



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

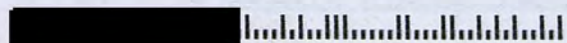
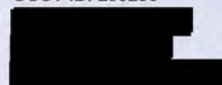
March/April 2003 Vol. 21, No. 2



Dave Rittman photo

TH-55's and OH-13's are scattered about the main heliport at Fort Wolters, TX, in 1967 during the buildup of Army helicopter pilots for service in South Vietnam. After completing primary helicopter training at Fort Wolters, student pilots went on to advanced training at Fort Rucker, AL, and later at Fort Stewart, GA.

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From the President

Hello again, helo-vets. I'm still on active duty, but when my two-star boss sees this *Newsletter's* reunion activities, he'll probably want to attend our reunion with me.

Take a look at what is planned for our 20th reunion in Orlando.

Dave Rittman working with our new event coordinator, Linda Irvine, and a whole host of volunteers are hard at work making this reunion the best ever. In pages following, check out the highlights of planned events.

For those of you arriving on Wednesday, July 2, we even have shuttle buses that will whisk you from the Orlando Airport to the Rosen Centre — our host hotel. Using the shuttle for \$5 will save you a \$32 (plus tip) cab ride. On Sunday, departure day, shuttles will again be available.

Just think, you'll be able to relive your favorite parts of the reunion right up to the time you board your homeward-bound aircraft.

The activity that's new this year is a post-reunion cruise. I, for one, am looking forward to a relaxing four days with no schedules, no telephones, and no laptop computer.

After a hectic, nonstop, fun-filled reunion, what better way to unwind? Want to join us? See Dave's reunion article for information.



Joe Bilitzke

Young finds additional 5,000

Besides the effort to produce another outstanding and memorable reunion, your Executive Council (EC) has continued its effort in other arenas.

Vice President Dana Young, your membership chairman, has successfully located an additional 5,000 potential VHPA members.

I'm not sure how he manages to come up with more and more pilots out there, but find them he does. We estimate there are about 40,000 Vietnam helicopter pilots eli-

gible for VHPA membership, and Dana vows he'll not rest until they're all safely hangared in VHPA.

Mike Sheuerman, midterm member at large, did an outstanding job heading up our VHPA representation at the Dallas meeting of Helicopter Association International (HAI).

Four new members were found and one life member was signed up.

Mike also donated all the furniture used at the VHPA booth. Well, he didn't exactly donate it willingly — it was stolen.

Mike owns an office furniture company in Dallas and volunteered the use of some of his stock. In the shuffle to break down the exhibits at the end of the meeting, the furniture was nowhere to be found. Mike willingly "sucked it up" and wrote it off. Thanks, Mike.

Letter from Kenny Bunn

In the last *Newsletter*, you may have read the letter from Kenny Bunn. Kenny has worked long and hard for this organization as site selection chairman, member at large, Atlanta reunion chairman, and VHPA president.

Kenny recently submitted his resignation as site selection chairman. He cited various reasons in his article. One was "philosophical" difference with the current Executive Council. I'll take the heat for that, Kenny.

I believe in using a professional event coordinator/meeting planner to take over the "heavy lifting" for our reunions. Part of the duty of this individual is using his influence of return business to a hotel in the negotiations for VHPA.

If a hotel sales manager knows our negotiator (event coordinator) has the potential of taking a number of other groups to their property, that coordinator then has the leverage of repeat sales to help VHPA.

Our event coordinator, Linda Irvine and her company, the REUNION BRAT books hotels and plans military reunions for a living.

She attended (and worked) the Las Vegas reunion and is taking a greater role in Orlando. She also will be responsible for future reunion sites.

Her involvement in no way detracted from Kenny's function as site selection chairman. But since there was a perceived conflict of responsibilities, Kenny submitted his

See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 4

Classified ads

SEEKING REVOLVER: I am looking for a Smith & Wesson .38 special that most Army helicopter pilots carried in Vietnam. If anyone knows of a source please contact Mike at [redacted] or email [redacted]. Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

E-mail items to Newsletter at:
swickard@vhpa.org

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VHPA EC Forum	www.vhpa.info

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This information, including but not limited to the VHPA Chapter list, shall not be used for commercial solicitation purposes or for any correspondence related thereto without prior written authorization from the VHPA president.

Correspondence relating to commercial purposes or solicitations shall only be sent to those officers, committee chairmen, and staff listed above.

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Albert Rodriguez, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

California Chapter North

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Michael Whitten, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

VHPA of Florida

www.vhpaf.org
(home)
(fax)

Dick Antross, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Fort Wolters Chapter

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Gerald Brazell, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Georgia Chapter

www.ga-vhpa.org
(home)
(work)
(fax)

Woody McFarlin Jr., President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Las Vegas Chapter

www.VHPALasVegas.org
(home)
(work)

John S. Winlow, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Mid America Chapter

Elections pending

Mid-South Chapter

(home)

Ken Culwell, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

National Capital Chapter

(home)
(work)

Stephen M. Reilly, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

North Carolina Chapter

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Joe Armstrong, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Ohio River LZ Chapter

(home)

Robert Hamilton, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Rocky Mountain Chapter

(home)

Ed Fickes, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Southern California Chapter

(home)

Larry Kolar, President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

Washington State Chapter

(home)

Jack Salm Jr., Interim President

(home)
(work)
(fax)

From the President

Continued from Page 2

resignation. I want to thank Kenny for all his contributions to this association.

I'm also pleased to call him a friend. We'll be seeing him in Orlando.

Study bylaw proposals

In the last *Newsletter*, you saw the revised bylaws published by the Executive Council. This is a compilation of the constitution and bylaws as written by the original 66 founding members.

In this *Newsletter*, you'll see a notice of another bylaw revision written by a small group of members call-

ing themselves the National Working Group (NWG). This is a separate document not approved or endorsed by the elected Executive Council.

In pages following, you'll see my article dealing with the issues of this second entry of bylaws. You will see how to access both and study both. There is a difference.

At the Orlando reunion business meeting, you'll have an opportunity to accept or reject either version by ballot. This is a very important vote. Please be certain you've read the two items so you can make an intelligent decision regarding a matter affecting the future direction of this organization.

I'm purposely trying to keep my column short this issue. There is a lot of information about the reunion in the following pages and I'd like you to read it over very carefully.

We have a lot planned, so make your plans to attend. See you in Orlando and in the next *Newsletter*.

— Joe Bilitzke, President

Eliminating the bylaws confusion

JOE BILITZKE
VHPA PRESIDENT

As many of you may know from reading recent issues of the *Newsletter*, my column in the September/October 2002 *Newsletter* advised you of the Executive Council's (EC) plan to revise our bylaws to "streamline our governing documents and bring the VHPA into the 21st century."

Consequently, your EC has spent considerable time this year developing revisions to the VHPA's Constitution and Bylaws. This was done with legal counsel qualified and knowledgeable of Kansas law, our state of incorporation.

Our purpose was to combine them into a single set of bylaws for ease of reference, to clarify various provisions where necessary, and to offer some limited new provisions to better reflect current operations.

The EC's bylaws proposal was completed just in time for publication in the last *Newsletter*.

Recently, a second version of revised bylaws has surfaced that may cause confusion among the membership. Let me give you some background.

At the last business meeting (Las Vegas 2002), I assumed my term as VHPA president. During my introduction speech, I said I wanted to explore an issue of interest to many of our members — one man, one vote.

This method of voting would be an alternative to our present method of voting on officers and issues only if a member was in attendance at the annual business meeting. This was not a proxy vote, but rather the ability for each current member to vote regardless of attendance at the annual reunion business meeting.

The one-man, one-vote issue is complex, and exploration was needed to answer a number of questions. Ques-

tions such as methods of advising the membership of issues and candidates for office needed solutions.

What would be the cost if additional *Newsletters* or extra *Newsletter* pages were needed to publish this information? Would members' votes be sent by "snail mail" or would email be used exclusively? Where would votes be sent? Who would count and certify votes received prior to the business meeting? What kind of deadlines need to be imposed in order to achieve the above? And on and on.

As you can see, as simple as one-man, one-vote seems, it is not.

Shortly into my term of office, our (then) junior member at large and elections coordinator, Mike Sheuerman, advised me of his conversations with the former Las Vegas chapter president, Lad Vaughan, concerning Lad's dissatisfaction with the current method of voting at the business meeting.

My recommendation to Mike was to further explore the issue. There was no other direction from the Executive Council, official or otherwise.

On his own volition, Mike contacted Lad Vaughan, and asked for assistance with this task. Lad agreed to form a committee to investigate the ramifications of one man, one vote.

This committee, calling itself the National Working Group (NWG), then prepared a proposed set of bylaws to replace our current Constitution and Bylaws. This was done without the knowledge or request of me or the Executive Council.

On Feb. 15, 2003, the NWG presented the EC with its proposed bylaws revision.

Rather than investigating the one-man, one-vote issue, the NWG rewrote the bylaws. To put it in aviation par-

See PROPOSAL, Page 5

Proposal envisions different structure

Continued from Page 4

lance: They were asked to improve the instructions for starting procedures, but instead rewrote the entire -10 operator's manual. The manual was now longer and more complicated, but didn't address the original request!

