



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

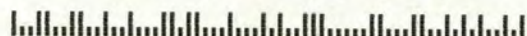
March/April 2004 Vol. 22, No. 2



Dave Rittman photo

OH-23 and TH-55 helicopters from the U.S. Army Primary Helicopter Center at Fort Wolters are shown at the Abilene, TX, airport in 1966 during a cross-country flight. The two helicopter models will be available for photos during dedication of the National Vietnam War Museum at Fort Wolters on July 3, during the VHPA Reunion in Dallas. See articles about the reunion on Pages 17-22.

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From the President

By the time this edition of the *Newsletter* reaches you, my year will be drawing to a close. Seems that before you read the first comments of a new president, he is starting to compose his last. It highlights the way "time flies when you are having fun."

A lot has happened during the past six months. You may have noticed in my columns that I have tried to initiate a "back to basics" focus that will, hopefully, facilitate the continued growth of our organization without the growth pains.

Consider, if you will, the emergency procedures we were taught in flight school. We were always on downwind at a prepared landing field when they cut the throttle.

Throughout my years of flying, I never once had problems in the traffic pattern. When asked what value could that practice possibly have if it was never used, my reply was that, when a problem did occur and all my deviations from "standard" failed, I could rely on the basics to get me back on course. It worked then, it seems to be working now . . . just the environment has changed.

This issue is packed with information about the Dallas Reunion. Like other reunions, it will have a particular flavor and personality. Where, in some, we tried to plan every minute of every day and, in others, we left the majority of the planning to the attendees, this year is a combination of options.

Each evening we have an event that should be a memorable end to the day's activities. This year, the day's activities are up to you.

With everyone in the same hotel and with a common meeting and gathering area, most will spend time meeting friends from prior reunions and finding those they have not seen since flight school.

Family members and guests might find some of the sights of Dallas and the surrounding area of interest. We have arranged for a local tour company to provide you



Dana Young

with numerous choices. They are highlighted in this *Newsletter* and a link to their website should be up and running on the VHPA Reunion webpage by the time you read this. They also will have a booth at the reunion for those who can't make up their mind prior to arrival.

The events of the Dallas Reunion are all described in the following pages. From the Welcome Reception to the Final Banquet, I think you will enjoy each and every one of the scheduled activities.

Imbedded in my first column was a comment that mentioned a change in the relationship between the VHPA and chapters. Since then, I have received two or three questions about the current status of chapters. Rather than address it here, please refer to the following article that should clarify the changes.

We continue to deal with the legal events that were discussed in the last *Newsletter*. We will provide a complete review at the Annual Business Meeting.

Membership has been a continuing focus. During the past two years, we have engaged in a significant effort to find potential members and to encourage them to join. We will never meet the needs of everyone who is eligible to join, but we can account for them and continue to encourage their participation.

As I have said before, we have provided the latest information available in your annual Membership Directory. It is now your turn. Find a name that you recognize, write or, call information for a number, and call. If they are not a member, encourage them to join; to attend a reunion. If you have more current information than the directory shows, let us know so we can make the changes.

The VHPA Executive Council is made up of volunteers. Each one has made the commitment to do the best they can for the betterment of the VHPA.

After a year as vice president and nine months as president, I can honestly say that I have never had the privilege to serve with a more dedicated and honorable group in a civilian environment.

While not subjected to flying lead, they get their share of written barbs and, in spite of that, give countless hours in support of the activities and commitments that sustain the VHPA. There are six elected members of the EC and each year, at the annual business meeting, two members are elected: Junior member at large and vice president.

I asked each member of the council to write a brief

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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 [redacted] or email [redacted].com Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

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

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This information, including but not limited to the VHPA Chapter list, shall not be used for commercial solicitation purposes or for any correspondence related thereto without prior written authorization from the VHPA president.

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

'Original 66' clarification

Since the Orlando Reunion, members of the Executive Council have received several questions and comments concerning the "Original 66" and how we arrived at the names of the 66 to be honored.

Several members with VHPA member numbers lower than 66 asked why they were excluded. We hope this article answers any and all questions.

The "Original 66" refers to the 66 pilots who attended and signed in at the business meeting during the first reunion held in Phoenix on June 15-17, 1984. It has nothing to do with VHPA member numbers.

According to Larry Clark, founding member of VHPA, he was granted VHPA Member 00001. He then announced the first guy to get a dues check to Larry would be VHPA Member 00002. Rick Freeman beat Ron Wright by a hair. Ron became VHPA Member 00003. No other member numbers were assigned during the reunion.

After the reunion, Larry and Terrie, his wife at the time and VHPA's first honorary member, put all the applications for membership in alphabetical order and started assigning member numbers. This is the reason most of the pilots who attended the first reunion in Phoenix have VHPA member numbers higher than 66.

The EC regrets any misunderstanding.

— Executive Council



and



Invite the VHPA to the dedication ceremony for The National
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July 3, 2004

- Visit the Museum site and walk the property
- Tour Fort Wolters, Mineral Wells, the Baker Hotel, and Downing Heliport
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**Start making plans today for this Reunion 2004 side trip
and don't miss this once in a lifetime event!**



Letters

Advisor seeks pilots — to say ‘thanks!’

I am John Peeff and I realize it has been 35 years since I was a 20-year-old lieutenant advisor to the 18th ARVN Division in the Bien Hoa area.

However, I sure would appreciate your help in tracking down any of the pilots and crewmen who saved me and three other Americans, not to mention a whole lot of ARVN, on Feb. 28, 1968.

Our battalion was on an operation on a large island in the Song Dong Nai River right across from Tan Uyen and north of Bien Hoa in War Zone C. Since it was the end of the month, we stayed back a few hours to get paid at Tan Uyen.



Our battalion had been ferried across the 100 yards of river by Vietnamese Navy landing craft. The pay chopper came (I don't know its origin, but I think the Bien Hoa area) and I asked the pilot if he would give us a lift across the river to join the battalion on the island.

He said he would and off we went. I have forgotten his call sign, after all the years.

Some of the battalion had run into a NVA reinforced weapons company dug around a small village and the LZ was hot, very hot. After dropping us off, the chopper made numerous gun runs for us until he ran out of ammo and I think the doorgunner was hit.

He continued to make runs and draw fire to help us until he was almost out of fuel. He then got a gunship from, I'm guessing, Bien Hoa, since it was close.

That Huey gunship tore them up and prevented a route

of the ARVN who had already suffered 20 KIA. In addition, our ARVN had lost a company commander, 3 platoon leaders and close to 50 wounded.

After six hours of fighting, I remember another chopper landing and giving us ammo and the doorgunner gave me one or two spare barrels for our M-60s.

The next day we were reinforced by an ARVN Ranger battalion. I counted 50 some NVA bodies and we had captured 7 NVA who were wounded or dazed.

I think the choppers deserved most of the credit. Our "battalion" was a battalion in name only. At full strength it fielded fewer than 300. But, on this day, one company was left behind. So you can see we took a beating. I guess with Tet on and bigger battles elsewhere, this never even made the news.

If I would have had any sense, I would have put everyone on those choppers in for a medal, but I was only a new 20-year-old lieutenant who was glad to be alive and trying to figure out how I was going to survive another 11 months.

If you can help me find any of those chopper pilots to say, thanks, please e-mail me at [redacted]

John Peeff

Nearly 33 years old and still going strong

Last weekend I flew home to visit my parents in St. Louis. They're in their 80's and still live in the house they purchased while I was in Vietnam on that fabulous year-long vacation.

We got to talking about that year and I found out something that I still find hard to believe. Let me go back to the start.

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From the President

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article that should give you, the member, an idea of just what these elected representatives are doing between annual meetings.

I also encouraged the committee chairs to update you about their activities. Why? Because it is time for you to take a look at what you can do to help make this organization stronger. If you have the time and the desire, run for one of the two elected positions that are open each year. No time? Look at the committees. Give us a call, GET INVOLVED.

Prior to the Orlando Reunion, we began negotiations with a major hotel chain. The desire was to be able to go

to some locations that had eluded us in the past and to be able to plan ahead more than one or two years at a time.

Two constraints: The first was that the host hotel had to be a quality property and able to support us under one roof . . . all attendees in the same hotel and; second: That we be able to obtain a rate that would be beneficial to our members.

Negotiations have been completed and we will be publishing the results either in the next *Newsletter* or at the Reunion Annual Meeting. We will be able to give you a schedule for the next six years.

The summary of the agreement may be a bit long for the *Newsletter*, but we will provide one at the Annual Business Meeting and post it on the secure portion of the VHPA website.

