference (AASSC) will follow the DUSTOFF Meeting.

WE NEED YOUR
HELP!

Several years ago the membership requested that a newsletter be published periodically. We have attempted to do that, but except for the letter following the annual reunion, there is little or nothing to put into a newsletter. Therefore, we need some input from the membership. It was a letter from DUSTOFFER Hank Cappelletti who alerted us to track down Carter Harman. We need your suggestions and letters!

THE 1987 ANNUAL MEETING/REUNION

By all accounts--phone calls, notes and letters and by word of mouth--the 1987 Annual Meeting/Reunion was by far the best of a long series of successes. But then, just being DUSTOFFers means that we try to do our very best all the time.

The 1987 Annual Meeting/Reunion started, as usual, on Friday afternoon with the registration and greetings of friends in the lobby of the Holiday Inn Northwest Loop Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. Included in the registration packet was a purple badge with "Who's Carter Harman?" printed on it. From then until the Professional Meeting the next morning, the stock question around the Hotel was, "Who is Carter Harman?" The most usual answer was, "Beats the hell out of me." At any rate, Mr. Harman did appear at the Friday evening social wearing a big purple badge with "I'm Carter Harman" on it. Few really knew him, or why he was at the Meeting until the next morning. (Read article on Carter Harman).

The Friday evening social was a fun time with plenty of food and drinks. Of course, it was the time to greet old friends and make new ones, and to rehash times and events of the past. Time passed all too quickly and then it was off to the Hospitality Room for more of the same. Members of the 507th Medical Company did their usual fine job in serving refreshments. Despite the presence of many first timers and old timers, the main attraction appeared to be the machine that produced delicious Margaritas which were consumed in abundance.

Friday afternoon a band of fool hardy golfers met at the Fort Sam Houston golf course in what was to have been a fun outing. It was anything but that as the weather was bad with cold temperatures and a harsh cold wind. It was fun for no one except, perhaps, Leonard Sly who led his team of intrepid warriors (C. Clark, G. Rhoades, and T. Schaffer) to victory.

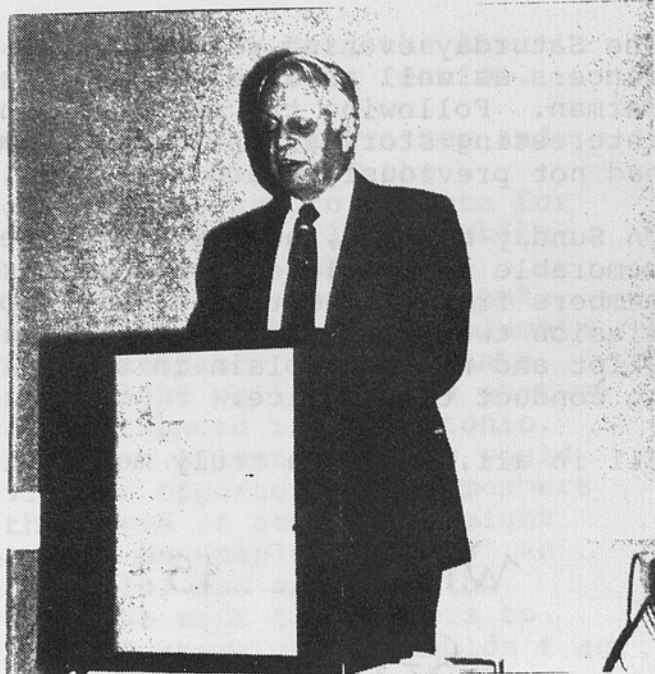
The Professional Meeting on Saturday was industry-oriented with presentations by Bell Helicopter, Sikorski Aircraft, Bell-Boeing Aircraft, Cubic Corporation and by Sky Trader Corporation. And then there was the First DUSTOFF, a really interesting and humorous account of LT Carter Harman's experiences.

The Ladies' Luncheon at Ruffino's Restaurant, by all accounts, was a howling success. The ladies allowed only two men to attend--John Soehnlein and Bill Pollard, and neither of them is talking.

