



# The VHPPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

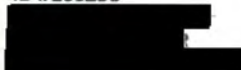
July/August 2004 Vol. 22, No. 4



Jack Swickard photo

Col. Chris G. Gallavan, a VHPPA member, shares a laugh with Bob Monette after presenting him with a Broken Wing Award during the July 2 Annual Business Meeting at the VHPPA reunion in Dallas. Also receiving a Broken Wing Award during the reunion was John Schillereff. See other photo on Page 12.

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## From the President

I am sitting here pondering just how to begin my first column and it is sorely reminiscent of my first attempt at stationary hovering flight.

Level the blades, adjust the pedals, center the cyclic, adjust the throttle, slowly pull up on the collective, and instant DISASTER!

How can something that appears so simple be so difficult? My predecessors made it seem so easy. If it weren't for "backspace" and "delete" keys, I would be wading in a sea of crumpled paper!

### Dallas reunion 21st

Dallas marked the 21st Annual VHPA Reunion, and what a reunion it was! Again, it all appears very painless, but the success was due to the countless hours of hard work and dedication by all involved.

Joe Bilitzke and Dave Rittman, our national reunion chairman and assistant chairman, work endless hours throughout the year to make our reunions the premier event among veteran's organizations.

Linda Irvine and her "Brats" handled the mechanics of the day-to-day event coordination, riot control and fire-fighting with apparent ease.

Our Headquarters staff juggled the many and varied duties of pre-registration, on-site registration, ticket sales, banquet seating, member renewals, new members and new life members without missing a beat.

### Hard work makes VHPA successful

The list goes on, but I need to move on, so let me extend my THANKS to everyone who works so hard to make the VHPA the success it has become.

I won't go into an event-by-event account in this column as these articles are being submitted by others and will appear elsewhere in this newsletter. Simply said, if you missed Dallas, you missed a great reunion.

All is not lost, however. We meet again next year in San Francisco, where the days are pleasant and the nights



Dan Ferguson

are chilly . . . yes, even in July. Make your plans now as it has taken 22 years to get the reunion located in San Francisco and another 22 years would make most of us too old to make the trip.

The Annual Business Meeting was the smoothest (and shortest) in recent memory. Dana Young, at the controls, guided us through the various agenda items, including financial reports, committee reports and elections and did it all in about two hours! Some of the guys didn't even have time to wake up.

Mike Sheuerman was elected vice president and John "Jack" Salm was elected junior member at large. I wonder if anyone has told them yet. (I said it was a fast meeting.) Mike, welcome back. Jack, welcome aboard.

Dana, thanks for a very difficult act to follow!

### Final Banquet well done

The Final Banquet was yet another huge success, again guided by Dana Young. It was business at hand, one of the best banquet meals I can remember, and on with the party. Dana, again, thanks for a very difficult act to follow! There are a couple of sidebar stories here, but more on that later.

Notice how I have refrained from getting into specific "events?" Notice how I did not say, Vince Vance . . . WOW . . . What a SHOW! Notice how I did not say that. Thank you, Mike Sheuerman for that find. I would have voted for you if I had seen the show before the election.

### Reunions promote camaraderie

VHPA reunions are a unique experience because the underlying purpose of the VHPA is to reunite old classmates and "stick buddies," promote camaraderie, and meet new friends, all based on our common experience. A few examples:

- Standing outside the entrance to the FNG function I witnessed the reuniting of two pilots who had not seen each other since Vietnam. It happens over and over again at every reunion.

- The Marine Color Guard who posted the colors at the banquet was invited to each bring a guest. Not one of them brought a guest. Why? It was just another veteran's gig. WRONG! They were so impressed by the reception they received and the camaraderie they witnessed, they not only stayed, but they stayed and closed the banquet!

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## Classified ads

**SEEKING REVOLVER:** I am looking for a Smith & Wesson .38 special that most Army helicopter pilots carried in Vietnam. If anyone knows of a source please contact Mike at ( ) Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

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

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

## Newsletter deadlines

The following are deadlines for submitting items to *The VHPA Newsletter*:

- September/October 2004 — Sept. 1, 2004
- November/December 2004 — Nov. 1, 2004
- January/February 2005 — Jan. 1, 2005
- March/April 2005 — March 1, 2005
- May/June 2005 — May 1, 2005
- July/August 2005 — July 10, 2005

## From the President

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• Hector Castro Sr. brought his son to a VHPA reunion for the first time. Every time I saw Hector Jr., he was smiling from ear to ear and he told me he had stepped back in history. Hector Jr. served 14 years in the Marines so he is not new to military functions. Hector Jr. will be back.

• There was a young Army private I saw on several occasions who was more than "taken" by the tradition he witnessed.

• I was admiring the new "Mobile Officers Club" when Hayden "Pappy" Jones walked in with an OV-10 pilot he had pulled out of the bush 32 years to the day. They had just been reunited.

I talked to them for several hours. It was an amazing story and I hope it will appear in a coming newsletter.

### Reunions more than parties

VHPA reunions ARE a party, of that there is no doubt. But there is so much more. The histories, experiences, personalities, common bonds, brotherhood, friendships old and new make us who we are.

The VHPA is the finest veteran's organization of its kind for one reason: Its membership is among America's finest.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all those who came up and offered not only their congratulations, but also their support for the coming year.

The reception I received at the "MOC" after the banquet was nothing short of overwhelming.

Serving this organization is an honor, and one I do not take lightly. Thanks again for your support.

One last comment, the final draft of the column sent to our newsletter editor, Jack Swickard, was 14 pages long. The best parts are probably lying around on the editing room floor in Roswell, NM.

Roswell?

Jack?

What did you fly before you flew helicopters?

— Dan Ferguson, President

## Letters

### Article by Dustoff pilot draws responses

The following letters were sent to William C. "Bill" Perkins in response to his article, entitled "Dustoff on fire! Medevac chopper: 'Going down and burning!'"

Perkins' article appeared in the September/October 2003 issue of *The VHPA Newsletter*.

Dear Bill:

My name is Rod Dykhous. I am one of the original 66 who started the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, but probably more of interest to you is that I have several pictures of you being shot down south of Uplift. I was there.

At the time I was a new peter pilot, one of the "Lucky Stars" having only been in country for five weeks. I was flying with my section leader, a little way to the west of you. We were on the same frequency as you and we were watching you as you made your approach.

We actually saw you getting hit on your left side and erupt into a flying fireball. I was one of the pilots hollering over UHF along with the grunts on FM for you to get it on the ground and real soon.

I very clearly remember you guys flying a ways toward the south with the entire rear of the aircraft engulfed in flames. What a sight.

We followed the other aircraft down who picked you up to ensure that everyone got out, and on final I grabbed a camera and started taking pictures.

I have several pictures taken on final, and while we were on the ground with the aircraft burning like crazy. You can still see the Red Cross on the nose compartment.

I also have several pictures taken a week or two later after the incident.

I can confirm that the rotor blade killed your crewmember, Mr. Lamborn.

When you hit, it was hard enough to apparently knock the transmission from its mounts because the rotor tip path plane was wobbling all over the place. He was struck in the back of the head as he moved toward that small dike to the south of you.

Mr. Lamborn's body is visible in one of my pictures, if you know what you are looking at.

Rod Dykhous

#### In response to Bill Perkins 'Dustoff down!'

I got goose bumps when I read his letter. I remember that day so well. Each day at LZ English and all over Viet-

nam, crews were anxious to fly in support of our troops. We would escort all troop insertions in, whether hot or cold. All extractions would get the same treatment.

On that same sunny and humid day around LZ English (the Crap Table), the crew of the 498th Medical Company Dustoff called for a pair of guns. The Star Blazers was on the ready pads. We supported the entire northern part of II Corps mentioned in Bill's letter, along with the Gunrunners of the 229th Aviation Company.

The primitive scramble bell sounded, a spent fire extinguisher and an iron pipe hanging outside of Operations. I

don't remember the other crew members, but the aircraft commanders went to Operations to get the mission and the peter pilots (copilots) ran to the aircraft, put on our chicken plates, strapped in, started the engine and, at 6,600 RPM, instruments checked ok, radios on and checked with operations, guns checked, crew chief and door gunner strapped in and guns checked with a call out "all clear."