From my initial review of the NWG proposal, it is obvious the proposal envisions a much different organizational structure and method of operation for the VHPA. While change is sometimes a good thing, I am concerned about the level of complexity and increased costs the NWG proposal appears to involve.

I am further concerned whether the NWG-proposed bylaws are workable or practical for an all-volunteer organization like the VHPA.

Therefore, I have appointed a committee to study the proposal and report back to the EC. Thereafter, the EC will take a close look at both proposals and prepare its recommendations for evaluation by the membership.

Please understand that a committee to write and present new bylaws was not what I requested. The EC had no idea this was the direction being taken by the NWG.

The NWG proposal was neither requested nor sanc-

tioned by your Executive Council. But at the request of the NWG, the EC will place the NWG bylaws proposal on the agenda for this year's business meeting at the Orlando Reunion. Therefore, the proposed bylaws revisions of both the EC and the NWG will be put to a vote of the membership on July 3.

Both proposals will be available for review and download from the VHPA website, www.vhpa.org or call Shari at VHPA Headquarters (800-505-VHPA) and you'll be mailed copies.

Also available on the website will be the EC's comments and recommendations on both proposals. Please take a look at both proposals, and take any questions you may have to the business meeting.

Both proposals will be discussed at the meeting before being put to a vote. This will be an important vote, so I hope as many of you as possible will have an opportunity to take a look at the website before coming to Orlando.

I look forward to seeing as many of you in July for the VHPA 20th annual reunion. It promises to be another terrific and enjoyable reunion!

VHPA briefs

Mike Law leaving for Ghana

After almost 20 years of volunteer service to the VHPA, Mike Law and his wife, Dianna, will be leaving on a mission for their church to serve in Ghana, Western Africa, starting May 5 and lasting 23 months.

Mike served in many positions in the VHPA, including executive director, following Larry Clark; president in 1992-93; reunion chairman in 2001; calendar editor for six years; and directory editor for more than 15 years.

VHPA gets new chairmen

Al Harinck is taking over the VHPA calendar editorship duties. He can be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

calendar@vhpa.org

The 2004 VHPA Calendar, which should be available for purchase at the Orlando Reunion, currently is at the printer.

Al will be responsible for the 2005 VHPA Calendar and has a copy of the VHPA photo library that his predecessor, Mike Law, and others have collected for the VHPA over the years.

Gary Roush, VHPA webmaster and Database Committee chair, will be the VHPA Membership Directory editor for at least the 2003 Edition.

He can be reached at [REDACTED] or roush@vhpa.org

Ross Rainwater is now a member of the VHPA Directory Committee. His duties include preparing the History Section for the 2003 Directory, which will be dedicated to the History of Flight Schools.

He can be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice of an Additional Proposed Bylaw Amendment to be Voted Upon at Our Next Annual Business Meeting Orlando, Florida, on July 3, 2003, at 9 a.m.

Your Association has received proposed amended bylaws from a group that has adopted the name National Working Group ("NWG").

The NWG's proposed bylaws were prepared independently from and without coordination with your Executive Council.

The NWG's proposed bylaws will be placed upon the Association's agenda for vote at the business meeting on July 3, 2003. The proposed bylaws that were prepared at the direction of your Executive Council also will be on the agenda.

Time running out

Have you made reunion reservations yet?

Plans are almost complete for a truly memorable celebration of our 20th anniversary of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Over the years, we have grown from the original 66 founders to our current membership of 11,630 — as of March 31.

Recently, we located the current addresses of another 2,964 pilots, who were sent invitations to join our association and to attend their first reunion with us at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando.

We expect more than 2,000 current members and their guests to attend. It is possible you may find and meet that special, long-lost friend from so long ago . . . but you have to attend to make it happen!

Haven't signed up yet? Dial up www.vhpareunion.org to complete the simple procedure . . . for both events and hotel rooms, or mail/fax the form within this *Newsletter* to our Headquarters staff.

Forgot to book your hotel room when you registered for the reunion?

Need an extra hotel room for your guest or family?

Or perhaps you didn't make your hotel reservation on the Internet when you registered?

Call the hotel direct at **(800) 204-7234** now, before it is too late to receive our special \$89 deeply discounted rates!

Our reserved room block expires on May 30, after which the hotel will market any rooms remaining on a first-come, first-serve basis, including non-VHPA guests.

Annual business meeting July 3

Our spouses, guests, and children attending the reunion are invited to attend a special brunch — starting at 9:15 a.m. on July 3 — that includes the comedy show “Kim and Scott Tie the Knot.” It will be an absolute hoot!

While the comedy show is going on, for our dues-current member pilots we will conduct our annual business meeting in an adjacent area, starting at 9 a.m.

While there is no cost to attend, a ticket will be required to enter the room or to vote.

After the business meeting and in the same room,

“Shadow of the Blade” will provide a video overview and discussion of flight experiences this past year while crews flew a UH-1 around the country.

There also will be plenty of time for those very special unit mini-reunions in the afternoon, as well as on the following several days.

Dinner show

Thursday evening, July 3, we have set up a private and totally dedicated VHPA “Arabian Nights” dinner theater show. The performance has been custom-tailored to our association, with a performing cast and support group of more than 100 very talented people.

More than 60 of the world's most graceful horses will be combined with the grandeur of a full Broadway type production.

Included are a one-hour reception and a full prime rib dinner, with all the beer, wine, and Coca-Cola products you can consume. Due to capacity restraints, attendance is limited to the first 1,200 members and their guests who register for this event . . . and we are on track to sell out ahead of time. Make your reservations now!

For those who prefer a different theme or after the Arabian Nights show sells out, we have arranged for a different dinner show on this same July 3 evening that is equally spectacular: Pirates Dinner Adventure.

This is an interactive show featuring a 46-foot-long Spanish galleon pirate ship anchored in a 300,000-gallon lagoon, with night sky lighting, cannon blasts, and indoor fire and fireworks effects.

A one-hour reception is included, along with all the wine and beer you wish. More than 40 performers participate in the show, in addition to about 50 children of guests who attend. Children who are selected get to race in dinghies around the lagoon as part of the show, as well as brave the sea-crusty captain.

While this show will not be exclusively for VHPA members and their guests, it will be a great experience that will be enjoyed by all.

After attendees from the two dinner shows return to the hotel about 10:30 p.m., we have arranged an informal get-together with light “lounge/cabaret”-type entertainment in the front lobby area of the hotel for the night owls of our group.

Pool party with fireworks

For sure, plan on being around the hotel on July 4 evening, starting about 7 p.m. We have a truly special event planned!



See PARTY, Page 7

Party features fireworks, laser show

Continued from Page 6

Those of you who remember last year's great pool party at the Riviera in Las Vegas — this one will be even grander and more fun.

In addition to a fabulous, eight-member party band called "The Tremors," we have arranged for our own 15-minute major fireworks and high-powered laser show with a very patriotic theme at the pool, all synched by computer to music.

The pool party will be a truly very special evening, with \$1 beers, great music, and the hotel will have available "pool food" (hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecue, etc.) on a cash basis.

Bring your swimsuit. However, to attend you must have a ticket and, due to height restrictions and visual obstructions imposed by nearby buildings, the fireworks/laser display will not be easily visible from most outside areas around the hotel nor many of the hotel rooms. Get your tickets now!

Also being planned is the return of the WOC Chorus to perform at about 8:45 p.m. The party continues inside at 11 p.m., with a separate band in the adjacent hotel lobby area.

On Saturday, July 5, we have our own golf tournament at the premium Mystic Dunes course. Included are prizes, mementos, lunch and, of course, recognition for top scores.

Final Banquet memorable experience

The doors open for our final banquet at 5:45 p.m. that evening, and refreshments and light entertainment will be available in the pre-function area starting at 5 p.m. This will be one last great opportunity to meet your comrades from long ago!

Great entertainment has been booked, including the fabulous headliner Susan McDonald from Las Vegas, along with highly patriotic show, and the major 17-member group "Dance Express" that will perform after dinner and at our closing dance.

As part of our 20th anniversary celebration, we also will be honoring our initial 66 founders. It truly will be special evening.

A 15-member Scottish bagpiper group will perform as part of our missing man ceremony, and the Vietnamese Military Association Honor Guard will post and retire our colors.

On Sunday, July 6, most of the membership and their guests are checking out of the Rosen.

For those of you heading back to the airport, we have again arranged for Atlas Motor Coach to run a VHPA-dedicated shuttle service every 20 minutes from 6 a.m. to



Special shuttle bus available at reunion

Flying to our next reunion in Orlando?

To assist you getting to and from the airport to the Rosen Centre, the VHPA is running its own 49-passenger bus shuttle using Atlas Motor Coach. The hotel is about 20 minutes from the airport and it is a somewhat expensive cab ride — about \$32 each way, plus tip.

Look for a large, white bus with the VHPA sign in the window, and flag it down. "Atlas Motor Coach" is written in large, red letters on the side of each bus.

On Wednesday, July 2, the buses will make the rounds at the various gates at the Orlando Airport every 20 minutes, starting at noon up to the last shuttle at 7 p.m. The cost is \$5 per person, collected when you get off the bus at the hotel.

