



The VHPA Newsletter

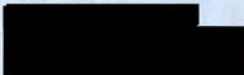
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

September/October 2003 Vol. 21, No. 5



WO Bill Perkins grips the controls of a hoist in his UH-1H medical evacuation helicopter at LZ Uplift in South Vietnam's Binh Dinh Province in the summer of 1970. The aircraft, on which Perkins was copilot, later would be shot down during a medevac mission near Uplift. Story on Page 21.

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From the President

Last issue I referred to my review of old issues of the *Newsletter* and how much of what was written was, in some cases, written again. What I derived from that review was that our Association has grown and prospered by relying on some basic principles.

The first, we are, in fact, a truly unique population. We experienced something that will, we hope, never be experienced again, and the second, we have no outside agenda. We are here to maintain contact with those that shared the experience. Nothing more, nothing less.

During the 20 years there have been several changes that have, for the most part, been successful and some that, for a variety of reasons, have not.

Your current Executive Council is working to move us back to those basics that have been successful and to do a course correction to get us away from those that have not.

Membership is the key to our success. To find everyone who is eligible to join, encourage them to join and participate in reunions, and maintain accurate contact information is, to borrow a phrase, "Job One."



Dana Young

Membership Directory larger

When you see this year's *Membership Directory*, you will note that it is considerably larger. We actually had to edit out some of the peripheral information to stay within our page limit.

One of the values of the *Directory* is that it affords you the opportunity to find fellow members with whom you served on active duty.

Another, a source for members who may desire to get together more than once a year. VHPA chapters were the result of members in various geographic locations who felt that once a year was not enough.

In an effort to support chapters, the VHPA National organization developed a standard for chapters, published guidelines to assist members in forming and assisted in

locating potential members by providing lists of members who, because of location, might be interested in participating in chapter activities. Prior to issuing these guidelines, there were already several groups in place that already had demonstrated how a successful chapter could operate.

Some restrictions unenforceable

Sometimes good intentions get in the way of reality. The strict requirements provided by National placed restrictions on chapters that were not only unenforceable, but also were inconsistent with the desires of the chapter members.

Some wanted to allow members who would be in violation of the guidelines, some wanted to vary the length of terms of office and some did not choose to comply with the reporting requirements levied on them by National.

Now what? We still want to be an enabler for those who want to get together more often than once a year, but we don't want to dictate what a chapter or group of VHPA members can, or cannot do.

The chapter policy has been revised to remove them from VHPA oversight. The services provided by National will still be available; names lists, examples of how to file for tax exempt status, for example. National will no longer attempt to legislate how groups will operate.

There are obvious advantages to this change, not the least of which is that we did not have the manpower to manage a formal chapter process. The other limits any financial liability that could inadvertently be created by the chapters or by VHPA National.

There are other changes in the works.

In the last issue I mentioned that, as we have grown, we have limited where we can meet. To expand our potential sites, we have started negotiations with a major hotel chain that has the capacity to support our Association in locations that previously have been inaccessible to us because of the limits we have placed on what we will accept for room rates and our requirement to be in one facility. I will keep you updated on our progress but, based on what we have seen so far, I think you will be excited when you see the results of this effort.

Site support is another area we are looking to improve. The benefits of a "third party" providing assis-

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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 (813) 293-0708 or email Mike@resdrywall.com Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

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

THE VHPA NEWSLETTER (ISSN 0896-3037)(USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly — February, April, June, August, October and December. Annual dues are \$36 or Life membership for \$450. Yearly subscription for nonmembers is \$36. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698. Periodicals Publications postage paid at Citrus Heights, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE VHPA NEWSLETTER, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698.

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This newsletter contains member privacy information the VHPA considers proprietary and confidential.

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.

VHPA receives IRS tax exemption letter

The VHPA is a veterans organization that is exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Many states exempt such organizations from state sales tax on purchases as well. For example, last year in Florida we applied for and received a state sales tax exemption that enabled the VHPA to avoid sales taxes on purchases of goods and services during our annual reunion in Orlando.

We hope to achieve a similar state tax exemption for our reunion in Dallas in July 2004.

On Nov. 3, the Internal Revenue Service issued to the VHPA a new exemption letter that reconfirmed our tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(19) organization.

The IRS had previously issued an exemption letter in 1984 prior to VHPA's incorporation.

One of the provisions in the new IRS letter is that since the VHPA's members are war veterans, contributions to the VHPA are tax deductible to contributors. Therefore, donations to the VHPA for specific projects, such as our scholarship program, new membership location efforts and the like, are tax deductible.

Under provisions of the tax code and applicable treasury regulations, deductible contributions include our membership dues.

The IRS requires written acknowledgment to the donor from the VHPA for contributions of \$250 or more. For those who have paid life member dues of \$450 this year, the VHPA will provide letters acknowledging those contributions.

You may want to consult your tax advisor on deductions for prior years' dues and contributions, and whether to file amended returns, as the IRS letter does not address retroactivity. The VHPA cannot give you tax advice on how to address this issue.

Thus, this might be a good time to renew your membership or upgrade to "life" status, prior to the end of the year!

The renewal and life member forms are available on the VHPA website: www.vhpa.org, and you can fill out the form and pay by credit card or check by Dec. 31 to make your dues deductible for tax year 2003.

— Dave Rittman

Newsletter deadlines

- January/February 2004 issue — Dec. 1, 2003
- March/April 2004 issue — Feb. 1, 2004
- May/June 2004 issue — April 1, 2004
- July/August 2004 issue — May 1, 2004
- September/October 2004 issue — Aug. 1, 2004
- November/December 2004 issue — Oct. 1, 2004

Letters

Bandit flag shows up down under

My name is Peter Seaward and I served as a sergeant in the Australian Army at Bien Hoa in 1965-66. I was an electronics technician at the 1st Australian Logistic Support Company, supporting the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment attached to the (U.S.) 173rd Airborne.

While on R&R in Bangkok, a couple of us Aussies became friends with a Ron Madsen, who was a warrant officer pilot with the 118th Assault Helicopter Company.

As a result of this friendship with Ron, we spent a few very enjoyable evenings in the Thunderbird Lounge, usually "writing ourselves off" with much enthusiasm and great fellowship.

Sometimes I got the feeling that we may have stretched the friendships just a little with our loud and crazy ways, but nobody ever suggested that we were not welcome, or that they didn't enjoy our company.

In about May 66, we (the Aussies) left Bien Hoa to join up with a new Australian Task Force that was being deployed in Phuoc Tuy Province and, as my memory serves me, somewhere about that time we had one of our drinking, singing, dancing, tomfoolery type evenings at the 118th. As we were leaving, after this celebration, I'm afraid



Peter Seaward displays the flag he left with after a night of partying at the Thunderbird Lounge in 1966.

we yielded to temptation and stole the brand new flag of the 118th Bandits being displayed proudly that evening. It has been in my possession ever since.

The Iraq war and the fact that our SAS troops, Air Force and Navy are serving once again with the U.S. forces got me to thinking about Vietnam and chuckling to myself thinking about a whole new bunch of Aussies coming home with "souvenirs" stolen some night from their U.S. friends. We can't help it, you see, it's part of our makeup, probably a throwback to the establishment of our country way back in 1788 as a British convict settlement.

So, a couple of evenings ago, I decided to punch "118th Bandits" into my Internet search engine to see what happened, and up you guys came!

As I think 38 years lost in the "wilds" of Australia is enough for any flag, and as I'm now 63 and worried that this flag needs to be treated with ongoing respect in the future. As (hopefully) somebody is still wondering "what the hell ever happened to that flag?" and as an Air Cavalry Troop of respect for the 118th, the mateship we experienced in the Thunderbird Lounge" and, in particular, the friendship shown us by Ron Madsen, it would give me a great deal of pleasure to return the flag.

I'm hoping that you can tell me who might be the appropriate person to return it to and their mail details.

Peter Seaward

Oh! my gosh, Peter. You have taken my breath away!

You ask a very good question and I am not entirely sure. However, we will contact Ron Madsen and tell him to be more careful in the future who he befriends! Helicopter Ambulance! Ron is, of course, retired and lives in Idaho.

Several things come to mind about where to place the flag and I will consult with the more than 330 former Thunderbirds I have e-mail contact with. Surely we can find an appropriate home for the flag. It would be great to get it back and I wish you could go on vacation in the U.S. and bring it back, personally. We would promise to be gentle

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From the President

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tance were evident in Orlando and, with that experience behind us, we can better quantify what the Association needs to ensure continued successes and improvements with future reunions.