The Business Meeting was conducted on Saturday afternoon with the major topics being: The 1988 Meeting (San Antonio), the 1989 Meeting (see details elsewhere in this publication), the allocation of some money for donations to the AMEDD and Aviation Museums and the election of officers. In regard to the latter, the Vice-President proposed to the membership that since he was on orders to go to Panama this year and because the President, Don Conkright would be returning from Korea, that he, Jim Ritchie continue to serve and then turn over the gavel to Don who would then serve as President for the next year. The membership approved and then elected Roy Hancock Vice-President, Dwight Fletcher Treasurer and Joe Madrano Secretary. Mike Proctor was elected to serve one year as a Member-at-large.

ABOUT OUR GUEST AND HONORARY DUSTOFF MEMBER CARTER HARMAN

At a time when few of us were even born and still fewer had ever heard of or seen a helicopter, our guest, then 2nd LT Carter Harman, United States Army Air Corps, found himself at Randolph Field, a few miles from San Antonio. As he describes it, he entered the operations office one day and heard a voice ask if anyone wanted to volunteer for helicopter training. He looked around and found that he was the only other person in the room. Since his heart had been broken by a local girl and since his home was in New York and he wanted to return home, he quickly volunteered because the helicopter training was to be conducted at the Sikorski plant in Connecticut.



At the Sikorski plant where he received a few hours of instruction, he was told the theory of autorotation and how the machine would react but never had one demonstrated. No one was willing to put the theory to practice! As one might expect, he did have an engine failure (Harman stated that it was a mechanical failure: he ran out of gas!) but he was able to walk away from the resulting landing (crash) in which the aircraft was demolished.

Upon completing the course, LT Harman found himself in the China-India-Burma theater of operations. There he was flying a flimsy, prototype Sikorski YR-4 with olive-drab canvas cloth wrapped around a 175 horsepower engine that had trouble breathing the thin Burmese air.

In April 1944, LT Harman was alerted to fly some 500 miles to a crash site and to pick up the survivors. The trip entailed a flight deep into Japanese-held territory in a machine that could only fly 100 miles without refueling. Four days later and after four trips to the crash site from a base camp, LT Harman successfully extracted three wounded British soldiers and the pilot of an Army L-1 aircraft.

The helicopter rescue had passed virtually unnoticed in the usual intelligence reports but the story of the first helicopter combat rescue has long remained a hidden vignette in aviation history. It was, in fact, the first reported "aeromedical evacuation" mission to be accomplished with a new type of flying machine--the helicopter.

After the war, LT Harman returned to New York, resumed his musical career and recently retired as a music critic for the New York Times.

The President presented to the Association a framed picture of scenes from outer space taken by Astronaut Woody Spring, our speaker for the 1985 Annual Meeting. The picture can be seen in the AMEDD Museum.

The Saturday evening gala was also a funfest with Mexican singers and dancers as well as a belly dancer who had eyes only for our guest, Carter Harman. Following the entertainment, Mr. Harman again told some of his interesting stories, this time primarily for the benefit of the ladies who had not previously heard him speak.

On Sunday morning, nearly 200 members and friends attended a truly memorable memorial service remembering our fallen comrades and the crew members from the 498th Medical Company who had lost their lives on a MAST mission two weeks earlier. Chaplain Walt Harris, himself a former DUSTOFF pilot and now a Chaplain in the United States Air Force, came from Hawaii to conduct the service.

All in all, it was a truly memorable week-end that will long be remembered.

What is a
DUSTOFFER?



Egor, our Executive Director said it best a few years ago, but a recent (December 1986) issue of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots' Association newsletter contained an article from the President, Mike McDonald which is a classic:

After my recent move to Phoenix I became involved in an interesting and very rewarding activity. I am an active pilot as many of you know. I've done many types of flying in the last 18 years, but was never directly exposed to the medical helicopter side of aviation. I had this deep and troubling uncertainty about accepting this job. I could not explain it. The job was a challenge and I needed the money, but I felt some unknown reluctance. After two days and much thought the realization finally came. I wasn't afraid of the night landings in the middle of streets surrounded by wire. I was afraid to again face the dead and dying. For the first time in 18 years I was flying injured people to the hospital facing death. Unfortunately, death wins all too often, but we do save most and that is one of the most rewarding experiences imaginable. . . . What started in Korea and WE perfected in Vietnam is the single most important contribution we VHPA members have given society. Every time you see or hear of a medical helicopter saving lives, sit back, smile and be proud. We helicopter pilots had a hand in creating the best medical care system the world has ever known.

