



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

February/March 1996 Vol. 13, No. 1



Gil Ferrey photo

An OH-23 and a Chinook appear to merge over a disabled tank in South Vietnam. Gil Ferrey, who took the photo, flew OH-23s for the 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry in 1966-67.

M00296 02/97

From the President

I am beginning this column with a call for help and a big THANK YOU!

Please encourage your friends to join the VHPA and to attend a reunion.

Thank you for buying the VHPA calendars and Historical Reference Directories. Those of you who have purchased these items have gotten good products in return for your money. We still have them if you want to give them as gifts or get a replacement for something you "loaned" out and may never see again!

You are familiar with Murphy's Law: Whatever can go wrong will go wrong. There are many things that can go haywire with the timely production and distribution of this newsletter.

I would like to explain to you a couple of the reasons your newsletter may be late in arriving at your mailbox. The December issue was late because it didn't get picked up by the bulk mail handler in time to beat the Christmas rush and their Christmas vacation. (A corollary to Murphy's Law states: If one thing goes wrong, others will follow).

Then the weather conspired against everyone in the Midwest by shutting down mail and transportation with one of the worst winter storms in history.

The volunteers who worked so hard to get the newsletter done and on time to the right places did their jobs, but the end result was late newsletters for every member.

Bulk mail rules put all bulk mail behind first- and second-class mail, but it is much less expensive, so we plan to stick with it and more closely watch the timing to try and prevent delays in the future.

Our plan to select a contractor for VHPA services is still on track, just a little late and now a little rushed. We still expect to name the contractor in time for a seamless transition from one contract to the next. Murphy was an optimist.

The 1996 reunion is going to be a great one. We have deliberately designed in plenty of free time to spend reuniting and finding our stick buddies because this is what it's all about.

Certainly there are events organized at which you will meet, but there also is unscheduled time in which you can plan to do things on your own or with your friends. Please read all of the newsletter and get your reservations made for this reunion right away! Thanks!

— Ken Fritz, President

VHPA chapters

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VHPAFWC@aol.com

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Don Hunt, President
Lee Overstreet, Vice President
New Orleans, LA

Florida LZ Chapter

Judd Chapin, Executive Director

[REDACTED]

Vets help station

The Americal Division Association is helping a New York City radio station prepare an eight-hour military history broadcast.

The station has done several long broadcasts featuring various military units and they were well-received by former members of the units.

The station is especially interested in audio material and comments from unit commanders and leaders.

Several Vietnam-era commanding generals have agreed to support this effort as have former Americal officers who are still on active duty.

Comments from helicopter pilots who supported the Americal Division in Vietnam are most welcome.

If you are interested in learning more about this effort or supporting this activity, please contact Les Hines at

[REDACTED]

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VHPA Headquarters [REDACTED]
Newsletter [REDACTED]

Seeking

Seeking information regarding Capt. David N. Head, KIA February 1971, Company B, 227th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division.

If you knew him in Nam and especially have details of his last mission, please respond.

Robert A. Coleman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Seeking Gary Daniels, Class 67-7, A Company, 228th ASHB, 1st Cavalry Division, August 1967-? Also served in "Guns A-Go-Go."

Last seen at Capt. Daniels, Fort Rucker, about 1976. Wife's name is Jane.

Please contact David Clemmer, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

VHPA briefs

Historical Reference Directory

The 350-page Volume 1 is available for purchase. It includes nine unit histories, Army flight class rosters up through 1966, the VHPA radio call sign database, and the helicopter incident database through 1965.

The 382-page Volume 2 also is available. It contains five unit histories, 12 short stories, the Army flight class rosters for 1967 and 1968, and the helicopter incident database for 1966 and 1967.

The VHPA helicopter incident database contains details on individual helicopters, individuals who served in helicopter units, helicopter and major combat units, major combat operations, plus significant events.

Information should be directed to Mike Law at [REDACTED] (office).

1996 VHPA Calendar

The calendar was printed in September. VHPA Headquarters is able to fill orders while supplies last.

For \$10 a copy, plus \$3 P&H, you can have the calendar for your home or office or a gift for that friend who just won't join the VHPA because . . .

This edition has 16 photos, including two paintings by artist Joe Kline. All but one are color photos.

AAAA coming to Texas

The annual Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) Convention will be held at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth March 27-29.

Anyone interested in helping staff the VHPA booth during the convention should contact Jack Jordan, who needs assistance.

Jordan can be contacted at P.O. Box 395, Mt. Vernon, TX 75457, or by calling him at [REDACTED] (fax).

Attention: Reunion vendors

Anyone interested in being a vendor at the annual VHPA Reunion — which will be held July 3-6 in Santa Clara, CA — should contact Jack Jordan for information and a vendor application.

Vendors who participated in the 1995 reunion at Kansas City automatically will receive vendor packets and are not required to notify Jordan.

VHPA seeks calendar publisher

The VHPA is looking for someone to publish the VHPA calendars. The VHPA Executive Council has voted to get the VHPA out of the calendar production business.

Interested parties may contact Ken Fritz, VHPA president.

Pilot's remains return home after 22 years

I was recently informed of the return from Vietnam of the remains of MIA CW3 Richard A. Knutson.

I received a phone call from a Lt. Col. Generazio from Fort Leavenworth, KS, who was assigned as the escort officer for Richard Knutson. Generazio escorted Knutson's remains from California to Knutson's final resting place in his hometown of Hallock, MN.

Lt. Col. Generazio told me that an honor guard from Fort Leavenworth also was present for Richard Knutson's final interment. He also was pleasantly surprised with the large turnout of more than 300 people at the cemetery.

Richard Knutson was a member of flight school class 72-33 and was assigned to 2nd CAC, 11th Combat Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade in Vietnam.

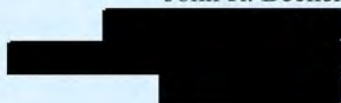
His aircraft was shot down north of the DMZ on Jan. 8, 1973.

A local farmer showed investigators where he had buried Knutson. I have not received any information about the other members of his crew.

Richard's mother has been an active member of Missing in Action Associations around the United States.

We all express our heartfelt feelings to Richard's family and friends, and feel happy to hear about one of our lost comrades finally returning home after all these years. God bless you, Richard.

John R. Becker



Warrant officer wounded by nail in his flying boot

No wound is funny, but I saw one that came close.

I served with Troop A, 3rd Cavalry in III Corps in 1967-68. One day, one of our warrant officer scout pilots caught an AK-47 round which came through the floor of his OH-6A and lodged in the heel of his boot.

I am ashamed to say that I cannot recall his name, but the scout-observer was Mike Corbett, who now lives in Dryden, NY.

We flight crew members were supposed to wear regular, all-leather boots, and not jungle boots, while flying. The idea was the nylon on the jungle boots was dangerous to your feet in a fire, and fires were common on hard landings, especially in Hueys.

(We had never heard of crashworthy fuel systems in those days.)

Most of us ignored this directive because the jungle boots were much more comfortable.

Continued on Page 5

VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO:

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

FAX NUMBER FOR

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (513) 721-5315

VHPA bumper stickers	2 for \$1 _____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only)	\$20/set _____ (\$5 P&H each set)
1992 VHPA Directory (7/17 Cav history)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1994 VHPA Directory (Lam Son 719 history)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1995 VHPA Directory (Available in September)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory	\$15/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
Vol. 2 Historical Reference Directory	\$20/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1995 VHPA Calendar	\$7/each _____ (\$3 P&H each)
1996 VHPA Calendar	\$10/each _____ (\$3 P&H each)
1995-96 VHPA Calendar set	\$15/set _____ (\$5 P&H set)

GRAND TOTAL _____

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: _____

Continued from Page 4

This particular warrant officer did what he was told and was dutifully wearing his leather boots when the round hit him.

Jungle boots had no nails in the heels — leather boots did.

That round struck the head of a heel nail, lodged in the heel of the boot, and propelled the nail through boot and flesh into the young pilot's ankle. The bullet never touched him.

Although in great pain, the pilot remained conscious to assist in his own medevac to the hospital.

There was only one pilot in a scout ship and we always taught the enlisted observers to fly straight and level, hover (after a fashion), and, most important, to land.

The observer, only slightly younger than the pilot, had learned his lessons well, and flew the ship to the hospital, where he safely landed.

The hospital gave one of his X-rays to the wounded pilot.

The nail was clearly seen inside the ankle, well above the foot, perfectly pointed up the leg. They removed it through surgery, of course.

This was the only pilot that I can recall, from two tours, who was wounded so lightly he was allowed to recover at his unit. He could not fly right away, of course, but after a few weeks on crutches he was back in the thick of scouting.

The day after the incident, between missions while staging out of Tan An, it was my great privilege to pin a Distinguished Flying Cross on the chest of that scout-observer.

Charles E. Qualline
San Antonio, TX

Pilot fails to teach first student to land

On a sunny afternoon, while flying what would be my last mission over the An Loa Valley, this question occurred to me:

In the midst of another boring run in support of ARVN troops, I had the crew chief requisition one each live white chicken that had, along with many more, been placed in my care for the short flight to the extreme north end of the valley.

It was not unusual to carry live chickens, pigs, and one time a goat to these outrageous defenders of the "no-fight" zone.

On our return flight, this particular chicken was removed from the crew chief's olive drab helmet bag, where he had been placed incognito.

Climbing from my seat and taking up a station nearby this charming bird, I coaxed the now nicknamed "Short Flight" rooster on the art of flying.

Now this magnitude of instruction would have cost "Short Flight" \$5,000 back in the States, but I felt that he, in his own way, he was somewhat a defender of Vietnam

Who sells poster entitled 'God created the Huey?'

During the last convention I purchased a poster entitled "On the last day GOD created the HUEY." Unfortunately, I was too distracted at the time to remember where or when I purchased the poster.

I would now like to purchase three more of these posters, but have been unable to locate the source. If anyone has any information about the source of these posters, would you please contact me with an address, name, fax or phone number?

Ronald C. Gibes
201st Aviation Company (1967-68)

and, therefore, I was compelled to share my combat experience with him at no cost.

This cocky little Vietnamese rooster was intimidated greatly by an American helicopter pilot telling him how to fly. After all, "Short Flight" had flown from the age of six months and was a well-respected fixed wing pilot about his own barnyard.

With landing gear retracted and both motors at maximum RPM, "Short Flight" was unceremoniously launched out the cargo door at 1,500 feet above the valley floor while our Huey was at a hover.

Diving back into the Huey's front seat, I swelled with monumental excitement as I saw my first solo student kicked out of the nest.

