



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

November/December 2001 Vol. 19, No. 6



A stylized slot machine helps form the logo for VHPA Reunion 2002 at Las Vegas this summer.

The reunion begins on July 3 and runs through July 6.

Details on Pages 19 and 20

From the President

It's hard to believe it has been only 120 days since our last reunion in Denver . . . and assuming this leadership role within our organization.

Our association is very blessed that we have a dedicated, committed, and hard-working Executive Council, committee chairmen and literally dozens of volunteers who are working on many key association goals, as well as our next reunion.

I am please to report much has been accomplished in this short time, with much more coming in months ahead.

In our July/ August *Newsletter*, I outlined the process of identifying 26 important long-term priorities, and then developing their prioritization. Your EC and committee chairmen spent time during the Denver reunion working on this, and we also sought the input and recommendations of the various chapter presidents. With the input in hand, we set to work.



Dave Rittman

Finding our fellow missing comrades

By far the highest priority was the need to find our fellow pilots who flew with us in Vietnam, but who we have not heard from since then.

Thousands are out there, and time is truly running out. Age and life experiences take their toll with us all, and with each passing month our potential membership decreases.

Gary Roush, Mike Law, Dana Young and many others have been working very hard on this . . . and some truly wonderful progress has occurred.

By extracting social security numbers from military orders issued years ago and then cross referencing them to our association databases, approximately 10,000 "lost" but future potential members have been identified.

As a test, Dana and his volunteers ran 1,000 of these names through a public records database contractor, which has identified approximately 850 people with current addresses.

They currently are working on an additional 8,000 names, and the vendor we are using has told us the initial pass on this second list has "hit" with 7,500 current addresses. Yes!

A number of edits and filters are still being processed, but the bottom line is: It looks like when the various lists are purified, we will have identified the current location of about 9,000 potential members who have, in many cases, been missing since our flying years in Southeast Asia.

Gary also has reported that, based on his processing the first 2,000 names, we unfortunately have had to add 52 pilots to our died after tour list.

This points out the urgency of completing this goal as soon as possible.

Additional details are in a separate article within this newsletter, including our plans to contact these prospective members, sort the database by geographical area, seek chapter involvement for addresses within their area of operation, and ultimately invite our newly found brothers to join our association/attend our upcoming reunions.

Membership retention

Our association currently has more than 11,000 members, but as in any organization or association, some have drifted away and become lost.

We no longer have their current address and thus are out of touch with these people. Refinding them is almost as high a priority as finding the 10,000 pilots who may not have even heard of our organization.

Over the next few months, I envision using the same technology as outlined above to gain current addresses for this group, and send them a welcome-back letter and packet. They also will be invited to update their membership and attend our next reunion.

This information also will be shared with the chapters for people within their area of operation, when available.

Our association is vastly different and much expanded from the early years. We have much to offer in terms of camaraderie and renewed friendships . . . and, for the first time, they may be able to find that special person they have been looking for.

We no longer have just a few hundred people at our reunions . . . there will be thousands, thus the chances are

See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 5

Classified ads

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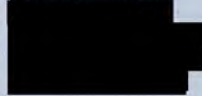
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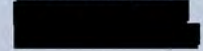
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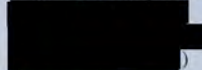
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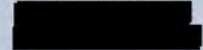
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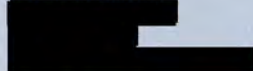
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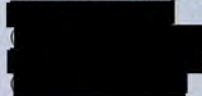
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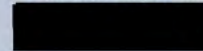
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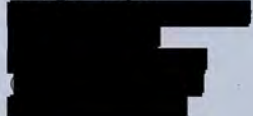
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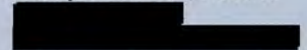
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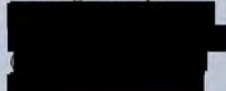
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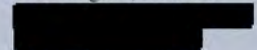
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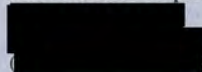
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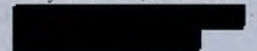
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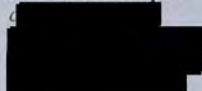
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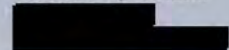
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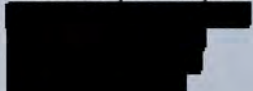
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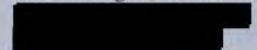
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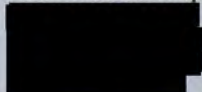
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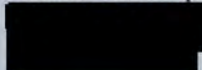
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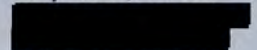
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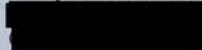
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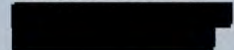
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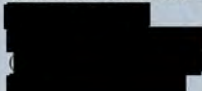
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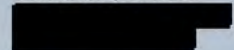
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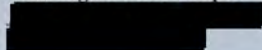
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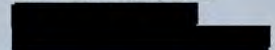
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You may order a past calendars with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-8472 or online at www.vhpa.org

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From the President

Continued from Page 2

statistically much better of finding that special friend of long ago. While our schedules will be very busy over the next few months, this one will get done.

Strategic planning

Another key project this year is to identify and start to implement our long-term legacy.

What do we want our association to be 10 years from now, 20 years from now, and how do we wish to be remembered when we are all gone?

It's a significant issue, and Bob Smith has formed a planning committee of past national VHPA presidents as a starting point.

We also will be seeking the input of the chapter presidents, as well as the general membership in the months ahead as we work thorough this most important subject.

It is our goal to have final recommendations ready to present to the membership prior to the next reunion.

VHPA scholarships

I'm sure most of you saw the very significant results of our first full year with this program in our last newsletter . . . but wow!!

The Army Aviation Association of America is administering this on our behalf, and 36 of the 197 applicants marked that their fathers were members of the VHPA and applied for our scholarships.

The final total of all scholarships awarded was \$194,500 won by 110 recipients. Of these, 110 winners, 22 had checked the VHPA box as VHPA members.

I would like to extend my appreciation to all the various Executive Council members, including Tom Payne and, at the time, Don Joyce, who had the vision and mental stamina through all the various roadblocks to see this project to its successful fruition.

Early on, this effort was controversial with some members and, like many good things, quality projects that are well implemented surface to the top and can make a difference.

I also can remember many volunteers, including former VHPA president Charlie Rayl going up and down the aisles at a business meeting, getting the final checks we needed for the program.

Thank you all, for a wonderful effort on the behalf of our association.

We also sincerely appreciate the efforts of Bill Harris, AAAA executive director, and our own VHPA member Mike Brokovich, who has volunteered to represent our Association on the AAAA scholarship selection committee. Thank you both, for all that your have done.

Unit chapters approved, being launched

An often talked about addition to our association will finally become reality in time for our next reunion.

In addition to geographical chapters, your association also has approved the formation of unit chapters.

You will find additional details in a separate article within this newsletter, and we sincerely appreciate Mike Sheuerman's efforts in getting this concept launched.

To quote Mike's recent memo, "Our association was formed when a group of helicopter pilots got together to share the camaraderie of pasted experiences in RVN and remember those pilots what died during those experiences. At no level is this esprit stronger or the memories of fallen comrades more deeply felt than in the individual unit. The creation of the unit chapter will be a positive step in the growth of the VHPA."

Well said, Mike, and thank you for all your efforts on this.

Investment Committee working hard

On each monthly conference call we take time to review our finances, investments, and any needed strategies.

Over the past few months, we have diversified and moved funds out of selected accounts to those providing secure, but higher return with the assistance of professional management assistance.

Bob Smith and his committee of VHPA member volunteers have spent many hours working on this and, as a result, our association assets have not been adversely impacted by the recent economic downturn.

This is but another example of the type of quality commitment by many of our membership to make our association the best it can be.

Las Vegas Reunion Committee on course

Joe Bilitzke and his volunteers are well along into the execution stage of our next reunion at the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas July 3-7, 2002.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find a separate article with many additional details. Starting in early January you will be able to go on-line at www.vhpa.org and register for all the various events, and make your hotel reservation all at the same time.

A survey completed at the Denver reunion reflected that over 94 percent of the membership had Internet access and would use this simple procedure.

For those of you without Internet access: Starting in January, you will be able to call our Headquarters on the toll-free number and get a form to complete and return similar to previous years.

