



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

September/October 2000 Vol. 18, No. 5



Don Joyce photo

An Air Force Huey, its skids resting on narrow PSP to keep it out of the mud, prepares for a mission in South Vietnam.



From the President

Since my previous article for this column turned out rather lengthy, I'll make it up to you by making this one nice and short (I'm still getting "ribbed" for speaking too long at the D.C. banquet).

With D.C. behind us, we turn our focus on Denver for the 2001 reunion. I had the opportunity to visit with Mike Law (Reunion Committee chairman) and his committee, as well as the Rocky Mountain Chapter, a few weeks ago.

I could go on for pages about the terrific folks I met (or remet), the great reunion they're planning, and what a really great place Denver is.

I was astounded by all the visitor attractions the city has to offer! The hotel is very nice and the layout for our reunion is really good.

I'm not going to elaborate on all that because the Reunion Committee will be doing so in this edition of the

Newsletter, as well as subsequent editions.

I mentioned in my previous column to expect a change in the hotel reservation procedures. That's been done and you can read the details in Joe Bilitzke's article in this *Newsletter*.

The hotel contract for Las Vegas has been signed, thereby making it official that Reunion 2002 will be in Las Vegas and will be hosted by the Las Vegas Chapter.

The host hotel will be the Riviera Hotel and Casino, which offers many advantages for our attendees, and recently has undergone an extensive renovation.

Look for more information to be published in the *Newsletter* as other 2002 reunion-related things get firmed up.

The Executive Council is reviewing applicants for VHPA legal counsel, and hopes to make a decision at our teleconference meeting. Look for the selection announcement in the next edition of the *Newsletter*.

Keep your rotors churning.

— Charles Holley, President

New membership contest begins

The 2001 VHPA Membership Recruiting Contest has started.

There are still more than 10,000 Vietnam-era helicopter pilots we have not found and welcomed into the VHPA.

As an incentive for current members to seek out and sign up new members, the VHPA Executive Council announces the following prizes for our "Top-Gun 2001" recruiters:

1st place: Reimbursement for four nights' hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2001 in Denver.

2nd place: Reimbursement for three nights' hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2001.

3rd place: Reimbursement for two nights' hotel room rate at VHPA Reunion 2001.

4th place: Reimbursement for one night's hotel room rate at VHPA

Reunion 2001.

5th place: Reimbursement for two tickets for the VHPA Reunion 2001 Banquet.

Contest rules

- Minimum of 10 new VHPA members to receive any prize.

- Applications must have been received by VHPA from July 6, 2000-July 6, 2001.

- Winners do not have to be present at VHPA Reunion 2001, but will be awarded the appropriate amount of the prize.

- Winners will be announced at the VHPA 2001 Banquet and in the *Newsletter*.

Recruiting hints

- Contact your Vietnam unit buddies, who are not listed in the VHPA Membership Directory.

- Check your unit webpage listings for non-members.

- Pilots who are listed in the VHPA Directory with a "#" symbol by their name have never been a member. If you know them, contact them.

- Copy the VHPA Membership Application from the *Newsletter*, put your name and membership number on the bottom, send it to your prospective recruits, with a short note about VHPA.

- Wear a VHPA T-shirt whenever possible, and carry an application. You will be surprised to see who talks to you about flying helicopters in Vietnam.

Please contact Robert Wiggins, the new VHPA membership chairman at membership@vhpa.org for further information and ideas.

— Don Joyce, Executive Council

Classified ads

POSITION WANTED: Experienced helicopter pilot looking for a position in the areas of EMS, natural resources or public service. Experience: Regular Army, Indiana National Guard. Class 68-27. Call Bill Resor at [REDACTED].

CALORAD: All natural wellness product. Would you like to lose inches/weight while you sleep? Build lean muscle mass? No diet or exercise necessary. Too good to be true? An 86% long-term success rate speaks for itself. Available retail or wholesale in an excellent business opportunity. Call VHPA member Paul Uster (L200) at [REDACTED] and follow the cues. Or visit www.evicom.com Use code word: paul

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New program manager at VHPA Headquarters



Whitten

Linda Whitten has joined the VHPA Headquarters staff as program manager. She succeeds Jodi Allison, who accepted a position with the State of California.

Linda's father, Mike, is a VHPA life member and belongs to the California Chapter North.

Linda has more than six years of banking and customer service experience. She loves to travel, and is talented in arts and crafts.

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter

[Redacted] (fax)

Albert Rodriguez, President

[Redacted]

California Chapter North

[Redacted] (fax)

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www.vhpafl.org
([Redacted]) (home/work)

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] (home)

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[Redacted]

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www.ga-vhpa.org
[Redacted] (fax)

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[Redacted]

Las Vegas Chapter

www.VHPALasVegas.org
[Redacted] (home)
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Lad Vaughan, President

[Redacted]

Mid America Chapter

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Gary Wineteer, President

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] (home)
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[Redacted] (fax)

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] (fax)

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] (home)
[Redacted] (work)
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Ohio River LZ Chapter

[Redacted] (home)

Bob Hamilton, President

[Redacted]

Rocky Mountain Chapter

[Redacted] (home)
[Redacted] (work)
[Redacted] 1 (fax)

Ellwood V. Sonderlind, President

[Redacted]

Southern California Chapter

[Redacted] (home)
[Redacted] (work)
[Redacted] (fax)

Carl Cortez, President

[Redacted]

VHPA Products

You may order a past calendar with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters. The 2001 Calendar may only be ordered by calling Turner Publishing at (800) 788-3350.

Product	Each	P&H	No.	Total
Bumper sticker	\$1	Free		\$
Window decal	\$1	Free		\$
Newsletters — back issues	\$2	Free		\$
1999 Directory — 1972 Easter Offensive	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Directory — Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, N. Vietnam	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
1997 Directory — IV Corps	\$5	Free		\$
1995 Directory — Tandem-rotor helicopters	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
1994 Directory — Lam Son 719 and tactical map	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
2000 Calendar	\$8	\$5 ea		\$
1999 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1996 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1995 Calendar	\$5	Free		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. II. (Highlights 1966-67)	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
Vietnam Helicopter History CD-ROM (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
Grand total				\$

To place your order

Complete this form, then mail or fax it to:

VHPA
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Fax: (916) 966-8743

Pay by credit card:

Call (800) 505-VHPA

Visit our website at:

www.vhpa.org

(Include credit card information or enclose check or money order)

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Credit card (check one):	<input type="checkbox"/> VISA	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard
Card number:	Expiration date:	
Signature:		

Letters

Poem describes death of veteran

The following poem was sent to me by one of us. I thought it might be appropriate for the newsletter.

Ty Simmons
Ghostrider 24
189th AHC

A Veteran died today

*He was getting old and paunchy
and his health was failing fast,
And as he sat around the Legion
telling stories of his past.
Of the war that he had fought in,
of the deed that he had done.
In his exploits with his buddies,
they were heroes, everyone.*



*And 'tho sometimes to his neighbors,
his tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened,
for they knew whereof he spoke.
But we'll hear his tales no longer,
for 'ol Bob has passed away,
and the world's a little poorer,
for a Veteran died today.*

*No, he wasn't mourned by many,
just his children and his wife,
for he lived an ordinary,
very quiet sort of life.
He held a job and raised a family,
quietly going on his way;
And the world won't note his passing,
'tho a Veteran died today.*

*When politicians leave this earth,
their bodies lie in state,
while thousands note their passing,
and proclaim that they were great.
The papers tell of their life stories,
from the time that they were young.
But the passing of a Veteran
goes unnoticed and unsung.*

*Is the greatest contribution
to the welfare of this land,
Some jerk who breaks his promise
and cons his fellow man?
Or the ordinary fellow,
who in time of war and strife,
Goes off to serve his country
and offers up his life?*

*The politician's stipend and the
style in which he lives
Are sometimes disproportionate
to the service that he gives.
While the ordinary Veteran
who offered up his all,
Is paid off with a medal and
perhaps a pension small.*

*It's so easy to forget them,
for it is so long ago,
That our Bobs and Jims and
Johnmys went to battle, but we know.
It was not the politician,
with his compromise and ploy,
Who won for us this freedom
that our country now enjoys.*

*Should you find yourself in danger,
with your enemies at hand
Would you really want some cop-out
with his ever waffling hand,
Or would you want a Veteran,
who has sworn to defend,
His home, his kin, and Country,
and fight until the end?*

*He's just a common Veteran
and his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us,
we may need his like again.
For when countries are in conflict
we find the Veteran's part
Was to clean up all the troubles
that the politicians start.*

*If we cannot do him honor,
while he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him homage,
at the ending of his days.
Perhaps a simple headline
in the paper that might say
Our Country is in Mourning,
for a Veteran died today*

WOCs oblivious to events of 1968

It was early December 1968.

