



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

January/February 2005 Vol. 23, No. 1



A Huey from C/229th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division, flies in formation to a troop insertion in an area just east of the Cambodia border. The photograph was taken in January 1967 about 60 miles northwest of Phan Thiet.

Dave Rittman photo

From the President

The holidays are over for another year and it is time to start making your reunion plans. I must apologize for the December *Newsletter* arriving late, but we had to hold printing until we had enough of the details finalized to include the registration form in the *Newsletter*.

Knowing the delivery of the December *Newsletter* would be late, the Executive Council decided on another "first" and sent a mass email to all the members we had email addresses for and opened the on-line registration in late December. Please provide HQ with your current email address so we can contact you by this means when necessary.

One driving factor for opening the on-line registration early is the very short time period we have for contracting additional space for the July 4th cruise. The "Belle" holds 1,200 people and we have to buy seats in blocks of 400. The response has been so overwhelming that we had to contract the second block of 400 and, as of this writing, half of the second block has been sold.

Registrations over the next few weeks will determine if we contract the final block of 400 and occupy the entire boat.

Registrations picking up

If you have a desire to attend this function, please register now if you have not already done so. Delivery of the December *Newsletter* began in mid-January and registrations are picking up again. This event may be sold out by the delivery of this issue.

The other factor requiring your early registration is our room commitment with the hotel. We have guaranteed one of the largest room blocks in VHPA history and we have occupied half of that block already.

Our block of rooms have been contracted at \$109 (plus tax), which is well below their normal rate. July 4 in San Francisco is at the peak of the city's tourist season



Dan Ferguson



and the hotel will sell out its remaining rooms at normal rate.

We simply do not have the reserve of available rooms at our rate that we normally have in "non-tourist season" locations. Please make your reservations early to ensure your room at the VHPA rate.

Two items of internal VHPA housekeeping have come up since the last article:

- Moving the reunion date from July 4th to some other date.
- Changing the name and structure of the VHPA to encompass all combat helicopter pilots from any era.

I will address the reunion date in some detail in this article and the changing of the name and structure of the VHPA in the next *Newsletter*.

I have contacted a past president and founding member of the VHPA and asked him to enlist a couple of other past presidents to address these issues and write a "position" statement detailing the reasons and intent of the founders.

Responses on website

In an attempt to keep the *Newsletter* free of internal VHPA politics, these suggestions and responses will be posted on the VHPA website. The location will be determined and posted in my next article for the membership to review.

Now, as I promised the two members who submitted the suggestion to change the reunion date from July 4th to some other date, here is a short explanation why we hold the reunion over the Independence Day holiday.

- It was the time frame chosen by the founders, I assume due to the patriotic nature of July 4th.
- It provides a holiday that most people have off and paid
- It is during the summer when school is out. (Most of our kids are grown now, but some members are now bringing grandchildren, so the point is still valid)
- A winter reunion would make a lot of destination sites unreachable, uncertain and undesirable due to weather, travel delays, etc.
- A majority of our reunion locations are from Texas and east due to our demographics, and most of those sites are not in their tourist season—better pricing.
- The very nature of the Fourth of July is a natural fit

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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 (813) 293-0708 or email Mike@resdrywall.com Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

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

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From the President

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for our organization.

- The VHPA currently is under a 6-year contract with Marriott Hotels, all over the July 4th week.
- There just isn't any date that works for everybody, but July 4th seems to work for most.
- One of the reasons for the formation of local groups was it would give members the opportunity to participate with other Vietnam helicopter pilots in their local area throughout the year and, especially, if they could not attend the annual reunion.

I know the above explanation will not resolve the issues some members have attending a July 4th reunion, but I hope it provides some explanation for the reasoning behind it.

As for changing the name and structure of the VHPA, this will be addressed on the VHPA website and the location posted in the next column.

Instead of completely restructuring the VHPA, maybe a new organization designed to be all encompassing should be considered by those desiring such an organization. I have to believe the VHPA would be willing to advise or assist such an effort as it has in the past.

The time has come to say good-bye for this column. I hope to see you all in San Francisco.

— Dan Ferguson, President

Newsletter privacy statement

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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.

Vietnam Huey documentary now on DVD

The documentary "In The Shadow of The Blade" is now available on DVD through www.intheshadowoftheblade.com or by calling Rose at (817) 691-9723.

As many of you know, "In The Shadow of The Blade" took UH-1 091, which now represents the Vietnam War in the Smithsonian's military history exhibit, on a cross-country tour to document the stories of Vietnam veterans and their families as they experienced the whop, whop of the war's icon going into America's backyards.

The filmmakers recruited me as one of four volunteer

Vietnam veterans to crew the mission.

What sets this movie apart from others about Vietnam is not just its use of the Huey as a catalyst for storytelling. More important is its dedication to true stories that shatter myths that have long clouded our service.

Vietnam veterans can be proud of the documentary for its tribute to the truth, the way it honors our dead, and what it illustrates about the respect Americans have for our service. It was my honor to represent you on this project.

— Gary Roush

Letters

Death of pilots a blow to unit

I knew Carey Beavers at the Aviation Development Test Activity (ADTA) at Fort Rucker. He arrived there sometime in 1983 or 1984 and was a service test pilot. He was married to a Eurasian girl from Korea and they had one child. She was seven months pregnant when Cary died.

Carey had been to Vietnam as a WO1-CW2 in the 1972-73 time frames and had flown for the Four Party Joint Military Team during the last part of his tour. That team was an instrument of the Paris Peace Accords and had the treaty sanction to resolve MIA and dead BNR cases for the four parties involved in the conflict.

He at times flew for Brig. Gen. Mike Healy. I know all of this because I was involved in the same effort, though not with Carey.

At some point after his tour, Carey accepted a direct appointment to lieutenant. When I met him, he was a first lieutenant.

We flew AH-1S's and Hueys a lot at ADTA, 5-7 hours a day. Carey was well liked by nearly everybody around him. His wife was strikingly beautiful.

Carey was flying an AH-1S on a routine lead-the-fleet test with Capt. Tim Jensen in his front seat. Tim was not a rated pilot, but was slated to go to flight school very soon. He was married to Patricia (Patty), who was an electrical engineer at ADTA and worked for me in the Systems Test Division at ADTA.

Tim and Patty part of ADTA family

Although Tim was not assigned to ADTA, he and Patty were still part of the ADTA family, and we were always connected during the social functions, as well as work.

On Feb 14, 1985, St. Valentine's Day, they were in an AH-1S on approach to LZ Runkle on the west side of the Fort Rucker. The aircraft rolled inverted while on long final, hit a tree, then rolled into the front of the barn/shed.

"Flat Iron," the Fort Rucker Medevac was launched and had some difficulty finding the crash because of it being at least partially inside the shed. I am not sure how they were able to locate them.

The cause of the crash was swash plate bearing failure due to a combination of bad lubrication and K747 rotor blades that caused greater than expected forces on the pitch links downward to the swash plate. This forced the swash plate to fail in a downward direction cutting through the left (lateral cyclic) pitch horn on the non-rotating portion of the lower swash plate.

Basically, Carey had no control of the aircraft as it per-

formed an un-commanded roll or wing over and crashed.

Having been at ADTA for 8 years and losing a number of pilots in various crashes, this loss hurt the worst because we all were connected much like a family. Carey and Tim's loss took a long time for all of us to deal with.

If you ask the older men and women still left at ADTA or in the Fort Rucker area about the aircraft losses, they will always remember this one as the one that hurt the worst. Cary was buried in his hometown of Noonan, GA, and Tim's remains were sent to his home. Please forgive my lack of memory concerning Tim's disposition.

Before I retired in 1988, I flew all over the local flying area and tried to land at each LZ. There were two LZs on the southwest side of the Fort Rucker flying area named for Carey and Tim — LZ Beavers and LZ Jensen.

These two young men were just like the heroes we have today in Iraq and Afghanistan. They possessed the best qualities found in soldiers and are still missed.

Dave Anderson, Lt. Col. (Retired)

Ordinary mission remarkable now

In my journal for May 1, 1970, I had written the following: "Flew FOB with Tec. Rescued a Navy pilot. Got 6 hrs. Was put in for Silver Star." (I usually didn't write much in my journal, it was mainly for keeping track of my flight hours)

Now, looking back, I wish I had put down everything that happened. I never thought much about the mission as being something out of the ordinary, except for how happy that Navy pilot was riding back with us from somewhere in Cambodia, north of Dak Seang, Vietnam. He was thanking everybody on board and shook our hands and smiled continually from ear to ear until he left us and boarded another chopper to take him back to his ship.

His joy and gratitude was something I will always remember. We had all just done our jobs, and successfully completed our mission — something, that at the time, we just took for granted as being routine.

Looking back on this mission, 34 years later, and after talking about it with others who were there at the time, I have come to realize how remarkable it was that we were in the right place at the right time with the right training and resources to be able to pull this Navy pilot out of the grasp of the NVA.

