



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

March 2002 Vol. 20, No. 1

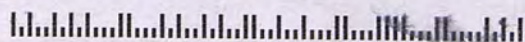
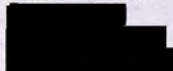


Curt Knapp photo

Under blue skies, a Marine Corps CH-46 from the Purple Fox Squadron (HMM-364) stirs up sand. The squadron, based at Phu Bai, arrived in Vietnam in October 1967 and stayed until March 1971.

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From the President

I trust each of you experienced the best the holidays could bring, and I know I share your wishes for a great upcoming year.

The 2002 calendar year is upon us and with it brings the likelihood of a stronger economy, the return from military service for a number of our comrades who were recalled to active duty last year, and within our organization the potential for a one-year expansion of membership unparalleled in our history.

For our association, 2001 was a very good year also. I will share some of the details with you in the paragraphs below.

Finding missing comrades

Our highest priority was the need to find our fellow pilots who flew with us in Vietnam, but who we have not heard from since.

Gary Roush, Mike Law, Dana Young and many others have been working very hard on this . . . and in our last newsletter we reported to you that we were working with a public records database contractor to match up old military orders available to us.

After applying various edits and filters, that effort has resulted in identifying what we believe to be the current location of 8,391 potential members who have, in many cases, been missing since our flying years in Southeast Asia.

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have written to each prospective member, letting him know about us: The existence of our website, the directory, the other benefits of our association, and providing him specific information, times, and dates of our next reunion in Las Vegas.

Our chapter leaders will be provided the names and current addresses of prospective members who live within their geographical boundaries so they may assist in the contact and follow-up phase, with the goal to invite our newly found brothers to join our national association and



Dave Rittman

attend our upcoming reunions.

We seriously looked into how we could provide each of you with a supplemental list using a special directory supplement and mailing, but the package would have run over 60 new pages in the current format used in your directory. When considering printing and postage, the cost became prohibitive.

However, these names will be added to our next full directory, which will be published later this summer. In the interim, if there is that special person you have been looking for, please contact our HQ operations by e-mail (hq@vhpa.org), or call (1-800-505-VHPA) and they will let you know if the pilot you are looking for is on the "found list" and, if so, his address.

Our 2001 year-end financial position

I am pleased to inform you all the steps we have advised you of previously in terms of cash management, expense control, investment committee actions, and moving our reunions to professional management have resulted in a \$97,201 increase in net assets over the 12 months ending Dec. 31, 2001, up \$104,976 from the previous year.

Our Denver reunion provided a positive cash flow, and we again thank Mike Law and his volunteers for the fine week we had last July in their home city.

Despite the downturn in the economy during the fourth quarter, with the efforts of Bob Smith; our investment committee; and Bob Potvin, a fellow member and professional financial advisor, we maintained all value of our investments, and earned from them \$15,441. An additional \$9,708 in interest was earned from our money market and bank accounts. Bob S, Bob, P, and all . . . thank you for a job well done.

Adding up all the numbers, our total current assets stand at \$634,256, up \$88,876 from a year ago. By accounting standards, we have no liabilities, and thus net assets less liabilities remain at the \$634,256 figure.

Change in reflecting life memberships

One significant change I am asking our accountants and auditors to perform effective Jan. 1 is to reflect the value of our life memberships as some type of designated/restricted account.

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Classified ads

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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.

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(work)
(fax)

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(home)
(fax)

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WA 98110

VHPA Products

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

Product	Each	P&H	No.	Total
Bumper sticker	\$1	Free		\$
Window decal	\$1	Free		\$
Newsletters — back issues	\$2	Free		\$
2001 Directory	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
2000 Directory	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
1999 Directory	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
Directories for years before 1999 (while supplies last)	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
2002 Calendar (Order through Turner Publishing 800-788-3350)	\$12	\$5 ea		\$
2001 Calendar	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
2000 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1999 Calendar	\$4	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Calendar	\$3	\$5 ea		\$
1996 Calendar	\$2	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. II. (Highlights 1966-67)	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
Vietnam Helicopter History CD (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
Grand total				\$

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Complete this form, then mail or fax it to:

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Name:		VHPA membership number:	
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Credit card (check one):	☐ VISA	☐ MasterCard	
Card number:	Expiration date:		
Signature:			

From the President

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The accountants and auditors are working on the details as this is being written. This is important, because the principal core life membership asset needs to remain untouched by any day-to-day operational needs, so the annual income that is derived from them will be available to fund the life member's fair share of our operational costs for all our years ahead.

The subject is made somewhat more complex, as during the early years life memberships were \$300, then raised to \$450 about 5 years ago.

Secretary-Treasurer Tom Payne, with professional assistance, worked up an industry-accepted actuarial table as to how much those funds should be and presented it at last year's business meeting.

At the time there were about 1,200 life members (we are over 1,300 now), and considering the average age of our membership is 57, \$488,260 was needed to service the life memberships for the next 21 years. Those numbers are being updated and will be part of our financials in the future.

The critical point is that when the value of the life memberships were subtracted from our overall assets a year ago, we really had a fairly small operating reserve.

Sometimes a member did realize this when making a proposal for a very large expenditure for a specific activity or reunion function, and on occasion declining such requests have resulted in some hard feelings.

However, we have a fiscal responsibility to the entire association, and the accounting breakout of the life membership assets should go a long way for most to understand our financial capabilities and limitations.

In summary, your association is financially healthy, has increased our operating reserves, and is on track for positive cash flow again in calendar year 2002.

Additional details will be provided to our membership upon completion of our annual audit later this spring.

Las Vegas — spectacular get-together

Now that you have seen what we are doing to bring newly found members to our next reunion, we also will need your participation. The airfares have never been lower, the hotel package of \$76 per night is the lowest in years, and in addition to the reviving of memories and friendships of long ago, this reunion is shaping up to be the party of all parties.

Register NOW by going on line at www.vhpa.org for your event and hotel reservations.

If you do not have access to a computer, are uncomfortable using the Internet, or do not have a credit card, call our HQ staff at 1 (800) 505-VHPA, and they will take care of you.

Major reunion updates, items of interest

Joe Bilitzke and his volunteers are well along into the execution stage of our next reunion at the Riviera on July 3-7, 2002. The survey completed at the Denver reunion reflected that more than 85 percent would arrive before 6 p.m. on Wednesday, July 3.

That was before they knew who was being booked for the first night's entertainment.

Remember the original 1960s and '70s headliner band Sha-na-na? With all the major hits? The seven numbers the band did with Olivia Newton John in the movie Grease . . . including being the stage band at the Rydel High School TV broadcast?

The full Sha-na-na group and dancers will kick off our reunion the first night with a spectacular performance. While there will be plenty of time to get to know your newly found and not-seen-for-a-while stickmates, plenty of quiet time to review old stories and memories, this is an event not to be missed.

To ensure this evening gets off to a flying start, we will be providing you coupons that night to buy your first two beers on us.

But to attend, needless to say, you need to be there, check in, register with our volunteers at the hotel, and arrive in the banquet area before the party starts at about 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 3.

Translation: Make your airline reservations and book on our website today, and book an early flight.

Some of the other entertainment booked during the reunion will include the very high-quality '70s and '80s dance music and show . . . possibly the well-known group "Love Shack" for the casual dance in the Grand Ballroom for July 4 at 9 p.m. (no dinner served).

To provide the completely different experience many of our survey respondents requested, at the same time on July 4, Susan McDonald and her very well-known show band will host a buffet dinner, dance, and fireworks at the Top of the Riviera.

This room has a spectacular view of Las Vegas at night. However, due to facility space limitations, only the first 600 people who sign up will be able to attend. After 11 p.m., members with tickets to either function will be allowed to cross over between the two locations.

However, to gain access to either event at any time, you must have a ticket. In fairness to all the paying membership, no "late" free access will be provided.

Preceding the casual dance or the Top of the Riviera dinner/ dance/fireworks are two special VHPA discounted shows . . . Splash (Riviera policy is no minors under 18, please), and La Cage. Both starting at about 7:30 p.m. Splash is limited to the first 900 who sign up; La Cage is limited to 575.

Be sure to register now . . . these heavily discounted shows will sell out early !

The final banquet night is Saturday, July 6. Immediate-
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From the President

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ly after the banquet we have put together very patriotic-themed, major stage show that will last more than an hour.

That will be followed by one of the best stage groups/bands I have ever seen: The Los Angeles-based The Zippers. The group is absolutely unbelievable.

Keep in mind, we are inviting all those newly found members to attend their first reunion at the Riviera. Make your reservations now . . . it is going to be a very special reunion, indeed.

Unit chapters approved, being launched

As announced in our last newsletter, in addition to geographical chapters, your association also has approved the formation of unit chapters.

