



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

March/April 1997 Vol. 15, No. 2



A Minuteman slick from the 176th AHC trails purple smoke to celebrate the ETS of LZ Gator "pad man" "Fast Eddie" Hall, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, in November 1969. Yes, those are new doors.

MRR# M002962/98



From the President

The Florida Chapter has been doing an outstanding job of putting together the 1997 VHPA Reunion. My hat is off to Jim Basta, reunion chairman, and his committee.

You should take a moment to complete the reunion registration form in this newsletter and forward it to VHPA Headquarters.

Angelo Spelios has volunteered to be the 1998 Reunion chairman and the Executive Council has approved his appointment. Angelo and Vice President Mike Hurley joined the Army from the New York City area.

Neither is native to the "fine art" of making Texas chili, so we are lucky to have reunions in the summer. The Fort Wolters Chapter is making plans for this reunion.

For you Tennessee members, the 1999 Nashville reunion organization effort will be getting under way with a mailing from Mike Haley and Larry Winters in the near future. Details of their organizational meeting will be in the letter.

Army Aviation Museum Foundation Inc. at Fort Rucker, AL, offers an opportunity to helicopter pilots to have a biographical listing at the Museum. As each of you have

served our nation as a helicopter pilot, we will, in the near future, be publishing information about the Museum's Flight Line Data Sheet in the VHPA newsletter.

My longtime law partner, Lee Fowler, has been appointed by Gov. Bill Graves, as judge to the District Court of the Fifth Judicial District for Chase and Lyon Counties, KS. He was sworn in to office on March 14, 1997.

We had practiced law together in our community since 1981, when he graduated from law school. He is extremely ethical, smart and dedicated to his profession.

When I was involved with VHPA matters, he carried the legal load at the office and in court. On many occasions, he worked on contracts, documents and other issues involving our firm's legal services to VHPA.

He is a skillful leader, chairing a committee to formulate the legislation forming the first National Park in Kansas, the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. Lee Fowler has been an outstanding law partner and I'll miss him in our office.

I want to express my appreciation for his services to VHPA. He will be an excellent trial judge.

However, the empty office down the hall, is like the empty bunk in the tent for a missing or fallen pilot comrade. It won't ever be quite the same, Your Honor!

— Charles R. "Tornado Red" Rayl, President

Museum lets pilots fly family in Hueys

DICK RENCH

From what we can tell, the Firelands Museum of Military History in Norwalk, OH, is the only military museum with Hueys in which civilians can ride.

In many cases, the first Huey a Vietnam helicopter pilot was able to give his wife or kids a ride in was one owned by our museum.

We have a tradition that the first ride for a wife is as a "Peter Pilot" beside her husband. Most love it and have waited for years, many for more than 30 years, to do it.

Our Hueys are full military, including M-60 machine guns.

We also have tanks, trucks, all types of military equipment that actually run. We crush cars with our M60A1!!!

We have a Cobra the government won't let us fly. It's in great shape and kids love to sit in it and get their photo taken.

Both of the Hueys we fly — 66-00992 and 67-17658 — are Vietnam vets. We hope to find some of the original crews.

We plan to build the first of our buildings this summer at the Huron County, OH, Airport. We have a \$150,000 state grant for the building and another \$300,000 promised for next year.

We currently have the equipment stored in some big barns at different locations. The Hueys and the Cobra are in a hangar we rent at the airport.

Another pilot has a full military 0-2, complete with dummy rockets, it also is a real Vietnam veteran aircraft.

We are located at Norwalk, Ohio, about seven miles southeast of Exit 7 of the Ohio Turnpike.

If you ever have a reunion near northern Ohio, we could fly in for rides!!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dick Rench is curator of the Firelands Museum of Military History at the Huron County Airport at Norwalk, OH.

Classified ad

HELICOPTER ACCIDENT LAWYER: I am a VHPA member who flew Cobras with the 334th in Vietnam.

I also am a lawyer who represents pilots and their families in product defect cases involving helicopters.

If you are in need of same, call Jeremiah A. Denton III (Gunrunner One) at [REDACTED].

THE VHPA NEWSLETTER (ISSN 0896-3037)(USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly — February, April, June, August, October and December. Annual dues are \$30 or Life membership for \$450. Yearly subscription for nonmembers is \$32. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 949 University Ave., Suite 210, Sacramento, CA 95825. Second-class postage paid at Sacramento, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE VHPA NEWSLETTER, 949 University Ave., Suite 210, Sacramento, CA 95825.

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Green Hats celebrate 30-year anniversary

Some former classmates of the Green Hats, Flight A-1, started the 30-year reunion festivities at a mini-reunion in Reno, NV, Feb. 6-9, immediately after the HAI Convention in Anaheim, CA.

This was an opportunity for some classmates to gather who will be unable to attend the class' 30-year reunion in Orlando due to business commitments.

John Barnicle traveled from Dublin, Ireland, to make the gathering. Others attending were Bob Browne, Bill Brown, Jerry Beck, Mike Arline, Gil Adams, Jack Breedlove, Mike Bucove, Joe Brimseth, Brian Bagnall and Jay Riseden.

A good time was had, sharing memories of flight school, viewing old photos, and renewing friendships.



With The Strip in the background are (front, from left) Jack Breedlove, Brian Bagnall; (second row, from left) Bob Browne, Mike Arline, Bill Brown, Jay Riseden, Mike Bucove, Jerry Beck; (back row, from left) Gil Adams and Joe Brimseth.

This summer's 30-year mini-reunion is set to start at 11 a.m. July 5 at the VHPA reunion in Orlando.

Make your plans to attend now. Contact Jay Riseden at [redacted] -

[redacted] or Mike O'Leary at [redacted] - for more information.

Visit the 67-5 reunion web site at <http://www.magicnet.net/~mikeo/reunion/>

Newsletter articles bring back memories

I just finished reading the November/December Newsletter and several articles made me want to write and just add some items of interest possibly and maybe connect with some of the guys I worked with in I Corps during 1970-71.

First, the article on the CH-54 was very interesting. Regarding dropping bombs, as an LOH pilot, my doorgunner (Dale Hanten) and I accomplished a similar feat, only on a smaller scale.

We had a recon team that came under heavy fire just about 5k's northeast of Firebase Rakisson. Of the seven men, five were wounded right after insertion. The medevac was called in with gunship support. Both were taking heavy fire and were not able to get in for the medevacs.

As the armament officer for Thunder Operations (3rd Brigade Aviation), I had borrowed one of the LZ shape charges from the 2/506 and was looking at trying it on something. My doorgunner and I had been working on this for awhile. We had figured out the depth cord length for different altitudes and air-speeds in order to get the charge to go

The (bomb) charge went off just above the ground, and blew an LZ large enough for two Hueys to land in.

off above ground level.

Anyway, we flew back to Camp Evans, loaded the charge (equivalent to a 250-pound bomb) and proceeded back to the engagement area. We had the other aircraft back out of the area. By this time, there were F-105s on station waiting for the clearance to proceed against the enemy location.

However, we thought with the LOH and the close proximity to our troops that we might be able to do a better job. We got the OK to give it a try.

My doorgunner was smoking a cigar in the back, clipped the fuse for the altitude we determined would work best, flew in low and slow, and did some pinpoint bombing. The (bomb) charge went off just above the ground, and blew an LZ large enough for two Hueys to land in.

There was not another shot fired in that area that day and all men were evacuated without incident.

The FAC pilot came over the radio and said, "Jesus, 33, what in the hell did you drop on them?"

Several days later, the S-3 of the brigade said they had intercepted a message that was sent by the North Vietnamese stating to not shoot at the little birds until they find out what they were carrying.

Continued on Page 5

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Continued from Page 4

The second article that I read with interest was the one from Ken Byrant regarding "Sneaky" James White. I do not know if it is the same person who I knew, but I only knew him as "Sneaky White" or "Sneaky," as we called him.

At the time I knew him, he was flying Cobras with ARA, but previously flew LOHs. The "Sneaky" I knew was an ex-Marine and was on his second tour as an aviator.

Thunder had the last of the White Team units in I Corps

and many times "Sneaky" would fly with us as extra cover when we went .51-caliber hunting.

I got to fly front seat with "Sneaky" on CCN missions in exchange. He also was one of the first gunship pilots

After that, all hell broke loose on the proceeding lifts and I lost contact with him from then on.

with the initial lift at the start of Lam Son in which I got to ride front seat for him. In that first lift, all was quiet. We flew back to Quang Tri, he dropped me off at my LOH and picked up his normal front seat.

After that, all hell broke loose on the proceeding lifts and I lost contact with him from then on. If he is reading this article or anyone knows if he is still around or what happened to him, I would appreciate getting any information.

J.B. West's article about flying behind CH-47s brought back the memory of doing flame drops using fogas.

There was a mission northeast of Evans one time where we had located a bunker complex in a small valley and ordered to do a flame drop.

The CH-47 came in, dropped its load, but the incendiary grenade didn't ignite the load. They tried several times to light it off, but because of their altitude, kept missing the area.

We volunteered to go in and ignite it since we were used

to flying low. Anyway, by the time that we decided to help out, the fumes had started to come up from the valley bottom. We never thought anything about it.

I flew up the valley low, came to a high hover over the

The explosion was so great we were pushed up at over 500 feet per minute on the altimeter . . .

load and told my doorgunner to drop the incendiary. It dropped no more than 100 feet when the whole valley ignited. The explosion was so great we were pushed up at over 500 feet per minute on the altimeter, and we had black all over the bottom of the aircraft when we got back.

The CH-47 boys stated it was the best flame drop they had ever been involved with.

Lastly, the article by Dustoff 97 regarding "Odors" is so true. There is nothing I love more than watching a new sunrise with the smell of diesel fumes in the air. It stirs many memories of both good and bad times fast.

Really enjoy the Newsletter and hope to someday get to one of the reunions. Best wishes to all.

T. Vraniak
Thunder "33"

Vietnamese pilot obtains citizenship

Those of you who met Maj. Nguyen Quy An at last year's reunion or knew of him before will be heartened that he has able to take his oath of citizenship to the United States of America in October. After nearly 20 years, it took an act of Congress to accomplish this achievement.

The legislation was authored and promoted through an anti-immigration Congress by An's congresswoman, Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose. INS regional director Thomas Schiltgen administered the oath of citizenship.

Schiltgen was deputy director of the INS in

"If it weren't for An, I wouldn't be here," he told the audience. "He must be very proud of this day. And the United States should be proud to have him."

Bangkok when he received authorization in 1993 from the White House to grant An and his daughter, Kim Ngoc, a humanitarian parole that allowed them to enter the United States. That did not allow them to stay permanently.

Retired Air Force Col. Noboru Masuoka started efforts five years ago to aid An. He was joined by a network of Vietnamese immigrants and U.S. veterans gathering signatures and writing letters on An and his daughter's behalf.

Following the oath of citizenship, about 75 well-wishers, of whom many were veterans, broke into 30 seconds of spontaneous applause in the county's Board of Supervisors chambers, where the oath was administered.