We have heard the membership loud and clear regarding the need for free time at our reunions, and we have concentrated on ensuring this year has plenty of open space so that you can maximize the true purpose of our get-togethers . . . the camaraderie and renewal of old

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From the President

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friendships. The surveys taken of the membership in Denver reflect that the vast majority of our members will arrive before 6 p.m. on Wednesday July 3 in time for the welcome reception, and will depart Sunday, July 7.

The final banquet gala . . . including significant stage entertainment and the dance afterwards . . . is Saturday evening July 6, and we have intentionally left the entire day and evening Friday July 5 open to enjoy the vast spectacular entertainment and culinary opportunities within the city.

Of course, the Fourth of July has a host of activities, including specially discounted major entertainment shows in the hotel, and a choice of later evening activities, including fireworks if you wish.

Keep in mind, we are inviting all those newly found members to attend their first reunion at the Riviera. Make your reservations early . . . it is going to be a very special reunion, indeed.

Our Headquarters operation

As we expand, we have also turned our sights to our headquarters operation.

Our Technology Committee is well on the way to vastly upgrading the database systems and technology at our California office and with our online capabilities.

These upgrades are timed to sync with the new reunion registration system that also is being developed.

Mike Law, Gary Roush, Charlie Holley, the Headquarters staff and others are very much involved and dedicated to getting the changes in place, and we sincerely appreciate all their efforts.

We also need to acknowledge Marcia Fritz, Linda Whitten and the other members of our Headquarters operation who work diligently and professionally to service the needs of our association throughout the year and, of

course, at the annual reunions.

With all this going on and, considering the very high quality services and benefits being provided to our membership, your Executive Council, after review of all the options, elected to exercise our contractual option to renew our current association management contract for an additional two years as we continue to grow and expand.

The contract will be revisited again at that time considering the total membership actually found, the efficiencies of the technology currently being put into place, the cost of publications/staff/facilities/utilities/technology, and the overall administrative support needs of the association at that time.

We look forward to working with Marcia, Linda and the entire staff for the next two years. Thank you, for all you have done.

Summary

I again would like to say thank you to all our council and committee members, and the many volunteers who are working literally thousands of hours on the behalf of the organization.

I believe you can see from the text above that much is being accomplished.

For some of our key people, it is not unusual to be committing 10-15 hours per week (or more) to further the association and make it the best it can be . . . and almost everyone still has a full time "real" job.

It's true dedication, and we as an association truly appreciate their efforts.

As I mentioned when I first assumed the presidency last July, when we were all "in-country" years ago, we were a quality, dedicated team. We are once again within this organization.

Sept. 11 has changed many things, but not the spirit, loyalty, or camaraderie of this organization. This is the time to pull together in these troubled times, put aside any differences that may have developed with another member for whatever reason, help each other as we did in the past, and make the upcoming times the best it can be.

If you do, it's still going to be a great year!

— Dave Rittman

Vietnam helicopter history on CD-ROM

The VHPA's Vietnam Helicopter History CD-ROM is a perfect Christmas present.

This interactive multimedia CD-ROM was produced last year for the VHPA from the result of more than 15 years of work by Gary Roush, Mike Law, Mike Sloniker and many others.

It contains history not available anywhere else including the very popular helicopter incident and acci-

dent reports on nearly all of the 12,000 helicopters flown during the Vietnam War from all services.

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

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

Missing some past VHPA newslet-

ters? The CD contains copies of nearly all newsletters back to 1993.

The Vietnam Helicopter History CD is being sold for \$15, plus \$5 shipping and handling to VHPA members and \$25, plus \$5 shipping and handling to non-members.

Buy the perfect Christmas gift by calling VHPA HQ at (800) 505-VHPA or using the order form on this newsletter or our website at:

<http://www.vhpa.org>

Letters

Crew promotes aviation safety

I know VHPA normally devotes its pages to the past and what we did so long ago. I'd like to reach out and let all our brethren know what's happening in aviation today, created by a helicopter crew from two different wars.

So, if I may:

One year after its initial conception, Safety Program managers Cary Mendelsohn — Operations, (CW4 retired and a VHPA member) and Randy Williams — Maintenance, (Chinook crew chief and Desert Storm veteran) from the FAA Fort Lauderdale Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) have completed hosting eight very successful presentations of "Who Wants To Be An Aire-man?"

Airmen from all over South Florida turn out to witness this very unique brand of aviation safety seminar.

It's unlike anything you would expect or see in the federal government.

Pilots and aviation maintenance technicians settle down to an exciting two-hour "show" at the Muvico Palace 20 Theater in Boca Raton, FL, for a safety seminar based on the popular ABC Television Game Show "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?"

By the time this goes to print, we would have gone to sea with our show on the Majesty of the Seas, having taken more than 100 aviation enthusiasts on a three day "Aire-man Cruise" from Miami to the Bahamas

"Sponsors" have pledged over \$50,000 in prizes to help the Safety Program managers reach their goal to prevent accidents and save lives through information.

Prizes have been awarded to dozens of contestants. The smallest prize is a pair of Muvico Theater tickets, just for making it to the "hot seat." The biggest prizes range from a week's cruise for two to a GPS, valued at more than \$1,500 to riding in the Goodyear blimp, which can't be bought.

No matter what their specific specialty in the aviation industry, each person attending leaves the meeting more safety conscious and wiser than when he arrived

Each seminar is videotaped by Boca Raton Educational Television, for broadcast to the community several times a week. The recording is also available on the Internet as a streaming video through the Fort Lauderdale website, in cooperation with American Flyers, one of the program's sponsors.

The value of participation by a community of nearly 20,000 certified airmen and aircraft, airlines, maintenance, FBOs, and parts distributors, getting directly involved in the recurrent training of our district office airmen, can only

have a positive result in helping to lower our rate of incidents and accidents.

If any of our fellow crew members are ever in southern Florida, and wish to experience a unique form of entertainment while going through some recurrent training, feel free to check our website for all the detail:

www.faa.gov/fdsd/fl/airefly.htm

Cary Mendelsohn
CW4 Retired
134th AHC, 1970

P.S. — By clicking on "Past newsletter" then "Thunderstorms" see the history of the 134th AHC, from Fort Benning to Vietnam and back (lots of operations); and "Helicopter Operations." Read what it was like to fly a Chinook upside down.

Calculating VNE put Hook ahead of C-model

Here's a capsule summary as related to me in 1967 by CW3s Miles Becker, Delfo Ferrante and Omar Kipe, all of whom were participants in the great race.

At the time, the Cav was operating A model Hooks (posted velocity not to exceed was 133 knots) and early Hueys (posted VNE about 120 knots). Consequently, according to the dash 10, the Hook was the faster aircraft.

Then came the UH-1C with the 540 rotor and a VNE of 140! Now, according to the dash 10, the Huey was theoretically faster.

Now for some technical data. The Huey's VNE is established by a phenomenon known as retreating blade stall. One simply cannot exceed the retreating blade stall speed in level flight to any appreciable extent.

The Chinook VNE is primarily a structural issue. Exceed VNE, and the aircraft will continue to fly, but the bending forces on the machine (remember, there are two main rotors) begins to do damage to the structure.

One can exceed VNE by a significant extent, and the machine will maintain level flight. The Hook can fly faster than the structural safe limits of the bird.

Retreating blade stall is a minor issue, in part due to the fact the rotors counter-rotate and you have a retreating blade on each side of the aircraft, not just one.

If you are willing to risk the damage to the aircraft, you could push an A model Hook to well past 165 knots, or more than 30 knots over the published red line. An empty A model had more than enough power to do this.

Well, when the Charlie Huey arrived, some of the Huey drivers were quick to point out they now could fly 7 knots

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Letters

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faster than the Hooks. Odds are none of the Huey drivers in question had any idea of what caused the VNE for the Hook.

Just figured that if one helicopter couldn't fly much faster than VNE, the other would be subject to a proportionally similar limitation and thus they were clearly capable of 7 knots more airspeed.

Consequently, boasts based on da figures turned into challenges for a race.

The Hook folks knew that while the red lines favored the UH-1C, engineering/scientific fact made the Hook a sure winner.

Consequently, not only was there a willingness to accept a challenge from the Huey folks, but an eager desire to put money on it.

The Hook folks simply agreed amongst themselves to keep their mouths shut about the fact retreating blade stall is NOT a factor in the Hook VNE, or no one in his right mind would have taken their bets.

If memory serves me, copious amounts of money were wagered, including very large bets between the two battalion commanders.