Included in this *Newsletter* is an article that updates the status of several legal actions that have been ongoing for the past two years. I would encourage you to read the summary of events. Anything aimed at the Association

hits us all.

The planning and preparation for the Dallas Reunion in July 2004 continues. We are looking at the first week in January as a target for accepting registrations and hotel reservations.

Details regarding events and the process for scheduling mini-reunions will be provided on the website and in the next *Newsletter*.

Each reunion is a unique event that provides special memories for those who attend. This one will be no exception.

Read on . . . this edition of the *Newsletter* has a lot to enjoy . . .

— Dana M. Young, President

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with you!

I am so very glad you sent a photo as evidence of the "dirty deed." Of course, after 38 years, I am sure you have lost a lot of sound sleep tossing and turning, because of guilt. With that in mind, we Bandits (of which I am a former one) will take that into account when we come up with a just punishment.

I plan on putting the photo (I assume it is you) and this story on the 118th website. You will become part of the world's "Most Wanted" and your life may never be the same.

Tom Payne
Tulsa, OK

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Payne, who was Bandit 32 during his first tour in Vietnam — in 1966-67 — now has the Bandit flag in his possession.

Fellow pilots help understand death

Julie Kink suggested that I write you. Between last Veterans Day and this Memorial Day the Family Contact Committee of the VHFCN has been working with me to help me and my family gain a better understanding of the events surrounding the death of my uncle.

During that time I became acquainted with a few of the men with whom my uncle served, and came to a better understanding of his death.

Before this process began all that I really knew was that William D. Potter was a warrant officer 1 serving in C Troop, 1st of the 9th, that he flew Hueys, and that he was killed only a week after getting to Vietnam. I was six years old when he died.



I had some memories of Uncle Bill, but neither I, nor my family, really understood what happened while he was in the Army. So my hope when I contacted the FCC was that I might be able to find someone who had some memory of Bill, however fleeting. I was hoping that there might be one person who remembered his good looks, charm or sense of humor. That he was remembered by someone would validate his service in Vietnam. But I presumed that since he was there just a short time, I would not achieve my goal.

All I really knew was that my uncle went "over there" and came home in a box. As a matter of fact, it just occurred to me that in all of the conversations I've had with everyone, I've never asked them what it was like when they came home.

To me, Vietnam meant death. That anyone came home

Author writing history of Dak Seang Campaign

Michael Taylor, who is writing a history of the Dak Seang Campaign, Vietnam, spring 1970, has contacted me. I was the final commander of the 170th Assault Helicopter Company in Kontum and the 170th played a major part in that series of battles.

He also served as a gunner with the 170th for two weeks in January 1971, although a U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Mike was assigned to COMNAVFORV in Saigon as a historian. He called and said he wanted to see combat. We met his wish.

There were many more units that participated in the Dak Seang campaign in addition to the 170th. I have contacted as many other 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion units that I knew names and addresses, but Mike Taylor would like eyewitness accounts from all involved.

If you would please publicize his plea for anyone who served in this conflict to contact him, his address follows:

Michael Taylor



Thanks very much for your assistance.

George S. Crawford



with the precious knowledge of my uncle's short time in Vietnam and be willing to share it (if they could be found) was too much to hope for.

How wrong I was! The brotherhood of C Troop is strong, and many of those who received letters or e-mails from me or my FCC coordinator, Jerry Ewen, responded.

Some wrote to say they didn't serve at the same time as Bill, but would be happy to answer questions. Others said they served at the same time and remembered the incident in which Bill was killed. And, there were a few, precious men who wrote to say they remembered Bill and offered me a glimpse of him through their eyes and memories.

I also took advantage of this journey to learn more about the Vietnam helicopter war generally, and the 1st of the 9th specifically. As I read and exchanged e-mails with various men, I began to learn some of the slang terminology, how to read UTM grid coordinates on a 1:50,000 map (there's a guy on Ebay who sells these maps!), and what sorts of things were experienced at Fort Wolters and Fort Rucker.

Best of all, there were those men who wrote or called to tell me that they knew Bill, remembered him, and even thought of him often. For me, this was the spiritual pot of

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gold at the end of the rainbow.

I've been able to converse both through e-mail and on the phone with men who were in flight school with Bill. I talked with men who remembered Bill as a pilot, and as a buddy. I'm indebted to these men more than can be described. As a result of our discussions, I now possess information about Bill's service, and about his death, that were previously unknown.

I also am the proud owner of a patch from the lift section of C Troop and of a photograph of Bill taken while he was in Vietnam.

I began to commit my thoughts and knowledge to paper. The result is a 20-page narrative containing the facts, as I know them, of Bill's time in Vietnam. Below are a few excerpts:



Graduates took leave before Vietnam

After graduation from flight school, Bill and the other graduates had four week's leave before they had to go to Vietnam. They met back at Fort Lewis, WA, on March 10, 1969, for their final orientation, a two-day affair of briefings, inoculations, and final preparations.

Their flight was to have departed on March 12 for Vietnam, however, a snowstorm in Tokyo grounded them (Tokyo airport had no snow removal equipment) and they had to spend four or five days in Washington. Among the soldiers gathered at Fort Lewis for shipment to Vietnam were 17 members of Bill's flight school class.

Most of the time was spent at the Officer's Club at Fort Lewis. It was there that 17 classmates from Bill's flight school class made a pact to volunteer to join the same unit.

A couple weeks before graduation, while at Fort Rucker, the Army made veterans of the fighting in Vietnam available for questions. One of these men had served with the 1st of the 9th. This pilot indicated this unit had an extremely high esprit d'corps, but also suffered from one of the highest casualty rates in the 1st Air Cavalry. It was a sobering description.

So, here at the O Club at Fort Lewis, as the guys passed time drinking beer and cementing relationships, there grew this feeling of camaraderie. Perhaps it was a feeling of invincibility, youthful bluster, machismo, brava-do, or loyalty — or maybe it was a combination of all these things. Whatever it was, all 17 of these men made a pact to

Since this group was divided among three different flights to Vietnam and would arrive at different times, they decided that once a man was assigned to the 1st of the 9th, he would write his name on the wall of a restroom in An Khe.

volunteer for the 1st of the 9th once they got to Vietnam.

Since this group was divided among three different flights to Vietnam and would arrive at different times, they decided that once a man was assigned to the 1st of the 9th, he would write his name on the wall of a restroom in An Khe. That way, they would know if anyone on previous flights was assigned to 1/9.

On March 16, they finally went to McCord Air Force Base to depart for Vietnam only to find their transport, a World Airways DC-8-63, had a problem with the nose gear and had to fly to San Francisco overnight for repairs. So there they were, part of a group of 254 GI's at a hotel in Tacoma for one more night of "freedom."

At 6 a.m. on March 17, 1969, they finally got on their way en route to RVN (Republic of Vietnam) via refueling stops in Anchorage, Alaska, and Tokyo.

At 6 a.m., March 17 (they arrived the same day they left due to the International Date Line), they arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. During the layover, Bill and a couple others found a ski boat at Special Services and spent the afternoon water-skiing on Cam Ranh Bay.

Later they went by C-130 transport to An Khe, where they went through what was called "Charm School."

Members of class headed for restrooms

Once the plane landed, the members of Bill's flight school class made a beeline for the restrooms. Every outhouse, bathroom, and head was inspected, but nobody could find any names scrawled on any walls. Then came the question: Had the earlier guys volunteered for 1/9? Should they go through with it? Though worried they might be the only ones, they decided to follow through with their pact and volunteered for the 1st of the 9th.

It wouldn't be until the morning of the third day that they would find out where they would be assigned. Three days were spent in An Khe while they attended Charm School to learn the do's and don'ts of Vietnam and shook off the effects of jet lag.

It was at the Officer's Club in An Khe that Bill ran into his old college buddy, Jerry.

Jerry related the story of how he was sitting in the O Club having a beer when who should walk in the door but Bill Potter. Bill and Jerry hadn't seen each other in a couple of years, and Jerry didn't even know Bill had joined the Army, just as Bill didn't know Jerry was serving with the 1st of the 9th.

"Potter! What the hell are you doing here?" Jerry asked.

Jerry had been with C troop for a number of months by

At 6 a.m., March 17, they arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. During the layover, Bill and a couple others found a ski boat at Special Services and spent the afternoon water-skiing on Cam Ranh Bay.

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this point and was the senior aircraft commander and unit instructor pilot.

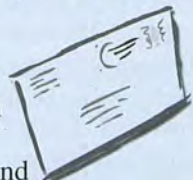
Upon hearing Bill's determination to volunteer for 1/9, Jerry tried to dissuade him. He explained that the 1/9 was a spectacular unit, but it faced danger every day.

