



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

September/October 2002 Vol. 20, No. 5

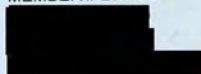


Dave Rittman photo

Hueys from C Troop, 229th Aviation Battalion, head toward a combat assault in a landing zone just north of Phan Thiet in January 1967. The LZ was being prepped by a B-52 strike when this photograph was taken.

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MEMBER # L00296



From the President

Hello again. I'd like to begin this *Newsletter* by thanking all of you who wrote encouraging notes to me.

It's very heartening to know the "silent majority" I alluded to in the last *Newsletter*, is really out there and holding very strong feelings for this organization. If I may take the space here, I'd like to have you read a few of those notes I received.

From past president Roger Gould regarding my story of what happened at the last business meeting:

Thanks for publishing the business meeting event that involved me. Your article will go a long way in stopping inquiries about what happened. There is a minor error concerning where the "hotel armed guards" were located, but nothing in your well-written depiction distracts from the essential facts of the event.

Thanks for your courage on "laying it all out there." I now hope the VHPA legal issues can be resolved and "peace in the house" be restored. Thanks for your efforts to that extent. Please let me know if I can help in any way.

Jim Ford, a new VHPA member (number 11,000) writes:

I fall well within the "silent majority" category, as discussed in President Bilitzke's comments in the latest VHPA Newsletter.

After reading his comments, I felt that I had to communicate the fact that I believe all of you are performing (way) above and (far) beyond what should be expected of you as volunteers in a membership organization. Keep up the good work.

Since military retirement almost 30 years ago, I have been heavily involved in volunteer activities of all descriptions and have some idea of what a (very) few outspoken persons can do to create turmoil within an organization. In that situation, all you can do is try to mitigate what little bit of substance may be in their complaints and concentrate on the fact that what you are doing is meaningful and positive and is best for the majority.

I am a born optimist and, for many years, I have sur-

vived on the old adage that "everything happens for the best."

You guys are going a great job. Keep it up.

From an old timer, Tom Shtogren, VHPA member No. 273:

I really enjoyed your first letter as president. You are on the right track. Don't let them get you down . . . A member of the Silent Majority.

And finally, from way down south:

My July-August VHPA Newsletter arrived today and I was excited as usual. I was disappointed, however, to read in your letter that some of our members are suing our organization.

I live overseas, so don't participate as much as I should, but I wanted to let you know that I think the organization and the guys in it (especially those who take the time to assume leadership) are great.

VHPA does for me exactly what I want it to do: It flies me safely between the exciting life I lead today and the exciting one I led in Vietnam 30 years ago . . . with gun cover and a chase ship if I falter.

*Thank you,
Mike Wise*

*Peace Corps Country Director
El Salvador
Assault 11
A/2/17/101 1970-71*

I'm printing these because they all make me feel good. I feel good about VHPA. I feel good about being associated with a group of guys who did something extraordinary. I feel good about working with an Executive Council that works tirelessly for all of us. And I feel good, as well as honored, to be elected president to represent all of you.

Are you feeling good now, too? Well, stay pumped because here's some more good things happening with your association.

Donations total \$6,000

Secretary/Treasurer Tom Payne reports we collected \$6,000 in donations from you. It was in positive response to the little box you checked on the Las Vegas reunion

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Classified ads

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VHPA SUPPORT

Legal adviser	James Gunderson
Investment adviser	Bob Potvin
VHPA Headquarters	(800) 505-VHPA
Fax	(916) 966-8743

ELECTRONIC MAIL

VHPA Headquarters	HQ@vhpa.org
President	president@vhpa.org
Historical chairman	sloniker@vhpa.org
Newsletter editor	swickard@vhpa.org
Directory editor	law@vhpa.org
Records/Database chairman	roush@vhpa.org
Membership chairman	membership@vhpa.org
Secretary/treasurer	TomPayne@vhpa.org
Webmaster	webmaster@vhpa.org
Reunion webmaster	webmaster@vhpareunion.org
VHPA website	www.vhpa.org
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Correspondence relating to commercial purposes or solicitations shall only be sent to those officers, committee chairmen, and staff listed above.

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chapete@juno.com

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Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
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Vietnam Helicopter History CD (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
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Card number:	Expiration date:		
Signature:			

From the President

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application. The money is on its way to the VHPA scholarship program administered by AAAA.

At the risk of stealing Tom's thunder and subsequent scholarship report to you (which I just did), I'm happy to report that retired CW4 Carey M. Sweeney just saved \$1,000.

His son Carey II was the 2002 VHPA Heritage Scholarship winner for that amount.

Carey the younger is currently studying business and pre-law at the University of Kentucky. Congratulations to you both.

More scholarship information is forthcoming. A special thanks to all our members who have contributed to our scholarship fund.

Remember, the youth of America will be contributing to your Social Security payments. Let's keep them educated!

Should newsletter title be changed?

Please indulge me here. I'm all over the map with this Newsletter article but wanted to pass on a few other tidbits.

Our champion Florida Chapter recruiter, Don Joyce, wrote to me a while ago asking for input on changing the name of this *Newsletter*.

Don says: "... The word 'newsletter' implies a 'small' publication, as it was 20 years ago."

He came up with a few ideas for titles. What do you think? Should we have a contest to change the *Newsletter* name? Or are you satisfied to call the newsletter, the *Newsletter*?

Let me know by going to the VHPA website and replying in the Commo Corner:

http://www.vhpa.info/commo/commo_corner_q.htm

We'll publish what you suggest.

Packets to be shipped quicker

Some members have written, saying they've sent in dues, either initial or renewal and not received their membership packet in a timely manner.

By way of explanation, our Headquarters staff, Linda Whitten, was trying to save us some money by waiting for a batch of packets to accumulate before sending them out.

I feel members deserve a more immediate response. From now on, the new or renewal membership packet will be sent on a weekly basis after receiving your application and dues.

It's the least that can be done for you guys. Linda agrees.

Please let me know how this is working.

Chapter president loses wife

On an unhappy note, our Florida Chapter president, Dick Antross, lost his beloved wife Kathryn in August.

I met Kathryn many reunions ago and she was a great lady.

Dick, our deepest sympathy goes out to you, and your children, Craig, Brandon, and Christine.

You have been a VHPA family for many, many years and it is always sad when we lose one of our own.

VHPA remains in lawsuit

Open commo means some other bad things, too.

We are still in the throes of a lawsuit by (former) members Tom Elliston and Gary Wineteer. They wanted the organization to allow proxy voting.

The founding 66 members wanted us to vote at the reunion business meeting. You're being sued to try to change the original intent. You can follow this saga by clicking on <http://www.vhpa.info.com>

In the meantime, the Executive Council unanimously voted to remove Tom Elliston and Gary Wineteer from the membership rolls of VHPA. That's where it stands to date.

We feel if an individual has a problem, there are ways to resolve it without involving all of us in expensive, time-consuming, and needless litigation. When everything is sorted out I'll let you know the results.

Council working on various issues

Your Executive Council is very busy on a number of other issues.

Vice President Dana Young continues working on membership recruiting after his very successful initial efforts.

Dana has some good ideas to reach even more prospective pilots who are out there, but still haven't heard of VHPA. He also is putting forth some excellent suggestions and working with me to come up with some concrete, long-range planning for the association.

Dana is as versatile as they come. He climbed the ladder from WO1 to retire as an O-6. He knows about staff chores and is a valuable asset in getting things done. More to come from him.

Senior member at large Dan Ferguson has been tasked with reviewing and publishing a formal Request for Proposal (RFP).

The current contract with FRITZCO, our headquarters and administrative arm, is scheduled to expire in September 2003.

I believe Marcia Fritz and her entire staff have done an outstanding job for us and I personally would like her to continue. But in fairness, we feel an obligation to put this out to bid at the expiration of the current contract.

If any of you are aware of an organization that might fulfill the many duties currently conducted by FRITZCO, please let me know.

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From the President

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Once completed, Dan will have a source for you to obtain a copy of the RFP.