As reported by the three aforementioned CW3s, the Hook was clocked at well above 165 knots. It suffered significant structural damage, and required a massive amount of work to make it flyable again.

The above account was presented as part of our CH-47 transition ground school at Fort Sill in 1967. I have no reason to doubt the truthfulness of the story as related by Becker, Ferrante and Kipe.

Later, Chuck Oram, another of the original Hookers, related the same story to a group of us Black Cats at Phu



Loi.

Of course, the B and C model Chinooks had red lines up in the neighborhood of 160-plus knots. The Black Cats got their first C (minus) Hooks in III Corps in late 1968.

I remember more than one occasion when I would be flying a C-model with a very stable sling load, and see a fully laden Cobra departing a rearm/refuel point, and make a point of either passing him or flying a circle around him.

Since no one was yet aware of the C-model, that caused great consternation. Also confusing to folks at first was the increase in fuel from 2 plus 15 to 4 plus 30. Our customers couldn't understand why we weren't going for fuel at the normal time.

It's been 20 years since I flew a Hook. I was blessed that 14 of my 25 years in the cockpit were in the Fat Lady.

No finer machine was ever delivered to the Army on my watch.

Al Fragola
Black Cats of Phu Loi

Colorado Springs site of great 189th gathering

I am sending this message to all 189th Assault Helicopter Company people who were there and to those who missed it.

There was a great gathering in Colorado Springs the first week in October. The ones who were there had a ball. All of you who missed it should plan on making it to St. Louis in October 2002.

Anyone interested in seeing some photos of the event go to www.associatesexpress.com click on links, then click on 189 AHC and maybe you will see someone you know.

Really guys, we are not getting any younger. Meeting guys you served with so many years ago is fun and exciting for everyone.

Start planning your trip to St. Louis in October 2002. Hope to hear from all of you.

Dick Butler
Avenger IV
May 1967-68
Better known as Moose

Veterans Day to focus on helicopter crews

My name is Dennis Miller and I teach in Adrian, MI. For the past two years, I've organized Veterans Day celebrations and invite all 8,000 vets from our county. Each year I try to focus on different groups to honor.

I would like next year's focus to be Vietnam helicopter

See LETTERS, Page 9

Pilot seeks fellow Charger aviators

If appropriate, would you please place the following in *The VHPA Newsletter*:

196th LIB "Chargers"

Wanted: Looking for LOH "Charger" pilots: Sells, McMahon, Burke, Merchant and others.

Please contact Dick Elgin at [REDACTED]

Can/does VHPA help find Vietnam-era pilots? I've tried a couple of different tactics to find pilots I flew with in Vietnam. Not much luck. Any help would be appreciated.

Dick Elgin
Class 69-5
196th LIB Charger, 1969-70

Letters

Continued from Page 8

pilots and crews. I would like to know how to contact groups or individuals from our area: Michigan, Northern Ohio.

Can anyone help?

Dennis Miller

Tree meager, sparse, but it was Christmas

Here is an image taken on Christmas Day 1966 in Phan Thiet, Vietnam, about 85 miles northeast of Saigon.

One views this photo and realizes how far we have all come since those days. The tree and ornaments, sent from my home in New Jersey, ended up being the "unit tree" of the C/229th Avn, 1st Cav that year.



Sitting on top of a 105 mm spent brass shell in the "club" area of a huge tent with the mortar foxhole in the background, it was meager and sparse . . . but it was Christmas, nevertheless.

Dave Rittman

Membership Directory

Couple of entries should be corrected

There are a couple of entries on Page 282 of the latest VHPA Directory that need correcting.

The location information on the 11th ACR and the Air Cav Troop of the 11th ACR are incorrect.

I cannot supply dates or even verify the movements of the unit between the time it left Di An and when it arrived at Phu Loi.

I joined the troop in November 1971 at Phu Loi. It is my understanding the troop went from Di An to Tay Ninh for a while and arrived in Phu Loi sometime in 1971.

The whole unit was intact there until standing down in March of 1972.

The only reason I can come up with for why Vung Tau is listed in the Directory is we had a small detail down there coordinating things when we sent the aircraft back to the

States, but no one was stationed there.

Thanks for another great Directory.

John Plummer

EDITORS NOTE: Thanks, John, for this information. Hopefully others from THUNDER HORSE can provide Mike Law, the directory editor, with some more information. He can be reached at law@VHPA.org

Unit missing from Directory listing

I just received my VHPA Directory and I noticed my unit (the 162nd AHC) was missing in the section where you list which units were located where.

The 162nd came over on the boat in February 1966 and was located at Phuoc Vinh until August 1968, when it moved to Dong Tam in the Delta.

Regards

Stan Gause

DIRECTORY EDITOR'S NOTE: This was an oversight on my part. I knew the 162nd arrived in 1966 and was based on Phuoc Vinh, but I just didn't include it in the material I prepared for the Directory. Sorry about my mistake, but thanks to you it is fixed in the official VHPA database.

New Directory great!

Great new edition. Received it yesterday.

Regarding my name in the database: Somehow from the 2000 to the 2001 Directory, my name went from McLeod to Mc Leod (space between the Mc and L). Consequently, in the alphabetical listing, my name appears at the beginning of the Mc's.

There's also a McHugh at the front with a space between the Mc and H. Minor thing, but it took me a while to find my name in the listing. Keep up the great work.

Hugh S. McLeod III

DIRECTORY EDITOR'S NOTE: You are correct on both people, darn! I even have a special step to catch this sort of error! Hugh, thanks for pointing this out.

Covers on Directory appreciated

Please pass on the word that I highly approve of the cover, both front and back, but particularly the front, of the new Directory.

W.D. Livingston

I love the 2001 Directory.

The front cover had the III Corps map of where I flew. Since I don't have any good maps of Nam, I could not show the kids or my wife where I was stationed. Now I can.

How about the next Directory having maps of all four Corps added and maybe something for the Air Force pilots who had to pick up downed pilots outside for Nam.

Just an idea. Thanks for all you guys' efforts.

Harry Kornbau

Taps

Thomas J. Burke

Thomas J. Burke died Sept. 1 of complications from surgery in Charlotte, NC, after an extended illness.

His physical address recently was the home of his brother Brian at 4829 Lebanon Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273.

Burke flew scouts for C/7/17 Cav in 1969-70 and was a Silver Star recipient.

Jim Harrison

Jim Harrison, an instructor at Sky Helicopters in Garland, TX, was killed in a helicopter crash.

He was a Vietnam veteran.

He was a former middle school band instructor for the Dallas Independent School District.



Rod Henderson

Rod Henderson died Oct. 24 at the East Texas Medical Center in Tyler.

He had struggled for several days as complications from cancer grew more and more difficult to manage.

He had been a member of the VHPA, but had let his membership lapse.

Henderson was with me in 1971 in F Troop, 1/9 Cav at Bearcat. He was a scout pilot and flew the OH-6. I will miss him very much.

Don Williams
Boomerang 11, 1967-68
Smiling Tiger 32, 1970-71

Omar K. Kipe

Chief Warrant Officer Omar K. Kipe, 77, of Lawton, OK, died Sept. 14 in a local hospital.

He was born Dec. 12, 1923, in Waynesboro, PA.

Kipe retired from the Army in 1968, after serving in Korea and Vietnam. He was recipient of the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and the Air Medal.

He married Thelma F. Meyers on Aug. 2, 1986, in Lawton.

Kipe was a carpenter and builder, and served for 22 years with the Holy City of the Wichitas, and was on the board of directors.

He was a member of Hilltop Baptist Church.

Survivors include his wife; a son, Michael Keith Kipe of Union City, TN; a daughter, Anita Janice Kipe of Smithsburg, MD; and three stepdaughters.



Michael Steven Waggener Plantz

Michael Steven Waggener Plantz, 53, of Frenchtown, NJ, died Oct. 15.

A 1972 graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, he was an aviation safety and air carrier inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Previously, he was director of operations for Keystone Helicopters in Pennsylvania and British Petroleum in Indonesia. He also worked for Bell Helicopter in Iran and Houston Helicopters.

He was an airline transport pilot with five helicopter and five jet aircraft ratings, and accumulated more than 12,000 hours of flight time.

Plantz was born in Pittsburg, KS.

He was an Army veteran of the Vietnam War, serving with the 61st Assault Helicopter Company. He received three Silver Star Medals, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and a Bronze Star Medal.

