



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

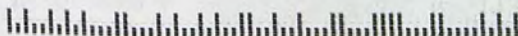
January/February 2001 Vol. 19, No. 1



Jack Swickard photo

A Chinook slingloads a UH-1D onto the helicopter parking ramp at "Hotel 3," the main helipad at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. The photo was taken in 1967.

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From the President

Well, the holiday festivities are behind us. I hope yours were as enjoyable as mine.

Everyone has now received their November/December issue of the Newsletter, which was the first issue with registration forms for the National VHPA Reunion to be held in Denver in July.

Gary Roush also has the registration form online at www.vhpa.org, along with a link to the reunion website: www.vhpa2001.org.

Lots of good information at the reunion website and kudos to Mike Law and his webmaster, Angelique Herran. This is by far the best reunion website we've had (Las Vegas, are you listening?).

As you know, we changed the reservation procedures for the reunion hotel this year.

Thus far, we've received positive feedback from a number of members who have registered, indicating favorable support for the new procedures.

If you have an opinion on the procedures please send a note to HQ (hq@vhpa.org). E-mail is preferred because of their heavy workload with reunion registrations but, if you don't have e-mail capability, phone (800) 505-VHPA or fax (916) 966-8743.

We want to hear from you.

Mike Law and his Reunion Committee have everything in place for our big bash in July . . . lots of good planning and execution on their part.

Planning begins for Reunion 2002

Lad Vaughn and the Las Vegas Chapter are well into preliminary planning for Reunion 2002 in Las Vegas, and the Site Selection Committee has begun hotel negotiations for Reunion 2003.

Due to the increased size of our reunions and our goal

to have rooms for everyone in the same hotel, not to mention at a reasonable rate, the reunion location possibilities have become more restrictive.

Our East Coast-Central-West Coast rotation strategy will continue to be implemented to the extent possible, but the Site Selection Committee's job has become more difficult.

Fritz heads vendor committee

The Executive Council also has created a Vendor Coordination Committee, with Ken Fritz as the chairman.

The primary purpose of this committee is to handle those activities that recur at reunions year after year, thereby providing consistency in terms of policy and quality.

Along with the coordination of reunion vendors, the committee also will assume responsibility for the reunion photographer and official reunion T-shirts.

Speaking of T-shirts, be sure to purchase one (or a dozen) on your reunion registration form.

Ken has assured us of a return to a high-quality, official reunion T-shirt, to include a good grade of cotton, a pocket and appropriate logos.

Fund to help find new members

One of the primary purposes of VHPA is to seek out potential new members.

We get a lot of good ideas for improving our work in this area, but frequently lack identifiable funds to support a good project. Consequently, a Membership Fund has been created to support identifying, locating, and recruiting potential members.

You'll find an article on this later in the newsletter, along with information on how you can contribute. Please do so!

Enough for now. The best to you and yours!

Register now for Reunion 2001 in Denver . . . and order your official reunion T-shirts!

— Charles Holley, President

The VHPA is looking for some good men.

Help us find our "lost" brethren.

Support the VHPA Membership Fund.

Classified ads

POSITION WANTED: Experienced helicopter pilot looking for a position in the areas of EMS, natural resources or public service. Experience: Regular Army, Indiana National Guard. Class 68-27. Call Bill Resor at [REDACTED].

CALORAD: All natural wellness product. Would you like to lose inches/weight while you sleep? Build lean muscle mass? No diet or exercise necessary. Too good to be true? An 86% long-term success rate speaks for itself. Available retail or wholesale in an excellent business opportunity. Call VHPA member Paul Uster (L200) at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and follow the cues. Or visit www.eyicom.com Use code word: paul

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Jack Salm Jr., President
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VHPA Products

You may order a past calendar with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters. The 2001 Calendar may only be ordered by calling Turner Publishing at (800) 788-3350.

Product	Each	P&H	No.	Total
Bumper sticker	\$1	Free		\$
Window decal	\$1	Free		\$
Newsletters — back issues	\$2	Free		\$
1999 Directory — 1972 Easter Offensive	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
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1994 Directory — Lam Son 719 and tactical map	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
2000 Calendar	\$8	\$5 ea		\$
1999 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
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Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. II. (Highlights 1966-67)	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
Vietnam Helicopter History CD-ROM (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
Grand total				\$

To place your order

Complete this form, then mail or fax it to:

VHPA
5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200
Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698
Fax: (916) 966-8743

Pay by credit card:

Call (800) 505-VHPA

Visit our website at:

www.vhpa.org

(Include credit card information or enclose check or money order)

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

Letters

Sister has questions about pilot's death

From Page 207, VHPA 2000 Directory:

WO1 Stuck, Lawrence Milton — KIA 05/21/69. (VN Wall) Panel 24W-Line 072.

Army, 336th AHC (Assault Helicopter Company) Flight Class 68-509/68-13.

Cause: Minigun accident on UH-1C Gunship, Soc Trang, RVN. How died: Shot through the chest while disarming and clearing a minigun on the ground that had no bullet catcher.

Does the newsletter have a section for family questions? If so, I would like to hear more about the accident, but I would also like to hear from others who served with him.

Perhaps they have stories they are willing to share that can fill in my white space.

Why was he disarming a minigun? Was anyone else with him when he died? If not, how long was it before anyone found his body? What's a bullet catcher?

There are also a lot of generic questions, such as: Do pilot duties vary? How many people aboard ship and who does what? Lawrence (Butch to me) was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for helping extract a downed pilot, this happened during his first month there — anyone familiar with this incident? (His tour began 8/26/68.)

'I'm not looking for 'feel good' stuff'

I'm not looking for 'feel good' stuff here; I want to know how the war affected him.

Did he still have a sense of humor? Where did he go? What was a typical (if there was such a thing) day like? What did he think about the countryside? What was he afraid of? Who were his friends?

There was still film in his camera when his personal effects arrived. I don't recall ever seeing them, but heard dad mention there were many of children.

There was also a tape recording he intended to send home. I don't know where any of this stuff ended up.

If possible, I would like to be in touch with class members from Fort Wolters and also Fort Stewart. I printed the Fort Wolters group picture, but the names are difficult to read.

Mom and dad are both dead and my sister and I have been estranged since mom's death in 1994. Butch and I were best friends growing up, the older brother protecting little sister.

I sewed patches on uniforms beginning with Civil Air

Patrol and ROTC and kept his "cigarette secret," hoping mom and dad would never discover. Of course they did.

I was only 18 when he died and thought I too would not live to be 19 — he died, so could I.

Dad was very stoic when he and an officer showed up at my office pushing a football-shaped pill in front of me saying, "Take this. You know why we are here."

I wanted to hear the words even though I knew Butch was dead. "No, I don't know why you are here, what's going on?"

"Get your coat Linda, I'm taking you home."

(At the exact time he died, Butch was sitting on my bed, "Linda, I just came to say goodbye. I'm okay." Then he was gone.)

Miscommunication common about death

There's a lot of miscommunication about death and Neil Fiore says it perfectly: "Out of a sense of duty and a desire to protect a loved one, a vicious cycle of misinterpretation, guesswork, silence and isolation is initiated."

It's not just in war, it happens in many cases. I am a hospice volunteer and nursing assistant, I get to spend many hours with dying people.

My husband teases me about being a "croak-ologist." He appreciates my work, but does not want to hear about it. Death is a difficult subject for the majority, and I'm not immune either.

My strong Southern Baptist upbringing protected me and let me accept Butch's death without question. He was the major influence on my life.

He worked as a drugstore delivery person (something of the past for sure) and was talking to our neighbor about warrant officer school.

"I would send my son to Canada to keep him out of that war."

"Yes, and if we all did that, who would be left here to protect you?"

Our neighbor never spoke to us again. Ironical that when Dad and I arrived home, there was a huge banner across their yard reading "Welcome Home." Their son was coming home from Canada that day.

There were many blessings that I chose for focus: He wanted to be there even though a back injury was an easy out and he had to fight to be in military service; we got his body back and could see it was him, not just dogtags and body parts.

Advised to take course on Vietnam

Up until recently I could not read anything about Vietnam. I started college at 48 and was advised to take the course on Vietnam. I couldn't do it.

With the liberal slant and feminist views espoused by colleges today, I'm glad I didn't take it. Of course, I am still a rebel (not just in the Southern sense) and my point of view did not make me very popular with the professors. Two years was enough "unbalanced education."

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Letters

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I also pursued education from the standpoint of "what can I learn about death" and psychology and sociology papers were written around that theme.

Now, I'm writing a book for health care professionals, including doctors who have the most difficulty discussing end of life issues.

Linda J. Austin
[REDACTED]

Cummings known for daring medevac

A fellow Marine aviator sent this to me from a retired Marine brigadier general about a real hero. It's worth a read. Dave was a friend of mine, as well as a squadron mate. He died just before taking command of an East Coast attack squadron.

Semper fi,
Skip Curtis
[REDACTED]

Glancing around at the clutter in my attic recently, I decided it was time to sort through some of the unpacked boxes associated with my military retirement and move to Pennsylvania.

A fond smile crossed my face as I gingerly pulled out aging flight logbooks. As I randomly scanned the yellowing pages, I was surprised by the vivid and detailed recall the numerous sorties inscribed on those pages evoked.

Aviation seems to have that effect on the mind.

Locked in a trance with my memories, it was the flutter of a small newspaper clipping, surrendering to gravity, as it fell from between the pages, that snapped the spell of the moment and brought me back to reality.

The clipping was a one-line notice from the Navy Times announcing the death of my friend, David Cummings, during 1988.

When I first cut out the obituary notice and tucked it away in my logbook, I mentally promised myself that one day I would tell the story of his heroics — in another place and time . . .

Vietnam 1969

It was December. Reconnaissance elements from a battalion-size Viet Cong force probed the hasty defensive perimeter set up by a remote Marine observation team atop Hill 845.

From afar, an OV-10 "Bronco" aircraft, responding to an urgent call from the outpost for close air support, swept in low from the south. The confines of adjacent mountain ridges, coupled with a rapidly deteriorating cloud base,

made the pending interdiction strike especially hazardous.

Monsoon season was well under way and, like the distant thunder, the drone of the Bronco's propellers reverberated off the trees and mountain sides, striking fear in the guerrillas (as wounded VC prisoners would later relate) while providing some semblance of comfort to the beleaguered Marines.

The Bronco pilot, Capt. Dennis Herbert, and his rear seat aerial observer seemed oblivious to the danger. Directed to the attack by a ground-based forward air controller (FAC), the Bronco pilot focused his attack on a shallow ravine leading into the outpost encampment.