During the year, assassins' bullets had claimed both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the Democratic convention in Chicago had been ugly, and Richard Nixon had just been elected to succeed Lyndon Johnson as president.

The country was in turmoil — but we WOCs at Fort Rucker were largely oblivious. The Army was pouring its all into the conflict in Southeast Asia, and the commitment

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required thousands of young, able-bodied (and slightly crazy) men to pilot the choppers used to conduct the war.

After chasing eagles and vultures through the Texas skies in OH-23's and TH-55's, we went to Mother Rucker to learn instrument flying (and flicker vertigo) in OH-13s, and then had transitioned to the magnificent Huey!

We were going to make it!

By that time we were pretty cocky. We were going to make it! They needed pilots so bad, there was no way we could wash out now — barring an absolute bonehead disaster of the highest magnitude.

It almost happened.

Tactical training was the final phase: Formation flying, confined area operations, gunnery tactics, and low-level navigation.

The night before our first low-level mission, we gathered in the barracks for elaborate mission planning. Our flight of three Hueys (six WOCs) had received the mission assignment that afternoon, and then spent the evening preparing for the flight.

Each crew marked its own map so each could lead any leg of the mission. We painstakingly marked the flight path to avoid populated areas, ticked off distances, noted obstructions, and highlighted prominent landmarks and checkpoints. Each was uniquely color-coded to assure easy recognition.

Our maps were pieces of art, surely destined for the WOC Hall of Fame (if there were such a thing).

Bill Donics and I were paired for this flight. Bill was both a better “stick” and a better map reader than me, but we thought the map part was more important for this flight, so we agreed I would mostly fly and he would mostly navigate and handle the radios. We were ready!

The next morning, our three ships formed up in a “V” formation on the pad.

Steve Brown and Gerald Clark were lead for the first leg; I’ve tried as hard as I can, but cannot remember who flew the other ship.

Chalks 2 and 3 gave a “thumbs up,” and Gerald called the tower for departure. We got light on the skids, then lifted up and nudged forward, adding power to adjust for the characteristic dip. We were on the left of the “V,” I was totally focused on Lead.

Map accordioned out window

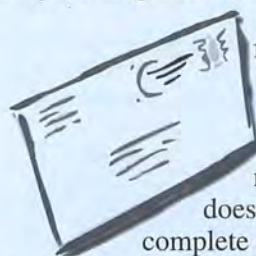
As we shuddered through translational lift, I saw Steve (in the left seat) turn his shoulder and lean right. At just that moment, his map — his WOC Hall of Fame map — accordioned out his window and began to slowly flutter earthward.

Steve jerked back and grabbed out the window — too late. I can still picture him, head out the window, looking

down and back at his rapidly disappearing map. Not a good start!

Our main commo among the flight, and with our instructors in a Huey overhead, was to be the UHF radio. But we WOCs had agreed beforehand on a VHF frequency, for things we might not want to share with the IP's. So we tried to bluff it out, with Chalks 2 and 3 telling Lead where to go via the VHF. Of course, that didn't go well.

After responding five straight times to instructor questions with, “Ahhh, wait one,” and then trying to sort out often-conflicting answers from 2 and 3 on Victor, Steve and Gerald had to tell about losing their map. I'm sure the IPs got a laugh out of that.



After that, it was just formation flight training for Steve and Gerald; without a map, they were out of the ballgame.

I don't remember if we took Lead next or if the other ship did. It

doesn't matter; the whole flight was a complete fiasco. Eighty knots at low level was completely new and foreign to us; landmarks whizzed by so fast as to be nearly invisible to our untrained eyes. We were lost within minutes.

The radio blared with “help” from the other WOC ship (the one with a map, obviously) and questions and derisive comments from our IPs. Several times our instructors vectored us from our wandering back to the flight path, told us where we were, and invited us to continue the flight.

We weren't even sure we were on map

Again and again, we were lost within minutes — if not sooner. At times we were so lost we weren't even sure we were on the map! (At one point, Bill asked me if we should “lose” our map out the window; we decided against it.) An absolute disaster, of the first magnitude!

Finally, after what seemed hours of mindless torture, the IPs told us to climb to altitude. We did, and headed back to the airfield.

Not surprisingly, the flight back was a quiet one. I'm sure we were all envisioning the tongue-lashing our IPs would have in store for us. Pink slips loomed as a definite possibility; could we wash out, this close to the end? Nobody knew.

We flew in, hovered to our assigned parking spots, and everybody made it down OK. Whew, at least it was finally over! I looked across the taxiway at Steve and Gerald's ship. Steve met my eyes and gave me his big smile and a “Thumbs down” sign. I shook my head and smiled back as he began to swing open his door.

Another Huey hovered between us, and I turned inside the cockpit to begin the shutdown. Almost immediately, Bill poked me and pointed across the taxiway. The Huey's rotorwash had caught Steve's opening door and ripped it off; Steve was running across the ramp, chasing his door. Oh no! What else can go wrong? After he caught the wayward door, he ran to his ship and tried to fit it back in place,

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hoping no one would notice. Right!!

The whole thing was so crazy, Bill and I both just laughed out loud. Losing a door was the perfect end for this day!

Les Davison
"Falcon 2"

155th Assault Helicopter Company
Class 68-21

Washington parade event to remember

A few weeks before the annual reunion in Washington, DC, the e-mails were much more frequent. Checking on hotel reservations, making sure the timetables for all those arriving were correct, so we could meet all of our friends at the specified times, not wanting to miss anyone or anything.

One of these messages caught my attention.

Mick Gutta shared information that his wife Judy had read in the *Newsletter* about the possibility of marching in the July 4th parade in Washington, DC, and thought it would be a wonderful experience.

Although this was our seventh reunion, I had never marched in any of the previous parades. I had always been too busy spending time with my friends and sightseeing.

I called Mick and Judy to inform them that my wife Darlene and I would like to march if we could get our names on the roster in time. Please bear in mind I am not one to get excited about parades, but if others were going to march, I thought I could march along just to be with my buddies.

On arriving in Washington, the opportunity to participate in the parade still had not hit home. I was informed the parade committee had waived the rule on the number of those that could march and all those with the VHPA

WOC Rock information wanted

WANTED: Any information or contacts concerning the 1st WOC Rock at Fort Wolters.

I am working on a Fort Rucker project concerning restoration and history of the Rock.

Lou "Rocket" Rochat

(home)
(work)

reunion who wished to, could take part in the parade.

After experiencing the ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial and the missing man toast at the banquet, the parade had to be anticlimactic.

On the morning of July 4th, we left our hotel at 10:30 a.m. to arrive at the staging area at 11:30.

I was somewhat taken back by the number of those that were arriving to participate. There had to be 1,500-plus members of the VHPA waiting to take part.



As the morning wore on, the sun came out, it became very warm, and time started to slow down. Just like the Army, "Hurry up and wait." I stood, I sat, and I got bored.

Then, in the early afternoon, we started to move. As VHPA members and their families moved out of the staging area and onto 7th Street, electricity filled the air.

There were hundreds of people standing, waving, and applauding. As I marched up 7th, I looked into the faces of those on the sidewalks. I could hear them shouting, "Good Job," "Well Done" and "Welcome Home," and I knew they were sincere.

As we turned onto Constitution Avenue, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. Here I was in our nation's capital, taking part in its Fourth of July parade.

And then I saw him, off to my right, on a small grassy hill, standing at attention, with his right arm raised in a salute, his right thumb in the air, indicating "Thumbs Up." As I raised up my right arm to return the "Thumbs Up" salute, our eyes met. And at that moment I was filled with pride to be marching in that parade with my brother helicopter pilots and their families.

Thank you VHPA Reunion Committee members for cutting the red tape to allow us to march. Thank you, Judy Gutta, for your idea that we should take part in this special parade, for it will be a parade to remember.

John M. Kazlauskas
"Dutchmaster 21"
Owensboro, KY

Washington reunion — from wives corner

No, this is not about us. Even though we want to be important and write things on our nametag to be noticed during the VHPA reunions. Things such as: "First Wife," "The Wife" or "Last Wife."

We are here for you VHPA husbands. It is a pleasure to be part indirectly of this organization of brave Americans who had put their life at risk for our country. I feel privileged every time I enter a room full of you crazy helicopter pilots.

You are "The Man." I see pictures of you back then and I can't believe that you were so young. I can't believe that

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you gave so much and it overwhelms me that you are so humble about it.

Sure I can see white hairs, big bellies and glasses. But if I look deeper, I see sharp eyes; if I listen carefully, I hear great men talk; and if I stop, I can hear the beatings of 1,000 lion hearts.

I cannot see or understand the scars; I wouldn't even dare to try. But my heart is full of happiness when I see the man of 1967 and the man of today merging through the meaningful sound of a laugh and a hug so long delayed for a fellow man.

Welcome home, Warriors, Lords of the skies and Patriots. Thank you for fighting in the Vietnam War, thank you for getting hurt, thank you for getting up and thank you for doing it for me.

