



The VHHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

January/February 1999 Vol. 17, No. 1



A Cobra from H/16 Cavalry lifts off from Lai Khe, South Vietnam, with both pylons loaded. The photo was taken in 1971 by Ron Timberlake, a member of the cav unit and a graduate of class 67-501.

OPERATION 10,000. Coming soon. Don't miss it!

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M00296 Feb-00



From the President

Happy New Year to all members of the VHPA and I truly wish this to be a great year for us all. There are several items to touch upon for this newsletter column and each is very important.

New members continue to be added to our rolls at the rate of about 50 per month. We are very likely going to reach our 10,000th member by Nashville.

However, over the years we have not been able to retain all new members as current members.

As of Dec. 31, our contractor's records show that 2,277 former members are over 365 days past due. They have been billed, but for some reason have failed to send in their renewal dues.

The contractor believes all those 2,277 former members' addresses are good! What the Executive Council and I would like to know is WHY members do not renew and WHAT can be done to reduce the numbers.

If you have an idea as to why or have heartburn, for some reason, send me an e-mail at: [REDACTED] and let me know.

Or you can send me a note, to my attention to VHPA Headquarters in Sacramento, and it will be forwarded to me, unopened.

All who serve on the Executive Council are truly interested in making the VHPA a better organization for all members.

The VHPA and its members now have a place to send historical and personal artifacts for safe storage and preservation. Read the article in this newsletter very carefully and understand the importance of the VHPA's relationship with The Vietnam Center/Archives, a part of Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

In my estimation, the Center/Archives promises to be the premier non-governmental storage and preservation site in the United States and, possibly, the world, when it comes to the Vietnam War and its place in history.

The commitment and dedication of Texas Tech University is very sincere and serious. The university's leadership is completely dedicated to the project and the VHPA is very fortunate to be a part of the growing work.

Do consider your personal papers and memorabilia for storage and preservation there, too.

Our upcoming reunion in Nashville is shaping up very nicely.

Mike Haley and his committee are at 6,600 rpm and ready to "pull pitch."

The one thing that there may be a shortage of is SPACE! One thing that all VHPA members should know is the interest in the annual reunion has rapidly grown over the past three years.

And, when the site selection committee chose Nashville almost four years ago, it didn't envision our growth in numbers would be so rapid.

As of Dec. 31, our Headquarters Hotel, the Renaissance Hotel, and one of the Marriott Courtyard hotels was full!!

There is still a large number of rooms available in several other hotels in the downtown area and you need to make reservations ASAP.

Read the articles provided by the Reunion Committee in this and future newsletters and our website for details.

Headquarters reports almost 100 members registered for the reunion activities before Jan 1. This has seldom happened before. All these numbers represent records and increases from previous years. Do not be left in the PZ, act now!

Finally, as your president, I want to encourage those members who are interested in becoming involved in the VHPA to run for an office.

You need to be thinking about it now and get "serious." Check the Constitution and By-Laws and follow the required process to get your name on the ballot for the elections during the general membership meeting in Nashville.

The VHPA needs more folks who are truly interested and would devote the time to serve and get involved. We are still a growing and vital group that shows no signs of slowing for a long time to come. In fact, we are one of the very few growing veterans organizations in the United States.

I welcome all members' input. As far as I am concerned, there is an "Open Door Policy" in this association. There is no such thing as RHIP and your paid membership entitles you to exactly what everyone else has: One vote.

Good Luck and mark with red smoke when taking fire!

— **Tom Payne, president**
TomPayne@vhpa.org

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] Extension/PIN 8936, or [REDACTED]

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VHPA briefs

History Book 2nd edition on sale

The helicopter war in Vietnam from 1961-75 is recorded in detail with many "after action reports" in the vets' own words.

This "second edition" printing also includes the history of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, plus hundreds of powerful photographs, maps and artwork. Additional contents include:

- Special tribute to Medal of Honor recipients.
- Special tribute to pilots who died while serving, with a listing of each pilot killed in Vietnam.

The book is 9 by 12 inches, hardbound, with 264 pages.

Copies are available from Turner Publishing Co. for \$52.50 plus \$6 shipping/handling. Write to Turner at P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101 or call (800) 788-3350. Visa and Mastercard accepted.

Members invited on ride

Any VHPA member who rides a motorcycle has been invited to join others on the annual Run For The Wall on Memorial Day.

The group travels cross-country from the Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA, to Washington, DC, with stops along the way at local Vietnam memorials.

Once in Washington, the group will join other motorcycles for Rolling Thunder, more than 300,000 motorcycles riding together to The Wall.

For more information, contact Larry Clark at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or check out the website: www.rftw.org

'Stolen Valor' author dedicated, great guy

Just received my November/December issue and was most pleased to see the favorable review of Jug Burkett's "Stolen Valor."

I met Jug when he was serving here in Dallas as co-chairman (with President Bush) in getting our Vietnam Memorial constructed. He really is a great guy and dedicated, as well.

You also had a reference to another Dallasite who is active in veterans affairs, Fr. Denis O'Brien, MM.

I first met him in 1993 when we asked him to give the benediction at a Memorial Day service. I was so impressed with what he said that I asked him for a copy.

Father O'Brien described himself as a "long time ago Sergeant, Division Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division, Fleet Marine Forces, Southwest Pacific."

He presently serves as chaplain, 1st Marine Division Association.

This is what he said:

"Almighty and Divine Creator, Loving Father of all mankind, Thee we adore, Thee we thank for every grace and blessing, for life, for the freedom to speak to Thee, each one of us in our own way, wherever we may be. Permit us to bless Thy holy name."

"Around us there does not lie any summer soldier, any sunshine patriot, any craven who fled our nation's shores and smirking, abandoned others to survive the unmarked paths of harm's way. We are in the presence of those who did not run when Uncle Sam said, 'I need you.' Many fell in combat, many others were called by the Supreme Commander later on."

"We are honored, and humbled, to be in the presence of those who lie here, who await us, who demand that we speak out, and act, to keep clean the honor of our nation, that we not forget the majesty of Duty, Honor, Country."

"It is the soldier, not the reporter who has given us freedom of the press."

"It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech."

"It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to demonstrate."

"It is the soldier who saluted the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag — who allows the protester to burn the flag."

"God of our fathers — from war's alarms, be Thy strong arm our ever sure defense. Fill all our lives with love and grace divine, and glory, laud, and praise be ever Thine. Amen."

Martin R. Vissers

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VHPA History Book, Vol. I Turner Publishing limited edition. Only a few left.	\$39/each (\$6 P&H each)	_____

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Aussie pilot recalls Vietnam War service

I am a retired Royal Australian Air Force pilot who served in No. 9 Squadron based in Vung Tau during the Vietnam War. I have recently been given several copies of *The VHPA Newsletter* which I have read with some interest and unwanted recollections.

The RAAF was manned by full-time professional servicemen and it maintained various squadrons and other elements in country throughout the stoush.

Number 9 Squadron was first based in Phuc Tuy Province from a very early time and remained until the end. Personnel were changed throughout the year to ensure a good balance of skilled and new people in the system.

The Squadron was originally equipped with UH-1B helicopters but these were upgraded to UH-1D and then UH-1H machines. All 16 machines were equipped as slicks (call sign "Albatross") with 5 being kitted out as gunships ("Bushranger") and various others fitted to do Command and Control, sniffer, voice, etc. roles.

All slicks were equipped to carry out Dustoff functions at any time, ie. they were equipped with sling, harnesses, stokes litter and appropriately trained crew at all times. During the night, two aircraft were on standby to carry out Dustoff operations if called on. We had no equipment to assist us with night flying and I reckon the scariest thing I have ever done was a hastily arranged night combat assault to a hot LZ. Many of your readers would know the feeling.

Primarily, we were fully deployed in Phuc Tuy Province (TAOR), working with the Australian ground forces. We seldom worked with other "Free World Forces" although we did fly to Saigon and other HQs around the traps from time to time. I got a tail rotor shot up landing into Cu Chi, which didn't impress me very favourably at the time.

The RAAF owned and maintained the aircraft in the same way that we did in Australia. When we lost one, we would have to go through the whole rigmarole of purchasing a new one. I had to pick up such an aircraft from Saigon one day and had the dickens of a job convincing the

U.S. Army sergeant that we would only accept a new craft and not one that had had a previous life; he couldn't believe that anyone was silly enough to pay their own way in that place!

Our pilots would arrive in country with at least 300 hours in their logbook. However, most of us had served a tour of duty on other types of aircraft before transferring to Hueys; in my case I had experience on several twin-engined transport aircraft (Dakota, Convair Metropolitan, HS748).

In country we would fly as copilots for about three months and then start some command time. After about six months, we would be flying command most of the time. Somewhere along the line we would get a shot at the gunships as copilots and we would then decide which type of flying (slick or gunship) we would prefer.

We would fly around 800 to 1,000 hours during our 12-month tour of duty. For me these were wonderful flying experiences with some days interspersed when I would have preferred to have stayed in bed.

Our accommodation was very good with individual rooms, of sorts, into which we rigged up some air conditioning — days off were very comfortable! We enjoyed peacetime messing facilities.

It might interest you to know that the very same aircraft we flew in Vietnam are still in service today. Several years ago they were transferred to the Australian Army to operate. A good number of RAAF pilots transferred to the Army with the aircraft.

I have to admit that I can't resist the temptation to rush outside when I hear the familiar WOK WOK of a Huey. I doubt that I will ever lose this uncontrollable urge, which seems very common to old Huey people.

As an Australian I am not a member of your organisation and there seems little point to my joining. I wish you all the best for the future as we all age and fade away. Perhaps in the next life there will be a Huey for every one of us.

Kindest regards,
Chris Ellis

Squadron Leader
RAAF (Retired)

'A Soldier's Christmas' written by Strickland

As an addendum to Greg Ross's contribution to the November/December newsletter, the author of the poem, originally entitled "A Soldier's Christmas," was written by Thomas Strickland at DOC-PTMAC1PO, Okinawa, Japan.

Randy Zahn
Cavalier 24
C Troop, 1/9th Cav
March 1970-71

Nebbing-Ailes article brings back memories

I have been reading the newsletter religiously from cover to cover and always find it interesting, stimulating and, most of all, it brings back some of the most important memories of my life.

The first installment of the Nebbing and Ailes article triggered an exciting memory as the authors mentioned the

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altitude they had to fly to stay out of harm's way on their flight from Da Nang to Ubon.

Triggered was a memory of our (1st Cavalry Division) assault into the A Shau Valley in what I remember to be early May 1968. We staged, staggered trail, in a very large open area, between LZ Evans and Sharron.

