



May/June 1997 Vol. 15, No. 3



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From the President

The 1997 VHPA Reunion is ready. Orlando is an exciting venue. The Early Bird Party is on July 2 for those arriving early. The reception is always an exciting place to see your friends on July 3.

The Sea World event includes a barbecue and a fireworks display for the Fourth of July.

Please join us at an old-fashioned country small town parade. The buses are provided by VHPA. Come, walk and show your patriotism and receive due recognition from grateful citizens.

Our final event for the 1997 Reunion is the banquet. All thanks to the Florida Chapter and Jim Basta, reunion chairman.

If you feel lucky, or want to make a contribution to VHPA, and want an opportunity to achieve the fountain of youth convertible, you should obtain a \$100 raffle ticket. You can obtain the tickets from VHPA by calling 1 (800) 505-VHPA.

Something about new wings, new convertibles and you . . . remember . . . ah yes, something about a 1966 red Mustang convertible, \$2,700, flight pay, TDY and youth . . . Remembered.

Time to give credit to the hard-working guys on your

Executive Council.

Ken Fritz has contributed immeasurably to the day-to-day operations. Mike Hurley has been underworked in the complaint department, but has proceeded to work extensively with our chapters. Jack Jordan has made a substantial improvement in our conference call ability and our Executive Council conference calls are made no cost to VHPA, thanks to Jack. Bob Smith is working hard at getting the second raffle running and he was our representative at AAAA. Bob Johnson has organized our membership committee efforts.

The newsletter editor continues to provide wonderful reading, thanks, Jack Swickard. Bob Davies, Gary Roush and Mike Law are Historical, Database and Directory, respectively, and have provided us with wonderful products to enjoy.

Ross McCoy and his folks have performed our contract functions and we are looking forward to a super reunion effort from Ross.

I must publicly thank those wonderfully efficient and effective people, Helen Willhite, Deanna Sollner and June Morgan, who run my law office and have provided much assistance to VHPA during my terms on the Executive Council and as president. My wife, Merry, deserves credit for her assistance and for enabling me to devote a lot of time to VHPA.

SEE YOU IN ORLANDO.

— Charles Rayl, President

'Squawk sheets' can have pearls of humor

From actual military "squawk sheets:"

Problem: "Left inside main tire almost needs replacement."

Solution: "Almost replaced left inside main tire."

Problem: "Test flight OK, except autoland very rough."

Solution: "Autoland not installed on this aircraft."

Problem #1: "#2 Propeller seeping prop fluid."

Solution #1: "#2 Propeller seepage normal."

Problem #2: "#1, #3, and #4 pro-

pellors lack normal seepage."

Problem: "The autopilot doesn't."
Signed off: "IT DOES NOW."

Problem: "Something loose in cockpit."

Solution: "Something tightened in cockpit."

Problem: "Evidence of hydraulic leak on right main landing gear."

Solution: "Evidence removed."

Problem: "Number three engine missing."

Solution: "Engine found on right wing after brief search."

Problem: "DME volume unbelievably loud."

Solution: "Volume set to more believable level."

Problem: Dead bugs on windshield.

Solution: Live bugs on order.

Problem: Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 fpm descent.

Solution: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

Problem: IFF inoperative.

Solution: IFF inoperative in OFF mode.

Classified ad

HELICOPTER PILOTS: Blue Hawaiian Helicopters, the largest helicopter tour company in Hawaii, is looking for a couple of high-time, professional helicopter pilots with recent helicopter flying experience and a proven history. Besides being a safe stick, you have to be good with people and have a desire to interact with your passengers.

Be ready to work hard, but receive excellent pay and benefits. Join one of the finest groups of helicopter pilots in the world, most are Vietnam vets, flying 11 late-model BA and B2 Astars on Maui or the Big Island of Hawaii. Owner is a VHPA life member whose preference is for pilots who have been through military flight training. Also have possibility of a managerial opening.

Send resumes to Blue Hawaiian Helicopters,

Attn: Dave [redacted] 1.

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North Carolina Chapter	Lawrence T. Lanier, President [REDACTED] 8
New England Chapter	Bob Whitford, Past President [REDACTED]
Fort Wolters Chapter	Charles Holley, President [REDACTED]
Mardi Gras Chapter	Don Hunt, President Lee Overstreet, Vice President New Orleans, LA
Florida LZ Chapter	Judd Chapin, Executive Director [REDACTED] (8 [REDACTED])
California Chapter North	Rich Buzen, President [REDACTED]

VHPA briefs

IV Corps history in Directory

The Directory Committee wants to thank the more than two dozen VHPAers and VHCMAers who have called, faxed and written to provide material and suggestions for the Helicopter History of IV Corps that will be featured in the 1997 Membership Directory this fall.

Because of this response, second and third versions of their unit's draft material have gone back and forth in the mails.

There is still time to get your ideas into this history, but by the end of July, the final version will take form. Input from anyone who flew in the Delta area is welcome.

Contact Mike Law, Directory Editor, [REDACTED]).

New VHPA chapter to form

VHPA members from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania are invited to attend a meeting to form a

VHPA chapter. It will be Aug. 16-17 in Kingston, NY.

The group can attend the museum and air show at the Old Rhinebeck Airdrome, take an evening dinner cruise on the Hudson River and have a business meeting. A hotel is being selected for overnight accommodations. Bring your family along.

Contacts: Dutch Magill, [REDACTED]

Or call ([REDACTED])
Jim Schueckler, [REDACTED]

Bring copies of patches to Orlando

The VHPA Unit Patch Project archive now has more than 500 items cataloged.

Committee members will be available at the VHPA Database display to accept copies of your patch. Review the unit patch inventory beginning on Page 239 of the 1996 VHPA Membership Directory.

If your patch is not listed, make an actual size, laser color copy of the patch at your local copy store and bring it to the VHPA Reunion in Orlando or send to Directory Committee member Jay Riseden [REDACTED].

Don Werner's story published

Don was a flight school classmate of mine who lived only a couple of hours away. After he got out of the Army, he started his own heavy lift helicopter company — Construction Helicopter — and eventually based it out of Willow Run Airport here in Michigan.

We managed to get together every now and then and it was during one of these “times for reminiscing” that he told me this story.

From the time I heard about this experience, which took place in the late 1980s, I bugged him and bugged him to put it on paper and send it in for publication in The VHPA Newsletter because it truly epitomizes the impact helicopters and their crews had on American ground personnel in Vietnam.

But he never did. To Don, it was just like another day in Vietnam. When it's over, it's over, and you wait to see what tomorrow will bring.

“You were a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, weren't you?”

Don Werner died in March from cancer. And now I will attempt to tell his story the way he told it to me.

Don had finished flying on a particularly hot day in Cleveland and went to the bar of the motel at which he was staying to quench his thirst.

Other than two guys with a gal who were sitting at a table and the bartender, Don pretty much had the place to himself. As he sat there unwinding, he noticed one of the guys kept staring at him. He tried not to notice, but the stares continued.

Finally, the guy got up and started toward Don, who at this point was giving some serious consideration to what options might be available since he had no idea what this person had in mind.

The guy walked up to Don, looked him straight in the eyes, and said: “You were a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, weren't you?”

Rather taken aback by the statement, Don replied, “Yes, I was.”

The guy continued; “You flew in support of the 9th Infantry Division in the Delta in 1968, didn't you!” to which Don replied, “Yes.”

The guy then said, (and forgive me readers as I do not remember the exact date, but Don remembered it very well), “On such and such a day, you landed your helicopter gunship in the middle of a heavy firefight and evacuated three critically wounded infantry after attempts to get a medevac helicopter were unsuccessful.”

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VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO:

VHPA
949 University Ave.
Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95825
(800) 505-VHPA

FAX NUMBER FOR

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (916) 648-1072

New VHPA bumper stickers \$1/each _____

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Back VHPA Newsletters \$20/set
(Complete sets only) (\$5 P&H each set) _____

1994 VHPA Directory \$10/each
(\$5 P&H each) _____

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1996 VHPA Calendar \$5/each
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GRAND TOTAL _____

TO ORDER

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Name: _____

Address: _____

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Credit card No.: _____

Expiration date: _____

Signature: _____

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At this point Don was wondering if he had by chance run into one the doorgunners who had served on his aircraft, and said, "Yesss, I remember that day very clearly."

The guy's eyes began to tear up and, in a voice that was not quite as steady as it had been, he said, "I'm one of those three wounded."

Don absolutely could not believe his ears, but before he had a chance to react, the guy pulled Don off the bar stool, gave him a rib-crushing hug, while swinging him around like a rag doll, all the while half yelling and half crying, "I knew I would find you!!! I knew I would find you!!!"

What we all have to keep in perspective here is that it is about 20 years after the incident. Some of us have added a little weight, lost a little hair and, generally speaking, may no longer have the same appearance as we did when we were young, strac, sleek as gazelles helicopter pilots in Vietnam.

Don's hair was a little longer than it was in Vietnam. He had grown a full beard, and certainly he was a little heavier.

But it was his face, the nameless face of a helicopter pilot that, on a day that had long since passed, was looking back for all of 15-20 seconds to make sure the wounded were loaded before pulling pitch, that had so heavily imprinted on the wounded soldier.

A face surrounded by an olive drab helmet, with a mike boom across the mouth, and sweat pouring profusely from the forehead whose eyes, nose, and whatever else could be seen for those few seconds were forever etched in this injured infantryman's mind, and he knew that some day he would see those features again. And on this warm summer day, he did!

Those of us who knew Don rarely, if ever, saw him display any emotion. But he was truly moved by what happened that day in the bar.

And he remembered very clearly the extremely busy day in 1968 when, after repeated attempts to get a medevac were unsuccessful and having been told by the unit in contact that the three injured most likely would not live if they were not gotten out soon, he opted to land his C-model gunship, jettison the rocket pods and miniguns, unload what belted 7.62 he had left in the trays, and load the wounded. All of this while under extremely heavy enemy fire.

Don was never one to talk about medals, but his wife Nancy said he had received a Silver Star for his actions on that day.

Don told me that after the initial meeting, the long lost "comrade in arms" took him over and introduced him to

the others and they then proceeded to talk until the bar closed down.

The conversation vacillated between bouts of laughter and bouts of crying, and countless sincere and heart felt statements of "Thank you for what you did."

The wounded man had indeed been very close to death, as were the others, but he said he had to muster enough strength to see the faces of the helicopter crew that landed under such harrowing circumstances in an attempt to save his and the others lives.