That rapid start sure saved time, but you had to be sure that all systems read go. The commanders ran to the waiting aircraft strapped themselves in and made a quick cross check and, above the whining noise from the engine and the popping of the main rotor blades, I heard, "hot dustoff extraction."

Now, when and only when allowed to do so, the copilot would bounce that heavy baby out for a kangaroo takeoff with heart beating in synchronization with the engine at 6,600 RPMs.

No need to be mention it again. We saw what Bill wrote about. We were saddened and returned to the crap table to refuel and rearm. The aircraft commanders would debrief the crew which usually started out by looking you in the eyes and saying: "Man, you all did a good job" or by looking straight ahead and saying: "Son, don't ever do that again."

Bill, thanks to you, your crew and, after 33 years, my condolences still go to the family of Kenneth "Ken" Lamborn and everyone who served in Vietnam from whenever to whenever.

We are still "Big Red One" the Pigmy Power. May God bless all of us.



Franklin McFadden stands beside a Huey gunship in LZ English during his tour in South Vietnam in 1969-70.

Franklin McFadden

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# Letters

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## Author addresses ROTC banquet at alma mater

On April 29, I had the honor of addressing the ROTC Awards' Banquet at my alma mater, John Carroll University in Cleveland, OH.

I enclose a copy of the speech. I think parts of it would be appropriate for our Newsletter.

James T. Joyce  
Author: Pucker Factor 10

*I have the feeling tonight, as I look out at you, that I am looking into a mirror that has been frozen in time. The image I see is from 40 years ago. Because, 40 years ago I was you. I, too, was good-looking, smart, witty, and charming and an ROTC cadet.*

*Upon graduation from John Carroll, I was full of enthusiasm for life, armed with a Jesuit education and a commission in the United States Army. I felt at the time that I had learned pretty much everything there was to learn. I had the world by the tail on a downward pull. I had it made. I thought. And then . . . along came . . . Vietnam.*

*When we were juniors at Carroll our Military Science class was visited by an Army captain who'd come all the way from Fort Rucker, AL, to tell us about Army aviation. I must admit I was an unenthusiastic cadet and was unaware that the Army had aviation (I thought that's what they did in the Air Force), so I was mildly interested in what the captain had to say, and I remember it well. Here was his pitch:*

### Good news compensates for bad

*Because flight school was almost one year long, if we volunteered to be pilots, our active duty obligation to the Army would be extended from two years to three. That, he stated, was the bad news, but he said he had more than enough good news to compensate.*

*One: The day-to-day living conditions for pilots was always better than for those on ground duty because pilots were always billeted in rear areas. (That turned out to be false.)*

*Two: We could get a free private pilots license, compliments of the Army, during our senior year at John Carroll. (That was true.)*

*Three: Army aviation would provide an excellent entree into a career as a pilot with the airlines when we returned to civilian life. (Also true.)*

*Four: Pilots got paid more money. They got flight pay on top of the regular pay. (Another true statement.)*

*And Five: (He saved the best for last) "Pilots," the captain told us, "Are more attractive to women. There's something about those silver wings," he said. (That was also true.)*

*When he concluded his talk, he then asked the big question: "So, who wants to volunteer for flight school?"*

*Because I was still thinking about all those women I could attract, I impulsively raised my hand.*

### Hand in the air determined future

*Of all the life changing, course-changing decisions I have ever made, this was the most far-reaching. That hand in the air determined where I would live my life, who I would marry, and what my occupations would be — and they would be many. That hand in the air gave names to two of my four sons and it is the reason I now eat, and enjoy, grits. It is also, of course, the reason I am here this evening — 41 years later.*

*The year was 1963 and Vietnam was a miniscule blip on the radar, so there was no way I could have known, sitting in a classroom on this beautiful campus in northeastern Ohio, that by raising my hand I had just volunteered to go to war in . . . Southeastern Asia.*

*Had I not raised my hand, I would have spent two very pleasant years with the Army in Europe. Instead, I wound up in the cockpit of a Huey helicopter, flying combat missions, seeing things, hearing things, and doing things most people cannot imagine.*

*Experientially, I was more fortunate than almost all other helicopter pilots in the Vietnam War because I got to fly both the Huey slick and the Huey gunship. This was most uncommon. You either flew one or the other.*

*The slicks were used primarily to fly infantry troops into and out of battle. They were also used extensively for medevac missions into hot LZ's.*

*When we were on final approach to a battlefield, we slick pilots were very vulnerable and there was a sense of helplessness. Although we had two M-60 machine guns on board, they were mounted in the back and were fired by the door gunners. All we pilots could do was hope, pray, pucker up, and go on in.*

*After awhile in the slicks, I began to think of myself as a target, which is a lousy way to go through war.*

### Gunships allowed pilots to shoot back

*The gunships, on the other hand, were outfitted with machine guns, mini-guns, and either rockets or grenade-launchers. They were attack helicopters and the pilots fired these weapons.*

*My time flying slicks was with the 1st Cavalry Division based in the Central Highlands. About midway through my tour, I was transferred to the 9th Infantry Division, headquartered hundreds of miles away in the Mekong Delta. The division was new in country and needed pilots with combat experience.*

*When I reported in to the 9th, I decided to take more*

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control over my life and I told my new commander that I was a gunship pilot. (In fact, I'd never been in one.) But I got away with this fib, with the help of a real gunship pilot — a buddy from flight school who was in the unit. He gave me a one-hour tutorial, on the ground, telling me how to arm the weapons systems and gave me some tips on tactics, and off I flew — in command of a gunship fire team. Nobody was ever the wiser. My buddy in deception, by the way, retired last year with the rank of major general.

## Pilot goes from defense to offense

So I was no longer a target. I went from defense to offense. Now when someone shot at me, I was able to shoot right back. Believe me, this makes being in combat much better — emotionally speaking.

But no matter how one experiences war, it is an unfortunate way to begin adult life. The experience leaves an indelible mark on the participants, so it is preferable, of course, that no one experience war, but sometimes we must. There are certain evils in this world that can only be stopped and extricated with brute force.

But, even in that unfortunate environment called "war," positives can be found. Visiting foreign countries and experiencing different cultures is broadening. Witnessing acts of courage is heartening. Observing sacrifice is humbling. Sharing hardships is unifying, and surviving deadly situations is exhilarating. These are positives that all combatants' experienced, and we find solace in them. They lessen the overall impact (of the horrible) and our super egos in one regard, have been forever satisfied. Our patriotism was proven to ourselves.

You are familiar with the gospel of St. John, Chapter 15, Verse 13, which states: "Greater love hath no man than this. That he lay down his life for his friends."

## Writer broadens message

At the risk of being sacrilegious, I am going to broaden John's message just a little: "Greater love had no man than this: That he attempted to lay down his life for his friends. And if he got lucky, and didn't get killed, the goodness of his act was not diminished." Many veterans know this and are rewarded with a feeling of subdued pride.

When flying medevac missions in the Huey slicks, we were sometimes asked to land in extremely tight LZs, hovering straight down through jungle canopy, often at night and under fire. We did not have to do this, even a general could not order us to land if we determined it to be too dangerous for our own crews. But we usually did, ready to sacrifice all for the wounded on the ground. Some pilots carried two canteens. One with water and one with vodka. Tight LZs got bigger after a swig of vodka.

When attacking the enemy in a helicopter gunship, we pilots had optional attack modes. The most treacherous, of course, was to fly right into his teeth. Often this was necessary to save our friends on the ground from being overrun. This maneuver, in case you're interested, was made easier with two swigs of vodka.

## Self-preservation instinct departs

When you hear your fellow soldiers (screaming) begging for your help — something mystical happens. Your fiercest instinct, that of self-preservation, departs and is replaced by an overwhelming need to help. This is quite amazing when you stop to analyze it because those "friends" you are now willing to die for are, in fact, total strangers . . . but they are wearing the proper uniform.