After the ceremony, Rep. Lofgren put retired Army Col. Bob Stratiff, who was calling from Virginia, on a speaker phone. Stratiff was one of four airmen rescued by An during a secret U.S.-South Vietnamese mission in Laos after his helicopter was shot down and burned after dropping off Green Berets in 1969.

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

"If it weren't for An, I wouldn't be here," he told the audience. "He must be very proud of this day. And the United States should be proud to have him."

For his efforts, An received the Distinguished Flying Cross, which the communists later took away after the fall of Saigon.

A year after the rescue, An was shot down and his arms were so badly burned when his helicopter caught fire that he had no muscle tissue left in his forearms and he had to force a window open with his elbow.

After the fall of Saigon, An was condemned to a communist reeducation camp, but his captors kicked him out after nine weeks, saying his injuries made him useless.

The nine weeks was too short for An to qualify for a humanitarian program that allowed former South Vietnamese soldiers who had spent at least a year in the camps to immigrate to the United States, until the "humanitarian

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

parole" was granted.

An tried to escape from Vietnam four times, but was caught each time and spent more than two years in jail. Before immigrating, he supported himself by tutoring students in math and growing orchids, and with money sent by relatives abroad.

An could have applied for political asylum, but did not because he feared his 24-year-old daughter would have had to return alone. Now, with his citizenship, he can sponsor his daughter to become a permanent resident.

Kim Ngoc has been working two jobs to support her father while he was being fitted with prosthetic arms and is taking accounting classes in hopes of finding work.

Maj. An hopes to find a good job so his daughter will be able to attend college.

Taking the oath of citizenship, An pledged, "I will serve the United States as I did my mother country."

Jim Kelley

Pilot locates OH-6 with Vietnam history

I flew with the 3rd Squadron of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment from June 1970 until the unit was deactivated in the spring of 1971, and finished my tour with the 1st Squadron.

I flew about equal time in the UH-1 and the LOH. I have

VHPA Internet site provides new forum

On the VHPA Internet site (<http://www.vhpa.org>) there is a forum for people to ask questions, make comments, or tell war stories.

Since being activated, we are averaging about 10 per week. Here is one of them for this week.

Gary Roush
Webmaster

The following comment has been submitted to the VHPA web site:

And there I was!

Pelican 223 here. WORWAC 68-518/68 32 B4 A/123 AVN in RVN '68.

Hope to see ya'll at 98 for my 30th. Probably will not make it this year.

Let the editors know that I read each issue, cover to cover, when it comes in. The only journal that compares is the CBI Roundup (China/Burma/India) that my dad subscribes to. He was a crew chief on C-47s in the '40s.

I live 30 minutes from Oshkosh. Let me know if I can help this summer.

My current job is manager Technical Services in an IS shop. 'Quit flying about 8 years ago.

Say hi to Mike McDonald if he is still around.

Mike McCormick
West Bend, WI

Major AUS (retired)

been employed in the helicopter industry ever since leaving the Army in June 1971. Currently I have a helicopter parts business and occasionally buy and sell a Jet Ranger or MD500.

For some time, I have been looking for a flyable OH-6 to purchase and keep in the configuration of the ones I flew in Vietnam. After three years of searching, I was fortunate to obtain Army SN 67-16026 that spent the majority of its life with the New York National Guard.

The aircraft did experience at least two incidents involving hostile fire while in Vietnam. I am curious if any of the members were flying the aircraft either time?

The first occasion was in support of my unit, the 11th ACR, but it's unclear to me what unit was flying. The following entry is in the log book:

"On 5 Sept. 69 at approx 1300 hrs, A/C 67-16026 at grid cord. XT 16501 did receive hostile fire while in support of the 11th ACR, resulting in extensive battle damage. Circumstances entered by 166th Trans Co. APO 96227."

Please note that all entries just prior to the incident were made by the 398th Transportation Company, which may be the maintenance unit that supported the 11th ACR.

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

The aircraft was sent back to the States for repair and was received back in country on 27 April 1970 by B Troop, 3/17th Air Cavalry, with an aircraft time of 1,704:50.

The following entry was made on 24 Aug. 1970:

"On 3 Aug. 70 at 10:10 hrs aircraft was on a visual reconnaissance mission at cord. WR 446666 when the aircraft came under hostile ground fire. The aircraft took several hits in the aft fuselage and one hit in the forward r/h said of the mast support structure fitting. Entered by 370th TC Det. APO 96557."

These are handwritten entries and it is somewhat hard to read the coordinates.

The aircraft is in the certification process now and should be certified to fly by the time of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Fly-In this summer in Oshkosh. I plan to park it next to the VHPA tent at the fly-in.

There is a lot of work to restore the aircraft back to the way it was in Vietnam, but that is the plan.

I would like to hear about the configuration of the aircraft in Vietnam and the hostile fire incidents and the crews to include with the history when on display.

Peter Bales
Tradewind International

'Happy Birthday, Brother,' it was an exciting flight

It was my brother's birthday, Dec. 30, 1967, he was 23. I was almost 27.

As my light team and I and flew our Charlie model guns on a SOG mission (Special Forces, long-range patrol)

We stank, but the smell of the jungle, the ammo's cordite, and the JP-4 fuel covered our body odor for the most part.

where the president of the United States was saying we were "not at," I was wondering if I would live another 22 days to see my 27th birthday.

It was hot, but the rotor wash and wind swirling through the space where the rear

doors had been cooled our sweaty, jungle fatigue-attired bodies. Nomex flight suits were rare in those days.

We stank, but the smell of the jungle, the ammo's cordite, and the JP-4 fuel covered our body odor for the most part. Maybe we were just getting used to our own body odor! No b.o. ever surpassed the smell of the burning

Former Navy pilot has helicopter parts

I have several collectible items which may be of interest to members of your association.

These items consist of tail rotor blades and complete tail rotor assemblies from the Huey (Bell models 204 & 212), TH-57 (Bell model 206), Sikorsky H-53, H-52 & H-2.

Also there are caution/warning panels which I have modified the circuitry so that all the lights light up with the aid of a 27-volt battery pack. These items come from the Huey 204, Cobra, H-46 & H-3. Most are from the 204.

Also there are landing gear wheel handles/controls which light up from the H-3 and H-60. All items were removed from military aircraft. No reproductions.

Bruce O. Williams

P.S. I am an old Navy fixed wing driver.

waste in the latrine barrels at Dak To, from where we had launched. Once you've smelled burning diesel fuel mixed with human waste, everything else smells good!

What a way to clean the latrine and protect the environment!

I think my wing man was Croc 2, "Snopes," WO1 Steve Pettit from Winnetka, IL, but my old memories are fading fast as I rush head-long toward 60.

I think Steve's pilot (left seat) was WO1 Les "Elmer Fudd" Lee from Wichita Falls, TX. Les was Croc 4. I do know two of my crew members were the pilot, WO1 Paul Vasseur of Seattle, WA, and a great crew chief named Johnson, a specialist 5. I believe the doorgunner's name was Lammers. I seem to recall Johnson and Lammers were cousins.

I do remember that one of the key reasons I am alive today is the courage, skill, war-fighting know-how, and experience of the enlisted men with whom I flew. I salute them almost daily in my heart and mind, almost 30 years after I left "The 'Nam."

I also remember my own youth as an Infantry sergeant with as much pride as my years of commissioned and CWO service flying choppers.

On Dec. 30, my captain's bars were only a year and two weeks old, and my flight time was still in the sub-500-hour range. I was a platoon leader (36 men, 8 UH-1Cs), flight leader, and pilot-in-command (PIC) of a "Hog" (ARA-type) chopper.

I had been trained to fly and fight (OJT in combat) by WOs Byron ("Bouf") Brown and Bob Payne.

The responsibility was scary, but welcomed, and handled as best I could. I loved my men, the Army, my branches, Infantry and Aviation, and my job, though I, just as everyone else I suppose, was scared at times.

We were escorting 119th AHC slicks (unarmed lift

Continued on Page 8

Continued from Page 7

birds) as they extracted American Special Forces and Montagnard troops from a hot PZ (pickup zone) in a country "where we weren't," just west of Ben Het, RVN.

It was a bright, sunny day, and we were on our third or fourth hot run, firing rockets, mini- and doorgun munitions

The first sensations and signals of possible disaster were a tremendous "BANG" and a momentary, blindness and stinging in my eyes.

into the east side of the PZ's woodline, which was full of agitated and hostile NVA forces.

We made the last run north to south, diving fire, breaking left. Just then, the feces hit the fan.

I was flying at about 120 knots in a dive, firing rock-

ets from the right seat controls. At about 200 feet AGL (above ground/tree-top level), I was preparing to break left and turn it over to Snopes for his final run, as the last slick was just lifting off, homeward bound.

Then our little world exploded.

The first sensations and signals of possible disaster were a tremendous "BANG" and a momentary, blindness and stinging in my eyes. The bang I can only describe like this: If you were to put your head inside an old-fashioned farmer's-type wash tub suspended from a wire, and then have Hank Aaron strike the outside of the tub with his Louisville Slugger in a home run swing.

The momentary blindness scared me, putting it mildly.

I kept my senses enough to remember I was hurtling toward Mother Earth at ever-increasing speed and decreasing altitude. Good ideas were little more present than the shrinking altitude.

I think my instrument training in flight school caused me to begin a climbing left turn, somewhat in the blind, won-

dering if my inner-ear senses and inexperienced, seat-of-the-pants flying would carry us up and away from the trees and the ground, and certain death, or capture by the enemy following "auguring in."

It worked. The climb was pretty steady and the turn pretty much standard-rate. After what seemed like two minutes of near blindness, more than likely two seconds of rapid blinking to clear my eyeballs, I could see the instruments. Somebody "up there" liked us that day, as all the instruments were reading normal, and the Lycoming engine's whine was just as normal and steady, as was the whopping of the blades.

What the hell was that tremendous bang? I would never have guessed that a single AK-47 round coming through the floor just under my left leg could have made that noise, but "busting" aluminum and magnesium with a high-velocity projectile makes a big noise.

The round had propelled slivers of floor and grains of sand into my face and eyes, despite my aviator's sunglasses and clear helmet visor both being in use! I was bleeding slightly, but was not badly wounded.

I looked over and saw blood on his neck and upper chest. I tried to remain calm and unemotional, but it was difficult to do.

Things suddenly got worse. Just after I called "We're hit" to Steve and to my CO, Alligator 6, Maj. (now colonel, retired) Joe Campbell, who was circling above, being helpful, but staying out of our way and observing, Paul,

my left seat, begin to yell over and over, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe."

I looked over and saw blood on his neck and upper chest. I tried to remain calm and unemotional, but it was difficult to do. I reported the injury to our flight and informed them I was heading to Dak To, about 15-20 minutes away, for medical help. Paul continued to yell.

I remembered some of my limited training as a medic in the National Guard about nine years earlier and began to talk calmly to Paul, assuring him (but not knowing myself) he would be OK. He yelled again.

All this occurred, from the dive to the last yell, in about 15 seconds. It dawned on me, "Hey, Martin, you dumb-ass, if Paul can yell like that, he can breathe."

I told Paul of my analysis. He looked at me with sort of a suspicious grin and agreed, but said something like, "How bad do you think it is, Six?"

I guessed correctly and said, "Hell, Paul, it's just a flesh wound or a scratch on your neck." So I hoped!

