



# THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

January/February 2007 Vol. 25, No. 1



Dave Rittman photo

A UH-1C Huey gunship takes off from the Phan Thiet Airfield, about 85 miles northeast of Saigon. The aircraft in this photograph, taken in December 1966, belonged to D/229th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division. During this time most of the Cav operated in the Highlands, but a platoon of slicks was assigned to support U.S. and ARVN combined efforts in the Phan Thiet area.

## From the President

First of all, I want to wish all of you and your families a healthy, prosperous and happy New Year.

There have been some changes in committee chairmen. Mike Sheuerman volunteered to chair the Membership Committee. This is in addition to his duties as past president of the VHPA.



**Angelo Spelios**

Dana Young, the prior chair of the Membership Committee, has volunteered to chair the Reunion Committee. Joe Bilitzke, the former chair of the Reunion Committee, stepped down. He retired from active duty at the mandatory retirement age of 62 and wants to enjoy full retirement with his lovely wife, Darleen.

Dana has not lost any time assuming the responsibilities of the Reunion Committee.

He has come up with an excellent schedule for our 2007 Reunion at Phoenix, Ariz., starting with the Early Bird event on Tuesday, July 3, and concluding on Saturday, July 7, with our Annual Banquet.

Sunday, July 8, will be our going home day.

One of the highlights will be the concert by a great American patriot, Lee Greenwood. I am sure that he will make us be "Proud to be an American," which has become his trademark song.

I wonder if he will be able to play our theme song, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place?"

Dana also has several side trips and tours planned for us.

Mike Whitten has planned another great golf tournament. The complete reunion schedule is printed in another section of this issue.

We will be staying at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa. This is an upscale resort complete with a tubing experience with small rapids to navigate. Cold beverages are available to all tubers during the ride.

With the exception of the fireworks display on July 4, most activities will be indoors in this great facility. I encourage you to make your plans to attend the reunion early.

This reunion will be more laid back than last year's reunion in Washington, D.C. We will have more leisure time to enjoy each other's company, renew friendships and to make new friends.

Last year, I was seated at tables with people I had never met before, and what a pleasure that was! I am looking forward to Phoenix and meeting more interesting people, as well as seeing all of my friends again.

— **Angelo Spelios, President**

## EC solicits comments on reunions

As you may or may not know, the VHPA is contracted with the Marriott Corp. to hold our next four reunions at its hotels in Phoenix (2007), San Antonio (2008), Philadelphia (2009) and San Diego (2010).

In the near future, VHPA will start to negotiate a new contract for post 2010 reunions. Your Executive Council is interested in your input as to where you want these reunions to be held.

Additionally, there has been interest shown in changing the dates of our reunions.

Many express the fact that the Fourth of July is a big "family holiday," many of us have children who are grown with children of their own, our grandchildren, and we get

together for a family reunion over the Fourth.

Also, the idea that the reunion must touch the actual Fourth of July causes problems, as we see this year — a 5- or 6-day reunion. Several members have expressed the idea of a set, 4-day reunion beginning on Thursday and ending on Sunday.

Many have commented on the heat during this time of year. Also, the average age of a Vietnam helicopter pilot is 63.5 years of age.

We can expect strong turnouts for several more years. But there will come a time when we start to see a decrease in attendance.

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### VHPA statistics

- Between Dec. 15, 2006, and Jan. 23, 2007, the VHPA added 9 new members.
- During This same period, members donated \$525 toward the VHPA Scholarship Fund.

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

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## Letters

# Pilot asks reunion timeframe study

What a great organization the VHPA is. From very humble beginnings to over 12,000 members with databases that cover nearly every aspect of helicopters, helicopter operations and the pilots that flew them for those horrific 10 years, we truly have come a long way.

As a life member and as a past member of the Executive Council (EC) and as a reunion chairman (Reno 1991), I would like to request the EC revisit the timeframe of our annual reunion . . . possibly May or November.

I am aware that the VHPA is under an extended hotel/location contract for the next four years, but my request, since we have the luxury of "time," is to seek the input from the membership as to whether (or not) a change in dates would be appealing for the out-years.

At the San Francisco reunion, I mentioned my thoughts to the then-president and was advised to "wait a little bit" and bring it up at a later time. This seems like a

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## Reunion comments

*Continued from Page 2*

A set time of the year with a set number of days might work better for us as you guys age.

Here's what we want to know:

1. Are you happy with the week of the Fourth of July?
2. Are you open to change? If so what time of year?
3. Do you care how long the reunion is?
4. How long do you think it should be?
5. What are your top five choices of venue? Please keep in mind air travel accessibility, size of hotels (we try to keep everyone in the same hotel if possible), attractions and weather.

6. If you currently attend reunions, would a change of date cause you to stop attending?

7. If you have never attended a reunion would a change of date cause you to attend a reunion or increase the chance of you attending a reunion?

We realize we will never be able to please everyone. The week of the Fourth has worked well and may be the best deal. We want your input where, when, how long, will you attend? Let us know. Contact Jack Salm at [johnsalmjr@aol.com](mailto:johnsalmjr@aol.com)

Jack Salm  
Senior Member at Large  
Life Member VHPA

## Letters

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good time to bring it up to the current EC so that you may possibly query the membership, by a show of hands at the business meeting.

Reasons to take another look at our reunion timeframe are very simple:

- We are a lot older now and a lot of us are less heat tolerant.
- Most of us do not have children of school age who need to be pulled out of school for a Memorial or Veteran's Day reunion get-together.
- Most of us are either retired or soon to be retired and it makes no difference when the reunion is set for.
- We are still getting together for the same reasons — patriotism and friendship — what else is there?

Gentlemen, as a two-tour veteran who contracted malaria during my second go-around, Phoenix at 107 degrees, Las Vegas at 106 degrees, Orlando at 101 degrees, Fort Worth at 99 degrees, or D.C. at 97 degrees, with 85 percent humidity, is NOT a fun time; outdoor activities, in most cases, cannot be attended.

I am quite sure that there are other members feeling the same way and it would be very interesting to go to the membership with a couple simple survey questions:

- "Would you consider changing the timeframe of our annual reunion?"
- "Would you prefer spring or fall?"

How hard would that be? The survey could be formatted by email or as an insert into *The Aviator*, or both.

There have been many changes in our organization in the past 20-plus years that I have been a member — personnel, events and interests — maybe a change in "time-frame" would be beneficial to the majority of us "old-timers."

T.L. Percy Sr.

## Remaking WOC Chorus songs would be terrific

To the WOC Chorus:

Guys, it's time to get a group together and remake the song "Winged Soldiers" (Warriors?). Recently I received a letter from a guy who didn't finish flight school, but became a doorgunner on the OH-6 in Vietnam. He had a copy of your old 45-rpm record and had lost it along the way, but remembered that song from his flight school days.

He contacted a radio station here in Mineral Wells and the owner went to an antique store and actually found a

copy of the old 45. The record even played, (a bit scratchy).

The radio station owner and the doorgunner have both been after me to get something going on this song. I've discussed it several times with several people and haven't been able to get the ball rolling so I'm asking this in our public magazine forum.

Everyone who has ever heard the song "Winged Soldiers" wants a copy. I know the original chorus is gone, but surely you can find some substitutes? Digitally remastering the old 45 would be better than nothing, but I think the old songs would be great to hear remade.

I don't know what it would cost, but sales of a new CD would surely cover it. I can provide a sales outlet and maybe some front money if that would help.

Whatta ya say?

Jim Messinger

## Westy was a great help getting me into Cobras

Reading the letters from other members about wanting to fly Snakes reminded me of my own quest for a AH-1G "Cobra" transition and to fly with the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers" and how Gen. William C. Westmoreland helped me get what I wanted.

At best, I was an average flight student; good at flying the helicopter, weak on how or why the helicopter was able to fly. The thought of flying a "slick" with a load of troops in the back into and out of an LZ in Vietnam or, for that matter, anywhere, scared the hell out of me.

Don't get me wrong, I wasn't afraid of the mission. I just didn't want to screw up and accidentally kill someone. The only course open to me was to try and get in to Cobra School.

### Mentioned 'godfather' to Branch

I started calling "Branch" about two months before my class, 70-48, was to graduate.

I called every day. I begged. I pleaded. I mentioned the name of my godfather, William Westmoreland, and offered to remember the kindness shown to me by the major in Infantry personnel to "Westy."

Finally, a week before the class was to graduate, I received a slot. I would graduate and receive my wings at Fort Rucker on a Thursday and my class at Hunter Army Airfield would start the following Monday. I was ecstatic. I was going to be a gunship pilot.

Thirty days after that, I would graduate from Cobra Hall. Thirty-five days of leave and then off to Vietnam on May 5, 1971.

Arriving in Vietnam, we were bused to the Repot Depot. After getting assigned to temporary barracks, I was told to go to personnel for in processing and assignment.