Bill persisted, that it was his goal to fly with the best men, in the best unit.

Jerry tried to convince Bill that he hadn't made the best choice. Bill wouldn't be persuaded, so Jerry told him to request C Troop.

Jerry told me he decided right then and there to personally shepherd Bill and try to get him through the first 60 days. According to Jerry, the first two months were when aviators could get themselves into trouble. He knew from experience that if an aviator survived 60 days, the chance of making a fatal mistake was diminished; after that the primary worry was the enemy.

The morning of the third day the duty assignment officer stood before the group of men and started to read off assignments. He marveled aloud at how many guys the last three days had volunteered for the same unit — the 1st of



the 9th.

The pact had held and from flight school class 68-23, the following men were assigned (according to my research): Stephen Young, Jerry Baxter, Ron Livingston, John Huserek and Norm Stewart were assigned to A Troop, while Potter, James Whitmore and Rob Zastrow, as well as Ray Mohr (who had gone to Hunter/Stewart rather than Rucker), and Steve Moody went to C Troop. Marv Metcalf, Norbert "Bill" Kirk, Gary Thomas, Joseph R. Lindhorst and Robert Albino were assigned to B Troop (the other two haven't yet been accounted for).

Sooty dust engulfed helicopters

Bill's first mission was to put 25 Blues into the jungle; they then went to LZ Joe to wait (called "wafting" or "laagering"). The area where the Blues were dropped off had been napalmed before the helicopters arrived, which meant that there was heavy, black, sooty dust that engulfed the choppers as they flew in.

The Blues came under heavy fire and, 20 minutes after dropping them off, the flight of three helicopters went back to extract the 25 soldiers. In the meantime artillery had been called in.

So, here were three men on their second day with their squadron flying their helicopters into combat for the first time — the landing zone was slightly larger than a tennis

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We know of one investment that always does well.

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.

- Now is the time you need someone who understands your goals and risk tolerance.
- Someone who can help you adjust your portfolio in a changing investment environment.
- Someone who takes the time to ask the right questions, so together you can come up with the right answers.

If you want to talk to a Financial Advisor that truly understands the importance of a long-term relationship, call us at UBS PaineWebber.

Robert F. Potvin

Account Vice President, UBS PaineWebber
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Attend the Dallas Reunion in 2004

Letters

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court, room for three Hueys to land for 30 seconds, take on their complement of soldiers, then take off.

In the meantime, artillery was impacting the enemy not more than 100 meters away.

Twenty-five Blues went in, and 23 came out alive. They went in with clean uniforms, quiet and ready for action. They came out dirty, sweaty, and bloody. It was the three new chopper pilots' first exposure to death.

Bill wrote this in an uncompleted letter home: "... northwest of here. We lifted our ground troops in. (3 ships with Zastrow, Whitmore & yours truly as Pete Pilot — it was their first day here!) We made one lift — (three-ship formation into a one-ship LZ!) and then moved out to another LZ to waft. The ground troops called us to bring in a quick reaction force. Twenty minutes later, we had to go pull them out. When we went back in, artillery was coming in ..."

And from another portion of the uncompleted letter: "... on our aircraft & he died before we could get him back. I guess I'll have to get used to this, but I'll be damned if I ever get used to the poi ..."



Bill was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for "distinguishing himself by heroism in action" on this mission. The next few days followed the same pattern ... briefings in the evening ... rocket attacks at night ... flights throughout the next day ... "smoking and joking" when not flying.

Then came March 27. It's been over 30 years and the men involved met, flew with, and lost many comrades. Some men remember their fellow fliers only by their call sign, others remember men by association. Thus, memories fade; the fog of war and time don't enhance those memories. Because of this, some of the exact details of Bill's

final flight can't be known, but based on conversations with a few of the men, here's what happened.

The mission Bill went on was a LRRP Recon; that is, to fly a team leader from the Ranger unit (Company H, 75th Infantry) attached to C Troop and identify potential LZ's. Typically every mission that C Troop flew had at least one Cobra flying cover, however LRRP reconnaissance missions were often flown without cover, so as not to attract much attention.

Bard Davenport and Bill were assigned helicopter 66-16714, with crew chief "Little" John Waller and gunner Allen Harper.

By 1:30 p.m. on March 27, Davenport and Potter were overdue. Their flight had taken off around 11 a.m. and since a Huey only carried enough fuel for about two hours of flight, it was apparent Charlie Troop was going to have a very difficult afternoon.

TOC had initiated a radio call, sort of an "all points bulletin" to all military units in the area. Since there hadn't been a Mayday, and nobody had reported seeing a helicopter go down, the crew was listed as Missing In Action.

At 1:45 p.m., a call came in from the 11th Armored Cavalry. They asked if Charlie Troop was missing a helicopter because they had come across a crash site.

"Yes," came the reply ... and they asked the soldiers to try and identify the helicopter by its tail number. Confirmation came: It was 714.

Sounding like a door buzzer, the "down bird" alarms meant everyone had to drop what he was doing and immediately go to a helicopter and get ready to fly because one of their helicopters had crashed. The responding helicopters flew to coordinates XT636587, where the heli-

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copter was reported down.

The 11th Armored Cav cut an LZ in the jungle near the crash site.

Jerry indicated that as he flew over the site and looked through the trees, it was apparent nobody had survived. Because the metal skin of Hueys were made from magnesium, they could easily catch fire and burn; that's what had happened to 714.

According to Maj. Shrader, the helicopter was hit by 12.7 mm anti-aircraft fire. The Huey crashed inverted and burned.

He writes: "When I immediately flew there, I could identify that it was, in fact, assigned to C Troop. My guess is that the aircraft, which was by itself and required to stay above 1,500 feet, noticed something on the ground and went down to identify something. That is probably when the 12.7 mm hit them and caused the crash."

Killed were WO1 Bard Davenport, WO1 William Potter, Spec.5 John Waller, Spec. 4 Allan Harper, and 1st Lt. William Brent Bell from the Company H, 75th Infantry (Rangers).

I would love to hear from anyone who knew Bill in flight school or in C Troop. I have gained so much knowledge, and this information has been a great comfort to me and others of Bill's family.

I can only imagine how difficult it is to possess the knowledge that many of you have. It can only be more difficult to allow those long-suppressed memories to come to the surface and talk about them. By sharing these memories (and your emotions), I am convinced you are giving families of KIA's the greatest gift of all.

Although she didn't want me to, I'm going to single out the Family Contact Committee for special recognition. Gary Thewlis, Jerry Ewen, Julie Kink and the other folks who so eagerly volunteer their time, knowledge, money to help us understand more about our loved ones will truly have a special place in heaven.

Fritz Miller

British security chief meets owner of lighter

When I attended the Vietnam Helicopter/Hornets Reunion in Orlando this year, I was talking to a friend of mine, Frank Anton, who was a POW for five years, another friend told me that someone was looking for me on the DOD Internet site.

Wanted: Pilots of '50s and '60s

I'm in the middle of writing a book and looking for old pilots who were assigned to the old light and medium helicopter companies in the '50s and '60s. Are you guilty?

Jim Eakins
CW4 retired.

I responded that evening and presume that it was someone wanting to know about a son who had died or some person wanting to know about their father etc., which has happen to me in the past.

Anyway, this person I responded to had bought a lighter on Ebay two years ago and it had my name on it, with a set of wings, and he wanted to know more about it.

We communicate via e-mail and, come to find out, he lives in Gatwick, England, and is employed at the Gatwick Airport as a security chief.

Ironically, we were less than three weeks from leaving for England, arriving at Gatwick Airport, for our vacation. He asked me how I lost it and I told him it was more than likely when I was shot up on the 21st of April 1970, flying C-Model gunships (Stingers) with my buddy "Duffy." I was shot in the stomach, fortunately saved by the chicken plate, and my personal belongings were left in the hospital during my short stay.

On our return trip, my wife and I met my new friend, Irvine, with his two daughters giving me my lost lighter of 33 years and a official police hat (Bobby type).

Al Schonert
Stinger 92

FAA released wrong conclusion in death

I would like to correct the obituary in the July/August issue for Gary Dolpha Freeman.

Gary died at the controls of a UH-1H, May 22, 2003, having suffered at massive heart attack. The post-crash autopsy proved he was dead before the aircraft hit the ground.

Unfortunately, the FAA rushed to a preliminary conclusion, stating that a long line had gone through the tail rotor, causing the accident. That did occur, as did the separation of the main rotor, but only after the aircraft rolled inverted.