Gator Six and Croc Two made a couple of encouraging calls over FM or UHF, which helped. It ain't over til it's over. Just as we thought everything was under control, I realized Johnson was standing out on the skid, suspended

Thanks for bomb drop article in newsletter

Many thanks to you, your staff and Mike Law for including the article on the CH-54 bomb drop in the November/December 1996 issue of The VHPA Newsletter.

I especially thank Mike Law for his persistence in dragging all those memories from this 70-year-old brain.

All my kids (4) now want their own copy and, of course, this makes Dad very proud.

As of now, my wife of 45 years, Raylene, and I plan to attend the 14th reunion in Orlando and look forward to meeting you and other VHPA members.

Jim Oden

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

from his monkey-strap, firing back underneath the tail boom at "the bastards who shot Paul."

Another tremendous BANG! I quickly checked the instruments and listened to my aircraft, old No. 549. All was again, thankfully, normal. Then Lammers said something. I turned and looked over my left shoulder, immediately seeing Johnson's face was covered with blood! He looked simply awful.

However, when I said, "Johnson, are you OK?" He replied something like, "Yes sir, my damn machine gun just blew up!" It had.

Apparently, and I am not a weapons expert, it had "double fed" and over-

heated, or some such combination, and the cover latch of the free-swinging M-60 had blown off and into Johnson's face. He was, as he said, OK, but much like me with multiple flesh wounds in the face.

I suppose the excitement of battle and the hot weather, perhaps enhanced by a half-

The armor-piercing part of the round penetrated the outer skin of the UH-1C, the floor, part of the console, and the "green house" (plexiglass) on the pilot's side of the roof.

case of beer the night before, caused us to bleed a lot from not-so-serious wounds. I flew that hog as fast as it would whop-whop through the air, straight and level at about 3,200 feet MSL, 1,200 feet AGL, straight into Dak To, landing right in front of the dispensary.

The medics were great. They took care of Paul first, discovering the wound was from the outer, soft jacket of the AK-47 round which had penetrated his skin and stopped right on, but not into, his voice box.

He lost a little blood, but the hospital in Pleiku had him back flying in about a week. The armor-piercing part of the round penetrated the outer skin of the UH-1C, the floor, part of the console, and the "green house" (plexiglass) on the pilot's side of the roof.

Paul was medevaced immediately, further to Pleiku.

Johnson's wounds and mine were treated by plucking metal out of our faces with tweezers, washing our eyes with a saline solution, disinfecting us with iodine, and a slap on the back and words like, "You two guys are really lucky, no eye damage at all."

Johnson and I returned to duty within an hour. I thought of my brother back in college in Tulsa, and thought "Happy birthday, Mike, you lucky stiff. Boy, would I like to trade places with you."

Then, I mused, "No I wouldn't. I am serving with the greatest guys on earth, for the best country in the world, and I am going to live to see my 27th birthday."

Croc Six was no candidate for delayed stress syndrome

then, still not. Thanks to the Crocs and Gators who took care of me and the guys on the ground from October 1967 to October 1968 in Southeast Asia.

You were the best then, still are. For an ironic twist to end this true story, I offer this: Somewhere, stored in my house in Oklahoma lies a yellowing certificate awarding me the Purple Heart. The medics put me in for it without my knowing.

The certificate constitutes a little white lie, as the wording goes something like "... for wounds received in combat against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam."

Oh well, what does being one country off matter in the overall "domino theory" world in which we lived way back then? The good old days when times were bad!

Don Martin

Crocodile Six

119th Assault Helicopter Company

Gun Platoon

Vietnam — 1967-68

EDITOR'S NOTE: Don Martin is dean of Central Texas College, Pacific Far East Campus. He resides with his family in Seoul, Korea.

VHPA member in Laos keeps up with organization

It was VHPAer James F. Newport, whom I bumped into in Hong Kong nine years ago, who introduced me to VHPA. I had returned to Asia the year before and have been here ever since. The last five years have been spent in Laos, with near-monthly R&Rs to Phnom Penh and Bangkok — I have close links to businesses in each capital.

I am happy to say that I do hear from VHPAers every now and then. But this has been more or less my doing, armed as I am with VHPA newsletters, directories, and historical volumes.

A lot of incomplete information is now complete, thanks to the untiring efforts of people interested in, and dedicated to, helicopter history.

From the perspective of Laos, there is not much to do with free time; so I dig through and sift and resift VHPA material whenever I can.

I am particularly interested in the letters VHPA has begun publishing after veterans returned to the States from trips to Vietnam.

With an eye focused on publishing such a collection someday, I believe VHPA should encourage such writing — VHPA could realize a substantial "royalty" budget (for research?) that way.

To such letters could be added the ones written in Vietnam during the war. And even more material, i.e., the many things so many of us left out for fear of alarming family and friends back home, could be added to those early (even

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

idealistic?) letters.

I recently began a little experiment of my own. I entered a small collection of letters from 1966-67 onto my C-drive,

Of course, e-mail makes the States seem like just across the street — excuse me, rice paddy.

did a bit of editing to improve the East Coast high school syntax, and added every bit of detail that I still remembered. Then I circulated the 27 Laser-jet-printed pages.

I could do 10 times that much if I had access to every

letter I wrote, but who knows where they are. Everybody wanted to read more. Even Lt. Gen. Donald E. Rosenblum (retired), whom I flew when he was a lieutenant colonel "Screaming Eagles" battalion commander in the Central Highlands, said last year there must be an enormous market for such a collection of "remembrances of things past."

I am happy to help even though I am geographically half-the-world away.

Of course, e-mail makes the States seem like just across the street — excuse me, rice paddy. Laos has not changed at all!

James Michener
Bulldog 3-Alpha
129th Aviation Company
WORWAC 66-13
TEL: () 8
FAX: ()
P.O. Box 4474
Vientiane, Laos

E-mail: ()

Writer denies all rumors of his untimely demise

Earlier this year, Henry A. Powell, an ex-Pachyderm, called and asked if I was dead. Since we were talking on the phone and since I had just completed a transition for the brokerage firm I work for, I answered: "No, but why do you ask?"

Then he faxed me two pages from the 1996 Membership Directory and indicated that maybe I was working both sides of the street.

On Page 60, with the living VHPA pilots, I'm listed as Andrew Hover at my former New Orleans address and on Page 224, in the Died After Tour section, I'm listed as CWO Andrew "Fred" F. Hover.

For the record, my nickname is "Sam," my middle name

is "Frank," I was in Flight Classes 68-19 and 68-511, my call sign was "Brandy 23" when I flew for the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division from October 1968 to October 1969, and I was a captain.

I am also alive and well in Slidell, LA. If anyone from Brandy Flight wants to verify this or just wants to talk, please call me toll free (888) 263-7394.

I really enjoy reading the newsletters and I'm looking forward to appearing only once in the 1997 Directory.

Andrew Hover

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Directory Committee says the DAT (died after tour) record was entered in August 1994 and indicated Andrew was killed in a weather-related helicopter accident south of New Orleans while he was flying for PHI in 1973 or 1974. We are happy to learn Andrew was not killed in this accident, but perhaps another Vietnam-era pilot was. Can anyone help us in this area?

Journalist seeks information on friend of dead cousin

I am a journalist writing a remembrance of my cousin, Nicholas L. Venditti, an Army helicopter pilot who was killed in Vietnam in the summer of 1969.

As part of my research, I'm also trying to find out about one of his friends, Wilbur J. Vachon III, who was with Nicky when a grenade went off in a classroom and also died.

Nicky and "Billy," as he was known by family and friends, together went through boot camp and Forts Wolters and Rucker together.

Two officers who were stationed at Chu Lai have told me that five or six soldiers died and about 10 were wounded in the blast.

Both warrant officers started their tour of duty in Vietnam on July 3, 1969, with the 16th Combat Aviation Group, which was attached to the Americal Division at Chu Lai.

Exactly a week later, on the morning of July 10, they and about two

dozen other soldiers were getting new-replacement orientation in a classroom at LZ Bayonet, at the division's Basic Combat Training Center. An instructor pulled the pin on a grenade that was supposed to have been inert and rolled the grenade under a table where Nicky, Billy and two other "rotorheads" were seated.

The explosion gravely wounded Nicky and Billy. My cousin died five days later, on July 15, and Billy died July 17.

Two officers who were stationed at Chu Lai have told

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

me that five or six soldiers died and about 10 were wounded in the blast.

One of the officers said the division's Criminal Investigative Detachment conducted an investigation, but it was inconclusive.

However, he said, he believes that someone deliberately replaced the instructor's practice grenade with a live one.

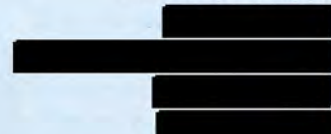
I have not been able to find a report on the grenade incident, and the Army's Criminal Records Center said it has no record of an investigation.

Nicky and Billy were evacuated from LZ Bayonet in differ-

ent helicopters.

I'm hoping you can help me find the pilots who flew them out.

C. David Venditta



P.S. Nicky's last name is spelled differently from mine. It's a quirk of the family.

Taps

Charles E. Bitely

Charles E. "Chuck" Bitely, 54, of Pace, FL, died March 5 after a three-year battle with cancer.

Chuck was a native of Paw Paw, MI. He had lived in Pace since 1978.

He was a pilot with Air Logistics. He served two tours in Vietnam — 1967-68 in C/2/20 ARA, 1st Cav, and 1970 in A/101st AVN, 101st ABN. He was in flight class WORWAC 67-7.

Survivors include his wife Claire, two sons, Jonathan and Ryan, and his daughter Kathleen. He had two granddaughters.

He was buried March 7 in Barrancas National Cemetery (Pensacola NAS) on the nicest day of the year. Pallbearers included Gerald Kelley, Brian McCulley, Herb Broadus and Bob Dingley.

Bob Dingley
Dustoff 100

Thomas F. Doran

Thomas F. Doran died on Dec. 16 after battling cancer.

He was born in St. Louis, MO, on Jan. 6, 1948, to Margaret and John Doran.

After graduating from Brentwood High School, he attended Drury College.

In 1968, he left college to attend Army flight school. Doran was a member of WORWAC flight classes 69-11 and 69-13.

He was assigned as a pilot to the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company "The Black Cats" in Quang Ngai, Vietnam.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Valor and the Air Medal with 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.

After leaving the service, he moved to Oklahoma City.

Doran is survived by his wife Nancy and son Grant Muse.

James Neal Hembree

James Neal Hembree, a retired Artillery lieutenant

colonel, died Feb. 19 at Fort Walton Beach, FL. He was 67.

Hembree served 22 years in the Army, with combat tours in the Korean and in Vietnam wars.

He received his helicopter wings in 1954 and served in Vietnam with 161st Assault Helicopter Company in 1965-66.

Later assigned to Fort Rucker, AL, Hembree commanded the Student Aviator Battalion and the Tactical Training Division.

He is survived by his wife Betty, son Neal Hembree, and daughter Robin Dieuaide.

Michael S. Lopez

Michael S. Lopez, former press spokesman for the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, died Dec. 15 of a heart attack in a hospital in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

Lopez, 51, died about 2:40 a.m., said his wife, Carolyn Lopez.