Our duty in our wife's tour regarding VHPA is to be there with you and for you. It is to go with you to your annual VHPA meeting to laugh your laughs and cry your tears.

VHPA is about you.

Rebeca Mizejewski
Last Wife
[REDACTED]

VHPA professor seeks pilots for panel session

I am organizing a panel session at the American Popular Culture Association Conference in Philadelphia, PA, April 8-15, 2001.

This is an academic conference and includes a Vietnam Study Area SIG (Special Interest Group); <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~pcaaca/> is the website for the association.

I am looking for 2-3 helicopter pilot-types to do presentations of 10-15 minutes, perhaps readings from their own literary work or providing an oral history approach to participate in this session.

This is a good opportunity for any Vietnam aviator (rotary-type) who is in the academic or publishing venue to present his materials.

Session description

Views From The Ground Up: Helicopter Pilots in Vietnam, a Retrospective.

Thomas F. Morrissey
Warlord 23, RVN 1970-71
Professor, Director of Exhibitions
Community College of Rhode Island

The role of the helicopter pilot in Vietnam is one which has been idealized, reported on, and interpreted by writers, film makers, and those whom we, as helicopter pilots, car-

ried in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

This session will feature multi-media, oral histories and readings by several helicopter pilots who served in the Republic of Vietnam at various periods during the war years and in a variety of capacities, providing a contextual dialogue on the subject of the "Helicopter War" in Vietnam from the aviator's viewpoint.

Prof. Thomas Morrissey
President

Community College Professors of Art and Art History
Director of Exhibitions
Community College of Rhode Island
Lincoln, RI 02865

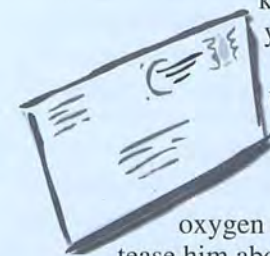
Voice ([REDACTED])
Fax ([REDACTED])

Poem stems from pilots' longstanding rivalry

Jack Tiesing, call sign "Boomerang 00," and I have known each other for more than 30 years. We flew together in the Army.

He is like a brother to me. Over these years, we have an ongoing rivalry. He was D-Model pilot and I was an H-model pilot.

He would harass me about using oxygen for the overpowered H, and I would tease him about being a ground feeder and stump jumper. This poem is in Jack's honor.



The D-Model Pilots Lament

*Today!!, he thinks, today I will fly!
As he dons his gear and peers to the sky.
So with checklist all done, he begins to run,
His mighty engine to comply.*

*After setting full throttle, he begins to coddle,
The beep up to its highest.
And when that has been done,
And flight has begun,
He asks, "Why doth this machine dawdle?"*

*As he starts to settle, and runs out of left pedal,
He plants it from whence it came,
Alas, he swooned, for again he was marooned,
On the ground and out of the game.*

*As the blades wound down,
He thought with a frown,
Who'd be so foolhardy,
To install an engine tardy, In an aircraft so well renown?*

*Alas, as robins are flying in the crisp spring air,
The pilot sits forlornly in his chair,*

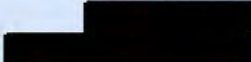
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*and peers into the greenhouse
high into the air,
And sets upon a wondrous sight!*

*An H- Model flying high,
through the clear blue sky,
Being flown by a carefree soul,
As he wistfully gazes,
he thinks of poetic phrases,
That begin with word . . . A*****!!!*

Preston "Skip" Shreve
Killer spade 20


NTSB file describes two planes colliding

Regarding my letter in the July/August VHPA Newsletter headlined "Beeper leads Huey crew a 'mile from the moon'," fellow VHPA member Angelos Spelios was able to access the NTSB's file on the incident.

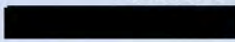
He found that a Lockheed 1049H (N6936C) did collide with an RF-4C (USAF 658) on June 6, 1967, while in Tan Son Nhut's Control Zone. The 1049 was operated by Airlift International Inc. under military cargo contract.

It was being controlled by approach control. Four crew members and three passengers died in the crash.

The RF-4C was controlled by the tower. Its two crew members survived the crash.

Which one was the one we rescued, I have no idea. Maybe if this story gets around, they will come forward.

There is an interesting note. In the remarks section, it is stated: "Investigation under jurisdiction of Government of South Vietnam."

Nick J. Primis
"Custer 6"


Pilot saves wounded company commander

You may be able to help me locate the pilot who saved my life in Vietnam.

I was the company commander of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry (Black Knights), 2nd Brigade, in the 1st Cavalry Division. Capt. Read or "Black Bear 6" was my radio call sign.

I was wounded on New Year's Eve 1967, around 6 p.m.

in the Central Highlands of II Corps on a mountain facing the beautiful beaches of the South China Sea (east of An Khe).

My company air assaulted the southern side of the Nui Mui Mountains around 4 p.m. New Year's Eve to "observe" the New Year's Truce.

Unfortunately, my company was placed on top of a mountain with caves below where, I was later told, an NVA battalion was staging for the 1968 Tet Offensive.


Several of us were wounded and the chopper that took me out received heavy rounds coming in and leaving. The fog started in and visibility was bad.

My RTO said the medevac chopper could not get in because of the fog. My medic had said I would die if not medevaced ASAP, that I could not make it through the night.

Somehow this pilot of a "slick," I believe, got in there to pull out those of us who were wounded. We were choppered, I am told, to an "aid" station and then on to the 67th Medical Hospital in Qui Nhon.

That pilot saved my life from what the doctors later told me. I survived five operations and lived. Now, 33 years later, I would like to locate the courageous pilot and thank him. Until recently, I never was happy to be alive.

Can you help me locate this pilot? I was excited to learn from someone else you pilots have an association. I would greatly appreciate your assistance and ideas on how I can best locate this fellow.

Beverly C. "John" Read


VC attack Hueys, pilots on Nha Trang airstrip

Nha Trang. Early 1967.

The small sapper unit beached its dugout between the two Special Forces compounds one moonless night just west of the Nha Trang airstrip, along the riverbank.

There was about a 2-3 yard gap between the two camps' fences, which was clear of obstacles and led directly to the tarmac of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company, which supported the 5th Special Forces Group's countrywide operations.

The northernmost compound held the headquarters and Mike Force of the 5th. The south compound contained the equivalent South Vietnam Special Forces camp.

At least two of the sappers prepared to provide covering fire to a lone sapper, who crossed the perimeter road, worked his way through the wire protecting our parking

See LETTERS, Page 10

Letters

Continued from Page 9

apron, and then ran in a crouch toward our unit's parked Hueys.

The lone sapper carried a woven reed basket of explosives.

He began placing explosive packages on the asphalt directly under each helicopter's cockpit.

Internal night security of the 281st tie-down area consisted of two roving guards, carrying loaded, personal weapons.

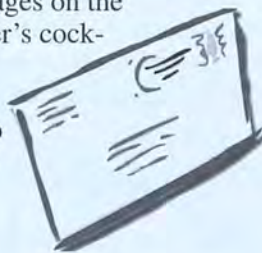
One of the sentries, making his rounds, spotted the sapper with the explosives, took a firing position behind some barrels and began firing at the intruder.

When the firing began, the sapper ran toward his team. Covering fire from the rest of the sapper team joined the melee.

Initial explosions of the charges set beneath the Hueys began, adding to the confusion of our company's personnel, who were grabbing weapons and rounds to join the battle.

A huge explosion that erupted several feet above their heads on the eave of the roof, met the junior officers, stacked up at the second story doorway of their barracks as they tried to exit through the outside stairwell.

Investigation later would reveal one of the sappers on the covering team had fired a rocket propelled grenade,



apparently aiming into the mass of junior officers. However, because of the darkness where he lay in waiting, the sapper failed to note a wooden fence post which ricocheted the round away from the officers exiting through the doorway.

Though both Special Forces' compounds' towers were guard-mounted, neither towers' guards — equipped with searchlights and weapons — were effective in cutting down the sappers, though there was a blood trail which indicated at least one sapper was wounded.

Explosives under the Hueys continued going off intermittently as the sappers made their escape between the fences of the two compounds back to their dugout.

The Air Force happened to have a Puff the Magic Dragon aloft over Nha Trang, with loaded Gatling guns and a cannon, which quickly got into the action through communications with corps staff, also located at Nha Trang. The staff was unable to obtain the local Vietnamese commander's approval to allow "Puff" to fire its weapons, even though "Puff" had the dugout and sapper crew in the beam of its searchlight.

We never learned why the local Vietnamese commander refused to give the order to "fire."

In reviewing the damage with Maj. Bill Griffin, our outgoing commander, Al Junko and other company officers in the aftermath, 12 Hueys were lost or damaged. Four were complete losses, four required major repairs and four could be repaired locally.

Fortunately, we had no KIAs or WIAs.

The irony for Griffin was it was his next-to-last day of duty before rotating.