Now, I knew where I wanted to go and what unit I wanted to fly with. Mike Harsh was one of my best friends

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## Letters

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at North Georgia College, a primary military college in Dahlonega, Ga., and was eight months in to his tour flying Snakes with the 361st ACE "Pink Panthers."

His wife, Gail, told me he really enjoyed flying in that unit. Standing in front of the captain in Long Binh, I requested that he assign me to the 361st at Camp Holloway in Pleiku and how much my godfather, Gen. Westmoreland, would appreciate his assisting me.

I had no idea where Pleiku was, but that's where I wanted to go.

### Friend based at Tuy Hoa

The next day I was on my way to 17th Group in Tuy Hoa. My good friend and college classmate, Cannon Ramey, was based there, flying "guns" with the 134th Assault Helicopter Company.

He was glad to see me, but was not impressed I was Cobra rated. Charlie model gun drivers were like that. I stayed with him that night and reported to the flight line at 1 p.m. the next day for transportation to Pleiku and the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion.

There were eight or nine of us there, all rotary-wing aviators. One guy, Penn Papini, was in flight school with me.

About 1:30, a slick landed and taxied to POL. We were told that was our ride to Holloway. We were almost to the aircraft when Mike Harsh jumped out.

"Hello, Hunter, I knew it was you when I saw you heading toward us. Nobody walks as bowl-legged as you do."

"How'd you know I was here?" I asked.

"I didn't," Mike replied, "they just scheduled me to come pick up some FNGs."

He scrounged me a headset and we talked once we were in the air. I had spoken with his wife just before leaving home on my way to Vietnam.

### Mang Yang Pass very spooky

The flight took us through the Mang Yang Pass, by far the spookiest place in Vietnam. Even the "Bad Guys" avoided it.

More than 7,000 dead Frenchmen were buried there in neat rows. You could still see all the lines of graves because the grass never grew back on the top of them. They say three dead Legionnaires were buried standing up in each grave, all facing France.

It still gives me the creeps thinking about it. But I digress.

The weather started to turn to crap, so Mike made the decision to RON at An Khe. We landed there and the first person we ran into was Lee DeVault, another friend and classmate. He was assigned to the 75th Rangers. He put Mike and me up for the night.

## Membership Directory shows up on E-Bay

Membership Directories are beginning to show up on E-Bay for sale.

Membership lists are on E-Bay's forbidden item list, so if you see a Directory on E-Bay, please notify the seller and E-Bay that it is forbidden by E-Bay and should be removed.

With the help of John Conway, we have gotten a couple of these removed before they were sold. Please help us prevent our Directories from getting into the wrong hands.

Gary Roush  
Directory editor  
[webmaster@vhpa.org](mailto:webmaster@vhpa.org)

The next morning we arrived at Holloway. We were dropped off at the Hot Spot, met by an NCO from the battalion, who led us to Headquarters. We were fed and then ushered into the office of Lt. Col. Ronald H Merritt, our battalion CO.

He welcomed us, gave a brief history of the unit, told us how lucky we were to be there and then started telling us which units we were assigned to. There were four Cobra pilots.

John Renzetti and I went to the 361st, Penn went to the 57th and the other guy was assigned to B/7/17.

### Slick pilots split up

The three slick drivers were split up, two going to the "Gladiators" and one to "Chickenman."

One of the 57th guys was Steve Egger. I can't remember the other two. The last two guys were second-tour guys with brand-new Chinook ratings. The colonel apologized to both and told them they were being assigned to B/7/17 as scout pilots due to a shortage of qualified aviators. To say the least, those two guys were not happy campers.

The 361st commanding officer took us to the company area for in processing and a pep talk.

He told us he expected more from us than he did from the warrant officers because we were REAL officers and the warrants were just pilots. He would turn out to be a real butthead.

He then handed us over to Mike, who found us a place to sleep. I got Lash's room temporarily. Lash was 5 days late returning from a 30-day extension leave and was believed to be lost somewhere in Bangkok, Thailand. John got Woody's room. Woody was with Cousin Brucie, trying to find Lash. They all returned a couple of days later.

Well, that's the story. To this day, I wonder what all I could have accomplished in the Army if "Westy" had really been my godfather.

Mike Sheuerman  
361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers"

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## Taps

### Thomas W. Blalock

Thomas W. Blalock, 64, of Fredericksburg, Va., died Oct. 7 at Mary Washington Hospital after a yearlong battle with leukemia.

Blalock was born in Fredericksburg in 1942, and lived much of his childhood in Richmond and Winston-Salem, N.C. He graduated from North Carolina State University with a BA in history, and was commissioned as an officer in the Army in 1967.

He served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, earning the Bronze Star Medal for valor and 14 Air Medals.

After leaving the service, Blalock settled back in the Fredericksburg area, working as a manager for McLean Trucking Co. and as a traffic manager at General Products.

He is survived by his wife of 39 years, Judi; and three sons, Maj. Brian Blalock of New Bern, N.C.; Brandon Blalock of Chesapeake, Va.; and Kyle Blalock of Kennesaw, Ga.

### Fred H. Caylor Sr.

Fred H. Caylor Sr., 62, of Sasakwa, Okla., died Feb. 14, 2006, of cancer.

He was an Army aviator who served at Chu Lai, South

Vietnam, in 1970-71.

Caylor retired from the Army in May 1986 with the rank of CW4.

He then worked as a civilian flight instructor at Fort Rucker, Ala., until 1999.

Caylor is survived by his wife, Debra G. Caylor of Sasakwa; and two sons, Fred H. Caylor of Daleville, Ala., and Michael A. Caylor of Atlanta, Ga.

### Lawrence E. Corser Jr.

Retired Lt. Col. Lawrence E. Corser Jr., 83, of Columbus, Ga., died Dec. 17 at St. Francis Hospital.

Corser was born Oct. 14, 1923, in Hibbing, Minn.

He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans.

Corser began his military career in the Army Air Corp., then the U.S. Army, serving his country for more than 30 years as an aviator.

He served in World War II and the Vietnam War, receiving the Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal with 21 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Corser was preceded in death by his wife of 51 years, Margaret Corser.

He is survived by four sons, Robert Corser of Kemp of

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## Letters

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### Source of Cobra name a continuing mystery

Where did the name "Cobra" come from? This has been a mystery. Even Lee Remick of Mail Call can't come up with the solution. I have three possible solutions.

Theory No. 1: The 114th AAC had a gun platoon with the call sign "Cobra." Many of those former members claimed the honor.

Theory No. 2: A high-ranking executive at Bell Helicopter had a walking cane with a cobra head as a handle that he put on the front seat collective.

Theory No. 3: Bell wanted a comeback from the failure of the P-39 Bell Aerocobra. Bell records show the first AH-1G was called the Bell Helocobra and didn't receive an Indian name because it was produced without an Army contract.

If anyone has a better story, please write.

Greg Smith

Dallas TX

### Writer seeks insignia, for Hornets, Lancers

I am trying to find the unit insignia or patches for the Hornets 116th and the Lancers. I am 34 and have recently finished my private rotorcraft license (civilian).

I have a dear friend who served in Vietnam in 1967 with the Hornets and in 1968 with the Lancers. I have been tirelessly searching for a good picture or actually a patch to buy with the units' insignia and/or pictures of any helos with it painted on them.

I have several Hornet pictures, but I'm not sure which are accurate. I found one Lancer insignia, but my friend told me it was from a later version, that his was different and was early Lancers before they became part of the 101st.

I am trying to locate these without my friend's help because I would like to have them airbrushed on my flight helmet and surprise him.

If you could please offer me any help in locating these items, I would be greatly in debt to you. Even with the Internet it's hard. There must be an Army database that has all this archived. I hope with your experience and resources we can find them. Thank you.

Bryan L. Webb

# Taps

Texas, James Corser of Duluth, Ga., Mark Corser of Columbus, and Hans Corser of Cullman, Ala.; and eight grandchildren.

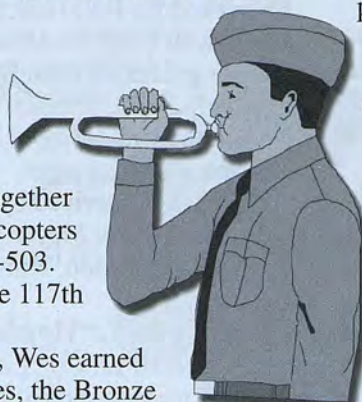
## Norman "Wes" Ford

Norman "Wes" Ford died May 3 after a lengthy illness. He was 57.

Wes and I joined the Army together on the "buddy system" to fly helicopters in 1967. He was in Class 68-1/68-503.

He served in Vietnam with the 117th Assault Helicopter Company "Sidewinders." While in Vietnam, Wes earned three Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal and the Air Medal with clusters.

After the service, he completed his college degree from California State University at Fullerton and took over



the family business until his retirement.

He is survived by his mother, Carmelita; his sister, Connie; his daughter, Cherish; and two grandsons.

