



# The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

January/February 1997 Vol. 15, No. 1



Don Joyce photo

A CH-47 from the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company recovers a downed UH-1 in mountains north of Pleiku in November 1967. The Chinook took the Huey to Camp Holloway for repair.

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## From the President

The end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997 was an exciting time at our house as my alma mater, Kansas State University, was playing in the Cotton Bowl.

K-State for years was the doormat of college football, having the most-losing football program in the nation for years. The football program has turned around in recent years to become a competitive-ranked program.

Pride exudes from the K-State fans. Forty-thousand of them rode the airways, highways and byways to the Cottonwood Bowl in Dallas, all decked out in purple, signs, banners and bumper stickers.

K-State came in second in the football contest on New Year's Day. But it didn't make their fans any less proud of them.

So what is my message to VHPA from this experience? Guys, show your pride in your organization of winners, the VHPA, by displaying your bumper stickers on your vehicles, cars, vans, trucks, tractors, RVs and, yes, even your pick-em-ups. Advertise our organization so that others may be aware of your service and that qualified pilots may join VHPA.

Ring in 1997 with your bumper stickers by buying one or more from VHPA Headquarters.

In the last issue of the VHPA Newsletter, Mike Peters wrote an article about the combat action resulting in the death of gunship crew chief Ronnie D. Schultz, a trooper in A Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry.

I was flying with an aerial scout team on the same mission and was involved with the rescue of the crew. Mike Peters' article brought back a lot of memories, so I telephoned him.

Peters had the addresses for about 10 A Troopers, including three guys in my platoon. I have called a couple of them, Jim Ehrhardt and Louie Vega. Both are doing quite well, one is a plant manager and the other is a judge.

These opportunities are the rewards of renewing of old camaraderie and the making of new friends with VHPA members with similar life experiences.

Recently, an issue surfaced at the Executive Council concerning participation in the 1997 U.S. Presidential Inauguration Parade by our VHPA Chapter in North Carolina. The question was whether the inauguration of a president of the United States was a political event and, thus, not within the realm of activities in which VHPA

should participate.

The majority of the Executive Council views the inauguration of the president of the United States and the commander-in-chief of our military and naval services as an American event.

The political process was completed after the filing for office by candidates for each of the various political parties, an extended and partisan political campaign, and the winners being declared after receiving the majority of the Electoral College votes cast.

The majority of the Executive Council view as political, participation in campaign ceremonies or campaign activities of a partisan nature, and these would not be supported by the Executive Council.

The Executive Council supports the Constitution of the VHPA, Article 11 — Objectives of the VHPA Constitution:

"The VHPA is dedicated to the fulfillment of the following purposes:

"b. To seek out, using whatever means available, individuals who piloted rotary wing aircraft in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era and inform them of the existence of VHPA and encourage all eligible individuals to become members."

North Carolina Chapter's participation in the inaugural parade with a Vietnam-era helicopter and the VHPA logo is a means available to VHPA to seek out individuals who piloted rotary wing aircraft in Southeast Asia.

Your Executive Council is in the better-check-the-weather mode before its long-term planning flight. Some of you have answered the calls made by Mike Hurley for chapter development; Jack Jordan for VHPA Vision; Bob Smith for further funding; and Bob Johnson for membership.

I expect these Executive Council members will be having a brainstorming session at the 1997 Reunion with those who answered the call and volunteered their services to VHPA to help us move toward long-range future planning and operation of VHPA.

Call, write and volunteer to help VHPA.

Speaking of the 1997 Reunion in Orlando, the Florida Chapter and the 1997 Reunion Chairman, Jim Basta, have a full-gallop cavalry charge show of activities planned. So take a look at the registration form, fill it out and send it in and make your reservation now to attend the Orlando Reunion.

You all in the Texas Chapter will be starting the planning for the 1998 Reunion in Fort Worth.

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## New chapter being formed

The Reunion Committee from the Kansas City 1995 Reunion will be forming a local VHPA chapter for Missouri and Kansas members.

VHPA members interested in forming the new group should write, call, fax or e-mail Bob Smith at:

Home: ( [REDACTED] )

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# From the President

## Continued from Page 2

We have high expectations for the Texas Chapter to have a real barn-burning reunion in 1998. One must be ever vigilant in Texas. Texas even tried to steal Bill Graves, as the public address announcer at the Cotton Bowl Game announced that the commemorative coin would be tossed by Bill Graves, the governor of the Great State of Texas.

Bill is the governor of the Great State of Kansas. I wonder if the announcer got a pink slip after flunking that check ride.

In the last issue of the newsletter, I asked for help from VHPA members living in Tennessee for the 1999 Reunion in Nashville. Guess what? Two VHPA guys have volunteered to head up the reunion organizational effort, Mike Haley and Larry Winters.

Volunteerism is alive in the Volunteer State, the Great State of Tennessee.

You VHPA members from the Volunteer State may expect to hear by U.S. Mail a message to assemble for a planning meeting for the 1999 Reunion.

The weather in 1997 has been a slam dunk for the Western and the Northwestern United States. There have been floods, blizzards, mudslides and all kinds of tragic weather-related phenomena.

Watching on TV, the rescues of endangered citizens by dedicated helicopter crews makes one proud to be, or have been, a helicopter pilot. Some of those pilots performing the life-saving rescue missions are surely VHPA members.

Jack Swickard, newsletter editor, is saving a special column for your stories. Fax them to Jack at [REDACTED] or e-mail them to him at: [REDACTED]

Jack continues to amuse me with the enchanting newsletter he provides for VHPA, but then what else could we expect from the Land of Enchantment.

My wife, Merry, teaches seventh grade English. Before the holiday vacation, one of her young students volunteered he had been out at the local airport playing with the flight controls inside an airplane in a hangar.

As the Chase County Interplanetary Airport (9KO) only has a sod runway and two hangars and two airplanes, both owned by my airplane partner and me, Merry asked him if he knew who owned the airplane.

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## From the President

### *Continued from Page 3*

A startled look answered. It is hard for a kid in a small county of less than 3,000 people to get away with anything. We knew that someone had jimmied the doors on a hangar. We thought it might be a gas thief.

Little did we consider it would be a curious seventh grader. So, rather than turn him in to juvenile authorities for breaking and entering our hangar, I called his mom and advised her that her son had developed an interest in airplanes and I would like to take him up for an airplane ride.

He got the message, as he told my wife he absolutely had to have a parachute if he was going to ride with me. (He may be wise beyond his years.)

The appointed day arrived for the ride. It was a cold, wintry Kansas day and here comes this spunky seventh grader wearing his black T-shirt (no coat, of course), black baggy pants, black ball cap turned backwards, ear-ring, and his best "I-can't-show-him-I'm-nervous" tough guy look and accompanied by his cute, bright-eyed, sweet, little, curious eight-year-old sister. She obviously had come to watch her big brother go for his first airplane ride with no idea she just might get to fly. She is excited just to watch.

I asked both to accompany me while I did the pre-flight, explaining the importance of the flight controls, emphasizing the obvious, rudder, elevator and flaps, etc. and demonstrating how each worked and, for obvious reasons, that such controls weren't objects for play.

So, now for the ride. I asked the little sister if she would like to go up. Wide eyes and excitement are descriptive of this little girl. And, for the first time in probably 10 years, my trusty 150 doesn't want to start. The battery isn't a diehard and runs down all too quickly and I manage to flood the little bird.