Who knows how many other veterans of the Vietnam War scan the faces of strangers they see every day with the hopes they also will recognize the features of a pilot who saved their lives so long ago.

Many of us will bear the scars and endure the pain for the rest of our days on this earth for wounds we received in Vietnam. But when we hear about experiences such as the one Don had, and read of other similar happenings in our Newsletter — it makes it all worthwhile!!!

Greg Ross
BlueGhost 22

Those of us who knew Don rarely, if ever, saw him display any emotion. But he was truly moved by what happened that day in the bar.

E-mail message gets webmaster's attention

Being the webmaster of the VHPA web site (<http://www.vhpa.org>) and the original webmaster of the VHFCN web site (<http://www.vhfcn.org>), I have had the opportunity to read thousands of e-mail messages from Vietnam veterans over the past couple of years.

In late February, a call sign (Mustang) caught my eye. I jotted down the e-mail address and the following series of messages occurred:

Gary Roush to GRW:

I am looking for the pilots of a UH-1C gunship with the call sign Mustang 5.

They saved my life while covering me going into Katum Special Forces Camp north of Tay Ninh in either late '68 or early '69. I have the date somewhere and will try to find it. I was Aircraft Commander on a Muleskinner CH-47A delivering ammo when a 50 cal was moving those big tracers into the cockpit.

Mustang 5 was flying on my left wing and nailed the 50 cal with two rockets just two heart beats from catastrophe. Would like to say thanks after all these years. Can you help?

Gary Roush
242 ASHC Muleskinners May 68 - May 69

GRW to Gary Roush:

"You won't believe this, but I was Mustang 6 (Gunship Platoon Commander part of the 68th AHC) during the time you mentioned. (My tour was July 68-July 69) We flew out

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of Bien Hoa. Normally, the way numbers went, Mustang 5 would have been my assistant platoon commander, only I don't recall a "5" during my year in the unit. He would have been a captain or 1st lieutenant, not a warrant officer. I was a captain.

"But again I don't think I had an officer assistant. The warrant officers had two-digit call signs — Mustang 21, etc. . . .

"I don't recall the incident you mention specifically, though, as a lot . . . happened during my tour and unless something much more dramatic occurred I probably would not have remembered it. (I'm sure it was dramatic for you, but I'm sure it was probably a bit more memorable to the 50 cal. crew! When Mustangs flew, the right people died. A whole lot of them. And frequently.)"

Did you continue your mission?

So . . . if it was me . . . thanks for thinking of it after all these years. If it wasn't, I'll accept your thanks on behalf of my unit. I know Katum well. Flew that area a lot.

I think we referred to that area as the parrots beak, No? (It was the outline on the map of the Cambodian border that had the bird's head shape.) I also remember the Muleskinners. We worked together often. You guys flew some of our shot-down birds back to Bien Hoa. I recall helping your CH-47s going onto the top of Nui Ba Dinh from time to time, the mountain overlooking Tay Ninh. It was called Black Virgin Mountain, I think. I also flew many medevacs when a CH-47 crashed on T/O at Song Bey. It was a huge crash involving some outrageous number of RVN soldiers — 80-90 people, I think. It was an American CH-47, but I don't know whether it was a Muleskinner???

Also, did a lot of firebase support missions when you guys were relocating them.

Any of this mean any thing to you? Are you a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

Geoffrey R Webster

Gary Roush to GRW:

Now I definitely have to go dig out my information and come up with a date since our tours almost exactly coincided (May 68-May 69).

Spent many hours hovering around and on Nui Ba Dinh including hovering up the side one morning after they had been over run to pick up 22 wounded. They were socked in and were desperate for help. That story is in the book "Life on the Line" by Philip Chinnery.

I had to chuckle when you said you did not remember because "nothing dramatic happened" — the reason nothing dramatic happened was because your aim was spot on. I can still hear your calm reassuring voice and still see the tracers and rockets just like it was yesterday. In fact I can vividly recall several of the times I got shot at, but none of the times I took hits.

Strange how the mind works. Another time I had gun support was going into what we called Diamond City, a diamond shaped village on the Cambodian border near Tay Ninh. Had a heavy team that day, two on my left and one

Pilot proud to associated with members of VHPA

After years of membership, I felt guilty, having attended none of your great-sounding reunions. I read all the newsletters and value the membership directories, yet I have yet to get in touch.

I'm proud to be associated with our fraternity, and the great job the association does, is befitting of such a group of individuals. Unfortunately (fortunately?), I flushed my Vietnam Memories as soon as I got home. Only now am I trying to remember that time in my life, so maybe I'll be a war story contributor some day.

Of note, I did fly the C&C ship with Maj. Gen. Davison (II Field Forces commander) on the May 1, 1970 Cambodian invasion. He was in command of that operation, and I flew him for the first two weeks of that operation.

I just recall the high points, like listening to Nixon on AFVN saying, "At this very moment our troops are crossing the Cambodian border" as we were crossing the border in the Angel's Wing area. Keep up the good work.

Rick Goodhart
Top Hat 522

on my right, all four in formation going into the city edge behind a row of trees. Tracers flying degree pedal turn and started away from the village. It was the first time I experienced tracers passing me from the rear on both sides without taking a single hit. Many thought I had a charmed life despite the nick name magnet ass. Were you covering me that day too?

I have been in the VHPA for over 10 years and go to every reunion since I am responsible for the databases and help publish the directory every year.

Are you going to Orlando this year? I am also the Webmaster of the VHPA web site on <http://www.vhpa.org> and the originator of the VHFCN web site on <http://www.vhfcn.org>

The Song Be crash was not a Muleskinner although we flew up there frequently. We flew a lot of II Field Forces missions which is when we used you for gun cover. Our primary support was for the 25th Division. Will get back to you after I do some more research.

Since you most likely saved my life, does that mean you are now responsible for me for the rest of my life?

Gary Roush

GRW to Gary Roush:

I went to a VHPA meeting a while back in Philadelphia. (I live in Greenwich, CT.)

Can't say I would go again, though. I enjoyed the non flyable C-model Huey out front and spent 2 hours in it

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alone remembering. The other 700 or so people inside were too well-coordinated (special flight suits, flags, hats etc. . .) that anyone who just showed up like me felt out of it. Or, I at least did — big time, and left that night to go home. I heard about the hovering-up-the-side-of-the-mountain medevac but I thought it was a Huey doing it not a CH-47. At any rate — great job — old buddy.

I didn't think of looking up the VHPA web site but will check it out. What is VHFCN???

Must be a strange time for all of us as on the same day I read your e-mail some one else contacted me out of the blue for a friend who was off line but wanted to know if there was any organization for old crew chiefs. He said his friend was in the 68th AHC Top Tigers which was my company unit!! And this guy was there during my tour also. Strange. Anyway we have a EM mainly group which covers our Battalion (the 145th) and I'll make sure he connects with them.

Clear right, GRW

Gary Roush to GRW:

VHFCN is the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network. It is made up of crew chiefs, gunners and pilots from all services. This organization (if you want to call it that) revolves around the Internet and computers. We have a list-server with 300 active people, a chat room that is active at noon and 9 p.m. daily from the vhfcn web site. There is also VHCMA — Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association. An application is on both <http://www.vhfcn.org> and <http://www.vhpa.org> sites. It is primarily crew chiefs, but pilots can also join. They have an annual reunion like the pilots but are not quite as big.

Sorry you did not feel you fit in at the reunion at Philly. Many people are like you, but are amazed to find we still have a common bond. Many of us do not belong to any other veterans group.

I found my notes. The Katum 50-cal. incident happened in August or September 1968. The 22 wounded off of the mountain happened on 15 Aug 68. Despite being shot at a lot between May and October, I did not take my first hit until 2 Oct 68. I had lost one engine by the end of September and we had one crew killed on 23 July 68 so by this time I was wondering whether or not it was possible to survive for a year. Thanks to people like you I did. — Gary

GRW to Gary Roush:

5 March 1997

If it was Aug-Sept 68 then it had to be me.

Glad to be of help, Muleskinner

Mustang 6 out

GRW to Gary Roush:

6 March 1997

The beer is on me.

Just remember — this means you now are responsible for me for the rest of my life.

Painted Post, NY is not far from CT in my Cessna 182.

Medevac pilot seeks contact with others

How do I contact other pilots and crew/support people I was with in Vietnam? I was with the 247th Medical Detachment (Air Ambulance) in Dong Tam May-August 1969 and with the 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) August 1969-May 1970.

I would like to communicate with anyone who served with me in the 247th Medical Detachment (Air Ambulance) in Dong Tam, May 1969-August 1969 or in Long Binh with the 45th Medical Company Air Ambulance, August 1969-May 1970.

My address is:

My phone number is:

Gary L. Calhoun

Would love to meet up with you sometime this summer. What is your closest airport with at least 1,500 feet of runway. Can not quite get that Cessna to hover.

Gary

GRW to Gary Roush:

6 March 1997

Hey, Muleskinner, any time —

Westchester County Airport is the closest.

I'm in the VHPA directory but here is my address/phone. Geoffrey R. Webster, 361 North Maple Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830. (203) 629-4999. I sent the series of e-mails we exchanged to several friends and one old Mustang who was there with me. They couldn't believe the story and how you found me!

I was wounded only once during my tour — AK-47 right thought my gunsight during a mission — crap flew all over and I got some in my head, but no big deal. However, the fine State of Connecticut provides super Purple Heart-Combat Wounded plates so I doubt a day goes by without thinking about Vietnam and my tour. I have great memories of it and will add your story to them. Thanks for taking the effort to contact me.

Mustang 6

Memorial should honor veterans who died later

I am writing to you because I believe an addition should be made to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C. I would like an approximately 3-by-3-foot plaque to be placed at ground level near the sidewalk linking the two statues opposite the vertex of The Wall to honor the men and women whose post-war deaths resulted from their experience in Vietnam. These many deaths are no less tragic than the deaths of those who died in Vietnam.

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My brother, John Keath Coder, died July 17, 1992, in the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. He was a patient there because he had non-Hodgkins lymphoma caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

John served in the Air Force from 1965 until 1970. He was stationed at DaNang, South Vietnam, from April 1969-April 1970, as a helicopter pilot in the 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron. He flew a CH-53 Jolly Green Giant. He received a Distinguished Flying Cross and an Air Medal for participation in rescues of downed pilots in Southeast Asia.

Before his service in the Air Force, John earned a BA from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He earned his MBA from the University of Kansas. He worked in Des Moines at the time of his death.