Jack Serig Sr.

Taps

Selba Khomer Beaty Sr.

CWO Selba Khomer Beaty Sr. of Ider, AL, died July 27 at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Mufreesboro, TN. He was 72.

Khomer was a veteran of the Navy and the Army, serving in World War II and Vietnam.

He flew tours with the 170th Assault Helicopter Company, in November 1966-67 at Pleiku and 1969-70 at Kontum.

Khomer also was originator and the website master of the present 170th AHC website. He was a member of the VHPA.

Khomer served 51 years as a minister of the Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church.

He was a graduate of Northeast Alabama State Community College and taught computer classes there for 10 years.

Survivors include his wife, Betty; five sons; three daughters; and two sisters.



Lynn A. Carpenter

Lynn A. Carpenter, 56, of Victoria, TX, died Aug. 7.

He attended St. Mary's University in San Antonio and was a 1966 graduate of Texas A&I in Kingsville with a bachelor of arts degree in psychology.

Carpenter was an Army veteran, having served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. He received an honorable discharge as a captain in October 1969.

He worked for the Devereux Foundation in Victoria for 17 years and helped set up the Adult Community Vocational Services program. He was promoted to be the first adult community vocational services coordinator in March 1997 and served in that position until December 1999 when he worked for Private Mini Storage in Houston and Austin.

Survivors include his wife, Sharon; a daughter and four sons; his parents; and two sisters.

Joseph E. Gunnels

As a Marine pilot in Vietnam, Joseph E. Gunnels once safely crash-landed a helicopter full of injured Marines

See TAPS, Page 11

Taps

Continued from Page 10

after his co-pilot was shot in the head, and his own back was filled with shrapnel.

He was a first lieutenant in HMM-364 in Vietnam during 1965 and 1966.

Gunnels, 59, who was to retire as a United Airlines 747 captain in October, died Sept. 3, while flying a single-engine, World War II-era plane in a Steamboat Springs vintage air show.

His wife Jane was in the stands, but did not see the crash, said his best friend and "wingman" Bill Porter.

If there was one consolation, Porter said, Gunnels died while in the pilot's seat.

"I don't think either of us would have chosen to go any other way," said Porter, himself a retired United pilot.

Gunnels, who lived in Aurora, and his passenger Lynn David White, 49, of Steamboat Springs were dead at the scene.

Porter described Gunnels' plane as a 1945 SNJ-5.

Gunnels purchased the plane in 1996, and Porter valued it at over \$200,000. It was Gunnels' dream plane, and a memorial to his fallen Vietnam comrades.

Gunnels painted the plane white, with purple stripes edged in black. A purple fox was on the plane's nose. It bore the number 14.

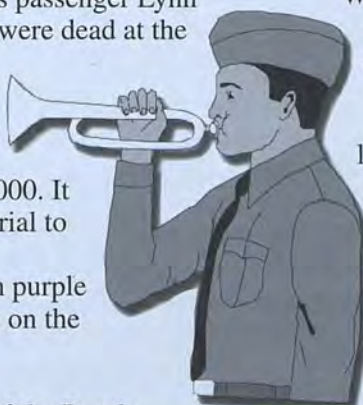
All for a reason.

In Vietnam, Gunnels was a member of the Purple Foxes squadron, which lost 14 of its members - about 35 percent, Porter said.

Another United captain and former Purple Fox, Frank Kerwin of Brookfield, CT, spoke during a memorial service, that included a 20-plane fly-by.

VHPA member Walt Wise flew in a restored OV-1D in the fly-by.

There is a picture of Joe on the POPASMOKE website under the HMM-364 Taps section.



Charles W. "Buzz" Hair III

Col. Charles W. "Buzz" Hair III was killed in an automobile accident Sept. 8 near Gramercy, LA. He was 53.

The *Baton Rouge Advocate* said he served his country for more than 30 years, first as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, then as an active reserve colonel with the 412th Engineer Command.

He was a native of Houston and a resident of Baton Rouge.

Hair was a civil engineer and president of Louis J. Capozzoli & Associates.

John W. "Jack" Green III
"Mardi Gras 3"
Baton Rouge, LA

Oscar Maxey "Max" Hall

Oscar Maxey "Max" Hall, 64, died at his home in Springdale, AR, Sept. 17 from multiple myeloma bone cancer.

He was noted for his restoration of H-21 helicopters, which he kept in a hangar he owned at the Springdale airport.

Hall was born July 25, 1936, in Little Rock. He attended Little Rock High School, Columbia Military Academy and the University of Arkansas, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering.

After working for the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and with various consulting engineering firms, Hall founded Engineering Services Inc. (ESI) in Springdale in 1971.

As an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam, he suggested his school's nickname "Razorbacks" be the call sign for his platoon in the 120th Assault Helicopter Company. He served with the unit in 1964-65.

While serving with the "Razorbacks," he flew 540 combat hours and completed 812 combat missions. His aircraft were hit by ground fire 25 times and he never lost a crew member.

Hall earned the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, the Purple Heart Medal and the Air Medal with 15 oak leaf clusters.

Hall also served in the Persian Gulf War as a chief warrant officer with the 374th Army Reserve Medical Detachment of Little Rock.

He was awarded the Air Medal with a "V" device and was nominated for the Distinguished Flying Cross. He also earned the Army Commendation Medal.

His highest rank was major.

One of Hall's last projects had been the "Remembering the Razorbacks" exhibit in the Ozark Military Museum at the Springdale airport to ensure the memory of his helicopter platoon.

Hall is survived by his wife, Margie Lyn Hall of the home; two daughters, Dr. Robin Lundstrum of Springdale and Toni Crowder; his mother, Maxine Hirsch of Albuquerque; a brother and a sister.

Francis John Hnatiuk

Francis John Hnatiuk, 54, of Tallahassee, FL, died Aug. 26.

At the time of his death, Hnatiuk was employed as a CADD engineering technician.

He served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam.

Hnatiuk was a member of class 68-23 at Fort Wolters and class 68-15 at Fort Rucker.

He is survived by his wife Tracy, a son and a daughter.

Kent Reinhard

Kent Reinhard, 57, of Aptos, CA, died Aug. 18 when the helicopter he was flying exploded and then plummeted.

See TAPS, Page 12

Taps

Continued from Page 11

ed to the ground.

A passenger in the aircraft, Gary Sefton, 46, of Hollister, also was killed in the explosion and crash of the Robinson R-22 helicopter near Watsonville, CA.

Reinhard was an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam. During his tour, he earned 15 Air Medals.

He is survived by a sister.

John A. Robinson Jr.

John A. Robinson Jr., 62, of Lansing, WV, died Aug. 14 at a Beckley, WV, area hospital after a lengthy illness.

Robinson was disabled U.S. Army captain.

He was a member of flight school classes 67-21 and 68-501.

Robinson served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot with the 192nd Assault Helicopter Company in 1968 and with the 117th Assault Helicopter Company in 1971-72.

Herbert Thorpe Sink

Herbert Thorpe Sink of Glen Allen, VA, died Aug. 25 after a two-year battle with prostate cancer. He was 67.

Sink was vice chairman of the Henricus Foundation at the time of his death.

He served in the Army for 27 years before retiring in 1981 at the rank of colonel.

In Vietnam, Sink commanded the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company and was operations officer of the 11th Combat Aviation Battalion.

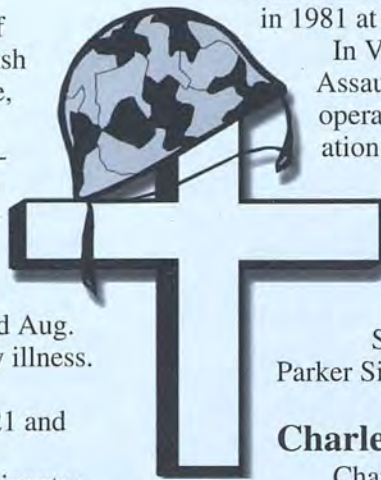
His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf cluster, and the Air Medal with oak leaf cluster.

Sink is survived by his wife Sarah Parker Sink and three children.

Charles I. "Irling" Smith

Charles I. "Irling" Smith of Lampasas, TX, died in his sleep Aug. 26.

In Vietnam, Smith served with C Troop, 1/9 Cavalry, 1st Air Cav Division in 1968-69.



VHPA history burned on new CD

GARY ROUSH

DATABASE CHAIRMAN

The VHPA has a new product available — a compact disc containing detailed history about helicopters in Vietnam.

It is the result of more than 15 years of work by Gary Roush, Mike Law, Mike Sloniker and many others.

It contains history not available elsewhere, including the very popular helicopter incident and accident reports on nearly all of the 12,000 helicopters flown in the Vietnam War from all services.

- Do you only remember the last three digits of your tail number or bureau number? With this CD, you can search the last three digits to find the full tail number.