On Sunday, July 6, the buses will depart the Rosen Centre to the Orlando Airport every 20 minutes, starting at 6 a.m. up to the last bus departing at 12:30 p.m. The cost is \$5 per person, collected when you get on the bus.

The shuttle will not run at times other than those listed above.

12:30 p.m.

The cost remains \$5 per person, payable upon departure.

Reunion continues with cruise extension

We also have a great 5-day/4-night cruise extension booked on Royal Caribbean starting Sunday, July 6.

For those who have not booked yet, it still may be possible to join the cruise by calling JoAnne Weeks at Cruise Holidays in Kansas City at (816) 741-7417 or toll free at (800) 869-6806. Details are on our website, or in our last several newsletters.

For those booked on the cruise in advance, we meet for a breakfast that includes champagne mimosas, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Bring your luggage with you, as VHPA-chartered buses will leave directly from the breakfast area at the Rosen at promptly 11 a.m. en route to the ship, which docks at Port Canaveral about 50 minutes away.

The cruise returns Thursday, July 10, with transportation back to the Orlando Airport or Rosen Hotel.

Tickets required for all events

Tickets are required for all events during the Orlando reunion and, once ordered through our website — strongly encouraged and simple to use — or our Headquarters

See DISPLAYS, Page 8

Driving to reunion?

Here are directions to headquarters hotel

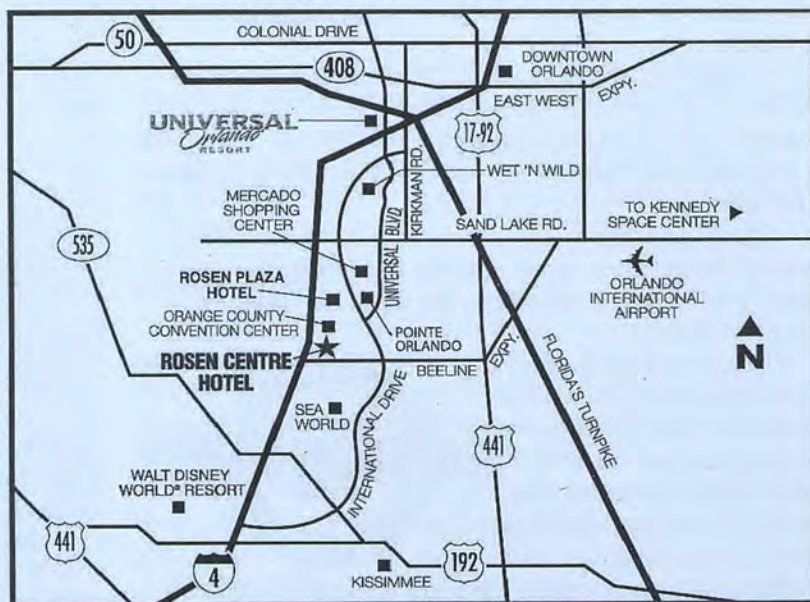
Printed to the right is a map to help you get to the Rosen Centre Hotel, located next to the Orange County Convention Center, just off Interstate 4 in Orlando.

- For I-4 travelers, take Sandlake Drive exit, make right turn (southwest) onto International Drive.

Go past Convention Centre and the Rosen Plaza Hotel (a different facility) on International Drive. Rosen Centre Hotel is on right side.

- For Beeline Expressway travelers, take International Drive exit, turn right, Rosen Centre is on left a few blocks down.

NOTE: Coming from either direction, if you go more than about one block past the new Convention Center you have gone too far.



Annual 5k run/walk set for July 5

On Saturday morning, July 5, we have arranged for a 5k run or walk in beautiful Turkey Lake Park, located about 15 minutes from the Rosen Centre.

This year we have arranged for a local running club to help with the arrangements, so we will have a true "run" for those so inclined. It will be complete with timers, race bib num-

bers, goodie packets, course layout, finish chutes, etc.

Everyone who goes will have access to post race or walk refreshments, fruit items, pastry and, of course, the "goodie bags" the local club is putting together.

Cost is \$10 per person, but tickets are required.

Buses will pick you up at the

Rosen and bring you back after the run or walk.

Going on to the Kennedy Space Center Tour or the Sun Cruz boat? You can still do the run/walk in the park, due to the earlier scheduling in the morning and we will hold the last bus going to Space Center or boat for 30 minutes from the time the bus from the park returns to the hotel.

Displays to be open through reunion

Continued from Page 7

operation, they will be available in your packets upon check-in.

Displays, vendors, mini-reunions

Vendors with merchandise of interest to VHPA members and their guests will be open throughout the reunion.

Of course, unit mini-reunions will be taking place on a predetermined schedule throughout the entire time.

Static helicopter displays are planned in, at and, in some cases, near the hotel, and the Florida Chapter is bringing its extensive Vietnam-era memorabilia displays for you to view.

In summary, our 20th reunion will be truly special.

Rooms still being booked

Need an extra room for your family or guest at the reunion?

Call the Rosen Centre Hotel direct at:
(407) 996-9840

Let the reservations people know you are with the VHPA, and they will book your extra room needs direct.

Make your reservation for events and hotel now at www.vhpareunion.org or send in the form contained within this Newsletter. See you there!!

— Dave Rittman

Reunion schedule

Tuesday, July 1

8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Vendor set up. Junior Ballroom F&G.
1-6 p.m. — Registration for pre-registered guests only. Desk area No. 3.

Wednesday, July 2

9 a.m.-7 p.m. — Registration/Desk area No. 2; pre-registration/Desk area No. 3.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Vendor area. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display/Florida Chapter. Signature 1.
Noon-7 p.m. — Shuttle buses run from Orlando airport to hotel every 20 minutes.
5:30-7 p.m. — First time reunion attendee special welcome reception (no cost)-Grand Ballroom A.
7-10 p.m. — Welcome reception and party for all members and their guests. Grand Ballroom C, D, & E. Music by "Volcano Joe." Your first two beers are on us.

Thursday, July 3

8 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration/Desk area No. 2; pre-registration/Desk area No. 3.
9 a.m.-noon — Annual Business Meeting (dues current members only). Grand Ballroom A&B.
9:15 a.m.-noon — Brunch for spouses and guests at hotel; including the comedy show "Kim and Scott Tie the Knot," a hilarious Italian wedding celebration. Grand Ballroom D&E.
1-2:30 p.m. — "Shadow of the Blade" helicopter flight presentation, discussions, and videos. Ballroom A&B.
Noon-6 p.m. — Vendor area. Junior Ballroom F&G.
Noon-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display/Florida Chapter. Signature 1.
Noon-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display. Junior Ballroom F&G.
1-5 p.m. — Mini reunions.
6-10 p.m. — Pirates Adventure Reception and Dinner show. Leaves hotel 6 p.m. prompt! . . . or:
6:30-10:30 p.m. — Arabian Nights Reception and Dinner show (private VHPA show extravaganza). Buses depart 6:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.
10:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. — Informal get together with light "lounge-cabaret"-type entertainment. Front Lobby area.

Friday, July 4

6:30-8:30 a.m. — 5k run (or walk). Buses depart hotel at 6:30 a.m. prompt! Runners also will be able to go on Kenney Space Center Tour or Sun Cruz gaming ship listed below. One bus will be held 30 minutes from time runners arrive back at hotel to ensure "connection."
8 a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
8 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration. Desk area No. 2.
8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. — Kennedy Space Center Tour.
9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. — Offshore gaming ship Sun Cruz (docks at Port Canaveral).
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Vendor area. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display/Florida Chapter. Signature 1.
1-5 p.m. — Mini-reunions.
7-11 p.m. — Major theme pool party, live entertainment "Tremors" (an 8-member party band) starting at 8 p.m.; our own

huge fireworks and laser show about 9:30 p.m.; WOC Chorus about 8:45 p.m., pool food available from hotel on cash basis; bring swimwear; rain contingency. Grand Ballroom.

10:30 p.m.-1 a.m. — Party continues with great two-piece combo inside the hotel lounge area. Hotel lobby and convention pre-function area.

Saturday, July 5

6:30 a.m.-2 p.m. — Golf Tournament at Mystic Dunes; includes lunch and mementos; bus leaves promptly from hotel at 6:45 a.m.; T time 8 a.m.
8 a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration. Desk Area 2.
9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. — Vendor Area. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. — Helicopter Display. Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-3 p.m. — Memorabilia Display/Florida Chapter. Signature 1.
4:30-7 p.m. — Vendor area closed. Break down booths and move out of Junior Ballroom (continued on Sunday a.m.).
5-6:15 p.m. — Pre-function area open for informal get-together, beverages available, light "background" entertainment.
5:45 p.m.-midnight — Doors open. Final Banquet (Typically this is a coat-and-tie event. Some members wear military dress uniform. Ladies wear cocktail dresses). Grand Ballroom.
6:30-6:40 p.m. — Presentation of Colors. Vietnamese Military Association Honor Guard; performance by 15-member Scottish bagpipe group.
6:40-6:50 p.m. — Missing Man Presentation, including continued performance by Scottish bagpipe group.
6:50-7 p.m. — Welcoming remarks. Joe Bilitzke.
7-8:30 p.m. — Dinner. Background-type live music while dinner served.
8:30-9 p.m. — Headliner Entertainment/Susan McDonald.
9-9:20 p.m. — Recognition of founders on the VHPA's 20th anniversary.
9:20-9:30 p.m. — Patriotic musical reprise and retiring of the colors.
9:30 p.m.-midnight — Final Banquet Dance/17-member "Dance Express."