Before non-Hodgkins lymphoma made him too ill to participate, John was active in his church and coached a

Aviation artist seeking advice from members

My name is Jerry Anderson, and I am an aviation artist and helicopter enthusiast. Currently, I am researching some ideas and could use some input from your membership.

I am putting together a proposal to present to the directors of the newly opened American Helicopter Museum and Education Center near Philadelphia. This would be for a possible series of limited-edition prints, sponsored by the museum or by its beneficiaries, depicting historically significant or just dramatic events involving helicopters and crews.

I would like to collect detailed information on combat rescues, operations, etc., complete down to unit markings, weather and terrain, specific makes and models of aircraft involved, from Vietnam or even the Korean conflict, and use this to create paintings to bring these events to life.

To help narrow the many thousands of stories that could be told, I would like to focus on some specific events wherein the participants were awarded decorations such as the Medal of Honor, DFC, Silver Star, etc.

Those participants who are willing and able to could sign the finished prints, and proceeds would go to support the museum.

Should the museum choose not to back the project, I would then seek the financing to publish and market the prints myself.

I would appreciate any help that VHPA members, from all military services, can provide. I also want to mention that I am available for commission work for individuals and organizations.

Jerry Anderson

number of youth sports teams. He was a wonderful husband, father, son, brother and friend.

He was 49 years old when he died.

There are many other people like John whose names, will never be on memorials, but whose lives were ended prematurely because of their service in Vietnam.

Because there are too many already dead and too many yet to die because of their service in Vietnam, it would be impractical to name them all. Also, I believe, no one wants another free-standing monument in the vicinity of The Wall. Because of that, I suggest the 3-foot-square plaque near the sidewalk opposite the vertex of The Wall, with words yet to be determined, honoring all those who have died because of their service in Vietnam. Such a plaque would therefore include people such as my brother, John Keath Coder, as well as people who committed suicide such as Lewis Puller Jr., and people who have died from alcoholism and drugs. Its inclusive scope would be similar to that of the "In Memory" honor list program of the Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

I am sure that money for this project could be easily raised.

I would appreciate hearing your opinions and advice on this project. If you agree with this project, we need to be in touch with and have the support of veterans groups such as the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, as well as members of Congress. We are a nonprofit, incorporated group. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Ruth Coder Fitzgerald

President, The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial Inc.

'Bikinis' had a marvelous tradition to prove manhood

I am sure all of you remember the experience of being a FNG. I would like to share one of my experiences when I first arrived in-country.

It was May of 1970 and I had been assigned to the 52nd AC BN, 170th AHC "Bikinis," flying out of Katum.

As most of you remember, we had this marvelous tradition about proving our manhood by an ordeal we called an initiation.

Our's was probably no different than anyone else's. We had this wonderful concoction called the Green M.F.'er. The purpose of this drink was twofold:

1. To see if you had guts enough to get it down.
2. To see if you were smart enough to get it back up.

Most had no trouble with 2., except for one WO1 Groody (not a real name). Of course, it was great fun for the "Old Guys" to watch as we tried to maintain our composure, but as we all know, this was impossible and we all lost it — except for Groody.

This was right after a very strong rainshower and it filled a crater just outside the O-Club, caused by a 122

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rocket, I think.

As the evening was drawing to a close, no one could find Groody. We became concerned because we all knew he kept his "composure."

We started to look for him and, before too long, we found him.

He had passed out in the crater. Naturally, this presented a dilemma — was he face up or face down? Lucky for him, he was face up.

Now, all you rotorheads can probably figure out the rest of the story, but I will continue anyway.

Someone yelled, "I found Groody."

The response was: "Is he face up or down?"

"He's face up."

This was the cue for all of us to rush to our hootches and grab our Yashika Golden 35s.

Now, in most civilized countries, the polite thing to do would be to yank him out, but this was the Nam in 1970, and opportunity had smiled on our little party.

"What should we

do with him?" was the next question. "Is he breathing?"

"Yep."

"OK, leave him there for a minute, I want to get my camera."

This was the cue for all of us to rush to our hootches and grab our Yashika Golden 35s. Now don't you know this is the stuff legends are made of?

John S. Flynn

EDITOR'S NOTE: On the VHPA Internet web site, there is a capability for people to ask questions, make comments or tell war stories. Since this capability was activated in early February, 54 people have used it.

Comments have ranged from sisters of KIAs looking for information about their brothers to the war story by VHPA member John S. Flynn.

If you get opportunity, visit Vietnam while able

If, in your final days on the Earth, you were stretched out on some hospital bed as your life slowly slipped away.

If you ask yourself, why didn't I do that, go there when I had the chance or was physically able?

If you find yourself saying, I always wanted to . . . but there never seemed to be enough time . . . don't wait, don't think, do it!

In July 1995, I was invited to return to Vietnam in January-February 1996. This was to be no usual vets return to the Land of Rice, Rain and JP4, but the return of some famous or infamous (depending on which end of the weapon you were on) warriors.

In our group, comprised mostly of former Navy Seals, were among others "Rogue Warrior" Cmdr. Richard Marcinko of Seal Team 6 and Chief of Chiefs James "Patches" Watson.

A documentary was to be filmed and written about the group's return and members' feeling and memories of the war years.

At Los Angeles International Airport, with only minutes to spare and winded from my run from the Domestic Airline Arrivals Terminal to the International Departure Terminal, I was thinking things are "going wrong already."

Just then, a familiar voice sang out: "Yo! Big John, over here." The rest of the tour group already had formed near the gate area, waiting for "Johnny Come Lately" to get his butt there.

After introductions, hugs and handshakes, we boarded our 747 to Hong Kong en route to Nam.

The flight, due to headwinds, would take about 15 hours. During this time, I was treated by the rest of the tour group as if we had all trained and done our original tours together. As far as the members were concerned, we were fellow warriors and we quickly became family.

Our section of the 747 had us somewhat isolated from most other passengers. The booze, jokes and conversation flowed like Niagara Falls and didn't stop till we were entering the landing pattern at Hong Kong. Good thing, for

Our midnight arrival gave us our first taste of the "new" Vietnam.

by this time, we had drunk the plane dry! It took two hours before we boarded the connecting flight to Saigon — most of the locals still call it that.

Because we would be arriving in Viet-

nam for the start of the Tet holidays, this plane was packed like a sardine can. Especially when you're 6-foot-3" and weigh 250 pounds and the seats are designed for the "normal" sized Oriental, I wanted the flight to Tan Son Nhut to be over before we even took off.

Our midnight arrival gave us our first taste of the "new" Vietnam. We thought we had gotten all the proper documentation — NOT. Forms, pictures, lines, money, then more lines, where we were told there was no reason for the new photos and paperwork.

Being a native of New York City, I shrugged it off as a "hustle." The last lines were for customs, where they searched our luggage for cameras, camcorders, weapons, etc. Some of us were seriously searched, while others just put their bags through the X-ray machine.

By this time (after 2 a.m.) having cleared customs, it was off to our hotel by motorcoach for the half-hour ride.

Hotel check-in was a five-minute deal and then it was up to our rooms. By this time, I think everyone was ready for a cold beer, shower and a real bed.

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Before we crashed, our American tour guide Beth said we had a 6 a.m. wakeup. Surely, she was out of her mind!

The next morning, 6 a.m. came — I swear — just 10 minutes after I fell asleep. The first half of the day was “do your own thing.”

Late that afternoon, we took a river cruise and had dinner aboard a floating restaurant. This is when I was reminded of the “real” smells of Vietnam — fish, humidity and diesel fuel exhaust.

For most of the group, this also was their introduction to Ho Chi’s revenge — a never-ending dose of the runs.

Over dinner, we became more like family than a tour group and this relationship has continued till this day.

Dinner over, we returned to the hotel where I, among others, made the mistake of going to the piano bar with a Frenchman I’ll call “Bud Lite.”

Well, Bud and his bride were celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary, and Bud didn’t want anyone raining on his parade.

He made the rest of us understand we would help them celebrate. Oh, what a night! And this was only the beginning of what seemed to become a nightly ritual! Now I know why “Frogs” swim: They’re partying too much to do anything else!

The next 10 days were spent touring the country from the Cu Chi Tunnels of Can Tho in the Mekong Delta.

Each of us had our own reason for returning to Southeast Asia, but we enjoyed one another’s memories of past events.

Day 3 for me was a day I never will forget. “Rick, the Diplomat” who could probably smooth out the road to hell with his understanding of how to get anything done, got me onto Bien Hoa Air Base.

Bien Hoa was and still is one of the busiest airbases in

As warm as our welcome in Saigon was, that’s how cold we were treated in Can Tho . . .

Southeast Asia. What memories this day brought back; it hasn’t changed much from 1966-67 when I was there.

The rest of the tour group used Day 3 to head south to Thoi Son Island where the Chief, 29

years ago, killed one of the VC’s greatest warriors — a sapper platoon leader named Do Van Chieu, the bad guys version of a UDT.

For many of the group, this was the main reason for returning to Vietnam to be with “Patches” when he came back to this spot.

Later that day, Rick and I caught up with the “family” in Can Tho. As warm as our welcome in Saigon was, that’s how cold we were treated in Can Tho — so much so we got out of Dodge very early the next morning. It was clear to everyone that we were not welcome.

We were to have spent two nights and three days in the Delta, but it was “di di mau” to Saigon.

Back in Saigon, we spent most of our remaining days visiting museums, Buddhist temples, shopping in markets of every type, eating in famous restaurants and, of course, the night life in bars which seemed to have never changed.

Saigon is like an Oriental versions of New York City, complete with its crime and poverty. The crime however, is not directed at tourists except for the usual “Cowboy” stuff of picking your pockets, stealing your watch and stealing your radio.

As most of us remember, the bad guys could strip a

We were treated as if nothing bad had ever happened between the Vietnamese and the United States.

deuce and a half with a pair of pliers while you were in a car wash getting a short time. Come out 15 minutes later and the only thing left is an oil stain where you parked and Uncle Ho’s boys already

are using the parts up in Hanoi.

Saigon, for the most part, is building and modernizing at a very fast pace.

For some of us, our last night in Nam was spent in Saigon’s “Lemon Tree Restaurant,” where we had dinner and drinks with Maj. Gen. Nguyen Von and his staff. The general was in charge of the Viet Cong’s 8th Corps Region — this was the U.S. III Corps area.

We were treated as if nothing bad had ever happened between the Vietnamese and the United States; we broke bread and made peace with each other over good food and lots of 333 Beer. No longer is it Bameba 33; now it’s 333. Same suds with another “3” on the label.