I unstrap the little sister and hook up the battery charger. The seventh-grade tough-guy look is gone. The panic look has appeared.

After a 15-minute battery charge wait, I strap in the still-excited-to-fly little sister, start the 150 on the first pull and off we go to explore the wonders of flight. The wonderful smile and appreciative eyes of the little sister when she thanked me for the ride captured the essence of what a wonderful gift all of us in VHPA were given with the skills and ability and opportunity to be pilots.

After landing with the little sister, the seventh-grade tough guy had by now opted for a coat, forgotten about the parachute, and apprehensively entered the realm of my flying machine for his first departure from terra firma. Landings equaled takeoffs.

A week later, I met the seventh grader outside school at a basketball game. He is all smiles. He waves. He is wearing a coat. His ball cap is worn bill-forward. No, I ain't sayin' his English grades have improved, he ain't had none of them there English tests to done did yet, but I think my 1997 New Year is started off right.

— Charles R. Rayl, President

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# Weapons system named for warrant

I am Russ Warriner, I have been writing about and for 2/20th that served with the 1st Cav in Vietnam from 1965-71 and F79 that took over the 2/20th aircraft and was there from 1971-72 and also took over the name Blue Max .

I have become the unit historian and have started the Blue Max Association for all those who ever served with our great units. The unit 2/20th was the first ARA (Aerial Rocket Artillery) unit ever and also helped train the 4/77 of the 101st in ARA ways. These were the only ARA units ever in the U.S. military ,although many units learned from what 2/20th learned.

In the June 1994 issue of The VHPA Newsletter was a write-up about a photo that was sent in by Rodger L. McAlister "Falcon 27 Alfa," who served with A/2/20 ARA March 1966-March 1967. It was about a photo that had

brought back memories. It spoke of the SS-11 ("SUGAR, SUGAR," as we called it when I was with the unit) wire-guided missile.

I spoke to Rodger and asked him a few questions about the missile as it was installed on my A/C many times, but I couldn't remember why we always kept the troops to our left. The rocket had a fail-safe mode that

was supposed to make the rocket dive to the right if one of the wires were to break, making it go out of control.

We had a system when I got there that we called the Maxwell System, so-called because Warrant Officer Bob Maxwell was the one who figured out how to combine the XM-3 (forty-eight 2.75 rockets) and the XM-22 (which had six wire-guided rockets).

I contacted Bob Maxwell and asked him to write something about it. His letter follows:

Dear Russ:

Here is the outline you asked for concerning the origin of the "Maxwell" system.

When the battalion arrived in Vietnam in September 1965, we were equipped with UH-1B and C helicopters, which had the XM-3 "2.75" rocket system mounted as the primary weapons system.

Each firing battery had an XM-22 Wire Guided Missile System in its spare parts inventory as a secondary weapons system.

However, this system was not mounted on any aircraft, but held to be used "on demand." This created some prob-

lems, since to change over between systems and checkout required about 2 1/2 to 3 hours to remove one system and install the other.

With the low demand for the missiles, this meant that having a dedicated M-22 aircraft available at all times would have been an unacceptable waste of assets.

On my first tour, I was assigned to Bravo Battery, and on several occasions we had to refuse missile fire missions because of the time restraints mentioned above. This disturbed me, since I felt we should do all that was possible to support the Infantry and help them accomplish the mission.

So, I began to research the tech manuals on both the aircraft and the weapons systems and discovered that the M-22 and the M-3 subsystems were electrically separate and independent. This meant the only thing that would be

required was a mechanical device to permit both systems to be mounted at the same time.

The next problem area which had to be addressed was the added weight combining the two systems would place on the aircraft mounting hard points.

After more investigation and conversations with the 15th TC support

company, it was decided the best mix of the two systems would be two banks of rockets and one missile on each side of the aircraft. This would keep the weight down to an acceptable level and still provide a tactically usable weapons mix.

By this time (late October-early November 1965), we had been engaged enough that we had found the average fire mission was only using a half load of rockets per bird.

This meant the four banks (12 rounds per side) would not affect the tactical use of the aircraft.

But the addition of the two missiles would allow immediate response to fire mission requests on hard-point targets (bunkers, vehicles, bridges, etc.)

At this point, I started to gather up the bits and pieces that would be needed to assemble the interface between the XM-3 and the M-22 subsystems.

I discovered a Huey skid tube was the right diameter to mount the launcher for the M-22, and that an 81mm mortar metal shipping container was the right size at the mouth to fit the outside diameter of the skid tube.

This would give me a steel tube that could be welded,



**This is what the "Maxwell System" looked like mounted on the side of a UH-1C Huey gunship.**

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instead of the aluminum skid tube which could not be with the tools available.

I then picked up some scrap steel plate, which I used to fabricate a ring the mortar tube was welded to and a flat piece the size of the flat area of a tube frame from the XM-3 system. This was bolted to the frame, then the ring was centered on it and bolted to the plate. This completed the mechanical adapter between the two systems and allowed one missile to be carried on each side.

Now came the hard part. As I mentioned before, the systems were electrically separate, so I had to pick out the firing circuits for the missiles and build the cable assemblies to fit each launcher and still allow for mechanical jettisoning of the systems.

The only big problem was fabricating a connection between the launcher wiring and the aircraft cable that would allow the unit to fall free if necessary, but still carry all the firing circuits.

After several weeks of searching the salvage yards and the electronics shops, I found a large piece of phenolic plate that was about an inch and a half thick.

So, with hand tools (hacksaw, files, pen knife and sandpaper), I cut and carved a plug to fit the inside of the aircraft cable socket.

I then covered the face of it with masking tape and coated the pins with stamp pad ink and transferred the pin pattern to the plug. I then took the cable to the avionics shop at the 15th TC and picked up the pin sockets of the correct size.

Then I sat down with the wiring diagrams and picked out which circuits would pass the signals I needed to launch and control the missile. After this was accomplished, I located these pins on the plug and, using a hand drill, drilled the holes for the sockets.

After inserting the wires into the plugs and running a system continuity check to conform the circuits, I turned again to the mechanical mount. After some conversations with the maintenance types, it was determined the outboard end of the tube needed some additional support, since it could have substantial "G" loads imposed during flight.

The outboard end of the skid tube still had the attachment lug for the ground handling wheels installed so I used it as an attachment point for two steel support rods that were threaded on the inboard end and held in position on the rocket tube frame with lock nuts and washers.

When this was done, I showed the setup to the battalion commander, (Col, Mahone) who, in turn, briefed the divarty commander and the commanding general (Gen. Harry W.O. Kinnard).

Gen. Kinnard came down and inspected the system and said, "This is what I mean when I say 'imaganuity'" (which, of course, was his buzz word for a combination of imagination and ingenuity).

Division gave us the clearance and we went out that afternoon and fired the system for the first time at a sniper located in a cave in the hills around the Mang Yang Pass.

The next day, J started on three more systems so that

## Committee back in business

I have moved from Atlanta, GA, to the Clearwater, FL, area last spring. Since I boxed all of the VHPA archives up in April I have been unable to do much with them or, for that matter, answer requests for information until now (I did not move my household until the end of October).

If you have copies of photos, after-action reports, unit histories, maps, or any other item you feel is of historical significance, you can send it to me at [redacted]

My E-mail address is now: [redacted]

Bob Davies

68-35 Gray Hats

101st Abn Div, January 1969-August 1970

Historical Committee Chairman, VHPA

each firing battery would have a system and there would be a spare (held at battalion). That is how the combination kit (later named Maxwell System) came in to being.

