



# The VHHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

December 1992 Vol. 10, No. 4



UH-1D "Huey" transports leave an LZ in Vietnam's III Corps after dropping off troops in 1967.



## President's Roll Call

By now, all members scheduled to get the 1992 Membership Directory should have received it. Briefly, if your dues were current through July 1992 and your membership number is less than M06468, you should have a copy. If you have any questions, please contact headquarters.

I think we all owe Jack Glennon a well-deserved THANK YOU for making certain we received the free gift of a bumper sticker. Lots of people talked about it — but he made it happen! Due to an error in communication on my part, only one bumper stick was included with each Directory instead of two. Maybe we can figure out a way to get another one to you next year. But if you can't wait, send \$1 to headquarters and they'll send you another.

If I had known so many of you would respond to the questionnaire we put in the Directory, I'd have put one in years ago. Not only are your comments most informative, but about one in five is including extra material like the name and address of a pilot not in the Directory, like more KIA/MIA information, like flight class rosters, or corrected information about themselves. THANK YOU AND KEEP IT UP! If you haven't returned your questionnaire, please do so. If you have information we don't have but can use, PLEASE SEND IT IN — we are only as good as you help us to be!!!

I am especially pleased to read so many favorable comments about Bob Snead's cartoons. Now I know that I am not alone in thinking that Bob has a very special talent. Come to the Phoenix Reunion — Bob is planning a special treat for you.

I've been in the VHPA for 10 years but I still learn something new all the time. Last year, I learned "a ton" about the various other associations that our members are and can be involved in. I'd like to mention two here to illustrate the point that we can all help each other out and make our members happier. In the 1991 Directory, we "advertised" the 145th CABVA. Jim Bodkin, a former crew chief and now national director of the 145th, always passes out VHPA application forms and calls us periodically. We added at least 50 names to the 1992 Directory because of the 145th CABVA. Recently, the 114th AHC association distributed VHCMA and VHPA application forms. Several of the "original 114ers" also served in the 7/17th Cav, so they loved the 1992 Directory. George Young, the leader of the 114th, found several new 114ers in the VHPA Directory. So we helped them and they helped us. Anyway, the next VHPA Newsletter will include an association roster as best as we can build one. If you know of an association like the 145th and the 114th mentioned above, please send us the address of their "point of contact" and information about any future reunions.

— Mike Law, President and Directory Editor

## VHPA OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND STAFF 1992-93

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VICE PRESIDENT .....Phil Marshall  
PAST PRESIDENT .....Gary Slaughter  
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## VHPA Life Memberships offered on installment plan

To make Life Memberships more easily attainable, VHPA has an installment program which allows members to choose to make two or three equal payments over a six-month period. Payments may be made by check or with a MasterCard, Visa or Discover card.

The cost of a Life Membership is \$450.

Contact VHPA Headquarters at (513) 721-VHPA for additional information.

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# 'Chickenman' stemmed from radio call

Just received the September Newsletter and enjoyed it from cover to cover as always.

The purpose of this letter is to bring to light the circumstances which led to the "gestation" and "hatching" of the call sign "Chickenman."

As with any war story, I swear on a stack of Bibles to God that this is the whole truth.

I arrived in Vietnam on Nov. 17, 1967, with orders to the 1st Cav. After FNG charm school at An Khe, I was assigned to A Company, 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion at Phan Thiet to aid in the "hearts and minds" program and win the war.

Phan Thiet was quite removed from the rest of the Cav, so we operated as an independent task force consisting of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry; a battery of 105's and 155's; A Company, 227th; a platoon of gunships from D Company and a couple of Chinooks from the 228th.

When I arrived, the company call sign was "Sword Fish," but within a couple of weeks had been changed to "Winter Monsoon." In mid-December, the task force was ordered to rejoin the division and A Company, 227th moved to LZ English.

Within a week, part of the company moved north near Hue. All the news we could get was that things were very bad up north. In January 1968, the Southern Straps moved north to join the battle-hardened Northerners.

Most of the "Old Guys" hated the call sign "Winter Monsoon" and there were open discussions amongst the real pilots about trying to change back to "Sword Fish." Then the order came down that, to confuse the enemy, we would change our call sign again. This time to "Drum Stick."

Open rebellion erupted in the company meeting when one of the old ACs asked, "Do we beat or eat the Drum Stick?" A very red-faced Old Man answered, "I guess we are the kind that you eat because B Company's new call sign is 'Potato Mash-er.'"

Lots of laughter and more discontent.

Over the next few weeks, all forms of military discipline and radio communication procedures broke down as open rebellion reigned within the ranks of the pilots of A Company.

One night at the pinochle game, while we consumed vast quantities of "screech," beer and other intoxicants, a consensus grew that when the sun came up, our new official call sign would be "Road Runner" and, if the Big Brass didn't like it, they could court-martial us and send us to Vietnam.

The change was not well-accepted at all from the upper command structure, but with the refusal of the warrant officers (Crazy Joe Zigler, Steve Davidson, Joe Potvin, Neal Heape and others) to give in, we operated under a myriad of various call signs for about a month.

Two clicks on the mike switch was replaced with "Beep, Beep," which was OK with everyone except the company, battalion, brigade and division commanders.

The whole issue came to a head in mid-March when Joe Potvin "Beep, Beeped" the battalion commander during a combat assault. The battalion commander went nuts and threatened anyone who ever used non-standard radio procedures with a court-martial.

Every one of the warrant officer aircraft commanders in the flight responded back over the radio with a message received, "Beep, Beep."

Things hit the fan and there was another lecture over the radio. After a few seconds of silence, Joe Potvin came over the radio, "Chickenman 24, we're three minutes out. Six-ship LZ. Standard section right."

From that moment on, A Company, 227th was the "Chickenmen." I was the original "Chickenman 22 Mike."

