

STAFF SERGEANT BARNES, WHERE ARE YOU

From Tom Campbell

One crash I remember at LZ Uplift was an over-the-perimeter-wire crash that happened after a mission I was running to help find John **Barnes** and his team, which was operating west of Uplift, was lost, and we had no radio contact with him. We were flying around trying to get him to identify us so that we could give him a location plot. High-tech equipment was all the rage back then: I had the pilots fly a pattern and, using a psyops bull horn, I would call out for SSG **Barnes**! No shit: "SSG **Barnes**, can you hear us? Pop a smoke if you can."!! Needless to say, the NVA just loved our search for a lost puppy, and decided we were just too delicious an opportunity to pass by! Concurrently with locating SSG Barnes, our new-found friends began shooting the hell out of our hole in the sky. The aircrew wanted to get out of Dodge City. I gave them an alternative of leaving and getting shot by me, or staying until we could tell SSG **Barnes** where to evade to for extraction. We stayed! By this time, the NVA was getting the hang of how to deal with us! The helo was like a duck in a penny arcade! The pilots had armor-reinforced seats but I and the two crew members in the back were like little kittens. Nothing excites one more than bullets coming up through the deck....talk about a literal pucker factor! We left the area, limped back to Uplift, and crashed landed just over the perimeter wire.

I found out later that the two pilots got Distinguished Flying Crosses for their bravery in an air operation, and the crew members got some lesser gongs for flying for the wrong airline at the right time! I was really proud of forcing the pilot in command to stick around to become a Hero of the Republic! Suffice it to say, I was happy just to have my ass intact...I already had two PHs and didn't need another for a perforated colon! Using our directions before we left the area, SSG **Barnes** evaded, and was successfully extracted and brought safely back to Mommy! In retrospect, I thought the whole exercise was a hoot!

Tom Campbell