Russ Warriner

C/2/20th ARA, 1st Cav

November 1967-July 1969

Blue Max Association

<http://www.gwi.net/~bluemax/>

## Pilot describes rare cutaneous lymphoma

A short time ago I was diagnosed with a very rare cancer called cutaneous t cell lymphoma.

It's a cancer thought to be caused by exposure to harsh chemicals such as those used in dry cleaning, petroleum distilling, solvents, vinyl chlorides, rubber manufacturing, pesticides and herbicides.

The only chemical I was ever exposed to was Agent Orange. I thought I was in a rather small minority of helicopter pilots who actually sprayed the stuff.

In the First Cav, after the Air Force sprayed the An Lao Valley, a few of us Cav pilots would go to the chemical pad at LZ Uplift, get outfitted with spray booms hooked to two 50-gallon drums in the back, and do the small patches in the hills and along the ridges that were missed by the Air Force.

As one might suspect, our exposure was far heavier than the A.F. Ranch Hand crews, due in part to the rotor wash and the slow airspeeds we used. Often, the windshield would be coated with the chemical.

This is a very insidious cancer that does not usually show up until the fifth decade of life.

In its first stage, it manifests itself as occasional pink patches of skin after a hot shower. These pink spots will

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fade after five minutes or so.

Often, small, dry patches of skin that are flaky show up. This is often misdiagnosed as eczema or psoriasis and can go on for several years like that. Often, it's curable in that stage.

Sooner or later, it gets more aggressive and causes skin lesions and tumors, and eventually involves the lymph nodes and internal organs, resulting in death.

There are four stages. Because I have lymph node involvement, I'm in stage four. I was misdiagnosed three years ago with exazmer by the VA. That's not to fix blame, but to demonstrate the difficulty of diagnosing this cancer.

Finally, this fall, after a lesion broke out, a biopsy fixed the cancer.

The rate of occurrence was two cases per million several years ago, but that rate has begun to double every year.

I think that you and the staff should consider using the newsletter to spread the word. I have been in touch with Mel Canon and his group and, much to my surprise, two or three former pilots had actually sprayed also.

A couple of the guys seem to be showing early symptoms and, to the best of my knowledge, are in the process of getting checked out.

It's my hunch that before it's all over, a bunch of former pilots and crew members who sprayed will eventually develop this cancer.

This was not addressed by the Agent Orange studies done over the last 10 years or so and cumulating in acknowledgment by the VA of a connection between Dioxin and most non-Hodgkin's lymphomas.

However, cutaneous t cell was not included and my research indicates the main reason for that is it's so rare and only now is beginning to show up among veterans! Most experienced dermatologists would never have seen this before. The only way to pin this down is a biopsy!

I was going to hold off writing to VHPA for awhile, but my staging results finally came in Friday and, being in stage four, the prognosis is poor and the upcoming treatment will be aggressive and will leave me feeling quite sick and not in the mood to type.

So now it's done. Do what you want with this information.

Denny Russo

## Reunion friendships lead to New Year's gathering

In 1991, my wife Wanda and I went to VHPA reunion in Reno which was 1,800 miles from Longview, TX, where we live. While there, we met David and Becky Fry, who live in Tatum, TX, which is only 18 miles from Longview.

We have since become close friends and have made all reunions since.

## Directory's the best

The 1996 VHPA Membership Directory is the finest of the several outstanding directories you've made. Many thanks to the people who researched and put it together.

As I've done with past directories, I'll keep it near my desk and find something to reflect on every time I look through it, until the next one comes out. Then that cycle begins again.

I can help you with a couple entries in the Crew KIA by Date section. I hope the supporting information with this letter will make things right.

Thanks again for your good work. I'm proud to be a member of the VHPA. It's composed of people like Jim Tasker and Dan Brophy (the two KIAs he provided supporting material for) who did what needed to be done to accomplish the mission.

Sincerely,

Duane R. Brofer

*COMMENTS from the Directory and Database Committees:*

*THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. Absolutely perfect material for correcting our KIA and helicopter databases and for complementing our BATTLE database. We are certain the membership will enjoy reviewing the results your material added to these databases when it is presented in our next Newsletter.*

**EDITOR'S NOTE: The details this VHPA member provided are so outstanding they will appear as a feature story in the next Newsletter.**

David's brother-in-law is David Rand in Lufkin, TX (90 miles) who is married to Marie, Becky's sister.

David and David are VHPA life members. (Presented to them at Reno reunion by their sister wives).

Anyway, we all have been enjoying the reunions so much and this year decided to have a get together for New Year's Eve. Then we decided to try to invite all the Vietnam flight crew members in our area to come join us.

Our efforts produced a very wonderful gathering of 10 flight crew members and eight spouses. "The gathering" was held at Holiday Inn in Longview.

Wanda and I arrived at the Holiday Inn for check-in about 1600 right at the same time that Chris (The Bigfoot) Christensen and his wife, Jan, were arriving from Arlington, TX. We all checked in and then they joined us in our room for a few brews and to watch the last half of Army-Auburn game on the tube.

Around 7 we went down to the dining room and folks began to gather. We all had a fine buffet meal featuring prime rib and blackened salmon. Very delicious and it was all you can eat. I lost track on Chris but I guess it takes a lot of fuel to keep that big frame fueled. Needless to say, the conversation flowed richly as we enjoyed about two hours in the dining room before we all mosied over to the

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## Continued from Page 7

ballroom area where the party was held. The party was a sellout with over 200 there. Our group was all seated at one long table. Conversation, laughter, and libations flowed freely as all members of the group stirred around and visited with each other. Many of us danced with our honeys and a great time was had by all.

Entertainment was a live jazz and blues band (the A Team), with singer T-Bone.

T-Bone is a rather large individual (somewhere between 350-400, but discretion avoids asking) who is a good entertainer and has been doing this for several years. The band did not know "We Gotta Get Outa This Place," but did play a special dedication to our group. At midnight, a champagne toast was made, "Auld Lang Syne" sung, balloons released, all the guys went around and hugged and kissed all the gals and everybody enjoyed themselves. The hotel served blackeyed peas and cornbread for new years luck.

I am sending pictures to Chris and John Grow so they can be posted on the net.

Following is a roster of those present. Sorry I do not know everyone's unit designation or when they were in Nam.

1. Chris Christensen (Bigfoot) and impostor wife, Jan from Arlington TX, Bell Helicopter and retired Army.
2. Robin Stansell of Waskom, TX. (Bonnie had to dogsit newborn bulldogs). Engineering test pilot with Rockwell (now Boeing) in Shreveport, La.
3. Robert and Cindy Frost of Longview, TX, retired.
4. Bill and Linda Underwood of Big Sandy, TX, air conditioning contractor and retired Army (involved with dogs and horses, also).
5. Ed and Susie Roener of Longview, director of public works, City of Longview.

## E-mail letter questions if pilot is named 'Alice'

E-mail from Pete Kacerguis about the 1996 Membership Directory:

Page 25 — Alice Coley. Did you guys put that in just to see if anybody reads this stuff, or is there a guy out there named "ALICE"?