Mike Sheuerman, midterm member at large, has the daunting task of revising chapter policy and publishing a guide for those of you running for VHPA elective office.

These are no small assignments and Mike has been working diligently to produce effective and fair policies in both arenas.

The chapters are being represented by Florida Chapter president Dick Antross.

All you chapter officers, let Dick know your thoughts

and ideas. They'll be represented in the policy doctrine currently under way.

Our immediate past president, Dave Rittman, has been tasked with a little of everything.

He continues to be our liaison with the legal team representing VHPA in the aforementioned litigation. He also is streamlining our bylaws and bringing them in line with the 21st century.

You will have an opportunity to study and respond to the outcome of his labor once it's finished.

Those are the highlights of activities to date. It has been a busy and gratifying few months since this team was handed the controls.

We'll continue to keep you "straight and level" despite occasional ground fire. Let me know what you're thinking out there. It's easy to email me at president@vhpa.org or call me at [REDACTED]. See you in the next Newsletter.

— Joe Bilitzke, President

Letters

Nolan did excellent job, aviation shorted

Keith Nolan did a truly great job with *RIPCORDER Screaming Eagles Under Siege Vietnam 1970*.

He told some of the stories of more than 350 soldiers by name.

Unfortunately, many of the stories told of Hueys, gunships, medevacs, flareships, Chinooks, etc., but rarely was an aviator or crew member name or even a specific aviation unit below battalion level identified.

Having failed to get a good read on the NVA side of RIPCORDER before Nolan's book was published, I have been trying for the past 18 months to get "the other side of the story."

I made a trip to Vietnam in June 1. I interviewed six NVA officers who fought at Ripcord and have finally located some PAVN official histories for 1970 in the Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces and had them translated.

I put together my book, titled: *The View From Hanoi, The North Vietnamese in the Battle for Ripcord*. It did not read well.

My advisers have told me that I cannot simply report the NVA/PAVN side, but must explain the battle and give the US/ARVN and the NVA sides as they unfold. This means that I must tell the Ripcord battle from the U.S. perspective.

I certainly do not want to tell Nolan's story, but the bottom line is that I need to tell a brief version of the U.S. side of the Ripcord battle. This may be an excellent opportunity to complete the story, not only from the NVA side, but include appropriate detail of Army Aviation.

We all know, as Mike Sloniker keeps reminding me, that battles such as Lam Son 719 and Ripcord tell how vital Army Aviation was, but they never give credit to these heroes who certainly deserve a hell of a lot more individual recognition than they have ever received.

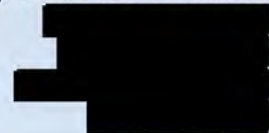
Hal Moore and Joe Galloway did a pretty good job, but more is needed.

My request to the VHPA membership and anyone with knowledge, is to please tell me the names and units of aviation crews and what they did in the battle for Ripcord from March to August 1970. Referencing by page of Nolan's book is probably the best way. I will do my best to get them in the history book of the battle for Ripcord in 1970.

Thousands of books have been written about the Vietnam War. None (other than the "official" BS histories out of Hanoi) have been written about how the NVA/PAVN fought us and none have done a very good balance of Army Aviation in the ground fight. Army Aviation is part of the ground battle; not part of the air battle.

Please give me your stories.

Retired Maj. Gen. Ben L. Harrison



Pilots, crew members could suffer from PTSD

During June 2002, I met a Vietnam veteran who had been declared 100 percent disabled by the Veterans Administration with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This vet had been an 11 Bravo grunt with the 9th Infantry Division who volunteered to be a M-60 gunner on

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a UH-1H to get out of the field. He told me that his combat experiences on a UH-1H as a machine gunner were worse than walking point as an 11-B.

This 100 percent disabled vet gave me a Disabled American Veterans (DAV) pamphlet entitled "PTSD Among Military Veterans." I glanced at the pamphlet and was immediately shocked. It was describing me and every VHPA member I know.

The DAV pamphlet listed the following as some of the symptoms:

Loud noises bother me; during the day I cannot get it out of my mind; I sit with my back to the wall whenever I can; I feel more comfortable with weapons (guns); night is bad — I hear dogs barking and people talking; I have few close friends; I need a couple drinks at night or I cannot sleep; I do not sleep well — nightmare flashes; a person's waking hours constantly remind them of the Vietnam War — helicopters passing overhead, fireworks, green treelines; or burning smells.

You do not need to have all the symptoms to be suffering from PTSD. All combat veterans have some of the symptoms.

The 100 percent disabled vet looked at me as I spoke about: Hot Us, .51 caliber MGs, AK-47s, RPGs, mortars, 122 mm rockets, incoming, pop smoke (RED), taking hits, emergency ammo resupply and emergency medevac missions.

The vet smiled and said, "You got it, PTSD."

He suggested I contact the Vet Center and speak to a counselor. The next day I contacted the Vet Center at (804) 353-8958 in Richmond, VA, and was immediately scheduled to see Gary M. Cohen.

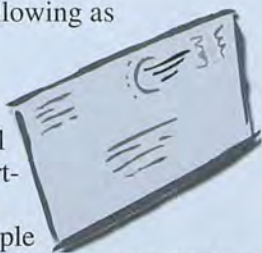
I have been counseled by Gary M. Cohen every week since, June 2002. He and every Vet Center counselor I have met are Vietnam veterans. The Vet Centers are not at VA hospitals. There are 206 Vet Centers around this great country who will listen and help any Vietnam helicopter pilot or crew member.

The Vet Centers are not the bureaucratic hassle that the VA is.

As I attended sessions at the Vet Center I learned about other indicators of PTSD: Divorced; have had several jobs over the years; drink too much; hollering or rage at your children or wife.

What I had been experiencing for years was typical for a Vietnam combat helicopter pilot. The Vet Centers know what U.S. Army helicopter pilots went through in Vietnam. Numerous drafted and enlisted Vietnam veterans have been to the Vet Centers, but very few helicopter pilots.

In Vietnam, we were young pilots, aircraft commanders, warrant officers or commissioned officers.



As leaders of soldiers in combat, we were supposed to be strong, tough and brave. Well we were, but for many of you combat helicopter pilots, Vietnam does not go away. For 34 years, I was a soldier on active duty, National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve. I have a wonderful wife and three sons, two of whom are now in the U.S. Army.

The Vet Center can really listen and guide a VHPA member who asks for help. Most combat veterans who have PTSD do not know it. All combat helicopter pilots react to their war experience every day they live, whether they realize it or not.

Of the VHPA members who read this article, I'd say 75 percent or more of you have PTSD.

If any VHPA member wants to talk about the Vet Centers or PTSD, I will be at the reunion in July 2003. I am also listed in the VHPA membership directory.

Bill Ambrose

National Capital Chapter joins ROA as festival host

On Sept. 28 and 29, the National Capital Chapter of the VHPA partnered with the Reserve Officer Association, hosting the first annual Freedomwalk Festival in the Nation's Capital.

Col. Tim Miner of the ROA contacted the National Capital Chapter, asking if any of our organization would be available to support his organization, and take the opportunity to promote ours. Of course, we said "yes."

The volksmarch had an excellent turnout, with more than 500 participants passing our checkpoints

The membership of the National Capital Chapter set up two booths along the route of the volksmarch, one at the

finish line at ROA HQ and one near The Wall. Both sites were marked with banners noting the VHPA and had plenty of fliers outlining our organization.

The volksmarch had an excellent turnout, with more than 500 participants passing our checkpoints. The walking routes took participants through the heart of the nation's mall and military memorials. All participants were interested in our organization and many took fliers to pass along to helicopter pilots they knew.

The members of the National Capital Chapter who supported this worthwhile event were: Beau and Mary Beth Lockhart, Jon Beckenhauer, Jack Blanchard, Jay Brown, Skip Butler, Jim Goldthorpe, Frank Thompson and Bob Tredway.

At the Chapter meeting on Oct. 19, Col. Miner presented the chapter with a plaque in recognition and appreciation of our partnership.