Sunday, July 6

(Checkout for majority of reunion attendees)

6 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Shuttle buses depart hotel to Orlando Airport every 20 minutes.
8-11 a.m. — Vendor area closed; continue final teardown of booths and vacating Junior Ballroom.
9:30-11 a.m. — For members and guests going on the cruise only: Complete buffet breakfast, champagne mimosas, and pre-cruise meeting with Royal Caribbean. Signature 1 banquet room on first floor near VHPA registration area. Bring all luggage with you to room marked with luggage tags provided by ship. You will be boarding the buses directly from this room. Cruise documents required in order to access room.
11 a.m. — Buses depart Rosen Centre Hotel promptly en route to Royal Caribbean ship Sovereign of the Seas for five-day/four-night cruise on VHPA-chartered buses.
Noon-12:30 p.m. — Cruise participants arrive at Port Canaveral for Royal Caribbean Cruise; go through security.
1-1:30 p.m. — Cruise participants board ship Sovereign of the Seas.

Thursday, July 10

7:30 a.m. — Cruise Ship Sovereign of the Seas docks at Port Canaveral.
9 a.m. — Special VHPA-chartered buses depart Royal Caribbean dock promptly for Orlando Airport, and one bus then will go back to Rosen Centre Hotel to drop off any members and guests who have left their car at the hotel during the cruise. Buses arrive at airport 10 a.m.; Rosen Center about 10:30 a.m.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

20th Annual Reunion • Orlando, FL • July 2-5, 2003

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

Register online at www.vhpareunion.com or mail completed form to:

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

Fax signed credit card authorization to: (916) 966-8743

Member name:	Member No.:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Flight class:	Chapter:	
1st combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
2nd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
3rd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
Address:	Address change? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
City:	State:	Zip:
E-mail address:	Telephone: ()	Fax: ()
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

A hotel registration form will be sent to you with your registration receipt. The hotel registration form must be completed and mailed to the Rosen Centre. Telephone and fax requests will not be honored.

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total	REUNION T-SHIRTS		
Registration through 4/30/2003*		@ \$45.00		QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
Registration after 4/30/2003*		@ \$55.00			S@\$15.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXXX	XXXXXX			M@\$15.00	
New attendee reception (July 2)		Free			L@\$15.00	
Welcome reception (July 2)		@ \$20.00			XL@\$15.00	
Business meeting (July 3)		Free			XXL@\$17.00	
Ladies Brunch (July 3)		@ \$25.00			XXXL@\$19.00	
Dinner Theatre/Arabian or Dinner Theatre/Pirates (July 3)		@ \$40.00 @ \$40.00		SIDEBAR TOTAL:		
5k Run (July 4)		@ \$10.00		QTY.	BANQUET MEAL	
Kennedy Space Tour or Sun Cruz Casino (July 4)		@ \$35.00 @ \$15.00			Filet Mignon	
Evening Pool Party (July 4)		@ \$20.00			Florida Grouper	
Golf Tournament (July 5)		@ \$95.00			Vegetarian	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 5)		@ \$55.00		Membership Fund contribution: \$ _____		
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$36.00		Scholarship Fund contribution: \$ _____		
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	3 years	@ \$90.00		General Fund contribution: \$ _____		
Life membership		@ \$450.00		Vietnam War Museum contribution: \$ _____		
GRAND TOTAL				*Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.		

***Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.**

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

MC or Visa No: _____ Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2003" with form.

VHPA 20th Anniversary Reunion Caribbean Cruise Extension – July 6-10, 2003

To book, all you need to do is call toll free:

JoAnne Weeks, our VHPA reunion cruise vendor



7000 N.W. PRAIRIE VIEW ROAD (816) 741-7417 or (800) 869-6806
AMERICA'S LARGEST AND OLDEST CRUISE VACATION STORE.

Make your reservation now!!

As of the publication date of this newsletter, there are still a few cabins left to join our deeply discounted post-reunion cruise on the fabulous Royal Caribbean "Sovereign of the Seas" from Sunday July 6th to Thursday July 10th. The itinerary is as follows:

Itinerary: 4-Day Bahamas

Day 1 – Sunday	Port Canaveral	departs 5:00pm
Day 2– Monday	Coco Cay (Private Island)	8:00am 5:00pm
Day 3 – Tuesday	Nassau, Bahamas	7:00am 1:00am
Day 4 – Wed	At Sea	
Day 5 – Thursday	Port Canaveral	Disembark approx. 9:00am

Reservations need to be made separately from our reunion registration directly with JoAnne Weeks at 800-869-6806. Specially discounted rates for specific categories are available while they last:

Category	Special Cruise Rates
Interior Stateroom	From \$430 per person
Ocean View Stateroom	From \$450 per person
Superior Ocean View	From \$670 per person

*All rates are per person, based on double occupancy; taxes and fees are subject to change.
Single person rate is 200% of category rate.*

Optional travel insurance available and is recommended. A signed waiver is required to decline insurance.

Port charges of \$99 per person and government taxes of \$25.55 per person are additional and not included in the above rates. Transfers direct from the Rosen Centre Hotel (VHPA reunion HQ hotel) to the ship, and back to the Orlando airport after the cruise are bring provided by the VHPA as part of the package. Also included in the package is a bottle of champagne per cabin, a get-together cocktail party our first night, and a pre-departure champagne brunch at the Rosen Centre Hotel Sunday July 6th.

Conclude your reunion with a fabulous cruise with many of your fellow pilots and comrades!

E-mail: joanne@cruiseholidayskc.com

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

YOU MAY CALL IN BOOKING INFORMATION TO

JOANNE @ {800} 869-6806 OR

Cruise Holidays Kansas City 7000 NW Prairie View Rd., Suite 200
Kansas City, MO. 64151

UH-1 available for rides at reunion

The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) has confirmed it will bring one of its fully restored and flyable UH-1 "Hueys" to the Orlando Reunion, where it will be available for rides at a nearby heliport.

The AAHF is dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of Army Aviation.

In a truly unique opportunity, AAHF will offer rides to VHPA members and their guests over several days during the reunion. AAHF will ask for a \$40 donation per person to help cover the cost of operation. The rides will last about 10 minutes.

As AAHF is a federally recognized nonprofit organization, it has advised us the \$40 can be deducted from your individual tax return.

In the weeks ahead, AAHF will be setting up a detailed schedule of available hours by day over the reunion period.

This schedule will be available in your packet upon arrival.

The AAHF also is hosting an information booth in our vendor area throughout the reunion.

Shuttle buses are being planned to transport participants from the hotel to the heliport site and back.

Our thanks to president Mike Brady and Cathy Johnson of the AAHF, who made this possible.

This is one more reason to ensure you attend the reunion in Orlando — the opportunity to fly once again in a restored UH-1 aircraft.

Mini-reunions

Minutemen, Muskets plan blowout

The 176th AHC will be having a mini-reunion in Orlando on July 4, from 1-5 p.m. Crew chiefs and gunners

will attend the mini-reunion this year.

Contact: Ken Bigelow at kenbigelow@aol.com for details.

Mini-reunion planned on July 3

The A/502nd — 175th Outlaws will be having a mini-reunion from 1-5 p.m. on July 3 at the Orlando Reunion.

MIKE SHEUERMAN
MIDTERM MEMBER AT LARGE

The VHPA had a booth at Heli-copter Association International (HAI) in Dallas Feb. 9-11, compliments of HAI.

Several current members still involved and/or interested in civilian rotary-wing aviation, including Larry Clark, the founder of VHPA, stopped by the booth.

Other non-current members renewed their memberships and one new member was found. The only downside was some non-rated individual stole the tables and chairs I provided for the booth.

Thanks to the Fort Wolters Chapter and the National Vietnam War Museum members for their assistance in manning the booth.

The VHPA also had a booth at the Army Aviation Association of America meeting April 9-12 in Fort Worth, compliments of AAAA.

More than 50 current VHPA members, most still wearing the green suit, stopped by. We renewed more than 15 non-current members and signed up 4 new members.

There was some really neat stuff on display. However, the joke around the show was "when the last Blackhawk goes to the boneyard, the crew will ferry home in a Huey."

We also had several guys take applications for themselves or people they knew.

There was some really neat stuff on display. However, the joke around the show was "when the last Blackhawk goes to the boneyard, the crew will ferry home in a Huey." True, very true. The Army should have kept the Cobra, also.

Again, my thanks to the Fort Wolters Chapter and the NVWM guys for their help.

Good news story: A guy comes up to the booth. He's heard of VHPA, but never joined. We get to talking. I asked who he flew with. He tells me. I open the directory and turn to his old unit. He looks at the names of members. He's excited. We look up a member or two and he writes down their

addresses.