I just received our first e-mail notification regarding the intent to form a unit chapter from Carl Cortez in Monrovia, CA. He let us know the 48th AHC will establish itself as a VHPA chapter, and be known as the "48th AHC Association of Blue Stars and Jokers."

Carl, we look forward to working on this with you. For other units, the chapter kit containing all forms and procedures can be downloaded from the vhpa.org website.

Mike Sheuerman's efforts are behind this, and he said it well a few months ago:

"Our association was formed when a group of helicopter pilots got together to share the camaraderie of past experiences in RVN and remember those pilots who died during those experiences.

"At no level is this esprit stronger or the memories of fallen comrades more deeply felt than in the individual

unit. The creation of the unit chapter will be a positive step in the growth of the VHPA."

Again Mike, thank you for all your efforts on this.

2004 reunion locked in

To obtain the significant cost reductions and lock down the large amounts of banquet space our reunions require in top-quality facilities and locations, it is necessary to plan far in advance.

Planning for the 2003 reunion is well under way with the help of Joe Bilitzke and some very appreciated volunteers.

We also took advantage of a unique opportunity to book a very favorable rate at a first-class facility for 2004. Overnight room rates for the 2003 and 2004 reunions are contracted for only \$89 per night.

Kenny Bunn, Joe Bilitzke and your Executive Council team worked very hard to make this happen, and we sincerely appreciate their efforts. Details of our next reunion will be announced in Las Vegas over the July 4 weekend.

Summary of commitment

As I mentioned when I first assumed the presidency last July, when we were all "in country" years ago, we were a quality, dedicated team. We are once again within this organization.

It's hard to believe that it is only four months until our next reunion in Las Vegas. Time does fly.

Our association is very blessed to have such a highly motivated, committed, and hard-working Executive Council, committee chairmen and dozens of volunteers working on many key association goals.

I am pleased to report that much has been accomplished in this short time, and much more to come. The year 2002 is going to be a great year! See you in Vegas!

— Dave Rittman, President

Las Vegas reunion attendance up from 2001

While registration for our 2002 reunion in Las Vegas has only been available for five weeks, early numbers are running well ahead of last year.

As of March 3, more than 760 members and guests have registered. This compares to 746 for the full January/February eight-week period last year.

On a weekly basis, this would reflect a significant increase over last year's Denver reunion. Yet to come is the significant impact from the 8,391 prospective members we recently found and 2,949 former members we had lost contact with . . . all of whom

Hottest tickets are The Top of The Riviera dance on July 4 and the show Splash, both of which are capacity limited and will sell out. However, there are alternative activities planned during the same time periods . . .

have been relocated and invited to the reunion. Thus it is extremely likely this will be the largest reunion ever.

One advantage of the new Internet

registration system is we access instantly the automatically updated summaries of each event and total member registrations "live" up to the minute.

Hottest tickets are The Top of The Riviera dance on July 4 and the show Splash, both of which are capacity limited and will sell out. However, there are alternative activities planned during the same time periods, and everyone will have a great time.

Need a ticket for an additional event, but have already registered or need additional tickets? Call Linda at our HQ 1 (800) 505-VHPA and she will add your request to your order.

Letters

Reunion brings back memories of recons

At the recent 7th of the 17th (REAL) Cav reunion last summer, I was holding court with some of the fantastic guys I had the honor of serving with.

Gary, Rocky and Duf, three crazy, but combat professional crew chiefs and observers with whom I flew hundreds of hours were present under the spread awning of my camper. We also had a scattering of Charley Troop guys, as some guys from the other parts of the "Real" Cav.

Obviously, we were remembering our life together, both good and bad. It was a delight to share the moments with them. Filled with laughter and the love that is shared by brothers-in-arms, time seemed to stop, go in reverse, go forward, and just disappear.

Anyway, I found myself remembering early morning recons: That is, the first recon of the day.

Sometimes, when we were working the "fishhook" or the upper Anh Lo, the clouds would still be burning off from the valleys. The air would be clean as no villages were in the AO and Mr. NVA was careful about giving his position away with smoky cook fires, etc.

Life would be still, with that morning moisture, freshness, absence of thermals and difficult wind currents coming off the ridge lines.

Leaning back, I began to remember how, on some of those mornings, I would gently let down from altitude to begin a recon. Somehow, the war would seem far away and I felt like a small boy going out on Cape Cod bay for a early morning sail in a little sunfish one-man sailboat.

In the midst of our crazy little war, this was my moment of serenity. I remember how it was rare and something to be cherished. For me, that moment of serenity would become my whole purpose in aviation — "To slip the surly bonds of earth."

Letting down from altitude, I would hold light power and maintain an airspeed of about 40-45 knots.

Having flown my whole tour in the mountains I knew exactly what the winds would do and not do. Turning my little Loach into a sailplane, I would ride the gentle updrafts coming over the ridges at about 25 feet of altitude and pulling almost no power.

The war was gone and I was drifting over a beautiful nature preserve as if on a magic carpet. It was like the engine was ticking over at an idle and we could keep it up for hours.

I never said a word about it to my wing or the Snakes. They may have thought I was doing a "high-speed" recon

and getting a feel for the area and the day.

I was not. I was playing the most ancient of all aviation games. I was becoming one with the aircraft and going with nature's flow. It was beautiful and one of Vietnam's experiences that I miss the most. Early morning, and my own aircraft.

Anyway, Rocky, who took over my backseat after Scotty died, remembered and also reflected with words something like this: "Oh ya, I knew when you were playing. It was time to lean back, stow my gun, light up a smoke, and just ENJOY."

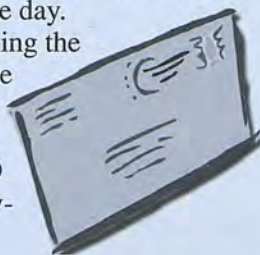
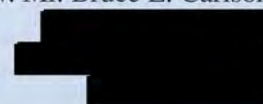
While I thought no one was on to my game, I found out better. Yet, best of all, I discovered that this hell-for-leather observer of superlative skills, who sometimes scared me with his temper, was also able to enjoy the moment.

It was wonderful to meet up with the great observers and crew chiefs for the first time in over 30 years. It was fantastic to remember some of the great "adventures" we shared.

Oh yes, it was super to find that they held for me a warmth similar to the warmth I held and still hold for them.

But it was most surprising to discover that Rocky was in on my little game and got a few moments of serenity.

The Rev. Mr. Bruce E. Carlson



Former Fort Wolters a fascinating place

Hi! I found your webpage while doing a search for Fort Wolters online.

I am very interested in the history of Fort Wolters. I grew up in the Peaster/Weatherford area and had an uncle who was stationed at Wolters during his Air Force days. Recently, my husband and I visited Fort Wolters and took a long drive through the area.

I have always been fascinated by old buildings, and I would love to explore Wolters more and learn what each of the buildings was used for originally.

There are no explanations of any type at the actual site, so we had to use our best guesses. The best we could tell was what used to be barracks and the swimming area, and I'm sure there are many areas we didn't even see.

Is there any place to find information on what the original layout of the base was, and what buildings are where, and what portion is open to the public today? I'd like to photograph some of the old buildings as well, for my port-

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folio.

I'm not sure if there are still any type of government regulations or anything about that! Are any of the buildings open to the public? I did see on your website that there was a hospital and an old theater. Those look fascinating!

Any information you could give me would be much appreciated. Thanks!

Pam Burkholder

Pilot fondly recalls his late Chinook instructor

I received my newsletter today and was saddened to learn of CWO Omar Kipe's death. Mr. Kipe was my instructor in Chinooks at Fort Sill in 1967-68. Man was he good!

I remember a funny thing that happened one afternoon when we were preparing for a flight. There was a flight of TH-55 aircraft from Fort Wolters that landed at the Sill airfield for refueling.

Several of the WOCs came over to the Chinook flight line to see the aircraft. Mr. Kipe and I were inside our assigned aircraft preparing for our flight.

All of a sudden, we heard this very loud: "Sir, Candidate _____, requests permission to come aboard your aircraft, Sir."

Mr. Kipe stuck his head out of the front door and the candidates were all standing at attention, saluting him. Mr. Kipe proceeded to chew them out and in no uncertain terms informed them that they didn't salute Won't Officers, and that they didn't have to yell.

Won't Officer was his term for warrants. They tried to explain that their TAC had drilled into them that they do salute warrant officers.

Omar ordered them to go back to Wolters and inform their TAC that he was full of bull and that Won't Officers didn't rate a salute.

To this day, I have always had this vision of these young WOCs returning to Wolters and telling their TAC that Mr.

Kipe at Fort Sill said they didn't have to salute warrants. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall.

