



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

December 1994 Vol. 12, No. 6



Marines load C-rations aboard a helicopter for transportation to the field. Besides the necessities of war, helicopter crews carried the Christmas season with them. Read "Christmas in Vietnam" on Pages 14-17.

From the President

A recent newsletter article has caused a bit of consternation among a few of our members, so allow me to set the record straight.

Though we may report on the activities of other veteran's groups, the VHPA in no way endorses any other organization's activities, or the activities of its individual members, particularly when it comes to issues of political volatility such as the POW/MIA issue.

A recent article on this subject was written to show our members a new spin on the issue and was approved in advance by the Editor and Executive Council.

The VHPA remains dedicated to its position of NO

Political Involvement.

On a lighter note . . . Right about now you're planning some Christmas shopping and thinking about the New Year. Just remember that 1995 is the year that we're "Going to Kansas City" and it will soon be time for CWO Santa to make plans for attending the Reunion.

Bring all the elves and Mrs. Claus (especially if she's been naughty and nice), but leave the reindeer home! They spill their beer and merely bellow when "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" is sung.

Ladies, a Life Membership makes a wonderful gift.

On behalf of the Executive Council, PAI, and the committee members who work for you all year, let me wish all of you Happy Holidays, and may the New Year bring you the very best of life.

— Kenny Bunn, President

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter

Update requested.

Ohio River LZ Chapter

Paul Cotter, President

Great Lakes Chapter (Northeastern Illinois)

John Becker, President

North Carolina Chapter

Gary Kimbrell, President

New England Chapter

Bob Whitford, Past President

Mardi Gras Chapter

Don Hunt, President

Lee Overstreet, Vice President

New Orleans, LA

Florida LZ Chapter

Barry Speare, President

Seeking

I am assisting a veteran who served with Companies B and D, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, from October to December 1970 in Vietnam. If someone is aware of this unit, please have him contact me.

Harold D. McMillion

Veterans Outreach Center No. 0319

If you can help, I'm looking for WO1 Allen North, 187th AHC, Tay Ninh. He was hurt flying a smoke ship in May 1969. He was from California.

Ray Root

I am asking your assistance in locating Hollis E. Stanford. Mr. Stanford served with the 101st Airborne Division in 1968 in Vietnam. His rank was CW2.

Domenic Russo

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VICE PRESIDENT.....Ken Fritz
PAST PRESIDENT.....Phil Marshall
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Midterm Member.....Mike Hurley
Junior Member.....Jack Jordan
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FOUNDER.....Larry Clark

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1995 Reunion.....Bob Smith
Gathering (HAI).....Jack Jordan
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ELECTRONIC MAIL

Newsletter.....74127.442@compuserve.com
Mel Canon, VHPA Online.....

Polish military historian seeks helicopter pilots

A Polish military writer and historian named Piotr Taras is writing a book on the use of helicopters in Vietnam. He is interested in hearing the stories of pilots and seeing photos of helicopters in Vietnam.

He has already written about 30 articles on Vietnam for Polish magazines and published an excellent book on the high-performance aircraft that were used there by both sides.

Mr. Taras' purpose is to tell the people of eastern Europe how the war really was, and "not as shown by communist propaganda."

He reads and writes English, and would like to hear from any helicopter pilot who flew in Vietnam. His address is:

Piotr Taras
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

VHPA briefs

History book being revised

According to Ken Fritz, the VHPA History Book, to be published by Turner Publications, has suffered another delay.

The second section of the history portion of the book has been rejected by Fritz as too political and without enough of the true history of the helicopter units involved in the action in Vietnam. He has worked closely with Turner Publications and they now have another writer for the second section of the book.

Although this is the way to ensure an accurate story is presented, it also means an unavoidable delay in publication and delivery of the book to VHPA members who already have purchased the book.

Fritz reports that some purchasers of the book have contacted him regarding the book's progress and when they have been informed of the reasons for the delay, they have agreed they'd rather have a first quality product than a refund or a substandard book.

Fritz anticipates delivery of the books before the next reunion.

Fritz represents VHPA

The VHPA was represented by Vice President Ken Fritz at the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association EXPO '94 in Palm Springs, CA, Oct. 21-23.

On Oct. 22, AOPA provided a complimentary seminar room for VHPA members to meet and visit. The group managed to sign up three new members, one renewal, more than 10 promises to attend the Kansas City reunion, and about 15 promises to order 1995 VHPA calendars. This is very good participation considering there were only 17 guys there!

New friends were made and plenty of great stories were shared at the meeting, including one from a new member who found himself in the deceased section of the directory!

Thanks to the AOPA for getting the word out in their national magazine and for the meeting space.

Vendor's records destroyed

Honor & Pride, the vendor of polo shirts and caps at the Philly reunion, has been unable to fulfill some orders taken at the reunion.

Some of Honor & Pride's records were destroyed after the reunion. As a result, it has shirts and caps that were customized and paid for by some VHPA members at the reunion.

Please contact Honor & Pride at (800) 277-9374 with proof of purchase in hand so the firm can send your merchandise to you. The company apologizes profusely for the error and the late shipment.

Mel Canon column was very enjoyable

I just received the October issue of the VHPA Newsletter and certainly enjoyed it, especially Mel Canon's article "Communicating by computer grows."

However, he did not include his e-mail address, or I overlooked it! Could you please e-mail me his e-mail address?

I just joined VHPA during the last AAAA Convention in St. Louis and have certainly enjoyed the newsletters and especially the 1994 Membership Directory. GREAT JOB!

I would like to suggest that Mel consider starting an e-mail address listing for VHPA members. I think many members would really enjoy communicating in that forum.

"I think many members would really enjoy communicating in that forum."

And his idea of chat session really sounds exciting — however, I'm on every service except AOL!!!!

I'm serving as the Director, Aviation Test Direc-

torate, U.S. Army Test and Experimentation Command, Fort Hood, TX. This organization is the old Aviation Board that used to be located at Fort Rucker — it was moved to Fort Hood in 1991.

I served in the 129 AHC, Lane AHP, An Son from August 1972 to March 1973. I flew in the last flight out of Lane AHP as we closed it down February 1973. We took what was remaining of the 129 AHC to Pleiku to stand-by for POW pick-up missions for a couple of weeks before flying the company to Hotel 3 (Saigon) and turning the aircraft over to VNAF.

D.I. Smith
Fort Hood, Texas

EDITOR'S NOTE: E-mail addresses for VHPA Online coordinator Mel Canon and Newsletter editor Jack Swickard are now published in the Page 3 box listing VHPA officers and committee chairmen. In addition, Canon's e-mail address will be published with each column he writes.

