



THE VHPA AVIATOR

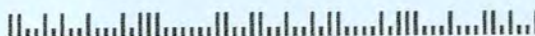
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

January/February 2006 Vol. 24, No. 1



Tommy Thornton photo

Troops from the 173rd Airborne Brigade charge across rice paddy dikes as choppers from the 118th Assault Helicopter Company lift off during a combat assault north of Tan Uyen on May 4, 1966. The 118th AHC "Thunderbirds" made seven lifts on May 4. During an extraction two days later, three helicopters were hit and two pilots were wounded.



*****ALL FOR ADC 870

From the President

As I write this column, registration for the Washington Reunion has been open 10 days and more than 915 people already have signed up.

OUTSTANDING!

More than 400 pilots — 45 of them first-time reunion attendees — are registered.



Mike Sheuerman

This reunion is shaping up to be one of our biggest ever, if not THE BIGGEST. Thanks to Joe, Dave, Dana and the rest of the Reunion Committee for all their hard work. Be sure to seek them out in DC and thank them personally.

Believe it or not, they already are hard at work on Phoenix for 2007.

This year's Welcome Reception will be a little different. We are dividing the huge banquet room into four sections running north to south. I Corps will be at the north end, then II Corps, III Corps and finally IV Corps at the south end.

We feel this will make it easier for members to find old friends, not only from their units but those they knew who served in other units.

We have a buffet dinner planned, since most of those attending will be flying east and should arrive later in the day.

First-time attendees and their guests will have a short reception with the Executive Council, committee heads and Headquarters staff from 7-8 p.m. and then will be ushered into the main banquet hall. The doors for this event will open at 7:30 p.m. Dinner begins at 8:15 p.m.

This will be a time to see old friends, make new ones and remember those not with us. Several bars will be set up outside and inside the banquet room to accommodate any need that should arise. And the best part — NO LOUD MUSIC.

In the last *Aviator*, I mentioned a book by Margo Raven entitled "America's White Table" about the missing man table. Stan Wiley did a review in the issue also.

Margo has agreed to be at the reunion and sign her

book. All the profits will go to the National Vietnam War Museum and the VHPA Scholarship Fund. If, like me, you already own a copy, bring it with you and she will be happy to sign it. This is an outstanding book for children of all ages. Buy two or three and give them as gifts.

The Fourth of July Parade down Constitution Avenue is a "don't miss" at this reunion. Sure, it will be hot. Sure, we are the last to go. Sure, it takes two or three hours of waiting. But, trust me on this; it's worth every second it takes. I promise you will never forget the experience.

If you can still fit into your old flight suit like Gary Roush, wear it. If you are still on active duty, wear your current flight suit. If nothing else, wear a VHPA T-shirt or a regular shirt. It will be hot, so bring plenty of water (VHPA will provide some water, but it never hurts to bring extra) and wear shorts. But be there and walk in the Fourth of July Parade down Constitution Avenue. You won't regret it.

Things continue to go well. The New Member Report is up and working at www.vhpa.org/info/memsearch.htm

The RFP is almost ready. Members are updating their emails as requested. Membership is growing. Retention is improving. Members are contributing to the Scholarship Fund. Jack is getting letters and articles for *The Aviator*, but can always use more. The EC is working on several things to improve your Association.

All in all, my year as your president has been a good one for me so far. You being in DC will make it perfect.

On a personal note, my friend and fellow Panther Wayne Lehto didn't make the San Francisco Reunion due to his battle with cancer. He was in a VA hospital in North Carolina during late June and early July of last year. He called us at the Marriott in San Francisco to assure us he would be in DC.

I first met Wayne in DC during the 2000 Reunion when he and his wife, Dee, showed up at the Stickitt Inn unexpectedly. In early 2000, I had written to invite them to join VHPA and attend the DC Reunion.

Wayne wasn't a member, much less a "joiner," and replied making no commitment. He said he'd try. Didn't sound too enthusiastic to me. He and Dee had a great time. He joined VHPA a little later and made every reunion until last year.

Wayne died last night after a six-year battle with cancer. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Continued on Page 3

VHPA statistics

- Between Dec. 31, 2005, and Feb. 6, 2006, the VHPA added 51 new members.

- During January and early February, members donated \$1,410 toward the VHPA Scholarship Fund.

E-mail items to The Aviator at:
editor@vhpa.org

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Letters

Defining moment occurs during rescue

Southeast of the old capital city of Hue, in what used to be South Vietnam, mountains curve eastward from the west toward the sea only to peter out before reaching it.

One gray, overcast afternoon in early 1968, I was orbiting my Huey helicopter over these mountains, listening to the troops on the ground as they maneuvered unseen below us, through jungle thick with enemy soldiers.

Their commander, a major, in the back of my helicopter, impatient with the progress being made, kept urging his people on the ground to keep moving. At one point, he radioed the lieutenant on the ground, "Charlie One-Niner this is Alpha Six, I need you to speed it up a bit and I need to know what is going on down there. Over."

The lieutenant, whispering on the radio, replied, "All I know is that I want the @x&# off this mountain."



That sounded very reasonable to me. I did not even want to be flying above it. I continued to orbit, dreading the inevitable call for an emergency medevac for wounded and dying American soldiers should the enemy discover them in their midst.

Given the terrain we were over, most likely, this would involve trying to find a relatively open space close to our troops. Then I would have to bring the aircraft to a hover and, using the crew for guidance, slowly lower the aircraft down through the trees, sliding forward, backward or sideways, as necessary, to keep from striking any large branches with the rotor blades.

Any time the blades struck smaller branches, it sounded like close automatic weapons fire and always scared the

Continued on Page 4

From the President

Continued from Page 2

Wayne always kept his word. He was that kind of man. He will be in DC for the reunion.

Remember to continue doing the three things I asked of each of you:

- Contribute to the VHPA Scholarship Fund
- Write a letter or article for *The Aviator*
- Sign up a new guy.

Hope to see you in DC.

— Mike Sheuerman, President

Letters

Continued from Page 3

hell out of me. Sometimes, if the enemy opened fire on us, we forgot about finesse, and just pulled pitch and went straight up, as fast as possible, hoping not to hit anything the blades couldn't handle; hoping they would hold together long enough for us to get to a safe location.

All these thoughts were swirling through my mind, when a call came over the radio, "Eagle One-One-Five, change to company push, over."

This was a request for me to change to the company frequency, where I was given the frequency of a company in contact, meaning they were in a battle. I changed. Immediately, the sounds of men screaming orders and the background sounds of automatic weapons fire, explosions and other men yelling orders for assistance brought my body to full alert. It sounded like I had tuned in on hell itself.

Pilot calls ground commander

At the first opportunity, I placed a call over the radio to the commander on the ground. "Bravo Six, this is Eagle One-One-Five. We are a UH-1H helicopter just a few miles north of you and waiting for your instructions."

"One-one-five this is Bravo Six, we are in contact with a company-size force. We have dead and wounded and are requesting emergency medevac."

"Roger, Bravo Six. We are en route with an ETA of about 10 minutes. I am limited on how many I can get onboard. Put the most seriously wounded on the first load and the less serious on the next lift. We'll get the dead, when we can. Over."

"This is Six, roger."

"Six this is One-One-Five, also, request that you set up a perimeter for us."

"This is Six. Negative, on that request. I am unable to comply."

"Roger."

Anytime I landed in an unsecured area, I always requested the force on the ground give me a perimeter. Sometimes, they did, and sometimes, they didn't. I was never certain what protection it gave me, but it made me feel better.

Battle raging south of location

We determined the battle was down in the valley a few miles south of our location. Using the FM Homer, I obtained the general direction of the radio transmissions and turned that way.

Pushing the nose of the Huey over, we plunged down the side of the mountain, quickly hitting the red line. At that speed, the old Hueys would buck, shake and rattle and were very uncomfortable to be in, especially for the troops in the back who did not understand what was happening.

Uncertain of the exact location, I called for the unit on the ground to pop a smoke. They popped a smoke grenade I identified as being the color purple to try and ensure American troops had popped it and not the enemy. The radios were alive with loud explosions, the sounds of gunfire and the frantic calls for support.

The smoke grenade burned out; I had called for it too early. I immediately lost track of the location where we wanted to land and called for another smoke.

Crew's guns in ready position

Looking back at my door gunners, I noted both had their guns up in the ready position.

"Do not fire, do not fire, don't even return fire!" I shouted over the intercom. "We have no idea where our troops are located."

As we neared the site, I could hear the throaty boom, boom, boom of a big .50-caliber machine gun firing somewhere close enough I could hear it over the din of the aircraft and the radios. I imagined I could feel the concussion of the muzzle blast. My heart felt as though it was going to burst from my chest.

I made a very hot approach with a big flare at the bottom. The co-pilot immediately began yelling over the intercom, "High RPM, high RPM!" Along with everything else going on, I had to work to get the RPM back down into the acceptable range.

It was very dusty at the landing site and we generated a huge, blinding cloud of dust. I had been in Vietnam for almost six months and flown enough hours the aircraft and I were as one. I knew where the ground was, what the aircraft could do and we touched down without so much as a bounce.