If you have not registered for the Dallas Reunion . . . why not? There is no penalty for registering early.

— Dana M. Young, President

Letters

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I was privileged to fly with the 361st Aerial Company, Escort (Pink Panthers). When I was assigned to the unit in May 1971, my college classmate and great friend, Mike Harsh, was in his eighth month with the company.

He was an A/C in the 3rd platoon. I was assigned to the 1st.

We hung around a lot and one day, about a month or two into my tour, Mike offered me the opportunity of a lifetime. One of the "Old Guys" in the unit — I can't remember who, maybe George Miller or Nate Van Keuren — was going home and had a mini fridge he wanted to sell. Wanted \$25 cash for it.

Mike thought we should buy it. He'd put in \$10 and keep it in his hooch until his DEROS and I'd pay \$15 and get it when he left. Sounded good to me. I'd get seven or eight months of use out of it. We did the deal.

Mike left the unit about a month or so later and I got the fridge. About this time some 52nd Battalion REMFs moved closer to the flagpole and Mike Kieren, my best friend to this day, and I moved into their old hooch. Had two bedrooms and a front parlor. (It also had a phone that you could call the States on, but that's a story for another time.)

Mike had an air-conditioner and I had a fridge. We were living the good life.

Somewhere over the next several months, in a state of alcohol-induced instability, we painted a peace symbol and the words "F___ War!" on the front in BIG RED LETTERS. I mean REALLY BIG RED LETTERS. After a while I guess we didn't even notice them anymore. At least I didn't. Life was good!

April 1972 rolls around and it's getting close to my DEROS. I pack up the fridge and my other stuff; stereo, tape deck, photos, SKS, painted helmet you never wore — you know, mementos of the past year — and ship them home to mom and dad. Oh, let's not forget all the items I'd purchased from PACEX.

Around the 20th of April I get told the next day or so I'm on the way home, we have my "going home" party and the next day I catch a flight from Pleiku Air Force Base to Saigon and start my trip home.

Several weeks later I show up at my folks door at 2:15 a.m. and ring the doorbell. To say the least, my mother was thrilled. Not for the reason you think, however. Sure, she was glad I was home in relatively good condition, but what she REALLY wanted was to see what was in all the boxes that had been arriving for the past six weeks. They were all piled up in the living and dining rooms.

I hadn't been home 10 minutes before we were opening boxes. She was in heaven.

Remember the fridge — the one I purchased with Mike H, the one I painted with Mike K? Remember the REALLY BIG RED LETTERS? I didn't.

Pilot asks help with addresses

Always enjoy the *Newsletter*! Sorry to read in Taps about Robert H. McKeegan passing away. When his younger brother Tom was in the Reserves in Northern California with the 343rd Medical Detachment, I was the safety officer and IP.

Have looked for any addresses on either Russ Whipple or the departed comrade, in hopes of locating Tom. If you can be of any assistance it would be very much appreciated.

Bob "Z" Zajonc

My dad and I were opening the crate. I was in the back when my dad pulls off the front of the crate and mom goes ballistic.

You would have thought she planned to wash my mouth out with soap. I caught it for at least an hour. "What if people should drop by to welcome you home? (It's around 4 a.m. and no one knows I'm home but my folks.) Where did you learn to talk and write like that? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? We don't use that kind of language in this house." She goes on and on.

Finally she gets a can of black spray paint and the REALLY BIG RED LETTERS are history. Around 7 a.m. the boxes are all opened and I finally get a shower and some sleep.

I know what your saying: What's the point of this story. Only this. The fridge, the one with the REALLY BIG RED LETTERS that was painted black, is still working in my parents' basement. Never been serviced or needed repair.

And, if you look really hard and the light is just right, you can still see the REALLY BIG RED LETTERS under the black paint. Nearly 33 years and still going strong. Just like us.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15 5/71-4/72
361st Aerial Company, Escort
Pink Panthers

Writer gives perspective of Special Forces captain

I read with some interest Jack Serig's letter (or perhaps another caption would be more correct) titled "Dilemma" and it brought back some memories, and some knowledge of situations that could arise that just weren't covered in the MI OBC course, or perhaps even (though I am not a Special Forces School graduate) at the Special Warfare School.

The Special Forces captain described in the letter remains anonymous (perhaps for his own protection) and isn't able to reply, so I thought that perhaps I could shed a

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little light on the subject from what I believe may be his perspective. I know that this seems presumptuous on my part, and I would gladly defer to him if he were to see and reply to the article, but this is quite unlikely.

Unlike today, with satellite communications and real-time video streaming worldwide to commanders at all levels, U.S. military advisors in that era operated in somewhat of a vacuum, with little hands-on command influence.

And, to further complicate their position, and their responsibility, they were, to a great extent, advisors more in name than in fact. One should remember that as a young officer (I wasn't much past my 21st birthday when I went "wheels down" in RVN), they were put in the position of "advising" soldiers and officers who had been fighting a guerrilla war for years, if not decades.

It was pretty much a myth that we, as young lieutenants and captains were really more skilled and knowledgeable in the art of guerrilla warfare, and the customs and practices of the nation in which we were fighting, and it was not even a myth that we were more experienced than the unconventional warfare soldiers we "advised."

As to whether this captain was really the "defacto commander" of the battalion, I would seriously question his command authority over his "troops." He was the American representative on the battlefield, and he did, to a reasonable extent, control the purse strings, but as for the term "command," well all that I can say is that was not the case in terms as defined in the FM's and Mr. Webster's dictionary.

In addition to the "loose" command structure, his real knowledge of local traditions, customs and mores was being gained concurrently with his tour of duty.

In many instances we, as Americans, tend to impose our values upon societies whose history and traditions are constructed from values divergent, if not completely opposite to, ours. And, until 9/11, few if any of us, and quite frankly no American soldier or civilian advisor that I met during my tour of duty, had experienced the trauma of watching

our village, or hometown in our terms, decimated by a brutal enemy whose mores were far more consistent with those of the region than those that we brought with us.

Perhaps a veteran of Korea or a World War II liberator of a concentration camp may have observed something

similar to this, but I never ran into one of those folks during my time in country.

How do you explain the Cao Dai faith to a Westerner without any time in-country? It took me a lot of time in Tay Ninh speaking and joining with these folks to begin to understand them, their philosophy and religion, and to learn of their experiences under occupying governments, as well as the tyranny of their own government.

Were the Chinese Nungs really conducting a respectful religious funeral service over the remains of dead enemy combatants when they "cook(ed) and ate the enemy heart(s)?" I don't know, and I really doubt that the captain in question was well versed enough in their religion and their society to make that determination.

And, if they were, in fact, doing so, would it have been his place to intervene, and interfere with their sacraments?

Remember, we are the folks who thought the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people could be won by imposing an unpopular Catholic president upon that principally Buddhist nation, perhaps because we were more comfortable with his commonality of religious practices, or with his prior affiliation with the colonialist "Western world" government of France.

In more modern terms, for those of you who are wives, children, or other non-contemporaries of the Vietnam veteran with whom you share an affiliation, it is similar to being an "advisor" to a Kurdish military leader whose family had, for generations, lived in the villages that were targeted by Saddam Hussein for attack by chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.

This advisor, the captain in the story, was officially placed into what must have been an untenable position, providing advice and guidance to people who may have had far more experience in the type of war that was being fought at that time and place.

He could only "advise" them, and apprise them of our values, which if applied, would have resulted in a schism between the advisor and his "troops." That would have resulted in a total mission failure on his part to attempt to properly induce them to take a more "progressive" attitude to their warfighting.

In a perfect world, none of us would, as a matter of choice, encourage the folks we were there to "advise" to act in the manner that Mr. Serig relates. I won't be presumptuous enough to tell those of us who have been there that the Vietnam War was somewhat less than a "perfect world."

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These soldiers could have been led into performing their duties in a more internationally acceptable manner, but you had to have their trust and confidence if you were to earn their respect, and the right to lead them down that path.

No advisor could "correct" the practices of the indigenous and third country national personnel in a one-year tour, even if he did spend the entire 365 days in the field with them. And, one must remember that this captain could not "lead by example," as he really didn't have sufficient numbers of U.S. troops with him at any given time to set such an example.



I would ask that we take the issues, and the problems in the context of the time and place where they existed.

Think back to the philosophy that "we had to destroy the hamlet to save it." Think of how many Vietnamese people were relocated from their ancestral homes to "strategic hamlets" where they would be "protected," or perhaps more correctly subjected to the control of a government that was morally, ethically and in many other ways corrupt,

and not emplaced by the populace to govern over them.