May 1970 mission would make headlines today

The mission that all the pilots, crewmembers, Special Forces team members, and Covey worked together to complete way back on that day in May 1970 would no doubt make headlines today.

To my knowledge, none of us who flew this mission ever received any recognition for what we did, much less a

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Silver Star. Apparently, someone was supposed to write us up for this award, but it must have hit a snag somewhere in the process.

Quite frankly, we would have been surprised if we had received some type of recognition. We all just felt like we had done our jobs in the usual way – with great professionalism and success. I don't think any of us ever thought much more about it because rescuing Special Forces Team members from life-or-death situations was something we did on a regular basis (about 3 or 4 times a month) as part of our duties in supporting the Command and Control Central (CCC) region of the Special Operations Group out of Kontum, Vietnam.

Pilot, crew chief helped with narrative

With help and input from Al Hoffman, who flew one of the "chase" ships, and David Owens, who was the crew chief on the bird that rescued the pilot, I believe I can put together the events of that day, (I was the copilot on the rescue ship). And I am willing to do this so the bravery and heroism of all those involved in this mission will not be forgotten.

According to my journal, the 170th AHC (the Bikinis) rotated in to supporting CCC in March 1970, while the 57th AHC rotated out. Because of the extremely hazardous nature of these missions, assault helicopter companies provided CCC support on a rotating basis to avoid having one company absorb all the losses of men and equipment over an extended period of time.

Briefly, our mission was to insert and extract Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP Teams) into Cambodia and Laos. The 170th AHC Buccaneer (Buc) Gun Platoon was equipped with UH1-Cs that could not carry the armament and firepower of the AH-1G Cobra gunships. So, for all Flights Over Border (FOB) missions (refers to flying over the border of Vietnam in Cambodia and Laos), we teamed with the 361st AWC Pink Panthers out of Pleiku, Vietnam.

Bikinis, Pink Panthers well-oiled machine

By the time, of this mission, the Bikinis and Pink Panthers had flown many missions together and were a well-oiled fighting team.

An average complement of ships and troops for our FOB missions were 4-6 slicks (UH1-D/H) and 3-4 Cobras (AH1-Gs). Bikini flight lead usually inserted the Special Forces team and directed the entire mission.

On this day, May 1, 1970, WO1 Thomas E. Connell (TEC) was Bikini flight lead, I was his copilot, David Owens was the crew chief and our gunner was Kaptur, nicknamed "Killer."

We were sitting at the Dak To POL topping off our tanks when the call came in. Covey had been in contact with a Navy pilot who had been shot down and wound up north of Dak Seang in Cambodia. Dak To was only about a 20-minute flight from there.

The pilot was being chased by NVA, but was in an area about 6,000 feet above sea level. The Marine Jolly Greens (H-53's) had been called, but had an ETA of over an hour.

We all said: 'Let's GO!'

CCC said we could delay putting in our team. Covey wanted to know if we could manage the extraction with the density altitude over 8,000 feet. With our payload, it was questionable, so TEC asked us what we wanted to do. We all said: "Let's GO!" (He knew what we would say). So, off we went. The FOB Mob to the rescue.

Covey had tried to direct the pilot to a possible LZ for an extraction, but the NVA were in hot pursuit. We decided to keep the LRRP team on board in case we needed them to secure the LZ or get the pilot if he was wounded.

Covey had called for all aircraft in the area to come running and, of course; the Pink Panthers in their fast-flying Cobras were the first helicopters on the scene. Another Bikini aircraft in the area piloted by Al Hoffman and D.J. Johnson arrived on the scene shortly after the Cobras.

Al writes, "First of all, I was a pretty new AC . . . in fact they put D.J. Johnson with me to keep an eye on me. We were moving a small village just east of Doc To from one place to another. You guys (the FOB Mob) were on a mission when the MAYDAY came in. As I recall, you could hear the emergency siren wailing on guard and then Covey came on the frequency to announce a 'jet down.' As I remember, Covey also called on all aircraft in the area to come running, which, of course, we all did."

Aircraft orbit over downed pilot

"This was particularly good for me because D.J. and I were tired of the pigs and chickens. We all met up and Covey vectored us in. The Panthers were working in the northern part of the Doc Seang and diverted to the scene. When the FOB slicks got there, all of us orbited over the downed pilot. Covey had marked the spot and reported the NVA were in hot pursuit and the A-4 driver needed help ASAP."

"The Cobras, which got there a minute or so ahead of us, swooped in to ID the pilot and provide cover. About a mile away you could see smoke pouring up from the jungle where the jet had gone in and the orange-and-white parachute canopy was stuck up in a tree below us. Panther lead called to us and said the guy was not in the open and 'did anyone have strings.'

"Well, of course, the FOB Bikinis did since we were the SOG support company. I radioed we had taken the strings out of my bird because we had to put some pigs in the cargo bay! Which was fine with me because that meant you guys would have to go into the hover hole! D.J. and I orbited around you low-level to draw off any fire. While

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you were in the hole, I saw a brace of green tracers scream past you several times. And there was the sound of almost continuous AK fire around us all. My crew was firing back.

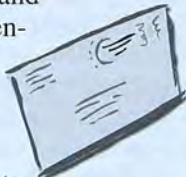
"The Pink Panther guys said they didn't feel comfortable shooting too close while you were in the hole."

NVA pin down Navy pilot near LZ

When we (the FOB Mob slicks) arrived at the LZ, TEC told the Panthers how he was going to approach, then Biki-ni chalk 2 flying above us, guided us to the LZ as we went low level above the trees. As we were on short final to the LZ, Covey told us the Navy pilot was about 50 meters from the LZ, but was pinned down by the NVA and couldn't get to the LZ.

TEC hovered us over to his location and David finally spotted him through an opening in the triple canopy jungle. The LRRP 6 tried to get a rope to him, but was unsuccessful (our ropes were 150 feet long and rigged with special hooks that allowed a team member to attach their harness to them).

Our crew chief, David, had much more experience getting the ropes and harness through the jungle and was able to drop them on the Navy pilot on his first try. Then we slowly worked the Navy pilot up through the maze of triple canopy jungle at the end of the 150-foot rope.



Rescued pilot dangles below Huey

Al and D.J. were circling nearby and Al writes, "When you pulled the guy out, it was like magic. Everyone was very happy to see you appear out of the jungle with a guy in a green flight suit dangling beneath you. As usual, you had to climb out at about 40 knots, so at 500 feet, I slipped in under you about even with the Navy pilot."

"I remember saying to D.J., 'Look at the grin on his face.' I keyed the mike and said something like, 'This guy is fat dumb and happy!' At that moment, the left C clamp failed and he swung away. His smile turned to terror very quickly."

"I radioed to you what had happened. There was some radio chatter about the failed C clamp and the fact he was holding on for dear life. Someone said we needed to put him down right now! Right in the middle of Indian country."

TEC decided to set the pilot down at the first possible site, which was about 150 meters in front of us, near an old hooch. TEC relayed our intention, but the Panthers didn't like the looks of that hooch and wanted us to pick another spot.

Our chase ship said there weren't any nearby. Since we were not sure if the pilot could hold on much longer, we told the Panthers we were going to set down near the

hooch. With the high-density altitude, small arms fire, a full team on board and our pilot at the end of our 150-foot rope, every crewmember had their hands full. Thanks to TEC's exemplary professionalism and skill, we managed to start our final approach to the LZ.

Again, Al had a much better perspective on what was happening and writes, "You guys slowed to a hover into the open field and were gently lowering him to the ground when Cobra lead started chattering about the small arms fire and that hooch at the west end of the makeshift LZ."

"I again tried to act as decoy while you guys were exposed. I was crossing behind you counter-clockwise and when I got to your 7 o'clock, I saw a flash from the rocket pods of Panther lead and thought, 'Holy Moly, he's going to shot us down!' but the rocket made a graceful arc as it left the pod . . . passed by you on the right close enough to reach out and touch and then slammed dead center into the open door of the hooch. Needless to say, it disappeared quickly in a cloud of dust, smoke, fire and molten metal. It was the best shot I have ever seen a Cobra driver make! Impressed the hell out of me!"

Like Al said, as we made our short final to set the Navy pilot down near the hooch, the Panthers put in two 2.75-inch rockets on the suspicious-looking hooch.

Panthers good enough to shoot through doors

Al, in the chase ship, said it looked like the Panther shot them just to the right of us. I'm sure they were good enough to shoot through our cargo doors if they needed to.

Anyway, we gently set the pilot down in the makeshift LZ and landed nearby. The LRRP team secured the LZ and we got the Navy pilot into the helicopter. We then loaded up the LRRP team and flew back to Dak To, where the Navy had sent a helicopter to pick up the rescued pilot.