*COMMENTS from the Directory and Database Committees: Ouch! You are correct. This person was not a Vietnam-era pilot. Sadly, this was added to the database in early 1994. The name appeared in the 1995 Directory as well; but no more!*

*Pete's e-mail goes on to provide data about four more individuals in Section I, about four KIAs and about four pilots listed in Section V (deceased). Additionally, he provided information to update the history of the 7/17th Cav that was presented in the 1972 Directory.*

*Thanks, Pete — we only need about 10,000 more like you and we would have the history of helicopters in the Vietnam War complete!*

6. Steve Gamble of Longview, attorney, former assistant district attorney, now in private practice.

7. Jack and Betty Lou Jordan of Mt. Vernon, TX, executive council of VHPA, owners of Jordan Home Health Service, with offices throughout east TX, and ostrich ranchers.

8. David and Becky Fry of Tatum, TX, chief pilot and director of operations for Metro Air in Shreveport.

9. David and Marie Rand of Lufkin, TX, corporate captain (chopper) with Temple-Inland.

10. Aaron and Wanda Ault of Longview, patrol sergeant with Longview Police Department.

It was a great time getting together with some old friends and getting acquainted with some new brothers and their spouses. The VHPA has come to be very meaningful to my wife and me, and the reunion is the highlight of our year.

We have renewed old acquaintances with Army buddies and made many wonderful new friends who are spread out all over this great country. It gives us a chance to all come together, celebrate our friendship and the birthday of our nation.

God bless each and every one of you and may you have a great, healthy, and prosperous year.

Aaron Ault  
Emu 24

## Stagecoach, Falcon pilots hold Veterans Day reunion

If you weren't at the second 155th AHC reunion, held over the Veterans Day weekend in Washington, DC, you missed the second-best company party ever — and this one wasn't interrupted by 122mm rockets.

Our gathering was a tremendous success, as many of the nearly 60 attendees saw each other for the first time in 25-plus years.

Dean Owen came all the way from Fairbanks. And special thanks to Mary and Tom Mullen and Mary and Earl Baldwin, organizers extraordinaire!

A highlight of the festivities was voting to identify the best Stagecoach/Falcon pilot of all time. Each pilot was allowed to cast one secret ballot, and speculation was intense. Unfortunately, results were inconclusive, as every pilot in attendance received exactly one vote. An investigation is continuing.

Of course, a few war stories were told. The best PG-rated anecdote came from Falcon pilot H.C. "Nook" Waters. It seems that when Nook and Bob Nickle were short-timers, the Falcon pilots built a new bunker behind their hootch. As the final step, the sandbags and roof from the old bunker were used to finish the new bunker.

As Nook told it, he and Nickle had been celebrating their shortness for several hours when the mortar attack came late one night.

Out of habit they ran to the old bunker — drinks in hand — and continued to toast their shortness as the mortars

*Continued on Page 9*

*Continued from Page 8*

pounded the compound.

After a couple of minutes Nickle looked up and, seeing flares in the open sky overhead, muttered, "Damn, Nook, somebody stole our sandbags!"

Les Davison

*If you were with the 155 AHC in Vietnam and haven't yet been in contact with the newly formed 155 AHC Association, drop a line to Tom Mullen, 610 Louisiana Ave., Cumberland, MD 21502, and get on the company roster.*

## Membership Directory draws changes, additions

I just received the '96 Directory and found a few changes and additions to be made.

On the pilots KIA list on Page 154, CW2 Tom Damm is listed as a vehicular accident.

Tom was originally assigned to my unit, B Battery 4/77 ARA, 101st Airborne. After a few months he requested to be grounded for personal reasons.

He was then transferred to A Battery where he was doing admin work for awhile.

After a month or so he was needed back in the cockpit and made to fly combat missions again.

After one or two missions back on flight status he went out on a night mission.

We believe Tom either got vertigo or target fixation and never pulled out of his gun run.

On the DAT Page 229, First Lt. James A. Welling is listed as death unknown. Jim was a good friend of mine and had been grounded for a couple of years for his heart.

Jim went to the doctor for chest pain and was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was dead within two weeks.

On the pilots KIA list on Page 209, Capt. Richard Hulse and WO1 Scott Pardee are listed as KIA in a UH-1E. They were both in B Battery, 4/77 and Rich was giving Scotty a back seat check out in an AH-1G.

They never returned from the training mission. On my way back from the A Shau, I was told to start S&R and given the approximate location where they were supposed to be working. I did find the burned wreckage and called it in.

It could never be determined if they were hit by enemy fire or flew through a GT line. The transmission had left the aircraft in flight.

See you in Orlando.  
Bill Burski

## Class roster information used in reference directory

I just received my 1996 Annual and was impressed once again with the fine effort that was done.

Several years ago I sent a copy of the referenced set of

**I noted no reference in the Membership list or KIA list for the following individuals.**

orders for the award of the Aviator Badge (Wings) for my graduating class at Hunter AAF. Reviewing the Annual, I noted no reference in the Membership list or KIA list for the following individuals. (List not printed in Newsletter.)

I hope you will be able to make use of this information

in adding to the potential list of members.

Keep up the good work  
Ralph Chappell

*COMMENTS from the Directory and Database Committees:*

*First, thanks for the letter and the roster. We wish more members would be as faithful as you are.*

*Second, the data from the roster (Class 68-9) you submitted years ago was added to the VHPA Flight Class Roster database. The roster for Class 68-9 was printed on Pages 151 and 152 of Volume 2 of the Historical Reference Directory. Again, thank you for the data.*

*Third, concerning the KIAs: We attempt to look up each Army pilot KIA in the VHPA Flight Class Roster database and add that data to each KIA's record. If you notice one of your classmates is listed in any of the deceased databases in the 1996 Directory without the proper flight class codes, please bring that to our attention.*

*Fourth, the current VHPA policy for listing a Vietnam era pilot in the Directory is as follows: (a) that we have information from a reliable source this individual (by name) did fly helicopters in Southeast Asia after completing some authorized helicopter pilot training. FYI, the reliable source can be the word of any VHPA member, a set of orders, etc. (b) that we have some information this person is still alive and we have a mailing address. Clearly we would like a current mailing address, but we will take a "last known address." Without items (a) and (b), the pilot is not entered into the membership database which is the source for the Directory.*

*Additional information (e.g. flight class numbers, the units and dates of service in Southeast Asia, current occupation, favorite radio call sign, etc.) help make the Directory more meaningful but are optional.*

*Fifth, we will pass your roster to the Membership Committee. Possibly it can use the Social Security numbers to obtain addresses and then they can be added to the membership database.*



Members of the VHPA, the Vietnam Helicopter Crewmembers Association and family members are shown near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial — also known as The Wall — in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day.

## Veterans Day special at The Wall

**MIKE SLONIKER**  
VHPA MEMBER

Vietnam helicopter pilots, crew members, wives, children, significant others, one sister of a KIA, and a mother-in-law met in Washington for a Veterans Day weekend.

The total number varies, but at one time at the Vietnam Memorial — at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 9 — more than 100 were present.

In late October and early November in 1995, Bill Staffa and I, being Northern Virginia residents, noticed a lot of VHPA members wishing they could visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day and then mention it would be too emotionally difficult because they had never been there.

Staffa and I were puzzled, so we notified the guys sending the notes on the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crewmembers Network (VHFCN) that if they came up here, we would be glad to show them around.

This event began to take on a life of its own. In the VHFCN chat room, Lee Westbrook and Al Schibi decided they were going to meet in DC for Veterans Day.