Squeezing off two Zuni rockets, he visually tracked the missiles (with a little body language) to the ravine where they exploded in a fury of smoke and fire.

Herbert immediately banked his aircraft sharp to the left to avoid flying debris. Quickly leveling his wings, he simultaneously pulled back hard on the control stick. His Bronco was now pointed straight up. Bleeding off airspeed for rapid altitude gain in an exchange of energy, the Bronco masked itself in the clouds to escape retaliatory ground fire and also to avoid collision with the mountains.

In a matter of seconds, the aircraft punched through the cloud overcast.

Capt. Herbert leveled off the aircraft, adjusted the throttle, and waited for a radio call to announce the results of his attack. The FAC reported the attack was successful.

Further probing by the enemy had ceased. For the time being, a second suppression attack would not be required.

During the siege on the outpost, however, the FAC reported a young Marine had tripped off an enemy booby trap and was seriously injured. Bleeding profusely, he was going into shock. The Bronco pilot was asked to relay a call for an immediate medical evacuation.

Meanwhile, at Landing Zone Baldy, Cobra pilot 1st Lt. David Cummings and his aircraft commander, Capt. Roger Henry, were standing by on routine medevac escort alert in their AH-1G helicopter gunship.

The rear cockpit seat of the Cobra, normally flown by the pilot in command, would today be flown by the copilot, Lt. Cummings, as part of his aircraft commander check-ride.

When the call came to escort medevac helicopters, the pilots launched with another Cobra to marry up with two CH-46 Sea Knight transport helicopters as part of a constituted medevac (medical evacuation) package.

After a smooth join up, the flight headed 40 miles southwest of Da Nang into the Que Son Mountains in Quang Nam Province where they rendezvoused with the Bronco for a mission brief.

Weather at Hill 845 had deteriorated badly. Rain and lowering cloud bases made it virtually impossible for the large Sea Knights to get into the area for the pickup.

Despite persistent maneuvering, the rescue flight finally

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retired to the edge of the weather mass where they loitered to wait for another opportunity to come in and pick up the wounded Marine.

After obtaining approval from the medevac mission commander, the agile Cobra flown by Henry and Cummings, proceeded in to scout the landing zone in order to facilitate a more expeditious evacuation.

The worsening weather, however, prompted Henry, positioned in the higher visibility front gunner's seat, to assume control of the aircraft's more difficult-to-use side console forward cockpit flight controls. Visibility was now practically zero.

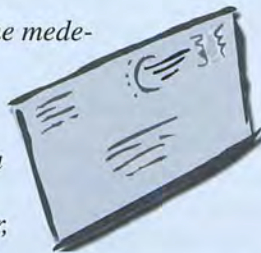
In those days, there was a variation of a popular song theme that "only mad dogs and Englishmen ventured into noonday monsoons!" Undaunted, Henry and Cummings pressed on despite harrowing weather conditions. The two Marines worked their Cobra up the mountainside amidst severe turbulence generated up and down gnarled mountain slopes.

Scraping tree tops at airspeeds that often dipped below 30 knots, or required holding in perilous zero-visibility hovers, the flyers anxiously waited for a call from the outpost giving them either a visual or sound cue that they were above the elusive, ill-defined landing zone.

After three hours and five different attempts (with refueling runs interjected in-between), the aviators finally found their mark.

Sporadic radio reports confirmed to Henry and Cummings their worst fear that the injured Marine was succumbing to his wounds.

Guiding the Cobra down through tall trees, Henry landed the aircraft on the edge of a bomb crater in a skillful display of airmanship. The helicopter settled to the ground



amid swirling debris.

The tightness of the landing zone was such that only the front half of the aircraft's skids rested on the rocky outer lip of the bomb crater. While the Cobra loitered in this precarious, teeter-totter position, Cummings climbed out of the aircraft to investigate the situation.

Wounded Marine in and out of shock

Torn and bloody, the wounded Marine was drifting in and out of shock.

Having served a previous tour in Vietnam as an infantry officer, Cummings was intimately familiar with the situation now confronting him. He had seen the haunting lurk of death in young men's eyes enough times before to know that it was time to get this Marine out immediately.

Death, Cummings promised himself, would not visit this Marine today if he had anything to say in the matter.

With the situation assessed, Cummings ordered the casualty lifted into the Cobra. Strapping the semiconscious Marine into his rear cockpit seat, Lieutenant Cummings fastened the canopy shut.

As "mud Marines" looked on curiously, Lieutenant Cummings climbed atop the starboard stubwing rocket pod. Straddling the pod and facing aft, Cummings banged his fist on the wing to get Henry's attention before giving him a thumbs up.

With a grim smile, Capt. Henry nodded and took off. The cloud base, by now, was less than 100 feet above the outpost.

As the Cobra lifted away, the radio airways snapped to life as radio operators in the vicinity broadcast descriptions of the incredible scene they were witnessing.

Cummings flashed a 'V'

Atop the rocket pod, Cummings flashed a "V" for victory to those remaining in the zone as the Cobra vanished dramatically into the blanket overcast. It was the ultimate stage exit. Marines on the ground stood and cheered. Morale soared.

Leveling off in a cloud mass at 4,000 feet, Henry accelerated the Cobra to 100 knots in order to improve maneuverability. Once stabilized, he glanced over his shoulder to check on the outrider.

Cummings flashed him back a sheepish grin. Biting rain, extreme cold at altitude, and the deafening shrill and shufflevibration of engines and rotors all mixed to fill his senses.

He could hold on only by squeezing his thighs tightly against the rocket pod wing mount. To exacerbate matters, the wind grabbed at the back of Cummings' helmet flexing it forward thereby causing the chin strap to choke him. And all the while, howling winds taunted him. But at their loudest, Cummings merely glanced at the wounded Marine, and howled back.

Herbert, still orbiting on patrol in his Bronco, began his return to home base as fuel began to run low.

En route, he happened to catch a chance glimpse of the
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Ex-WAC recalls 'my boys'

I was watching the inaugural parade today, and one of the groups in the parade was the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

I was an Army Link instructor at Fort Rucker, AL, in 1969 and 1970.

It took awhile, but I finally got some stuff on the computer, and wanted to send a "hello" and WELCOME HOME" to all of you. Some of you were and, still are, my boys." Thanks again.

Mary Lackner-Rupp

EDITOR'S NOTE: The helicopters seen in the parade belong to the VHPA's North Carolina Chapter.

Letters

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Cobra darting in and out of the clouds in its tenuous race against time. Zooming down for a closer look he was unprepared for the spectacle of Cummings, hanging outside the aircraft, and the bleeding, semiconscious Marine within.

In mild disbelief, the Bronco pilot pulled up wide abeam the Cobra, gave a thumbs up and departed.

"What a crazy war!" Herbert quipped to his observer while still shaking his head in disbelief. But in his heart, he knew this was the way of the warriors!

After the 25-minute flight through turbulent weather, the gunship descended through the clouds and broke into relatively clear sky at 1,200 feet over a land navigation point called Spider Lake.

The Cobra now headed toward a medical facility. Thoroughly exhausted from the strain of the mission, Henry was having trouble discerning the exact location of the medical site when he sensed a series of thumbs coming from the starboard wing.

Glancing to his right, he saw Cummings, much like a prize-winning bird dog, with locked pointed finger directing his attention to their destination below.



Marine whisked into triage

After landing, the wounded Marine was whisked into a medical triage for stabilization, while Navy Corpsmen, who thought they had seen everything, helped Cummings "defrost" himself off the rocket pod.

A short time later, a CH-46 Sea Knight arrived to fly the wounded Marine to Marble Mountain for emergency surgery.

Sprinting along through the sky as combat escort with the Sea Knight, to the more sophisticated "in-country" medical facility, were Cummings and Henry. The two were weary from fatigue, but nonetheless vested in their interest to culminate the safe arrival of their wounded Marine.

(The young Marine survived, married, and was last known to be living in Texas.)

Despite the long day and fatiguing limits they had endured, Henry continued the training portion of Cummings' check ride on the way back to home base.

Oddly enough, among senior aviators "in country," there was talk of censure and a court-martial for the out-rider affair. The act, in their opinion, had overtones of grandstanding, regardless of the fact the young Marine would have died had he not received medical attention as soon as he did.

However, when Henry and Cummings were personally invited by the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division to dine as special guests in his quarters, the issue of court-martial was moot and dead on arrival. For their

actions, Henry and Cummings each were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Years later, when asked about the dining experience with the commanding general, both pilots readily admitted they had a great time. Libations, it appears, were liberally dispensed.

And it was reported to the two aviators they were transported horizontally into their hookahs and gently tucked in their racks by the grunts!

Few realized Dave's legacy

When Dave Cummings died unexpectedly in 1988, there were the normal expressions of loss, especially for one so young.

But none who first attended his lifeless body, and only a few who were present at his hometown funeral, fully realized the magnitude of his life or the legacy he had left with the Corps.

A native of Woburn, MA, Cummings enlisted in the Marine Corps in September 1966. Upon completion of recruit training, he attended Officer Candidate School and the Basic School at Quantico, VA.

Cummings served several months as an infantry platoon leader with the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Division in Vietnam.

After being seriously wounded in a firefight with Viet Cong forces, he was evacuated to the States.

Cummings had always wanted to fly so it was a thrill, following recuperation, when he was selected for flight training. Earning his "Wings of Gold," Dave Cummings returned to Vietnam in September 1969 to start his combat flying career.

Nineteen years later, Lt. Col. Dave Cummings, en route to attend a special military course in Albany, GA, stopped in Atlanta for the night. After a routine workout, he returned to his hotel room where he suffered an apparent heart attack and died. He was 42.

Dave Cummings set example

Although Dave Cummings' life spanned a relatively short period of time, he managed to walk a worthy journey. Among his personal military awards were four Distinguished Flying Crosses, four single mission Air Medals, the Bronze Star with combat "V", and a Purple Heart.

In this day and age when the term hero is used so loosely, it is comforting that I can say I actually have known some true heroes in my lifetime. Dave Cummings was a man who set the example. He was a guy who displayed courage that all of us who knew him hoped we could muster if the call came.

Dave Cummings was a special piece of the Corps' past, a large measure of its tradition and, maybe more importantly, a sizable chunk of its soul. He will not be easily forgotten. Semper Fi, Dave.

Brig. Gen. Lloyd Pool
USMC Retired
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Letters

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CH-21 pilot responds to newsletter article

First I would like to say that I have been a member of VHPA for quite some time and enjoy the newsletters very much.

