



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

March/April 2005 Vol. 23, No. 2



Dave Rittman photo

A UH-1D rigged for parachute jumps is shown at Phan Thiet, about 85 miles northeast of Saigon, in December 1966. The aircraft belonged to C/229th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division, which operated in various parts of South Vietnam.

From the President

I would like to dedicate this article to the VHPA Cobra.

The Cobra is historically passed from the outgoing president to the incoming president during the banquet at the annual reunion.

The symbolism is normally read from the plaque that accompanies the Cobra, explaining the various elements.



Dan Ferguson

Last year in Dallas, the plaque had been misplaced and, consequently, the "hand off" ceremony was without explanation.

We have since located the plaque and it will be passed along to the incoming president at the banquet in San Francisco, along with the Cobra.

In the meantime, I thought a little history about the Cobra would be appropriate, along with an explanation of the symbolism of the elements that comprise the Cobra. We have many new members who may not be aware of this tradition.

History of Cobra

The VHPA Cobra was donated to the VHPA by Robert Taylor, Don Swope and Jim Keel, employees of Bell Helicopter. The Cobra is passed from president to president as a symbol of office and it is to be given to the last surviving member and, upon his death, request it be given to the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

The wings are blood wings. No one knows when they went to Vietnam and they won't say when they came out. They are basic wings to represent the youth of the aviator.

The materials the Cobra is cast from are materials used to make Huey and Cobra helicopters — including the shot (tail rotor balance).

The mold used to make the VHPA Cobra was the mold used to make the original marketing grip used in the front seat of the very first Cobra helicopter and was cast from an actual stuffed cobra head. When the VHPA grip was made, the mold was scored so it can never be repro-

duce, making it one of a kind.

VHPA member Robert Taylor relayed the above history to me. Hopefully, at some future time Robert will take a moment and write the complete details of this story for the *Newsletter* and posterity.



VHPA COBRA

SYMBOLISM:

COBRA — Represents Southeast Asia.
COBRA — Represents the helicopter in Vietnam.
SHOT — Individual aviators in Vietnam bound in the helicopter fraternity.
*Note — a few are missing.
BLACK — Mourns our lost friends.
UNPAINTED EYES — Frozen in time. There can be no new members...only found comrades.
WINGS — The youth of the aviators.
The VHPA COBRA was cast from the original mold used to manufacture the first collective grip on the Cobra prototype.

Donated to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association by Robert Taylor, Don Swope and Jim Keel, employees of Bell Helicopter. To be used by each president as a symbol of office. To be given to the last surviving member and, upon his death, request it to be given to the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

Responses on website

As I stated in the last column, it is our desire to keep the *Newsletter* free of internal VHPA politics. To that end, I asked Greg Ross, a former VHPA president and founding member, to form an "unofficial" Past President's Advisory Committee to bring some history and past reasoning to the Executive Council in dealing with these issues.

I asked Greg to enlist (draft) two other past presidents to serve with him on the committee. Greg enlisted past presidents Mike Hurley and Phil Marshal.

The committee was tasked with drafting responses to the issues noted below and delivering its recommendations to the Executive Committee.

In the last *Newsletter* I dealt briefly with July 4th

Continued on Page 3

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

THE VHPA NEWSLETTER (ISSN 0896-3037)(USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly — February, April, June, August, October and December. Annual dues are \$36 or Life membership for \$450. Yearly subscription for nonmembers is \$36. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698. Periodicals Publications postage paid at Citrus Heights, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE VHPA NEWSLETTER, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698.

VHPA OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND STAFF 2004-2005

PRESIDENT	Dan Ferguson
VICE PRESIDENT	Mike Sheuerman
PAST PRESIDENT	Dana Young
MEMBERS AT LARGE	
Senior Member	Angelo Spelios
Midterm Member	Mike Whitten
Junior Member	John "Jack" Salm
SECRETARY/TREASURER	Rich Buzen
FOUNDER	Larry Clark

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

National Reunion	Joe Bilitzke
Membership	Dana Young
Records/database	Gary Roush
Public relations/publications	Ken Fritz
Directory	Gary Roush, Editor
Newsletter	Jack Swickard, Editor
Assistant editors	Ken Fritz, Thomas Payne
Vendor Coordinator	Rich Buzen
Historical	Mike Sloniker
Technology steering	Charles Holley
Strategic planning	Robert Smith

VHPA SUPPORT

Legal advisor	Wally Magathan
Investment advisor	Bob Potvin
VHPA Headquarters	(800) 505-VHPA
Fax	(916) 966-8743

ELECTRONIC MAIL

VHPA Headquarters	HQ@vhpa.org
President	president@vhpa.org
Historical chairman	sloniker@vhpa.org
Newsletter editor	swickard@vhpa.org
Directory editor	roush@vhpa.org
Records/Database chairman	roush@vhpa.org
Membership chairman	membership@vhpa.org
Secretary/treasurer	
Webmaster	webmaster@vhpa.org
Reunion webmaster	webmaster@vhpareunion.org
VHPA website	www.vhpa.org
VHPA reunion website	www.vhpareunion.org
VHPA EC Forum	www.vhpa.info

Newsletter privacy statement

This *Newsletter* contains member privacy information the VHPA considers proprietary and confidential.

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.

From the President

Continued from Page 2

reunion date and will very briefly respond in this column to the suggestion we change the name and structure of the VHPA to encompass ALL combat helicopter pilots from all eras.

Such an endeavor would require a complete restructuring of the VHPA to include our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, refilling for our tax status, etc. No simple matter. Furthermore, the VHPA was formed to encourage camaraderie and cohesiveness between Vietnam helicopter pilots, who share a common bond, history and experience.

Please visit www.vhpa.info "In The News" Section, and read the complete posting, which includes the conclusions of the Past President's Advisory Committee.

Reunion related

By the time this *Newsletter* reaches your mailbox, San Francisco Reunion registrations will be well on their way. Due to the unique circumstances surrounding planning our reunion in one of the country's most desirable tourist destinations at the height of tourist season, we opened reunion registration early and have been encouraging early registration from the beginning.

However, if you have not registered yet, all is not lost. There are tickets available for most functions such as the Welcome Reception, Cabaret Night (a free event for registered members and guests), Golf, the Banquet, and most Alcatraz trips (one is sold out). The July 4th Bay Cruise may well be sold out by the time you read this column.

The Cruise is a nonrefundable event as we were required to guarantee all tickets, but there undoubtedly will be members who have purchased tickets for this event and will have to cancel at the last minute. We will attempt to put members with tickets they cannot use in contact with members who would like to purchase those tickets. Please contact HQ if the cruise is sold out and you would like to purchase tickets.

Again, if you have not yet registered for San Francisco, NOW is the time!

Remember, San Francisco can turn very chilly in the evening, especially near the Bay. Bring warm clothes and plan on layers, especially if you plan to take in the sites after dark, particularly near the Wharf.

Get your cameras ready and make this one of the most memorable reunions ever!

— Dan Ferguson, President



Letters

Father honored at Vietnam Wall

My father enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1965. He served five years in the Army — 1965-70.

During his first enlistment in the Army, my father was an aircraft mechanic. He was sent to Vietnam for one year (1965-66) shortly after he joined the Army. Following the end of his first enlistment, my father was forced to make a decision that would change his life forever.

My father had applied for and was accepted to go to flight school with the Army in 1968. He had always dreamed of being a pilot. However, he knew if he decided to re-enlist in the Army and go to flight school, he'd have to go back to Vietnam.

My dad sat his fear aside and followed his dreams of being a helicopter pilot. My dad re-enlisted, and went to flight school.

As expected, he was sent back to Vietnam in 1968 for one year as a scout pilot (1st Cavalry Division, Troop A, 1st of the 9th). Being a scout pilot is one of the most dangerous jobs anyone could have had in Vietnam. He was responsible for flying slowly at treetop level, while attempting to locate the enemy by spotting them or drawing their fire.

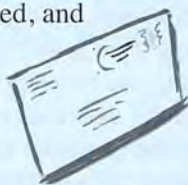
He served a total of two tours in Vietnam. This all happened before his 27th birthday. The only reason my dad got out of the Army was because he didn't feel like he could serve a third tour in Vietnam, and he knew if he stayed in, this is where he'd have to go.

Father decorated veteran

My dad was the recipient of a Bronze Star Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device 60, Air Medals (18th OLC — over 180 combat missions in Vietnam), and National Service Defense Medal.

Following my dad's Army career, he secured employment with Petroleum Helicopters. He was a helicopter pilot and base manager for PHI. He loved to fly. This was his passion. He worked for PHI for 33 years before he was forced to medically retire at the age of 58.

On April 25, 2003, my father was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer (glioblastoma multiforme) at Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, FL. Because Pensacola did not offer the specialists my father needed to see, we moved him to Orlando, FL, where my twin sister Kari and I lived so he could seek proper medical treatment from a neuro-oncologist.