Descriptions of CS drops bring back old memories

As an "A" model Chinook pilot with A/228, 1st Cav in 1968-69, I was most interested in John Konek's August

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VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO:

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

FAX NUMBER FOR

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (513) 721-5315

VHPA bumper stickers	\$1/each	_____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only.)	\$20/set	_____
1992 VHPA Directory. (7/17 Cav history)	\$10/each	_____
1994 VHPA Directory (Lam Son 719 history)	\$10/each	_____
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory	\$15/each (\$5 P&H per order)	_____
Vol. 2 Historical Reference Directory*	\$15/each (\$5 P&H per order)	_____
Researcher's Edition 1994 Directory	\$14/each	_____
1995 VHPA Calendar	\$7/each (\$3 P&H per order)	_____

GRAND TOTAL _____

*Available in April 1995

TO ORDER

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Credit card No. _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____

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1994 feature under the headline, "Two CH-47 missions controversial."

When he described CS1 or CS2 dropped in thirty 55-gallon drums, the memory bells began ringing, I participated in one of those drops in early 1969, although the exact operation name escapes me. It well could have been Opera-



Spec. 4 Woody Ediger with minigun mount in 1968.

Assault helicopter unit trying to locate members

We are trying to locate all 128th Assault Helicopter pilots and establish a complete roster of all who served in the unit. We would appreciate any help in the way of current addresses and copies of old orders, etc.

Enclosed is a photo of a Gunslinger B model with artwork and one of the earlier door-mounted miniguns. The lad in the picture is Spec. 4 Woody Ediger, who designed and built the mount for the minigun.

Also enclosed is a copy of remarks about helicopters that Harry Reasoner (CBS Television reporter and commentator) made in 1971. Perhaps he described some of us quite well:

"The thing is, helicopters are different from planes. An airplane by its nature wants to fly, and if not interfered 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. There is no such thing as a gliding helicopter.

"This is why being a helicopter pilot is so different from being an airplane pilot, and why in generality, airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts and helicopter pilots are brooders, introspective anticipators of trouble. They know if something bad has not happened it is about to."

James L. "Jay" Riseden

tion Pershing.

There were several aspects of this mission that merit recounting. Working with CS naturally required that we wore our protective masks through the loading and dropping phases of the mission.

During flight school and unit training, we all occasionally piloted our aircraft while wearing the masks, but having them on for a three-hour period was very different, producing something between discomfort and mild vertigo.

Once en route with the drums relatively secure, the pilot and flight engineer took turns with the co-pilot and crew chief in

taking the masks off for an unencumbered look around; however, at drop-zone time, we were all masked.

Over the drop-zone, our airspeed was required to be 30 knots with the 2,000-foot drop targeted for a designated ground track. The slow airspeed ensured total coverage for the specific area which we understood was an NVA division headquarters.

The most significant aspect of our particular mission was that the drop had to be started precisely on time and completed at an exact, predetermined minute because at that very minute, the guard frequencies crackled that Air Force B-52s were "doors open" and their bombs were heading right on top of the dropped — and by now exploded — CS drums.

As you might imagine, we wasted no time leaving the area once the last drum cleared the rollers and dropped off the back of the Chinook's ramp.

Even though tear gas employment is today correctly headlined as controversial, post-mission intelligence reports revealed that the combination of CS and bombs on the same place at the same time was quite an effective and demoralizing weapon.

Jim Dooley
VHPA member

'Bomber' chopper pilot shares more information

I read with interest the bit in the VHPA Newsletter that said there were some secret missions involving dropping napalm from a helicopter.

Since I'm one of the few bomber helicopter pilots, I thought I'd share some more information.

Around spring in 1971, I got assigned the mission to drop some 55-gallon drums of foogas over the Iron Triangle area in III Corps. The purpose, as told to me, was to

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clear the area of booby traps.

The Air Force or Chemical Corps (I forget which) had rigged up some racks made of angle iron that allowed the drums to be stacked and rolled out the rear of the aircraft while lying on their sides. There was a little propeller gadget mounted on each drum that would arm the fuse after

It was kind of exciting, and we actually got to use the red-green jump lights that were installed in the Chinook's cargo area.

rotating a hundred or so times while falling through the air.

Since it was against our company SOP to carry flammables internally, I naturally refused the mission.

After a couple of hours of briefings and radio conversations with our battalion HQ, and a direct order from some brigadier, we loaded the things and flew out to the drop zone.

It was kind of exciting, and we actually got to use the red-green jump lights that were installed in the Chinook's cargo area. Perhaps a fourth of the drums failed to explode on impact but the powers that be had sent a pair of gunships along to help them along.

I don't know if it was my refusal or what, but I was never assigned that mission again. A little later on the Australians came up with an external "piggyback" sling-load technique that worked pretty well. It was probably quite a bit safer and required a lot less time to load.

Anyone else drop stuff on purpose? I've heard that LOH guys dropped grenades all the time, sometimes in the chin bubble!

Ed Faught
213th ASHC "Black Cats"
Phu Loi 1970-'71

CH-47 'bomber' pilot describes normal mission

I was also a CH-47 bomber pilot on several occasions. Some of the drops were entirely unintentional, but spectacular!

A normal mission was to drop CS gas out of the back in 45-gallon drums. We loaded the barrels standing upright on rollers, and then two crew members wearing harnesses stood on the lowered ramp and armed the detonator rings and pushed the the barrels out.

The drop zone was usually a free-fire zone, so after we made a pass dropping the gas, a team of gunships would work the area.

It was a mission we all hated because the barrels always leaked and the aircraft would fill up with gas, and even though we were wearing masks the gas would sting and burn exposed skin.



Reuniting at the Philly reunion are (from left) Norm Fanning, Jim Mason, Ken Fritz and Bob Larson.

Reunion brings four pilots back together

At the Philly Reunion I met up with classmate Norm Fanning, WORWAC Class 68-31, and our TAC, Jim Mason, for the first time since 1968! A third member of the class, Bob Larson, and I have met at previous reunions. We were really surprised to see Norm and Jim!

Norm and I were in the same basic training group, E/2/2, at Fort Polk, too, but after Fort Rucker we lost contact. So, 26 years later we were staring incredulously at one another as Norm told lies by the LOH and I told lies by the lobby bar. We shared old memories of having been caught posing as cadre at the Cadre Club (club crashers?) at Fort Polk and then having to wax the BDE CO's floors late at night for our dirty deeds. All that for a lousy 3.2 beer!

Norm and Bob aspired to higher office and served as WOC "brass" at Fort Wolters, while I chose to be a life-guard at the Fort Wolters O Club pool. My job had a better view!

Norm went RLO later and now serves in the Pentagon (waxing floors?) as an LTC. Bob is chief pilot on a Gulfstream for owners of a major league baseball team, Jim flies for the Guard and I fly in the Reserve and am in business for myself.

We really enjoyed a couple of days of, "There I was — 5,000 feet, pockets full of change and not a Coke machine in sight. I tell ya' man, war was Hell in my AO!" I can hardly wait 'til the next reunion!