I attended flight school starting in late 1956 and graduated from Fort Rucker, AL, flying CH-21 helicopters. Also flew them with the 33rd Helicopter Company in Vietnam. A letter in the November/December 2000 issue is what I am writing about.

It is about the letter "Razorback football game cause of great emotion"

I knew Max for quite a few years and admired him for what he and his wife did to complete the CH-21 project. I had a flyable CH-21 in Corona, CA, at a helicopter museum.

It's name was Vintage Helicopters Inc. In 1993, when the HAI honored Frank Piasecki, I flew the H-21 to the Anaheim Convention Center to be displayed by the HAI to honor this great man.

In 1996, I closed down Vintage Helicopters and we transferred the CH-21 and all of it assets to Classic Rotors Helicopters in Ramona, CA. This CH-21 Helicopter is still flying today.

John Givhan stated that Max had the only CH-21 flyable in the United States. Our CH-21 was flying at least six years prior to Max getting his flying.

I'm not trying to take anything away from Max, but he would call me to see if Vintage Helicopters had any parts that he needed for his rebuild and we would help if we could.

Again, what Max and his wife did was a great feat. And if you saw the condition that the H-21 bodies were in, you would agree.

Richard E. Loynachan
[REDACTED]



VHPA Calendar highly recommended

I just hung my 2001 VHPA Calendar. I was pleased with the diversity shown in the 2001 version. I was extremely pleased with April. My time as a slick pilot is all shown in that photograph.

I recommend it to all who served in the small world of the Vietnam helicopter community.

Wm. Robert "Weird" Stanley Sr.
[REDACTED]

Getting lost results in close friendship

In July 1968, I had just achieved that milestone in Army Aviation, I had flown solo round the traffic pattern a few times and felt like King of the World.

It was at this point that I realized that yes, I will make it.

On this day, my flight was flying afternoons with classes in the morning.

It was the first time I was to fly out of Downing Heliport solo and take the TH-55 to the stage field.

My preflight that day was a bit long, I took extra care since no one was watching.

So I was the last one in my flight to take off.

The stage field was southwest of Downing and I had observed on the previous day that following a particular ridgeline would take me straight to it.

I should have been more careful about compass heading.

Well, anyway I am airborne and really full of myself.

The feeling was exhilarating, being up in the air with no IP yelling in my ear and pointing out a thousand and one things I am doing wrong.

I finally come to my senses and decide to head for the stagefield.

I look around and spot the ridgeline that I am sure will take me there.

Student picks wrong ridgeline

Of course, I picked the wrong ridgeline to follow and not looking at the compass I fly along still feeling like I'm God's Gift to Aviation.

Unfortunately this ridgeline went somewhat southeast, but I being the great aviator did not pay attention to mere instruments like the magnetic compass.

I just kept going. After a while this ridgeline just faded away into a fairly level area, I looked around for the stagefield and not seeing it, I turned left.

I knew that it was a bit left of the ridge line I had followed the previous day with my IP, so I looked for it in that direction.

It took a while for the fact to sink into my brain.

But then it finally hit me like a jab-right cross combination. I'M LOST!

I tried calling Downing but got no response, looking around me, I could see nothing familiar.

I continued to bore holes in the sky trying to contact someone to no avail.

Finally as I was low on fuel I decided to try 121.5 (emergency frequency).

I made several transmissions saying I was lost and low on fuel, and gave some prominent features and structures I could see on the ground.

I also broadcast that I was going to land at a farm I had flown over several times.

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I checked wind direction by observing and made a perfect traffic pattern making my approach to the front yard about 50 yards from the house itself.

I did notice the family had come out and had been watching me as I made my approach.

The family consisted of the couple and two little girls, ages 4 and 6.

I shut down the aircraft and stepped out as they came up to me.

I explained to the man that I had gotten lost and run out of fuel and could I use his phone to call in.

As luck would have it, the phone company was doing maintenance on the lines and their phone was dead.

But they assured me that it would be up in awhile since that is what they had been promised.

So I was stuck there hoping that the description of the area was enough for the Army to find me.

The good side of this was that supper was being prepared and I was invited to join in.

Fried Chicken, mashed potatoes, peas, homemade biscuits, and chicken gravy and plenty of all of these.

After Army food (although food at Wolters wasn't bad), this was like heaven.

The phone was finally back on around sunset and I made my call. The only number I could remember was the one to my WOC company, so I called it.

My TAC officer got on the line and we talked for a bit, with me explaining what had happened, while he laughed at my predicament and yelled a few endearing statements that questioned my intelligence, sanity, and membership in the human race.

But he did tell me a search had been initiated and I would have to sit tight until they found me and that he would pass on the information to the search party.

Telephone rang 30 minutes later

About 30 minutes later, the phone rang and my host gave someone directions on getting to his farm.

He then told me that Downing would send someone out with gas for the helicopter in the morning and I was to wait for them. So, I was shown a bedroom where I would spend the night.

As it turned out the lady of the house was a part-time reporter for the local weekly newspaper (Granbury, TX) so we sat around for a while and talked and the story of my visit was a front page item on the next issue.

The two little girls were precious and looked on me like some kind of hero, which went a long way toward healing my bruised ego.

The family spent time telling stories for their benefit and

I was asked to participate.

It felt great to be sitting there with this family, being accepted and treated like a combination family member/VIP.

I told the kids stories I had heard in childhood as well as some of the adventures of my literary heroes, Ivanhoe and Don Quixote.

The next morning, after a fantastic breakfast of pork chops, eggs, hash browns, and those great biscuits, an H-13 landed in the front yard.

In it were two men, CW2 Ray Champagne (test pilot) and a mechanic with a can of avgas. (I later worked with Ray Champagne, flying offshore for Sabine Offshore Services on the Texas Gulf Coast.)

Test pilot, mechanic treated to breakfast

They were treated to the same hospitality and breakfast, while Mr. Champagne told me I was lucky the other guy who had gotten lost spend the night in the woods.

He added I probably would not last out the week after this incident and wished me well as an Infantryman since all WOCs who flunked out were automatically assigned and shipped to Fort Polk for fun and games in Tigerland.

Luckily his prediction of my career did not come true.

I did visit with that family several times before graduating from Fort Wolters and going on to Rucker.

I even corresponded with them while in Vietnam and they sent some goodies (cookies, fudge, and things like that), which I shared with some of the guys in the unit.

I also visited with them a few times while I was at Wolters after Vietnam, but have lost touch since then.

I think that next time I visit my folks in South Texas, I will make a special detour and look them up.

They were very good folks and their hospitality and kindness meant a lot to me then and still does now.

Jose L. Martinez

First VHPA reunion was 'Very Fabulous'

I had the very good fortune to spend the July 4th holiday at a Very Fabulous Reunion.

It was a reunion I have thought about attending many times, but never did because of the stories I've heard of past gatherings and experiences I've had at various veterans functions and memorials.

I'm telling you this because I suspect there are others who flew in Vietnam who also have never been to a reunion of our flying comrades.

The function I attended was the annual reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. I had such a great time, along with my wife Pat, that I feel compelled to relay my experiences in hopes this will get others to someday attend.

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It was with some trepidation that I arrived in Washington, DC, and went to the headquarters hotel for registration.

My first impression was "where did all these old guys come from?" I have, over the years, tended to remember everyone as I last saw them 35 years ago.

The second impression, and great relief, was that virtually everyone was dressed and acted "normally." There were none of the jungle fatigues, headband, chip-on-the-shoulder, swaggering folks I was expecting. A great relief and it was all uphill from there.

One of the first things I did was recognize someone from my Fort Rucker F/W class. We had a great time and we had only been there 30 minutes.

The organizers had events planned that kept one busy, but weren't obtrusive. Many spent most of their time sightseeing.

A sampling of events: Saturday, buffet; Sunday, Helicopter flyover and wreath laying at "The Wall"; barbecue picnic at Fort McNair; buffet and dance Sunday night, Banquet and business meeting on Monday and walking in the Nation's 4th of July parade and going to the fireworks.

Some comments: The flyover and wreath laying were very moving and emotional, but survivable. Fort McNair is a treasure and gem in DC that is rarely seen by other than lieutenant generals and ambassadors and has buildings that saw a mortally wounded President Lincoln. The dance was played by The Hubcaps, so you can imagine what that was like. They even played "I've Got To Get Out of This Place." It was great to be a teen-ager again . . . well almost.

The banquet got so big they had to move it to the Convention Center. Center spotlight was a table set for the missing pilot with helmet and gloves, etc.

Parade highlight of reunion

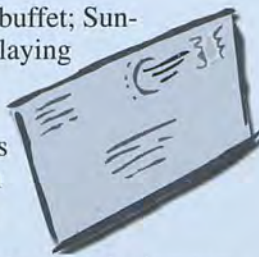
Another night of period rock'n'roll! The parade was a highlight. There were RVN-era helicopters on trailers and lots of "us guys."

Got to make some new friends while waiting for our element to join the parade.

Pat and a granddaughter of a guy I met from Texas watched the parade and then joined us in the march as we went by. They were thrilled.

The "nation's fireworks" were spectacular and we were directly under them near the Washington Monument.

All during the long weekend, there were unit "mini-reunions." It was touching, watching old friends meet up again after the passing of so many years.



I still marvel at the deportment of everyone. It was certainly not what I expected. I didn't even hear a single "HIM," although I'm told there was one at the business meeting.

Some of your contemporaries I ran into while there were Ed Newton, Ed Ferguson, Cliff Whiting, Rich Kimball, Dave McAdams, Craig Wheel and Jeff Bulmer. I'm sure they would be happy to share their experiences.

The principal speaker at the banquet was Joe Galloway, who co-authored "We Were Young Once, And Brave."

A few of his words about pilots in RVN: "You chopper guys were our heroes in Vietnam," "You are the cream of the crop of our generation . . . the best and finest of an entire generation of Americans."

Everyone acted like a gentleman

Perhaps that is why the reunion was such a pleasant surprise for me! Everyone acted like the gentlemen and professionals we were/are.

He continued: "I am not ashamed to say that I love you."

On why veterans gather to reunite: "They long to be with the men who once acted their best . . . I have never given anyone such trust . . . They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation . . . the memory of me."

Next year is in Denver.

See you all in the Poconos and thank you for letting me share this memorable event with you.

Jay McGowan
Dustoff 78

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter about VHPA Reunion 2000 in Washington, DC, originally was written as an article for the Eastern Regional Helicopter

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Roger Reid flying with another pilot when killed

WO1 Roger Reid was flying with Gordy "Magnet Ass" Bellen when he was killed on Firebase 6 not Bob, (God rest his soul).