Producers interview veterans for project

This is NOT a commercial inquiry. We work in partnership with the Library of Congress to record veterans' experiences for the National Veterans History Project. We videotape interviews at no cost with the veteran, provide them a copy and forward a copy to the Library of Congress.

We are based in the Northwest, Eugene, OR, and are looking for veterans who would consent to an interview. We can be contacted at: (800) 547-6014. Ask for Gary or by email at gary@timelessmusic.com

As a note, I am a Vietnam veteran myself, having flown as an observer in an OV-1 Mohawk with the 73rd SAC out of Long Thanh North.

Any assistance would be appreciated.

Gary Rhay

He was treated by neuro-oncologists and a neurosurgeon. My dad had 2 craniotomies, gamma knife surgery, and countless rounds of chemo and radiation treatment. He took it all in stride, hoping for the best.

Because of my dad's prolonged exposure to Agent Orange and petroleum fuels in Vietnam, we applied for benefits through the VA. My dad was declared 100 percent service-connected for his cancer and related disabilities on July 5, 2003. The VA recognized his cancer had resulted because of his exposures in Vietnam.

Pilot inspired many people

My father was never bitter about his diagnosis. He gave the battle everything he had. He was an inspiration to so many people.

My father lost his battle to the brain cancer on Oct. 16, 2004, while living in Winter Park, FL. He died peacefully, but unexpectedly at his daughter's home.

We held my dad's funeral in Orlando because the panhandle was too devastated from Hurricane Ivan. My parent's home was also damaged by the storm. There were no hotels to be found because of the devastation. My father's ashes are being scattered in Winter Park, Florida and Perdido Key, FL, and Priest Lake, ID, per his request. We have installed a memorial marker at Barancass National Cemetery on the Pensacola Naval Base.

On April 18 at 10 a.m., my dad will be honored at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, DC. His name will be added to the In Memory Honor Roll, which is part of the Vietnam Wall. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is coordinating the ceremony. The ceremony honors all Vietnam veterans who have lost their lives as a result of their exposures in Vietnam.

Since they did not die physically in Vietnam, their names cannot be inscribed on the wall.

My dad's parents, my mother, sisters, friends and fami-

Continued on Page 5

Letters

Continued from Page 4

ly will be flying to Washington, DC, to represent my father for the April 18 ceremony. He served his country without reservation. My father resided in Perdido Key (Pensacola, FL) for 25 years. My father was born and raised on Spokane, WA. He graduated from Gonzaga Prep and attended Eastern Washington University.

To further honor my father, we have created a college scholarship fund — The George Bartol Memorial Scholarship Fund. In lieu of flowers for his funeral, we collected money for the college scholarship. We have raised \$10,000 toward the scholarship so far.

The first recipient will be awarded in time for the January 2006 term to start. My father was a big advocate of higher education. He paid for my sisters and me to earn multiple degrees from Florida State University without any hesitation.

With this scholarship, we will be helping the children who have lost a parent to brain cancer go to college. We want to make a difference in the lives of the children who are being left behind.

On behalf of my family and I, thank you for considering my dad's story. He's an American hero without question.

Heather M. Bartol
Orlando, FL



Hospitalized pilot seeks Vietnam amputee aviator

Hi, My name is Joe Finch, author of Angel's Wing, VHPA member number 11317. I am also a member of the 25th Infantry Division and part of its hospital outreach team.

One of the patients I visit in the Walter Reed Army Medical Center is Maj. Tammy Duckworth, who is a Black Hawk pilot. She is also a member of my American Legion Post 1995.

Tammy is with the Illinois National Guard. Her unit was activated and she was sent to Iraq. She was shot down over Iraq in December when an RPG hit her aircraft during a resupply mission in support of the 25th Infantry Division.

The RPG came up through the chin bubble and impacted the bottom of the cyclic, which triggered the warhead. She continued to try to fly the aircraft to the ground, but found her control inputs to the pedals were not working. She kept trying to kick pedal, but was not successful. Finally, she noticed that her legs were no longer attached.

She lost her right leg from a few inches below the groin and lost her left leg from the calf down.

She wants to stay on active duty and is an amazing

fighter. I am attaching part of our visit report from yesterday.

Tammy said she was trying to find any Vietnam veterans who flew after leg amputations and were able to remain in the service.

What she needs from the VHPA as soon as she can get it is documentation and names of any other aviators who stayed on active duty after traumatic amputations. She will use the information when she goes before the medical evaluation board to plead that she be allowed to stay on active duty.

I remember a rotary wing classmate, Ron Roberts, was shot down, lost some of his right foot and was allowed to stay on active duty, but I cannot find him.

Can you help this heroic young lady? She is in Walter Reed, on Ward 58. [REDACTED]

Dave Garrod and I visited with a few of our troops at Walter Reed on Friday. First stop was Ward 58 to see Tammy Duckworth, who happened to be at therapy. We spent a few moments with her recently widowed mother, Frank Duckworth's wife, who told us several things we had not known. Tammy is just a thesis and a dissertation shy of her Ph.D. in human services.

Rumsfeld to visit pilot

We called Ward 58 and found that Tammy was back in her room and went to visit. While we were there, a public affairs officer came in to ask if Tammy would be available to see Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at 4:30 that afternoon. There would also be a contingent from the secretary's office, with a reporter from Time magazine.

Tammy Duckworth was in fine form, refreshed, smiling and doing exceptionally well. Her therapy is going well. She is still on track to get her prosthetic legs and then get back into a cockpit and fly this year.

"Walk then fly," she said. She has decided to stay in the Army if she can and is gathering evidence to prove she can perform her duties in the reserves.

Tammy was somber for a moment when speaking of her dad, who passed away last week. She and her mother told us of Frank Duckworth's service in World War II, when he was wounded, and in Vietnam when he earned a Silver Star Medal.

Duckworth Olympic backup

Frank had been an expert marksman and had been backup for the Olympic team. In a raid into Laos, a helicopter was shot down; he had one clip of ammunition and took down an approaching group of five enemy soldiers with six rounds. Tammy and her mom are very proud of her dad. He had been ill for a long time and "in a way, it is a blessing he no longer has to suffer."

Both of them expressed again their appreciation for Tom Gragg making it to St. Joseph's Hospital twice to visit with Frank and cheer him up with war stories in his last days. Dave Garrod asked about the State of the Union address.

Continued on Page 6

Letters

Continued from Page 5

Tammy was very enthusiastic about being present at the State of the Union and described the moment when the lady from Iraq, whose father had been murdered by Saddam Hussein, was recognized and then the parents of a Marine who was killed fighting in Iraq hugged the Iraqi lady.

"It was electrifying. The whole room was just ecstatic! Several of us wounded veterans were in the balcony just out of camera view, on the same level with the first lady, and there wasn't one of us with dry eyes. It was a precious and historical moment."

She told a little of her plans for the future, and discussed her thesis and plans for her Ph.D. dissertation. She is moving onward and upward.

Is there anything better an old guy like me could do with his time? It is very uplifting. Have a great day, and when you see one, thank a veteran for preserving freedom.

Joe Finch



Death of old timer cause for reflection

One of the old timers in Army aviation passed away last week.

CW4 (Retired) Bobby R. Quearry died on March 18 in Enterprise, AL, and his memorial service was on March 21. Bobby was 73 and had been married 54 years.

As I sat in the service for Bobby and reflected on his life and experiences, I couldn't help but acknowledge how blessed many of us have been to have survived all these years and remember all those who weren't so fortunate.

Many of the dangers we faced weren't just in combat. Remember all the people we lost in the 11th Air Assault (Test) Division? Fort Rucker was a very dangerous place in the mid-1960s. I came home from a day of instructing and my wife was all dressed up and sitting in the living room. She thought I had been killed and was waiting for the chaplain and commander to come. When I asked about my supper, she said she didn't want to cook it and then throw it out!

Crews look out for one another

I resigned from my job as a contract flight instructor January after 42 years in Army Aviation.

I am trying to avoid living in the past, but often reflect and am grateful to God for allowing me survive all these years. I also owe a lot to fellow aviators and crewmembers who looked out for me and helped me survive.

Carl L. Hess
WORWAC 63-3W
Vietnam 1964-65 and 1967-68

Aviator killed in 1971 honored in procession

I just wanted to pass on what I saw at Redstone Arsenal (RSA), AL.

The following e-message was sent out by the U.S. Army Garrison-Redstone and the (AMCOM) Aviation and Missile Command Head Quarters, with info copy to NASA's Marshal Space Flight Center:

What: Please help us in honoring CW3 Randolph Ard. Missing in action for 34 years, Ard was a pilot serving in Vietnam whose helicopter was shot down March 7, 1971. We ask that you line Martin and Patton roads to show honor to him and his family as they participate in a procession through post.

When: Thursday, March 17 — the procession is expected to reach post between 11:45 a.m. and noon.

Where: Procession will enter post through Gate 7, Martin Road, turn on to Patton, and exit post through Gate 10, Patton Road.