I have flown with Gary numerous times and know he was one of the most conscientious, safe pilots in the air. It is for that reason that I would like to see his obituary corrected to reflect what really happened. Our pilot group doesn't need another "Pilot Error" conclusion, when one

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Letters

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did not exist.

I also would like to encourage all of our members to have their PSA checked yearly. This, of course, is the blood test for prostate cancer. I firmly believe EVERY male has prostate cancer, it's just a matter of when it will show up.

I was diagnosed in May 2003, my PSA number having jumped from 1.9 to 5.6 in 18 months. I had the implant placement surgery the end of June and now, the end of October 2003, my PSA is back down to under 1.0. That is complete cure! Catching it early is the big key.

Paul E. Uster

Daughter tries to find chopper pilot father

My name is Terry Wood. I am a schoolteacher and we live in the southwest part of Missouri. I'm trying to help a friend of ours locate her father who was a Vietnam chopper pilot late 1967-1970.

We know quite a bit of information on the guy, but we don't know his last name. Our friend, Mrs. Lisa Vo, was

separated from her father during the war as a child. She is 35 now, is married and living in and is a citizen of the United States.

She has two lovely children: A boy named Jack, 5, and a girl, Amy, 6. She and her husband run a successful Chinese-American restaurant in Marshfield, MO.

Her father was affectionately known as Mr. G or Mr. Gene by his buddies. He was chopper pilot and often flew officers about. He should not be that hard to identify as he was half-Filipino. He had a mole or birthmark on the face, too. His father had been an American serviceman, too.

Anyhow, he was about 24 at the time of Lisa's birth in December 1968. He came back to America and went back again. He had started paperwork on bringing Lisa's mother and the baby to the United States, but they lost contact with each other. The mother became afraid and ran off. They were separated ever since.

Lisa's Vietnamese name was "Tuyet," meaning snow; he might remember that. She really wants to meet her father again and I know he'd love her and these two adorable children. I've known them five years and they are really nice, hard-working people.

We know he was at these locations in Vietnam between 1967 and 1970. Nui Que, Bong Son, Pleiku, Kon Tum, Tuy Hoa or Bien Hoa, Koung An and Da Nang.

Continued on Page 11

PUCKER FACTOR 10



Memoir of a U.S. Army
Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam

JAMES JOYCE

From the preface...

Most of the book is set in Vietnam, but there are also stories of learning to fly before going to the war. It was a time of glory for us. As the aircraft we flew defied gravity, we defied

fear. We had wings on our chests and a swagger in our gaits. We were aviators, pilots, fly boys. We were hot stuff and we knew it: we were invincible -- at least at the beginning -- and we loved life (boy did we love life). We were beautiful paradoxes.

Published by McFarland & Co.:
Jefferson, North Carolina and London

Available at mcfarlandpub.com, amazon.com, booksamillion.com, etc.

James Joyce has written numerous articles for newspapers such as The Durango Herald and The Chicago Tribune.



and



Invite the VHPA to the dedication ceremony for The National Vietnam War Museum

July 3, 2004

- Visit the Museum site and walk the property
- Tour Fort Wolters, Mineral Wells, the Baker Hotel, and Downing Heliport
- Enjoy real Texas Bar-B-Q and all the beer, soda, and water you can handle.
- Entertainment by the Radio Ranch
- A nationally known guest speaker and more.

Start making plans today for this Reunion 2004 side trip and don't miss this once in a lifetime event!



Taps

Thomas S. Cafferty

Thomas S. Cafferty, 56, of Woburn, MA, died Sept. 3 in his home after a three-year battle with cancer.

Cafferty was born in Stillwater, MN, the son of the late Donald L. and Hazle L. Cafferty. He was raised and educated in Stillwater, and graduated from Stillwater High School.

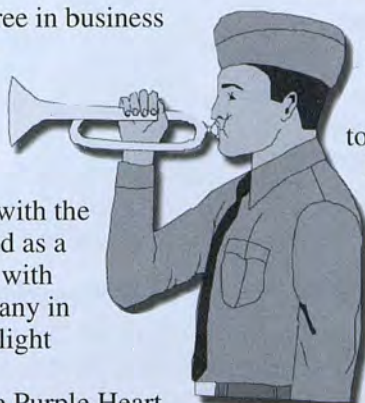
He received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Wisconsin-Stout and attained his master's degree in business from Leslie College in Cambridge, MA.

He served as a helicopter pilot with the Army and was honorably discharged as a chief warrant officer. Cafferty flew with the 114th Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69. Cafferty graduated from flight school with Class 68-11.

Cafferty was decorated with the Purple Heart Medal, the Bronze Star and the Air Medal for Valor.

He retired in 2002 as a result of his illness, after 21 years of service as a logistician manager at Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, MA. He worked installing radar systems in many parts of the United States, Germany and Belgium.

In earlier years, he flew helicopters for the Canadian Park Service in Baanf.



Clyde Lee Ford

Clyde Lee Ford, 63, of Amarillo, TX, died Feb. 16 from complications of cancer and emphysema.

Ford was born in Texola, OK.

He retired from the Army as a captain in 1980 after 23 years of service. He was a helicopter pilot with the 228th Aviation Battalion in Vietnam in 1968-69 and served in Korea.

He loved flying helicopters and got to take a flight when Shadow of the Blade made a stop in Canyon, TX, last fall.

Ford was a life member and past commander of the VFW Post 1475. He also was a member of the American Legion, DAV, Vietnam Veterans of America and life

member of VHPA. He also did a lot of volunteer work at the VA Medical Center and was always ready to help a fellow veteran.

He is survived by Carmen Ford, his wife of 41 years, a daughter, Karen Orthengren and husband Alan of Amarillo, and two grandsons, Corey and Trey Orthengren of Amarillo.

Gilbert Keith Jenkins

Retired Maj. Gilbert Keith Jenkins of Suwanee, GA, died April 7 in a Duluth, GA, hospice.

He enlisted in the Army at the age of 17, and attended Officer Candidate School and Ranger School.

Jenkins served two tours with White Star and one tour with II Corps Mike Force. He completed his fourth tour of duty in Southeast Asia as commander of an aviation company in Vietnam.

He graduated from flight school in Class 69-30.

His awards and decorations included the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with two "V" devices and three oak leaf clusters, seven awards of the Air Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.

Leighton Franklin Kohl

Leighton Franklin Kohl of Tampa, FL, died of cancer on Oct. 6.

He graduated from flight school with Classes 68-513 and 68-23.

Kohl, who was president of American Rigging, served in Vietnam with the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69.

Robert H. McKeegan

Robert H. McKeegan died in a motorcycle accident on Sept. 14 near his home in Pioneer, CA. He was 54.

McKeegan was wounded and decorated while flying with DMZ Dustoff as "Dustoff 713" in 1969-70.

After the Army, he was the first pilot to fly for Jacques Cousteau. He spent more than three years with the Cousteaus aboard the CALYPSO and was seen on many made-for-TV documentaries from Antarctica to Alaska in the early 1970s.

McKeegan also worked for Hughes/McDonnell Douglas/Boeing company for more than 19 years, starting as a

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Lisa said that during May or June 1968 his chopper was shot. She thought the rotor tail was hit. He was shot in the leg and escaped the Viet Cong. The mother said they wanted to catch him, but he escaped on foot.

Anything we can do we will try to help too. I'm a teacher so I don't know much about searching for people.

Thanks for any help!

Terry J. "Woody" Wood

Taps

Continued from Page 11

Hughes 500 production test pilot and rising to chief production test pilot for the AH-64 Apache program. During those years, McKeegan was seen performing aerobatics in Apaches and Hughes 500s in movies and at many international air shows and "agility" tests throughout the world.

After leaving Boeing, McKeegan flew for Erickson Air Crane as a firefighting Skycrane pilot. This job also took him all over the United States and to many far-off parts of the world.

McKeegan had friends and colleagues all over the world and everyone who ever worked with McKeegan knew him to be very humble man, especially given all of his knowledge, experience and accomplishments.

He is survived by his son, Micheal; daughter, Megan; and brothers Tim and Tom.

He was the greatest friend a friend could have and all who knew him will miss him.

Russ Whipple
Charliehorse 34

Robert Odell Moree

Robert Odell Moree, 63, of Horizon City, TX, died. Moree graduated from flight school in Class 69-19.

He served tours in Vietnam with the 243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company in 1969-70 and 1971-72.

Moree was the third pilot in the unit to get more than 2000 hours combat hours flying time. A fine gentlemen and even better pilot and fellow comrade.

Farewell, my friend, we will miss you dearly.

He is survived by his wife Jane and daughter Tami Caudillo.

Jon Beckenhauer

Le Cong Quan

Quan Le, as he was known to his friends and classmates, died in a helicopter crash on Oct. 10.