Sounds of battle heard without radios

Soldiers immediately swarmed the helicopter. I was assaulted with sights of dirty, fearful faces, blood, mangled bodies and the continued sounds of the battle, now heard easily without the radios.

"Give me an up, Chief," I said, unnecessarily, to the crew chief, who was now standing about five feet from the aircraft, connected by a long communications cord, and assisting in getting the wounded onboard.

I sat there, as I always did in these circumstances, willing myself to stay put until the crew chief gave me the signal we were up and ready to depart. I kept my left arm locked as straight as I could so that I would not inadvertently start to pull pitch before we were ready. I listened for the unmistakable sounds of bullets slamming into the aircraft and tried to imagine what it would feel like to have a bullet smash through the aluminum and enter my body. We had been on the ground so long and people were just milling around.

Intellectually, I knew I had only been there for seconds and everyone was working as fast as humanly possible. Combat, however, becomes very personal and it is difficult to view it dispassionately when you know that every second may well be your last.

Continued on Page 5



Letters

Continued from Page 4

As I sat there, willing the crew chief to give me the go ahead to leave, two soldiers carrying a stretcher ran up beside my door, pausing for a second waiting for their turn to place the wounded soldier they were carrying onto the aircraft. I looked down at this man; actually, he was just a boy, noting his uniform covered in dirt and dark red blood. His face, pale and yellowish from shock, turned toward me. He looked at me for a moment and then he did the most wondrous thing. He smiled at me.

Effect of smile immediate

The effect of his smile was immediate and complete. I knew, with absolute certainty, I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing. The Army had trained me and life had prepared me for this exact moment. I was here to take wounded American soldiers away from this hellish place.

My heart ceased feeling as though it was going to crash through my ribs; my thinking became calmer; I stopped worrying about rounds striking the aircraft and I concentrated on what needed to be done.

"We're up, Sir!" the crew chief called.

I began takeoff, staying low to the ground until we had built our speed to about 100 knots then made a rapid climb to altitude.

I have no idea the fate of that soldier, although I have always hoped fervently he made it out alive. He did so much for me; I hope I did something for him.

John Bercaw



Pilot's sister attends for many reasons

I'm pretty sure no one asks you folks why you go to the VHPA reunions. But as a "non-helicopter pilot," I am asked that question a lot. This week, for some reason, I asked myself that question and decided I would share that with you.

I've attended six reunions in the past nine years; 1997 was my first reunion after finding my brother's unit, the Pink Panthers. Much of that reunion remains a blur. It was very emotional, educational and heartwarming. I think most everyone's first reunions remains a blur for one reason or another. It was the first year I had ever met someone who knew my brother, served with my brother, and those he spent his final days with.

It was also my first year I became friends with Julie Kink. She was the first person I ever met who had experi-

enced the same loss. There is a bond between Julie and me that maybe only you all understand.

My second reunion, in Fort Wolters included a tour of the base as it is today.

In the hall where you all had dances, I was asked by Gary Thewlis of the VHCN to join the Family Contacts Committee, to assist others like Julie and me perhaps locate someone who would remember their lost loved one. I was honored to be asked to help out with such a worthwhile labor of love.

Thanks for sharing memories

My many thanks to all of you who have helped in sharing your memories with those seeking answers. If you are not familiar with this group, please stop by our table in the vendor room at the VHPA reunion.

During all the reunions there is always someone new to me from my brother's unit or flight class. A new meeting is always something I look forward to. There is always something new to learn about how it was in Vietnam back then. Those things are never anything anyone can learn in a textbook. You all are a wealth of information!

Then there are those who I seek (and hug) at every reunion. Not from my brothers unit, not even from his flight class. I learned through reading a story written by a Pink Panther of a horrific day in the history of the 361st about a man who, without regard to his own safety, willingly flew his Huey in to pick up my brother when he was shot down. I will *forever* be grateful to Kent Harper, Bikini 29.

Family KIA breakfast planned at reunion

So the reasons I go are many. This summer we will have our third annual Family KIA breakfast in DC. Many thanks to Rick Lester for your support. We know this will be our best ever!

And I need to add here: I always have a blast!

Thank you to everyone for making me feel so welcome at *your* reunion. I look forward to DC and hope you all are planning on attending.

Susan Clotfelter Blaker
Sister of Mark Clotfelter
361st Aviation Company (Escort)
KIA 6/16/69

Colonel helped shape life of a young pilot

This is not a war story, but carries as much emotion as any I have read, heard or told myself.

I was assigned to B Company, 229th Aviation Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. After departing LZ Sharon during the monsoon of 1968, B Company moved to Dau Tieng, with the balance of the battalion to Tay Ninh.

Fast forward to November in Dau Tieng. We were on

Continued on Page 6

Letters

Continued from Page 5

call for an ash and trash mission to Tay Ninh. On landing, we found our mission was to take the battalion commander, Col. Quay C. Snyder, up to observe a significantly large combat assault near Quan Loi.

After staying on station until we needed to return for fuel, Col. Snyder, during a brief discussion, found out I was the company standardization instructor pilot. Col. Snyder was rated, but felt a bit rusty and asked if I could return within the next few days and fly with him for a few hours. I did.

Colonel describes career

During our time together, with my pulling a few circuit breakers, stomping on a pedal to simulate tail rotor failure, with a run-on landing, shooting a couple hovering auto rotations and at-altitude auto rotations, we settled down for some straight and level flight and conversation.

Col. Snyder told me about his life and very interesting military career, including teaching what he referred to as "leader sleep" classes at West Point, the military schools he had attended, his family and how much he liked to drive his car just after it had been washed.

He asked me about my history, and what I wanted to do long term. I told him I was a product of a military home, spent seven semesters majoring in fraternity life, and my interest in making the Army a career.

After that flight, my life changed significantly. I flew with Col. Snyder often and, because of his intercession, I received a commission as an O-1 in late 1968.

Col. Snyder asked me what I wanted to do as a commissioned officer and I told him I was most interested in aviation safety. Shortly after that conversation, I became the 229th Aviation Battalion safety officer and moved to the headquarters compound in Tay Ninh.

Snyder takes pilot under wings

Col. Snyder literally took me under his wing and tutored me in the art of developing safety reports, providing daily briefings, and talking with and providing direction to aviation company commanders who, in every instance, were field grade officers.

My branch was field artillery and Col. Snyder found and gave me several field manuals and instructed me to read, giving me a "leg up" when I attended the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course. Several times toward the end of my tour, Col. Snyder told me he fully expected me to become a senior officer. Col. Snyder's positive attitude, support and faith in me translated to faith in myself.

In mid-March 1969, I left Vietnam for Fort Sill and the basic course. I graduated from the basic course in the top 5

percent of the class. I went on to Fort Hood where I was assigned as the division artillery aviation officer (1st Armored Division). After my aviation assignment, I became a battery executive officer and battery commander. I finished my brief career as a troop commander (3/1 Cavalry) at Fort Hood.

Upcoming RIF causes career change

The reason for the brief career was a decision on my part after visiting the Office of Personnel Operations (OPO) to find I was within the target zone for an upcoming Army reduction in force. I was told, without a degree I was most likely going to be selected.

I chose to take a two-month early out to coincide with the beginning of a semester at the University.

I finished my undergraduate degree, master's degree and PhD with flying colors. I taught at several universities, worked within the civilian nuclear industry at the state and national level for over 25 years, retired and now work for 3M as a national market director in Washington, DC.

I could have not done what I have done without the support and direction I received from Col. Snyder. His guidance made me realize my potential and how best to utilize it.

Planned to contact colonel for years

On any number of occasions between mid-March 1969 and mid-2000, I wanted to contact Col. Snyder and give him a progress report and tell him how much his support and positive attitude had influenced me.

On a phone conversation with a Vietnam colleague, I spoke of the influence Col. Snyder had had on me, and how many times I had wanted to contact him, but never took the time to ferret out an address or phone number.

My colleague said Quay C. Snyder was by no means a common name and he would see if he could assist. Several hours later, he called and said he had found a Quay C. Snyder in Colorado who was somehow involved in aviation. Bingo.

I called the number provided and a woman answered the phone, "Mrs. Snyder." I immediately introduced myself and told her I had served with her husband in Vietnam, how much he had influenced my life and how much I was indebted to him.

Mrs. Snyder told me her father-in-law was Col. Quay C. Snyder, and he had died unexpectedly several years earlier. Mrs. Snyder, whose husband is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and a flight surgeon, went on to tell me while her mother had remarried, she would be pleased to hear about our phone conversation.

Many people fail to close loop

This is not an uncommon story. Many of us want to tell someone how much he or she has meant to us, how much they have influenced our lives, but for any number of reasons we seem never to close this very important loop.

If you have read this far and your level of empathy is

Continued on Page 7



Letters

Continued from Page 6

up, perhaps you too need to contact someone who has affected you as Col. Snyder did me.