- Remember the call sign, but not the unit? You can search units by call sign and vice versa.

- Ever wonder when your unit did certain things? Many units have a list of historical events.

- Wonder about the history and

The CD also contains video and audio from the Vietnam War, taken from home movies and live recordings. Remember monitoring three radios, plus intercom? When you hear these recordings, you will wonder how we did it.

flight time of your unit helicopters? Get a list of helicopters by unit and month-to-month gold book details on each helicopter.

- Wonder what happened to all the guys in your flight class? Get Army flight class lists with each member's status as we know it today.

- Would you like to know more about KIAs than what is in the Membership Directory? Get complete helicopter flight crew KIA records.

- Can't remember what your MOS means? Look it up in the MOS data-

base containing Vietnam era records for Army, Marine, Air Force and Navy.

- Making a trip to The Wall? Get a list of helicopter crew member KIAs by panel on The Wall, along with a list of events taking place in that same time period.

The CD also contains video and audio from the Vietnam War, taken from home movies and live recordings. Remember monitoring three radios, plus intercom? When you hear these recordings, you will wonder how we did it.

Samplings of live action video from public and private sources are on the CD. As an example, see burning Chinooks at Cu Chi right after a sapper attack from live action taken by a Super 8 movie camera. Remember them?

Also, the CD contains many color helicopter pictures from past VHPA calendars, suitable for printing or as wall paper on your PC.

Get the full text with pictures of

See CD CONTAINS, Page 13

CD contains most newsletters back to 1993

Continued from Page 12

histories compiled by Mike Sloniker on Lam Son 719, History of the 1972 Easter Offensive and this year's all new Helicopter Units North of Da Nang.

These histories contain first-person accounts, as well as background and details about the activities of helicopter units normally left out of Vietnam War books.

Missing some past VHPA newsletters? The CD contains copies of nearly all VHPA newsletters back to 1993.

This is an exciting time, with all the new technology available for making information available to the public in an inexpensive way.

The CD-ROM technology provides an excellent medi-

um for distributing our collection.

We think you will find this new CD-ROM product the perfect gift for family and friends.

To offset development and production costs by Image Marketing in Tampa, FL, the Vietnam Helicopter History CD will be sold for \$15, plus \$5 shipping and handling to VHPA members and \$25, plus \$5 shipping and handling to non-members.

CDs for resale will be available to veteran organizations and museums for \$15 each, plus handling and shipping.

Reserve yours now by calling Headquarters on (800) 505-VHPA or sending an e-mail to Gary Roush at webmaster@vhpa.org

VHPA business directory

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Helicopter units north of Da Nang

MIKE SLONIKER
VHPA HISTORIAN

This is my second shot at compiling your history.

I assisted Mike Law with the 1994 Membership Directory's Lam Son 719 history.

At that time, I learned a serious lesson about our history: It isn't recorded very well anywhere.

Many of the Vietnam-era books merely state, "we owe our lives to the accuracy of the Cobra crew." Who were they?

In Keith William Nolan's recent book "Ripcord," Cobra crews are frequently cited for scrambling out of Camp Evans.

We all know that was Charlie Battery 4/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery, but they are not specifically cited.

The cavalry troop that constantly was over the beleaguered 2/506 Infantry companies obviously was C/2-17 Cav, but it was not specifically cited.

We have a few options: We can complain. You can write your own book. Or, lastly, you can compile it as a unit, and get it forwarded to the VHPA Historian — me.

Last year, I took the baton to get the history of the 1972 Easter Offensive finished after Ron Timberlake, who was writing it, died in a motorcycle accident in May 1999.

After having read Dale Andrade's "Trial By Fire," that focused on the Easter Offensive, I could not believe he had not included the names of the aviation units that hung it out for the ARVNS during this offensive.

After all, he is an Army historian and his notes state he used the vast Army libraries as a source.

In those very same libraries are the manuals that show what units were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for valor.

The 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion was awarded the citation for the Easter Offensive, yet this fact was not cited in the book.

It is my intention to have the VHPA history be a "living document" that is not all inclusive, can be updated and is history from the membership that they "want" to share.

In compiling the history last year, I was amazed at the daily, common bravery displayed by a handful of aviators after most of the units had gone home, circa March 1972.

The high number of Distinguished Service Crosses awarded OH-6 crews for saving lives was unprecedented and unknown until you, the membership, stepped up with facts.

Last fall, I requested information for the historical portion of the VHPA 2000 Membership Directory from the membership in *The VHPA Newsletter*.

It is my intention to have the VHPA history be a "living document" that is not all inclusive, can be updated and is history from the membership that they "want" to share.

That is what makes our history unique. It is "our recollections" and not a literary effort that will eventually sell a book.

In consultation with Mike Law, Gary Roush and Tom Payne, we decided to feature I Corps north of Da Nang 1964 up to Lam Son 719 that started in preparations in late January 1971.

This subject was not adequately covered in past VHPA histories. This would include the early 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion detachments that sent B-model gunships up to Da Nang to cover the Marines in the H-34s.

Ralph Young wrote "Army Aviation In Vietnam, 1963-1966" which he sold at the VHPA 2000 reunion. This excellent book, with glossy pic-

tures, examples of all unit patches, clear text and fantastic research, really covers the early years in Vietnam better than we will in this history.

The book is available from The Huey Company Inc., PO Box 625, Ramsey NJ, 07446-0625.

The excellent cooperation between the author and the subjects is clear in the accuracy that prevails in that book.

Our history will be in two formats: Four pages in text for the Directory and more than 90 pages of text on the CD-ROM being produced.

The VHPA Historical Committee is accumulating so much history, in the form of pictures, text, audiotapes, videotapes, we are remiss if we don't get it on the current technology for all who want to invest in a CD-ROM reader on their computer.

The units that sent in data which is on the CD ROM were:

A 4-77 Aerial Rocket Artillery; C/2-20 Aerial Rocket Artillery; An AF A-1 pilot's account; B 4-77 Aerial Rocket Artillery; UTT of the helos in the Son Tay; D 1-1 Cav; VNAF maintenance; raid in Noth Vietnam, November 70; B/159 Assault Support Helicopter Battalion; 108th Artillery Group; B/229th; A/158 Assault Helicopter Battalion; Aviation Section 1/5 Mechanized Infantry Brigade; C/158 Assault Helicopter Battalion; Compilation of data from 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion; D/158th Assault Helicopter Battalion; the Chinook and Caribou mid-air over Evans.

We are putting visual and audio tapes, many pictures and a major load of text on our second attempt at a CD-ROM, which will be offered this fall.

Believe me, I am loving every minute of this time-consuming effort. Thanks for the incredible output by the membership this year.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Historian Mike Sloniker can be contacted by e-mail at sloniker@vhpa.org

Reflections on a war many years ago

DR. JAMES R. RECKNER
VIETNAM CENTER/ARCHIVES

It is difficult to imagine 25 years have passed since the fall of Saigon.

We were young then, those of us who fought there. Young, but not the "n-n-nineteen" of the inaccurate, but emotional, song of that day.

Today we are grandfathers.

We thought we were immortal, too. At least most of us thought we were, until about the time we experienced our first incoming rounds.

For me, it was a beautiful 1969 morning in the minutes before dawn. The eastern sky, a deep, royal blue, was just light enough to silhouette the nipa palms along the side of an unnamed canal in the Plain of Reeds.

As we beached our boat to disembark Vietnamese troops for another one of those interminable sweeps, a Viet Cong soldier (that name is now politically incorrect, but it will stay

*Somewhere along
the line, unnoticed,
I reached apogee in my
life's trajectory.
Perhaps it was that
morning on the
Plain of Reeds.*

with me forever) opened fire with an AK-47.

In my greenness, I had time in the second or two that elapsed to appreciate the beauty of the tracers as they sped in an upward arc, brilliant against the still-dark sky. It seemed almost like slow-motion.

Then the first rounds reached apogee and began their downward course. At once it seemed — it was

an illusion — that they increased in speed. And it seemed, too, that every one was heading directly for me.

That also was an illusion. Most missed our boat completely. A few harmlessly struck its armored sides. The troops continued unloading. It was a totally unremarkable event in a long, long war.

In retrospect, the flight of those tracers, I think, might aptly describe the trajectory of our human lives. As I now approach my 60th birthday, I remember well how slow the years before my 17th birthday passed.

I wanted to join the Navy, but had to finish high school first. Days and months dragged on interminably until the magic day.

Somewhere along the line, unnoticed, I reached apogee in my life's trajectory. Perhaps it was that morning on the Plain of Reeds.

Since then, the days and months

See I OFTEN, Page 16

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Las Vegas will host VHPA 2002 reunion

Las Vegas will be the location of our reunion two years from now, in July 2002.

After extensive contacts and negotiations with many hotels, the recently and extensively renovated Riviera Hotel was selected.

