



THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

May/June 2007 Vol. 25, No. 3



Dave Rittman photo

This photo of the Sky Crane was taken at LZ English in March-April 1967. At the time, the 1st Cavalry Division was flying out of the newly created LZ on the Bong Song Plains about 80 miles north of Qui Nhon. In the photo, a Cav Sky Crane is hauling fuel bladders from the POL area just to the west of the airport.

From the President

Go to the VHPA reunion in Phoenix in July? It is too dang hot!

If you are thinking this, I have news for you. Come to our reunion hotel, the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa and, if you choose, you can spend the entire time in air-conditioned comfort and still have access to all of the



Angelo Spelios

10 restaurants, shops and meeting rooms.

You may never have to go out once you go in! The only reason to leave would be to take advantage of the tours that are available and to make use of the golf courses and swimming pools or to walk to the spa.

We will have most of our VHPA activities inside or later in the day to make sure we take advantage of the cooler evening temperatures. The individual tours are, for most part, scheduled for early morning to allow you to participate in the mini-reunions and information seminars that will be available during the day.

More than 20 vendors

For those who have enjoyed spending time and money in the vending area in the past, this year we will have more than 20 vendors for you to browse.

Come and bring your families. The resort is family friendly. There are pools, both for adults and for children,

eight tennis courts and 36 holes of golf. At the 1988 reunion in Fort Worth, Texas, we had a separate room for our children to listen and dance to their rock music. Now those kids have their own kids. So bring your grandchildren to enjoy the resort, too.

The resort also has two championship golf courses, although these are not air-conditioned. The Golf Tournament will be played on the more challenging course during the morning, making it worthwhile to be outside on such a beautiful golf course.

This reunion, like all in the past, will be a unique experience, to see old friends and to make new ones. If you have not registered yet, I encourage you to do it now. Do not wait until the activity you want to enjoy is sold out.

First reunion was in Phoenix

Yes, it is hot in Phoenix in July, but the first VHPA reunion was in Phoenix in July, without the advantage of air conditioning. The EC and I look forward to seeing you in Phoenix this year and hope you will encourage other members of your former units or classmates to join us.

This is my last column to you as president of the VHPA. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you. This past year I have worked with a group of men that have demonstrated a true dedication to our organization.

Although Mike Sheuerman's term as past president will be over after this reunion, he will continue to serve as chairman of the Membership Committee with just as much enthusiasm as he has shown in the past six years serving on the Executive Council. I feel very confident he will increase our membership.

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Poker anyone?

The VHPA is considering organizing a friendly Texas Hold'em poker get-together at the Phoenix Reunion if there is interest.

A room, day(s) and times are not set yet and the VHPA will not be an official sponsor of the event.

However, if the interest is there and a simple set of rules is established, the VHPA may organize a formal tournament at next year's reunion in San Antonio and thereafter.

We envision a signup at the registration desk, with a small donation requested for prizes.

Only chips will be used in games. Check the reunion website where we may post a survey to gauge interest.

Please send an email to John "Jack" Salm [REDACTED] to indicate your interest.

A friendly poker tournament would be a great way to meet other VHPA members.

If you're interested, let us know or it won't happen.

— **Jack Salm**

VHPA statistics

- Between March 26 and May 7, the VHPA added 29 new members.
- During this same period, members donated \$560 toward the VHPA Scholarship Fund.

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

THE VHPA AVIATOR (ISSN 1930-5737) (USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly — February, April, June, August, October and December. Annual dues are \$36 or Life membership for \$540. Yearly subscription for nonmembers is \$36. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698. Periodicals Publications postage paid at Citrus Heights, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE VHPA AVIATOR, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698.

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

From the President

Continued from Page 2

Mike Whitten will take over as president. Even though he has served on the EC for four years, he has been turning out outstanding annual golf tournaments for a much longer time. I am sure he will bring forward some great ideas for our organization.

Jack Salm, our senior member at large, has been offering his advice, mixed with humor, at every opportunity, during our conference calls and our email exchanges. He also has published some great articles in *The VHPA Aviator*.

Roush contributes much to VHPA

What more can I say about Gary Roush, our midterm member at large? He has contributed thousands of hours to make the VHPA into an organization it is today. Just look at our *Membership Directory* that has taken years to develop. Gary also serves as chair of the Records/Database Committee.

Woody McFarlin, our junior member at large, has been offering some very thoughtful advice during the past year. He will be running the elections this year.

Our legal advisor, Wally Magathan, has always been there for the VHPA. He has and will continue to give us comprehensive advice on all legal matters.

Rich Buzen, our secretary/treasurer has been wearing many hats. He has done a great job keeping track of the minutes during the Annual Business Meeting, as well as during our conference calls. He coordinates with our investment advisor, Bob Potvin, in keeping our financials in a very healthy state. Rich also serves as our vendor coordinator, which he has been doing for many years.

Young, Bilitzke do great job with reunion

Dana Young, chairman of the Reunion Committee, and Joe Bilitzke have done an outstanding job of putting together another great reunion. We are thankful both are retired, to allow them to put so much time into the reunions.

Linda Irvine, The Reunion Brat, also has helped the Reunion Committee by shouldering some of their responsibilities. You will see her and her staff loading the buses that will be going to all of the events.

Our investment advisor, Bob Potvin, has done an outstanding job of investing our funds into cash positive investments.

Many thanks to Charles Holley, our webmaster, for maintaining our website and posting all the updates. This also includes the registration site that has made registration for the reunion easy for us to use.

To Marcia Fritz, Colleen and Laura of Fritzco, many

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Letters

After 40 years, wife connects with pilots

Anne Long lost her beloved husband, Johnny Long, on July 19, 1966, near the border between Duc Co and Chu Pong, in a mid-air collision.

Johnny Long flew out of Camp Holloway with the Alligators and Crocodiles of the 119th Assault Helicopter Company. Johnny's son, Greg, was only 10 months old when his father died.

Always wondering what the men were like whom her husband had talked about, Anne began to search via the Internet in 2005. Her search found several of the men her husband had flown with so long ago. It was amazing.

She asked many questions, most painful and emotional. The men talked and Anne received her answers. A connection at last had been made, after 40 years. This connection needed to be made, because you see, Anne Long never remarried after her Johnny's death on July 19, 1966.

In 2006, Anne and her son, Greg, were invited to attend the VHPA Reunion in Washington, D.C., as guests of the men of the 119th AHC. They all knew her husband, Johnny, 40 years ago. They all loved Johnny.

Ultimately, Anne Long accepted the invitation to join them. It was also to be a mini-reunion of Crocs and Alligators who would gather in the nation's capital. Greg could not attend. In Washington, Anne Long met, for the first time, the men who were mentioned in her husband's letters. One was Charlie Mathews. Charlie was the first at the



Chuck Qualline, Anne Long

crash site that fateful day. Charlie had landed, dismounted with his crew chief and gunner, and walked the jungle and crash site looking for survivors. There were none. Charlie had even ordered his pilot to take off and orbit so he would not be at risk in case the VC came to the crash site.

Anne met Chuck Qualline and his wife, Jan, with their two daughters who attended the reunion. Everyone accepted and treated Anne Long as if she were family; the way we all do with comrades and family. Chuck told Anne how he had checked Johnny out as an aircraft commander and how he had even taught Johnny to shoot dice in the Holloway O-Club. There was also Bob James and Bill Staubach, who had both been in Johnny's platoon and loved him. All of Johnny's comrades loved him.

It was a wonderful time, a bittersweet time for Anne Long and the Crocs and Alligators of the 119th AHC in Washington, D.C. They all shed tears of love and loss at The Wall during the memorial service. They told stories and laughed and cried far into the night. They even marched together, Anne, Chuck, Charlie, Bob, Bill and others. They marched side by side in the national parade. It was a wonderful time; one they will all never forget. And, of course, no one will ever be the same.

Anne Long was very impressed with Johnny Long's friends and comrades. She made a fine, significant, donation to the VHPA Memorial Scholarship Fund in Johnny Long's name. This is what it is all about, the VHPA. Meeting and remembering. Finding those we served with and those who didn't come home.

Anne Long is grateful to have been a part. We, the VHPA, are glad; you took the time to find us, Anne Long. You are welcome to return again and be a part of us, the VHPA. Johnny would be glad, too!

Chuck Qualline
119th Assault Helicopter Company
1965-66

Son seeking friends, photos of his father

I'm looking for anyone who may have served with my father, CW2 Stanley Richard Bozek, in the Army or who may have flown with him while working for Petroleum

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From the President

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thanks for running our Headquarters in the daily operations of VHPA.