The news spread like wildfire and overnight, one night in May, 20 guys said they also were going to be here. Events started showing up for the weekend at the same time.

Vietnam Helicopter Crewmember Association (VHCMA) member Jim Henthorn, gunner on a Special Operations USAF CH-3, was part of a team in nearby Baltimore restoring a UH-1C in the colors of the 116th Assault Helicopter Company and announced it would be dedicated on Nov. 9.

VHPA member Pat Dougan contacted his Texas congressman, who arranged for 50 slots to see the White house on Nov. 9. The White House tour attracted the wives and adult children of many of the attendees.

As a result, after consultation with John Plummer, VHPA chaplain and a minister of a nearby church, I put a schedule together and we were off and running. We heathen refer to him as "Rev Thunderhorse" because of his service in the 11th ACR.

This was the schedule:

- Friday night — Vietnam Veterans memorial (20 attended).
- Saturday morning — the UH-1C dedication in Baltimore (45 attended), the White House tour (47 attended).
- Saturday afternoon — More than 100 visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean Memorial and the artifacts left at The Wall, on display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.
- Sunday church services at Plummer's church in Purcellville, VA, followed by a brunch (74 attended).
- Monday — Veterans Day at The

Wall (70 attended).

I have attended nine VHPA reunions in a row and never experienced a reunion as diverse as this.

Tom Matason and VHCMA member Brian Piggott last saw each other on Dec. 26, 1968, when they were shot down in a 3/17th Cav Loach. Piggott was medevaced to the States.

This was typical of many of the reunions that took place. The 116th AHC gathered to see their company colors and paint job once again on an old warrior — the UH-1C.

The 155th from Ban Me Thout held a company reunion.

We paid respect to our forgotten forerunners, the Korean War vets.

The ability of the VHPA to help the family members of a KIA was once again demonstrated as we all met delightful Julie Kink. She was eight years old in 1969 when her brother, David Kink, died as a result of injuries received on a scouting mission with C/1/9th Cav.

Ironically, his birthday was Nov. 11. Julie was the bravest of the brave, coming to DC to meet people she only knew as a result of her letter to The VHPA Newsletter, requesting assistance.

To date, she has not met anyone who knew her brother in 1/9th, but has met many who knew him in flight school.

*See JULIE, Page 11*

# Julie Kink received warm welcome

*Continued from Page 10*

We all had the feeling, as we talked to her, that if we had been killed, we would have wished our sister had the same understanding care and welcome that Julie was getting. She will be forever a part of our Veterans Day reunions.

Through us, she was able to understand more about her big brother, and we became the big brothers for Julie.

I want to personally thank Jon Harris and his wife for offering to sponsor Julie at our Orlando 1997 reunion, so that all VHPA members get a chance to meet this vivacious lady. You could not help but think: "There, by the grace of God, goes my sister."

On Sunday, we (74 of us) went to church and watched one from our ranks, John Plummer, deliver a sermon we won't forget. His congregation will not forget our gathering, either, as we filled up half of the right side of the church.

The highlight of the sermon for me was John's reading of a Sea Wolf gunner's (Michael Shafernocker) poem, titled: "Look, God."

Michael was KIA in 1969. The sermon was taped and I will send it to those that want it. Just send me a blank, 90-minute cassette tape. If you want to read the poem and the sermon, they are on the VHFCN home-

page at [www.vhfcn.org](http://www.vhfcn.org).

If you do not have computer access, send me a note, and I will send a copy. My address in the directory is good copy.

The next day, the Rev. John Plummer would "deal with his own personal demon" at the Vietnam Memorial.

On John's second tour, he worked in the 3rd Regional Assistance Command's (TRAC) G-3 section that did air strike targeting. After careful analysis of intelligence data, John's section would prepare future air strikes.

As a participant of the Easter Offensive 1972 at An Loc, I witnessed his handiwork as the B-52s laid waste to the formerly no-fire rubber plantations around An Loc that hid the NVA tanks.

One of his planned air strikes was executed with precision by a flight of VNAF A-1's on the town of Trang Bang. You will recall the June 1972 picture of the little Vietnamese girl running and screaming toward cameraman Nick Ut after being splashed with napalm.

On Nov. 11, she, Kim Phuc, was a guest speaker at the 1 p.m. gathering at the memorial.

She mentioned she forgave the men who dropped the bombs and the

people that planned the mission.

Plummer had carried the pain of knowing it was his mission planning that caused the destruction and injury. He was in the front row of spectators with a band of us around him when she spoke.

At the Santa Clara VHPA reunion, Jay Riseden had introduced John to a Vietnamese poet who had written a poem about Kim Phuc.

As Veterans Day drew nearer, Riseden was contacted and told Kim Phuc and the poet would be there and they would like to meet with Plummer.

As Kim Phuc left the VVM, arrangements were made for her and Plummer to meet.

John Plummer was finally able to deal with the past and find that even though Kim Phuc lost her brother, had to have many skin grafts and gone through many years of physical pain, she forgave the man who planned the mission.

We honored the fallen, we learned how we all had similar hidden feelings. We saw that no one was exempt from the demons of the past. We had a family event. We saw how each looked in his 50s (or close to his 50s) — and could have passed on that.

We will do it again in November 1997.

## Vietnam helicopter pilots are everywhere

Check out the March issue of FLYING magazine.

Once again, FLYING is providing VHPA advertising space to help reach more potential VHPA'ers within the flying community.

FLYING, the most widely read aviation publication in the world, has been providing this space for the VHPA since 1983 and we are very thankful for their continued support.

In fact, the invitation for the VHPA to be a part of the biggest airshow in the world, the Experimental Aircraft Association Annual Convention at Oshkosh, WI, last August was the result of some brainstorming that took place between a couple of longtime VHPA members and friends: Dick Koenig and Ken Fritz.

Dick and Wayne Lincourt, both VHPA'ers, are both to be found on the masthead of FLYING.

This is the kind of member support that has helped the VHPA to grow and if you are a FLYING reader, you might want to drop them a line and say thanks.

If you aren't a FLYING reader, but you still have any interest in aviation, you should pick up a copy and check it out. Thanks, FLYING!

### Keep on trucking

VHPA member Mike Nord, WORWAC 69-37, 175th Assault Helicopter Company, 1970, came up with a great way to get the word spread about the VHPA.

Mike is president of Western Truck School, which has more than 200 semi-trailers and some big buses used for training drivers all over the Western United States.

Each of them sports a bright yellow VHPA bumper sticker on the back as they go about their jobs.

*Independent Study*

Subject: 600 44  
 To: John Sullivan  
 From: Professor Clark  
 John

You are quite correct in pointing out the omission of The Chinese People's Republic from the journal's traditional list of aircraft manufacturers along the Pacific rim.  
 As you know from the study guide, the Pacific Rim aircraft manufacturing nations have traditionally not been involved with the design and manufacturing of large commercial aircraft, sticking instead primarily to component manufacturing.  
 However, China is currently in the process of attempting to change this with their aggressive new design and manufacture of a 100-seat regional jet to be done in partnership with the European Consortium.  
 In addition, China has used entry into their market as a negotiating tool to gain component contracts with

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## IV Corps helicopter history to be featured

**MIKE LAW**  
**DIRECTORY EDITOR**

The History Sections of the annual Membership Directory have taken on different styles over the years.

Our tradition has been to "dedicate" each Directory to the theme of the History Section. The cover photos usually relate to the "dedication" theme.