During the dinner, I was reminded by our hosts that wars are created by governments, but fought by warriors and the people who suffered on both sides were just like you and me trying to keep ourselves and our brothers alive.

I’ll probably get a lot of flack from some of your guys for having had dinner with these people, our old enemies, but I’ll take it from any of you who have walked in my shoes. It is time to put it behind us — not forget, but forgive.

Our trip home was more somber than the flight over.

Customs, upon exiting Nam and entering the United States, can cost you your freedom and/or your life if you try something stupid.

The business people in Vietnam will sell you anything for a price, even give you a receipt and official looking document stating whatever you bought is legit to bring out of Nam, or into the United States. It ain’t so! If they don’t confiscate it as an artifact or antique over there, they’ll take it from you when you get back to the world.

The rate of exchange U.S. dollars to VN dong was about \$10 U.S. to 110,000 VN dong in February 1996. You can

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spend anything from \$25 to \$250 a night for hotel accommodations and buy beer from about 35 cents at the market place to \$6 in a hotel's bar.

My trip cost me \$3,600 for transportation, hotel and most meals, etc. I spent just over \$2,000 on gifts for family and friends — \$1,000 of which were monetary gifts to those who controlled how much access you had to the places you wanted to go and things you wanted to do. Money talks just like anywhere else in the world.

Ask me if I'd do it all again, the answer is: Tour '98, the 30th anniversary of Tet '68. Most of our group will be going back then, God willing.

If anyone else is interested, drop me a line or call:

John "Graz" Frasso, 68th AHC
Bien Hoa 1966-67
Mustang Gunship Platoon.
"The Widow Maker," Tail No. 656,
Huey C Model Frog

P.S. If you choose to return to Vietnam, remember Murphy's Law of Combat No. 23 applies now more than ever: "Everything you do can get you killed, including nothing!"

Taps

John W. Rodgers

John W. Rodgers, 50, of Hermiston, OR, died March 25 at St. Vincent Hospital in Portland.

Rodgers, a cattle rancher, graduated from flight school with Class 68-24.

In Vietnam, he flew with B/4th Aviation, 4th Infantry Division in 1968-69 and with the 48th Assault Helicopter Company in 1971-72.

David N. Transki

David N. Transki passed away after fighting cancer for a year.

David's Flight Class number was 66-9 (Green Hats) and was assigned to Vietnam to the 11th Aviation Battalion, 162nd Aviation Company in July 1966 as a warrant officer.

In March 1967, he was infused into the 187th at Tay Ninh. He was in the slick platoon in both of these companies.

On his second tour, in 1970, he was captain assigned to A Battery 2/20th ARA.

He was a member of the 1st Cavalry Association. Among the medals he received were the Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

Survivors include his wife and two sons, Aaron and Ashley. Each day he lived in his last year he felt that sci-

Member checking records for old flight school orders

Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Lee Jurney, president of the U.S. Army Signal Officer Candidate School Association.

I'm a member of VHPA and may be able to help Mr. Gary Roush in his search for flight class info. I will check my records for any old orders.

If you would ask Mr. Roush if he was an instructor pilot in the OH-6 LOH in Vung Tau around August 1968?

Your newsletter is great, already helped me contact a former Emu 135th AHC member in Australia.

I'm going to try to push my Signal Corps chopper types to check out your organization.

Lee W. Jurney
Fireball 11 — Emu 3
1968-69, 1971-72

No, I was not a LOH instructor. I flew Chinooks out of Cu Chi. What flight class information do you have?

Gary Roush
242nd ASHC Muleskinners, May 1968-69

ence was that much closer to finding a cure for the cancer. May you rest in peace, David.

— Russ Warriner

Don Werner

It is with great sadness I announce another VHPAer made his final takeoff. Don Werner passed away on March 19.

I first met Don at the Chicago VHPA reunion, but never looked him up and assumed I would see him at the next reunion.

Several years passed and while I was on an early morning walk (wearing my VHPA jacket), a black Trans-Am hurriedly pulled into a nearby parking lot. The driver jumped out of the car and pointed repeatedly to his VHPA ballcap. A nice mini-reunion, to say the least.

Our paths crossed many times since then and, regardless of the circumstances, we took the time to share a few minutes.

There were a few occasions when Don was doing air-conditioner lifts in Ann Arbor and I pulled off the road and watched him do his thing. When the lifts were complete, he would land, climb down from the helicopter and run over to shake hands, and we would share a few smiles.

We'll miss him!

— Dick Crawley

EDITOR'S NOTE: Don Werner, 52, owned and operated Construction Helicopters in Horton, MI. He graduated with Class 66-23 and served in Vietnam with the 9th Infantry Division in 1967-68.

Special service would honor crews

Last year at the Santa Clara reunion, our esteemed president, Charlie Rayl, appointed me chairman of the Chaplain's Committee and asked me to serve as the VHPA chaplain.

I was very honored by this surprise appointment and immediately began to figure out how best to employ the several ministers in our membership.

Unfortunately, because this has been such an event-filled year for me, I haven't been very organized.

There are many things that have flashed through my mind that we could do to reach out to our membership on a spiritual level.

The first thing I thought of is a memorial service for brothers who gave their lives in the defense of liberty. This could be an annual event in which a room would be set aside as a sort of chapel, perhaps with posters or signs containing the names of all those crew members who died in Vietnam.

I hope to have a special service at sometime during the reunion to commemorate their sacrifice. I also believe there should be some way to honor our members who have died during the previous year.

I've found that many of our members who have no church affiliation often need someone to talk to regarding spiritual matters that arise during the year.

Many of them would prefer to talk with someone who

has a similar background and experiences as themselves. Consequently, I hope to include in future articles, the names and phone numbers of all the clergy members in the VHPA.

I have a database printout from Gary Roush showing all the VHPA members who listed minister, pastor, or priest as their occupation, but I'm sure it is incomplete.

If you are a licensed, ordained, or consecrated clergy person, please let me know so you can be included in the chaplain's committee and we can add you to our list. We especially need to identify a rabbi so that all faith traditions can be represented.

I would have liked to have had these services implemented in time for the reunion this year, but we will certainly try to be more organized next year.

If you have additional ideas on how our committee could better serve you, please write me at the address in the directory, contact me via e-mail at [REDACTED]

The "Chaplain's Office" will be a regular feature of the newsletter and even though this first column is administrative in nature, I hope to make it more devotional in future issues.

I have enjoyed this past year as your chaplain and look forward to serving you in the future. Please plan to attend the nondenominational worship service on Sunday, 6 July, at the reunion in Orlando.

**Grace and Peace,
John "Rev. Thunderhorse" Plummer**

The Chaplain's Office

Volunteers help make VHPA so successful

KEN FRITZ

It's with some regret and with some relief that I will no longer serve on the VHPA Executive Council (EC) after the big reunion in Orlando.

Six years ago at the Reno reunion, you first elected me to serve. Thanks for urging me to run for the EC.

I have really enjoyed my involvement over the past six years.

Some members encouraged me to run for vice president when my three-year member-at-large term was up and I was subsequently elected as your vice president.

Thanks to all who came to the business meetings to learn what's going on with the association and thanks for your vote.

You have given me the opportunity

to meet far more Vietnam helicopter pilots than I ever would have imagined possible.

For those of you who haven't yet volunteered to put together a unit or class mini-reunion, for those of you who haven't yet volunteered to help on a VHPA committee, for those of you who haven't yet volunteered to actually search for those guys (your friends) we haven't found or gathered into the fold as VHPA members, for those of you who haven't urged a member to rejoin the VHPA, and for those of you who haven't yet begun to get a local chapter together, I can say from experience:

You HAVE thought about doing at least one of the aforementioned and you are probably trying to kick yourself in the butt for not doing it yet.

It's hard to kick yourself in the butt when you're sitting on it.

Now is the time to get off your butt, give yourself a swift kick and get going!

If you don't know where or how to get started, please give any EC member a call or drop them a note or call VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA and ask for help, directions, or whatever you think you need.

Or call me and I'll be glad to help you get going.

There are no stupid questions. It's easier than you think.

VHPA life member Ross McCoy, owner of the company that manages the day-to-day VHPA stuff at Headquarters pays for the Headquarters 800 number and he put in this service
See HEADQUARTERS, Page 14

Independent Study

Every day at
Embry-Riddle,
Kevin Norris goes
to class so you
don't have to.

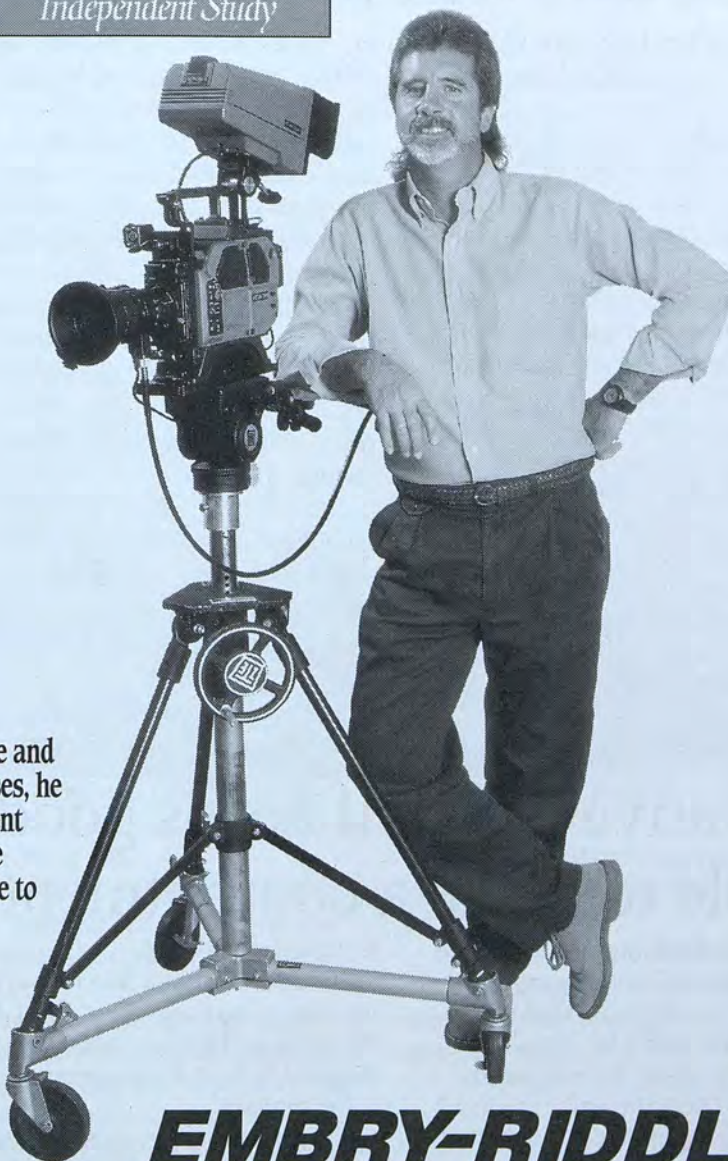
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Headquarters staff dedicated to members

Continued from Page 12

to do a better job. Make them go to work for you.