The accident occurred some 80 miles southeast of Galveston, TX, and initially appears to have been weather related.

Quan was the only Vietnamese air cadet in Class 66-16. He was a combat veteran of the VNAF's 215th, 217th and 227th Helicopter Squadron. The 227th provided an Honor Guard in uniform at the memorial service (Oct. 17) and funeral service (Oct. 18) held in Dallas.

Quan was a pilot with Petroleum Helicopters Inc. since 1980. He was well respected as an individual and as a pilot. He will be missed by all those who worked with him. He also was known as a devoted family man.

Survivors include his wife, six children and six grandchildren.

Among his many talents, he was an accomplished flamenco guitarist, entertaining family, friends and fellow

church members at several congregations in the Arlington and Garland area.

Joe Kane
66-15

Danny Rowe

Danny Rowe of Lake Milton, OH, died Sept. 4 in his sleep.

He graduated from flight school with Class 69-3.

Rowe served in Vietnam with the 92nd Assault Helicopter Company in 1969-70 and the 1st TOW Detachment in 1972.

He is survived by his wife and two sons, ages 27 and 32.

Andy Archer
North Canton, OH



James W. Sandridge Jr.

Retired Col. James W. Sandridge Jr. of Bradenton, FL, died July 16 after a short illness.

He commanded the Eagle Mountain TC Aviation Depot, the U.S. Army Aviation Maintenance Center Depot (USAAMAC) in Germany 1964-67 and the 34th General Support Group in Vietnam in 1968.

Sandridge graduated from flight school in 1963.

Leo Francis Welsh

Leo Francis "Lee" Welsh of Copperas Cove, TX, died Oct. 24 of pancreatic cancer.

While a teen-ager, Welsh enlisted in the Air Force, trained in military intelligence, and served a tour in Japan as a Chinese-intercept radio operator.

After four years in the Air Force, he briefly taught dance lessons at an Arthur Murray Studio in Cleveland, OH.

He then enlisted in the Army, became a paratrooper and served with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY.

Welsh rose through the enlisted ranks to staff sergeant and was selected for Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, GA.

He graduated from Infantry OCS and rose through the ranks from second lieutenant to lieutenant colonel in the following years.

As an officer, Welsh attended several schools, including Officer Rotary Wing Aviation Course, from which he graduated with Class 67-8 as a helicopter pilot in the summer of 1967; Infantry Officers Advanced Course, Fort Benning; the Armed Forces Staff College; and the John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare Center's Psychological Operations School at Fort Bragg, NC.

In Vietnam, Lee served from October 1967-October



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Taps

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1968 as intelligence officer of the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion. His radio call sign was "Dragon 2," and some of his friends called him that to the present day.

While in combat, Welsh's battalion was honored with the Presidential Unit Citation. His personal awards included the Bronze Star Medal and the Air Medal.

While most of his duties entailed in-office, analytical work related to enemy movement and capabilities, he still performed the duties of combat aviator, often flying with the gunship platoon commanded by his best friend, Don Martin, Crocodile 6, assigned to the 119th Assault Helicopter Company.

While at Fort Bragg after his tour in Vietnam, Welsh served as executive officer, 182rd Assault Helicopter Company, XVIII Airborne Corps.

He was selected for the Army's Degree Completion Program (formerly called "Bootstrap") in 1969, and graduated with a baccalaureate degree in business administration from Campbell University, NC, in 1971.

In 1979, he completed his masters' degrees in management with Webster University's outreach branch campus at Pope Air Force Base, NC.

After his retirement as a lieutenant colonel, Welsh became a high school ROTC instructor in western North Carolina.

He then was hired by Central Texas College to work for CTC's overseas branch on the Pacific Far East Campus. Welsh served in Korea as the director of MOS Instruction; as regional director of Region A; and as associate dean, Operations and Support (ADOS).

After service in Korea, he was promoted to director of Human Resources Management Division (worldwide) at CTC's home campus in Killeen.

Welsh is survived by his wife Johnelle and five sons, Steve, Kenny, Ricky, Chris and Bruce.

Henry Joseph Wilkins

Retired Lt. Col. Henry Joseph Wilkins of Guyton, GA, died Sept. 14 at South Fulton Medical Center in Atlanta. He was 77.

Wilkins was born in Savannah, GA. His family later moved to their farm where he attended Guyton Public School and graduated from Guyton High School in 1944.

In July 1944, he embarked on a military career beginning as an Army private serving in the South Pacific in World War II and retiring after 26 years of service, having also served in Korea and Vietnam.

He graduated from flight school with Class 54-D. In Vietnam, he served with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Combat Aviation Battalion in 1966-67.

Wilkins was awarded numerous medals, including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

After retiring from the Army in 1970, he and his family moved back to the family farm near Guyton where he raised cattle, hogs and farmed row crops.

Wilkins served as Effingham County tax commissioner in 1985-95 and was presented the Community Leadership Award in 1989.

Survivors include his wife, Marise Rahn Wilkins; daughter, Susan Sykes of Tampa, FL; and four sons, David Wilkins of Woodland, CA, Michael Wilkins of Jacksonville, FL, Martin Wilkins of Springfield and Barrie Wilkins of Warner Robins, GA.

James Wittman

James Wittman and his family died May 5 in an aircraft accident.

He graduated from flight school with Class 67-3.

In Vietnam, he served with the 61st Assault Helicopter Company in 1967-68.

— Jim Beach

George J. Young

George J. Young, 75, died May 9 after a lengthy battle against COPD.

He joined the Army in 1945, and for the next seven years served as an enlisted man in Germany and Okinawa, Japan.

Young was encouraged to attend Officers Career School in April 1952. He completed Airborne and Jumpmaster School, Fixed Wing Flight Training, Instrument/Rotary Wing Qualification, Aviation Staff Officer, Aviation Safety Officer and Instrument Flight Examiners Course.

He was rated an Army aviator in 1957 and served tours at Fort Hood, TX; Fort Carson, CO; Fort Rucker and Korea.

Young was assigned to Saigon, Vietnam, in 1963 with Headquarters, 45th Transportation Battalion, detached for duty with MACV J-3 and departed Saigon in February 1963 for Vinh Long, where he was commanding officer of the 114th Airmobile Company.

In March 1966, Young returned to Vietnam as aviation officer of the Brigade Task Force, 25th Infantry Division, at Cu Chi.

He retired from the Army at Colorado Springs in July 1972 with more than 27 years of service.

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 20 Oak Leaf Clusters.

Young worked for Bell Helicopter from 1973-79, serving in Iran as an aviation manager, advisory and instructor. He also was an instructor at Fort Rucker.

He is survived by his wife Ginger, and their four children, Dale Young of Long Beach, CA, David Young of Villa Rica, GA, L.D. Shannon III of Bealeton, VA, and Laura Shannon-McDaniel of Lynchburg, VA.



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Directory

2003 edition has 80 more pages than 2002 issue

GARY ROUSH
DIRECTORY EDITOR

By the time you read this, you should have received your 2003 Membership Directory.

The directory is 592 pages this year. That is 80 pages thicker than last year with 122 pages of new information and 42 of those pages are 40 percent more dense.

Unfortunately, to make room for the new information, we had to remove the geographical index because 600 pages is the limit for this type of book.

Also because of the limited space, the flight class history collected by Ross Rainwater had to be restricted to just three pages. Ross's complete work can be seen on the Directory Supplement (password protected) portion of our website.

The focus for this year is flight classes so, for the first time, the directory has complete flight class listings in the index for everyone we know about.

If your name or names from your class are missing, it is because we do not have that information. This is the perfect time to pull out your flight class records, graduation programs, and orders assigning wings to be sure that we have everyone listed.

If there are any missing, please send a copy of your records/programs to Gary Roush or to HQ so we can include them next time.

This year we have added all known men who flew helicopters in Vietnam. This information was obtained from the Pentagon, based on helicopter pilot MOS information from all services.

We are now working to add addresses for all of these men. As a result, your directory now contains more than 50,000 names, with 26,400 of those having good addresses.

We believe that some 10,000 on this list never served in Vietnam because they were either foreign nationals trained by the Army or National Guard officers who were not called to serve or men just lucky enough to get other assignments.

The results so far of this ongoing effort, is the addition of more than 26,000 new names, with many new addresses.

Unfortunately, this effort also determined that about 7

The results so far of this ongoing effort, is the addition of more than 26,000 new names, with many new addresses. Unfortunately, this effort also determined that about 7 percent of our comrades have died. As a result, the Died After Tour section in this directory has dramatically increased.

percent of our comrades have died. As a result, the Died After Tour section in this directory has dramatically increased.