They and a rescue aircraft crew who were shot down E&E'd toward Firebase 5 before being picked up that evening by WO1 Jett and Maj. Adams, who died two months later at 5.

Last I heard, Gordy was living in Michigan, working with the Veterans Administration.

Maj. Adams, on the later mission, was rescuing Spec. 5 Littleton, who was the only survivor of the crash of Capt. Larry Dewey's crew. The major was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Frank Tierney

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Council newsletter. Author Jay McGowan forwarded the article the The VHPA Newsletter with the note: "Please feel free to print this if you so desire. Maybe it will help others make the decision to attend" a reunion.

Pilot attends party at 1st Aviation Brigade

In the middle of November, this year, I received an invitation to the 1st Aviation Brigade's Christmas party.

Having participated in the dedication of their conference room and their observance of POW/MIA day, I gladly accepted.

Feeling immediately very old among the young officers, even the commander looks like a kid, I still felt at home among these modern day warriors.

The seating chart placed me at a table with the foreign liaison officers, which proved to be interesting as the evening progressed. At the table were officers from Great Britain, Canada and Italy. All of them were amazed at the connection the active Army has with the retirees and that nothing like that existed in their armies.

I answered many questions about warrant officers as applied to the U.S. military.

Prior to the formal dinner, a ceremony was conducted much like our ceremony at the annual reunion, with some twists. The deputy brigade commander sent me a copy of the script and I'll add to that what I saw.

After the benediction, we were asked to remain standing and a lieutenant from the brigade began with:

"As you entered the dining room this evening, you may have noticed a small table set before you."

The lights are dimmed and a spotlight is focused on the table, set for four, in the center of the dance floor.

"It is our way of recognizing those members of our profession of arms missing from our midst."

At this point, barely perceptible, we could hear "Amazing Grace" being played on the bagpipes.

"Commonly known as KIA, MIA, or POW — we call them brothers. They are unable to be with us this evening and so we remember them because of their sacrifice."

At this point, four warrant officers begin a slow-step march from the lobby into the room and on to the table. Each is carrying an officer's hat, one from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.

The Army WO was wearing his current uniform; the WO representing the Navy was wearing his former Navy uniform and the warrant officers representing the Air Force and the Marines also were in their former uniforms.

Prior to each soldier entering, the narrator said: "Let

us remember the United States Army, honored by (the individual's name and his former service and rank were stated)." This is repeated for each of the services.

The narrator continues, "Let us remember the men and women prisoners of war from all branches of service who are too often forgotten. The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms so that their children may remain free. The lone candle symbolizes the frailty of a prisoner. Alone, trying to stand against their oppressors."

The sailor picks up a lighter and lights the lone candle.

"The black ribbon of the candle is a reminder of the loved ones and the families of our comrades in arms who keep the faith and eagerly await their return. The slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate if we fail to bring them home. The salt on the plate symbolizes the tears cried by loved ones as they wait and hope."



The airman slowly picks up a salt shaker and pores salt onto the plate in front of him. "The glasses are turned over; they cannot be with us tonight, maybe tomorrow."

Each man slowly turns the wine glass over and steps back.

"The red ribbon is joined by a yellow ribbon and tied to a flower vase as a symbol of those worn by the ones who wait and hope. The picture on the table is there as a reminder that they are missed and remembered. The chairs are tipped because they are not with us today, but saved in the hopes that they will return home once again."

Each man slowly tips the chair forward and they rest on the table.

"As you look upon the empty table, do not remember ghosts from the past, remember our comrades. Remember those whom we depend upon in battle. They depend on us to bring them safely home. Remember our friends. They are the ones we love — who love life and freedom as much as we do. Please . . . remember for they may be gone, but not forgotten."

Muted bugle plays Taps

As a muted bugle plays Taps, the soldiers behind each tipped chair slowly salute and order arms, do a facing movement and with the same slow step, leave the room. The spot light remains on and the dance floor lights are brought up and the narrator continues.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to propose a silent toast to our soldiers killed in action, and to our comrades still missing. The toast will be made with water instead of wine for wine is unavailable to prisoners and water is a luxury."

The narrator holds his water glass aloft and waits for everyone to raise his or her water glasses; there is no response.

The liaison officers at the table were speechless for sev-

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eral minutes, their wives had tears in their eyes and finally the officers remarked how powerful a ceremony we had just witnessed.

After dinner and a skit involving Santa, the deputy commander introduced the brigade commander, Col. Russ Forshag, who spoke of the accomplishments in the past year and then introduced the guests gathered this night.

He introduced five of us who served with the brigade in Vietnam and then a special acknowledgement to CW4's Mike Novosel and Willie Ruff. Mike for his Medal of Honor and both of them for their service in World War II,

Korea and Vietnam.

Sleep well gentlemen, the 1st Aviation Brigade is in good hands.

George Miller
Hillclimber 28
Pachyderm 3B

Vietnam Center/Archives official history depository

The VHPA voted two years ago to adopt the The Vietnam Center/Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock as the official depository for all historical books, pictures, documents and information written or received from whatever source by the VHPA.

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VHPA business directory

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Letters

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And, to date, there have been several thousand pages and documents shipped to that Center/Archives.

It has been catalogued and stored in the finest and latest storage methods for posterity and is available to anyone who has a need to see or use it.

To see exactly what is stored from the VHPA go to: <http://www.lib.ttu.edu/vietnam/index.htm> and see for yourself. Click on "Collections" in the right column and you will see the VHPA title and link. Check it out.

The Vietnam Center/Archive at Texas Tech continues to be recognized as a "friend of the Vietnam veteran."

It serves the public in the United States and Vietnam as a major and growing source of information about the Vietnam War.

Close ties have been established with several universities in Vietnam, namely the Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Can Tho University and Da Lat.

The Center/Archives staff make frequent trips to Vietnam to coordinate cooperative projects and exchange teaching and instructional materials.

Some 467 boxes of books were recently shipped to Vietnam, arriving in port on Sept. 9, 2000, for the General Science Library.

In the opposite direction, Vietnamese scholars recently came to Texas Tech to participate in seminars and conferences at the Center/Archives and to teach the Texas Tech students in their classes on the Vietnam War. No other university is so honored, to my knowledge.

Steve Maxner, director of oral histories, is becoming very busy traveling around the United States, attending Vietnam veteran reunions, as he did to the VHPA reunion in DC.

In fact, additional staff members are being trained and hired to carry out this important part of the Center/Archives.

The Oral Histories archive is growing every day and looking for more vets to take the time to contact them and participate.

All you have to do is call them on the phone at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] or e-mail to [REDACTED]

The Vietnam Center/Archives is very interested in your oral history because this is a valuable source of information for future generations.

In many cases the history will also be reduced to writing, I am told.

You can make arrangements to go to Lubbock or they can tell you how you can give the oral history via telephone.

If you are interested in doing this and participating, give them a call or e-mail.



Lt. Gen. Hal Moore visited in October and was very interested and impressed with the Center/Archives.

During their last Advisory Board meeting, the upcoming documentary "The Flight Line" was previewed with great excitement.

The film is introduced by Sen. John McCain and narrated by actor Harrison Ford.

When the VHPA began its association with The Vietnam Center/Archives two years ago, one of the requirements of the VHPA was one of our members be a representative on the Center/Archives Advisory Board.

They agreed and our man on location at all meetings is VHPA member Bill Fitzgerald, who lives in Lubbock and works for the FAA.

We appreciate Bill taking the time to attend the meetings and know that with his presence, our best interests are assured.

Most importantly too, The Vietnam Center/Archives has consistently affirmed it wants no conflicts with The National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells, which our Fort Wolters Chapter is so heavily involved in developing.

Such a relationship will be good for both our organizations.

Tom Payne
VHPA Secretary/Treasurer
Tulsa, OK

Woodcarver would like feedback about artwork

I have, over the past five years, been doing carvings in black walnut for Vietnam vets.

I do not charge for these and do not advertise other than word of mouth. The carvings are of unit crests and pocket patches.

These carvings, for the most part, take from 1½ hours to 3 hours to carve and finish. They are very fast, as wood-carvings go, but are fast due to the vast amount of tools and equipment I use.

Each carving is an original one, some include call signs and/or aircraft numbers. Some are aviation wings, depending on the request.

I had some on display at the DC Reunion. I tried to give 12 away at the raffle, but for some reason they did not make the bulletins, nor any of the "Winners" lists.

I have nonetheless honored all the certificates I provided and will continue to honor them. At the VHCMA, they went over very well and I gave away 12 certificates and 10 carvings of them at that Reunion in Charlotte.

All I ask is that they will acknowledge the receipt and report on the condition. I do this on a very small budget and insure them with the USPS. My packaging is minimal and I want all of them to be in good condition when they arrive.

I must add that I do accept donations in order to continue the project. I am on a fixed income and my monthly cost

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is around \$300. So any assistance is well received. This is the amount of my entertainment and a source of great pleasure to me.

I will be starting to send out carvings from a list I collected at DC. I would like all that receive them to respond in a timely fashion to avoid placing a false claim with the USPS.

So far over 700 have been sent out. I should hit 800 before June. Much of my reward comes from the notes, cards and letters I get back. I would like to have this made public in the newsletter so this small worry can be corrected. I am also putting a similar message in the VHCMA Newsletter.

You can see some of my work at <http://members.nbci.com/pouvoir/weird1.htm> These are some of the earliest ones I have done.

Thanks for any assistance you can offer. Send me your address and unit/call sign of your VN unit(s) and I will get one done for you also.

Wm. Robert "Weird" Stanley Sr.

A/229th, March 68-July 68, B/229th July 68-March 69
13th CAB, 164th Gp, October 1970-71

Family received little information about death

I am looking for information on Joe L. Sanchez, a cousin who was killed in Vietnam.

Our family was informed of his death in June of 1969, by the U.S. Army, but little information about his death was given to us.

Now, all these years later, our family and two of my New Mexico Vietnam survivor friends would like to know more about what happened on that day.

Can you help?

- Jose "Joe" L. Sanchez, Army, 1st Signal Brigade.
- Second tour of duty: March 21, 1969. Date of casualty: Sunday June 1, 1969.
- Duc Pho, Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.
- Ground casualty, multiple fragmentation wounds, rocket and mortar attack.

It is our understanding the base consisted of an Air Force airstrip, Army helicopter landing zone (LZ Montezuma), and Marine security force.