Al had these recollections, "As I recall when the C clamp failed, the Navy pilot tried to catch himself so violently he pulled his left shoulder out of the socket. It was all blue and swollen when he got off your aircraft, but he was smiling and he shook hands with everyone there. Then you guys flew off to insert the team, and I went back to moving pigs and chickens . . . just another day in paradise."

I, too, will always remember the smile on that Navy pilot's face, stretching from ear to ear as he continually thanked all of us for rescuing him. To us, we had just done our jobs.

Mission was all in a day's work

So, we topped off our tanks and went on to insert the SOG team. All in a day's work. We felt we had just done our jobs with our usual professionalism, pride and teamwork, but for some reason we all shared some extra satisfaction from that mission.

We had successfully taken our aircraft and ourselves to their respective limits and back. Every pilot, crewmember and Special Forces team member involved in the rescue had distinguished himself in keeping with the highest traditions of their units, and the United States Army. Anyway,

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Letters

that's how the award should have read.

Joe Hanebrink
The Last Bikini 26, 170th AHC

Al Hoffman
The Last Bikini 24, 170th AHC
David Owens
Crew Chief, 170th AHC

Dedication of Huey a time to get together

VHPA Historian Mike Sloniker contacted me concerning AH-1G 67-15803, a snake assigned to the 361st ACE/AWC from September 1970 through August 1972, when the unit stood down and went home.

The aircraft originally had been assigned to D/227th

(the Lobos), was damaged in an accident, rebuilt and assigned to us.

It seems the aircraft had been donated to American Legion Post 11 in Florence, AL, and was to be dedicated on Veterans Day 2004.

Mike wanted some history on her, as well as wanting to know if some of the Panthers might want to attend the function. Forty-five members of our unit, many of whom flew the aircraft, live in Alabama and adjacent states.



Nine Panthers and one Lobo attended the dedication. Three had actually flown her and spoke about 67-15803. She flew support for the SOG teams from CCC operating across the border in Laos and Cambodia, was flown in Tailwind, the battles of FSB 5 and 6 in April/ May 1971, the battle of FSB Delta, was instrumental in the rescue of the advisors during the fall of Than Canh, flew multiple sorties in the battle of Kontum during the Easter Offensive in May 1972 and flew gun cover for the B Model Townships.

Best of all, the dedication was a time for good friends

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"Fearless" Forrest Snyder stands in front of the Cobra gunship donated to American Legion Post 11 in Florence, AL, and dedicated on Veterans Day. Snyder served with the Pink Panthers, one of the units the gunship was assigned to in Vietnam.

to get together, visit for a day and a night, and celebrate an old friend. We had guys come from as far away as Virginia and Texas.

We presented the veterans group with a plaque contain-

ing the two unit patches, a brief history of the 361st ACE/AWC and photos of 803 while in the unit.

It has occurred to me this would not have happened if not for the VHPA. It is the instrument that brought us all together after all these years. It put most of us back in contact with each other. It has revived the esprit de corps, cohesiveness and camaraderie of 30 plus years ago.

My thanks and those of every Pink Panther in VHPA, to Larry Clark for his idea and effort. We owe you. Our thanks to VHPA member Skip Butler, who is from Florence, for his efforts in getting us involved in the dedication.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15
5/71-4/72
361st ACE/AWC
Pink Panthers

'Silver Wings' cap leads to 1st Cav pilots reunion

I gotta share the following story.

My wife and I spent the night in a resort the Friday night of this past Memorial Day weekend. We drove two cars because I was going to a car auction on Saturday in Belvedere, IL, a small town 90 miles from Chicago.

As I was loading up her car for her to drive home, I noticed a "Silver Wings of The Cav" cap in the back of her car. This is a group in the 1st Cavalry Division Association that I started back in the 1980s and wrote an article for, for many years. One that continues to date. We had caps made 10 years ago which had the Cav patch between the aviators wings embossed on them.

Having cleaned the car out a month before for a long trip she took, I didn't have a clue why she would have it there. I was wearing my black VFW jacket, so I noncha-



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lantly put on the black cap, loaded up her car and I left for the car auction.

At the auction, I was watching the auction and talking with a guy I happened to meet there when I noticed a second fellow, I'll call him "RB," walking around me and looking at my VFW jacket and cap. The glances went on for maybe a half hour before he approached me. Following is the exact exchange:

RB: "I noticed your cap. Were you in the Cav?"

FT: "Yeah. Were you?"

RB: "Yeah. Were you in 'Nam?"

FT: "Yeah."

With that, we stopped watching the auction and started looking at each other.

FT: "Were you?"

RB: "Yeah. When were you there?"

FT: "71 to 72. How 'bout you?"

RB: "70 to 71."

Our vocal pitch became more excited as we realized we were there at least for a few months at the same time.

RB: "Yeah, I was a helicopter pilot."

FT: "Wow, that's a coincidence, so was I!"

RB: "I flew loaches out of Bien Hoa."

I figured we couldn't have flown together because of the different aircraft, but was still excited to meet a fellow pilot.

FT: "Oh yeah, I flew into Bien Hoa quite often!"

RB: "Well that was for 6 months. Then I transitioned to slicks and was transferred to Lai Khe!"

I shook my head and blinked my eyes in disbelief because I had been stationed in Lai Khe! I couldn't believe we were stationed at the same base at the same time. As I was trying to get some words out, RB continued in a matter of fact sort of way.

"But then the company was transferred up to Pleiku. We became part on the 52nd AHB."

Now, with my tongue and brain back in sync' and in a fevered pitch, I moved closer to him and blurted.

FT: "I was stationed in Lai Khe. My company was transferred to Pleiku! We became part on the 52nd AHB!"

RB: "Alpha, 227?"

FT: "Alpha, 227!"

Now, talking loudly and probably splattering in his face.

FT: "What was your call sign?"

He, too, moving closer with his voice increasing, (which was HUGE, considering how low key RB is) and both of us now having the attention of everyone around us.

RB: "Chickenman"

FT: "I was Chickenman 22"

RB: "I was Chickenman 21!"

Our faces cocked to the side, tilted forward, as close as we can get to each other without kissing and having more people looking at us then the auction stage, I wiped my face and shouted:

FT: "Who in the hell are you?"

RB: "Rob Brooks!"

FT: "I'm Frank Tierney!"

Ends up we flew together in 'Nam. Well the longest bear hug, which only two war-torn soldiers who knew what the other endured can give each other, followed.

Cav patch, wings tattooed over heart

He said he was drawn to me because of the "Silver Wings" emblem on the cap. With that and oblivious to the stares and smiles of others, he lifts up his shirt to bare his chest and show me the same exact emblem that was on my cap, the Cav patch in the center of a set of aviator wings, was tattooed over his heart!

Well, you know I took off that cap and immediately gave it to him.

It was fun to then include the first guy I was talking with in our conversation. He couldn't believe what he had just observed. Then his wife reappeared and was moved to tears, as were we, as the chance encounter was recounted.

We talked for two hours and bought each other beers. We recounted many of the same missions and incidents. We walked out to the parking lot together as we left. Amazingly, we both were driving red convertibles.

Rob and his wife came over to my home on Memorial Day to be a part of dedicating a veterans monument. That was followed by more beers and brats.

Rob became active in veteran activities

Rob, who had never been involved in any veteran activities, immersed himself immediately. Within weeks we went to the 1st Cav reunion in Milwaukee. A few weeks later, he rode his Harley to Texas for the VHPA reunion.

Well now, I know this is long, but I want you to know this is the short version! Everyone at the Cav reunion can probably tell the long version, as I told it numerous times to anyone who would listen.

And, if there were seven people in the group, I managed to tell it seven times before I moved on to the next group!

And the most amazing part is that neither Kathy nor I know how "The Silver Wings" cap got in the back of her Jeep.

As I said, I cleaned it out a month ago. It was the only thing in the back of a Jeep that had been to New Orleans and back. I had not worn one of those caps in years. That one was brand new and I didn't even know I had any left! (The Twilight Zone music plays in my head every time I think about that!)

Cool, eh?

Frank Tierney
Chickenman 22 "Double Duck"
Lai Khe, February-March 1971
Pleiku until January 1972



Taps

Julius L. "Lou" Berry

Julius L. "Lou" Berry, 73, died Jan. 27 at his home in Daleville, AL.

Berry was born July 15, 1931, a son of L.C. and Essie Berry. He retired as a CW4 from the Army where he served as a helicopter pilot. He was a decorated veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars.

He belonged to the VFW, DAV, VHPA, VHPA of Florida and the American Legion.

He is survived by a daughter, Julie Berry Church of Atlanta; a son, Joseph Berry of Dothan, AL; sisters Charlotte Berry Cairns and Ruby Berry Dunbar, both of Charleston; a brother, T.P. Berry of Reevesville, SC; and three grandchildren, Erin, Keri, and Kelly.



Dempsey L. Birmingham

Retired CW5 Dempsey L. Birmingham died of a heart attack in Savannah, GA, on Jan. 29.