This dramatic increase in information is 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 all of this into a usable format.

The flight class work was done by many volunteers over the past several years.

The addition of the MOS information now presents a challenge. As you can see, we are missing flight class information for many of these men.

The cover is black and white this year, mainly because most of the pictures used were black and white, but also to save some money since the extra 15 percent of pages boosted the cost. In all, the total production cost increased about 10 percent.

With this being our 20th anniversary year, it is appropriate to reflect on how far we have come. From the first 66 pilots who got together 20 years ago to the more than 50,000 names in this directory, it is appropriate to recognize the many volunteers who have made this all happen through their dedication, hard work and perseverance.

It is appropriate to specifically recognize one of the original 66 who is a 20-year volunteer.

Mike Law has developed this directory to its current point over many years and thousands of hours of hard work. Without his undying devotion to duty, your directory would not be what it is today.

Mike has diverted his energies for the next two years to serving his church as a missionary in Ghana, Africa. While his absence is a tremendous loss to the VHPA, we know that it is an enormous benefit to those he is now serving.

Thanks, Mike, for all you have done for us. We look forward to your return to "The World."

Although I have been involved with the directory for many years, this is the first year of doing the directory completely by myself. I now, more than ever, appreciate all that Mike Law has done over the years.

Continued on Page 16

Mike Law established guidelines

Continued from Page 15

Producing this document is a very difficult and demanding task and would have been impossible without Mike's years of groundbreaking efforts and detailed written instructions.

We are running out of time to record your information.

As mentioned before, the Died After Tour section of this directory has grown considerably from last year. These almost 3,000 men took their information, stories and histories with them for the most part never to be recorded or shared with anyone. Please do not let that happen to you.

Now is the time to write down, tape record, videotape or tell someone about your experiences flying helicopters in the Vietnam War.

If you need help writing your stories, we have VHPA volunteers to help you. Contact Don E. Long at [REDACTED] or at the address included in the directory and he will be glad to help you out.

We are dying at an increasing rate, so now is the time to take action.

It is now your turn to make the 2004 Directory that much better by providing the information you know, but the VHPA does not!

Got a war story?

If you have a story relating to your Vietnam experience, we would love to hear it. So would your buddies.

All of our stories need to be preserved for posterity. If that is not important to you, perhaps your family would like a record of your wartime activities.

In any case, we are the only ones who can tell the story accurately and the world needs to know the true stories of the greatest helicopter pilots in the world.

If you want assistance with the writing, Don Long has agreed to help. His e-mail is: [REDACTED]

During the months of June through November his phone number is [REDACTED]. From December through May, it is [REDACTED].

His address is 197 Brandywine Drive, Murphy, NC 28906. You can e-mail, snail mail, or call.

It would be best to write as much as possible, but he will work with what you have. Make sure you include a way for him to contact you.

Once the story is pretty solid, a draft will be provided to you for proofing. If you don't have all the facts, don't worry, just write what you remember.

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 cspullen@alltel.net

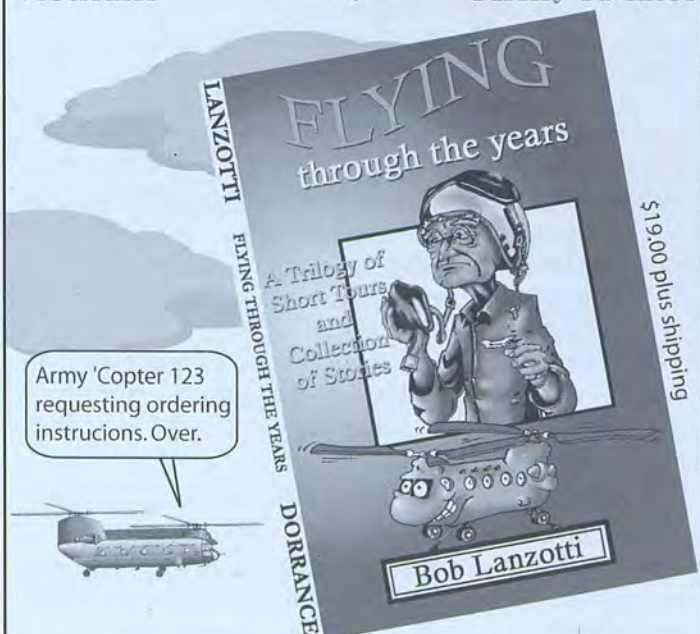


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Dallas

Reunion 2004 headquarters hotel largest in Texas

HAYDEN JONES

VHPA SECRETARY/TREASURER

The reunion in Dallas promises to be bigger and better than ever.

The Adams Mark Hotel is no exception. With three towers and 1,840 rooms, the hotel brags it is the biggest in Texas.

The hotel has the largest ballroom in Texas; I can attest to that, and there will be plenty of room for vendors and mini-reunions.

There are three bars on the ground floor. Pearl Street, an informal restaurant and small bar are in front of you as you enter the building on the lobby level.

To the right in the south tower is Players, a sports bar with big screen TV that will hold more than 100 people, not counting standing room. Players has a light menu and a good selection of beer and wine.

Next to the registration desk in the North Tower is a much larger bar that will hold the rest of us. It's a music bar with live music almost every night. I'm told we can control the sound volume.

Down the hall, still in the North Tower, is Bagels on Bryan. I can see this being a gathering place for breakfast, with gourmet coffees and New York-style bagels.

For your dining pleasure, there is the Chaparral Restaurant, located at the very top of the Center Tower, on the 38th floor with nothing but glass for the exterior wall. The view of the Dallas skyline is spectacular.

Tables are set for formal dining, with all the silverware and glassware you can imagine. But not to worry, the wait staff will help you manage. They will shake out the napkin and place it in your lap and, if you choose not to have a salad or desert, they will remove the appropriate fork and dish.



C.J. Niehoff photo

This is a view of downtown Dallas after dark from the roof of an Uptown office building.

I was looking for other places to eat and had hoped to find something within walking distance of the hotel. Unfortunately, there are none. Oh, there is a McDonalds in the Tower of the Americas, if you are so inclined.

All is not lost, however. Immediately outside the doors of the North Tower are the DART tracks and a stop. The DART will take you to the West End where there are more places to eat than you will ever be able to cover while in Dallas.

It will only cost you \$1.25 to ride to the West End. Ladies might want to consider the "all day" deal for \$2.50 because of shopping along the tracks.

The JFK Memorial and the Texas School Book Depository are the third stop going west on the DART.

Golfers! The course we are set up to play is the Tour 18. If you haven't heard, it a course made up of some of the most famous golf holes of courses around the country. More on this later, I've got a tee time next month.

Dallas M-Line provides free trolley service

The McKinney Avenue Trolley, the only historic streetcar system in Texas, offers free service under its new name — the "M-Line" — to many Dallas entertainment districts.

In addition, the system now connects with DART's light rail line at City Place Station, one block from West Village.

The M-Line service offers visitors a ride down McKinney Avenue on the free streetcar system, connecting to the free M-Line trolley bus at St. Paul and Ross by the Dallas Museum of Art in downtown.

The trolley bus proceeds down Ross Avenue to the

West End Historic District and up Main Street returning to the Arts District to reconnect with the streetcar system.

The M-Line also connects to the DART light rail system at City Place, where visitors can buy a DART Day Pass for \$2.50 with stops to NorthPark Shopping Center, The Dallas Zoo, the Dallas Convention Center and other areas of the city.

M-Line service operates 7 days a week every 15 minutes during peak and lunch hours, every half hour off-peak hours and weekends, and between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Saturdays, and 12:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Sundays.



Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza displays many artifacts that tell the story of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. The museum allows public viewing of the window from where shots were fired at the president.

Museum preserves JFK's legacy

In 1963, Dallas witnessed the tragic death of one of the most revered presidential figures in our nation's history, President John F. Kennedy.

Since that time, Dallas has succeeded in preserving the legacy the president left behind. The place of his death has since been turned into a site of historical commemoration for the man and the infamous moment.

In 1989, The Sixth Floor Museum of the Texas School Book Depository opened in downtown Dallas. This exhibit features historic photographs, artifacts, and documentary films, which have taken millions of visitors on a tour through the life, death and legacy of JFK.

The sixth floor is the location from which Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly shot and killed the president.

Since that sunny 1963 day in Dallas, the nation continues to search for the truth surrounding the death of our 35th president.

The movie *JFK*, starring Kevin Costner and directed by Oliver Stone, was filmed in Dallas and included extensive footage of the School Book Depository, now known as the Dallas County Administration Building.