Ken Fritz
Orangevale, CA

An unusual bombing mission was the time we dropped 45-gallon barrels of JP-4 into the mouth of a big cave on Nui Coto Mountain (? spelling). Nui Coto was a granite hill on the Cambodian border in IV Corps.

The idea was that the JP-4 would run down into the bottom of the cave, and then an F-4 was to drop an incendiary

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bomb to ignite the fuel and burn everyone out of the cave.

So, we hovered over the mouth of that cave, getting the heck shot out of us, for what seemed like hours while the crew in back threw out all those barrels.

We finally got unloaded and out of there, and then the F-4 dropped all his ordinance and never once hit near enough to the cave to ignite anything. So we all went home!

The Viet Cong in that cave had fuel for their lanterns for years after!

Walt Luelling
Klamath Falls, OR

UH-1C pilot recalls his bombing mission

Saw one of the "F-47s" myself. Happened some time in early to mid-1967 on a ridge line west of Bong Song (LZ Two Bits).

A hook slinging a blivet hovered over the mountain and turned it loose. About 50-100 feet off the ground, the whole mess blew, covering quit a large area. Thought that was neat!

A few weeks later we got some racks put in our UH-1C models, a sight of sorts hooked to the manual cargo release and a load of mortars! The whole idea was to lift the rack as commanded and roll about 8-16 mortar rounds out the door! Never forget the sound they made bouncing off the skids!

The next great idea was to take the old 48-round (hog) pod, which was modified with coil springs and latches on

the talking end, fill each tube with CS (tear gas) grenades with the pins out. When in AO, you would shove one end out the door and pull the latches, thus shooting the grenades out into the slip stream.

A second gunship or section would follow and shoot up the area. The one thing that made it interesting were the low clouds we flew under to dump the load in a valley. We had to fly out the way we came in! Sort of left us crying in our beer.

So we now have not only "F-47s" but "BH-1s" in this crazy war.

Gordon Eatley
Warlord
1st Cav 2/20, C Battery and
E Battery, 82nd Artillery — 1967-68
D Troop, 3/4 Cav, 25th Infantry and
117th Assault Helicopter Company — 1970-71

Son Tay Mission pilot thanks VHPA members

I have put off far too long writing to you and your VHPA Newsletter staff.

First, Jill and I thank you, Phil Marshall and all those who attended the July 4th reunion in Philadelphia. It was great being among folks who know the rotary wing business and who share the Vietnam experience. The response to my Son Tay Mission presentation was the best I have ever received — and I've given it several times.

Especially meaningful to me was the attendance of three former POWs and their kind remarks for our effort to free their fellow POWs.

Second, the hospitality accorded us was great throughout the event, a celebration Jill and I shall always cherish.

Finally, I received my copy of the VHPA directory today. I commend you and your staff for an outstanding effort — it's a first-class document and should be well regarded by your membership.

I am including my check for your 1995 calendar.

Although the SEA adventure is well behind us, I suggest we all persevere in watching our 6 o'clock. Most of us can only watch as our nation continues to walk that narrow line between peace and a similar experience. In the meantime . .

Jay M. Strayer
Colonel, USAF (Ret.)
Jamestown, OH

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter was addressed to Mike Law, VHPA Membership Directory editor and former president.



Is tattoo too much?

Please see enclosed photo. I decided, after "coming out of the closet" about being a Vietnam vet, to make a statement about my time there.

One question — Do you think I went too far?

Gregory M. Gove
"Spartan 11"

P.S. If you look real close, you can see the blue-and-white diamond of the 190th AHC.

Sorting history done with feeling

BOB DAVIES
HISTORICAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

When Kenny Bunn asked me if I would take over the Historical Committee after Bill Greenhalgh resigned, I thought it would be a great way to become more involved in the VHPA.

Immersed is closer to the truth. With my acceptance came about six banker's boxes filled with the sum total of our historical documents.

You know that feeling you got on a dark, rainy night deep in Charlie territory when your engine-out warning came on? I felt that same cold chill as I opened the boxes and began to sort through the contents. I must say that my predecessor had done a fine job of collecting a lot of stuff, and he probably had it organized in a manner that suited him. The problem was it didn't make sense to me (those who know me will find this no surprise).

After three months of cataloging and classifying, I have transformed

those boxes of stuff into an organized archive.

During this time, I found myself reading in detail many of the documents. Guys, it is difficult to express the feeling you get from reading our story. You know the one, which has joy, pride and sadness all lumped together. The sad thing is that we only have a small fraction of the unit histories, etc. that we should have.

Imagine the power a complete story will have, in addition to being a leading resource on the helicopter war in Vietnam.

Now the fun begins! As you know, there is a great effort to publish our history in several volumes by Mike Law. I have promised him that the Historical Committee will provide him with the historical items he needs. Which brings up another problem! Who is the committee?

This is a call to arms (or computer)! I am looking for at least one person to represent every unit. The unit

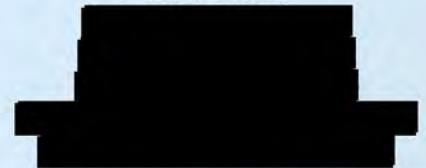
historian will search, collect, and write about his unit's history.

If this sounds like your calling, contact me at the address listed at the end of this column. There are many of you who have worked on the committee in the past and I hope I can count on your continued support.

If you don't feel the urge to join in the work but have in your possession unit histories, operational reports, unit orders, photos, movies, audio tapes or any other item that reflects a part of our history, you can help us by sending a copy to me. If you are unable to get a copy, you can send the original and I will copy it and return the original to you.

You can contact me by any of the following:

Bob Davies



This is good year to attend HAI Convention, Gathering

JACK JORDAN
THE GATHERING (HAI) CHAIRMAN

If you have ever considered attending Helicopter Association International Convention and/or The Gathering, which is a mini-reunion held by the VHPA during the Convention, this is the time.

The HAI Convention will be held at the Las Vegas Hilton on Jan. 29-31.

HAI, the Gathering

Thanks to the generous support of HAI, the VHPA will again operate a booth at HAI and host The Gathering, which will be held Sunday, Jan. 29, in Ballroom G during the Superbowl.

We will have a big-screen TV,

cash bar and finger food.

Contact your friends, bring your wives and plan on enjoying a unique opportunity.

Where else in the world could you drool over the latest technology in the aviation industry, swap lies with long-lost buddies, watch the Superbowl and place a small wager on the outcome in the same day?

Ken Fritz will be in charge of the VHPA booth at the convention and also will be hosting The Gathering.

He will need assistance with both, so if you plan on attending and can help, please call Ken Fritz at () or Jack Jordan at () (work) or ().

Because this is Superbowl Sunday, be advised you need to confirm room reservations soon.

Taps

Jimmy G. Tucker

Jimmy G. Tucker of Niceville, FL, was killed in an accident on Nov. 4 while flying an EMS helicopter for a Tallahassee hospital.