In 1995, the History Section was devoted to the four tandem rotor helicopters that served in Southeast Asia. In 1996, it was an overview of the helicopter history of southern I Corps.

The preparation of these History Sections has often required more effort than the rest of the publication — certainly the LAM SON 719 coverage in the 1994 Directory was our "high water mark."

For economic (and Directory Committee resource) reasons, we believe we have found success with our relatively small (about 10-18 pages) History Sections that present a good overview (vs. in-depth coverage) of a

piece of our helicopter history. Naturally, input from the membership on this opinion is always welcome.

The Directory Committee is working on a "Helicopter History of IV Corps" for the 1997 Directory. The goal is to make certain we have a little something about every helicopter unit, about every major battle, about every important event. The following are examples:

- Army CH-21s from the 8th and 57th TC Companies were the first American helicopter units to fly in the Delta.
- Marine UH-34Ds from HMM-361 were the first American helicopters to be permanently based in the Delta.
- The legend of DUSTOFF was born in the Delta via Maj. Kelly and the 57th Medical Detachment.
- The major bases at Soc Trang, Can Tho, Vinh Long and Dong Tam need to be mentioned.
- The Navy HA(L)-3, the Army 7/1st Air Cav Sqdn, the VNAF 211st Squadron, and Air America will be mentioned.

• All the Army aviation units that served with the 164th Combat Aviation Group (e.g. the 13th, the 214th, and the 307th Aviation Battalions, plus their companies) will be mentioned.

• The U.S. Army 9th Infantry Division was the only major American combat unit to serve in IV Corps.

• The story of Tuffy, the Soc Trang Tiger, and the events relating to Special Forces Maj. Nick Rowe's escape from the VC after five years of captivity are examples of "special events."

**THE POINT IS THIS** — now is the time for you to get your comments, suggestions, source material, ideas **WHATEVER IS IMPORTANT TO YOU** to the Directory Committee to be considered for the History Section of 1997 Directory.

Feel free to send them to VHPA HQ, ATTN: Directory Committee or contact Mike Law, the Directory Editor [REDACTED].

## VHPA Unit Patch Project inventory still growing

There are more than 430 items in the Unit Patch Project archive.

Now that things have settled down a bit after the holidays, take some time to look at the Unit Patch Project inventory in your latest VHPA Directory.

If your unit patch is not listed, we need a laser color copy of it to help complete the collection.

There have been some questions about the black-and-white unit patch images depicted every few pages in parts of the current directory.

These are computer graphic images drawn by Jay Riseden and are not considered part of the Unit Patch Project collection, as they may not be historically accurate.

Please check the patch descriptions in the inventory, as some units had several different patch versions. You will notice we are including related platoon, maintenance section, signal detachment, med detachment, motor pool and mess section patches, as well as novelty patches.

All these items are part of our history. Send copies of your Vietnam helicopter unit patches and calling cards to Jay Riseden, [REDACTED].

## VHPA briefs

### Discover service dropped

The Executive Council has again reviewed the bank fees VHPA must pay in support of Visa, MasterCard and Discover credit cards.

Discover card fees are roughly twice as high as the other card fees.

Because the Discover card is used by a relatively small percentage of the members, the decision has been made to discontinue this service. Visa and MasterCard will continue to be accepted.

### Reunion hotel rooms available

The 1997 Reunion hotel in Orlando, FL, is very active booking rooms for early arrivals and is anxious to have all of the VHPA membership in the hotel.

There are 1,600 rooms in the hotel and VHPA has an inside track to them at a great rate.

If you have any problem with booking rooms, notify Reunion Chairman Jim Basta at [REDACTED]. His e-mail address is: [REDACTED].

# Flight class information most confusing

Of all the information the VHPA collects in databases, flight class information turns out to be the most confusing.

To start the confusion, the services operated flight classes differently. The Army had regularly scheduled classes with specific start and end dates, while the Air Force and Navy allowed pilots to proceed through training at their own pace with no specific end date.

The Marines and Air Force sent some of their flight students to Army flight classes and many Army pilots first got their fixed-wing ratings, then transitioned to helicopters in a Q (qualification) course.

During the 1950s, Army fixed-wing pilots were trained by the Air Force in L-21 Super Cubs at Gary A.F. Base in San Marcos, TX.

Primary Army helicopter training also was done by the Air Force in H-

13s at Gary A.F. Base as early as 1956.

Tactical helicopter training was done by the Army at Fort Rucker, AL, in H-13s or H-23s. Camp Wolters in Mineral Wells, TX, was reactivated in 1957 for primary helicopter training.

Fixed wing Class 59-13 was the last one to go through Gary A.F. Base. Flight Class 59-4 was the first all-officer class to go through Camp Wolters.

The Hunter Stewart complex started training in 1967, with the first classes 67-21 and 67-22, which graduated Dec. 15, 1967. The last Hunter classes were probably 70-5 and 70-6 that graduated April 7, 1970. Fort Wolters closed in January 1973.

After the 1950s, Army flight training had three types of classes:

- WORWAC (Warrant Officer Rotary Wing Aviator Course), made

up primarily of warrant officer candidates who were promoted to warrant officer at the same time they received their wings.

- ORWAC (Officer Rotary Wing Aviator Course), made up primarily of first and second lieutenants who had already received a commission and completed their branch basic course.

- RWQC (Rotary Wing Qualification Course), made up primarily of warrant and commissioned officers who already had fixed-wing ratings.

Class numbers consisted of the year the class began, plus a numerical sequence.

Until 1966, WORWAC classes were differentiated from ORWAC classes by adding a "W" after the sequence number.

Beginning in 1966, this numerical sequence was an odd number for

*See CLASSES, Page 15*

## The Hughes OH-6A LOH "Eye of the Tiger" by Joe Kline



Standard version - shown above (\$80), personalized version, with any unit markings and crew configuration (\$100). Full-color, 20"x28". Limited Edition. Call or write for ordering information. MC, Visa, personal checks or money orders.

**Joe Kline Aviation Art**

## Classes spaced four weeks apart until 1967

*Continued from Page 14*

WORWAC classes and an even number for ORWAC classes.

The WORWAC-ORWAC classes (flight portion) lasted for 16 weeks at Wolters and Rucker, with the same end dates.

Classes were spaced four weeks apart until the end of 1967, when it was decided to space classes two weeks apart to decrease the numbers in each class.

As a result, WORWAC 67-23 was the first class to split into 67-23 and 67-501 at Rucker and Hunter.

Those selected for 67-501 were delayed two weeks, graduating on Feb. 13, 1968, while the other half of WORWAC 67-23 graduated with ORWAC 67-24 on Jan. 30, 1968.

The 500 sequence numbers were used through 1968 at Rucker and Hunter until the regular sequence numbering caught up at Wolters (500 series numbers were not used at

**Injury, emergency leave, failing a test or convenience of numbers all caused people to be assigned to multiple classes.**

Wolters).

Additional confusion was caused by the fact many people were in more than one flight class. Injury, emergency leave, failing a test or convenience of numbers all caused people to be assigned to multiple classes.

Some people spent their entire time with one class only to receive their wings with a latter class because of missing a requirement at the time of their regular graduation.

When reporting flight classes, the

VHPA reports a maximum of two for each person: One for Wolters and one for either Rucker or Hunter. These class numbers are determined by the highest number we have for each location.