Lopez became briefly ill early on Dec. 14, a Saturday, after the visit to the center by Defense Secretary William Perry, who had just addressed the fifth graduating class, the European Stars and Stripes reported.

Carolyn Lopez said that later Saturday, "we called the hospital because he was feeling bad. The paramedics came and worked on him because his blood pressure had dropped extremely low.

"He said he was feeling better as they took him to the hospital. The doctor there said they hoped to save him with the proper drugs. He passed away about 2:30 in the morning."

Carolyn Lopez told the Stars and Stripes doctors believe her husband had suffered a heart attack about 48 hours before the fatal one.

Lopez had been relieved of his duties at the Marshall Center in May and reassigned to another job after alleging of mismanagement and anti-Semitism at the school, the Stars and Stripes reported.

The allegations helped lead to a Defense Department investigation and structural changes at the center, including a new director, the newspaper further said.

Lopez was born in Granite City, IL, on March 9, 1945. After graduating from high school, he attended the Uni-

See TAPS, Page 12

Taps

Continued from Page 11

versity of Missouri, where he studied journalism.

He interrupted his studies to attend Army flight school. Lopez graduated from flight school in 1966 and served as a helicopter pilot on three combat tours in Vietnam, and on special operations missions in Cambodia and Laos.

He held the Distinguished Flying Cross, three awards of the Bronze Star Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, two awards of the Army Commendation Medal, the Good Conduct Medal and 23 awards of the Air Medal, including the "V" valor device.

This was followed by seven years of service in Germany.

On active duty, he became the youngest chief warrant officer 4 in the Army.

Lopez met his wife Carolyn in 1972 and they were married on his birthday, March 9, 1973, at Fort Rucker, AL.

After resigning from the military in 1979, Lopez started work in the civil service in Frankfurt, Germany.

He served as public affairs officer for the 129th Aviation Company in Vietnam, the 10th Aviation Battalion in Vietnam, the 361st Aviation Company in Vietnam, the 52nd Aviation Battalion in Vietnam and the 11th Aviation Battalion in Hanau, Germany.

He also was deputy public affairs officer for the 1st Aviation Brigade, vice president for public affairs, Army Aviation Association of America-Europe; managing editor, U.S. Army Aviation Digest; managing editor/producer

manager, PS Magazine; and supervisory managing editor of SOLDIERS Magazine.

In late 1993, Lopez was selected to become the Marshall Center's public affairs officer.

Charles W. Rhyne

Charles "Chuck" W. Rhyne died in January from a heart attack.

He had just retired from the FAA.

Chuck graduated from flight school in WORWAC 67-1 and was assigned to B/7/17th Air Cav, which was forming at Fort Knox, KY.

The 7/17th deployed to Vietnam in October 1967, ending up at Camp Enari near Pleiku. Chuck served his entire tour with B/7/17th.

Donald J. Werner

Donald J. Werner died in March after a long bout with cancer.

After leaving the Army, Don started his own heavy lift helicopter service, Construction Helicopter, basing out of Michigan.

He had just sold the company in early 1996 and was looking forward to spending more time with family and friends.

Don graduated from flight school in WORWAC 67-1 and was assigned to the 190th Assault Helicopter Company, which was being brought up to strength at Fort Carson, CO.

He deployed with the unit in October 1967 and spent all of his tour flying in support of the 9th Infantry Division in the Delta.

VHPA seeking help in manning booth

The Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) will conduct its annual convention at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville April 23-26.

If any VHPA members plan to attend and are willing to work the VHPA booth during the convention, your help would be appreciated.

VHPA has been given free booth space at the AAAA convention for many years. We continue to gain new members and renewals from attendance at this convention.

If you are in a position to do so, please thank the directors of AAAA for their support. Contact Jack Jordan for scheduling and additional information.

Jack Jordan

(fax)

Committee needs data

The database committee is trying to fill holes in the Army Flight Class Database. If you have any of the following documents, please send copies to Walker A. Jones Jr.,

• Fort Rucker or Fort Hunter graduation programs or orders assigning wings for flight classes: 68-4, 67-10, 67-13, 67-14, 67-26, 68-14, 68-15, 68-24, 68-25, 68-43, 69-2, 69-28, 69-36, 69-38, 69-40, 70-8, 70-10, 70-12, 70-16, 70-22.

• Fort Hunter orders assigning wings for flight classes: 68-13, 68-21, 68-523, 68-524, 69-4, 69-12, 69-22, 69-24, 69-26, 69-30, 69-42, 69-49, 70-6.

• Fort Rucker orders assigning wings for flight classes: 66-10, 66-12, 66-14, 66-16, 66-17, 66-18, 66-20, 66-21, 66-22, 66-23, 66-24, 67-1, 67-7, 67-8, 67-12, 67-15, 67-16, 67-17, 67-18, 67-19, 67-20, 67-24, 68-1, 68-2, 68-5, 68-11, 68-12, 68-13, 68-14, 69-3, 69-4, 69-9, 69-11, 69-12, 69-13, 69-22, 69-24, 69-28, 69-34, 69-40, 69-42, 69-46, 69-50, 70-4, 70-7, 70-8, 70-10, 70-11, 70-12, 70-14, 70-20, 70-21, 70-22, 70-26, 70-28, 70-29, 70-30, 70-32, 70-34, 70-36, 70-39, 70-40, 70-42, 70-43, 70-44, 70-46, 70-48, 70-50, 71-2, 71-4, 71-10, 71-11, 71-12, 71-14, 71-16, 71-18, 71-20, 71-21, 71-22, 71-42, 71-24, 71-34, 71-35, 71-36.

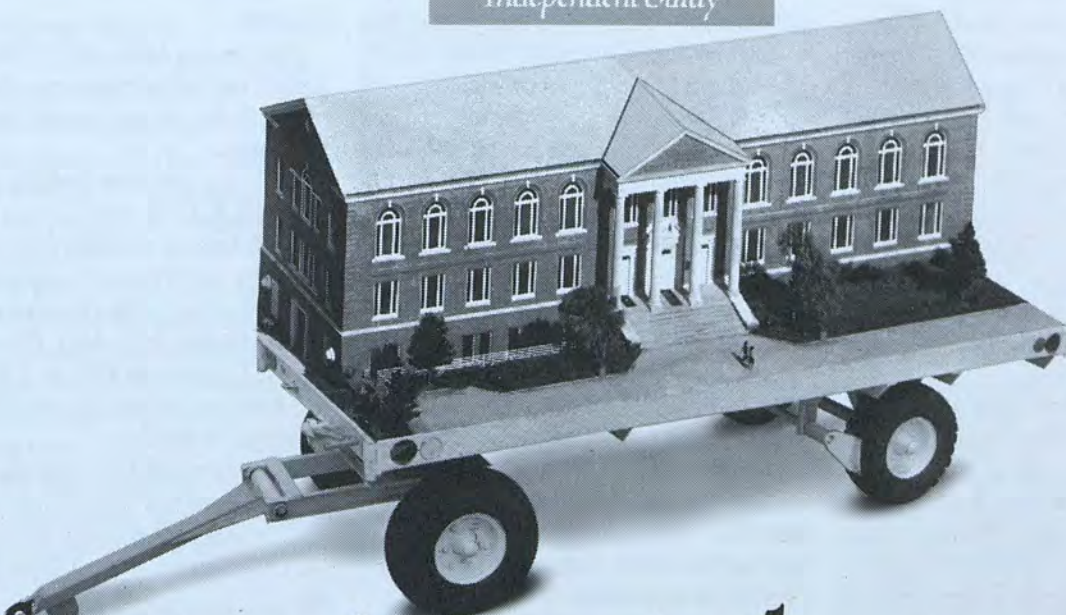
Wings orders were done in several sections, so it typically takes two or three sets of orders to cover a full flight class.

Gary Roush
Chairman

Database Committee

Walker Jones
Member

Database Committee



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VHPA4 4/97

Visiting USMC History Center productive

While enjoying the Veterans Day activities in Washington, DC, I spent a day at the Marine Corps History Center at the Navy Yard and was well rewarded for this effort.

First, I visited with Dr. Jack Shulimson, who is preparing the 1968 edition of the official Marine Corps History of Vietnam.

When this edition is published, the official history for the entire Vietnam era will be complete.

Dr. Shulimson was kind enough to allow me access to the manuscript and to provide me with an early copy of just the command and staff section which lists all the major Marine units in the South Pacific, their commanding officers, and the dates they arrived or departed from the various Marine bases.

It also allows us to "watch" helicopter squadrons leave Vietnam to

join the two SLFs (Special Landing Force) groups that sailed off the coast of Vietnam during this period.

Dr. Shulimson said the current plan is to deliver the manuscript to a government printing office about February and that it should be available to the public about October 1997.

Second, I visited the research section, where I was allowed access to the casualty file on microfilm. This file is organized by conflict (Korean War, Vietnam War, etc.) and then alphabetical by last name.

I was armed with an extract of the VHPA KIA database, specifically a list of the 151 Marines who died in Vietnam in 1968, related to helicopters in some way.

We have been publishing the crew members in the Membership Directory for some time now and slowly we are adding details and linking crews

together.

Five hours later, the VHPA now knows the squadron name and cause of death for all but one of these 151 Marines.

Now we can start linking them to our HELICOPT database to add the aircraft bureau number (tail number in Army lingo) where appropriate.

We also are able to solve one of the mysteries from Maj. Demko's CH-46D crash on Feb. 5, 1968, that has been mentioned in several VHPA Newsletter articles.

The Casualty File records tell us Cpl. Conner was the CE on that aircraft and was the badly burned person Lt. Col. Hunter from VMO-3 picked up.

He died of pneumonia and burns at the U.S.A.F. hospital at Cam Ranh Bay on Feb. 20.

See MARINE, Page 15

Northern California chapter launched at Orangevale meeting

The VHPA-California Chapter North (VHPA-CCN) is up and running. Our first "pre-meeting" was held March 15 at the Orangevale VFW Post 3045.

Fifteen VHPA members gathered to fold, staple, label and almost mutilate our first newsletter. Dues was set at \$10 per year to fund the mailing and other miscellaneous costs: Incorporation of the chapter, publication of the constitution and by-laws, etc.



Mailed to 610 potential members in northern California and northern Nevada, Jay Riseden did a fine job getting the first newsletter together. He and Ken Fritz just about fried wife Marcia Fritz's copy machine doing four sides of the 610 issues!

Mike Nord reported on the incorporation papers; Wayne Coe is working

on the chapter outing, a salmon fishing trip out of San Francisco; and Ken Lindstrom did his usual terrific job of keeping us all fiscally responsible.

Inexpensive refreshments were available by the courteous staff of the VFW canteen and we all had a very good meeting.

Membership is open to any member in good standing in the VHPA. The VFW offered free use of their hall for our meetings, so the first "real" meeting, wherein we will elect officers, is set for April 12 at the Orangevale VFW Post [REDACTED].

Future meetings will be held wherever we have an event or a local sponsor. Currently the chapter's office address is Ken Fritz's, but this may change, according to Ken. Fritz can be reached at [REDACTED].