Robert C. Evans, PhD
National Market Director
3M Public Affairs and Government Markets

Getting team out 'just another day at office'

The primary mission of the 57th Assault Helicopter Company "Gladiators" during my tour was flying Special Forces recon teams into Laos and Cambodia in the tri-border area.

We flew out of the "CCC" camp in Kontum, escorted by the 361st Aviation Company (Escort) "Pink Panthers."

We would put these teams along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, where they would look for truck convoys. If all went well, we would pull the team, call in the B-52s and the bad guys would lose a lot of war supplies. The numbers of destroyed trucks told a huge story and the NVA didn't like us very much. Which brings me to my story.

Each and every day flying over the border brought on a new "white knuckle" adventure.

On this one particular day, I was leading a flight of "Gladiators" from our base at Camp Holloway in Pleiku to the "CCC" camp in Kontum.

I called "CCC" operations and told them that we were inbound. They immediately told me they had a team that was surrounded, with no ammo, and that the good guys and bad guys were both waiting for us. It was going to be another one of those days!

I called "Covey," our forward air controller, and he said he had no visual on the team because the valley was completely socked in. He also said it didn't look good for the team because it was reporting "hundreds" of bad guys all around it.

We circled the area half the morning until the fog start-

Continued on Page 8

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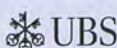
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Letters

Continued from Page 7

ed to burn off and finally spotted the team's orange panel. I called the "Pink Panther" lead and told him that it was show time.

As his team descended to set up a gun pattern, someone called me on FM and asked, "Are you coming down to get them or do you want us to kill them?"

Not sure of what I just heard, I asked for a repeat and was asked the same thing.

Pilot talks to NVA officer

I asked, "Who is this?" and he said, "Who do you think I am?" Realizing that I was probably talking to a high-ranking NVA, officer I told him I was coming down to pick up our team and he said he was waiting for us.

With the pucker factor rising quickly, I spiraled down into the Pink Panthers' gun pattern, telling them to start shooting up the tree lines and don't stop shooting until I got out of there. They proceeded to show me where the word "deforestation" comes from. I would never do one of these extractions without the "Pink Panthers." They made these kinds of things possible.



Without going into a lot of detail, I did get the team out and called our forward air controller and asked if he could have one of the circling F-4s drop a couple 500 pound "presents" on my new friend on the ground. He said: "With pleasure."

Phantoms roll in on NVA

As the Phantoms rolled in, I went up on FM and said: "If your still alive, this is for you."

As I brought my flight around to the east and the safety of South Vietnam I realized it was my 20th birthday. I told my crew. They laughed and said I couldn't even vote or

buy a beer back in the States.

Oh, well, it was just another day at the office.

Richard Madore
122 Federal St.
West Hartford, CT 06110

April 1967 a dangerous month for chopper pilot

It seems April of 1967 was a dangerous period in my life. Not only did we get shot down on April 1, but the following happened on the 26th.

We had been assigned to a battalion commander, (Lt. Col. Thomas Rosell, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment), for the day.

He had three companies combing the jungle about five miles north of the Ia Drang Valley. We were flying in a D-model Huey that was noted for being a "dog," with little power.

We flew mostly command and control, in which the commander directs his troops from the air. It's kind of boring type of flying, flying around in circles.

Crew refuels, waits for release

Toward the end of the day, I had dropped off the colonel at his firebase, had gone to refuel at a Special Forces camp near the Cambodian border named Duc Co, and had gone back to the firebase to wait for the colonel to release us.

We sat around for about an hour when the colonel came running to our helicopter and asked us if we could go in to evacuate two critically wounded men of his battalion.

It seems one of his companies had gotten into a fire-fight and had gotten surrounded. He had sent his other two companies to relieve the first one and they had also gotten surrounded.

He said there were no medical evacuation helicopters

Continued on Page 9

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Letters

Continued from Page 8

available. He also said they had blasted a small landing zone with C4 explosives.

I said OK and he briefed me on the situation. He gave me the units' position and radio call sign and told me there was artillery firing to the north and fighter-bombers flying close air support to the east and west.

Gunships agree to cover slick

We cranked up and I contacted two of our gunships (The Gamblers). I had flown with them for six months and knew the gunship team leader. He was standing by at Duc Co and readily agreed to cover us while we went in to pick up the wounded.

I gave him the FM radio frequency and call sign of the ground commander. We communicated with each other on a UHF frequency. I told him I would meet his team south of the landing zone and we would be approaching from south to north over a small hill.

I contacted the ground commander and told him our plans and to call off the fighter-bombers for a while.

When we got set up, I asked the ground commander to pop a smoke grenade to mark the landing zone. I identified the color, (I still remember it was yellow), and we went in with the gunships on each side, firing to the east and west of the landing zone. Usually the gunships flew an elongated, circular pattern to cover each other, and us but due to the ground unit being surrounded, they came in on each side.

It was a really tight LZ in which we had to come to a hover above the trees and come straight down about 60 feet.

LZ full of dust, smoke, noise

I remember setting down while they loaded the wounded. The LZ was full of dust, smoke, and sound, with an occasional tracer passing above. They were still firing and the artillery was still going on to the north.

They brought up the two wounded men; one was wounded in the head and was able to walk, but the other was on a stretcher and a soldier was giving him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. He had been shot in the buttock and the round had come out in front and taken out his groin area. He was white from loss of blood.

With the three extra bodies and a full load of fuel, we were overloaded.

I called the gunships and told them we were coming out and to give us cover. I had to climb straight up due to the tight LZ.

When the rotor blades were about 4-6 feet from the top of the trees, the engine RPM started bleeding off. I boosted it up as far as I could, but we could not gain any more altitude. Our options were to go back down and burn off fuel, find some way to lighten the load, or to cut through the

trees.

I remembered we had come over a hill and if we could get to the other side, we could go downhill and get enough airspeed to fly. I decided to cut through the branches sideways toward the south. The branches went flying just like being cut by a giant lawnmower and the helicopter's fuselage was scraping the ends of the cut branches. We made it safely and were able to fly out.

By the time we took the wounded to the hospital, it was dark. We still had to fly about another 20 minutes to our airfield at the 4th Infantry Division base camp. By this time, a thunderstorm had come in and we had to fly back in the dark, in driving rain, thunder, and lightning. We were practically flying on instruments; luckily, the lightning illuminated the ground occasionally. We got back to Enari Airfield in one piece.

Rotors almost broken apart

I had the next day off and was asleep when the maintenance officer woke me up about 8:30 a.m. He asked me if we had hit anything with the main rotor blades the day before. I told him the story and he told me that the rotor blades had deep gashes in them and that we were lucky they hadn't fallen apart.

Lt. Col. Rosell wrote up a great recommendation and I wound up getting my 23rd Air Medal, with a "V" Device, for being extremely lucky.

Bernardo S. Paez

Army screws up again — promotes pilot to general

Won't they ever learn? First, they RIF a lot of talented combat aviators, including me, after the conflict was over. Said they didn't need us anymore.

Then they swap the Cobra in for the Apache. That hasn't worked out too well has it?

But this last episode takes the cake. They take an outstanding maintenance warrant officer, a guy who could get a Snake in the air with one rotor blade, a guy that would give you all the birds you needed for a mission, a guy who consistently met or exceeded his availability rate day after day — and made him a general. Yes — that's right — they promoted him to brigadier general.

The 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers" wishes to congratulate former CW2 Alberto J. Jimenez, Panther 48 during September 1971-August 1972, on his recent promotion to general officer. We look forward to giving him the opportunity to buy his fellow Panthers numerous drinks in DC. Hey, Tamale Kid, don't let it go to your head.

No matter how hard you try, you will never top the outstanding performance you provided to us as a maintenance officer with the 361st in Vietnam. After that, it has all been down hill.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15



Taps

Robert "Bob" L. Dodson

Robert "Bob" L. Dodson, 57, of Cape Girardeau, MO, died Dec. 27 at his home.

He served with the 240th Assault Helicopter Company at Bearcat, Vietnam, in August 1969-70.

Bob grew up and attended school and some college in Cape Girardeau. He went to Vietnam after flight school and then returned to Hunter Army Airfield after his tour. At Hunter he served with the 3rd Aircraft Maintenance Battalion until his discharge from active duty as a CW2 in April 1971.

He returned to Cape Girardeau and briefly attended Southeast Missouri State College. He worked various jobs in Cape Girardeau until he joined Sabreliner Corp., where he worked for 26 years until his death.

Bob and I were best friends. I met him when we entered the Army together in St. Louis in 1968. We went through basic training at Fort Polk and then on to flight school with Class 69-21 at Fort Wolters and Hunter AAF.

We served with different companies in Vietnam, but kept in constant touch with each other. After our return, we went to Hunter AAF to attend MOI, but due to the downsizing of the war were sent to the 3rd Aircraft Maintenance Battalion as test pilots. We were released from active duty on the same day.

We have remained in touch. He and his family would visit us and we would visit him. I spoke with him just days before his death.

He married twice and divorced twice. His daughters, Kimberly and Sarah; grandchildren, Aaron Dodson and Cole Proffer; and his sister, Nancy Duschell, survive him.