Diving the Huey into one turn, then into another, we followed "Short Flight" in close formation as he soared first east then west. I thought my heart would burst with the joy of a father of a newborn as I witnessed "Short Flight" do his first chandelle maneuver.

Neck outstretched in confidence, feathers laid back in the breeze, ole "short flight" was doing very well I thought, especially when you consider how short a time I had to train him.

The entire crew was yelling words of encouragement as OUR rooster passed through 600 feet barely 20 yards off the right side of our Huey.

"Did you teach him how to land?" The other pilot asked?

"Huh?"

"I said: Did you teach 'Short Flight' how to land?" He inquired again.

"Now that you mention it, we never got that far," I replied in all honesty.

The crew got real quiet as I stood on the skids outside the aircraft and yelled at the top of my voice new instructions for landing. I could easily tell my warnings were being heard, but this cocky little "know-it-all" Vietnamese

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

aviator already knew everything there was to know about landings — why worry?

At about 10 feet altitude and with the forward velocity of a 30 mm cannon shell, "Short Flight" extend his landing gear and to start his flare for final.

To our astonishment, all his wing feathers came out! Out of respect, I landed the Huey and walked one way while the crew chief walked the other. We recovered all of "Short Flight's" body parts.

We made him a respectful marker using a C-Ration carton and a popsicle stick on which the crewchief inscribed: "Here Lies Short Flight! WO1 Tom Johnson's first solo student — Year of Our Lord 1968."

Tom Johnson
"Bandit 88"
229th, 1st Air Cavalry
1967-68

Serviceman seeks pilots who served with father

My name is David Christopher Woods. I am a 30-year-old Army military police officer currently assigned to White Sands Missile Range, NM.

I am attempting to locate anyone who served with my father, WO Alvin Richard Woods Jr., in Vietnam. Dec. 31, 1995, marked the 30th anniversary of him being killed in action.

My father was deployed to Korea in June 1965, a month before I was born. From Korea, in October, he was deployed to Vietnam, where he was assigned to Company A, 1st Aviation Battalion, 1st Infantry Division.

On Dec. 27, his 29th birthday, he wrote a letter home, saying he was all right with God, and not afraid to die. Four days later, he was killed.

I believe he was at a firebase called Phuc Vinh, approximately 12 miles north of Saigon.

'North Flag' patch shows a flag that depicts north

The unit call sign of C Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (1969-71) was "North Flag" and the patch was designed with a flag that depicts north as on a map.

Also in the 1995 Directory in the MIA-KIA Section IV, you have Capt. Gerald Swayze listed as died as a result of aircraft accident. He was killed by ground to air fire. I was leading the flight that day (Page 179).

I have other info that may have historical significance and I will forward it. Great job with the directory.

Roger C. Baker
C/229th AHB, 1st Cavalry
August 1969-August 1970

I've spoken with a combat medic who said he believed that it had been a three-day battle from Dec. 29-31, but he could not remember exactly. He did say, however, that it was a hard-fought battle the medic's unit had been called in.

I was told by my mother that someone who had been in the unit had said Dad had gone into the zone repeatedly to bring out wounded.

On his fifth trip, he was on the ground and was hit by a sniper, Dec. 30 and died on the operating table Dec. 31.

I would be indebted to hear from any of you who knew my father.

The photos, letters from him and the rubbing from The Wall are a somber and wonderful remembrance, in a sense, but I'm looking for something more.

Sgt. David C. Woods

Two pilots trying to find former field grade WOC

I first met Bob "Gabby" Hayes at Houston Airport in July of 1969. We were both connecting on the "Tree-Top Airlines" to Fort Polk, LA. (I'm sure this will probably bring more chills down the spines of all warrants than the following story.)

We hit it off and became instant friends. We ended up being bunkmates through basic and roommates all through flight school. We went to Vietnam on the same flight and were roommates during our year there. We shared two R&Rs, coming home, and getting out on early outs the same day at Fort Lewis, WA, in August of 1971.

During our tour, I convinced Bob to put in for the 1st Cavalry because one of my fraternity brothers from college, Ken Keithly, was already with the "Killer Spades." (I believe B/229th at Bear Cat.)

There were no slots there and we got sent to the "Ghostriders" C/227th, 1st Cavalry, at Phuoc Vinh on Sept. 1, 1970. I ended up with 1,003 hours and Bob with 999 hours in truly great company.

The premise of my story actually starts back at Fort Wolters, TX. There was a WOC (name unknown) who was ahead of our class (70-19) who had attained field grade status as a member of battalion staff (all wobbles will remember this).

Well, it seems that everywhere we went, we ran into this guy, who would quickly lock our heels and proceed to make us do push-ups, give us demerits, ass-chewings, etc.

We vowed that if we ever caught this so and so off campus, we would clean his clock good! We never understood why he picked on us.

One year later, flying UH-1s in the "Ghostriders," I checked out as aircraft commander two days before Bob did and we were flying missions in Cambodia.

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

(We weren't allowed to tell anybody for our first two or three weeks, since we were technically not there. I hope I don't get in trouble.)

Bob was my copilot, so I put him in the left seat because he was supposed to check out as an aircraft commander in the next day or so.

We were flying missions with the 1st Cavalry, Pink Teams over the Chupp Rubber Plantations in Cambodia. We'd meet at Tay Ninh West in the early morning, then cross the border as a flight of four — a Loach, a UH-1 and two Cobras.

I have nothing but the highest praise and respect for those guys at 1st.

They were so effective in their "hunter-killer" missions, but working with those guys was another story. They were nuts! Hanging around them was sure to get one killed fast!

When I saw Robert Duvall's character as squadron commander of the 1st in "Apocalypse Now," I figured he was fashioned after an actual character from these guys — "nuts." I do mean that affectionately and respectfully. My hat was off to them and their hard missions.

Well, we would get there and the Loach would get on top of the treeline and start searching for targets. (Easy to find in Chupp, since there reportedly were 2 1/2 NVA hard-core divisions in there.)

We were at 2,000 feet and our mission was to get clearance to fire, since there were ARVNs in there, too, and try to get the crew out when (not if) they got shot down, if they could get out of the treeline and then the two Cobras, at 3,000 feet, were to roll on his targets.

That day, we're flying this package and listening to the Loach pilot finding targets and, sure enough, they start taking and get hit (what's new?). So, he's trying to keep it flying long enough to clear the trees and we're right on his

Belonging to the VHPA an honor for special few

I am enclosing \$10 for the new 1996 calendar, along with \$3 for shipping and handling. If this one is anything like 1995, it should be great!

It is an honor to be a part of this organization because we, a special few, did something that will never be repeated in history. I seriously doubt that anyone could have known this at the time.

D.E. Scott

tail, so we can get them out.

He finds a place just clear of the trees and, as we were going in, I see more NVA than I had ever seen in the open coming after us.

The Cobras are going nuts trying to suppress them so we can all get out.

We got down right behind the Loach and the three crew members got on our bird. As we start to come out, if we pop up, the NVA are so close we're dead ducks.

Bob, who was flying, took off through the bushes, staying low, trying to get some distance between us and an "angry cast of thousands."

Of course, the Cobras are having a field day! But, as I oft felt during my tour, we never had enough of them! Finally, we start to climb out and away from the action and circle, while the Cobras expended.

As we were watching the fun (now), I felt a tug on my shoulder and turned around and looked at the face of the Loach aircraft commander. You guessed it, our buddy from battalion staff back at Fort Wolters!

I snatched the controls and told Bob to look at who we had just picked up. As soon as Bob looked, we both initially said, "Let's take him back!"

Of course, we didn't and took him back to Tay Ninh West.

We never got to talk to him and discuss what happened at Wolters, after "patting our shoulders red" and shouting about how much free liquor we were entitled to the next time we met.

(Those of us who were lucky enough to either be picked up or pick up other crews that were down knew the meaning of this gesture.)

He was off, down the flight line, looking for another bird, to go win the war. The 1st guys were certifiable!

We returned to another mission and never saw him again.

Bob is now happily married, with three kids, living in Birmingham, AL. He is an engineer for the Rust Corp.

I am in my 23rd year with Northwest Airlines, living in Marietta, GA. I fly as a captain out of Memphis.

Bob and I talk often and try to get together when I lay over in Birmingham.



California veteran plates come with VHPA decals

A note to all California VHPA members: You can get a VHPA decal for your license plate by ordering a Veteran plate.

It would be a good way to commemorate the upcoming convention in Santa Clara.

Ben Prieb

Continued on Page 8



Photo shows 1963 UH-1B medevac

I am sending you this original photo from Vietnam for possible publication in The VHPA Newsletter.

Information is on the back, but let me expand, based on additional information I have.

The caption on the back of the 1963 photo says: "Army of the Republic of Vietnam medics load a seriously wounded soldier into a UH-1B Heli-ambulance of the 57th Helicopter Ambulance Det. at Moc Hoa airstrip in the Plain of Reeds region west of Saigon. He was flown to Saigon for treatment."

Two H-21 transportation companies, the 57th and 93rd, supported ARVN troops, who were making a sweep in the Plain of Reeds, which is southwest of Saigon. The staging area

was at the Moc Hoa Airfield. The sweep took place on May 18, 1963.

The photo shows ARVN troops carrying one of their wounded to a UH-1B assigned to the 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance). An element of the 57th Med Det was co-located with the 57th Transportation Company and the UTT Company at Tan Son Nhut. The B model was virtually brand new, having just arrived in Vietnam.

In the background is an L-19 (O-1A). Five of these aircraft were assigned to the H-21 transportation companies. Also in the background are two H-21s. They have the white diamond on their tails (with "57" inside). The white diamond is a recognition symbol for the 57th Transportation Company (Light Heli-

copter) and comes in handy when participating in multiple-unit missions.

Also of interest are the uniform items. A U.S. Army adviser just in front of the Huey wears the old coffee can patch. The crewmember preparing to assist wears regular cotton fatigues with the sleeves shortened.

The wounded ARVN soldiers were medevaced to Saigon.

As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. This photo is exceptional for its content and clarity.

George Reese

EDITOR'S NOTE: George Reese received the photo from John Foley, who served with the 57th Transportation Company in 1963.

Continued from Page 7

If the Loach pilot in this story can identify himself (I pray he is alive and in good health), I hope he will call.

I, in turn, promise to get "Gabby" to come to Atlanta and the three of us will have a long-overdue reunion.

I promise we won't try to clean his clock, but we will take him up on the liquor thing.

Russ Boyd "Boy Wonder"
"Ghostrider 27"
(C/227th, 1st Cav)
(770) 973-8713

In Touch matches vets, KIA families

JIM SCHUECKLER
VHPA MEMBER

"I have memories that belong to his family."