He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Survivors include his mother; daughter Kristen Plantz-Gaumer of Allentown; a sister and a grandchild.

Bill Ruth

Funeral services for Chief Warrant Officer Bill Ruth, 57, of Mount Airy, MD, were held Oct. 6 in Alliance, OH.

Ruth died Sept. 11 when terrorists forced an airliner to ram into the Pentagon.

"Bill loved to fish. He loved going to his camp in Canada. He loved riding his motorcycle," recalled Col. John Reynolds, chief of the Army National Guard's Human Resources Policy and Programs, about Ruth.

Ruth flew medevac helicopters in Vietnam as a Marine officer.

He taught world geography and science in Maryland, and served in Southwest Asia with the 29th Air Traffic Control Group as a warrant officer during the Persian Gulf War after joining the Maryland Army National Guard in 1976, said Col. Ronald Eaton, the safety and aviation director.

"Billy beat the drum for the National Guard, especially for the Maryland Guard. He was a man of character," said Eaton of the aviator who logged 3,500 hours in helicopters and 500 more in airplanes.

Ruth also flew helicopters for the 104th Medical Company in Edgewood before beginning his Army personnel assignment at the Pentagon.

Ruth, who lived in Mount Airy, also was a ham radio operator, amateur astronomer and commander of a Veterans of Foreign Wars post.

"I helped get him interested in biking, and he went out and bought his Harley-Davidson before I bought mine," Reynolds recalled. "I didn't know he had been a Marine officer until after he died. He would always say, 'I'm a

See TAPS, Page 11

Member's son receives scholarship

TOM PAYNE
VHPA SECRETARY/TREASURER

James F. Gause of Boca Raton, FL, is recipient of the VHPA Central Florida Chapter/Army Aviation Association of America matching scholarship for \$3,000.

The scholarship pays \$1,500 a year for two years.

VHPA member Stanley R. Gause, the proud father, said: "We heard about the VHPA Scholarship through the VHPA in May."

James applied for the VHPA scholarship. It was a big surprise and honor for James to be selected, not for the VHPA one, but another AAAA scholarship.

James is an Eagle Scout and was a class officer in his junior and senior years in high school. He is now a freshman at the University of Florida and is studying to be a com-



James F. Gause and his father, VHPA member Stanley R. Gause.

puter/electrical engineer.

Congratulations to another proud VHPA member, Stan Gause, and his son, James F. Gause.

The new VHPA Scholarship program in partnership with the AAAA continues to be a bright new direction in fulfilling the legacy of the VHPA in the future.

If you are considering having your son or daughter apply for the VHPA Scholarship with the AAAA, do not delay. Go to the AAAA website at:

www.quad-a.org/

Take the link to "Scholarships" and follow the instructions. The AAAA phone number is: [REDACTED]

The VHPA hopes to expand the scholarship program. However, it can do so only if more contributions are made to the VHPA, designated "Scholarship Fund." What a great way for us to enhance our legacy — making a donation in honor of a friend or buddy who died would be an appropriate way to be a part.

CCN takes first in bass derby parade, again

VHPA California Chapter North participated in the Rio Vista Bass Derby Parade in October and once again we took first place in our category.

After the parade, we had the helicopter and the MOC on display for people to tour. It was very successful again. Thanks to all of you who were able to participate.

The next future event will be our annual golf tournament in April 2002 at Alta Sierra Country Club. It will be hosted by Bob Asbell.

Another event we are taking a look at is a repeat of our cruise to Ensenada a couple of years ago. Everybody had a

blast. More information will follow on that.

It's finally going to happen and CCN has contracted with Janet Vaughn to develop our website.

She did my website and, if you want to see the quality of her work, you can go to:

<http://www.westerntruckschool.com/>

We hope to have it on-line this year.

Mike Nord
President
California Chapter North

Taps

Continued from Page 10
warrant officer."

The Ohio native is survived by his mother Jane; his son Sean, a brother and sister who are both married and several nieces and nephews. Another son, Chad, preceded him in death.

James E. Teague

James E. Teague of Enterprise, AL, died Nov. 6 as the

result of an automobile accident.

He was a member of class 69-34, and served with the 11th Aviation Company in 1969-70 and the 1st Brigade, 1st cavalry Division in 1970.

Henry S. Wann

Henry S. "Hank" Wann of Williamsburg, VA, died Nov. 19.

He was 86.

He was a member of the so-called Class Before One, the class of instructors and student pilots who started Army aviation as we know it today, while the Army Air Corps was part of the Army.

Maintenance theme of 2002 Directory

MIKE LAW

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY EDITOR

As reported in the last VHPA Newsletter, the 2002 Directory will be dedicated to helicopter maintenance — specifically all Southeast Asian helicopter-maintenance units and any helicopter maintenance personnel.

We need detailed input for the people who served in all the Transportation Corps detachments, all the E companies of divisional maintenance battalions, and all the aircraft direct support (ADS) and aircraft maintenance general support (AMGS) companies, to name just a few.

We also need color photos for the cover, and black-and-white ones for the interior.

Our good friend Les Hines from the 123rd Aviation Battalion and the Americal Division associations, offered the following short stories from his tour as a crew chief and in maintenance:

I have memories of several incidents. I can recount an individual named Williams lifting a tracking flag up into the arc of a turning main UH-1 rotor blade.

He was standing next to five maintenance team members and a pilot.

Lucky the flag was on the downward side of the rotor's movement in relation to the team members. As you will recall, the tracking flag was made from pieces of metal

pipe. It was quickly snatched from his grasp.

I also remember pilots racing other helicopters after we had turned in our UH-1Ds for remanufactured UH-1Hs. Two well-known pilots (who will remain nameless for this article) blew the seals out of the transmission.

As I recall, they were pulling 43 pounds of torque, which was way above anything they could do on the UH-1D. During the races, they pushed the torque up over 50 pounds.

It got so bad I think we were losing over 3.5 quarts an hour when we decided to pull over for a fix. The shop quickly put a red "X" on it. Come on guys, this was a 1964 retro-fit nearly five years old!

I also remember that pilots would slip during preflights and put their foot through the greenhouse windows. It would take a day of tedious work to remove and replace the window.

We had problems obtaining replacement cells for the batteries. If the battery voltage dropped below 11.5 volts while engaged in cranking, we gave it up. If it had 11.5 to 13 volts, the doorunner and the crew chief would run the blades around to help crank. I often worried whether the helicopter would start again when we shut down out in the field, but we never had a problem after we got the thing cranked that first time in the morning.

See CREW CHIEF, Page 13

VHPA briefs

New calendar full of photos

The 2002 VHPA calendar features more photographs and illustrations than previous editions.

These include a great aerial photograph of a combat assault as well as a photo of a field location maintenance area.

There are 29 photos in all.

Eight show illustrations from Paul D. Fretts, two USMC CH-46s, five AH-1Gs, 5 OH-6As, 2 CH-54s, 2 UH-1Ds, one each UH-1H, UH-1C, and OH-58.

VHPA Newsletter deadlines

The following are deadlines for submitting items to *The VHPA Newsletter*:

- January/February 2002 — Dec. 1, 2001
- March/April 2002 — Feb. 1, 2002
- May/June 2002 — April 1, 2002
- July/August 2002 — June 1, 2002
- September/October 2002 — August 1, 2002
- November/December 2002 — Oct. 1, 2002

Written items should be sent by e-mail to:



Ride with
the Outlaws
of the 175th
Aviation Co.
in the
Mekong Delta
during
1966-1967

ARVN squads getting out of the Hueys were being mowed down in the deep, blond rice paddy grass as if a giant piano wire were sweeping through the LZ, cutting them off at the knees. Whole squads of ARVNs were losing their lives due to the grazing fire. The radio was full of guys screaming, "I'm hit. I'm hit! I'm HIT!"

To order send \$25 by check or money order,
to: Dave Eastman,
P.O. Box 59, Center Sandwich, NH 03227
Order online at www.elgringoviejo.com

Crew chief almost left behind by pilots

Continued from Page 12

I had several personal incidents where the pilots would land the helicopter to refuel with the nozzle/hose on the wrong side. Then, when they were ready to take off, they would forget me in the back still putting the nozzle away. I made many a jump for the skids as they lifted off without me.

However, my experiences pale to those of a doorgunner from our platoon name Selby Callahan.

He thought he had it made on his first flying mission after coming out of the field from the 1/52nd Infantry. That was until he was caught on the ground putting the nozzle away as his ship left.