H. Jay Brown
Vice President

National Capital Chapter

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Photo by CW3 Nelson Martin

First Lt. Tom Watson and his crew from the 2nd Platoon of the 118th Assault Helicopter Company "Thunderbirds" participate in an Eagle Flight operation southwest of Saigon in 1964. Two soldiers can be seen approaching the Huey (just under and to the left of the main rotor blades). The soldiers' paths can be seen in the grass above the helicopter. The 118th AHC, one of the first assault helicopter units in Vietnam, was headquartered at Bien Hoa Airbase.

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Las Vegas Reunion 2002 a fantastic first reunion

Just a short comment. My wife and I attended the 2002 reunion for our first one. Fantastic! We are planning on Orlando.

I do want to thank all the guys I met and my fellow Charliehorse pilots. Because of the reunion and the people there, I have been able to bring back and voice the memories I have pushed back for years. Thanks, VHPA, and all

the rest of our family.

I have even been able to publicly admit to having been in RVN. Surprise, the reactions I have received from the general public has been one of thanks.



members.

I hope I have not overstepped the bounds by replying to any thanks by asking on behalf of myself and all other vets that instead of thanking us now, support our people in uniform now who are in harm's way.

Thanks again to VHPA and all

Gene Sellon

charliehorse 35

C/3/17 Air Cav

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Letters

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Ex-chopper pilot pulls third 'tour' in Vietnam

In July 2002, nearly 32 years after I left Vietnam following my second tour, I returned to serve again.

This tour was with a humanitarian service organization, Vets With A Mission (VWAM) and proved to be one of the most rewarding things I have done.

I was able to come to terms with many of the emotions I have had about the war, some of which I did not even realize I had been suppressing. I met, worked, socialized, and became friends with some wonderful people.

I gained a new perspective of the country where we all served and I came home knowing that this time the work we are doing is having a positive impact on the lives of those people and the future of that country. It will not be my last tour.

In many ways Vietnam is very different today as you might expect. In other ways it is as if time has stood still.

I spent two days in Saigon, seven in Da Nang, and one in Hue.



Vietnam seeks U.S. tourist dollar

Vietnam is trying very hard to modernize to attract that almighty tourist dollar. This is particularly evident in the cities, where cleaner streets and new construction are evident. Those who have been back many times say this is accelerating, particularly in the past few years.

Saigon is a modern Asian city compared to 32 years ago. "Highway 1" from Saigon to Hanoi is being advertised as the "Vietnam Tourism Highway" and is planned to be a six-lane highway. They have a long way to go, but they have a lot of workers.

Saigon and Da Nang even have water parks and one large one in Saigon rivals any in the States.

When you enter the countryside, it is as if nothing has changed. The rice paddies are the same. They still farm with water buffalo and the older women can't stand straight because of years of bending over, working in the rice fields. The small villages look very much the same.

I noticed genuine warmth in the people. There is virtually no hostility toward Americans. I never had one case of anyone making any derogatory comment. In fact, I often found a curious respect, even from former VC and NVA soldiers.

As far as the Vietnamese are concerned, the war ended a long time ago. Those old enough to remember will talk if asked, but what they really want to talk about is the future.

Membership Directory cover looks very good

I received the Directory cover the other day. It looks great. You guys do good work. Glad I had some stuff you could use. FANTASTIC!

Dick Lund

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dick Lund called Directory Editor Mike Law several months ago after reading a "we need your input on helicopter maintenance" article in the Newsletter. He sent Law some photos and slides. When the work was done, the printer sent Law extra copies of the color page. Law mailed one to Lund with a thank you letter.

We would do well to do the same.

I have traveled in Mexico and South America, where it is common to see police and soldiers with automatic weapons, and I expected Vietnam to be much the same. It was not. I walked alone in parts of Da Nang where I was the only Caucasian in sight and I never felt unsafe.

I even left my camera in an Internet café only to return and find the manager had secured it and was planning to bring it to the clinic where he knew we were working.

The government also has softened its attitude. The former "American War Museum" in Saigon is now called the "War Museum," although it is still very graphic and very one-sided.

There are several similar museums and, although they do focus on American participation in the war, they do it without presenting an image of hostility. With the help of time, they seem to have tried to erase the damage of the war.

The government also has softened its attitude. The former "American War Museum" in Saigon is now called the "War Museum," although it is still very graphic and very one-sided.

Bomb craters no longer mark land

From the air, the land is no longer marked with bomb craters. Many old U.S. military installations are gone, while remnants of others remain as ghostly reminders.

At the Citadel in Hue, the most heavily damaged buildings inside the walls have been removed and replaced with parks. Other, more historically important buildings have been repaired. The walls and gates still show pockmarks and holes and you can still find .50-caliber bullets imbedded in the walls. The plaque at the gate says simply: "Damaged by war in 1968."

Many American, French and Australian veterans have returned to Vietnam. I would encourage every one of you

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to do so while you still can. Most go as a tourist or with veteran organizations taking vets back as vets to see where they served. If this is the experience you want, then do it.

If you want to really experience the country, then go with a humanitarian organization. Go out and work with people, talk with them, eat dinner with them, drink with them, share stories with them, laugh with them and cry with them. It will be a healing experience you cannot imagine.

Story encouraged me to visit Vietnam

I very nearly backed out of returning to Vietnam. Then I received the following story from VWAM. It was just the encouragement I needed and from that time on there was never a question about going. I found the experiences of my trip to be just as rewarding and now there is no question that I will go again.

Like I said, the Lord works in mysterious ways. VWAM is partnering with the General Baptist Conference of West Covina, CA, and its International Vietnamese Ministries to build a children's playground in Nha Trang next summer. This is a \$80,000 project of which \$40,000 will be VWAM's responsibility.

Anyway, listen to what happened to them in March 2000 when they went to Da Nang to build their first playground.

As 70 volunteers and ministry leaders were waiting to get on the plane in Los Angeles, a member of the advance party already in-country called one of the team leaders on his cell phone. He proceeded to tell them that the local government has just withdrawn permission to build the playground on the site they've negotiated over the last two years!

Well, what do you do? Tickets were purchased, arrangements made, and supplies were sitting in Vietnam. They decided to go over anyway. My friend asked the advance team leaders to begin talks with the Vietnamese for another site.

Well, when they got to Da Nang two days later, a new site had been chosen. The next morning as trucks, buses and vans left the city, they passed the first playground site, which was right off the new bridge that's been built in Da Nang.

The ministry leader told me he bristled with anger when they drove by it because it was the perfect place for the

playground. Lot's of visibility, in the city, etc., and so.

Soon they were out in the middle of nowhere, down several kilometers of dirt road (if you wanted to call the wide path a road) and they drove up to a rural site way out in the boonies. The communist officials said this is where they could build their massive community playground. In a village about 15 kilometers out of the city next to a dilapidated school! Boy, the ministry leader told me, he was mad as hell at the V's and God for allowing this to happen. That's pretty mad for a Baptist preacher.

They were in a place where no one would see their work and it appeared it didn't mean that much or amount to a hill of beans to anyone!

The volunteers got out of their vehicles, unloaded the equipment and supplies, and went to work, most of them wondering why they had paid all this money to come to Vietnam. Maddier than a disturbed nest of hornets, he told me he stewed over that development all day. Others in the team felt the same way.

He told me the only upside of the situation was that they were staying at the Furama (this is the contact that helped VWAM with accommodations for our teams).

Explanation given at dinner

That night the local communist officials invited the team's leadership to a dinner in Da Nang. He told me they almost begged off going, but believed they should go to present a "good witness."

Early in the dinner the head of the Da Nang's People Committee introduced the local district communist official for remarks. This guy was VC back during the war and fought right in the locale around his village. Of course, this is where the playground was now being built. His story follows.

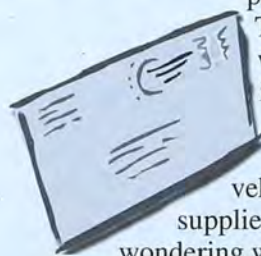
During the Eastertide offensive in April 1972 a fight against South Vietnamese ground forces with U.S. air support took place at the village where the playground was being constructed.