He trained in flight school classes 70-25 and 70-27, and served in Vietnam with the 498th Medical Company in 1970-71 and A/227 1 CAV in 1971.

At the time of his death, Dempsey was director of new programs for FightSafety Corp. in Savannah.

"Zap" Birmingham briefly left the Army right after Vietnam, but then returned to active duty for a full career, mostly spent as a fixed-wing pilot. He was a great guy, an excellent aviator and, more importantly, a really good and decent man.

Charles Stonecipher
Political and Specialized Agency Affairs
U.S. Mission Geneva

Van T. "Terry" Drake

A pilot contracted by the military died Oct. 14 when his helicopter crashed and burst into flames in the desert on Fort Bliss property about five miles west of Orogrande, NM, the *El Paso Times* reported.

The pilot was identified as Van T. "Terry" Drake, 61, of High Rolls, NM, a pilot for defense contractor Lockheed Martin.

He served as an Army pilot with the 334th Attack Helicopter Company in 1970-71.

Larry Gene Gore

I am saddened to report the death of CW2 Larry Gene Gore.

Born Jan. 17, 1942, Larry graduated from helicopter flight training in WORWAC class 67-5. In June 1967, he entered combat in Vietnam, where he distinguished himself many times while flying with A/229th 1st Cavalry Division.

While launching from LZ English in II Corps, he flew headlong into hot LZs during the battles for LZ Pat and Tam Quan. The 1st Cavalry moved north to I Corps on Jan. 20, 1968, and into the middle of the 1968 Tet Offensive and the battle for Hue.

Despite torrential, monsoon rains, obscured ceilings, and enemy gunfire, Larry never had second thoughts about launching and completing his assigned missions. A/229th had not completed the ongoing battle for Hue when Larry and company did a "wheel and turn" to lead the entire Cavalry assault into Khe Sanh.

On the heels of this battle, Larry and the 229th entered the battle for the A-Shau Valley, where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, having survived while 22 helicopters were lost to anti-aircraft fire on the first day.

He also served as aviation liaison officer from the 1st Cavalry to the 101st Airborne Division.

In addition to his DFC, Larry's other awards include Bronze Star and Air Medal with 5 silver leaf clusters.

After Vietnam, Larry instructed at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA, until January 1970.

He entered civilian life as an air traffic controller and retired in 2002. After a short battle with cancer, Larry died May 9 in his beloved hometown of Tabor City, NC. At his side was his wife of more than 30 years, Sonya-Jean Gore; and two sons, Jason Alan Gore and Jonathan Owen Gore.

Having been a very close friend to Larry for 38 years, I and all who knew him will miss his North Carolina drawl and his dry humor. I wonder if they have Hueys in Heaven?

CW2 Tom Johnson

Donald "Don" Hildreth

Donald "Don" Hildreth, 74, of Lady Lake, FL, died Jan. 18 of cancer.

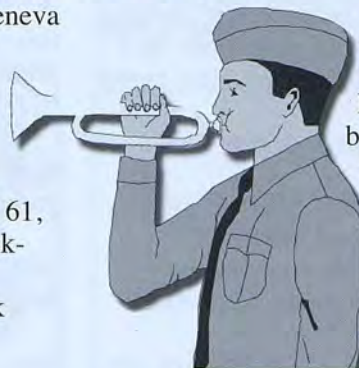
He graduated from flight school as a member of class 56-10, and was selected to remain at Fort Rucker to instruct in the H-13. He became a member of the OH-13 Square Dance Team and performed in many shows.

Hildreth later went to Korea to join the 6th Transportation Company, flying H-21s. He returned to Fort Rucker for fixed-wing qualification and then

was assigned to Alaska where he participated in rescue missions with the 65th Aviation Battalion.

He was assigned to Fort Bragg as a H-34 instructor pilot with 6th Special Forces Group.

In July 1965, Hildreth joined the 227th Aviation Battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division at An Khe long enough to be awarded several Air Medals and the Purple Heart



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Taps

Continued from Page 10

Medal. On Oct. 14, 1965, a round went through his face shield, injuring his left eye and ending his flying career.

He retired as a CW3 in September 1967 and moved to Lady Lake.

Hildreth is survived by daughters, Susan I. Sweeney of Cotuit, MA, and Cynthia A. Carnegie of France; his mother, Ethel Dinsmore of Easton, MA; a brother John Dinsmore of Lyndonville, VT; a sister, Susan Burdette of Mesa, AZ; and three grandchildren.

Roman Ochotsky

Roman Ochotsky, 57, died on Nov. 23 after a nine-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

Born in New Jersey on Feb. 9, 1947, he was living in Oceanside, CA, at the time of his death.

Ochotsky was in flight school classes 66-9/66-11, and served in the 189th and 57th AHC. After his Vietnam tour, Ochotsky was a flight instructor at Hunter Army Airfield.

He remained in aviation, flying helicopters, various fixed-wing aircraft, including 737s, and 747s, after completing his military service.

With him at his death, at the home of his fiancée, Christina Shymkovich, were Christina, his mother, his ex-wife Diane, his two children, and others who were close to him.

Charles J. "Chuck" Savage Jr.

Charles J. "Chuck" Savage Jr. of South Boston, MA, died Jan. 8 after a battle with cancer. He was 57.

Savage attended flight school in class 68-512/68-20, followed by AMOC.

He served in Vietnam from April 1969 to March 1970 as detachment commander of the 665th Transportation Company, attached to the 361st ACE "Pink Panthers."

His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and numerous awards of the Air Medal.

He was an outstanding maintenance officer who took his turn flying combat missions.

After continuous harassment, pestering and pleading from his fellow Panthers, Chuck reluctantly joined VHPA and attended his first reunion in Washington, DC, in 2000. Afterward, his wife, Elaine, told me this story:

"As we walked down the hall toward our room on the same floor as the Panther Suite, Chuck stopped me and

said his coming to the reunion was a mistake. This was in his past and should stay there. I told him we had come this far, should go to our room, drop our bags, go to the suite and check it out. If he still wanted to go home after that, we could leave the next day.

"We walked in to the suite, he saw several Panthers he knew and it was like Chuck was with his best friends again. He had a ball."

She told me Chuck actually regretted he had made reservations to go home a day before the reunion ended.

The reunion turned out to be one of the great times of his life.

He was able to make several more and had plans to attend Dallas last year when the cancer was discovered. He also planned to attend San Francisco this year.

Chuck is survived by Elaine, his wife of 37 years; their daughter Sandra; two sons, David and Matt; his father; and numerous grandchildren.

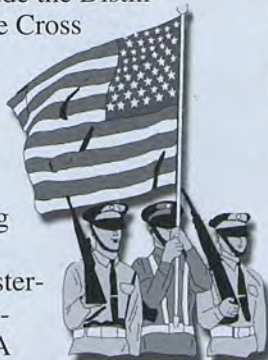
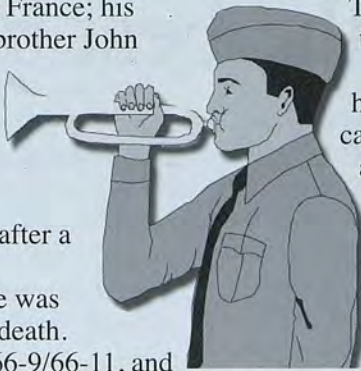
He was a devoted husband and father, true friend and courageous man to the end.

He never complained.

Chuck was a Pink Panther to his core. He will be missed and remembered at the San Francisco reunion and all future Panther gatherings.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15

361st ACE/AWC Pink Panthers
SIO



Robert Samuel Springer

Robert Samuel Springer, 66, died Jan. 31 in Fort Worth.

He was born Aug. 31, 1938, in Chicago to Robert and Loraine Wells Springer.

At the age of 18, Springer joined the Marine Corps and was honorably discharged in 1960.

He continued his military service with the Army as a helicopter pilot, serving two tours in Vietnam for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with valor device, 39 awards of the Air Medal, including one with a valor device.

Springer retired from the Army in 1977 with the rank of CW3.

After his military service, he became a master clock maker, restoring antique clocks for several years until he returned to flying with Miami Helicopter.

Springer was a member of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society and the VHPA.

Survivors include his wife, Ann Delbridge Springer of Granbury, TX; his sister Diane Sandine; and niece and nephew, DeAnna and Rex Sandine of the Chicago area.

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Taps

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Thomas C. White

Thomas C. White died at his home on Anderson Island, WA, after a lengthy illness.

He joined the Army in 1966 and served as a heli-

copter pilot in Vietnam in 1968. He was recipient of the Silver Star Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with one oak leaf cluster, and a Purple Heart Medal.

I thought some of you probably flew with him or knew him. May he rest in peace.

Steve Henshaw

'Snake Pilot' the best book about us

Sometimes you read a book about a subject you are familiar with and it has little or no lasting effect on you. You enjoy the read, but when you finish it, it's over.