This is not to condemn each and every Vietnamese officer or official within the South Vietnamese government; many were good men, with lofty goals, and who were called upon to make many sacrifices, including, in a number of cases the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

I shall refrain from naming names and encouraging controversy by doing so, but there was, at least during my tour, a degree of corruption, political and economic, within that South Vietnamese government, and an absence of altruism amongst a serious number of its senior officials.

We were truly Americans in a foreign land, with customs and practices far different from our own. We were there, at least ostensibly, to prevent the expansion of Communism, as hypothesized by the "Domino Theory."

Many of us who were in contact with the local nationals, the citizens and residents of the small "non-strategic hamlets" will remember that those folks had little or no concept of the "world communist threat," or even the threats to their perceived freedoms under the current South Vietnamese regime.

They were concerned with survival and subsistence, for this is the way of the third world. Even today, despite our most moralistic attempts and benevolent intent, we cannot change that. They were pretty much simple people who really didn't give a hoot about their national government

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We believe one of the most profitable investments is an investment in relationships. At times like these, when the market can be volatile, that investment really pays off.

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George G. Reese Jr.
309 Loyola Drive



Attend the Dallas Reunion in 2004

Letters

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except to the extent that it taxed them and took a portion of their already scarce resources.

Please don't make any mistake about it. I am proud of my service, what my country did in Vietnam, and the fact that I was there. I don't always think that I was there for the exclusive benefit of the Vietnamese people. In fact, a number of things I observed over there were neither designed, nor executed in furtherance of that goal.

I went over there to serve the best interests of the United States and I am proud of that fact. If we left something of the best of our society behind (a goal that perhaps was not accomplished to the level that was intended by President Kennedy when he sent the first advisors onto South Vietnamese soil), so much the better, but all in all our comrades died for many things, perhaps each for his own personal reason which we may never know or understand, but I'm sure that not all of them had the freedom and exclusive best interests of the South Vietnamese people as their exclusive goal.

A wise general (sometimes I see that as a rare and exceptional quality within that demographic) once said that Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines die for each other, and for their country, and the continuation of our way of life, and I would venture to say that this description could be applied to the actions of many of us during our tour of duty.

Did Mr. Serig actually make a mistake in not reporting what he witnessed? That remains his own, personal decision.

He alluded to My Lai and Lt. Calley, but that was quite a different circumstance. Lt. Calley was a leader of American soldiers, men of similar (at least to some extent) backgrounds and heritage, under his direct command, who were

subject to the rules and laws of the United States and its Uniform Code of Military Justice.

He wasn't their "advisor," he was their platoon leader, and these men were soldiers and non-commissioned officers in the U.S. Army.

I would ask that before we condemn this captain, and the entire advisory program by proxy, that we step back and place things in perspective. Advisors advise, and commanders command. Advisors teach, counsel, sometimes cajole, and guide those whom they advise. Commanders are responsible for the actions of the soldiers they command, and they are given the tools with which to command, tools not available to those who advise and counsel.

Perhaps walking a mile in the jungle boots of that captain would have given him pause to reconsider some of his options.

Knowing the casualty rates for advisors such as the captain described in the treatise, I can only hope that he returned home to consider the consequences of his actions, and to be introspective in a more refined environment. The probability is far too great that he reposes in a place of eternal rest, memorialized by a "name on the Wall" and deprived of that opportunity.

Steve Spies
525 MI GP
1971-72 in RVN

Name of pilot rescued from water was Pate

I think I can help John Butler get started on locating the pilot he helped rescue back in 1971: His name was WO1 Pate, and he flew with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company. The crash occurred on the night of Oct. 18.

Here's a bit more of the story:

That night, I was aircraft commander of the "second up" Dustoff ship in Chu Lai, and WO1 Barry Wood was

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A/C of "first up." We got a call that the perimeter patrol bird had crashed into the water of an estuary adjacent to the base, as the aircraft was coming back in due to deteriorating weather conditions.

We scrambled both Dustoff aircraft and headed to the scene. The weather was typical monsoon: Low ceiling, strong north wind, intermittent heavy rain, and dark as . . . well, you all know.

There were perimeter guards on the ground who told us roughly where they thought the aircraft had hit the water, and Barry and I divided up the area. Each of us began hovering searches out over the water.



The flying was miserable. Hovering over the choppy water at night with just our landing lights and search lights was tough and probably not all that smart, but there weren't any other options.

When bursts of rain would move through the area it got really hard to do more than maintain heading until it cleared again — hovering five or six feet off the water, a thousand meters or so offshore, stuck in a little bubble of light, hoping it passed through quickly.

Even worse, though, was the wind — no problem when you hovered north and it was a headwind, but devilish on the downwind legs, with the tail constantly pitching around, tipping the nose toward the water, and making the whole drill a real white knuckle affair.

Back and forth both aircraft went, working over the whole estuary, and occasionally coming to a stop to let the crews reach down and pick up pieces of aircraft debris that we would see. My crew picked up various floating pieces of honeycomb and one helmet, but there was no sign of survivors.

My copilot that night was a Vietnamese officer getting Dustoff training — a fine fellow, but totally unable to control the aircraft under the conditions we were in, so we gave up on having him do any of the flying.

He was great, though, at communicating with ARVN ground units in the area, and got them to send search parties along the shore.

Barry and I each burned up a fuel load, hot refueled, and went back out for a second go at it. Thank God the flair aircraft piloted by John Butler arrived, because it made the whole operation safer and more likely to succeed.

My copilot that night was a Vietnamese officer getting Dustoff training — a fine fellow, but totally unable to control the aircraft under the conditions we were in, so we gave up on having him do any of the flying.

Up until then, the chances were good we could miss a survivor in the water simply because we couldn't see more than a few score feet in any direction. After we went through the second fuel load, I was physically worn out by the hours of non-stop, lousy-conditions hovering, and sadly resigned to the likelihood that no one had made it out of the crash. Both Barry and I decided to return to base for some coffee and a chance to shake out the kinks.

We hadn't been back on the ground long when we got another call — a soldier on the shore had heard what he thought was a voice calling out from the blackness over the ocean near the mouth of the estuary where the crash had occurred.

John Butler has written how he got to the scene and saw a survivor in the water. Fantastic! Meanwhile, our "first up" aircraft had launched, and Barry arrived within minutes to pull WO1 Pate from the water — where he had survived by clutching to a piece of honeycomb panel (which had badly torn up his arms over the hours he held on to it).

Barry Wood and I visited Pate in the hospital, and he seemed to be in pretty good shape, although he could not remember much that had happened immediately before and after the accident. He had no recollection, for example, of how he had gotten out of the aircraft, or how he had managed to find the honeycomb panel to hang on to.

Unfortunately, I do not recall his first name, but there can't have been very many Pates in the likely flight school classes of 1971.

Barry and I got a nice phone call from some general who said we'd done a swell job, etc., etc., and that we'd be receiving an "impact" decoration from him — but Chu Lai got hit by a huge typhoon within a week or so, which pretty much caused it to shut down as a major base, and neither Barry nor I ever heard another peep about an award. Just as well, I suppose, since we wouldn't want to mess up our otherwise perfect record in that regard!

Four nights after the crash into the water, we lost an entire Chu Lai Dustoff crew on a night mission into the mountains to the southwest. The weather again.

On that miserable night a flair ship from Chu Lai came out to help as I vainly searched up and down a narrow mountain valley in the dark and rain, and it likely kept me from creaming into the side of the mountain myself.

It must have been the Hornets again — could it have been John Butler? Whoever it was, belated but sincere thanks.

Charles Stonecipher
Dustoff 58

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Letters

Continued from Page 9

Association could help members connect dots

Have you noticed when solving a dot puzzle that if the dots are not properly connected, the picture does not become clear?

I realized that when responding to the VA on an appeal for my claim of an in-service hearing loss and tinnitus.

My American Legion representative recommended that I review the Statement of Case and Rating Decision before I decided whether any additional information would be submitted.

How could I provide any more information? The VA knows I have a 40 percent loss of hearing and ringing in both ears 100 percent of the time? They know what I flew and how much I flew. BUT, what they are enjoined to do is challenge whether my condition is linked to my service. There is the challenge.

As I reflected on my task, I found that there was no ready database for me to check on the incidence of hearing loss, tinnitus and consequent disabilities that resulted from flying or crashing in helicopters.

So why don't we create one in the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association? Within the ranks of the VHPA, we have not only a potentially unequalled source of information



about the human damage incurred from flying helicopters, but we also can learn how the VA is reacting to claims submitted for those damages.