He and his staff are dedicated to helping you and the rest of the members.

Here's an example of the sort of thing I have enjoyed helping people with for the past six years.

This past week I got a call from a very nice lady in Albany, NY, who was looking to start a VHPA chapter. She left a short message on my answering machine, so when I retrieved the message from Wisconsin (I live in California), I was a little bewildered by a woman wanting to start a chapter.

All good pilots know good crew resource management, so I thought it was a member's wife who had "inherited" the task.

WRONG! She works at a VA hos-

pital and she's trying to help some VHPA members in that VA hospital get their stuff together!

She explained that she didn't know how she got "elected" or what to do, but she called Headquarters because one of the guys there gave her the number.

This is a case when you volunteer to help out, guys, and she did it.

Headquarters gave her my number and now she and the guys in the hospital should be forming up a new chapter soon.

Thanks to all of you who have gotten involved, thanks to all of you who will become involved and thanks to all of you who are going to continue to help run this volunteer organization.

It's been a pleasure working with all of you, especially Swickard,

Roush, Law, Riseden, Davies, Glennon, Scheuckler, the entire EC since we began 14 years ago, and everybody who ever called me with a question, an attaboy or an awshit, etc., etc.

There are too many of you to list, but you know who you are.

If any member ever wants to know what it's like to have so many friends, give me a call and I'll try to explain it to you.

It's better than a strong ship with no 1:1 vertical, a good crew and a full load of fuel on a clear day with no hot LZs.

It's fantastic! It's almost like having a VHPA reunion every week! Come to the Orlando reunion and see for yourself.

I love you guys (and no, I'm not after your beer — but if you offer . . .)

Executive Council needs good people to make a commitment

Please think about what it takes to be an Executive Council member, then run for office or help a friend get up and do it. You won't be sorry.

It will take about 50 hours in the entire year if you are really involved. That's a long week, but it's not all at one time.

The council spends time on four or five Sunday evening conference calls, some time at the reunion and some more time during the year doing the things that have been agreed upon during the calls and the reunion.

The VHPA is a volunteer organization and no one is making any money from their endeavors. The time you spend is volunteered, so the big reward is making new friends and feeling like you have done a good job for the good of your association (your friends).

There are two ways you will get "covered" for your expenses.

First, your phone and postage expenses are reimbursed monthly when you submit an itemized expense report. This is an easy task, so don't

let this scare you off.

Second, you get a free room (nothing else — no food, drink, etc.) during the reunion. This is because you are required to be at the business meeting at the reunion.

Another thing you should know is that over the years the reunion hotels have been urged to lower room rates overall if the EC and committee members were to reject the hotel's offer of comp rooms.

The hotels have been agreeable to not giving us the comp rooms, but they have refused to lower the rates.

And, since I mentioned it, you might like to know that the U.S. annual average of hotel rate increase has been around 16 percent each year. This is far more than your EC has ever approved for increases at any of the reunions.

It is a commitment to work for free and it does require some effort. Please don't volunteer unless you are willing to do the job, but please don't hesitate for any reason. You can do it.

— Ken Fritz

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

Retired NCO provides information

M.Sgt. Bob Story (retired) has written the VHPA three letters during the past three months, providing information about the two units he deployed with to Vietnam, both times as the unit's first sergeant.

Somehow, Bob came across a copy of the 1995 VHPA Directory and since it did not contain the correct information about his units and the pilots in those units, he started writing letters.

Because of his diligence, the VHPA added seven new pilots to the membership database, one to the Died After Tour database, and corrected the address of a pilot we first learned about in 1990.

Of the 11 pilots he sent in, only two had joined the VHPA since the 1995 Directory was published.

Bob deployed with the 20th Transportation Company (ADS) from Fort Campbell, KY, in May 1967 that went to Phu Loi to join the 520th Transportation Battalion.

In March 1969, he was assigned to be the NCOIC of the OH-58A New Equipment Training Team that formed at the Bell Helicopter plant. Maj. Jack Hester would command the NETT.

In all, the team consisted of six

officers (all but one was a pilot), 23 EM, and four Bell tech reps.

The Kiowa NETT officially arrived at the Bell plant on May 1 for factory training on operation and maintenance of the new aircraft.

Cpts. Marquis Howell and Jimmy Arnold were already SIPs from Fort Rucker, so they became the first OH-58 SIPs and trained the rest of the pilots as SIPs.

The five aircraft were disassembled, loaded into a C-133 at NAS Dallas and flown to Bien Hoa.

The rest of the team and all their equipment left in two C-141s and arrived a few hours before their aircraft on Aug. 17, 1969.

It only took the team two hours to attach the main and tail rotor assemblies to the otherwise complete aircraft after arriving in Vietnam.

Then they took off as a flight of five and flew over USARV Headquarters on their way to their training base at Vung Tau.

There they were attached to the 765th Transportation Battalion, but were under the operational control of USARV.

One of their aircraft was disassembled for use in the maintenance training and the other four were used for

flight training.

Their first classes started on Sept. 1. They ran two 20-man maintenance classes simultaneously and one pilot training class.

Each pilot class had 10 students and lasted two weeks. During that time, each pilot received 10 flight hours.

The first units scheduled to receive the OH-58 were corps artillery and division artillery units.

During the summer of 1970, the Aviation Systems Command released control of the Kiowa NETT to USARV, which reorganized it as the OH-58 Training Team.

In May 1994, those who served in the NETT or the USARV Training Teams held their first reunion at the Bell plant in Texas.

In May 1996, their second reunion was held at Fort Eustis, VA. Plans call for another reunion in May 1998 at Branson, MO.

The VHPA deeply appreciates the information Bob Story and Jack Hester provided.

Not only did they teach us a little more about our helicopter history, but they also provided valuable membership information.

— Mike Law, Directory Editor

Mini-reunions

July 3

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. — 227th Aviation Battalion (Mike Rudd/Herb Nagel).

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. — C Company, 159th Aviation, 101st Airborne Division (Mike Maloy).

11 a.m.-12:50 p.m. — A Company, 25th Aviation, "Little Bears;" B Company, 25th Aviation, "Diamond Heads;" 3/4th Cavalry "Centaur" (Joe Footer).

1-2:50 p.m. — 7/17th Cavalry (Jim Culley).

1-2:50 p.m. — 176th Assault Helicopter Company (Ken Fritz).

1-3:50 p.m. — 187th Assault Helicopter Company (John Quisenberry).

1-3:50 p.m. — 192nd Assault Helicopter Company (Woody Mitchell).

1:30-3 p.m. — 2/17th Cavalry Squadron (Toby Hardy/Bill Jones).

2-5 p.m. — 174th Assault Helicopter Company (Jim McDaniel).

3-3:50 p.m. — 7/17th Boat People (Jim Culley).

3-4:30 p.m. — 2/17th A, B, C, Headquarters Troops (Toby Hardy/Bill Jones).

4-5 p.m. — 7/17th A Troop (Jim Culley).

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 62-6, 62-7, 62-8 (Ken Loveless).

1-2:50 p.m. — 119th Aviation Company/81st Transportation Company (Bob Heisterman).

2-4 p.m. — 48th Assault Helicopter Company (Bill Kelbaugh).

Master planner/scheduler for mini-reunions is:

Ken Mulholland

(Work)

(Fax)

(Home)

Room assignments will be published at the reunion.

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)
 1-5 p.m. — Vendor displays. (Wedgewood Ballroom)
 5-8 p.m. — Early Bird reception. Pay as you go. (Atrium)
 8 p.m.-??? — Renew friendships. (Dolphins Lounge)

Thursday, July 3

7-11 a.m. — Golf. Transportation departs at 7 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)
 11 a.m.-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions. Times and rooms to be posted.
 6-8 p.m. — Reception. Ticket required. (Convention Center Rooms 5-8)
 8-9:30 p.m. — Show and dance.
 9:30 p.m.-1 a.m. — Dance.

Friday, July 4

7 a.m.-1 p.m. — Parade. This will be held in Brandon FL, a 1½ -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)
 4-11 p.m. — Sea World. Tickets required. Buffet: 7:45-8:45 p.m..
 10 p.m. — Fireworks at Sea World.

Saturday, July 5

7-8 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)
 9-11 a.m. — Business Meeting. (Crystal Ballroom A)
 9-11 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; \$45 a person for aerial view of all area attractions.
 6 p.m.-midnight — Banquet, with band and dancing. 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.

**Save
On
Airfare!**

VHPA TRAVEL DISCOUNTS TO THE 1997 VHPA REUNION

Call VHPA's official travel agency & save on airfare & car rental with exclusive discounts guaranteed to save you money! \$100,000 flight insurance is included FREE with each airline ticket purchase.

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'Back to the World' reunion nears

ORLANDO — The theme for this year's reunion is "Back to the World."

The reunion will be a world of fun, get-togethers and activity in this Florida community.

To make sure you don't miss out on anything during the July 2-6 reunion, be sure you make hotel reservations and send in your reunion registration. Don't wait until the last minute.

Reunion headquarters — the Renaissance Orlando Resort, 6677 Sea Harbor Drive — is filling fast, requiring that a backup hotel be booked.

To make a reservation at the Renaissance Orlando Resort, call (800) HOTELS-1. Be sure to mention you are with VHPA. At last report, most of the rooms were booked for the night of July 2.

The backup hotel is the Sheraton World Resort Orlando. To make reservations at the Sheraton, call (800) 824-0026 or (407) 352-1100.

Rates at the Sheraton are \$69 per night, plus tax.

A waiting list for rooms at the Renaissance Orlando Resort will be maintained, so be sure to register there even if you book rooms at the backup hotel.

Transportation to any attraction is available from the Renaissance Orlando Resort.

The reunion officially kicks off July 2 with an Early Bird reception from 5-8 p.m. in the Atrium. Food and drink will be available on a pay-as-you-go basis.

On July 3, golfers can assemble at 7 a.m. for the trip to the renowned International Golf Course. After play ends around 11 a.m., golfers will be returned to reunion headquarters.