The accident also claimed the life of the flight nurse.

Tucker had just celebrated his 60th birthday on Oct. 4.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you know of a Vietnam-era helicopter pilot who has died, please notify Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association headquarters at 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202. This information is published in The VHPA Newsletter, and is entered into the association's database. Newspaper obituaries and news accounts are particularly good sources of information on deaths.

Immortalize the Long Green Line



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The Art of William S. Phillips. The Long Green Line.

A limited edition fine art print.

Vietnam veteran William S. Phillips immortalizes a "long green line" of UH-1 Iroquois helicopters in the central highlands. "This print is my tribute to the men who served," says the artist, "and the aircraft they flew." His skill in capturing the drama and power of the moment gives ample evidence as to why he is now renowned as the "master of in-flight action."

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P675

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Christmas brings thoughts of reunion

BOB SMITH
REUNION CHAIRMAN

It is Christmas time here in Kansas City.

My committee and I wish all of you health and happiness for this joyous time of the year.

With 1995 on the horizon, it is time to start thinking about the 12th annual VHPA reunion.

With Christmas gifts probably yet to buy, you might make that Christmas gift a round trip pair of tickets to Kansas City. If you do, you will need to make the reservations for Saturday, July 1, for the early bird gathering and your best price by staying over a Saturday night, to Wednesday, July 5, for going-home day.

Kansas City is one of this country's finest treasures. Metropolitan and inviting, it sits proudly in the Heartland of America. Truly a city offering something for everyone, Kansas City provides sophistication in a hometown atmosphere.

Part of Kansas City's charm lies in its beauty. The city boasts more fountains than any city except Rome and more boulevard miles than Paris.

As French writer Andre Maurois wrote, "Who in Europe, or in America, for that matter, knows that Kansas City is one of the loveliest cities on earth?"

The entertainment opportunities are endless. From dining to shopping; museums to amusement parks; performing arts to sports — Kansas City has it all.

To make your trip and reunion something very special, we have reserved one of the best hotels in Kansas City, the Westin Crown Center Hotel. The Westin is located just 20 minutes from the KCI Airport, which has been ranked in the top 10 user friendly airports in the world by Conde Nast's Traveler's Magazine.

The hotel's central location makes it easy to get to the Royals' Ball Park the beautiful parks and lakes, the renowned Country Club Plaza and a variety of theaters, art galleries and

Stop stampede for banquet seating

If you are willing to coordinate with your friends and plan ahead a little, you will not have to participate in the stampede for seating which has become an infamous part of the reunion banquet.

Here is how it works: When you fill out the *reunion registration form*, you will be able to purchase one ticket, an entire table (10 seats) or several tables for you and your friends. It will be on a first-come, first-served basis, the best seats assigned as the orders come in. (We will try to honor requests for the side, back of the room, etc.)

When you arrive at the reunion, the tickets you purchased for you and your friends will be in your registration packet with numbered table assignments. At the banquet you will be required to give your numbered ticket to the waiter to obtain your seat and banquet meal.

The city boasts more fountains than any city except Rome and more boulevard miles than Paris.

museums.

To add an air of drama to the hotel, you will enjoy a spectacular indoor waterfall that spills gracefully through a five-story tropical rock garden.

It has a full-service health club that features year-round swimming, tennis, jogging track, steam, sauna and tanning facilities open for your use. Unique shopping, cinemas and the American Heartland Theater are all an indoor walk at the Crown Center Complex, owned by Hallmark Cards.

The Westin Crown Center staff is looking forward to making this a truly enjoyable experience you can only find in the Heartland of America.

Make your plans now and call the hotel direct at **(816) 474-4400** or **(800) 228-3000** for central reservations. Tell them you are with the VHPA to take advantage of our special low rate of \$69 a night.

Here is what we have planned:

Saturday, July 1

- Early registration.
- Early bird welcome luau party.

- After hours city entertainment.

Sunday, July 2

- Registration and vendors.
- Church service at the hotel.
- Royals baseball.
- Mini-reunions, static display.
- Junior/senior high pool party.
- M*A*S*H party with show, food and dancing.

Monday, July 3

- Registration and vendors.
- 5K run or crawl.
- Mini-reunions.
- Golf, zoo, Truman Library, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Worlds of Fun/Oceans of Fun.
- Riverboat casino, gambling, fun, food and entertainment.

Tuesday, July 4

- Registration and vendors.
- Mini-reunion.
- Business meeting.
- Ladies function.
- Kids pool party.
- Banquet dinner, presentations and entertainment.

Wednesday, July 5

- Return home or stay and enjoy the many sights of Kansas City.

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VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

12th Annual Reunion Kansas City, MO July 1-5, 1995

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 6/1/95*		@ \$ 25.00	
Registration after 6/1/95*		@ \$ 35.00	
M*A*S*H Party (July 2) (Food, show and dance.)		@ \$ 25.00	
Riverboat casino (July 3) (Transportation, food, admission.)		@ \$ 25.00	
Banquet (July 4) (Order 1 or 100; stop the stampede.)		@ \$ 35.00	
Total for additional activities			
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 activities

Royals baseball game: (July 2. Transportation, ticket.) Cost: \$17	
Kansas City Zoo: (July 3. Transportation, entrance fee.) Cost: \$12	
Truman Library: (July 3. Transportation, entrance fee.) Cost: \$12	
Nelson-Atkins Museum: (July 3. Transportation, entrance fee.) Cost: \$12	
Worlds of Fun/Oceans of Fun: (July 3. Transportation, admission. Slight additional cost to enter both.) Cost: \$21	
Golf Tournament: (July 3. Transportation, cart and entry fee.) Cost: \$50	
5k run or crawl: (July 3.) Cost: No charge	

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

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '95"
- ☐ Please charge my: MasterCard VISA Discover (circle one)