We have empathized with each other about the struggle and fulfillment of learning how to fly and then surviving Vietnam. Why don't we now consider our role in helping each other in our dealings with the VA as well as those pilots who follow us so that they can better understand the challenges ahead?

What we need is simply more dots. I frankly don't know all the questions to ask, but think this is a reasonable base:

If you have suffered a hearing loss from your flight experience, tell me what type of helicopter, in general, you flew; how many hours; what percentage of hearing loss incurred; and if you also have tinnitus.

If you have submitted a claim for hearing loss and/or tinnitus but got denied, what was the basis of denial? Is it still in appeal?

If you have been awarded a disability for hearing loss and/or tinnitus, what percentage hearing loss have you sustained? Percentage of tinnitus? What percentage disability rating? What was the factor that linked your disability to your award? How long did the process take from initial claim to final award?

If you have any advice with my next steps in this appeal, I would be happy to listen to your sage words.

Please send your response to:

Jerry Gladysz



Directory Committee started 20 years ago

The Directory Committee was started by Mike Law 20 years ago to make our extensive data collection available to the membership in useful forms.

To date, we have published 20 membership directories, two historical reference directories, and two CD-ROMs. In addition, we have published directory supplements on our website, along with thousands of pages of history documents related to KIAs.

Law has grown the Membership Directory from a small, thin, paper book-size document to a professionally printed, 592-page book with extensive indexes.

In recent years, each directory has had a theme containing portions of our history.

The 20th year issue was dedicated to flight classes. It was 80 pages thicker than the 2002 directory, with 122 pages of new information. This increase in information was the result of many years of effort and thousands of hours of volunteer time to collect and computerize flight class lists, acquire databases from the military, and organize it into a usable format.

In addition to the flight class work by many volun-

teers over the years, the 2003 directory also includes for the first time all U.S. men we believe served in the Vietnam War as helicopter pilots.

This information was obtained from the Pentagon based on helicopter MOS's from all services.

As you can see, we are missing flight class and Vietnam unit information for many of these men. Please take your flight class graduation programs and Vietnam orders and check them against this directory. If your flight class information or unit is missing for your buddies, please send a copy of your class graduation program and/or orders to me so we can add the information.

The 2004 Membership Directory will be dedicated to the Order of Battle for helicopter units in the Vietnam War.

Stan Gause is updating our combat unit information for this publication. If you have information that can help Stan, please contact him at [redacted]

Gary Roush
Chairman, Directory Committee

w [redacted]

Job description lacking for historian

MIKE SLONIKER
VHPA HISTORIAN

At the 1998 VHPA in Fort Worth, I was asked to take the position of historian.

I quickly learned the job is what you make of it. There is no job description.

My previous experience with the historical aspect of the VHPA was with Mike Law in the preparation of the 1994 Membership Directory's subject, Lam Son 719, and with assisting Gary Roush with DoD offices who would share Vietnam-era information for his database.

Since then I have learned the compilation of the VHPA history is totally dependent on member input.

In 1998, the late Ron Timberlake was asked to put together the Easter Offensive history for III Corps. I worked with Ron on this because of my experience in A/229th, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry, a sister unit of his, which was F Troop, 9th Cavalry.

We shared many of the experiences, in the same places, fall of Bu Dop, fall of Loc Ninh, support of the surrounded city of An Loc, but from a different perspective, mine being slicks and his being Air Cav guns.

Ron really did an outstanding job, but died on May 5, 1999, so I took over the effort.

I used the 1999 reunion at Nashville to spend the entire time interviewing members of the 361st Aerial Company, Escort (Pink Panthers) who flew support around Ben

Het and Dak To when they fell in II Corps, members of F Troop, 8th Cavalry, who flew support around Camp Carroll when it fell in I Corps, F Troop, 4th Cavalry, who also flew some key lifesaving missions in and around Quang Tri, 48th Assault Helicopter Company, who flew in the same fights, and the composite company at DaNang.

In the middle of all this, I kept getting stories about the SS11 Mike Models that were sent over from Fort Bragg, the USMC units that flew combat assaults from Helicopter Carriers off shore in CH-53s, and D Troop 17th Cavalry. I had never read about these units before.

From this, I learned the only way to learn about history is to compile it from the members of the VHPA.

For 1999, I submitted the Easter Offensive that was used in the directory, with the cover being the Joe Kline

picture of Mike Brown's Blue Max Aerial Rocket Artillery Cobra losing its tailboom to an SA-7 on June 20, 1972, near Tan Khe at 4,400 feet.

Many VHPA members sent me e-mails about other SA-7 hits on Cobras in 1972, one being VHPA member Bob Monette. This information was passed to the Aviation Electronics Systems program manager at Aviation and Missile Command, Huntsville, AL, prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom at their request after having found the shutdown information on the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crewmember Net (VHFCN) webpage.

For 2000, the membership supported a compilation of Units North of DaNang. This was a great compilation because it documents the movement of the 1st Cavalry from II Corps to I Corps during Tet 1968, and other contributions showing the formation of the 101st Aviation Group.

The beginning history of the 4/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery was developed in that effort by Mike Brokovich and Jack Tabor, who were in the unit when it formed at Forts Bragg and Sill, respectively, and flew from there to the West Coast.

In 2001, I was contacted by the Ollie North War Stories producer concerning Mike Brown's event which ended up being shown on Fox News in June 2002.

For the 44 minutes of that broadcast, retired Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, retired Lt. Col. Bruce Crandall, retired Lt. Gen. Harry Kinnard, Col. John Herren, Mike Brown and I were each interviewed for two hours.

So 12 hours of information translated to 44 minutes of airtime. I can vouch for the accuracy of the producer and crew in the presentation of that piece.

Since then, the same producer has used the data I have compiled or the network I have compiled for last month's Oliver North's War Story concerning Fire Base Ripcord and is working on another War Story episode on the Easter Offensive.

In 2001, I was contacted by Jack Swift, a reporter for

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Roush heads Database Committee

Current active members of the Database Committee are Gary Roush, chairman; Stan Gause, combat unit database; Bert Adams, Army SSN search; and Mike Law, Vietnam helicopter records. Many others have helped in the past.

The VHPA Database Committee has been in operation for 20 years. It was started by Mike Law at the very beginning of the VHPA with a list of the original 66 members and about 1,600 KIAs from the Army Aviation Museum.

These two databases have grown to 40,000 potential members and 6,839 KIA helicopter pilots, crew members and passengers.

The first assignment Mike gave me when I volunteered to help at my first reunion in Washington, DC, in 1986 was to identify all of our KIAs.

This began my 18-year trek of writing Freedom of Information Air Cavalry Troop (FOIA) requests, visits to the National Archives, Fort Rucker, Wright Patterson Air Force Base and many other places to acquire our historical data.

We now have more Vietnam War helicopter and crew information than any other source.

Mike and I, with assistance from many others, have now accumulated millions of electronic records.

Since the Vietnam War saw the first use of computers to collect, store and manipulate data, we have the unique capability of acquiring information in an easy to use form.

Easy to use is relative since most of this information arrived on 12-inch IBM computer tape reels.

The challenge was to find a way to transfer this

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Newspaper reporter makes contact

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the Norfolk newspaper, concerning an impending trip he was going to make to Laos with a recovery team looking for the crash site of the commander of B/101, Jack Barker who went down on March 20, 1971.

I gave Swift an update copy of the Lam Son 719 piece done in 1994 and continuously updated with pictures and new information. He used that information, plus a CD I made from audio tapes in LS 719 that had Barker's voice on it. The tapes were made by 174th Assault Helicopter Company member, Don Peterson, who I was informed died in 1996.

Swift's book, "Where They Lay," published this year, is a strong recollection of the events, then, now, and the other B/101 experience of the events leading up to that shootdown. Swift has written one of the best descriptions of the RLO/WO working experience, I have ever read.

Very accurate, detailed and to the point. This book could not have been written without the support of VHPA members who served in B/101 and C/101.

In October 2003, I was contacted by Ted Duvall, a Discovery Channel producer, who wanted to do a documentary on Lam Son 719 focusing on one company size unit.

I gave him the LS 719 load, plus the audio tapes that are converted to CD. We discussed where different members of the companies/troops/batteries were today, and he picked the 48th Assault Helicopter Company, mainly because of the picture of LZ Lolo taken by Cliff Whiting on March 5, 1971, two days after the chaos on Lolo on March 3, 1971.

He contacted the Fort Rucker historian, Jim Williams, secured use of the Aviation Museum as a backdrop for the

interviews and interviewed the former commander of the 48th in Laos, Bob Bunting, now the Mayor of Ozark, AL; CW5 Steve Knowles, a Joker WO1 aircraft commander then, and others.