He asks about flight classes. He was in 68-6. I turn to it. He looks at it, finds a name and a huge smile crosses his face. He asks if this guy is a member. I turn to the name and the guy is a current member. This guy goes nuts.

They were best friends in flight school. They haven't seen each other since. The member's daughter is his god-daughter. He writes the member's address and email address down. He thanks me, takes an application and says he'll send it in tomorrow. The directory is worth it as far as he is concerned.

I tell him it gets even better at a reunion. He tells me he's going back to his hotel room and email his friend.

Bad news story: A guy comes up to the booth and says he was a member, but not anymore, it's getting too political. I ask him what he means. He says he came to the first Fort Worth Reunion and everybody was arguing about stuff. He says he has a friend in Las Vegas and he hears from him that there were all sorts of problems at the Las Vegas Reunion.

I tell him I was there and I thought

See WHY, Page 13

Membership grows to 12,000 pilots

DANA M. YOUNG
MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

During the Orlando Reunion, we will recognize our 12,000th member.

That is a significant increase from the original 66 who attended the first reunion 20 years ago.

Since the initiation of the VHPA, there has been an effort to locate all pilots who flew helicopters in Southeast Asia from 1961-75. The accounting includes current information for each individual that served.

As we age, we will move from one section of the Membership Directory to another, but the Directory will provide a unique view of the slice of history that for many years was kept in the shadows.

We have just completed a second major search for members and are in the process of conducting a third. These searches have utilized search companies that specialize in the processing of large numbers of names through numerous data bases.

As we age, we will move from one section of the Membership Directory to another, but the Directory will provide a unique view of the slice of history that for many years was kept in the shadows.

The second search processed more than 5,000 names, the last of those for which we had with SSANs.

Future searches will be for those that left the armed forces prior to the transition from US, RA, WO and O serial numbers to the use of the SSAN. These searches are time-consuming and expensive. This is where we need your help.

Take a look at your flight school photo; your orders sending you to RVN; your orders for awards and decorations. Check to see if those who were with you then are in the latest Directory. If not, let us know.

The more information you have about someone we have missed, the better chance we have of finding him.

My goal, as membership chairman, is to find everyone who is eligible for membership and include them in the Directory; once

there, maintain current information so we can continue to make contact with our friends.

My goal, as a VHPA member, is to know that no one is left behind.

My goal is to find everyone who is eligible for membership and include them in the Directory; once there, maintain current information so we can continue to make contact with our friends.

Why does our association exist?

Continued from Page 12

it was a pretty good reunion. I tell him it's all in how you look at things and what you want out of VHPA. I suggest, since he lives in this area, that he come to the Dallas Reunion next year and find out for himself. He agrees to do that.

Guys, let's get back to the reason VHPA exists. Let's find the guys we flew with, let's tell them about VHPA, let's encourage them to join VHPA and let's get together somewhere in the U.S.A. every year, celebrating our common bond and remembering those not with us for whatever the reason.

All the rest is BS.

Who cares if our elected leaders are called the Board of Directors or the Executive Council? Who cares if a guy wants to serve and is elected to consecutive three-year terms? Who cares if a member who puts in long

Our legacy, the legacy of the helicopter pilot in Vietnam and Southeast Asia from 1961-75, your and my legacy, was ensured more than 30 years ago by what we did on the battlefields in Vietnam. It cannot be damaged, tarnished or changed by what happens today.

hours for the association and its members gets a comp room at the reunion? Who cares if a guy who invests our money wisely, continually turning a profit in these hard economic times, is a member of VHPA? Who cares if a guy serves on a committee year after year?

I don't.

I want six good newsletters, I want

a fact-filled directory, I want to find the pilots from my Vietnam unit who are still missing and I want the opportunity to attend a reunion somewhere in the United States and see my friends.

That's it.

Recently I read an email in which a member said that we, the VHPA, needed to change the association to ensure our legacy for the future.

That could not be further from the truth.

Our legacy, the legacy of the helicopter pilot in Vietnam and Southeast Asia from 1961-75, your and my legacy, was ensured more than 30 years ago by what we did on the battlefields in Vietnam.

It cannot be damaged, tarnished or changed by what happens today.

Let's get back to the reasons VHPA exists.

Seeking national office?

The VHPA has adopted a new Election Policy, effective immediately. The policy was published in the January/February *VHPA Newsletter* and is posted on the VHPA website.

If you plan to run for national office in Orlando you must notify VHPA Headquarters or any current Executive Council member of your intentions, in writing, no later than midnight June 15, 2003.

Please contact VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-8472 or www.vhpa.org or Mike Sheuerman, midterm member at large/election coordinator at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED] with any questions.

Mike Sheuerman
Midterm member at large
VHPA election coordinator

Library of Congress to tape at reunion

Our 20th anniversary will have one additional special feature — the Library of Congress is sending four volunteers to talk to VHPA members and videotape our memories of the Vietnam era.

In addition, the volunteers will tape parts of our reunion events to document for posterity how veterans groups get together in later years to foster those memories and rekindle the camaraderie formed many years ago in hostile military environments.

All the tapes and material go into the Library to be preserved for future generations to review. Current plans also call for the editing of the event videos into an approximate 60-90 minute tape, which then would be available for viewing at the Library upon completion.

Any members with specific interest to be videotaped and who are attending the reunion can make their desires known by emailing availability to shari@vhpa.org

She, in turn, will forward your information on to the representatives of the Library of Congress.

Any communication should contain a brief overview of your unit, time and dates in country, and anything special you would like them to know. They have expressed interest in Vietnam era maps, memorabilia, and other similar items that you might be willing to show them as part of any taping.

It would be helpful to include dates and times you might be available to meet with them Tuesday, July 2 - Saturday, July 5 (our reunion schedule is printed in this *Newsletter*) — example Tuesday, July 2, from 2-6 p.m., or Wednesday, July 3, noon to 3 p.m., etc.

Confirmed appointments last about 45 minutes, and are made at the discretion of the Library of Congress.

Letters

Captured Vietnam pilot discusses POWs in Iraq

Bruce, my brother-in-law, is fascinated with the history of the helicopter in Vietnam and the pilots who flew them.

He and his wife attended the Denver Reunion and met many of the guys from my unit, the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers."

Last night he sent me an email, informing me he had seen Bill Reeder, Panther 36, 12/71-3/73 on TV (CNN, I believe) talking about POW's.



Bill was shot down outside the wire near Ben Het May 9, 1972 and E&E'd for three days (with a broken back and fractured leg) before being captured on the 12th. He spent the next 10 months as a guest of the NVA in Cambodia, Laos and, finally, North Vietnam at the Hanoi Hilton.

This got me thinking about the first time I met Bill. It was Jan. 2, 1972. It was a "down" day for me. The next morning, bright and early, I was catching a flight to Saigon, then on to Hawaii and the States for a three-week R&R with Carole Blackburn.

As I lounged around thinking of Carole and the plans I had for the two of us, the phone rang. I answered it (a large mistake) and was informed by Art Childers, our operations officer, that a recon team out of Thailand had run into a bit of trouble near the Laos-Vietnam border and declared a "prairie fire."

Their air assets out of Thailand attempted to pull them, but got the "smelly stuff" shot out of the aircraft. The Jolly Green barely made it to Ben Het before the

engine died. The A-1E's were keeping the bad guys back, but without immediate help from other aircraft, the team was dead or, at best, captured.

Their higher-up contacted the SOG higher at CCC in Kontom, asking for assistance. The four Cobras from our unit and six slicks from the 57th, on standby at the Box, were launched in support.

Dennis Trigg, lovingly referred to as "The SIP," was AML. He arrived on station, got a briefing and a "bingo" from Covey and went to work. They were able to get most of the team out, all wounded in some way, but two mem-

Their higher-up contacted the SOG higher at CCC in Kontom, asking for assistance. The four Cobras from our unit and six slicks from the 57th, on standby at the Box, were launched in support.

Letters

Continued from Page 14

bers of the team remained on the ground.

All the aircraft received multiple hits and Smitty's aircraft was severely damaged. There were so many bullet holes around the 90-degree gearbox, I don't know how the tail rotor stayed on until he landed at Ben Het.

"The SIP" radioed operations for a backup and here's where Bill and I come in.

Art told me to get to Operations and to grab a "bullet break" (front seater) on the way. I informed him I was going on R&R in less than 18 hours and he could kiss my a—. He told me that, with all the guys already on R&R, I was it and, besides, I'd be back in time to catch my flight.

I grabbed a flight suit, boots, my white scarf and ran out the door.

There was Capt. William S. Reeder Jr., fresh from Cobra School, in the Unit for 3-4 days at the most, no in-country check ride, no flight gear, no flight orders.

I yelled: "Hey, new guy (I didn't know his name), you wanna go get a medal?" He didn't hesitate at all.

As we ran across the flight line, Col. Bagnal, a great battalion commander and good guy, saw me only partially dressed, running like a madman and yelled: "Lieutenant Sheuerman (he knew me well, we had met several times before, the reasons escape me), what are you doing and why aren't you dressed?"