Mike McDonald

Well done, Mike, but then we DUSTOFFers, many of whom are also VHPA members, have known that type of satisfaction for a long, long time.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR MORE MEMBERS

Your Association is only as strong as its membership. That is why we warmly welcome new members. It is not that we are after more money or that we just want to increase membership for number's sake. We want more members because there are many out there who are missing the comradeship of years gone by which were cemented with blood, sweat and tears. Each year brings a good number of members to the Annual Meeting/Reunion who have never attended before and without exception bemoan the fact that for whatever the reasons, they regret not having attended before. So, the message is--encourage your eligible friends to become members or to at least attend the next Annual Meeting/Reunion.

We need your help too, in helping the Executive Board decide on a site for the 1989 Annual Meeting/Reunion. As you may know, the first Annual Meeting was held in Atlanta in 1980. Since then, for a number of reasons, the Annual Meetings have been held in San Antonio. The primary reason, of course, has been the preponderance of members living in or around San Antonio, and more recently, the fact that many DUSTOFFers have been able to attend an Aviation Conference hosted by Health

Services Command. But, the Annual Meeting is not a Texas reunion.

Several members have written and called suggesting that the Association return to Atlanta for the 10th reunion in 1989. While there are a large number of DUSTOFFers living in the Atlanta, Columbus, Ft. Rucker, and Columbia areas, attendance at an Atlanta reunion might well be below what we have experienced in San Antonio. However, an Atlanta meeting would provide an opportunity for members in that area to attend who might otherwise be unable to travel to San Antonio, and as indicated earlier, we want our members to attend. Numbers aside, wouldn't an Atlanta reunion be a nostalgic return to the city of our first gathering?

John Temperilli has agreed to chair a committee to look into the possibility/feasibility or whatever of going to Atlanta in 1989, so please give us your thoughts, ideas, and a yea or nay on the tear-off change of address slip.

We really want your input on this, so please, please write, call or send up smoke signals (Joe Madrano, phone 512-659-4237).

Please tear off and send to: DUSTOFF Association, P. O. Box 8091,
Wainwright Station, San Antonio, Texas 78208.

PRINT NAME (Last, First, MI)

RANK

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone Number

Effective date of change of address

Thoughts on Atlanta for the 1989 DUSTOFF Meeting/Reunion

SPECIAL REQUESTS

A letter from Don (Hoss) Caldwell, 301 Bishop Street, St. Mary's GA 31558, has been received. Don served with both the 498th Med Co and the 50th Med Det from October 1967 to March 1968. Don is writing a book and is asking for input from DUSTOFF members, particularly from those who served within the 55th Medical Group during the period March 1967 to March 1968. Good luck with the book, Don, and unlike the movie "Platoon," please see that the wounded are loaded in DUSTOFF ambulances and the body bags in the slicks!

The Association plans to publish a 1987 Membership Directory later this year. Therefore, the Secretary requests that you look carefully at the address label on this newsletter and that you forward any changes NLT 1 September 1987. The "y" following your name means that your dues are current. A "d" following your name means that you have not paid your dues for 1987. We make mistakes now and then, so if a "d" disagrees with your records, let the Secretary know and he will re-check his records. The tear-off change of address slip may be used for corrections and, of course, any changes of address.

The Association has received notice of the recent death of Marlene Williams, spouse of DUSTOFFer COL (RET) Glen Williams. Services were conducted at Arlington National Cemetery. For those who wish to send condolences, the Williams' address is: 199 Old Highway, Southbury, CT 06488.

DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION

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