I had known Wes since high school. Over the years, we had always blamed each other for signing up to fly helicopters. I think both of us would probably say it was probably one of the best things we ever did. Wes was not only a great son, brother, father, grandfather, and pilot, but he was a great friend. He will be sorely missed.

Larry Jensen, Blue Max

## James Edward Gauze

James Edward Gauze, 70, of Rapid City, S.D., died Sept. 23 at the VA Hospital in Temple, Texas.

He was born in Fort Meade, S.D., and attended his early years of school in Cheyenne, Wyo.; Spearfish, and then Rapid City, SD.

Gauze joined the National Guard in Rapid City while in high school. In the years to come, he attended National Guard schools and became a helicopter pilot. He

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**Attend Reunion 2007  
in Phoenix**

# Taps

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flew H-13s, H-23s, H-21s, Hueys and Chinooks.

In December 1961, he was assigned to Fort Bragg, N.C., and then moved 21 times in the next 24 years. He returned to Fort Hood, Texas, as director of logistics, retiring in 1988.

His assignments included two tours in Vietnam, a tour in South Korea, Germany, and Norway. During these years, Jim attended the Transportation Advanced Course, the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

Combining National Guard and active duty time, he served 33 years.

After retiring from the Army, he went back to college for a year, and then became a consultant for Kellogg Brown & Root for seven years.

Gauze is survived by his wife of 45 years, Aletha; daughters, Johna of College Station, Texas; Kris of Kempner, Texas; son, Heath Gauze of Killeen, Texas; adopted son, Jethro Prugh, with the Army; and six grandchildren.

## Jess Gossage

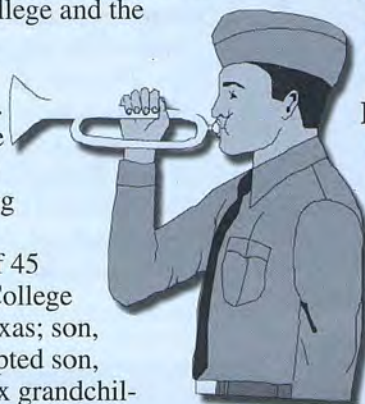
Just to let everyone who knew him know that Jess Gossage, my flight classmate and buddy, died Nov. 29 at the age of 75. He was living in Hermiston, Ore.

We flew CH-37B "Mojaves" all over I and II Corps in 1964 and 1965, and then taught in the rotary wing Q course in 1965, 1966 and 1967.

We also flew 37s together while in Korea in 1967 and 1968.

Gossage was a member of Class 63-3.

— Gerald R. "Budda" Meador



## Richard Robert "Dick" Hatton Jr.

Retired Lt. Col. Richard Robert "Dick" Hatton Jr., 75, died Jan. 3 in an Albuquerque, N.M., hospital.

He served his country for 20 years in the Army as a helicopter pilot, including two tours in Vietnam.

Hatton retired from the Army in 1974. As a civilian, he worked for Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth, Texas, and Honeywell Corp. in Albuquerque.

He graduated from Bishop Duffy High School in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Niagara University with a BS in economics and the University of Southern California with a MS in aerospace management.

Hatton is survived by his wife of 52 years, Diane; children, Patty Meyer, Robert Hatton, Karen Adams, Kevin Hatton, Kim; and nine grandchildren.

## Lonnie T. "Howie" Howard

Retired Lt. Col. Lonnie T. "Howie" Howard of Savannah died at Hospice House on Dec. 29, after a lengthy illness. He was 75.

He was born or raised in Fort Mill, S.C., and attended Clemson University. Graduating in 1953 with a degree in textile chemistry, Howard was commissioned as a Chemical officer and entered active duty with the Army.

After a branch transfer to the Infantry, he attended flight school and became an Army aviator qualified in fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

Howard served two tours of duty in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot.

In addition to his Vietnam tours, he also served for eight years in Germany and in a variety of command and staff positions during his almost 25-year career.

After his retirement from the Army in 1978, he moved to Savannah, where he served as director of transportation for the Chatham Association for Retarded Citizens workshop, followed by a position as the senior Army instructor teaching Junior ROTC at Groves High School in Garden

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## WANTED

Looking for memorabilia from Air Cavalry, Assault Helicopter, NETT, UTT, ICCS, Support, Medical, Transportation and Special units. Patches, Uniforms, Headgear, unit "Business" cards, Propaganda, Printed matter, Plaques, Souvenirs, Party Suits & Novelty items are all of interest. This material is wanted for use in historical exhibits and information for a book. I have numerous references. What can I do for you?



**John Conway**

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# Taps

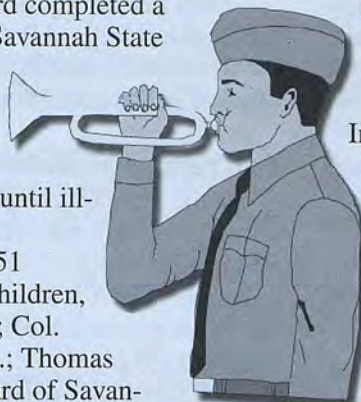
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City, Ga.

An avid shooter, he also was a rifle and pistol coach at the school and did part-time work as a gunsmith in a local gun shop. In his spare time, Howard completed a Master's degree in business from Savannah State College in 1985.

After his second retirement, from the Chatham-Savannah Board of Education, he filled his time as a driving school instructor until illness prevented him from working.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Pat; and seven of his eight children, Catherine Franch of Raleigh, N.C.; Col. John Howard of Fort Carson, Colo.; Thomas Howard of Savannah; James Howard of Savannah; Lonnie "Rick" Howard of Marietta, Ga.; Nancy Howard of Savannah; and Mary Tallman of Marietta; 17 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.



## Lawrence M. King

Retired Lt. Col. Lawrence M. King, 62, of Williamsburg, Va., died in his home on Dec. 22 of cancer.

He retired from the Army at Fort Monroe, Va., in 1991 after 24 years of service.

King was a veteran of Vietnam, serving tours in 1968-69 and 1971-72. He was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Star Medals, 13 Air Medals, and two Vietnam Crosses of Gallantry.

He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Blackhawk Association and the Distinguished Flying Cross Society.

King is survived by his wife of 30 years, Patricia King of Williamsburg; two daughters, Kelly Michelle King of North Carolina and Tracey Denise King of Williamsburg; his mother, Olivia King of Dade City, Fla.; and a granddaughter.

## Ken McGarity

It is with sadness I report the death of Ken McGarity, who died Jan. 3 in Columbus, Ga.

He had another bout with pneumonia and his heart just gave away. Ken fought many battles and it was a miracle to have lived as long as he did.

Gerry Sandlin

## John Anthony Nasche

John Anthony Nasche, a retired major and a senior Army aviator, died June 4. He was 71.

Nasche served two tours in Vietnam, where he was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, 16 Air Medals, a Legion of Merit, a Meritorious Service Medal and an Army Commendation Medal with an Oak leaf Cluster.

He served in Germany in 1954-58 and in Okinawa in 1961-62, when he departed to attend Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. He received his commission in September 1962.

He attended flight school at Fort Rucker, Ala., and received his aviator wings in May 1963.

After reaching 1,500 flying hours, he received his senior Army aviator wings in May 1971.

He served in Vietnam from August 1963-July 1964 and from March 1967-March 1968. He also served in South Korea from August 1971-72.

Nasche later worked as manager at FlightSafety International Inc., a subcontractor to Bell Helicopter Textron Inc., providing flight simulator training to pilots flying Bell Helicopter products. He managed that operation for more than 15 years before retiring. He also retired from Bell Helicopter International after serving 10 years — 4 years in Iran and 6 years in the United States.

Survivors include daughters, Sherry Lee and Cathy Nasche of Paris, Texas; Carmella Siegel of Topeka, Kan.; and Patty Kyle of Paris, Texas; two sons, Michael Anthony Nasche of Texarkana, Texas, and James Calvin Nasche of Fort Worth, Texas; 12 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

## Raymond T. Nutter

Retired Col. Raymond T. Nutter, 76, died Oct. 25 at St. Thomas Hospital in Nashville, Tenn.

Nutter, a long-time resident of Bowling Green, Ky., was a native Kentuckian, a graduate of Western Kentucky University, a member and former president of the "W" Club, and a Rotarian.

For several years, he had been active in residential construction and property management in Bowling Green.

Upon graduation from Western, he was commissioned an officer in the Army from which he retired many years later after a distinguished military career during which his combat service in Vietnam earned numerous citations for valor, including the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest medal for valor.

An avid sports participant, Nutter played on Western's 1952 Refrigerator Bowl Championship team, coached a number of service football and basketball teams, and was very active in the organization and coaching of Vienna Youth Incorporated, Vienna, Va., receiving recognition by selection to that organization's Hall of Fame.

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Bobbie Jean Atwood; a daughter, Gina McIntosh; and a son, Michael Nutter.