Mike Law has devoted countless hours to the VHPA. He developed the *Directory* into the product we have today. Gary Roush is now maintaining the *Directory*. Mike upgrades our Headquarters' software for the VHPA

and develops the annual calendar.

The *VHPA Aviator* is Jack Swickard's baby. There is so much time that Jack puts in to turn out such a fine product. This form of communication is what keeps us together. Please do not hesitate to send in your articles to Jack for publication.

Finally, I would like to thank the other countless volunteers who make the VHPA such a fine organization.

Once again, I thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you.

— Angelo Spelios, President

Letters

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Helicopters Inc.

Or anyone who may have any pictures of him in his flight class of 63-5w.

My father died on Feb. 19, 1973, when I was six years old and I only have vague memories and few pictures. Any help would be appreciated.

I'm also looking for patches that a warrant officer CW2 would have worn during Vietnam, as I'm trying to put a shadowbox together as a surprise for my mother.

My older brother David was taking care of this, but he passed away on Nov. 16, 2006.

Robert M. Bozek

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stanley Richard Bozek died in the crash of a Petroleum Helicopters Bell Jet Ranger caused by a mechanical failure while flying from an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Bozek served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1964-65.

Membership chairman helps old friends meet

I love my position as membership chairman. I really do.

Last Tuesday I went to see a client who had excess furniture to sell. His name is Ron Heuer. His brother is Marty Heuer, a member of VHPA.

Ron wanted to go to flight school, but being colorblind kept that from happening. He enlisted, went through all the required EM courses, applied for OCS, was accepted, attended Transportation Corps OCS at Fort Eustis in 1966-67 and served as a TC officer in Vietnam in 1967-68.

One of his OCS classmates and running buddies was a rather distinguished fellow named Grabowski. Ron couldn't remember his first name. Ron told me a story about something that happened during his tour in Vietnam.

One day he ran into this old friend in Tuy Hoa. It seems Grabowski, after completing TC OCS, had attended Flight School followed by AMOC before being sent to Vietnam. Grabowski gave Ron a ride in a Huey one evening. It was Ron's first time up.

Grabowski said something to the effect that he, as maintenance officer for his unit, had to fly the bird around the pattern to check it out. Would Ron like to ride along? Ron was thrilled, that is until Grabowski chopped power and preformed an autorotation. After that it was a little scarier.

Ron said he had wondered about this Grabowski fellow for several years. They had been good friends before and during Vietnam, and Ron had wondered whatever happened to him.

Pilot enjoys reunions, but Phoenix 'spendy'

I have been a VHPAer since 1985, when my wife joined me up. We had received a letter asking if I had flown in Vietnam.

Since then I have enjoyed 21 reunions starting with the first D.C. reunion. Thank you, Skipper, for making that one really great. Then onto the Queen Mary; what a great time that one was.

All the reunions have had something that made them stand out as something to remember. I won't go into each and every one, but hit my highlights.

Kansas City and the parade that was a tearjerker. Atlanta and the go-cart races. Bus 19 where are you? Fort Worth the barbecue and bus ride (race) back to the hotel. Second Phoenix HOT. Philadelphia and all the historic places. Thank you, Jim and Lynn. That is just to name a few.

Now we are looking forward to Phoenix again. Which will be the most "spendy" one yet. I don't know when we became millionaires, but somewhere I got left out . . .

I will attend this year's reunion, but the future looks bleak for anymore if the prices keep going up.

Thank you Dick and Donna, Russ and Nancy, Mike and Margaret, Jim and Lynn and everyone else who makes these so enjoyable.

George and Barbara Shields
Renegade 30

Your membership chairman sprang in to action. I called Laura at HQ.

"Do we have any Grabowskis in the database?"

"Yes, four."

"Any attend Officer Flight School, an even-numbered class?"

"Yes, two."

"Any serve in Vietnam 1968-69?"

"Yes, one."

"What's his name?"

"Edward P. Grabowski, Class 67-14."

"OK, where does he live, what's his phone number, etc, etc, etc?"

Laura gave me the information I requested and I placed the call. Ed wasn't home, so I left my name, reason for the call and Ron's contact information on his answering machine. I asked that he call Ron whether or not he was the lost friend. Five minutes later the phone rings, it's Ed, he's the right guy, he's wondered about Ron and I was just so much extra baggage. I told Ron goodbye and left.

I love my position as membership chairman. I really do.

Mike Sheuerman
VHPA membership chairman
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Taps

Keith Crisman

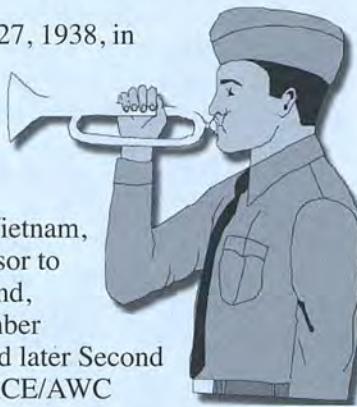
Keith Crisman died Feb. 23 in Daleville, Ala., from complications related to a fall earlier in the year. He was 68.

Crisman was born Sept. 27, 1938, in Pennsylvania. He was a career soldier, serving first as an enlisted man before going to Infantry OCS in 1967.

He served two tours in Vietnam, the first, 1968-69, as an advisor to ARVN Infantry and the second, from December 1970-December 1971, as executive officer and later Second Platoon leader in the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers."

His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal for Valor, the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, the Purple Heart Medal, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

He retired from the Army as a major.



Crisman was a good leader, excellent combat pilot, accomplished card player, fun-loving friend and a great storyteller. He attended his first VHPA reunion in Las Vegas and was in Washington, D.C., last year.

He was fortunate to have two loving wives, Cinda, who passed away in 2004, and Anne, who survives him. Several children, Kevin Crisman, William Crisman, Lori Strickland, Matthew Cook, Renee Hogue, James Cook and Megan Best, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren also survive him.

Crisman loved to tell the story of his first tour in Vietnam when he was wounded while leading his troops in an attack. He was shot in the buttocks. He wasn't shy about showing you the scar if you wanted to see it.

Good guy. The Panthers will miss him.

— Mike Sheuerman

Lucien R. Garneau

Retired Lt. Col. Lucien R. "Joe" Garneau, 75, of Cumberland, Maine, died April 26.

He entered the Army under the ROTC program as a second lieutenant in 1955.

In 1956, Garneau graduated from flight school and spent the next 18 months in Korea.

His assignments included two tours in Vietnam, the first as a company executive officer and the second as a

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Letters

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POW/MIA command seeks Vietnam photos

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) is searching for three Special Forces soldiers who are still unaccounted for after the battle of "new" Lang Vei in February 1968.

JPAC's mission is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing service members from our nation's past wars. We are looking for possible air or ground photos that any of your members may have taken of the "new" Lang Le Special Forces base camp situated along Highway 9.

We are trying to identify terrain and structural features (e.g., bunkers, perimeter wire, etc.) present around the time of the battle. Our hope is that the information will aid in the recovery and future identification of these missing Americans.

Maj. Brian DeSantis
Public Affairs

Chief, Community Relations
Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

Letter about VA benefits should not have been run

I take exception to the inclusion in *The VHPA Aviator*, March/April 2007, the article "Veterans overlook benefits due them" submitted by member Vincent Anderson.

There are veteran organizations too numerous to list here that have as their "Mission" getting connected into the Veterans Administration system, but the VHPA is not one of them. If the VA wishes to advertise in our magazine, then I'm sure all would welcome the input.

The mission of the VHPA is: *To enhance and accredit the cohesiveness, esprit de corps, and traditions of valor of rotary wing aircrews that flew in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era.*

In past newsletters, there have been discussions about Post Traumatic Stress and other health issues, but it was agreed that our newsletter was not the proper forum for such issues.

Yes, I am a grumpy old man, but for me the VHPA has been a source of pride, entertainment, memories, but mostly friendship for the past 23 years and I like it that way.

And, oh yah, been meeting on July 4th all those years with the heat and humidity; kinda reminds one of Vietnam.

Andrew Belmont

EDITOR'S NOTE: Letters for publication in *The VHPA Aviator* should be sent by email to:
editor@vhpa.org

Taps

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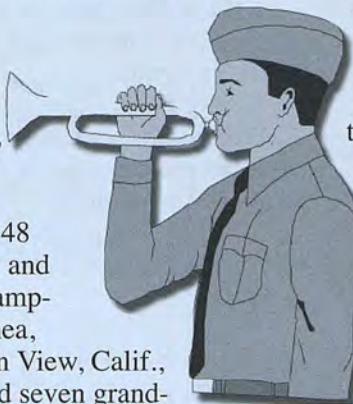
company commander. He retired after 20 years of service in 1975.