To this day, I consider myself very lucky to have been taught Chinooks by three of the very best, Omar Kipe, Miles Becker and Delfo Ferranti.

Billy J. Hampton
CW4 (Retired)

Operation ruins moment after crew on standby

It had been a fairly easy day.

The SOG mission out of Kontum had three teams "running west and north of Ben Het and deep in Indian country" and that was the limit.

We had "stood by" at the Box, the small airfield outside the wire on the south side of the CCC compound, all day just in case a team got in trouble. Nothing happened.

It was the worst kind of flying day in Vietnam. One-half hour up from Pleiku, sit on your tail for 9-10 hours waiting to scramble, bored, hot, sweaty, etc. (you guys remember), one-half hour back to Pleiku. The worst kind of flying day in Vietnam.

I flew with the 361st Aviation Company, Escort. We

were assigned to Special Operations Group, Command and Control Central. Our mission was to escort and protect the lift ships of the 57th Assault Helicopter Company (a unbelievably brave group of pilots and crews) when they inserted and extracted Special Forces recon teams in

Laos and elsewhere.

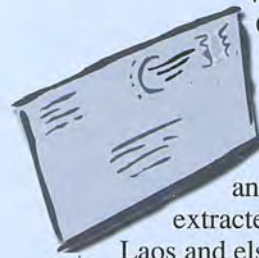
We put up four snakes each day to cover their six slicks. It was a great mission. But I digress.

We got our "all clear" around 5:30 p.m. and had returned to Camp Holloway in Pleiku, post-flighted the aircraft, put up our flight gear in the lockers in operations, gone to the O Club, ordered a Carling Black Label, Schlitz or Falstaff, and started to take that first cold, golden, well-deserved drink when our CO, John Barfield, rushed in and ruined the moment.

Seems an Air Force fast-mover was in the wrong place at the wrong time and had been shot down in Laos "north and west of Ben Het and deep in Indian country." The pilot had gotten out OK and Covey had him pinpointed on the ground.

Since we knew the area, we were to launch immediately, go to Dak To, refuel, go find this unfortunate young aviator and cover a 57th AHC slick as it rushed in, pulled him out of the jaws of death and whisked him away to safety. An easy plan.

The CO was proud, excited and already writing the A&D recommendation in his head.



Ferranti sat out great race

I would like to make a large correction about the great race. CH-47/Huey.

It is true that Miles and I flew together on many missions, this was one that I sat out. Maybe it was all the conversations about the race that caused some confusion. I was just a spectator.

Del Ferranti

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Letters

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All the rest of that day's Panther crew, with the exception of yours truly, already had taken that first cold, golden sip of beverage. I was elected to play the hero once more.

Capt. John DeBay, one of the finest officers I ever knew, was going to be Lead. I don't remember who his frontseater was.

I would fly wing with Capt. Art Childers as my "bullet brake."

We ran to the flightline, did a rather quick pre-flight (I flew 67-15674, the aircraft I'd flown earlier in the day, so I knew she was OK), cranked and headed in a direct line for Dak To.

Coordination with the Gladiator slick and Covey would be done on the way.

Did I mention it was getting dark? Did I mention it was a moonless night? Did I mention I had barely passed tactical instrument flying? Please keep these things in your mind as they WILL be important later.

We get to Dak To to refuel. The refueling site is closed for the night, The ARVN in charge has not been informed of our coming and is PO'd. He is sure that his butt is going to get mortared or rocketed because we are there and we will be the cause of his demise.

John contacts Covey, Covey contacts some higher-up, who contacts another higher-up, who gets a ARVN higher-up to contact the refuel ARVN's higher-up, who contacts the refuel ARVN. He runs out of his bunker, turns on the generator, runs back to his bunker, all the time screaming at us in his native tongue.

To this day I don't know if he was extolling us to greatness or accusing us of being sexually active with every kind of Vietnamese farm animal known to man.

We lift off and head west-northwest. John coordinates with Gladiator and Covey. Our guy is in a tree about 35-40 miles across the border. Covey tells John the guy is about 2,800-2,900 feet above sea level. I tell John that that doesn't sound right. John agrees. John tells Covey. Covey

Did I mention it's pitch black? Did I mention I'm only trained to make left or right 180-degree turns and fly out of bad weather?

says for us to climb to 10,500 and hold.

Did I mention it's pitch black? Did I mention I'm only trained to make left or right 180-degree turns and fly out of bad weather?

After 20-30 minutes, John decides this is starting to get a little scary. I'm 15-20 minutes ahead of him on that one. He tells me to climb to 11,500 and circle. He drops to 8,500 and does the same.



Covey is deciding whether to run the "ballgame" now or hold off until first light. John is steering him toward the latter.

I contact Pleiku Approach Control for comfort. That was a big mistake. They inform we are so deep I should contact NKP Approach Control in Thailand when I turn to the west and then dial up Pleiku.

Art calls from the front seat and tells me he has the aircraft. I ask why? He politely suggests I check my airspeed and altitude. We are at zero airspeed and coming through 10,000 BACKWARD.

I decide to give my frontseater (who has a real instrument ticket) some stick time. I figured it would be good training for the young aviator.

I call John and express my reservations about our enterprise and suggest rather firmly that we get back to Camp Holloway. About that time, Covey also has a vision and, having made sure our Air Force guy is safe for the night, calls the "ballgame" off until first light.

He asks us to be on station by 6:30 a.m. John wilcos and we head to Camp Holloway. He suggests we stay at our different altitudes until we reach Pleiku. I have no problem with that.

By this time I've taken the controls again. We bid NKP Approach good night and head for Holloway.

I contact Pleiku and ask to be vectored in. They are eager to oblige. I am thrilled. About 50 minutes later we

As we get close, John contacts Covey, who tells us there are Jolly Greens and A-1Es on station also. He plans to use them to pull the downed pilot.

break out of the pitch black and see the lights of Pleiku and Camp Holloway. John is 10-15 minutes ahead of me.

We land, shut down, post flight and go to the O Club. I have one of the best beers I have ever had in my entire life up to and

including tonight.

We are up at 4 a.m., preflighted and off by 5 o'clock, refueled and out of Dak To by 6:10 and on our way to the PZ.

As we get close, John contacts Covey, who tells us there are Jolly Greens and A-1Es on station also. He plans to use them to pull the downed pilot.

John says fine, but I can sense a little displeasure in his voice. I know him pretty well. John volunteers us to hang around just in case.

Covey thanks us and says, "yes."

About this time, some wise ass Air Force pilot comes up on the frequency and says, "Boy, I feel safe now, the Army boys are here to save us if we get in trouble. Whoopee."

I know John and he's hot, especially after last night, but he doesn't say anything. Covey tells "big mouth" to shut up and asks John for his "lineup" (ordnance on board).

John starts, "I've got 76 2.75 folding-fin aerial rockets with 17-pound, high-explosive warheads, 4,000 rounds of

See LETTERS, Page 10

Letters

Continued from Page 9

7.62 machine gun ammunition, 450 rounds of 40 mm grenade launcher ammunition and 1,500 rounds of 20 mm Vulcan cannon."

Covey, obviously impressed, says: "Jesus, all that on one aircraft?"

John lies and says: "Yes and there are two of us out here, so tell the wise ass to keep his thoughts to himself or we might change sides for the day."

No more side comments from our brothers in blue.

The mission was a success. We pulled the downed pilot with no problem. He was fine. Probably flies for an airline.

One more thing. He was at 5,300 feet above sea level, not 2,800-2,900. Turns out the pitch black saved our lives.

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15
361st AC, E/AWC

'We Were Soldiers' movie was terrific

After attending an advanced movie showing of "We Were Soldiers" in Dallas last evening, I thought I might say a word:

OUTSTANDING!!!

Because of that movie, my wife now has a clear mental image of what it is like to bounce in and out of a hot LZ; what it is like to low-level through mountains in poor visibility; and how it looks when basketballs are coming up at

As fate would have it, one day she observed an army staff car driving up and down our block, then stop up in front of our house.

the aircraft. (Actually, no amount of CGI could convey THAT feeling).

Surprisingly, she said the "bounce landings" were pretty much the way I described them. And there was one other thing she could really identify with: The

"knock on the door."

TRUE STORY: While I was off on my second tour in '71, with Dustoff down in the Delta, she elected to stay in Mineral Wells instead of going back to our hometown — Gainesville — in north Texas.

I had been an instructor pilot at Fort Wolters between tours and most, if not all of our friends were there.

By 1971 the services had finally organized the notification of KIA and MIA, and an officer was sent around to carry out that horrendous duty.

As fate would have it, one day she observed an army staff car driving up and down our block, then stop up in front of our house.

A young captain got out, squared away his cover, then walked up to our door where Nancy was holding our third child, waiting, horrified, for his knock.