We get this type of notification occasionally for soldiers who have died in Iraq from the north Alabama area, so it wasn't a big news deal to most.

Also, we at the Provost Marshal's Office usually are informed in order to support the Honor Platoon for 21-gun salutes.

However, this was different for a couple of reasons:

First, this returning KIA was from the Vietnam War, a MIA returning after 33 years, and second, the funeral procession was to enter RSA and drive down one main avenue through the HQs area of NASA, AMCOM, and a few other major tenant organizations for about five or six miles. Then it would turn north on another major avenue and proceed another five or six miles to exit the post, passing several more major tenants, housing and billeting areas, and pass the Army Missile School area.

Procession crosses post

This hasn't happened since 9/11. Security just made it too difficult to access or cross the post.

I set my computer to warn me so I could go about a block from my office and stand by the street to watch the hearse pass and give a long-lost war brother a welcome home and a last salute.

I did this and left the office by myself, with no word from the bosses or plans for anything special. I parked close to the street and stepped out to the side of the street about 10 minutes before I expected them to arrive. Within

Continued on Page 7

Letters

Continued from Page 6

the next five minutes my two office partners had joined me, and the Missile School seemed to have stopped classes and fell out at least a 1,000 soldiers and civilians, trainees, drill sergeants, instructors and command staff.

Also, spontaneously the Directorate of Emergency Services, my organization, started showing up and lining the streets with fire trucks, police cars, and even a K-9 vehicle with a dog and handler parked right beside me.

This was not planned; it was just spontaneous on their part. I was so proud of them. I had thought I might be a rather solemn figure out there, paying my respects.

When the hearse and a bus with the family onboard did start down the road toward us escorted by civilian police, highway patrol, and military police front and rear, you could hear road guards and MPs all over the area calling out: "Attention!"

As it passed, a lot of old guys like me gave the best

salute we had rendered in years while standing at attention with a bunch of young soldiers.

As the procession got about a block up the street, I heard someone shout the fire command and three volleys were fired by a squad of Missile School soldiers.

It was the most amazing spontaneous thing I ever saw. When I lowered my salute after they passed, I had to wipe the tears from my eyes.



When I looked up, the young female soldier across the street from me was doing the same thing, as was the tough old civilian police dog handler standing beside me.

I heard later that the NASA and AMCOM civilians, contractors, soldiers and brass had fallen out to the street by the thousands, too, along the first 13 miles across the arsenal.

What I thought would be a private moment turned out to be so special that I just had to pass it along.

Larue "Lash" Wisener

Continued on Page 8

Thinking About Retiring or Changing Jobs?

If so, we invite you to take advantage of our free retirement analysis.

Considering that it's likely a person who is 65 years old today will live past age 85, it is important to plan appropriately for retirement. Regardless of your current age, you should ask yourself:

- Can I afford to retire when and how I would like?
- What should I do with my 401(k) and pension plans?
- Is my asset allocation suitable for my risk tolerance?

A personalized retirement analysis can help you identify your goals, review your assets and understand such influences as market risk and time horizon. Your Financial Advisor can assist you in developing an appropriate retirement savings and investment strategy. After all—your retirement may need to last more than 20 years.

Call us for a complimentary analysis. And start preparing for your financial future today.

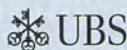
For information, call:

Robert Potvin, Account Vice President
"Stingray White 25"
231-995-7000 517-332-2878 800-235-9031
robert.potvin@ubs.com

202 East State Street, Suite 300, Traverse City, MI 49685
www.ubs.com/fa/robertpotvin

UBS Financial Services Inc.

©2005 UBS Financial Services Inc. All Rights Reserved. Member SIPC.



Rings with Wings
"Precious Metal for Men of Mettle"

FINE JEWELRY FOR battle
tested HELICOPTER PILOTS



www.ringswithwings.com
blueghost22@sbcglobal.net

**Register now for
Reunion 2005
in San Francisco**

Letters

Continued from Page 7

Vietnam refrigerator at 38, running strong

During my first tour with the Gambler Guns, August 1968-August 1969, I shared a hooch (and many missions, adventures and memories) with Walt Moss (he flew scouts and I flew guns), who was an OCS and flight school classmate. We also flew together half of our second tour,

After the 1st Cav went home, I was infused from the Blue Max in August 1972. We were there until the end and stood Holloway down. After the H/17th was gone, I got to go home, but Walt stayed as the aviation group S-4 and stood the group down and left on the last day on the next to last plane. But that's another story!

In 1968 things were hard to come by; there were few creature comforts and if the PX got anything in, it usually was gone the same day.

After spending some time in Ban Me Thuot, living in tents, we returned to Camp Enari and were desperate for a refrigerator. It seemed that everyone who was going back to the world that had a frig sold it to his hooch mate or stick buddy. Even the 4th Battalion O Club wasn't guaranteed of having a cold one when you got through flying.

After several months in country, I was making a rare visit to the 4th Division PX when, low and behold, they were unloading small, Sanyo refrigerators. I quickly grabbed one and, waving my .38 to let everyone know I was serious, dragged it to the cashier and escaped with my prize.

We kept our proud possession filled with whatever was available in those days and enjoyed many a cold one during

the remainder of our tour.

When we were getting ready to DEROS, I decided to take the frig home instead of selling it, so I had a box built for it and filled it with jungle boots, a poncho liner, etc., and shipped it home.

Since then, it has been built into bars, set on patios by the pool, and generally kept my beer ice cold during many Texas and Arizona summers. Like Mike's fridge, it has never been serviced or repaired and today sits on my son's patio in Arizona, where I had a cold one from it on St. Paddy's Day!

So, the old fridge is almost 38 and, like a bunch of ole rotor heads I know, still going strong!

John Parker

Gambler Guns 1968-69

Blue Max 1972

Ruthless Riders 1972

Chopper pilots of various wars forming new group

Recently a group of former combat helicopter pilots, which includes Desert Storm and Vietnam era pilots, has started a new veterans organization, the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association (CHPA). We have been working on the idea for almost a year and the organization is now announcing its formation.

The idea truly came together when the group met last October for a working session to establish what the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association would be. We became "legal" when we incorporated in the District of Columbia on Jan. 7, 2005. We have applied for approval from the Internal Revenue Service to be a 501(c) 19 Veterans Organization.

At our October meeting, we decided that regular membership, with voting rights, would be open to any rated avi-

Continued on Page 9

Do you have a DFC?

Call or write us for information

**THE DISTINGUISHED
FLYING CROSS SOCIETY**

4442 Vandever Ave.
SAN DIEGO, CA 92120-3322

Tel. (866) 332-6332

Fax (619) 269-6378

Visit our Website: www.dfcsociety.org



Richard Yood, MAS
Gladiator 21

**THE
PROMO
DELI**

"A Rare Medium Well Done™"

Ph: 850-222-7755 • Fax: 850-222-2266
1734 Thomasville Rd. • Tallahassee, FL 32303
info@thepromodeli.com • www.thepromodeli.com

Your Unit insignia or Company Logo on anything. We have:
Caps, Shirts, Pens, Pencils, Ring Binders, Coffee Mugs, Gifts, Golf Items, Clocks, Flags, Banners, Decals, License Plates, Coins/Medallions, Plaques, Knives, Trophies, Key Tags, Glassware, Ribbons, Badges, Food, Electronics and many other items from the over 15,000 types of products available.

Letters

Continued from Page 8

ator, from any U.S. military service, who flew helicopters in combat in any "war." We go from Korea through Vietnam to Iraq. All are welcome.

In addition, we understand the role of the "guy in back," and created a membership, without voting rights, for those men and women who kept the bird flying so we could get home.

Finally, close to our hearts are the families of the pilots and crew who gave the ultimate sacrifice. For them, we created Legacy Membership.

We intend to have corporate sponsors so the cost to the members will be reduced. In addition, we are developing a veteran's service area to assist our members on a wide variety of issues from VA health claims to job search assistance. These will change as the needs and desires of the members change.

It goes without saying that we will have meetings where we can share our experiences. Although the details are not set, we are beginning to plan our first annual meeting this fall. We anticipate we will have national meetings every other year, with regional/state meetings in the off year. We encourage the formation of local chapters and state organizations as an avenue to accomplish the goals of CHPA.

I am a member of VHPA and will continue to be a member because I think it is a great organization. Conceptually, however, it is a "last man organization." There is much benefit to that concept because it serves a very important purpose. The founders of CHPA don't view it as competition to VHPA. Apparently neither does VHPA; I have talked with a couple of EC members (by phone and e-mail) who offered their support in our endeavors. We at CHPA appreciate that support.

Our webpage is up and running, with new information added on a regular basis.

I would like to invite you to go to www.chpa-us.org and see what CHPA is about. While you are there, take the opportunity to join and help us develop the legacy of the combat helicopter pilot.