I am hoping to secure information on what really happened on that fateful day. Thank you to anyone who can help.

Steve Gonzales

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Taps

Willard E. "Gene" Bailey

Willard E. "Gene" Bailey died March 14 in Magna, UT, of cancer.

He had moved from HI to his hometown of Magna in his effort combat the illness.

He graduated with class 62-1 and served in Vietnam with the 114th Assault Helicopter Company in 1964-65 and the 334th Attack Helicopter Company in 1967-68.

Daniel R. Bauer

Retired Lt. Col. Daniel R. Bauer, 62, of Elizabethtown, KY, died Feb. 11 at Hardin Memorial Hospital in Elizabethtown.

He was a native of New Bedford, MA, and was a military test analyst for Fort Knox Civil Service.

Bauer was a highly decorated Army helicopter pilot who served in Vietnam.

He graduated with class 62-8. During his Vietnam tours, Bauer served with the 52nd AL Platoon in 1964-65, the 9th Infantry Division in 1966, the 7th AL Platoon in

1968-69, the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion in 1971 and the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion in 1972.

Survivors include his wife, Dely Ashby Bauer; two sons, Dr. M. Brian Bauer of Lenoir, NC, and Christopher R. Bauer of Louisville.

Herbert Larry Degner

Retired Lt. Col. Herbert Larry Degner died July 3, 2000, at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tomah, WI.

He attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, graduating with a bachelor of science degree.

Degner entered the Army in September 1959 as a commissioned officer and was assigned as a platoon leader to the 52nd ARB, 2nd Missile Command at Fort Carson, CO.

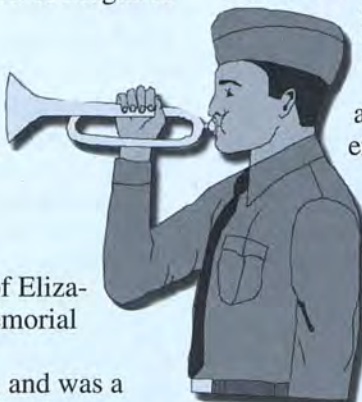
He graduated from flight school with ORWAC class 62-8. He then was assigned to the Army Aviation Test Board as a Chinook test pilot. He served in this capacity until he

was sent to Vietnam in August 1964.

He flew UH-1Bs as a section leader with the 145th Aviation Battalion.

In July 1965 he returned to Fort Rucker and served as an Instructor pilot until December 1967.

See TAPS, Page 17



Fund established to locate pilots

One of the primary purposes of VHPA is to seek out potential new members.

We do many things in this regard, but we need to do more. For example, our database has more than 10,000 names and social security numbers for helicopter pilots who flew in Southeast Asia, but with whom we've never made contact because of limited or outdated information.

In early October, the EC opted to create a Membership Fund to support such approved projects.

This will be a targeted fund, supported by members' contributions, and may only be used for identifying, locating, and recruiting potential members. Our initial goal is to raise \$15,000.

Please make your contribution to the fund! Any amount, no matter how large or small, will help us to achieve the goal.

You can contribute by indicating so on either the National Reunion Registration Form, The Membership Application/Change of Address form, or by sending a donation directly to Headquarters and indicating it is for the Membership Fund.

— Executive Council

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Taps

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He returned to Vietnam in January 1968 for a second tour, flying Chinooks for the 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company of the 222nd Aviation Battalion. In June 1968, he was transferred to the 1st Aviation Brigade, serving as the S-3 officer.

After Vietnam, he served as commander of the 154th TC Detachment and later as commander of HHC, 21st Aviation Battalion at Fort Sill, OK, between January 1969 and September 1970.

He then served as commander of the 568th Transportation Company and later as S-4 for the 222nd Aviation Battalion at Fort Wainwright, AK.

In July 1975, he was sent to the 190th Assault Support Helicopter Company in Olathe, KS, as aviation adviser and completed the Army Command and General Staff College while there.

He also assisted with the evacuation of the U.S. hostages from Tehran, Iran, to Rhine-Main Air Force Base.

He chose Fort McCoy, WI, as his final tour of duty and was assigned as a training officer for the Readiness Group, which supervised many National Guard and Reserve units in the Upper Midwest.

In March 1982, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and became executive officer of the Readiness Group.

He retired with a 100 percent disability due to multiple sclerosis, which he had developed in early 1981, because it had affected his ability to walk.

George W. Gorsuch Jr.

Retired Lt. Col. George W. Gorsuch Jr., 71, of Lutherville, MD, died Jan. 16, 2001, at his home in Baltimore County after a 2.5-year battle with cancer.

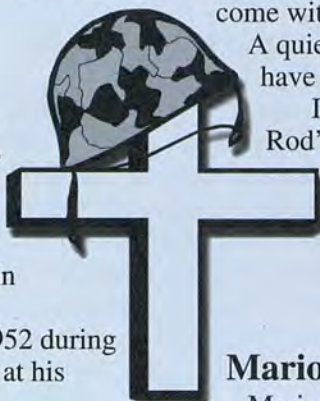
Gorsuch was born in Gamber, MD, and graduated from Westminster High School in 1946.

He subsequently entered the Army in 1952 during the Korean War. He took up flying lessons at his own expense and time.

During his enlisted service, he worked with the Army Missile Program. Subsequent to leaving the regular Army, he joined the Army Reserve and was commissioned a second lieutenant after completing Officer Candidate School.

He applied for flight training and was accepted, attending flight school at Fort Sill, OK.

He learned to fly light planes and helicopters, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel during his service in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.



Gorsuch served several tours of active duty for training and two full combat tours in Vietnam.

During his first tour, in 1963, he flew helicopter gunships in support of direct combat operations. He also was on the combat evaluation team for the UH-1B gunship that had .50-caliber machine guns.

During his second tour, he flew electronic warfare and reconnaissance airplanes over enemy-controlled territory.

After his active duty, he joined the Army Reserve, where he became the aviation facility manager at Tipton Army Airfield at Fort Meade, MD.

Gorsuch was one of the founding members of the Army Aviation Association of America, and he flew four of the aircraft on display at the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker, AL.

Rod Hooks

It is my sad duty to report the passing of one of our fellow VHPA members in a bizarre accident.

Rod Hooks served two tours in Vietnam as an Army aviator. In recent years, he was the pilot for KPRC Television, where he was a visible presence.

As one of his competitors at KTRK, I held the greatest respect for Rod for his service to the nation and for his piloting abilities.

Rod died at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, where he was showing some of his beloved cutting horses. For the first time, Rod had made the finals of the event and was anxious for the chance to win a top prize.

As is the custom with many who come to Houston to show their animals, Rod was sleeping in the parking lot in a compartment of the horse trailer designed for humans.

It was a cold night and Rod apparently was running a generator for heating. By all accounts, that generator was venting into the sleeping compartment and Rod was overcome with carbon monoxide fumes as he slept.

A quiet end for a one-time warrior who was proud to have done his duty.

I know you join me in extending sympathies to Rod's family and his extended family at KPRC Television, where he was held in high regard as a pilot and a man.

Bob Boudreaux

Class 69-18

155th AHC, 1969-70)

Marion "Skip" Lee Mark

Marion "Skip" Lee Mark, 54, of Oakland, OR, died Dec. 21 in a care facility.

Lee, a member of class 66-15, served with the 48th Assault Helicopter Company in 1966-67.

He belonged to the VHPA and was a life member and former New Mexico state commander of the Disabled American Veterans.

Mark is survived by his wife, Margaret; two sons, Marion Russell Mark of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, and Jeromy Ray Mark of Oakland.

Reunion information gets an update

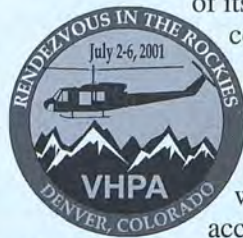
Here is the latest update on VHPA Reunion 2001 in Denver July 2-7:

• **Adam's Mark Hotel:** The contract has been amended to provide more rooms on July 2 so all the golfer and motorcycle riders can be accommodated.

Please remember you must register for the reunion with VHPA HQ in order to get the hotel reservation form. It does you no good to call the hotel directly.

• **The Buffalo Run Golf Course reserved for VHPA:** This is a beautiful course.

Check it out on the www.rockies-golf.com/buffrun website. We play the course with a shotgun start on July 3 and the Colorado Open uses it as one



of its qualifying courses on July 17. Only the best for the VHPA!

Remember, we can only accommodate 144

golfers. The \$90 fee includes everything plus lunch.

Contract Rich Walker at

or

• **"Rumble in the Rockies"**

Motorcycle Ride: Several people have called to get the list of bike rental companies for the July 3 ride.

They are:

Cruise America (303) 426-6699, HOG Rents (303) 305-8908, Moturis, Inc. 1-888-295-6837, Rolling Thunder (303) 683-8834, Easy Rider (303) 584-9886, Mile High Harley-Davidson (303) 343-3300 (Fly & Ride), Rocky Mountain Harley-Davidson (303) 762-8450 (Fly & Ride), Road Hogs/Hog Broker (303) 790-2815, Eagle Rider (303) 295-7113 or 888-440-7113, Freedom Tours (800) 643-2109, Colorado Riders 1-877-4RID-ERS.

You must contact them directly. While Colorado does not require helmets, some of the rental companies do.

The State of Colorado requires a

United Airlines is official airline of Reunion 2001

Here is how to take advantage of the special rates offered by United Airlines as the official airline of VHPA Reunion 2001:

- Call (800) 521-4041 to book your reservations.
- The meeting number is 592XE.
- Receive a 5 percent discount off the lowest applicable discount fare or a 10 percent discount off full fare unrestricted coach fares, purchased seven days in advance.
- Receive an extra 5 percent discount for tickets are purchased at least 60 days in advance of your travel date.
- Fly into Denver or Colorado Springs between June 29 and July 10.

motorcycle endorsement on your driver's license, so check with the rental company if your state does not require one.

At the direction of the VHPA Executive Council, the Reunion committee prepared a waiver form each rider must sign prior to joining the escorted ride.

Please remember, we will be traveling in the mountains, so we could likely encounter rainshowers. We suggest sunscreen, rain gear and a jacket because it can be cool.

The elevation in Nederland is 8,236 feet, so expect summer high altitude conditions. The roads in the canyons are very winding, fun and narrow, so we will be traveling slowly. On the other roads, the scenery will make you want to proceed slowly, as well.

Our main objective is to be safe and have a great time. Contact Fred Lyssy at [redacted] or [redacted]

• **Artists Luncheon:** Will also be

held on July 3. If you participate in the golf or motorcycle ride, you will miss the luncheon. Sometimes we have to choose between several good options.