Sincerely,  
James L. Cauffman

## VHPA member signed up

I finally met one of your "active members," Al Eason, who works in the Pentagon. He saw my Master Army Aviator wings and literally signed me up in the hall outside his office.

I really enjoy the Newsletter and appreciate the extensive efforts made by all those who work so hard and long to get this organization "off the ground and into the air."

I have a suggestion. Have you (the association) considered estab-

lishing a "Hall of Fame"? Other professional organizations have such, so why not us?

I continue to serve as a USAR colonel assigned as an individual mobilization augmentee at U.S. Army Missile Command, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. I work closely with both active and National Guard aviation activities.

Thomas M. Reeves  
Colonel, Armor, USAR

## Newsletter reader washed plane in river

I have info about the Huey gunship being washed in the river (your cover December 1991) as I was there at that time and did the washing of my chopper in that river.

Ray Snoddy  
Captain USAR



# Old RLO honored to belong

As an old RLO in the Corps of Engineers, I consider myself most fortunate to be able to share the distinction of membership in your fine organization.

Drafted in '66, I went to OCS in '67 and fixed-wing flight school in '68 (OFWAC 68-11, Red Hats).

I spent most of the next year with the 10th SFG at Fort Devens (O-1s, U-6s, C-45s and U-10s) and, after RWQC (69-2), arrived at the 114th AHC, Vinh Long, in November '69.

The next 13 months were spent with the Knights and Cobras where I was Knight 3 for the last 10 months of my tour.

After RVN, I flew with the Far East District Engineers (K-16, Seoul, Korea, '75 to '77), and with the Special Electronic Mission Aircraft PMO (Navy Lakehurst, NJ, '77 to '80). I missed my 18-year gate and have been landlocked ever since.

Last year I bumped into Bob Codney and Jerry Eatherly, both former 114th Cobra leads in the '69-'70 time frame, whom I had not seen in more than 20 years!

Bob, now retired but most recently with the TF160, is presently with LTV in Texas. Jerry, also retired, has started his own software firm in Fairfax.

I expect to retire before the end of the year but will stay in the Washington area.

Would love to renew old acquaintances and swap a few stories with any Knights or Cobras who may be coming to, or are already in, DC or Northern Virginia. Call or write (I'm in the book) and we'll set something up.

Joe Papapietro ("Knight 3")  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
Office of the Secretary of the Army  
Office, Chief of Legislative Liaison  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20310-1600



## Van sports VHPA logo

Here is a photo of what I've done to encourage new members. The phone number is now under the logo.

I drive 165 miles each way to work (5-6 times a month). I've already had people acknowledge the logo. It's vinyl and will last a very long time.

Dennis Lyons

## Ran into forest from chopper

# Woman seeks information about her missing father

My name is Ronda Marie Brown-Espinoza. I am writing to you today in desperate hopes that maybe you could help me locate any information regarding my missing-in-action father, M.Sgt. George Ronald Brown, a.k.a. Ron.

He became missing on March 28, 1968, in the Savannakhet Province, 15 miles inside Laos, northeast of Tchepone. The mission was extremely classified!

Records state my father was last seen alive and unwounded, running into the forest when his helicopter left him. No one in my family has been able to discover even one shred of evidence as to my father's fate.

Yesterday, we discovered the name of the man flying the chopper when dad was lost. He is Maj. Russell White. I desperately want to talk to him.

The government is being uncooperative with us! I don't even have his files. I asked for his records in on Aug. 20, 1992, and was told to expect them in two to three weeks. Sept. 25, I was told I could possibly receive a partial file by late February or March, but not the whole file because I couldn't understand it anyway.

Thank you in advance for all your help toward my family.

Ronda M. Brown-Espinoza



# Mardi Gras Chapter holds summer get-together

On July 11, the Mardi Gras Chapter held a shrimp boil at Dan Seely's summer home on the Jordan River at Kilm, Miss.

Fun was had by all, with plenty of food, drink, boating, wave-running, and election of officers.

This member did not know if he was up to another reunion so soon after Hot-lanta but, as any good helicopter pilot, along with outgoing national President Gary Slaughter, we

made a good showing.

Gary Slaughter gave the group a synopsis of

the National Reunion and a slight chastising,

as most of these members were unable to

attend for various reasons.

Randy Juge and Dan Seely, our outgoing pres-

ident and vice president, did a wonderful job again this year putting this reunion together.

Our new President Don Hunt and Vice President Lee Overstreet are very enthused over the chapter, so with the help of the membership and a good recruiting drive, this could be the chapter's best year yet.

Mardi Gras Chapter WILL have a much better representation at Scotts-

Roger F. Miller



Dan Seely (from left), Bo Paidá, Gary Slaughter, Roger Miller and Lee Overstreet visit over drinks aboard a boat at the Mardi Gras VHPA Chapter's shrimp boil. Slaughter is past VHPA president.

# Ranger seeking 'wild, crazy rotor jocks'

I'm looking for some wild and crazy rotor jocks who happened to have been in one of the largest chopper battles of the war.

I'm talking about the 101st's combat assault on Aug. 4, 1968, into the middle of the A Shau Valley. I understand that some aircraft from the 1st Cav were in the fray also.

I'm William "Doc" Osgood who was a paratrooper combat medic, Airborne Ranger, and grunt with Col. Charlie Beckwith's 2/237th, 101st on the day of the invasion. Later I flew some missions with Eagle Dustoff (June 1969) and later became a civilian pilot.

I'm finishing up my book "Boonie Rats" and would like to find some more of the crews that were shot down in August.

On Ta Bat airfield I saw a C model gunship go down in flames. I think he was from the 101st avi-

At least 17 aircraft were shot down or damaged the first day of the operation.

ation group, possibly Company D "the Lancers" and I've worried about them for over 20 years.