He was a friend in flight school or your AC, Peter Pilot, or wingman in Vietnam.

You came back from Vietnam; he didn't. You wish you could do one last thing for your buddy. You often have thought about contacting his family, but you've been afraid doing so may only stir up more pain or sad memories.

"I have memories that belong to his family," was written by the first GI to complete an In Touch application that resulted in a "match."

The In Touch program of the Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has made more than 1,000 such matches between buddies and families.

The program maintains a database with a file for each name of our brothers and sisters on The Wall. Many of the files contain only one contact name, waiting for the second.

You no longer need to wonder how the family will feel when you call — family members who have registered with In Touch definitely WANT to hear from you!

Even if you only have one small piece of information, it belongs to his family.

A note about what to say when you do make contact: The family may say

"Tell us everything." That does not mean they want to hear he died a slow, painful death, his body was all torn up, he was a jerk, or he liked to visit prostitutes.

They want to hear you remember him, he was respected and liked, he did his job well, he was part of a team. Did he have some peculiar likes or dislikes? Some favorite phrases? Do you have any pictures? What did he do as a helicopter pilot in that war so long ago?

For an In Touch application, you may call The Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at (703) 525-1107 or fax (703) 525-1109.

Or, if you also want a catalog of items you can purchase to help the In Touch program, call (800) 800-FVVM.

Or you may write to them by e-mail at Vietwall@aol.com.

Or at FVVM — In Touch 2030 Clarendon Blvd., No. 412 Arlington, VA 22201

Or visit their home page at <http://www.sersoft.com/vietwall>

If you can't wait for an application, you may write to In Touch, with the following information: Last, first, and middle name of KIA/MIA, your relationship or reason for your request (buddy in 'Nam?) Additional info about the KIA: Rank, birthdate, KIA date, nickname, branch, unit, hometown, etc. Then your own last, first, and middle names, your mailing address, and phone number(s). State

if you do or do not give permission to FVVM to release your name to other participants in the In Touch program.

In some cases, your entry will wait in the database until a family member submits a request; in other cases, your application may result in an immediate match!

The list of names that accompanies this article will result in instant matches. There may be more waiting, but the family did not know the man's unit. Or send an application in now so that when a family member begins their search you will be there.

Contact can be a letter, one or a few phone calls, or one party visiting the other.

Parents, wives, sons, daughters, sisters and brothers are waiting to hear from some of you.

Families and vets are still coming to the Wall for their first time. They come to heal. You can be part of that healing. For them. For yourself. For him.

Families registered

Families of the men listed below already have registered with In Touch — they are waiting to hear from men who knew their loved-one.

• **Assault and airmobile companies:** 68th Avn WO James P. Barton 3/19/67 66-15; 116th Avn Capt. Richard Salmond 11/15/70 69-20, Spec. 4 Raul Villa 5/9/67; 118th Avn 2nd Lt. Lynn H. Rothenbuhler 12/28/63; 119th Avn WO J Larry De La Rosa 7/19/66 66-5; 121st Avn Spec. 4 Michael Joseph

See FAMILIES, Page 10

Taps

George Thomas Crowell Jr.

Retired Navy Cmdr. George Thomas Crowell Jr., 60, died Nov. 19 of liver failure at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD.

At the time of his death, Crowell resided in Burnpass, VA.

Crowell received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart Medal during a tour in South Vietnam. He assumed command of a helicopter squadron in 1970.

He was born in Danville, IL, and attended the Universi-

ty of Wisconsin before entering the Navy in 1955.

Before retiring from the service in 1975, Crowell was assigned to the Pentagon. He later worked as a program manager for several defense contractors.

He is survived by three children, a sister and a granddaughter.

Michael F. Patterson

CW4 Michael F. Patterson died Nov. 24 at his home in Brundidge, AL. He was 46.

Patterson, who graduated from flight school in class 70-29, served with the 134th AHC in Vietnam.

He was preceded in death by his parents. Survivors include a son and two brothers.

Families registered with In Touch

Continued from Page 9

Lynch 2/9/68; 135th, 155th Avn Spec. 5 David J. Nachtigall 2/23/70; 155th Avn WO Eugene W. Caswell 5/27/66 65-21; 170th Avn WO William H McDonnell 1/24/69 68-15; 174th Avn WO Edward L. Harris 3/1/69 68-21, Spec. 4 Brian T. Murray 3/5/68, WO R. Hazen Shields 8/15/69 69-1; 180th Avn Spec. 5 Richard S. Dennison 3/5/71; 187th Avn Spec. 4 Ricardo Romero 4/13/69; 187 188th Avn Capt. Ellis Miller Bailey 10/11/67; 240th Avn WO Harvey C Addison 6/25/68 68-3.

• **All Cavalry units:** A/3/17 WO William T. Wallace 6/4/70 69-41; B/1/9 WO Darwin H Engman 5/6/66 65-1, WO David F. Popp 3/14/69 68-13, CW2 Jack W. Beardsley 3/3/70; B/2/20 CW2 Douglas Silvio Vergamini 6/26/70 69-9; B/3/17 CW2 Anthony W. Manstis 4/21/70 69-9; B/7/17 WO Stephen Cohan 2/19/68 67-2; B/229 AHB CW2 Michael B. Varnado 5/2/70 69-23; C/1/9 I WO John G. Buchanan 12/24/70 70-27, WO Eric R. Nordman 8/8/66 66-1, WO Michael W. Hunter 1/28/70 69-9, WO David R. Kink 8/3/69 69-11, Maj. Billy Joe Nave 6/27/66; C/7/17 WO Fred A III Exner 11/20/69 69-1; HHT/1/9 Maj. Stephen R. Porcella 11/30/67; HHQ 227 CAB Spec. 4 Jeffrey A Hawk 11/19/67; 15 Med CW3 Ferman Bobby Hodges 10/28/69; ?/1/9 Maj. Michael F. Field 10/16/67; ?/2/? Capt. Donald H White 8/12/69; ?/2/? WO William Robert Lee 1/31/68 67-21.

• **Other Army units:** 1st Inf 1st Lt. Robert R. Wright 10/21/68 68-508; 18th Bn 1st Inf Lt. Col. Lon Arnold Spurlock 3/28/69; D/1/4 1st Inf Maj. Frederick G. Terry 7/4/68 64-3; 1FFV CW2 Robert Ned Sauls 3/11/69; B-4 Avn 4th Inf CW2 Carl Wanka 10/14/70; HHC, 5th Inf 1st Lt. William David Schlutter 3/17/71 70-24; 20 Eng Bde Capt. Robert Wehnt 12/23/69 68-24; 25 Avn 25 Inf WO Kenneth Raymond Leach 11/3/69 69-17; A/2/17 101st 1st Lt. Danny A Cowan 10/22/71 70-50; B/4/77 101st Capt. Charles D. Jr Allen 3/16/71 70-22; D/158 Avn 101st 1st Lt. Willard "Don" Richardson 8/21/69 68-514; HHB/4/77 ARA 101st Lt. Col. Roger J Bartholomew 11/27/68; 118/145 Avn Americal Spec. 5 James H. Turner 10/10/69; F/8 Capt. Larron D Murphy 4/23/70 69-10; HMM 164 Pfc. Larry P Daniels 4/7/70; MIA Capt. Larry Francis Lucas 12/20/66; Mohawk Capt. James J Shereck 3/4/71 66-23; Trans Co Spec. 5 David Helriegel 4/16/67; Bell Heli John James Patton; unknown units WO Selwyn R. Taylor 3/16/69, Pfc. James B. Woods 9/24/69.

• **U.S. Navy:** Ens. James F. Burke Jr. 8/1/67 66-17; HM3 Manuel Reyes Denton 10/8/63; Lt. Julian D. Hammond 10/26/66; Cmdr. John Jr. Leaver 5/9/72; HN Claude Rice 10/8/63; ADJ1 Ronald Phillip Soucy 5/23/67.

• **U.S. Marine Corps:** 2nd Lt. Bruce Horace Eaton 7/3/67; Sgt. David Gonzales 3/21/70; Sgt. Larry D. Jameson 10/8/63; Pfc.

I know he received several medals for his heroism, but I don't know what he was like as a person. Did everyone like him? Was he a jerk?

Bruce S. Larson 9/19/68; Capt. Paul T. Looney 5/10/67; Sgt. David Lloyd Moser 10/6/66; Maj. Donald J Reilly 12/9/65; 1st Lt. Arthur "Bud" Richardson 10/8/63; 1st Lt. James N. Sweet 10/17/68.

Father killed in Vietnam

Dear Veteran,

My father was killed in Vietnam when I was two weeks old. His name was William L. Williams, but was called Bill or Billy by friends.

He served six months with Company D, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, 23rd Infantry Division, before being killed trying to save a fallen comrade.

I know he received several medals for his heroism, but I don't know what he was like as a person. Did everyone like him? Was he a jerk? Was he quiet or the life of the party?

I'm not asking for anyone to tell me what I want to hear. I know nobody's perfect. I'm sure there were people who didn't like my father and that he might have done things that were wrong, but isn't that true for everyone? I'd like to discover who he really was.

Lynn, my mother, was destroyed by his death. Being so young, she coped the only way she knew how. She erased that entire part of her life from her memory; choosing to remark and forget.

I'm now 23 years old. It's not easy to grow up never knowing what your own father was like.

Now I have a son of my own. He's two. It won't be long before he'll want to know what his grandfather was like. How do I tell him if I don't

even know myself? I don't know what to do.

My mother tells me that I'm very much like my father, but that is about all she can say before she bursts into tears and then she says that it's too painful to talk about. She won't tell me anything.

My whole life has been shrouded in mystery because of my mother's decision to forget. Having no clue as to where I came from, I really don't know who I am. And soon, my son Billy will want to know who he is. What do I tell him?

I know that Vietnam was a long time ago and I'm asking you to try to remember a time in your life that was miserable and I'm sorry for that. But if you do remember my father, please, please tell me what it is that you do remember.

He spoke fondly of his friends that he served with. He wrote to my mother almost every day and he mentioned some of them in his letters, but he referred to them by nicknames, so I'm not really sure what their names were. I apologize in advance for any bad memories that this may stir up.

Can you help me? If there is anything you may remember about my father, anything at all, please write or call me. I would be most grateful for any information you could give me. And I'm sure he would be, too.

Amy E. Williams

Father flew helicopters

It was a cold day in October when my mother called to tell me a lady would be contacting me regarding the "In Touch" program that involved my father.

My father was a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War when, during a mission in June 1965, he was killed, leaving my mother with two small children to raise.