— Richard R. "Dick" Crow

Christopher E. Gates

Christopher E. Gates, 54, of Wayzata, MN, died Nov. 11 of melanoma cancer in Minneapolis.

He graduated from flight school in Class 71-29. Gates served with the 120th Assault Helicopter Company from June 1971 to February 1972.

He was recipient of the Bronze Star Medal and the Air Medal with 8 oak leaf clusters.

Wayne L. Lehto

Wayne L. Lehto of Durham, NC, died Jan. 25 after a six-year running battle with cancer.

Wayne served two tours in Vietnam, the first as an infantry officer and the second as a Cobra pilot in the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers" in May 1970-71.

Wayne was an outstanding officer and excellent pilot, hard-nosed and gruff, but always a mentor to the younger pilots in the unit.

His awards and decorations include a Silver Star Medal, a Distinguished Flying Cross, and numerous awards of the Air Medal.

Wayne was a member of Class 69-42. He had hoped for a Chinook transition out of flight school, but received a Snake transition instead. He never tired of telling his fellow Panthers and all his friends it was the best thing that ever happened in his military career.

Wayne attended his first VHPA reunion in Washington, DC, in 2000. He was hesitant to attend at first but thoroughly enjoyed seeing his old friends and making new ones. He joined VHPA shortly after the reunion and was a regular until health problems sidelined him in early 2005.

His wife, Dianna "Dee" Lehto; a son, Wayne Lehto Jr. and his wife; daughters, Sandra, Stephanie and Janae and their husbands, six grandchildren, five brothers and six sisters survive him.

Wayne was a warrior extraordinaire.

— Mike Sheuerman

Wayne Raymon Olliff

Wayne Raymon Olliff, 60, died Jan. 17 under the care of Hospice of Palm Beach County, FL.

He served two tours of duty in Vietnam as an Army helicopter pilot.

Olliff attended Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and was a retired journeyman electrician.

His son, Jeffrey Olliff, and his father, Raymon Olliff, preceded him in death.

Olliff is survived by his wife, Margaret of Loxahatchee, FL; sons, Wayne Olliff, Jr. of Statesboro, Joshua Olliff of Tallahassee, and Randy Olliff and Jonathan Olliff of Metter; stepsons, Eddie, Eric, Lance and Aron Hulen of

Florida; his mother, Karl Olliff of Metter; brother, Norman Olliff of Statesboro; four grandchildren; seven step-grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Steven Lamb Rodgers

Steven Lamb Rodgers of Odessa, TX, died Nov. 25 of a heart attack in Columbus, OH. He was 71.

He was a member of flight school Class 59-19/59-6, and served three tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot: In 1964-65 with the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, in 1967-68 with the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion, and in 1970-71 with the Combat Aviation Group.

He was recipient of the Air Medal with oak leaf clusters, the Bronze Star Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Steve retired from the Army as a major.

He was founder and owner of Stemarco Inc., an Odessa engraving firm.

Steve was a member and past president of the Odessa



Continued on Page 11

Taps

Continued from Page 10

Tri-Service Lions Club. He served as district governor of Lions Clubs International, executive director of the Lions Eye Bank Permian Basin, and district director of the Texas Lions Camp.

He is survived by his wife, Margie Rodgers of Odessa; daughters, Stephanie Wynn Strain of Bowling Green, KY; Ramona Russell and husband Mark of Odessa; and Frances (Bené) Fann and husband Jerry of LaVergne, TN; and a stepson, David Hale of Chicago; grandchildren, Carol Rey Ollinger, Travis Strain, Luke Russell, Jacob Strain, Hope Russell, Katherine Fann, Hannah and Sophia Hale; and great-granddaughter, Daizy Lindvall.

— Pat Richardson

Mark F. Scanlon

Mark F. Scanlon, 56, of Charlotte, NC, died Nov. 25 at Carolinas Medical Center after an ongoing illness.

A 36-year disabled veteran of the Army, he graduated from Warrant Officer Candidate Flight School Classes 69-37/69-35 in Fort Rucker.

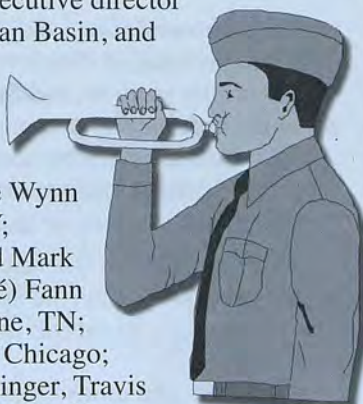
During his Vietnam tour in 1969-70, he served with the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company "Black Cats," flying out of Da Nang (Marble Mountain) and Quang Ngia. His call sign was "Black Cat 10."

After active duty, Mark served with the Army Reserve Aviation Company, North Carolina National Guard.

His military decorations included the Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Air Medal with oak leaf clusters, Vietnam Service Medal, Army Aviator Badge, National Defense Service Medal and Sharpshooter Badge (M-14).



Mark F. Scanlon



He is survived by his wife, Deborah Scanlon; a son, Sean Scanlon and his wife, Laura; a grandson, Seth Scanlon; his father, Frank Scanlon; a sister, Cindy Spitz; a nephew, Doug Simpson and his wife, Angela and two sons; a niece, Kim McConnell and one daughter.

He would like me to tell all his family and friends that he loved you and appreciated your friendship and support. He is at peace now and his spirit will always be with us.

Memorials may be made to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, VHPA Memorial Scholarship Fund, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698 and Black Cat Association, 412 Azle Highway, Weatherford, TX 76087.

— Deborah Scanlon

Hugh Thompson

Hugh Thompson, a former Army helicopter pilot honored for rescuing Vietnamese civilians during the My Lai massacre, died of cancer on Jan. 6. He was 62.

Thompson died at the Veterans Affairs Medical Centre in Alexandria, VA.

On the morning of March 16, 1968, Thompson, door gunner Lawrence Colburn and crew chief Glenn Andreotta came upon U.S. ground troops killing Vietnamese civilians in and around the village of My Lai.

Thompson landed the helicopter in the line of fire between U.S. troops and fleeing Vietnamese civilians. The helicopter crewmen pointed their guns at the U.S. soldiers to prevent more killings.

Colburn and Andreotta provided cover for Thompson as he confronted the leader of the U.S. forces. Thompson later coaxed civilians out of a bunker so they could be evacuated and landed his helicopter again to pick up a wounded child, whom he transported to a hospital. Their efforts led to the cease-fire order at My Lai.

In 1998, the Army honored Thompson, Colburn and Andreotta with the Soldier's Medal, the highest award for bravery not involving conflict with an enemy. It was a posthumous award for Andreotta, who was killed in battle three weeks after My Lai.

"It was the ability to do the right thing even at the risk of their personal safety that guided these soldiers to do what they did," Maj. Gen. Michael Ackerman said at the 1998 ceremony. The three "set the standard for all soldiers to follow."

Email addresses

VHPA needs your current email address on file at HQ.

This will give the VHPA the ability to contact members quicker and reduce costs in labor and postage expenses, and assist in getting dues collected faster.

Please send an email with your current email address to HQ at hq@vhpa.org or use the forms on at www.vhpa.info or www.vhpa.org/info/vhpaform.html

Send it even if you believe the email address on file to

be current. Be sure to include your name and member number. HQ will verify receipt with a reply email.

Recently we have found almost 50 percent of the email addresses on file are bad.

In the future, HQ will notify members with current email addresses of such things as dues renewal dates, requests for personal data by another member and any other information that needs disseminating immediately.

Thanks in advance for taking the time to do this.

Mike Sheuerman
President

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

DAVE RITTMAN, JOE BILITZKE, AND DANA YOUNG
2006 REUNION COMMITTEE

Wow! The membership has spoken!

This article is being written on Feb. 8, only three weeks after registration first opened on the afternoon of Jan. 16. Already more than 1,200 members and guests have registered for what has the potential to be the largest reunion ever.

Washington, DC! Ready for a great time and to meet all those fellow pilots who meant so much to you some 40 years ago?

Our Association and our reunions are about camaraderie, friendship, and renewing acquaintances of old, while we have a great time and do fun things together and with our spouses/guests in the process.



Our recommendation: Register early!

Our last issue of *The Aviator* contained details about the upcoming reunion, and that same information is posted on the reunion website: www.vhpareunion.org

For those of you who do not have access to the Internet, in this magazine there also is a manual form you can complete, and then fax or mail to our HQ in California.

For most of you, who are completing the event registration process on-line, the system will seamlessly hyperlink you directly to another site to complete your hotel reservations.

For those situations where a member requires an additional overnight room, you may call our HQ staff toll free at **(800) 505-VHPA (8472)** for additional information, or any other registration related problems.

If you are using the manual form, once HQ completes the registration process, an employee will provide you a

Continued on Page 13

COMBAT HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION



DUTY • HONOR • COURAGE • NEVER EVER FORGET

DUTY • HONOR • COURAGE • NEVER EVER FORGET

CHPA is an all-service, non-profit, military association of active duty, NG, Reserve, and former U.S. combat rotary wing pilots from all wars.