— Tom Payne

## Gerald R. "Jerry" Worthington

Retired Lt. Col. Gerald R. "Jerry" Worthington, a decorated Army veteran, died Nov. 1 at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, after a five-year battle with multiple myeloma.

*Continued on Page 10*

# Reunion 2007

## *VHPA offering new Reunion Refund Guarantee*

Last year the Executive Council (EC) experienced an unusually high number of cancellations for the Washington, D.C., reunion after the published reunion cutoff date.

More than 15 members cancelled, with a dollar figure exceeding \$9,750. Luckily, the reunion had a positive cash flow.

Although the published Reunion Refund Policy states no refunds, the EC decided to make an exception to the policy and grant refunds.

As the shepherds of VHPA's funds, this indicated to us the potential for a huge problem if a significant number of attendees were to cancel after the cutoff date and expect refunds.

### **Decision made to enforce policy**

The decision was made that in all future reunions the Reunion Refund Policy will be enforced with no exceptions.

However, to protect the association and still show compassion to our members and their guests whose plans for attending the reunion have fallen apart at the last minute, the EC decided to implement a Reunion Refund Fee to protect our members and our association.

This is how it will work: All those attending will have the option to purchase a Reunion Refund Guarantee for a cost equal to 10 percent of the price of all the tickets purchased for events; the banquet, the welcome reception, special entertainment, side trips, etc. If all the tickets pur-

chased came to \$290, the cost would be \$29.

Each person registering will have to check he has read the Reunion Refund Policy and chooses to accept or reject the Reunion Refund Guarantee in order to complete the reunion registration process.

### **Full refund available, minus fee**

If the person cancels before the published cutoff date, he will receive a full refund of all charges, less a \$10 administrative fee to cover the costs of handling the cancellation. VHPA has done this for quite a few years.

If the person cancels after the cutoff date and has purchased the Reunion Refund Guarantee, he will receive a full refund on all ticketed events he purchased.

He will forfeit the non-ticketed registration fees and the Reunion Refund Guarantee he paid and he will not be charged an additional \$10 cancellation fee.

If the person cancels after the published cutoff date and elected not to purchase the Reunion Refund Guarantee, he will forfeit all monies paid with the exception of any ticket that is limited in number, has sold out and has a waiting list of people wanting to purchase those tickets. Those tickets will be sold and a full refund will be given to the person on those tickets only.

The EC trusts our members understand the need for this action.

— Angelo Spelios  
President

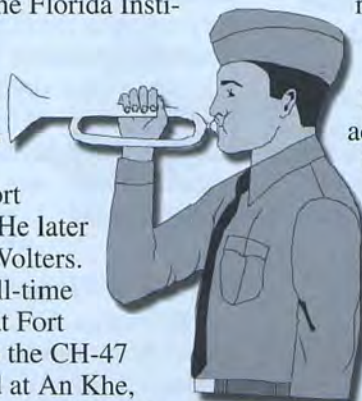
## Taps

### **Continued from Page 9**

Worthington was born on Valentine's Day 1938 in San Antonio, Texas. He was a graduate of the University of Tampa and received a Master's from the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne.

He served eight years with the Texas National Guard, attending Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. He was commissioned in 1960 and graduated from flight school at Fort Rucker in 1961 as a fixed-wing pilot. He later attended helicopter transition at Fort Wolters.

In 1965 Worthington became a full-time active duty officer and was stationed at Fort Hood. In early 1966 he transitioned to the CH-47 "Chinook." That same year, he arrived at An Khe, Vietnam, and served with the 228th Aviation Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division until 1967.



He returned to Vietnam in 1969, serving with the 52nd Aviation Brigade.

Among his decorations are the Silver Star Medal, the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, and 20 Air Medals.

After retiring from the Army in 1983 as a master Army aviator, Worthington was employed by United Technologies Corp, Sikorsky Marketing Division in St. Louis, Mo.

In 1995, he retired to Hondo, Texas, where he loved being "on the ranch" and enjoyed outdoor activities until suffering a stroke in August 2001. Cancer was diagnosed two days later.

Shortly after receiving chemo and a stem cell transplant, he and his wife sold the ranch and relocated to San Antonio to be near doctors. He was in remission for 4.5 years, but the cancer returned in August 2006.

He is survived by his wife of 45, Wanda; a son, Todd of Owings, Md.; a daughter, Shelly Grimes of Fort Hood, Texas; and four granddaughters.

# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

DANA YOUNG

NATIONAL REUNION CHAIRMAN

Ready for a great time, and to meet all those fellow pilots who meant so much to you, about — can you believe it — 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 Internet registration system has just opened, and you can begin the registration process at [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

Our recommendation: Register early!

We have booked every available room at our host hotel, the Marriott Desert Ridge Resort. The facility and all the features of the resort will be almost 100 percent dedicated to VHPA, but given the nothing short of fabulous discounts negotiated for our room rates in a truly world class resort, we will sell out at our primary hotel quickly.

Regrettably, there is no question about that. Thus, you will want to register early to secure your reservations, for events and the hotel itself.

Don't miss the opportunity to take advantage of arriving a day early (Tuesday, July 3) to enjoy all the amenities and features of this great location. That way you don't have to travel on the Fourth of July holiday itself, you can enjoy the vast amount of recreational facilities available at the hotel, attend the Early Bird activities that night, and be ready for all the festivities the next day, Wednesday, Fourth of July.

Our HQ facility this year will be the gorgeous Marriott Desert Ridge, located north of Scottsdale, Ariz., in a truly beautiful part of the Southwestern part of the country.

This property is going to be a "first" for VHPA. It is not a hotel in the typical fashion, but a true resort, with many recreational activities on its property, including two

18-hole, premier, signature golf courses.

While VHPA has been to many great facilities, it is the opinion of your Reunion Committee that this will be the most luxurious yet, truly a world-class resort, with many amenities and services. It will provide an outstanding reunion experience for our members.

The Desert Ridge is a new facility, built in 2003. That's why we were able to get the booking here within our price range — and most likely the only reason.

There is often talk about summer being off-season in the Southwest, but not here. It's prime tourist season at this hotel, and between the world-class spa, the two golf courses, a number of premium restaurants on site, and all

the other amenities, the hotel draws a lot of local folks over a holiday weekend.

The Desert Ridge already has turned down other significant bookings for our time period in July 2007, including a number of TV reality show events, as we were there first.

All this is available to you for the unheard of price of \$115 per night.

How did we get the price this low, when each room is normally more than \$659 a night in winter, and even more than \$307 per night during the summer? When we booked it back in 2003, the hotel had not yet opened and the Desert Ridge had not built up its advance bookings yet, thus the hotel offered some spectacular pricing.

### Photo tour available

For those of you who attended the D.C. reunion last year, you saw a PowerPoint presentation in the registration area of the Desert Ridge. Portions of that presentation are available to view of the VHPA website at [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

Also, a photo tour is available now direct from the hotel at [www.jwdesertridgeresort.com](http://www.jwdesertridgeresort.com)

First click on "enter non-flash site" (easier access to the home page), then the tab "photo tour" and view photo



Dave Rittman photo

**This is the main entrance of the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa, headquarters hotel for the Phoenix reunion. This will be the first reunion hotel in years where members can park their own vehicle for free.**

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# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

**Continued from Page 11**

after photo of the resort. Imagine yourself in this kind of ambiance for \$115 a night. What a deal!

Even though it is located in the higher desert area north of Scottsdale and downtown Phoenix, with the new interstate systems, it is only a 35-minute, relatively inexpensive taxi ride from Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport.

### **Rooms limited relative to last year**

Room reservations are first come, first serve. While provisions have been made for an overflow hotel at another Marriott, it's more than 10 miles away.

Last year we used more than 1,250 rooms per night at the Marriott in D.C. At Desert Ridge, which is somewhat smaller facility, only 875 per night are available; you do the math. We will run out early, and those who register now will enjoy the experience of a lifetime.

### **Hotel amenities**

In the hotel itself, there are 10 distinctive and different dining experiences available to you, from four-star restaurants to more casual dining to a full-size Starbucks.

A major shopping complex is just down the road from the hotel, and VHPA has arranged for a shuttle bus to run throughout the reunion from the resort to the shopping areas.

The two world-class Arnold Palmer

Signature golf courses at the property are rated by *Conde Nast Travel Magazine* readers among the top 100 courses nationwide.

Tennis courts, a center just for the kids, a fitness center, and four acres of pools and shimmering waterways are available on the property. That includes a "Lazy River" over one-third of a mile long on which you can go tubing. The currents allow you to float in a loop that takes about 20 minutes to go around. On one of the islands there is a bar where you can be handed a cold beer or whatever as you float by, and you keep on going! Now, that's life.

We have also negotiated complimentary use of the hotel fitness center during our reunion for all VHPA members and their guests. Just show your ID badge to the desk or identify yourself as a VHPA member to the fitness center receptionist upon arrival. The hotel also has a separate world-class spa adjacent to the resort that is available to members for an additional fee.