My family was contacted because one of my father's friends from the Army, Jack Clark, had been trying to locate our family for over 20 years.

See CLARK, Page 11

Clark had been trying to find family

Continued from Page 10

The In Touch program invited my mother and me to visit Washington, D.C., to be interviewed on CBS Nightwatch, along with Jack; CBS wanted to show a real live story of how the In Touch program operates.

The In Touch program is a non-profit organization that locates family members for Vietnam veterans who need to deliver messages, mementos, or a first-hand account of how their loved ones died.

At first, I didn't want to go because I was apprehensive about meeting Jack, but getting the opportunity to meet someone who knew my father was something I couldn't pass up.

Finally, we were on our way to Washington, D.C. As we came off the plane, there was a huge banner reading: "Welcome Saegaerts from In Touch."

Then I anxiously searched the crowd, looking for the face I had only dreamed of meeting. As he introduced himself to my mother, he embraced her as if he were greeting an old friend.

We stood in the airport talking, where we learned that Jack is the vice president of the Vietnam Veterans of America which keeps him closely involved with activities concerning Vietnam.

The next day we went to Jack's office, where he showed us a cross-stitched picture a friend had done showing a section of The Wall which was on black material with gold lettering and two deep red roses laying across it. The unique aspect of the cross-stitch was that my Dad's name, along with the other men who had died with him, were stitched on it.

As we sat down, I tried to concentrate on what we were about to hear and I remembered when I was 12, I would have fantasies about my Dad being a hero. When Jack started describing the events that took place, everything seemed to move in slow motion. Then Jack began by saying,

Jack told me that Dad's death never seemed real until he saw his name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

"Your father loved to fly and he loved his family," there was a short pause before he continued, "We were fueling up our helicopters and when we took off we were not going to be in our correct formation positions, so I asked your Dad if I could just slide into his spot and your Dad told me, "No, let's not change our luck." At that moment, I realized if Dad had said yes, that my life might have been very different.

Jack told me that Dad's death never seemed real until he saw his name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

My older sister had seen the memorial, although my mother and I had never found the courage to see it because we knew how it would make us feel. Jack accompanied us to The Wall, where we quietly walked toward the black, cold, sleek wall with thousands of names on it.

As we slowly approached the section of The Wall where Dad's name is engraved, the lump in my throat got bigger and tears came to my eyes. While we stood there admiring The Wall, I heard a lady say, "This was the only nice thing they have ever done for them." That's when I realized there are people who still care.

Before meeting Jack, I believed our family were the only ones who thought about Dad. Now it's comforting to know that other people think about him and miss him too.

Even though I was unsure about meeting Jack, it was the best experience of my life. Now it's easier to accept my father's death, hearing the

story from someone who was there because it put a lot of unanswered questions to rest.

I could never repay Jack for what it's meant to my family, knowing what events took place that terrible day, except to say how much I admire his courage to contact us.

In fact, thanks should go to others who find the heart to step forward to help families come to terms with the loss of their loved ones.

Then my sincere gratitude goes to all the volunteers at the In Touch office for their dedication to putting families and veterans "In Touch."

Meets father's friend

Dear Corky,

It finally happened! Thanks to the In Touch program, I met someone who served with my father.

This past summer, you put me in touch with Quint Holton, who fought with my dad. He has since put me in touch with several others in the same company.

I've even met one recently! James Johnson was a chaplain who knew my dad very well. We only had a few hours to visit, but what a profound experience!

He also gave me several other names to contact. I'm so excited about these guys I can't think straight! Quint even paid my dues to join the Mobile Riverine Forces Association and I hope to attend their annual reunion this summer to learn more about the man who was my father.

Of course, none of this would be possible without you guys at In Touch. Thanks so much for all the hard work!

I'm finally getting some questions answered. Now I can tell my son about his Grandfather when he gets older. I feel as though I started a quest that can only end in happiness and finally, peace. Thanks again for all your help.

Sincerely yours,
Theresa

Holidays, snow delay newsletter

JACK SWICKARD
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

December's VHPA Newsletter arrived late because of a chain of events that included a problem with a label printing program, holiday business closings and two major snowstorms in the Midwest.

Normally, the newsletter is in members' hands 2-3 weeks after its components are sent to VHPA headquarters by editor Jack Swickard, who lives in New Mexico.

The December newsletter components — which included a floppy disk containing the laid-out pages in electronic form, page proofs, photographs and advertisements — arrived at headquarters in Cincinnati on Dec. 7.

Four days later, on Dec. 11, the components were picked up by the Hamilton, OH, company that prints the newsletter.

On Dec. 20, the Dayton, OH, company that mails the newsletters was not able to pick up mailing labels from VHPA headquarters because of a label program problem.

The next day, Dec. 21, the printing company delivered the December newsletters to headquarters.

The same day, the label printer program was corrected and the labels were printed. However, the mailing service — because of a misunderstanding — failed to pick up the mailing labels.

On Dec. 22, the 5,000 December newsletters were delivered to the mailing service.

Because of the Christmas holiday weekend Dec. 23-26, the mailing labels were not delivered to the Dayton mass mailing company until Dec. 28.

The mailing company was closed one-half day on Dec. 29, the Friday before the New Year's holiday weekend. The mailing company scheduled the newsletter to go to the Dayton Post Office no later than Jan. 4.

However, on Jan. 2, the Dayton area was hit by a major snowstorm and only half of the mailing company's employees were able to arrive at work the following day.

Addressing the December newsletter issues was completed over the weekend of Jan. 6-7, but could not be taken to the Bulk Mail Unit at the Dayton Post Office until Jan. 8.

Because of another major snowstorm in Ohio on Jan. 7, the post office got behind in its Jan. 8 mail deliveries, thus putting the newsletters even further behind in postal processing.

This was aggravated by the heavy snow, which contributed to more delays because the newsletters are trucked out of Ohio by the Postal Service.

On Jan. 15, the Postal Service was closed because of the Martin Luther King holiday, further adding to the delays that plagued the December newsletter.

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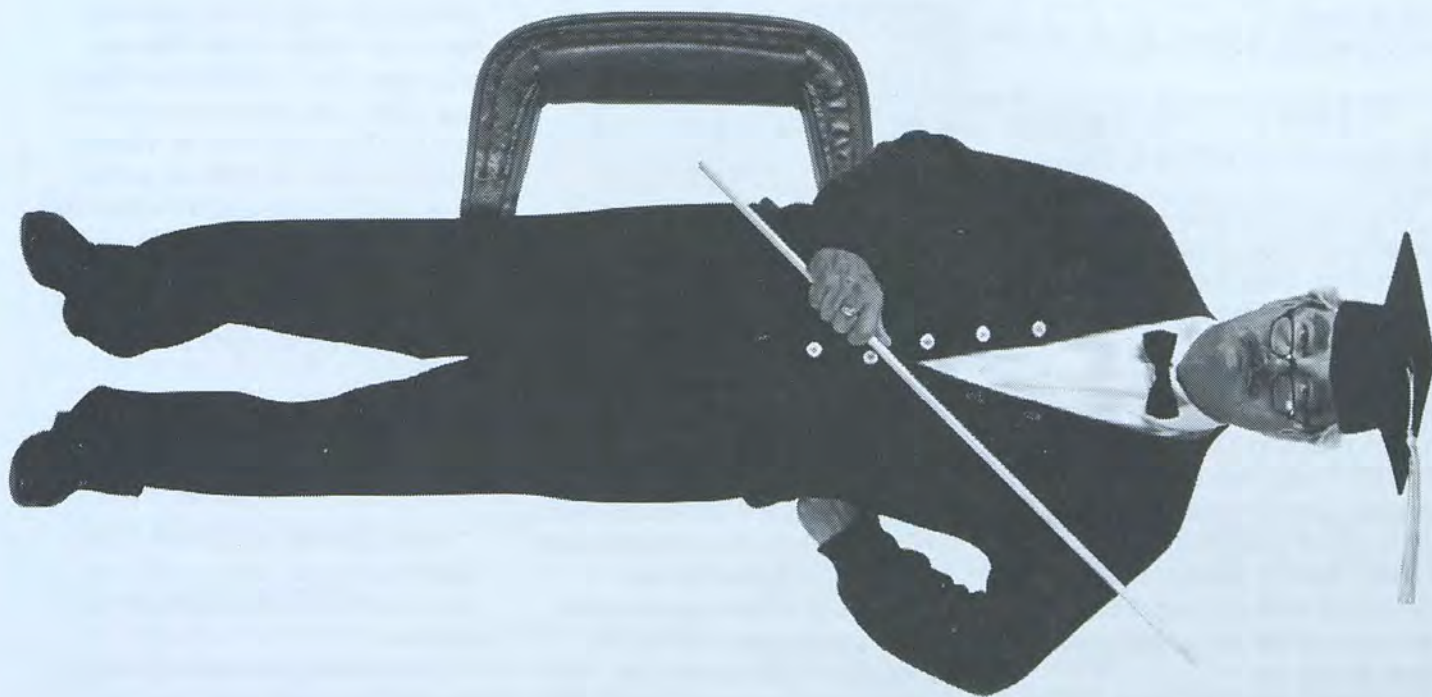
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VHPA1 2/96

Unit Patch Project archive tops 250 items

JAY RISEDEN
PATCH PROJECT COORDINATOR

The VHPA Unit Patch Project now has more than 250 items in the archive.

We still have a long way to go, but progress is good. With very few exceptions, color copies of all unit patches are needed to complete the project.

A new dimension to the effort has been added recently as started by VHPA members Dan Miller and Joe Duvall. Along with copies of unit patches, they forwarded copies of what can be best described as Cheap Charlie novelty patches that were not associated with any unit. These too are a part of the story; send copies of these if you can.

The Unit Patch Project was started by the VHPA Directory Committee

... they forwarded copies of what can be best described as Cheap Charlie novelty patches ...

last spring to collect and catalogue color copies of each Vietnam helicopter unit patch.

The collection includes patches from platoon and detachment level to division and brigade, and represents all services and allied forces.

Patches of related support units, such as maintenance and signal detachments, also are sought.

The archive now includes the distinctive calling cards of some units.

All of these items are an important part of the history of the Vietnam helicopter pilot. It is estimated more than 1,000 distinctive patches were used by Helicopter units in Vietnam. If you are able to contribute to the effort, make a high-quality color copy of your unit patches and calling cards, and send them to VHPA headquarters or direct to VHPA Directory Committee member Jay Riseden at:

Jay Riseden

Please include any history information available, such as when the patch was used, where the unit was stationed.

Avoid folding the copy as it may get damaged in the mail. It is best to mail them in a large flat envelope.