Garneau's second career began after his retirement from the military. He worked in retail for Porteous, Mitchell and Braun, where he eventually rose to vice president, director of stores.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Virginia "Ginny" Garneau; and four children, Lisa Garneau of Hampden, Maine, Greg Garneau of Kihei, Hawaii, Jeff Garneau of Mountain View, Calif., and Lori Hyland of Readfield; and seven grandchildren.

Thomas Joel Glenn

Retired Maj. Thomas Joel Glenn died April 6 in his



Fort White, Fla., home after a brief illness. He was 67.

He was born in Tallahassee, grew up in Fort White and attended the University of Florida on an ROTC scholarship. In 1962, he earned a degree in chemical engineering, as well as being a distinguished military graduate.

After initial training at the Basic Artillery School in Fort Sill, Okla., he completed airborne training and Ranger School.

In 1964, with the growing need for pilots in Vietnam, Glenn was selected for Army Flight School and earned the wings of an Army aviator. He served his first tour of duty in Vietnam flying the UH-1 "Huey" where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Bronze Star Medal.

In 1966, Glenn returned to the artillery where he completed a tour in Frankfurt, Germany. Three years later, he returned to Vietnam as commanding officer of an Army attack helicopter Squadron.

In 1976, he transferred to the Army Reserve and returned to the family farm at Fort White. Glenn worked for the Florida Department of Transportation for 16 years as an engineer. He retired in 2005 as the head

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Are you retiring or changing jobs?

If so, you may be facing some important financial questions. That's why now is a good time to turn to a Financial Advisor for some answers.

Get answers about:

- Retirement income sources
- Retirement plan distribution options
- Rollover IRAs
- IRA distribution options
- Social Security
- Financial planning and investing

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Eye of the Tiger

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**Attend Reunion 2007
in Phoenix**

Taps

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of the Environmental Engineering Department.

He was an avid photographer and published a book of historical pictures of High Springs, Fla., as well as a book of photos detailing his experiences in Vietnam.

Glenn is survived by his wife of 44 years, Judy, and two sons, Thomas J. Glenn Jr. and Robert J. Glenn, and six grandchildren.

Gordy Hine

I am sad to report the passing of Gordy Hine, who died in his sleep on March 31.

Gordy was in Flight Class 67-20 and was in D Troop 1/1st CAV in Vietnam.

I met Gordy when he came to work at Air Logistics, where he was working at the time of his death. He had been with them for more than 30 years and was one of the "legends" of Air Log.

Gordo was one of the great "Good Time Charlies" and his quick wit and infectious laugh will be truly missed.

— Kenny Bunn

John Sattler Kennedy

John Sattler Kennedy, 79, died April 7 of cancer at his home Addison, Maine.

He was born March 3, 1928, in Germantown, Pa., and was raised in Llanerch, Pa. He graduated from Friends Academy, N.Y., and Pennsylvania State University.

His military service included two years in the Navy and 20 years of service in the Army, retiring in 1970 as a master army aviator with the rank of lieutenant colonel.



He was a veteran of Korea and two tours in Vietnam. Among his decorations are the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters and the Army Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters.

His military service also included two tours in Germany, where he traveled extensively throughout Europe with his family.

After his military retirement, he earned a doctorate degree at Auburn University, Auburn, Ala., and was a tenured professor in the Aerospace Engineering School of Auburn University for 10 years. After settling in Addison in 1984, he was involved with many town committees and programs and was a charter member of the Addison VFW Post 11553.

He is survived by his wife, Joan W. Kennedy; sons, David W. Kennedy and John S. Kennedy Jr. of Addison; daughter, Helen I. Charczuk of Cherryfield; and six grandchildren.

Odious D. Knight

Odious D. Knight flew with the 57th Assault Helicopter Company in 1972. I met him in 1988 in the Pentagon when I was working in the office of the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC).

Every time I asked him why his mother named him "Odious," he always had some BS answer. We knew him as Odee. He was 6-foot-4, at the most 200 pounds, looked good in a suit, and was a smoker.

He died of a heart attack on March 30, in Tampa, Fla., where he worked for Northrop Grumman.

When I first met Odee, he was working for Delta at Fort Bragg as an aviation officer. He was highly respected by all Army special operators.

Odee was a loyal friend. In 2001, when I was considering telling one company to pound sand, Odee had a

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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?



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CD version of Directory popular

With a new year well under way, we are beginning to plan for the 2007 *Membership Directory*.

As you are probably aware, we offered the option of the 2006 *Membership Directory* on CD-ROM for the first time last year. Reception of the directory CD has been very favorable, so we will be continuing that option this year with the plan for the CD version of the *Directory* to be primary in 2008.

There are several advantages to the *Directory* CD. It is much smaller and lighter. Members tell us they now throw it in their briefcase or pocket when traveling so they have it on the road.

There is more information such as phone numbers and email addresses on the CD and the ability to search by first name and call sign that are not available in the paper *Directory*. It also has a high-tech search feature called Soundex, which helps you find names even if you do not know the exact spelling.

Members can flip through pages

Even the concern about not being able to flip through the pages like you can with a paper directory is available on the CD because there is an Adobe Acrobat file of the actual paper directory on the CD so you can electronically flip through the pages.

Since there is extra space on the CD, we have included the full text of the history section and past newsletters and magazines back to February 1993. We plan to continue

these additions with other information as we develop it. This extra information alone is worth switching to the CD. Although this extra information in PDF format can be read on Macintosh computers, the search program for the *Directory* will not work on Macs. We are planning an online option for Mac users in the near future.

If you elected to receive the *Directory* on CD last year, that option is still in effect for 2007. If you received a paper *Directory* last year and want the 2007 *Directory* on CD, please contact HQ at HQ@vhpa.org or (800) 505-VHPA (8472) and tell them of your selection. You also can use the form at www.vhpa.org/info/vhpafom.html

If you want to receive the paper and CD directories, please notify HQ. There is a \$20 fee to receive both.

If you do not want your phone number or email address to appear on the *Directory* CD, please notify HQ.

In 2008, the *Directory* CD will be primary and the paper directory secondary. The reasons for this change are to reduce costs and prevent a dues increase. Like everyone else, the VHPA is affected by inflation so we are looking at ways to reduce costs and avoid a dues increase.

One cost savings we are doing this year is to drop the geographical index from the 2007 paper *Directory*. That information will be available on the CD *Directory* and on our website

Gary Roush
Directory Editor
webmaster@vhpa.org

Taps

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Washington area job offer for me from Northrop Grumman. Doesn't get any better than that.

— Mike Sloniker

Harvey Curtis McCoy

Harvey Curtis McCoy, 76, of Claremore, Okla., died March 29.

After graduation from high school, McCoy began a degree in petroleum engineering at Oklahoma State University, where he became involved in the ROTC program. This led him to Army flight school and an interruption in his academic career.

He later completed his degree, changing the emphasis to electrical engineering and then began his first tour of duty and a 20-year career in Army Aviation.

McCoy served two tours in Vietnam with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company in 1965-66 and with aircraft



maintenance in 1968-69. He was a member of Class 55-F.

He retired from the Army with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

McCoy is survived by his wife, Louise, of their home in Claremore; sons, Curtis L. McCoy of the Washington, D.C., area, Terry Lee McCoy of the Washington, D.C., area, and Randy Joe McCoy of Columbus, Ohio.

Michael E. Staggs

Michael E. Staggs, 65, of Carson City, Nev., died of cancer on Oct. 15, 2006.

He was a member of flight school class 66-2, and served in Vietnam with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company in 1966, the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company in 1966-67, and the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-71.

Staggs was a member of the Merrymen singing group.

James Don Warren Sr.

James Don Warren Sr., 59, died Nov. 11, 2006, in Kingston, Tenn., from cancer.

Warren served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam with the 161st Assault Helicopter Company.

He was a member of flight school Classes 67-13 and 67-17.

Legacy

How does your age compare to other members?

Since we are a last-man organization, age is becoming an increasingly important topic.

Here is some membership age information so you can get some idea where you stand. I think the most pertinent information is for regular and life members who are current with their dues. You are the ones who are reading this article.

We started collecting birth date information about five years ago at the prompting of Don Joyce and that is now starting to pay off.

As of the end of March, we have 6,500 dues-current members with good birthdates out of 7,407 (2,070 life and 5,337 regular members). The oldest was born on June 30, 1918, and the youngest was born June 28, 1954. The average age is 62.954 years.