It has a huge banquet facility that can easily accommodate our entire group for our banquet, sufficient overnight rooms for all our members, and very ample display space.

Many of you will recognize the Riviera as a popular filmmaker location.

The 1961 classic "Oceans 11" was shot there, as well as Martin Scorsese's 1994 "Casino."

The hotel features a number of excellent restaurants and food courts, as well as a renowned comedy club and a separate major production show.

Tennis courts, an Olympic-size swimming pool, mini shopping arcade and other major features are all part of the facility.

We all look forward to seeing you at the Adam's Mark in Denver next summer and at the Riviera in Las Vegas in 2002.

I often reflect on the Vietnam War

Continued from Page 15

seem to have flown by. The end of my life, though hopefully not nigh, isn't entirely out of sight.

Like many veterans of that distant conflict, I suspect, I often reflect on the war. It seems clear now, for example, that our political leadership was particularly ill-advised in the many decisions they made about our involvement there. I think we will all agree on that.

But what is most disheartening to me is the continuing tendency of the media and Americans in general to associate the young men who fought in Vietnam with failure. I most firmly believe that the vast majority of the young men who served in Vietnam did so with honor and dignity. They served their country as faithfully as the soldiers of World War I or World War II.

Perhaps Americans will never label us "The Greatest Generation." But if they don't, I suspect it won't be because of the behavior of those who

actually served. Rather, we will always be defined downward by the actions of those who didn't. And that is a great pity.

As for the war itself, well, I will leave final judgments to a generation not so intimately involved. But I will observe that Vietnam was the final victory of the otherwise failed communist system. And for those Americans who gave support and comfort to our opponents during the war, it is worth noting that the American failure in Vietnam has condemned the Vietnamese people to at least a quarter- and probably a half-century of poverty.

Indeed, in a recent visit to Vietnam, a communist academic even observed that they had sacrificed everything for the "revolution," but had gained nothing. In the end, he concluded, he often wished they had lost.

In reality, everyone lost in Vietnam.

Americans lost a great measure of their idealism and 58,000 of their

sons. They also lost their trust in government.

The South Vietnamese lost their country and a far greater number of their sons.

Perhaps the "victors" lost most: Some 300,000 of their troops are still listed as missing in action.

Further, a combination of communist mismanagement and rampaging corruption has ensured that the poor peasants of Vietnam continue to suffer even today.

These things I am powerless to change. But as I reflect on my life, like a select few American men of my generation who are actual Vietnam veterans, I can say I served my country faithfully. I am confident that a future generation will render the same judgment of my many comrades-in-arms.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. James R. Reckner is director of the Vietnam Center/Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. He is a three-time Vietnam veteran, with two of those tours in the Riverine Forces.

Young's book does the impossible

Army Aviation in Vietnam, 1961-1963 by Ralph B. Young. Softback, 125 pages, 211 pictures, 57 illustrations, 5 Maps. Copyright 1999, The Huey Company

It had to be done! If Ralph Young, aided by Steve Davis, illustrator, and Kevin Lyles, figure artist, had not produced Volume 1 of a proposed 10-volume series about Army Aviation in Vietnam, many of the details and most of the pictures and maps would have been lost forever.

However, Ralph Young did produce Volume 1 and it is a success.

If Volume 1 is any indication of future publishings in the series, you will not want to miss any that are published.

I personally know of no other more complete and documented historical journal. This one is gleaned from official and personal information gathered from the actual combatants.

We all will someday be indebted to Ralph Young for

doing the almost impossible task of telling much of our story; the story we all lived, one year at a time.

The Army Aviation story began as far back as October 1954 with the Aviation Division and Flight Detachment of MAAG, Indochina in Saigon.

In those early years, Army Aviation was very very small and consisted of young men baptised in the combat of World War II and Korea. However, most were trained as aviators well after World War II.

The Army Air Corps had split to form the U.S. Air Force, leaving hardly anyone who possessed flying skills within the U.S. Army.

Young men like Col. Kenneth D. Mertel, Col. Samuel G. Conley, CW4 Frank Baldwin, Gen. Joe Stillwell and dozens more acknowledged by the author, brought together the men and early aviation assets to set rotors/propellers in motion in Southeast Asia. These pioneers provided leadership which would advance Army Aviation.

They carefully formed Army Aviation's strength, tactics and composition to what we know today.

Army Aviation in Vietnam, 1961-1963 is truly an illustrated history of unit insignia, aircraft camouflage and

See HISTORY, Page 17

***Book
review***



History can be read over and over

Continued from Page 16

markings. A detail-rich text, derived from personal contacts with those who wrote the history, and a humongous amount of fresh personal pictures and illustrations will give you so much detail to absorb you will want to read and look at each page over and over again.

In fact, I can personally attest to the fact that after looking and reading most of the 125-page book several times, I discovered something new every time! Not many books offer that kind of "meat."

The pictures are mostly never before seen personal snapshots. They are definitely not the oft-used prints most mass-produced media books offer.

The hundreds of pictures were offered from the highly prized personal albums of all the contributing men the author interviewed and corresponded with during the research phase.

Volume 1 is dedicated to the seven men who were in the first night time crash of an H-21 belonging to the 57th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter) which spun into the ground on an island in the Mekong River at 10 p.m. on Jan. 11, 1963.

The crash was only days following the Battle of Ap Bac when Army Aviation lost its "cherry" during a large-scale combat assault on known Viet Cong positions.

Ralph Young devotes several pages to the Battle of Ap Bac and its "lessons learned," which produced many changes to early helicopter airborne tactics.

Many of the changes in tactics remained in effect until the deployment of large-caliber anti-aircraft and infrared anti-aircraft rockets demanded further change, almost five years later.

Future volumes will deal with those changes in much greater detail. I cannot wait.

Finally, to put in perspective the task that looms before Ralph Young and his artist and illustrator (who are not even rated aviators) in telling the story of Army Aviation in Vietnam, think about World War II and the volumes of books, movies and stories told over the last half century.

Vietnam, on the other hand, was three times longer than World War II, from 1961-73. An almost impossible task lies before the author. It is possible that telling the story of Army Aviation in Vietnam might just take a century.

Keep working, Ralph. We look forward to each book in the 10-book series. I personally will want each and every volume to put in my personal library and to pass on to my children or local library. After all, as I said, it had to be done.

— Thomas Payne



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Registration form in next newsletter

MIKE LAW
REUNION CHAIRMAN

The November/December *VHPA Newsletter* will have the reunion registration and hotel reservation form.

At about the same time, the reunion website — link to it via www.vhpa.org — will have the same capability.

Avis Rent A Car System Inc. is the official car rental company of the Denver Reunion. If you or your travel agent call the Avis Meeting Reservation and Information Desk at (800) 331-1600 and use Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) number **J099439**, you can take advantage of the VHPA Reunion program.

There are 10 car classes in the program. See the VHPA Reunion website for all the details.

Examples of the rates are:

- The subcompact class has a \$32.99 daily, \$22.99 weekend, and \$148.99 weekly rate.
- The compact class has a \$36.99 daily, \$23.99 weekend, and \$158.99 weekly rate.
- The full-size, four-door class has a \$43.99 daily, \$26.99 weekend, and \$189.99 weekly rate.

These are guaranteed rates for all Colorado Avis locations and require

United Airlines is official airline of Reunion 2001

Here is how to take advantage of the special rates offered by United Airlines as the official airline of VHPA Reunion 2001:

- Call (800) 521-4041 to book your reservations.
- The meeting number is 592XE.
- Receive a 5 percent discount off the lowest applicable discount fare or a 10 percent discount off full fare unrestricted coach fares, purchased seven days in advance.
- Receive an extra 5 percent discount for tickets are purchased at least 60 days in advance of your travel date.
- Fly into Denver or Colorado Springs between June 29 and July 10.

returning the car to the same renting location. The rates are available from June 23 to July 14, 2001.

All rates include unlimited free mileage. These rates do not include any state or local surcharges, tax, optional coverage or refueling charges.

Renter must meet Avis' age, driver, and credit requirements.

Summer Ski Train to Winter Park

There has been a lot of excitement about having a train trip as part of our Reunion activities.

Several Rocky Mountain Chapter members have ridden the train in recent years and enthusiastically recommend it to anyone.

Sadly, the Reunion Committee was forced to concede the financial risk was too great for chartering the entire train for a weekday. However, if you can spend a Saturday on either side of the Reunion, you can still ride the train.

The 1999 schedule has it departing Denver at 8 a.m. for the two-hour scenic trip to Winter Park. It leaves Winter Park about 3:30 p.m.

The Winter Park Jazz Festival is usually held on the second and third Saturdays in July. If so, the train would depart later.

Make reservations by calling (303) 296-4754 or check out their website at www.skitrain.com

Coach tickets are \$40 for adults, with children 13 and under \$20. The train station is a short, two-block walk and a free shuttle bus ride from the Adam's Mark.