To make a long story short he had become disoriented — easy enough to do if one is new to Mineral Wells — so he simply stopped to ask for directions.

There was no way he could have known who she was, or her connection to the Army or Vietnam. With an inaudible sigh of relief, she gave him the directions he needed and watched until he drove off.

She then placed our six-month-old son in his crib, sat down on our bed and proceeded to bawl her eyes out, off and on, for the remainder of the day. Can't say as I blame her.

For the first 20 years after I heard this tale I tried my best to ignore the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of her experience with that notification officer; I simply did not want to go there. Gen. George S. Patton was fond of saying, "Never take counsel of your fears," and I clearly was.

It finally caught up with me in late summer of 1990 when some camel jockey named Saddam decided to be somebody, and started a war, and we were sure to become involved.

Next thing we knew the all-wise and knowing news media was touting casualty figures in the tens of thousands. Then someone in the hierarchy decided that because this was going to be the "Mother of all Wars," every Army area needed several notification teams, and I was selected to be on one of the teams for the Bryan/College Station area of Central Texas.

Oh yeah . . . our son, the child my wife was holding "that day" back in 1971, was full grown and at Fort Benning going through OSUT Infantry and Airborne training. Don't know who said it, but someone else once said, "Never look back . . . something might be catching up with you." He was right.

With nothing more than a slight glimmer of how she must have felt "that day" back in 1971, needless to say I had mixed emotions about what might lay ahead in the months to come. I truly did not know if, in the end, I could muster the courage to tell someone they had lost a loved one in the Gulf War. I thank God I was never called upon to do it.

With all that in the distant past, I have tried a number of times to get a sense of how she must have felt, and I cannot. Her courage in the face of the terror she must have felt is far beyond anything I could ever hope to muster. No doubt I married up.

I have a bumper sticker that reads simply: "ARMY WIVES Toughest Job In the Army"

I couldn't put it more heroic if I tried.

Lee Westbrook
Gladiator 13

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Letters

Continued from Page 10

Most Huey pilots suffered hearing loss flying in RVN

I think I am ready to submit an article on the high-frequency hearing loss most of us UH-1 pilots incurred during our tour in RVN.

It seems that no matter how much senior aviators instructed us on this eventual dilemma, that we all went forward anyway and underwent this loss.

I witnessed numerous *Army Aviation Digest* articles worrying about it, and saw at least three evolutions of the

APH-5 flight helmet while I was still flying. Still no joy.

When we returned to Wolters, and all of us immediately experienced our first flight physical since being sent to Vietnam, I pointedly remembered how we all were told, "Yup, you've lost it" as we underwent our flight physicals' hearing exams. It was across the board.

The point I'm trying to make here, is that I don't believe the VA ever owned up to this as a service-connected disability.

I have been turned down several times since 1969 — after all the exams reveal that I certainly did lose the upper end of my hearing.

I know that they can't get me a hearing aid that would remedy much of the situation, but I'm wondering if any of our VHPA brethren found a way to get around this, and have had some VA hearing officer or doctor say it certainly

See LETTERS, Page 12

VHPA business directory

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and:

"A Vietnam Journey . . ."

(<http://www.vietnamvideos.com>)

A travel video about veterans returning to Vietnam with their families and friends.

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(Gladiator 21)

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Taps

George S. Beatty Jr.

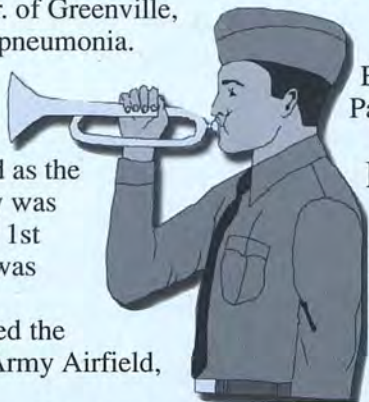
Retired Maj. Gen. George S. Beatty Jr. of Greenville, SC, died Dec. 17 of complications from pneumonia.

Beatty commanded the 1st Brigade, 11th Air Assault Division, Fort Benning, GA, in 1963.

When the 11th AAD was redesignated as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), Beatty was assigned as chief of staff, and eventually 1st Brigade commander when the Division was based at An Khe, Vietnam.

From 1968 to 1970, Beatty commanded the Army Flight Training Center at Hunter Army Airfield, Fort Stewart, GA.

Beatty was a past president of the Army Aviation Association of America and was a 1992 inductee into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame at Fort Rucker.



Thomas Robert Herrington

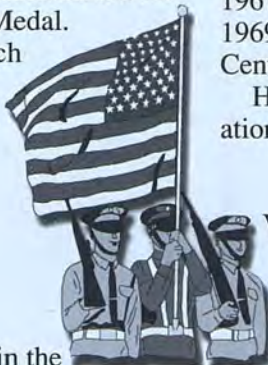
Thomas "Tom" Robert Herrington, 55, of Sarasota, FL, died Jan. 18.

He was born Jan. 5, 1947, in Charlotte, NC, and came to the area 20 years ago from Birmingham, AL.

He was an air traffic controller for the FAA for 20 years and a pilot with Air Scan. He was a warrant officer in the Army during the Vietnam War and received the Air Medal, Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal.

He was a member of First Baptist Church in Perry, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and was a U.S. swimming official.

Survivors include his wife of 31 years, Pamela; sons Thomas J., Robert and Michael, all of Sarasota; and his mother, Anna W. of Perry.



John P. Boyajian

A helicopter pilot who served 25 years in the U.S. Army, including tours in Vietnam and Desert Storm,

John P. Boyajian, 58, died Jan. 21 in Vancouver, WA.

Boyajian was born July 13, 1943, in South Carolina and lived in Vancouver for five years.

He was awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star Medal during his service in the Army. He was a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7824.

Boyajian enjoyed gardening and animals.

Survivors include one daughter, Erin Boyajian of Port St. Lucia, FL; and his father, Paul Boyajian of Riverside, CA.

Michael McNellis

Michael McNellis was killed while flying a helicopter Feb. 17 near Tampa, FL, while en route to pick up Joe Gibbs, former Redskins coach and now a NASCAR race car owner.

McNellis was a two-tour Vietnam helicopter pilot who flew C-model gunships, 121st AHC call-sign "Vikings."

McNellis was in flight classes 67-21/68-501 and was with the 121st Assault Helicopter Company in 1968-69 in Vietnam.

Frank Meszar

Retired Brig. Gen. Frank Meszar died in January at the age of 86.

He built a flight training school at Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, GA, during the Vietnam War.

His son, Capt. Frank Meszar III, was killed in Vietnam.

Meszar served at Fort Stewart and Hunter from March 1967 to June 1969 as commander of the U.S. Army Flight Training Center.

He also was deputy commander of the U.S. Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker during that time.

Vernon W. "Woody" Woodward

Retired Lt. Col. Vernon W. "Woody" Woodward, age 67, of Newport News, VA, died Oct. 22.

A veteran of 20 years service, Woody, a Transportation Corps officer, was rated in rotary- and

See TAPS, Page 13

Letters

Continued from Page 11

was service-connected.

I truly believe all 11,000 members of our organization lost their hearing through the turbine's whining presence.

Has anyone beat this one out there? Please contact me, Dave Eastman, at [redacted] or by e-mail at: [redacted]

Dave Eastman
[redacted]

Swanson receives medal

The 3/5 Cavalry Black Knights Association is happy to report President George W. Bush signed a bill posthumously awarding Vietnam helicopter pilot Capt. Jon E. Swanson the Medal of Honor.

Jon was shot down in 1971 in Cambodia while serving in B-Troop, 1/9 Cav, 1st Cavalry Division.

He and his observer officially are listed as MIA. Jon was put up for the Medal of Honor 31 years ago. Jon could not speak for himself, but his friends did.

Ron Quezada, President
Black Knights

Maintenance theme of new directory

MIKE LAW

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY EDITOR

As mentioned in the most recent *VHPA Newsletters*, the 2002 Directory will be dedicated to helicopter maintenance — specifically, to all Southeast Asian helicopter maintenance units and any helicopter maintenance personnel.

We need detailed input for the people who served in all the Transportation Corps detachments, all the E companies of divisional maintenance battalions, and all the aircraft direct support (ADS) and aircraft maintenance general support (AMGS) companies, to name just a few.

We also need cover photos for the cover and black-and-white photos for the interior.

Several people have provided material. As with all history collection efforts, there really is never too much.

VHPA member Lee Brooks (Condor 7) was the troop maintenance officer and test pilot in late 1969 and early 1970 for the slicks of C/2/17th Cavalry of the 101st Airborne Division operating out of Camp Sally and later out of Phu Bai. He provides:

Based out of Phu Bai in the northern portion of South Vietnam, C Troop, 2/17th Cavalry was on a mission operating out of Quang Tri, North of Hue and South of the DMZ.