"Snake Pilot," by Randy Zahn, is not one of those books. It stays with you long after you finish reading it.

At first, I thought my enjoyment and appreciation of the book might have been the similarities between the author and myself — both Cobra pilots, similar experi-

ences in Vietnam and the knowledge each of us flew with the best aviation unit to serve in Southeast Asia.

But, after much thought and review, that is not the case. I believe this may be the best book ever written about us, the rotor wing aviator in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Randy tells the complete story of what we did, felt, endured, sacrificed and accomplished during our time there.

You identify with all his emotions, feelings and actions — bravery, fear, loss, anger, disgust, depression, compassion, brotherhood, laughter, guilt, etc. Each of us can substitute the names of those we served with for the

Continued on Page 13

Book review



Flying the Cobra Attack Helicopter in Vietnam

Own it now!

Get your copy of Randy Zahn's stirring memoir of life as a 19-year-old kid flying one of America's most potent weapons in Vietnam — the AH-1 Cobra.



"This is the best memoir to date on the air war in Vietnam."

— JOHN SHERWOOD,
author of *Fast Movers: Jet Pilots and the Vietnam Experience*

"Through the sweat, blood, and tears of far too many missions, he learned that war is about men and what it does to them.... Randy tells it well. Cleared hot."

— DARREL WHITCOMB,
author of *The Rescue of Bat 21*

"Snake Pilot is a real keeper. I couldn't put it down."

— JOSEPH L. GALLOWAY,
senior military correspondent,
Knight Ridder Newspapers,
and co-author of *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young*

Published by Brassey's, Inc.

Available at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, Borders.com, and bookstores everywhere.

Membership

Pink Panthers exceed 86 percent dues current

Since the last *Newsletter* the dues current membership in VHPA among those who served in the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers" has increased dramatically.

As of this article, every Panther we had located who had never been part of the Association before is now current and several of those who were members at one time but let their memberships lapse are again dues-current members.

The unit started with a goal of 80 percent membership in VHPA.

As of this writing, we have 33 Life (20 percent), 114 Regular (67 percent), 15 Non-current (9 percent) and 7 Not Yet Located (4 percent).

The dues-current percentage of Panthers exceeds 86 percent.

Of those dues-current pilots, 75 plus, along with their families and friends, are expected to attend the VHPA reunion in San Francisco next July, several for the first time.

Association members signed up buddies

How did this happen? Panthers, already members of the Association, signed their buddies up. They gave the gift of VHPA membership to someone who had not yet experienced the renewed camaraderie, esprit de corps and brotherhood of 30 plus years ago. And the cost is minimal — \$36, less than two beers a month.

Since the last *Newsletter*, we found out the member-

ship is tax deductible. Plus, we get a \$25 spiff from VHPA for every 10 guys we sign up. Right now we've got \$50 coming and plan to make \$75 by the reunion. FREE BEER.

Other units can generate members

If the Panthers can do this, so can the Gladiators and Cougars of the 57th, the Bikinis and the Bucs of the 170th, the Ghost Riders of the 189th, the Devils and the Demons of the 134th, the 1/9th CAV, the 7/17th CAV, the 48th AHC, the 162nd AHC, the 101st ABN and all the other aviation units that served in Vietnam.

Less than 32 percent of the more than 38,000 pilots listed in our current VHPA *Membership Directory* are now or ever have been members of VHPA. We need to change that.

Unit challenges others to contact pilots

Again, the guys from my unit and I challenge you to look up the guys in the *Directory* you served with and contact them.

Better yet, pick out one or more guys and give him or them a one-year membership in our Association. Do it today. Get your buddies in the Association to do the same.

If each one of us signs up one other pilot, the Association doubles in size. Help make the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association grow. It's up to us.

— Mike Sheuerman

Book hits home for most veterans

Continued from Page 12

names he mentions in the book. You can recall the strain on our parents and friends and, though they tried to understand and appreciate what we were going through, never would.

You recall the utter stupidity of the conduct of the war in general and the local area decisions made by those who never ventured outside the wire or, much less, flew in the

AO. You recall the guys you came to hold as close as brothers. You recall doing your job for the guys you flew with, knowing they would do the same for you. You remember counting the days until your tour was over just like he did. You remember feeling guilty about leaving your buddies behind as you went home.

Book review



It finally hit me this book is our book. Each of us could have written it. It could have been written by Gary Roush and titled "Chinook Pilot," Stanley Steenbock and called "Slick Pilot" or any one of us and called "Helicopter Pilot."

This is truly a great book about the helicopter pilot in combat, but it's really more about his emotions. I laughed and cried as I read it, remembering my own time in Vietnam and those I served with. I highly recommend this book to all of you and suggest you have those close to you read it also. It will give them a solid picture and deeper appreciation of what we went through. Randy does a great job in presenting our story.

An interesting side note is this, I checked the VHPA Membership Directory to see if those mentioned in the book are members of our Association. I found those Randy speaks highly of are, for the most part, members. Those he tends to feel less kindly toward are not.

— Mike Sheuerman

What a party!

Registrations double best-attended past reunions

JOE BILITZKE AND DAVE RITTMAN
NATIONAL REUNION CO-CHAIRMEN

Wow! The membership has responded to news about our upcoming reunion in a resounding way!

As this article is being written in early February, registrations are coming in at a rate almost twice of any other reunion in our history — far out-tracking even our previous best-attended get-togethers: Las Vegas in 2002 and Washington, DC, in 2000.

Said simply, if current actual registration sign-up trends continue, when we meet in July to renew acquaintances first made in difficult times and renew camaraderie of old, you will be doing so with the highest number of pilots and guests in attendance in our 22-year history.

And all this is happening in a fabulous city that knows how to host a great party!

Our last *Newsletter* contained a significant amount of information for your review and this update is being written after a comprehensive on-site meeting with the hotel staff, entertainment producers, and our various vendors.

This reunion you have to attend

Trust us when we say, regardless of whether you have been to a recent reunion or not, this is one you have to attend!

While ensuring very ample time exists for meeting that special person you haven't seen for years, telling stories of old that get better by the year in the lounges, and even taking time to just "chill out" in a great first class hotel, this year there are many very special events and activities that will in themselves be an experience of a lifetime.

The hotel: First class and what a rate!

By now you know the host hotel this year is the San Francisco Marriott, located downtown in the heart of everything at 55 Fourth St. At the fabulous, negotiated rate of \$109 per night plus tax, as anyone who knows San Francisco, this is a true bargain. Don't believe it? As of Feb. 4, when this article was written, over 56 percent of

our original room block was already booked by members through our on-line reservation system (or the manual process through HQ) and are guaranteed by credit card.

Rooms will be limited and this year's reunion is being held in the middle of the most desirable tourist season. Thus, overall space in San Francisco will be at a premium; be sure you reserve your room(s) early.

This year we are

doing that through our VHPA registration system www.vhpareunion.org So, when you complete registering for VHPA events, the software continues to accept your room reservations online! Simple!

Arrive July 1 and take an extra day to view the City!

Officially the reunion starts off on Saturday, July 2, though many of you are electing to arrive a day early to take in the sights of the city on your own. Actual sign-up trends so far reflect there will be some 1,000 or more members and guests already there as of Friday evening. At the above rates, it is an opportunity not to be missed and, for the time being, the hotel has the overnight room space.

Most of the remaining attendees are arriving Saturday for our first "official" night of the reunion. We recommend you try to time your arrival for early or mid-afternoon, if possible, so you can take advantage of the very



San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau
The crown jewels of San Francisco's Victorian treasures, this row of houses called "Postcard Row" is one of the most-photographed residential streets in America. Bounded by Webster, Broderick, Oak and Golden Gate streets, Alamo Square Park looks out over the downtown area to the east, framing these turn-of-the-century beauties against a backdrop of modern skyscrapers. A number of them are open to the public on private-home tours.

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Burdon, Animals booked

Continued from Page 14
special activities planned for Saturday evening.

Eric Burdon and the Animals booked for opening reception

For our first-time reunion attendees, we will have a special welcome orientation at 6:30 p.m., and for the general membership, including our first-time attendees, we open up the doors at 7 p.m. to mingle, possibly find that special pilot you haven't seen in 40 years, and socialize in the best of company.

With the reunion being in the Pacific time zone, our experience has been almost everyone will be checked in and ready to party when our headliner show kicks off at 8:30 p.m. in the main ballroom — none other than Eric Burdon and the Animals.

We have been using their song "We've Got to Get Out of This Place" as our unofficial theme song for years, and now's your chance to hear it live from the band that performed it originally way back when.

Actually, we put a special clause into the contract: They have to play it twice! Ticket cost, including taxes and gratuities, is \$35 per person. What a night it will be!

Culinary exhibition, brunch for spouses — 10 a.m., July 3

For the spouses who are reading this article: Have you ever wondered how those gourmet chefs make some of the unique pastry specialties that look too good to eat?