Steve Reilly



Marvicsin not on list of servicemen held POW

In the November/December 2004 issue of *The VHPA Newsletter*, I noticed the "Taps" article for Dennis Marvicsin said, "He was one of the few POWs who escaped from captivity during the Vietnam War."

Because only 30 American military members escaped from captivity during the Vietnam War, I was immediately curious about this very rare individual who was also a fellow helicopter pilot.

I was quite disappointed when I could not find Dennis Marvicsin on the official list of Vietnam War POWs, according to the lists in *Fake Warriors* by Henry Mark Holzer and Erika Holzer. If those lists are correct (and I have no reason to doubt their authenticity), Dennis Marvicsin did not escape from captivity and was not a POW.

While it is not my intention to dishonor the service of a legitimate fellow Vietnam helicopter pilot or to cause additional distress to his family, I think it is extremely important to expose false claims of heroic military service, including medals, awards, membership in elite units, and POW status.

If this man's claim of POW status proves to be false, it also casts doubt on all of his military service, especially the claims of medals he earned. "Two Silver Star Medals, multiple Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals for valor, the Soldier's Medal and two Purple Hearts" is such an amazing accomplishment, they also raise my suspicions.

I have made no attempt to obtain a DD-214 or otherwise check Mr. Marvicsin's military records. Nor have I read the book he wrote about his Vietnam experiences.

Perhaps the person who submitted the "Taps" obituary could verify the authenticity of Mr. Marvicsin's military service. The book *Fake Warriors* gives specific information on how to go about such verification.

If Mr. Marvicsin was indeed a Vietnam War POW, his name should be added to the official Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office Reference Document (www.dtic.mil/dpmo/pmsea/files.htm). Any authentic POW deserves such recognition and much more.

Bob Stewart

145th CAB, 1969-70
"Old Warrior 3 Zulu"

Make reservations now for 2005 VHPA Reunion in San Francisco

Register online at: www.vhpareunion.org

Taps

George Daniel Bartol

George Daniel Bartol, 59, of Winter Park, FL, died Oct. 16 at his home as the result of brain cancer.

He served in Vietnam as an Army aircraft mechanic with the 501st Transportation Company in 1965-66 and as a helicopter pilot with A Troop, 1/9th, 1st Cavalry Division, in 1968-69.

After leaving active duty in 1970 with the rank of CW2, Bartol worked for Petroleum Helicopters for 33 years as a pilot and base manager.

His daughter Heather recalled her father "loved to fly. Aside from his family, flying was his real passion in life. My father was a very dedicated family man. He loved to travel, attending Florida State University sporting events, gardening, boating, and going on cruises, and home improvement projects. My father was the love of our lives. We miss him dearly

"He is an American hero who served his country, God and his family with honor, dignity and pride," his daughter said.

Bartol is survived by his wife, Sue, of Winter Park and Perdido Key, FL; daughters, Kari Bartol of Winter Park, Heather Bartol of Orlando and Brandy Bartol of Crawfordville, FL; Jack & Wanna Bartol, Spokane, WA; sisters, Diane Cook, Denise Bledsoe and Jacquie Shearer, all of Spokane, WA, and Debbie Graff of Katy, TX.



David J. Hardee

David J. Hardee, 54, of Gainesville, GA, died July 31, 2002, in Atlanta after a heart illness.

He served two tours as an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam, in 1968-69 and 1971-72.

Hardee graduated from the Florida Institute of Technology in 1976. He moved to Memphis, TN, and then to Atlanta, where he owned a computer programming sales and installation business.

He was involved in the Porsche Club of America and raced in club events on the East Coast.

Hardee is survived by his wife, Connie, of the family home, two sons, two daughters, and six grandchildren.

Frank L. Jensen Jr.

Retired Col. Frank L. Jensen Jr., 76, died Feb. 12 of multiple myeloma at his home in Dumfries, VA.

Growing up in an orphanage as the eldest son of six

children, he lied about his age and joined the Navy at age 15 as a way to support his siblings. He became a combat radioman and gunner on dive-bombers and patrol bombers.

After World War II, he joined the Army and graduated with honors from officer candidate school. During the Korean War, he was a paratrooper with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. He also served in Japan and Europe, and had two tours of duty in Vietnam. He also flew through radiation clouds as part of atomic bomb tests in Nevada.

He retired as a colonel and master aviator with a number of awards, including three Legions of Merit, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and Paratrooper Wings.

He received his general equivalency diploma in the Navy and an undergraduate degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha by attending night school while in the Army. He also received a master's degree in aerospace operations management from the University of Southern California while in the Army.

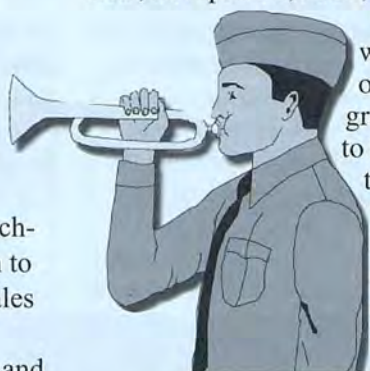
From 1982 until his retirement in 1998, he was executive director and then president of Helicopter Association International and founding editor of *Rotor Magazine*. He was named Elder Statesman of Aviation by the National Aeronautic Association and designated a fellow of the American Helicopter Society.

He was president of the Washington chapter of the Army Aviation Association of America, president of the Aero Club of Washington and secretary of Helicopter Foundation International.

Survivors include his wife, Leda Jensen of Dumfries; five children; two sisters; a brother; 12 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

James C. "Fuzzy" Kuttenkuler

James C. "Fuzzy" Kuttenkuler died in Springfield, MO, on April 13, 2002, after a prolonged illness.



He graduated and received his wings at Fort Rucker as a member of class 66-23/67-1. Following graduation, Kuttenkuler proceeded to Fort Knox, where he helped form the new B Troop, 3/17 Air Cav. The 3/17 deployed to Vietnam from Oakland, CA, aboard the troop ship, U.S.S. General Walker, arriving in November 1967. Kuttenkuler received the Purple Heart Medal for severe wounds received during an interdiction mission in III Corps in December 1967.

After he was medically discharged from the military service, he graduated from Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, with a degree in accounting. He worked the remainder of his life as a computer programmer for several companies in Springfield.

Continued on Page 11

EMUs

U.S.-Australian helicopter company to be honored

A May 27 ceremony at Fort Rucker will honor 32 U.S. soldiers and 5 Australian sailors killed in action while members of the bi-national 135th Assault Helicopter Company Experimental Military Unit (EMU).

The ceremony begins at 1 p.m. at the U.S. Army Aviation Center.

The 135th was unique in that one-third of the unit's personnel were permanently assigned Royal Australian Navy (RAN) sailors. It was the only unit of its kind in U.S. military history.

The ceremony is being hosted by the Mississippi Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association of America, in conjunction with the Fort Rucker Chapter.

Former EMUs of the 135th AHC (EMU) and their families, as well as the Australian ambassador to the United States, have been invited to the unveiling of a 6-foot-tall granite memorial monument immortalizing the unit's 37 members killed in action.

Additionally, the 135th AHC (EMU) unit crest will be

memorialized in the U.S. Army Aviation Museum.

To date, 44 former EMUs from Australian have registered. More than 150 former EMUs from the United States are expected to attend.

On May 25 and 26, the EMU veterans will gather in Biloxi, MS, for a reunion. The Mississippi Coast Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America will open their homes to the Australian families.

In the mid-1960s, the Australian military was asked by U.S. military authorities to help bolster the growing need for additional helicopter pilots, maintenance, and support personnel caused by the escalating war in Vietnam.

The Australian command determined its helicopter-rated Navy fliers would be more suited for the Vietnam mission requirements. Thus, the two nations agreed to an unprecedented merger to form a bi-national combat aviation unit.

Continued on Page 12

Taps

Continued from Page 10

His wife, Carolyn; his son, Gregory, his wife Kara and their daughter Lili of Kansas City; and his son, Christopher, of Kansas City, survive Kutenkuler.

He was a great pilot and a great friend, said his friend Mike Jackson.

Frank W. Nadeau Jr.

Retired Col. Frank W. Nadeau Jr., 78, of Palm Coast, FL, died April 4, 2004, at Ormand Beach, FL, after an illness.

Nadeau served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, the first with the 1st Cavalry Division in 1966-67 and the second with USARV at Long Binh in 1970-71.

He is survived by his wife and eight children.

Douglas E. Ryzdyski

Douglas E. Ryzdyski died on March 18 at his home in Las Vegas, NV, after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 60.

He was a member of flight school class 67-25. Ryzdyski served with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company and the 120th Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69.

After returning from Vietnam, he was a platform instructor at Fort Wolters.

Ryzdyski was a member of the Las Vegas Chapter. After his military service, he was employed as an insurance broker.

He is survived by a wife, two sons and a daughter.

— John T. Wilson

Joe Schaefer III

Joe Schaefer III, a warrant officer helicopter pilot in C/229th from August-June 1970, was killed while piloting an EMS Twin-Dauphin helicopter near Washington, DC.