I yelled back as I continued to Operations: "Prairie fire, Sir."

I still remember his: "Take care and good luck."

We grabbed some flight gear for Bill out of other people's lockers, got him a .38, did a "Tac E" preflight and off we went in the direction of Ben Het. We arrived on station, joined up with "The SIP," and got the last two guys out. Both were wounded.

Bill was great with the minigun and chunker. You never would have guessed it was his first Cobra ride outside of transition or his first flight in country.

The bad guys threw everything you can imagine at us. Our aircraft had numerous holes in the fuselage and blades. And she was the lucky one. She was flyable in a day or two.

Arriving back at Hollaway, we hovered in to the revetments, shut down, post flighted and consoled the crew chief.

As we walked toward operations for the debriefing, Bill stuck out his hand and said, "thanks, Lieutenant, it was

fun. By the way, my name is Bill Reeder."

By the way, in case you were wondering, my R&R with Carole was everything I had hoped for and then some.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15
361st ACE/AWC
Pink Panthers

Program features crew from chopper company

Here is a heads up for an future History Channel broadcast of an incident involving a crew in A Company of the 158th in Vietnam. It will be aired on the East and West Coast at 8 p.m. on May 25.

I will bring a videotape of the film with me to the Orlando Reunion if anyone wishes to see it.

The production company, Indigo Films, with whom I worked to produce the film (with credits going to the VHPA and the Commemorative Air Force), wants to do at least a few more of these reunion theme productions for the History Channel in what its hopes will become a series.

So we need to get the word out that we are looking for stories to make into movies before the last Huey gasps its final breath.

Gil Ferrey

Information about program

Operation Reunion is a one-hour History Channel pilot episode that searches for missing soldiers and reunites them with fellow veterans.

Indigo Films, with the help of detectives around the country, finds these missing individuals and films their actual reunions. The special program also presents "unsolved" cases in which we call upon our viewers to help find missing GI's to reunite in future episodes.

This first episode features two riveting stories. One story is an actual reunion orchestrated and filmed specifically for the History Channel; the other story is an unsolved story or "Call to Action" where we ask our viewers to help us find a missing person.

Using the History Channel's website, viewers can log on and provide information to help our team track down a missing veteran.

See LETTERS, Page 16



The bad guys threw everything you can imagine at us. Our aircraft had numerous holes in the fuselage and blades. And she was the lucky one. She was flyable in a day or two.

Letters

Continued from Page 15

The program then can reunite the soldiers in a subsequent episode.

Story No. 1

FIREBASE RIPCORD: Vietnam, 1970

The first story of this program began during the beginning of the end of the Vietnam War in early 1970.

Our show reunites Larry Kern, a helicopter pilot with the Ghost Riders of the 101st Airborne Division in 1970 with his gunner, "Mac" Macfarland.

On July 21st, 1970, Ghost Riders set out on the most terrible mission of their tour of duty, one that would leave them all deeply scarred — physically and emotionally

The mission was the evacuation of Firebase Ripcord. Ripcord was a late-war attempt to destroy Viet Cong supply bases in the mountains. Their mission was to help rescue as many of the men left as possible.

Kern's helicopter was hit by anti-aircraft fire. As he tried to land, soldiers were running toward the chopper, trying to get on. It crashed, landing on several soldiers.

Mac fell out and was pinned under the helicopter. In the chaos of getting rescued, only 18 soldiers remained alive, including Kern and crew.

For more than 31 years, Kern had no idea if Mac survived his injuries; his nightmares of that day grew worse over the years.

Kern suffered with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For the past decade, Kern has searched for Mac. Extensive therapy finally helped him, but to this day, he still feels guilty about letting his best friend down and must find him so he can get relief from his deeply disturbing guilt. Today he counsels troubled vets and is writing a book called "Wounded Mind."

Enter the team from the Operation Reunion program. Hired by the History Channel, private detective Jimmy Mesis, a former Marine, sets out to locate Mac.

Mesis knew the units Kern and Mac were in and tracked down people who remembered Mac and his first name. He also used investigator databases that offer information on the last address a person may have used. Mesis soon found Mac living in North Carolina.

Kern and Mac were quickly flown to New Orleans by our Operation Reunion team.

Mesis knew the units Kern and Mac were in and tracked down people who remembered Mac and his first name. He also used investigator databases that offer information on the last address a person may have used. Mesis soon found Mac living in North Carolina.

We then filmed their emotional reunion after more than 30 years on June 14, 2002.

The two men engaged in excited, nonstop conversation, comparing memories and filling in the gaps left by the chaos of battle and the fog of war.

Story No. 2

TIGER SURVIVORS: Korea, 1950s

The second half of our show spotlights, Wilbert "Shorty" Estabrook, who was a "Tiger Survivor," a former POW from the Korean War.

Estabrook, who enlisted in the Maine National Guard at age 16 by forging papers, found himself in a North Korean prison camp just three years later in 1950.



Along with 730 American soldiers, Estabrook endured "unimaginable horrors," at the hands of a North Korean major known only as "The Tiger," and was one of only 250 GIs surviving the three-year ordeal.

After he retired from the military in 1974, Estabrook began searching for his fellow POW's and holding an annual reunion that grew from 6 people its first year to more than 200 last year.

Through the years, Estabrook managed to find all but one remaining "Tiger Survivor."

This missing man, whom he believes is named Goya Mata, has kept him searching and he's not ready to give up yet. He wants to find this last missing GI and close the book on his search for all these former Tiger Survivor POWs.

Private detective Gary Cohen, hired by the History Channel, turns up Mata's full name, Gregorio, whose last known location was Germany.

That lead took the detective to a dead end. We hope viewers watching this program will help us locate Gregorio Mata.

Operation Reunion fusion of past, present

Operation Reunion melds live interviews with reenactments and archival war footage. Veterans, organizations and military groups were more than happy to help out, and the California National Guard proved vital to the project.

For our future programs we will need stories that meet the following criteria:

1. The stories must come from American military conflicts from the Vietnam era forward.
2. They must involve a combat veteran who is looking to reunite with another combat veteran or veterans who shared some sort of battle/rescue mission experience together.
3. They must have a very strong, emotionally driven reason for wanting to reunite. And, just as an example, wanting to say "Thank You" for saving my life is not a compelling enough reason. Some good examples of strong reasons to reunite might include wanting to return a person-

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al effect, needing the corroboration of an eyewitness to receive VA benefits or a much-deserved medal, or to return something to a family member of a soldier KIA or MIA.

Natalie Miller
Indigo Films
[REDACTED]

Husband's death attributed to diabetes, 'rare' tumors

On Dec. 26, 2002, a man, husband and father, and VHPA member passed away long before his time from diabetes and brain tumors . . . "extremely rare" brain tumors.

His passing wasn't gentle. I'm his wife, and I don't believe his passing was unique, either.

Are any of you out there, having been exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam, suffering, as Dan did, with "extremely rare" diseases? Or, do you know of anyone else who was in Vietnam who died from or currently has an "extremely rare" disease? Perhaps children or grandchildren of such individuals have suffered like fates, and you have knowledge these.

The Veterans Administration is not interested in finding a connection between Agent Orange and these "rare" diseases.

I could understand this if, in fact, "rare" aptly describes the situation, as they would have us believe. However, I have come across many individuals like Dan, all of whom have been told by the VA, "Not A-O related" without the VA having investigated these mysterious central nervous system tumors.

In short, I don't believe for a New York minute that these cases are "rare."

The final straw for me was when my daughter (conceived post Vietnam), delivered a beautiful baby boy who passed away at the age of two weeks from a massive, "extremely rare" brain tumor. The neonatologists reported they had never seen anything like it.

Are we, the Sullivans, alone in these experiences? If we are not and you are aware of similar situations, I would appreciate hearing from you. My email address is: [REDACTED]

Please note the "a" in "sulliva" is followed by the number 1, and not the letter L.



I am not seeking to place blame: Was it the chemical company? Was it the government? etc.

What I do want is for this government to step up to the plate and accept responsibility for these tragic consequences of Agent Orange exposure which no one could have foreseen and for them not to do as they have been doing: Summarily dismissing these victims in a cavalier manner as "Not A-O related."

Dan was as heroic over the last eight years as he had been in Vietnam. He never complained or whined. He did, however, pray, "Lord, just don't let it be for nothing." Here's one for you, Babe.

Mrs. Sandra A. Sullivan
[REDACTED]

Pilot saves crew chief, others' lives in rescue

The day started out boring, with just chuck-chuck as a mission.

When asked to rearm FB6, it heated up considerably. Our first trip in was hot, but successful.

The second trip was tragic. Another Chickenman bird picked up a third sling load of ammo and followed us out.

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At the instant our aircraft commander (Roger Reid) punched off the load, he took a round directly in the face. My guess is that he went into a death grip on the controls.

The ship behind us said they saw our tail rotor get blown off. Incidentally, their aircraft commander took a round in the leg, but they made it back to Dak To.

We went into a horizontal spin . . . left side down . . . totally out of control, but taking our good old time getting to the ground. As a crew chief, my usual position was in the left gunwell, but flying doorgunner, I was in the right.