Because of the mountains over which we were to fly and because the conditions were not SAVU, we launched and began a long, slow climb, going "pop-eye," to VFR on top, at an altitude of approximately 11,000 feet.

Thomas J. Harnisher, the AC, decided to switch seats with me in case we had to fly protracted IFR. His decision was good for me and not so good for him.

On long final, after braving air bursts and a pucker factor approaching 100 percent, our aircraft was hit several times. One round entered the chin of the aircraft (right side) and peppered Tom's face with Plexiglas and aluminum.

Bleeding badly, Tom gave me the aircraft. I proceeded to see how fast I could get us through the hail of fire, not taking heed the LZ was now only 300 yards in front of us. And we, at 120 knots, 500 feet, and fully loaded were not going to be able to make a successful landing to the ubiquitous three-foot hover. Tom took the controls and called for a go-around — excellent move, or we would probably still be there, a permanent part of the landscape.

Tom was OK, back flying within a day or two, but my aspirations to do well in a "real" combat situation had been tested, and to my mind, I received a "pink slip." Tom never mentioned the incident and, no more "pink slips" in the remaining 10 months of my first tour.



All this to introduce a significantly better memory. One or two days after the initial assault to the A Shau Valley, the Air Force airlifted a portable GCA unit into the Valley to assist in air traffic control during the all-too-frequent marginal weather days, and night-time operations.

The unit had been grossly calibrated, but needed a "real" target to ensure its accuracy.

For some unknown reason, B/229 was contacted to field an aircraft and crew to make a night GCA approach into the A Shau. I happened to be walking in front of the TOC when the volunteer AC was discussing the mission. I jumped at the chance to volunteer as his "Peter Pilot." I needed to do something to reinstate my bruised ego.

The last thing our CO (Pearce "Rocky" Long) said to me was, "you know, you do not have to go, this is totally voluntary."

We lifted off in what was the darkest night I have ever experienced, then or now. After flying for what seemed to be hours, we contacted the Air Force GCA operator and performed the requisite turns to insure proper acquisition.

The AC (I cannot remember his name) was calm, and gave me very succinct directions on assisting his in-cockpit

Ranger thanks pilots for surviving tour

Thanks to all you great pilots for the wonderful job you did. I would not be here today if it were not for you back in Nam in 1968-69.

I was a LRRP/Ranger in Company H, 75th Rangers and got out alive from many a mission only because some super brave pilots were willing to risk their lives in some hairy situations.

I am a part-time CFI-AIM in Helicopter for some years now and truly respect the skills demonstrated to me during my brief tour by some wonderful pilots.

I especially remember one night, only one pilot, Mr. Miller, 1/9 Air Cav, Quan Loi. 1st Cav Div, would volunteer to come out to extract us from a PZ requiring a pure vertical approach, with blade tips chopping down trees, and once on board, a vertical takeoff in zero wind, hot, humid and heavy conditions with we five guys still fully equipped for our five-day mission with full ammo, canteens, etc.

That Huey was straining its guts out, but managed somehow, as we all fired our guns at the enemy surrounding us below, as evidenced by some 10-15 campfires.

Anyway, thanks, guys. If I had it to do over again, I would have gone to flight school and been one of you.

Steve Curtis

cross checks, and maintaining visual contact outside the aircraft. He flew flawlessly.

The GCA operator was equally calm, with a reassuring voice. I stared out of the aircraft seeing absolutely nothing, not a single spot of light anyplace. We flew at about 60 knots, slowing incrementally as we were talked down by the operator.

The whole crew knew how narrow the valley was from several sorties over the course of the past few days. We could see nothing, our lives and the aircraft were in the hands of a single individual on a yet-to-be-tested GCA unit, being powered by one of those not-so reliable, air-cooled 10 KW generators.

We were on the glide path, on final, slowing to the point that the transmission started to growl with the extra torque needed to sustain flight out of ground effect. Still no visual contact.

We continued to slowly let down and slowly decrease our airspeed. When were we going to get to the valley floor? No sooner had I thought this than the GCA operator requested we turn on our landing light. We were no more than 20 yards from the GCA unit and at no more than a six-foot hover — wow!

We thanked the operator, hovered the aircraft over to a safe area within the perimeter, shut everything down, and

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looked for a beer. What a night, what an experience.

Our TAC tickets (a calm and well-experienced AC) and the well-trained Air Force GCA operator set up a synergy that worked, allowing us to take our helicopter into a foggy/moonless night and maneuver it between two very steep and narrow valley walls to a very successful conclusion. All was well that night as we slept in the Bell "Hotel."

Bob Evans

Class 67-23
B/229

71st AHC doorgunner seeking pilot, photos

My name is Greg Heinle. I was a doorgunner for the 71st Assault Helicopter Company between June and September 1971.

I was involved in a combat assault where an infantryman was wounded in the stomach. I'm pretty sure he was shot by rifle fire. We got him into the slick and decided to dee dee back to the 91st Evacuation Hospital.

There wasn't anything we could do but radio in that we were coming. I remember we low-leveled so as to save time

On the way back, the peter pilot took a couple pictures of me holding that soldier. I remember us landing in the helo pad at the hospital. We were all hoping he would make it. The next day I went up to the 91st Evac and the nurse told me he died on the chopper.

I remember talking to him on the way back from the LZ. I told him I'd tell his family what happened and that he

loved them.

Two or three weeks after this incident happened, that same peter pilot was on my flight again and we talked a little bit about what happened and also he gave me two or three pictures or negatives of me holding that soldier in my arms. I treasured those pictures, but unfortunately they were lost.

I have narrowed down the pilots who could have been the one who took the pictures and was with me that day. You are one of 11. I may have talked to you by phone in the past, for I have been trying to locate this officer for a few years. I'm determined to find this officer and talk to him about that day.

I'm sure you can understand what I feel. Please, if you possibly might be that officer and could double check your pictures, I would be the doorgunner holding a soldier in my arms while flying back to the hospital in a slick.

I sure would like to get copies made of those pictures and talk about that day.

Please believe that I'm on the level with you, sir. I'm not making this up. Please help me if you can.

Gregory D. Heinle

P.S. The pictures could be prints, slides or maybe negatives not yet developed. Please check.

Scout dog, handler fly home in Cobras

I was a scout dog handler with the 37th IPSP, 1st Cav from September 1970 through August 1971 in III Corps.

I had just finished pulling a rather tough mission . . . I guess that all missions were tough just by the nature of being combat missions. I can not remember exactly when, where and with what units I worked or the aviation units I flew on during that year. They all seem to run together, now. This story I do remember and I tell this story to you because I want to find two Cobra pilots and say, "Thanks."

I remember getting a log bird out of the bush early in the day. I loved that feeling of sitting in the door of the chopper with my dog, Prinz, cruising the canopy. There was always a feeling of mutual respect and admiration between the dog handlers, pilots and crews.

My mission was over and I was looking forward to some R&R back at Bien Hoa . . . only I couldn't seem to catch a ride, which was very unusual.

I had gotten bumped off the bird I had been scheduled on by some wigs in starched fatigues. I was left sitting on the tarmac in Song Be, watching rhinoceros beetles and

Newsletters being sent to cav troops in Bosnia

I am a member of the 1st Cavalry Association, which sponsors a support program for our Cav troops in Bosnia. I jumped in with both feet and have been in touch with fellow aviators in the 227th Aviation Company.

I know you would enjoy the fact that the last three issues of *The VHPA Newsletter* are on the way to Bosnia. I'm sure the troops will enjoy — it's military history! Your newsletter gets better all the time; you guys are pros.

John R. Nielsen

A Troop, 1/9 Cav
RVN 1965-66
Headhunters
Bullwhip Squadron

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ants while waiting on another bird to land.

While I was sitting there, a couple of Cobra gunships flew in to refuel. There was only one pilot in each of the Cobras.

They approached me . . . evidently because of my dog. They were real happy to check him out.

Prinz really hammed it up, shakin' hands and performing eagerly; as was his nature. The pilots loved it.

Somehow it seemed to make them forget about the war and the Army for awhile. Or, maybe they remembered their own dogs back in the States. They took a few photos and we exchanged some standard comments about the heat, rain, bugs, etc.

It was apparent that they were very close buddies by the way they joked with each other in a typical "nut-bustin" kind of way.

I explained my unfortunate predicament and they offered to give us, me and Prinz, a lift back to Phouc Vinh! I thought they were joking, but they were serious.

With their help, I lifted and put Prinz in the gunner's seat of one Cobra and then I climbed into the gunner's seat of the other Cobra!

One of the pilots took some more photos of Prinz in the gunner's seat.

Man, what a sight. Off we went, only a few feet apart in formation, cool in the air-conditioned environment inside the cockpit.

We flew side by side at what seemed like at least 1,500 feet up. Just cruisin'.

I remember looking over at Prinz and he had the most beautiful slobbering "grin" on his face . . . he was truly happy.

In fact, I would say he was about as happy as I could ever remember him being.

It ended all too soon with our arrival at Phouc Vinh and we didn't seem to create very much excitement as we landed, which I am sure they were worried about.

Prinz and I got out and saluted and waved goodbye as they left.

When I think back, after 27 years, what a cool story.

I very much want to meet again and thank those Cobra pilots for that special moment we all shared together.

It was certainly one of the most wonderful memories anyone could ever have coming out of a war where there were so many things we would like not to remember.

And, I am sure that Prinz would want to say "thanks," too, if he were still alive. I am not sure what ever happened to him because most of the dogs never left Vietnam after the war. (Scout dog web page at: www.vdhaonline.org/)

I remember that the pilots took some photos and I am looking to see if I have any in my slides.

And, I have always wished



that I had taken the pilots' names, so that I could hook up with them now.

Maybe, you can help me find them. Prinz would appreciate it, too.

Again, I salute you all, pilots and crews alike. Thanks for being there.

"Jingles of the Nam"

Paul V. Weismann (a.k.a. "Jingles")

Alabaster, AL

Brother seeks survivor of fatal LOH incident

I received a guest book entry and e-mail from Tim Fitzsimmons whose brother was WO Pat Fitzsimmons. He is seeking anyone who knew his brother and would be willing to talk to him.

My wife Celeste and I have been trying to find the individuals who Tim named, with no luck. I have included his messages to me below this note to you so that you can see what he wrote.

I am writing you with the hope that you might know someone in his unit or that you could possibly get his request printed in the January/February *VHPA Newsletter*.

Here is the incident info listed on the VHPA site:

Incident Date — Aug. 15, 1970

WO1 Patrick G. Fitzsimmons

190 AHC, 145 CAB

OH-58A 68-16914

Thanks for your assistance.

Carl Zipperer
Minuteman 27,
1970-71

Thank you so much for your recent response regarding my brother, WO Pat Fitzsimmons.