So we have here somewhat of a paradox, an irony really. For it is in combat where we find the greatest number of opportunities to demonstrate that greatest kind of love . . . as described in the Gospel of St. John.

I'd now like to say a few words about how being in the military is good training for a career in business and indeed it is. Working within the chain of command — up, down and sideways — is certainly important in both worlds. So, too, is dressing appropriately and being courteous and respectful. "Yes sir, no sir; yes ma'am, no ma'am" are very important words to use in business dealings.

Disciplining your time, thinking on your feet, working with a team and not being timid, tentative, or a "second-guesser," are attributes that are important for success in business, as well as the military.

But what will ultimately determine whether a person is successful, no matter his or her chosen field, is that elusive personality trait called character. Being able to say, "I do not know the answer, but will find out and report back promptly" or the words, "I made a mistake" or simply, "I apologize" are indications of character. It is flabbergasting and annoying to me how many people in the business world cannot get those words past their lips. They feel they demean them when, in fact, they enhance them — proving they are people of substance.

The problem with character is that the Army can't give it to you, nor can the Jesuits. They can refine it, polishing the stone, so to speak. But it must be there to begin with. Although people are not born with character — it comes from our early years. It is absorbed. So, if you have it, and I hope you do, thank your mom and thank your dad and others who made you — when you were growing up.

Since Pucker Factor 10 was published, I have had numerous men come up to me and confide that one of their greatest regrets in life was that they maneuvered themselves into a posture whereby they did not serve their country during the Vietnam War. This regret (more appropriately called a guilt), has not abated in time, it has gotten stronger — as time runs out. Their country called to them. They didn't answer and they have been paying for that lapse ever since.

In the 40 years since I walked off this campus with gold

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*bars on my shoulders and a diploma under my arm, I have done many things. I practiced for years as a psychoanalyst. I have been in various businesses.*

*Today I am the president of two chemical manufacturing companies. Yet I never took one course in chemistry or one course in business. I learned about them as I went along. The Jesuits were very good at teaching us how to learn, and the Army taught us not to be afraid — to go forth.*

*So my life has been interesting. Were I to compile a resume, it would read like fiction. Along the way I have done some really stupid things, of which I am*

*ashamed, and some good things, of which I am proud.*

*One of the things I am most proud of is that I served my country, in uniform. And I do not say this merely for your benefit. It is something I have said all my adult life.*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** James Joyce graduated from John Carroll University and received an ROTC commission in 1964. He attended two Army flight schools, earning his wings in fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. He spent a tour of duty in Vietnam flying Huey helicopters.

He is a nationally certified psychoanalyst and a



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businessman. His company, Green Mountain International Inc., markets products throughout the United States and into 30 foreign countries. Joyce also is an author. His first book, *Pucker Factor 10: Memoir of a U.S. Army Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam* was published by McFarland and Co. in 2003.

## Old friends continue bond made in training

I am a life member of VHPA and have read every war story with great interest. Over 35 years ago I met another young man. While warrant officer candidates at Fort Wolters, we were fortunate enough or lucky enough to move on to one of the first warrant officer classes at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA.

We each did a tour in RVN together and thought it would be a great idea to volunteer to go to Germany after RVN.

I left the Army at the end of my Germany tour and my friend took a direct commission and transitioned to fly Skyranes. We have stayed in contact for the past 35 years.

He still flies for a living and now lives on the West Coast. I have not flown since the Army and live on the East Coast.

Recently, my wife and I went to visit our son who is in

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## Vietnam Army Helo Pilot

This highly detailed porcelain figure stands 6½ inches high. The pilot is wearing a soft cap, two-piece Nomex flight suit, chicken plate, survival vest, .38-caliber pistol with holster, while carrying an APH-5 helmet in one hand and a CAR-15 in the other.

Each figure is assembled and painted by me. The total cost (including shipping) is \$65.00. I personalize each figure by painting on the rank and combat patch. Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery. If you have any questions, please contact me at



Send only checks or money orders to:  
**Steve Pullen/Banshee 11/Centaur 11**

## Letters

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the Marines. We also were planning to visit my old Army buddy for lunch.

Well, it turned out to be for much more. Much to my surprise, he arranged a flight in a dual-controlled helicopter and took my son and me along for the ride.

After he started the aircraft, he said, "You got it." I lifted the aircraft up to a shaky but controlled hover, and he said, "Add power and nose it over."

It all started to come back and we were flying. We flew for about an hour and then started to head back and land. The "LZ" looked like a postage stamp; my hands were sweating profusely, but I did it.

My son now believes his old man really did fly helicopters. Outside of seeing my son, this experience was beyond my imagination. Even though we've all thought about flying, we wonder if we could still do it. It was a great thrill.

I never will forget this experience. For obvious reasons, I cannot mention my friend's name or where this momentous occasion took place, but I do know that our bond will continue for another 35 years. Thanks to Army aviation.

Michael A. Holt

## Families of KIA pilots share Dallas breakfast

On Friday morning, July 2, during the VHPA reunion, a small group of family members of helicopter veterans killed in action gathered to share our common bonds and recognize by name the loved ones who drew us to the

reunion and its brotherhood.

The breakfast was an "experiment." It was the idea of Sherry Leeper, sister of Wally Leeper, that we "Gold Star" families get together to share introductions and put a face with a name.

The "KIA Family Breakfast" was a success. Five sisters of KIAs, along with a few support people who were much appreciated, shared our experiences and promised that we will meet again.

As we went around the table and introduced ourselves, it became evident we shared similar paths.

Each of us had been very hesitant in our search for information about our brothers. We each thought our presence among the men our brothers served with would be unwelcome — that we would represent only painful memories and tragic losses. And we each found just the opposite — that the men our brothers loved, have come to love us, and that the "missing parts" we all share can bring us together in a way that no other relationship can match.

Those of us at the table that morning were:

- KIA families: Sherry Leeper, sister of Wallace Wilson Leeper, 48th Assault Helicopter Company Bluestars KIA 12-2-1967; Julie Kink, sister of David Kink, C Troop 1/9th Cav KIA 8-3-1969; Linda Barsom Minor, sister of George Barsom, D/229th Assault Helicopter Battalion KIA 4-19-1972; Linda Wilsher Clance, sister of Everett N. Wilsher, 116th Assault Helicopter Company KIA 2-21-1969; and Susan Clotfelter Blaker, sister of Mark Clotfelter, 361st Aviation KIA 6-16-1969.

Also attending the VHPA reunion but unable to attend the breakfast was Donny Kidd Jr., son of Donny R. Kidd, 173rd Airborne Brigade KIA 3-4-1968.

• Friends who also attended the breakfast were: Sharmann Kraft and Paula Terrana, whose husbands served in Vietnam; and Mike Phillips, 116th Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69, with his 11-year old son, PJ.

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## Letters

### Continued from Page 8

We owe a debt of gratitude to the accommodating staff of the Pearl Street Cafe, Adam's Mark Hotel; Ross Eliason who let his coffee and breakfast get cold while he juggled our cameras; and Rick Lester and the 48th Assault Helicopter Company Bluestars who very kindly paid for the breakfast.

Each of us were there that morning standing in, in a sense, for someone we loved. Among the band of brothers that we have found, we can see glimpses of who our loved one may have become, had he survived. As Susan Blaker so aptly said, "these veterans help us know, not only how our brothers died, but more importantly, how they lived."

Thanks to all VHPA members who made us feel so very welcome.

Julie Kink  
Sister of WO David Kink  
C Troop, 1/9th CAV  
KIA Aug. 3, 1969

Member of VHFCN Family Contacts Committee

## Whatever happened to my '67 fastback?

When I finished at North Georgia College in August of 1969, my parents, good people that they are, paid off my midnight blue 1967 Fastback Mustang as my graduation present.

There I was, a second lieutenant of Infantry, reporting in at Fort Benning seven days later with no car payment. Eight months later, with the Infantry Officers Basic Course, Jump School and Ranger School behind me, I called Branch to see what lay ahead.