He was 56.

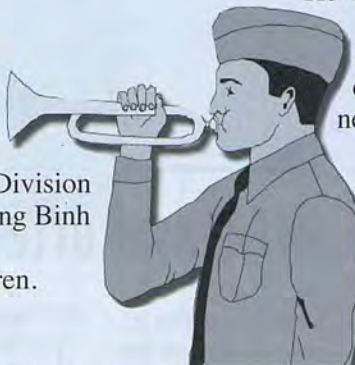
Joe worked for Life Evac, an air medical company in Virginia, and had just dropped a patient at a hospital somewhere near DC — at about 11 p.m. on Jan 10.

The helicopter was returning via a low-level VFR route along the Potomac River when they crashed into the river near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The low-level route is designed to avoid the traffic at Ronald Reagan Airport.

Joe arrived in C/229th in August 1969, the same day as Roger Baker. He shared a hooch with Dave Thomas, Les Tatarski and Murray McMillan.

When Tatarski was killed in June 1970, R.C. Baker assigned Joe to escort the remains home from Vietnam. Since he had so little time left, Joe didn't have to come back to RVN to finish his tour.

— Dan Tyler



Vietnam War museum thanks VHPA

The National Vietnam War Museum wants to take this opportunity to thank all the VHPA members who made our dedication ceremony at last year's reunion such a success.

We've heard nothing but positive responses from those who attended.

Since last July, as you may have read, we acquired our newest and most significant artifact — a UH-1H that served with the 101st and the 1st Cav in Vietnam.

We've also added a new sponsoring organization. Earlier this year, the Military Order of World Wars at the

national level passed a resolution of sponsorship.

In June, the Museum will be participating in Operation Homecoming USA in Branson, MO, prior to coming to this year's VHPA reunion in San Francisco.

As always, we'll be bringing the gift shop and museum displays, but because we won't have all the local Dallas-Fort Worth VHPA members to draw on, we're looking for volunteers to help man the booth.

If you're interested in helping, please contact Jim Messinger, care of the museum, or Mike Sheuerman, care of VHPA.

We're looking forward to another great reunion and generating more excitement about the museum.

— Edd Luttenberger



135th AHC known as 'Fighting EMUs'

Continued from Page 11

The Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight-Vietnam was fully integrated with the U.S. Army's 135th AHC and renamed the 135th Assault Helicopter Company Experimental Military Unit.

The unit quickly gained a reputation as the "Fighting EMUs" and remained in that configuration from October 1967 until June 1971.

The entire Royal Australian Navy lost eight men during the Vietnam War. Five were with the 135th AHC (EMU). The Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight-Vietnam (RANHFV) contingent became the most highly decorated Australian unit in Vietnam.

In April 2002, nine former U.S. members of the EMUs flew to Australia to participate in a memorial ceremony conducted at Walsh Memorial Park, Bomaderry, New South Wales.

It was a very special occasion for both the Australians and the Americans because the story of the 135th AHC (EMU) as a successful two-nation experimental unit remained untold.

During the ceremony, U.S. Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer presented long over due U.S. Air Medals to 12 former EMU Royal Australian Navy veterans. (The Australian military did not authorize the wearing of foreign medals during the Vietnam era. The policy was changed in 2001, thirty years after their participation in the Vietnam War).

Adm. Chris Barrie, chief of the Australian Defense Force, unveiled a bronze plaque set in a large granite stone commemorating the U.S. soldiers and RAN sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In memory of the five Australian Navy men killed and at the request of Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., an encased U.S. flag which had been flown over the U.S. Capital on Australian Remembrance Day was presented to a representative of the Australian Parliament.

The flag hung in the halls of the Parliament Building in the Australian capital city of Canberra for six months before it was permanently moved to the Fleet Air Arm Naval Air Station Museum at HMAS Albatross Nowra, New South Wales.

"A WILD, ORIGINAL and often HILARIOUS ride..."



What *Catch-22* did for World War II...
What *M*A*S*H* did for the Korean War...

**NAM-A-RAMA does now
for Vietnam!**

NAM-A-RAMA
PHILLIP JENNINGS

"From its opening sentence to the last, this is a weird, painfully funny, wonderful book."

—Christopher Buckley,
bestselling author of *Washington Schleppe Here*

★ "Reminiscent of *Catch-22* and David Mamet's *Wag the Dog*.... [A] wonderfully irreverent novel."

—Publishers Weekly, starred review



Available Now in Hardcover 0-765-31120-8; \$24.95/\$34.95 Can. www.tor.com

Membership

New guy signup table to be introduced at reunion

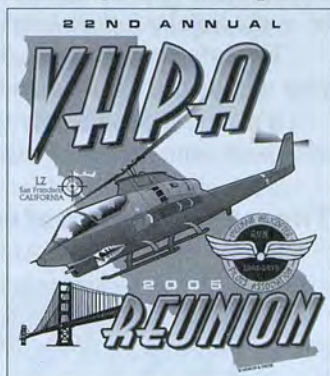
MIKE SHEUERMAN
VHPA VICE PRESIDENT

Hey, VHPA members attending the San Francisco Reunion, want to give the gift of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association to a buddy from flight school or pilot from your unit in Vietnam who has never enjoyed the camaraderie of a membership?

Here's your chance. This year, for the first time, you will have the opportunity to sign up an old friend to be a member of the Association while at the reunion.

The cost is \$36 for a year, less than two beers a month. For that matter, why not sign up two or three.

We will have a table in the South Registration Area with all the information and necessary forms. We will



have several directories for you to search through and find that missing friend you've thought about over the past 30 plus years.

Gary Roush will be seated next to us and may be able to give you a phone number to contact that comrade in arms right then and there. You have to pay for the call.

Every member who signs up a new member at the table will receive a free gift from VHPA.

The Reunion Committee expects more than 1,200 pilots to attend this reunion in San Francisco. If each one of us attending signs up one pilot, our Association grows almost 16 percent. OUTSTANDING!

Personally, I'm signing up Frank Shipton, a buddy from college who flew with B/7/17 in 1971-72 or Warren Smith, a guy I taught with at Fort Rucker after my tour. What the hell, I'll sign them both up.

Hey, VHPA members attending the San Francisco Reunion, who are you going to sponsor, a flight school classmate or Vietnam stick buddy? How about both?

Look for the flyer in your reunion packet for more information. See you in San Francisco.



Passing the Torch

Full Color, 20" x 24" limited edition print with UH-60 Blackhawk, and UH-1 Huey. \$80 standard, \$100 customized with nose art of your choice.

Joe Kline Aviation Art

6420 Hastings Place
Gilroy, CA 95020
408-842-6979

klinejd569@aol.com
www.joekline.com



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

Register now for Reunion 2005

Reunion

San Francisco will host largest ever VHPA event

JOE BILITZKE AND DAVE RITTMAN
NATIONAL REUNION CO-CHAIRMEN

What our organization is about is camaraderie, renewing old friendships formed years ago in a hostile environment, and being there for each other.

Sure we have great entertainment, fabulous special bookings on hard-to-get ships and tours, activities for our spouses/ guests, and much more.

However, it's meeting that special someone who meant so much to you years ago that rounds out the memories and makes our reunions so special.

Something special is happening!

Whether you have previously been to a reunion or not ... what is happening with our registration process thus far this year is truly without precedence.

By now you know the reunion is in San Francisco over the Fourth of July weekend, the downtown Marriott at 55 Fourth St. is our host hotel, and, as these reunions always are ... there will be great times for all. But this year there is something else ...

As of March 28, when this article was written, we are on track for the largest attendance ever experienced for a reunion in our 22-year history, more than Washington, DC, in 2000 and more than Las Vegas in 2002.

Already more than 1,700 pilots and guests have registered, and there are almost three full months left before the reunion.

Based on historical trends, we are on track to exceed 2,500 pilots and guests, and there is even better news! Several hundred pilots and guest will be coming to a reunion for the first time.

This truly increases the chances of meeting your fellow stick-mates that you haven't seen in — can you believe it — almost 40 years!

The party is starting early

Much has been written about all the activities and special events in the past two *Newsletters*, and those articles are posted on our website www.vhpareunion.org for specific details.

The exciting news is that while the "official" start of the reunion is Saturday, July 2, many of you are taking

advantage of the low airfares and highly discounted room rates at the Marriott to come in at least one day early. It's a great idea, and highly recommended.

Already, 760 pilots and guests have booked room reservations through that evening. Trending that number means more than 1,100 of our members and guests could be at the hotel a full day early.

The informal "early bird" party typically held each year will be truly well attended that Friday, July 1.

It's a great opportunity to come early, enjoy the town, and meet your friends of old in a casual environment.

Two major evenings of entertainment

Eric Burdon and the Animals kick off our Saturday evening, July 2, welcome reception.