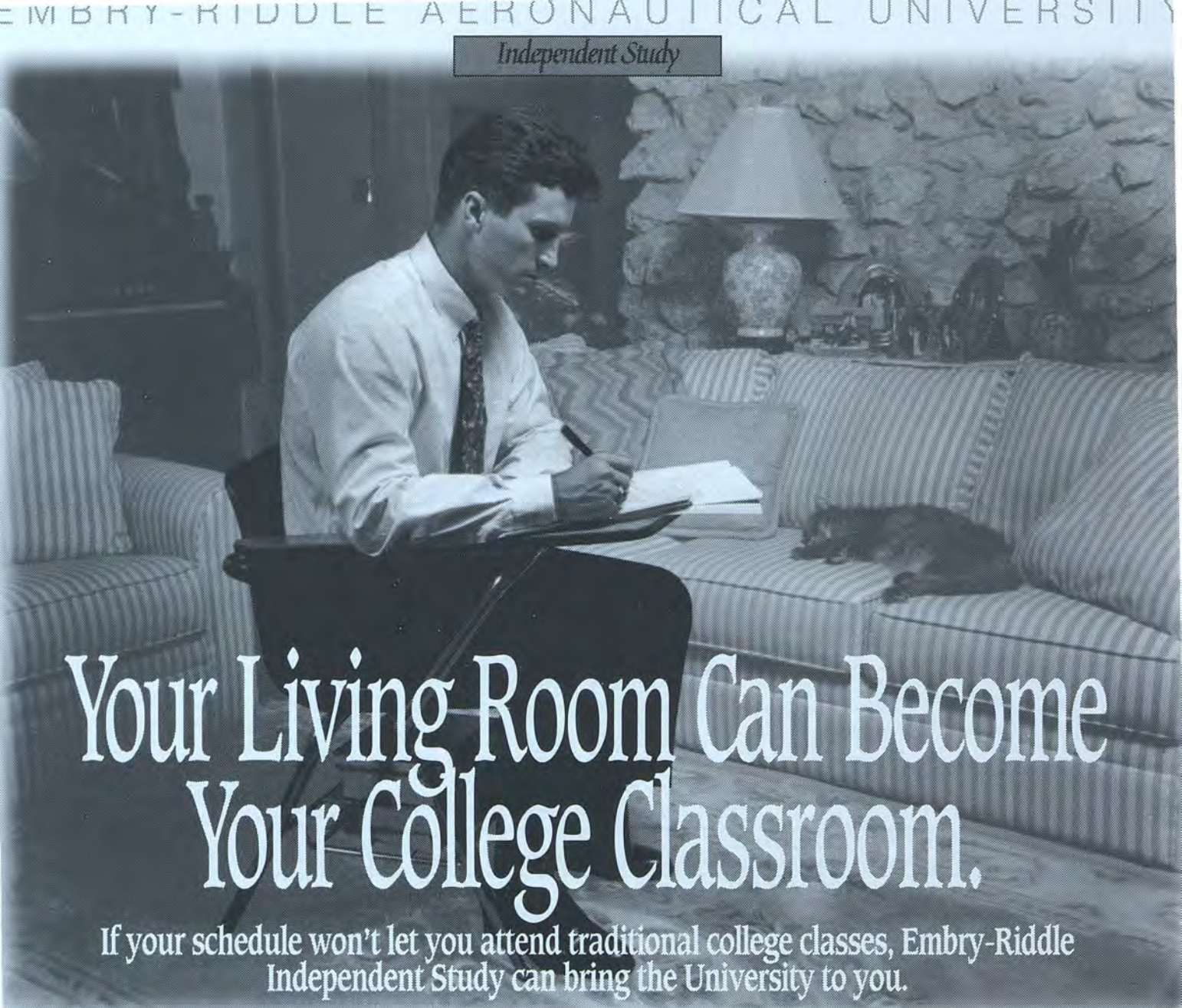
Credit card No.: Expiration date:

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, 1995, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events (the Banquet is a fixed-price event) 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.



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VHFA3 12/94

Listserver sends 'mail' to subscribers

MEL CANON
ONLINE COORDINATOR

I told you last issue I was going to talk about listservers.

First, I need to explain how all this online computer stuff comes together. In the 1970s, the Defense Department started a worldwide net called Arpanet.

Originally, it had a military function, but it has long since been expanded and replaced. Its descendants form the backbone of what is now called the Internet.

The Internet — sometimes referred to as the "Information Superhighway" — can best be described as a collection of computer networks from all over the world. Its basis is primarily informational, but it has so many facets it is almost invalid to say it has any particular focus.

It is too vast and all-encompassing to be narrowed down to, simply, information.

One of the more popular uses of the Internet is its international e-mail capability. That's how the listserver comes into play.

A listserver is a program running on a computer somewhere that automatically directs all e-mail addressed to it to anyone who is listed with it as a subscriber.

There are hundreds of listservers that address just about any subject you might imagine. So, if I want to say something to everyone who subscribes to a particular listserver, I send an e-mail to that listserver and it automatically distributes it to everyone.

I don't have to know who all the subscribers are because the listserver automatically distributes the e-mail to those who have signed on with it.

Subscribing and unsubscribing are simple, too. A message to the listserver, with a simple command in the body of the message, automatically starts or stops a subscription.

Recently, VHPA was granted permission by Helicopter Association International (HAI) to use HAI's systems equipment for its own VHPA

listserver. The VHPA list is appropriately named "VHPA-L."

It's available to anyone who is a member or potential member of VHPA, and who operates a computer online.

For information on how to subscribe to VHPA-L, send me an e-mail inquiry at [REDACTED]@[REDACTED].com, write me at [REDACTED], or call at [REDACTED].

For those who are interested, HAI also has a listserver named AV-JOBS. As you might have guessed, it is a listing of aviation jobs available world-

**VHPA
Online**

wide. It has just gotten started, so it doesn't have many listings, but it will grow rapidly.

HAI also operates an electronic bulletin board. If you have a computer and modem and want to log onto the HAI BBS, you can do so by calling [REDACTED].

The BBS is different from the listserver. There are no charges for it other than the call. The BBS has a feature that allows you to post your resume to the Internet, in addition to many other features.

Well, enough of the technical stuff, let's meet some more of our members who are participating in the online activity.

LeROY, N.Y. — Hello, JIM SCHUECKLER [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Here's a familiar name . . . if you read *The VHPA Newsletter*, that is. Jim wrote a great article in the August 1994 issue about flying in support of the LRRPs out of Phan Thiet in 1969.

Jim is a group supervisor these days with Kodak Research Labs. He also teaches at Rochester Institute of Technology and flies those boring starched-wing things. He says he's still trying to make a Cessna 172 hover.

Jim flew for the 192nd AHC "Polecats" in RVN and was assigned to Fort

Meade after his tour. He went back to school after the service and got a master's degree in electronic engineering. He did confess to me that it took 17 years to do that, but he was a slow reader.

He is also an amateur radio buff and his HAM call sign is KF2CZ. Jim was very instrumental in helping to get the VHPA listserver in operation. His online contacts helped us to discover the HAI net and the rest is history.

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore — Hello, WALTER LUELLING ([REDACTED])

Walter is an old hook driver. He's since left the shake, rattle and roll of the hook behind and gotten into those boring starched-wing things also. He says he really misses the dripping of oil and hydraulic fluid, though.

Walt works and lives in some of the most beautiful areas of Oregon and is the flight operations director for a manufacturing company in K-Falls.

He does like to reminisce about those days in 1968-69 flying for the 271st in IV Corps. He says some of his fondest memories were supporting the Navy on Polyopi and Con Son Islands. Those were the tough, agonizing, days of beaches and basking in the warm sun. The Navy probably even had cold beer. Just brings tears to the eyes of this old Cavalry trooper. Oh well, somebody had to do it, eh Walter?

GAINSVILLE, Fla. — Hello, ROBERT MASON [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Most of you know of Bob from his 1983 book "Chickenhawk."