Here's a chance to learn first hand, while the pilots are off getting bored to death at the annual business meeting in a different area of the hotel. The hotel has several of the premium executive chefs in the country on staff.

In addition to a fine brunch, you will witness first hand from highly talented culinary artists — including executive pastry chef Bill Holt — how to prepare very unique and exquisite pastries, desserts, chocolates, and the

like. Bill and his staff have promised samples of their work throughout the presentation for all.

Cost, including taxes and gratuities, is \$30 per person. Based on our on-site meeting with the hotel, just the chocolate and related goodies may be worth more than that . . . on top of the brunch!

Trip to Alcatraz — July 3 or 5

Listen to the taxi drivers, they say, to learn things when you come into a town you don't know. The advice we got on the way to the airport after visiting the hotel was to make sure we told you to book the Alcatraz tour

well in advance, as tickets usually are sold out weeks ahead of time and are not available upon arrival.

Alcatraz, which is on an island in the middle of San Francisco Bay, is a very popular tour. This trip is operated by the U.S. Park Service, and the "locals" told us you had little hope of obtaining tickets upon arrival, unless the VHPA set up the reservations in advance, which is exactly what we have done on your behalf.

The VHPA has put in reservations for 800 prepaid tickets — 400 on Sunday afternoon, July 3, and another 400 on the morning of Tuesday, July 5. Regrettably, that is all we anticipate getting. As of the writing of this article, members already have purchased more than 53 percent during registration.

In addition, tickets are capacity controlled to only 100 for any one sailing, thus the experience is truly limited.

When they are gone, they are gone — and there is a possibility the Park Service may not allocate all the tickets we have ordered. The message, of course, is to order now!

The dock where the tour starts is on the same trolley line that stops in front of the hotel or you can catch a cab for \$6-\$7. We are leaving the transportation up to you, so you can walk around the city, see the sights, and not be locked into a specific schedule.

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San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau photo

The most popular tourist destination in the city, Fisherman's Wharf, is still a working fishing pier, bringing in thousands of tons of fresh fish and crabs annually. Freshly cracked crab and crusty sourdough bread are not the only delicacies to tempt the visitor here. More than 11 million people a year come for the shops, bay cruises, attractions and historic view restaurants.

Alcatraz boats reserved in advance

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By ordering your ticket now for the day you wish, upon check-in at our registration desk at the hotel, you will receive your tickets along with your precise sailing time. The boats run every hour and, like an airplane flight, they are all reserved in advance. Cost, including taxes, gratuities and our administrative costs, is \$22.50. You will need to specify which date you prefer. Once ordered, the tickets are not refundable.

Cabaret party Sunday 9 p.m.-midnight

Attention to orders! (Sound familiar?) Early Sunday evening is free time for you to enjoy as you wish BUT you will really miss out if you do not plan to be back at the hotel by 9 p.m. That is when we kick off a special cabaret party which we have relocated into a specially configured area in the main ballroom (a change from our last *Newsletter*), complete with a satellite stage built "in the round" in the middle of the room.

That should give you more than a subtle clue something very special is going to happen. This is planned as a free event for all registered members and guests, but you will need your ID registration badge/ lanyard to gain entrance to the area.

Casual in atmosphere, envision mingling and socializing with all your friends and acquaintances, while a host of great singers, actors, and entertainers perform almost nonstop in a interactive Las Vegas-style cabaret setting. Bring cameras — this is one not to be missed!

Golf tournament the morning of July 4th

Play golf? Sign up and you are going to have the privilege of playing the best golf course in Northern California for turf conditions and one of the highest-rated courses overall.

If you would like to take a virtual tour of the course, go to this website: <http://stonetreegolf.com> You may think about wearing warmer clothes when you first leave the hotel, but by 10 a.m. it should be above 80 degrees at the course and reach 90 degrees by the time we finish. Cost is \$100 per player, and includes green fees and a cart.

We are going to have some interesting events and mementos at the tournament this year, and golf coordina-

tor Mike Whitten already has got sponsors to donate a case of premium wine and some other prize money.

If any of you know anyone who would like to sponsor a hole at the golf tournament, please get in touch with Mike at [REDACTED]

July 4 harbor dinner cruise

Early registrations received thus far reflect this is going to be an absolute blast, and very likely a total sell-out ... and very soon. The San Francisco Belle is an upscale, four-deck, stern-wheeler ship.

During dinner cruises, the bottom three, fully enclosed decks can comfortably accommodate 400 people each. The top deck is open to the elements (and available to view the fireworks).

As of Feb. 4, we have sold out virtually 100 percent of the top level (400 members and guests), and 353 of the 400 spaces on the middle level. With more than 750 tickets already sold, that means we have fewer than 450 seats remaining on the ship. They will go fast! By the time you receive this article, remaining tickets will be very limited.

A note on the overall accommodations is in order. Ambiance-wise,

each of the three decks is exactly identical; the only key difference is the type of entertainment that will end up on each deck. Once a deck is sold out with VHPA members, it becomes exclusively accessible only by VHPA members and guests, and we will match the decks the best we can with comparable entertainment. First come, first served.

Depending on how soon the VHPA Internet registration system (or HQ) receives any remaining reservations for the cruise, we may have the lower deck available solely to VHPA before they're offered for sale to the public on or about March 1. This is the most popular cruise of the year in San Francisco; tickets go fast and it's always a sellout months before July.

Once inside the ship, you'll find linen-covered tables, a dance floor, and a five-piece band with instructions to "keep the tunes in the 1960s." Domestic beer is going for special \$2 VHPA prices! Huge bars, one forward and one aft, will keep the liquid refreshments available all

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San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau photo

As seen from the bay, the lighted towers of the Financial District and northern waterfront gleam under a clear sky just after sunset. In the forefront is the Ferry Building, whose spire was built in 1898 and was modeled after the Giralda cathedral tower of Seville, Spain. Today it is dwarfed by the Transamerica Pyramid, Bank of America building and downtown skyscrapers.

Cruise dinner scrumptious

Continued from Page 16

evening. The buffet is first class, as you could see from the menu printed in our last *Newsletter*. Details are still posted on the VHPA website, of course.

Here's the flight plan for the evening: We'll leave the San Francisco Marriott and climb aboard buses for a short hop to the pier. For those who require assistance, the ship is fully wheelchair accessible, but please check the registration box if you need a wheelchair-accessible bus so we can plan for you accordingly.

We'll shove off around 7:30 p.m., still with plenty of daylight to enable you to absorb the sights. While you're enjoying your adult beverage and scrumptious dinner, we'll pass a number of San Francisco landmarks, including the island of Alcatraz. Continuing around Angel Island and after viewing the exclusive (and very expensive) enclaves of Tiburon and Belvedere, you'll see the town of Sausalito. The glowing lights of the town will remind you of similar settings along the French and Italian rivieras.

Your floating restaurant then hugs the coast, turns west, and directly in front of you is the structure that is San Francisco — the Golden Gate Bridge. After returning to the bay and being the biggest dog on the porch or, more appropriately, the biggest boat on the bay, we get to choose the best spot to drop anchor for the next event.

Weather and fog permitting, get set for a fireworks show to end all shows.

San Francisco has the reputation for the biggest and best fireworks in the West. The Belle will moor as close as possible to give you a breathtaking view. Now, if the weather is cooperative, and the fog remains outside the bay, you'll have ringside seats to the display.

Look around; you'll see the Bay literally covered with boats of all sizes. This is a very popular spectacle in the Bay area! As a reminder, this trip, once purchased is non-refundable and we cannot guarantee the weather.

However, the boat sails rain or shine, and locals tell us from experience we have a better than 75 percent chance fog will not force cancellation of the fireworks display.

Checking our seasonal weather for July, the average high is 71 degrees F, the average low is 56 degrees, and the mean is 64 degrees, with very little cloud cover. (Remember, fog is not cloud cover). So, as you can see, the temperatures remain relatively cool, even in July. Dress accordingly, grab a beverage, and look up. Oooh! Aaah! Register early and don't miss it. It is going to be a great night!



San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau photo

Conceived as a grand classical ruin, the Palace of Fine Arts originally was designed by architect Bernard Maybeck as a temporary structure for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exhibition. The romantic lagoon, Romanesque rotunda and elegant colonnade evoke a sense of joy and timeless beauty. Even after the other structures were torn down, the public clamored to preserve the Palace. It was rebuilt in near entirety in concrete in 1966, after crumbling for more than 50 years.

Final night banquet – Tuesday, July 5

For many of you, this will be your final night to enjoy the camaraderie and friendships formed and renewed during the reunion. There is a choice of three meals: Strip steak, halibut or vegetarian. Cost is \$60, including taxes and gratuities.

After the ceremonies, we have a great group of entertainers to finish up the evening — David Martin and his house band, which includes singers, dancers, and other performers.

This year we are starting activates a little

earlier so you all can enjoy the entertainment a little longer before you head back to your rooms that night and prepare to return home the next day. But if you leave early, you will miss a great show!