Our purpose is Unity, Legacy, and Remembrance of our fallen comrades.

For information on Preserving Our Legacy, visit the web site or request a brochure from our HQ in Washington, DC.

www.CHPA-US.org

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PO Box 15852
Washington, DC 20003-0852

COMBAT HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 12

toll-free number to a third party vendor (not the hotel) to complete your hotel reservations.

As in previous recent years, you will not be able to secure rooms in our room block using our heavily discounted room rate by calling the hotel directly. You must register through the VHPA first.

We also cannot accept requests for "sub-blocks" of rooms for units or groups of people. Each member must register himself for his own room(s).

Our host hotel

Our headquarters hotel this year is the prestigious Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, located in DC's prestigious Woodley Park neighborhood "Embassy Row," the National Cathedral, and the Zoo. A photo tour is available at www.marriott.com/wasdt

There is a Metro (light rail) stop just outside the hotel, and you are only 8 miles and a quick cab ride from Reagan National Airport (DCA).



Details about the hotel are on-line and in our last *Aviator* magazine.

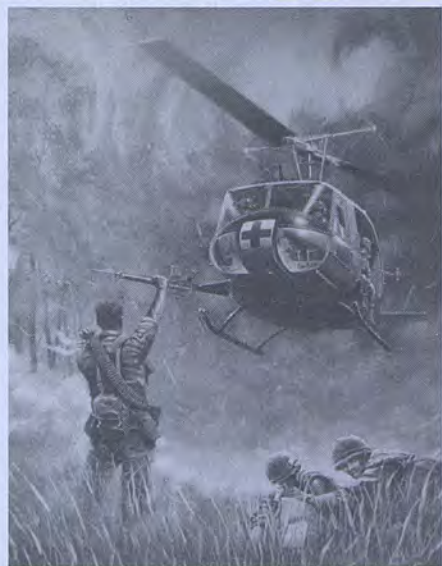
Overnight rooms are deeply discounted to \$115 per night, plus tax, and it's clear they will sell out in the weeks ahead. As this article is being written, members already have booked more than 3,000 room nights — about 87 percent of the original available room block at the Marriott.

Arrangements have been made at the nearby Omni Hotel to accommodate room needs when the Marriott fills. When that happens, we automatically will change the links on our website to the Omni, which is a short walk across the gardens and lawn that separate the two hotels. The Omni will honor the same pricing for VHPA members and their guests.

Arriving early?

Here's some advance "skinny" for you. Similar to last year, members are taking advantage of the low room rate, and almost 50 percent are planning to arrive at least one day early.

Continued on Page 14



Dustoff

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WANT TO BE ON THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL?

There are two positions available in the
2006 election for EC offices

**They are Vice President
and
Junior Member at Large**

**Please submit your letter of intent
I will send you the application packet
by return mail**

Send your letter to:

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4331 NE Rhodes End
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
(206)842-7998
johnsalmjr@aol.com**

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 13

Based on actual bookings so far, it appears there will be more than 1,250 members and guests in house by Friday evening, June 30.

In recognition of the “early bird” attendance, we have arranged for an informal, VHPA-dedicated gathering area, complete with a band to perform from 4-7 p.m. Friday, before those with tickets to the Marine Tattoo depart (see below).

Summary of the official events

U.S. Marine Corps Military Tattoo – Friday June 30

The Marine Corps is hosting a unique “Tattoo,” with a lot of music, pageantry, precision parade, and demonstration of military skills. Based on early sign-ups, it looks like more than 1,000 of you will be going — quite a group.

We’ll load buses that will leave the hotel about 6:45 p.m. The show ends at 10:10 p.m., and we estimate you will be back at the hotel about 11 p.m.

This is an inexpensive, very unique evening, and well worth the trip. Please be advised security will inspect purses, bags, and may run attendees through metal detectors.

Welcome Reception, Buffet Dinner – Saturday July 1

Due to time zone differences for those flying in from other than East Coast locations, we know many of you will be arriving much later in the day than last year.

Therefore, we have made arrangements for a complete buffet dinner as part of our evening activities. This will allow you plenty of time to find guys from your flight school class or pilots who flew with you in Vietnam, and at the same time not have to leave the welcome reception to find a restaurant after traveling for most of the day.

A small band will be available throughout the evening, but the goal for this evening is to mix and meet and party. More details on this event are contained in the President’s message in the front of this magazine.

We also changed the times for this event from our last issue of *The Aviator* a bit to permit more time for people to fly and drive into Washington. The doors will open at 7:30 p.m., and the event will run until 11 p.m.

We also will have a special first-time reunion attendee orientation and welcome reception from 7-8 p.m. in the Maryland Room, which is near the main ballroom.

The buffet dinner lines will open at about 8 p.m. The hotel assures us they will not run out.

Business Meeting – Sunday July 2

The official part of our reunion starts at 10 a.m. with our annual business meeting. Dana Young will help moderate again this year, and he always keeps it moving. All dues-current members are invited to attend. This year, anyone having materials to present need to have them in digital format in advance — preferably PowerPoint.

Special event for Spouses, guests — Sunday at 10 a.m.

Each year we

strive to provide a unique event for all spouses and guests while the pilots attend the annual business meeting. This year, in addition to a great buffet brunch provided by the Marriott, we have something very special set up for you all — with a unique twist.

We have made arrangements for Dick Steiner, a well-known and nationally recognized illusionist-mentalists, to be with you during and after the brunch. His performance has a comic overtone, and has been described as similar to a David Copperfield presentation — an “adult” experience. In this case, adult does not mean X-rated, but a sophisticated presentation.

The twist? In addition to the incredible illusions he performs, Dick is a 1968 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He served in Vietnam, Germany, Australia, and at several stateside posts during his distinguished, 21-year Army career.

The show will be tailored to our group, and with the military background of VHPA and all that goes on within



Dave Rittman photo

The grounds of the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, headquarters for the 2006 Washington Reunion, offer a tranquil setting for walking.

Continued on Page 15

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 14

the organization, there will be plenty of fodder for him to use.

The Washington Times wrote a review on him that stated: "Perhaps the only thing more enjoyable than watching Mr. Steiner perform is watching his audience watch the show. The reactions are the same, trick after trick. Mouths drop.

Foreheads are slapped. Words like 'unbelievable' and 'amazing' are muttered. People gasp."

Make sure you purchase your tickets for this event now to reserve your seat — this will be a performance to remember. Given the capacity of the room and the structure of the event, it is unlikely you would be able to get a ticket at the last minute. Order now!

A Special Night to Remember – Sunday evening, July 2

A Private Evening at the new Smithsonian

Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport is one of the key, very special events of our reunion — like the Fourth of July harbor cruise last year in San Francisco. So far, almost 85 percent of the members registering for the DC Reunion have signed up to go. What a night this will be.

We start with an open, prepaid bar from 7-10:45 p.m. We also are having a complete buffet meal, organized into eight food stations catered so you can take a plate, grab what you like, and continue to walk through the facility and see some really interesting things, and then come back for more food.

The centerpiece is the SR-71 spy plane. Our food stations and bars will surround it for two full hours — from 7-9 p.m. Nearby is the newly installed Concorde. The B-29 Enola Gay also is on display, plus a full-size prototype of the B-707. For us, there is a UH-1H, plus about 30 other helicopters of all types, all restored and on display. There is even a space shuttle — the Enterprise.

Want to fly one of the flight simulators, have at it. They will be available for you, at no extra cost. So will the IMAX Theatre, at no extra cost.

Top this off with a band for entertainment and you can see this is going to be a very special evening. Bring your camera, for sure. If you are using film, 800 ASA or higher high speed is strongly recommended.

Plus, for this one event, about \$25 of your ticket price per person will be fully tax deductible, as the Smithsonian is an IRS qualified 501c3 nonprofit organization. The

exact amount will be on your ticket, which can be used as a receipt for tax purposes.

We start loading buses about 6 p.m. and we have complete run of the facility until 11 p.m. Want to go on a night tour of the exterior buildings and monuments of Washington afterwards? Four of our buses will be staffed with tour guides to take you for about an hour side trip departing from the Smithsonian party at Dulles. First come, first serve. The other buses will go "non-stop" back to the hotel.



Dave Rittman photo

One of the highlights of the Washington Reunion will be a visit to the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Northern Virginia. The special visit has been arranged for Sunday night, July 2.

Golf Tournament – Monday, July 3

Play golf where the president plays, on the south course of Andrews Air Force Base.

Included in the price is transportation to the course, green fees, carts, prizes, lunch, and more!

As this event is adjacent to an active, high-security Air Force base, advance security information will need to be provided to VHPA as part of the registration process to pre-clear you onto the course.

Your full name, Social Security number, date of birth, town, state, and county of birth, and full home address will be required for each attendee, including guests, spouses, and children.

Unless you have an active duty or retired military ID card, it will not be possible to sign up at the last minute for this event.