Pilots, crews can help write history

Accurately recording our history is very important. Our experience with "official" government information about the use of helicopters in Vietnam is there are many mistakes and omissions.

The best source to correct these mistakes and fill in the holes are the people (you) who actually experienced this history firsthand.

In order to give you the opportunity to make corrections and additions, we need to make the information we have available to you. We have started doing this in the form of the Historical Reference Directories.

We now have a problem: It cost more to publish these directories than the revenue received from sales.

How can you help?

• First: Provide us with your information and/or help us collect and record information. This is the most efficient way to record our history by proactively capturing accurate information before it is published.

You are the best source of our history.

• Second: Buy the products we produce and/or help us sell them. This has two purposes.

First the revenue will be used to cover costs. Second it

Every Vietnam helicopter pilot, crew chief and gunner should have an opportunity to review the Historical Reference Directories ...

gets more veterans involved in improving accuracy of our history.

Every Vietnam helicopter pilot, crew chief and gunner should have an opportunity to review the Historical Reference Directories to ensure their accuracy. Corrections and additions are always welcomed.

So, buy directories for yourself, a veteran friend, veterans organization libraries, and your local library.

• Third: Donate money to the Historical Reference Directory project and/or help us locate additional funding sources. Cincinnati is set up to keep track of donations for specific purposes.

An extra \$10 or \$20 from each member could cover the publication costs, but many members cannot afford increased dues. This means larger donations from those who can afford it.

Since the VHPA is a nonprofit veterans organization, your donations may be tax deductible. Check with your local tax adviser.

Gary Roush, Chairman Database Committee
242 ASHC Muleskinners

VHCMA notes

JOHN H. HASTINGS
VHCMA

Forty-nine members of the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association attended the mini-reunion in Washington over the Veterans Day weekend.

Most went to The Wall and several new members were found.

The 155th AHC held a get-together with the people it recently located from the 1968 era.

We will be in DC again on Nov. 11, 1996, at the Hyatt-Arlington.

Call for reservations, as the rooms are filled quickly. The phone number is (800) 233-1234. Be sure to mention the Crew Members Association or LZ "DC."

Memorial Committee

Recently, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association's Memorial Committee met in St. Louis to discuss plans to place the Crew Members memorial at the Jefferson Barracks National Park.

Park representatives expressed some concerns about a full-size Huey being part of the memorial design and distracting from the historic esthetic appeal of the park in

general.

A final design has not been selected and packets containing information on design criteria will be available when approval is given by the St. Louis County government.

Information about the general memorial design can be obtained through the VHCMA.

Packets will be made available to VHCMA members at no charge, non-VHCMA members may obtain a design packet for \$100. Cash awards will be awarded for the first-, second-, and third-place design winners at \$5,000, \$3,000, and \$2,000, respectively.

Jefferson Barracks

Jefferson Barracks National Park is in the St. Louis area, overlooking the Mississippi River.

From 1846-1947, it was an active military post that trained horse-mounted cavalry.

The proposed site for the VHCMA memorial will be on a slope overlooking the river, about 300 yards from the amphitheater.

VHCMA/VHPA events

The VHCMA and VHPA will co-host a hospitality suite at the Army Aviation Association of America and Helicopter Association International meetings.

AAAA will meet in Fort Worth on March 27-29 and HAI will meet in Dallas Feb. 22-24.

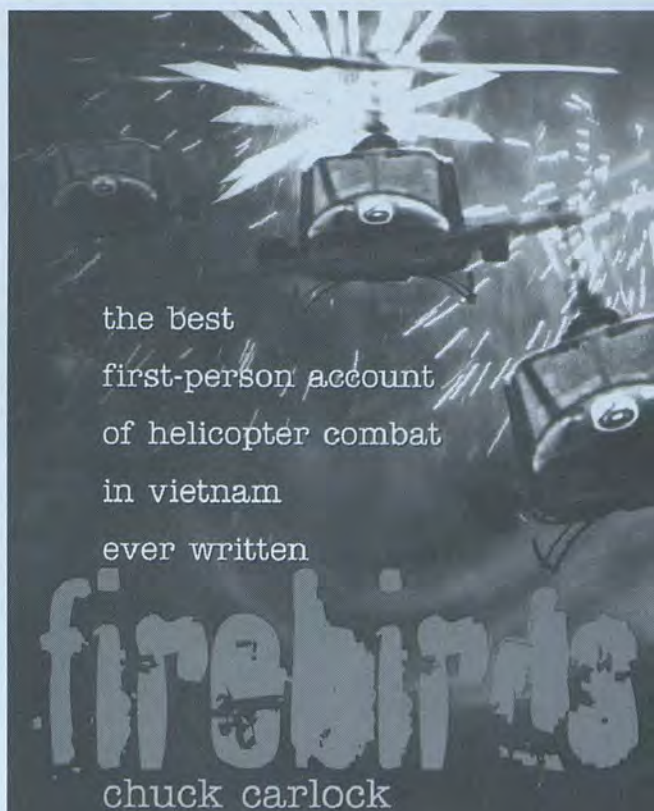
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Wine-tasting a high point of reunion

ROSS MCCOY
REUNION CO-CHAIRMAN

The Taste of California wine-tasting on Friday evening, July 5, after the buses return from San Francisco, will feature a number of wineries.

The admission price includes the tasting, cheeses, and a commemorative VHPA wine glass.

The banquet is on Saturday night, July 6, and we have three entrees on the menu: Filet of beef with halibut or vegetarian or chicken breast with halibut.

The banquet will be staged by our very own VHPA member Joe Bilitzke, whose firm specializes in convention and meeting production. Joe really knows how to make these things spectacular and he has promised to DO IT RIGHT!

The business meeting will be on Saturday morning, and while we are there, the ladies will have the opportunity to go shopping and to lunch in San Francisco on a special bus tour.

We are planning a donation/raffle/drawing for a new Dodge Ram pickup truck (with the option of taking the cash instead). All net proceeds go to the VHPA. There are other cash prizes, too, all the way to 50th place! Tickets for the raffle will be limited to 500, and will cost \$100 each. Full details will be in the next newsletter.

During the reunion, there will be five mini-reunion rooms available, complete with VCRs, monitors, 35mm projectors and screens. A reservation form for your unit's mini-reunion will be in the next newsletter.

Don't forget to reserve your T-shirt on your registration form. This will ensure that you get the right size. These shirts have a pocket with color logos on the front and the back. Provided by Honor and Pride the same people that have sold VHPA embroidered polo shirts at the last couple of reunions, you know they will be first class shirts.

Details:

Summer time, good friends and the San Francisco Bay Area already are sounding pretty good to the members we have been speaking with lately. They are looking forward to the West Coast reunion next July 3-6 in Santa Clara.

There is no better getaway than to share time with the people who get your jokes, and there are few better places to get away to than the Cities by the Bay.

Santa Clara, located at the southern end of San Francisco Bay, is a perfect base camp for day excursions to San

Our special VHPA room rate of \$70 for up to four people per room is a savings of about 50 percent off the regular room rate!

Francisco (40 minutes), Carmel (60 minutes), Napa Valley (75 minutes), and an excellent golf course (five minutes on a hotel provided free shuttle).

In the local area you can enjoy some of the finest foods and wines in the world, or just a friendly bartender setting you and your company up with bottles of Coors. You can send your wives off to Saks and

Neiman Marcus, or rent a convertible and cruise the Pacific Coast Highway to the Monterey Peninsula — stopping for 18 holes at Pebble Beach. (Better bring your taste for adventure and your VISA card!)

For simpler pleasures, there are the De Young Museum in Golden Gate Park or the Giants or the A's games.

We have reserved two great hotels. Our special VHPA room rate of \$70 for up to four people per room is a savings of about 50 percent off the regular room rate! This rate is good June 29-July 8.

The Santa Clara Marriott and the Santa Clara Westin are lavish, full-service hotels brimming with California hospitality.

They provide free shuttles to and from nearby San Jose International Airport. Plenty of free parking (some of it is even covered) is available at both hotels if you wish to drive.

Our primary hotel is the Santa Clara Marriott, direct phone number is (408) 988-1500 or toll free at (800) 228-9290.

The Westin Santa Clara, our overflow hotel, is five minutes by free shuttle down the street from the Marriott. The Westin is adjacent to the Santa Clara Golf Center where the golf tournament will be held.

The Westin's direct phone is (408) 986-0700.

Please be sure to tell the hotels you are with VHPA so the proper rate will be charged. Both hotels have free swimming pools, exercise facilities and plenty of friendly service.

Special VHPA drink prices are in effect at both sites. There will be bars close by the shuttle bus stops at both hotels for a seamless transition back and forth if you want to go hit a bucket of balls next door to the Westin or just visit the other hotel.

VHPA members and guests will enjoy these prices: \$1.50 for 12 oz domestic beer, \$2 for imported, wine will be \$1.75, mixed drinks will be \$2.50 for well drinks, \$3.00 for call brands and \$4.50 for premiums.

If you are going to rent a car for your own side trips, be sure and reserve it early to ensure availability.

See REUNION, Page 17

Reunion has a wide range of events

Continued from Page 16

Calendar of events

- Early Bird events, July 3, feature a DJ pool party with no host bars.

- July 4 we'll enjoy blue grass music, an outdoor barbecue and an outstanding fireworks display. The Jesse Charles band, one of the best in the Bay Area, also will play that night. Fireworks will be put on by Paramount's Great America theme park. This park is across the street from the barbecue spot.

- July 5 is the day for bus tours to San Francisco and the special Taste of California wine tasting party. (Dinner is on your own, but we have suggestions that will be provided in upcoming newsletters and in your registration packet.)

- July 6 is the date of the morning business meeting and the evening banquet. We have a real professional doing the staging, lighting, sound, etc., at this year's banquet.

The business meeting will be in the morning and while we are there, the ladies will have the opportunity to go on a special shopping tour and lunch in San Francisco.

A raffle winner this year will be presented with the keys to a new Dodge Ram pickup truck. There will be a limited number of tickets sold at \$100 each, with cash prizes of no less than \$100 each going to the first 50 tickets drawn. The full details will be in the next newsletter,

The 1996 reunion is gathering steam as we speak. Registrations are starting to come in for the hotels. We are sure you will enjoy your stay in sunny California.

so starting saving now for your ticket.

Don't forget to reserve your T-shirt on your registration form to ensure that you get the right size. These shirts have a pocket and color design/logos front and back. From Honor & Pride, the same people that have sold embroidered polo shirts at the last two reunions, you know these will be first class.

There will be a larger than normal vendor area where you can book everything from wine country excursions to deep sea fishing.