Being a career soldier, I wanted to go to Vietnam. Branch thanked me for my interest, but told me since I was a reserve officer and only had about a year left in service, they planned to send me to Fort Hood for troop duty.

I said, "Hold on now, I'm a Voluntary Indefinite Officer, I want to go to Vietnam!"

The major asked when I had signed up for Voluntary Indefinite.

I told him when I applied for flight school. (Back then, we reserve officers, who wanted to make the service a career, were told to sign up for every school possible.)

He told me he could send me to flight school and then Vietnam. I told him I didn't want to go to flight school, I wanted to go to Vietnam now. I wanted to go today, I'd pay my own way, no more training, I WANT TO GO TODAY.

He hesitated about 15 seconds and then replied: "Son, they pay you \$25 per diem a day while you are in flight school, ARE YOU NUTS?"

"No sir," I replied "when does my class start? Can you blackbird? Do you want me there tomorrow?"

On May 5, 1970, I signed in at Fort Wolters and joined class 70-46.



And now to the point of this story.

My birthday is May 20. On the night of May 18, 1970, I drove by Ed Lee Chevrolet just as they were unloading a brand new British racing green, 1970 Corvette with a 454 cubic inch, 465-horsepower engine, oversized seat covers, high-performance hubcaps, fuel-injected cigarette lighter, etc. I mean that car was so fast, you had to slow down to let the radio waves catch up.

I had to have it and, 90 minutes later, we made a deal and out I drove. They had given me \$1,100 for my car. And to clinch the deal, Ed gave me 100 free gallons of gasoline. I thought that was a huge bonus. Looking back, it cost the dealership less than \$30 to sucker me in.

I couldn't wait to call my Dad. We share the same birthday. I was and continue to be the most expensive birthday present he ever received.

I told him about the birthday present I had purchased for myself. He was not as excited as me.

He asked these seemingly inane questions like: "Didn't you have a car that was paid for?" "Don't you have orders for Vietnam in the next 9-12 months?" "Who did you finance with?" "ARE YOU NUTS?"

Eleven months later, having spent all the money I had saved and some more to boot, I had to borrow \$3,000 from the bank to pay off my bills BEFORE I left for Vietnam. I may be the only person ever to borrow money to go to Vietnam.

Anyway, back to the point of the story.

Five days after I purchased the "Plastic Pig," I saw a warrant officer candidate driving my old Mustang. I always wondered who it was and what he paid for it.

So, if you purchased a 1967 midnight blue Fastback Mustang from Ed Lee Chevrolet in late May of 1970, give me a call. I'd like to know what happened to the car.

Mike Sheuerman, Panther 15  
May 1971-April 1972  
361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers"

Continued on Page 10

# Register early for Reunion 2005 in San Francisco

Watch for notice in The VHPA Newsletter

## Letters

Continued from Page 9

### After 32 years, adviser thanks pilot for rescue

On Wednesday, June 30th, after dying on the golf course, I was sitting at the bar in the California Chapter North "MOC Trailer" having a very cold beer.

The "MOC" was parked outside the entrance of the Adam's Mark Hotel during the VHPA reunion in Dallas.

This John Wayne-looking character, wearing a "Cav" hat, walked up to me, and said: "Jim Stein, I'm William Page and I've been wanting to find you for 32 years to thank you for rescuing me and three others from Tan Canh on April 24, 1972, but mainly me."

As we gave each other a big hug, I mentioned to him, "I had always wanted to meet one ground soldier or adviser of the many we rescued from airfields and firebases being overrun."

"This was a first," I told Page, "and I think you owe me a beer, and let's talk."

#### Former adviser contacts VHPA

Page, by contacting the VHPA and Jack Heslin, confirmed I was attending the Dallas reunion. He registered with the VHPA and drove to Dallas from Lafayette, LA.

"For 32 years, I have wanted to personally thank the pilot who risked his own life to come in and save my young ass during the fall of Tan Canh," he said, adding, "My memory has faded so much from those days. However, there is no way I could ever forget you coming in to pick us up."

"I read Jack Heslin's website off and on, looking for information on who might remember some of what I experienced. It took me awhile to read and re-read your Memories Section post on 'Flying John Paul Vann' to realize that you, Jim Stein, were the pilot who flew in for us," Page said. "You just cannot imagine how excited I was to find out you were not killed and that I could possibly find and finally thank you."

#### Story of rescue appears on website

This rescue story is posted on John "Jack" Heslin's website, "thebattleofkontum" under Memories: "Jim Stein Flying John Paul Vann rescue at Tan Canh."

Before Pfc. Page, age 18, was assigned to D Company, 1/12 Cavalry, under John Paul Vann, he was with B Company, 2/5 Cavalry. When they stood down in early March 1972, Page was told to find his way to Pleiku and report to MR II Headquarters.

While trying to get a hop out of Tan Son Nhut, the MPs tried to arrest him for wearing full combat gear with weapons. MPs were told there were no more combat

ground troops left in Vietnam and he wasn't going anywhere.

Capt. John H. Wheeler overheard the discussion and told the MPs he was Page's new commander and they needed to get to Pleiku. For a short time, Wheeler did become his commander in MR II under Vann. (If anyone knows Capt. Wheeler, please contact Page.)

As we flew toward Tan Canh, Vann had some contact with the group on the ground, but whether we would make the pickup before they were overrun was the question.

During the Dallas reunion, I found out the one lone gunship giving us cover was from the 361st Pink Panthers, piloted by "Skip" McFarland.

McFarland, flying from Dak To, noticed the little bird going into Tan Canh without gun support, so he decided to cover.



"One gunship is better than none and the NVA, knowing guns fly in pairs, just maybe they will be looking for the other gun and not fire before the LOH gets out,"

McFarland said.

Page's addition to the story: Before we heard of the rescue attempt, we had pretty much resigned ourselves that the jig was up. We had NVA all over the place and I don't know how many tanks were inside Tan Canh. It was looking so bad that a sergeant and I had a last toast of good liquor, thinking this would be it.

"What a good feeling to find out that someone was actually coming through all that to pick us up," Page told me. "I never knew who it was and I certainly didn't know John Paul Vann himself was in the chopper. All I remember is the LOH came in directly toward us and, just before landing, did a 90-degree turn and landed so the door opening was in front of us."

#### Rescue chopper severely overloaded

"We were running like hell for the chopper and jumped in. Within seconds, the chopper was bouncing along, trying to get airborne, when I realized it was severely overloaded and yelled at the others to start throwing off all the gear we didn't need: Steel pots, rucksacks, and anything else that was not essential. I threw a lot off."

"I do remember making sure I kept my weapon and about half my magazines. I usually carried about five bandoliers (35 each 20-round magazines) and two taped 30 rounds in my M-16," Page said.

"When I would pull my quick release straps on the rucksack, all the ammo would stay, along with my pistol belt with water, etc. I know I also threw my pistol belt. I can still remember my thought of — what the hell, go ahead and shoot as much as you can, not only for suppression purposes, but to help lighten the load."

"The LOH was still bouncing along, right up to the concertina wire, and I thought for sure the skids were going to catch it and flip us," Page said. "Not being a chopper pilot, but previously having been combat assaulted into many tight spots, I still don't know how you got up over

Continued on Page 11

# Taps

## Elmer O. Amacker

Retired Army Maj. Elmer O. Amacker of Poplarville, MS, died at his home on Aug. 26, 2003.

He was a member of flight school class 68-13.

After graduating from flight school, Amacker was assigned to the aircraft maintenance officers course in Virginia. He then served in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, Amacker flew an LOH and served as an aircraft maintenance officer in 1968-69 with the 41st ART.

He retired from the Army in 1981 at Fort Polk, LA.

Amacker is survived by his wife, Judi Amacker; four children; 10 grandchildren; and a great-grandson.



## Earnest L. Grimm

Earnest L. Grimm, 66, of Willow Lake, SD, died of an illness July 7 at Parkview Care in Bryant, SD.

Grimm was a member of flight school classes 67-14/67-12.