The California Chapter North already has a site on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.hooked.net/~panda/ta/ccn.html>

Procedure

Running for office in VHPA?

The names of VHPA members who want to run for VHPA office should be submitted to the Nominating Committee chairman (NCC) prior to the reunion.

Nominations will be accepted at the reunion.

However, all nominees must be interviewed by the NCC before the NCC submits the ballot to the Executive Council.

No nomination will be accepted later than 1800 hours on the day prior to the annual business meeting.

Nominations should be sent to:

Bob Johnson

Chairman

Nominating Committee

[REDACTED]

Marine reports provide interesting details

Continued from Page 14

Third, I reestablished my contacts with the Archives Section and obtained the first installment of Command Chronologies for the Marine helicopter groups (MAGs), which were about the same size as an Army aviation battalion.

MAG-16 chronologies for January and February 1968 provided some interesting details that will appear in the Historical Reference Directory.

We already knew HMH-463 brought the first CH-53A's to Vietnam in early 1967, that they flew their first operational mission on Jan. 13 and reported their first battle damage on the 17th.

The VHPA HELICOP database shows 150 battle damage records for HMH-463 aircraft through Jan. 7, 1968, but no losses.

It is all starting to come together now.

Here is an example of some of the things we now know about HMH-463 for this period.

Its first CH-53 loss occurred on Jan. 8, 1968, when YH-37 crashed into a mountain 18 miles south of Dong Ha with a crew of 5 and 36 passengers while on an IFR flight.

The weather was terrible and it wasn't until the 11th that search teams found the crash site.

The bodies were finally recovered on the 19th, when a recon team was

Aboard the CH-53 when it flew out of Dong Ha, 11 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone, Monday were 36 Marines . . .

inserted.

Recently, Les Hines from the Americal Association sent the VHPA a batch of Pacific Stars and Stripes articles that relate to helicopters.

The one for Monday Jan. 15, 1968, carries the headlines "No Sign of Life in Copter Crash" and reads:

SAIGON (AP) — Monsoon rains and dangerous down drafts blocked search parties Saturday from flying into rugged terrain in the far north of South Vietnam where a big CH-53 helicopter crashed Monday with 41 Americans aboard.

An Air Force rescue helicopter crew that defied the heavy weather Friday and hovered over the crash site for a few minutes reported no sign of life.

The U.S. Command disclosed Saturday that the helicopter had crashed Monday. The wreckage was first spot-

ted Friday.

It declined to give a detailed report because "additional information might endanger the lives of the survivors, if there are any."

Communist guerrillas are known to operate in the area. Aboard the CH-53 when it flew out of Dong Ha, 11 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone, Monday were 36 Marines, including the five-man crew, three sailors, one soldier and one civilian employee of the U.S. Army's post exchange system.

Marine officers said the hump-backed helicopter — the largest troop-carrying chopper in service in Vietnam — crashed into the almost vertical side of a mountain while heading toward Phu Bai, 49 miles south of Dong Ha.

If all of the occupants were killed, it would be the most disastrous helicopter crash of the war.

About 1,250 Allied helicopters have been shot down, shelled or accidentally crashed in South Vietnam, but the U.S. Command did not have statistics available immediately on other heavy-casualty crashes.

Slowly but surely, the VHPA is gathering historical information for many sources for presentation in the Historical Reference Directory.

— Mike Law

Directory and Database committees

Mini-reunions

187th AHC

Former crew members of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company "Blackhawks," "Crusaders" and "Ratpack" will holding their 30th birthday party in Orlando from 1-4 p.m. July 3.

Contact: John Quesenberry at () or fax (). Alternate contact is Art "Killer" Cline at: ()

Members who want a T-shirt should provide Quesenberry or Cline their shirt size.

Space has been reserved for 187th AHC photos and memorabilia.

192nd AHC

The 192nd Assault Helicopter Company "Polecats" and "Tigersharks" will hold a mini-reunion from 1-4 p.m. on July 3 during the VHPA Reunion in Orlando.

Contact: Roger W. Mitchell, ()

Orlando mini reunions

- Thursday, July 3, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Saturday, July 5, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Contact Ken Mulholland to reserve a specific time/meeting room and any video equipment needed.

Work ()

Fax ()

Calendar of events for Reunion '97

Wednesday, July 2

All day — Transportation from airport to Resort. (Mears Transportation)
 8 a.m.-8 p.m. — Registration. (Yellowtail B)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Unit and chapter memorabilia. (Coral Ballroom)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — VHPA Historical Database and Banquet seating. (Yellowtail A)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Tour and attraction desk. (Registration area)
 1 p.m.-5 p.m. — Vendor displays. (Wedgewood Ballroom)
 5 p.m.-8 p.m. — No-host Early Bird reception. (Atrium)
 8 p.m.-??? — Renew friendships. (Dolphins Lounge)

Thursday, July 3

7 a.m.-11 a.m. — Golf. Transportation departs at 6:30 a.m.
 8 a.m.-8 p.m. — Registration. (Yellowtail B)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Tour and attraction desk. (Wedgewood area)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Unit and chapter memorabilia (Coral Ballroom).

8 a.m.-5 p.m. — VHPA Database and Banquet seating. (Yellowtail A)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Vendor displays. (Wedgewood Ballroom)
 10 a.m.-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions.
 6 p.m.-8 p.m. — Reception. Ticket required. (Atrium)
 8 p.m.-?? — Renew friendships. (Dolphins Lounge)

Friday, July 4

This is a very busy day, we need your help to keep things moving.
 7 a.m.-1 p.m. — Parade. This will be held in Brandon FL, a 1 1/2 -hour drive. It is the only parade in the area. Need a good count to arrange transportation.
 8 a.m.-8 p.m. — Registration. (Yellowtail A)
 8 a.m. 3 p.m. — VHPA Historical Database and Banquet seating. (Yellowtail B)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Vendor displays. (Wedgewood Ballroom)
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Unit and chapter memorabilia. (Coral Ballroom)
 4 p.m.-10 p.m. — Sea World. Tickets required. Buffet will be served.

10 p.m. — Fireworks at Sea World.

Saturday, July 5

7 a.m.-8 a.m. — 5k Run. Depart from front of Resort.
 8 a.m.-4 p.m. — Registration. (Yellowtail B)
 8 a.m.-4 p.m. — Vendors displays (Wedgewood Ballroom)
 8 a.m.-4 p.m. — VHPA Historical Database and Banquet seating. (Yellowtail A)
 9 a.m.-11 a.m. — Business Meeting. (Crystal Ballroom A)
 9 a.m.-11 a.m. — Ladies Social. (Crystal Ballroom B)
 11 a.m.-4 p.m. — Mini-reunions. Units and times will be posted.
 11 a.m.-4 p.m. — Helicopter rides at rear of resort. Reduced rate.
 6 p.m.-9 p.m. — Banquet. Ticket required. Arrange seating at registration. (Convention Center)

Sunday, July 6

Buses depart for airport all day.
 8:30 a.m. — Church Service. Room to be posted.

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 Number In Party: _____ Names: _____ / _____ / _____
 Departure Date: _____ Departure Time: _____ Return Date: _____ Return Departure Time: _____
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UNITED AIRLINES

Continental Airlines

Alamo

Reunion '97 in Orlando draws near

DON LONG

ORLANDO, FL — The reunion is coming! The reunion is coming!

We're not Paul Revere, but the urgency is almost the same.

First, when you arrive at LZ Orlando, starting on July 2, you can visit the Coral Ballroom in the Renaissance Orlando Resort to view unit and chapter memorabilia.

Or you can look up old friends by tapping into the VHPA database in Yellowtail Room A.

While you are in this area, it would be a good time to select your banquet seating.

Then, if you haven't already found a buddy and started your "... there I was at 20 feet ..." stories, you can visit the vendor displays in the Wedgewood Ballroom and the Tour and Attraction Desk in the resort's registration area.

Transportation to any attraction is available from the resort, which is located at 6677 Sea Harbor Drive in Orlando. You can always drive yourself, if you want, and there will be many locals available to help you find the best "VFR" route.

Pilots, wives and guests can enjoy themselves at the no-host Early Bird reception from 5-8 p.m. in the Atrium. Food will be available on a cash basis.

Later, everyone can meet in the

To reserve a room at the Renaissance Orlando Resort, call:

1-800-HOTELS-1

If you have any problems booking a room, notify reunion chairman Jim Basta at () .

Dolphins Lounge to renew old friendships and make new ones.

The next day — July 3 — golfers will assemble at 6:30 a.m. so they can be taken to the beautiful International Golf Course several miles from reunion headquarters.

Mini-reunions will be conducted from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Then you will have time to rest briefly before the reception begins at 6 p.m. in the Atrium.

A band will play during the two-hour reception, which requires a ticket.

July 4 is a very busy day at LZ Orlando. We will be departing at 7 a.m. for a 1½-hour bus trip to Brandon, FL, for the parade.

If you want to have fun, represent the greatest group of people in the world, not to mention the world's best pilots, and feel good about life, don't miss this parade.

Be sure to bring your flight suit, if

it still fits.

We're trying to arrange getting fed in Brandon before returning to reunion headquarters at 1 p.m.

After the flight touches down back at the hotel, starting around 4 p.m., we can attend the fantastic Sea World barbecue and show, and then see the fireworks at 10 p.m. Tickets are available for the barbecue and show.

On July 5, the traditional 5k run will begin about 7 a.m.

From 9-11 a.m., the ladies social will be held in the Crystal Ballroom while the pilots attend the annual business meeting, in another area of the Crystal Ballroom. Tickets are required for the ladies social.

Following the social and business meeting, helicopter rides will be offered until 4 p.m. from the rear of the resort.

The day will be topped off with the annual banquet at 6 p.m. in the Convention Center.

The following morning, a church service will be held, starting at 8:30.

We hope many of you will opt to stay over in Orlando to enjoy the many attractions in the area.

Pack your bags and file your flight plan for Orlando. See you in July!

EDITOR'S NOTE: For a view of the rooms at the Renaissance Orlando Resort, along with a list of the hotel's features, visit the VHPA website at <http://www.vhpa.org/>

Directions to Reunion '97 headquarters

Driving directions to the Renaissance Orlando Resort

• **From Orlando International Airport:** Take Bee Line expressway (Highway 528) westbound. Travel about 9 miles, take Exit No. 1 (Sea World). Turn left onto International Drive. (Be careful, there is no traffic light).

Go past Westwood Boulevard to next intersection, Sea Harbor Drive. Turn right, the Resort is about one-half mile on the right.

• **From the north on I-75:** South of Ocala near Wildwood, exit left onto the Florida Turnpike. Go south approximately 50-55 miles to the I-4 Interchange.

Go west (Tampa/Disney) on I-4. Take Exit 28 (High-

way 528, Sea World, International Airport). Take Highway 528 (Bee Line) to the next exit, Sea World Exit No. 1 (International Drive).

Turn left about one-quarter mile to Sea Harbor Drive. Turn right, the Resort will be on your right.

• **From Orlando/north on I-4:** Take Exit No. 28, follow above directions.

• **From Tampa, eastbound I-4:** Take Exit No. 27A. Take second left (Sea Harbor Drive). Resort will be on your left.