Everyone must be "pre-cleared" as part of an advance security screening. Those taking the bus from the hotel will be checked completely, under, around, and through, and your picture ID will be matched to the pre-event-

Continued on Page 16

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 15

approved attendance roster.

But all the security will be worth it. The course is spectacular and you will get to play on a very historic course.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery — Monday, July 3

Starting about 7:45 a.m. (a slight change from the last issue of *The Aviator*), our buses will start departing the hotel for Arlington National Cemetery, where we will transfer to special tour-mobiles permitted to operate throughout the park area.

Advance registrations reflect that about 1,600 members and guests will attend. That's much more than some sites can hold at one time, so we will establish a "round-robin" system with the trams, and then will shuttle you around to the different sites within Arlington and nearby areas.

All of you should see the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but at different times. The guards change every 30 minutes.

VHPA will place a dedicated wreath at the tomb in a brief, but very meaningful ceremony while we are there. Other stops include the eternal flame of the John F. Kennedy grave, the visitor's center, and more.

We then will shuttle over to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial directly across the Potomac for another wreath-laying ceremony. There is plenty of room at The Wall and our entire group will be together.

Many of you have told us this was one of your most meaningful experiences a number of years ago when the VHPA last held its reunion in Washington, DC.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, buses will be available for transportation back to the hotel, which we will arrive about 2 p.m.

Of course, you may stay and walk the Mall area, and get back to the hotel on your own later in the afternoon by cab or on the Metro.

Formal Banquet — Monday, July 3

This year our formal banquet is a day early so we all can attend the special Fourth of July fireworks the next night.

Doors open at 5:45 p.m., and ceremonies start at 6:30 p.m.

We've got a great menu this year: Your choice of filet mignon, salmon, or a veggie plate.

We have booked the entertainment group Onyx — a well-known party band with dancers and performers. It will be a great evening. You can stay and enjoy all the fun and the party, as you don't have to pack and go home in the morning.

Fourth of July Parade — Tuesday, July 4

We appreciate Gil Ferrey's assistance in helping set up the parade this year. We

will leave the hotel about 9:30 a.m. on buses that will take us to the parade start point. Spouses and guests are welcome! Bus transportation also will be available at a predetermined location near the end of the parade to ride back to the hotel.

With us at the parade will be about 4 or 5 Vietnam-era helicopters provided by some of our North Carolina members. The helicopters will be towed along with us.

The parade ends about 2 p.m., and we expect being back at the hotel about 2:45 p.m. or so. The end of the parade site is about 3-4 miles walking distance from the hotel. We recommend you ride the bus back to the hotel after the parade.

July 4 fireworks, picnic and entertainment at Bolling Air Force Base

What a way to end a reunion — on a patriotic note! Based on registrations thus far, almost 85 percent of reunion attendees and their guests will attend.

About 4:45 p.m., we will start to board buses that will take a preplanned, special route through all the DC traffic snarl that afternoon and end up at Bolling Air Force Base,



Dave Rittman photo

The Washington Monument is one of the main attractions to visit in the nation's capital during the VHPA Washington Reunion in early July.

Continued on Page 17

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 16

home of the presidential helicopter.

Members and guests who have driven to the reunion will not be able to take their cars to this event; all must ride the buses we provide.

Bolling is located directly across the Potomac from National-Reagan Airport, 2.5 miles south of the Washington Monument, and has a fabulous view of the Washington skyline, the river and, of course, the fireworks.

We have been invited to join the base military and their spouses and guests for a special evening of entertainment, a cookout, games, military displays, and the prime, unobstructed view of one of the largest fireworks displays in the nation, even larger than the San Francisco fireworks display, we are told.

A number of on-base volunteer groups and charities operate various food stations and sell beverages, including beer, to raise money for their causes on base.

You will be able to purchase all kinds of food and beverages for cash. The Air Force Band will perform in the early evening, and several other honor guards and military units will demonstrate their skills.

After the fireworks there will be a very special one hour, highly patriotic performance and show, while the roads clear of all the traffic and gridlock.

The VHPA has received clearance to put on a static display of our Vietnam-era aircraft there for all to view.

A word about security: This event takes place on an active military base with very high security. The base is not open to the public at any time. As part of the registration process, we will collect some basic, personal information needed to pre-clear you onto the base for the evening.

Your full name, Social Security number, date of birth, town, state, and county of birth, and full home address will be required for each attendee, including all guests. Spouses, children, family members, and other guests of VHPA members are all welcome, but you must register in

advance, and there is an absolute, final date cutoff for registration for this activity, as now determined by Air Force security people. (See separate article within this magazine for updated details).

It will not be possible to sign up for this event at the reunion at the last moment, or "walk in" to the event without a reservation or being on the "approved" security list. Everyone entering the base will be required to have a security pass and you need to get that through us in advance.

Flying to the reunion?

We strongly recommend you try to take flights that land at Reagan National Airport, even if you have to connect somewhere else to make that happen. The airport is located near downtown Washington area, on the Potomac River, and is only 8 miles from the hotel.

A 10-12 minute cab ride costing \$18 will get you to the Marriott. More details about flights, hotel location, driving directions, and motor home parking were in the November/December 2005 issue of *The Aviator* and are on the website.



Dave Rittman photo

The Metro station at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel makes travel through Washington, DC, convenient from the headquarters hotel during the 2006 Reunion this summer.

Parking cars at hotel

There is a parking garage owned by an outside firm on the hotel property. The rate as of the time of this article is \$22 per day for self-parking, and \$26 for valet service.

Cancellation policy

Please read and be aware of the VHPA cancellation policy for all events, activities, and hotel rooms which are outlined in detail on our website.

The cutoff date for any requests to our HQ in California for refunds is Friday, June 23 at noon, PDT. After this date and time, VHPA has given commitments and guarantees to the hotel, bus companies, the Smithsonian and its caterers, and others in your name that generate nonrefundable expenses to our Association.

HQ can be reached by fax at (916) 966-8743; email at

Continued on Page 18

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 17

hq@vhpa.org; or by a toll-free telephone at (800) 505-8472.

All functions will run, rain or shine. Specifically, no refunds will be given for adverse weather, as we have pre-paid for buses, access to event areas, and other expenses on your behalf, which are nonrefundable to VHPA.

Non-Transferable events

Due to security requirements at Bolling and Andrews Air Force bases, tickets purchased for the golf tournament and the Fourth of July fireworks events are NOT transferable to third parties at the reunion, or at the last moment.

There is an absolute, firm cutoff date for processing security clearances, as specified by the Security Threat Group in DC.

A separate article in this edition contains details. Tickets, your VHPA name badge, and a photo ID will be



checked against an approved security list when you get on the bus and/or upon arrival at Bolling and Andrews Air Force bases.

Events that will not be available for sale at the reunion

Tickets for the Fourth of July fireworks at Bolling and the golf tournament cannot be purchased at the last minute at the reunion due to the pre-security clearances.

In addition, we must give final guarantees to the Smithsonian and the catering company on the morning of June 26 and we cannot realistically add to those numbers upon our arrival in DC the next Saturday (one day prior to the event).

Thus, last-minute purchase of Smithsonian tickets at the reunion is iffy or not possible, except for replacing space created by a member's last-minute cancellation or backfilling a few no shows as we board the buses.

Bus capacity and ticket availability for the Marine Tattoo will limit last-minute sales in a fashion similar to the Smithsonian above.

Unless someone cancels at the last minute, tickets are

Continued on Page 19



Ride with
the Outlaws
of the 175th
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Mekong Delta
during
1966-1967

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

— Tom Payne, Secretary/Treasurer
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

To order send \$25 by check or money order,
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P.O. Box 59, Center Sandwich, NH 03227
Order online at outlawsinvietnam.com

Help VHPA save, recycle old lanyards

Starting with the Denver Reunion, VHPA lanyards were given to each reunion attendee.

At a cost of nearly \$2.25 each, taking into account cost, shipping and handling, VHPA is spending between \$4,500-\$5,500 every year.

The lanyard has not changed in style, design and color since the Denver Reunion and there is no plan to do so.

Many of us who attend the reunion each year are accumulating a drawer full of lanyards. They actually seem to multiply.

As a way to save a little money, bring your old lanyard to future reunions and use it. Some members and guests add the reunion pin to their original lanyard as a way of showing the reunions they have attended.

Registration will have new plastic cardholders for all registered attendees, so you don't need to bring the old ones.

Thanks for your help with this attempt at saving VHPA money.

However, should you forget your old lanyard, there will be plenty available at Registration when you arrive.

— Mike Sheurman, President

Reunion 2006

Registration now open for Washington reunion

Continued from Page 18

not expected to be available. We try to accommodate all who come for the formal banquet, but projections based on registrations so far reflect a possible sellout of this event as we near the reunion.

The bottom line: Please purchase your tickets ahead of time and have a great time at all the events.

Dial up the Internet and register now

Our 2006 Reunion is going to be great! But you have to register to be there. Registration is open at www.vhpareunion.org

Ready to party? It's going to be a great reunion, and we all look forward to seeing you next July in the land of "foggy bottom."