He served two tours in South Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, and later served in the South Dakota Army National Guard, retiring as a captain.

Grimm served in the Navy before joining the Army. In Vietnam, he earned two Purple Heart Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He is survived by his daughter, Myrna Ellington of Ulysses, KS, and a son, Dwight Daniel Grimm of San Antonio, TX.

## Marvin "Maxie" Levine

Marvin "Maxie" Levine of Fair Oaks, CA, died of a heart attack on June 21, the day before his 67th birthday.

Levine served as Thunderbird 23 with the 118th Assault Helicopter Company in 1967-68. He later served

with the 212th Combat Aviation Battalion in 1970-71.

He graduated from flight school with Class 67-3.

He is survived by two sons, Adam and Eric Levine; a granddaughter, Rebecca Levine; and two grandsons, Julian and Jacob Levine.

## Dennis Marvicsin

Dennis Marvicsin died July 23 at St. Joseph Hospital in Tampa, FL, after heart surgery the day before.

Marvicsin had a bad heart valve since his youth, but it was never a problem until recently when the doctors advised him he needed corrective surgery. Before and during the surgery, doctors discovered two blockages that required bypass procedure, along with the valve repair.

Marvicsin's wife Sharon is being assisted by Judd Chapin (Eagle 8 pilot with Dennis) and Dick Fortenberry (Dennis' RVN stick buddy).

Dennis has a load of medals from RVN and was a POW.

— Ken Mulholland, VHPAF Treasurer

## Dennis R. Russo

Dennis R. Russo, 55, died after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Russo entered the Army after graduating from high school and attended flight training.

He served two tours in South Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, from February 1967-February 1968 and from August 1969-August 1970.

He received the Bronze Star Medal and more than 30 Air Medals while serving in Vietnam.

Russo later served as a pilot with the Wisconsin National Guard. He retired as a chief warrant officer 4.

He is survived by his wife, Patty; a son, Michael R. Russo; a daughter, Jennifer M. Pickett; two grandchildren.

## Submit Taps articles from website

A special form has been added to the VHPA website ([www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org)) for writing and submitting Taps articles for *The VHPA Newsletter*.

# Letters

## Continued from Page 10

the wire and out of there without us being shot down or flipped. I also don't remember where you flew us. I do remember there were NVA, fighting and a lot of civilian pandemonium going on all over the place."

I convinced Page and his friend George Allman to stay longer and join Larry Brassell, another Scalp Hunter from 1972, to be our guests at the rodeo.

George is from Mesquite, TX, and claims "he spent the greatest tour in the Delta 1968-69, making sure all our radar and listening sites were always up and running."

He had some stories. We all had a great time and spent many late hours together before they left on Saturday.

When Page's tour was over, he came back to the States, completed college, and started a very successful company, hiring many Vietnam veterans.

For the past few years, Page has been doing research, trying to discover information about his assigned units in '72. He said "they didn't seem to exist."

Remember early in 1972, President Nixon declared there were no longer American combat troops on the ground in Vietnam. Page was among 21 Americans on the ground around Kontum of which B/H Troop, 7/17 Cavalry "Scalp Hunters" rescued 14.

Jim Stein

# Meeting

## *Members elect officers, hear about state of VHPA*

**VHPA Annual Business Meeting  
Dallas, Texas  
July 2, 2004**

• 9 a.m. — President Dana Young called the meeting to order.

• 9:05 a.m. — Past President Tom Payne offered the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

• 9:10 a.m. — Young introduced the sitting members of the Executive Council and others present, and gave the State of the Organization.

Young continued with a briefing on the past year's activities, including an explanation of the Bylaws change.

• 9:15 a.m. — Broken Wing Awards presented to Bob Monette and John Schillereff by Col. Chris G. Gallavan.

• 9:25 a.m. — Payne asked the minutes of the 2003 Annual Business Meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Ken Fritz, a former VHPA president. The motion passed.

• 9:30 p.m. — Marcia Fritz, contractor for VHPA administrative services, gave the Headquarters Operational Report, introducing members of her staff working at the reunion.

• 9:35 a.m. — The independent auditor's report was presented by Dave Ljung. The report compared cash vs. accrual.

• 9:45 a.m. — Ljung and Marcia Fritz departed the meeting.

• 9:45 a.m. — The Membership Committee report was presented by Young, who also explained the different numbers used in reporting on members.

• 10 a.m. — Bob Smith gave the Investment Committee report.

• 10:10 a.m. — Jack Swickard spoke to the membership about the Newsletter and the need of support from the membership in order to get the publication completed and in the hands of members in a timely fashion. Young presented Swickard a certificate of achievement and a plaque from the VHPA.

• 10:15 a.m. — Payne spoke about the VHPA Schol-

arship Fund. He explained that funds are deposited with the Army Aviation Association of America. Scholshrahip winners will be selected later this year.

• 10:20 a.m. — Gary Roush briefed the membership on the Membership Directory and the database. The need to add 100 pages to the Directory, as well as removing the KIA listing and preserving it on compact discs was presented to the membership. A question from the floor was asked about the Vietnam Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. Flight class information also was discussed.

• 10:25 a.m. — Young and Joe Bilitzke briefed members on the 6-year Conferon/Marriott reunion plan, reviewed the Financial Disclosure Policy and the Articles of Incorporation change. A question from the floor about Hawaii was addressed by Young. The Marriott bonus points program and the use of the points were questioned.

• 10:35 a.m. — Election of the new members to the Executive Council. Mike Sheuerman, outgoing senior member at large who was running unopposed, was elevated to vice president. Jack Salm, running unopposed, was

elected junior member at large. Members approved the election of both members to office.

Young presented plaques of appreciation to Executive Council members.

• 10:45 a.m. — Introduction of the incoming President Dan Ferguson.

• 10:47 a.m. — Old Business addressed by Young.

Other New Business was called for by Young. The topic of how to include family or other individuals attending functions without having to fully register will be addressed during the coming year and will be published before the next Annual Business Meeting.

From the floor: A request to change the scholarship fund from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Payne will address the issue in the Newsletter. The FritzCo administration contract was discussed.

Young then threw the floor open to questions.

• 11 a.m. — The meeting was adjourned.

— Hayden Jones, Secretary/Treasurer



Col. Chris G. Gallavan gives a Broken Wing Award plaque to John Schillereff during the VHPA Annual Business Meeting on July 2 in Dallas.

Jack Swickard photo

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

## STATEMENTS OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS – CASH BASIS YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2003 AND 2002

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
<b>CASH RECEIPTS:</b>		
Reunion	\$ 318,177	\$ 401,208
Membership dues:		
Annual renewals	187,554	271,179
Three-year prepay incentive	63,540	101,880
Life memberships	5,850	3,475
Interest	26,133	20,484
Unrealized gain on investments	22,885	5,738
Scholarship contributions	7,359	9,205
Publications	5,539	9,305
Newsletter advertising	4,048	4,805
Product order postage and handling	1,546	2,765
Miscellaneous	361	1,428
Total cash receipts	<u>642,992</u>	<u>831,472</u>
<b>CASH DISBURSEMENTS:</b>		
Reunion	316,362	363,603
Management fee	136,462	134,493
Directory	63,534	56,201
Legal and professional fees	33,566	6,810
Promotion - other	17,051	13,039
Publications	11,539	11,235
Newsletter postage	11,464	13,078
Bank charges	10,599	12,512
General postage	10,107	8,021
Scholarships	5,104	6,000
Office supplies	5,013	3,245
Telephone	4,584	5,186
Insurance	4,371	1,234
Life member gift shirts	2,243	2,721
Software reservation system	2,205	20,090
Copying and printing	2,965	7,930
Storage	576	1,162
Miscellaneous	112	948
Promotion - chapter		100
Total cash disbursements	<u>637,857</u>	<u>667,608</u>
<b>NET INCREASE IN CASH AND INVESTMENTS</b>	5,135	163,864
<b>CASH AND INVESTMENTS, JANUARY 1</b>	<u>788,880</u>	<u>625,016</u>
<b>CASH AND INVESTMENTS, DECEMBER 31</b>	<u>\$ 794,015</u>	<u>\$ 788,880</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

## NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS DECEMBER 31, 2003 AND 2002

### 1. ORGANIZATION AND SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (Association) is a nonprofit corporation organized to promote the bonds of brotherhood, esprit de corps, and traditions of rotary wing aircrews that flew in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War era.