On one particular mission, our slick platoon leader, Capt. Mac Jones (Condor 03) and CW2 Glenn Dooley (Condor 44), his IP on that flight, took a round in the rotor blade. Our unit CO called me to bring up a

replacement aircraft and to take the damaged one back to Phu Bai.

When Capt. Jones saw me hovering into Quang Tri, he hopped onto my skids, begging me to change aircraft with him. For these past 30 some years, he always thought he had conned me into switching aircraft when, in fact, I was instructed to do just that.

I often wondered why the CO just didn't have Capt. Jones fly the aircraft back to Phu Bai and pick up the replacement helicopter. (Maybe test pilots had some kind of insurance on them that the other pilots didn't have that I was not aware of.)

I was not appraised of the damage until I arrived at Quang Tri and inspected the aircraft. The bullet hole on the underside of the blade was the size of a .51 caliber, but the exit on top of the blade was the size of my fist and surrounded by jagged metal.

Maintenance Rule No.1: For a helicopter to remain out of premature and sudden ground contact, rotor blades need to remain intact.

After trimming off the excess jagged metal and inspecting the paint surrounding the jagged hole for hairline cracks, I covered the hole and possibly any hairline cracks I did not see, with duct tape. (We just happened to have a roll of that stuff in the helicopter.)

I started the helicopter up and brought it to a hover. No noticeable vibration. I set it down and motioned for the crew to climb on board.

They looked at me as if thinking: "Say what??"

After a second invitation, they

climbed on board, figuring they would miss out on a hot meal if they didn't, and we flew it back to Phu Bai.

Once at cruising altitude, you could count the revolutions by the sound the blade with the duct tape made as it rotated. I let on it was no big deal. (Mostly to convince myself.)

Any sane maintenance test pilot would probably have loaded the helicopter onto a flat-bed tractor-trailer and hauled it back to Phu Bai, or at least arranged to have it sling-loaded back. But then nobody could ever accuse me of being sane.

C-Troop had some of the best helicopter maintenance crews (507th TC Detachment) within the 101st. They worked day and night keeping C-Troop helicopters flying and operational, no easy task in a combat zone when ships would quite often return shot up or with some other type of damage.

I don't recall what C-Troop's percentage was on readiness, but it must have been pretty darn good, thanks to the maintenance enlisted men and NCO's of the 507th TC Detachment who worked on the aircraft day and night to keep them flying.

To borrow a quote from the Army Aviation Historical Society: "Without maintenance, crews aviators would just be pedestrians wearing sunglasses."

Please contact Mike Law, [REDACTED]

80227, (303) 988-7797, or law@vhpa.org with any maintenance material that would be an addition to the 2002 VHPA membership Directory.

Taps

Continued from Page 12

fixed-wing aircraft, and served a tour in Korea and two tours in Vietnam.

His first tour in Vietnam was from September 1966 to October 1967, flying UH-1s with the 170th Assault Helicopter Company at Camp Holloway, Pleiku.

His second tour was from September 1968 to October 1969 assigned to the 5th Transportation Battalion (AM), supporting the 101st Airborne Division at Camp Eagle.

After his retirement from the Army, Woody owned a tax and accounting service in Newport News and was active in the Denbigh Kiwanis Club and the Peninsula Chapter of the Retired Officers Association. He was a past president of both organizations.

Woodward is survived by his wife of 44 years, Anne Boyer Woodward, three children and five grandchildren.

Headquarters provides daily support

JOE BILITZKE
VICE PRESIDENT

Few members have had the opportunity to visit our Headquarters operation in Citrus Heights, near Sacramento, CA.

In addition to Marcia Fritz, who heads up the operation, we receive the full-time services of Linda Whitten, who many of you have talked to on the phone from time to time.

In addition, Shalyn Lance and Coleen Mitchell help us on a part-time basis.

Linda's primary role is to handle the day-to-day contact with our members, which includes just about all facets of the operation.

Shalyn helps on the mail, handles all the product orders, the bulk mailings, including the foreign newsletters and directories.

Coleen handles the accounts payable, the bank statement reconciliation, and the financial statements.

Included in the management contract are all of the staff salaries, office space, utilities, equipment, phones, faxes, photocopies, and office supplies.

Not commonly known, the contract also includes the complete cost of the member newsletter production and mailing — 6 color issues per year.

Also included in the fee is the cost of postage and mailing of all annual renewal notices, merchandising shipping costs, administrative office correspondence, and membership certificates and life membership cards.

One of the most complex jobs is the data entry and maintenance of the membership and product databases. Included is the processing and tabula-

tion of all the annual reunion attendees. This is an area that currently is being upgraded to better serve our membership with the appreciated and extensive assistance of our technology committee including Charlie Holley, Mike Law, and Gary Roush.

Finally, completion of the required annual reports are part of the task, as well as related services normally provided by a CPA firm on behalf of an association such as ours.

All this is done for \$1.50 per current active member's dues per month.

We sincerely appreciate the services of our headquarters operation and look forward to seeing them this summer as they handle the annual reunion registration at the hotel, along with our member volunteers.

Thank you, Linda, Shalyn, Colleen and Marcia for all you do for our association.



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George G. Reese Jr.
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Phone [REDACTED]

Book a great story on cheating odds

**Lest We Forget — The Kingsmen,
101st Aviation Battalion, 1968**

By William C. Meacham

354 pages, Softback

21 B/W photos (including cover)

Published by The Ballantine Publishing Group

Copyright 1999

I Corps, in 1968 and especially Northern I Corps, was an area that could be called "Ground Zero" in the Vietnam War.

The presence of large concentrations of Liberation troops and NVA in the Laos/Vietnam border area was huge.

They were well-trained, well-equipped and possessed mobile anti-aircraft weapons that were devastating for helicopters of the Kingsmen and the 101st Aviation Battalion.

"Lest We Forget" is a great story of "cheating the odds" while flying exclusively for the grunts and LRP's for the 101st Division. However, let us start at the beginning . . .

the bloody beginning.

Bill Meacham, alias "Wild Bill" Meacham, began his yearlong tour in Vietnam assigned to the 17th Assault Helicopter Company at Long Binh. Even before he sat in a cockpit for his in-country orientation, he was tapped to

be the investigating officer for a gunship incident deep within the jungles of III Corps.

Book review



The distasteful job led Bill to realize Vietnam was truly a dangerous place and he was knee-deep in "reality."

The very first month with the 17th AHC, Tet 1968 erupted everywhere across Vietnam. Bill came face to face with NVA, in the wire, all-around the 17th AHC compound for a bit of nighttime excitement.

Never one to sit idly by and let himself be killed, Bill took the aggressor group under fire, killing almost a squad as they raced across the 17th's compound. The onslaught finally was halted and the story of Tet '68 became one of

See , Page 16

Book airline reservations for Reunion 2002 in Las Vegas

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Pilot knee deep in ground combat

Continued from Page 15

slaughter for the enemy. However, the U.S. news media never really saw it that way.

Bill Meacham couldn't believe he was knee deep in ground combat. He was supposed to be a helicopter pilot!

The nickname "Wild Bill" was not yet coined for William Meacham as the 17th AHC was uprooted and shipped to I Corps. There the company would join and be redesignated, Bravo Company of the 101st Airmobile Division's 101st Aviation Battalion.

Still proudly known as the "Kingsmen," the unit faced new challenges and threats in the mountains and weather of North I Corps. For the next year, Bill and his buddy, W.T. Grant, would slowly but surely be consumed by the "meat grinder" as they experienced days and days of the same old thing . . . bad weather, NVA and long, long hours of flying.

It didn't take "Wild Bill" Meacham long to realize he was best suited to working closely with the LRP teams of the 101st Division. He and W.T. Grant made many good friends and comrades with the LRP's as they concentrated on the tricky and specialized work of the LRP units.

Their flying skills were quickly recognized by the LRP's as "just what the doctor ordered" and they were assigned almost exclusively to fly for them.

Together, Bill, W. T. and the LRP leaders formulated many techniques which proved to be most effective in getting the job done, yet keeping everyone as safe as pos-

sible, under hazardous conditions.

Higher headquarters basically left them alone to performed their missions almost in their own world. That is not to say they had it easy, just that they were very good at the job. No one within the LRP leadership wanted anyone else . . . they were the best.

"Lest We Forget" is a book that will keep you on the edge of your seat. Throughout the book, William

Meacham allows the reader to "tune in" on the radios and tactical frequencies to hear the tension and terror from

Book review



the LRP's on the ground.

He also lets the reader hear the comms between him and his wingman, Grant.