The resort has the largest ballroom in Arizona, with more than 200,000 square feet of air-conditioned space available for the VHPA.

### **How to register**

The same procedure is in place that we used for previous years. It's easy: Just link to [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org) (you can also get there from our main website [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org)), and follow the prompts.

Once you complete the event registration process, the system will seamlessly hyperlink you directly to another site to complete your hotel reservations.

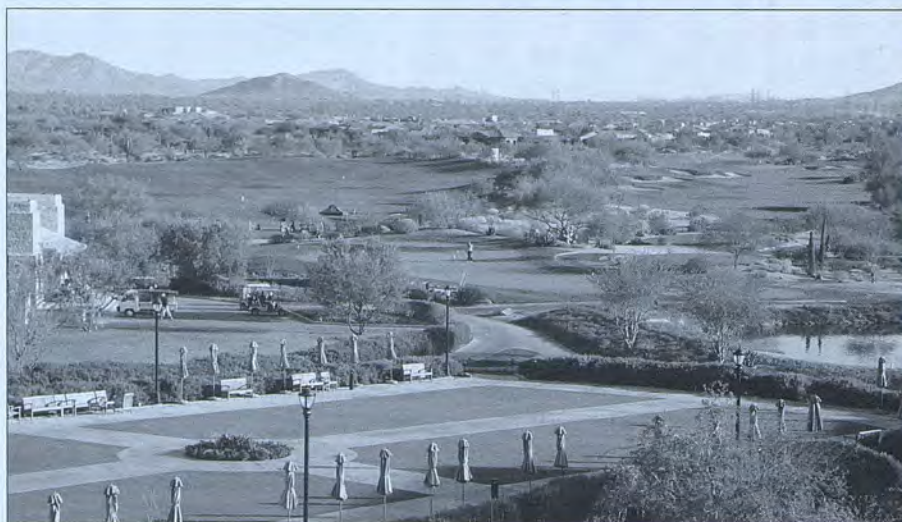
The system will permit you to use a credit card to reserve up to two rooms online. As in recent years, you will not be able to secure rooms in our room block using our heavily discounted room rate by calling the hotel directly. You first must register through the VHPA.

For unique situations in which a member requires more than two rooms, you may call our VHPA

Headquarters staff toll free at (800) 505-VHPA (8742) for additional information, or any other registration-related problems.

As in recent years past, we cannot accept requests for "sub-blocks" of rooms for units or groups of people; each member must register himself for his own room(s).

Not computer literate? In this magazine you will find a registration form that can be completed, then mailed or faxed, to VHPA Headquarters in California. Details are on the form.



Dave Rittman photo

**This photograph, taken from a room in the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa, looks northeast toward the resort's two world-class golf courses. The Desert Ridge is packed with amenities for those attending the 2007 Reunion.**

**Continued on Page 13**

# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

**Continued from Page 13**

Once you have registered, Headquarters will provide you a special, toll-free number to call our third-party passkey vendor that administers our hotel reservation block. The Desert Ridge Resort cannot accept a room reservation directly by phone or through its own Internet registration system under our discounted room block.

Questions on this can be referred to our VHPA Headquarters staff toll free at (800) 505-VHPA (8742).

### **The events**

- “Early Bird” Reception with entertainment — Tuesday, July 3

Take advantage of the fabulous room rates and all there is to do at the Marriott Desert Ridge, and plan to arrive on Tuesday, July 3.

Our reunion officially starts on Wednesday, July 4, but last year more than half of our members and guests took

advantage of the special discounted hotel rates and came a day early to enjoy all that was available to them. We anticipate the same trend this year . . . and, thus, for you “early birds” we have arranged a special reception, to include entertainment that night.



Dave Rittman photo

**This one of the hot tub-social pool areas, complete with bar. The JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa features various water recreation areas.**

There is plenty of time to eat on your own at one of the 10 restaurants at the resort, or even off-site if you prefer. This is a “come as you are” type of event, and there is no cost for attending.

- Welcome Reception Buffet Dinner — with our own private fireworks show — Wednesday, July 4

Last year in D.C. our high-quality

welcome reception buffet dinner was so popular we have made similar arrangements again this year. As a result, those flying in that afternoon won’t have to worry about finding a place to eat on a holiday.

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## Make certain email address is up to date

On occasion we need to send email messages to our membership, primarily due to time-sensitive information that can’t wait for the next edition of the *Aviator* or it would be expensive to send by regular mail.

For example, we recently sent an email regarding getting the 2006 *Membership Directory* on CD-ROM; it was time-sensitive because of a publishing deadline.

A few years ago we encountered a problem with VHPA scholarship information due to the application deadline being prior to the next edition of the (then) *VHPA Newsletter*; we were compelled to use email notification and we had several successful applicants who received scholarships.

On our last emailing, approximately 50 percent of the messages “bounced”. There are generally two reasons for this:

- Members do not keep their email addresses current.

You can easily and conveniently correct this by going to the following website:

[www.vhpamembership.org/emailupdate/login.php](http://www.vhpamembership.org/emailupdate/login.php)

After logging in, the email address we currently have on file also will be displayed.

- Many of our members are now using spam blockers/spam filters. You can correct this problem by adding the following domains to your approved/white/friends list: (1) [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org) (2) [vhpamembership.org](http://vhpamembership.org) (3) [vhparegistration.org](http://vhparegistration.org) and (4) [vhpareunion.org](http://vhpareunion.org)

We appreciate your cooperation as it not only allows us to get information to you quickly, but also saves the organization money.

Remember, the email messages are infrequent and are always authorized by the Executive Council. We also are considering an email reminder for dues renewals.

— Gary Roush and Charles Holley, Webmasters

# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

**Continued from Page 13**

This is Fourth of July evening, however, there are no fireworks shows planned in nearby cities, so VHPA will put on its own 22-minute "Class A" display at the hotel as part of the welcome reception and dinner.

The doors will open on our "official" welcome reception this year at 6:30 p.m. and will last until at least 11:30 p.m.

For first-time reunion attendees, we also will have a special orientation and welcome reception from 6-7 p.m. The buffet dinner lines will open about 7:00 p.m., and there will be plenty of food for all.

At about 8:30 p.m., we will experience our fireworks display. Entertainment will be by "Snake Eyes," a Jimmy Buffet-style performance that comes highly recommended. It will be a great evening for all.

- A special pool party on Thursday, July 5

You cannot come to a true resort such as the Desert Ridge and not take advantage of the spectacular water-based amenities.

While the Desert Ridge is in the desert and temperatures in the afternoon can average 105 degrees Fahrenheit (it's a dry heat, as their PR folks say), a key consideration is it gets dark early in this part of the Southwest — sunset is about 7:35 p.m. — and, with the mountains blocking the horizon, it's dark and much cooler by that time, and the desert does cool down rapidly.

Evening temperatures drop to an average of 80 degrees (we got the official Weather Service statistics). As you are at an elevation of over 1,250 feet, which is somewhat higher than Phoenix, it gets a little cooler quicker here.

Thus, this is the perfect place to run a great pool party in the evening, to include a buffet cookout — hamburgers, hotdogs, and much more in the beautiful outdoor garden and pool area. The area is designed for these kinds of things, and it's the perfect area to mingle, meet, and greet.

The party is to run from about 6-10 p.m. outside, and then all the fun moves inside to a number of lounges within the hotel.

- Our annual Golf Tournament — Friday, July 6

This year the tournament is at the resort, so no buses are required to go anywhere.

Mike Whitten has set up another great event on one of the two nationally acclaimed championship Arnold Palmer signature courses built into the Sonora Desert. These courses are rated at the highest-level course that has been designed by this American golf legend.

Included in the one price are the green fees, carts, prizes, some beverages on the course, and lunch. As play is scheduled for the morning hours, the heat of the day will not become overbearing before you complete your game just before lunch and the award ceremony.



Dave Rittman photo

**This is part of the lobby at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa. A huge staircase goes down to the next level.**

- Major Entertainment, Friday evening, July 6 — Lee Greenwood

Keeping with providing some of the best entertainment possible for members, we are proud to announce we have arranged for the legendary Lee Greenwood to perform in a private concert at the Desert Ridge the evening of July 6.

Lee is the performer of the song

"Proud to be an American (God bless the USA)."

If you want to hear a sample of the performance, go to [www.sceniclasvegas.com/proud\\_to\\_be.html](http://www.sceniclasvegas.com/proud_to_be.html) Make sure your computer has speakers.

The show will start about 9 p.m. in the main hotel ballroom, which will be turned into a theater-type setting, complete with live TV projection.

- Business Meeting — Saturday, July 7

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 promises to keep it moving.