He jumped up and got his armpits over the skid to hang

on, but the pilots didn't notice his predicament until they were 500 feet up in the air. That made an impression on him!

During my last week in country, they wanted to take over for me so I went to my hooch and let them run the shop on their own.

A couple days later, I was summoned to the flight line by one of the team. They were trying to rig a fuel control unit and they had the adjustments so out of whack the pilot couldn't shut the helicopter off!

Please contact Mike Law, [REDACTED] with any maintenance related material that you think would be an addition to the 2002 VHPA Membership Directory.

VHPA business directory

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An award-winning documentary about members of B Troop, 2/17 Air Cav, 101st Airborne Division
(www.deltaforce.net/air_cav/healing.html)
and:

"A Vietnam Journey . . ."

(<http://www.vietnamvideos.com>)

A travel video about veterans returning to Vietnam with their families and friends.

Looking for 3/17 and 2/17 Cav Sqdn pilots and crews for a reunion at

Di An and Camp Eagle . . . visit
www.deltaforce.net/aircav/index.html

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Your Executive Council

Who we are and what we're all about

DAVE RITTMAN
PRESIDENT

From time to time, we get a question about our Executive Council and who we are.

Contained below are some brief facts and policies we follow in the conduct of VHPA business:

We're made up of six elected members and one appointed member who collectively manage the day-to-day affairs of the association.

Your new vice president is elected for a three-year term, and rotates from that position to president, and then to the past president position.

Similarly, a junior member at large is elected each year, then rotates to mid term member at large, and then senior member at large.

Our secretary/treasurer serves at the request of the president and Executive Council, and does not vote unless there is a tie. The names of the member currently elected to each position are on Page 3 of this newsletter.

All of our positions come under the category of volunteer services . . . no one receives a salary or an expense account. We occasionally do turn in reimbursement requests for association-related expenses, but just as often we just consider those expenses a donation to the cause.

No member of the Executive Council does business with the association, nor profits from it. We do, on occasion, arrange for services to be donated gratis to the association from outside sources, and sometimes from companies we work for. A good example would be Joe Bilitzke's 100 percent donation of a significant amount of audio/visual services to the Santa Clara reunion a few years ago.

Meetings of the Executive Council are held often . . . in recent times about one per month by conference call. These calls cover the day-to-day business of the association, the progress being made on specific projects, and development of new goals and initiatives that would benefit the membership.

Our committee chairmen currently consist of 11 dedicated volunteers who each donate many hundreds of hours of time annually, and are nominated to their position by the president and ratified by the Executive Council.

They do not vote on matters before the Executive Council. None are paid positions, and committee expenses

are approved/budgeted in advance by the council.

Similar to the Executive Council, many committee chairmen donate a significant amount of their day-to-day expenses in lieu of reimbursement.

For example, by their own election, our Site Selection Committee has been traveling around the country to visit potential reunion sites at their own expense for years, except for a few facilities that provide transportation and/or accommodations.

Both council and committee members accept complimentary rooms if offered from a hotel while performing association business, but do not accept monetary or gifts of intrinsic value from any entity or organizations doing business with the association.

Financially, our books and accounting documents are maintained by a highly respected CPA firm, and we commission an annual "arm's length" audit to be performed by independent accounting firms.

Our bylaws and constitution are printed annually in our membership directory. Our financials are published in the newsletter from time to time as deemed prudent, and also presented at the annual business meeting.

When feasible and in the best interests of the association, comparative pricing or bids are obtained for major expenditures. Recent examples would be our use of a financial investment advisor and selecting a vendor to process 10,000 prospective member current address searches from social security numbers.

We maintain a full headquarters office operation with paid staff under the administration of a contractor in California. In addition, we do employ as needed or seek volunteer outside professionals as needed to conduct the association's business.

If you see them in the hallways at the next reunion, buy them a beer.

In summary, your Executive Council and committee chairmen collectively manage the day-to-day activities of our association in the spirit of the volunteer nonprofit

501c19 tax-exempt organization that we are, and provide their expertise and time in a tireless fashion to the betterment of the membership.

On behalf of the entire association, I would like to thank the many dozens of Council members, committee chairmen, and volunteers who contribute so much of their time and dollars to make our organization a success.

If you see them in the hallways at the next reunion, buy them a beer. I hope you agree they collectively have really gone the extra mile on your behalf.

Outlaws tells full, rich story of pilots

Outlaws in Vietnam

By David L. Eastman

435 pages, Soft back

47 B/W photos (including covers)

Peter E. Randall Publisher

Portsmouth, NH 2001

Copyright 2000

If you are looking for a complete book dealing with the lives of helicopter pilots in Vietnam, look no farther. This book is it!

From cover to cover, *Outlaws in Vietnam* tells the full, rich story of the "Magnificent Seven" as they flew in the 175th Aviation Company (AML) from late 1966 until late 1967.

The seven classmates of flight school class 66-14 lived at Vinh Long and experienced the "best years of their lives" as they wrestled everyday with danger, boredom and terror! This book is a wonderful story of comrades in combat, told through the clear, vivid writing of David Eastman, one of the "Magnificent Seven."

Outlaws in Vietnam is a great mix of 40 short stories, so interesting and gripping with detail the reader will easily be able to visualize and understand every described happening.

Each story will leave you wanting more. Funny, sad,

tragic, ironic, but never dull, all chapters are "brim full" of wonderful details and emotion.

Book review



David is very skillful as a writer and he easily brings back vivid memories about his fellow helicopter pilots and enlisted crews.

He also enhances the understanding for the non-pilot reader.

In real life, David Eastman is a forester and is attuned to the aesthetic world of wildlife, the environment and landscapes. He writes and publishes regularly for the print and broadcast media about the outdoors and its beauty.

He lives in New Hampshire where forestry, nature and

See **AUTHOR**, Page 16

Book airline reservations for Reunion 2002 in Las Vegas

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(DAVE GRIEGER, L-66)

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VHPA PATCH	\$ 4.50
VHPA PIN (HUNDREDS AVAILABLE)	\$ 3.95 (WOPA, RLO, ETC.)
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Author teases readers with events

Continued from Page 15

esthetics are very important.

Most books about Vietnam usually begin with flight school and the lengthy flight to the other side of the world.

However, David Eastman teases the reader with a very interesting turn of events, which could have allowed him to, perhaps, escape the trip. David was an honorable man, however, deciding to have no part in the "chance opportunity."

Then as luck would have it, his assignment to the 175th Aviation Company (AML) at Vinh Long would be a wonderful stroke that would launch the young RLO (real live officer) to a year of flying which he describes as "the best year of his life."

Many, but not all, helicopter pilots have echoed his thought. But, all would admit their lives were changed significantly by the experience.

One thing stands out about flying helicopters in the Delta was the size and lack of recognizable landmarks. The vast, flat, often flooded southern part of Vietnam, offered very little contact with or support from U.S. troops.

In the Delta, the Vietnamese mainly fought the war. Not until the 9th Division came to Dong Tam, later in the war, did U.S. forces enter the Delta region in significant numbers.

U.S. advisors were the only Americans David and his fellow pilots came in contact with on a daily basis. The Delta was a different world, a world where the young helicopter pilot and his trusted crew spent hours and hours flying daily to the far reaches of IV Corps.

Long days and many flight hours ensured their learning

many skills and "tricks" about flying over what could be described as mostly enemy territory.

And, if these little details were not passed on to other young pilots or adhered to exactly, the crews could be destined to a lonely death.

Staying alive and reaching DEROS was always in the back of each crewmember's mind. But in the end, David Eastman is full of mixed emotions about going home.

Leaving his fellow crewmembers and their past months together was

more difficult than expected. He would no longer be experiencing the intense and close lifestyle of

Book review



Vinh Long.

Such realizations caused him to wrestle within himself. Then, when that long awaited DEROS finally arrived and he could leave Vinh Long with the other members of the "Magnificent Seven," he found it very difficult.

It's an interesting conclusion to a very good book.

Outlaws in Vietnam is a book that is well-written, interesting, and certainly deserving of your reading. It is one of the best I have read.

It would not be a surprise to have the entertainment industry agree. We just might see something in the future based on this book and its real life, no, bigger than life characters.

If the details, as written by David Eastman are retained . . . it will be a great story.