More pilots born in 1947 than other years

Age distribution is interesting. Although the average age person was born in 1944, the age distribution "bell curve" shows the peak in 1947. In other words, more Vietnam helicopter pilots were born in 1947 than any other year. The reason for this skew toward younger ages is the 19-year restriction on Army pilots, with essentially no restriction on older pilots.

The median age for current members is 61.57 years. In other words, the 3,250th member is 61.57 years old, with half of members younger and the other half being older.

Another way to look at this is all pilots who have ever been a member, are still alive and whom we have birth dates for. There are a total of 10,896 people in this category out of 12,586 who are or have been members. Their average age is 62.95 years; so adding them does not change the average age.

Now adding in everyone we know about with good birthdates, whether they have been a member, the total is 33,502 out of 41,456 total potential. Their average age is 64.058, so it is about a year older on average.

Another statistic that might be of value to you is the average age of life members: 61.929 years. This is for the 1,800 members we have date of birth for out of 2,070 total life members. They are about a year younger on average than total members.

Looking at life expectancy tables (see

www.ssa.gov/OACT/STATS/table4c6.html), you can expect to live up to another 17.5 years if you are 63 years old and 19 years if you are 61. This means that in 17-19 years, we will be close to being out of business.

So how do we transition from being bulletproof 20-year-olds to geriatrics? In my view, we start getting serious about our legacy. We learned a long time ago and are still alive today because we learned not to give up or quit. So what is the action plan?

Three things are already establishing our legacy:

- First is the scholarship fund that will provide a few of our heirs with educational funding.
- The second is our history collection of data and war stories that we have published on our websites, magazines, CDs, DVDs, directories and calendars.
- The third and, by far the most important, are our official archives at the Vietnam Archives at Texas Tech University. If you go to the Archive's web site at www.vietnam.ttu.edu/ and search for just about anything related to the Vietnam War, you will see documents provided by the VHPA.

We have a substantial and important presence there for hundreds of thousands of people to see. As time goes on, we will continue to contribute more and more to Texas Tech until we are all gone.

Representatives from Texas Tech are planning to attend our reunion in Phoenix and probably will have additional suggestions on how they can help us establish our legacy.

Write down war stories for collection

What can you do? First, write down your war stories and your contribution to history and send them to me so they can be added to our collection and be made available to others via our website and *The VHPA Aviator*.

Second, establish the VHPA and/or Texas Tech as the benefactor for your Vietnam War collection. Anything that you think your family will not want to keep should go to Texas Tech. Finally, donate money to the VHPA earmarked for Texas Tech so the university can continue to maintain our legacy.

Gary Roush
webmaster@vhpa.org
Database committee

Register online for Reunion 2007

www.vhpareunion.org

Reunion 2007

Another memorable VHPA event begins in July

DANA YOUNG

NATIONAL REUNION COMMITTEE

The 2007 Reunion in Phoenix is almost here and some of the activities may be sold out by the time you read this.

The Reunion Committee has made every effort to make this year's reunion another in a series of memorable events you will be glad you attended and just wish it could have lasted a little longer.

The facilities are a cut above what we have experienced in the past.

The JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa, our headquarters hotel, is a self-contained resort with all the amenities: pools, spa, restaurants, shops, golf courses and spacious meeting areas.

The rooms are first class and are situated so that, if you desire, you can enjoy all of the events at the hotel, except for the fireworks and pool party, without leaving the air conditioning.

At the resort you can see a private fireworks display on the Fourth of July as part of the Welcome Reception and on Friday, July 6, there is golf in the morning at one of the on-site golf courses and that night a special concert by Lee Greenwood.

Each of these events is ticketed and will be for VHPA members and their guests only.

The final night's banquet is a tradition you will not want to miss. The facilities will be equal to any we have experienced before and the ceremony continues to be one of the annual events that remind us why we participate each year.

Members will want to attend the Annual Business

Meeting while their spouse/guest enjoys a fashion show with brunch.

Each day there will be mini-reunions, seminars, the War Story Contest and Historical Presentations as well as a large vendor area for you to check out. As in past years, the vendor area is a prime location for finding friends you have not seen for years. Everybody shops sooner or later.



Dave Rittman photo

This is one of major swimming pool areas outside JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa, complete with a fountain. This is the general area where the pool party will be held on the night of July 5.

away and provide you opportunities to see the natural desert landscape, mountain ranges and vegetation.

If you would rather see the area from a raft, there is a River Rafting Tour that takes you to the Sonora Desert where you start a 4 to 7-mile journey down the river.

The Pima Air & Space Museum just outside Tucson provides a unique look at aviation history. The hangar houses more than 150 fixed-wing and 30 helicopters, and we have all heard of the "bone yard." This is a full day and includes lunch at the museum.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to increase the capacity for the tour to Boeing, but you can check at the registration desk to see if anyone has turned in his tickets.

Once you have registered, make sure that you check out the transportation link on the VHPA Registration Website.

There is a link that takes you to directions, if you plan to drive, and one that lets you print out a discount coupon for the airport Super Shuttle. The shuttle price is \$18 each way per person with the coupon.

The Reunion Committee has done its best to make this an event you will enjoy and remember.

The only thing missing, if you have not registered, is you.



Lee Greenwood

Reunion 2007

Dr. Frances Latimore to lead Women's Seminar

RICH BUZEN
VENDOR COORDINATOR

I am pleased to announce that Northern California's own Dr. Frances Latimore will lead the Women's Seminar from 1-3 p.m. on Saturday, July 7, during the VHPA Reunion in Phoenix.

"Francie," as she likes to be called, brings to the seminar a lifetime of experience working with families, PTSD, the military and individuals and groups. Please encourage your wives/significant others to sign up for her seminar.

Francie will be bringing several books for distribution at the seminar at no cost to the participants.

Francie began working for the Concord Vet Center Readjustment Counseling Service, an arm of the Veteran's Administration, on Sept. 11, 2001. Since then, she has provided assessment and counseling for combat veterans of all wars and for veterans who have experienced sexual trauma and/or harassment while in the service.

As the team's clinical co-coordinator she has supervised interns of various disciplines, provided group sup-

port for significant others of veterans, facilitated groups which addressed Post Traumatic Stress, couple communication, couple conflict and grief work. She has been involved in working with Blue Star and Gold Star families of veterans and is passionate about facilitating peace within in veteran's families.

Prior to moving to Northern California in 1999, Francie maintained a private practice in psychology and counseling in Southern California for 24 years.

She has many years of experience serving individuals and families dealing with marital issues, parenting, domestic violence, including time working with military families through the El Toro Marine Corps Family Advocacy Center.

She has extensive experience in assessing and treating persons impacted by trauma and abuse, including victims and perpetrators.

Francie obtained an M.S. in Education from Cal State University Fullerton in 1972 and a M.A. in Community Psychology from Chapman University in 1976. She completed a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in 1981.

University of North Texas Press

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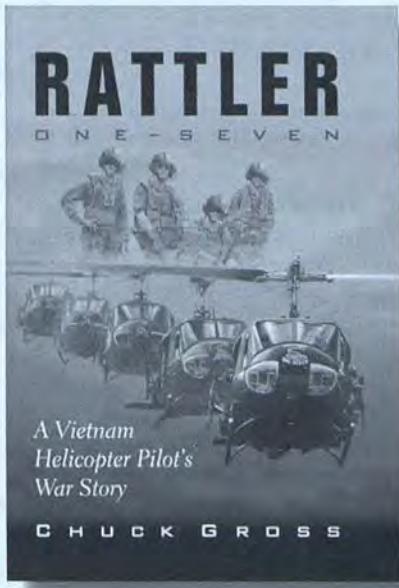
Chuck Gross

Rattler One-Seven puts you in the helicopter seat, to see the war in Vietnam through the eyes of an inexperienced pilot as he transforms himself into a seasoned combat veteran. At the age of twenty, Chuck Gross spent his 1970-71 tour with the 71st Assault Helicopter Company flying UH-1 Huey helicopters. He inserted special operations teams into Laos and participated in Lam Son 719, a misbegotten attempt to assault and cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, during which his helicopter was shot down and he was stranded in the field.

Soon after the war he wrote down his adventures, while his memory was still fresh with the events. *Rattler One-Seven* (his call sign) is written as Gross experienced it, using these notes along with letters written home to accurately preserve the mindset he had while in Vietnam.