At least 17 aircraft were shot down or damaged the first day of the operation.

Tom Holcombe, with the Lancers, 101st, was shot down in his C model Huey. His is an interesting story. It looks like there were two other C models shot down in flames near the Ta Bat strip. I'm looking for them.

I'm in contact with Larry Frazier of the 101st Association, as well as Bill Meacham and Bill Grant. Meacham and Grant were

both "Kingsmen" (Company B, 101st), and Frazier was in Company C, "Phoenix," 101st. Talking with the Dustoff Association in San Antonio has led me to a couple of Eagle Dustoff crews (326th Med), no pilots.

The 2/327th, 101st, made another combat assault into the A Shau strip on March 22, 1969. Anyway, I am looking for stories, maps and especially photos for my soon-to-be-published book. I am now working on a three-foot-by-three-foot oil of the Aug. 4 combat assault and have a collection of Vietnam art.

If you would try and put me in contact with some of the above mentioned people, crews or anyone with knowledge of those events, I'd thank you very much.

William Osgood



# Reunion a tremendous experience

Dear Dolphins, Sharks and Witchdoctors:

Those of you who see this letter and either don't know me or don't want to remember me, please read it anyway!

I returned 10 minutes ago from my first Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) reunion and have to tell you that it was the greatest experience I have had since I got back to Khe San from my "R&R" in Laos during Lam Son 719.

I'll have to admit I couldn't recognize a single person until I got to put the old pictures of young faces together with the old faces. Then, the stories, old and new, flowed like water from Thursday evening until Sunday at breakfast when we all reluctantly said goodbye once again and promised to meet next year in Phoenix.

The 176th Minutemen and Muskets, and specifically Ken Fritz, invited the members of the 174th to join their mini-reunion and for two days

we dominated it.

We had piles of scrapbooks, cassette tapes and videotapes of the way it was 20 some years ago, all set to the music of the time. It was fantastic.

I can't express how great it was to see all those faces and, even greater, not to have to circle some red "X" that one of them put in a log book.

The data that has been collected primarily by Fred Thompson and Mike Sloniker from the info that we all continue to send them is fantastic and the Unit History is fascinating reading with even an occasional word about the efforts of those maintenance pukes.

I would like to reassure all the past unit members that were in command positions that I did not hear any bad words about you, so you can come out from hiding for the 10th Reunion in Phoenix next year. I know that doesn't apply to Dale Spratt, but I asked about the others

and no one seemed to have an explanation for the absence of the rest of the command structure.

I did hear that both Hal Alvord and Mike Ackerman are still on active duty and are both colonels. Mike was the Shark platoon leader in 1970 and '71, and Hal was the guy who stuck us with the various and choice (I might add) missions on a day-to-day basis. Congratulations to those two.

We have some great pictures of you two: Mike holding up the standard signal indicating someone's IQ and Hal singing songs with Greg Smith and me.

Next year, the VHPA and the Aircrew Association are both meeting at the same time in Phoenix, so we will have the opportunity to look up those guys who were such a big part of why we are even around to have a reunion.

If you start planning now for the 1993 Reunion, you'll be sure to make it, and it's

absolutely a sure bet that you'll have a fantastic time and that we will have the largest number of Army Aviators ever assembled in one place. We had over 1,400 already checked into the hotel the day before the activities started this year.

Looking at the number of people that are still members of the VHPA representing the 174th through the years, we could have the biggest mini-reunion ever next year.

I know Fred and Mike are planning to a mini-reunion, so it would be very helpful to them if we could let them know well in advance who is going to be there. Fred's address is [REDACTED]

and Mike is at [REDACTED]

I've rambled enough. See you there.

Sincerely,  
Ralph E. Elliott III  
Butch Newbee  
Witchdoctor 05

## Museum seeks Huey's history

I am writing to you in hope that some of your members could fill us in on the history of one of our aircraft.

It is a Vietnam-era Bell UH-1H, Serial Number 66-16579, which was originally delivered to Carswell Air Force Base in Texas on 3rd July 1967 for shipment to South Vietnam.

It saw service in the Gulf War and last served with 4th Squadron, 7th Cavalry, based at Bidingen in Germany, and is currently stored at Ramstein Air Force Base, for transportation to the museum.

Therefore, I would be grateful if any of your members who served on 66-16579 could

get in touch with me at the museum and supply the information needed and also, if possible, some photos of its original paint scheme and artwork, as it is still desert colours.

I hope very much to hear from you or your members in the near future.

Ian Green  
The International Helicopter Museum

P.S.: It would also be helpful if you could find out the call sign of said aircraft.

## Directory excellent

I am a former member who wishes to reactivate my membership. I'm still flying UH-1Hs with the Illinois National Guard and a friend showed me the recent yearbook and my name was in it — but not in bold type!

I hope it's not too late for me to receive a copy, since I was in the Cav in Nam and know a lot of the guys who were mentioned in the Cav section in the back — that was an excellent write-up!

Also, there are some CW4s in my Guard unit who aren't members, but should join. Could you send membership forms to them?

Jim Alexander



# Friend seeks information about death

I am writing this letter in hopes you can help me locate anyone who knew or served with my best friend, Spec. 4 Jeffrey Allen Hawk, who served with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 227 Aviation Battalion, 1st. Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and was "KIA" Nov. 19, 1967.

As I understand it, Jeff was a doorgunner and his chopper had landed to rescue crew members from a downed chopper and was shot in the head and killed.

Jeff and I were best friends, having served together at Fort Benning, Ga., just before he left for his second tour.

We kept in touch by writing letters and had planned on a big reunion after he got his early out to go to college, but he never made it back.

Just a few months ago, I found his old address in California, and wrote a letter to that address, attention to "occupant" as I figured his parents had long since moved or were deceased. A few weeks went by and I received a letter from his father in Sedona, Ariz., where my letter had been forwarded by a relative who lives at Jeff's old address.