**Basis of accounting** – The Association uses the cash basis of accounting and presents its activities in a statement of cash receipts and disbursements. The Association does not present transactions that would be included in its financial statements if presented on the accrual basis of accounting, as contemplated by accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

**Investments** are stated at market value.

**Income taxes** – The Association is exempt from income taxes under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(19).

**Use of estimates** – The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

### 2. CASH AND INVESTMENTS

The Association considers all investments with a maturity at purchase of three months or less to be cash equivalents. Cash and investments consisted of the following balances at December 31, 2003 and 2002:

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
Money market accounts	\$ 594	\$ 80,678
Checking accounts	1,479	41,639
Petty cash	220	220
Subtotal, cash and equivalents	2,293	122,537
United States government securities	318,861	302,017
Corporate bonds and notes	154,823	153,602
Certificates of deposit	176,284	151,867
Mutual funds	118,735	58,857
Municipal bonds and notes	23,019	
Total	<u>\$ 794,015</u>	<u>\$ 788,880</u>

The Association maintains its cash in bank deposit accounts which, at times, may exceed federally insured limits. The Association has not experienced any losses in such accounts. Management believes the Association is not exposed to any significant credit risk related to cash.

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

## NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS DECEMBER 31, 2003 AND 2002

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The Association has a continuing obligation to provide services for those who choose life memberships. Those members pay a one-time membership fee in exchange for lifetime membership benefits. The Association has estimated its obligation at \$754,907 and \$723,652 as of December 31, 2003 and 2002 and has designated a portion of its cash and investments for this purpose.

### 3. SERVICE AGREEMENT

Marcia Fritz & Company, Certified Public Accountants, (Management Company) provides management services for the Association and prints newsletters for its current and life members. The Association pays the Management Company a fee, which is calculated monthly based upon the number of Association members, plus expenses. The Association's contract with the Management Company expires December 31, 2004. The Association paid the Management Company \$136,462 for 2003 and \$134,493 for 2002.

### 4. FUNCTIONAL ALLOCATION OF CASH DISBURSEMENTS

The Association allocates cash disbursements to member services and management and general based on estimates of time incurred by its management company. The Association's cash disbursements are summarized on a functional basis as follows:

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
Member services	\$ 501,447	\$ 575,976
Management and general	<u>136,410</u>	<u>91,632</u>
Total	<u>\$ 637,857</u>	<u>\$ 667,608</u>

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

## NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS DECEMBER 31, 2003 AND 2002

### 5. REUNION CASH DISBURSEMENTS

Cash disbursements for the Reunion for 2003 and 2002 consist of the following:

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2002</u>
Banquet	\$ 111,288	\$ 134,411
Registration	32,645	26,038
Arabian Nights	28,745	
Pool party	28,564	10,756
Kennedy Space Tour	18,048	
T-shirts	16,448	17,164
Welcome reception	14,566	47,094
Reunion meeting planner	11,714	2,500
Prepaid 2004 reunion expense	10,160	
Golf tournament	8,665	14,843
Ladies social	6,328	9,584
Pirates Adventure Dinner	5,380	
Business meeting	5,034	2,253
Miscellaneous	3,330	1,121
Sun Cruz Casino	2,740	
5k run	2,632	
New member welcome party	2,416	2,082
Site selection	2,408	
Vendor room	2,105	566
Reunion pre-planning	1,586	1,383
Mini-reunions	1,560	2,909
Splash		33,993
Top of the Riviera		32,189
Grand Ballroom		13,027
Evening at La-Cage		5,168
Skybox		3,391
Chapter receptions		1,409
Computer and copy machine services		719
Staff travel		638
Plaques		365
Total	<u>\$ 316,362</u>	<u>\$ 363,603</u>

# Golfers had great time at Tour 18

MIKE WHITTEN

MIDTERM MEMBER AT LARGE

We started out the Fourth of July with a wonderful round of golf at Tour 18 under beautiful conditions and a great venue.

We arrived at the golf course about 7:15 a.m. and did what all golfers do at that time of the morning: Look for coffee.

Everyone received a gift box as a memento of his or her participation in the tournament. After we got our instructions and headed out on the course, all hit the drives of our lives.

What made this a successful day were all the sponsors that generously gave money and prizes. I cannot express my gratitude enough for your help to make this memorable for us all.

I especially want to thank Army Aviation Association of America, Bell Agusta Aerospace Co., and CAE Simulite for providing a sizable contribution to make this golf tournament work.

Next in line were the following sponsors:

- Adam's Mark Hotel
- Marriott Hotels and Resorts
- Joseph M. Bilitzke
- Mecca Club



- George H. Larson and Assoc. Inc.
- Western Truck School
- Hunter and Associates
- 361ST ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers"

I also need to thank Bob Potvin for coming through with his group of investors for their outstanding support of the VHPA Golf Tournament.

We were able to hand out more than \$1,800 in gifts and prizes, and I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the great work Carol Fann did for us in sorting out the prizes and money while we enjoyed our outing. She usually plays in the tournament, but due to an injury could not, so she volunteered her time to help us.

I tried to have a special guest this year as the golfers know, but due to his schedule, President Bush declined at the last minute (10 days before the reunion).

However, he did send a letter to the VHPA that was read to all at the Final Banquet. We will be in Washington D.C. in two years and I will try again; he shouldn't need to campaign that year quiet as hard as this year.

Next year we will be in San Francisco and, I can assure, we will be playing on one of the best courses you will ever play. No, it's not Pebble Beach, but just as challenging. More about the golf in future issues.

Again, thanks to all the golfers and the sponsors for their assistance.

If anyone has suggestions about future tournaments, please let me know at [REDACTED]

## Vince Vance show one to remember

He came, he played, he knocked us dead.

What a showman!

What a group!

What a show!

If you didn't attend the Dallas reunion or did attend, but passed on the Vince Vance show, you will never know what a great time you missed.

From his opening number until he said good night 3½ hours later, Vince and his group kept those in the room entertained, excited and involved. Even though it was 12:30 a.m., more than 90 percent of those who attended were still there. When is the last time that happened at a VHPA reunion?

Vince and his band, The Valiants, played music from the '50s, '60s and early '70s. And they played it with gusto. You knew they were enjoying playing for us. You felt they really wanted to be there.

I gave him a list of songs to play, songs that meant something to us, and he played them all, including "Gary Owen," which he learned especially for our event.

Since it was the "official song of the Cav," Vinnie

thought the "Cav guys" would know it by heart, so he had all of them in the room come up on stage to sing it. When this proved to be incorrect, he had them marching around on the stage while the band played the tune. It was great.

The band's encore of "Money, Money" in the second set was outstanding. And he sang "We Got to Get Out of this Place" at least two — and, maybe, three — times.

His interaction with the crowd was fantastic. He was in the audience more than he was on stage. He continually changed costumes to fit the song he was going to sing. From Uncle Sam to Elvis to Sponge Bob, he was great.

He got us all involved and kept us involved. And his girls, The Valianettes, were extremely talented vocalists and enjoyable to watch.

All in all, it's the best entertainment we've ever had at a VHPA reunion that I can remember and, with the exception of the Final Banquet, easily the highlight of the Dallas reunion. Hopefully, Vince Vance and the Valiants will entertain us again at another reunion in the near future. Next time, DON'T MISS IT!

— Mike Sheurman

# Vendors

## Look for more at San Francisco reunion next year

**RICH BUZEN**  
VENDOR COORDINATOR

I hope all of you had a chance to visit the Vendor Room this year in Dallas.

I know my wife, my children and my grandchildren did, because my wallet was a lot lighter this year, by a bunch!

We had more than 30 vendors, and it looks like most of them had one of their best years ever. But, if my plans work out for San Francisco, the vendor area at next year's reunion will be even better.