Well, in case you're not up to date, he has three more out: "Weapon" (1989), "Solo" (1990), and "Chickenhawk: Back in the World" (1993).

He is currently working on his next one, a suspense novel in which the hero is a 48-year-old Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot. The villain is also a Vietnam veteran helicopter pilot. Says he doesn't know where he gets his

Continued on Page 14

Christmas spirit alive in far-off war

JIM SCHUECKLER
VHPA MEMBER

It was early Christmas Eve, but didn't feel like it.

The "Polecat" and "Tigershark" helicopter crews had spent a long day taking rangers and infantrymen from forward sites in the jungle back to base camps for the Christmas cease-fire.

The mess hall had been unusually quiet; a tape recorder played Christmas music, but nobody was talking.

Later, in the first platoon pilot's hooch, the mood was the same — everyone was subdued and drawn-in.

Several pilots were sitting together, and one finally piped up, "We have to do something happy to get out of this mood." I announced I had to fly tomorrow; after almost a year of flying in Vietnam, I was not going to sit around there on Christmas day watch-

ing 20 long faces.

After more silence, someone blurted out, "Let's take up a collection for the hospital at Dam Pao!"

In concert with my earlier statement and because I was the most

Christmas in Vietnam

senior pilot, I declared I would ask for

the Da Lat MACV mission the next day and take the money to the hospital. Mike volunteered to fly with me.

First stop: The crew chiefs' hooch. I asked Bascom if he would like to fly the Da Lat mission. He quickly answered, "I would much rather fly than stay around here watching everybody crying." Dave, our regular doorgunner, also asked to go.

Next stop: Operations. The operations officer and company commander were in the bunker finishing some

paperwork. I explained our plan but my request was denied.

"Please, Sir, could you call battalion and see if some other company has Da Lat MACV?"

The CO picked up the phone and, after a few minutes, started writing on a mission form. He handed it to me and said, "Da Lat MACV helipad, 0730. The new commander wants to visit every one of his outposts."

He took out his wallet and removed some Vietnamese money. "Here's something for your collection." The operations officer followed suit.

We reached the gunship platoon hooch just as one pilot was raking a pile of money from the center of a table toward himself, three other pilots looking on sadly; he had just won an exciting hand of poker.

We made our sales pitch about

Continued on Page 15

Hero, villain pilots

Continued from Page 13
ideas.

Bob says he wants to give his readers a balanced image of Vietnam helicopter pilots. He spends 4-5 hours a day, four days a week, working on his writing and he says it takes him about a year to do a book.

In his spare time, he has managed to enlarge his house on the Santa Fe River in northern Florida from 500 square feet to 1,800 square feet.

He says getting the final certificate of occupancy on that project was akin to getting his DEROS orders in Vietnam. Although stress took 25 pounds off him during the remodeling, he says he's enjoying the results and has a pleasant place to do his writing.

After selling the movie

rights to "Weapon," he is inspired to write a screenplay one day. So, if you're pushing the air out of the way in northern Florida and have a thought for a new plot, drop a few leaflets and maybe Bob will pop smoke.

Well, my friends . . . that about does it for another wild episode of VHPA Online. Hope I haven't worn you out or boggled your brain too much with all the computerese stuff.

I know there are lots of you out there with some fine hardware sitting on your desk who are not joining in our online fun. So, grab a modem if you don't have one, tap into a service that will give you e-mail, and join the gaggle. All the LZs are cold and the friendly fire is harmless.

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Continued from Page 14

Dam Pao. The generous gambler rationalized, "I would just end up losing it all back to these guys anyway." We now had more than \$100.

We continued panhandling through the rest of the Polecat area.

In one hooch, we were given a package of cheeses and sausage.

Having the food brought another thought to our minds: What about the mess hall? The mess sergeant and cooks were still there, preparing for Christmas Day.

"Do you have a truck with you?" was the sergeant's reply. "We have an oversupply of food right now because of all the guys who went home early. We also have some canned foods about to reach their expiration date."

We moved the boxes and cans into the Huey.

My alarm clock startled me out of a deep sleep. A check with my wrist-watch verified the time.

Mike was already in the shower building when I got there.

Bascom and Dave were the only ones eating in the mess hall when we got there, and the cooks offered us anything we wanted.

We took off and headed for the mountains.

It felt good to fly with this crew; we were a finely tuned team. Together, we had taken that helicopter into and out of a lot of difficult situations.

We approached Da Lat from the south, landed, shut down the helicopter, and walked into the bunker.

A lieutenant colonel made it clear he was the new commander: "What is this stuff about you wanting to make some little self-interest junket while you are supposed to be working for me?"

"Sir, we wanted to stop at the Project Concern hospital at Dam Pao for just a few minutes to drop off some food we collected last night. It's right on the way to one of your outposts."

"Do you know there is a war on? We can't just go flying around playing Santa Claus. We have schedules to meet."

"We worked hard last night, sir, collecting the food and loading the

helicopter. This is important to the morale of our company."

"All right, but it will probably be late in the day, because we are scheduled to visit all of our outposts today, and I don't want to disappoint anybody."

Then, he added, "We're taking mail and hot food to them. We have to meet a truck at Phan Rang Air Base in 30 minutes. Let's go."

When we got closer to Phan Rang, the colonel plugged in his headset. The whole crew listened to his radio conversation. Not only was there food and mail to pick up, but the man on the ground asked if we also wanted to fly some Donut Dollies around to visit his outposts!

The helicopter was filled with young men eagerly nodding their heads and flight helmets "YES."

Christmas The MACV truck met us at the Phan *in Vietnam*

Rang helicopter fueling area. Soon we were heading back to the mountains in a Huey full of fuel, food, mail, Christmas cargo, and two young American women.

We had hot sliced turkey and pumpkin pies for the men who had been living off Vietnamese food and canned Army-issue rations at the outposts. Maybe the colonel wasn't such a bad guy after all.

At the first outpost, three Americans came over to the Huey as the rotor was slowing down. One Donut Dolly gave each of them a package from the Red Cross.

The other Donut Dolly began to call out names to distribute the mail: "Willet, Johnson, Willet, Willet . . ." Sergeant Willet looked surprised as a pile of mail built up in his hands, as others looked on with curiosity and jealousy.

"They're from kids!" he said, looking at the writing on the outside.

"This one looks like an adult's writing, but who is Sue Sikora?" He opened it and read out loud: "Dear Sergeant Willet, Your sister asked me if her class could write letters to you

in Vietnam. It was voluntary, but all 28 of Kelly's friends wrote letters. Merry Christmas and God Bless You." He choked on the last few words and then turned away from us.

At the next outpost, the colonel split off to talk privately with the local officials.

The crew and I didn't mind having the task of escorting the Donut Dollies. It was easy to see how happy the soldiers were to talk with them.

Throughout the day, the same scene was repeated at a number of other small outposts.