Please, if anyone knew Jeff, please write, as I want to get the information to his parents.

James Upton



**Front row (from left):** CWO Richard M. Dyer, Spec. 4 Robert G. Elson, S.Sgt. Wesley O. Crew, Spec. 5 Gary R. Reentz, CWO John M. Mercer, Spec. 5 Veron E. Shannon, Spec. 5 Anthony C. Law, Spec. 5 Roger J. Anderson and Spec. 5 Virgil K. Wright.

**Back row (from left):** Capt. Richard M. Koenig, CWO Lawrence C. Dean, Capt. Charles S. Goldmark, Capt. James W. Hoppe, CWO Marc A. Corder, CWO William T. Skavdahl, CWO Fredrick T. Grotenhuis, CWO Michael V. Sheehan, CWO Michael G. Baker, Spec. 5 Lewis R. Hartwell, Spec. 4 Dale A. Senatore, CWO Joseph B. Mongogna, CWO David W. Savage, Spec. 4 Franklin Phillips, Spec. 5 Terry E. Smith, Spec. 4 Richard J. King, Spec. 4 Merle E. Nelson, Spec. 4 William F. Moraski and CWO Fredrick W. Geminhardt.

## Photo shows 'Mavericks'

I was digging through some of my memorabilia and found this wonderful picture of one of the best units in Vietnam during the '68 Tet offensive, the 3rd Armed Platoon, 175th Assault Helicopter Company, better known as the "Mavericks."

Our trademark was a red cowboy handkerchief worn around the neck, and we flew some of the finest C models in country.

This group of pilots, crew chiefs, gunners and armament specialists were simply some of the very best in the business,

just as were those who wore the red cowboy neckerchief and came before us and fought long after we left.

If you find some room to run this unit picture of the "Mavericks," who literally saved the Vinh Long Army Airfield from being overrun on the night of Tet 1968, I'm sure they would love to see it.

Dick Koenig  
Vice President/Publisher  
Flying Magazine

## Wounded soldier would like to thank medevac crew

On Oct. 14, 1968, while operating with my unit of the 25th Infantry Division near the village of Trang Bang in III Corps area, I suffered explosion and shrapnel wounds to both arms, and was medevaced out to Cu Chi in a Huey.

I would be very interested in locating the pilot

and crew who participated in this "dust off," in order to say thanks after all of these years.

Towards this end, I have listed below what I believe are the relevant details which may help in identifying this particular crew:

Unit — Delta Compa-

ny, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry, 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.

Site — Trang Bang village, III Corps area, Highway 13 between Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh City.

Date — Oct. 14-15.

Time — 2200-0100

Hours.

Evac — 25th Evac/Cu Chi.

Your assistance in finding these guys will be greatly appreciated, and if further details are required you may feel free to call me (collect) at either [redacted] (office) or [redacted] (residence).

Michael T. Turner



# Member comments favorable about 1992 Directory

**Member comments from the questionnaire mailed with the 1992 Membership Directory:**

"Don't get too serious! If you're going to make these questionnaires multiple guess, please use a checklist format; helicopter pilots get confused when confronted with 'Yes/No.'"

"Thanks for the bumper sticker. It will be seen in over two-thirds of the U.S. on the rear of my 48-foot trailer."

"Thanks for your judgment, efforts, and the 1992 product — the best yet."

"Great job! I'm impressed and grateful!"

"I really enjoy the Directory but you've got to allow more room for written comments on this questionnaire!"

"I really liked the call signs. If you remember, that was how we identified who we were flying with and for."

"I can't thank you enough for the work you've put into the Directory! I've recommended membership to numerous former Army and Marine helicopter pilots from the Vietnam Era and I've located people I've wondered about for 24 years. Thanks."

"The cartoons are outstanding! Bob Snead is an artistic genius!!"

"The committee has done an outstanding job! Well done! May be impossible to improve on."

"I'm very proud to be a member of this organization."

"Keep up the good work. I keep wondering each year how it could be better, but I'm always pleasantly surprised with each issue. I love it!"

"It's great! Many thanks because it is our bloodline."

"I know it takes a lot of time and effort to produce this thing, but it's well worth it. Thanks."

"I don't think I can get enough KIA/MIA information. I'm really impressed that each year so much data is added. Thank you for your efforts!!"

# Expanded Newsletter schedule announced

Starting in February, the VHPA Newsletter will be published six times a year.

Instead of receiving the Newsletter in March, June, September and December, VHPA members will receive them in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Adding two Newsletter issues a year will require greater participation in the publication by VHPA members, Newsletter Editor Jack Swickard

said.

"Letters from members are the most popular items in the Newsletter," Swickard said. "And we are seeking members who will review books, write feature articles and provide photographs from their tours."

He also encourages members to let VHPA Headquarters know whenever they learn of the death of a helicopter pilot who flew in Southeast Asia in 1961 through 1975.

## VHPA Product Order Form

**MAIL FORM TO:**

VHPA  
7 W. Seventh St.  
Suite 1990  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only) \$20/set \_\_\_\_\_

1992 VHPA Directory (VHPA members only, while supplies last.) \$10/each \_\_\_\_\_

VHPA decals \$1/each \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAND TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

Send check/money order or charge to your VISA, MasterCard or Discover card.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Member No. \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



# VHPA briefs

## Words not appreciated

Mike Law, VHPA president and directory editor, said that some members "were kind enough to let me know that they did not appreciate the words 'If you ain't Cav . . . you ain't s—t' on the cover of the 1992 Membership Directory.

"For those I offended or disappointed, I apologize. I especially appreciate these members' rationale: 'We all went through helicopter pilot training . . . we all went to Vietnam . . . we all served our country . . . we all shared the risks, no matter what we flew or what unit we were in . . . no one was better, no one was worse . . . WE WERE ALL THERE and VHPA is for all of us who were there!'