You will "feel" the sweat dripping from inside his helmet as it burns his eyes. Your gloves will become wet as he hoists LRP team members out of the jungle with a 120-foot-long rope, called a McGuire Rig.

You will ride to the hot PZ to extract the "whispering" LRP teams as NVA watch and fire from a treeline only yards away. Yet, most will be extracted safely!

"Wild Bill" Meacham will live to fly another day. What a ride! What a book! What a story!

— Tom Payne

Reserve skybox for unit at reunion

At many of our reunions, units, chapters, or other groups "chip in" and get a hotel suite to serve as their Tactical Operations Center (TOC) during the reunion.

Due to the unique arrangement of the Riviera Hotel & Casino, we're able to offer folks the opportunity for something special this year. The hotel has several skyboxes that overlook the banquet floor and the Executive Council has decided to make these available for use as TOCs.

Your TOC will be available for the "entire reunion", which means July 3 (Wednesday) through July 5 (Friday), inclusive; and July 6 (Saturday) after 5 p.m.

The quantity of free beer is TBD, but is intended to satisfy any Vietnam helicopter pilot . . . within budget constraints.



This photo shows several of the skyboxes at the Riviera Hotel & Casino, headquarters of Reunion 2002 in Las Vegas. The skyboxes are available for rent.

Here are the rules:

- First-come, first served.
- \$600 for the entire reunion for a single skybox (six available).
- \$1,200 for the entire reunion for

a double skybox (three available).

- Payment at time of scheduling using MasterCard or Visa.
- Banquet meal may be served in the skybox.

Here are the features of the skyboxes:

- Free beer.
- Built-in bar.
- A single skybox accommodates about 30-40 folks in a sit-down dinner arrangement.
- Double skybox accommodates about 60-80 folks in a sit-down dinner arrangement.
- Easy accessibility overlooking the banquet floor.

You can schedule your SkyBox TOC online at www.vhpareunion.org and select "Get a TOC" from the menu. Supplies are limited!

— National Reunion Committee

Events going together for reunion

JOE BILITZKE

CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL VHPA ANNUAL REUNION

The excitement of the national VHPA annual reunion is growing by leaps and bounds!

See the lead article in this *Newsletter* by President Dave Rittman. He outlines events and groups that have been added to the reunion entertainment lineup.

The new, online registration also has been going well. By going to the VHPA website at www.vhpa.org you can register for the reunion, reserve your hotel room, buy tickets for the myriad events planned, and find valuable information about the reunion, the Riviera Hotel & Casino, and Las Vegas.

ARE YOU ARRIVING BY RV? Parking and hookups are available at a hotel across the street from our host hotel.

By calling CIRCUS CIRCUS at (800) 634-3450, you can reserve a space for your recreational vehicle. There are a total of 399 available spaces and rates vary depending on the size of your rig.

On weekends, you'll pay \$25-\$27 and weekdays from \$17-\$19. A few spaces are available for pull-throughs at \$32 each.

Show your AAA card or SAM's membership and get a discount.

Amenities include a dog run, full hookup, showers, pool and a general store. Call now, spaces are limited over the July 4th weekend.

ARE YOU ARRIVING BY AIR? Need a rental car after arriving? United Airlines and Avis Car Rental are the official transportation providers for the VHPA reunion. See the reunion website at www.vhpareunion.org/ for information on discounts available from both companies.

NEED A RIDE FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE RIVIERA HOTEL? This year no local shuttle service was contracted.

For those of you who have been to Las Vegas, you know the efficient, relatively inexpensive taxicab service available at McCarran International Airport.

After retrieving your luggage, you'll find taxis lined up and dispatched very proficiently. It's a 20-minute ride from the airport to our host hotel.

CHAPTERS HAVE A NEW LOOK THIS YEAR. Through the efforts of Mike Sheuerman, VHPA junior member at large, unit chapters have been authorized by your Executive Council.

The unit chapters, together with the 14 area chapters, have an opportunity to hold a collective mini-reunion this year. We will have one room set aside specifically for the chapters, both area and unit.

Earlier, I wrote to each of the area chapter presidents

offering space for their chapter to be represented.

This space may be used to recruit new chapter members, display chapter memorabilia, hang your banner, and have an area dedicated to recognizing the important role our chapters play in the association.

MINI-REUNIONS AGAIN A MAIN FEATURE OF

REUNION. Many unit representatives already have contacted me to reserve space for their Vietnam unit.

This year, each room reserved for mini-reunions will be used for two units each day. We will provide mini-reunion space on Thursday and Friday, July 4 and 5.

The first reunion is allocated a block of time 8 a.m.-noon, and the second, 1-5 p.m. Each room will have a

VCR and monitor, if required.

Units are cautioned liquor and soft drinks may not be brought into the hotel for group consumption. Bars will be set up in the vicinity of the mini-reunions and all drinks may be purchased at the special, reduced rate for VHPA members.

One word of caution: No unit or chapter is authorized to sell anything from these areas. All sales must be conducted from the designated vendor area.

If sales are desired, please contact our vendor coordinator, Ken Fritz or go to www.vhpareunion.org/vendors.htm for details.

To see those units requesting mini-reunions, and the room they've been assigned, please go to the reunion website at www.vhpareunion.org/ for updates.

RHODES RANCH COUNTRY CLUB is the site for our reunion golfer.

We have a golf chairman, CCN Chapter member Mike Whitten, who is an avid golfer and, having retired from active duty, works at a golf course in northern California.

Mike has jumped in and taken the "ball by the horns," so to speak. He can be contacted at [REDACTED] with any questions you might have.

CHECK OUT VHPA WEBSITE REGULARLY for updates on times and places for various events.

The reunion is shaping up to be the best ever with four, fun-filled days to keep you occupied and entertained. But the best is always the opportunity to see old buddies, find new ones, and help keep alive an association that is one of a kind.

I'm always available to any member who may have a question or problem regarding the reunion. Please contact me and leave a message, I promise I'll get back with you.

My work number is [REDACTED] and if I'm not readily available, please identify yourself as a VHPA member and leave a voice mail. Or, contact me by e-mail at NationalReunion@VHPA.org and I'll respond ASAP. See you all in Las Vegas!



VHPA membership now stands at 10,877

As of Jan. 31, VHPA membership stands at 10,877. This includes 1,284 life members.

Over the years, some members have drifted away or moved without letting us know where they were.

One of the highest priorities of your current Executive Council has been to recontact and, in some cases, find these former comrades.

In some cases, using the same address location technology we used to find prospective new members, a few weeks ago we sent welcome-back packets to 2,949 former members we have not heard from in more than six months and for whom we now have current addresses.

In addition to information about our association, each was provided details of our upcoming reunion in Las Vegas.

Added to the 8,391 actual mailing sent in mid-February to prospective new members just located, a total of 11,300 pilots are being contacted and asked to join or return to our association.

The chapters, our HQ staff, and your Executive Council plan additional follow-ups this spring.

We'll keep you updated as to our progress in future newsletters.

B-Model Huey for sale

T/N 62-4567 Display Aircraft. Street-legal, 12v and 24v trailer light hookup.

Was Ft. Lewis Slick, 120 AHC Razorbacks FlexShip Tet/TSN, Seawolves, Rucker trainer. Complete, semi-functional, mounted on low-profile trailer. No engine. Everything correct for 1966. Has intact Bell identity plates. Log books n/a. Full set of manuals, copious VN and helicopter references and historical novels. Includes helmets, body armor (4 kinds including chicken plates), 1966 WO1 flight suit.

Several large waterproof informational placards, cut-aways of blade and bulkhead. Extensive historical research done including partial crew list with currents. Well-written narrative of Tet battle by pilot, extensive correspondence with ex-crew. Lots of visible combat evidence, 1/3 of airframe replaced, C boom.

Exterior paint rough (1989), interior worn spots in original flat grey. Includes original Razorback door and tail art by ex-DG. Located in Ft. Lauderdale. All inquiries welcome. E-mail me at [redacted] or call me at: [redacted]

I hate to sell this wonderful piece but we just don't have enough exposure for it down here in S. Fla. Also I have to do the 5 or 6 shows annually by myself, now becoming more of an unpaid job than a pleasurable hobby.

I wanted to offer it first to VHPA members and chapters.

John Kessler
Ex-CPL Arty. CONUS 1964-66



UH-1



Apache

Listen Up!

Here's a great opportunity to receive hand crafted rosewood models commemorating your military service. All models are unique collectables that can be personalized with your military affiliation coins, badges, and honors, with an engraved plaque.

These beautifully finished models are made to enhance any office or home decor. Check out our military models: aircraft, tanks:

www.modelsmilitary.com

Call [redacted] Visa, Master Card, Amex.