May 15 is last day to sign up for the Fourth of July evening fireworks at Bolling Air Force Base and be assured a reservation.

As *The Aviator* goes to press, we just learned from the Security Threat Group at Bolling the last date you can sign up for the Fourth of July evening of activities and fireworks is 8 a.m. Pacific time May 15.

Our HQ staff will provide all info to Bolling that morning. After this list is submitted, we can only add 150 additional names (first come, first serve) on a "short" final list to be submitted on the morning of June 20. After this time, we no longer can accept new registrations for this event.

A word about clearing the security check — we have been advised a felony conviction will result in denial of a security clearance. If the Security Threat Group picks up a record of a felony charge that ultimately was discharged, dropped, or found not guilty, the group may request you provide a document.

Security clearances will be provided to children under the age of 17 who do not have a Social Security number, as long as the minor's name and other requested background information is submitted along with the adults with whom the minor will be attending the function.

Did you register for the Golf Tournament or the Fireworks Evening at Bolling Air Force Base?

As you may have read, both these events are being held at very high security bases and we need to submit a small amount, but very important, background information on ALL attendees, including children.

If you already have registered and did not submit your background information for all attending, you can do so now. You can simply click on:

www.VHPAregistration.org/background.htm

Or go online to: VHPAReunion.org

At the bottom of the page just under the Enterprise Car advertisement is a white box "VHPA on line registration," click on that link.

On the next page, at the bottom, right hand side in red, you will see: "For events requiring background checks, you must etc." Click on that link and fill in the form.

Get your information before logging on. You will need first, middle and last name(s), Social Security number, physical address, no P.O. boxes please, email address, which event attending (there is a drop-down box to pick from), telephone number, date of birth, the city, county, state, and country of birth. Remember we need this information on each person attending. There is enough room for you to fill in the information on yourself and 6 guests.

We need to submit this information by May 15. If you do not give us this information, you will not be able to attend, no exceptions.

If you haven't registered yet but know you will be registering for either of these events, you can submit your background information before registering for the reunion.

We have established a secure site for this information and you may be assured HQ and the U.S. government will be the only ones who will have access to it.

There has been great response to the request to update email addresses, keep them coming. We look forward to hearing from you.

— Your VHPA HQ Staff

Register now for Reunion 2006

2006 VHPA Reunion in Washington, DC

Schedule of activities at a glance *

(Updated Jan. 23, 2006 – subject to change)

Friday, June 30th

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Vendor set up – lower level; Washington Room B North
10:00 AM – 7:00 PM	Registration – main floor registration desk (just to right of hotel check in area)
1:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Vendors open for business - lower level; Washington Room B North (escalator right at registration desk)
4:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Early Bird informal get together – lower level atrium just down escalator from Harry's Bar
6:45 PM to 11:00 PM	Buses depart for Marine Military Tattoo, an evening of excitement, pageantry, music, and skills

Saturday, July 1

10:00 AM – 8:00 PM	Registration – main floor registration desk (just right of hotel check in area)
10:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Vendor area – lower level; Washington Room B North (escalator right at registration desk)
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Mini Reunions
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Historical Preservation Forum I
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	First time reunion attendee special orientation welcome reception - Maryland Room (near main Ballroom)
7:30 PM – 11:00 PM	Welcome reception, buffet dinner, and party for all members and their guests – Grand Ballroom (Full Buffet Dinner served at 8:00 PM to 9:30 PM)

Sunday, July 2

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration – main floor registration desk (just right of hotel check in area)
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Annual Business Meeting (dues current members only) – Marriott Ballroom 1 thru 4
10:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Brunch and entertainment for spouses and guests – Cotillion Ballroom (location subject to change)
12:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Vendor area – lower level; Washington Room B North (escalator right at registration desk)
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Mini reunions
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM	Historical Presentation Forum II
2:30 PM – 4:00 PM	War Story Contest
6:00 PM – midnight	Private Evening at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport

Monday, July 3

6:30 AM – 3:30 PM **	Golf Tournament at the south course at Andrews Air Force Base; includes lunch and mementos
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Mini-reunions (8:00 AM – noon and 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM)
9:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Registration – main floor registration desk (just right of hotel check in area)
9:00 AM – 5:30 PM	Vendor area – lower level; Washington Room B North (escalator right at registration desk)
7:45 AM – 2:45 PM	Visit and Wreath Laying at Vietnam Wall and tour of Arlington National Cemetery
5:45 PM – 12:00 PM	Doors open - Banquet, entertainment, & dance (Coat and tie event. Some members wear military dress uniform. Ladies wear cocktail dresses) – Grand Ballroom; ceremonies start at 6:30 PM

Tuesday, July 4

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Mini-reunions (8:00 AM – noon and 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM)
9:30 AM – 2:30 PM	Participation in Washington DC Parade down Constitution Avenue
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration – main floor registration desk (just right of hotel check in area)
9:00 AM – 4:30 PM	Vendor Area lower level; Washington Room B North (escalator right at registration desk)
5:00 PM – midnight **	4th of July Fireworks Display at Bolling Air Force Base; includes numerous food & beverage vendors on a cash basis; performance by the Air Force Band, static display of Vietnam era and current active duty helicopters, military exhibitions, entertainment

Wednesday, July 5

AM Departure	Check out for majority of reunion attendees – returning home
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* All events run rain or shine – no refunds due to adverse weather. See reunion article for details

** Requires specific background information be provided during VHPA advance registration process on each attendee so military security clearance can be issued prior to arrival in Washington DC. Active or retired military with ID cards have already met this security requirement, but must register with VHPA for 4th of July fireworks event in advance. See reunion article for details.

Disoriented

But pilot is never lost — in the air or driving a car

JACK SALM

“Disorientation,” a strange word, often is misused by many of us to protect our fragile ego.

The dictionary says it means, “confused as to one’s whereabouts or bearings.” To most of us, it is a term sometimes used when we are hopelessly or, at least, temporarily lost.

How often have you put something valuable or important in a safe place later to discover you haven’t a clue as to where you put it? Of course, there are varying degrees of disorientation — some life threatening, others mere inconvenience.

Grass greener away from home

I remember when I was 5 or 6 years old, my parents must have grossly overstepped their authority. I determined the grass would be greener if I left home. I hopped a freight train and hit the rails. When the train got to the other side of town and it began to get dark, I felt my impulsive departure was not too smart.

After I got off the train, I realized I didn’t have a clue as to how to get home. I was cold, hungry and in tears. Luckily, a police car spotted me and the policeman realized I was not where I should be — home.

My parents were not happy. I was told if I was going to leave, I had better make better preparations. TOUGH LOVE. I thought I was old enough to look out for myself. We all go through phases like this. Some carry out their fantasies, others only think about it.

Later in life, as we get older, we do things equally stupid. I had been in the Army for about seven years.

Outpost on DMZ easy to find

Shortly after I arrived in South Korea, I was assigned to 3rd LAS, I Corps in Uijongbu. I had a mission to fly a Marine Corps major to an outpost on the DMZ.

It was an area I had not been to before, but it was prominently displayed on my map. All I had to do was fly up the MSR from Uijongbu, past Tong-du-Chon, take a left past the I Corps Artillery strip, then turn left up the second valley to the OP. No problem, or so I thought.

I took the first valley and was flying north toward North Korea. I crossed the DMZ, realized my mistake, retraced my route and found the correct valley and eventually the OP.

When I got back to Uijongbu, my passenger wasted no time telling everyone how his idiot pilot had almost gotten him killed by flying into North Korea. It was a gross overstatement of the occurrence and a real reputation killer. It was merely that I was disoriented — not lost.

After Korea and now at Fort Huachuca, AZ, I was on a night orientation flight.

Interstate 10 was below us

This time I knew exactly where I was. That was Interstate 10 right below us. Bumper-to-bumper traffic, heavy even for I-10. It was the end of the month, payday, and we were really over the main road to the border and the town of Naco, Mexico.

It seemed the entire post had evacuated and was on the way to that lovely Mexican playground. How embarrassing, but just disoriented — not lost.

While assigned as aide-de-camp/pilot for a two-star general, we were en route from Fort Belvoir to the Sikorsky plant in Stratford, CT. We had left Fort Rucker in a hurry, with a stopover at the Pentagon.

I had not updated my Jep Charts with the latest revisions. As luck would have it, two of the VOR (Omni) stations in Virginia changed their frequencies. A radial from each formed an intersection about 10-20 miles off the coast on V-3 East or some such thing. We were on what I thought was a leg to the intersection called Neptune or some other nautical term.

I told general to take up heading

As we passed Neptune, I told the general — he was flying, I was navigating — to take up a heading of 031 degrees.

A few moments later, an air traffic controller with a distinct New York accent asked: “Ah, Army 1234, what are your intentions?”

This was not good. Usually they don’t mess with you when everything is OK.

The general looked at me questioningly and I stated our intentions: “Army 1234 en route Victor 3 to New Haven, CT.”

“Not on that heading you ain’t,” was the instant call back. New York was getting his jollies.

“Youse guys going to London?” he laughingly questioned?