On Nov. 22, 1993, the 30th anniversary of JFK's death, Dealey Plaza was designated a National Historic Landmark. This area includes Dealey Plaza Park, the triple underpass and its bridge, all surrounding buildings and a portion of the rail yards north of Elm Street.

Although tragic circumstances surround the designation, the city of Dallas has a great honor in preserving the historic significance of the site.

These two sites serve Dallas with more than just additional tourist attractions.

The Dallas County Historical Foundation, which operates The Sixth Floor Museum and hosted the opening ceremony for Dealey Park, hopes these two sites will provide educational guidance for future generations.

Foundation President Walter Blake said, "These two landmarks will have strong influences in the Dallas area as they force us to focus on our responsibilities in a democracy to preserve both good and bad history, and on the positive legacy of John F. Kennedy that lives on to inspire countless Americans who are not yet born."

In 1969, a Kennedy family friend, Phillip Johnson, constructed the John F. Kennedy Memorial, also located in Dallas. This 50-foot-square, open-roofed, concrete-walled, monument resembles an open tomb.

Designed to the specifications expressed by former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, "John F. Kennedy" is inscribed on the black marble.

It is not unusual to find flowers or notes placed here, especially on Nov. 22. This memorial is located downtown on Main, Elm and Market streets.

Recent additions to the permanent educational exhibit at the Sixth Floor Museum include artifacts from the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Estate sale.

Also added is an exhibit of 13 cameras in use at Dealey Plaza in 1963, including the Abraham Zapruder camera, which captured the entire assassination.

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Special treat awaits reunion golfers

At the 2004 Dallas Reunion, we have got a special treat for all golfers.

Make sure you sign up for it early because we expect to have a full field.

Imagine yourself playing on carefully simulated holes from some of the greatest courses in America: Cherry Hills, Baltusrol, Doral, Crooked Stick, Winged Foot, Medinah, Harbour Town, Oakland Hills, Sawgrass, Oakmont, Southern Hills, Riviera, Pine Valley, Firestone, Muirfield Village, and, of course, Augusta National.

All of this will be in one package called Tour 18, a collection of incredible replicas.

The attention to detail and unquestionable standards

for beauty and challenge will make you appreciate the great golf courses from which these simulations were chosen.

For those that would like an advance look at the course, check them out at www.tour18golf.com

We will have the same format as in the past years, with a lunch afterward at the clubhouse before returning to the hotel.

There will be an aggressive hole sponsorship campaign and we are looking for anyone who wants to sponsor a hole to contact Mike Whitten, [REDACTED] for information on forms and information.

— Mike Whitten

Good taste

Fine restaurants abundant in Dallas area

With more restaurants per person than New York City, Dallas can please the palate of the most discriminating diner.

Dallas's growth as a cultural melting pot has brought dining choices from virtually all over the world. Local restaurants offer a world of tastes and styles including: Chinese, Italian, German, French, Indian, Greek and American nouvelle — to name a few.

But the specialty cooking styles of Dallas are Mexican, Tex-Mex (Mexican food with a Texas flair), Southern/home-cooking and barbecue.

With more than 7,000 restaurants located in Dallas, diners can select from gourmet cuisine prepared by world-renowned chefs like Dean Fearing of the Mansion on Turtle Creek, and Southwestern specialist Stephen Pyles.

For fine dining, The French Room in the Adolphus Hotel and the restaurant at the Mansion both received AAA's highest rating.

Other popular restaurant choices in Dallas include the steakhouses that serve delicious Texas beef. Texas is not only famous for its juicy steaks, but most steakhouses also offer fine selections of chicken, lobster and other seafood delicacies.

Del Frisco's, Morton's of Chicago, The Palm, and Ruth's Chris Steakhouse are the leaders in this category and very popular with visitors. But if you dine at the Trail Dust, please don't wear a tie, or they'll gladly take it off for you — with scissors.

According to the Texas Restaurant Association's latest figures, Dallasites spent \$68.1 million in Mexican restaurants, the No. 2 choice for Dallas diners.

It's no surprise that Dallas is home to the fajita, a tortilla stuffed with grilled beef, chicken or shrimp and a

variety of toppings including cheese, sour cream and jalapenos.

The frozen margarita also was born in Dallas. Made of tequila, lime juice and triple sec, this frozen concoction can be ordered in any Mexican or Tex-Mex restaurant in Dallas.

Because Dallasites have a fondness for spicy foods, barbecue and chile also are popular. Chicken, beef, pork and almost anything can be — and is — barbecued in Dallas. Texas barbecue represents more than just the sweet, tangy sauce that meats are basted in; it describes a method of cooking, a leisurely style that includes baked beans, sweet corn-on-the-cob, potato salad, cole slaw and fresh cobbler to complete the meal.

One of the oldest and most popular barbecue restaurants in Dallas is Sonny Bryan's, which opened in 1958.

Chile cookoffs, competitions among amateur "chile chefs," also are part of life in Dallas and the Southwest. In fact, a Dallas restaurant took its name from the beefy stew — "Chili's Grill and Bar" is franchised across the country.

Southern or "home" cooking describes a variety of old-fashioned favorites including chicken fried steak, pork chops, roast beef and catfish pan-fried in corn meal batter. Restaurants offering these local dishes include Celebration, the Black-eyed Pea, and Good Eats Grill.

While diners can find restaurants located throughout the city, several areas of Dallas have a higher concentration of eateries.

For example, in North Dallas, a popular dining area is known as "I-35 Corridor." Greenville Avenue and Deep Ellum both feature eclectic restaurants such as Sambuca, Bay Leaf and Terrilli's. Many of these restaurants also feature local musicians nightly or on weekends.

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Mason wins VHPA scholarship

TOM PAYNE
PAST PRESIDENT

The third annual VHPA Heritage Scholarship was awarded to a VHPA member's daughter from Virginia.

The 2003 winner is Jennifer Z. Mason, daughter of retired CW3 Robert W. Mason of Midlothian, VA. Mason, not to be confused with the author of "Chickenhawk," has a business specializing in computer systems, networking, engineering and design.

Jennifer plans to attend Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, VA.

Congratulations to Jennifer and we all wish for her success as she utilizes her \$1,000 VHPA Heritage Scholarship to begin her college education.

For 2003, the AAAA Scholarship Foundation provided \$153,500 in scholarships to 107 awardees. Looking at the entire list of awardees, it appears 14 of them had fathers who were Vietnam helicopter pilots — roughly 13

percent.

This is a bit less than last year, but still a fair number from our ranks who have children and grandchildren eligible to apply not only for the VHPA scholarship, but the other Army Aviation Association of America scholarships.

Anyone with a child or grandchild who is interested in entering the merit-based scholarship program for 2004 should visit the AAAA website at: www.quad-a.org and look under scholarships for application instructions.

Applications should be requested prior to May 1, 2004, and be returned by June 1, 2004, to be considered.

Also, the father, grandfather or the student must be a member of AAAA to be eligible to compete. The reason for this is the VHPA applicants must comply with the AAAA Scholarship Foundation requirements. The AAAA membership is minimal considering the possible award.

Anyone having further questions may contact Tom Payne, Scholarship POC at TomPayne@vhpa.org

Book review

'What Are They Going To Do, Send Me to Vietnam?' refreshing

What a refreshing attitude, author Jack Stoddard, has exhibited in his new book, "What Are They Going To Do, Send Me To Vietnam?"

No whining, no anti-war BS, no blame . . . just pure, unadulterated life presented in short stories detailing his personal experiences so long ago.

Jack's style is simple and clear. His memories are full of honest emotions of fear, sorrow and anger. The public and every "swinging" Vietnam veteran needs to hear truth from authors, like Jack Stoddard: Authors who served in Vietnam and remember the personal details with such clarity.

All Vietnam veterans experienced the same war, but from a different perspective. Here is what I am talking about.

As a helicopter pilot, I remember watching the grunts and tankers on the ground, sitting on their tracks and thinking, "God, am I glad I don't have to live like those poor bastards with all the dust, mud, bugs, heat and mines on the ground, looking for the VC and Charlie."

Little did I suspect the grunts and tankers on the ground were saying, "God, I'm glad I am not one of those poor bastards who flies one of those frail, little choppers, and have my ass shot off by the VC as I fly around exposed in the sky!"

You see what I mean? Perspective is very important.

It has been said war is hours of boredom punctuated by seconds of terror. I think that is about right, having been a helicopter pilot two tours in Vietnam.

Jack Stoddard probably would bore the average reader to death if he tried to give a day-to-day account of his daily life in the 'Nam.