Register for Reunion 2002

Outlaws in Vietnam



**Ride with
the Outlaws
of the 175th
Aviation Co.
in the
Mekong Delta
during
1966-1967**

ARVN squads getting out of the Hueys were being mowed down in the deep, blond rice paddy grass as if a giant piano wire were sweeping through the LZ, cutting them off at the knees. Whole squads of ARVNs were losing their lives due to the grazing fire. The radio was full of guys screaming, "I m hit. I m hit! I m HIT!"

To order send \$25 by check or money order,
to: Dave Eastman,
P.O. Box 59, Center Sandwich, NH 03227
Order online at www.elgringoviejo.com

Battle with enemy lasts five days

EDITOR'S NOTE: A Battle in the Renegade Woods was documented by the 25th Infantry Division's 18th Military History Detachment. This action occurred April 2-6, 1970, in Tay Ninh Province. The source documents were obtained and provided to the VHPA by former crew chief Ron Leonard, Diamondhead 085, who also is webmaster for the 25th Aviation Battalion Association.

RON LEONARD

The battalion had been preparing to conduct operations in the same general area on that day.

At 9:25 a.m., Lt. Col. George Custer III, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, flying in a command and control helicopter from Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, took off to supervise the action.

He remained on station for most of the five-day encounter.

Company C, utilizing three UH-1H aircraft, began helilifting to an LZ. Artillery fire from FSBs Hull and Hampton provided a blocking fire into which the enemy was to be driven.

By 11 a.m., the 1st and 3rd Platoons of Company C had assembled and began moving west toward the area of the Ranger contact, while part of the 2nd Platoon moved along a parallel course 300 meters north.

At 11:40 a.m., both elements became engaged. The heavier contact involved the southern group, which had been moving forward in a two-column formation through a series of open areas bordered by hedgerows.

The initial burst of fire killed the point man of the right column and wounded the other point man.

The lead platoon, the 1st, was immediately pinned down by a light machine gun firing from the right front. The initial burst of fire killed the point man of the right column and wounded the other point man.

The platoon leader, Lt. Ronnie Clark, was wounded in the stomach by this burst, which initiated a 20-minute firefight.

At 12:17 p.m., an urgent medevac request was made by the company commander. When this action began, 2/C/2-27 Infantry began receiving small arms fire from the west, but most fell short.

See PLATOON, Page 20

VHPA reports additional details of annual audit

At the annual business meeting last July, the yearly audit by our CPA firm was presented.

A summary copy was also printed in *The VHPA Newsletter* last fall.

In response to an inquiry by several members, we asked our independent auditor Dave Ijung to provide us a breakout of what he has lumped into the \$17,360 "Miscellaneous under Cash Disbursements" heading for the 2000 Washington, DC, reunion.

He has provided us the following summary:

- **Bank Charges** — \$10,711 (The bank fee charged when members used their credit cards.)
- **Insurance** — \$ 2,239 (Insurance purchased for the reunion.)
- **Member shirts** — \$1,764 (Given to each member as part of their \$450 lifetime enrollment.)
- **Storage** — \$1,896 (Storage of VHPA records, newsletters, directories, etc.)
- **Other** — \$750 (Typical small expense, such as postage, photocopies at hotel, slides, etc.)

VHPA briefs

25th Battalion plans reunion

The 25th Aviation Battalion will hold a reunion April 12-14 in Charleston, SC.

It will be the third for the A Company "Little Bear" reunion and the first ever for the B Company "Diamondheads."

CONTACT: Ron Leonard at [REDACTED]

128th announces mini-reunion

A mini-reunion in Las Vegas is being planned for the "Tomahawks" and "Gunslingers" of the 128th Assault Helicopter Company.

All former 128th AHC pilots and their family members are urged to attend. Make your plans for the VHPA reunion early and watch for 128th AHC mini-reunion updates.

CONTACT: Jay Riseden at [REDACTED]

VHPA Calendar needs photos

Do you have any photos you'd like to see in the 2003 *VHPA Calendar*?

CONTACT: Mike Law [REDACTED]

Platoon rejoins rest of Company B

Continued from Page 19

The platoon leader, Lt. Monte Hack, requested gunship cover to enable him to pull back and link with the rest of the company. He withdrew, but was unable to rejoin the rest of the company until about 2 p.m., when Company B was lifted into the action.

At that time, his wounded man and five heat casualties were evacuated.

The 3rd Platoon, which had been on the right flank of the 1st, pulled back and maneuvered in again on its left.

Lt. Ronald Kolb, with 3/C/2-27 Infantry, was killed during this maneuver, and Staff Sgt. Melvin Kalili, platoon sergeant of the 1st Platoon, was killed when he went to aid the wounded point man.

The intense enemy fire was very accurate and well-directed. The men of Company C effectively were pinned down and had difficulty locating the source of the enemy fire.

They remained pinned down by the sniper fire after the firefight for more than six hours and had extreme difficulty extracting their casualties. The dead point man was left overnight because it was impossible to reach his body.

At 11:45 a.m., a light fire team composed of two UH-1C gunships from the 118th Assault Helicopter Company was orbiting the contact area, trying to locate ground fire with other aviation elements and Capt. William Wilson, a FAC.

One of the gunships was shot down by small arms fire, but the pilot was able to set it down in a clearing about 800 meters west of the contact site, and the crew safely evaded one hedgerow westward where the other gunship rescued them.

The UH-1C's left side rocket pod was on fire and the rockets "cooked off" after the crew had left.

At noon, Capt. Wendell Brown, a forward air controller, was on station over the contact area and inquired if the ground commander wanted tactical air strikes in addition to the lift from Company B, 25th Aviation Battalion, then on station.

He requested two immediate air strikes, in addition to

They remained pinned down by the sniper fire after the firefight for more than six hours and had extreme difficulty extracting their casualties.

Then resupply ships from Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, brought in extra ammunition and evacuated seven wounded men and five heat casualties to Tay Ninh.

the one already scheduled. Those he directed on target in an area west of the contact.

Then resupply ships from Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, brought in extra ammunition and evacuated seven wounded men and five heat casualties to Tay Ninh.

Company B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, which had been waiting at its pickup zone since 9 a.m., finally was airlifted into an LZ to assist Company C.

The seven UH-1H helicopters took the commander, Capt. Charles Creswell, and his command element with the 1st and part of the 2nd Platoons on the first lift. After an hour-long flight, it inserted at 2:23 p.m.

The second lift brought in the remainder of the company and First Sgt. Domingo Rodriguez-Colon at 6:20 p.m.

The element from the initial lift formed on line with 2/B/2-27 Infantry on the right and moved forward 300 meters until they reached Company C.

At about 2:45 p.m., the troops began to receive small arms and automatic weapons fire, and assaulted forward, bypassing the strong-point that was keeping Company C pinned down.

The 1st Platoon worked through the open area to its front by fire and maneuver, but was forced to halt when the 2nd Platoon became pinned down temporarily, causing its fire to impact close to the front of the 1st Platoon's positions.

While they were temporarily halted, the enemy attempted to maneuver around the right flank.

Two men who emerged from the hedgerow were killed by the fire of 1/B/2-27 Infantry. One appeared to be a junior officer or NCO who was attempting to lead his men.

Other enemy soldiers were chased out of the hedgerow and two more were killed by gunship fire when they attempted to flee west. This firefight cost the 1st Platoon one wounded machine gunner.

The 2nd Platoon finally was able to move up on line, but highly accurate sniper fire pinned it down, killing Spec. 4 John Lyons, the RTO, and Lt. Orvil Kitchens, the forward observer from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 77th Artillery, in rapid succession.

The bypassed "hot corner," where the initial light machine gun fire had come from, had been quiet for some time, so Sgt. Stephen Adams, a squad leader from the 1st Platoon, Company B, and Spec. 4 Richard Nast, a medic from HHC attached to his platoon, attempted to retrieve the body of the dead point man.

The machine gun opened fire and kept them pinned

Other enemy soldiers were chased out of the hedgerow and two more were killed by gunship fire when they attempted to flee west.

See FORWARD, Page 21

Forward elements fight to withdraw

Continued from Page 20

down until Spec. 4 Orlando Noriega, a machine gunner from 1/B/2-27 Infantry, fired to his rear with his M-60 and an M-16, which he took from his assistant gunner, and silenced it.

This action also enabled the forward elements to commence a fighting withdrawal as they began to run out of ammunition. They were forced to leave two bodies at the limit of the farthest advance, as well as the dead point man, and abandon some equipment.

At 3:25 p.m. Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, was alerted to move to a pickup zone at Cu Chi and began lifting on two UH-1H helicopters at 4 p.m.

By 6:15 p.m., the last of the company had inserted into an LZ about one kilometer southwest of Companies B and C. The withdrawal of these two companies to a NDP in the vicinity of their LZ was covered by artillery fire from FSB Hull and FSB

Hampton, and air strikes placed on enemy positions 400-600 meters west by Lt. Hamby Fagg at 5 p.m. and again at 6:05 p.m.