At one stop, after reading his mail, one soldier said, "This *Army Digest* magazine says that no matter where we are or what we are doing in Vietnam today, we will always remember Christmas in Vietnam."

Finally, when the colonel's official MACV work was done, we were above the hospital at Dam Pao. I landed at the small helipad a few hundred feet from the main building.

Several American-looking men and women came out, carrying folding stretchers. They first showed surprise we were not bringing an injured new patient, and then joy as we showed them the food, money and medical supplies.

One of the doctors asked if we would like to see the hospital. He began talking as we carried the goods from the Huey to the single-floor, tin-roof hospital building.

"Project Concern was founded by a missionary doctor from Kentucky. He came here after setting up four similar clinics in Hong Kong. We now have volunteer doctors, nurses and pharmacists from England, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S.A."

There were homemade Christmas decorations everywhere; most had been made by patients or their families.

As we moved into one ward, a nurse gently lifted a small baby from its bed and, before I could stop her, I was holding him.

The staff invited us to stay for supper, and I could tell the invitation was sincere. But the sun was getting low,

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and I didn't want to fly us home over 100 miles of mountainous jungle in the dark. I also would have felt guilty to take any of their food, no matter how graciously offered.

As we started the Huey, the colonel was still about 50 feet away talking to the doctors and nurses. He took something out of his wallet and pressed it into the hand of one of the doctors with a double-hand handshake, then quietly climbed on board.

There was no chatter on the intercom as we flew back to Da Lat.

Mike set the Huey down softly; the colonel and the sergeant climbed out. The colonel had his headset on again, and he motioned to Bascom that he wanted to borrow his long intercom cord. He came up to my door and pressed the button to talk. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes, sir," was my scared reply. He opened my door and extended his hand towards me to shake hands.

"Thanks for taking us to that hospital, and Merry Christmas."

The flight to Phan Rang was also marked with silence. I thought of my family, who I would be with in just 12 days, good friends I would soon be leaving behind, and good friends who were gone.

I realized the *Army Digest* statement was, indeed, going to be prophetic — this was to be a Christmas day I would never forget.

Footlocker useful during Hope Show

ED FAUGHT
VHPA MEMBER

There was seldom any concern about carrying extra weight in a C-model Chinook, especially a "Super-C," so the well-equipped flight engineer kept a footlocker full of spare parts and miscellaneous useful items on board.

At Christmastime 1970, our company drew the assignment to carry the Bob Hope Show from Bien Hoa to Long Binh, a simple five-minute flight.

The maintenance officer took advantage of the prior knowledge to run a little contest within the company to see which flight engineer could get his aircraft in the best shape. There was a flurry of activity for a week or so and we ended up with some very nice-looking and well-maintained Chinooks.

I flew the second hook of two and carried the Gold Diggers and the Dingalings, along with Lola Fallana and a couple of real REMF colonels.

In flight, since it was a Chinook, we quite naturally developed a

Christmas in Vietnam

hydraulic
leak in
the aft
area of
the

cabin, necessitating the use of the forward door by the gals to disembark.

There was this full bird, yelling to be heard over the noise, ordering my poor flight engineer to throw his 500-pound footlocker out the door to be used as a step for the fair ladies.

Argument is out of the question, of course, so all five of us in the crew wrestled this danged footlocker out the door and into position, only to be rewarded by a good tongue-lashing from the colonel because we had taken so much time.

Christmas truce which actually held

MEL CANON
VHPA ONLINE COORDINATOR

The 1st Cavalry Division was very apprehensive about the truce set up for Christmas, 1967.

The Division's 3rd Brigade had been in heavy contact with the 2nd NVA Division for several months and the battles had been very aggressive

from both sides.

After such intensive fighting, it was hard to believe either side would lay down its arms for a single moment, much less a full day.

I drew an ash-and-trash mission that day and was mostly involved in hauling Christmas hots to the troops in the field.

Division had ordered all units to provide hot meals of turkey and fixings, and we were busy getting everything delivered. It sort of felt like a catering service, but I guess that's what we really were that day.

I'd just finished my last trip out and had some time to kill before we had to start hauling the mermmites and stuff back to the rear.

The area of the Que Son Valley I was in was a part of the AO I hadn't seen much of. I had just made aircraft commander and felt like stretching my wings a little. Rather than head back to the rear base, I turned up into the valley and headed towards the mountains to the west.

I saw an O-1 Bird Dog cruising at our altitude in front of us and moved up beside it to let the pilot know we were close by, then backed off and flew formation on him for awhile.

We couldn't raise him on the radio, so we didn't stay with him very long. When I broke off, I flew back to the east, but instead of going through the valleys, I popped up over a ridge and into the mountains above the valley on the north side.

As soon as I cleared the first ridge, I saw a lake a quarter of a mile in front of us and there were soldiers all around it.

At first, I thought it was a Cav unit. There were even guys floating in the lake on air mattresses.

As we came upon them, I could tell they were Vietnamese and thought they were an ARVN unit that hadn't been reported in the area. We passed directly over the top of the lake and could see the encampment and most of the troops. Many of them were waving at us.

I went into panic mode when the crew chief started screaming through the intercom they were NVA. I told

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him and the gunner to hold their fire. I was clear of the lake to the east and we hadn't taken any fire, so I decided to go back and take another look.

I still thought it could be an ARVN unit.

I started a slow left turn, then tightened it up and pulled in over the lake at about 500 AGL. Sure enough, these guys were NVA and they were waving and smiling at us.

No one had weapons pointed at us, so I continued to circle. I got a little bolder and dropped to about 100

AGL and flew orbits around the lake for a minute or so. We waved back. It looked like they were all taking an in-country R&R.

Christmas in Vietnam

After a couple of orbits, we figured we'd stretched our luck far enough and decided to get out of the area.

We were probably the luckiest crew in Vietnam that day. We flew east and returned to our base camp, reporting the incident to our battalion

S-2.

We had Christmas dinner and I actually said a silent prayer before I ate, something that I rarely took time to do.

The strangest thing about that encounter was the calm, friendly attitude the NVA displayed. It was the first time I'd ever seen that many NVA in the open.

The next time I'd see that many enemy troops would be over Hue on the first day of the 1968 Tet Offensive, and this time they would all be shooting at me.

VHHPA news

The 1995 Membership Directory

The Directory Committee is considering dedicating the 1995 Directory to all tandem rotor helicopters that flew in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era.

This includes CH-47s and CH-21s flown by the Army, CH-46s by the Marines and HH-43s by Air Force helicopter pilots.

The committee desires to use the same techniques that were so popular with the LAM SON 719 history in the 1994 Directory — namely, using formal or official material as a background for personal comments by VHHPA members.

If you have information about tandem rotor helicopters, please send it to the VHHPA: Attn. The Directory Committee. Questions can be directed to Mike Law at [redacted] (days) or [redacted] (evenings).