Times and locations will be posted for mini-reunions, which will be held from 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

At 6 p.m., the reception begins at the Convention Center. The reception will be followed at 8 p.m. with a show lasting until 9:30 p.m. Dancing will continue until 1 a.m.

Look for kiosk at the airport

If you fly into Orlando International Airport on July 2-3, after getting off the shuttle from the arrival gate, look for a "kiosk" manned by VHPAers.

They will have a red-and-yellow, hand-held sign with "VHPA" on it and could possibly be wearing identifiable colored vests.

The reunion committee still needs people to help man the kiosk on both days for a few hours at a time.

To help out, call Don Long at

On July 4, VHPA members and family members can catch buses leaving at 7 a.m. for Brandon, FL, where a "welcome home parade" has been scheduled.

Hold onto your bladder! After the 90-minute bus trip, everyone will be treated to doughnuts and coffee at the starting point. At the end of the parade, there will be free beer, along with food at a reasonable price.

All parade-goers should be back to reunion headquarters in Orlando by 2-2:30 p.m.

At 4 p.m., we will walk across the street to Sea World. A barbecue buffet will be served there from 7:45-8:45 p.m., followed by fireworks at 10 p.m. Tickets are available for the barbecue.

Cost of the evening at Sea World is \$49 per adult, \$6 less than stated earlier. The reason for the reduced price is Sea World cannot provide private shows for groups smaller than 1,200 people. The reunion committee expects 900 to attend the Sea World events, so there will be no private shows.

Reunion attendees who paid \$55 will receive \$6 back in their registration packet.

Anyone who would like to visit

Sea World before 4 p.m. can pay an additional fee — \$18.95 per adult and \$11.90 per child under age 12 — and be admitted. To receive this rate, take your VHPA ticket to the Guest Services area at the main gate.

On July 5, the ladies social will be held in Crystal Ballroom B while pilots attend the annual business meeting in Crystal Ballroom A from 9-11 a.m. Tickets are required for the ladies social.

From 11 a.m.-4 p.m., helicopter rides will be offered from the rear of the resort for \$45 a person.

The annual banquet will start at 6 p.m. in the Convention Center, followed by dancing until midnight. Seating at the banquet can be arranged during registration.

Please mark your choice of meals on the reunion registration form. Choices include pork chops, grilled chicken teriyaki, scallops over pasta and a vegetarian dinner.

Final event for the Orlando reunion will be a church service starting at 8:30 on July 6. The location of the service will be announced and posted during the reunion.

Besides scheduled events, those attending the Orlando reunion will have an opportunity to visit vendors, see memorabilia displays, check out and help update the VHPA database, and enjoy the company of pilots with whom they flew in Vietnam.

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/>

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 (813) 962-3461.

Major attraction opens in Orlando

ORLANDO — Fantasy takes on a new dimension with Terminator 2 3-D, a new attraction at Universal Studios Florida that utilizes the latest in digital imaging technology to catapult the audience into the center of three-dimensional action right alongside international superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A \$60 million attraction, which opened this spring at the Orlando theme park, Terminator 2 3-D combines the filmed pyrotechnics of award-winning director James Cameron with incredible live-action stage stunts for a futuristic thriller whose theatrical sleight-of-sight boggles the mind.

"We wanted to do something spectacular," said Cameron, whose films (including "True Lies," "Aliens" and "The Terminator") have given him a reputation for the larger than life. "There is an enhanced sense of reality

that comes from the high-resolution 65 mm film format we chose mixed with the illusion of depth offered by 3-D. Combined with the live action, it's very immersive."

"The payoff for this presentation is double," says Academy Award-winning special effects maestro Stan Winston. "This is the continuation of an epic, and it's in 3-D, so it is seen in a way it's never been seen before. You may know the saga, but you've never experienced it like this."

Action adventure utilizes tomorrow's computer technology

Making good on his "I'll be back" promise, Schwarzenegger is again the swaggering Terminator turned good-guy.

Taking its story cue from the blockbuster feature "Terminator 2: Judgment Day," the 12-minute film reunites the mega-star with former

sidekick John Conner (Edward Furlong) in a new and fantastic adventure that advances the film's futuristic premise.

This time, the duo is time-traveling to a world controlled by robots, where they take on the evil Skynet and its army of mechanical killing machines known as "terminators." The dateline is Los Angeles 2029, and if the two can topple Skynet, they'll circumvent a devastating future war, ensuring the safety of future generations.

Rounding out the A-list screen talent reprising their roles are actor Robert Patrick as the morphing metal menace known as the T-1000 and Linda Hamilton as Sarah Conner.

Their imaginations unleashed through the power of computers, the attraction's creators pulled out all the stops to conjure an apocalyptic vision of the future.



MEARS TRANSPORTATION GROUP

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Transportation Options

from Orlando International Airport to the Renaissance Orlando Resort.
Distance from hotel to airport is roughly 30 minutes.

MEARS MOTOR SHUTTLE

Regular shuttle service that will make stops at other International Drive hotels.
Shuttle vans depart approximately every 20 minutes. No reservations needed prior to arrival.

Cost Adult: \$12.00 O/W \$21.00 R/T

Booth Locations: On baggage claim level:
Outside #5 on the A side for Delta Outside # 8 & 14 on the B side for all other airlines

TAXI CAB

Can be arranged at the Mears Motor Shuttle Booth.
Approximate one way meter fare: \$22.00 - \$27.00

DIRECTIONS TO AIRPORT BOOTHS

2ND LEVEL

"A" TERMINAL: EXIT THROUGH THE DOORS IN FRONT OF
AMERICAN BAGGAGE CLAIM CAROUSEL #5
"B" TERMINAL: EXIT THROUGH THE DOORS IN FRONT OF
UNITED BAGGAGE CLAIM CAROUSEL #8 OR
DELTA BAGGAGE CLAIM CAROUSEL #14

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Coupon Valid June 20th - July 10th, 1997

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REGULAR ROUND TRIP PRICE: \$21.00
per person
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46
SALES #

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



VHPA searches for loaded '97 convertible

BOB SMITH

The hunt is on to find a fully loaded 1997 Chrysler Sebring convertible.

Most of you would say, "that should be no problem," but when we went to the Orlando Chrysler dealers, we found out there is little demand for convertibles with "heated" seats, much less "leather" heated seats.

For that matter, selling convertibles in the summer there is like selling ice cubes to the Eskimos in Alaska; there is no demand and no inventory.

BOTTOM LINE: We will have a

1997 Sebring to win with a fully loaded sticker price of \$26,626.

BOTTOM, BOTTOM LINE: 1.) You can take what we have on display at the reunion. 2.) If you don't want the one we have on display, which may not have all the bells and whistles, heated leather seats, etc. and a sticker price of \$26,626, you can always take the \$22,000. Or option 3.), you can order the 1997 Sebring convertible with your choice of options, up to the \$26,626 suggested retail price, and have it delivered to the closest Chrysler dealer to your home.

With all that said, order your raffle

ticket now if you have not already done so.

NOTE: We have made it easier to order. In this newsletter we have inserted "Sebring Auto Raffle" on the Reunion Registration Form.

Register now and add that in, no call, just check the box and send in your form. Your ticket will then be on its way to you. Or call (800) 505-VHPA.

We need to sell a minimum of 300 tickets or the VHPA can cancel the raffle and return all monies.

Remember, only 500 tickets will be sold. Win one of 50 prizes. Order your ticket now.

Reunion briefs

Helicopter rides

To avoid peak periods there will be a sign-up sheet at the registration area. It is important to sign up before July 5.

The rides will be provided by Universal Air Service, which is owned and operated by VHPA member Roy Henley, Class 68-31.

MasterCard and Visa are accepted.

Please call Bob Buchanan at (██████████). If no answer, please leave your name and telephone number.

July 4th parade

Be sure to sign up for the parade when you register or as soon as you know for sure you plan to participate or attend.

The bus contract has to be paid in advance and we need to fill our buses in order to get what we pay for. The bus cancellation date is approaching.

Sea World prices

Many people have called to ask if they can get into Sea World before our designated 4 p.m. time for our price. No, you can't.

You can enter earlier, but there will be an additional charge. Ask about this at registration.

Cypress Gardens unveils new entertainment

Visitors to Cypress Gardens will see some dramatic changes among the park's most familiar facets — its world-famous tropical garden and water ski show, and its legendary congenial cast of Southern Belles.

These new elements comprise an entertainment package designed to create more memorable park adventures.

Most significant in this year's park portfolio is the creation of a new Biblical Garden.

The new respite showcases more than 25 plant species indigenous to the Middle East and described in the Bible.

The largest such themed garden in Florida, the new 2,000-square-foot

attraction also is the largest permanent element to be added to Cypress Gardens' world-famous original botanical garden in more than 20 years.

Moreover, the tropical showplace again doubles as an outdoor fine art gallery of flora and fauna in 1997 as the park's third annual Wildlife Sculpture Series continues.

Aside from the revitalized gardens, another park tradition — its water ski show — has a fresh, new look in 1997, too.

"Ski Xtreme" is the latest rendition of the world's longest continuously running entertainment production.

The new show breaks ground in showmanship and innovation, as one would expect from "the water ski cap-

ital of the world."

Incorporating more audience participation than before, the show was written by the skiers themselves.

"The guts of the show is 'living the dream of becoming a Cypress Gardens water skier'," said Scott Clack, production manager and second-generation park water skiing champion. "We have a rich heritage here stretching more than 60 years."

Cypress Gardens is a 200-acre tropical theme park located off U.S. 27 just 22 miles south of I-4 between Orlando and Tampa on the shores of Lake Eloise and Lake Summit near Winter Haven. The park is open 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily, with extended hours during special seasons.

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		@ \$ 49.00	
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 2, 8 a.m. Includes prizes.) Cost: \$50. Limit: 72 players.		
Teen Dance: (July 2)		
Sebring Auto Raffle: \$100 X number of tickets		
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		
DINNER BANQUET CHOICES		
Pork chop		
Grilled chicken teriyaki		
Scallops over pasta		
Vegetarian on request		

* 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)

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.

Remaining crewmembers badly wounded

STANLEY C. MARCIESKI
DUSTOFF 97

We never saw Madison again.

The information passed on to us was that the remaining members of 913's crew were badly wounded. Then later, through the grapevine, the word came down that both Fred and the medic were dead.

The next day, Sunday, found me on third-up duty, this time with CW2 Bill Whittiker. About midday, we were buzzed for a mission.

As I cranked up, Whittiker phoned ops for the mission information. When Bill gave me the coordinates, I recognized them as being the site where DUSTOFF 913 had been shot down.