The 1996 reunion is gathering steam as we speak. Registrations are starting to come in for the hotels. We are sure you will enjoy your stay in sunny California.

The reunion committee is looking forward to a huge party that we are certain you

won't soon forget. See you in July!

Mini-reunion planned

A mini-reunion is being planned for the 128th AHC at the annual VHPA Reunion in Santa Clara, CA, this July.

All Tomahawks, Gunslingers, Witch Doctors and Medicine Men should start making plans to attend. Watch for additional details in The VHPA Newsletter and annual unit newsletter.

For additional information, contact Doc Daugherty at [REDACTED] or Jay Riseden at [REDACTED] or e-mail at [REDACTED]

Calendar

Feb. 23-25

The Dustoff Association will hold its 17th annual reunion at the Holiday Inn Northwest in San Antonio, TX.

Former pilots, medics, crew chiefs and support personnel, as well as Medical Corps and Nurse Corps members, and medical team members who served in Vietnam are encouraged to attend.

Information: Dustoff Association, P.O. Box 8091 Wainwright Station, San Antonio, TX 78208 or call Joe "Doc" Kralich at (210) 558-7764.

March 1-3

The VHPA Ohio River LZ Chapter will host a mini-reunion in Canton, OH.

Mini-reunion headquarters will be the Belden Village Sheraton Inn in Canton. For reservations, call (216) 494-6494 and say your are with VHPA.

Chapter spokesman Andy Archer said, "The chapter's exclusion of the eastern portion of the LZ provides a convenient opportunity for potential new faces from all over the area to join with a very accepting core of chapter members in a weekend of fun, fellowship and reflection." Saturday, March 2, afternoon activities include a visit to the Football Hall of Fame, a tour of Ohio's UH-1/AH-1 museum and a visit to the Inventor's Hall of Fame.

On Saturday night, there will be an Officer's Call Dinner and dancing.

Contacts:

- Andy Archer, [REDACTED]

- Rich Sebastian, [REDACTED]

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

13th Annual Reunion Santa Clara, CA July 3-6, 1996

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 949 University Ave., Suite 210, Sacramento, CA 95825

FAX signed credit card registrations to: (916) 648-1072

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

REGISTRATION FEES

	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration before 6/1/96*		@ \$ 25.00	
Registration after 6/1/96*		@ \$ 35.00	
T-Shirt and/or golf (See sidebar)			
Barbecue (July 4)		@ \$ 17.00	
Wine tasting (July 5)		@ \$ 7.00	
Banquet (July 6)		@ \$ 35.00	
Bus trips:			
Don't tell me (July 5)		@ \$ 20.00	
Bay Tour (July 5)		@ \$ 40.00	
Lights, Camera (July 5)		@ \$ 40.00	
Shop 'til . . . (July 6)		@ \$ 40.00	
Dues (if included)	1 year	@ \$ 30.00	
You can make 3 payments over 6-month Installment period if you wish	Life installment No. 1	@ \$150.00	
Complete Life Membership		@ \$450.00	
	GRAND TOTAL		

Indicate if you want to participate in these

Golf Tournament:
(July 4, 8 a.m. Includes prizes.)
Cost: \$50. Limit: 72 players.

5k Run:
(July 6. Prior to Business mtg.)
No charge. No limit.

Early Bird Party:
(July 3.)
No charge. Number attending?

T-shirts:
(Order now!)
List total at left.

Qty.	Size	Price
	S	@ \$12
	M	@ \$12
	L	@ \$12
	XL	@ \$12
	XXL	@ \$15
	XXXL	@ \$15

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

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '96"
- ☐ 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. 8, 1996, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events that lose money unless the entire reunion has a positive cash balance. VHPA headquarters will process and pay all refund requests within 10 days of completing the reunion account balancing.

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Veterans Tour Operator Continues Support of American G.I.s

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Working closely with the Vietnam Veterans Travel Service, Galaxy has developed individualized itineraries for many U.S. divisions, including the 101AB, 3MD and 4ID. At the same time, arrangements have been made for just four people traveling together to receive special group rates and personalized itineraries.

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Galaxy's clientele return to former service areas for a myriad of reasons. Some return to honor fallen comrades...others to put old war wounds to rest. Some wish to see again the rain forests, mountains & lush plains...others want to see for themselves how their military service played a role in Vietnam's rebirth into a contemporary and prosperous nation. And some go to simply remember a most significant time in their lives.

For more information, call Galaxy Tours toll-free at 1-800-523-7287.

The first CH-46D loss in Vietnam

MIKE LAW

As part of research effort for the next volume of the Historical Reference Directory, I was looking at data for early 1968.

I noticed for Feb. 5, 1968, Marine helicopter pilots Maj. Demko and Capt. Burke died in bureau No. 153986, an HMM-364 CH-46D, and the only detailed description we have about this event is "ground fire."

I said to myself: These men, this squadron, this action and the VHPA deserve more than just "ground fire" as a detailed explanation in the Historical Reference Directory!

The VHPA helicopter database currently has 29,797 records — all for the Vietnam Era. Twenty-five are for helicopter events on Feb. 5, 1968, and one is for CH-46D No. 153986.

The few details in this record indicate No. 153986 crashed in South Vietnam and was "lost to inventory"

after being hit by "unknown fire" while on a combat, rescue and recovery, medevac mission.

"Lost to inventory" is the official term that means the helicopter was damaged to such an extent it could not be economically repaired and thus was stricken from the government's records.

"Unknown fire" is a term that means the helicopter was hit by some sort of ground fire (anything from small arms or automatic weapons, but not an exploding device, such as an artillery round, a grenade or a rocket) from an unknown source (friendly or hostile).

OK, now we know they were doing a medevac. The Marines routinely assigned medevac missions to their UH-34D and CH-46 squadrons, so this makes sense.

The record also indicates four people died of injuries and two others were injured but survived in this

event. Aha! The VHPA KIA database only shows two (Maj. Demko and Capt. Burke), so not only don't we know the details about this event, but we don't have all the people identified yet. Work to be done here!

The VHPA history database contains information about Southeast Asian helicopter units and shows HMM-364 served two tours in Vietnam (February to June 1964 with SHUFLY and September 1965 to November 1966 with MAG-36) equipped with UH-34Ds and on Oct. 28, 1967, arrived as the first CH-46D squadron to deploy to Vietnam. They were assigned to MAG-36 and stationed at Phu Bai.

Returning to the helicopter database, we see that CH-46Ds start reporting battle damage for the first time on Dec. 10, 1967. The time gap from Oct. 28, when the unit arrived, to Dec. 10, first reports of battle dam-

See CH-46Ds, Page 21

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The VHPA watch

Bro Vau Watch Co. is offering special watches to members of the VHPA.

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The VHPA is running a special on 1995 and 1996 calendars ordered as a package deal.

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Call VHPA headquarters at (513) 721-5315 and order your calendar package today.

CH-46Ds report battle damage

Continued from Page 20

age, makes sense because most of the time the personnel arrived in Vietnam before their helicopters and it takes a few weeks to get a new helicopter type and a new unit up to combat operational status.

After listing 41 CH-46D battle damage records in date order, starting on Dec. 10, we find our first CH-46D loss record — on Feb. 5, 1968.

So now we know Maj. Demko and Capt. Burke died in the first CH-46D to be lost in Vietnam while serving with a unit that had been flying combat for about 10 weeks.

The VHPA battle database contains information about the major allied and enemy combat operations and battles. The famous Battle of Hue, as part of Tet of '68, began on Jan. 31, when the NVA occupied the vast majority of Hue.

Several USMC and ARVN units were fighting from pockets within the city, while Army units (the 1st Cavalry Division was the most notable at this stage of the battle) were fighting the NVA between the city and the mountains.

At this point, I started calling VHPA members who served in HMM-364 during this period.

Gary Monk, Joe Duckett and Mike Phillips provided a wealth of information plus the names of other squadron mates (unknown to the VHPA — Jim Warner and Jim "Pugh" Parson — to name a few) who also would provide information.

What follows is the "current" compilation of information. Naturally, by printing this in The VHPA Newsletter, we are asking others for their input.

The HMM-364 CH-46D and at least one UH-1E gunship, most likely from VMO-3 which also was based at Phu Bai, were given the mission to extract some wounded from one of the pockets in the city of Hue.

We have yet to identify the UH-1E crew, but many HMM-364 guys remember talking with them after-

The program is the most accurate depiction of the way helicopters were used in Vietnam.

ward.

The distance between Phu Bai and Hue is only a few miles, so Leon Demko's aircraft was in radio contact with HMM-364 operations. The weather at that time presented a solid cloud layer just a few hundred feet off the deck.

The CH-46D was hit by enemy ground fire soon after it lifted off from some place in Hue.

The aft section received the majority of the hits and Maj. Demko reported that they had a hydraulic warning light from the primary system.

Because of the uncertain tactical situation on the ground and the fact that Phu Bai was so close, Maj. Demko elected to fly the damaged aircraft rather than try to find an emergency landing zone. They continued their low-level flight for another minute or so.

Apparently, the gunship asked Leon how they were doing, because their last radio transmission was something like: "Not so good. Get out of my way, we're going to crash!"

While still at en route airspeed and about 150 feet in the air, the Sea Knight rolled inverted and then crashed into a rice paddy less than two miles from Phu Bai.

The UH-1E landed near the burning CH-46D and may have evacuated a few survivors and some of the dead crew members. Joe Duckett remembers the crew chief on the gunship was a good friend of the crew chief on the CH-46D, that he ran to the wreck and was able to reach his friend, but he died almost immediate-

ly.

We do not know the number of passengers who were on the CH-46D. The VHPA copy of The Wall database tells us that of the 36 Marines who died on Feb. 5, 14 were in Thua Thien Province.

The Wall database contains two fields that allow us to "associate" aviation related deaths.

These fields indicate that Sgt. James D. Shelton died as a crew member of this Sea Knight and that Cpl. Norman O. Copeland also died because of this accident. Copeland's record indicates that he was not a crew member; possibly one of the wounded being evacuated. However, the VHCMA indicated to the VHPA that Copeland was a gunner based on his MOS.

The Wall database indicates four Marines died in the same event — Capt. Burke, Cpl. Copeland, Sgt. Shelton and Maj. Demko. As mentioned above, the helicopter database record for No. 153986 also indicates four died. We may have identified all who died in this wreck.

Because it was a scheduled medevac mission (vs. an impromptu mission), they should have had a Navy corpsman on board. The only USN person that died on this date was a Vernon Parr Smith, but he died in Quang Tri Province.