"Gross's memoir is worth reading . . . because of his description of the chaos and incompetence that accompanied Vietnamization. . . . His stories should find an audience among serious collectors of books about Vietnam." — **Military History of the West**

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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
6-8 p.m. Pre-concert by The Screamin' Javelinas
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

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NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Register online at www.vhporeunion.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? Yes

Address:

Address change? Yes

City:

State:

Zip:

Email address:

Telephone: ()

Wife/guest name:

Hometown:

21 or older? Yes/Wheelchair? Yes

Guest name:

Hometown:

21 or older? Yes/Wheelchair? 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

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

VHPA dues (if not dues current)

1 year

@ \$36

VHPA dues (if not dues current)

3 years

@ \$99

Life membership

@ \$540

GRAND TOTAL

T-SHIRTS

QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$18	
	M@\$18	
	L@\$18	
	XL@\$18	
	XXL@\$19	
	XXXL@\$20	

SIDE BAR TOTAL:

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:

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Signature:

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.

Visit to Rucker

Young warrant officers graduate from flight school

DAVID ADAMS

You know my job really keeps me tied up — but Linda and I were able to make a trip to Tallahassee, Fla. There's a printer over there I really wanted to check out.

I insisted Linda come with me because I thought it would be a good chance for us to visit Fort Rucker. We hadn't been there together since our last PCS school assignment there in 1981 — more than 25 years ago.

When we arrived in the area we went immediately to the Aviation Museum. The first thing we noticed was that the parking lot was packed and most of the cars were already full of luggage, potted plants and all the other stuff we had to load in our car every time we had to move.

The next thing I noticed was a lot of NCOs lounging outside the front door; it looked like all of them were waiting for someone to come out.

We went in the front door and inquired about the gathering in the main room. The volunteer told us that they were hosting a graduation ceremony for a class of young warrant officers.

Now all cars in the parking lot and the activity in the front of the building really made sense.

And then there they were, about 20 young warrants, all with their new wings and really looking good. There was proud parents everywhere, a couple of satisfied-looking TAC officers and quite a few beautiful, young wives looking pretty proud of their husband's accomplishments.

But what really blew me away was the fact the class that was graduating that day was Class 07-05. You see, I graduated in Class 70-05.

"Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all

the world" to borrow a quote from Casablanca, "what was the chances . . . "

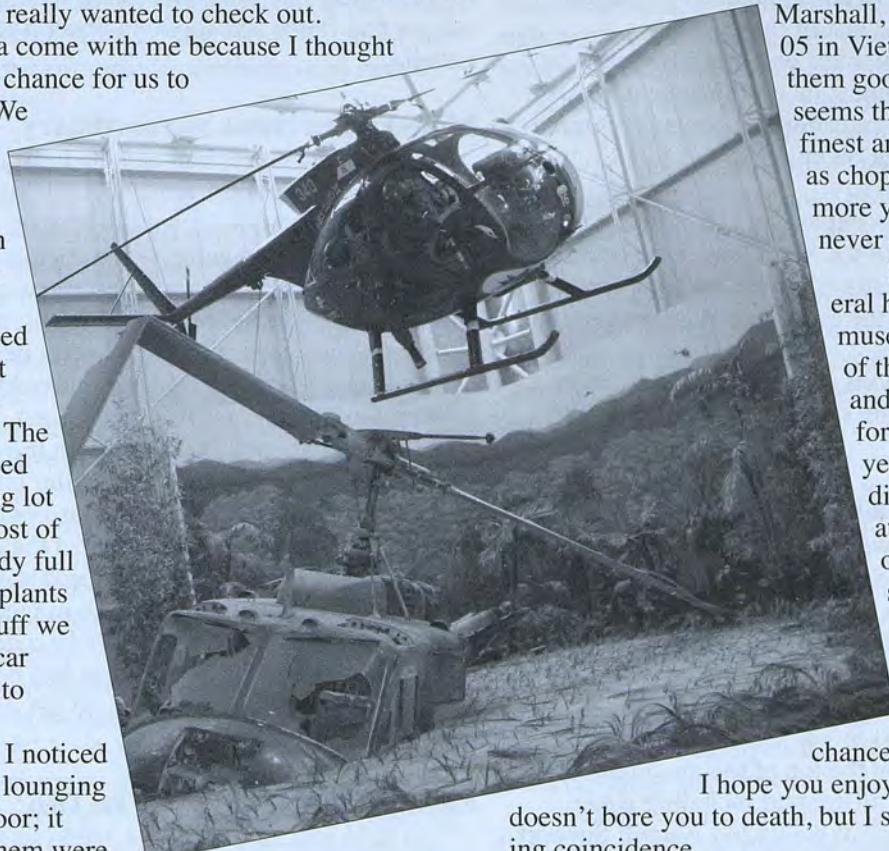
I shook hands with as many of them as I could; I asked them to read "Price of Exit" by Tom Marshall, the story of my Class 70-05 in Vietnam, and wished all of them good luck in their careers. It seems that once again America's finest are going to be personified as chopper pilots for quite a few more years to come. Some things never change, do they?

Linda and I then took several hours to wander around the museum, the main orientation of the museum is still Vietnam and I assume it will remain so for at least the next few years. There's some great dioramas to see and I've attached photos of a couple of them and, of course, several of the aircraft that were in the museum when I was a student are still there, and you should also go by if you get a chance.

I hope you enjoy the photos and the story doesn't bore you to death, but I still think it was an amazing coincidence.

• Above: An Aviation Museum exhibit shows a Loach scout hovering over a downed Huey.

• Below: The author standing beside a display designating flight school Class 07-05.



Rescue

Chinook makes 0/0 medevac from top of mountain

GARY ROUSH

The most prominent terrain feature in III Corps was Nui Ba Den — the Black Virgin Mountain — that protruded 3,235 feet above the rest of the area.

It was visible for many miles on clear days and was great as a navigation reference. Its prominence was important for allied communications as a relay communications station and observation point for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army.

The summit was first occupied by U.S. forces in 1964 and was a frequent target of the Viet Cong, who occupied most of the rest of the mountain, which contained caves and supposedly contained the enemy headquarters for all of South Vietnam, COSVN.

This key communications center was used by more than 10 U.S. units, including radio intercepts for intelligence purposes.

Top overrun in May 1968

In May 1968, the top was completely overrun by the VC/NVA and all of the U.S. communications equipment was destroyed, so the 25th Infantry Division deployed A Company, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry to the top of the mountain on the morning of August 17 for its defense. This timing turned out to be very lucky.

The approximately 180 Signal Corps, engineer and infantry troops stationed on the top of the mountain relied entirely on helicopters for all support including water.

Most of this support fell to the 242nd Assault Support Helicopter Company "Muleskinners" out of Cu Chi. As a result, we flew to the mountain nearly every day delivering supplies and replacements from Tay Ninh.

In August 1968, I was a newly appointed aircraft commander (AC) with the Muleskinners and loved flying to the mountain so I volunteered for those missions.

We were restricted to flying no more than 120 hours in a 30-day period and I was always at the max so I did not fly to the mountain every day.

Flying in mountains a challenge

Mountain flying was challenging and exciting. With the combination of high density altitude, hovering out of ground effect in very tight quarters, coupled with high and gusty winds, it was definitely challenging.

One day I was hovering over a spot on the mountain while indicating 50 knots. It was a blast. Unfortunately, we got shot at occasionally, too.

Unbeknownst to the Muleskinners, the Battle for Tay Ninh began on August 17, 1968. This battle lasted until Sept. 27, 1968, and would prove to be a very busy time

for us.

On Aug. 18, 1968, my crew and I took off at first light for Tay Ninh to accomplish our missions on Nui Ba Den. Unfortunately, the only other crew member I know who was on that flight was flight engineer Spec. 5 John D. Labelle.

Muleskinner crews extraordinary

The Muleskinners had outstanding crews. The guys in the back were extraordinary and were highly respected by the pilots. Without them, we could never have done our job. You will see the value of those guys in a moment.

The monsoon season was in full swing, so weather was a constant challenge during August and September. We tried to complete all of our sorties before mid-afternoon because that is when the rain would start.

On Aug. 18, the visibility was good, but there was a cloud layer at about 2,000 feet. With the good visibility, we could see Nui Ba Den shortly after takeoff from Cu Chi and, with the low ceiling, it was obvious missions to the mountain would have to wait for the clouds to clear, since the top was completely covered with clouds.

When we got within FM radio range, we called the mountain to tell them there would be a delay in their daily resupply. We then discovered they had been overrun during the night and were desperate to get 23 wounded medevaced to Tay Ninh.

Enemy attacks top of Nui Ba Den

At 2:34 a.m., the VC/NVA made an attempt to disrupt the communications into and out of Tay Ninh by attacking the top of Nui Ba Den with an estimated company-size unit. They attacked with small arms, automatic weapons and rockets against the bunker line defended only 14 hours earlier by A/3/22 INF 25 DIV.