What to do in Denver with or without car

MIKE LAW
REUNION CHAIRMAN

Al Harinck and wife, Dotty, went on the first *Three Perfect Days* tour.

"It was a busy day, but well worth it. Even living here in Denver, we found this tourism venture very good."

Al, a United Airlines captain, noticed the July 2000 issue of the inflight magazine *Hemispheres* featured *Three Perfect Days* in Denver.

Being somewhat experienced in travel and tours, he "checked it out" and recommends it to anyone with some extra time in Denver.

The Reunion website will host a detailed version of the five-page magazine article.

Or you can send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Al and Dotty for a copy. Their address is: 5461 Preserve

Parkway South, Greenwood Village, CO 80121.

Briefly, here is what the tour includes:

• **Day 1:** The Brown Palace hotel, corner bakery, state capital, Colorado history museum, Palettes at the Denver Art museum, U.S. Mint, Denver chophouse & brewery, Coors Field and El Chapultepec.

• **Day 2:** Watercourse foods, Molly Brown house museum, Black America West museum, Tattered Cover book store, Washington Park, Denver Performing Arts complex, Vesta Dipping grill, and the Cruise Room.

• **Day 3:** Colorado's Ocean Journey, Buckhorn Exchange, Buffalo Bill's museum and grave, Red Rocks park and amphitheater, the Fort, and Grizzly Rose.

You can reach over half these locations via a short walk and public transportation from the hotel. The restaurants and watering holes are certainly unique!

Take a day trip to Colorado Springs

This issue features the Colorado Springs area, which is about a 75-minute drive south from the Reunion hotel.

Check out the "Attractions" pages on www.coloradosprings-travel.com for details and even more ideas.

The Air Force Academy, with its outstanding aircraft display and museum, are on the way.

If you are into soaring, one of the best glider clubs in Colorado is based on at Kelly Air Park near the academy.

Another 15 minutes will get you to the Garden of the Gods, which is a drive and walk-around park with a great visitors center. The towering sandstone rock formations and natural beauty of the area is truly breathtaking.

The Cave of the Winds is a few minutes west, near Manitou Springs. This cavern is huge and the tour is very entertaining.

The Canyon City area, made famous by the Royal Gorge Bridge, is 45 miles southwest of Colorado Springs. The bridge is the highest suspension bridge in the world, built 1,053 feet above the Arkansas River. You also can



take a train ride through the canyon.

Fort Carson, now the home of the 7th Infantry Division, is another 30 minutes farther south of Colorado Springs.

If you want to experience some of Colorado's mining history, 48 miles into the mountains from Colorado Springs gets you to the towns of Cripple Creek and Victor. Ride the Cripple Creek & Victor Narrow Gauge Railroad and the Mollie Kathleen gold mine tour is a must unless you are afraid of being 1,000 feet underground.

The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument is a lovely drive west of Colorado Springs.

Colorado has 52 peaks that are more than 14,000 feet above sea level and Colorado Springs has Pike's Peak virtually in its backyard. You can drive or you can walk the famous Barr Hiking Trail to the top. You can ride a cog-train part way up the mountain.

If you are interested in museums and visitors centers, Colorado Springs has the ProRodeo Hall of Fame, Santa's Workshop, the U.S. Olympic Visitors Center, the Cliff Dwellings Museum, and the Ghost Town Museum, to name a few.

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(DAVE GRIEGER, L-66)

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Follow reunion hotel reservation procedures

JOE BILITZKE

SENIOR MEMBER AT LARGE

The procedures for hotel reservations for the Denver reunion follow.

President Charles Holley gave the rationale behind the change in procedures in his "From the President" column in the July/August *Newsletter*.

The procedures tie the hotel room reservation directly to the submission of the VHPA Reunion Registration Form.

You will receive the Reunion Registration Form in the November/December VHPA Newsletter. The online registration form at vhpa.org will be available after all members have had time to receive the Newsletter, which should be around Jan. 1.

Along with the usual requested information, there also will be places to indicate your hotel accommodation requirements.

Complete and return the Reunion Registration Form to VHPA Headquarters by whatever means you choose.

Headquarters will send you a confirmation notice, as it always has done.

However, it also will contain an Authorized Hotel Reservation Form (AHRF). The AHRF will be distinct and brightly colored for easy identification. It will be

See AHRF, Page 20

AHRF has details needed by hotel

Continued from Page 19

preprinted with some of the same information you submitted on the Reunion Registration Form: Name, address and member number.

The AHRF also contains all the preprinted information needed by the Adam's Mark Hotel to reserve a room, e.g., arrival/departure dates, number in party, type of rooms, and number of rooms.

Please note: You must identify the correct number of rooms on your Reunion Registration Form, along with the corresponding adult guest for multiple rooms.

If you require additional rooms for family members, you may request them, but the family members must be identified as guests on your Reunion Registration Form. You also may request an additional room or suite for your unit's TOC by so indicating on the form.

After you complete the missing information on the AHRF, mail — yes, "snail mail" — it to the hotel. Upon receipt of this brightly colored AHRF, the hotel processes the form against the VHPA master room block.

The hotel confirms directly with the member. All future communication and payment of the member's room, except cancellation, is directly with the Adam's Mark Hotel. (See below.)

The hotel will accept room reservations **ONLY** by receipt of the original, Authorized Hotel Reservation Form.

No reservations will be taken by telephone, fax or e-

mail.

Upon receipt of the AHRF, the hotel will guarantee the authorized rooms against the VHPA room block.

Headquarters will determine the authorized number of rooms, based on the member's request in the Reunion Registration Form.

A member may cancel his Reunion Registration and Hotel Reservation(s) up to June 25, 2001, with no penalty. After that, the usual VHPA registration and reservation rules apply, as well as the hotel's cancellation policy.

To cancel, the member must contact VHPA Headquarters, not the hotel. Headquarters will cancel all reunion activities reserved by the member.

Headquarters also will notify the hotel and cancel the member's room, adding it back to the room block.

After June 25, the member will forfeit one night's room charge for each canceled room. The hotel will deduct the one night charge against the member's credit card.

By combining the two forms, the Executive Council believes each member will have an equal opportunity to obtain his room from within our room block.

We have attempted to make the new procedures as fair as possible to the membership, and to protect VHPA against financial losses that have been incurred in the past by "room hoarding."

Also, we do not anticipate a shortage of rooms, since the Adam's Mark Hotel should be large enough to accommodate all attendees under one roof.

Pilot flies 'insertions,' 'extractions'

BOB JOHNSON

On the back of his helmet, he had painted in bright colors a small cluster of flowers and the words: "I Don't Dig it, Either."

This was the helmet he was sure to wear when dropping off and picking up surveillance and combat patrols in the jungles of Vietnam.

He was 21 years old. A warrant officer. A highly trained helicopter pilot.

And for 10 months straight, he flew "insertion" and "extraction" missions several times a day.

Sometimes the "landing zones" would be so small and cluttered with foliage he'd squirm the helicopter down between the trees, the rotor blades chopping greenery along the way like a food processor.

Countless times he was sure there was no way in, or no way out if he did get in. But he went in anyway. It was his job.

Sometimes the only available place to land was in flames. Sometimes the smoke was so thick, he couldn't see his way. But, of course, he'd go in anyway.

At these times, he'd angle the craft in such a way the rotor blades would act as a fan, blowing back the flames and the smoke.

Often he did this while taking enemy fire. He knew it, but he couldn't distinguish it from "friendly" fire and rocket cover. So he did what he could to put it away, to put it someplace else in his mind so that he could just go about his business.

When "inserting," he'd go in as quickly as possible.

Hovering for the briefest moment before impact not only made him and his crew and his payload more vulnerable to enemy fire, but also was an unintentional invitation to the troops to jump from the ship prematurely, risking busted bones, ankles, knees.

So he landed quickly. At times the ground was so precarious, he'd balance the ship on one skid. At these times his challenge was to maintain a steady balance while the weight on his ship kept shifting as troops, one by one, jumped to the ground.

When "extracting," it was the same thing — in and out as quickly as possible, giving spent troops only the time they needed to get from cover and to scramble aboard with their wounded, their dead, their prisoners.

And this is how he lived for 10

See PILOT, Page 21

Pilot kept quiet about war service

Continued from Page 20

consecutive months of his life, when he was 21, when most American young men his age were in classrooms, roaming college campuses, going to movies, to Canada, to football games, rooting for the home team, protesting a war they had no understanding of whatsoever.

That was 30 years ago. And for the most part, those years have been reasonably quiet.

Today Dennis Kistler lives with his wife, son and daughter, in Stow, MA, a town of 6,000 known for its apple orchards and golf courses.

The town has a traffic light, a doughnut shop with a counter, a small airport where people fly their small private planes in for breakfast or lunch, a couple of pizza shops, a grocery store, a video rental store. Town business is taken care of by open town meetings where the majority rules.