I was at a loss. The general wasn’t saying anything, but I knew he was not happy.

“Tell you what,” says New York, “take up a heading of 015 degrees. That should keep you in the U.S. of A.”

The General turned to 015 and we continued on our way to New Haven, our trip interrupted frequently by New York checking to see if we were still in the air.

After we were on the ground in Stratford and the general had left for meeting with the Sikorsky people, I tried to sort out what had happened. Revisions to the Jep Charts

Continued on Page 22

Disoriented and other Jack Salm stories

Continued from Page 21

I had picked up but had not taken the time to update showed the frequency changes for two of the VOR stations we had used. The resulting intersection of the two legs forming Neptune was not Neptune, but some open airspace over the Atlantic.

Oh, the shame of it all. I was disoriented — not lost.

While in Germany I had a mission to go from Stuttgart to Grafenwohr. I had the route memorized — follow the railroad tracks and take a left at the “Y.”

Peter Pilot took a right and damn near wound up over the Iron Curtain. At this point, you are probably asking if I successfully passed map reading or navigation?

Since retirement I have had numerous episodes of disorientation, mostly in the car, but have never been LOST!

Memorable moments

We have all had them, those times when it seems everything or everyone is out to get you.

It can be something really not that earth shattering, but at the moment seems monumental.

Like the time at Fort Benning, we were under arms, each of us had an M-1 rifle, not loaded, of course, but we had to carry the thing all day. This was silly because the whole morning was spent in the classroom. No matter. The order was with weapons.

When you stack rifles all the No. 3 man in the squad has to do is pass his weapon to the No. 2 man. The No. 2 and No. 1 man are responsible for making the stack. If the stack falls, tough tacos! You sleep with the weapon for a week.

Does this seem fair? I didn't think so, since I didn't even have the weapon in my possession.

No matter. Even after exhibiting my unhappiness with the punishment and additional demerits for each complaint, the sleeping arraignments stood. I had a sleeping companion for a week. What a pain in the labanza.

Not only did I have to sleep with the damn thing, I also had to eat, march, study, and everything else with it — including go to the latrine.

I was on a night cross-country flight from Fort Campbell to Evansville, IN, and back.

I had just taken off from the civilian airport and was climbing out over the city when the engine quit.

It got deathly quiet. Where to go? All I could see below were lights. I was at about 1,100 feet and desperately looking for a place to land.

After switching fuel tanks, checking all the gauges and praying, at about 800 feet the engine caught. Never did anything sound so sweet. I made it back to Campbell okay. What caused the glitch? Water in the fuel? Carburetor ice? Never did find out, but I know I had the crapola scared out of me.

During a training flight in the L-20 “Beaver” out of

Libby Army Airfield, Fort Huachuca, I was practicing solo touch-and-goes at the Tombstone strip.

After several trips around the traffic pattern, I was climbing out at about 700 feet when the engine quit.

I was all over that cockpit, checking gauges, lowering the nose and looking for a place to land. Shades of Evansville, but at least it was daylight.

As I switched fuel tanks, the engine caught and I recovered the aircraft.

On the way back to Libby, I noticed the rear tank was empty. We had been trained to fly rear, middle, front tank. The aircraft had been flown the previous hour by another pilot and I assumed the tanks had been topped off. Oh, contraire! Always check the fuel level.

What would have happened if I had managed to crash land the aircraft in the desert with two full tanks of fuel? Probably end of flying career. Pilot error is always one of the probable causes of an accident/incident.

Sleeping with a weapon or having the hell scared out of you in training is small potatoes. Having someone shooting at you and trying to knock you out of the sky is really scary. All else pales in comparison.

But, you know, it seems that in order to get the job done, you can mentally detach yourself from the danger of the moment, suck it up, and press on. Such is the life of an aviator.

Fiasco

It was all pomp and circumstance! General and field grade officers were all over the place.

The place was Nha Trang Airport 1967. Nguyen Cao Ky was going to make the Squadron of the Year Award to the VNAF Squadron on Hon Tre Island. All was at the ready. The band was playing, flags were flying. It was all very impressive.

Here came the personal DC-6 of Nguyen Cao Ky. He was flying the aircraft. He wheeled in front of the crowd, waving from the cockpit window. He cut the engines, the wheels were chocked and the passenger door opened.

The Kys, in their custom purple flight suits, waved from the doorway.

Oh, Oh! There were no stairs. One little, skinny Vietnamese fellow, just one, ran down the line and manhandled the stairs, all by himself, up to the plane.

The Kys were still smiling and waving.

After the Kys deplaned and were greeted by the dignitaries, a VNAF H-34 wheeled in, blowing dust all over everybody.

The pilot motioned for the Kys to get into his helicopter. There were two U.S. Army Hueys waiting for the Kys. Everyone was waving the VNAF pilot away.

Finally, he left and the Kys departed for Hon Tre.

The point being, if you allow Murphy's Law to take over — it will. Sometimes the most obvious is forgotten.

Reports

During the past year, you have seen various attempts by the VHPA to get more of our eligible members to join.

We have tried contests, postcards and phone calls from members of the Executive Council. Several of the efforts have been somewhat successful but, over time, we have found there are two ways that really work.

The first is a phone call or an email from a current member the prospective member knows and the second is by getting a prospective member to attend a reunion.

Washington, DC, will be one of our more memorable gatherings. With the trip to the Wall; the private event at the Smithsonian; the parade on the Fourth of July; the fireworks on the 4th from a special vantage point; and the various on-site reunion activities, there is plenty to experience.

Those of you who have attended a reunion know what it is like to see someone you have not seen in more than 30 years and what it is like to "catch up." Those who have not need to experience it at least once.

It is reunion time again and, since we know what works, I would like to encourage you to take a few minutes, look through the 2005 Membership Directory for friends you spent time with in flight school, flew with in Vietnam, or served with after your tour.

Focus on those who live in the area around Washington. One of the reasons we move the reunion sites around the country is to make them more accessible to those that

might not find it easy to travel long distances. We know they are out there; we just need your help to bring them to DC.

Take the time. Make a call.

Dana Young
Membership chairman

Membership Directory CD-ROM

The Directory Committee is working on a project to put the Membership Directory on a CD-ROM.

If this is successful, it will provide an electronic alternative to the paper directory. The paper directory has become very large and several people have requested an electronic version.

Assuming we can develop the appropriate encryption to protect the database from being made into mailing lists, we plan to have the CD available as an alternative to the paper directory this year.

You will have an opportunity to select whether you want the regular paper directory or the new CD or both. Receiving both will require an additional fee.

Please check the March/April *Aviator* for a status of this project.

We plan to include e-mail addresses on the CD so now is a good time to be sure your email address is up to date at HQ.

You can update your email address by sending an e-mail to HQ@vhpa.org or using the form at www.vhpa.org/info/vhpaform.html

Gary Roush
Directory editor

Operation veterans to thank crews

During Operation MacArthur, for approximately 14 days in late April and early May of 1968, the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry fought a vicious battle with elements of the North Vietnamese Army on and around Chu Moor Mountain.

Chu Moor Mountain is located north of Duc Co, near the Cambodian border in the famous Plei Trap Valley. At this time, the 1st Battalion was part of the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

The 1st Battalion, with elements of the 4/42nd Artillery, used FSB Chu Ya Bruh as their base during this battle. The combat was intense, with 1st Battalion attacking, the NVA counter-attacking, and 1st Battalion attacking again.

The NVA employed mortars, B-40 rockets, snipers, and even flame-throwers. In addition to its organic weapons, 1st Battalion utilized artillery, air strikes, B-52 strikes and helicopter gunships.

Elements of the 1/14th Infantry, the 1/12th Infantry and the 3/8th Infantry joined the battle, when it became clear the enemy was in force and had decided to stay. After nearly 14 days of heavy fighting, U.S. ground forces

withdrew from the area.

An arclight was delivered on the pursuing NVA only minutes after the last of the U.S. elements left FSB Chu Ya Bruh. The 1/22nd Infantry and their supporters from the 1/14th and 1/12th Infantry suffered at least 30 KIAs and 98 WIAs during the Battle of Chu Moor Mountain between April 22 and May 5.

Veterans of 1/22nd Infantry will hold a Battle of Chu Moor Reunion on April 28- 30 at Circus-Circus in Reno, NV.

Anyone wishing to attend or desiring more information can contact Doc Shyab at: fossilflea@comcast.net or John McKee at: jfcmckee@comcast.net

John McKee writes: "The veterans of the Battle of Chu Moor are anxious to contact veterans from the various air support elements, primarily the helicopter variety. We are especially interested in thanking members of Cougar Guns, Gladiator Slicks, Tornado Guns and Scouts, Gator Slicks, Gambler Guns, Headhunters, Ghostriders, and Dustoff 33, 34, 26, 37, and 38 whose brotherhood with us ground-pounders is responsible for us still being here today."

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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(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

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☐ Annual: \$36

☐ Three years: \$99

☐ Life: \$540*

Aviator subscription only:

☐ Annual: \$36

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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?

**NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$185 each.*