This was a coordinated attack matching the attack time on several locations between Tay Ninh and Nui Ba Den, including Fire Support Base BUELL II. The VC were successful in breaching the bunker line in the helipad area and managed to blow up one generator. (We helped replace that generator later, but that's another story.)

After more than three hours of close-quarter fighting, the Americans finally drove the VC off the summit by about 6:15 a.m. The VC left behind 15 dead and several weapons, including 100 satchel charges and 20 RPG rounds.

The Americans suffered eight killed in action and 23 wounded. The attackers failed in their mission to cut off American communications, but now the Americans had

Continued on Page 17

Rescue

Chinook makes 0/0 medevac from top of mountain

Continued from Page 16

another problem — how to get their wounded evacuated.

According to our radio call to the unit we were supporting, Dustoff Hueys had attempted to land at the mountain top helipad without success. They were desperate to get some help and the company commander was practically begging us to try.

Pilot amazed he did not crash

So into the clouds we go, feeling our way to the mountaintop. Man, was that a bad idea or what? In hindsight, I am amazed we did not crash into the mountain.

The man on the radio would say, "We can hear you, but cannot see you, keep on coming." We did this twice.

All I can say is we were VERY lucky not to hit the mountain. Just as we were about to give up like the Hueys had done, someone in the crew came up with the idea of flying down to the base of the clouds and hovering up the side of the mountain.

Our Chinook was empty, so we had lots of power to hover at this altitude. So that is what we did. Because of my many sorties to the mountain, I knew the terrain very well and could picture the helipad in my mind, along with its surrounding obstacles. Now all I had to do was get to the helipad. No one in flight school taught me how to hover up the side of a mountain in the clouds.

But wait! The VC/NVA had just broken contact about an hour earlier, so where were they now? My reasoning was that no self-respecting VC would ever dream of a big lumbering, very noisy helicopter hovering right over his head right after a major attack. So my logic was it would be such a surprise, the VC would not do anything about it.

If our troops could not see, could Charlie?

I also rationalized that if our troops could not see us, neither could Charlie. Just in case, though, I instructed my left door gunner to shoot anything that moved. I also instructed the left gunner to help by calling out obstacles.

I was at the controls, flying from the left seat. The pilot read off the instrument readings for vertical speed and altitude to give me some idea about where we were in relationship to the top and everybody looked for obstacles.

And, oh, by the way, I had been shot at recently from this side of the mountain and took six rounds.

Now to find the helipad and not the bank of antennas. After hovering for what seemed like an hour, we finally came to the perimeter barbed wire, bunkers and, finally, the landing pad appeared. Needless to say, I was glad to have all four wheels safely on the ground. After a few seconds, I started looking around.

The scene was like it had come out of a horror movie. In the swirling mist of the clouds, I could just make out the outline of bodies that were lying everywhere. The rotorwash from the Chinook was slowly clearing the area right around the landing pad, revealing the nightmare our troops must have experienced minutes before.

Directly under my feet, through the chin bubble, was a VC with half of his head missing. Next to him was another grotesque figure of a Viet Cong and then the American dead and wounded neatly lying in a row on the edge of the resupply pad, giving us just enough room to land.

The nearby-uninjured troops who were on guard never took their eyes from the now-breached perimeter. This was not characteristic, since we were normally the center of attention, with everyone watching us perform our hovering feats.

Chinook carries out all 23 wounded

Fortunately we could take all 23 of the wounded at once, because I certainly did not want to go through this approach again. But what about the departure? My memory recalled the antennas straight ahead, still covered by the clouds, and on both sides the bunkers with high RPG fences also in the clouds, so a vertical or 180-degree turn departure were the only two reasonable alternatives, other than hovering back down the side like we had come up and I certainly did not want to do that again.

I had one instructor during primary flight school at Fort Wolters, Texas, teach me how to do backward take-offs, and my instrument instructor, Capt. Adam Runk, at Fort Rucker taught me 0/0 takeoffs under the hood. Doing one was crazy, but putting both together was suicide.

A vertical takeoff was certainly possible, but how high did the clouds go and how would we avoid the mountains on the way down? The only logical procedure was a hovering 180-degree turn and then a 0/0 standard takeoff on the back course of a normal approach until we were sure to be clear of the mountain, then a standard instrument descent out of the clouds just like a VOR approach.

How do you hover IFR in tight LZ?

Sounds simple, but how do you hover under Instrument Flight Rules in a tight LZ?

In order to get high enough to get all four wheels off the ground, the cockpit would be in the clouds and I would not be able to see the ground. No one thought to teach me how to hover IFR! But wait, I have made this turn hundreds of times in good weather, so with a little

Continued on Page 18

Rescue

Chinook makes 0/0 medevac from top of mountain

Continued from Page 17

care and concentration on the instruments and the help of the other four pairs of eyes to stay over the landing pad, it should work. There was no way I was going to stay on top of that mountain until the weather cleared.

The plan worked. Throughout the 180-degree hovering turn, at least one of the four other crewmembers had sight of the ground and gave me, in turn, the necessary directions to stay over the landing pad.

Pilots used to getting hovering directions

Since the Chinook is so large and most loads in Vietnam were carried externally, out of sight of the pilots (the cargo hook was about 30 feet behind the cockpit), we were used to getting reliable hovering directions from the crew.

I was not able to see the ground shortly after lifting the front wheels off the ground until we broke out of the clouds well away from the mountain.

This marked my first and last 0/0 takeoff and landing in actual weather. There were other low-visibility landings due to monsoon rains, but no other below acceptable visibility takeoffs.

After dropping off the wounded at the Tay Ninh Field Hospital, we went back for the KIAs, but decided it was not worth the risk. Another Chinook picked them up after the weather cleared.

Because of limited space on top of the mountain, it was decided not to burn the Viet Cong bodies there, as was common practice.

Instead, they were put in a cargo net to be hauled as an external load to a suitable burning site by a Chinook flown by my hooch mate, Mike Ryan.

Shortly after takeoff with the sling load of enemy bodies, the sling became disengaged from the cargo hook, dumping the contents over the adjoining small mountain. Since the Viet Cong owned that mountain, they were given an unexpected chance to recover their dead.

The interesting thing about this experience is I did not report it because I thought I might get into trouble for unnecessarily risking the lives of my crew.

In hindsight, we probably should have gotten medals for what we did, but the satisfaction of helping our wounded soldiers was award enough.

I have often wondered what happened to those 23 wounded. Perhaps this article will help me find out.

Event triggers Vietnam 'flashback'

WARREN "WILLY PUDD" WILLIS

I just returned from an early morning "scene" call and, not being able to go to sleep, thought I might pass on a "flashback" I had while I was waiting for my medical crew to load the patient.

It all began just prior to touchdown in the LZ. We train our crews to look for and report anything during our approach and landing phase that might be of a safety concern.

Just as we were about to touch down, the paramedic casually mentioned we were landing in an area that appeared to be sloping off to our right. I, too, had noticed the slope and had compensated for it on landing. No big deal.

After my crew had left the aircraft, however, my mind began to drift back to an event in RVN, which had been brought to mind by my paramedic's comment. Whenever I have had thoughts of this "event" over the years, it has always brought a bit of a chuckle with it. I think you may chuckle, too.

As I recall, it happened in August, or thereabout, of 1969. We were working in an area I would estimate as about 20 kilometers northwest of Lai Khe.

We were working with the ARVN. I can't remember what unit it was. Never paid much attention to the ARVN units we supported, anyway.

As my mind went back, I could vividly recall the LZ as we were on final. The area was large enough, but was interspersed with small trees and termite mounds. This required each of the nine ships to pick their landing sites on short final.

I believe we were in a staggered left formation and I was chalk two. The day to this point had been uneventful and all of our insertions had been without suppression. All in all, a quiet day.

The landing area I had selected had a large termite mound on final that we had to clear, which required about the last 10-15 feet of our approach to be a vertical or near-vertical descent.

As we were just about to touch down, my gunner said in the same casual way my paramedic had earlier tonight: "Sir, you're landing on a slope."

I remember being a little surprised because I hadn't noticed a slope during the approach and I really couldn't make one out as he spoke. However, since the pace of the

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Gunner repeated advice on landing

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day was a casual one and since, maybe, he had noticed something I had not, I said, "OK," and instead of putting the full weight of the aircraft on the ground, I picked up and moved a few feet to the right and began to come down again.

Now comes a more forceful reply from my gunner.
"Sir, you're landing on a slope!"