"Perfect logic, as far as I am concerned!!" Law added.

"I'd like to offer two thoughts concerning the matter," he said. "First, the directory cover has a scrapbook motif and the words are appropriate for a Cav man's scrapbook. Several members pointed out that these words under the VHPA logo are not appropriate. I agree and, for that, I apologize.

"Second, please don't take it personally. Every Vietnam era helicopter pilot is welcome in the VHPA and everyone's unit will get its 'day in the sun.' Anyway, I've learned a lot from this directory and deeply appreciate everyone's input," Law explained.

## Media database planned

Recently, the VHPA Database Committee established a "media database" that will hold the names and addresses of television, radio, newspaper, veterans' groups, etc., which might help advertise the VHPA, especially reunions.

VHPA also wants to include a contact person for each military installation, and National Guard and reserve unit.

Periodically, the VHPA will send posters and other materials to the contact person, who will see that the materials are displayed in an appropriate place — such as the officers club or flight line bulletin board — and/or give the material to the local press.

Jack Glennon, VHPA Membership Committee chairman, worked with the 1992 Reunion Committee and organized a small-scale poster campaign at several military installations in the Southeast. VHPA benefited from the results.

Any VHPA member who wants to serve as a contact person or who can suggest one is encouraged to send this information to VHPA Headquarters.

## Videotapes still sought

Mike McDonald is still seeking videotapes taken at past VHPA reunions.

The tapes will be assembled for a program during the 10th Reunion in Phoenix in July.

Anyone with videos can contact McDonald in care of VHPA Headquarters or personally at [REDACTED].

## Vendor packet put together

Several members and companies have expressed an interest in providing giveaways at the 1993 Reunion, VHPA President Mike Law said.

To be fair to all parties concerned and to obtain the best value for VHPA members, the Reunion Committee has put together a "Request for Proposal" packet. Anyone interested in bidding for this business should contact VHPA Headquarters.

## Doughnut dollies subscribe

The VHPA Newsletter has three new subscribers who were "Doughnut Dollies" in South Vietnam.

They are:

- Gainor "Gi Gi" Gunter of Atlanta, Ga.
- Kammy McCleary Malloy of Monroe, N.Y.
- Linda Wilson of Laurel, Md.

# Two Vietnam helicopter pilots die

## William E. Hyler Jr.

William E. Hyler Jr. died in a Lama helicopter crash on Aug. 18 in Bolivia, South America.

Hyler had been employed as a pilot since January by Helimar SA, a Bolivian helicopter company, doing seismic work.

He is survived by his wife, Bonnie of Chesapeake, Va.; a daughter, Cori Lynn; and a son, William E. Hyler III; his mother, Adelaide

Carter Hagman III of Chesapeake; and two sisters, Judith Perry and Linda Pacini.

Burial was at the Carter family cemetery in Brosville, Va.

Hyler served in South Vietnam in 1967 with E Battery, 82nd Artillery, 1st Air Cavalry Division. During his tour in Vietnam, he earned the Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters; the Air Medal with 19

oak leaf clusters; and the Soldiers Medal.

## Robert F. Faith

Robert F. Faith of Jefferson City, MO., died Sept. 21 of a heart attack.

Faith served with the 195th Assault Helicopter Company in South Vietnam in 1967-68.

He was a member of Class 67-20.





Photo shows the Lobby Bar, looking west, in the Scottsdale Plaza Resort, one of the two resorts which will be home for the 1993 VHPA Reunion in the Phoenix-Scottsdale, Ariz., area July 1-5.

**PAUL USTER**  
**1993 REUNION CHAIRMAN**

The VHPA 10th Anniversary Spectacular – also known as the Reunion – draws ever closer.

The focus this year will be on sports. Some of it will be outside in the beautiful Arizona sunshine and some inside in air conditioned comfort.

The gala affair is being held at two resorts, the Scottsdale Plaza and the Scottsdale Registry. They are located across the street from each other and both have a fantastic resort atmosphere.

Room rates will vary from \$65 to \$75 a night per room. There will be prizes for early registrants, so

call ASAP and get your room reserved.

The Plaza can be reached at (800) 832-2025. The Registry at (800) 247-6606.

All the rooms are very luxurious at both places. The higher price gets you a suite and some are bi-level.

The Plaza room decor is Southwest in style and color scheme. The Registry's rooms are decorated in rich, dark wood, and elegance abounds. All the rooms are appointed as you would expect from a top-of-the-line resort.

I envision the suites going quickly, so get your reservation in early. Next Newsletter, I'll tell you the prizes for early registration.

The Plaza has booked the entire resort for our group, and the Registry has most of its rooms blocked. Hopefully, that will help you decide which one to make your early reservation with.

Both resorts have fantastic main swimming pools with smaller pools and spas throughout the grounds.

More details will follow, but get ready for the racquetball tournament, the tennis tournament, the golf tournament, the 5k run, the "Kenny Bunn 10m Crawl," pool parties, dances, fireworks, static helicopter displays and more.

Come help us celebrate 10 outstanding VHPA years in beautiful Scottsdale, Ariz.



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

10th Annual Reunion Phoenix, AZ July 1-5, 1993

## REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202

FAX signed credit card registrations to: (513) 721-5315

Name:	Member No.:	Expected arrival 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 6/1/93*		@ \$ 10.00	
Registration after 6/1/93*		@ \$ 20.00	
Golf Tournament (includes cart & r/t trans.)		@ \$ 44.00	
Western Dinner/Dance Saturday evening July 3		@ \$ 28.00	
Banquet July 4		@ \$ 37.00	
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	

Indicate if you want to participate in these activities	
Tennis	
Racquetball	
Volleyball	
Team Volleyball	
Walleyball	
5k Run	
Kenny Bunn 10m Crawl	

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

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '93"
- ☐ Please charge my: MasterCard VISA Discover (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 prior to the Reunion. All refund requests must be submitted to VHPA headquarters no later than Aug. 5, 1993 and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events (the Western Dance and Banquet are fixed-priced events) that lose money unless the entire Reunion has a positive cash balance. The VHPA headquarters will process and pay all refund requests within 10 days of completing the Reunion accounting balancing.