I was speaking to my mother today, who is quite elderly, but she recalled the name of the survivor when my brother's LOH was shot down near Loch Nien, on Aug. 15, 1970.

His name is Jack Talkington, and my mother "thinks" he was from Arizona? I hope this helps because I sure would like to e-mail or talk to Jack.

Another bit of information is on Eric Lincoln, my brother's best friend who flew a medevac flight and ultimately attended my brother's dead body, and accompanied him home to Ventura, CA.

My mother tells me Eric was last living in Kehei, Hawaii.

In closing, I admire your labor of love and compassion for the soldiers who served and their loved one's and friends. There will be rewards in heaven for you.

Tim Fitzsimmons
Oryx Ecuador Energy Co.
Quito, Ecuador

Taps

Robert "Bob" Acklen Jr.

Robert "Bob" Livingston Acklen Jr. of Dallas died New Year's Eve at the age of 57 of a brain tumor at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Dallas.

Acklen was a life member of VHPA and was in flight classes 68-20/68-512.

State District Judge John M. Marshall, a longtime friend, said Acklen's military accomplishments were so impressive even those who had seen his citations found them hard to believe.

Acklen's decorations include a Silver Star, a Distinguished Flying Cross, 6 Bronze Star Medals, 40 Air Medals, four Army Commendation Medals and a Purple Heart Medal.

On one occasion, Acklen was honored for jumping from his helicopter, picking up a satchel bomb that had been tossed near his aircraft and throwing the bomb back at the enemy, the judge said.

Acklen's family didn't learn the extent of his military honors until shortly after his brain tumor was diagnosed last September.

Acklen broke his back in Vietnam after being shot down. He was told he would never walk again, but recovered and was able to attend paratrooper jump school, becoming airborne qualified. He later went to Ranger school and served in Korea after the Vietnam War.

Acklen earned a bachelor's degree in history at Texas A&M University in May 1967 and immediately joined the Army.

At the end of the Vietnam War, he earned a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Texas at Austin. He then rejoined the Army and served in Korea.

After retiring with a 70 percent disability due to his combat injuries, Acklen earned a bachelor's degree in computer science at North Texas State University, now the University of North Texas, in August 1989.

As a civilian, Acklen was a teacher, a private pilot and a private investigator, his sister said. The pain from his war injuries seemed to prevent him from staying with many of the civilian jobs he took, she said.

Hamilton H. Howze

Retired Gen. Hamilton H. Howze, credited with developing helicopter warfare tactics used in the Vietnam War, died Dec. 8 at the Broadway Plaza Retirement Center in Fort Worth. He was 89.

In 1962, Howze presided over a military panel, the

Howze Board, that issued a landmark report that called for aircraft, mainly helicopters, to carry soldiers into battle, resupply them and remove the wounded.

"The Huey (helicopter) was to our riflemen roughly what the horse was to the old cavalryman, close by and ready," Howze once said.

Howze was born at West Point, NY, Dec. 21, 1908, when his father was commandant of cadets at the U.S. Military Academy.

Prior to entering the U.S. Military Academy in 1926, Howze attended Ohio State University for one year. He was commissioned a second lieutenant of Cavalry upon graduation from the academy in 1930.

Howze also was a graduate of the Cavalry School, 1935; Advanced Equitation Course, 1936; Army Command and General Staff College, Command Course, 1946; the National War College, 1949; and Infantry School (Airborne Course), 1951.

He was a qualified fixed wing and rotary wing pilot.

Howze served with distinction during his 35 plus years in the Army. He saw action in World War II with the 1st Armored Division, participating in the Tunisia, Naples-Foggia, Rome-Arno and North Apennine and Po Valley campaigns.

During this period, he served as G-3 of the 1st Armored Division and as commanding officer of the 13th Armored Regiment and commanding officer of Combat Command Alpha in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

After returning to the United States in 1945, he became chief of the Tactics Department of the Cavalry School, Fort Riley, KS.

He served as director of instruction at the Cavalry School and as executive officer of the Ground General School.

As a general officer, he served as the assistant division commander, 2nd Armored Division in Germany, and commanding general, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC.

In October 1961, Howze became commanding general, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, NC.

In August 1963, Howze became commanding general of the Eighth Army and commander in chief, U.N. Command/commander, U.S. Forces Korea.

Howze retired in July 1965. After retirement, Howze served as president of the Army Aviation Association of America.

Howze was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star Medal, the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Bronze Star Medal.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Henry Howze, and his two sons, William G. Howze and Guy R. Howze.



Taps

Continued from Page 9

George P. "Phip" Seneff Jr.

Retired Lt. Gen. George P. "Phip" Seneff Jr. died Dec. 2, in Honolulu after a long bout with Alzheimer's disease. He was 82.

He entered West Point as an enlisted man and was commissioned a Field Artillery officer upon graduation in 1941. He ranked in the upper 15 percent of his class.

Seneff later transferred to his family's traditional Cavalry branch, and served with the 14th Armored Division in command and staff positions in Europe during World War II, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel by war's end.

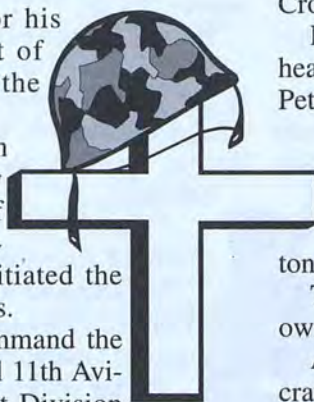
He will best be remembered for his contributions to the development of Army Aviation and what became the Army's "Airmobile Concept."

He became an Army aviator in 1956 and, as chief, Air Mobility Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Research and Development, Department of the Army, initiated the UH-1 and CH-47 helicopter programs.

He was selected to form and command the developmental, and highly successful 11th Aviation Group of the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) at Fort Benning, GA, in 1963.

In 1965, he became chief of Army Aviation and was promoted to brigadier general. During this assignment, he succeeded in obtaining the Cobra attack helicopter for the Army.

In January 1966, he was assigned to Vietnam as U.S. Army Republic of Vietnam aviation officer, and in February of that year was given the additional responsibility for the organization, activation and command of the 1st Aviation Brigade.



He was responsible for the development of the aviation tactics and techniques used for the employment of more than 4,000 combat aircraft and 23,000 personnel in support of combat forces until reassignment in August 1967.

After Vietnam, as a major general, he commanded the 3rd Infantry Division in Europe. After a tour of duty as J-3 of STRICOM at MacDill Air Force Base, he became deputy commander of the Modern Army Selected Systems Technical Evaluation and Review Program.

Upon promotion to lieutenant general, he assumed command of III (Phantom) Corps at Fort Hood, Texas.

His next assignment was commanding general of 5th Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, from which he retired in 1974.

A master army aviator, his awards and decorations include two Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star Medal, four Legions of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Bronze Star Medals and 21 Air Medals.

He is survived by his wife, Frances "Franki" (Whitehead) Seneff, a daughter and son-in-law, Sharon and Ned Peterson, and three grandchildren.

Jack C. Turley

Jack C. Turley, a combat helicopter pilot in Vietnam, died Oct. 6 of cancer in his home near Washington, DC. He was 48.

Turley, a member of class 71-1, was president of his own charter plane service at the time of his death.

After leaving active duty in 1971, he worked as an aircraft rigger for Piper Aircraft Manufacturing Co. in Vero Beach, FL; as a field representative for General Motors Corp. in Toledo, OH; as a pilot and instructor for the Baltimore Police Department; and as a senior training captain for British Aerospace at the Dulles Training Center.

Turley served in the Army Reserve, retiring as a chief warrant officer in 1988.

He held the Bronze Star Medal and seven Air Medals.

Turley is survived by his wife, Camille Branch-Turley; their son, Christopher Turley; his father; three sisters; five brothers; and three grandchildren.

VHPA bumper sticker helps friends reunite

Several days ago, a guy called me, looking for an old college roommate he had lost contact with more than 20 years ago.

His roommate flew helicopters in Vietnam, so the caller figured he might find him through the organization advertised on the yellow VHPA bumper sticker he saw on the back of a passing vehicle.

The caller talked with Deb at VHPA Headquarters and, after explaining his quest, Deb gave him

my phone number.

A quick search of the membership database came up with four possibilities. I started making verification phone calls to the four prospects.

The first three had no clue who this searcher was, so that left the fourth guy.

A call to his number got an answering machine, so I left a detailed message to call the searcher if this was a match.

I received a "thank you" call from

the searcher, telling me the fourth guy was a match. They have talked several times and are now planning a reunion.

The searcher did have a suggestion: "Make the phone number bigger; do you know how close I had to get to read that thing?"

So, just remember that tailgater is trying to get the VHPA phone number, not run up your six.

Gary Roush

webmaster@vhpa.org

History preserved at Texas Tech

TOM PAYNE
VHPA PRESIDENT

The VHPA Executive Council has taken steps to consolidate and send all historical documents and information belonging to the VHPA, whether it be in written, digital, photographic, audio and video tapes, to The Vietnam Center/Archives at Texas Tech University.

Over the past couple of years, past President Mike Hurley and I have been in discussions with many VHPA members as to what needed to be done.

Bob Davies, past Historical Committee chairman, and Mike Sloniker, current chairman, agreed something needed to be done.

For more than 10 years, a rapidly growing volume of histories, stories, pictures and other information had been accumulating in boxes in the garages of VHPA members across the United States.

Furthermore, historical papers, histories and directories, written by the always faithful Mike Law and others, was accumulating.

Everyone concluded a formal archive site with the interest and

capabilities to competently handle ALL the VHPA material should be found, and soon.

Such a site would be required to accept, preserve, store and catalog all current items as well as future items. But, WHO and WHERE? The search considered all sorts of government and private archive facilities throughout the United States.

However, the best site for VHPA purposes eventually came down to The Vietnam Center/Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX.

The Vietnam Center/Archives has been a growing entity within Texas Tech University at Lubbock for 10 years. The chancellor and vice chancellor of Texas Tech are Vietnam veterans and the director of the Center/Archives is a two-tour Vietnam veteran of the "brown water Navy" type.

Dr. James Reckner, USN retired is the director and heads a staff of two archivists and several full-time people, as well as many graduate students. They all work daily to receive, catalog, preserve and store in a controlled environment all sorts of information about Vietnam and the war.

More than 4 million pages already are in their collections.

After a personal visit, I concluded they are committed to preserving for the future all they can about the historic and turbulent time we all shared. Dr. Reckner and the staff are our friends and will treat items placed by the VHPA as relevant and of equal importance to any other items placed there for future history and study.

Eventually, all the items within the archive will be available via the Internet. Now, with VHPA items stored in boxes and in so many different locations, this is not possible.