As an example, if a person graduated from Rucker with ORWAC 67-24 (name on graduation list), but got his wings with ORWAC 67-26 (name on wings orders), we report 67-26 as the flight class.

Section VI, Pages 230-238 in the 1996 Directory, lists the flight class records we have. Of primary importance are orders assigning wings.

Please check to see if your flight class information is complete. If not, send copies to the VHPA — attention Gary Roush.

As always, any additions or corrections to this information is greatly appreciated.

Gary Roush, Chairman  
Database Committee

## Honor & Pride

**6100 Tradewinds Court  
Virginia Beach, VA 23644**

We are now taking orders for jackets with a full-back VHPA logo, for delivery at the 1997 reunion in Orlando.

The jackets are black or white satin baseball jackets with 10½-by-10½-inch embroidered logo on back.

Two lines embroidered on left chest.  
Use your name and call sign.

Cost: \$70 each (\$75 for 2XL size). Please prepay and pick up at the reunion. If you don't attend the reunion, the jacket can be shipped for \$7 S&H.

Cutoff date for jacket orders is May 20.

**Are you  
looking for a:**

- Long-lost stick buddy?
- A classmate from flight school?

**Look the easy way.  
Use VHPA's  
"Find-A-Friend"**

Simply send a No. 10, self-addressed, stamped envelope — and the name of the person you're seeking to:

Phil Marshall

## VHPA news

### Class 67-5 reunion website

In conjunction with planning for WORWAC 67-5's 30-year class reunion, Mike O'Leary and his son Scott have constructed a 67-5 theme website. The address is: <http://www.magicnet.net/~mikeo/reunion/>

There is also a link to the website from the VHFCN home page at: <http://www.vhfcn.org>

The 67-5 home page contains emerging details about the class reunion to be held at the VHPA reunion in Orlando, FL, in July.

Other items on the page will be: Class roster, casualty list, died after tour list, class memorabilia, mini reunions and a "Find a Stick Buddy" link to a national phone directory that will help you track down that long lost classmate.

For more information or if you have something to contribute for the 67-5 home page e-mail Mike O'Leary at: [mikeo@magicnet.net](mailto:mikeo@magicnet.net) or Jay Riseden at: [JRiseden@aol.com](mailto:JRiseden@aol.com)

All 67-5 "Green Hats" are urged to contact former classmates and start making plans to attend the 30-year reunion.

### Unit plans mini-reunion

Members of the 7/17th Cav will hold a mini-reunion starting at 1 p.m. on July 3 at the Orlando Renaissance Resort.

Contact: Jim Cully, [REDACTED]

### Sun 'n Fun '97 in April

The Florida Chapter of the VHPA will have its helos at Sun 'n Fun '97, Lakeland, FL, April 6-12, in full force. All VHPAers are invited to stop by and visit.

To get more info on the second largest airshow in North America, call (941) 644-2431 or [www.sun-n-fun.com](http://www.sun-n-fun.com)

### Little Bears sought

I am interested in finding Joseph Wasmond and Peter Gallimore. They flew with the Little Bears, 25th Infantry Division in 1969-70.

If anyone knows their whereabouts or has some old orders with names and social security numbers from flight school or the 25th, please send them to me or call.

Mike Taylor  
Removed

Camas, WA 98607  
[REDACTED]

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## VHPA TRAVEL DISCOUNTS TO THE 1997 VHPA REUNION

Call VHPA's official travel agency & save on airfare & car rental with exclusive discounts guaranteed to save you money! \$100,000 flight insurance is included FREE with each airline ticket purchase.

**United Airlines**

**Continental Airlines**



**Carlson Wagonlit Travel**

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**(800) 283-8747**



## VHPA fund-raiser features Sebring

It won't be long. The Orlando Reunion is now in its final count-down.

For those of you who plan on flying to the reunion, you may want to consider a reservation for a one-way ticket.

This year you can enjoy the ride home in an elegant, 1997 Chrysler Sebring convertible.

This is the next best thing to a Huey with the doors removed and flying through the air at 90 knots. It really can't get any better.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to buy one, two, three or more tickets and win this fabulous **GRAND PRIZE**.

You may be thinking you can only afford one ticket. Well, get the office crew together, your flight crew or any crew, and pool your funds. It may be hard to split the car, but an option is to split the **MONEY**.

Your option, if you choose it, is to accept \$22,000, in place of the car. Not a bad day's work.

Should you win the car, you will be the proud owner of a 1997 Sebring with an approximate retail value of

\$23,000, FOB Orlando, FL. Taxes, fees and title not included. Void where prohibited by law.

Mission details: Sponsored by the VHPA, a nonprofit organization. Help yourself and the VHPA.

Net proceeds go into the VHPA general fund.

Tickets are a donation of \$100 each. Only 500 tickets are to be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is no limit to how many tickets you can buy, but there can be only one name per ticket.

Yes, your spouses, girlfriends and children over 18 of VHPA members may purchase tickets. The deadline is June 1. After that the tickets will go on sale to the general public.

The **GRAND PRIZE** winner, second place finisher and 14th place finisher will be announced at the banquet on July 5. Winners of the other prizes will be posted next to the morning report the next day.

You need not be present to win, but you are responsible for picking up and transporting the vehicle (I do have it from reliable sources that an Orlando volunteer would agree to

drive it anywhere, tough job).

If you choose the cash, a check will be sent to you.

Mission prizes:

• **First ticket:** **GRAND PRIZE** or \$22,000 cash.

• **Second ticket:** \$500

• **Third-13th tickets draw:** \$100

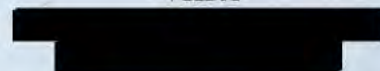
• **Fourteenth ticket:** Life membership in VHPA, if eligible, and a \$50 gift certificate or \$450 cash and a \$50 gift certificate.

• **Fifteenth-50th tickets drawn:** \$100 each.

Mission Impossible ? Not at all. A one in 10 chance of winning. To start this mission, you need a ticket!

CALL: (800) 505-8472 (VHPA) or fax (916) 648-1072 with your Visa, MasterCard or mail requests with check or money order to:

**VHPA**



If you accept this mission don't wait. Do it now. No money, no ticket. **GOOD LUCK!**

— Bob Smith

## VHPA Reunion '97 calendar of events

### EVENTS

#### July 1 (Tuesday)

8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Set up registration.
- Set up vendor area.
- 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Sign up early tours.

#### July 2 (Wednesday)

8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Registration (\$35).
- 1-5 p.m.
- Vendor displays.
- 5-7 p.m.
- Early bird reception.
- 5-9 p.m.
- Teen get-together.

#### July 3 (Thursday)

7-11 a.m.

- Golf.

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Vendor displays.

8 a.m.-8 p.m.

- Registration.

9 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Sign up tours.

11 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Mini-reunions.

6-10 p.m.

- Reception (\$25).

#### July 4 (Friday)

7 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Parade.

8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Vendor displays.

8 a.m.-midnight

- Registration.

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Mini-reunions.

4 p.m.-midnight

- Sea World (\$48 plus tax).
- Followed by fireworks.

#### July 5 (Saturday)

7-8 a.m.

- 5k run.

8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Vendor displays.
- Registration.
- Mini-reunions.

9-11 a.m.

- Business meeting.

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Ladies Social (\$20).

6-9 p.m.

- Banquet (\$35).

#### July 6 (Sunday)

8:30 a.m.

- Church service.