This year your Executive Council has voted to test a concept talked about within the Association for several years. If you and your spouse/guest would like to bring a special non-member friend, relative or guest just to the final night's banquet, but not to any other event at the reunion, you may do so without paying the overall reunion registration fee by purchasing a ticket for that person at the same time you sign up for your final night banquet tickets. Cost is \$85 per guest (taxes and gratuities included), a figure that covers the approximate cost per person of conducting the banquet, including the entertainment, ceremonies and technical support.

Post trip to Maui, Hawaii – Wednesday, July 6

After all the excitement of the wonderful reunion in San Francisco and traveling from far and wide, why not

Continued on Page 18

Golfers plan post-reunion Maui trip

Continued from Page 17

go the next step and fly to Maui for a week of fun in the sun and surf.

We have made arrangements with Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) for 7 days at the Fabulous Kapalua Resort on the Island of Maui. We have reserved condos at the Kapalua Villas in the Fairway section.

These beautiful one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas range from 1,200 to 2,400 square feet. Enjoy resort charging and guest privileges at the Ritz Carlton, Kapalua and the Kapalua Bay Hotel and Ocean Villas. Three beautiful, white-sand beaches and 54 holes of championship golf are just minutes away.

Please look at the following website:
*Kapalua Resort -
Kapalua Villas -
Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii*
Additional details on accommodations and pricing were contained in our last Newsletter, and are easily available on our VHPA website

Air travel will be on United Airlines, leaving SFO at 9:30 a.m. and arriving Maui at 11:40 a.m. on July 6. The return flight will leave Maui at 9:30 p.m. on July 13, arriving SFO at 5:18 a.m. the following morning. Shorter stays are possible

Our travel agent is Bobbie Bograd at MOAA vacations. She is the only agent that has this program and is the only one who will offer this great program. She can be contacted at the following locations:

United offers discount fares

If you fly on United Airlines to San Francisco for the VHPA, you are eligible for a special discount.

Booking your reservation within 30 days of the June 26-July 14 availability date will entitle you to a 5 percent fare discount. Booking more than 30 days ahead entitles you to the 10 percent discount.

To make reservations, call (800) 521-4041 and refer to Meeting ID Code 531CD.

You must call United Airlines directly or book your flight through a travel agent to qualify for the special discount.

★★★★★

Hertz is the official car rental agency of this year's VHPA reunion.

Use the URL below to receive a special rate from Hertz:

https://www.hertz.com/banner_com/bannerentry.jsp?target=quote&uniqueID=5793&ret_url=www.vhpa.org

Do I fly or drive to the reunion?

For many of you in the Central and Eastern United States, that decision will be obvious. By booking well in advance, there are many discounted airfares to the San Francisco area.

Special additional discounts have been negotiated with United Airlines (see details elsewhere in this Newsletter and on the website).

Oakland is just across the Bay from downtown San Francisco and, while it is about \$20 farther away by cab, Southwest and other discount airlines fly there on frequent schedules.

San Francisco International is somewhat closer to downtown and also hosts many airlines with resulting discount fares if you purchase them early enough.

Cab fare from SFO to the hotel costs \$30-\$35, and coming in from Oakland is \$50-\$55, though traffic can be a factor at certain times of the day.

Shuttle buses run from the airport to the hotel too, but if you have two people going, a cab works out to be about the same price, and is faster.

Vehicle parking

If you decide to drive, be aware parking in downtown San Francisco is expensive. However, directly across the street from the hotel lobby entrance is a multi-story park-

Continued on Page 19

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC) ELECTIONS

Here is a heads up for the EC Elections

If you are interested in running for office on the EC, contact me at the following and I will send you a complete election package:

Telephone: (206) 842-7998;
e-mail: johnsalmjr@aol.com;
or Fax: (206) 842-6683

THERE ARE TWO POSITIONS AVAILABLE:

VICE PRESIDENT

JUNIOR MEMBER AT LARGE

EC Coordinator:
Jack Salm
4331 NE Rhodes End
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

SUSPENSE DATE:
NO LATER THAN MIDNIGHT, JUNE 15, 2005

Parking expensive in San Francisco

Continued from Page 18

ing garage called Verba Buena Garage, which is operated by the City of San Francisco. Daily rates there are \$20 (an update from our last *Newsletter*), which is considered relatively inexpensive for San Francisco.

Important! The Marriott hotel garage is owned by an outside vendor who charges \$42 a day.

Neither area will accommodate a RV motor home. Our website has specific visitor and convention bureau recommendations for those driving RVs.

If you have a choice, this year it might be better to leave the car home and fly.

Rental vehicles

If you are thinking about flying to the reunion and renting a car, Hertz has a counter and vehicles available at the hotel. We have negotiated VHPA discounts, details of which are contained elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. Rates vary, of course, but vehicles can be rented for about \$40-\$50 per day, with pickup and return at the hotel.

If you plan to rent a car, checking out your credit card policy in advance could save you from the cost of purchasing additional "insurance waivers" as part of the rental contract.

Dining around San Francisco

Besides the facilities at the Marriott, there are many wonderful restaurants in San Francisco – thousands of them in all sizes and types, many of which pride themselves as smaller, culturally diverse, and they often describe themselves as "intimate." Several hundred are

within walking distance or a short cab ride away from the Marriott.

The concierge at the hotel has access to many of these places and can make reservations for you easily online in the main lobby, even at the last minute, though advance reservations are strongly recommended.

Cab rides in the downtown are relatively inexpensive and the restaurants can be reasonable. While there is no food at "The View" on the 39th floor of the Marriott, it provides a spectacular overlook of the city and is a wonderful place to sit and enjoy the ambiance.

Other entertainment

Similar to the past few years, your reunion committee has arranged for lounge entertainment at various locations around the hotel throughout the reunion.

By popular request, Kaycee and Roger Cowen, who preformed for us at the Orlando and Dallas reunions, will return again this year. Roger performed on the USO circuit during our Vietnam era, so this is like a reunion homecoming for them also. Details on their schedule will be provided on the one page reunion schedule elsewhere in this *Newsletter* and, of course, will be provided to you upon arrival.

Time to act is now! See you there!

This year it is apparent a number of key events and activates, and the overnight rooms themselves, are clearly capacity limited. Make your reservations now and plan to have the time of your life with your friends and comrades of old. See you there!

Bringing a motor home or RV to reunion?

Parking in downtown San Francisco is scarce and expensive. Neither the hotel parking facility or the adjacent City garage across the street will accommodate over-size-type vehicles. The Marriott garage, in particular, is operated by an outside vendor, and is not recommended due to its premium costs.

The San Francisco Visitors and Convention Bureau has recommended the three areas below if you are bringing your RV or motor home to the reunion.

Recreational Vehicle Parks/Campgrounds

Candlestick RV Park

650 Gilman Street

San Francisco, CA 94124

Primary Contact: Mr. Chu Fung, Manager

Phone: (415) 822-2299, (800) 888-2267

Fax: (415) 822-7638

URL: www.sanfranciscorvpark.com

Email: candlestick_rv@msn.com

Marin Park Inc.

2140 Redwood Highway

Larkspur, CA 94904

Primary Contact:

Connie Kidd, Park Manager

Phone: (415) 461-5199

(888) 461-5199

Fax: (415) 925-1584

URL: www.marinrvpark.com

San Francisco RV Resort

700 Palmetto Ave.

Pacifica, CA 94044

Primary Contact:

Charlene Winter, Manager

Phone: (650) 355-7093

(800) 822-1250

Fax: (650) 355-7102

URL: www.sanfranciscorvresort.com

Schedule:

San Francisco reunion events begin on July 1

Friday, July 1

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Vendor set up – Golden Gate Hall A-C
1:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Registration for pre-registered guests only – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
6:00 PM – Whenever	Early Bird informal get together – 2nd floor hotel Atrium area

Saturday, July 2

10:00 AM – 8:00 PM	Registration – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
9:00 AM – 7:00 PM	Vendor area – Golden Gate Hall A-C
6:30 PM – 7:00 PM	First time reunion attendee special orientation welcome reception – Nob Hill A-D
7:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Welcome reception and party for all members and their guests – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
8:30 PM - 10:00 PM	Eric Burdon and The Animals performance – Yerba Buena Ballroom

Sunday, July 3

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Annual Business Meeting (dues current members only) – Salon 8 & 9; Yerba Buena Ballroom
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Brunch for spouses and guests, including culinary exhibition of master gourmet chefs – hotel area TBD
12:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Vendor area – Golden Gate Hall A-C
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Mini reunions
1:30 PM – 4:30 PM	Alcatraz Island Tour – departure time exact schedule per your pre-purchased tickets – approx 4 hours.
5:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Informal get together with great 2-piece combo – 2nd Floor Hotel Atrium
9:00 PM – midnight	Cabaret Entertainment and Stage Show – Yerba Buena Ballroom

Monday, July 4

6:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Golf Tournament at Stone Tree Golf; includes lunch and mementos
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Mini-reunions
9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Vendor area – Golden Gate Hall A-C
6:00 PM – 11:00 PM	4th of July Dinner cruise, dancing, and weather/fog permitting very major fireworks display
10:30 PM- 1:30 AM	Party continues with great 2-piece combo inside the hotel lounge area – 2nd Floor Hotel Atrium

Tuesday, July 5

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Mini-reunions
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Alcatraz Island Tour – departure time exact schedule per your pre-purchased tickets – approx 4 hours.
9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration – Yerba Buena Ballroom area
9:00 AM – 4:30 PM	Vendor Area – location to be announced (relocated from Golden Gate A-C)
5:30 PM – midnight	Doors open - Final Banquet & dance (Typically this is a coat and tie event. Some members wear military dress uniform. Ladies wear cocktail dresses) – Yerba Buena Ballroom

Wednesday, July 6

AM Departure	Check out for majority of reunion attendees – returning home
AM Departure	For members and guests going on the post reunion trip to Maui, Hawaii only – flight leaves SFO enroute to Maui – exact departure times included in your trip package.