Remember our "informal" theme song *We Got To Get Out Of This Place*? It's Eric's song, and he will be playing it not once, but twice during the performance.

Sunday morning, July 3, there is a culinary demonstration for the spouses while members attend the Annual Business Meeting.

Later that night we have a special Las Vegas-style cabaret party with some very, very special performers and entertainers.

Sunset dinner cruise on July 4

Monday night, July 4, is the sunset dinner cruise in San Francisco on a large yacht — 1,200 of us — and, weather/fog permitting, we will have a front seat to one of the most spectacular fireworks shows in the nation.



A dining room on the San Francisco Belle shows the lavish table settings for the cruise through San Francisco Bay the night of July 4. The cruise is a sellout event.

Continued on Page 15



Final Banquet set July 5

Continued from Page 14

Response to this event has exceeded all expectations and, as of today, the cruise has been sold out.

Tickets were non-refundable by VHPA once purchased, but we have established a waiting list on our website should any of the members who already have purchased tickets are not be able to go and want to offer them to others.

If you would like to be put on the waiting list, please click on www.vhpareunion.org and follow the prompts.

The cruise will be 100 percent reserved for VHPA members and their guests.

The dinner seating at your table will be assigned by the deck you purchased, but once you are on the ship, you will be able to go freely between the three inside decks and, of course, the top exterior deck area of the ship.

Each deck will have it's own entertainment — current plans call for live bands on the top and lower deck — and a quality DJ on the middle deck. They have all been told to play the music of our era, of course.

Final Banquet night

The Final Banquet is on Tuesday, July 5, with all the special activities and ceremonies — and great entertainment.

The next day, some of you leave to take the post trip to Hawaii, but whatever your plans, this will be truly one of the great experiences of a lifetime.

Book now to get discounted rooms rates

We need to talk about hotel rooms. The Marriott is a first class, large hotel, but it's clear we are going to sell out.

San Francisco in July is prime tourist season, and the rate of \$109 plus tax is unheard of in this town. As of this March 28, our members have booked 3,645 room nights. Last week we got the hotel to increase our overall room block by an additional 500 room nights, but most likely that will not be enough. Thus, in the past two weeks your reunion committee has identified and contacted several overflow hotels nearby.

If/when we do sell out, we will post on the website other nearby hotels that still have availability.

Some may honor the VHPA rate, but the ambience may not be the same and, of course, you will not be staying in the "HQ" hotel where all the action is. If at all possible, book now.



Need an extra hotel room?

The vast majority of our members secure their room through our VHPA website. After registering for the reunion events, the software links directly to the hotel reservation system. For most, it has been a seamless and efficient process.

In years past, we have had problems with the general public, either by way of the Internet or otherwise somehow learning of our deeply discounted room rates, and then booking rooms in our block at the significantly reduced rate that would not otherwise be available to them. This had the effect of denying rooms at the "HQ" hotel to VHPA members and our member's invited guests. Our reunion in Washington DC in 2000 was an excellent example.

To ensure our hotel block of highly discounted rooms is defacto used by our VHPA members and their guests, in recent years we have established policies and put restrictions on the hotel accepting reservations directly from individuals without registering.

OK, registered, but need an extra room? Easy, just call Nancy at VHPA Headquarters toll free at (800) 505-VHPA. Once she verifies your member/registration status (which is as quick as a computer key-stroke), she will provide you with the direct toll-free number to a third party vendor that works closely with the Marriott Hotel system and is managing our room block on our behalf.

Cheap airfares available at the moment

How you get to the reunion is another key subject. Airfares right now are, in many localities, dirt cheap to San Francisco, but spring is about here, and the rates typically go up.

San Francisco International is the airport of choice, but also check Oakland, which is right across the bay and home to Southwest Airlines and other discount carriers. Travel details and discount airline/rental car rates are posted on our website and published in previous *Newsletters*.

We're pulling pitch — are you coming?

OK, the bottom line is this reunion has cranked up, the engines (for you Huey pilots) are spun up to 6,600 RPM, and lead aircraft Yellow 1 has pulled pitch.

Can you join us for a truly special weekend? If so, dial up the Internet www.vhpareunion.org and register for your events and hotel reservation, and do it today.

Prefer to use a manual form? There is one printed in this *Newsletter*. It can be faxed or even called into HQ. The numbers are on the form. We look forward to seeing you all for what is shaping up to be a fabulous few days with some great friends from long ago.

See you there!

Golfers

Bay Area sponsors offering prizes in tournament

Have you started your practice yet for our annual golf outing?

This year we are playing at my home course of beautiful Stone Tree Golf Club in Marin County. We have over 85 golfers signed up and will close registration when we get to 140 players.

I have sent out letters to last year's sponsors to ask for support of our endeavor on the golf course. I hope they will be as generous as last year.

I also have asked for support from some of the great people in the Bay Area and it has been heartwarming. It looks like we will have a hole-in-one contest this year for a car on the 10th hole and other prizes on the other three par 3 holes.

One of our own members has promised a case of pre-

mium wine and we are hoping for a local microbrewery to come forward with a donation of award-winning brew for lunch.

We are still trying to finalize some other great surprises for the tournament, so don't wait until the last minute to sign up.

More to come in the next *Newsletter*. I hope to report to you that we are well on our way to the greatest golf outing ever. This cannot be possible without your support to golf and the wonderful sponsors that help us.

Next year in Washington, DC, I am working with Andrews Air Force Base to hold the tournament at the South Course. And the price will be pleasantly lower.

Remember to practice, practice, practice before we meet on July 4.

Also remember the weather will be wonderful, but could be chilly in the morning until about 9 a.m., then it will get warm (50-85 degrees F).

— Mike Whitten



Members to consider amendments

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 1:

Since our last reunion, VHPA volunteers have been working on a longtime, key goal of the membership: To certify the Association to be eligible for receipt of surplus helicopters of all types from the Vietnam-era direct from Department of Defense (DoD).

Enhanced security requirements and operational policies resulting in the post Sept. 11, 2001, era have made donations of DoD aircraft highly restricted and almost impossible to accomplish without a charter enacted by Congress.

On Dec. 19, 2004, the VHPA Executive Council voted unanimously to support a bylaw amendment proposed by President Dan Ferguson. The proposed amendment will appear on the agenda and be put to a vote of our membership at our next business meeting 10 a.m. Sunday, July 2, at the San Francisco Marriott, 55 Fourth St., San Francisco, CA.

The proposed amendment and further details are posted on www.vhpa.info, "In The News" section. Please take a moment to visit the site and review the complete proposed amendment.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 2:

There are a number of requirements for members seeking office spelled out in the Election Policy that our Bylaws do not address. This is not a new phenomenon as historically there have been requirements for election that were not addressed in the old Bylaws (and old Constitution).

With the growth of the Association, technical advances and increased use of our websites, the need to bring our Election Policy and Bylaws into concert is evident.

The Executive Council has enlisted the help and advice of Wally Magathan, our VHPA legal advisor, to devise a proposed amendment to our Bylaws to bring our Election Policy and Bylaws into harmony.

This amendment will be presented to the membership at the Annual Business Meeting during the San Francisco Reunion.

The proposed amendments and further details are posted on www.vhpa.info, "In The News" section. Please take a moment to visit the site and review the complete proposed amendments.

Business Meeting starts at 10 a.m. on July 3

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 Club; 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

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

22nd Annual Reunion • San Francisco, CA • July 2-6, 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	SOLD OUT		
Alcatraz Trip — July 3	SOLD OUT	@ \$22.50	
Alcatraz Trip — July 5		@ \$22.50	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 5)		@ \$60.00	
<i>Non-registered guests at banquet only</i>		@ \$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 pilots

Aviators team up on helicopter mission in Iraq

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article appeared in the Nov. 12, 2004, issue of the Stars and Stripes. The writer of the article has given permission for his story to be reprinted in The VHPA Newsletter

RON JENSEN
STARS AND STRIPES
EUROPEAN EDITION

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq — They fought in a war that ended 30 years ago, but now find themselves fighting another one, alongside soldiers young enough to be their children.

Or grandchildren.

A group of veterans of the Vietnam War who have joined their country's latest fray marked Veterans Day Thursday by making up the crew of two Black Hawk helicopters and executing a mission.

It is not unusual for the Vietnam vets to fly down in Iraq, but they have never flown a mission made up of so many veterans of that war. Nine of the 10 crewmembers on the two aircraft were in Vietnam.

The 10th, Sgt. Jose Perez, a crew chief, is the grandson of a Vietnam vet.

"It's an honor," Perez said before the mission Thursday morning. "I'm doing this for my grandfather. He lives in Puerto Rico."

The nine veterans had combined for more than 8,000 hours of combat flying in the war. Their time in Southeast Asia ranged from 1968 to 1971.

The idea for the mission came from Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mike Chapman, 55, who flew UH-1 gunships in Vietnam for the 92nd Assault Helicopter Company and is now with the Louisiana National Guard's 244th Command Aviation Battalion.