Now I began to feel the first hint of confusion creeping into my, by that time in my tour, battle-hardened mind. Again I said, "OK," and once again I picked the aircraft up, moved to the right a few feet, and began to come down.

By this time I'm starting to wonder what the big deal is about this slope anyway!

Gunner makes most forceful comment

Now came the most forceful comment from my gunner. "Gxxdamn it, Sir! You're landing on a slope!"

Well, now I'm really pissed and totally confused about this GD slope. I picked the aircraft up and, with emphasis, moved as far as I could to the left in my little LZ and put the aircraft down. As our passengers left the aircraft, I turned to my right and, looking across, the rear of the aircraft, I looked my young gunner in the eyes and said: "What's going on?"

I probably didn't say it that nicely, but I did notice my gunner also looked somewhat confused and uncomfortable.

As I learned later, he couldn't figure out why I wasn't getting the picture. Although this event seemed like it had taken forever, it really only took a couple of minutes. The saving grace was others were having trouble finding places to land, too.

Flight departed before explanation

However, I didn't have time to explore what had just happened at that time. Lead was pulling pitch, so off we went.

I let my peter pilot take the controls on the way back to Lai Khe and told my gunner we would talk on the ground. On the way to Lai Khe, I went over what had happened, trying to make some sense of it. I believe it was at that time several things that I hadn't paid much attention to during the heat of the moment came to mind.

First, I realized that each time I had attempted to land, the crescendo of the ARVN's chatter would intensify. Secondly, as I had turned to talk to my gunner, I had noticed out of the corner of my eye the ARVN who had come off my ship had appeared to go over and pick up one of their own and carry him off.

I had to admit to myself the whole thing was confusing.

Finally, on the ground in POL at Lai Khe the whole story came to light. In talking to my gunner, the following had just unfolded in the LZ.

Apparently, as we were making our vertical descent into the area, an overly zealous ARVN had jumped out at about 10 feet. Lying stunned on the ground, he looked up to see our Huey about to land on him.

At this time, my gunner reported I'm landing on a "slope." Trying to get out of the way, the hapless ARVN tried to crawl to safety only to have me pick up and follow him and try to kill him again.

The next "slope" alarm came from my gunner. Desperately, my target again tried to crawl to safety. And again the not-to-be-denied Willy Pudd pursued his prey.

Finally, the most impassioned plea from my gunner put a halt to the silliness.

ARVN's condition unknown

I really don't know how badly the ARVN was hurt. I never did put the full weight of the aircraft on him, but I'm sure I nailed him pretty good a least once. Rumor had it that once he recovered from his "helicopter lashing" he defected to the other side and asked for duty in an anti-aircraft unit.

This, however, could not be confirmed.

I informed my gunner that in the future, at least when he was flying with me, to please not call the Vietnamese "slopes." I didn't use that term so it hadn't registered. To me a slope was a change in the terrain, ether upward or downward, however you looked at it.

One positive thing did come out of this, however. I proved that slick drivers could get "kills," too.

It's my opinion the Army would have employed this tactic on a regular basis had it not been so labor intensive. This is a true story. I can't recall who my other crewmembers were, so if you were with me that fateful day, please comment.

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Top aviator

Flying above the Great Marble Mountain Tsunami

DWANE SHIRLEY

The story you are about to read is true. The names have not been changed because there are no innocents.

A long time ago, in a country far, far away, an incident comes to mind that brings a smile to an old, worn-out aviator/policeman. I apologize for any inaccuracies in the following account, but over the years, as my waistline grew, my memory shrunk.

Before I get into the lucid details of the "tsunami incident," let me provide a little background to allow the reader to more clearly understand the incident and the surroundings of its occurrence. Cutting to the chase, let me say I entered the Army in the Warrant Officer Program and graduated from primary in WOC Flight Class 71-38 at Fort Wolters, Texas.

After completing further flight training at Fort Rucker, Ala., I was provided with an AH-1G transition at Fort Hunter Stewart, Ga. Upon completion of training at Fort Hunter Stewart, like most new WO1s, I felt that not only was I a good Army aviator, I probably was the only truly qualified Army aviator to complete the training. Someone

once said that ignorance is bliss.

I got my orders to go "across the pond" and couldn't wait to get over there and was truly afraid it would end before I got there. I just knew that all the war needed was my presence to assure a quick and decisive victory.

In April 1972, I was unceremoniously dumped on the tarmac at Ton Son Nhut Airbase and found myself consumed by a feeling of "what the hell is going on?" After some basic processing I was placed in a transition company for several days before finally being assigned as a new pilot to F Troop, 8th Air Cav (Blueghost), which at that time was stationed at Marble Mountain Army Airfield in Da Nang.

Being the best Army aviator currently in Vietnam, I thought I might be given preferential transportation up to my unit in Da Nang. Shortly thereafter these thoughts were dashed when, over the next two days, I was shepherded through a series of "hops" on C-130s and C-123s until finally arriving at Da Nang Airbase.

I tried to rationalize the Army's mistakes by saying they probably didn't know at that time I was the world's

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"One of the best books on the Vietnam War."

—General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

AMERICAN WARRIOR

BRIG. GEN. JOHN C. "DOC" BAHNSEN, JR. USA (Ret)

FOREWORD BY
GEN. H. NORMAN
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AMERICAN WARRIOR

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Top aviator

Flying above the Great Marble Mountain Tsunami

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best aviator. Besides, the Army band probably had another engagement and couldn't play for my arrival.

My pride was further bruised when I had to hitch a ride with several wooden pallets in the back of a deuce and a half from Da Nang Airbase over to Marble Mountain Airfield. I did manage to get settled in and quickly learned that for the time being I would be assigned as a "slick pilot" until I learned the AO and got my feet on the ground.

If you aren't familiar with Marble Mountain Army Airfield, let me say it was basically a bunch of Quonset huts sitting on the beach and surrounded by barbed wire. Yes there was an airbase there, but for this story the important part is it was nothing but sand that was perilously close to the South China Sea.

Aviator's pride loses a little luster

By this time my pride was losing a little of its luster and I was beginning to realize I had to quickly learn a lot more than they taught in flight school, if I was going to stay alive that is!

Now to the tsunami incident. It was about 3 in the morning and I was asleep in my cot inside a Quonset hut, which I had to myself at that time. I got the impression the other pilots felt sleeping in the same hut with a new WO was bad luck. Probably a good idea.

Anyway, I heard a loud banging on the door and managed to get up, wearing nothing but my olive green boxers, and stumble to the door. About the only thing that came to mind was maybe the airbase was being overrun, in which case I had no idea what to do. After all, I was an aviator and other people were supposed to protect me.

When I opened the door, a very excited Spec. 4 told me the duty officer had received word an earthquake had just occurred far out in the South China Sea and this had caused a tidal wave that was headed directly toward Marble Mountain Airbase.

The order had been given for all aircraft to be launched to save them from destruction. Yea, right! I'm sure he used the phrase "tidal wave" because if he had said "tsunami," I would have thought he wanted some Chinese carryout. Still wearing my flip-flops, I threw on a flight suit and went to the flight line, where I was assigned one of the parked AH-1Gs to get into the air.

At the time I failed to mention I hadn't flown a Cobra since Fort Rucker, which was several months past and had never flown one at night without a front seat co-pilot to act as counterweight.

I managed to get settled in the cockpit and get the rotors turning. Then, into the night I went, bravely at the

controls. I managed to fly out over the South China Sea, where I saw numerous aircraft milling around and congratulated myself on the fact I remembered to turn on the nav lights and rotating beacon.

Competency begins to return

Maybe I was working my way back to being at least a moderately competent Army aviator. I was feeling a little lost up there by myself, so I keyed the mike and tried to contact Blueghost 26 (WO1 Neal Thompson). I made contact with Neal and tried to explain to him exactly where I was among the gaggle of circling aircraft.

Neal, who had quite a bit more stick time than I did and probably was a little annoyed with the "Newbie," finally told me to flash my landing light so he could identify my aircraft.

Here's where it gets good. I took my left hand off the collective and began pressing what I thought was the switch for the landing light. I immediately asked Neal if he saw it.

Before he could respond, I was shocked into reality by the loud blaring of the "low RPM" audio.

At that time I looked up and noticed that my rotor blades did not appear to be traveling at their normal operating speed. My God, they looked like they were moving in slow motion. I actually thought I could read the lettering on the blades as they began to coast to a stop.

Fortunately some of my flight school training began to kick in and I realized that instead of flashing the landing light, I had pressed the RPM decrease button to the point sustainable flight was seriously in question.