In negotiations with The Vietnam Center/Archives, I made several requests which will ensure the VHPA is an integral part of future activities and plans of the Center/Archives.

First, the Center/Archives has agreed, in writing, the VHPA will be allowed to place a member on its board of advisors. Our member is a full voting member and not an ex-officio member.

Second, the information placed at the Center/Archives may be copied and provided to any VHPA-supported or -sanctioned museum developed in

See VHPA, Page 12

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VHPA items safer, more accessible

Continued from Page 11

the future, such as the one planned by the Fort Wolters Chapter in Mineral Wells.

Finally, the VHPA, to insure the proper care of our present and future items, must donate its items to The Vietnam Center/Archives. However, given the future availability and other benefits afforded the VHPA, this is not really a liability.

Inter-library loans, Internet access, and personal visits to the Center/Archives make our items far more accessible and protected than now.

Our representative to The Vietnam Center/Archives is VHPA member William "Bill" Fitzgerald, who lives in Lubbock and works for the FAA as a safety program manager.

He is a longtime member of the VHPA who was in Class 70-3/5 and flew with the 101st in 1970-71.

Bill, whose appointment was approved by the Executive Council, will be responsible for attending all meetings in Lubbock. Additionally, he will be the "man on the scene" to coordinate the shipment and "hand-over" of all present and future items donated by the VHPA or its members.

He will keep the VHPA membership informed at all times of what is going on at the Center/Archives and how it may affect us. Bill will write and post frequent articles in The VHPA Newsletter.

Thanks, Bill, for taking on this

The Vietnam Center/Archives very likely will approve a \$2 million operating budget next year. And a 50,000-square-foot building has been approved at the center of the Lubbock campus.

responsibility for us ALL.

The Vietnam Center/Archives very likely will approve a \$2 million operating budget next year. And a 50,000-square-foot building has been approved at the center of the Lubbock campus.

Currently, all items received are cataloged, preserved and stored in the University Library, Southwest Collection Area.

The new building will have the latest innovations in preservation and archive storage facilities. Medal of Honor recipient Roger Donlan will join the Center/Archive staff this spring as an outreach director for veteran's affairs.

The Vietnam Center/Archives can be found on the Internet at: www.ttu.edu/~vietnam

Take a look at this website.

Catalogs of items now in the archive can be obtained by writing James A. Ginther Jr., archivist at The

Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University Libraries, Special Collections Library, Room 108, Lubbock, TX 79409-1041. The phone number is (806) 742-9010.

If any VHPA member would like to donate personal items relating to the Vietnam War, he can do so.

Members also can request their personal items be cataloged and stored with the VHPA collection. All the VHPA items will be kept together with a separate listing available.

Donated items will become permanent property of the Center/Archives, so you might want to make some copies for yourself.

Dr. Reckner has eagerly agreed to attend the VHPA Reunion in Nashville. He will be taking time out of his busy schedule to come and meet us and give a short presentation at the Business Meeting on Sunday morning.

He will welcome the VHPA, officially, and tell us what future plans are planned for the Center/Archives.

The next day he is scheduled to fly to Australia to attend Vietnam veteran functions there.

He is a world traveler and a highly regarded historian on the Vietnam War.

The VHPA is fortunate to become associated with Reckner and his people at Texas Tech University as they forge an accurate and unbiased history archive of Vietnam for future generations.

Membership Directory off limits for soliciting

The purpose of the VHPA is to reunite and rekindle old friendships.

The association has tried to make this easier by publishing the Membership Directory. It has proven to be a wonderful facilitator and has made it easier to communicate with those who mastered the art of rotary wing flight in Vietnam.

The Membership Directory has always included a statement prohibiting its use for soliciting members, but

occasionally this sort of thing occurs.

When this has happened, the victims of the solicitation usually make it clear they have taken offense.

In every instance, this was enough to discourage the offending party from further use of the roster.

In fairness, most of the mass mailings have been innocent, but in a few cases, an attempt was made to get the members to spend money. This is a solicitation and it should be restricted

to the friends of those doing the soliciting.

The VHPA Newsletter will gladly accept advertisements for whatever a member is selling, if it is in good taste and in line with the interests of the general membership.

Contact the *Newsletter* editor for advertising details and use the membership roster to rekindle and make new friendships.

— Ken Fritz

Vietnam museum planned for Texas

CHARLES HOLLEY
VHPA MEMBER

Growing from a desire to bring honor to the many veterans who served in Vietnam, a group of former Army helicopter pilots is planning to build a national museum in Mineral Wells, Texas.

The decision to create the first national museum dedicated to the preservation of artifacts and information specific to this crucial period in our nation's history was not taken lightly.

Upon completion, the museum will be the definitive cultural and historical resource for the Vietnam era, featuring cutting-edge, interactive exhibits based on scholarship of the highest order. It will be a place to remember, to understand, and to learn lessons from the past.

Now, 25 years after the peace accords between the United States and North Vietnam, the time is right to integrate the Vietnam War into a larger historical and cultural framework. The National Museum of the Vietnam War seeks to serve as the common ground for reflection and resolution.

The beginnings of the museum revolve around an event that was primarily social in nature. In September 1995, a group of former Army helicopter pilots, all Vietnam veterans, met at the American Legion hall in Mineral Wells. The purpose of the meeting was to determine whether there was enough interest in forming a local chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA).

Based on the turnout at this initial meeting, there was more than enough support for the idea, and the Fort Wolters Chapter of the VHPA was formed.

The name was selected because the former Fort Wolters, located in Mineral Wells, was the location of the Army's Primary Helicopter School. As such, it was the training ground for about 98 percent of the helicopter

The original concept was for a modest museum incorporating the significance of Fort Wolters in the history of the city, and its contribution in training Vietnam-era helicopter pilots.

pilots who flew in Vietnam.

In attendance at this initial meeting were several members who wanted to do more than just meet socially. They were looking for a way to acknowledge what Fort Wolters, Mineral Wells, and Vietnam had meant to them. It was here that the idea for a museum surrounding those three themes was born, with the creation of the historical/museum committee.

The original concept was for a modest museum incorporating the significance of Fort Wolters in the history of the city, and its contribution in training Vietnam-era helicopter pilots. This idea was heartily embraced by the local chapter members, and was presented to the executive committee of the national organization at the 1996 reunion in Santa Clara, CA.

Buoyed by the encouragement of the national executive committee, the museum committee began work in earnest.

The next year was spent in planning strategy, creating relationships with the city, and investigating possible sites for the museum. At this point, with still modest goals, the committee was looking at existing buildings that might be donated for use as a museum facility. While there were promising sites, the process was moving very slowly. At the same time, possible fund-raising concepts were being explored.

Museum committee member Cleve Clark of Mineral Wells suggested

engraved memorial bricks, a concept used successfully by many organizations.

Brick sales were begun at the VHPA reunion in Orlando in 1997, and have provided a steady, albeit low, source of funding.

In addition to the memorial bricks honoring individuals, the museum also began offering larger memorial tablets for unit memorials.

The initial purchasers of these tablets have been Vietnam aviation company associations.

When the museum concept was presented to the general membership in Orlando, the museum committee felt that there was sufficient interest to continue work on the project.

This was supported by the interest of the general population, shown during the group's participation in the 1997 Mineral Wells Crazy Water Festival.

While the museum activity continued to build, the Chapter was engaged in another project that was to be a watershed event for both.

The Fort Wolters Chapter was to host the 1998 VHPA reunion in Fort Worth. Not only would this be an opportunity to demonstrate Texas hospitality to our national membership, but it would bring many former helicopter pilots back to the place of their birth, so to speak.

The museum committee felt this was our best opportunity to garner a national base of support for the museum, building on the interest sparked in Orlando.

Because the committee was composed of volunteers, all of whom were also gainfully employed, there was little time to take on any additional responsibilities. This was particularly true since many of them were also working on the reunion committees.

So, a Fort Worth public relations firm, DGPR, was engaged to assist in planning for a fund-raising campaign to be introduced at the 1998 reunion.

See WAR, Page 14

War museum sets its goals higher

Continued from Page 13

Through working with DGPR, the committee realized it was thinking on too small a scale when it was determined that no national museum, dedicated to the study of the Vietnam War, existed.

It was decided that a national venue, encompassing all aspects of the war, and a much larger constituency were now an appropriate goal for the committee.

This feeling was echoed by the chapter membership as well. The vision for the museum is to create an atmosphere of learning that will engage people of all ages, nationalities, and political points of view.

A thematic approach to the war will be used, with the following eight themes interwoven throughout the museum:

- The Cold War
- The Nation and Culture of Vietnam
- Vietnam War Chronology
- The Conduct of the War
- The Home Front
- Technology and the War
- War's End and Aftermath
- Fort Wolters

While the museum will have a specific point of view, a deliberate attempt will be made to present a balanced view of the historical facts, perceptions, and consequences of the War. The museum will be relevant and meaningful to everyone.

When the museum committee participated in the 1997 Crazy Water Festival, it began a close relationship with the City of Mineral Wells.

In an effort to maintain and extend that relationship, the committee, through the leadership of member Jim Messinger, worked for many months to bring the Vietnam Moving Wall to the city for the Fourth of July. Messinger's motivation was simple.

"I had always wanted to experience the Wall," Messinger said. "It will be an emotional closure activity for everyone including the communi-

Because of the intense community involvement, the visit of the Wall has cemented the relationship between the Museum and the city, and given additional impetus to locating the Museum in this small North Texas town.

ty. The community of Mineral Wells is largely made up of ex-military."

The amount of interest generated in the community became evident during the months that the chapter members and the city worked together in preparation for the Wall.

Virtually every civic organization in Mineral Wells provided support for the week-long visit, from June 28-July 5. This visit was scheduled to coincide with the VHPA 1998 Reunion, and was one of the scheduled events on July 3.

In addition to the July 3 visit of the helicopter pilots, the Wall visit was marked by opening ceremonies on June 28 that included remarks by U.S. Rep. Stenholm, and Air Force Maj. Gen. Richard Brown, a 1966 graduate of Mineral Wells High School. Gen. Brown flew 140 combat missions in Vietnam in 1971-72.

The ceremonies were also marked by a Confederate Air Force flyover, an honor guard, and "missing man" formation featuring F-16s, and a bugler sounding "Taps."

Because of the intense community involvement, the visit of the Wall has cemented the relationship between the Museum and the city, and given additional impetus to locating the Museum in this small North Texas town.

Currently, the museum board is negotiating for a piece of property on the old Fort Wolters reservation.

A fund-raising project called "honorary landowners" is now under way.

This project is directed specifically at the purchase of the property, and will be open to only 200 individual participants.