All dues-current members are invited to attend. VHPA

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# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

*Continued from Page 14*

members in good standing do not need to be registered for the reunion to attend this meeting, but as in previous years, you must have a ticket to be admitted to the room. Non-registered, dues-current members may pick up a ticket at our registration desk prior to the start of the meeting.

Similar to last year, anyone with materials to present should have them in digital format, preferably Power-Point. We anticipate the meeting will run until about noon.

- Special activity for spouses and guests while the business meeting is going on — brunch with fashion show

A great brunch has been arranged during the same time pilots are attending the annual business meeting. It starts at 9:30 a.m., and includes a live fashion show, complete with runway models, lights, and music to help display today's fashions and styles. All this happens at the resort, of course.

This should be a very interesting event, timed to end at about the same time as the business meeting.

- Our banquet — Saturday, July 8

Doors will open about 5:45 p.m., and ceremonies typically start about 6:30 p.m. The opening ceremonies, the presentation/posting of the flag, and tribute to our missing men are some of the most meaningful parts of the reunion.

Similar to the past few years, we've arranged for a choice of three types of meals: A beef, fish, or veggie plate.

For those who attended the San Francisco reunion a few years ago, at popular request we have arranged to fly back in to this year's reunion the ultra high-energy group Dave Martin's House Party.

The group will perform music of the 1960s and early 1970s, and will bring a complete lineup of dancers and entertainers.

- Special tours and trips

At last year's reunion in D.C. we surveyed attendees about what activities they wanted to see at this year's reunion. Then we went about arranging the ones that were most requested by the membership.

To make it easier for you, this year we have arranged to reserve any of the below special trips or tours directly through the VHPA reservation system when you register.

As many of these events are capacity controlled, it's truly first-come, first-serve. More details will be on the website, but as an overview, here is a summary of what's

available, including a great post reunion overnight trip to the Grand Canyon:

### **Thursday, July 5**

- Hot air balloon ride, with champagne brunch. Limited to the first 75 people who sign up. Tentative time: Departing about 5 a.m. and returning about 9 a.m.

- Jeep riding in the foothills of the Sonora Desert. Limited to the first 75 members and guests who sign up. Tentative departure

time: 7 a.m., returning about 11 a.m.

- Bob Bondurant Racing, including use of racing go-carts. Limited to the first 200 members and guests who sign up. Tentative departure time: 7:30 a.m., returning about 1:30 p.m.

- River rafting. Limited to the first 150 members and guests who sign up. Tentative departure time: 8 a.m., returning about noon

- Special trip to Luke Air Force Base, including tour of the flight lines and buffet lunch. Limited to the first 330 members and guests who sign up. Tentative departure time: 9 a.m., returning about 4 p.m.

### **Friday, July 6**

- Trip to Bell Helicopter in Phoenix to view the Apache Combat Helicopter production line. Limited to the first 100 people who sign up. Tentative departure time:



Dave Rittman photo

**The JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa has acres of landscaped grounds, including a host of water features and two championship golf course. However other areas are left in a "natural" state. Trails are built through these areas and most of the vegetation is identified by signs listing what the particular plant or item is.**

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# Reunion 2007

## Internet registration system opens for Phoenix

**Continued from Page 15**

8 a.m., returning about noon

• Trip to Tucson and the Pima Aviation Museum and “Bone Yard,” where thousands of vintage and Vietnam-era aircraft, including helicopters, are stored. There is a list of all the serial numbers of aircraft there and it’s possible you may be able to find your old helicopter. Included are a lunch and other special activities at the historical site. Tentative departure time: 6:30 a.m., return mid-afternoon.

### Sunday, July 8

This is a special reunion post trip requested by many members on last year’s survey. Due to the distance to the Grand Canyon, it is not feasible to do a day trip and still get members and their guests back to the hotel in time for evening activities.

However, we have arranged for an overnight trip to the Grand Canyon, including transportation from the Desert Ridge to a hotel near the rim of the canyon, access to the canyon, the cost of the overnight room, and transportation back to the Phoenix airport (2 p.m. arrival) or to the Desert Ridge resort (3 p.m. arrival).

The package is priced for double occupancy at the hotel, so if a single occupancy overnight room is requested at the canyon, there will be a supplemental charge.

### Flying to the reunion?

There is only one realistic airport this year to fly into on the commercial airlines: Sky Harbor, the international airport for Phoenix.

There is a Super Shuttle system similar to the airport-to-hotel shuttles available in Dallas and D.C. If you want to use this service and would like a discount coupon, click on this link:

[www.supershuttle.com/Coupons/PHX/VHPA.pdf](http://www.supershuttle.com/Coupons/PHX/VHPA.pdf)

However, the Desert Ridge is the last stop on the run. If you are traveling with at least two people it is cheaper

and much quicker to take a cab. The cost is \$50 door to door, plus tip, but that is for up to four people.

### Discounts with United Airlines

We have arranged again this year for a discounted group rate with United Airlines

To make reservations, call (800) 521-4041

Website:

[www.united.com](http://www.united.com)

Use the following information:

- Meeting ID Code – 562WD
- Can use for airports: Phoenix
- Peak dates: June 27- July 7
- Dates rates available: June 24- July 10
- Book on line or call agent
- 2 percent discount within 30 days

- 7 percent discount before 30 days

Given the variety of discount rates available, a check of competitive airlines rates would be appropriate. Southwest Airlines has a major hub in Phoenix.

### Renting a car?

Hertz has an on-site location at the Desert Ridge. Members using other rental companies will need to rent vehicles at the airport and return them there. The hotel has an agreement with Hertz for “no drop off charge” for a one-way rental. In other words, a car rented at the airport can be returned to Hertz at the hotel without additional charges.

We have negotiated a discount off the lowest available rate at the time of booking or the convention rate, whichever is lowest, by calling Hertz with the following group code to make reservations at the following rates:

CV# 022Q3029

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association  
Phoenix, Ariz.  
July 2-8, 2007

*Continued on Page 17*



Dave Rittman photo

This photo shows the circular river built around the property of the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa. You can float on your back or use a tube. Bars are set up on islands so floaters can reach out and get a beer as they go by.

# Reunion 2007

## *Internet registration system opens for Phoenix*

### **Continued from Page 16**

Identify yourself as a VHPA member at the time of booking. There will be a link on our website if you want to book over the Internet.

### **Parking cars at the Desert Ridge**

There is ample outdoor parking space at the Desert Ridge. If you park your own vehicle in one of the nearby lots there is no charge.

### **Motor homes**

The Marriott Desert Ridge has an outdoor parking area that will hold coaches or motor homes. We are told there is no charge for self-parking, however, there are no hookups. There are many RV parks in the Phoenix area, though transportation from a RV park to the hotel will have to be coordinated by the member.

### **Driving directions**

The Marriott Desert Ridge is located north of Scottsdale, about 35 minutes from the airport. The address is:  
JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa

5350 E. Marriott Drive  
Phoenix, Ariz. 85054  
Phone: (480) 293-5000  
Fax: (480) 293-3600  
Toll-free: (800) 835-6206

### **If arriving from the north:**

- Exit I-17 via ramp to AZ-101-Loop (Pima Freeway)
- Bear left on AZ 101 Loop (Pima Freeway) and go east 7 miles
- Take Exit 31 (Tatum Boulevard)
- Turn left on Tatum Boulevard and go north 0.5 mile
- Turn right on Deer Valley Road and go east 0.5 mile
- Turn left on Marriott Drive into the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa Phoenix

### **If arriving from the east:**

- Take "AZ 101 Loop N"
- Bear right on AZ 101 Loop (Pima Freeway) and go north 20 miles
- Exit AZ 101 Loop (Pima Freeway) via ramp to Tatum Boulevard
- Turn right on Tatum Boulevard and go north 0.5 mile
- Turn right on Deer Valley Road and go east 0.5 mile
- Turn left on Marriott Drive into the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa Phoenix

### **If arriving from the West:**

- Exit Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway) via ramp at sign reading: "Exit 133B AZ 101 Loop N"
- Continue on AZ 101 Loop and go northeast 29 miles
- Take Exit 31 (Tatum Blvd)
- Turn left on Tatum Boulevard and go north 0.5 mile
- Turn right on Deer Valley Road and go east 0.5 mile
- Turn left on Marriott Drive into the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa Phoenix



Dave Rittman photo

This photo shows one of the garden areas at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa where you can sit back, visit and relax during the morning or evening.

### **If arriving from the South:**

- Exit Interstate 10 via ramp to U.S. 60 (Superstition Freeway)
- Continue on U.S. 60 (Superstition Freeway) and go east 3.6 miles
- Exit U.S. 60 (Superstition Freeway) via ramp at sign reading: "Exit 176B AZ 101 Loop N"
- Continue on AZ 101 Loop and go north 23 miles
- Exit AZ 101 Loop (Pima Freeway) via ramp to Tatum Boulevard
- Turn right on Tatum Boulevard and go north 0.5 mile
- Turn right on Deer Valley Road and go east 0.5 mile
- Turn left on Marriott Drive into the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa Phoenix

Get on the Internet and register now!