The interviews are over, the documentary is being compiled to fit in the allotted time used by the media which is usually 44 minutes of data for a 60-minute production.

In 2000, Tom Payne established a VHPA working relationship with Texas Tech University's Vietnam Archives, and began sending our information for them to catalogue.

I have been sending many boxes of information to that organization since 2001. It does no good sitting around my house, when others could benefit from it.

So far, three boxes weighing 40 pounds each, have been sent. The data in the boxes came from research done by VHCMA member Don Armstrong and former L Company 75th LRRP, Randy White, who know how to obtain information from the National Archives Repository Agency, NARA, in Silver Springs MD. One misconception is that anyone can go there and get copies of the data.

To get the proper information requires coordination with the NARA staff, and some cash. There is a charge for copying the material. All Lam Son 719 logs totaled more than \$400 in copying. That information is now at Texas Tech.

Many VHPA members are learning how to transfer their 8 mm movies on VHS tapes to DVDs. I will be receiving one soon, that will show a 228th Chinook crashing in the A Shau in 1968 on the same day the CH-54 from the 478th was shot down. The 361st has successfully transferred some of their tapes to DVD.

VHPA not set up to operate chapters

The Chapter Policy has been revised and, while not in specific detail, the elements of that change were discussed in a prior *Newsletter* column.

During the past few weeks there have been a few requests to explain why a change was made.

The VHPA was formed as a social organization. The reunion; the *Newsletter*; and the directory were the "deliverables." It became evident, over time, that there were members that desired to meet more than once a year and National supported that effort by providing area specific names that organizers could use to form "chapters."

The VHPA By Laws did address the subject of chapters and did detail specific guidelines that a chapter must follow to be recognized.

Keeping in mind the original intent of the VHPA, the monitoring of these groups to the guidelines was not something that National was staffed to do and, even if they were, the chapters, while chartered, did not, in all cases, feel an obligation to maintain their chapters to those guidelines.

The change gives the chapters the ability to do what they originally set out to do, get together more than once a year. The VHPA guidelines restricted who could be a member or how long a chapter officer could hold office. Why should the VHPA care?

To quote an anonymous letter that I received last week, "The Chapters have been dissolved or relegated to their own devices without excessive restrictive covenants prescribed by the Executive Council."

Since chapters were formed as independent organizations, the EC did not "dissolve" the chapters; the EC eliminated the status of chapters within the VHPA.

Local or regional chapters continue to exist as independent organizations bound only by State and Federal statutes that govern C19 organizations.

The VHPA no longer has "officially recognized or affiliated chapters" and chapters/organizations no longer have VHPA requirements to meet or EC oversight to deal with. This also eliminates any legal or financial exposure between the VHPA and local organizations or between the local organizations themselves.

I was one of the founders of the Southern California Chapter and, while the concept seemed well-intended and the seed money and lists of prospective members were welcome, some of the VHPA requirements made it very difficult to maintain the health of the local organization.

VHPA will still provide any help they can to assist groups to find additional members; names lists by area, for example. The chapter websites will still be linked from the VHPA Home Page.

The list of "Chapters" has been changed to "Related Websites."

We are trying to get back to the basic reason the organization was formed.

When we take on more than we can manage, it dilutes our focus and no one succeeds. VHPA was not formed to create, monitor and/or manage chapters.

— Dana Young, President

Committee makes technology work

The Technology Committee's areas of emphasis are to automate the flow of information to and within Headquarters, and to maintain our various websites.

For many of you, this information flow becomes apparent when you register online for the national annual reunion. Your online information gets downloaded into the reunion database at HQ, where the staff handles the various associated chores such as sending you a hotel reservation form and printing your name badge(s).

Unfortunately, this year's hotel wasn't able to accommodate online room reservations so we have been compelled to revert to our manual system.

Also, as part of this "online flow," Headquarters periodically uploads an updated membership roster so you can access the online system and have much of the information pre-filled for you. HQ also updates the Reunion Morning Report on the main website (www.vhpa.org) several times each week; it is also linked to the reunion website (www.vhpareunion.org).

Mike Law has been off doing missionary work in a land far away and in his absence Gary Roush and David Haldeman have filled in to keep the Headquarters software

functioning properly.

Nancy Suhrie, the new office manager at Headquarters, comes from an IT (information technology) background and this has been a tremendous help in communicating with the "geeks" and identifying problems in need of correction.

Roush maintains our main website (www.vhpa.org) and does so in an outstanding manner. If you haven't visited it lately, do so as there is a wealth of information and connections there.

I maintain the registration website, the Executive Council Forum (www.vhpa.info), and the electronic message board. If you haven't visited the EC Forum, do so. The EC has posted much useful information there as a method of keeping members informed of details of running the organization.

My thanks to all on the Technology Committee who were mentioned above for helping us keep the "electronic side" of the VHPA functioning smoothly.

Charles Holley
Chairman
Technology Committee

Transferring older data challenging

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"ancient" main frame data into today's personal computers. This was done with the help of my employer, Corning Inc.'s IT Department.

Here is a sampling of the databases we have collected through FOIA from the government:

- HELODAB — Survivability/Vulnerability Information Analysis Center Helicopter database.
- ACCIDFIN — Army Aviation Safety Center database.
- HELILOSS — Defense Intelligence Agency Helicopter Loss database.
- REFNO — Defense Intelligence Agency Reference Notes.
- AVDAC — Survivability/Vulnerability Information Analysis Center AVDAC database.
- VET — agent orange database from the Pentagon.
- GOLDBOOK — monthly Army helicopter records from the Pentagon.
- CACF — Combat Area Casualty File (The Wall data) from the National Archives.
- MOS — Military Occupational Specialty file from the Pentagon.

We also have built several databases from scratch because the information is not available from the government in electronic form. These databases had data manually entered by many volunteers.

They are: FLIGHT CLASS, CALLSIGN, COMBAT UNIT, DATDDT (died after tour, died during training), HISTORY, FLIGHT CLASS PICTURES, and WARSTORIES.

These databases have been consolidated and/or connected by computer programs using FoxPro to make them usable for research and publication.

Some of the information is on our website and most of it is published in the Vietnam Helicopter History CD-

ROM and the two Historical Reference Directories that are available for sale from VHPA HQ.

Since we have pretty much exhausted the information available from the government, we now need your help.

Since one of the main objectives of the VHPA is to identify all potential members, we need copies of orders from flight school or Vietnam with potential members SSNs.

With a SSN, we can get a current address and therefore be able to recruit that person.

The 2003 Membership Directory now lists everyone we believe flew in the Vietnam War, so please look up your flight class and unit to be sure everyone is properly listed. If not, please send us copies of orders that identify them with your class or unit.

All of this data has been very useful, not only to inform VHPA members through our publications, but also thousands of non-members. I answer hundreds of requests per week for information and research assistance.

These have included research and information for the FBI to prosecute fakes, for museums about helicopters now on display, for many documentary films, for the Joint Task Force/Full Accounting searching for MIA remains in Southeast Asia, for congressional committees, for the Department of the Army, for TV programs, and for thousands of individuals.

It has been especially rewarding to help people find someone from their past and to help expose fakes.

A primary need right now is collecting SSNs especially for USMC, Air Force and Navy helicopter pilots. We also need SSNs for an additional 11,600 Army pilots.

If you live close to Lubbock, TX, and would like to help by doing research at Texas Tech, please contact me.

Gary Roush

Chairman, Database Committee

Public relations

Fritz makes contact with news media prior to VHPA reunions

As public relations chairman for the VHPA, I get involved with various media contacts around the country as we prepare for our reunions.

This results in television, radio and print coverage of our reunions, and we get some new "walk-in" members at the reunion because of this coverage.

Press releases explaining the who, when, what and where of the reunion are sent out; some respond by publishing the reunion dates and a brief outline of our purpose and goals (per our VHPA Constitution).

Others respond with publicity and they send a reporter to meet me at the reunion for interviews that subsequently are published or put on TV or radio.

The best results come from good coordination between me and the local members who best know the media outlets in the area surrounding our reunion site.

Additionally, I am usually the initial contact for media types who contact VHPA Headquarters. In this capacity, I act as a traffic director to let them know who to contact within VHPA when they are not looking just for news items.

As assistant *Newsletter* editor, I proofread *The VHPA Newsletter* and I often submit articles from the local chapter here in Sacramento. This is something each member for a local chapter should be doing, too: E-mail articles

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Taps

David R. Bailey

Retired CW4 David R. Bailey died Feb. 1 after a lengthy battle with multiple types of cancer.