Once the property is acquired, there will be a national design competition announced for the museum building and grounds.

The development and construction of this museum is important not only to the committee, but to the country as well.

For many Americans, Vietnamese, and others, the war in Vietnam was the defining event of their lives. It was a conflict that divided families and brought violence both to Vietnam and the United States.

Whether in uniform or not, each of us had a Vietnam experience.

Now a national museum is envisioned to help us remember and understand.

In the words of museum committee chairman Jim Irwin: "The memories of the veterans who took the call and went to the war because the government asked them to, can't continue to be tainted. It's time for us to get out in the sun. We did a good job. The museum will

give a comprehensive history of the Vietnam War political as well as military activities."

Anyone desiring more information or wishing to make a contribution, may contact the museum at the National Museum of the Vietnam War, P.O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068, or on line at www.nationalmuseumvnwar.org

In addition, the next 10 "Honorary Landowners" will receive a free copy of the critically acclaimed book *Primer of the Helicopter War* by Charles Holley and Mike Sloniker.

Anyone desiring more information may contact the museum online at:
www.nationalmuseumvnwar.org

Committee helps share memories

JULIE KINK

"I never forgot him."

To a sister, brother, parent, wife or child of a Vietnam War casualty, those words mean a lot. The Family Contacts Committee of the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network (VHFCN) helps connect family members and buddies of the person who never came back.

Formed in July 1997, the committee consists of 10 volunteers — Grant Isom, Jim McLaughlin, Patrick Pavey, Brian Piggott, Jim Schueckler, Jack Taber, Chuck Utzmann, Susan Blaker and Julie Kink — with Gary Thewlis as chair.

At the 1998 VHPA Reunion in Fort Worth, the committee made several connections between pilots and family members who might otherwise have never found each other.

Accessible to date only through word of mouth, representation at the VHPA and VHCMA reunions, and its Internet website, the committee has worked on nearly 200 "cases" so far.

Some family members have been searching for years; others just started. Some are looking for details about the casualty incident, while others are trying to find out "What kind of a person was he? What did he like? Or dislike? What made him laugh? Or cry?"

Parents who lost a son, brothers and sisters who lost a sibling, sons and daughters without a father, they are all seeking information, knowledge and healing.

For detailed information about the casualty incident, we use the VHPA database (thank you, Gary Roush), government casualty records and eyewitness reports from members of VHPA or VHCMA. We try to find men who served in the same unit in Vietnam, or who were in the same flight school class or attended the same technical school.

We cannot release the names of VHPA or VHCMA members, so we mail out the letters or make the first phone calls ourselves. We also cooperate with the Healing Connections (formerly In Touch) program of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

We seek not only buddies of those whose family members have contacted us, but all memories and stories about anyone and anything that happened during the tours of Vietnam helicopter veterans.

As one family member put it, "They are our only link to know how our family member lived, worked, played, laughed and spent their last days. After all, we loved the same people."

If you can provide information, or share memories on any of the following persons, please contact Gary Thewlis, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The committee's website is:

<http://www.VirtualWall.org/contacts>.

All are KIA unless otherwise noted.

Unit	Date	Name
1 AVN BDE	6/1/71	Wayt, Scott William
1 CAV	3/18/67	Goddard, Myron Thomas
1 CAV DIV	8/17/67	Livemore, Keith Warren F
101 ABN	6/5/70	Trimm, Archie Edward
118 AHC	5/28/65	Piper, Edward Roger
	11/24/69	Perkins, Allen Dean
	10/10/70	Bailey, James Albert
119 AHC	10/20/65	Racine, Franklin Douglas
121 AHC	7/11/66	Aydlett, James Quinel
129 AHC	9/12/69	Jackson, Lawrence David
135 AHC	2/8/68	Moore, Glenn Douglas
	8/21/68	Fennell, William Ervin
	5/19/70	Sprewell, John Spurgeon
155 AHC	4/19/68	Larson, Paul Noble
16 CAG 23 INF	7/15/69	Venditti, Nicholas Louis
162 AHC	11/15/66	Bruhn, James William
17 AVN	5/22/78	Link, Robert Charles
170 AHC	12/16/67	King, Thomas Ray
173 ABN BDE	7/27/66	Hunt, Joseph Francis
	3/4/68	Kidd, Donny Ramon
175 AHC	3/15/69	Whynaught, Jeffrey Lyle
176 AHC	9/9/70	Sizemore, Robert Ralph Jr.
178 ASHC	6/27/66	Sceley, John Stuart
191 AHC	8/12/68	Jens, Terry Roy Jr.
192 AHC	10/28/69	Campbell, Thomas Eugene
	10/28/69	Wright, John Paul
	11/4/69	Anderson, John Steven
	3/22/70	Hatfield, Michael James
195 AHC	10/9/69	Brennan, John Patrick
	5/5/70	Dougan, Charles Garvin
	5/5/70	Rabb, Robert Ira
	5/13/72	Wiley, Thomas J
196 BDE 23 INF	6/6/70	Branch, William Anderson
2/14 25 INF	6/6/70	Dille, Dana Allen
20 SOS	3/14/70	Hall, Gary C
21 SOS	1/24/75	Hill, Robert Oren Jr
237 MED DET	9/27/70	Brown, Joseph Gordon
	2/18/71	Hall, James Albert
25 AVN 25 INF	7/9/65	Stover, Douglas Earl
254 MED DET	3/26/69	Bultman, Roy James
282 AHC	9/3/66	Freda, Arthur Anthony Jr
	9/3/66	Easley, Leonard Eugene
	8/14/67	Jaquins, Charles Egbert
3/17 CAV	9/22/71	Sheldon, Kimball Hayes
335 AHC	3/31/70	Sonderman, Thomas Lee
358 AVN DET	4/8/71	Clotfelter, Mark Dennis
361 AVN	6/16/69	Wood, Patrick Hardy
38 ARRS DET 7	2/6/67	Beck, Gregory George
4 INF	5/18/69	Rucker, Kenneth Ray
45 MED	5/27/68	Huntley, John Norman
57 AHC	9/27/69	Ferrell, Charles Elton
	12/6/69	Darrah, Michael Lee
57 MED DET	10/13/71	Wilson, Mickey Allen
62 AHC	10/5/78	Dillon, David Andrew
68 AVN	7/20/66	Lambdin, Daniel Alvey
	7/20/66	Baca, Richard David
	6/19/69	Poteat, Dennis Michael (MIA)
9 INF	3/30/68	Bruce, Ronald Dwight
A/1/9 1 CAV	4/18/67	Mc Kain, Bobby Lyn
	5/3/68	Mefford, Harrell Samuel
	6/29/69	Woods, Gerald Ernest
A/101 AVN 101 ABN	2/18/71	Hingston, William E Jr.
A/2/20 ARA 1 CAV	1/24/67	Hiemenz, James Borland
A/25 AVN 25 INF	8/14/69	Sysak, Craig Alan
A/377 ART 101 ABN	1/9/71	Mc Donnell, John Terence
A/4/77 ARA 101 ABN	2/16/77	Noble, Allen Earl
A/7/1 CAV	7/17/71	Galbraith, Raymond Clarence
A/82 AVN 173 ABN	6/10/65	Collins, James Wilford
	7/27/66	Popp, David Fred
B/1/9 CAV 1 CAV	3/14/69	King, Danny Raymond
	6/2/71	O'Neill, Daniel John
B/101 AVN 101 ABN	3/9/69	Johnson, Larry Du Wayne
B/229 1 CAV	7/22/70	Thomas, Roy Stephen
B/25 AVN 25 INF	5/10/69	Falk, Gary David
B/7/1 CAV	1/4/69	Cohan, Stephen
B/7/17 CAV	2/19/68	

See VHFCN, Page 16

VHFCN Family Contacts list continues

Continued from Page 15

B/9 AVN 9 INF	2/5/69	Burkhart, Willard Harley
C/1/9 CAV 1 CAV	8/8/66	Nordman, Eric Reinhard
	8/3/69	Kink, David Robert
C/158 AHB 101 ABN	5/18/70	Stone, Harry James
C/158 AVN 101 ABN	12/7/70	Baade, Clifford Keith (DAT)
C/159 ASHB 101 ABN	8/2/69	Stacey, James Shelton
C/16 CAV	4/7/72	Stern, Robert Alan
C/2/20 ARA 1 CAV	9/6/67	Clark, Paul Leslie
	12/19/69	Frank, Richard Wagner II
C/227 AHB 1 CAV	5/23/70	Greene, Ellis David
	6/5/73	Clinton, Dean Eddie
C/228 ASHB 1 CAV	11/18/66	Leach, James Willis
	4/25/68	Eiler, Linden Dale Jr.
C/229 AHB 1 CAV	6/24/66	Lebrun, Lawrence P.
C/3/17 CAV	11/16/68	Brown, Eddie Wayne
	11/30/71	Ziel, Joseph Bernard
D/1/4 CAV 1 INF	11/6/69	Vad, Henry Joseph
D/158 AVN 101 ABN	6/1/71	Magers, Paul Gerald
D/17 CAV	10/29/72	Florence, Dexter Bush
D/3/5 CAV	9/4/71	Gronborg, Martin Wayne Jr.
DIV ART 4 INF	5/18/69	Huffstutler, Steven Riley
F/79 ARA 1 CAV	5/15/78	Strobridge, Rodney Lynn
F/8 CAV	7/13/69	Howison, Graham Henry
H&S/1/4 MARINES	6/6/68	Harper, Ralph Lewis
HHC 2 BDE 1 CAV	1/10/68	Lemaire, Douglas James
	12/1/69	Camp, Jack
HMH-463	2/19/68	Ehnis, Kenneth Paul
HMM-161	6/6/65	Wilson, Frank Willard
HMM-165	6/3/67	Gardner, John Garrett
HMM-262	8/31/67	Moyer, Lawrence Richard
HMM-263	11/18/70	Rogers, Orville Curtis Jr.
HMM-265	6/11/67	Bohlscheid, Curtis Richard
HMM-361	10/8/63	Ritchey, Luther Edmond Jr.
HMM-362	2/4/69	Haglage, Andrew Martin
HMM-364	12/3/65	Riley, Kirk Irwin

MACV

8/1/67

Gudleske, Gustave Franklin

MARINE CORPS

4/10/68

Padgett, Samuel Joseph

1/17/64

Hasper, Charles Martin

2/28/68

Coles, Kyle J

6/4/70

Wilson, Harry Truman

7/23/75

Pitt, Albert (MIA)

VMFA-315

4/20/68

Walker, William John

VMO-2

11/14/67

Kelsey, Milton George

Unit unknown

Charles R. Beatty — Help locating
 William J. Brown — KIA 11/17/69
 Robert J. Chipman — DAT
 Gregory S. Ciccarella — DAT
 Ron Clarke — Help locating
 Norman O. Copeland — KIA 2/5/68
 Glenn E. Cox — DAT
 James T. Fields — KIA 2/15/69
 Henry "Chip" France — Help locating
 Walt Gardner — Help locating
 Mike Greiner — DAT
 James H. Hoag Jr. — Help locating
 John P. Landahl Jr. — Help locating
 Ron Peabbles — Needs veterans who served with him
 Timothy G. Robinson — KIA 4/19/68
 Vincent F. Sabatinelli — KIA 7/25/69
 I.W. Sanders — Help locating
 Johnny Sharpolsky — KIA
 James C. Smith — Help locating
 John R. Todd — Help locating
 Chris Wagner — Help locating

EDITOR'S NOTE: Julie Kink, a member of VHFCN Family Contacts Committee, is the sister of WO1 David Kink, C Troop, 1/9 CAV, who was killed in action on Aug. 3, 1969.