# HAI Convention will be Feb. 25-27

**JACK JORDAN**  
**THE GATHERING (HAI)**

The Helicopter Association International (HAI) Convention will be held at the Miami Beach Convention Center Feb. 25-27.

Thanks to the continued support of HAI, the VHPA will again staff a booth during the convention.

If you are out of the aviation loop and want to see the latest technology in the rotor world, this is your opportunity to visit with friends and drool over the best equipment available at the same time.

"The Gathering," an evening for members and prospective members to renew friendships and share experiences, will be held Feb. 25, starting at 5 p.m., in the Voltaire Room of the Fountainbleau Hilton on Miami Beach.

Last year, we had 245 members or prospective members sign in at The Gathering.

★★★★★

## AAAA anyone?

For those who cannot make either the summer reunion or Miami, or if you can make both of them and are looking for more excitement, plan on attending the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) Annual Convention March 31-April 4 in Fort Worth, Texas.

VHPA will have a booth at AAAA again.

Details of this convention will be in the February Newsletter.

If you are interested in attending the HAI Convention or the AAAA Convention and have further questions or would like to offer to help work the VHPA booths, let me hear from you.

For further information, contact:

Jack Jordan

[REDACTED] evenings  
[REDACTED] work

During the HAI Convention, I can be contacted at the Ritz Plaza on Miami Beach.



"...I THINK ITS SAFE TO SAY WE'VE BEEN  
SHOT DOWN..."

Bob Sneed

## Lighthouse Cav hats can be special ordered

Those who served with Lighthouse (D/3/5 and C/3/17 air cavalry) had the distinction of wearing white Cav hats. Some of us have lost, misplaced or never had the opportunity to purchase the white hats.

Now, through a special arrangement with Stetson Hat Co., the white hats are once again available. This is a one-time offer. Stetson has agreed to manufacture a special run of white hats if we have at least 24 orders.

Each hat will cost \$80 and includes the chin strap and acorns. To place your order, send payment of \$80 to the address listed below. Be sure to include your return address and hat size.

The deadline for all orders is Jan. 8, 1993.

All payments will be deposited with Colorado National Bank in Golden, Colo., until the order is placed. If, for any reason, the order is not placed with Stetson, your payment will be refunded in full.

Lighthouse Hats  
c/o Rex Gooch

## Calendar

### March 10-14, 1993

Lawyer-Pilots Bar Association Meeting. The Doral, Miami Beach, FL. Contact: David E. Prewitt,

[REDACTED] or call [REDACTED].

### Aug. 18-21, 1993

7/1 ACS "Blackhawks" who served in Vietnam from 1968-72 will hold "Reunion '93" at the Norfolk (VA) Airport Hilton. Contact: Michael J. O'Reilly,



# NVA spoils last flight in Loach

**LOUIS J. ROCHAT III**  
**APACHE AND EL LOBO 16**

LAI KHE, South Vietnam — Sept. 1, 1970, was an awe-inspiring day as the personnel selected to form the all new E Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile) gathered around at the disbanded D/229th company area.

All the other units in the squadron had been tasked to provide pilots, air crew personnel, support personnel, equipment and aircraft to form this new "search and destroy" troop.

Maj. Herbert Chole had a "Black Sheep Troop" on his hands, but he rolled up his sleeves and went to work.

By Sept. 8, we were putting up five teams a day, and that increased to seven by Sept. 12, after we raided every unit in III Corps for parts, equipment, ammo and anything else that wasn't tied down.

Two of the Cobras we got were delivered on lowboy flatbed trucks and were flying within days.

I was proud to be an original member of this elite, ragtag, no name, no AO, Red X aircraft, 70 percent strength, 1st Real Cav unit of short-lived great-fame-to-come.

Our immediate mission was to support the other three "regular" troops. You can guess what missions they gave us: Convoy escorts, last light checks, first light checks, sniffer hits, and electronic detection hits.

But the 1st Infantry stood down and we got our very own turf — the

Iron Triangle. Boy, did we ever have a party over that.

My activity with the unit ended on Jan. 18, 1971, in the Iron Triangle.

I came to Vietnam a Cobra pilot out of flight school, but wanted the OH-6A. I ended up flying both.

I would fly the Loach until I took a mess of hits and then jump back into the Cobra until I got bored with 1,500 AGL and AFN's Saigon Sue while the Scouts had all the fun, and then I'd jump back into the Loach.

I was a two-digit midget getting ready to extend when I went back into the Loach for what would be the last time.

I had found a sampan docking point and, after destroying the sampans, flew low-level cover for a Korean team we put in to check out the bunker complex the docking point trail led to.

I was down to about 30 minutes fuel when the "down bird" call went out. We were the closest team, as most of the other teams had already broken to refuel and rearm.

Capt. Paul "Red" Dagnon was my high-bird, with the XO, Capt. Reterrer, in the front seat. Capt. Reterrer also had just taken over as troop commander, as Maj. Chole had gone to a headquarters assignment.

We arrived on station and found the low bird had been hit, but had flown out of the area before having to set down.

His high bird Cobra

had to leave due to low fuel and no munitions, as he had shot everything up when his Loach had taken fire.

The Loach pilot was a brand new first lieutenant who hadn't been in the unit more than a week or two; this was the first time he had taken fire.

I arrived at his location and found him outside the aircraft counting bullet holes. He gave me a sign count of more than 10 hits in the engine doors.