Register at www.vhpareunion.org

VHPA 2005 Tour Options

NAPA WINE TOUR

Sunday 9:00-5:30 p.m.

Price per person \$35

Tour of the Napa and Sonoma Wine Country by bus from San Francisco. Discover the wonders and romance of Napa and Sonoma — one of the largest and most exciting premium wine producing areas in the world. You will have an opportunity to both taste wines and learn the ins and outs of wine making at a selection of both boutique and high-volume wineries. These wineries are a short drive from the Bay Area, located on the rolling hillsides in valleys suited for wine growing. Excellent photo opportunities.

There will be time for lunch and shopping at either Sonoma's historic square or Yountville's Vintage 1870 building. You will have wonderful memories to share with family and friends.

This bus tour takes you from San Francisco to Napa and Sonoma Valleys and back. Lunch is not included.

MUIR WOODS/SAUSALITO TOUR

Sunday 1:30 p.m. –5:00 p.m.

Tuesday 10:30 a.m. –2:00 p.m.

Price per person \$25

See the giant redwood trees in Muir Woods, and visit picturesque Sausalito. Travel across the Golden Gate Bridge and through our coastal highlands into one of the oldest national monuments. Nestled at the foot of Mount Tamalpais is Muir Woods National Monument, one of the remaining groves of first-growth Coastal Redwoods. The woods were named for John Muir, Jr., a 19th century naturalist. Wander through this grove of virgin Redwoods, and capture photo opportunities like you've rarely experienced.

Then on to picturesque Sausalito. Once a fishing community, Sausalito is now a mixture of Victorian bungalows built into the steep hillside and a variety of restaurants, boutiques, and small art galleries. You'll have time for shopping, photos, and a bit of exploring along the waterfront of this unique town, with its old world charm and fantastic views.

DELUXE CITY TOUR

Sunday 1 p.m. –4:30 p.m.

Tuesday 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Price per person \$22

See the highlights of San Francisco — our beautiful city by the Bay. This tour visits all the major sights in San Francisco — from Fisherman's Wharf to the Golden Gate Bridge to the Pacific Ocean to Chinatown. Your tour concludes at Ghirardelli Square where you will have the opportunity to explore Fisherman's Wharf. You will have the choice of returning directly to your hotel or doing some further sightseeing on your own.

Special VHPA Reunion Prices Apply!!

To register for tours go to

www.towertours.net and click on the VHPA link at bottom right corner or call

(866) 345-8687 and tell them you are with VHPA!

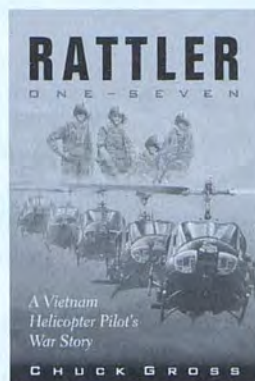


Last Hueys retire in Indiana

The Indiana Army National Guard had a special retirement ceremony Dec. 11, 2004, at the Aviation Support Facility in Shelbyville, IN.

Maj. Tim Winslow, operations officer of the facility, said: "The event is intended to honor the service of the UH-1 Huey helicopter and all who served with it over the years."

"There are roughly 100 UH-1's remaining in the entire National Guard," Winslow said.



Rattler One-Seven

A Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's War Story

Chuck Gross

Hardcover \$27.95
248 pp. 26 b&w photos, 2 maps

Chuck Gross spent his 1970-71 tour flying UH-1 Huey helicopters. He inserted special operations teams into Laos and participated in Lam Son 719, a misbegotten attempt to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, during which he was shot down and stranded in the field.

"Exciting reading! *Rattler One-Seven* is a compelling memoir of what it was like to fly combat helicopters in Vietnam. It is a must-read for all military and aviation enthusiasts."

—Chuck Carlock, author of *Firebirds*

"As a helicopter pilot with combat experience in Vietnam, I could readily relate to Gross' experiences—several of them had the hair on the back of my neck standing up!"

—John F. Guilmartin, Jr., Lt. Col. USAF (Ret),
and professor of history, Ohio State University

"The only things missing are the smells of gunpowder and the incredible noise as he takes the reader on combat assaults into hot landing zones."

—James Joyce, author of *Pucker Factor 10*



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FORMER & CURRENT EMPLOYEES OF AIR LOGISTICS, INC.

A reunion is being planned for all former and current employees of Air Logistics.

It will be held on
13-14 May 2005 in
Baton Rouge, LA.

All interested parties should contact
Kenny Bunn at 205-
620-1880,
bunnz@earthlink.net,
or by snail mail at:

3831 Hwy 26
Columbiana, AL 35051

All dress will be casual. Take this opportunity to catch up on old friends. See you there.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

22nd Annual Reunion • San Francisco, CA • July 2-5, 2005

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Register online at www.vhpareunion.org 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.:		
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?	Yes	No
City:	State:	Zip:	
E-mail address:	Telephone: ()	Fax: ()	
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older?	Yes No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older?	Yes No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older?	Yes No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older?	Yes No

If using this manual form in lieu of the VHPA Internet website, once registered, you will need to contact the San Francisco Marriott Hotel, 55 Fourth St., San Francisco, CA 94103-3199 yourself to complete your room reservation. The hotel's telephone number is: (415) 896-1600. Be sure to identify yourself as a VHPA member to receive the heavily discounted rate. A credit card number or one night's advance payment will be required to hold a reservation. Please review the reunion refund policy for further details. Limit of 2 rooms per member unless approved in advance by VHPA Headquarters.

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration through 4/30/2005*		@ \$55.00	
Registration after 4/30/2005*		@ \$65.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXX	XXXXX	
Welcome orientation for first reunion attendees only (July 2)		No charge	
Welcome reception (July 2)		@ \$35.00	
Spouse/guest brunch (Culinary demonstration) (July 3)		@ \$30.00	
Golf Tournament (July 4)		@ \$100.00	
San Francisco Bay Cruise (July 4)		@ \$120.00	
Wheelchair transport needed? Number			
Alcatraz Trip — July 3		@ \$22.50	
Alcatraz Trip — July 5		@ \$22.50	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 5)		@ \$60.00	
Non-registered guests at banquet only		@ \$85.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$36.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	3 years	@ \$90.00	
Life membership		@ \$450.00	
GRAND TOTAL			

REUNION T-SHIRTS		
QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$17.50	
	M@\$17.50	
	L@\$17.50	
	XL@\$17.50	
	XXL@\$18.50	
	XXXL@\$19.50	
SIDEBAR TOTAL:		

QTY.	BANQUET MEAL
	Beef
	Fish
	Vegetarian

Membership Fund contribution:	\$ _____
Scholarship Fund contribution:	\$ _____
General Fund contribution:	\$ _____
Vietnam War Museum contribution:	\$ _____

*Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee. (Except non-registered banquet guests.)

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 2005" with form.

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)

Membership application/change of address

☐ New application ☐ Address change ☐ Directory correction

Membership dues: ☐ Annual: \$36 ☐ Three years: \$90 ☐ Life: \$450*

Newsletter subscription only: ☐ Annual: \$36 ☐ Three years: \$90

Add \$ _____ as my contribution to: ☐ Membership Fund ☐ Scholarship Fund

NAME

DATE OF BIRTH:

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CITY:

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OCCUPATION:

- ☐ Please charge my MasterCard/Visa credit card.
☐ Enclosed is a check/money order payable to VHPA.

- ☐ Add \$15 for current Membership Directory,
plus \$5 for postage and handling

Credit card No.:

Expiration date:

SIGNATURE:

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS:

SERVICE BRANCH:

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS:

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:

Information about each Vietnam tour:

Date of tour			Unit	Location	Call sign
	From:	To:			
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					

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

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association? Referred by? Was membership a gift? From whom?