Bailey graduated with Class 69-17, served two tours in Vietnam. His first tour, in 1969-70, was with the 190th Assault Helicopter Company; his second tour, in 1973, was with the 57th Assault Helicopter Company.

In 1989, Bailey retired from the Army after 20 years of active duty during which he served rotary and fixed-wing tours in Germany, Korea, Central America and the United States.

After retirement, Bailey returned to his hometown of Roberta, GA, where he taught school for 11 years.

He also was serving his third term as mayor of Roberta at the time of his death.

Bailey played a mean game of golf, always lit up a room with a wonderful ear-to-ear smile and greatly enjoyed the comradeship offered by the VHPA.

Last December, a television crew from Albany, GA, as part of a series entitled Hometown Heroes, spent the day with Bailey and his wife, Pat, doing a story on their lives, Bailey's fight with cancer and his service to our country and to his hometown of Roberta.

The part that sticks in the mind of everyone who has seen the broadcast is Bailey saying over and over again that "I wouldn't change a thing about my life, and I would gladly do it all again."

Pretty classy words from someone who knew he was dying from a 30-year old exposure to Agent Orange. I often think that somehow the words "The thanks of a grateful nation" don't even come close to expressing how much we all owe to some men.

Bailey is survived by his wife; and his daughters, Jenny and Katy.

David, you will be truly missed by all those lucky enough to have known you.

— David Adams
Sabre 75

Russell D. "Rock" Capps Sr.

Retired CW4 Russell D. "Rock" Capps Sr., 63, of Bluffdale, Utah, died Dec. 5 at the VA Hospital in Salt Lake City after 18 months combating cancer.

A master parachute rigger, a master Army parachutist and civilian skydiver, as well as a master aviator, he was a true warrior in the purest sense. He dedicated more than 30 years of honorable service to his country.

His battle with cancer began after his initial diagnosis and the doctor told him, "You can go home Mr. Capps, we're sorry but you only have six weeks to live!"

He, of course, would not accept that as an answer and fought the medical bureaucracy, demanding some medical



WO1 Russell D. "Rock" Capps Sr. readies his AH-1G Cobra for a daily mission with D Company, 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, Camp Evans, South Vietnam, in 1970.

action, even experimental, to fight his illness.

There was never a point in Rock's life when he would ever have "just gone home!" He never gave up without a fight and, even though the end was inevitable, he maintained his dignity, pride, and his undying love for his family.

Rock joined the Utah National Guard and, after completing Special Forces Training, was assigned to the Parachute Rigging Section of the 19th Special Forces, serving for more than 12 years.

In May 1969, he entered flight school at Fort Wolters where he was continually in a leadership role in Class 69-47, 2nd WOC Company (Green Hats).

Rock received his pilot wings in February 1970 at Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, GA. He remained at Hunter an additional two months to attend advanced aircraft qualification training in the AH-1G Cobra.

In May 1970, Rock was sent to Vietnam, where he was assigned to the aerial weapons platoon "D" Company "Redskins," 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division at Camp Evans in Northern I Corps.

While assigned to the Redskins, Rock, as usual, displayed the remarkable leadership and courage that won him the Silver Star Medal for heroism, along with three Distinguished Flying Crosses, a Bronze Star Medal, two

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Taps

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Purple Heart Medals and more than 40 Air Medals, to name the highest of his many awards.

Upon his return from Vietnam, Rock attended the Aviation Safety Officers Course at the University of Southern California and was an outstanding ASO his entire career.

He had a long and varied career, from flying medical evacuation helicopters at Fort Bliss, TX, to flying search and rescue missions during the Mount St. Helen's eruption in Washington State.

Rock was a graduate of the Warrant Officers Advanced and Senior Courses. He distinguished himself throughout his career by winning numerous Army writing awards for the articles he wrote for the *Aviation Digest* and the *AAAA Magazine*.

Later in his career, Rock was selected for fixed-wing qualification, flying the U-21 and the C-12. During this time, Rock extended his professional military qualifications by obtaining FAA commercial rotary wing and fixed wing multi-engine licenses, as well as airline transport pilot certification.

He flew corporate jets for a short time out of Boeing Field in Seattle after retiring from the Army.

Rock earned his bachelors degree in recreational management from the University of Utah in 1992 and worked with the BLM Wild Horse Program.

He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Jeanne, and their three children, Tracy, Jenny and Russ Capps Jr.

— Ray Hixson, a lifelong friend.
Class 69-47 and Redskin

William Gurski

William "Bill" Gurski, 56, died on June 28 after a

lengthy illness.

Gurski was an active member of the VHPA and attended many reunions.

He was instrumental in organizing a well-attended reunion of the 4/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery at Fort Worth in 1998, and was always working to make the Aerial Rocket Artillery TOC a well-attended venue at VHPA reunions.

Gurski was a resident of Roeton Community, AL, where he made his home with wife Carole.

He was born in New Jersey on Dec. 6, 1946, and was a graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Gurski graduated from flight school with Class 68-524.

His service in Vietnam during 1969-70 was with "The Toros," B Battery, 4/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).

Stationed at Camp Eagle in Northern I Corp, his service was recognized by the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart Medal, Bronze Star Medal and numerous Air Medals.

Upon his return from Vietnam, Gurski was stationed at Hunter Liggett Military Reservation, where he flew AH-1G Cobras against F-4's and tanks in a program that developed modern day NOE tactics.

Gurski reported the Cobra could handle the F-4's, but was ineffective against the tanks.

He then returned to Fort Rucker as an instrument instructor. Upon his discharge from active duty as a captain, Gurski went to work for Air Logistics and joined the Alabama National Guard, where he was promoted to the rank of CW4.

Gurski worked as a civilian instrument instructor pilot with Lear-Sigler Inc. at Fort Rucker until grounded by illness.

He is survived by his wife; children, Jerry Wesley Gurski of Montgomery, AL, and Mary Giggie Gurski of Arton, AL.

Fritz also proofreads VHPA Newsletter

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and captioned photos to the *Newsletter* editor about your chapter activities.

Maybe some of us are traveling and wish to join you for your barbecue, fly-in, golf tourney, raft trip or whatever your chapter is doing. We certainly have an interest in what your chapter is doing — if only to try to do it ourselves.

As assistant reunion vendor coordinator, I help Rich Buzen, the man who replaced me as the vendor coordinator for the reunions. We try to ensure quality suppliers have good products of interest to the membership at the reunions.

For more than 21 years I have worn a lot of hats and

been involved in almost every VHPA activity: Reunion vendor coordinator, calendar editor, membership committee, directory editor, Newsletter publishing coordinator, publications manager and coordinator, all six EC chairs, reunion chairman, reunion site selection, and (official) VHPA contractor liaison.

I also have worked extensively with three VHPA contractors. Because I am located not far from our current contractor's office, I am available to the office staff and to the EC to answer questions about who does what, VHPA historical issues, VHPA decision precedents and other various oddball questions. In this role, I defer management decisions to the VHPA EC.

— Ken Fritz

Reunion 2004

VHPA celebrates milestone — 21st reunion

JOE BILITZKE

NATIONAL REUNION CHAIRMAN

We've reached the age of majority.

In July, VHPA celebrates its 21st Annual Reunion. This year we return to our roots, at least as close as the years permit.

Dallas is the place and the Adam's Mark Hotel is the site. As we try to do every year, the tempo and events vary, and the 21st Annual Reunion is no exception.

There are exciting, fascinating, and interesting events planned. There also is an opportunity for you to renew old friendships and meet new fellow pilots and families. See the schedule at a glance on Page 19 of this *Newsletter*.

You're welcome to book your room for an early arrival and enjoy Dallas prior to the official 21st Annual Reunion start date.

Beginning Thursday, July 1, the Registration, Vendor areas, and Mini-Reunions are open all day, every day.

Note this year there is no Early Bird activity scheduled.

We jump right into Day 1 with a welcome reception for first-time attendees (no cost), followed by a Welcome Reception for all registered guests (ticketed event).

This year, the entertainment at the Welcome Reception has been modified to allow for greater interaction by you, fellow pilots and guests. We have a great group scheduled to provide the evening's entertainment. The Julie Bonk Jazz Quintet, featuring singer Sandra Kaye, will play for your listening and dancing pleasure while still enabling the "meet-and-greet" flavor the first night offers.

Day 2 takes care of business. Friday morning is the Annual Business Meeting for all pilots who are current VHPA members in good standing. You neither have to register nor attend the reunion in order to participate in the business meeting. This is the time for you to make your voice and vote lead the way of our organization.