I automatically looked over my right shoulder, but seeing the firewall, I didn't get much input when the "we're gonna crash and I'm gonna die" realization set in.

I don't know how much you know about the mechanics of slicks and Cobras, but all fuel lines and filters are on the left side of the engine. A crash on the left side causes the engine and transmission to break their mounts, spewing fuel over everything, including hot components which "always" cause the ship to blow up.

Adding insult to injury, we were at about one-third fuel capacity, which made the fuel tanks particularly explosive. Adding additional insult, we were about to crash outside a firebase being actively hit around two-thirds of the perimeter by NVA regulars.

Lady luck smiled.

The engine and tranny didn't break their mounts, and we crashed in a clear area of the perimeter, right smack in the middle of the unhit one-third! Three of us crawled up and out, unhurt! I remember looking at Roger, lying in his seat.

Had we crashed 100 feet in either direction along the perimeter, climbing out of the bird, we would have been targets like fish in a bucket. If we had crashed 100 feet down the hill, we would have been in jungle, with the trees and shrubs mangling the ship and us, and likely causing ignition.

Using our "best" basic training skills, we crawled through the wire and hunkered down in a bunker, trying to get our senses back, and come down from the adrenaline rush.



Had we crashed 100 feet in either direction along the perimeter, climbing out of the bird, we would have been targets like fish in a bucket. If we had crashed 100 feet down the hill, we would have been in jungle, with the trees and shrubs mangling the ship and us, and likely causing ignition.

Within about a half hour, the lieutenant — Brian Thacker, Medal of Honor earner for the events of this day — said to get up to the pad, one of our ships was coming in to get us.

Needless to say, things hit the fan. Under heavy fire, I remember taking a flying leap onto the floor of the bird, while AK rounds, mortars, and B40s flew all around. We barely got airborne when we dropped back down and had to abandon a second ship.

And clumsy me, jumping into a hole, I managed to catch my foot on something and looked down and saw my ankle at a nice, right angle (to the side!). I didn't know if it was broken, but it hurt like hell and I wasn't going to take my boot off to examine it.

Anyhow, now there were seven Chickenman crew, and we retreated to the command bunker to wait out who knows what.

Whatever command was controlling the activities in support of this battle, they had their heads firmly implanted in their anal cavities. We spent about four hours in that bunker.

Our air support consisted of U.S.A.F., VNAF, and Army gunships, and things were relatively calm when they were rolling hot. But it seems they all were on station at the same time, jockeying for position and runs, then would leave at the same time to POL and rearm, leaving us with about half hour intervals with no air cover or support. The "activity" notched up tremendously each time.

When we arrived on the firebase, three bunkers on the perimeter were already held and occupied by bad guys. With each of these "intervals," we'd lose a couple more. After awhile, the lieutenant was calling in targets within the perimeter. At least twice, the bunker we were in was hit with a flame thrower. (With 20-20 hindsight, I guess it was somewhat comical to watch pilots and crew throwing sand into the rafters to put out the flames.)

Anyhow, eventually, the lieutenant said the ARVNs had begun to didi, and we had no choice but to follow (which was an interesting proposition on a broken? ankle, but the "no choice" was pretty compelling to try).

And clumsy me, jumping into a hole, I managed to catch my foot on something and looked down and saw my ankle at a nice, right angle (to the side!). I didn't know if it was broken, but it hurt like hell and I wasn't going to take my boot off to examine it.

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We headed for the tree line, following a column of fleeing ARVNs. Clumsy me (again!), I tripped on some loose wire, and took a tumble, causing my glasses (those worthless "aviator" style ones that hurt with a helmet on, and had no grip behind the ear, but sure looked good!) to go flying. Having no time to look for them, I was now semi-blind, and lame, running for my life through the jungle!

We were a pretty sorry lot! Between us, we had one .45 pistol, one pack of pin flares, one survival radio with a weak battery, and I was "heavily" armed with a pocket knife!

The ARVN's were tossing their jammed M-16s along the trail, but we had no time to unjam and clean them up, and no rounds, so they pretty much stayed littering our path. We were being chased, we could hear the bad guys coming, and running alongside, setting up ambushes to the front of the "column."

We'd hear an attack up ahead, and make a detour. The NVA were pretty well entrenched in the area. They were lobbing mortars in our direction, and even started pumping 105 rounds from the abandoned artillery on FB6 at us.

We passed many bunkers, and even tripped over commo wire strung through the jungle. We guessed we were heading toward Dak To, although as you probably remember from your E&E training, navigation is difficult at best in triple canopy. All we could do is keep on truckin',

The NVA were pretty well entrenched in the area. They were lobbing mortars in our direction, and even started pumping 105 rounds from the abandoned artillery on FB6 at us.

and try not to think about what was going to happen, as it started to darken and drizzle, and then we heard you.

We were close to panic when you said you saw the third flare, but not where it came from. Try to imagine our joy when you saw us on the fourth (and last!) flare. You know the rest!



Be as humble as you like! You are a HERO to me. Sure, anybody else could have done what you did, but it wasn't anybody else. So YOU get my thanks and eternal gratitude (and at the very least, a beer)!

Incidentally, I returned to Nam in October of 2000 (a wonderful trip I recommend every Nam vet take). The runway is still there at Dak To (although heavily overgrown), and I stood on the very spot where we loaded up the slings. It was very easy to "see" the F4s rolling in on "6" all over again (although the jungle is gone, clear-cut for lumber!).

We proceeded up the road toward Ben Het and walked through a small patch (and over a foot bridge over the river) to a Montagnard village in the vicinity of the area we ran through. Talk about an emotional moment . . .

A couple of years ago, I hooked up with the crew chief of 277 (the bird we got shot down in). He found me through the directory of the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association (of which I'm a life member). I let him know I found you, and he's as excited as me. "Aw Shucks, twern't nothin" all you want, it was something to us, and now you're stuck with us!

Craig Tonjes

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dana Johndro, Panther 23, 361st ACE was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his efforts in saving the writer of this letter and the others. The incident occurred in April/May of 1971.

Wayne Lawrence Crocker

I regret to inform you my uncle, hero, friend and fellow veteran has passed away.

Wayne Lawrence Crocker, a helicopter pilot Vietnam with the 1st Cav Division in 1968-70, died March 16 of complications from surgery in Togus, Maine.

Stanley E. Cagle

Stanley E. Cagle of Huntsville, AL, died Oct. 24, 2002. He was 54.

Cagle was technical director for program planning and control and acting vice president for the Acquisitions and Support Division at ELMCO Inc.

He graduated from flight school with Class 71-8. Cagle served in Vietnam with C/3/17 Cavalry in 1971-72, and with HHT/3/17 Cavalry and 72 AMMC in 1972.

Cagle is survived by his wife, Mary; his father, Eugene C. Cagle of Naples, FL; his daughter, Caryn Cagle Williams of Owens Cross Roads, AL; and his son, Sean Eugene Cagle of Wingate, NC.



He was my hero, and the hero of every man saved by him flying into a hot LZ to extricate, evacuate. He had many ghosts in his life due to flying young men into areas and flying them out many times in pieces. He did not share many of his experiences with me or anyone else.

He put up a good front for so many years, but his soul was hurting for so long with no way to find help. Hopefully, you have had the pleasure of meeting him. If not, I'm sure you

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Taps

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have met someone who has. The Army has and always will be a small community.

— Paul Jeffrey Allen

Jim Cunningham

I have learned of Jim Cunningham's untimely death on Jan. 11 at his home in Suffern, NY.

His wife Anne phoned me with this sad and shocking news.

Jim was actively working to overcome the many troubling memories he suffered from his leadership role in Vietnam.

Jim was my executive officer October 1968-October 1969. He served as Hornet 26, Hornet 5 and Hornet 3.

We had just reunited at Sun 'n' Fun last year, after not seeing each other for many years. We enjoyed some great moments together; Jim joined the VHPA at that time.

We had hoped to be able to spend time together in Vegas, but business obligations kept him from attending. Instead Jim sponsored a hole at the golf tournament and dedicated it to the Hornets.

Last August, Jim and his daughter participated in a Walkathon in Washington, DC, to support a group, Out of Darkness, to bring attention to the many veterans who suffer from depression.

Jim and I designed and produced Hornet T-shirts for this event, as well as to be used for future Hornet reunions.

Jim and I planned to use the T-shirts funds to cover our printing and mailing expenses for a post-card mailing to find other Hornet.

I promised Anne, to carry on as flight lead, and bring all Hornets together as Jim had wanted.

Our prayers go out to Jim's family and friends. To all that are suffering depression, we are here for you.

Joe Duvall
Hornet 31

Tony Ward Miller

Tony Ward Miller, 54, died Jan. 13 in his Springfield, MO, after a lengthy illness.

Miller served two tours in South Vietnam, with 29 ARTY in 1967-68 and with C/7/17 Cavalry in 1970-71. He was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters, two Bronze Star Medals and multiple awards of the Air Medal.

He graduated from flight school in Class 70-1. Miller is survived by two daughters, Sarah Jane Rosendahl of Springfield and Michelle Renee Miller of Boynton Beach, FL; and three grandchildren.