• **Colorado Springs and Golden Outings:** Several people have signed up for both events, but you can't do that — they are both scheduled at exactly the same time on July 5.

Several have asked about tours and side-trips, especially in the Colorado Springs area.

As outlined in the *September/October Newsletter*, one of the goals of the outing is to show you how easy it would be to rent an Avis car after the Reunion and enjoy Colorado in detail.

You will only visit Turkey Creek Park located on Fort Carson, but view the Air Force Academy, the front range, and the city of Colorado Springs along the way.

Now, the Golden Outing includes two side-trips (Buffalo Bill's Grave overlooking Denver and the Colorado Railroad Museum), plus the Coors Brewery tour as options.

The barbecue and drinks at both outings will not disappoint anyone.

Local VHPAers will pour the beer from large Coors trucks as fast as you can take it. Multiple food serving lines are designed to handle everyone in less than one hour.

Contact Terry Sullivan at

or

or Bill Robie at

or

• **Evening Entertainment:** The July 3 Early Bird Party is free to all registered VHPAers, their family and friends in the Grand Ballroom.

The Hot Tomatoes, a nine-piece ensemble specializing in swing, jazz and big band music, will provide music for three hours starting at 6:30 p.m.

The July 4 Welcome Reception requires a ticket to enjoy the food and The Nacho Men, a rock'n'roll "street
See PARKING, Page 21

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Reunion • Denver, CO • July 2-7, 2001

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

Mail completed form to:

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

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

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

A hotel registration form will be sent to you with your registration receipt. The hotel registration form must be completed and mailed to the Adam's Mark Hotel. Telephone and fax requests will not be honored. If requesting a hotel room for a Unit TOC, specify unit. Total rooms needed? _____

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration before 4/30/2001*		@ \$35.00	
Registration after 4/30/2001*		@ \$45.00	
Total from sidebars	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	
Golf tournament (July 3)		@ \$90.00	
Motorcycle ride (July 3)		@ \$15.00	
Artists Luncheon (July 3)		@ \$23.00	
Authors Luncheon (July 4)		@ \$23.00	
Welcome Reception (July 4)		@ \$ 6.00	
Colorado Springs Outing (July 5)		@ \$32.00	
Golden Outing (July 5)		@ \$32.00	
Talk and Enjoy Party (July 5)		@ \$ 5.00	
Ladies Function (July 6)		@ \$27.00	
Closing Banquet/Dance (July 6)		@ \$45.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$30.00	
Life membership (installments)	1 of 3	@ \$150.00	
Life membership		@ \$450.00	
GRAND TOTAL			

REUNION T-SHIRTS		
QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$15.00	
	M@\$15.00	
	L@\$15.00	
	XL@\$15.00	
	XXL@\$16.50	
	XXXL@\$17.50	
SIDEBAR TOTAL:		
QTY.	BANQUET MEAL	
	Prime rib	
	Pork loin	
	Chicken Oscar	
	Vegetarian	
Membership Fund Contribution: \$		

***Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.**

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

Credit card No: _____ Expiration date: _____ Signature: _____

CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2001" with form.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Reunion • Denver, CO • July 2-7, 2001

NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

Part 2

REFUND INFORMATION

Reunion fees. No refund will be given for any reunion fees (dinner, event, registration fee, or other activity) unless the member cancels the registration by faxing, e-mailing or calling VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25, 2001. Requests by U.S. Mail must arrive at VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25, 2001. There will be a \$10 cancellation fee charged for each refund request, regardless of the number of items (dinners, events, registration fee, hotel reservations, etc.) included in the request. Each refund request will be assigned a refund request confirmation number on the day the request is received by VHPA Headquarters. Reasons for requests received after June 25, 2001, such as hospital admission, medical emergencies, death in the family, etc., will be considered on an individual basis. Please remember that some events (i.e. the banquet) require the VHPA to commit a firm count to the hotel in advance. If the VHPA is unable to resell the canceled ticket, the registrant might not receive a refund for that event.

Hotel fees. Notice of hotel reservation cancellations must be made by June 25 by faxing, e-mailing or calling VHPA Headquarters. Requests by U.S. Mail must arrive at VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25. Each refund request will be assigned a refund request confirmation number on the day the request is received by VHPA Headquarters. VHPA Headquarters will process the cancellation request as quickly as possible. No hotel fee refunds will be made if the hotel does not honor the cancellation due to insufficient time prior to date of arrival.

DENVER MINI-REUNION REGISTRATION

Send min-reunion registration information to Brian Foote [REDACTED] or mail completed form to: [REDACTED]

Unit or flight class designation: _____

Unit call sign: _____

Estimated number attending mini-reunion: _____

Point of contact name: _____

Telephone: () _____

E-mail address: _____

SCHEDULING INFORMATION

FIRST CHOICE

- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — a.m.
- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — p.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — a.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — p.m.
- ☐ Thursday, July 5 — Evening
- ☐ Friday, July 6 — p.m.

SECOND CHOICE

- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — a.m.
- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — p.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — a.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — p.m.
- ☐ Thursday, July 5 — Evening
- ☐ Friday, July 6 — p.m.

SPECIAL REQUEST INFORMATION

AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT

- ☐ TV/VCR
- ☐ 35mm slide projector
- ☐ 35mm slide carousel
- ☐ Projection screen
- ☐ Photographer

ROOM FURNISHINGS

- ☐ Podium
- ☐ Microphone and sound system
- ☐ Private unit banquet
- ☐ Extra tables
- ☐ Internet access (limited availability)
- ☐ Hang a banner

We have more than a dozen rooms that can be scheduled for mini-reunions. Three are large enough for small banquets and/or gatherings of more than 200 people, hence they have sound system capability. Unit banners can be hung.

Each room will have one 8-foot table per 15 people attending the mini-reunion. This table can be used for displaying photographs, memorabilia, etc. You can have a 27-inch TV with VCRs. Slide projectors come with a portable projection screen.

Parking available in downtown area

Continued from Page 18

corner a cappella" dance band, starting at 6:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom.

The July 5 Talk and Enjoy Party also requires a ticket. In addition to snack food, Remember When, a DJ will keep things jumping starting at 6:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom.

The July 6 Closing Banquet is the premiere event in the Plaza Ballroom and tickets are required.

Afterward, the Closing Dance featuring the 101st Colorado National Guard Band takes place in the Grand Ballroom.

• **Parking:** Street parking is controlled by parking meters for the

entire area within walking distance of the hotel.

There are several surface lots and parking garages within easy walking distance for

between \$8 and \$14 per day. The hotel has three huge levels of underground parking for \$15 a day.

Please remember, you will pay the parking fee for each space used. For example, an SUV and your motorcycle trailer would take up two spaces.

The hotel's underground parking and a high-rise parking garage about one block away provide the best security, especially for motorcycles.

Concerning RVs, the surface lots across the street to the south and west of the hotel accommodate RVs, but there are no hookups and you must pay about \$8 for each space you take up.

We are still working to provide more options for remote RVs parking.

Contact Mike Law at

██████████ or ██████████

See CHAPTERS, Page 22



Special Rates For You.

Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association
Denver CO
June 30 July 7 2001

Your Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) Number: J099439

	Daily	Weekly	Weekend/Daily
Subcompact	\$19.99	\$49.99	\$17.99
Compact	\$24.99	\$59.99	\$21.99
Intermediate	\$29.99	\$69.99	\$25.99
2 Door Full Size	\$34.99	\$79.99	\$29.99
4 Door Full Size	\$39.99	\$89.99	\$33.99
Premium	\$44.99	\$99.99	\$37.99
Luxury	\$49.99	\$109.99	\$41.99
Van	\$54.99	\$119.99	\$45.99
Sport Utility	\$59.99	\$129.99	\$49.99
Convertible	\$64.99	\$139.99	\$53.99
Taxi	\$69.99	\$149.99	\$57.99
Low additional driver fee and reduced insurance	\$74.99	\$159.99	\$61.99

AWIS Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association
Denver CO
Your Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) Number: J099439

Be sure to mention your Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) Number when you call for reservations.
To reserve an Avis car in your meeting or event call 1-800-331-1800

VHPA LOGO ITEMS

(DAVE GRIEGER, L-66)

THEY'RE BACK!! THESE ITEMS ARE STOCK ITEMS AGAIN

VHPA JACKETS (L,XL) — \$69.95 (XXL,XXXL — \$74.95) BLK

CALL SIGN, NAME, UNIT, LOCATION, DATE, ETC. — FREE (3 LINES)

ALSO AVAILABLE: WINGS (ALL SERVICES), CIB, CMB, ABN, PATHFINDER, MORE — \$12.00 EACH

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| VHPA BIG BACK PATCH (10") | \$29.95 |
| VHPA EMBL'D HAT (WHT) | \$12.00 |
| VHPA HAT WITH PATCH | \$11.95 (BK, N, Wh) |
| VHPA HAT W/"EGGS" & PATCH | \$14.95 (BK, N, Wh) |
| VHPA EMBL'D GOLF SHIRT (WHT) | \$25.00 (L,XL) WHITE |
| | \$30.00 (XXL, XXXL) |
| VHPA T-SHIRT (WHT W/POCKET) | \$17.95 (L, XL) |
| | \$19.95 (XXL, XXXL) |
| VHPA PATCH | \$ 4.50 |
| VHPA PIN (HUNDREDS AVAILABLE) | \$ 3.95 (WOPA, RLO, ETC.) |
| VHPA WINDOW STICKER | \$ 2.00 ('W') |
| VHPA BUMPER STICKER | \$ 3.00 ('B') |

BESIDES VHPA STUFF: BELT BUCKLES, FLAGS, DoD/NOVELTY PINS, PATCHES, POW/MIA, DoD MEDALS AND AWARDS, SHADOW BOXES, FIXED/ROTARY PINS, MAPS, LICENSE PLATES/FRAMES, BUMPER/WINDOW STICKERS, BULLET KEYCHAINS, AND CUSTOM PINS/PATCHES OF YOUR UNIT!

36-PAGE COLOR CATALOG — \$ 2.00
SHIPPING & HANDLING — \$ 4.95 (MC/VISA)

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Screen name: DLG555@aol.com

Galloway joins chapter to sign, discuss book

LAD VAUGHAN

LAS VEGAS CHAPTER PRESIDENT

On Feb. 18, the VHPA Las Vegas Chapter hosted a book signing by war correspondent Joseph L. Galloway.