Of course, the best participation is running for office. Those willing to take the plunge will be given the opportunity to present their platform and throw themselves to the electorate.

As always, you'll be voting for a junior member at large and a new vice president. You must be present to vote and this is the time.

Besides the election, you'll be updated on our finances, committee reports, and upcoming reunions. The business meeting is always lively and spirited — be there. Note no mini-reunions are scheduled Friday morning in order to allow maximum participation at the business meeting.

While the pilots are enmeshed in the business of business, our spouses, guests and significant others haven't been forgotten.

It's been a tradition for VHPA to host a brunch and entertainment during the business meeting. This year the practice continues.

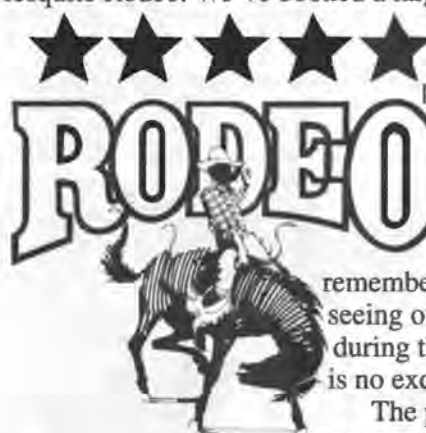
This ticketed event combines a great hotel brunch with wacky entertainment the morning of Friday, July 2. Every year we try to vary the scope of the entertainment and this year is no different.

Mac Fulfer will host the brunch, giving his spirited roundtable on Face Reading. Please see my article on his entertaining skills on Page 21.

Mini-reunions continue Friday afternoon, and Friday evening we get down and dirty. Our senior member at large and Dallas resident Mike Sheuerman absolutely guarantees you'll have the time of your life at the VHPA Mesquite Rodeo. We've booked a large block of tickets,

so VHPA is the "big dog on the porch."

For those of you who attended the Arabian Nights adventure at the Orlando reunion, remember the excitement of seeing our colors on display during the show. The rodeo is no exception.



The price of admission gets you to an air-conditioned arena in air-conditioned buses. You'll then enjoy a sumptuous meal before the event begins. Then sit back and enjoy a real, honest-to-goodness Texas rodeo. Pointy boots optional.

On Day 3, you'll have to choose to attend a mini reunion, spend the day enjoying the sights and events of Dallas, or join the tour to the dedication of the new Fort Wolters National Museum. The tour is an all-day event, with buses to and from Fort Wolters.

Although no building yet exists, you'll participate in history at the groundbreaking ceremony. The Fort Wolters Chapter has scheduled a fine food fest (maybe even some beer) along with the ceremony.

You'll not recognize the place where we all picked up our first pink slips, but we'll take a look around and find some old landmarks.

The buses will get you back to Dallas in time to take a breather, get cleaned up, grab a bite to eat and then . . .

Continued on Page 18

Songs follow return from Wolters

Continued from Page 17

head to the ballroom for a time you'll not soon forget.

Presenting — Vince Vance & the Valiants! Those of us who've had the opportunity to see the Vince Vance show promise your legs will turn to rubber while dancing and listening to the hits of our era.

Vince is non-stop costume changes, songs, and entertainment. His stunning singers, the Valiants, are a sight to behold as they back up Vince and do a few solo numbers.

We've scheduled the group to begin at 9 p.m. in order for you to finish the day's activities and be relaxed to boogie! Add tickets to the Vince Vance show when you register. It'll be a one of a kind experience.

Now you're getting to bed late and getting up early on Sunday — time for golf. The Tour 18 Golf Club represents the top holes from the nation's 18 best golf courses.

Junior member at large Mike Whitten spends his retirement days working at a California golf course. As your golf host, he assures you this fabulous course will challenge and antagonize even the most proficient golfer.

Your ticket includes transportation, a lunch, maybe a few divots, and some prizes for you low handicappers. Space obviously is limited to this event so add it to your registration right now.

Sunday is also the time to continue mini-reunions, perhaps take in a religious service, and start the process to get ready for the closing banquet and dance.

We've been fortunate to avoid the "rubber chicken" entrees that seem to prevail on the hotel circuit. Again this year, you'll have a choice of three meals from which to choose.

As soon as you complete reunion registration at the hotel, you can immediately choose your table for the final banquet. This will allow you to be comfortably assured you're sitting where you want during the closing event.

Again during the banquet, we're trying to hold the speeches, accolades, presentations, and recognitions to a minimum. Of course, the Missing Man tribute is a tradition we're continuing.

We've been fairly successful during past banquets knowing you want to enjoy a great meal then dance until dawn. Both events are again assured.

Our local producer has been involved in Dallas show biz since World War II.

O.D. O'Donnell presents The Roof Raisers for our final night dance and entertainment band. The group's repertoire of '60s and '70s music will certainly keep you dancing.

Continued on Page 19



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Reunion events

Wednesday, June 30

All day

- Early Bird arrivals.
- Early Bird registration at Skybridge Registration.

Thursday, July 1

All day

- Main arrival.
- Registration at Skybridge Registration.
- Vendors rooms open in Austin Ballroom 3.
- FNG Reception in Lone Star Ballroom C.

7-11 p.m.

- Welcome Reception in Lone Star Ballrooms A&B. Featuring the Julie Bonk Jazz Quintet.

Friday, July 2

All day

- Arrivals.
- Registration at Skybridge Registration.
- Pilots' Business Meeting in Lone Star Ballrooms A&B. Coffee will be provided.
- Ladies'/Guests' function in San Antonio Ballroom. Featuring Mac Fulfer, face reader. Brunch provided.

Noon-5 p.m.

- Vendor room open in Austin Ballroom 3.

5 p.m.

- Mesquite Rodeo at Rodeo Arena. Food and beverage service provided.

Saturday, July 3

All day

- Arrivals.
- Registration at Skybridge Registration.
- Vendor room open in Austin Ballroom 3.

9 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Entertainment by Vince Vance & the Valiants in Lone Star Ballroom A&B.

Sunday, July 4

All day

- Arrivals.
- Golf at the Tour 18 Golf Club.
- Registration at Skybridge Registration.
- Vendor room open in Austin Ballroom 3.

5:45-midnight

- Closing Banquet/Dance in Lone Star Ballroom. Featuring The Roof Raisers.

Monday, July 5

All day

- Guests depart.

Tour 18 course features first class amenities

Fore!

To all golfers, it's a warning to be looking for a ball coming your way.

We have a short time left before we will meet at Tour 18 for our annual golf tournament in Dallas.

Tour 18 is a beautiful golf course with first class treatment and amenities that will make your mind wander to the original layouts that you may have played or seen on television.

From the first hole, which is a short downhill par 4 that if the wind is at your back you might think about driving to the simple par 3 ninth (island green) that you think is real easy, to Amen Corner at the finish you will have

great time.

As always, we will have a shotgun start at 8 a.m., with a great lunch and awards presentation in the clubhouse before boarding buses to return to the Adams Mark Hotel.

I have written letters to several organizations for hole sponsorships and I hope to have some great news in the last *Newsletter* before the reunion.

If any of you want to sponsor a hole, please let me know as soon as possible so we can get signs made and show you the recognition you deserve for helping out. Send me an e-mail at [REDACTED]

— Mike Whitten, Golf Chairman

VHPA reunion comes to an end on Monday

Continued from Page 18

The mini bars placed strategically around the room and priced for VHPA add to the evening.

Monday, July 5 also is Day 5 and, sorry to say, time to crank and yank. It has been a great 21st Annual Reunion and now time to begin planning to attend our 22nd Annual Reunion in another favorite city. We look forward to

seeing everyone in Dallas.

Regardless if this is your first reunion, or you've made every reunion, join us for a great time of renewed friendships, making new ones, and most of all give support to the greatest, most unique veteran's organization, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. See you in Dallas.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

21st Annual Reunion • Dallas, TX • July 1-4, 2004

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

Register online at www.vhpareunion.com or mail completed form to:

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

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

Member name:	Member No.:	Hotel room? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Flight class:	Chapter:	
1st combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
2nd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
3rd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
Address:	Address change? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
City:	State:	Zip:
E-mail address:	Telephone: ()	Fax: ()
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Guest name:	Hometown:	18 or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No

A hotel registration form will be sent to you with your registration receipt. The hotel registration form must be completed and mailed to the Adams Mark Hotel. Telephone and fax requests will not be honored.