Michael Raymond Redding

Michael Raymond Redding of Gettysburg, PA, died Jan. 26. He was 53.

He was a member of flight school classes 69-37 and 69-38, and served in Vietnam in 1970 with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company.

He was recipient of the Bronze Star Medal and the Air Medal with 25 oak leaf clusters.

Redding was a retired police officer.

He is survived by his wife Michelle.

William E. Savedge

William "Bill" E. Savedge, 55, died at his home last July 25 after a lengthy illness.

He and his wife Cindy had lived in Newport News, VA, for 33 years.

Savedge had retired from his job as a corporate operations manager with McKesson General Medical, a position which took him all over the country for 31 years.

He and I went through flight school together in Class 67-15, then we served together as two of the three original pilots of the 2nd Brigade Aviation Section, 101st Airborne Division.

We survived the 1968 Tet Offensive in the unfriendly skies of northern I Corps, and for his service to his country, Savedge was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Air Medal with V.

In fact, the Loach we flew, "Old 795," also survived the war, and currently is flying with the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation. I'm glad Bill got to give his family a ride in it

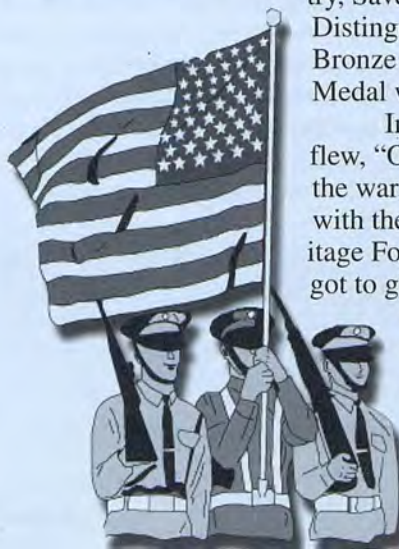
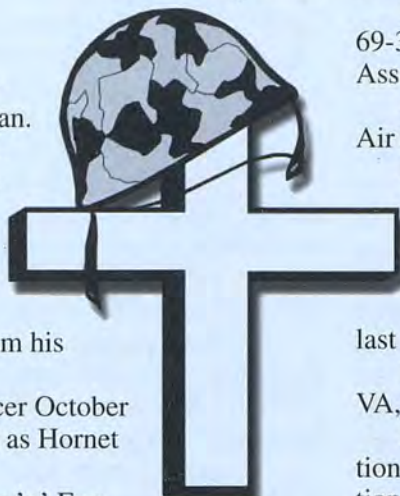
before his illness. One of his stick buddies in Vietnam, Ed Robinson, said, "In-country, no matter how bad the weather, heat, mud, bugs, food, RLOs, or tactical situation, Bill was always upbeat,

positive, fun to be with, and a ray of sunshine in an often bleak existence."

Another, Ted Smith, said, "Bill was another victim of the Vietnam War."

As for me, I say, "Your spirit lives on in each of us, old buddy. Watch yer RPM."

Curt Knapp
Tadpole 795



White medevacs

MACV tested changing color to reduce casualties

MIKE LAW
AND LARRY WAGONER

I first met Larry Wagoner, Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association and dustoff member, at a VHCMA reunion several years ago.

I immediately was impressed with his nearly photographic memory of literally dozens of shoot-downs, crashes and medevacs during his months as a crew chief with Eagle Dustoff.

Since I've been collecting stories for the VHPA for more than a dozen years and I can quickly check a story against the VHPA's helicopter database, I consider myself to be a pretty good judge of the quality of a war story.

Larry is one of the best I've ever met. Not only does he remember the terrain, the weather, the site location of the downed crews, their names (especially if they died) and medical conditions, he can tell you the tail numbers and details about the wreckage for event after event.

Larry mailed me a copy of four separate Military Assistance Command Vietnam documents relating to the famous White Medical Evacuation Helicopter Test Program in Vietnam.

I thought *VHPA Newsletter* readers might find this interesting, so here is a cut-and-paste version of these MACV documents.

SYNOPSIS: MEDCOM initiated a test and evaluation program on Oct. 1, 1971, to determine whether aeromedical evacuation helicopters painted white and marked with a large, red cross would be respected by the enemy as immune to hostile fire, thereby reducing hazards to patients and the combat loss rate of medical personnel and medevac helicopters.

A point of clarification: MEDCOM was the successor to the 44th Medical Brigade. Together they controlled all U.S. Army non-divisional medevac helicopters in Vietnam. The Air Ambulance Platoons of the 15th Medical Battalion (1st Cavalry Division) and the 326th Medical Battalion (101st Airborne Division) were the only medevac helicopters not under the control of MEDCOM or the 44th Medical Brigade.

MEDCOM initiated a test and evaluation program on Oct. 1, 1971, to determine whether aeromedical evacuation helicopters painted white . . . would be respected by the enemy as immune to hostile fire . . .

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: From July 1966 through April 1971 aeromedical evacuation helicopters in RVN were hit 1,394 times by hostile fire, resulting in the combat loss of 141 helicopters and the death of 114 crew members and 26 patients.

These helicopters were painted olive drab camouflage and were marked with a red cross. The loss rate was approximately 2.5 times the overall loss rate of helicopters in RVN in general.

The following is a direct quote: "Brig Gen. Bernstein, MACV command surgeon, expressed concern over loss of medevac helicopters to enemy ground fire, and suggested painting medevac aircraft white.

MEDCOM personnel, including helicopter pilots, are enthusiastic about the idea, as they believe that the OD-color medevac helicopter is often mistaken for a combat aircraft."

The USARV surgeon suggested that a more readily identified aircraft might result in a reduced loss rate.

By July 1, 1971, MACV had considered the feasibility of painting aeromedical evacuation helicopters white with large, red crosses, approved a recommendation to evaluate the "white" helicopter program and tasked USARV with the development and implementation of the evaluation plan.

The test plan was initiated on Oct. 1, 1971, employing the six UH-1H helicopters assigned to the 68th Medical Detachment at Chu Lai operating in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces. The initial test, which was to have lasted for three months, was extended in order to gather more meaningful statistics and experience.

Eventually the test involved 21 white helicopters operating throughout South Vietnam and terminated on March 31, 1972.

Employment of the white helicopters was preceded by a PSYOP program designed to explain to the enemy via posters, leaflets, and sound tapes, the use and purpose of white helicopters. The program also appealed to the enemy not to shoot at medical helicopters.

STATISTICS: The document includes three spreadsheet reports that would be difficult to present in the Newsletter. The following is a five-column extract for the period October 1971 through January 1972:

- White Medical Helicopters: Hours 1,735, sorties 4,791, combat hits 3, combat losses 0.
- 68th Medical Detachment: hours 964, sorties 3,180, combat hits 1, combat losses 0.
- 159th/283rd Medical Detachment: hours 691, sorties 1,409, combat hits 2, combat losses 0.
- 247th Medical Detachment: hours 80, sorties 202, combat hits 0,

See WHITE, Page 22

White choppers dispersed in country

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combat losses 0.

- OD Medical Helicopters: hours 9,829, sorties 25,900, combat hits 17, combat losses 1.
- USAMEDCOMV: hours 7,501, sorties 19,970, combat hits 12, combat losses 1.
- 1st Cavalry Division: hours 1,202, sorties 2,342, combat hits 5, combat losses 0.
- 101st Airborne Division: hours 1,126, sorties 3,588, combat hits 0, combat losses 0.
- All Medical Helicopters: hours 11,564, sorties 30,691, combat hits 20, combat losses 1.
- UH-1 Helicopter (less Medical): hours 235,860, sorties 598,960, combat hits 262, combat losses 15.
- Rotary Wing (less Medical): hours 383,002, sorties 870,761, combat hits 575, combat losses 53.

REMARKS: The density and location of white helicopters: 11 at Long Binh (159th/283d Medical Detachments); 5 at Da Nang (68th Medical Detachment); and 2 at Phan Rang (247th Medical Detachment).

The 68th Medical Detachment, which was the initial unit to be painted white, completed standdown on Jan. 3. The white helicopters were transferred to the 236th Medical Detachment, Da Nang. The 247th Medical Detachment began flying white helicopters in the southern half of Military Region II on Jan. 11.

PSYOPS: 14,279,000 leaflets were dropped in the border provinces of Military Region III on Jan. 15 and 18; 1,500,000 leaflets were dropped in the Trang Bang area. (White helicopters received fire on Jan. 14 and 15 in the Trang Bang area.)

Leaflets dissemination in Military Region III was delayed because of a higher priority, country-wide PSYOP mission in support of the coming Tet holidays and because of the guns on the 1st Cav Division's medevac helicopters. The PSYOPS leaflets stated that medical helicopters, white and OD, are not armed.

Since the mounted guns on the 1st Cav Division's medevac helicopters contradicted the PSYOPS effort, no leaflets could be dropped in Military Region III until removal of the guns.

By direction of commanding general of U.S. Army Vietnam, the M-23 armament subsystems were removed from the medevac helicopters of the 1st Cavalry Division on Jan. 7.

CONCLUSION: There is insufficient statistical data available to date (assumed to be February 1972) to make a valid determination of the success or failure of the program.

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