The event was organized by chapter president Lad Vaughan and attended by chapter members John Winlow, Mike Smith, Glen Gibson and Capt. William Conger of the Las Vegas Metro Police.

Galloway was in Las Vegas enjoying a family reunion and made time to meet the VHPA Chapter and discuss the book "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young." The book, co-authored with retired Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, is the powerful account of the Battle of Ia Drang.

Galloway discussed the air mobility tactics employed in the engagement between the North Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

Chapter members were treated to first-hand recollections and reflections by Galloway of the intense confrontation with an enemy eager to test the concept of air mobility and the 1st Cavalry Division.

Galloway also relayed the progress of a movie depicting the battle. The movie rights and script integrity have been closely held and vigorously protected by Moore and Galloway for many years.

The movie, now in production, is expected to be released in the summer of 2002.

Chapters, units can post banners

Continued from Page 21

[REDACTED]

☆☆☆☆

Here is information for anyone planning to drive an RV to the Denver Reunion this summer:

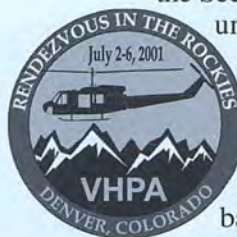
I have found an RV park in Aurora, about seven miles from the hotel. It has more than 280 full hookups and, when I made my reservation, it already had four units registered and will park us all together.

The Denver Meadows RV Park reservation phone number is (800) 364-9487. The online address is <http://www.denvermeadows.com/contact.html>

Keith M. Crisman

☆☆☆☆

• **Banners:** We want to cover the ceiling of our main meeting area on the Second Level with unit and chapter banners.



reunion.

Contact Mike Law at [REDACTED]

or [REDACTED]

• **Mini-Reunions:** We have more than a dozen large business rooms. We can handle groups up to 250 without a problem.

We provide all your audio visual equipment, such as 27-inch TVs, and VCRs and slide projectors.

We can schedule photographers and even small unit banquets.

See mini-reunion reservation form for details and schedules.

Contact Brian Foote at [REDACTED]

or [REDACTED]

• **Special Events:** We are pleased to announce several free video presentations, plus a demonstration of the newly released Vietnam Helicopter History CD-ROM.

There is so much information on the new CD-ROM, we hope everyone will attend a demo.

There will be regularly scheduled showings of "Flight Line," the Bob Mason video recently aired on PBS.

Bob will introduce the showing and host a Q&A afterward. Copies of "Flight Line" are available from the National Vietnam War Museum.

VHPA 2001 Calendar

Order your VHPA 2001 Calendar,
printed by Turner Publishing Co.,
P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002

The cost is only \$12 each, plus \$5 for shipping and handling
on up to three copies

To order now, call (800) 788-3350 Monday-Friday

The calendar features more unit logos than previous calendars, plus 27 photos — 8 showing Air America helicopters, 4 showing a Guns-a-go-go AH-47A, 2 USMC CH-46s, 2 CH-47As, 2 OH-13s from the 1st Cavalry Division, 2 OH-6As, 2 UH-1Hs from the 101st Airborne Division, 1 CH-54A, and 5 AH-1Gs from various Air Cavalry units.

The calendar also has an updated roster of pilot KIA,
commemorated on the day each died.

Take a day-trip to the mountains

This article provides ideas for a day trip west of Denver and is a continuation of the *September/October Newsletter* that had several dozen ideas about taking a day trip around Colorado Springs.

The *March/April Newsletter* will provide ideas for a day trip north of Denver.

Perhaps the best "pocket guide" for this area is the six-fold DENVER pamphlet the Denver Reunion Committee passed out so liberally during the Washington Reunion. If you want one, please contact Mike Law at law@vhpa.org or visit the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau website www.denver.org

Basically, there are three major highways going west from Denver into the mountains: U.S. 6 and Interstate 70 are the favorites vs. U.S. 285.

Places to see and visit start at the foothills.

The city of Golden (about 30 minutes from the hotel) hosts Coors Brewery, Colorado School of Mines, Colorado Railroad Museum, Buffalo

Bill's Grave, Heritage Square (a shopping and entertainment center), plus the famous Red Rocks Amphitheater.

If you only have half a day and you want to drive a beautiful mountain canyon, take U.S. 6 from Golden toward the old mining (now gambling) district of



Black Hawk, Central City or Idaho Springs.

The road between Central City and Idaho Springs can be a thrill or a treat, depending on your point of view. There are mine tours (look for the Phoenix Gold Mine signs), neat shops and plenty of things to look at.

If you just want to run out of town and have a nice dinner in the mountains, take Interstate 70 to the Evergreen Exit and try the prime rib at El Rancho.

Past Idaho Springs (about 45 minutes from the hotel), the highway

climbs toward the Continental Divide and God's Country.

Just before Georgetown — about 60 minutes from the hotel — you have to choose between two beautiful routes: Interstate 70 continues past charming and fun Georgetown and Silver Plume (two Victorian mining towns with the famous Georgetown Loop narrow gauge stream train) or U.S. 40 to Winter Park.

Past Silver Plume, you start to see the ski resorts and drive the Eisenhower Tunnel under the Continental Divide.

You are now in Summit County (about 90 minutes from the hotel) which is certainly God's Country.

The beautiful Dillon Lake, the shops at Silverthorne, the resorts at Keystone and Breckenridge are great in the summer.

If you stay on Interstate 70, you can continue to another fun mining town, Leadville, or go over the beautiful Vail Pass to the high-rent district of Vail (about 120 minutes from the hotel) in Eagle County.

CD-ROM well-done, informative

Goosebumps.

That's what I got when I inserted the preview copy of the new VHPA CD-ROM and the audio started, with sounds of combat assaults, "taking fire" radio calls, and the constant "whop-whop" we will all recognize to Fiddler's Green and beyond.

With help from Mike Law, Mike Sloniker, Leslie Hines and a host of others, VHPA Database chairman Gary Roush has assembled an amazing collection of information about "The Helicopter War."

Along with the audio track that opens the CD-ROM, you are met with a menu selection of "History Documents," "Video," "View Pictures" and "Search Database."

When I selected "History Documents," Adobe Acrobat Reader (included with the CD-ROM) offered me an almost overwhelming number of choices: Easter Offensive 1972, parts 1-4; "The Falcon — Above I Corps" from 1968-69; VHPA Newsletters beginning in 1993 through September/October 2000 (many with full-color photos, although not in all issues); OPLAN El Paso (about the Ho Chi Minh Trail); Lam Son 719 history; Helicopter Units North of Da Nang; Americal Division's "Southern Cross," 1969-1971; selections from the Pacific Stars and Stripes; histories and

after-action reports galore; "Army Reporter" 1966-1968; numerous ORLL's ("Operational Report-Lessons Learned"), and even an extract from *The New York Times*. Had I wanted to print everything, it would have taken more than nine reams of paper to print the 4,527 pages!

Particularly useful is Adobe Acrobat Reader's "search/find" feature.

Entering the name of a flight school classmate took me to a couple of listings where he was mentioned. Each search took just a few seconds.

Selecting "View Pictures," I was presented over 35 beautiful full-color photos of various combat helicopters, all of which may be printed.

A "Video" option took me to 8 mm movies of the aftermath of a sapper attack on a group of CH-47s, many of them still burning.

Similar to the previous version, the database included on the CD-ROM allows the user to search on a variety of criteria: Pilot name, aircraft tail number, unit, MOS, call signs, flight classes and several others.

This one is a definite keeper.

Ross Rainwater

C-1/9 Air Cav, 1st Cav, 1970-71

Benavidez, 240th spend time in hell

MARK AUSTIN BYRD
VHPA MEMBER

On Feb. 24, 1981, Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Ronald Reagan for his actions on May 2, 1968, while assigned to B-56, 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam.

After the presentation, Reagan asked Benavidez to use the following years of his life working with youth.

For the remaining 16 years, Benavidez traveled across the country and around the world to share his story about growing up in poverty and prejudice in south Texas, joining the Army, and becoming a member of the Special Forces.

He told the dramatic story of his "six hours in hell," captivating audiences with his honest and humble account of his life.

Benavidez dedicated himself to teaching young people the value of duty, honor and country.

He carried on his speaking tours in great pain due to injuries from which he never fully recovered. Even as his health began to fail, he continued to travel with his message.

For his dedication and service, Roy was honored by many organizations across the United States and abroad.

The most recent of Roy's many honors is a new large roll-on/roll-off transport ship which will be named the USNS Benavidez and will be launched in mid-2001.



Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez
Received Medal of Honor for helping rescue helicopter crews

Six hours in hell

On the morning of May 2, 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Recon Team consisting of three Americans, seven CDIG soldiers, and two Vietnamese Special Forces interpreters was inserted by helicopters of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) into Cambodia in a dense jungle area west of the Special Forces base at Loc Ninh, South Vietnam.

Soon the team came into contact with a large North Vietnam Army force, and requested extraction.

Pilots of the 240th AHC launched from Loc Ninh with three UH-1C Huey gunships, call sign "Mad Dog," led by WO Lewis Wilson (Mad Dog 22) and three Huey slicks, call sign "Greyhound."

Two aircraft were delayed in launching by a battery problem. Extraction was aborted.

Five miles from the pickup zone (PZ), the Hueys began to take automatic weapons fire from the jungle below.

One-half mile from the PZ, the fire became extremely heavy and the Greyhound slick, piloted by WO Roger Waggle, with copilot WO Dave Hoffman, took numerous hits, severely wounding the crew chief,

Spec. 4 Michael Craig, and the doorgunner.

Waggle aborted his approach and called for WO Bill Armstrong to return to base with him, but Armstrong's radio had just been shot and he assumed he was to make the extraction in Waggle's place.

At about the same time, a Mad Dog gunship piloted by WO William Curry was shot down and other gunships concentrated their attention on the recovery of Curry and his crew.

Armstrong landed in the PZ about 100 meters from the team, near an NVA position.

As he descended, six NVA soldiers stepped out and waved him down as if they were friendlies.

Leroy Wright, the team leader saw the mistake, but could not warn Armstrong. To avert disaster, the team opened fire on the NVA just as the slick came to a hover.

At first, crew chief Gary Land and doorgunner Robert Wassell thought the team was an NVA unit firing on them and they opened fire on the team. However, they quickly realized their mistake and shifted their fire

*Both
doorgunners
were wounded,
but with
the help of
the Special
Forces medic
... they were
able to keep
the NVA
out of the
aircraft.*

onto the NVA "friendlies," killing many of them.