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total	REUNION T-SHIRTS		
Registration through 4/30/2004*		@ \$45.00		QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
Registration after 4/30/2004*		@ \$55.00			S@\$15.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXX	XXXXX			M@\$15.00	
Welcome reception for first reunion attendees only (July 1)		No charge			L@\$15.00	
Welcome reception (July 1)		@ \$15.00			XL@\$15.00	
Spouse/guest entertainment (Brunch & Face Readers) (July 2)		@ \$25.00			XXL@\$17.00	
Mesquite Rodeo and Buffet Dinner (July 2)		@ \$35.00			XXXL@\$19.00	
Fort Wolters Tour/National Museum Ceremony (July 3)		@ \$25.00		SIDEBAR TOTAL:		
Show and Dance (July 3)		@ \$20.00		QTY.	BANQUET MEAL	
Golf Tournament (July 4)		@ \$95.00			Beef	
Final Banquet/Dance (July 4)		@ \$55.00			Fish	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$36.00			Vegetarian	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	3 years	@ \$90.00		Membership Fund contribution:		
Life membership		@ \$450.00		\$ _____		
GRAND TOTAL				Scholarship Fund contribution:		
				\$ _____		
				General Fund contribution:		
				\$ _____		
				Vietnam War Museum contribution:		
				\$ _____		

*Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

MC or Visa No: _____ Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2004" with form.

Face reading

Spouses to be shown how to read expressions

JOE BILITZKE

NATION REUNION CHAIRMAN

You've seen the movie. The grainy, black-and-white film showing the prisoner sweating under a single light bulb.

The good cop and bad cop combining to pull the last bit of information from tight lips.

If only they were acquainted with face reading.

It's the early 17th century in a young America. The flames are licking at the feet of the struggling wench roped to an upright pole. She's accused of witchcraft and her accusers have to rely on divine intervention to decide her guilt or innocence.

They knew no just deity would allow an innocent to burn at the stake — if she was innocent. There was an easier way, of course. Practice face reading on those accused of practicing the dark arts.

Face reading? What the heck is face reading?

Pilots beware! While you're attending that exciting, informative and challenging annual business meeting during the reunion, your significant other is learning things you've never dreamed — only feared.

On Friday morning, July 2, those who have chosen to attend the brunch (scheduled simultaneously during the pilots' business meeting), will be informed, challenged and entertained while enjoying a sumptuous hotel brunch. All this combined in a one price ticket.

Face reading? You'll love it! It's literally what it says. You'll learn that body language, especially facial expressions, says a whole lot more than most verbal communication.

Of course, there isn't a single spouse who isn't able to "read" a pilot like an up-to-date IFR chart. But at the conclusion of the morning, you'll know exactly what that lip twitch means when he gives you an answer.

Just think, before the words leave your lips, you'll know exactly what his response will be. Questions like, "Do you like the red one or the blue one?" "Does this

dress make me look fat?" "Do you like my hair this length?" "My parents would like to visit for six weeks; is that okay with you?"

Yes these questions and more take on a whole new meaning because you'll be a confident, informed face reader!

While enjoying an excellent brunch, you'll learn that face reading is a combination of art and science. Hosting the event will be a master face reader, Mac Fulfer.

Fulfer is a Texan, graduating from Texas Christian University and earning a degree with a double major in government and history, minoring in psychology. He later graduated from the University of Texas with a law degree.

The following is taken from Mac's biography:

In 1985 Mac became interested in physiognomy or "face reading" as a tool for successful jury selection. After years of practice and study, he wrote *Amazing Face Reading: an encyclopedic guide to reading faces*.

One of his most notable periodicals is an article on face reading as a tool in organization meetings. It was published in the *Journal for Organizational Excellence*, the title being, "Nonverbal Communication: How to Read What's Plain as the Nose . . . or Eyelid . . . or Chin . . . on Their Faces."

Mac's use of face reading has provided a surprising breakthrough in communication. The science has proven helpful in creating better rapport and eliminating bias and discrimination. It has earned Mac a spot for three consecutive years as a speaker at the national conference of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Don't get the misconception that this is a "lecture," "workshop" or "school course." Mac Fulfer is a funny, ingenious, and engaging presenter. You'll have a ball as he describes his methods and experiences.

While your pilot is engaged in the serious business of VHPA business, take a break and enjoy face reading. We're certain you'll have a great meal, a grand experience, and just wait until you see the look on his face. From then on, you'll know exactly what it means.

Museum dedication at Fort Wolters

The National Vietnam War Museum dedication ceremony for the museum property on July 3 is shaping up to be even better than the Fort Wolters trip in 1998.

The event includes all the barbecue you can eat, and all the beverages (beer, water and soft drinks) you can consume, along with entertainment and equipment displays.

And, at \$25 a head, including round trip transporta-

tion, it's a real bargain. As of the last accounting, 49 percent of the registrants for the reunion have opted to attend the dedication ceremony.

We'll just throw a couple more longhorns on the barbecue if the crowd gets too large.

The dedication ceremony will start at 11 a.m. and last about 30 minutes. After that, you will be free to board the

Continued on Page 22

Thoughts of banquets stir memories

HAYDEN "PAPPY" JONES
VHPA SECRETARY/TREASURER

When I was asked to write an article for the *Newsletter* about reunion banquets, I thought about all the banquets at all the reunions I have attended in the past 17 years.

I thought about some of the comments I'd heard in elevators or sitting at one of the bars. Things like, "I don't wear ties any more" or "there is always a hassle with seating" or "the food is never good" or "there are never enough bars" or "it takes too long to get a drink." All these complaints may seem valid to some.

I think back to the banquets we all attended at the Fort Wolters mess halls, the 10 "pull-ups" we had to do before we could stand in line with our classmates. At parade rest!

I remember the banquet at the Fort Rucker Officers Club we all attended after being pinned with bars and wings. Uniform of the day: Dress blues.

Some of the most memorable events of past reunions have taken place during the banquets.

In Houston, Bob Beaudreau and Jesse Miller put together a video called *Above the Finest*. It was used again in Reno.

At Fort Worth the first time, Bob Mason's *The Race* and Bell Helicopter's presentation of the Cobra to the organization that is still used today as a symbol of the

VHPA office of the president.

Who can forget the Mardi Gras Parade in New Orleans?

Why do we have a banquet at all? Why do we dress and wear a tie. There has to be more to it than giving the ladies a reason to dress up.

Seems to me that sitting to mess or dine with classmates and comrades in arms has been a tradition from the beginning.

But a banquet at the reunion each year has other special meanings. It's the culmination of the reunion and an opportunity for the Executive Committee to introduce the newly elected members to the membership as a whole, to pass the symbol of office to the in-coming president.

But more than that, it's an opportunity for the entire membership present to honor those who cannot attend, to honor our dead in a way only we can. We do it with our Missing Man ceremony.

Our Missing Man ceremony outshines other organizations. Nobody does it better, not the VFW, American Legion, nobody.

So, consider this an appeal to come to the reunions. Renew old friendships with your buddies. Tell war stories. Have fun. And, attend the banquet.

Let the ladies dress, put on a tie. And, should you, like me, at some time during the evening, shed a tear, feel free to use your tie to wipe it from your cheek.

OH-23D, TH-55A available for photos

Continued from Page 21

buses for a quick area tour or start eating.

For those of us who can still fit into the seat, we plan to have an OH-23D and a TH-55A, in school paint, for photo opportunities, plus other military hardware, as available.

We've also invited Southern Airways to join us. You may even run into your old IP. A highly placed administration official has been invited to address the gathering, but we don't know as yet if his schedule will permit.

Radio Ranch, a local radio station, will be operating a remote broadcast from the site; we'll have taped music for entertainment, and we'll have a large tent so that you can eat in comfort, out of the Texas summer sun.

Expect the weather to be hot, because it's July in

North Texas, so dress accordingly — shorts and T-shirts are perfectly acceptable. We'll do everything we can to make it as comfortable as possible at the museum grounds.

The ride from Dallas to the museum site will be in air-conditioned buses. We plan to staff each bus with a knowledgeable bus commander to ensure you arrive at the correct location.

We're also making accommodations for "Pappy" Jones and the VHPA motorcyclists to corral their bikes.

For those who are so inclined, side trips to Fort Wolters, downtown Mineral Wells, and the Mineral Wells Airport will be available, in the same air-conditioned buses, with a knowledgeable tour guide to point out the sites, and sights.

— Edd Luttenberger

Attend Reunion 2004 in Dallas July 1-4

VHPA Products

You may order past calendars with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-8472 or online at www.vhpa.org

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Vietnam Helicopter History CD (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
Grand total				\$

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Complete this form, then mail or fax it to:

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How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

**NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$150 each.*