I knew right off we weren't dealing with Viet Cong, but with NVA and they wanted him down and alive, otherwise they would have put all those rounds in the pilot's compartment.

He pointed the direction from which he came and we headed out.

Red said everyone was in refuel and rearm, but that Capt. Larry Brown, my scout platoon leader, and his Cobra were almost refueled and armed and it would only be a few minutes before they took off.

Both of our 20-minute warning lights were on. I told him we needed to check the area to ascertain what was in there so we would know what it would take to terminate the bad guy situation, and that I would do it at 60-plus knots.

Red could see where the other team had been firing and guided me in there while I was low level. I went in at 60 knots, but was up to 90 knots within seconds.

I had bunker openings, uniforms hanging out to dry, campfires with food cooking,

stacked AK-47s, heavy-use trails. NVA equipment and gear was everywhere.

I had my Torque start "recon by fire" with his M-60 just to keep the bad guys' heads down.

I had flown the entire Cambodia campaign and had learned a lot of the unwritten tactics you use to survive as a Loach pilot but still get the body counts and kills.

We had been out of Cambodia for quite a while and my edge wasn't as keen as it had been for Cambodia; I made an error that would cost me dearly.

I was on fumes and getting ready to split when a group of about five or six NVA packing full fatigues, gear and AK-47s came out of nowhere and appeared to be running away from us.

I fell for it and stood the Loach on its tail and started hovering sideways as the Torque started putting them down.

Just as the last NVA went down, I heard or felt the rocket coming.

I went nose over and pulled 102 pounds of torque to get out when the rocket hit the tail. I learned later from Red that all he remembers seeing is a gray-black cloud and my tailboom section flipping through the air.

Everything went into slow-motion.

The aircraft was nose-over, with a ton of torque to the blades and the rocket blast flipped the Loach into a forward full flip.

During the time it was upside down, I took one

*Continued on Page 14*



# Blast from rocket knocks Loach into full flip

*Continued from Page 13*

.30-caliber round through my right hand. It came through what would have been the top of the aircraft.

The round entered my hand between the thumb and index finger and exited out my ring finger where it was attached to my hand. My thumb and little finger were the only thing letting me hang onto the cyclic.

I remember the aircraft finishing the flip and heading down, as parts of the dash, instruments and radios started flying everywhere from rounds coming through my side of the cockpit.

I felt several tugs at my left leg and then a whack in the chest and head.

Just before impact, I pulled the collective and rolled the nose forward and to the right to impact on my side, nose down to help keep my crew alive.

Just as I was getting a good look at the ground, my left leg fell over and the cyclic (or part of) came out of the floor and a lot of stuff hit my face.

I recall the aircraft hitting, bouncing and rolling several times before it came to rest on its left side.

During this part of "controlled" crash, I remember getting a good rap on the head from something. After stopping, I saw it was one of the rotor blades that came into the cockpit.

Everything was still slow-motion as the dust and debris was settling into the cockpit. Then everything returned to normal speed.

I was hurt bad and knew it.

I braced myself and had my observer reach up to unlatch my seat belt as I started to crawl through the "greenhouse" roof window.

A bucket of blood landed on my observer as I moved my left leg up. That is when I saw it and knew it was blown in half and I was bleeding to death.

I stuck my head through the window and saw the damn rotorhead still turning and clanking and grinding.

No tailboom, no skids, no rotor blades and a smashed-up bird — and the engine was still running at flight idle. I had to turn back around and shut the engine off before I could get out.

I could hear my Torque shooting the M-79 grenade launcher.

I rolled out of the aircraft, my observer right behind me. I could smell burning grass and hear AK rounds hitting the top of the aircraft.

Red was really working out with the Cobra, but I could also hear return fire after he broke off his run. They were shooting .30- and .51-caliber at him.

My left foot was turned the wrong way and I flopped it over the right way, knowing my flight suit and blousing rubbers were the only things holding it on.

I saw a bomb crater and told the observer to get any guns he could find and head for it. I dragged myself into the crater and then realized that all kinds of dirt and bamboo were falling on us from Red's shooting to cover us.

Damn, he could shoot. During what must

have been their third gun run while I was in the crater, I remember how awesome it sounded hearing the rockets fire, then break the sound barrier and then impact, and you'd hear a split second of the thunder the Cobra made in a dive run.

As the sound of the Cobra left us, the enemy guns opened up and the debris from the gunship would start floating down on us. We even heard shrapnel flying through the air. It was fantastic!

Then I got scared for the first time. I couldn't hear Red.

My Torque was shooting his M-79 and I had been shooting left-handed with my handgun. The observer had lost his rifle in the crash and I gave him my empty handgun to reload when I heard the sweetest sound there was in the world:

The high-pitched whine of another Loach as it made one pass over us and went on his tail in a right hand circle, coming down on top of us.

He half-landed and half-hovered over that bomb crater while my Torque and the observer picked me up and tossed me into the back of the aircraft.

My rear landed in the frag grenade box and my legs were pointing out the gunner's door.

I looked around and saw a full load of ammo and my Torque and observer standing on the left skid. No way could this Loach take off with six people and a full load of ammo, weapons and fuel. I had maxed a Loach before and knew this would be too much.

I was still cringing

when I felt the wind blowing after all the shuddering and vibrating the OH-6A went through to get us airborne.

I do not honestly believe that takeoff could be repeated. Being scared can get all kinds of things done.

Something was wrong with the aircraft, as it would not maintain trim and the wind coming from the gunner's door was blowing blood all over my face and helmet.

We tried to get my visor down, but it was history as two .30-caliber rounds had gone through it from front to rear and there was a crack on the right side of the helmet from the rotor hit.

We landed at 15th Medical at Phuoc Vinh, and I was carried inside. The smell inside these places was one you would never forget.