There is no eastbound reentry onto I-4 at Exit No. 27A. Take International Drive east to reenter I-4 at Exit No. 28.

Theme park puts you in the movies

ORLANDO, FL — If you've ever dreamed of breaking into the movies, call your agent immediately.

Your travel agent, that is. Because now, thanks to creative consultant Steven Spielberg and the motion picture magic of Universal Studios Florida, you can really feel, see, hear, touch, smell, taste and thrill to the fun and adventure of being up there on screen, behind-the-scenes, on camera and in the center of moviedom.

King Kong is waiting for you on the set, so get your Studio Pass and rush your family through the Studio Gates, pronto! Or we may have to send the Big Ape over to pick you up.

After 75 years of making motion picture history, Universal knows the meaning of colossal, spectacular, thrilling and unforgettable. And you'll really see what we mean from the moment you walk past the Universal Globe to enter the studio front gates.

It's Hollywood — but Hollywood as you've never dreamed it before, shimmering and sparkling with star quality in the Florida sun.

As you walk along Rodeo Drive, Hollywood Boulevard and the world-famous Walk of Fame — where your favorite stars' names are immortalized in the sidewalk — you know you're in the middle of the biggest, most lavish, most exciting production ever conceived.

This is a real working studio, the largest outside of Hollywood, and the more than 40 spectacular sets you see all around you are full-scale recreations of scenes from the most famous movies ever made.

On any given day, these sets may be used as the locations for upcoming box-office hits. So, watch out for crashing helicopters, high-speed boat



Soaring 60 feet through the air, this stunt boat driver feels the heat from the 2,000-degree wall of fire at Universal's spectacular stunt show.

chases and unexpected explosions.

The Studio's 444-acre backlot, a director's dream, encompassing magnificent locales, from the sidewalks of New York to the streets of San Francisco and Fisherman's Wharf, from a New England village to Gramercy Park, from the Garden of Allah to Angkor Wat. The realism of the surroundings intensifies the thrill of each experience.

Escape a Kongfrontation on the streets of New York. You survive Earthquake, The Big One at the Embarcadero in San Francisco, not far from landmarks like Ghirardelli Square and Golden Gate Park.

The thin line between reality and fantasy seems to disappear as you dodge 3-D hunter killers alongside Arnold Schwarzenegger in Termina-

tor 2 3-D, soar home on a star-bound bike with E.T. to save his planet in E.T. Adventure, and scream through the shower at Alfred Hitchcock: The Art of Making Movies.

Even when the mystery is explained in the "Murder, She Wrote" Mystery Theatre . . . even when monsters are unmasked at The Gory, Gruesome & Grotesque Horror Make-Up Show . . . even when the director yells "Cut!" and you realize you were just playing a part in an earth-shattering Earthquake . . . you can't believe your eyes.

Take the ride of your life in the most intense and enveloping multi-sensory motion picture experience possible when Doc Brown blasts you and your friends through the space/time continuum on Back to the Future . . . The Ride, based on the famous movie trilogy.

Or survive the relentless all-out attack of JAWS as a 32-foot great white shark stalks you on the most terrifying boat ride ever!

Recapture the thrill and adventure of some of cinema's most memorable Western films as guns blaze, bullwhips crack, glass shatters and fists fly at the daring "Wild, Wild, Wild West Stunt Show."

Or grab your life preserver and stand back from the guard rail — Universal Studios Florida's "Dynamite Nights Stuntacular" is the ultimate thrill-a-minute stunt show extravaganza featuring daredevil boat pilots, amazing pyrotechnics and a 60-foot stunt boat jump through a three-story inferno of raging fire.

But even a star can't survive on thrills alone. Take lunch with the stars at the backlot Studio Stars Restaurant. Enjoy an ice cream float or sip a soda at Schwab's Pharmacy.

Fly to reunion, drive home in car

It won't be long. The Orlando Reunion is now in its final count-down.

For those of you who plan on flying to the reunion, you may want to consider a reservation for a one-way ticket.

This year you can enjoy the ride home in an elegant, 1997 Chrysler Sebring JXi.

This is the next best thing to a Huey with the doors removed and flying through the air at 90 knots. It really can't get any better.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to buy one, two, three or more tickets and win this fabulous GRAND PRIZE.

You may be thinking you can only afford one ticket. Well, get the office crew together, your flight crew or any crew, and pool your funds. It may be hard to split the car, but an option is to split the MONEY.

Your option, if you choose it, is to accept \$22,000, in place of the car. Not a bad day's work.

Should you win the car, you will be the proud owner of a 1997 Sebring with an approximate retail value of \$25,000, FOB Orlando, FL. Taxes, fees and title not included. Void where prohibited by law.

Mission details: Sponsored by the VHPA, a nonprofit organization. Help yourself and the VHPA.

Net proceeds go into the VHPA general fund.

Should you win the car, you will be the proud owner of a 1997 Sebring with an approximate retail value of \$25,000, FOB Orlando, FL.

Tickets are a donation of \$100 each. Only 500 tickets are to be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is no limit to how many tickets you can buy, but there can be only one name per ticket.

Yes, your spouses, girlfriends and children over 18 of VHPA members may purchase tickets. The deadline is June 1. After that, the tickets will go on sale to the general public.

The GRAND PRIZE winner, second place finisher and 14th place finisher will be announced at the banquet on July 5.

Winners of the other prizes will be posted next to the morning report the next day.

You need not be present to win, but you are responsible for picking up and transporting the vehicle (I do have it from reliable sources that an Orlando volunteer would agree to drive it anywhere, tough job).

If you choose the cash, a check will be sent to you.

Mission prizes

- **First ticket:** GRAND PRIZE or \$22,000 cash.
- **Second ticket:** \$500
- **Third-13th tickets draw:** \$100
- **Fourteenth ticket:** Life membership in VHPA, if eligible, and a \$50 gift certificate or \$450 cash and a \$50 gift certificate.
- **Fifteenth-50th tickets drawn:** \$100 each.

Mission Impossible ? Not at all. A one in 10 chance of winning. To start this mission, you need a ticket! CALL: (800) 505-8472 (VHPA) or fax (916) 648-1072 with your Visa, MasterCard or mail requests with check or money order to:

VHPA

949 University Ave., Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95825

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to dealer's inventory, all the options indicated above may not be available. The VHPA has the right to award a car similar to the one described above. If the value of the car is less than \$25,000, the VHPA has the right to make up the difference in cash or other prizes. The VHPA has the right to return all monies if at least 300 tickets for the raffle are not sold by the day of the drawing.

Sebring JXi comes with a 2.5-liter engine

Don't miss your chance!

Drive home this year in a 1997 Chrysler Sebring JXi, this year's GRAND PRIZE, which is worth more than \$25,000.

Edmund's Review says: "After two short years of production, Chrysler improves its already attractive Chrysler Sebring. This sports convertible carries four occupants in comfort, with reasonable performance abilities and suave good looks."

The Sebring JXi comes with a 2.5-liter V-6. To enhance its already good looks, it now comes with touring tires, 16-inch cast-aluminum wheels with anti-lock disc brakes.

It even gets better with dual air bags, air conditioning, power door locks, power windows, illuminated visor vanity mirrors, dual heated power outside mirrors, auto-dimming rear view mirror, Infinity stereo with cassette and CD player and eight speakers, six-way power adjustable, low back bucket seats with driver lumbar adjustment, tilt steering, remote keyless entry, center console with dual cup holder and supple leather seats.

When it comes to leaving the 1997 reunion, why not do it in style?

Fly to Orlando — and plan to drive home.

— Bob Smith

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

14th Annual Reunion Orlando, FL July 1-6, 1997

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 6/1/97*		@ \$ 25.00	
Registration after 6/1/97*		@ \$ 35.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX	
Early Bird Party (July 2)		No host	
Reception (July 3)		@ \$ 25.00	
Sea World & Barbecue (July 4):			
Adults		@ \$ 55.00	
Children under 12 years of age		@ \$ 40.00	
Ladies Social (July 5)		@ \$ 20.00	
Banquet (July 5)		@ \$ 35.00	
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 3, 8 a.m. Includes prizes.)
Cost: \$50. Limit: 72 players.

Teen Dance:
(July 2.)

Tennis Tour:
(July 3.)

Parade:
(July 4.)

5k Run:
(July 5.)

T-shirts:

Qty.	Size	Price
	S	@ \$12.00
	M	@ \$12.00
	L	@ \$12.00
	XL	@ \$12.00
	XXL	@ \$15.00
	XXXL	@ \$15.00
	Sidebar total	

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

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '97"
- ☐ Please charge my MasterCard or VISA card (circle one)

**Questions? Call
(800) 505-VHPA**

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 before reunion. Basic registration fees are not refundable. All refund requests must be sent to VHPA headquarters before Aug. 8, 1997, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events that lose money. VHPA headquarters will process and pay refund requests within 10 days of completing the reunion account balancing.

Second medevac trip even wilder than first

STANLEY C. MARCIESKI
DUSTOFF 97

The second trip into the site was more of the same, only more violent, as we started taking fire the instant the aircraft dropped into position. It was a wilder ride, with the volume cranked up to the max.

How we got that JP to the ground through that fire and the grunts managed to strap their wounded buddy on is a tribute to the bird, her crew and the grunts — with more than a good measure of luck thrown in.

This time it was Jim Zwit's turn to take a helicopter ride. Helping Zwit onto the swaying jungle penetrator was Bob Gervaci. Gervaci said it was something of a relief when the DUSTOFF birds came in because the NVA then directed all their fire at the hovering helicopters.

His eyes followed Zwit as he ascended on the cable toward our aircraft and he watched in fascination as a cone of green tracers seemed to envelope our bird.

Again, at the height of this tension, slow motion seemed to envelop everything as my eyes burned into the gauges and my whole being willed them not to move.

I could swear there were things floating through the cockpit, but before I had a chance to think about

that, the aircraft bolted nose down and forward. The force of the forward movement and the natural tendency for a pilot to keep his eyes on the horizon jerked my head up.

I was not looking up at the greenhouse window, I was looking through the greenhouse window level with the horizon. What I saw froze in my

Part 3 of series

memory as my mind screamed that I was about to die.

Something had exploded close behind and below us. The force of the explosion thrust the tail of 460 upward and caused such a nose-down attitude Fred had no choice but to pull pitch in an attempt to recover control or crash. The helicopter was headed out of its hover at a high rate of speed without a second to warn anybody.

As the aircraft blasted up and forward, the sight that greeted my bulging eyeballs through the greenhouse window was a blacked-out Cobra charging out of the smoke, fog and low-hanging clouds directly at us from the left.

We were about to have a mid-air collision with that Cobra and it flashed in my brain that there was no

way we were going to avoid tangling our blades with his skids. Seemingly only feet apart, I braced for the imminent impact. It never came.

To this day, I never will know why we missed that Cobra and plunged into the clouds, escaping the pickup site once more, but we did.

On that trip, we brought out with us another wounded Grunt (Jim Zwit) who, dangling 20 feet below the aircraft, had a wild ride through the treetops and gunfire. He picked up a few branches and bruises before the crew hauled him aboard.