Dennis makes a living for himself and his family by managing a construction company, which he founded 20 years ago. Kistler & Knapp Builders Inc., an \$8 million company based in Acton, employs 30 people, who build multi-million dollar homes throughout eastern Massachusetts.

In his spare time, Dennis plays jazz on an electric guitar he designed and built himself. Occasionally, he plays local jazz concerts with fellow musicians.

For the past 30 years, Dennis has done what was necessary to put Vietnam behind him, to make it "just another episode in my life."

But like thousands and thousands of Vietnam veterans, he has felt the dark cloud, the stigma, that hangs over them all.

For 30 years, he's quietly endured the intensity of public and private attitudes that have ranged from callous indifference to blatant icy hostility.

So, over the years, he learned to say little. He learned to keep Vietnam to himself. Few friends and neighbors

*Through the Internet,
he found himself
reconnected with an
old flight school buddy
who introduced him
to a periodical published
by an association
of helicopter pilots who
flew in Vietnam.*

know of his war background. The subject has hardly ever come up.

Mostly he's just gone about his day with Vietnam and its haunting memories embedded deep below the surface, away from the critics, away from himself.

Until recently.

Through the Internet, he found himself reconnected with an old flight school buddy who introduced him to a periodical published by an association of helicopter pilots who flew in Vietnam.

In the first issue was a lead line, asking for pilots who had flown troops from the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol, F Company, 51st Infantry, anytime during 1967-69, to call a particular telephone number.

This was Dennis. So he called.

This is Don Hall, said the voice on the other end. And Dennis' life angled sharply.

Hall, a former "Lurp" (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol), the organization for whom Dennis provided transportation, said he was producing a documentary about the Lurps for television.

Since the helicopter pilots had been such an integral part of their mission, and the Lurps had such admiration and respect for their skill and courage, would Dennis be interested in going to Florida and being interviewed on camera by the film director?

In 30 years, no one had ever said the words to Dennis. No one had ever

talked about his "skill," his "courage."

After several more phone conversations and an exchange of e-mail messages with Hall and a few other Lurps, Dennis found himself sitting in a make-shift studio in Florida with an off-camera interviewer asking him detailed, pointed questions about his experiences in Vietnam.

There were so many memories, and so little time.

He never got to the one about his attempt to rescue badly wounded Cambodians. They were desperately hacking a landing zone out of the jungle, and he tried getting in, weaving his tail boom in spaces between trees too narrow for the main rotor.

When he got through most of the jungle canopy, he knew the remaining vegetation made it hopeless. He knew if he continued, he'd kill his crew and the Cambodians under him. He realized his need to bring out the wounded had almost corrupted his judgment as a pilot, and he knew he no longer had a choice. He had to leave.

Their faces, as he pulled up and away, are clear in his mind to this day.

Or the one about lying under a truck for cover while his home base was being shelled. He shared the cover with a buddy. But there was only one helmet.

With explosions rocking the truck, the two argued about who was going to wear the helmet. Each one wanted the other to wear it.

Nor was he able to get to the memory of being on the ground in the jungle in an elongated clearing. At one end was intense enemy fire, at the other trees so tall he had no way of getting over them. He had passengers and he had a tough choice to make. He chose the trees, in spite of the tail wind.

Drawing on every ounce of flying skill he could muster, balancing the unbelievably tight tolerances and holding his breath, he was somehow able to clear the trees.

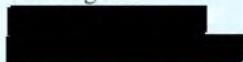
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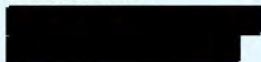
New Members Corner



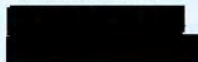
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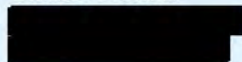
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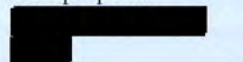
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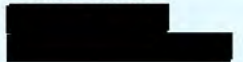
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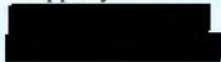
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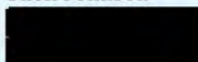
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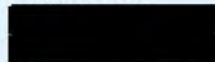
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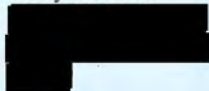
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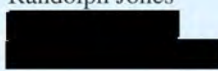
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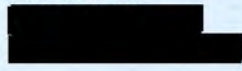
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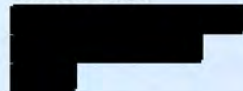
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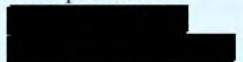
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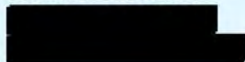
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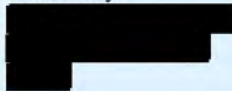
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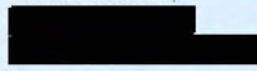
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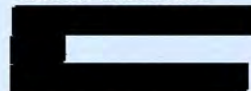
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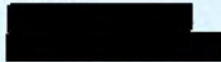
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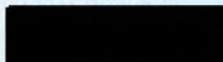
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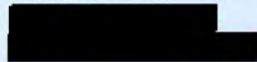
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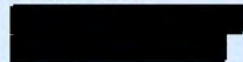
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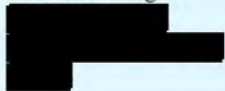
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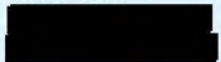
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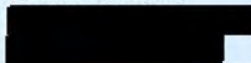
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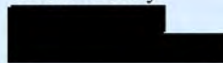
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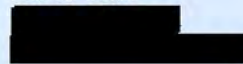
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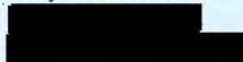
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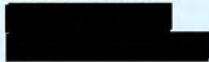
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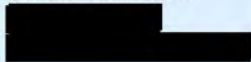
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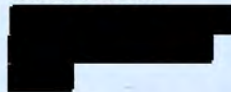
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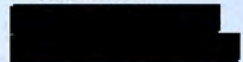
Robert Masterson



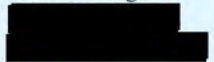
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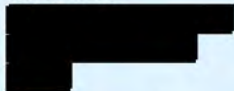
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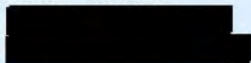
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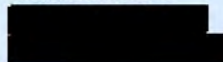
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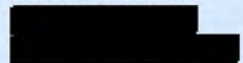
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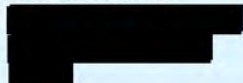
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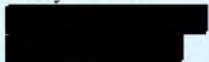
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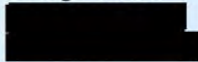
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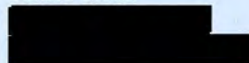
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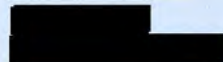
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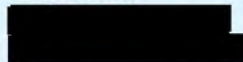
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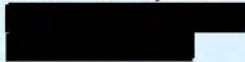
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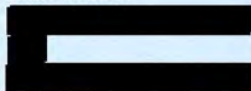
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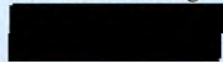
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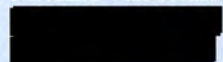
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Michael Rothberg



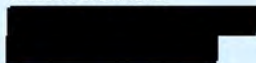
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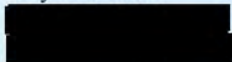
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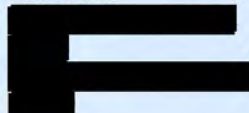
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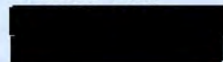
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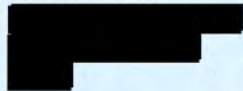
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William Voss



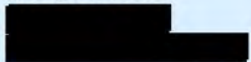
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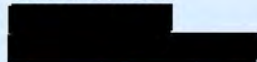
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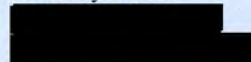
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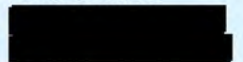
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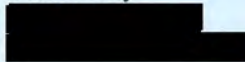
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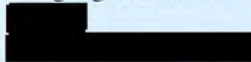
Dan Dennison



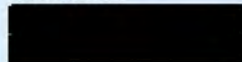
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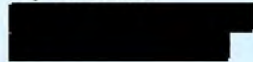
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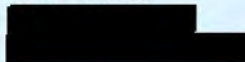
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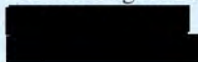
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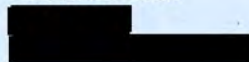
Robert James



Michael Pignataro



Theodore Smith



EDITOR'S
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VHPA on parade

Member Gil Ferrey's photos capture the flavor of the July 4, 2000, parade down Constitution Avenue in Washington, DC.

More than 1,000 VHPA members and family members marched in the parade, and received a warm welcome from spectators along the route.



Members of the Hilltop Singers (above) applaud VHPA pilots as they march in the July 4 Parade. The singers were a USO troupe who entertained GIs overseas during the Vietnam War. At right, spectators watch from the steps of a building sporting the national colors.



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