Lt. Col. Lou Guilling, the squadron commanding officer, and Maj. Pugh Parson, the maintenance officer, climbed in another CH-46D and were over the scene within 20 minutes.

Pugh remembers several details about this grim scene. The rice paddy had less than a foot of water and the wreck was still burning. After putting Pugh on the ground, Lou hovered the helicopter to try to suppress the fires, but this was not successful.

When they were able to inspect the wreck, they counted 36 holes in the ramp alone! Obviously the NVA had shot up the CH-46D pretty badly!

Because the aircraft hit inverted, the forward transmission was pushed

See THERE, Page 22

The first CH-47 loss in Vietnam

GARY LOZIER

Over the years I have received calls from the Directory Committee asking for information and "remember when" details. I've always enjoyed helping the VHPA.

The 1995 Directory contains some of the information I provided and I am very happy one of my photos appears in the 1996 VHPA Calendar.

So long as I'm on a roll, so to speak, I thought I'd share some other ideas with the Newsletter.

I had the misfortune of flying the first Chinook to be lost in an accident in Vietnam. It happened during the first 24 hour period of the Ia Drang battle — after the 1/7th Cav was inserted into LZ X-Ray.

Harold Moore's "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young" provides the details about how the 1/7th ran into a hornet's nest that Sunday morning, Nov. 14, 1965.

By mid-afternoon, the Chinooks had moved some 105 artillery to LZ Columbus, a few miles west of X-Ray. Then we started the task of moving 3,000 rounds of ammo so the artillery could fire protective fires for the 1/7th Sunday night and Monday.

At this stage, we did not have nets or slings for the Chinooks, so we would load 150 rounds in their round fiber containers in a pile down the middle of the aircraft.

During takeoff and en route, the load was strapped down. When we got to the LZ, we would hover, nose high and let the rounds roll out the rear of the ship.

This ammo resupply operation went on through most of

Sunday night. A low layer of stratus moved in after dark, so we had to fly on top at 4,000 from Pleiku to LZ Columbus (210 degrees for about 25 minutes).

When we got to the area, we would find a hole, let down, locate the flashlights in the LZ and land.

Capt. William H. McGlockton and I plus Spec. 6 Daniel L. Wilson and Spec. 5 Victor S. Lafrancoeur were flying 64-13110 and were on our last sortie at about 3 o'clock Monday morning, Nov. 15. About 10 minutes south of Pleiku, the aircraft suddenly developed a very severe lateral vibration. It shook so bad that we only had partial control and could not read any of the instruments.

It was throwing us around against our lap and shoulder restraints and even threw my helmet off.

The second ship in our flight, flown by CWO Hooks and CWO Anzilotta, saw us suddenly descend into the clouds and disappear.

We broke out of the clouds about 500 AGL but still only had partial control of the aircraft. We could not communicate because I had lost my helmet.

We turned on the landing lights and saw nothing but trees. Since some appeared much taller than the others, we steered toward the shorter trees. As it turned out, the trees that appeared shorter were actually down in a ravine.

We ended up crashing on the side of the ravine, on about a 60 degree slope. Hitting on the slope is what I think actually saved our lives.

Had we hit on flat ground, I think that the impact would
See HITTING, Page 23

There were 36 holes in ramp alone

Continued from Page 21

into the cockpit. This may have killed the two pilots.

The impact also "shrunk" the fuselage by at least two feet.

Normally, a CH-46D cannot lift another CH-46D; but the next day HMM-364 retrieved what was left of No. 153986 and put it in a pile near the maintenance area.

Gary Monk, and others, were shocked when they saw this. It was just a chain of pieces held together with tubes and cables! It didn't look anything like a helicopter at all.

HMM-364 had formed on the West Coast the previous summer and was equipped with factory fresh aircraft. About half its cadre were second-tour veterans and, like most Marine squadrons, they were "family."

Leon Demko had been seriously injured in a helicopter crash that ended his previous tour in Vietnam and actually had to volunteer to deploy with HMM-364. John Burke had recently been promoted from first lieutenant.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Anyone wishing to add to this narrative is encouraged to send his comment to the VHPA or contact the Directory Committee.

In Seppo I. Hurme's article in December's newsletter, a paragraph was left out after the fourth line on Page 15. It reads:

"The next day, 1st Lt. Jerry Crutcher was the HAC and we were assigned to a VIP chase mission; I guess they thought this would be safe enough for me and good flight experience."

Looking for a:

- Long-lost stick buddy?
- A classmate from flight school?

Look the easy way. Use VHPA's "Find-A-Friend"

Simply send a No. 10, self-addressed, stamped envelope — and the name of the person you're seeking to:

Phil Marshall

Airborne citation raises a question

TOM EITEL

My wife works with several Vietnamese people. When she told them I served in a Marine unit in Southeast Asia, one of them brought her a copy of a citation for a friend named Dang-Duy-Cu.

My wife's co-worker corresponds with Dang-Duy-Cu, who is still in Vietnam and who is interested in knowing what happened to the helicopter pilot he met that day.

My search for information eventually led me to the VHPA. I am both pleased and impressed with the information the VHPA provided me. Here are the details:

On July 17, 1969, the 101st Airborne Division presented a Certificate of Achievement to Dang-Duy-Cu, a Vietnamese citizen. The citation reads

as follows:

"Dang-Duy-Cu distinguished himself by valorous actions on 13 July 1969. When a light observation helicopter crashed into the Cau Hai Bay, Dang-Duy-Cu assisted in the rescue of the pilot and ultimately save the pilot's life. The immediate and unselfish response by Dang-Duy-Cu reflects great credit upon himself, Vinh Ha Village, and the Republic of Vietnam."

The citation was printed in English on the left side of the page and Vietnamese on the right. It was signed by Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr., the commanding general.

The VHPA's Directory Committee provided the following details from the accident report for OH-6A No. 67-16218 from 2nd Brigade, 101st ABN:

"On the morning of July 13, 1969, Lt. R.F. Mecredy was given the mission of flying the LOH for 2nd BN, 327th INF. He departed LZ Sally with two passengers for drop off at Phu Bai airfield on the way to FSB Roy, where the battalion TOC had recently located.

"He arrived at FSB Roy at about 0825 hours. He was directed to fly to Coastal Group 13 and pick up Lt. Roger Bove, USN, and bring him to FSB Roy. This he did without incident, shutting down upon his return at FSB Roy.

"About 1030 hours, Lt. Mecredy departed FSB Roy with Lt. Bove to return him to Coastal Group 13. On the way they flew northwest to the western end of a dike where a diversion dam is set into the dike, which

See LT. BOVE, Page 24

Hitting on the slope saved our lives

Continued from Page 22

have been too severe; but by rolling down the slope, the impact forces were reduced.

I tried to shut down both engines just at impact, but only got one shut down.

When the dust settled and we regained our senses, we were hanging upside down and realized that the No. 2 engine was still running and losing its oil.

With 7,000 pounds of ammo on board and expecting a fire to start any second, we quickly exited the aircraft and moved about 200 yards away.

CWOs Hooks and Anzilotta found a hole a few miles north and came looking for us.

By the time they got back to our area, the engine on 110 had caught fire and they had no problem finding the crash site! They, however, had no way of knowing our status or location.

I had a cigarette lighter and our crew chief, Spec. 5 Lafrancoeur, had a letter from his wife in his pocket. We lit the letter, which generated enough flame for the guys in the air to see us. They landed on the ridge top above us.

We quickly climbed out of the ravine and got into their aircraft. We were only on the ground about 20 minutes — thanks to the extraordinary efforts of CWOs Hooks and Anzilotta and their crew.

Earlier that evening we thought we might have had a tree strike while hovering near LZ Columbus. After shutting down at Pleiku for another load of ammo, we inspected the blades as best we could with our flashlights.

I think we flew at least one more round trip after that, so we thought everything was OK.

Ben Silver's "Ride At A Gallop" (he was the 228th Battalion commander and did a marvelous job of recording the pains we had giving birth to the Army's first Chinook battalion and deploying it to Vietnam) describes how the CH-47's blades were assembled with pockets.

Obviously, the severe lateral vibration was caused when one of our blades slung at least one pocket.

Ben Silver also mentions this accident on Page 304 of his fine, fine book.

The next day, they sent a Crane to retrieve 110. They were in a hurry and didn't unload the ammo; so even the mighty Crane couldn't lift the entire load.

I have some pictures of poor old 110 laying in that ravine.

Eventually, they were able to bring all the pieces back, but 110 was totaled.

I hope the VHPA can add these details to the material printed on Page 299 of Vol. 1 of the Historical Reference Directory.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Directory Committee is delighted to have the details Gary provided not only on the loss of 110 but also the "life and times" of the 1st Cav's early days in Vietnam. Anyone with information about a helicopter loss or incident is encouraged to contact the Directory Committee.

Lt. Bove wanted to inspect the dam

Continued from Page 23

extends across the northwestern end of the dam, Dam Cau Hai.

"Lt. Bove wished to inspect the dam, which he intended to blow, allowing his boats entrance into the Song Cong Quan stream. The flight to the dam was at 700-900 feet. At the appropriate spot, a high overhead descent was made to 50 feet, one left hand circle was made and the aircraft departed at low level, Lt. Bove having said the dam would be blown.

"As they departed, Lt. Mecredy reminded himself of previous engine failures in his unit and began a normal climb to altitude. At about 250-300 feet and 60-70 knots, Lt. Mecredy heard a 'loud crack' behind his head, which was accompanied by a left yaw. Believing this to be an engine failure, Lt. Mecredy smiled to himself for his foresight as he floored the pitch, rolled off the throttle and corrected the yaw with right pedal.

"At this instant he noted Lt. Bove had unbuckled his seat belt and was sitting up as if he intended to do something. Lt. Mecredy yelled at him to fasten his harness and leaned over toward Lt. Bove, pushing the available seat belt and harness toward him to give him the idea to rebuckle.

"Lt. Mecredy said he then locked his inertial reel as he checked his instruments, noting only that N1 was in the green. Cyclic control was still present, though there was a feedback which caused hand and arm motion.

He, therefore, rolled on throttle and pulled a bit of pitch, getting a loud response from the engine, which was 'the best sound in the world.'

"During this sequence of events he also noted the water of the bay, which had previously been below and visible forward only between the pedals, was now straight ahead. At this point, Lt. Mecredy believes they were doing perhaps 90 knots; however, he did not look at the airspeed indicator.

"Realizing they were going into the water he flipped the radio to guard and got off one 'May Day,' which may have been on intercom, as he unlocked his inertial reel, pulled 'a wild hairy flare, and big handful of pitch,' at an estimated 10-15 feet altitude, but the collective response to the pitch pull 'felt like a wet noodle.'