By the way, never, I mean never, refer to San Francisco as "Frisco." You are immediately tagged as a tourist and the price doubles.

I wanted to expand on all the great work Ken Fritz did by adding a greater variety of vendors to our usual group of military "stuff."

I have also reached the age of reason, meaning I have



learned that where the women go, the men will surely follow! So, this year we had several jewelry vendors, Mary Kay, a few more artists, and other "different" types of items that appealed to a much broader age range. The result was much greater traffic in the vendor area, at times making it difficult to move around the room! (This is a good thing!)

Next year I have plans to expand this even more. Now that many of us have children, grand kids and even a few great-grand kids, I will be working to expand the types and variety of vendors for next year's San Francisco reunion.

Because of the success of this year's show, many of the current vendors already have expressed interest in next year's reunion. If I can get the space, I will be adding a whole new group of vendors who will appeal to an even larger audience.

If any of you have suggestions for new vendors or know of anyone who would be interested in taking a booth next year, let me know. I can be reached at [REDACTED]

Hope to see all of you in San Francisco!



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# Rodeo a VHPA reunion highlight

**MIKE SHEUERMAN**  
VICE PRESIDENT

The Mesquite Rodeo proved to be one of the many great events of the Dallas Reunion.

Following an all-you-can-eat barbecue dinner, VHPA members and their guests were treated to an outstanding show containing plenty of exciting action, including bareback bronc riding, calf roping, bull riding, steer wrestling and many more.

Heck of a way to make a living. Flying helicopters in Vietnam didn't seem so dangerous.

One of the high points was Jim Lucking and his child bride Liz, riding into the arena as part of the Grand Entry, carrying the VHPA flag. The announcer spent several minutes recognizing the VHPA and those present.

Several times during the rodeo, he acknowledged the



Association and it's contribution to the nation. We were, by far, the largest group attending.

Three events, unusual to us, stick out in my mind.

- The first was the chuck wagon race. Two small wagons pulled by teams of four, racing around a barrel course. And they were flying.

- The second was cowboy poker. Four cowboys sit around a card table. A huge bull enters the arena, sees the game and charges. The last cowpoke to move wins.

The bull caught one guy, a little slow to react to the charge, and tossed him and his chair several feet into the air. The player escaped OK, but the chair needed to be replaced.

- The last was the sheep riding. Little kids, 8 or younger, on the backs of huge sheep, holding on to the sheep's wool for dear life, try to ride for 8 seconds. At first I thought the riders were monkeys, they were so small. It was hilarious.

Everyone had a great time. It was an authentic taste of a Western rodeo and a worthwhile experience for those in attendance. YEEHAA!

## VHPA members attend dedication

**ANGELO SPELIOS**  
SENIOR MEMBER AT LARGE

Some 1,200 VHPA members and guests gathered at The National Vietnam War Museum site on the morning of July 3 for the official dedication ceremony.

Some 20 buses, private cars and motorcycles left the Adam's Mark hotel in Dallas at 8 a.m. and arrived at the 13-acre site later that morning. The site is just east of the old Fort Wolters main gate.

A static display of old and new Army aircraft greeted the visitors. Included were a CH-47D Chinook, an AH-64D Longbow Apache, an OH-58D armed Kiowa, A UH-1H "Huey," a UH-60 Blackhawk, a civilian OH-23F (a stretched OH-23 with a pilot in the front and three in the back) and a civilian BH-



206L helicopter ambulance. Of the old military aircraft, there was an OH-23D Raven and a beautifully restored and flyable TH-55.

The dedication ceremony started with an invocation led by Brig. Gen. James Spivey, a retired Army chaplain.

The main speaker was retired Navy Rear Admiral Jim Leher, a Vietnam veteran, who spoke about the war. He concluded with warnings about the present war against terrorism.

After the dedication ceremony, everyone attending was served a delicious barbecue dinner, desert and to an unlimited amount of assorted beverages, which included bottled water.

After dinner, the buses were loaded up, with some going directly back to the hotel and some went on a tour of old Fort Wolters, Downing Heliport and downtown Mineral Wells.

This was a great event for a dedication to The National Vietnam War Museum.

## Pilots mess up elevator takeoff at reunion hotel

Two pilots attending the Dallas reunion screwed up their takeoff and ended up spending 100 minutes in an elevator between floors at the Adam's Mark Hotel.

Maurice Geldert and Newsletter Editor Jack Swickard had entered the elevator on the first floor on July 4.

After rising several feet, the elevator came to a sharp halt.

Repairmen dispatched to the stalled elevator could not get it to budge.

A ladder was lowered through the roof, and Geldert and Swickard left the elevator by climbing over the top.

# VHPA 2005 CALENDAR



*The VHPA 2005 Calendar is the 10th Calendar  
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# Reunion 21

## *Dallas VHPA event one of biggest, best-operated*

**JOE BILITZKE**

**NATIONAL REUNION CHAIRMAN**

The 21st VHPA Annual Reunion is now in the memory books. And what a memory it is.

Only the 19th reunion in Las Vegas had greater attendance, but not by much. For those who missed it, you'll have to be content to read about all the great events penned by various EC members and printed within this *Newsletter*.

Our host hotel, the Adam's Mark, was a superb site for our all-in-one-hotel concept. There was an abundance of public space for all of our events; and all the space was on the same floor. One couldn't ask for a better setup.

The sleeping rooms were comfortable, with plenty available.

And, after spending a lot of my adult life in hotels, I personally found the food at the Adam's Mark to be fantastic. My filet at the final banquet was served still warm and pink in the center. An unusual experience, indeed.

This year the budget allowed us to place wine at each table. We look to continuing this, expenses permitting.

An unexpected pleasure occurred Friday morning. The business meeting, you ask? Yes the business meeting.

It was short, concise, positive, and productive. All questions, asked from the floor, were answered to the satisfaction of the membership. All in attendance are grateful to outgoing president Dana Young for presiding over a well-managed, to-the-point business meeting.

The events this year came off without a hitch and, from all reports, were enjoyed by those who attended them.

### **Sheuerman introduced Vance to reunion**

Our thanks to the newly elected vice president, Mike Sheuerman. He introduced Vince Vance to the reunion. Vince and his group, the Valiants, provided a nonstop, personalized show designed especially for the VHPA.

A true patriot in his own right, Vince wrote, recorded, and made available a number of songs with a patriotic theme. All this was done at his own expense.

In all my years attending reunions, this was the first in recent memory that still had a full dance floor at midnight. Vince Vance and the Valiants are popular!

Other events included an honest-to-goodness Western rodeo with a stomach-stuffing buffet. It was headlined and

introduced by VHPA member Jim Lucking, riding his own horse and proudly carrying the VHPA flag during the grand entrance of all the riders. See the rodeo article by Mike Sheuerman in this *Newsletter*.



**Joe Bilitzke**

Our trip to Fort Wolters reminded us how hot and humid it was during summer training all those years ago. Despite the heat (remember, it could have been rain), a great time was had by those making the trip.

The Fort Wolters gang pitched in to coordinate the dedication of the site for The National Vietnam War Museum and helped provide a great barbecue, with plenty of cold beer. Our newest senior member at large, Angelo Spelios, has more details.

Mike Whitten provided the leadership in bringing 132 players a great golf experience. He personally lined up 12 sponsors and was able to hand out \$1,800 in player's prizes.

In addition to providing a lunch, he brought the golf tournament in on budget. Thanks, Mike, for another successful golf outing. More details are provided in Mike's *Newsletter* article.

### **Final banquet events flowed well**

The final banquet was managed in the same style. Dana keeping speeches to a minimum and the proceedings flowing.

Our honor guard this year was a change — we used the Marines. Their crisp, snappy manner was accompanied by the Marines Corps Hymn as they marched up the center aisle to present and retire the colors.

A live, mournful, trumpet version of Taps was heard echoing through the ballroom as the tribute to the missing man concluded. This year's simple ceremony brought accolades from a number of members.