Unfortunately, one of those terrible accidents involving noncombatants occurred exactly where the playground was started that day. An American Navy aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs on VC positions. While one of the bombs hit the AAA position, the other hit a school with more than 100 children inside, seeking refuge from the ensuing battle. Over 40 of them were killed.

For years he blamed the American plane and pilot, but also felt partially responsible himself because had the VC AAA position been farther away from the school the accident wouldn't have happened.

He said now a beautiful playground in the precise place that caused so much pain and unhappiness will bring pleasure and joy to the children of his village, and those from the surrounding area.

He continued that never in their wildest imagination or dreams did they think anything so wonderful as this play-



Letters

Continued from Page 10

ground would ever happen to them. He raised his hand and toasted the Americans, thanking them for coming back to his village.

Well, my friend said there wasn't a dry eye among the Americans and he asked God to forgive him for his lack of faith and trust . . .

VWAM is an organization founded and managed by Vietnam veterans dedicated to reconciliation.

First VWAM is a Christian Missionary based organization. However, the communist government still does not offer any freedom of religion so this mission is accomplished quietly through one-on-one conversations and by example through our service projects.

Second, VWAM coordinates service projects. Over the years, these have included playgrounds, orphanages and schools, but have focused mostly on medical clinics and

treatment.

VWAM has constructed 22 medical clinics throughout Vietnam and we broke ground this year on number 23. These clinics provide year-round medical service with Vietnamese staff and each year VWAM takes in two or three medical teams consisting of doctors, dentists,

optometrists, nurses, pharmacists, and non-medical helpers like me to staff these clinics or help out in hospitals. All are volunteers who pay their own way.



Finally, VWAM helps veterans to reconcile their emotions about the war through missionary and/or service project work with other veterans who have the same feel-

ings.

My team consisted of 41 Americans, including 19 Vietnam veterans, 2 Vietnamese-born Americans, and 4 doctors from Ireland. The Vietnam veterans were from all services and included one couple, an Army nurse and a 1st Cavalry

See LETTERS, Page 12

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Holloway Association seeks plaque information

Many may remember the memorial wall that stood by the main gate at Camp Holloway at Pleiku.

The Camp Holloway Association has been told the plaques with the names of those who died while serving at Camp Holloway were taken off the wall, packed and sent somewhere.

Anyone with information about these plaques — when they were removed and by whom — is asked to contact Vern Gano, 6 Lake Port Court, St. Peters, MO 63376 or [REDACTED]

The association held a reunion on Oct. 3-6 in St. Louis to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the battalion's departure from Vietnam.

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Letters

Continued from Page 11

captain who met at the 24th Evacuation Hospital after he was wounded.

For most of us, it was our first return trip. Others have returned for many of these tours. I think the record is 12. The remainder of the team consisted of spouses of a few of the vets, three teen-age dependents, doctors and other medical staff, and mission group volunteers from churches in Newberry, SC, and Marietta, GA. Most of us served a 10-day tour, but others served 20 days, staying to be joined by a second team.

The team was from all parts of the United States, so we assembled at LAX and departed in the very early morning of July 8, arriving at Tan Son Nhut International Airport in Ho Chi Minh City before noon on July 9. We had that afternoon and most of the next day free to be Saigon tourists and departed for our mission project in Da Nang on July 10. We would spend the next 8 days in Da Nang with one day off on which I went to Hue. We then departed Da Nang on July 19 for Hanoi, Hong Kong, and back to LAX.

Group attends dedication of clinic

On the morning of July 11, we attended the dedication of VWAM clinic 22, followed by the groundbreaking for No. 23 and tours of two others. All this was attended by local and national party and health department officials and covered by national TV and newspaper. We then were treated to a first class lunch.

Our Vietnamese hosts can really drink. They bought rounds of beers and toasted to just about everything. Our missionaries allowed that the Lord would excuse this because it came under the heading of relationship-building, which I was to find is crucial to the success of the mission. Following lunch, it was back to the Hotel to prepare for starting the clinic work the next day.

In Da Nang, our group was divided into two medical teams, one at each of two VWAM clinics, and one construction team at clinic 23. Each clinic was staffed by three of our MDs, one U.S. and two Irish, and other support staff. We also had an optometry team that rotated between the clinics and a pharmacy team at each clinic. Each clinic also had Vietnamese doctors and nurses. We brought several hundred pounds of donated medications and 1,600 pairs of used prescription eyeglasses.

Lines were long every day and people waited, some-

times all day, in 100-degree temperature and very high humidity (you all remember) to get treatment. The clinics were not air-conditioned. They did have ceiling fans that worked most of the time — when the power was on.

Treatment very basic at clinics

At these clinics, service is mostly "Band Aid treatment," consisting of prescription medications and lots of vitamins and every patient left with a toothbrush and toothpaste. This may seem insignificant for the effort involved to make it happen, but nearly every patient left with a smile on his face and in one way or another said "thank you." Those smiles were worth a thousand thank yous.

There were some special cases, both good and bad that I will always remember. They filled the day with elation or devastated it with anger. The following are a few.

A 13-year-old girl came in to our optometry team so nearsighted she was effectively blind. Her lens correction was determined to be -10. Of 1,600 pairs of donated eyeglasses, there were 2 with -10 lenses and one with child frames. When the Vietnam vet ophthalmology assistant placed those glasses on her face, her eyes popped open wide and she screamed.

The next day, that girl's mother returned to say thank you. For the first time in her life, her daughter could see leaves on trees and stars in the sky. You may call it a miracle or just luck. I know what I think. That was a good day.

A 57-year-old man who spoke very broken English and had one hand missing came in. I sat and talked with him while he waited.

He had been a South Vietnamese soldier who worked closely with Americans. After the war he was sent to a "reeducation" camp and his right hand was cut off. I asked him what he did now. He said, "we are people." The reeducation worked!

Eventually I found that he mines marble at Marble Mountain, with one hand. He asked about American names that I couldn't understand and didn't know. Then he said, "I worked with Americans — you left me." That was hard; I had to get some air. His diagnosis was TB and leprosy and not much hope. That was my worst day and I will never forget it.

Party members receive VIP treatment

The communist party members enjoy a lot of privileges. One day a man walked up the stairs past our team member who was controlling entry. When Bill tried to send him to the end of the line, one of the Vietnamese staff came running up and told Bill, "No, No, VIP."

I was just preparing to seat an elderly woman at the

The next day, that girl's mother returned to say thank you. For the first time in her life, her daughter could see leaves on trees and stars in the sky.

Our Vietnamese hosts can really drink. They bought rounds of beers and toasted to just about everything.

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Letters

Continued from Page 12

triage table for blood pressure, pulse, etc., and the VIP pushed his way in and sat down right under the woman. I led the woman back to a waiting bench and, not knowing that she spoke English, said: "I'm sorry." She looked up and said "It's OK."

This was to be repeated many times. The common people walk to the clinic, and wait hours in the heat. The party people, none of whom were sick, arrive by air-conditioned car and walk straight to the front of the line. But they are all "people."

The next story requires some background. We had two other American doctors who changed plans and could not go within two months of the trip. We were going to have to reduce to staffing just one clinic.

The four Irish "doctors" are actually last year medical students who were trying to get into Vietnam with another U.S. Vet-sponsored team, Mission Of Peace, in the Delta area.

Mission Of Peace could not get them visas and referred them to VWAM. In a few weeks VWAM had the visas. Remember the importance of "relationship building?" These Irish doctors stayed at a different hotel from the VWAM crew because it was cheaper.

One day a mother came into the clinic, carrying her daughter, who was severely crippled as a result of polio. I took her in to see Dr. Jenny, as we called one of the Irish girls who plans to be a pediatrician. Without treatment, which was not going to happen, this girl had little chance of survival.

Dr. Jenny was visibly shaken, but she asked the mother to return the next day. It seems that at the other hotel, Dr. Jenny had met a small group of U.S. orthopedic surgeons who were working at a local hospital.