"He believes they hit tail low, which caused them to cartwheel forward 5 or 6 times as he saw sky-water flash past in sequence several times. Coming to rest underwater, but still harnessed in his seat, Lt. Mecredy unstrapped and felt to his left where the passenger should have been, but found nothing.

"He then pushed straight out of his seat in a direction he assumed was through the bubble or perhaps the green house, though not certain anything of the aircraft was even there, and found himself standing in waist deep water. He noticed his helmet floating upright about 100 feet ahead of him, about in the direction of the original flight.

"He walked around what he thought was the aircraft looking for Lt. Bove, but saw only the tailboom a few yards back down the track of flight. Finding nothing, he began wading toward the village, calling for help from boats coming toward him. As he waded toward shore, he found the log book which he picked up, then after a few yards decided he did not need it and pitched it over his shoulder.

"Picked up by a boat, he was carried to shore and dropped off, and the boat returned to the wreck. Others took him to the village and dressed his wounds. About 1½ hours later, a helicopter from his unit arrived and called a Dustoff that took him to the 22nd Surgical Hospital in Phu Bai.

"The unit chopper then went out to the wreckage and recovered Lt. Bove's body and took it to the 22nd Surgical Hospital."

EDITOR'S NOTE: For several years, the VHPA Database Committee believed Navy Lt. Bove was a pilot because he was killed in a helicopter. The information in the accident summary indicated he was a passenger on a courier flight and he was an officer from a Navy command responsible for coastal patrol boats. It gives us no reason to believe he was a pilot. The VHPA KIA database was corrected because of the research initiated by Tom Eitel. The VHPA has no information about the current whereabouts of former Lt. R.F. Mecredy.

Firm receives VHPA management contract

The VHPA's management firm, effective April 1, 1996, is McCoy & Kilgore, 949 University Ave., Suite 210, Sacramento, CA 95825.

ALL MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO BUSINESS WITH VHPA AS USUAL WHILE THIS TRANSITION TAKES EFFECT.

Members are asked to make their reunion reservations directly with the hotel.

Reservations for reunion events will be handled by McCoy & Kilgore at the Sacramento address.

McCoy & Kilgore can be contacted at (800) 505-VHPA.

Both management firms will work with the VHPA Executive Council to ensure a smooth transition.

McCoy & Kilgore is a full-service accounting firm with a management support emphasis.

VHPA member Ross McCoy, as

one of the principals of the firm, has committed to supplying needed services to the VHPA.

His firm won out over a field of five competitors for the VHPA contract. Two other firms submitted no-bids to the VHPA Request for Proposal. This competition was announced in the December VHPA Newsletter and the deadline for contract proposals was extended to accommodate late delivery of that newsletter.

Computer net continues to grow

MEL CANON

Well, I missed a couple of issues with the column . . . sorry. Things got hectic around my place . . . some new training for me . . . school . . . just ran out of time. So, I have some catching up to do this issue.

Where to start? Well, the net has grown substantially. We now have about 130 members participating on-line on any given day and we have more than 300 people on our on-line roster.

Let me tell you some of the significant happenings on the net.

CHARLIE ELIASON

() has completed a move to Moscow, Russia.

Charlie, old Workhorse 16 from the 335th AHC, works for Caterpillar and is setting up a plant in the former Soviet Union. A significant aspect of Charlie's move is that he was assisted somewhat through our net.

MIKE WISE (), who is with the USAID Bureau in Honduras, put Charlie in touch with a USAID counterpart in Moscow. The guy was very helpful in helping Charlie get set up in Moscow and with helping him to reestablish his on-line connection with the net.

It was a real surprise to get my first message from Charlie after his move. He left the U.S. as a member of America Online. His first message came to me through AOL, but I didn't know how he accessed it from Moscow.

Turns out Charlie was able to access his old AOL account through his new provider in Moscow . . . Russia Online.

Well, Charlie is set up now and having a great time in the land of the bear. He recently spent Christmas with the family in the Swiss Alps.

As an aside to Charlie's relocation to the former Soviet Union . . . if they are still monitoring incoming traffic . . . and I'm sure they are . . . they have got to be shaking their heads in disbelief and confusion after reading some

of the traffic generated by the rotor-heads on the network.

MIKE SLONIKER

() has joined the net recently. For those of you who don't know Mike personally, let me just say that this guy is a definite type A personality. Mike is forever on the go . . . making things happen . . .

On the InterCom

rarely pausing long enough to take a trip to the latrine.

No, I didn't say he's full of it . . . I said he's a busy guy!

Mike has been involved with The Wall for a long time and does his part to make sure our fallen brethren are never forgotten. One of the highlights of Mike's life, however, came from a net-related experience.

Seems as though Mike got wind through the net there was a young lady trying to discover something about her father who was KIA in RVN. She was but a month or so into this world when her father was KIA flying a UH-1 on a C/A. Never having met her own father and on a quest to find out about him was all that Mike needed to hear.

Mike never knew the girl's father, WO1 Robert Hazen Shields II, nor did he know young Marcie Shields. He hadn't even served with her father in RVN, but he sensed a mission and went after it.

The original information about Marcie and her quest came from net member JIM SCHUECKLER ().

The Shields family received one great Christmas present, thanks to Mike and the others . . .

().

When it was apparent no one on the net had flown with Shields, Sloniker picked up the ball and ran with it. Mike discovered through another net member, J.C. PENNINGTON (), an acquaintance of J.C.'s, TOM DANA (), had flown for Shield's unit, the 174th AHC at the same time.

Dana was contacted and, as it turned out, was actually flying a gunship escort on the mission in which Shields was KIA.

Sloniker finally met with Marcie Shields and provided her pertinent information about her father that he'd obtained through the net. Then he set up a meeting with Marcie's mother, Judy, who has never remarried.

Finally, a meeting was set up with the Shieldses and Tom Dana, to bring the story to full circle.

End result . . . a daughter who went on a quest to find out something about her father was gratified in that quest and the net was instrumental in helping to make it all happen.

Tom Dana has joined our on-line family and all is good in the on-line world of rotorheadom.

Mike Sloniker and all involved did a heck of a job on this one. The Shields family received one great Christmas present, thanks to Mike and the others . . . and they have made some new friends . . . friends for life should they so choose. There's no way to convey the true emotions that went into this endeavor, but I can tell you there were plenty.

Mike derived great satisfaction in bringing all this to fruition and is especially delighted the net made all this possible.

Another great story involving the net comes from BILL STAFFA ().

Through the net, Bill was able to locate the family of one of his crewmen who was KIA flying as Bill's observer.

He didn't know the young man,

See PILOT, Page 26

Pilot locates KIA observer's family

Continued from Page 25

Victor Heesacker, very well because Victor hadn't been in the unit long. Bill couldn't even remember the man's name and was assisted with that by Gary Roush via the VHPA Database.

Gary got the man's name from an incident report involving the OH-23G Staffa was flying that day. Staffa then ran the man's name through the Vietnam Memorial Database (also online) and came up with his hometown of Humphrey, NE.

He then called the Humphrey Democrat, the local newspaper, and inquired about the family name. Oddly enough, the lady he talked with at the newspaper was a schoolmate of Victor's and remembered the obituary that had been in the paper after he'd been killed.

She also knew the family well and gave Staffa the phone number of Victor's sister.

Staffa contacted the man's family and finally visited with Victor's brother . . . giving him some long-awaited information. Victor Heesacker was finally laid to rest in a lot of minds . . . some 25 years later.

Along these lines, MIKE PATE (wpm6233@aol.com) asked the net if it was possible to track down a second cousin who had been KIA in RVN also.

Again, the net went to work.

Bill Staffa, now a pro at this stuff, went to Gary Roush and again called upon the database for some information. This time the search is for a non-aviator warrant officer.

Oddly enough, Mike Sloniker remembered the name from his work on the MIA/POW project and recalled this might be a warrant officer who was killed in the shootdown of a Birdog.

Checking the database, Staffa found the information and enough data to go back to Mike Pate with plenty of stuff. Mike's aunt has gone all these years not wanting to know what had happened to her son . . . just

Staffa contacted the man's family and finally visited with Victor's brother . . . giving him some long-awaited information. Victor Heesacker was finally laid to rest . . . some 25 years later.

wanting to put it out of her mind. Then . . . this winter, she decided she did want to know how he died.

Mike's cousin, CW3 James Butler, had been a Special Forces observer riding in the Birdog on a recon mission five miles west of Tra Vinh on March 20, 1970. The aircraft was downed by hostile fire and Butler's body was not recovered. He'd been declared dead in 1978.

This information was enough for his mother, Mike's aunt, to declare the matter closed.

Another interesting thing that's taken place through the net is the initiation of obtaining Air Medals for some of our Aussie brothers.

While attached to our units and flying combat missions, the Australian (Navy) pilots were not allowed (by their government) to receive the Air Medal for combat or combat support flight time.

So, a recent decision by the Australian government prompted our net member, BOB KYLE (), to inquire on the net about procedures to accomplish such a task . . . that is getting the medals they'd been put in for during the war.

Once again, the talents of the net prevailed.

Bill Staffa and Mike Sloniker used their contacts and made some things

happen that will ensure these Australian pilots get their rightful awards.

That got the issue on the table and since has spread to some of the American pilots who were awarded medals and never received. Staffa and Sloniker have opened some pretty obscure doors and got the ball rolling that might indeed bring those long overdue awards.

Due to playing catch-up this issue, I was unable to bring you some of the chatter taking place on the net so that I could bring you up to date on some of the more sensational things that have happened. Hopefully, I will be able to resume the dialogue next issue.

Some interesting administrative things have happened with the net, as well.

We now have the ability to send out a digested form of the net traffic. The program we use archives the daily traffic and sends it out once a day as just one message.

So, in effect, the entire day's traffic is incorporated into one large file. Also . . . thanks to Gary Roush, we have obtained our own official Homepage on the World Wide Web (WWW).

For those of you who do not want to join us on the net as a regular member, you may visit our homepage at the following WWW address: (<http://www.vhfc.org>).

The homepage features stories from Vietnam, pictures of aircraft and personnel, and pointers to other homepages of guys from the net who have developed their own.

As a reminder, anyone who has an Internet address and would like to be added to our online roster, drop me a note at () and I will see that you are added to the roster. The roster is made available to everyone who signs on to the net.

If you are interested in joining us on the net, contact me at the same address and I will ensure that you are set up to fly with us in cyberspace. I'll see you next issue when we will listen in . . . "On The InterCom."

The guns are now on station!



Have Guns, Will Travel

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