In summary, our 2007 Reunion is going to be great! But you have got to register to be there. Go to:

[www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

We'll have more details on the website and in our next Aviator.

Make your plans to return to Arizona.

# PHOENIX REUNION SCHEDULE

## **Tuesday — July 3 — Early Arrival**

1-5 p.m. Pre Registration  
8-12 midnight Early Bird Gathering

## **Wednesday — July 4 — Arrival Day (yes, it's the Fourth of July)**

9 a.m.-8 p.m. Registration  
6-7 p.m. First Time Attendee reception  
6:30 -11:30 p.m. Reception and Fourth of July party  
— Dinner Buffet  
— Fireworks  
— Premiere Phoenix Party Band "Snake Eyes"

## **Thursday — July 5**

9 a.m.-6 p.m. Registration  
5-9 a.m. Hot Air Ballooning  
7-11 a.m. Jeep Riding  
7:30-1:30 p.m. Bondurant Racing go-cart racing  
— Race time 8:30-12:30  
8 a.m.-12 noon River Rafting  
9 a.m. -4 p.m. Luke AFB  
8 a.m.-12 noon Mini Reunions  
1-5 p.m. Mini Reunions  
1-4 p.m. War Story Contest  
2-4 p.m. Scholarship seminar  
6-10 p.m. Pool party w/ entertainment & food

## **Friday — July 6**

9 a.m.-6 p.m. Registration  
7 a.m.-2 p.m. Golf  
6:30 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Pima Air and Space Museum Tour  
8 a.m.-12 noon Mini Reunions  
8-11 a.m. Boeing Apache Line tour  
1-4 p.m. Historical Presentation Forum  
1-5 p.m. Mini Reunions  
8-11 p.m. Lee Greenwood Concert

## **Saturday — July 7**

9 a.m.-12 noon Registration  
10 a.m.-12 noon Annual Business Meeting  
9:30 a.m.-12 noon Spouse & Guest Brunch (Fashion Show)  
1-3 p.m. Veterans Benefit's seminar  
1-3 p.m. Women's seminar  
1-4 p.m. Historical Presentation Forum  
1-5 p.m. Mini Reunions  
5:45 p.m. doors open Final Banquet

## **Sunday — July 8**

Departure Day  
Optional Post Reunion Grand Canyon Tour

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

24th Annual Reunion • Phoenix, AZ • July 3-7, 2007

## NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Register online at [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org) or mail completed form to:

VHPA Headquarters, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

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

Member name:	Member No.:	Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Address:		Address change? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
City:	State:	Zip:
Email address:	Telephone: (     )	
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	21 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Guest name:	Hometown:	21 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Guest name:	Hometown:	21 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Guest name:	Hometown:	21 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Guest name:	Hometown:	21 or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes/Wheelchair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration through 4/30/2007*		@ \$60	
Registration after 4/30/2007*		@ \$70	
Registration for under age 21		@ \$15	
Early Bird Event (July 3)		No charge	
Welcome reception for first reunion attendees only (July 4)		No charge	
July 4th Party		@ \$75	
Hot Air Ballooning (July 5)		@ \$160	
Jeep Riding (July 5)		@ \$80	
Go Cart Racing (July 5)		@ \$225	
River Rafting (July 5)		@ \$80	
Luke AFB Tour (July 5)		@ \$35	
Pool Party w/BBQ (July 5)		@ \$30	
Pima Aviation Museum (July 6)		@ \$65	
Golf w/Lunch (July 6)		@ \$90	
Boeing Apache Tour (July 6)		@ \$20	
Lee Greenwood Concert (July 6)		@ \$55	
Spouse/Guest Event (July 7)		@ \$40	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 7)		@ \$75	
Non-registered guests at banquet only		@ \$95	
Grand Canyon (single occupancy)		@ \$375	
Grand Canyon (double occupancy)		@ \$570	
Total from sidebar	XXXXX	XXXXX	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$36	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	3 years	@ \$99	
Life membership		@ \$540	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			

T-SHIRTS		
QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$18	
	M@\$18	
	L@\$18	
	XL@\$18	
	XXL@\$19	
	XXXL@\$20	
<b>SIDEBAR TOTAL:</b>		

QTY.	BANQUET MEAL
	Beef
	Fish
	Vegetable

Membership Fund contribution:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Scholarship Fund contribution:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

General Fund contribution:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Vietnam War Museum contribution:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### REFUND GUARANTEE

No refunds will be given for any reunion fee or event unless VHPA HQ receives cancellation notification no later than the published cancellation date.

However, if a Refund Guarantee fee of 10 percent is paid at time of registration, a full refund will be made for any event cancelled at any time.

\*Each person 21 and older must pay full registration fee. (Except non-registered banquet guests.)

### CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

MC or Visa No:	Expiration date:	Signature:
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### CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2007" with form.

# War stories, presentations planned

At the D.C. Reunion in 2006, two new events were well received: A War Story Contest and a Historic Presentation Forum (HPF).

The War Story Contest includes short, informal war stories by members who tell their best stories for fun and glory. The HPF consists of professional talks on Vietnam War topics.

We are also seeking VHPAs to provide HPF talks or war stories. Details to sign up are on the reunion website.

These events will be filmed for our history archive and each participant will be recognized.

At the D.C. Reunion, nearly 200 people attended the War Story Contest. A DVD of the event and the five HPFs presented at the D.C. Reunion can be ordered from the VHPA website.

## Information available

For more information, contact Dr. Jim Fulbrook at

██████████ or call him at ██████████.

The "This Ain't no Sh\_t!" Vietnam War Story Contest will consist of VHPA members telling stories about their Vietnam-era experiences.

Each storyteller gets up to 15 minutes to tell it like it was in a session that will be scheduled for up to two hours.

HPF talks will consist of more formal historic presentations on the Vietnam War. Each will be up to one hour in length and will be recorded. Speakers will be members who complete an information form and provide a summary of their topic. See the VHPA Reunion website.

## Three categories of topics

We have three categories of HPF topics:

- Aviation Operations during the Vietnam War
- Non-Aviation Operations during the Vietnam War
- Thirty-minute book author or video producer presentations on Vietnam War topics

Aviation (Helicopter) Operations is self-explanatory. Non-aviation operations could include topics such as Special Operations, ground operations, etc. (topic possibilities are endless).

If you have a published book or multimedia presentation or a complete manuscript, we will organize a forum where each presenter in this category has 30 minutes to discuss his work (with a book signing session after).

These are more good reasons to come to the Phoenix Reunion, so give some serious thought to presenting if you're a decent public speaker. We want to hear from you. Check the reunion website or contact me.

— Jim Fulbrook

## Scholarship Seminar planned in Phoenix

The VHPA Scholarship Program is beginning to grow. We now have two \$1,000 VHPA Memorial Scholarships awarded each year and another partially funded.

New funds are beginning to flow into the VHPA Scholarship Fund at an increasing rate. Plus, many in our membership are asking how they can contribute to the scholarship program.

So, therein is the reason why your Scholarship Committee senses a need for a Scholarship Program Seminar this year at the annual reunion in Phoenix.

If you work in the insurance, money management, or are experienced with similar foundations or scholarship programs and would like to be a part of the seminar panel, send your resume and details of your work expertise to Tom Payne, 9920 S. Louisville Ave., Tulsa, OK 74137.

If you have questions about how you might be able to contribute to the panel, call Tom Payne at (918) 298-5132, noon to 9 p.m. daily.

There will be a limited number of panel members selected by June 1 and notified. They will be eligible to make a 10- to 15-minute presentation.

— Tom Payne

## Do you have a DFC?

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San Diego, CA 92153*

**Tel. (866) 332-6332**

**Visit our Website:**

**[www.dfcsociety.org](http://www.dfcsociety.org)**

## Attend Reunion 2007 in Phoenix

# Music

## *Writer recalls sound of Huey's blades in Vietnam*

TERRY DICKSON  
THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION

Music of helicopter blades still holds a chill  
I never met Jack Barker, but I'm familiar with his music.

Barker, a Waycross native, his copilot and two-man crew were killed in March 1971, when his helicopter was shot down over Laos as he tried to rescue South Vietnamese Rangers pinned down by North Vietnamese soldiers.

Barker, a company commander, organized what most called a suicide mission. His was the only helicopter that pressed on in the face of daunting ground fire.

About that music — it wasn't really music. It was the dull percussion of Huey helicopter blades beating the air. Barker was on a rescue mission.

To me, anytime the helicopters flew to the bush to pick up soldiers — even when no bullets were flying — it was a rescue.

As an infantry sergeant with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, I loved the sound of those choppers coming. We'd hear that characteristic whopping sound faintly at first, then the hum of the engines. They'd come into sight and we'd move from cover into the open landing zone and climb aboard. The "slicks" had no doors, so we'd fly seated on the metal deck with our feet dangling over the skids.