Our team had no idea they were there and we still do not know who they are. These doctors agreed to see the little girl, but had to clear a lot of red tape. Remember the "relationship building?"



The orthopedic team fitted the girl with a brace and arranged to pay for her to receive a year of physical therapy and will continue her treatment on future visits. Her prognosis is much better. Call it a miracle or coincidence. That was a very good day.

Visit changes pilot's perception

I came away from my third tour with a very different perception of Vietnam than when I left 32 years ago. Above all else, Vietnam and its people do not harbor ill feelings about the war.

In the clinics, on the street and on the beach, we met and talked to former soldiers, south Vietnamese, VC, and NVA, and civilians who had sympathized with the north and with the south.

At the "relationship building" lunch I sat with a former NVA colonel. In their minds, the war is over. At no time did one person ever make one derogatory comment toward me or any member of my team.

Almost universally, they say that the war ended a long time ago; that it makes no sense to fix blame because that is the past. Today we need to think about the future.

They welcomed us and tried hard to make us feel that way. My experience also taught me that through faith you can see impossible things happen every day if you just try.

Those Vietnamese I asked expressed that they deeply appreciate what these humanitarian teams are doing and that it is slowly making a difference in their lives.

I guarantee that if you go on one of these teams, you will receive far more than you give. Next year there will be another trip or two to Da Nang and probably one to Na Trang.

If you would like to participate in a future project or if you can afford to help financially, please contact me or contact VWAM through their webpage at VWAM.com

VWAM is funded entirely by contributions. We need doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, interpreters, and all kinds of support staff and volunteers. You do not have to be a Vietnam veteran, so if you know anyone else who would like to participate, let us know.

David L. Bonifield
Vulture 29, 1968-69
Deans, 1970

Taps

Amadio R. "Bob" Fioretti

Amadio R. "Bob" Fioretti of Shoreham, NY, died Aug. 19 from a brain tumor.

Fioretti was a member of A Company, 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division "Ghost Riders," stationed at Camp Evans, RVN.

He served with the Ghost Riders from June 1969-June 1970.

Fioretti graduated from Fort Rucker with WORWAC class 69-11.

Earl W. Fletcher

Earl Warren Fletcher, a retired Army colonel who served in three wars, died Aug. 15 in Arlington, VA. He was 78.

Fletcher was born and raised in Moultrie, GA. He graduated from North Georgia Military College and George Washington Graduate School.

During his military career, Fletcher served in post-World War II Europe as aide-de-camp to Gen. C. Magruder

See TAPS, Page 14

Taps

Continued from Page 13

er and Gen. Maxwell Taylor.

He served in Korea in 1950, and in Vietnam from 1967-69, where he survived three helicopter crashes.

He was awarded more than 60 combat medals, including the Silver Star Medal, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Bronze Star Medals, 27 Air Medals and numerous foreign awards.

Fletcher served at Fort Rucker from 1970-73 as assistant commandant and deputy commander of the Army Aviation School.

He was posted to Fort Hood, from 1973-75 as chief of staff Army Test Command until his retirement in May 1975.

After his military career, Fletcher served from 1978 -79 as director of the Flight Training Division of Bell Helicopter International in Iran.

He was responsible for aviation training that involved

2,100 pilots and ultimately was responsible for the safe evacuation of more than 5,000 Americans due to the fall of the Shah of Iran.

Survivors include his wife Wendy; sons, Mark, Michael, David and Scotty; and daughter, Nancy Fletcher Madren.

Thomas Alexander McCarthy

Thomas Alexander McCarthy, 55, a retired air traffic controller, died of cancer Aug. 26.

McCarthy, a Sterling, VA, resident since 1971, worked at the Washington Air Traffic Control Center in Leesburg for more than 30 years.

He was a Norfolk native who served in the Army during the Vietnam War. As a chief warrant officer, he served as a helicopter pilot and instructor.

His honors include a posthumous Purple Heart, which was awarded at his burial.

Survivors include his wife, Carlene McCarthy of Sterling; two children, Mary McCarthy Balderson of Sterling and Michael Thomas McCarthy of Richmond; a sister; and two grandsons.



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If you're only in the market for an extended warranty, be sure to check out the Top Ten List at Auto Warranty Reviews <www.autowarrantyreviews.org>. But keep in mind: the 5-Star rated companies come with a special rebate to members of Auto Warranty Reviews Consumer Club.

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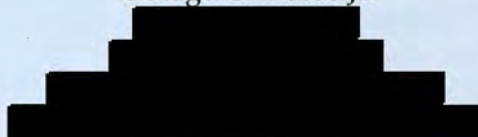
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George G. Reese Jr.



Vote set on proposed amendment

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

Notice of Proposed Amendment to our Constitution September 8, 2002

To be voted on at our next annual business meeting in Orlando, Florida, July 3, 2003:

Back when the Association's original 66 founders first put together and wrote our Bylaws and Constitution, one concern was that any changes to the organizational documents be in a proper format vs. some of the original provisions that were literally submitted on cocktail napkins. Thus a provision was written in Article VIII of the Constitution that the Executive Council must approve the proposed amendments. Our Constitution and Bylaws continued in place after the Association grew and was ultimately incorporated in the State of Kansas in

1989.

It was not the intent of the founders to limit the membership from submitting a proposal to change the Constitution or Bylaws and, to our knowledge, this has never occurred.

However to clarify this point, your Executive Council as stated in the July 4, 2002, business meeting, is recommending the elimination of the following sentence from Article VIII, Paragraph b of the Constitution:

"The Executive Council must approve the proposed amendment(s)"

However after extensive review and receipt of legal counsel, your Executive Council is recommending that in the interest of procedural fairness, the other two conditions for amendments remain. The purpose of at least a 90-day notice is to allow time to ensure the proposed change(s)

are in the proper format and that they are published at least once in the Newsletter before they are voted on at the business meeting.

Thus we are recommending that Article VIII of the Constitution be amended to read as follows:

Proposed amendments will be submitted to the VHPA Headquarters or any VHPA officer 90 days prior to the annual reunion

The adoption of the amendment(s) at an annual meeting of the VHPA is by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at the business session.

In compliance with the existing Constitution and Bylaws, this notification is the required prior notice for voting on this change at our next annual business meeting scheduled in Orlando, FL, at the Rosen Center Hotel, 9 a.m., July 3, 2003.

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.

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— Tom Payne, Secretary/Treasurer
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

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Sweeney wins VHPA scholarship

The VHPA is pleased to announce the 2002 winner of the VHPA Heritage Scholarship is Carey M. Sweeney II of Enterprise, AL.

Carey, the son of retired CW4 Carey M. Sweeney, will be studying for a business degree at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

CW4 Sweeney was in Class 68-522 and served with the 48th Assault Helicopter Company, "Blue Stars" in 1969-70.

Applicants for the VHPA Heritage Scholarship also are eligible for many other AAAA scholarships, in addition to the \$1,000 VHPA scholarship.

In fact, the 2002 competition attracted 268 applications and there were 90 awards, for a total of \$152,000 in scholarships.

This was a reduction from the



Carey M. Sweeney II is winner of the 2002 VHPA Heritage Scholarship. His father, retired CW4 Carey M. Sweeney, is at right.

number awarded in 2001, due mainly to the reduced amount of total AAAA Scholarship Foundation funds available from investments. Even with the reduction, it appears nine of the total scholarship winners were children of VHPA members.

Again this year, the AAAA executive director Bill Harris invited a representative from the VHPA to join the overall scholarship selection committee.

Joining the selection committee for the VHPA was Forrest B. Snyder, Jr. who lives in the Washington, DC, area.

Forrest was a member of Class 71-30 and served in the 361st Aerial Weapons Company in 1971-72 as Panther 19. He did a wonderful job and was very impressed with all the applicants. He has volunteered to represent the

VHPA on the committee again next year.

Congratulations to Carey M. Sweeney II.

— Tom Payne
VHPA Secretary/Treasurer

VHPA scholarship fund growing

TOM PAYNE
SECRETARY/TREASURER

After only two years of awarding \$1,000 VHPA Heritage Scholarships, the fund is growing.