— Tom Payne

VHPA secretary/treasurer

AAHF nominated for Fisher award

For its sustained effort since inception four years ago, the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation has been nominated for the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Humanitarian Award.

Presented each year by the secretary of defense, the award recognizes individuals or organizations that inspire patriotism and support of the military.

This is the first known time the U.S. Army Aviation Branch has ever made such a nomination.

The foundation was nominated by Maj. Gen. Anthony R. Jones, former Fort Rucker commander and chief of the Aviation Branch. The nomination

The foundation preserves authentic, flyable examples of historic Army aircraft and utilizes them in aerial demonstrations . . .

has been endorsed by the Training and Doctrine Command and has been forwarded to Department of the Army.

AAHF is the only civilian nonprofit organization known to be actively working to "connect the American soldier to the American public as an

admired, accepted and active member of the American family through the story of Army Aviation."

The foundation preserves authentic, flyable examples of historic Army aircraft and utilizes them in aerial, educational "living history" demonstrations and presentations to inspire Americans so the symbols of America's military legacy may always remain in our skies for future generations.

Flying aircraft in numerous air show venues around the country, the Heritage Foundation demonstration team has performed for more than five million spectators.

EC approves unit chapter formation

MIKE SHEUERMAN
JUNIOR MEMBER AT LARGE

The VHPA Executive Council has approved the formation of VHPA unit chapters in addition to local/geographical chapters.

The purpose of the VHPA unit chapter is twofold:

- To find aviators who flew in that unit in RVN.
- To inform these aviators of the VHPA in hopes of getting them involved in the association.

Requirements to form a VHPA unit chapter are basically the same as forming a local VHPA chapter, with a few exceptions.

Formation requires a minimum of 15 members who flew in a particular unit in RVN. All VHPA unit chapter members must be current members in good standing of the VHPA national organization.

VHPA unit chapters will be required to hold their annual business meeting at the national VHPA reunion each year. Newfound Aviators will be encouraged to join local VHPA chapters or start one if none exists in their area.

Unit chapters will receive a banner and streamer, but not the \$500 new member recruitment fund from VHPA national.

Forms to initiate the VHPA unit

chapter process are available from national VHPA chapter coordinator Mike Hurley at:


We hope to have several VHPA unit chapters active by the Las Vegas Reunion.

Our association was formed when a group of helicopter pilots got together to share the camaraderie of the past in RVN and remember pilots who died.

At no level is this esprit stronger or the memories of fallen comrades more deeply felt than in the individual unit. The creation of the VHPA unit chapter is expected to be a positive step in the growth of VHPA.

Vendor policy at annual reunions

Each year at our reunions, a very popular place to visit has been the vendor area, in which about 40-50 different folks market books, merchandise, trips, tours, art work, and much more.

A number of years ago we adopted similar procedures to other veterans groups such as AAAA and HAI to better organize the effort and provide needed structure to an area that for most recent reunions has been sold out well ahead of the arrival of our members.

Who are our vendors?

Many of the vendor participants . . . approximately 70 percent in recent years . . . are individual VHPA regular/associate members or other nonprofit entities, such as the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker or the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation based in Georgia that maintains flyable Vietnam-era aircraft.

To comply with insurance requirements, hotel contractual requirements, and ensure compliance with various fire code regulations, each vendor does endorse a contract well in advance of the reunion with your association for space in the vendor area, which generally is allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis until

there is no more.

VHPA members and prior participants receive prioritization based on a formal policy that can be viewed by visiting our www.vhpa.org website.

We do not charge for the use of our VHPA logo, but do license its application.

How setup, security costs have been paid

There is a certain amount of setup, administrative, and security costs associated with operating the vendor area, and to date the policy has been for the participants that are selling something to pay 10 percent of their sales to the association to offset the cost of the room operation.

For individuals, chapters, or noncommercial organizations that do not sell anything, but are providing information only — such as the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation booth in Nashville and Washington, DC, the fee has been waived.

Any income in excess of expense — which is usually minor in nature — goes against the overall budget of the reunion, and thus is returned to the attending membership as value added services.

Proposal received to change policy

Recently your association received a request from a few individuals within one chapter to reconsider our policy and provide chapters special exemption from any fees while selling merchandise in the vendor room.

Their proposal was to shift the fees that offset several thousand dollars worth of annual vendor setup and security expenses away from the people selling merchandise

See EC REVIEWED, Page 18

EC reviewed request for loss shift

Continued from Page 17

and include those costs in the overall registration fee each member pays for the reunion . . . about \$5-\$6 additional cost to each attending member.

An alternate proposal submitted was to make up the loss of income by economies elsewhere in the association, which would mean the cost of vendors selling merchandise would be borne by the annual membership fee or the annual interest from the life memberships we all pay.

Guidelines for reviewing policy change

Your council reviewed this request on its merit, and considering the following guidelines:

- Would it be fair to all concerned?
- Would it help to build and foster additional good will vs. the current policy?
- Would it be beneficial to all concerned, or benefit only just a few?

Council review and response

Your Executive Council reviewed this policy carefully, taking into consideration the input from the requesting individual, all 13 other chapters, as well as individual members and vendors.

We also checked with other organizations to see how they were handling their vendor operations. On a special

conference call on Aug. 12, your elected council discussed the proposal in depth and reached unanimous consensus that vendors should pay their own fair share of the costs directly associated with the vendor room and operations if they are generating income from that area.

Since this number is definable and known in advance, it can be handled in the course of the sale gracefully and, in the process, all vendors remain on an equal economic footing.

Thus, the cost of the vendor operation is contained by those generating profits from the sales and the purchasers buying the products being offered.

Recognizing so many of the vendors are already VHPA regular/associate members or other nonprofits, your council did not feel it was in the interest of fairness to waive the fees to accommodate the request of one group of VHPA members at the expense of other VHPA members or nonprofit entities.

We do appreciate the opportunity to review how we operate, and felt the membership would be interested in the thought process, consideration, and due diligence that went into evaluating and reviewing this policy.

Additional Information

During the six-month period prior to any reunion, the updated vendor policy, contract, logo license, and related information are available to review and print from our website at www.vhpa.org

Directory this year is largest ever

By now, each of you should have received your 2001 annual Membership Directory, which is the largest ever published in our organization's 17-year history.

It also was produced on time, and within budget through the efforts of Mike Law and all his volunteers who help put this edition together.

It truly is a labor of love.

The Membership Directory is one of the major projects that are supported by your annual dues, costing about \$30,000 to produce.

On top of that are the many hundreds of hours of time spent to pull all of the data together.

I urge you to thumb through it . . . there is just a wealth of information that will be of interest to you. For example, starting on Page 318 is the updated list of members by state and town.

You may find someone living near you that you may not have been aware of. Starting with Page 177 is a new section this year . . . chapter members.

As always, our by-laws and constitution are in the front of the book.

On behalf of the entire association, we would like to thank Mike for all his efforts with this annual project that has so much meaning for our members, and all the volunteers who have helped make this directory the first class edition it is.

Missing pilots in the tragedy

In our last newsletter, we sadly informed you of the loss of VHPA member William Ruth of Mt. Airy, MD. As this article is being written in

early November, we know of no other VHPA members who were lost in the Sept. 11 tragedy.

However there are several names remaining on the Pentagon missing list that appear to have gone through rotary-wing flight school during the Vietnam-era, and may be known to a number of our membership.

Several of our members are working diligently to positively confirm that these 4-5 names on missing list, in fact, match similar names in our databases.

This information was not available as of our print deadline. However, if we can determine in the future these names were, in fact, those individuals that went through flight school with us during our era, we will let you know in a future edition of this newsletter.

— Dave Rittman, President

Las Vegas Reunion begins July 3

JOE BILITZKE

CHAIRMAN, VHPA NATIONAL REUNION

July 3 Wednesday

- **ARRIVAL DAY IN LAS VEGAS!** This is the time to find your buddies and make plans for an outstanding time in the city that never sleeps. Come to think of it, that sounds like a lot of pilots attending the reunion, too.

- **REGISTRATION WILL BE OPEN ALL DAY, EVERY DAY** to take care of early and late arrivals.

The hospitality suite also is available on a 24-hour basis until the Saturday business meeting.

At Registration you'll receive a nametag on a lanyard that will be your pass into all the events you choose. You and your guests are asked to please wear it whenever you're in the VHPA AO. Security will be directed to restrict admission to badge holders only.