I gave my name, unit, blood type, etc., and then watched my flight suit disappear into pieces from all the scissors being used on it.

The doc asked me where I was hit and I told him my left leg and right hand, but he had a funny look on his face.

They removed the front chest plate and that's when I saw the damage to it. I tried to raise my head up and look down, but I was getting weak.

The doc then asked me what I thought was a funny question: "Can we remove your helmet now?"

Of course, I couldn't see the bullet and rotor blade damage on the helmet, plus all the blood and parts of my leg splattered all over it, and they must have thought part

*Continued on Page 15*



# Book answers questions about LRRPs

**"Acceptable Loss: An Infantry Soldier's Perspective" by Kregg P.J. Jorgenson. Ivy Books. 243 pages. \$4.99 in paperback.**

Slick pilots who wondered about the LRRPs they dropped off in clearings at night and retrieved under the stars days later get an answer from Kregg Jorgenson.

Though he later was a member of the infantry Blues platoon of the 1/9th Cav at Tay Ninh, "Jorgy" began his combat operations in 1969 as a Ranger on long-range reconnaissance patrols.

Jorgenson is an excellent writer, and the pace of his book never flags.

"Acceptable Loss" has a nice mix of humor accompanying the author's remembrances of the

darker side of war.

Recalling his first minutes in Vietnam, after his government-contract airliner came to a halt near the terminal at Bien Hoa Airbase, Jorgenson writes: "As I stepped from the plane, it wasn't the sudden rush of heat or humidity that immediately caught my attention. It was the applause!"

The applauding GIs, it turns out, were happy about the arrival of Jorgenson's airliner which, after being refueled, would take them home from Vietnam.

Jorgenson, a 19-year-old buck sergeant when he arrived in Vietnam, wasted no time getting into the thick of things. He volunteered for in-country Ranger training and was soon a LRRP, walking through Viet Cong and

North Vietnam Army territory.

After receiving his first Silver Star Medal and contracting malaria, Jorgenson transfers to 1/9th Cav's Blue Team which "spent the majority of their time rescuing downed helicopter crews or serving as quick reaction forces for Ranger teams that had suddenly found themselves in contact and desperate need of help."

Vietnam veterans will read Jorgenson's book with a nostalgic smile. He refreshes long-ago memories with such words, abbreviations and phrases as: Camp Alpha, FNGs, MPCs, chloroquine-primaquine tablets, body count, that mythical island off the coast for GIs with incurable VD, and REMFs.

— Jack Swickard

## 'Can we remove your helmet?' the doc asked

*Continued from Page 14*  
of my head was gone.

I said, "Sure," and reached up with my left hand, grabbed the lower rear of the helmet and pulled it off.

They all gasped, but there was nothing but my black, sweaty, dirty hair underneath.

All of a sudden, I heard: "Hey, Rocket! How's it going?"

I looked up and saw Red Dagnon. He was holding his shoulder and chicken plate, both were covered in blood. He had taken a round through the shoulder and had a mess of plexiglass stuck in his face.

They had taken more than 20 hits in the cockpit area, losing the No. 1 hydraulic system on the last run they had made. As he was setting the Cobra down several clicks away, the No. 2 hydraulic system light came on and the controls froze.

He rolled off the throttle to get it all the way on the ground.

That made three birds and eight people down within a 10-minute period.

When they started to cut on my left boot, I went through the ceiling and learned that I hadn't had any pain medication.

I went to sleep and woke up three days later at the 93rd Evac, having already had two operations, plus they had lost me twice on the operating table — once from loss of blood and another from shock.

I had one bullet hit in my left heel that took off a small chunk; one bullet put a six-inch cut across my left thigh; one hit in the right hand and took off my ring finger, but it had been reattached; one or more rounds hit the chest plate, broke six or seven ribs and gave me a 14-inch wide, one-half-inch thick bruise across

the chest; one or more rounds in the helmet that didn't hurt anything, just as the rotor strike only thumped me real good; and the biggie, a .51-caliber round just below the left knee that literally blew the leg in half.

I had one artery still pumping blood to the foot, so they left it on to see if it could be saved. Seven-plus hits and still kicking!

There was one thing that I wouldn't have survived if it had not been for my scout platoon leader, Capt. Larry Brown.

Division had really been coming down on us for not wearing flight gloves, having our Nomex sleeves rolled up, wearing jungle boots and not wearing our armor chest plate — or chicken plate.

Brown caught me walking to the flight line and asked me where my plate was. He was new to

the unit, but we had hit it off great, as he and I had finally found someone else just as flamboyant, cocky and self-assured as the other. So I told him I didn't have it with me, instead of saying it was in the aircraft when it wasn't.

He handed me his. Less than two hours later, it had several hits dead in the center.

I got to see and meet him again for the first time since that day at the VHPA Reunion in Reno.

It was like seeing the love of your life, except this was a guy who saved my life by giving up his equipment to me and then walking back to the unit area to get another one instead of ordering me to go get my own.

He was, and still is, a commander, a leader, a friend and a brother.

I only wish I knew the name of the Loach pilot who came in and got me and my crew out.



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990 Cincinnati, OH 45202 (513) 721-VHPA

## Membership application/change of address

☐ Application

☐ Annual dues: \$30

☐ Address change

☐ Life membership: \$450

☐ Directory correction

☐ Subscription only: \$12\*

☐ Information only

(\*Included in annual dues)

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

HOME PHONE: ( )

WORK PHONE: ( )

OCCUPATION:

☐ Please charge my MasterCard/Visa/Discover

☐ Enclosed is a check/money order payable to VHPA

Credit card No.:

Expiration date:

SIGNATURE:

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS:

SERVICE BRANCH:

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS:

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:

Information about each Vietnam tour:

Date of tour			Unit	Location	Call sign
	From:	To:			
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					

Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?