In fact, after the reunion in Las Vegas, there was about \$6,000 in the account to be added to VHPA funds already available within the AAAA Foundation.

Almost \$4,000 came from VHPA member donations when they registered for the Las Vegas reunion, checked the donation block and paid for their reunion.

Another \$1,500 came from a gift from the authors of *Chicken Soup for the Veterans' Soul*, where the VHPA is listed as a recipient veteran organization to share in some of the profits from the recently released book.

VHPA member George Larson graciously gave \$500 during the Annual Business Meeting in Las Vegas.

Finally, Dick Antross, president of the Florida Chapter of VHPA, presented \$425 from the family of deceased VHPA member Mike Mullens, who died in June 2002.

It was magnificent growth of the VHPA Heritage

Scholarship program in just one year.

In case you might not know, the VHPA Heritage Scholarship money is held within the Army Aviation Association of America's Scholarship Foundation. There, it is accounted for separately, invested and grown along with the Foundation's \$1 million plus.

The income produced by the interest is funding many annual scholarships, including ours. The AAAA Foundation manages the VHPA dollars and provides the mechanism used to select the winners for all of the scholarships, including the VHPA winner.

There is no charge for doing this and the VHPA is very fortunate to be a part of their successful AAAA Scholarship Foundation. In every way, the VHPA and AAAA are "soul mates," with many members in common and many common attitudes and goals.

Applications for the 2003 VHPA Heritage Scholarship of \$1,000 for one year, plus many other AAAA scholarships, may be obtained by calling the AAAA at (203) 226-8184 or logging onto the AAAA website at: www.quad-a.org

See APPLICANT, Page 17

Directory

Flight schools theme of 2003 edition

MIKE LAW

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY EDITOR

The VHPA Directory Committee has decided to dedicate the 2003 Directory to the History of Flight Schools.

This dedication means the photos selected for the front and rear covers (usually color photos) and those printed inside (usually black-and-white versions), plus the traditional history section, will all reflect the theme — the History of Flight Schools.

This effort has four main objectives.

- First, make certain the Flight Class Pictures section of www.vhpa.org is as complete as humanly possible.

Gary Roush has been working on this effort for several years. Now the time to make certain it is complete. For those that went to flight schools not associated with the U.S. Army, we welcome your photos as well.

- Second, make certain the VHPA's roster of flight classes is as complete as humanly possible.

This list includes details for each flight class such as the location, name, starting and ending dates, color of hat, number of students, etc.

Again Gary Roush has worked on this for years and will soon put this roster on www.vhpa.org for all to view. Naturally, the message is: If you don't see details about your flight class, now is an excellent time to bring this to our attention!

Again, for non-U.S. Army flight schools, please work with us for whatever you have.

- Third, over the years, the VHPA has keyed various flight school social rosters, official orders, etc., into an electronic database with more than 40,000 records in it. Each record identifies one student in a particular flight

class. Again Gary Roush had lead this effort but at one time as many as 15 VHPAers worked under his direction.

We will figure out a way to advertise to the membership what flight class rosters we don't have. We hope now is the time to get this 100 percent accurate and complete.

- Four, and what could be the most fun, are the "interesting details" — what the students did during their flight school days.

Clearly, the warrant officer classes have story after story after story after story the Directory would love to publish to the world. Over the years of "fishing for stories" to publish in the Directory, I have heard some GREAT Flight School stories, but there was never enough time to write them down.

Well, that day has arrived!! Bring 'em on!!

For example, I was registering a guy for the Las Vegas Reunion and he was telling me about his WOC platoon. Their Tac officer had a VW beetle and one evening it was clearly visible on the roof of their building with the light shining proudly for all the world to see! I nearly fell off my chair laughing at the thought of all the energy, all the teamwork, and all the ingenuity it took to make that happen.

I also asked him if everyone survived the repercussions. WHAT A STORY!

And the WOC Rock — really a collection of about 100 layers of paint. Several years ago, several VHPAers helped relocate that from Mineral Wells to Fort Rucker and it was an "instant success" — sometimes painted multiple times a day!

OK, let's have your best WOC Rock stories!

There are other interesting details, such as some of the
See DIRECTORY, Page 18

Applicant/father must be in VHPA

Continued from Page 16

Deadline for requesting 2003 applications is May 1. Deadline for returning the applications is June 1. It is important to remember, the applicant (student) or his/her father must be a member of AAAA to qualify for a VHPA scholarship. This should be no problem because the cost of the AAAA student membership, is minimal.

The reason for membership in AAAA is to comply with foundation guidelines that insure the funds will be awarded only to Army Aviation-related students.

The VHPA has a capable representative on the AAAA scholarship selection committee when it meets every June

in Washington, DC, to examine the hundreds of applications.

Forrest B. Snyder Jr. volunteers to do the honors for the VHPA and taking time to be a part of the process that usually takes about two days over a weekend. Forrest lives in the Washington area and served in Vietnam 1971-72 with the 361st Aerial Weapons Company.

Finally, if you would like to make a donation to the VHPA Scholarship Fund, send your checks designated "VHPA Scholarship" to our HQ in Sacramento, CA. The gift is tax deductible and a wonderful way to memorialize a friend who died in Vietnam.



Mike Sloniker photos

• Above, readers from the National Capital Chapter pose near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington after reading the names of KIAs on Nov. 7.

• At left, pilot Jim McDaniel (left) and crew chief Steve Radcliffe of the 174th Assault Helicopter Company, who participated in the ceremony.

Time to build Vietnam museum

EDWARD T. LUTTENBERGER

Do you feel that an educational institution of truth and information relating to the Vietnam era is important to complement the monuments and memorials to those of us who didn't make it back?

Do you feel, as we do, that the time to build this institution has come?

The National Vietnam War Museum will be an educational institution "To promote an understanding of the Vietnam era while honoring those who served."

While it will honor those men and women who served their country in Vietnam, it is more than another



memorial. Memorials exist to help us reflect and remember those who served and died. And, though the Museum's memorial gardens will celebrate the allied nations that fought in the war and honor both individuals and units, first and foremost it will be an educational venue.

The National Vietnam War museum will maintain a library, but will not need to have an extensive archive, because we expect to continue to

cooperate with the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

More than just a research facility, The National Vietnam War Museum will be a place to acquire knowledge, truthfulness, and understanding. No other place exists that will offer such a comprehensive presentation of the Vietnam era.

Using interactive displays and artifacts, the museum will allow visitors to understand and appreciate the Vietnam experience. The goals of the museum are to:

- Provide a historically accurate rendition of the events of the Vietnam era.

See VHPA, Page 19

Directory editor collecting stories

Continued from Page 17

pioneering efforts by the early (1950s era) flight schools — the Gary AAF and San Marcos and Fort Sill days.

I hope we can record as many of these as are possible.

As you read this *Newsletter*, the 2002 VHPA Directory will be well into the print and distribution cycle and is scheduled to be in all dues-current members' hands before the end of October.

On behalf of the Directory Committee, we want to thank the more than two dozen VHPAers and VHCMAers who responded to our requests for information and photos for the Helicopter Maintenance dedication for the 2002 Directory.

Clearly this response has been much greater than in years past — maybe the repeated articles in *The VHPA Newsletter* had something to do with it — maybe all those "forgotten maintenance" units and people are really glad to see their "day in the sun" for a VHPA Directory.

Anyway, thanks for trusting us with your photos, your yearbooks, your histories, your stories. I trust you will enjoy the 2002 Directory and show it to others with pride.

Please contact Gary Roush at [redacted] or roush@vhpa.org after viewing the website for the first three items mentioned above.

Contact Mike Law at [redacted] or law@vhpa.org with your stories and all other materials pertaining to the Directory.

VHPA briefs

Call for VHPA Calendar photos

The VHPA Calendar features 11x17-inch-high, quality color photos of helicopters, helicopter crews, helicopter maintenance personnel, terrain, battlefields, LZs, and flight lines all from Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War era (1961-1975).