They'd take us back to the rear, where we showered — always cold — shaved and put on clean, wrinkled uniforms, sometimes the first time in weeks.

Guys would head to the club and buy beer for 15 cents, mixed drinks for a quarter and eat pizzas made with bologna and cheddar cheese.

At the post exchange at Freedom Hill, you could eat banana splits made creatively by Vietnamese women. Sure, you sometimes got coffee or mint ice cream, but the tree-ripened bananas made up for that.

At night we would crawl onto gritty mattresses that were brown from the sweat of dozens of soldiers before. There was no such thing as an assigned cot and you sometimes wondered if you were sleeping in a bed where a man dreamed of a wife and kids he never lived to see again.

But thanks to pilots like Jack Barker, at least we weren't sleeping on the ground with rain puddling around us.

Back in the rear, you could sit around, talk at night and get your mind off things. You could brag about a girl you used to date or lie about how fast your Mustang was. You could laugh out loud, smoke a cigarette in the open and eat hot sausage, eggs and pancakes in the mess hall.

In the bush all you could do was lie silently in the dark and wish the mosquitoes would leave you the hell alone as you ached for someone. Or you aimlessly gnawed a mouthful of cold C-ration meat and remembered how good your grandma's chicken and dumplings tasted after church.

Those pilots brought mail, food and ammo to thousands of troops, sometimes with green tracers whacking into their birds.

Once, a medevac crew flew through a mountain fog that was like gray bisque to hoist Richard Graham, one of my soldiers, up through the trees on Charlie Ridge after he took four AK-47 rounds in the thighs.

I admit that I hated outgoing flights when the birds started dropping toward an LZ and the door gunners cranked up their M60 machine guns. But they always got us out.

That's what Barker and his crew were trying to do when they died. Their sparse remains were found more than 30 years later and next week Barker will get a hero's burial at Arlington.

Many other chopper pilots already are in their graves. Many, blessedly, are still with us.

They're all heroes to me. Maybe that's why Huey music still gives me chills.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Terry Dickson of The Florida Times-Union wrote this article, which is dedicated to the crew of a UH-1 Huey that flew for B/101 whose bodies were recovered recently and now are buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Dickson served as a sergeant with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. The VHPA Aviator thanks Dickson and The Florida Times-Union for granting permission for this article to be reprinted.

## Register online for Reunion 2007

[www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

# Pleiku 6

## *Pilot asks for correction about his status in series*

MIKE SHEUERMAN

Please be advised that a request has been made of me to change a small part of the thrilling story of Pleiku 6 by one of the pilots who lived it.

James L. Siegfried, better known to those who flew with him as "Ziggy," has asked that I change the part concerning his departure from the unit and Vietnam. As one with great respect for accuracy, please allow me to grant Ziggy his wish. See correction below.

### **Ziggy continued flying missions**

Ziggy did not leave the unit right after Mike Kieren and me, as I stated in Episode 4. He continued to fly with the Panthers until June 30, 1972. On that date, he was AMC in a flight of two returning from shooting at bad guys and their armored toys in and around Kontom.

Northwest of Pleiku he contacted Pleiku Air Force Base and requested permission to cross the base's extended west runway low level en route to Camp Holloway. Permission was granted and, as he crossed, 26 AK-47 rounds made Swiss cheese of his AH-1G Cobra, 12 going through the cockpit. Several hit his front-seater, "Fearless" Forrest Snyder, in the left foot, behind the left calf and left knee. Ziggy took two in his right foot. There were also holes in the tail boom and tail rotor.

Ziggy notified his wingman, Bernie Busby, he had taken hits, both Fearless and he were wounded, and he was putting the Snake down. Bernie notified Panther OPNS and called for a medevac.

### **Pilots remained alert**

Both pilots remained alert and headed for the pad at Artillery Hill, Ziggy using his left foot and Fearless, his right.

Three Chinooks occupied that space, so Ziggy and Fearless landed in a parking lot across from the pad. Bernie was in behind them. The medevac arrived and carted both of the wounded guys to the 94th Evacuation Hos-

pital in Pleiku.

When John Debay, the 361st maintenance officer found out, he was concerned about the pilots. When he saw the aircraft and realized it would have to be sent back to the States for repair, he was irate. The Cobra was a new aircraft in Vietnam, with less than 10 hours on it.

Several days later, when he went to visit Ziggy and Fearless in the hospital, he said, and I quote: "If you two assholes wanted to low level home, why didn't you fly 295? That thing is a piece of s\*&# and needs to be shot up and shipped home."

The crew chief, Roy Snisko, also was fit to be tied when he saw the aircraft. There was blood everywhere in the cockpit. "I'm not cleaning this. Those two officers can do it when they come back to the company," he reportedly said.

Ziggy and Fearless stayed in the hospital in Pleiku until July 6, then were flown to Japan. From there, they were flown to Travis Air Force Base on July 16.

### **Pilot spent months in hospital**

Ziggy spent several months in an Army hospital in San Francisco. Fearless was flown on to Washington, D.C., and spent almost a year in Walter Reed. Oh, don't be too concerned about him, he got to go home every night.

Ziggy attended the 1992 Atlanta reunion with Mike Kieren and me. It was the first time either of us had seen him since Vietnam. He still looked the same.

I located Fearless in the spring of 1999. He attended his first VHPA reunion that year in Nashville. He and Paula, his beautiful wife haven't missed one since.

After the Nashville reunion, Fearless was flying to California to meet Paula and visit their son, a Navy man who lived on the West Coast. He made a point of going to see Ziggy. It was the first time they had seen each other since July 16, 1972.

Well, I hope Ziggy is happy now, the record is straight, and the tale has been corrected.

## **Interested in advertising in *The VHPA Aviator*?**

The cost for a black-and-white ad is only \$125 for a quarter-page ad, \$250 for a half-page ad, and \$500 for a full-page ad

Contact Mike Sheuerman at [membership@vhpa.org](mailto:membership@vhpa.org) for details

# Stolen valor

## *House OKs tougher punishment for imposters*

LEO SHANE III  
STARS AND STRIPES  
MIDEAST EDITION

WASHINGTON — A bill mandating tougher punishment for military imposters gained final approval from the House on Wednesday, and will now go to the president to be signed into law.

The legislation, dubbed the “stolen valor act,” calls for up to six months in prison for anyone who falsely claims to have earned a military honor, and up to a year in prison for fraudulently wearing a Purple Heart, Silver Star or other high military honor.

Both crimes would also be classified as felonies, which can carry additional penalties such as limits on gun ownership and disqualification from certain public offices, depending on the state.

Under current law, anyone caught wearing a military medal they did not earn faces a misdemeanor charge and up to six months in prison, but law enforcement can’t do anything to someone simply displaying or claiming to have earned the honor.

House officials on Wednesday said the change closes that critical loophole and helps protect the integrity of the military awards.

“These frauds have diminished the honor of our military heroes,” said Rep. John Salazar, D-Colo., who introduced the original version of the measure. “They use it to gain credibility for themselves, and often go on to commit even worse crimes.”

Along with cases of individuals using the fake medals to gain speaking engagements and community leadership roles, Salazar referenced crimes committed in 2004 by

retired Marine Sgt. Gary Lakis, who claimed fake combat experience and nonexistent Silver Stars in order to gain \$66 million in defense contracts to provide training to the service.

The military revoked those contracts once Lakis was found to be lying about much of his military career, but he fled the country before FBI investigators could arrest him and charge him with fraud.

Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., said awards such as the Purple Heart “hold a deeper meaning and value for servicemen that far outweighs their monetary worth,” and called the bill a chance to honor the sacrifice of all troops by preserving the military’s legacy.

The tougher penalties are backed by a number of veterans groups, including the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

As of late last week, supporters thought the bill likely wouldn’t pass this session because of House Republican leadership’s resistance to moving a measure proposed by Salazar, a first-term Democrat.

The measure approved yesterday was a nearly identical bill sponsored by Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., which was approved by the full Senate in September.

The White House has not released any timetable for when the bill could be signed into law.

*Used with permission from the Stars and Stripes.*

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<http://www.stripes.com>

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** The above article appeared in the Dec. 8, 2006, issue of the Stars and Stripes, Mideast Edition. The VHPA Aviator thanks Stars and Stripes management and writer Leo Shane III for granting permission to republish this article.

## WANT TO BE ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE?

There are two officer positions to be elected to the 2007 VHPA Executive Committee.

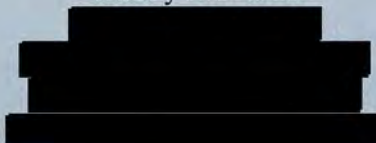
The positions are Vice President and Junior Member at Large.

If you are interested in either position, please submit a letter of intent to me no later than June 15, 2007.

I will send you the complete application packet by return mail.

Send your letter to:

Woody McFarlin



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105 • Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

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

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Dates in units			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?

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