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Promises Kept. Expectations Exceeded.

Driving to reunion can be enjoyable

RHEA RIPPEY

Still can't decide whether to fly, drive or take the high-speed bullet train to the Nashville Reunion, July 1-5?

Considering the bullet train is still a gleam in the eye of a future politician in search of a legacy, your options just decreased. So, before you opt for festival seating in a flying cattle car with a 12-peanut limit, think about the flexibility your POV can add for you and/or your family in terms of increased vacation activities.

Six blocks out of hotel parking will place you on the on-ramp to Nashville's freeway-rich glittering array of options guaranteed to bring a smile to the most jaded traveler.

Antiques, Civil War locations, historic plantations, small funky shopping villages, music clubs, a full-scale reproduction of the Parthenon (complete with a 60-foot Athena), single-canopy campuses and gorgeous state parks await your discovery.

Did I mention the much-anticipated Roach Theme Park that was just announced for the Opryland Hotel? That's right. They're taking advantage of the relatively dark, moist environment of the beautiful indoor four-acre Conservatory at Opryland Hotel in order to convert it into a . . . roach theme park.

Hey, I don't make these decisions, I just report 'em. This gives a whole new dimension to the concept of roach hotels. And corporate dunderheads.

If you're into antiques, bring a trailer and a letter of credit.

Two exits from the hotel will put you on 8th Avenue (Franklin Road), a street bristling with antique dealers ranging from bona-fide high-end

If outlet malls are your (or your wife's) obsession, Nashville is ringed by a number of these opportunities to max out the old credit card.

European and American to, well, junk.

Prices run according to quality, that is to say nosebleed to pocket change.

Twenty miles south is the town of Franklin, lovingly restored to National Registry of Historic Places status. Great old 19th century homes, period street lighting and brick sidewalks make Franklin's multiple antique malls, restaurants, galleries and boutiques a very pleasant place for your family while you attend your unit mini-reunion.

The Carnton Plantation, an architectural jewel and field hospital during the Battle of Franklin, served as a temporary resting place for the bodies of 4 of the 12 Confederate generals killed during that engagement. The price of your house and grounds tour is much lower.

If outlet malls are your (or your wife's) obsession, Nashville is ringed by a number of these opportunities to max out the old credit card. Lebanon and Murfreesboro, both short and easy drives, present an array of choices.

Several other malls are located close to the Opryland Hotel. These malls dreadfully await the conversion of the Opryland Theme Park into the Mother of All Shopping Malls. However, this major conversion will not be completed in time to ravage your savings.

For art and history lovers, a short drive to the west offers the Belle Meade Plantation and Cheekwood Art Center.

Both offer exceptional architecture and lunch, the kind women seem to love: Small portions of fancy finger sandwiches, semi-exotic salads with dressings like crushed fern-leaf with fragrant mushroom antipodal peppercorn fragments, interesting teas from expensive places and great waistline-popping desserts.

The desserts are OK because the antipodal peppercorn fragments are low-cal.

Widely known as the "Queen of Tennessee Plantations," Belle Meade was the oldest and largest thoroughbred farm in America in the early 1900s.

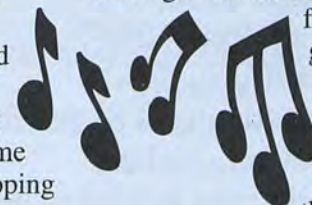
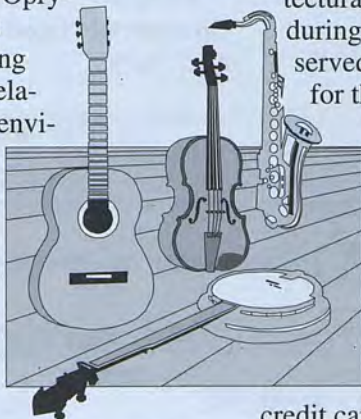
Some of its original 5,400 acres now provide a beautiful wooded setting for Nashville's priciest residential real estate.

The restored 1853 mansion is surrounded by National Registry outbuildings such as a carriage house with (surprise!) antique carriages, stable, log cabin, smokehouse, garden house, mausoleum, etc. Definitely an interesting destination and highly reminiscent of my hooch in Tay Ninh.

A couple of miles farther west is Cheekwood, a 1929 vintage neo-Georgian mansion that sits on 55 acres of formal botanical gardens. This former residence, a destination in itself, now houses resident collections and travelling art exhibits of all kinds.

In addition, the Botanic Hall features all types of exotic horticulture. That's "plants" for those of you who don't get out much. This place is restful, serene and a great place to unwind if you feel the need.

I haven't even mentioned the numerous music clubs where songwriters and perform-



See TOP, Page 18

Top music stars show unannounced

Continued from Page 17

ers hone their craft and where established musicians often take the stage unannounced for a spirited jam session.

I attended a songwriters' benefit for a local music school at the Hard Rock a few months back.

Vince Gill and Waylon Jennings both appeared unannounced and performed unscheduled sets lasting at least 20 minutes apiece.

It ain't called Music City for nothing, guys. And yes, that hot 5-string banjo picker WAS your waiter last night.

I think you get the picture.

Leave your car at home and you're stuck in downtown Nashville with nothing to do but eat, drink, shop and party in a wide variety of historic places with your rotorhead buddies.

Drive your car, however, and open up new universes for yourself and your family in terms of music, antiques, history, architecture and great food. Y'all come on down to see us, now.

Reunion notes

VHPA Nashville Reunion Chair Mike Haley has arranged for another great downtown Nashville hotel to be added to the "official overflow hotel" list:

Crowne Plaza
623 Union St.
Nashville, TN 37219
(615) 259-2000
(615) 742-6056 (fax)
(800) 447-9825

Rate: \$79 per night for one or more.

Website: <http://www.crowneplaza.com/hotels/bnadt/welcome.html>

A landmark 28-story, 473-room Nashville hotel with the city's only revolving restaurant on top for a great view of the city, the property is only three blocks from the headquarters hotel.

In addition to a link to this hotel from the Mid-South Chapter website, we have added mini-reunion schedules and points of contact, and a recap of reunion activities signup numbers.

The chapter's website address is: <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/msvhpa>

Vendors can sign up

Are you interested in being a vendor at this year's reunion in Nashville?

Space is limited and will sell out early this year. Reserve your table or square footage early.

For registration forms and additional details, write, fax or e-mail your name, U.S. mail address, fax/phone numbers to:

Dave Rittman

E-mail address:

Fax:

A complete sign-up and information package will be sent to you promptly by return mail.

Reunion events recap

Thursday, July 1

Early Bird reception.

Friday, July 2

Golf tournament.
Tour of Jack Daniels.
Music City reception.

Saturday, July 3

5k run.
Country music show, fish fry and aircraft static display at Tennessee Army National Guard Air Activity.
Grand Ole Opry.

Sunday, July 4

Business meeting.
Ladies social (City tour).
Dinner/dance.
Banquet — Guest speaker: Adrian Cronauer of "Good Morning, Vietnam" fame.

Monday, July 5

Departure.

Advertising rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

- Full page, \$500.
- One-half page, \$250.
- One-quarter page, \$125.
- Business card size, \$45.

Classified advertising is \$1 per line or \$7 per inch, whichever is highest.

Advertising revenue is used to help produce the Newsletter and limit the publication's dependence on membership dues.



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(Gladiator 21)

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VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

16th Annual Reunion Nashville, TN July 1-5, 1999

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7621

FAX signed credit card registration to: (916) 966-8743

Name:	Member No.:	Arrival date:	Departure date:
Wife/guest name:	No. of children:	Is this your first reunion?	
Names of additional guests:	How many reunions have you attended?		
Address:	Check here if notifying VHPA of an address change []		
City:	State:	ZIP:	Phone: ()

REGISTRATION FEES

	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration before May 1, 1999*		@\$25.00	
Registration after May 1, 1999*		@\$40.00	
Total from sidebar	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	
Early Bird Reception (July 1)		No host	
Jack Daniels Tours (July 2) (Limited to 600 people)			
• Tour 1 (dry tour) — 8:45 a.m.**		@\$20.00	
• Tour 2 (wet tour) — 8 a.m.**		@\$27.00	
Music City Welcome Reception and Music Show (July 2 — 6 p.m.)		@\$25.00	
Fish Fry and Nightstalker Display; buses to Smyrna, TN (July 3 — 9:30 a.m.)		@\$25.00	
Grand Ole Opry (July 3 — 5-9 p.m.) (Limited to 900 people)		@\$25.00	
Ladies Tour of Hermitage (July 4 — 9 a.m.) (Andrew Jackson home)		@\$15.00	
Annual Banquet/Dance (July 4 — 6 p.m.) (Check menu at right)		@\$35.00	
Dues (if included)		@\$30.00	
Life Membership		@\$450.00	
GRAND TOTAL			

INDICATE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE

Golf Tournament:

(July 2 — 7 a.m.)

Cost: \$60. Limit: 144 players.

5k Run:

(July 3)

Sidebar total

Annual Banquet menu

Entree choices Number

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| • Rainbow trout | |
| • Prime rib | |
| • Breast of chicken | |

**Lodging reservations
should be made
directly with hotel.**

☐ Enclosed is my check payable to "VHPA Reunion '99" ☐ Charge my MasterCard or VISA card (circle one)

* Each adult 18 and older must pay the registration fee.

** Dry tour (no alcohol) includes a box lunch.

*** Wet tour (alcoholic beverages served) includes a barbecue picnic with an open bar.

Credit card No.: Expiration date:

Signature:

REUNION NAME TAG INFORMATION

Name you want on name tag: Call sign:

Name of wife/guest: Flight school class:
(Number or year for Army; branch and year for other services.)