The weather was clear and bright, not at all like my most recent visit to the A Shau.

Arriving on station was like plunging into the middle of a flying circus. C&C orbited on station directing the show, with Cobras, slicks and fast-movers and the ground pounders under his control. We were briefed and gave the supporting guns our intended route in and out.

Whittiker had the controls as we dropped out of the sky making a beeline for the LZ. To keep the bad guys occupied we had Cobras laying down rockets on our sides. A Phantom was

dropping heavy ordinance just on the backside of the LZ and the grunts actually in the LZ had formed a perimeter and were laying down a constant stream of fire outward as we touched down.

True to Fred's assessment, we could put only one skid down. Sitting there in that Huey, my insides

Part 4 of series

bounced and shook from the concussions of the explosions. Fred's aircraft lay in the LZ, riddled with holes. The thought flashed through my brain that I needed to take a picture of all this. My little Instamatic camera (I had not yet been to Hong Kong!) was sitting on the radio console well within easy reach.

About the same instant, another thought crossed my brain just as fast. If I were to take my hands off the controls, Whittiker just might take a round and we would then become the second pile of junk in the LZ.

In seconds my eyes sucked in the scene and for some reason I happened to glance down through the chin bubble. To my shock I saw Fred's grimy dust covered face through the curved plexiglas! I thought, "Good God, we've landed on Fred's body!"

Next thing I knew, his eyes

opened and he broke out in a big grin!

I yelled over the intercom for the crew to drag Fred out of there and get him on board.

Somehow, with the help of the grunts, they flung Fred and the other wounded on board. When the crew-chief gave us the "Go," Whittiker pulled pitch, kicked a pedal and nosed the Huey over and dived into the Valley leaving the sounds of battle behind us.

Somebody in the back said, "Fred said he just wants a Coke!" He was wounded in quite a few places, but was alive after crawling around for almost three days on the ground with no food or water.

He had been the target of several of the NVA and was too often on the wrong end of U.S. ordinance being hurled toward the LZ.

We dropped Fred at the 85th Evac in Phu Bai and that was the last I heard about him, other than rumors he had lost a leg and possibly other body parts.

One of the other patients we pulled out of there that day was Fred's medic who, sadly, did not survive his wounds after his struggle on the ground.

There were eight more nerve-racking months for me in Nam and

See IT SEEMED, Page 22

VHPA briefs

Membership benefit offered

VHPA is now offering a convenient way to renew your membership — with a credit card.

By utilizing this optional benefit, you will ensure uninterrupted service. You'll automatically receive your annual Membership Directory and Newsletters.

You also will automatically receive a fresh bumper sticker with a reminder your credit card has been charged. No more last-minute rushes to renew your membership — and a free sticker, too.

This is especially good news for those members who renew at the annual reunion — less time in the registration line!

Newsletter subscribers also may take advantage of this program.

To request this service, please call VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA with your VISA or MasterCard at hand.

If you are outside the United States, call (916) 648-1040 and ask for the VHPA renewal desk or fax (916) 648-1072.

Members assist VHPA

Six VHPA members were nominated for a "Certificate of Appreciation" for distinguished volunteer efforts on behalf of the association during the Helicopter Association International meeting in Anaheim, CA, Feb. 2-4.

They are:

Jim Cunningham, Max Mizejewski, Joel Dozhier, Will Gibbons, Russ Janus and Dan Bresnahan.

It seemed as if no other world ever existed

Continued from Page 21

somewhere, somehow it got to the point that I knew if I lived through this tour it would be my personal miracle. Nam was like that. After being there awhile and being subjected to the experience of flying DUSTOFF, it seemed as if no other world had ever existed.

The nightmare conviction developed that I had always been in Vietnam and that I had always been flying DUSTOFF. I had never been anywhere else. The "World" was a totally foreign land you read about in Stars & Stripes or magazines. You never lived there, but someday maybe you would visit.

With those feelings, along about September, I submitted paperwork for an extension based on the promise of

a Contact IP course. When we lost 460 with Tony Luc and his entire crew one very ugly night, a friend talked me out of extending and I pulled my paperwork. Eventually I went back to the "World."

I found with a shock that the "World" was a foreign land and I didn't know anybody and they sure as hell didn't know me. That is maybe except for one old guy. A WW II vet who somehow could see or feel my confusion at a welcome home party.

What we talked about, I cannot remember, but he knew what I felt. What was to celebrate? There were still guys crawling through the paddies and jungle . . . humping the boonies.

They were still getting shot, still stepping on mines, still walking into

to booby traps that blew them to hell. They were OD'ing in the field, getting stung by bees, breaking arms and legs in falls and I was no longer there to get them out of their mess and back to safety. I was good at flying DUSTOFF and I left them there to get out of their mess somehow or die.

So, how could these people yuck it up and swill booze while talking about a place that was in another universe and people I could save were dying. All I wanted to do was go back to Nam and do my job.

Col. Don Retzlaff at MSC aviation assignments finally got tired of my calls requesting to go back and asked, "Tell me the truth, did you leave a wife or a kid back there?" No, but I guess I did leave family there. I

See I HARBORED, Page 23

Memorabilia on display at reunion in Orlando

I am looking forward to putting on my sixth Vietnam War memorabilia display.

My first display for the VHPA, at the New Orleans reunion, was relatively small and simple, basically memorabilia placed on a table with little or no description of the artifacts.

As my collection grew, and I gained experience doing the displays, they have evolved with each reunion.

I began to utilize Vietnam War photos, unit historical information and biographical data to complement the artifacts. Those viewing the memorabilia seemed to appreciate being able to put a face, a date or a place on an object being viewed. Hopefully, this will be my best display so far.

While I enjoy exhibiting my collection, there is a selfish element involved. As a collector, I am interested in obtaining additional items for my collection.

I would very much appreciate it if the VHPA members would look over my advertisement, in this issue, to see if they might have anything they would consider parting with.

Items received into my collection will be preserved and will be displayed at future VHPA reunions. I am looking for anything from MPC to Ho Chi Minh sandals.

I will be bringing some nice walnut display cases and medals for trade in Orlando. Hope everyone will have a chance to get by my display.

— George G. Reese Jr.

(Advertisement)

Vietnam War Memorabilia

I am looking to add to my collection of Vietnam War memorabilia. I am willing to purchase or trade for single items or large groups.

Have nice walnut medal display cases, and most medals for trade. Will bring cases and medals to Orlando and will conduct trades there or by mail anytime.

All who served in Vietnam were awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and Vietnam Campaign Medal, but most vets never received the actual medal. Will have those medals available for trade.

Items received into my collection will be displayed at future VHPA reunions.

Want the following items:

UNIT PATCHES	PARTY SUITS
UNIT PLAQUES	FLAGS, UNIT
WEAPONS	SOUTH VIET PATCHES, ETC.
FLIGHT JACKETS	CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORMS
FLIGHT HELMETS	MEDALS, BADGES, CRESTS
SURVIVAL GEAR	SPECIAL FORCES ITEMS
UNIT LIGHTERS	VC/NVA CAPTURED ITEMS
UNIT HISTORIES	MAAG VIETNAM ITEMS
MAPS, SILK/RUBBER	UTT, 68th Avn Co., 197th ITEMS
BLOOD CHITS	TIGER STRIPE FATIGUES
CHEAP CHARLIE	UNIT PATCHES, HATS, HOLLERS, ETC.
NEED PRE-1965	JUNGLE FATIGUES, BOOTS, FLIGHT JACKETS.

George G. Reese Jr.

I harbored guilt for years and blamed myself

Continued from Page 22

never did go back.

I harbored guilt over the years and blamed myself for not going in to get Fred that night even though I knew we simply could not have found that LZ once that storm hit. And we were lucky to get out of that weather ourselves.

Nobody else could get in there for two days until Whittiker and I made it that Sunday, so I should know better.

I also cannot help thinking that if Fred had not volunteered to go back in, that it would have been us instead of his crew who died and bled in that LZ.

Almost 20 years later, after my military retirement and while living in Northern Virginia, I received a copy of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) newsletter.

A notice in the letters section got my eye. It was an announcement about a reunion of the Air Amb Platoon of the 326th Med. The letter was signed — "Fred Behrens."

I was a little stunned, but called information for the town in Virginia indicated as the address of the sender.

I dialed the number, not really knowing what to expect. It did seem to me that after being badly wounded in a war that our country was trying to forget, Fred might just be one very

The explosion that virtually blew our aircraft out of the LZ that night was caused by an RPG round.

bitter SOB. He was not and is not.

We talked for two hours and I learned more about the mission he and I shared my first night with Eagle DUSTOFF.

I knew I was very lucky to have survived Vietnam and I discovered later how lucky we were to have survived that particular mission.

The explosion that virtually blew our aircraft out of the LZ that night was caused by an RPG round.

Bob Gervaci, who helped Jim Zwit onto the JP the night of his rescue, said an RPG flashed up and glanced off the bottom of our aircraft. Gervaci said today that round glanced off one of our skids. The RPG is a point-detonating round. That round had to just glance off the skid a split second before exploding.

As so often happens in war and other tragedies, a fraction of an inch or a second in time meant the differ-

ence between life and death. It made such a difference that night not just for me, but a lot of people.

When we dropped Jim Zwit off at the 85th Evac the docs there did not expect him to live.

They pumped 25 units of blood into him. Eighteen months and 20 operations later, Jim left the hospitals. Today he is a former Chicago policeman turned private investigator with four children.

In nearly 700 hours of logged combat flight, I may have rescued as many as 700 people, probably more. My memories can picture a lot of them.

The situations that brought us together were not all dramatic and combat did not fill each of my 366 days in Vietnam.

Those days had ample shares of boredom punctuated with blood red excitement, a lot of laughter and a good measure of sadness, friendships that were real alongside the unreality of the totality and madness of the war in Vietnam.

I suppose we acted on whatever helped to forget and hide the underlying but not overwhelming fear.

Today, if certain odors evoke memories and I hear the whisper now and then, it simply tells me what I felt long ago . . . flying DUSTOFF was a very special mission.

VHPA briefs

Kansas/Missouri chapter forming

For all the Kansas/Missouri VHPA members attending the 1997 Reunion, Bob Smith will be having a short meeting for those who may have some interest in joining a chapter as charter members.

Stop by only if to say "hi" and have a beer.

Information will be in your packet for the time and place.