All pilots and guests over 18 are charged a registration fee of \$45 if paid before April 30, 2002. After that date, registration increases to \$55. Be sure to register early and save!

- **THE WELCOME RECEPTION** will be held from 7-10 p.m. A live band will play for those surviving jet lag and wanting to start the reunion on the dance floor.

Areas also will be offered to sit, drink and buddy bond. Of course, your favorite libations will be available at bars scattered throughout the room.

No meal will be served, in order to provide you an opportunity to experience one of the great restaurants in the hotel or nearby. Tickets are \$20 for this event.

July 4 Thursday

- **ACTIVITIES GALORE TODAY!** Mini-reunions, vendor sales, hospitality suite, and all-day mini bars are just the beginning.

In the evening, you have a choice of two stage shows beginning at 7:30 and immediately afterward two great functions starting at 9 p.m., all within the confines of the Riviera Hotel & Casino. You'll only have to walk from your room.

- **MINI-REUNIONS, VENDOR SALES, THE CHAPTER WELCOME CENTER** are all on the agenda through Saturday. Closing times for these functions will be announced at a later date.

- **SPLASH! IS A NON-STOP ENTERTAINMENT EXTRAVAGANZA!** A plethora of entertainers keep things moving with daredevil motorcycles (yes, on stage), ice skaters, jugglers, contortionist, dancers and singers all performing in this variety show.

VHPA members will have the Splash Theater all to ourselves. We've secured the rights to the entire facility –

900 seats full of pilots and guests.

Your ticket will not be the regular weekend price of \$75. Special VHPA price is just \$42.50!

For a sample of **SPLASH!** see the Riviera Hotel web-site at www.rivieracasino.com/splash.html and download the "sneak peak" of the show.

- **AN EVENING AT LA CAGE** is the second production choice.

Although costing less, it is no less an entertainment spectacular.

The show highlights Frank Marino performing as Joan Rivers and features the "most accomplished female impersonators in the world."

You'll be entertained in the tradition of the Parisian cabaret in the Mardi Gras Pavilion – again reserved exclusively for the VHPA reunion. Civilian prices for this show range from \$30-\$40, plus tax. Our special rate is just \$22.50 for the 600-seat capacity house.

To see highlights of this show, log on to www.rivieracasino.com/lacage.html and get a glimpse of an entertaining burlesque.

- **TWO MORE CHOICES** follow the floorshows.

For those wanting a quality dining experience, dancing to a live band, and a spectacular view of citywide fireworks in a relatively intimate atmosphere, we have set up a great evening for \$37.50 per person.

You'll enjoy all this from the Top of the Riviera, where floor-to-ceiling windows offer a dramatic view of downtown Las Vegas.

Attendance is limited to the first 600 members and their guests who sign up. If you would prefer to eat on your own, then dance to a totally different great live band and socialize in the Riviera Grand Ballroom. A \$20 ticket will get you in. After 10:30 p.m., you will be able to travel between the two areas as you wish.

July 5 Friday

- **THE ENTIRE DAY IS YOURS** to relax, shop, or see one of the many spectacular shows offered throughout Las Vegas.

Many who have attended past reunions have asked for a day with nothing on the agenda. Friday is the day set aside for doing nothing if you choose.

If you'd like to make early reservations (highly recommended!) for other shows around town, please call Vincene Baldi at the Riviera Hotel Box Office: (877) 892-7469.

Do this as soon as possible to ensure access and good seats to the show of your choice. Most popular shows on a Friday night are sold out weeks ahead of time, particularly on a holiday weekend.

- **GOLFERS, THIS IS YOUR DAY** to play one of the

See BUSINESS, Page 20

Business meeting planned July 6

Continued from Page 19

magnificent, five star courses in Las Vegas. Tickets will be available to the first one hundred golfers.

You will be picked up at the hotel in a deluxe motor coach (OK, it's a bus) and delivered to a golf course that will be featured in a later newsletter.

Eighteen holes of golf, cart, liquid refreshments during play, and an air-conditioned ride back to the hotel (another bus) are all available for \$95 per player.

July 6 Saturday

- **THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING INVITES ALL CURRENT VHPA MEMBERS** to participate in the workings of your association.

Elections for junior member at large and vice president will be conducted during the meeting.

You also will be briefed by the various committee chairmen and elected Executive Council on the state of the association.

This is your time to take an active role in VHPA, so plan to be at the business meeting from 9 a.m. until noon.

- **LADIES YOU HAVEN'T BEEN FORGOTTEN** during the Saturday morning business meeting.

While the pilots tend to business, you'll be entertained at a brunch, complete with a live, Murder Mystery Theater.

For the cost of a \$25 ticket, you'll be involved in a "who done it" while enjoying a hotel-prepared meal.

This is something completely different from past reunions, and the spouses and guests should have an outstanding event in which to participate.

- **GET READY FOR THE CLOSING BANQUET** taking place in the immense Royale Pavillion Ballroom.

Everyone will be seated in one room this year. Your \$50 banquet ticket pays for your meal and all the following events.

With your choice of broiled New York steak, baked orange roughly, or pasta vegetarian meal, the hotel banquet staff assures us this is no "rubber chicken" banquet.

After dinner (with minimum speeches), you'll remain seated for a spectacular one hour-plus live stage show designed for the VHPA reunion.

Following the extravaganza, a short walk to the Grande Ballroom (across the hall), and you'll be able to dance and party the rest of the night.

We have contracted a great dance band to bring this memorable evening to a close.

July 7 Sunday

- **DEPARTURE DAY AFTER AN UNFORGETTABLE 2002 REUNION** in the city of lights.

You've enjoyed seeing old stick mates, friends, and classmates. You've met new ones, as well.

The vendor room (open throughout the reunion), exceeding 10,000 square feet, has been a source for all kinds of sale memorabilia.

Unit reunions, chapter functions, a 24-hour hospitality suite, dances, and the ambiance of Las Vegas are all great memories of a great organization.

- **PLEASE READ THE ARTICLE BELOW BY CHARLES HOLLEY.** He explains everything necessary to register and reserve your room.

We look forward to seeing you all at the VHPA 19th Annual National Reunion.

Online reunion, hotel registration will be available

CHARLES HOLLEY
TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
NATIONAL REUNION COMMITTEE

One of the major projects the VHPA has been working to complete is to have reunion and hotel reservations online for the Las Vegas Reunion.

This system is scheduled to be in place shortly after Jan. 1 and we are requesting everyone make their reunion and hotel reservations using the online system.

The system will be accessible by a link from www.vhpa.org and www.vhpareunion.org

There are three phases you will be stepped through in using the system.

First, you will provide identification information so the system will know you're a current VHPA member and eligible to register.

Second, you will complete a Reunion Registration Form, with credit card processing in real time (MasterCard or Visa).

Third, you will automatically enter the hotel's reservation system, where you will make your reservation and be provided with a reservation confirmation.

The system is designed to be user-friendly and is intended to make the reunion registration and hotel reservation tasks easier for members and the HQ staff.

If you do not have online capability or for some other reason are not able to use the online system, contact HQ.

Again, we are requesting everyone use the online system if at all possible.

Battle fought in Renegade Woods

EDITOR'S NOTE: A Battle in the Renegade Woods was documented by the 25th Infantry Division's 18th Military History Detachment. This action occurred April 2-6, 1970, in Tay Ninh Province. The source documents were obtained and provided to the VHPA by former crew chief Ron Leonard, Diamondhead 085, who also is webmaster for the 25th Aviation Battalion Association.

RON LEONARD

At 7 a.m. on April 2, 1970, Capt. Paul Schierholz, commanding officer of Company F (Ranger), 75th Infantry, was alerted by the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, to provide an element to exploit intelligence information in the Renegade Woods.

From 7-8 a.m., a light scout team from Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry flew a visual reconnaissance of the area and noted no activity in the proposed landing zone, but saw signs of recent activity in a large clearing some 1,000 meters to the west and 500 meters to the south.

An AH-1G Cobra — "Centaur 47" — with WO1 Kenneth L. Strand serving as aircraft commander and WO1 Roger Johnson as pilot, and OH-6A LOH "Centaur 13," piloted by WO1 Dan A. Lohwasser II, with crew chief Spec. 5 Steven L. Doherty and gunner Spec. 4 Michael R. Bagley, saw a camouflaged structure just west of this clearing and made rocket and grenade passes at it, uncovering 8-10 buildings.

The crews then returned to Cu Chi to refuel.