"I think it's a good thing," he said of the mission, which was to fly personnel to Fallujah. "It depicts that we're still here and we're still doing our job. We still have full dedication to God, duty and country."

The helicopters that went on the mission were from the 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment and the 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment

When these veterans first flew in combat more than

three decades ago, the concept of using helicopters in battle still was new. They were on the frontier of that entire strategy.

Now, the Army is more likely to enter combat without helmets than helicopters, thanks, in part, to the aircraft's success in Vietnam.

Staff Sgt. Bona Dyal, who was a crew chief on a UH-1 in Vietnam, is now with the Florida National Guard.

"It means a whole lot," he said of the mission. "At least we've got survivability."

It is hard to compare today's soldiers with those of Vietnam, he said, because of the different technology and training. One thing, however, hasn't changed.

"(Soldiers) still got the same heart," Dyal said.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 John Wyatt Jr., 57, who was an air cavalry captain in Vietnam, said the biggest difference between the two wars is the lessened threat level in Iraq.

In Vietnam, "if you made it past 30 days, you were considered a veteran," he said.

In Iraq, the threat from enemy fire is minimal. He said he expects to leave without having lost a single soldier in his unit. That was unheard of in Vietnam.

Of Thursday's flight, he said, "It's sort of a memorial for the ones that are no longer flying because they can't or they didn't make it home from Vietnam."

There was little time for talk as Chapman, Dyal, Wyatt and the other six veterans — Chief Warrant Officer 4 John Lanning, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard Erickson, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Don Berres, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ben Roche, Command Sgt. Maj. Wayne Eden and 1st Sgt. William Wellmon — joined Perez for a pre-mission briefing and then rushed to their choppers.

They did, however, stop to pose for a group shot as a memento of the day, kidding one another about gray hair and no hair as they formed two lines.

Despite the wrinkles and the signs of age, the men are fit and ready to fly. They are doing one-year tours in Iraq just like their younger brethren.

"It's a country worth fighting for," Wyatt said.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 John Wyatt Jr. said the biggest difference between the two wars is the lessened threat level in Iraq.

In Vietnam, "if you made it past 30 days, you were considered a veteran," he said. In Iraq, the threat from enemy fire is minimal.

Miss America

Visit causes a problem at firebase in Highlands

DORCEY WINGO

One day back in good old 1969, Miss America made her rounds of South Vietnam.

Wherever she traveled, young pilots like myself were taken off combat assault rolls and ordered to fly her and her entourage around in the newest Huey we had available.

That meant the "H" model had to be all spit-shined and gleaming. And *that* meant the pilots had to help make it that way, because there was a lot to do and only four people to do it, practically overnight.

I recall having mixed emotions about flying the mission. On one hand, I feared the rush of distracting hormones that most of us manly types suffered from upon being suddenly exposed to a helicopter full of gorgeous, radiant women. On the other hand, I was embarrassed to be assigned a non-combat job.

I was one of the newer pilot pilots at Camp Enari, home to the "Famous Fighting 4th" Infantry Division, therefore I was at the beck and call of my company commander.

If Maj. Griffiths wanted Wingo to fly the right seat of the "VIP" Huey, then by gosh, Wingo was available. There were worse jobs.

So there I was and here they came, an hour or so late. I tried not to look at the beauties; just did my duties, setting up the ship to crank as the XO showed the lovely ladies into their seats and seat belts — taking a lot longer than I thought was necessary.

The young captain probably fell into a daze back there amongst the cluster of fragrant Southern belles dressed in camouflage — yet looking good enough to eat.

I tried to keep my thoughts on the turbine engine's N1 and exhaust gas temperature amid their charming, melodious giggles; roasting an engine at this point would not get me any brownie points.

The firebase we were flying to was about half an hour west of Camp Enari, and I can't begin to remember its name, as they came and went under the direction of Maj. Gen. Pepke.

If the CO at the firebase knew of Miss America's approach, I don't think he bothered informing one combat infantryman who chose that time of the morning to head for the head. And who on Earth put the incredibly dusty helicopter LZ next to the head? Whomever, the guy had a military sense of humor.

Looking back, it might have been a secret to the troops that five of the finest-looking, unattached American women alive were only a minute away. No sense in telling Charlie about our precious cargo, as he was not above ruining our day at any given moment.

No one could have been less aware of Miss America than the brave, temporarily clean and shirtless GI who faced the morning sun and calmly dropped his shorts. He bowed, taking a seat on the open-air slit trench's wooden stoop as our slick banked in his direction.

My final approach over the firebase's wire-strewn perimeter was deliberately hot, zeroing-in on a red smoke grenade just upwind of the head. Standard tactical approach.

The Huey was heavy with fuel and the Highlands' density altitude was over 6,000 feet that day, as usual. Picking my spot, the skids slid onto the ground with forward momentum near the smoke canister as I reduced collective pitch.

I kept one eye on the smoke, and one on our disbelieving GI, seated 30 feet away — his olive drab skivvies down around his ankles. I heard the XO key his foot mike as he looked forward for the first time and took in the scene unfolding at 12 o'clock.

"HOLY SH _ _!" the captain gushed, as the ugliest cloud of dust in all of II Corps boiled under the Huey's 48-foot main rotor and raged in the direction of those green skivvies. At the last second, the GI looked up at us with an expression of, not again!

Resigned to his fate, he leaned forward, turned his head to the side, and clenched his eyes tightly shut. His precious roll of paper began to spin and flutter, as he tightly gripped the rough wood board behind his bent knees with both hands.

The nasty, red dirt momentarily obscured his image, tearing at him like an angry herd of tumbleweeds.

You could hear the lovely ladies gasp in unison behind us as the hapless soldier went feet up and over backwards, the roll of toilet paper shooting skyward, unraveling. It was a scene burned forever into the windshield — never to be forgotten by manly warriors nor virginal beauty queens.

As the dust cleared, our vista became the backlit underside of the wooden bench: Several uniformly sawed privy holes were all lit up horizontally, left to right. Toilet paper waved gaily from yonder perimeter's concertina wire.

Behind Hole No. 3, the naked GI reclined on his backside in the warm, red dirt. Slowly, his right arm rose, and he flipped Miss America the bird, through Hole No. 2.

I Corps

H-13 pilot found area hottest during Vietnam tour

STEVE ROCKETT

I got shot at in my H-13 in I Corps more than anywhere else in Vietnam.

We moved into southern I Corps to relieve the Marines because they were expecting a big push on the DMZ and did not have all the choppers like we did.

We had an LZ at Duc Pho and usually were shot at soon after crossing the LZ perimeter. When we first arrived in I Corps, the Vietcong and NVA would stand out on the roads and shoot at us in the open until they learned we shot back. It was really nice of them to stand out in the open for us.

One day we were trying to win the "hearts and minds" of the people and we flew over some Vietnamese working in the rice paddies. I was the low scout and we flew over the people, dropping candy but not one of them ever looked up, they just kept working.

As I flew around the paddies, there were villages on each side of me about 300 meters away. As I turned and the gunner dropped candy, we started receiving automatic weapons fire from the village to my front.

I turned to the right and received fire from another village and kept turning and received fire from the village that was initially to my rear.

I kept turning to the right and started making a gun run on the first village. The people in the paddies still did not look up, but did hit the water in the paddies.

I made my gun run and, of course, my M-60s jammed so I beat it out of the area with a few hits on my copter. The 1/9 Cav sent in the Blues (assault platoon), who had small contact, finding a few weapons and killing some VC.

That day I realized we were much hated and I didn't believe we could do anything to change the situation, but we continued to plod along and do our missions trying to protect each other.

I flew a captain to a Special Forces camp near the Laotian border to do intelligence work. The flight over was about one hour and there were mountains all around us and valleys between.

Dark was approaching and we finally departed toward

the coast and the LZ at Duc Pho. While at the camp the captain had traded for an M-1 rifle and he held it fondly as we flew. I didn't know the M-1 was loaded.

On the way over and back, we were shot at. I looked out the door and, without my knowledge, the captain opened up with his M-1 from 1,500 feet and the cartridge brass was flying about inside the chopper. I almost had a heart attack.

He must have been a great shot to hit someone from 1,500 feet with an M-1.

The next day I was flying the same captain to some outposts and LZs. One of the outposts was on a pinnacle. The captain had spent six months commanding a rifle company and he was still a little nervous.

I was about to complete my approach and had a nose-up attitude when the M-60s on my skids began to cook off.

The troopers on the pinnacle dove for cover and the captain freaked out. He thought we were taking fire.

I dove to the right and made sure the arming circuit breakers were out and I flew with my hand down the cyclic not anywhere near the trigger. As I headed toward the beach, the M-60s continued to cook off intermittently.

Each time the 60s fired, the captain would try to bunch himself into a tiny ball. He was probably scared, but had a right to be after being a ground pounder for six months.