Even if you can't make it, e-mail Smith or drop him a fax or letter. E-mail is: [REDACTED] and fax is: [REDACTED]

NOTE: E-mail me again even if you have in the past. My saved e-mail got lost. — Bob Smith

VHPA members get discount

Through Carlson Wagonlit Travel, the official 1997 VHPA Reunion travel agency, Alamo car rentals has a discount offer available to all VHPA members.

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— Ken Fritz

After-action report extremely significant

MIKE LAW

In commenting on Duane Brofer's letter to the VHPA printed on Page 7 of the January/February Newsletter, we promised the membership a feature story based on the outstanding material he provided.

Prior to Duane sending us a copy of the Unit After Action Report for June 24, 1968, for D Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry, 9th Infantry Division, the VHPA knew the following:

- **June 24, 1968:** U.S. Army, helicopter battle damage and loss, OH-6A No. 66-17770, map coordinates XS677702.

- **Details:** Was on an armed reconnaissance mission. During the attack approach target area, had more than 99 holes from 7.62 mm type SA/AW, crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

- **June 24, 1968:** U.S. Army helicopter crew member

Spec. 4 Daniel Ralph Brophy died, 9th Infantry Division, location (Long An Province, III Corps, South Vietnam).

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

- **June 25, 1968:** U.S. Army helicopter pilot WO1 James Bruce Tasker died from hostile fire, OH-6A, D Troop 3rd Squadron 5th Cavalry, location (Long An Province, III Corps, South Vietnam).

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

- **Brief summary:** Shot down southeast of Tan An. Pilot and observer not hurt. They were overrun on ground by enemy.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The helicopter loss is a "solo" record in the HELICOPT database and the two "solo" KIA records are from the KIAMAIN database which agrees with the Vietnam Wall information.

"Solo" means the events are not linked or related to another event.

See SLICK, Page 25

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by
Charles Holley & Mike Sloniker

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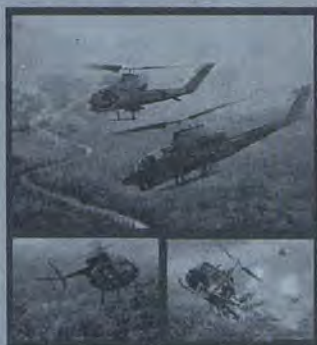
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Slick sent to Dong Tam for 'Sniffer'

Continued from Page 24

After-action report from Duane Brofer

• **June 24, 1968:** Delta Troop was OPCON to the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division for missions west and northwest of Tan An. The mission commander (Longknife 26) was briefed at 0700 hours at the Brigade CP.

One slick was sent to Dong Tam to pick up the "People Sniffer" crew and one slick to Tan An to pick up CS for use in a "People Sniffer" operation north of the Van Co Dong River, northeast of Tan An, the LST (Light Scout Team), LFT (Light Fire Team), "People Sniffer," and CS aircraft were over the AO at 0840 hours.

The "People Sniffer" received high readings in the vicinity of XS6668, XS6771 and from XS678689 to XS672699 and over to XS700700 the "People Sniffer" received several moderate readings.

The LST following the "People Sniffer" was searching and marking the areas of high and moderate readings for the Control aircraft along the north side of the Rach Doi Ma River.

One pass was made from east to west generally between An Nhut Tan and Roch Kien and back, and the second pass going to the east had just began.

At 0920 hours a light scout aircraft (War Wagon 14) was marking a small structure and suspected area which had not given a reading on the "People Sniffer," but was generally between two high readings. The light scout aircraft was approximately 75 feet and 20 knots when it received extremely intense automatic weapons fire from immediately below the aircraft.

The aircraft called receiving fire and attempted to break

contact. The aircraft was hit and crashed into the edge of the tree line at XS679699.

The trail scout ship immediately suppressed the area and sighted one crew member outside of the aircraft and reported the entire area was under intense enemy automatic weapons fire and no aircraft were able to enter the immediate area.

A unit, C/5/60th Infantry was airborne from Rock Kien en route to the area of high readings. The unit was inserted vicinity XS675703 to work south into the area of the downed aircraft at 0944 hours.

The unit immediately came under intense fire and was pinned down. A Cobra strike was placed on the area of fire with the heavy tree line south of the downed aircraft being worked.

Several low passes were made over the area and the fire was so intense in the vicinity of XS668702 that a low recon of the downed aircraft area was impossible. B/5/60th Infantry was inserted in the vicinity of XS668702 to sweep west and help block the west side of contact.

A/5/60th Infantry was inserted generally in the vicinity of XS680707 to block and help sweep from the north. Both units were initially pinned down upon landing. The light scouts continued to screen in the south of the area to keep the VC from moving out to the south as continuous artillery and Cobra strikes were put into the area.

At 1140 hours, the LST sighted four VC running in a nippa palm area 100 meters west of the downed aircraft. A Cobra strike was inserted in the area with four VC KBA (possible).

The LST made a pass near the downed aircraft and the

See ALL, Page 26

Warrant messes with new lieutenant's mind

DREW BOUDRIEAU

A perfect example of how we liked to mess with the minds of lieutenants occurred on one of the infrequent days I had off from flying.

My aircraft had been in maintenance, and I was headed to the flight line to see if everything was all right.

Due to the fact the figure heading toward me was struggling with a full duffel bag and other assorted gear, I could tell it was a new guy just arriving.

As he drew closer, I saw it was a lieutenant.

When he got to within a few steps of me, I said, "Hi, new guy," and kept on walking.

Behind me I heard a sharp intake of breath, followed by, "Hey, you!" As we all know, you never turn around for this call, because it is usually followed by the statement you have just volunteered for something or you are in trouble. So, in keeping with the best military traditions, I kept on going.

I next heard an even louder, "Hey, Mister!!" Since this was the proper way to address warrant officers and the lieutenant learned so quickly, I turned around and said, "Yes?"

He replied "Don't you warrants salute lieutenants around here?"

"No," I replied in return.

He then became very rude to me. While I was only trying to start his

indoctrination into the unit, all he could do was turn very red and start babbling about military courtesy and associated issues.

Suddenly, he dropped his gear, snapped to attention and executed a very professional salute. I started to explain to him it wasn't a requirement that lieutenants salute warrants when he hissed something at me.

I asked what he had said and he replied, "There's a captain behind you!" I let my jaw drop and my eyes go wide and said in hushed tones, "A real captain?"

I then felt an arm on my shoulders and a familiar voice said, "Drew, what's the new guy doing?" It was

See YOU'RE, Page 26

All ground units received heavy fire

Continued from Page 25

crew was not sighted as they were thought to be in a bunker 10 meters to the front of the aircraft.

A CS drop was made into the area with negative results on decreasing the intensity of the ground fire. An airstrike was put in and the A/2/60th Infantry was inserted vicinity XS 683703 to block on the east between 1330-1400 hours.

All ground units were still receiving heavy automatic weapons fire from the downed aircraft area. A LST reported seeing two personnel in an open bunker about 25 meters south of the downed aircraft at approximately 1449 hours. The personnel did not appear to be alive at this time.

All aircraft continued to draw heavy automatic weapons fire from the nippa palm area.

Medevacs were begun at 1500 hours for the ground units and LFTs covered. At 1559 hours, three VC were sighted 150 meters east of the aircraft in a stream line.

A LST and LFT fired on the VC, with one VC KBA in the water (BC) and two VC KBA (possibles). Heavy rain hampered the operation between 1548 and 1600 hours.

At 1700 hours, six people in a sampan were sighted at XS673698 and a LST checked with negative personnel sighting and one empty sampan. The sampan was destroyed.

A/2/60th Infantry was able to move and made it to the downed aircraft at approximately 1819 hours.

One OH-6A and UH-1C C&C landed to pick up the crew. Both personnel were located in an old home foundation with the EM facing north and the pilot facing south in firing positions. The area was 25 meters south of the aircraft location.

The EM's leg was badly broken and he had been shot in the front of his body. The pilot was wounded in the back and otherwise appeared uninjured from the crash.

The aircraft was a complete loss with the cockpit smashed, the rotor system wrapped around a palm tree and the mini-gun jammed into the ground.

The SOI, M-60, M-79 and other articles from the air-

craft were recovered. The pilot's .38-caliber pistol, Car-15 and morphine blood chit packet were missing. The equipment and bodies were extracted at 1837 hours and the troop released to Bear Cat at 1920 hours.

• **Summary:** Two U.S. KIA, one VC KBA (BC), seven VC KBA (possibles) by LST and LFT passes at 1559 hours.

No estimate available until sweep is completed on the total VC KBA from Cobra strikes. One sampan destroyed, two structures destroyed. One .38-caliber pistol, one Car-15, and one blood chit-morphine packet were not recovered.

It is considered unusual in that the area in which the scout aircraft was shot down was not an area with a significant "People Sniffer" reading, although maximum readings were obtained to the southeast and west of the area.

The U.S. KIA's were removed by troop aircraft to Tan An.

• **Pilot:** TASKER, James B., WO1, W3157697 (SSN:274-42-5116); CE: BROPHY, Daniel R., Spec. 4, US56705375 (SSN:552-64-4328).

• **Aircraft:** OH-6A, SN6617770. The aircraft has been secured and will be extracted at first light on June 25, 1968.

Ammo expended by Cobra gunships was 23,000 7.62 mm, 380 FFAR, and 800 40 mm rounds. One aircraft was hit more than 100 times and crashed at XS679699 and one Cobra received one hit in the rocket pod at XS678698 without any damage to armament system.

FOR THE COMMANDER: William E. Whitworth
Captain, Armor, Operations Officer

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not only do we have a detailed narrative of these events and can "link" the helicopter record with the two KIA records, but we also know that WO Tasker died on the June 24 vs. June 25, as recorded on the Vietnam Wall. Thanks again, Duane Brofer, for helping the VHPA record the helicopter history of the Vietnam War correctly.

'You're a captain and he's a lieutenant'

Continued from Page 25

Andy, my platoon leader, and he looked perplexed.

I said, "He's saluting you."

"Why?"

"Because you're a captain and he's a lieutenant."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"He was just giving me a lecture on military-type junk and, from what

I can gather, you are supposed to salute him back."

"Didn't you tell him that we don't do that kind of stuff around here?"

"I was trying, but then you came along and interrupted."

Andy then sort of waved his hand in the direction of his head and the lieutenant dropped his salute.

Before the new guy could say anything else, Andy looked at me and

said, "I think I better take you over and buy you a beer. You look like this guy has gotten you all upset."

So off we went to the club, leaving a very, very confused lieutenant to ponder his introduction into the brotherhood of a combat aviation unit.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Drew Boudrieau served as "Minuteman 14" during 1968-69.



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