This second strike — which was made by four F-100s — struck positions marked by a Cobra in the area of the camouflaged structures.

During this last strike, Lt. Fagg expended 1,000 rounds covering Company B's right flank with a Cobra. The gunship spotted a group of enemy maneuvering to attack and broke it up after the ground troops had marked their positions with smoke.

At 6:20 p.m., the second lift of Company B arrived at the LZ and was directed by Maj. Howard McAllister, the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, S-3, who had assumed command on the ground, to begin securing a NDP for the engaged troops to withdraw to.

Custer reported the contact was broken off at 6:40 p.m., and a four-ship resupply mission brought ammunition, food and water to the NDP.

Reinforcements were brought in for Company C from the battalion rear, and Lt. Cy Weisner, Company C executive officer, replaced the wounded Lt. Clark in command of 1/C/2-27 Infantry.

Helicopter gunships and flareships remained on station during the night, but there was no contact.

Capt. John MacLeod directed the final airstrike of the day at 7 p.m. and made rocket and machine gun runs when the fighters received ground fire.

The mission of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, was to conduct a ground reconnaissance on April 3 of the previous day's contact area, and to retrieve the five bodies left

overnight.

The task force was composed of Companies A, B, C, and Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, which was made OPCON.

Plans called for B/C/2-27 Infantry to sweep west from its position through the area of their firefight to the area of the Ranger contact. There the company would link up with Company A and B/2-22 Infantry (M) moving up from the south.

At 7:45 a.m., a LST from D/3-4 Cavalry engaged three enemy. They received ineffective small arms fire from the enemy and killed all three.

Capt. Bobby Hawkins, FAC, arrived on station at 9:45 a.m. as the ground troops began moving forward, and shut off artillery fire to clear the air for friendly aircraft.

At 10 a.m., he sent the day's first air strike into the area, resulting in two enemy KIA (BC). His rocket and machine gun passes — required to suppress ground fire directed at the aircraft — resulted in another possible enemy kill.

Companies B and C, meanwhile, had moved up to the contact area and paused while the airstrikes were brought in, and then moved forward to evacuate the three bodies left in the area the previous afternoon.

The companies paused again at 11 a.m. to let additional air assets be brought in.

Capt. MacLeod brought in an airstrike at 11 a.m. on positions marked with smoke by a LST from Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, and in response to ground requests for additional napalm had two more air strikes brought into the area by 1 p.m.

At 11 a.m., an LST from D/3-4 Cavalry engaged two enemy near an ox cart, killing both.

NVA soldiers were attempting to fire an RPG at the LOH when they were killed by rockets and minigun fire from the Cobra.

A .51-caliber machine gun mount, six RPG rounds and one-quarter pound of documents were evacuated to Cu Chi from this encounter.

MacLeod engaged two enemy soldiers in a bunker at 11:46 a.m., killing both of them. The weather had cleared by this time, enabling the followup missions to avoid making low-level approaches, which had plagued pilots earlier in the day.

The first element of fighters hit at 1 p.m., producing multiple secondary explosions.

During their pause to allow the air assets to be brought in, Companies B and C policed the contact area and gath-

See TWO, Page 22

The gunship spotted a group of enemy maneuvering to attack and broke it up after the ground troops had marked their positions with smoke.

A .51-caliber machine gun mount, six RPG rounds and one-quarter pound of documents were evacuated to Cu Chi from this encounter.

Two companies stop for a hot lunch

Continued from Page 21

ered abandoned equipment for evacuation.

At noon, the companies also ate a hot meal, which was brought forward from the LZ by their respective security elements. Company C utilized its 1st Platoon for this task, with the 2nd and 3rd Platoons remaining on line.

Company B kept three platoons as a striking force and had its Weapons Platoon (without heavy weapons) acting as a rear security element.

The equipment was evacuated between 2 and 2:30 p.m., with the two companies (minus security elements)

sweeping forward to the area of the Ranger contact where they

linked up with A/2-27 Infantry and B/2-22 Infantry (M), which had swept up from the south across their front.

Two APCs broke down during the sweep and 2/B/2-27 Infantry provided security for them until they were repaired.

At about 2 p.m., Capt. Brown and Lt. Parsons received permission to engage a bunker complex which Parsons had seen one NVA run into earlier.

After having B/2-27 Infantry mark its positions with smoke, Brown made an initial rocket pass, which flushed four or five enemy into the open. The two FACs made 10 passes apiece on the target, chasing several more enemy into the open, and receiving fire from small arms, LMGs, and RPGs.

Initially, the enemy ran toward Company B, which engaged them with organic weapons at 2:15 p.m.

Six enemy soldiers were killed by the ground troops before they fled. Several weapons were found in the bunkers, indicating the enemy was attempting to strike Company B on the northern flank.

After the bodies of the two dead Rangers were recovered by Company A, the ground troops swept west to the downed UH-1C.

The company provided security while the Huey was disarmed and recovered by a CH-47. Recovery took place at 6:15 p.m., with Parsons flying cover.

At this time all four companies returned to the clearing where the Ranger contact had occurred and established a NDP with APCs positioned around the perimeter.

During the afternoon's sweep of the area, there were

At about 2 p.m., Capt. Brown and Lt. Parsons received permission to engage a bunker complex which Parsons had seen one NVA run into earlier.

Using small arms fire at 3:17 p.m., the company killed three enemy without taking any casualties.

several isolated contacts.

Company A engaged three enemy soldiers in a bunker located by a LST from D/3-4 Cavalry.

Using small arms fire at 3:17 p.m., the company killed three enemy without taking any casualties. A Chinese mine and documents identifying the executive officer of C13 Company, 3rd Battalion, 271st Regiment, were evacuated and three RPG rounds destroyed.

At 3:28 p.m., Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, engaged four enemy soldiers with organic weapons, killing all four.

The enemy small arms fire produced negative casualties, and a cache containing 49 RPG rounds, seventy 82mm mortar rounds, and one hundred 60 mm mortar rounds was uncovered and evacuated.

At 3:29 p.m., an LST from D/3-4 Cavalry located eight enemy killed by artillery. The force sweeping from the south engaged another group of four enemy at 3:35 p.m.

Company A killed three of the enemy and captured one CKC rifle without receiving any return fire. Company B, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry, captured the fourth, who was taken to Tay Ninh for interrogation.

April 4

After spending an uneventful night, all companies moved out from the NDP to continue their ground reconnaissance of the immediate area.

Company C prepared to move to Cu Chi Base Camp to conduct a 24-hour maintenance standdown, and Company A, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 22nd Infantry moved from Patrol Base Blue to replace them.

A cache containing 43 rounds of 82 mm, 30 rounds of 60 mm and three rounds of 75 mm ammunition, plus an 82 mm mortar sight and one ton of unbagged rice was discovered by the two companies at 11:36 a.m. and destroyed.

At noon, the companies returned to their NDP for a hot meal brought in by helicopter.

The two air strikes of the day were flown at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. before weather conditions became too poor.

Brown directed the first on targets marked by helicopters from D/3-4 Cavalry.

MacLeod directed the second, which produced one large secondary explosion and several smaller ones.

He had the F-100s make strafing runs with their 20 mm cannon, but they were unable to cause any more explosions.

The two air strikes of the day were flown at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. before weather conditions became too poor.

Continued in next issue

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

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

VHPA at the drag strip



VHPA member Steve Vermillion from Puyallup, WA, recently acquired a couple of the large VHPA stickers and applied them as shown in the photos.

"We covered the rear slicks (tires) with the removable panel with the VHPA sticker to keep the internal air pressure in the tires from increasing from the heat," Vermillion said.

"Then, when we were not racing and back in the pits to work on the car, we placed the wheel heat covers on the trailer," he said. "They created a lot of interest and prompted a lot of questions from fans and pit crews."

The VHPA stickers were seen in Dallas and in Pomona, CA.

Vermillion is with Top Alcohol Dragster team.



Angel on High

In honor of those who served and continue to serve as helicopter pilots of the United States Armed Forces, I am offering this rendition of the Sikorsky CH- 53 Super Stallion to add to your collection of modern day rotorcraft.

Although this helicopter was not in service in the Vietnam War, I hope that you can appreciate its service as a military aircraft.

Proceeds from the sale of this print are intended to assist in financing my continuing education as a helicopter pilot as I work toward my commercial and instructor ratings. In addition, a percentage of the proceeds will be donated to the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization.

If you are interested in purchasing a print, please send a check or money order in the amount of \$80.00 to Jeffrey M. Rooney at

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at
I would like to thank the VHPA for its support.

xt. 114.