1st combat unit: Year(s):

2nd combat unit: Year(s):

3rd combat unit: Year(s):

Hometown or current residence:

Refund policy: No refund will be given for any dinner, event, registration fee, or other activity unless the member cancels the reservation by faxing or calling VHPA Headquarters no later than seven (7) days prior to the start of the first day's activities (July 1, 1999) of the reunion. Members may elect to notify VHPA Headquarters at 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610 by U.S. mail of cancellation; however, the letter must arrive no later than the 7th (seventh) day prior to the reunion. Reasons for cancellation and refund, such as hospitalization, medical emergencies, death in the family, etc., will be considered on an individual basis.

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- Special tribute to pilots who Died While Serving, with a listing of the 2,173 pilots killed or declared MIA in Vietnam
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Council approves chapter guidelines

At the Oct. 11, 1998, Executive Council meeting, the following guidelines were approved:

CHAPTER GUIDELINES: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish and maintain consistency throughout the Association.

The increasing size and complexity of our organization makes it necessary to seek assistance from a broader range of members. This is especially true with respect to the annual reunion. It is the belief of the Executive Committee that the chapters will be most effective in organizing the annual reunion. In addition, chapters are the best mechanism for locating

and securing new members and retaining present members.

1. Adhere to the conditions in the VHPA Constitution and by-laws.

2. The chapter must incorporate as a Not-for-Profit Organization under the applicable state laws.

3. ALL members with full chapter privileges MUST be VHPA members in good standing. This does not preclude non-VHPA members participating in an affiliate status. Any person expelled from the VHPA may not participate in a chapter.

4. Use of the VHPA name and logo is by permission only. A letter of permission will be issued and the VHPA is to receive 10 percent of the sale price of those items using the VHPA logo.

5. Each chapter must submit a copy of its constitution, by-laws, and officers upon activation and no later than 1 June of each year.

6. Changes to the constitution, by-laws, and officers must be submitted to HQ, VHPA when they occur.

Upon reaching 15 members under the conditions of paragraph 3, the Chapter can submit a request for the following:

- \$500 to assist the new Chapter in recruiting.
- A banner with the VHPA logo.
- A "battle streamer" with the Chapter name.

The roster of member names and VHPA membership numbers must accompany the request.

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	\$30.00 (XXL, XXXL)
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VIETNAM HELO PILOT

This late-era Army helo pilot is made of porcelain and stands 6½ inches high.

Each figure is painted by me and takes about 7 to complete.

The pilot is wearing a soft cap, two-piece Nomex flight suit, chicken plate, survival vest, .38-caliber pistol with holster, while carrying an APH-5 helmet in one hand and a CAR-15 in the other.

The cost is \$45.00, plus \$5.00 shipping (\$12.00 outside the U.S.). For an additional \$5.00, I will paint your unit patch on the left sleeve.

Figures are shipped priority mail.
Send checks and money orders to:

Steve Pullen



If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at: [REDACTED]

Son receives aviator wings at Fort Rucker

JACK SWICKARD
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

It one of those great moments in your life as a parent.

On Jan. 26, I stood beside my son Derek and pinned on his Army aviator wings at Fort Rucker.

The ceremony was 32 years after I stood while my wife pinned an identical set of aviator wings on the left breast of my Army uniform.

That was in January 1967.

Two weeks after graduation from the U.S. Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker, most of my classmates and I were taking our in-country helicopter orientation checkride. Derek will transition into the OH-58D "Kiowa Warrior" scout/attack helicopter before reporting to Fort Polk, La., this summer.

When the pilots receive their wings now, they have been officers for at least nine months.



My son Derek is on the left and my younger brother Jeff, who recently retired as a CW5, is on the right in this photograph, taken at the Final Ball at the Fort Rucker Officers Club, the night before Derek graduated from Army flight school on Jan. 26. I'm in the center.

Enlisted men and women who are selected for flight training must complete a six-week warrant officer candidate course before flying actually begins.

They are commissioned provision-

al WO1s for flight training, which they must complete within a year to retain their warrant officer rank.

Before they become warrant officer candidates, though, they are rigorously tested.

VHPA briefs

CH-54 pilot mini-reunion

Skycrane pilots will conduct their second annual mini-reunion during the VHPA gathering in Nashville on Friday, July 2, from 2-5 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel.

Bring photo albums, memorabilia and war stories. An automatic carousel slide projector will be set up. Bring your slides loaded in carousel trays.

Contact Max Torrence at [REDACTED] to complete a Skycrane pilot profile sheet for a booklet being published for the mini-reunion.

Washington volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed for the Year 2000 VHPA Reunion in Washington, DC.

Jim Goldthorpe, chairman of the Washington reunion, is seeking volunteers for various committees and activities.

He may be contacted at (home) or [REDACTED] work).

Please leave name and phone number. He will be setting up a planning meeting.



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Sergeant takes tank from the enemy

HARRY R. NEVLING
AND WILLIAM E. AILES

Boy, were we ever glad we had topped off the tanks at Luang Prabang.

We listened intently to the briefing by the Special Forces captain on local operations and activity.

This included the story of his complaint about not having any mobile artillery, as large weapons were restricted to 4.2-inch mounted mortars, so the sergeant went out with a patrol and took a tank away from the North Vietnamese/Pathet Lao.

Now the captain had his mobile artillery. However, the sergeant told him he was on his own for any additional

Part 2 of series

ammo he needed.

He also told us the officer

in charge of the airfield had been killed a few nights before. Someone had penetrated the camp and tossed a frag into the bunker where he was sleeping.

We went back down to the ship and helped the crew pump fuel. After getting a full load, we talked to the PA&E people about their loads.

The first item out was a small grader. While we had hauled "baby bulls" in 'Nam for making landing zones and fire support bases, as well as a variety of other construction equipment, this was the first grader either of us had hauled.

The second item was a rubber-wheeled packer. This piece of equipment used dirt for ballast and was lightened significantly by the removal of this ballast material.

This was the Crane's first load.

We had a second load of a large generator. We checked the rigging on both of our items, as these were our only flights scheduled for the morning.

We cranked up the Hook, picked up the load and headed off for Nam Lik, about 60 miles away. We depart-

We had moved supplies, equipment, and troops for the building of the road from Phu Bai to the A Shau Valley. That terrain had its challenges, but it was nothing compared to this.

ed to the south along a beautiful valley of rice paddies. The west side was a low ridge about 100 feet above the valley floor. The east side was a cliff of more than 200 feet.

About a half mile from the airstrip, the valley abruptly ended with the hill to the west becoming a ridge turning sharply to join the cliff on the east. Beyond this ridge the land dropped away sharply in a series of ridge lines of lower elevation. This would become very important later.

We were able to make a fairly straight line to our destination. Radio contact was established with the drop-off point. A smoke grenade was popped and we put the grader on it. Whew! One down and no one shooting at us. What a relief!

We were a bit, just a bit, relaxed on the way back to Moung Soui, and talked about the spectacular scenery and the immense difficulty of trying to transport equipment through this rugged terrain.

We had moved supplies, equipment, and troops for the building of the road from Phu Bai to the A Shau Valley. That terrain had its challenges, but it was nothing compared to this.

We made another run with the packer. This trip also was uneventful, other than getting to see more of the spectacular scenery of northern Laos.

Upon our return to Moung Soui, we shut down for lunch. We talked to the PA&E people about how many loads they had for the afternoon.

They only wanted to move two more loads that day. Both were cargo net loads of miscellaneous equipment.

We thought that was great! An easy day and, more importantly, we had plenty of fuel to take both loads and get back to Luang Prabang without having to hand-pump any more fuel!

The fun began when we cranked up after lunch. When we took the engines from flight idle (about 37 percent power) to flight (about 92 percent power) the No. 2 engine went up to 42 percent and hung there. Cycling the engine control lever had no effect. We couldn't get more than 42 percent out of No. 2.

After trying everything we could think of, with no effect, we shut down to check the engine.

The flight engineer opened up the No. 2 engine nacelle and went over the engine, especially the fuel control unit. This is a highly complex piece of equipment that receives the demand asked of the engine, measures the pressure altitude, and meters the appropriate amount of fuel into the engine.

Close examination of this piece of equipment revealed the fuel drain had clogged. This prevented the fuel from in the unit from draining upon shutdown. The relatively cool fuel in the engine from flight was trapped upon shutdown.

The expansion resulting from the heat increase blew out an internal "o-ring" seal. This prevented the fuel control unit from performing its essential function.

We talked with the local cadre about getting a part flown in. They informed us if our aircraft sat on that loading area overnight, it probably would be destroyed by morning. Not an acceptable situation.

We cranked up the ship to see if we could get it to a hover on one engine at that altitude and temperature. We were unsuccessful. We shut down again to make arrangements for any excess weight we could shed.

See AIR, Page 24

Air America flies crew, equipment

Continued from Page 23

An Air America pilot told us he'd take our crew and equipment to Luang Prabang for us after he dropped off his load.

We took out the guns and ammo, along with the toolbox and anything else heavy we could get by without. This was going with our crew chief and gunner on an Air America plane.

While we were waiting, we witnessed an interesting accident. Another Air America pilot, flying an Aero Porter, was chafing at the bit to get out, but was told to wait for an incoming C-123. This seemed to upset him.

He stomped around for a bit, then got in and started up his plane. He taxied into the parking area facing toward the strip. As the loaded C-123 landed, he gunned it and pulled onto the strip immediately behind it with the throttle to the firewall.

The turbulence got him. His hurry put him up on one wing and the other into the strip. Oops! Not going very far now!

The pilot jumped out of his aircraft, hollering about the turbulence and that the accident wasn't his fault. We tried real hard to ignore him.

Bill, Harry and the flight engineer cranked up again for the flight. We pulled another hover check and, although we couldn't get a hover, we could feel it was light on the landing gear. Both engines were running, but No. 2 was at flight idle.

We discussed trying a running takeoff. If we left the ship there, it would be destroyed. It was worth the try.

We taxied to the far east end of the strip. We couldn't take off to the east, which was open plain and slightly downhill, as we had been told that if we tried to go in that direction, we would be headed into Russian .51-caliber machine guns. We wanted to avoid that problem.

So, we headed west, which was uphill and toward a ridge line. Bill had practiced this running takeoff

We looked out at the ridge at the end of the valley. It was approaching fast. The extra 150 feet of altitude needed to clear that ridge was nowhere to be found.

procedure at Da Nang on several occasions. He eased the stick forward and we moved up the strip. He got the ship up on the main (front) gear and increased the airspeed as we moved down the strip.

All the instruments looked real good. We were moving along at about 80 knots when Bill eased the nose off the ground. We came up slowly and settled back in, although we were well above what should have been flying speed. One bounce and we were off the end of the runway. We were in a slow climb, rotor rpm was steady and airspeed was increasing. All right! This was going to work!