While most of the photos relate to U.S. Army helicopter activities, we have printed many showing USMC, USAF, USN, VNAF, and Air America helicopters.

The 2004 issue will be sent to the printer near the end of January 2003. As we did this year, you can purchase production copies of next year's calendar at the VHPA



Reunion. So in Orlando, you can purchase the 2004 issue of the VHPA Calendar.

Anyone wishing to submit candidate photos should contact Mike Law, [redacted] or [redacted] or law@vhpa.org during the next two months.

Investment Committee needs help

The VHPA Investment Committee is looking for three volunteers from the membership that would like to join the Investment Committee.

We are looking for three people who are active in the investment field as a stockbroker, investment adviser, CPA, or have a related background in finance.

The purpose of the VHPA Investment Committee is to invest the assets of the VHPA within the parameters of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Investment Policy.

Please contact Bob Smith at [redacted], my home telephone [redacted], or at my office at [redacted].

VHPA was first founding member

Continued from Page 18

- Provide the information in a manner to be understood by young and old alike.

- Provide information and resources to support additional independent and group study.

The Fort Wolters Chapter of the VHPA was the founding organization for the museum. In 1999, VHPA was the first national organization to accept a nomination as a Charter Sponsor of The National Vietnam War Museum. Since then, the following organizations are some that have accepted this same status:

- NAM-POW
- American Legion
- American Division Veterans Association
- Vietnam Center at Texas Tech
- The Reserve Officers Association, Department of Texas
- VFW, Department of Texas
- VVA, State of Texas

These sponsorships were based on the mutual recognition that there is a need for an institution directed toward a better understanding of the Vietnam era. This sponsorship required no financial commitment on the part of the sponsoring organization. The primary benefit of the sponsorship was to



provide an information path to the membership.

This year we have undertaken a major review and revalidation of our development plans. Costs of about \$25 million are now projected to build, staff and provide displays associated with these eight museum themes:

- The Cold War
- The Nation and Culture of Vietnam
- Vietnam War Chronology
- An Evolution in Ground, Air, and Sea Warfare
- The Home Front
- Technology and the War
- War's End and Aftermath
- Fort Wolters

As VHPA members, we are spread among the 50 states, numerous territories and foreign countries.

Are you a member of the other sponsoring organizations? More importantly, are you a member of other organizations like these that should be contacted to become sponsoring organizations? And, are you

willing to carry the message to those organizations?

We have initiated activities with the various local VHPA chapters, but we need representatives of the museum across the country and throughout these and other organizations.

We need representatives to not only spread the word, but to provide names of other individuals and organizations that also feel such an institution is needed now.

With your participation and support, this dream can become a reality during the next five years.

As a "stretch goal," we would like to accomplish the groundbreaking during the VHPA reunion in Dallas in 2004. With your help this goal can be attained.

For additional information or to be part of this noble effort, contact the museum at P.O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068-0146 or at our website www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org

"Help us build a museum, and understanding," by your contribution of money, time and local organizational effort.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Edward T. Luttenberger is communications director for The National Vietnam War Museum.

Orlando 2003 Reunion to have optional Caribbean Cruise Extension - July 6-10, 2003

Our next annual reunion is at the Rosen Center in Orlando Florida Wednesday July 2 through Sunday July 6th. We start with a welcome reception with major entertainment Wednesday evening July 2nd, and the final banquet is Saturday evening, July 5th.

When we surveyed members about various future reunion preferences at our Denver reunion, the results indicated that a cruise option would be of significant interest by a portion of the membership. Our proximity to Port Canaveral near Orlando provides us an unique opportunity to offer a optional add on cruise to your reunion experience on the fabulous Royal Caribbean "Sovereign of the Seas" from Sunday July 6th to Thursday July 10th. The itinerary is as follows:

Itinerary: 4-Day Bahamas

Day 1 - Sunday	Port Canaveral	departs 5:00pm
Day 2- Monday	Coco Cay (Private Island)	8:00am 5:00pm
Day 3 - Tuesday	Nassau, Bahamas	7:00am 1:00am
Day 4 - Wed	At Sea	
Day 5 - Thursday	Port Canaveral	Disembark approx. 9:00am

Reservations would need to be made separately from our reunion registration directly with our cruise vendor within the next few weeks to ensure you get a cabin at the below special discounted rates:

Category	Special Cruise Rates
Interior Stateroom	From \$430 per person
Ocean View Stateroom	From \$450 per person
Superior Ocean View	From \$670 per person

All rates are per person, based on double occupancy; taxes and fees are subject to change.

Single person rate is 200% of category rate.

Optional travel insurance available and is recommended. A signed waiver is required to decline insurance.

Port charges of \$99 per person and government taxes of \$25.55 per person are additional and not included in the above rates. Transfers direct from the Rosen Hotel (VHPA reunion HQ hotel) to the ship, and back to the Orlando airport after the cruise are available for \$38 per person round trip. Included in the package is a bottle of champagne per cabin, and a get-together cocktail party our first night. In addition, dollar credits the VHPA will receive from Royal Caribbean on the cruise cost (excluding taxes) will be put into our overall reunion budget and be used to fund special activities for members while on the ship.

To reserve your cabin, all that is needed is a \$100 deposit per person by **January 8, 2003**. Final payment would be due April 23, 2003. On the next page is an enrollment form with additional details. To book, all you need to do is call toll free, or fax-mail the enrollment to:

JoAnne Weeks, our VHPA reunion cruise vendor



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E-mail: joanne@cruiseholidayskc.com

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

YOU MAY CALL IN THIS INFORMATION TO
JOANNE @ {800} 869-6806 OR
IF YOU PREFER YOU MAY MAIL THIS FORM IN TO
Cruise Holidays Kansas City 7000 NW Prairie View Rd., Suite 200
Kansas City, Mo. 64151

LEGAL PASSENGER NAMES (First and Last) AND DATE OF BIRTH (MM/DD/YEAR)

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE () _____ BUSINESS PHONE () _____

CELL PHONE () _____ E MAIL _____

CATEGORY REQUESTED: RCL Cruise – Sunday July 6th – Thursday July 10th; 4 nights

Superior ocean view _____ ocean view _____ Inside _____

From \$670 From \$450 From \$430

Government taxes of \$25.55 and port charges of \$99.00 per person are additional.

AIR TRANSPORTATION:

I'd like Cruise Line Air _____

OR

I'll make my own arrangements to the ship: _____ I'll need Cruise Line Transfers: _____ ***
(\$38.00 from Rosen Hotel to ship Sunday 7-6,
and ship to Orlando airport Thursday 7-10)

*** Cruise transfers strongly recommended

SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND SPECIAL NEEDS

BIRTHDAY _____ NAME _____ DAY TO CELEBRATE _____

ANNIVERSARY _____ DAY TO CELEBRATE _____

SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS _____

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS _____

OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS _____

DINING PREFERENCE: EARLY _____ LATE _____ XXX (unless requested otherwise, VHPA group will be seated in same dining area during late seating if possible)

WE WOULD LIKE TO DINE WITH _____

DEPOSIT REQUIRED: \$100 PER PERSON due 1/08/03 (FINAL PAYMENT DUE: 4/23/03)

- PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CRUISE HOLIDAYS OR

- CREDIT CARD INFORMATION:

NAME AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR CREDIT CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRATION DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____ AMT. TO CHARGE _____

It is going to be a great cruise to finish up a truly memorable reunion!

***VHPA 20th Anniversary Reunion, Orlando Florida July 2-6th;
Cruise Extension July 6-10th***

Reunions:

One in chopper, one in Las Vegas

MIKE LAW
DIRECTORY EDITOR

Editor:

It only took 32 years! Originally a Dutchmaster gun pilot, later Crusader 32, the guy I have tried to find for the last 32 years is Peter Jordan.

Peter started with B/7/1st Cav in the spring of 1969, later extended and transferred to D/3/5th Cav. Many of the Dutchmasters from my era may recall the story of his D/3/5 Cobra crash.

He lost a canopy in flight on a "last light" mission and subsequently lost the tail rotor and 90-degree gearbox. Needless to say, he was shortly on the ground.