I was about to provide the Army with its first AH-1G submarine without having to go through any research or bidding process.

Pilot remembers light switch

Thankfully I did know where the cockpit light switch was and was able to turn on the cockpit lights and quickly increase the rotor RPM, just as the waves of the South China Sea were lapping at my skids.

I remember being determined to keep from crashing because I didn't want the investigators to determine the cause of the crash was because the RPM had been decreased as a result of pilot error. A pilot who, by the way, was wearing light blue rubber flip-flops.

We later were advised over the radio the tidal wave had never formed.

Needless to say, it was a humbling experience and I never again thought of myself as the Army's best aviator. Occasionally, over the following year I did sometimes consider myself the second best.

VHPA briefs

Online dues payment operational

We previously have announced various membership functions that will be coming online at www.vhpamembership.org

We are pleased to announce online dues payment is operational as of March 1 and that 16 members already have taken advantage of the new capability (including three opting for automatic dues renewal and one for sending a gift membership).

To use the service go to www.vhpamembership.org and click on "Dues Renewal/Gift Membership." Alternatively, there is a link on <http://www.vhpa.org> that will take you there.

— VHPA Technology Committee

Please contact HQ early

For those who have registered for or are going to register for the Phoenix Reunion with the Refund Guarantee option, the Executive Council requests that if you cannot attend the reunion, contact VHPA Headquarters before the reunion, if at all possible.

This will give the Reunion Committee an opportunity to adjust the food and beverage numbers. The cancellation notice prior to the reunion also may allow someone else to attend a sold-out event.

— Angelo Spelios, President

Online membership renewal

One of the agenda items the Executive Council worked toward during my year as VHPA president was the ability for our members to renew their memberships on line without having to call HQ.

I am pleased to announce that Mike Law, Gary Roush and Charles Holley have informed me they are ready to

go "hot" with this benefit. Go online to www.vhpamembership.org and renew your dues when the time comes. Please note this is a secure site and your credit information will be safe and protected.

Please take advantage of the other services available on this site. It offers not only Membership Renewal but also gift memberships, new member applications, change of member information, notice of death of pilots who flew helicopters in Vietnam and Southeast Asia 1961-75.

I believe this site will help VHPA retain members and reduce the workload of our HQ staff, allowing them more time to assist in recruiting and retention.

— Mike Sheuerman, membership chairman

Calendars available at reunion

I am pleased to announce that Turner Publishing has the material for the 2008 VHPA Calendar. This will be the 15th calendar produced by the VHPA.

You will be able to see production copies and purchase them at the VHPA Reunion in July.

Copies of the outstanding 2007 issue are still available for \$14.95 by phone (800) 788-3350 or on the web at www.turnerpublishing.com

The official goal of the VHPA Calendar is to refresh the memories of all those who flew in or worked on helicopters in Southeast Asia, and to record, preserve and display the events and activities that were important to those who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

Turner pays the VHPA a royalty fee based on sales, but the company bears all the production, advertising, and distribution costs. This reduces the VHPA's financial risks greatly.

As part of the VHPA Calendar project, the VHPA Executive Council asked the editor to implement an online view of the VHPA Digital Photo Collection. This may be old news to many of you, but you can go to www.vhpaphoto.org to see some of the VHPA Digital Photo Collection.

— Mike Law, VHPA Calendar editor
law@vhpa.org

WANT TO BE ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE?

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

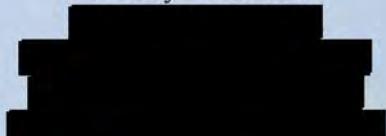
The positions are Vice President and Junior Member at Large.

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



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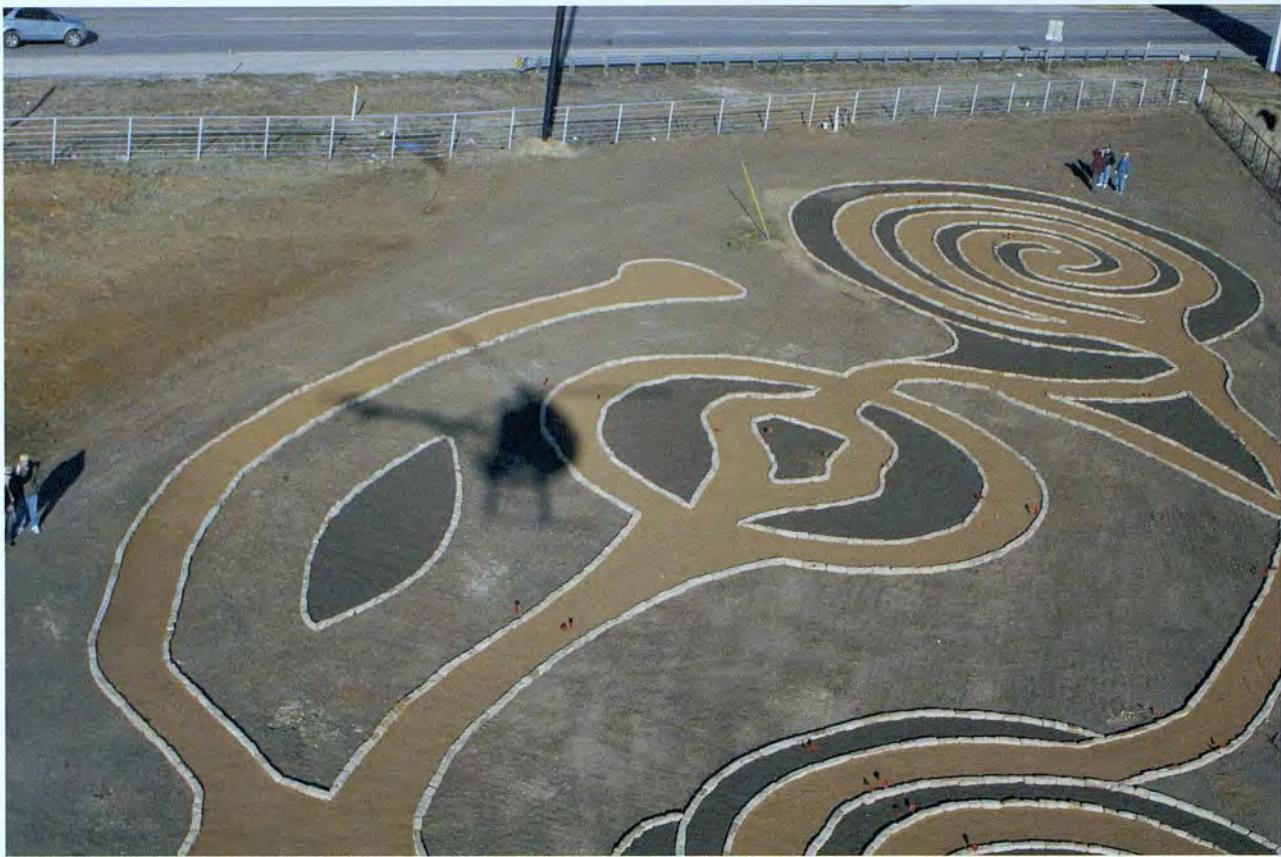
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Dates in units		Unit	Location	Call sign
	From:	To:		
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2nd				
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How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association? Referred by? Was membership a gift? From whom?



National Vietnam War Museum builds the Meditation Garden.

The first of several gardens to be constructed on the museum site. The picture above shows the completion of the labyrinth trail system designed for the Meditation Garden by the Parker County Master Gardeners Association. The trail system is the beginning of the garden itself which will be completed by June 2. Anyone in the Mineral Wells area on June 2, 2007 is invited to the ribbon cutting at 11:30 am. If you want to stay for lunch the Fort Wolters Chapter, VHPA is having their quarterly meeting at the site and will be having a BBQ lunch for \$10.00 per person (BYOB).

The garden project is funded by donations both corporate and private. Donors who contribute \$250.00 will have a stone engraved with their name and the message "In Honor of Those Who served" placed in the garden along the main trail. The stones are sandblasted flagstone and will be permanent markers in the garden. People who have bought bricks or buy bricks (\$100.00) will have their brick placed in the garden. Bricks may be purchased through the museum online gift shop (www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org and click the gift shop button). Other donor opportunities available include: Parking lot - \$25,000; Water System - \$15,000; Adopt a trail section - \$2,500; Bench, covered - \$1500; Large tree (i.e. Burr Oak) - \$1,000; Bench - \$750; Small tree (i.e. Desert Willow) - \$500. Donors will have their name engraved on an appropriate plaque at the item donated. Contact the museum at info@nationalvnwarmuseum.org for additional information.