Well, almost. We cleared the end of the strip and everything went to hell. The rotor rpm started bleeding off along with our climb and airspeed.

Bill told the flight engineer to get buckled in quick. We looked out at the ridge at the end of the valley. It was approaching fast. The extra 150 feet of altitude needed to clear that ridge was nowhere to be found.

Bill was trying to get us back to the strip. He headed to the right and the ground dropped away below us. Bill eased back on the stick, but she still wouldn't climb.

Harry said, "Let me try this." and flipped No. 2 to its flight position. The engine picked up to about 42 percent, as it had before, and hung there. The good news was this seemed to lessen the drag on the system enough for us to start regaining our rotor rpm.

Bill had been bleeding off airspeed as we didn't want to go in at that speed. He had been trading the speed to maintain the low rotor rpm and altitude.

Bill eased back on the stick again and we began a shallow climb. As we approached the ridge, he found a break in the trees at the far end. He pulled back more and we slid over the top. He leveled off and traded the climb rate to get the rotor rpm back in the green.

Carefully monitoring the instruments, we limped around and landed back at the airstrip. Another whew!

We shut down the aircraft and made the decision to switch out the fuel control units back to the leaky unit. Again, we couldn't leave the aircraft at the strip overnight.

The flight engineer made some unauthorized repairs and rebuilt the leaky unit with parts from the disabled unit. This was depot level repair, not field repair!

The flight engineer changed out the fuel control units and we were ready to try again. This time things worked. The leaky unit no longer leaked and it got us to Luang Prabang.

Upon our arrival, we were taken back to the Air America compound.

As we got out of the vehicle, we witnessed a very strange occurrence. At the entrance to the compound, a group of Laotians had assembled. This was not unusual, as helicopters and their pilots quite often attracted groups of the curious.

What was strange was one of the men had a camera and was taking pictures of us. We had never experienced a local taking pictures of GIs. It was always the GIs taking the pictures.

When we got inside the building, we mentioned this to the Air America men. They all jumped up, asked us what he looked like and how he was dressed, grabbed their weapons and ran out looking for the man. When they couldn't find him, they returned

See PHOTOS, Page 25

Photos probably went on posters

Continued from Page 24

to tell us if we ever saw someone taking our picture, we should shoot him.

It seems the photographer was probably a spy for the Pathet Lao and our pictures were for their "wanted posters" of "American agents in Laos." Oops!

We checked out the situation with the PA&E people. They determined we had moved the essential equipment. The remaining equipment could be transported by the Crane and an Air America Huey. We were released from the mission.

We got our gear together and headed south to Udon, Thailand. The fuel control unit worked fine. We made an uneventful flight south and landed at Udon airport. This was a joint military-civilian airport used by the U.S. Air Force, the Royal Thai Air Force and Royal Thai Airways, a commercial carrier.

A "Follow Me" truck escorted us to a parking ramp and handed us off to a ground handler. He guided us into a parking slot — and a light pole. Yup, he guided us right into a steel pole holding lights for the parking ramp.

The flight engineer was yelling, "We're too close!" We thought he was talking about the edge of the ramp and we were about to go off the concrete onto the grass. Wrong!

The rear blades took down the pole with little effort. We shut down and examined all three aft blades.

One was damaged, with a large dent in the leading edge. All three had tears in the lower side. Hook blades come in sets of three, they are very heavy, and the aft rotor head is about 25 feet off the ground. They have to be replaced in sets, even if only one is damaged.

For the really important things going so well, the disabling small things were getting real old.

To top off the situation, the Air Force came over and told us we couldn't leave the aircraft on that ramp overnight. We had to move it to

The replacement blades finally arrived. With the help of the Air Force, the old blades were removed and the new ones were slung on the aft rotor head. We tracked the blades and got the ship ready for the return flight to Vietnam.

the far side of the airfield.

We went into flight operations and contacted our headquarters with the bad news. They would make arrangements to get us a new set of blades and a means to get the old blades off and the new ones hung on the aft rotor head.

We next made arrangements with the Air Force for billets for our crew and ourselves. They wound up putting us up in Udon at the Hotel Sharon. This was nice. A real hotel with real restaurants.

We were expecting a quonset hut with cots at the air base. This made the accident seem almost worthwhile.

We had another nice dinner. This one in a rooftop restaurant at the hotel. Even after all these years, I remember the real tomato soup! Ah, what a wonderful evening.

The only thing that spoiled it was that peculiar odor of Nomex. We were still wearing flight suits. These were the only clothes we had.

The following morning brought more bad news. Harry developed a major case of gastro-enteritis. Sweat, chills, and stomach cramps. At the airbase, the flight surgeon made the diagnosis and provided the appropriate medications. It took a long 4-5 hours to overcome the symptoms.

Bill and Harry had lost their caps. They had tossed them on the seats in the back of the aircraft when they were filling out the log book after the mishap with the light pole.

They couldn't check the blades

until they wound down and stopped.

They went outside the ship with the flight crew and checked the blade damage. Upon their return to recover their caps to leave the flight line, they discovered the caps were gone. Neat disappearing act on the part of the caps.

After making arrangements for the replacement blades and billets, we went looking for the BX to get new headgear.

An Air Force colonel was walking along the other side of the street. He called Bill over and read him the riot act for being outside without headgear. Bill didn't have the opportunity to explain the situation.

We found the BX and removed any opportunity for further ass-chewings with Air Force caps.

The replacement blades finally arrived. With the help of the Air Force, the old blades were removed and the new ones were slung on the aft rotor head. We tracked the blades and got the ship ready for the return flight to Vietnam.

With a new set of rear blades, a full load of fuel and a flight plan filed with the Air Force, we cranked up the ship and headed for home.

Another extremely apprehensive flight across the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this time without an escort. We thought we'd be as safe or safer without an unarmed escort.

We felt removing two additional targets might further dissuade any interest from the gunners along the trail.

This flight route was a bit different, as we went straight to Phu Bai instead of to Da Nang.

The scenery was strangely familiar. The main track of bomb craters clearly showed where the trail went.

We were very glad to pass the eastern edge of the A Shau Valley and the sight of Hue and Phu Bai in the distance.

We descended out of our nose-bleed altitude and made a long approach to Pachyderm Beach.

It was great to be home!

VNAF dustoff ability comes of age

JOHN KONEK

With the activation of the VNAF's first H-34 helicopter squadron and the assistance provided by the U.S. Army's 57th Medical Detachment (HA), beginning in 1962, the helicopter gradually replaced the ambulance truck in the evacuation of the seriously wounded.

This cut down substantially on evacuation time, which was reduced to 2 or 3 hours after a request was transmitted. Although still slow and limited, aeromedical evacuation came as a great morale boost to the ARVN combat soldier.

This support was further enhanced by the deployment in 1964 of the U.S. 82d Medical Detachment, with its six UH-1 helicopters stationed in the Mekong Delta.

Several U.S. ambulance units arrived in South Vietnam as the first U.S. combat units were deployed in 1965.

Within four years, the buildup of U.S. forces had brought in a total of 2 helicopter ambulance companies and 11 separate medical helicopter detachments scattered across the country.

In the meantime, by 1968, the VNAF also increased its H-34 fleet to five squadrons, which were used for tactical and medical evacuation missions. As a result, and with the activation of a grid network of station and field hospitals, evacuation flight time was drastically cut back to an average of 35 minutes.

Radio communications, the number of helicopters available, and the devotion of U.S. advisers were three factors accounting for an unprecedented success of VNAF dustoff operations.

In addition to their organic radio systems, ARVN combat units could always depend on the effective U.S. advisers network.

Helicopters in increasing numbers seemed always available for medical evacuation, including those earmarked for tactical purposes, but

If anything remained engraved in the hearts of ARVN servicemen, it surely was the image of the U.S. adviser who stayed by his radio or telephone requesting a helicopter medevac or the U.S. pilots who braved weather and hazards . . .

above all, it was the unequalled devotion of U.S. advisers and helicopter pilots who made all this possible, regardless of the time of day.

If anything remained engraved forever in the hearts of the ARVN servicemen, it surely was the image of the U.S. adviser who stayed by his radio or telephone late into the night requesting a helicopter medevac or of the U.S. pilots who braved weather and hazards to pick up the wounded, no matter how remote the area or tactical situation.

U.S. helicopters performed most of the medical evacuation missions for the VNAF after 1965, accounting for 70-80 percent of the daytime and 100 percent of the nighttime missions.

It was a period during which the incipient VNAF helicopter fleet could not cope with the requirements of stepped up fighting.

Reliance on U.S. medical evacuation, however, caused some administrative drawbacks.

Because U.S. helicopter pilots were not familiar with RVNAF hospitals, they frequently brought ARVN patients direct to U.S. medical facilities, making it difficult for parent units to keep track of their personnel.

Occasionally, patients even ended up on the off-shore hospital ships *Repose* and *Sanctuary* and their whereabouts were unknown by Vietnamese authorities for some time.

Beginning in 1969, Vietnamization trends brought about some modernization and expansion to the VNAF

helicopter fleets, whose H-34s were gradually replaced by the UH-1s. Each year saw new helicopter assets added to this fleet, which eventually expanded to 16 squadrons and increasingly, despite their mixed usage, VNAF helicopters took over the medical evacuation missions in replacement of redeploying U.S. units.

In preparation for this gradual take-over of responsibility, 83 medevac pilots, 21 crew members (medics) and 28 flight nurses received specialized training in the United States during 1971-72.

During the five months following the outbreak of the 1972 Easter Offensive, VNAF helicopters evacuated 31,600 patients, compared to 1,200 by U.S. helicopters. This was a remarkable achievement, highlighting the coming of age of VNAF aeromedical evacuation.

The drastic cutback in U.S. military aid in 1974 seriously affected the operation of VNAF helicopters. Flight time during the second half of the year was reduced to a mere 20 percent of the first half.

Medical evacuation, which depended largely on the VNAF helicopter fleet, suffered accordingly, despite the high priority assigned it by field commanders. The impact was acutely felt by combat troops in the Mekong Delta which depended on the helicopters for evacuation needs.

In remote areas, therefore, units reverted to the old evacuation means of the mid-1950s: Litters, hammocks, boats and vehicles.

In addition to their being grounded by limiting operating funds, helicopters on medevac missions ran into the newly created hazard of the deadly SA-7 missile and expanding anti-aircraft systems.

Many evacuation missions were therefore aborted, giving rise to all sorts of harsh criticism against VNAF helicopter pilots. This criticism was unfounded, as the VNAF helicopter pilot was truly "above the best" and performed truly heroic missions.

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