However, by breaking the years up into short stories, he gives the us only the best: The seconds of terror. He omits most of the mundane details of the hot, tired, uninspiring pace of life in a jungle with its oppressive heat and insects. Good choice.

"What Are They Going To Do, Send Me To Vietnam?" is a question more than two million GIs said countless times during their year-long tour.

It really was not a question, in the true sense of the word, when it was uttered, and normally with plenty of expletives. Instead, it was a "challenge" or statement intended to convey the sense, "I am going to do what I am going to do, regardless what you think, and you can do nothing to me that is any worse than what I am enduring right now in Vietnam, anyway."

It was a phrase that said it all and to hell with the consequences, because what I am experiencing now is 100 times worse than what you can do to me.

I love the saying because it truly is the "bottom line."

So, do yourself a favor, whether you're a veteran or not. Pick up Jack Stoddard's book and read it. You will find easy reading, with short, compact and colorfully graphic short stories which will amaze you.

They will remind you that war, especially the Vietnam War, was fought by real men, just like you.

— Tom Payne

Dustoff on fire!

Medevac chopper: 'Going down and burning!'

WILLIAM C. "BILL" PERKINS

LZ Uplift, June 9, 1970, RVN.

It is a typical sunny, humid day in Binh Dinh Province and by mid-morning a gentle coastal breeze is in effect as we are close to the coast and located on Hwy. 1 halfway between Bong Song village to the north and Phu My/Phu Cat Air Force Base to the south.

Uplift is a good-size landing zone base of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, with its LRRP teams and other supporting elements, including our UH-1H Army medical evacuation (dustoff) helicopter that is on constant, 24-hour standby alert.

My fellow crewmen of the 498th Medical Company, consisting of WO Max Owens, the aircraft commander; Spec. 4 Kenneth "Ken" Lamborn, the crew chief; Spec. 4 Richard Doke, our medic; and me, WO Bill Perkins, copilot, are halfway through a 10-day field standby and are taking it easy in the shade of our hootch.

Only a few feet and seconds away is our dustoff bird and we are waiting for the inevitable call that always comes, sooner rather than later.

We all hear the urgent dustoff request message coming into the RTO shack close by and immediately spring into action, with Max Owens running to the RTO operator with his map board and the rest of us racing to the medevac, where we strap on our helmets and heavy armor chicken plates.

While our crew chief and medic untie the rotor blades, I strap into my seat and, when the blades are clear, begin an emergency engine start to rapidly bring the engine and up to full flight 6,600 revolutions per minute in less than 2 minutes.

As I flip on the radios, Owens takes control of the aircraft and we do a rapid dustoff departure from Uplift.

On climb out to altitude, Owens quickly briefs the rest of us that this is a hot LZ with a unit of the 173rd "The Herd" in contact with the enemy and a critical, gunshot-wounded U.S. casualty who is in need of urgent evacua-

tion to the 67th Evacuation Hospital.

We then switch radio channels to the FM frequency in use by the ground unit and supporting UH-1C gunships of the 61st Assault Helicopter Company with the call sign "Starblazers."

A flight school buddy of mine, WO James McFadden, is flying copilot in one of these two gunships overhead. I recognize his voice on the radio.

As soon as we are airborne we can see the circling gunships and ground smoke as the combat action is close to Uplift. We are quickly told by the Starblazers and ground unit that the guns have just finished another run on the suspected Viet Cong ambush positions and hostile fire has ceased.

We are given the all-clear signal to go in for the urgent dustoff pickup. Owens tells the ground unit to pop colored smoke to mark the location of the casualty next to a tree line.

As Max starts the approach into the LZ, I put my hands and feet on the controls, a standard procedure in case he is killed or wounded by

flying bullets. I also place our intercom on hot mike so all crew members can instantly communicate with one other.

The medic and crew chief complete preparations to treat the wounded.

All is quiet as we descend to short final at 100-150 feet. Then all holy hell breaks loose as the loudest noise I have ever heard erupts as 100 or more armor-piercing AK-47 and 37 mm rounds hit the left rear side of our aircraft.

Instantly, the engine area is on fire as we start losing rotor RPM, with all red and caution lights blinking.

Max instinctively turns us away from the LZ and manages to glide us over a tree line away from the enemy fire by milking the collective and cyclic controls to retain minimum RPM for a crash landing.

The gunship pilots are yelling on the radio that dustoff is on fire and to get it down! NOW!

Fortunately, there are plenty of open, flat, dried rice paddies in front of us.



Charles Clapp

The burned remains of Bill Perkins' medevac helicopter were taken later the day it was shot down.

Continued on Page 22

Gunship pilots yell dustoff is on fire

Continued from Page 21

At 35-50 feet, I yanked hard on my pilot's emergency door release handle and the door fell cleanly away. Unbeknown to me, Doke and Lamborn had the presence of mind to retract our pilot's seat side armor plates to allow Max and me to quickly exit this now-flaming inferno on crash landing.

The flames and smoke are now in the crew compartment and they have moved up front, just behind our seats.

Using what little control and non-flying RPM he had left, Max sets us down in a soft, plowed paddy with a slight slope. The skids sink in up to the belly and instantly we all bail out of the right side of the aircraft, with Max on my heels and coming over my seat and through my door behind me.

The fire was just behind his seat.

I banged my head hard on the upper door post. I later learned I had cut my leg on the lower instrument panel and broken the visor on my helmet.

We fell to the ground and, as we stood up, a muffled explosion from inside the aircraft knocked us down again. We all had cleared the burning aircraft.

Again we got up and remember stepping up onto and over a 1-2 foot dike and then taking cover behind it with my .38-caliber pistol in my hand.

With sickening realization, I now saw Lamborn face down in the paddy, within 15-20 feet of the aircraft. Our medic, Doke, who was kneeling beside him, nodded his head that Lamborn was dead. He had died instantly.

I was about another 15 feet from them and thought Lamborn had been killed by the same or other VC who had just shot us down.

The dustoff was now a raging inferno, with thick black smoke billowing out of it and continuous hissing, sizzling, popping and muffled sounds coming from it as our small arms ammunition cooked off and fire extinguishers and other items exploded and burned.

I was sick and disgusted to death to know Ken had escaped alive with us from the burning wreckage only to be killed seconds later by something of unknown origin, possibly enemy gunfire.

With the guns circling over us, we were in the prone position behind the dike, with weapons drawn, and waiting for the VC to attack us or fire upon us from hidden cover.

After only a few minutes, at most, I noticed a commotion behind me and turned to see a UH-1D "slick" helicopter had landed just behind me and the crew was gesturing for us to haul ourselves aboard. We all were returned to Uplift for treatment of our minor wounds and

the body of our crew chief was immediately flown to the 67th Evacuation Hospital in Qui Nhon.

We learned later the crew who rescued us belonged to the 134th Assault Helicopter Company, called the "Demons," and they were simply passing by the area and saw us go down in flames and, without hesitation, proceeded to our location to save us from our predicament.

This heroic "Demon" crew consisted of Lt. George Swartz, WO Daniel Brown, Spec. 4 Edward Parodi and Pfc. George Kev.

For all they knew, they could have been landing in the middle of a murderous firefight.

The soldier we were attempting to medevac died in the hot LZ due to his wounds and a command and control (CC) helicopter was severely shot up, with one crewman seriously wounded while trying to complete our dustoff.

A rapid response infantry platoon from 173rd was landed and the firefight raged on with one VC or NVA dead and a number of weapons captured.

We later were told Ken was killed by a blow to the back of his head from the still-spinning rotor blade. Some of us believe he may have been killed by cookoff from our small arms ammunition or from exploding fire extinguisher.

We never will know for sure and, in this case, it really doesn't matter. Combat dead is dead.

The 1st Air Cavalry lost a lot of helicopters and crewmen to the local VC in this same area of the Bong Son Plain from 1965-67.

I have color photos of the burned remains of our dustoff aircraft, thanks to WO Charles Clapp who took those photos later that day. He and his crew replaced us on dustoff standby at Uplift.

Ken Lamborn, 20, was one happy new father and bragged about his new baby girl, who he held only a few times before leaving for Vietnam. We were all happy for him and remember the photos he showed us of his baby girl. He placed those photos in the cockpit between us pilots while we were on dustoff missions. Those photos burned with the helicopter.

Max Owens and I would not be alive today except for the brave, courageous actions and loyalty of Ken Lamborn and our Doke.

With the flames and smoke in their cabin, they had the presence of mind to retract our side armor plates, while we were still in the air. This made the difference between our life or death by fire.

We will always remember the memory of Ken Lamborn and his family. Richard Doke is still with us today and he never will be forgotten.



Bill Perkins in cockpit of Huey.

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