Short stories to be published

Volume 2 of the Historical Reference Directory will be printed in March.

In addition to unit histories, a new "Short Story" section will appear. A short story is defined as any Vietnam helicopter-related material that is not a unit history, but would be important to VHHPA members.

The Directory Committee has several expanded editions of material published by VHHPA members in other publications, as well as private manuscripts.

Please contact Mike Law, Directory Editor, at [redacted] (evenings) or [redacted] (days) to learn how you can pass your short story to the VHHPA.

The 1994 Membership Directory

The 1994 Directory was delivered to the Wichita, KS, post office in early October.

If your dues were current as of the early September and you joined the VHHPA before Aug. 19 (this year's Directo-

ry cutoff date), you should have received your copy of the Directory. If you have not, please contact the VHHPA.

The 1995 VHHPA Calendar

It is not too late to order a copy of the 1995 VHHPA Calendar.

This year's edition contains fourteen 11-by-17-inch photos and is dedicated to all 2,177 helicopter pilot KIA/MIAs. There are 11 color and 3 black-and-white pictures that include three pieces of art. There are two photos of U.S.A.F. and two of U.S.M.C. helicopters and lots of Huey pictures this year.

Please use the order form on Page 4.

LAM SON 719 histories requested

Mike Sloniker of the Directory Committee is seeking personal comments from anyone concerning the LAM SON 719 history printed in the 1994 Membership Directory.

The updated LAM SON 719 history will be reprinted in Volume 3 of the Historical Reference Directory in the spring of 1996.

Anyone desiring to add or change the LAM SON 719 history, should contact Mike Sloniker at [redacted] (evenings) or [redacted] (days) to learn how you can pass your information to the VHHPA.

Unit histories requested

The Directory Committee is actively seeking unit histories to be printed in Volume 2 of the Historical Reference Directory in early 1995.

Volume 1, printed earlier this year, included 10 unit histories. Many unit associations and VHHPAers have prepared histories and have asked the Directory Committee: "When are you going to publish my unit's history?" The answer is NOW.

If you have a unit history, please contact Mike Law, Directory Editor, at [redacted] (evenings) or [redacted] (days) to learn how you can pass your information to the VHHPA.

Night medevac rewarded with smile

ROD CARLSON

The flight schedule was posted a day in advance, so I'd known for 24 hours I had drawn my first night medevac mission.

With everyone else flying day missions, the hooch was deserted, but I couldn't sleep. I tried writing a letter but gave up.

On the way to an early dinner a CH-46A flew overhead with its graceful whooshing sound that I missed. After flight school in 1967, I joined a 46 training squadron in California and waited for orders to Vietnam.

Once in country, I flew three hops with HMM-265 but then everything abruptly changed. With the UH-34Ds being phased out, the copilot pipeline was prematurely reduced to a trickle and now there was a 34 copilot shortage.

After dinner I returned to the ready room and read the status board. Bad news! I was still on the schedule. Capt. Ron Sabin would be the HAC (helicopter aircraft commander) and section leader of the two-bird night medevac mission.

Next I headed for the maintenance shack to preflight YN 17 (serial number 150210). When I had finished, more bad news, the aircraft was flyable. By now it was getting dark fast. There was nothing left to do but go back to the ready room and wait.

I reported to Sabin, who was semi-asleep on one of the threadbare easy chairs. He asked if the crew had all its equipment and was ready to go, and I answered, "Affirmative."

At 2000 the telephone rang in the ready room. I had my shoulder holster and bullet bouncer on before I was fully conscious, but I heard the duty officer say: "Roger, 220 degree radial Da Nang Vortac at 18 nautical miles."

I followed Sabin and the two pilots who would fly our chase to the door as the duty officer said, "Hostage gunships are on station with 2 hours of fuel. Meet them on button yellow."

Sabin pulled power, and we lifted off. The constant blue-white flame from the exhaust stacks extended past my side window like a huge blowtorch.

"Two aboard," the medevac chase announced.

"Welcome aboard, Two, we're blacking out and switching to yellow," Sabin said as he flipped the light switches overhead and, except for the bright flame from the exhaust stacks, everything vanished in total darkness. I felt helpless. Everything I needed to fly was gone, including airspeed, altimeter, rotor rpm's, manifold pressure, and all external references. But the sensory inputs I needed for survival, Sabin didn't seem to need or miss in the slightest degree.

"You're on them now, Hostage, nice shooting. Tarbush medevac, this is Rich Widow Six Actual, we've got to get our guy out of here fast, you copy?" the Marine on the ground said over FM and told us they'd mark the zone with a strobe light.

The gunships told us the zone was taking fire from the treeline on the south but they hadn't seen any .50s so far.

A little later Sabin said, "Hostage, this is Tarbush; 45 seconds to commence approach. Give me another 45 seconds, then hit the treeline, but be sure to save something to cover our egress."

The Hostage leader acknowledged.

We were at 1,500 feet and Sabin said, "Rich Widow, Tarbush coming down, turn on your beacon," and he bottomed the collective, turned the grip throttle, dropped the nose, and banked steeply to the right. There were no visual references, no horizon, no lights, no instruments.

Surprisingly, the impossibility of performing the impending feat had transformed my fear into curiosity. I looked out Sabin's window and occasionally the strobe light came into view as he varied the angle of bank.

After five complete revolutions, he stopped banking and the strobe light was now bright and dead ahead.

Sabin raised the nose and twisting on full power to stop our descent as smoothly as a new elevator.

"You're following him all over the zone. He's running to get away. The idiot put the damn strobe on his helmet," yelled the crew chief through our earphones.

Sabin landed with the exhaust stacks on my side away from the enemy so they would not be a target.

"Sorry about the strobe," Rich Widow said, and Sabin replied, "No sweat, I'm just glad we didn't land on him."

The crew chief interrupted, "All aboard, Skipper," and Sabin twisted on every drop of energy the 1820 had saved up, rose swiftly through a hover and gained translational lift. With a series of brilliant flashes, the night was brighter than high noon as Hostage's rockets exploded in the treeline. I realized I hadn't taken a breath since we started the approach, exhaled, and sank back in my seat.

It took only minutes to get to G4, the Navy hospital just off the west side of Marble Mountain's runway. Their welcoming committee was already at the hatch door before the landing gear struts were fully compressed.

Under the flood lights of the landing pad, we could see the wounded Marine being moved away. He had them pause for a second, waved and shot a smile at the helicopter. "That's what it's all about," Sabin said as he waved back at the Marine.

That night, we flew another 4.1 hours and made 11 more landings.

On our last run, with just a hint of horizon, Sabin turned the controls over to me. Except for a couple gentle nudges on the collective, I flew the whole mission myself and it didn't stink.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is from a short story written by Rod Carlson, who flew with HMM-265 and HMM-161. The full version will appear in Volume 2 of the VHPA Historical Reference Directory.

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