I landed on the beach and exited the chopper, staying clear of the M-60s and disconnected the ammo feed belts and cleared the weapons. I can't remember what maintenance determined as the cause of the cook-off.

Back we went to the outpost and landed. The troopers thought we were being fired on by AK-47s. I was just thankful I was in a nose-up attitude or some of the troopers could have been hit.

Once I flew a doughnut dolly around to see the troopers. As I did, I noticed the Navy and Merchant Marines unloading supplies on the beach. I flew over at 100 feet.

One guy was tattooed from head to toe. He gave me a mean glare with a sour look. He probably had been in the Merchant Marines all his life. He looked like the tattooed harpooner from the movie *Moby Dick*.

As I flew over I applied left pedal. Of course, the H-13 yawed and the dress of the doughnut dolly came up over her head. The face of the guy on the landing craft changed from a smirk to a smile and his jaw dropped as he saw the round-eyed woman.

We stayed in I Corps for a couple of months and I was glad to get back to II Corps and the Bong Song Plains. LZs English and Uplift were familiar territory. It was good to be home again.

I made my gun run and, of course, my M-60s jammed so I beat it out of the area with a few hits on my copter. The 1/9 Cav sent in the Blues (assault platoon), who had small contact, finding a few weapons and killing some VC.

FSB Coral

Largest unit-level battle for Australians in Vietnam

JOHN EATON

The battle for Fire Support Base Coral occurred toward the end of the Tet Offensive in 1968.

Here is a brief rundown on the big picture of the battle. It has been described as the biggest unit-level battle involving Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War.

The operation lasted about a month and involved units of the 1st Australian Task Force in actions in and around Fire Support Bases Coral and Bal-moral to the north of Saigon.

This type of action was not what the Australian Army was used to. We were trained to patrol with stealth and set ambushes for the enemy. Beating them at their own game was the objective. Moving with stealth through the jungle had been a central part of our training since the war with Japan.

What occurred at FSB Coral almost caught us on the back foot.

The opposing Viet Cong /North Vietnamese Army units included the 141st NVA Regiment, 269th and 275th Infiltration Groups, K2 and K3 Battalions, C17 Recoilless Rifle Company and the C18 Anti-aircraft Company.

Total Australian casualties for this operation were 25 killed in action. Casualties for the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) in and around FSB Coral for this operation from May 12-June 6 were 16 killed in action, plus 66 wounded.

In addition, 267 members of the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army were killed in action over the duration of the operation.

I was with 1RAR and the battalion was just settling into its second 12-month tour in South Vietnam.

Australia rotated units, not individuals, during this war.

I had completed the first tour with the battalion when it was attached to the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1965-66. At this point in a second tour of duty,

Total Australian casualties for this operation were 25 killed in action. Casualties for the 1RAR in and around FSB Coral for this operation from May 12-June 6 were 16 killed in action, plus 66 wounded.

I was with 1RAR and the battalion was just settling into its second 12-month tour in South Vietnam. Australia rotated units, not individuals, during this war.

I guess I would have been considered a combat veteran. I had participated in most of the battalion/brigade operations on the first tour and had been involved in combat at company, platoon and section level.

Most of my previous experience was typically jungle-type counterinsurgency warfare. Contact with the enemy was usually fleeting, and was very short and sharp. I thought I had seen it all. The battle of FSB Coral certainly proved that wrong. And how.

Coral was very much a static conventional-type battle. In fact 1RAR was involved in two major battles at Coral. The first occurred on the night of May 12-13. The second on May 15-16.

I wasn't there for the first battle, but arrived just in time for the encore on May 15.

It isn't difficult to recall the battle. Those images and memories are with me for life. Every soldier who was there will have his own story to tell. I will describe it as I remember it from the particular location I was in at the time.

My group was located on the southeast perimeter, facing east, overlooking flat, open grassland to a treeline about 800 meters

away. This location was mostly devoid of trees and our only cover was what we could dig ourselves. It turned out to be an ideal spot from which to observe the battle as it progressed.

On the night of May 15, the battalion was still recovering from the effects of the battle that occurred on the night of May 13. We had spent most of the day digging individual weapon pits with overhead cover.

The word from Headquarters was it didn't expect the enemy to hit us again. Obviously, nobody advised the enemy of this expectation because in the early hours of May 16, it decided to have another go and all hell broke loose.

I had sweated and toiled all day digging my pit and had stupidly decided to sleep above ground. My first recollection of the commencement of battle was when the balmy tropical quiet was shattered by the arrival of the first of hundreds of mortars and RPG-7s (rocket-propelled grenades) into the immediate area. A millisecond later, I was well established in the deepest recesses of my pit.

It's difficult to explain to the uninitiated what it's like

The word from Headquarters was it didn't expect the enemy to hit us again. Obviously, nobody advised the enemy of this expectation . . .

Continued on Page 23

Bombardment noise beyond belief

Continued from Page 22

to be exposed to a continuous bombardment of high-explosive projectiles.

The RPGs can be heard coming in. Most unnerving. Then comes the impact of the arrival. The noise is beyond belief. Nothing like the movies. It is palpable. It has a physical, as well as aural, dimension. The earth shudders and pulsates. It is terrifying. There's nothing you can do about it.

You just huddle in the bottom of your pit and pray for it to end.

The term "foxhole religion" takes on a whole new meaning.

The barrage seemed to go on forever, but probably lasted

about 10 minutes. It ended as abruptly as it started. The short period of silence at the cessation had an almost physical presence. We stunned survivors popped our heads up to see how others had fared. One in our group had been killed by a direct hit and several others were wounded.

The silence was short-lived. Almost immediately, enemy troops began their ground attack. Fortunately for us, the enemy didn't try to cross the open grassland to our front as our perimeter was lightly defended. Other than our personal weapons, we only had one M-60 machine gun and a 106 mm recoilless rifle to hold back any screaming hordes.

Along the perimeter, through the rubber trees to the north and west, waves of enemy troops began their assaults. The volume of firing along those perimeters increased rapidly until individual shots became a continuous roar.

Red and green tracers crisscrossed the base; grenade and claymore mine explosions punctuated the ongoing small arms fire. The air was alive with the buzzing of small arms rounds. We were in no doubt a massive ground attack was under way.

Our own mortars and artillery commenced their defensive fire missions. Flares soon were aloft, swinging on parachutes and adding an eerie illumination to the scene.

To add to the clamor of battle were two U.S. Army

We stunned survivors popped our heads up to see how others had fared. One in our group had been killed by a direct hit and several others were wounded.

Our own mortars and artillery commenced their defensive fire missions. Flares soon were aloft, swinging on parachutes and adding an eerie illumination to the scene.

Dusters on the perimeter to our left. (A Duster is a small tank with twin 40 mm, quick-firing Bofors guns.) The Dusters commenced suppressive fire across our front toward the distant treeline, using illuminating, tracer and explosive rounds.

Distant support from U.S. Army artillery units at Bien Hoa arrived in the form of 175 mm and 8-inch artillery shells. Those big shells could be heard coming, a whooshing, roaring sound which culminates in the thunderous impact of the arrival.

They were quite intimidating for us initially. One can barely imagine how the enemy must have felt when those shells arrived among them.

Just when we thought this battle had reached its peak, along came the air component in the form of U.S. Army Cobra gunships, USAF F-4 Phantoms and a mini-gun equipped C-47 called Spooky.

Spooky was an awesome spectacle. The aircraft flies in a slow orbit about 1,000 feet above the target area. The gun fires tracer rounds at 6,000 rounds per minute down into the target area. Individual shots are indiscernible. The noise is a terrible ripping or tearing sound and the tracers look like a red phosphorous waterfall.

The most spectacular memories I have of this battle has to be those of the duels fought between the Cobras and the enemy 12.7 mm heavy machine guns.

The enemy had moved the HMGs into an area just to the northeast. Those guns were becoming a real problem for the ground-attacking F-4s, as well as the Cobras.

The F-4s were pressing their attack so closely on the northern perimeter (down to about 150 feet); the perimeter trip flares were illuminating the aircrafts' lower fuselage. Those aircraft were being harassed by the HMGs. It was a remarkable display of professionalism and courage. The aircraft flashed into view. Napalm canisters tumbled just once before striking the ground. A roaring torrent of fire. An explosion of after-burner. The aircraft pitches up and disappears into the darkness on plumes of fire. It then re-appears again on another run.

Shortly after that show by the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Army Cobra pilots showed they also were made of "the right stuff."

The Cobras initially were having problems neutralizing the enemy 12.7 mms. At one point, a Cobra at about 250 feet commenced to fly slowly down the upcoming stream of green enemy tracers.

The most spectacular memories I have of this battle has to be those of the duels fought between the Cobras and the enemy 12.7 mm heavy machine guns.

Continued in next issue

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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

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

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: _____	
ADDRESS: _____			
CITY: _____		STATE: _____	ZIP: _____
HOME PHONE: () _____		WORK PHONE: () _____	
E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____		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?