Pete and his copilot both survived the crash, but Pete was medevaced home in July of 1970. I did see him once after our tour at his home in Valley Forge, PA, in either 1970 or 71, and then I completely lost track of him.

Every year I have looked in the VHPA Directory to see if Pete would show up as either a member or potential. After returning from the VHPA Reunion, on July 10th, I was flying air tours for AirStar in the Grand Canyon and guess who climbs into my front seat?

This guy mentioned he flew Cobras in Vietnam and, after a couple of questions, who, when, where, we realized who each other was!

We had a great dinner that evening with his new fiancée, Sydney. Amazing — Pete had never heard of the VHPA!

I gave him a Directory and an application form. I also sent an e-mail to Mike Law, to see if he could provide some details about the crash. This was my lucky year.

Rick Davis, a classmate of mine who I met in Las Vegas, also flew with Pete. Prior to Las Vegas, I had not seen Rick since Vinh Long. This may be a small world, but the VHPA makes it better for me!

Don Clarke


Database gives details of flight

The VHPA Helicopter Database has the following accident record for D/3/5 CAV AH-1G No. 66-15263 flown by CW2 F.P. Jordan and WO1 J.R. Burch (a life member of the VHPA).

The Accident Summary reads: At about 2100 hours on July 15, 1970, CW2 Jordan, first pilot, and WO1 Burch, copilot/gunner of AH-1G No. 66-15263, began a night mission as firefly security for Vinh Long Airfield.

At about 2200 hours that night, they received word a Vietnamese outpost to the south of Vinh Long was being attacked by enemy forces. They, along with a sister Cobra, piloted by WO1 Ross and WO1 Will, went to the aid of the outpost.

After expending their rockets, they returned to Vinh Long in order to refuel and rearm. Jordan and Burch armed their aircraft with a full load of 2.75-inch FFAR rockets with 10-pound HE warheads and PD fuses, 52 rockets in all. They refueled with 1,400 pounds of JP-4.

Cobras make rocket attacks

The Cobra gun team returned to the area of conflict and began to make rocket attacks on the enemy positions.

During Jordan's third gun run, just as he was about to initiate a recovery from his dive, the pilot's canopy door sprung open. At that moment Jordan was between 1,000 and 1,200 feet altitude and about 160 knots indicated air-speed.

Burch reached for the controls. He had become startled and thought Jordan had been wounded by hostile fire. Mr. Burch then looked back over his right shoulder and saw Jordan reaching out to close the door.

The door then suddenly tore away at its hinges and flew up into the main rotor blades. Both pilots noticed, while this was happening, that the SCAS had been disengaged. Jordan had become aware of this through the blinking of his SCAS lights and Burch by the feel of the controls.

Jordan felt after that possibly he had unconsciously punched off the SCAS during the excitement of the moment.

Jordan takes over controls

After the canopy door had flown off, Jordan took the controls away from Burch, who had started a gradual break.

Jordan cried out over the radio: "Going down, lost tail rotor, canopy came off."

The Master Caution Light came on. The aircraft was now between 500 and 700 feet altitude and had slowed in airspeed and was yawing to the right.

Burch noticed the yaw, but stated later there existed no center of gravity problem. Jordan also claimed no CG problem, though he knew by now the tail rotor had been damaged and was not providing thrust.

However, he believed he at least still retained the 90-

See CHOPPER'S, Page 23

Chopper's airspeed slows to 50 knots

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degree gearbox. Since the aircraft's airspeed was now down to 50 knots, Jordan put in forward cyclic, leaving his torque setting alone.

As airspeed increased, the aircraft turned smoothly to the right and began to streamline. Burch stated that this occurred at 90-110 knots, whereas Jordan thought it to be more around 120 knots.

Since the aircraft was now stable, Jordan decided to fly back to Vinh Long and make a running landing. His altitude was 300 feet. He radioed to the other aircraft that he had the ship under control and was going back to Vinh Long.

Helicopter rolls into 90-degree bank

After having leveled off at an airspeed of 140 knots, the helicopter began to yaw to the right and roll to the left into about a 90-degree bank. At this time Jordan applied hard right cyclic to overcome this condition. He said over the radio: "Going inverted."

The roll had been eliminated, but the yawing tendency increased. Jordan described the unwanted maneuver as virtually flying sideways. The aircraft now began to fly backwards in a tail low attitude.

Burch recollected the attitude to be about 20 tail low and that they flew for about five seconds rearward. During this time, additional altitude had been lost.

Jordan then applied full forward cyclic and the nose of the aircraft dipped and the aircraft spun to the right 360 degrees. There was one, possibly two, complete turns.

Jordan then pulled out of the erratic dive. As he leveled the helicopter, he noticed his airspeed to be zero and the altitude above the ground was between 50 and 150 feet. He described the attitude as being at a "stable hover."

After transmitting "zero airspeed," the aircraft once more began spinning to the right in a non-continuous manner. (The aircraft spun to the right 180 degrees, stopped, and then quickly spun another 180 degrees to the right). The aircraft then began spinning continuously 360 degrees, increasing in velocity.

Jordan reacted by cutting the throttle. The aircraft responded by turning 270 degrees to the right and then stopping. The altitude above the ground was 10-15 feet. Jordan pulled the collect.

THE END

Now for the rest of the story.

I called Peter Jordan, who said: We were attacking a treeline on a north-south axis. When I pulled out of the last attack run, we were heading toward Can Tho. I could see Vinh Long's lights about 5K away.

I only recall making one or two turns before I knew we were in trouble and needed to get the Cobra on the ground. As mentioned in the accident summary, the Cobra seemed to have a mind of its own as we lost altitude and

airspeed.

Finally, I could see that we were going to impact on a grass-covered area. I'd guess we were only a few hundred yards from the treeline we had been attacking.

As I pulled the last of the collective, I also pulled the cyclic as far as I could to the rear. I wanted the tail boom to hit first — hoping it would take some of the impact. This worked, more or less, but we still hit pretty hard.

The last thing I remember was seeing stars. The first thing I remember after the impact was some very intense back pain.

As I became more aware of my surroundings, I noticed Jim was standing on the ground, talking to me. The Cobra had impacted hard enough to spread the skids, but didn't roll over and, blessedly, there was not fire.

I later learned Jim had suffered a spinal compression injury, as well, but he was able to get himself out of the front seat and came around to the open canopy area where I was. I told him that I had a lot of back pain.

The next thing I remember was seeing the gunner and crew chief from our flare ship running toward us. Jim and the two others were able to get me out of the Cobra and, using a fireman carry, got me to the Huey.

I remember Joe Sheeran (another VHPA member, but we last heard from him in 1994) was the pilot of the Huey and there was an ARVN officer in the back. I laid on the floor of the Huey as we flew to Can Tho.

I remember Jim was also in the Huey. I believe I stayed in Can Tho about five days.

Doctor said I would be evaced

The doctor said that I'd served enough and would be evaced. At that time, I was about two or three months into an extension. I recall Jim was sent back to the unit and eventually went back to flying. I stayed nine days in Japan and then was medevaced to Fort Dix.

I remember I had the best of both worlds on that flight. I could sit in a seat or lay in a bed on the long ride across the Pacific. While I was home on my extension leave, I used to watch these Hueys fly over my house from Fort Dix on their way to the Valley Forge Hospital, so I thought I might be flying that way.

Well when we landed at Fort Dix, the weather was bad so they loaded us on a bus to go to the hospital. By an interesting twist of events, the bus actually drove right by my house and I looked out the window to see my folks walking out of the front door to get in the car to come see me.

By about November I was OK and received orders to Fort Carson. I was discharged from the Army not long after signing in at Fort Carson.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Army records show AH-1G No. 66-15263 was retrograded to AVSCOM at Corpus Christi, Texas, and repaired. By early 1971, it was flying again for the Army — at Fort Hood, Texas.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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

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

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Information about each Vietnam tour:

Date of tour			Unit	Location	Call sign
	From:	To:			
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					

Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

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