As the slick landed, 30 NVA rushed the helicopter from the tree-lines. Some reached the chopper and attempted to bayonet the pilots through the windshield.

Armstrong and his copilot, WO James Fussell, killed several with their .38's. Both doorgunners were wounded, but with the help of the Special Forces medic aboard the slick, they were able to keep the NVA out of the aircraft.

Armstrong was severely wounded

See FAC SEES, Page 25

FAC sees 250 NVA soldiers in area

Continued from Page 24

in the head by a burst of fire that also knocked out the hydraulics. Armstrong and Fussell succeeded in lifting the slick off the ground, but they took out the tops of trees for several hundred feet before gaining sufficient altitude.

Overhead, the Air Force FAC, 1st Lt. Robin Tornow, in an O-1F had arrived just ahead of the gunships and saw at least 250 NVA soldiers in the open swarming about the area.

To him it was obvious the team had been inserted into a main NVA base camp. He immediately called a "Mayday" on guard, requesting assistance from any fighters who were within range.

Within five minutes, two F-100s responded to his declaration of a Daniel Boone tactical emergency.

240th AHC regroups

Benavidez was at the forward operating base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation

by radio when the battered Mad Dogs and Greyhounds returned with their wounded crewmembers.

As the choppers landed, he helped with the wounded and found himself kneeling on the ground beside a good friend, Michael Craig, the crew chief from Armstrong's slick.

Craig died clutching Benavidez' hand and whispering, "Oh God, my mother and my father . . . !"

As the other aircraft returned, Benavidez heard the pilots discussing the incredible volume of automatic weapons fire from hundreds of NVA soldiers who surrounded the PZ.

The situation of the team must have seemed hopeless to Benavidez as 6 of the 12 members were dead and the six survivors were all wounded.



Spec. 4 Michael Craig is shown with Greyhound marking on door of a 240th Assault Helicopter Company Huey. Craig was severely wounded in the early phase of the battle with North Vietnam Army soldiers.

The situation of the team must have seemed hopeless to Benavidez as 6 of the 12 members were dead and the six survivors were all wounded. He thought of his close friends on the team, Leroy Wright team leader, Lloyd "Frenchy" Mousseau, and Brian O'Conner.

He knew he had to do something to help them and he prayed, "God, help me to help these men out."

McKibben crashes in PZ

When Benavidez saw WO Larry McKibben turning up his slick for another extraction attempt, he impulsively jumped aboard and announced he was going along to replace their "bellyman."

When McKibben arrived over the PZ, he realized he could not land in the PZ — it was too hot in the zone.

Benavidez told McKibben to set him down in a clearing about 75 meters from the team and he would make it to them on foot. McKibben agreed to this, then dove his slick through the intense fire down to the clearing, where Benavidez jumped

from the aircraft at 17 feet AGL with only a bag of medical supplies and his knife.

On the ground Benavidez got to his feet and ran through withering small arms fire to the team. He was hit in the leg by a bullet and received wounds to the head from shrapnel.

When he reached the team, he took charge and learned Wright was dead, Mousseau had a

bad head wound but was still firing his weapon and using his radio.

O'Conner was with one critically wounded CIDG about 60 feet from Mousseau's group. The ground between them was covered by enemy fire.

McKibben responded by making two "strafing" runs during which his doorgunners fired on the surrounding treelines.

Benavidez adjusted Mousseau's perimeter in preparation for extraction. Realizing the team was in danger of being overrun, Benavidez requested McKibben pick them up immediately.

McKibben responded by making two "strafing" runs during which his doorgunners fired on the surrounding treelines.

On his third pass, McKibben dropped into the PZ, landing a few feet from the team. Benavidez carried

See BENAVIDEZ, Page 26

Benavidez severely wounded in back

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and dragged Mousseau and the three CIDGs to the slick.

He then led McKibben's hovering aircraft closer to O'Conner's position in the trees.

While O'Conner and the wounded interpreter crawled toward the slick, Benavidez located Wright's body and recovered the secret documents.

As he attempted to lift Wright, he was severely wounded in the back, collapsing his left lung. At nearly the same moment, McKibben was killed and crashed into the trees.

Benavidez rushed to the crash to pull survivors from the smoldering wreckage. The craft had nosed into the ground and the transmission had broken loose, fatally crushing the doorgunner,

Spec. 4 Nelson Fournier.

Copilot WO Fernan stumbled around the nose of the aircraft with his pistol drawn and a small tree branch jammed into his head.

The doorgunner, Mousseau and some other survivors had

taken cover behind the broken tailboom and were returning the enemy fire.

Benavidez ordered the men away from the wreckage, which was liable to burst into flames, and established a perimeter in a small clump of trees near the wreckage.

He then called for air support and, within minutes, a pair of F-100s were dropping napalm and delayed-action cluster bombs on targets that Benavidez identified.

Between the fixed-wing strikes, Mad Dog gunships made rocket and gun runs.

The air strikes created lulls in the

enemy fire and Benavidez was able to move among the survivors, giving first aid, water, ammo and encouragement. However, whenever the air strikes stopped, the enemy fire returned with seemingly increased intensity.

The team's ammunition was almost gone and the radio batteries were failing. Benavidez sensed the end was near.

Waggie's Silver Star

As the gunships circled Benavidez' position, another of the Mad Dogs was shot down and crashed near Roy's position.

Soon the crew crawled through the grass to join the team and, as the other gunships circled overhead, Benavidez heard a weak signal on his radio: "Okay, get ready, we're coming in to get you."

Benavidez instructed the team to load the last of its ammunition and be ready to move.

A lone slick piloted by Roger Waggie made a tree top approach to the zone, while the gunships drew most of the NVA fire above him.

Waggie landed next to the crashed Huey and looked out to see at least 100 NVA swarming towards him.

The doorgunners were WO Bill Darling and WO Tom Smith, both pilots who had taken the places of Waggie's crew chief and doorgunner.

Waggie and copilot Dave Hoffman fired their pistols at the NVA attacking the front of the aircraft with fixed bayonets.

The fire from the doorgunners wiped out dozens of NVA soldiers, but many reached the aircraft and attempted to enter the cargo doors. Waggie jerked the Huey airborne, dragging the NVA through the trees.

At about 200 feet, he shook the last of them off.

Waggie immediately circled for another approach and landed near the team. Benavidez rallied the walking wounded team members to the slick just as it landed and, with the aid of

Special Forces medic, Staff Sgt. Sammons, who arrived on the slick, dragged and carried the others to the craft.

The NVA soldier lunged at Benavidez' abdomen with the bayonet. He dodged the bayonet, but was cut on the arm.

Benavidez was struggling to carry Mousseau on his shoulders toward the slick when he was clubbed from behind by an NVA soldier. Dropping Mousseau, he turned to face his attacker's

fixed bayonet.

The soldier struck him again, this time smashing his jaw. The NVA soldier then lunged at Benavidez' abdomen with the bayonet.

Benavidez dodged the bayonet, but was cut on the arm.

Incredibly, Benavidez was able to trap the bayonet in the crook of his arm. As the smaller man struggled to free his weapon, Benavidez drew his knife and killed him.

Benavidez then picked up the rifle and carried Mousseau toward the slick, where he shot and killed two

Waggie landed at Quan Loi, where his aircraft — which had more than 200 holes in it — subsequently was scrapped.

NVA soldiers who were rushing the craft from behind.

Benavidez made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in several of the

dead. Only then did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft.

Waggie landed at Quan Loi, where his aircraft — which now had more than 200 holes in it — subsequently

See MEDICS, Page 27

The air strikes created lulls in the enemy fire and Benavidez was able to move among the survivors, giving first aid . . .

VHPA chapter in Inaugural Parade

North Carolina Chapter salutes new commander-in-chief



The VHPA North Carolina Chapter took its Hueys to the Inaugural Parade for President George W. Bush in January.

• Left, a member salutes the new commander-in-chief.

• Right, actress Bo Derek gets shelter from the rain in a Huey.



Photos by Todd Bennett

Medics declared Benavidez dead

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was scrapped for parts.

By the time Waggie landed at the base, Benavidez was unable to move or speak, but he was conscious.

The medics declared him dead and placed him in a body bag. As they were closing it, Green Beret Jerry Cottingham recognized Benavidez and demanded they make sure he was actually dead, thus saving his life.

Benavidez and Mousseau were loaded on a slick and flown to the hospital in Saigon. Benavidez noticed Mousseau was watching him with his one good eye and Benavidez reached over to him and held his hand.

Minutes from Saigon, he felt Mousseau's fingers dig into his palm. Mousseau's arm twitched and Roy felt as if electricity was flowing into him from Mousseau.

Just before the helicopter landed, Mousseau's eye blinked once and he died.

Benavidez officially was credited with saving the lives of eight men counting the crew of McKibben's aircraft and the team.

Of the original recon team, only O'Conner and one CIDG survived the war. Over the years, Benavidez located some of the survivors of the 240th AHC who had played such an impor-

tant part in the mission.

Benavidez felt they were heroes of the action. When he died in 1998, Benavidez was working on getting the Medal of Honor for Waggie.

Benavidez' son Noel continued that effort and finally Waggie was awarded the Silver Star. However, the award was announced a few months after Waggie's death from cancer.

Benavidez' message

Roy frequently said, "an education is the key to success. Bad company and bad habits will ruin you."

His message was simple, but people listened. Perhaps his message is best stated as: DUTY. HONOR. COUNTRY.

Request for information

Anyone who has personal knowledge or facts about the incident and surrounding events is requested to contact Mark Austin Byrd. Pictures or verbal descriptions of any of the participants will be particularly important in the sculptural modeling.

Foundation formed

In December 2000, the Roy P. Benavidez Foundation Inc. was incorporated to continue the mission which Roy assumed when President

Ronald Reagan awarded him the Medal of Honor.

The foundation will award scholarships to economically disadvantaged high school students. An innovative, interactive bronze monument will be created by the foundation which tells the story of Benavidez and his comrades for future generations.

For further information about the foundation, contact Noel Benavidez, director of the Roy P. Benavidez Foundation Inc., [REDACTED]

; e-mail: [REDACTED]

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Roy P. Benavidez Foundation Inc. has teamed with Mark Austin Byrd, author of this article in the development of the Roy P. Benavidez Memorial Sculpture. Byrd is a former Marine pilot and a member of the VHPA and the USMC Vietnam Helicopter Association. He flew UH-1E gunships in 1969 with HML 367 and also flew SOG missions into Laos. He is now a sculptor working in Dallas. He may be contacted at: Mark Austin Byrd, [REDACTED]

; ([REDACTED]

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