The 13-man Ranger element, composed of teams 38 and 39, boarded two UH-1H helicopters provided by D/3-4th Cav at 8 a.m. and proceeded to the Renegade Woods, escorted by the LST.

Upon arriving in the area, they still found no signs of enemy activity near the proposed LZ, but discovered footprints in the other clearing along with a lister bag laying in the open near a well.

At this time Strand advised Lt. Philip Norton, the Ranger team leader who was riding in the lead UH-1H, to supervise the insertion.

WO1 James D.R. Tonelli, the aircraft commander; Capt. Philip A. Toccol, the pilot; Spec. 5 Charles E. Lowe, the crew chief; and Pfc. Richard K. Adams, doorgunner, crewed Centaur 23.

Norton decided to insert the team at the new location.

This was done at 8:35 a.m.

The Rangers deployed from the helicopters, immediately found signs of recent activity, and began moving west toward where the structures had been uncovered.

At about 8:40 a.m., a light machine gun opened fire on the lead man at a range of 10-15 meters.

In this initial burst of fire, Sgt. Fred Stuckey was wounded, Lt. Norton's AN/PRC-25 radio was rendered inoperable when the cord to its microphone was severed, and the extractor mechanism on Spec. 4 Donald Purdy's M-16 was shattered.

Stuckey and Purdy destroyed the machine gun with hand grenades, killing its crew, but the team began taking fire from all directions.

Since a light machine gun usually is found with at least a reinforced platoon, too large a force for the team to fight, it was decided the team should withdraw to the east and attempt to maneuver around the enemy.

Sgt. 1st Class Alvin Floyd, the assistant team leader, contacted the Cobra with the remaining radio and asked that suppressive fire be placed on the western treeline, and that a reaction force be sent into the area.

The team split into its two elements, Team 39 under Norton, moving eastward, and Team 38 under Floyd, provided cover fire.

The initial firefight lasted 3-5 minutes and died down to isolated sniping by the time Team 39 reached the eastern end of the clearing 100 meters away and began deploying into the woods.

During this withdrawal, the Cobra made minigun and rocket passes on the western treeline to provide cover. At this time, its 40 mm automatic grenade launcher jammed after firing 1 of the 250 rounds it carried.

The LOH also made firing passes with its M-60 machine guns. The two UH-1H helicopters (Centaur 23 and Centaur 24) were dispatched to Cu Chi to bring out a reaction force.

Centaur 23 had intended to land to medevac Stuckey, but WO1 Strand refused it permission because no assistance had been requested and ground fire was too intense.

As Team 39 entered the eastern treeline, it began to receive heavy fire from small arms and two or possibly three light machine guns.

Team 38 had just reached the area of a large bomb crater, some 15 feet deep and 30 feet wide, when a combination of small arms and a RPG fired from the north

See TEAM, Page 22

The 13-man Ranger element, composed of teams 38 and 39, boarded two UH-1H helicopters provided by D/3-4th Cav at 8 a.m. and proceeded to the Renegade Woods . . .

Centaur 23 had intended to land to medevac Stuckey, but WO1 Strand refused it permission because no assistance had been requested and ground fire was too intense.

Team loses contact when radio hit

Continued from Page 21

killed Floyd and Sgt. Michael Thomas, and wounded Spec. 4 Donald Tinney.

Floyd's radio was destroyed by the explosion, leaving the team without radio contact. Suppressive fire was placed by the Rangers in all directions to enable all to withdraw to the crater, which provided the only cover in the area.

At this time Sgt. 1st Class Colin Hall silenced the western machine gun and killed its crew with hand grenades and M-16 fire, and Sgt. Charles Avery silenced the RPG-7 and M-79 firing from the northern machine gun site.

Once inside the lip of the crater, Norton dragged Tinney to safety and took the microphone from Floyd's radio, enabling him to regain communications.

He repeated his request for a reaction force and gunship support, and additionally requested a medevac for the three men struck by the RPG.

The Cobra expended the rest of its rockets and minigun ammunition in laying suppressive fire.

The LOH made passes with its M-60s, expending 600 rounds. It also began jettisoning extra ammunition in preparation for an attempt to accomplish the medevac by leaving one of its gunners on the ground to make space for the wounded.

The UH-1H helicopters heard the call and returned on station. The Rangers inside the crater were taking small arms fire from all directions and hand grenades from a finger of the woods to the southwest.

However, their suppressive fire succeeded in silencing the crew-served weapons. A NVA soldier emerged from the southern treeline to throw a hand grenade, but was wounded and then killed by two hand grenades thrown by Stuckey.

Pfc. Raymond Allmon expended the 700 rounds of M-60 ammunition he carried and a 50-round belt he removed from Sgt. Thomas' body, and was reduced to using his .45-caliber pistol.

Pfc. Steven Perez expended all his M-79 ammunition and Pfc. Kenneth Langland fired 860 rounds before his

Once inside the lip of the crater, Norton dragged Tinney to safety and took the microphone from Floyd's radio, enabling him to regain communications.

At 9:22 a.m., Centaur 23 landed after a low-level approach to pick up the wounded. The helicopter received four hits from ground fire during the extraction

M-60 malfunctioned. By 9:20 a.m., the team had expended most of its ammunition and was having many weapons failures.

The LST had expended its ammunition and was making dry gun runs in an attempt to suppress the enemy fire.

At 9:22 a.m., Centaur 23 landed after a low-level approach to pick up the wounded. The helicopter received four hits from ground fire during the extraction and later was examined by experts from Bell Helicopter, who expressed amazement it was still able to fly.

The ship landed 10-15 feet from the lip of the crater, and Norton gave his men the order to board, since they were in an untenable position.

The crew chief continued firing his M-60 at the treeline 10 meters away, while the doorgunner, a former member of Team 38, jumped off the ship to help Tinney aboard.

After spending 30 seconds on the ground, the overloaded UH-1H lifted off with maximum torque and severe vertical vibration, and cleared the treeline with 11 Rangers and its crew of four aboard.

One of its M-60 machine guns jammed as it was lifting off, but the Rangers continued firing their individual weapons.

The two dead men were left on the ground, along with some of the destroyed or damaged weapons and equipment.

All the helicopters were running low on fuel and departed for Cu Chi, arriving there about 10 a.m.

Centaur 23 had to stop near Trang Bang to administer initial first aid to Tinney and to redistribute the passengers, some of whom were literally hanging on, before landing at the 12th Evacuation Hospital.

At 9 a.m., Lt. David Parsons, a forward air controller, arrived on station over the contact area in an OV-10 and expended 1,500 rounds of minigun ammunition, strafing after the extraction.

He received small arms and automatic weapons fire from the ground.

Also at 9 a.m., Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, were alerted they were to be inserted into the area as the reaction force.

Company B had conducted ambush patrols (APs) nine kilometers south of the contact area and was alerted to move to a pickup point for airlift.

Company C had been serving as a blocking force for an ARVN contact four kilometers to the southwest.

Additionally, Company A — which had just come into Cu Chi on standdown — was placed on alert.

Centaur 23 had to stop near Trang Bang to administer initial first aid to Tinney and to redistribute the passengers, some of whom were literally hanging on.

Continued in next issue

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200 • Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

(800) 505-VHPA (voice) • (916) 966-8743 (fax) • HQ@vhpa.org (e-mail) • www.vhpa.org (website)

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Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

**NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$150 each.*



Chariots of Fire - AH-1G



Eye of the Tiger - OH-6A

ALSO AVAILABLE



Magic Carpet Ride-UH-1D/H,UH-1C



Have Guns, Will Travel - UH-1B/C



Iron Dance, CH-47A,B,C



Heavy Metal - CH-54



Dustoff-UH-1B/D/H



In Army Aviation - Vietnam, artist Joe Kline depicts all of the U.S. Army aircraft types used during the Vietnam War, both rotary and fixed-wing. The four crew members in flight gear under the Purple Heart medal symbolize the over 4,300 Army Pilots, Crew Chiefs, Doorgunners, Observers and Medics who were lost during the war. Accompanying Certificate of Authenticity lists the number of each aircraft type which were lost. In the personalized version, unit markings of your choice will be added by the artist. Print is 20" x 28" in size. Standard version, as shown, is \$80 ea. Personalized version with aircraft markings of your choice, is \$100 ea. Mastercard, Visa, check or money order accepted.

"Riders on the Storm" is now sold out. THANK YOU, VHPA for your support.