His injuries from ploughing through treetops at our speed were minor compared to the holes in his chest. The crew of DUSTOFF 913 delivered him safely to the 85th Evac and I believe his only comment was, "Why'd you drag me through the trees?"

Poor guy did have leaves and branches stuck in him. Less than two weeks later two blacked-out Cobras had a mid-air over T-Hawk and all four pilots died.

Having been more than lucky so far and with the Huey having no serious combat damage, we decided to go back and give it another try.

The third time was the charm

See *EXTRACTION*, Page 22

Mini-reunions

Here is the VHPA mini-reunion schedule at Reunion '97 in Orlando so far:

Thursday, July 3

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. — 227th Avn Bn, Mike Rudd/Herb Nagel.

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. A Co, 25th Avn, Little Bears, Jim Kelly.

1-2:50 p.m. — 7/17th Cav, Jim Culley.

3-3:50 p.m. — 7/17th Boat, Jim Culley.

4-5 p.m. — 7/17th A Trp, Jim Culley.

1-3:50 p.m. — 187th AHC, John Quisenberry

1-2:50 p.m. — 176th AHC, Ken Fritz

1-3:50 p.m. — 192nd AHC, Woody Mitchell

2-5 p.m. — 174th AHC, Jim McDaniel

Saturday, July 5

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. — Class 67-5, Mike Oleary, Jay Riseden

11 a.m.-4 p.m. — 361st ACE, Jack Jordan

2-4 p.m. — Class 62-8, Ken Loveless

1-2:50 p.m. — 119th Avn Co/81st Trans, Bob Heisterman

2-4 p.m. — 48th AHC, Bill Kelbaugh

Room names will be published at the reunion.

Master planner/scheduler for mini-reunions is:

Ken Mulholland

(work)

(fax)

(home)

Extraction made on top of bunker complex

Continued from Page 21

because the groundfire was so intense and conditions so bad it was impossible to make further extractions and C&C canceled further ops until first light.

Four Eagle DUSTOFF birds, including us, received combat damage and one pilot was wounded at that site. We each received the Distinguished Flying Cross for our work that night. (The battalion awards officer said later that we, the crew of 913, had been put in for the Silver Star, but it had been downgraded by battalion headquarters because we should not have flown red X'd 460)

When General Tarply, the division commander, presented the DFCs, he said why things had been so hot that night. We were extracting wounded on top of an NVA regiment's underground bunker complex.

The 101st had been looking for that regiment during the previous six

weeks. D Company found them and lost eight KIA and 14 WIA.

Tarply presented my DFC, moved to the next guy in formation, then came back to me. While passing a coin to me he said, "I forgot your Brave Eagle coin. This and 10 . . . no, 50 cents will buy you a cup of coffee in the 'World.'"

* * * *

During the next 10 days, Fred and I pulled duty together a couple of times. I gained a great deal of respect for Fred's abilities as a pilot while I learned more about the AO.

On the 10th day, I was pulling duty with CW2 Rich Di Boye. Late in the day, we were alerted for a mission that was somewhat garbled in content when it was passed to us.

The mission request was to pick up a wounded crew chief. A wounded crew chief on the ground was rather

odd. It had to mean the crew chief was either wounded and left on the ground, had fallen out of his aircraft, his aircraft had crashed — or all three.

The coordinates indicated the location was on the edge of the A Shau Valley. We saddled up and headed for the Valley.

After clearing with arty, we tuned in to the tac push. That was when we heard the whisper. "This is 'Two-zero Foxtrot.' There's 15 more of them coming up the trail toward you." The sound of that whisper was so very different that an immediate change took place in the crew. We became serious in a heartbeat.

I, for one, was wishing we had not popped off the front doors because I did not like the idea of being a more visible target in a hot LZ.

It was evident the situation on the
See DUSTOFF, Page 23

IV Corps History in 1997 directory

About a dozen VHPAers responded to the article in the last Newsletter announcing the History Section of the 1997 VHPA Membership Directory will be devoted to the helicopter history of IV Corps.

The Outlaws and Mavericks (175th AHC) and the Warriors and T-Birds (336th AHC) are especially well-represented, as are the Jayhawks and Stingrays from the 9th Avn Bn.

The "original owner" of Tuffy, the Soc Trang Tiger, called and we have a source for a great photo of the Wagonwheel. Does anyone know the grid coordinates for that?

The 1970 publication Vinh Long provides a powerful narrative of the Battle on Easter Sunday. We are certain the Knights (114th AHC), the Blackhawks (7/1st Cav), and the Seawolfs (HA(L)-3) associations will provide lots of material.

We could really use some input from the Warwagons (D/3/5th Cav, 9th Inf), the Vikings and Tigers (121st AHC), the various Dustoff units, the CH-47 companies (the 147th and 271st), the CABs (the 13th, 214th, and 307th), and from the 164th Group. Indeed, input from anyone who flew in the Delta area is welcome.

Contact Mike Law, Directory editor, [REDACTED]

(fax).

Viet Nam Today

Experience the country at peace!

A tour exclusively designed for Viet Nam Veteran Pilots visiting important military sites including Birmingham, Bastogne, Ashau (Tabat), Khe Sanh, Laotian Border, Vandy, Rockpile, DMZ, Camp Evans, LZ Sally, Hue, Phu Bai, and Camp Eagle.

September 19 - October 3, 1997

\$3195 per person

(all inclusive with international air)

Additional tour highlights include:

- Informal meetings with Viet Nam Veteran counterparts
- Exploring Cu Chi tunnels
- Snorkeling in Nha Trang
- Climbing Danang's Marble Mountain
- Delivering in-kind donations to an orphanage in a Montagnard village
- Overnighting in the Ashau Valley
- Golf in Hanoi



*Optional in-country helicopter tour under construction
---call for more information!*

SPACE IS LIMITED!

For further information or detailed itinerary

CALL 800-419-4446

Tour Exclusively Designed by
GLOBAL SPECTRUM + Viet Nam Travel Specialists

Dustoff makes trip without taking a round

Continued from Page 22

ground was deadly. C&C and guns were on their way to provide support and we circled some distance away waiting for our clearance to go in. Per 101st Division orders, DUSTOFF was required to have gun coverage for all hoist and in-contact missions. They were definitely in-contact and the voice on the ground told us there was no way we could come in yet.

It was not a pleasant wait because we had a ringside seat to a situation where GI's were in desperate trouble. We were ready and willing to help, but were not permitted to go in.

Circling, we watched the show and the drama develop with the Cobras rolling in hot on the area. We continued to wait for clearance to go in. After a period of time, it was evident that with our fuel burning up, we would not be able to remain on station for much longer.

Somehow, I do not recall whether we called for another DUSTOFF, or if C&C did, but Fred Behrens appeared on the scene and relieved us to go refuel.

While we were refueling, Fred received clearance to go in and pick up wounded. Covered by the Cobras and without a recognized shot being fired at him by the bad guys, 913 flew in, picked up wounded and left the LZ without taking a round. We passed him on the way back to the pickup site as he was taking his patients to the 85th Evac.

Arriving back on site, we were again put on hold and began to circle out of the way as the Cobras and a Canberra bomber worked the area over.

While we refueled, one of the units from division attempted an insertion. Two of their aircraft were hit and the lift diverted from the ridge line LZ to the valley floor. The grunts were inserted there and began moving toward the ridge several clicks to the northeast.

Again our crew made circles in the sky as we watched the action and waited for our cue to try a rescue attempt. To make matters worse as

As Fred touched down in the LZ, the aircraft came under heavy fire . . . The aircraft was dead in the LZ.

night began to settle, a billowing black cotton wall preceded by lightning was moving from the south rolling up the A Shau directly for us.

With fuel again running low, it did not take long for us to realize that if we were to make the rescue attempt, it would have to be now. Once that storm hit any hopes of getting in would be gone.

We contacted C&C and, with only minutes to spare before the monster storm hit, he agreed to allow us to make the attempt.

About that time Fred came back up on the net and was telling us the LZ was small and very sloped. We would only be able to put down one skid. Then he said, "I've been in once already. I know the way, so I'll go ahead on in." Diboye agreed and Fred headed for the LZ in the rapidly deteriorating weather.

A couple of minutes passed and we heard nothing from Fred. I tried calling on our internal fox mike with no success. Then we heard Fred on the guard radio frequency, "We crashed in the LZ, but we are all right."

In truth, this crew of 913 was far from all right. As Fred touched down in the LZ, the aircraft came under heavy fire. The crewchief was killed instantly by a round through the head, Fred was shot in the ankle and the Huey took an RPG in the compression section. The aircraft was dead in the LZ.

Seconds later, all hell broke loose as the storm hit, scattering all the aircraft that had come to support this

mission.

The storm was bad enough. Coupled with the chance of having a mid-air with another aircraft as we punched into the clouds made the situation even more life-threatening for all of us. We lost the chance to rescue Fred and his crew that night.

As our aircraft went into the clouds, we climbed and headed due north. North because in that part of Vietnam the country bends in such a direction that a northerly heading will take you out to the coast and not across the DMZ.

Without the doors on, it became very cold and wet as we climbed. This Huey was equipped with a non-operational transponder, a nonoperational VOR and an operational ADF. In other words, we were pretty much on our own as far as getting back to Mother Earth in safety.

Eventually, with our fuel getting very low and not able to be painted on radar by approach control, one of the crew saw what looked like a large fire down below. With few options to choose, we spiraled down toward the fire.

The 20-minute fuel light was burning as we came out of the clouds just shy of the DMZ. Low-leveling to a refueling point, we were thankful for our luck but very concerned about the crew of DUSTOFF 913.

Jumping over power lines through the fog and rain down Highway 1, we arrived back at Eagle DUSTOFF. We debriefed at ops and tried to find out what was going on back in the A Shau. They had very little information.

As the next day wore on, DUSTOFF 913's situation became grim. The only good news was that Madison, the pet pilot, somehow escaped. Apparently he and a Ranger were told to make a break for it when the Cobras rolled in hot. They took the chance and Madison made it into the arms of the troops fighting their way up the hill to the LZ.

NEXT: A surprise rescue.

Call can flesh out historical data

For some time now, the Directory and the Database committees have been soliciting data to add to the VHPA's databases that are used to prepare the Historical Reference Directory.

Many VHPAers and VHCMAers have called and sent information. We want the membership to see just how much one telephone call can effect the quality of our history data.

This was how the data would have been presented BEFORE the phone call:

This is a "solo" battle damage record in the HELICOPT database.

3 September 69, US Army, helicopter battle damage, CH-47B No. 67-18473, 1 fatality.

Details: Was on a direct combat support combat assault hot area mission, during the take-off pickup zone, took 2 hits from B-40 rocket and B-40 rocket type exploding weapon which hit the nose, right forward fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

This is a "solo" pilot KIA record in the KIAMAIN database.

3 September 69, US Army, helicopter pilot CW3 Dean Richard died from Hostile Fire, C Co 288th Avn 1st Cav, location (Phuoc Long, South Vietnam).

Reason and cause of death: Killed because of hostile action, aircraft lost or crashed.

After recording the information provided by Gary Myers:

3 September 69, US Army, helicopter battle damage, CH-47B No. 67-18473, C Co 288th Avn 1st Cav, Phuoc Long Province, III Corps, 1 fatality.