Dana again deserves praise for maintaining the direction of the final banquet and his past year as VHPA president. (Dana is one of the few members who began his military career as a WOC and retired as a colonel. He stresses his best days were as a warrant!)

No article would be complete without thanks to those who did so much to help produce a successful reunion.

First, I'd like to give a big, personal thank you to Dave Rittman. Dave has been working with me on the National Reunion Committee and, with his background and experience, has made certain we always have a realistic budget and stay within it.

He also tends to the details and minutia that constant-

**Continued on Page 22**



# San Francisco to host 2005 reunion

DAVE RITTMAN  
NATIONAL REUNION COMMITTEE

Throughout this Newsletter you will be reading about the great times had by all in Dallas a few weeks ago.

Now's the time to mark your calendar for next year's reunion in San Francisco. Your reunion committee already is working hard on the details.

Early July in San Francisco is the absolute height of the tourist season and the city is jam-packed with people, activities, and special events.

We will be taking advantage of some of those special events as part of our activities, but with so much to do, this will be a very special reunion, indeed!

Our host hotel is the San Francisco Marriott at 55

Fourth St., a premium property in the heart of downtown, just steps from many key attractions and activities.

Only 25 minutes from San Francisco International Airport and 35 minutes from the airport across the bridge in Oakland, the hotel could hardly be more convenient for arriving members and guests.

At a room rate of only \$109 per night — a bargain for a top-quality facility in San Francisco — our room block is expected to sell out long before the reunion starts. So plan to book your room early, as well as register for all the VHPA events through our Internet system starting in mid-January 2005.

In summary, circle that first week in July on your calendar now. Put in for that vacation week now . . . and plan to attend! See you there!

## Block dates on calendar for Reunion 2005

To assist you in making preliminary plans to attend our 2005 reunion in San Francisco, these are the dates to block on your calendar:

- **Friday, July 1** — "Early bird" arrival for those who like to come early and enjoy the city and meet other members prior to the start of planned reunion activities.
- **Saturday, July 2** — Main arrival date; registration, welcome reception.
- **Sunday, July 3** — Events and activities to be announced in our next newsletter.
- **Monday, July 4** — Events and activities to be announced in our next newsletter.
- **Tuesday July 5** — Final evening banquet.

• **Wednesday July 6** — Depart for home or possibly on a very special "post reunion" VHPA trip currently under consideration and development.

For planning purposes, if you are wavering between flying and driving . . . we recommend you fly and then take relatively inexpensive cabs or the BART train to the hotel.

Parking in San Francisco is expensive, and discounted advance airfares are reasonable from most locations. The hotel is in the downtown area, and it is easy to get around by cab, trolley, cable car, or by just walking.

More exciting details on our planned events and entertainment will be forthcoming in future *Newsletters*.

## Dave Rittman, others assure success

Continued from Page 21

ly crop up and makes the decisions that help keep your reunion running smoothly.

Other unsung heroes, rather heroines, should be recognized.

Linda Irvine and her Reunion BRATS, Ann Lappas-Stiles and Gail Newchurch, kept buses running smoothly, the reunion staff organized, and the hotel administration in line.

At the conclusion of the reunion, Linda stayed behind to meet with the Adam's Mark accounting staff to ensure all your dollars were accounted for and nothing was paid unless it was authorized.

We're positive that Linda and BRATs will continue to be a positive addition to our reunions; your Executive Council has approved a new contract for an additional three years. Thanks, Linda and BRATs!

Members of our Headquarters staff served long hours to be certain you were able to check in despite late

arrivals. They were available to assign banquet seating and, assisted by the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau staff, were the first faces you saw at the registration table.

A sincere "THANK YOU" to Marcia Fritz's staff at FritzCo: Colleen Mitchell, Nancy Suhrie, Laura Riley, Tina Demerchant, and volunteer Terry Barger for being the interface between the membership and the reunion. You do more than you realize and are appreciated more than you know.

Well, as you can see, if you didn't attend the Dallas reunion, you missed a lot. If you did attend, a hearty thanks for your support of the organization. All of us responsible for producing the reunion are grateful to all of you.

Before it's too late, mark the next Fourth of July on your calendar. We're going to San Francisco! Read more in future *Newsletters* about the 22nd VHPA reunion in the City by the Bay.

# Calendar relies on members' photos

The 2005 VHPA Calendar is now available.

It is filled with great photos from our Vietnam flying. The calendar is printed in full color and, like our previous calendars, each month has a full-page photo.

In addition, the names and units of the 2,197 helicopter pilots killed or declared MIA are included at each date of death or disappearance.

To order the calendar, see the order form from Turner Publishing Co. on Page 16 of the *Newsletter*.

Photographs for our calendars come from fellow crew members.

Over the years, we have collected hundreds of pictures, have had them scanned into a digital format and stored on compact discs.

We also have accumulated a library of events we encountered in Southeast Asia.

However, our selection of photos is running low and we can always use more to give a diversity of scenes for our calendars.

We are now in the process of collecting the photos for the 2006 calendar. Many of you at this year's reunion

mentioned your collection of Vietnam photographs and your desire to have them published.

What we are looking for are pictures of helicopters and the activities surrounding them, preferably in the 35 mm slide format.

If you have any pictures you would like to share with us, please let me know.

If you send me your photos, I will have them scanned and return the originals, along with a CD containing the digitalized pictures, to you.

We understand your concern about losing these precious memories, but of the thousands of photographs we have handled in this manner, none have been lost.

If you would rather have them scanned yourself and send us the digital photos, please be sure to scan them at a minimum of 300 dpi (dots per inch) resolution at an 11-inch by 17-inch format.

Send them to Al Harinck, 5461 Preserve Parkway South, Greenwood Village, CO 80121.

Send e-mail to: [calendar@vhpa.org](mailto:calendar@vhpa.org)

— Al Harinck

## Memorial dedicated at Fort Rucker

Father Jerry R. Daly's comments during the dedication of 13th Combat Aviation Battalion Memorial on May 16 at Fort Rucker:

"As St. Peter said atop Mount Tabor, 'It is good for us to be here.' We gather together not only to reminisce and remember, but to pay honor and homage to all who served in The Delta Battalion, the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

"True, we've all grown older, a bit larger (around the waist!), with hair either gone or gray, but all, I think, more appreciative of the Vietnam experience which shaped and continues to shape our lives. And, although our memories grow a little less reliable with the passing years, we possess the remarkable ability to recall the good and meaningful moments of our Vietnam experience. Certainly that is God's gift.

"Nothing of our time, no matter how long or how short our tours at Vinh Long, Can Tho or Soc Trang, nothing is more memorable, nothing more meaningful than the bond of battle, the camaraderie of combat, the utter dependence of one upon the other — the literal trusting of our lives to each other! To crew chiefs and gunners, to pilots and copilots, to leads and wingmen, to mainte-



Attending the memorial service are (from left) Ed Tolfa Jr., last 13th Combat Aviation Battalion commander in 1972; Lt. Col. Bishop, battalion commander in May 2004; John Kennedy, Soc Trang Tiger 6 in 1967 who designed the memorial; and Father Jerry R. Daly, a Virginia priest who served as a helicopter gunship pilot for three tours in the Mekong Delta.

nance folks and technical inspectors and to commanders.

"And so, it is good for us to be here today to pay tribute and to dedicate this handsome and fitting memorial to all who served with us in The Delta Battalion in those years of our youth, years not forgotten, but rather, fondly remembered. We, the remaining, pay special honor to those of our brothers who never came home, never "DEROS'd" to the "Land of the Big PX," but who fell in battle halfway around the world some three or four decades ago; and to those who have since "DEROS'd" permanently to a better place. May God grant them eternal rest.

"We who were once young and bold have grown old and, surely, a little less bold! And so, as we look forward to the short flight ahead may we never forget the long flight behind and those who flew and fought with us in the greatest gathering of Army Aviation, The 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

"As we turn the controls over to another generation, may the great and glorious heritage of the Delta Battalion, the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion, be a guide and an inspiration for those who fly 'Above the Best.'"

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