Crew: Aircraft Commander CW3 Dean Richard Lange had fatal injuries. Pilot Capt. Mohler, Flight Engineer Spec. 5 P. McGowan, Crew Chief Spec. 4 G.A. Myers.

Details: Was on a direct combat support combat assault hot area mission, during the takeoff pickup zone, took 2 hits from B-40 rocket type exploding weapon which hit the nose, right forward fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was recovered to LZ Caldwell and repaired at Phuoc Vinh, then repaired in theater and evacuated.

Additional Details: 473 was the lead ship in a flight of three C/228th CH-47s that were extracting ARVNs. I was the CE and manned the M-60 position at the right door. I believe the NVA started mortaring the PZ when we landed.

I could hear loud explosions over the noise of the Chinooks. About the time our aircraft was almost fully loaded, the ARVNs panicked and started charging the aircraft. While the gunner and I were getting the ARVNs seated, the FE, Spec. 5

Pete McGowan, was standing on the ground near the back ramp. Somehow he stopped the mob and got back on the helicopter.

As CW3 Dean R. Lange, the AC, picked the aircraft up to a low hover, a few ARVNs fell or jumped off. At about a 30-foot hover, he started a left pedal turn. I believe there was an obstacle of some sort that prevented us from departing straight out of the PZ.

I was standing at the right door. The lower half was closed and the upper half was stored in its overhead track. My M-60 pintle mounted and pointed forward out the door. Like the other crew members, I was watching outside for any obstructions and talking to the cockpit.

As we were making this turn, I saw an NVA soldier stand to our front. He was wearing a helmet and had something on his shoulder. There was a flash, then a puff of white smoke and I saw this corkscrew smoke trail coming at us. I could not swing the M-60 forward enough or had the time to return fire.

The B-40 rocket came through the windshield but did not

See B-40 ROCKET, Page 25

VHPA briefs

Volume II of History Book planned

The VHPA has again teamed with Turner Publishers to produce Volume II of the VHPA History Book.

If you were in Volume I of this book, you can resubmit/update your biography and photo, you can recount your favorite story or you can submit photos for inclusion. Please give us a caption for the photo.

All photos will be returned. Be sure to put a sticker on the back with your name, address and telephone number.

You do not have to buy the book to be included, but it is of historical importance that you be included.

We do not have plans to do this every few years. It's too much work for the volunteers involved and, honestly, you must admit time is running out for all of us.

VHPA seeks copies of patches

The VHPA Unit Patch Project archive continues to grow, with 480 items cataloged. Many helicopter units are not yet represented in the collection.

The goal of the project is to obtain a laser color copy of each Vietnam helicopter unit patch, including those used at platoon and detachment level.

The collection copies will be used as a historical reference and as the subject of a future publication.

Take a minute to review the unit patch inventory beginning on Page 239 of the 1996 VHPA Membership Directory.

See if patches you have are listed. If not, make an actual size, laser color copy of the patch at your local copy store and send to Directory Committee member Jay Riseden, [REDACTED].

Inquiries may be sent to the same address or e-mail [REDACTED]

B-40 rocket passed through the pilot

Continued from Page 24

explode. It passed through CW3 Lange's upper body, killing him instantly. Then it went through the radio closet behind him and delivered a glancing blow to the left gunner's helmet. It continued up to hit a major bulkhead, then angled back and hit two ARVNs.

It finally came to rest on the floor near the gunner's feet. I cannot remember the gunner's name. He was knocked out or seriously dazed by the blow to his helmet because he fell to the floor. He survived.

The two ARVNs were injured, but I don't recall how bad their wounds were.

Because Mr. Lange was flying the aircraft, I am certain the impact of the B-40 warhead forced his collective hand back because the Chinook tried to stand up. I thought it was going to go all the way over on its back.

Capt. Mohler (I know he was a captain and I think that is how to spell his last name), the other pilot, prevented this from happening. He got control of the aircraft, continued the turn and we departed.

During this time, we also took hits in the aft pylon. I managed to fire a few shots from the M-60, but don't think I did any major damage to the enemy.

As we were departing, I saw Mr. Lange's helmet rolling up against my feet. After about 30 seconds, I went into the cockpit and asked Capt. Mohler if he needed any help. He was covered with blood and had shrapnel wounds, but said that he had things under control.

I remember seeing lots of warning lights on in the master caution panel and the cockpit was a mess. We had lost one of the hydraulic flight control systems and we had some problems with engine No. 1.

We only flew about five minutes and stayed right on the trees. I think we landed at a small American LZ near Song Be. We found the B-40 warhead still smoking on the floor and threw it out.

Pete McGowan and I loaded Mr. Lange into a body bag we got from the guys on the LZ. I remember they flew in a security force plus a maintenance team. We worked all that day and may have spent the night there, I don't know for sure.

I know we changed an engine, repaired the flight controls, and used lots of 100 mph tape; then flew it home. I stayed with the ship the whole time. 473 stayed on the maintenance pad for several months. We cannibalized lots of parts off it. Finally, they lifted it out with a Crane.

**Submitted by Gary A. Myers
November 1996**

The reader will note that not only do we now have a very detailed narrative description of this event that really only a crew member could provide, but we also can "link" these HELICOPT and KIAMAINE records.

Gary also provided the names of the other crew members so they will appear in the index at the end of the volume. We hope anyone else who served in C Company can provide us with Capt. Mohler's correct name.

Gary also caused us to focus attention on this particular battle damage record and review the programs that extract meaning from the record. We learned how to decode two new fields.

The VHPA's copy of the GOLDBOOK shows that 67-18473 logged four hours in September 1969 for a total of 763 hours on the airframe.

It stayed in C Company until January 1970, but logged no time. It was transferred to the 520th TC Battalion and returned to the States for repairs at New Cumberland. All this completely supports what Gary Myers states happened in Vietnam.

The GOLDBOOK goes on to show the 473 returned to Vietnam to serve with the 178th ASHC in February 1971.

— Mike Law

Ohio River Chapter meets during rainy weekend in Frankfort, KY

The invitation said "Dress Blues and Shower Shoes."

But for the members of the Ohio River LZ Chapter of VHPA who attended this year's reunion Feb. 28-March 2 in Frankfort, KY, it should have read: "Dress Blues, Shower Shoes and Water Wings."

You probably will remember from the national news that along with the Ohio River LZ Chapter's visit to Frankfort came the worst rain accumulation (more than 11 inches in 24 hours) in more than 30 years.

From our vantage point in the Capital Plaza Holiday Inn, members kept a close watch on the rising river

level.

The chapter's annual reunion was hosted by our four-times past president, Paul Cotter, and his wife, Barbara. Beginning with a potential member listing obtained from national, Paul and Barb refined the list and mailed out more than 300 "blind" invitations, as well as invitations to everyone who had attended previous local reunions.

We had a good showing and had a number of enthusiastic new members.

The business meeting went along swimmingly. Jack Shrode rode the

See SHRODE, Page 26

VHPA Newsletter advertising rates

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Newsletter and limit the publi-
cation's dependence on mem-
bership dues.

VHPA, VHCMA team up on orders

For the past two years, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association has been collecting data from Vietnam-era orders into a series of electronic files.

Charlie Rains, VHCMA executive director, has been the driving force for this effort.

He has successfully "recruited" several unit coordinators to help in this effort, even though their primary objective is to locate people who served in their unit and to collect unit histories.

The VHPA has made three attempts to do something with the potentially volumes of data that can be collected from Vietnam-era orders.

First, our former Historical Committee chairman, Bill Greenhalgh, collected about 100 orders for mostly VHPAers. He faithfully made copies and physically filed them by unit.

For example, when he received a copy of the 17th Combat Aviation Group's order promoting all the WO1s to CW2 in II Corps, Bill would make 15 copies (one for each unit mentioned in the order) and highlight each unit, plus the individuals in that unit, then file them by unit.

Sadly, when Bill's health prevented him from continuing this work, we could not find a VHPAer interested in following his footsteps, so Bill boxed all this up and sent it to Charlie Rains at the VHCMA.

Second, our current Historical Committee chairman, Bob Davies, and some of his friends in the Atlanta area, (Bob now lives in Florida) revis-

ited the idea of collecting paper copies and building an electronic file about three years ago. They also recognized this was a huge effort and didn't feel they could take it on.

Third, the VHPA Directory and Database committees have been interested in this sort of "people data" for some time.

Indeed, when they were building Volume II of the Historical Reference Directory, they obtained a copy of the VHCMA order files, but to be usable in the Directory, changes were needed.

Now that the VHPA Executive Council has instructed the Directory Committee to continue with the Historical Reference Directory, the VHPA and the VHCMA are interested in publishing the wealth of historical data that is available in Vietnam-era orders.

The VHPA clearly recognizes collecting this data in a quality manner is a huge effort and is both thrilled and grateful the VHCMA has taken a leadership position in this important area.

In February, a representative for the VHPA Directory Committee visited Rains in Memphis and worked out details for the procedures manual, computer programs, coding standards, etc. to "make this happen."

Rains maintains, "The VHCMA is happy to assist in this effort. We knew we had duplicate data in these files and the codes we used were not standardized because the people inputting the data did not know the military jar-

gon. The VHPA's help with computer programs and helping us pull together a set of standards and a procedure manual, this will allow the VHPA to publish our very important common history."

Charlie adds, "Many crew members have purchased copies of the Volumes I and II of the VHPA Historical Reference Directories. They are excited when they see something about their old ship or their unit in these books. They also know that the VHCMA, by itself, cannot publish these books; but we can furnish data and support this effort."

The VHPA and the VHCMA recognize their members want to see their names printed in the Historical Reference Directory because they were part of the helicopter history of the Vietnam War.

Charlie says: "When the only thing you see is your name mentioned in a helicopter accident report or your hooch mate on the KIA list, well . . . you want more."

Because of the VHCMA's leadership and support, more is on the way! Data from the VHCMA-maintained orders database will be printed in the next VHPA Historical Reference Directory.

How can you help? Simple — make a copy of any Vietnam-era order and send it to the VHPA Directory Committee via headquarters in Sacramento or to the VHCMA, P.O. Box 752592, Memphis, TN 38175-2592.

— Mike Law, Directory editor

Shrode presides over Ohio River LZ Chapter banquet

Continued from Page 25

tide of success and was re-elected for a second 1-year term as president.

Andy Archer was re-elected secretary/treasurer.

Newcomer Mick Molish volunteered to host the 1998 Ohio River LZ Chapter reunion in Indianapolis. Old-timer Larry Wigger volunteered to help.

On Saturday evening, the banquet

meeting was presided over by Shrode.

After welcoming the 46 or so diners to the meeting, President Jack asked each VHPAer to introduce himself, any guests he was fortunate enough to bring along, and make such remarks that were for the good of the order.

An interesting item for the good of the order was how one pilot learned about VHPA a week earlier.

It seems he spotted a VHPA bumper sticker on a car ahead of him in traffic. He followed the car into the driver's home driveway and asked him about VHPA.

Well, these guys lived not two blocks from each for more than five years. In any case, they came down for the reunion and appeared to have a great time.

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