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

14th Annual Reunion Orlando, FL July 1-6, 1997

## REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 949 University Ave., Suite 210, Sacramento, CA 95825

FAX signed credit card registrations to: (916) 648-1072

|                             |                                                       |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 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 6/1/97*                                         |                        | @ \$ 25.00 |       |
| Registration after 6/1/97*                                          |                        | @ \$ 35.00 |       |
| Total from sidebar                                                  | XXXXXXXXXX             | XXXXXXX    |       |
| Early Bird Party (July 2)                                           |                        | No host    |       |
| Reception (July 3)                                                  |                        | @ \$ 25.00 |       |
| Sea World & Barbecue (July 4):                                      |                        |            |       |
| Adults                                                              |                        | @ \$ 55.00 |       |
| Children under 12 years of age                                      |                        | @ \$ 40.00 |       |
| Ladies Social (July 5)                                              |                        | @ \$ 20.00 |       |
| Banquet (July 5)                                                    |                        | @ \$ 35.00 |       |
| Dues (if included)                                                  | 1 year                 | @ \$ 30.00 |       |
| You can make 3 payments over 6-month Installment period if you wish | Life installment No. 1 | @ \$150.00 |       |
| Complete Life Membership                                            |                        | @ \$450.00 |       |
|                                                                     | GRAND TOTAL            |            |       |

|                                                                                                       |                      |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Indicate if you want to participate in these</b>                                                   |                      |           |
| <b>Golf Tournament:</b><br>(July 3, 8 a.m. Includes prizes.)<br><b>Cost: \$50. Limit: 72 players.</b> |                      |           |
| <b>Teen Dance:</b><br>(July 2.)                                                                       |                      |           |
| <b>Tennis Tour:</b><br>(July 3.)                                                                      |                      |           |
| <b>Parade:</b><br>(July 4.)                                                                           |                      |           |
| <b>5k Run:</b><br>(July 5.)                                                                           |                      |           |
| <b>T-shirts:</b>                                                                                      |                      |           |
| Qty.                                                                                                  | Size                 | Price     |
|                                                                                                       | S                    | @ \$12.00 |
|                                                                                                       | M                    | @ \$12.00 |
|                                                                                                       | L                    | @ \$12.00 |
|                                                                                                       | XL                   | @ \$12.00 |
|                                                                                                       | XXL                  | @ \$15.00 |
|                                                                                                       | XXXL                 | @ \$15.00 |
|                                                                                                       | <b>Sidebar total</b> |           |

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

- ☐ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '97"
- ☐ Please charge my MasterCard or VISA card (circle one)

**Questions? Call  
(800) 505-VHPA**

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| 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 refunds will be granted before reunion. Basic registration fees are not refundable. All refund requests must be sent to VHPA headquarters before Aug. 8, 1997, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events that lose money. VHPA headquarters will process and pay refund requests within 10 days of completing the reunion account balancing.

# Jim Zwit hears the screams of wounded

STANLEY C. MARCIESKI  
DUSTOFF 97

Far back in the column, Jim Zwit heard the firefight start.

He heard the screams of the wounded, plus Lt. McKenzie yelling for help. McKenzie was well respected by the men of the entire company and particularly by Zwit.

Realizing nobody was going to their immediate aid and without a thought for his safety, Jim Zwit jumped up, dashed past his platoon and the second platoon toward the firing and Lt. McKenzie's cries for help.

Reaching point under enemy fire, Zwit dove to the ground near Sterns. He found Sterns had been killed in the first burst of gunfire. Zwit then rolled over and sprayed a clip from his M16 and tossed a couple of grenades in the direction of the enemy fire.

What had been a crescendo of bat-

tle noise just seconds before instantly became a dead silence. In that brief lull of only seconds, Jim reached Lt. McKenzie, heaved him over his right shoulder and began a beeline for the friendlies.

This race to friendly lines was halted by the bright flash of an explosion

## Part 2 of series

just off to his right side. The explosion blasted both Zwit and his human cargo into the air and off to the other side of the trail. The explosion killed McKenzie whose body, slung over Jim's right shoulder, probably saved Zwit from instant death.

The blast still ripped shards of shrapnel deep into Zwit's exposed right side. Zwit lay on his back stunned and watched as tracers slashed in both directions above his face. He was caught between lines in

the middle of a deepening firefight.

Seventy-eight grunts of D company had stumbled into 1,500 well-disciplined NVA regulars who were waiting in well-prepared, fortified positions. Casualties began to mount as movement was hindered by the tangled masses of timbers that had been felled by previous artillery and airstrikes. D Company was in a fight for its life.

Running after Fred on the way to the flight line, I noticed we had accumulated a small entourage that later blossomed into our crew.

One of the group, Danny McFadden, was hobbling along on crutches because, as I later found out, of a stab wound in the leg. The wound was inflicted when he unexpectedly opened a door that was being used for knife-throwing target practice by Spec. McGuigan.

McGuigan, our self-proclaimed

*See MEDIC, Page 20*

## VHPA news

### VHPA to man hospitality tent

The VHPA has again been asked to attend and man a hospitality tent for veterans at the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Convention in Oshkosh, WI, the first week of August.

Please think it over and, if you can volunteer some time, you can get some real VIP treatment and a free pass into the convention.

This is a really big airshow: Flybys of F-18s, World War II planes, homebuilts and helicopters, the B-1, etc.

The veterans hospitality tent last year had representatives from the Mohawk pilots, Korean T-6 combat pilots and other pilots' associations.

It was a lot of fun, entertaining and definitely worth doing.

Plan early to attend.

Contact the VHPA Headquarters to register your desire to participate.

### Hueys given away by government

The government is giving away Hueys to various individuals and organizations.

Ken Fritz got a Mike model that was flown in Vietnam as a Charlie.

Plans are to put it on a pole at the local VFW before vandals can destroy it.

The Auglaize Township Historical Society, Harrod, OH, has found a use for an H Model on a pole in its new veterans park.

VHPA member Steve Kerchenfaut, 176th AHC, helped to get this deal together.

To help pay for it, he tells us they have 4- by 8-inch granite "bricks" going into a panel that will memorialize veterans with their names, unit patches or whatever for a donation of \$125.

This sounds like a good way to go if you want to put up a Huey and be able to show your friends what you flew way back when.

Steve is in the membership directory if you want to know more.

### VHPA members help at HAI

At Helicopter Association International (HAI) this year there will be some good help from members Russ Janus, Jim Cunningham, Dan Bresnahan, Max Mizejwski, Will Gibbons and Ken Fritz.

The idea is to offer an easy way for members who attend HAI to renew and for new members to learn about the VHPA and join up.

HAI gives the VHPA complimentary booth space.

This a great help to all members of the VHPA in our quest to locate our old stick buddies.

## Medic carried a sawed-off machine gun

*Continued from Page 19*

registered psychopath also was a medic, a most unusual medic, since he carried a sawed-off M-60 machine gun strapped to his back.

That night, McFadden also was carrying a machine gun, a Thompson submachine gun, which is a weapon I had only seen previously in the movies. Pickens, the crew chief, and Flores, an OJT medic, rounded out our crew.

Fred ran up to one aircraft, opened the door, grabbed the log book, flipped it open, said it was red X'd and ran to another one. At the next Huey he did the same, except for saying this one was "OK" and for me to get in and crank her up.

"What about preflight?" I asked, knowing nobody in his right mind ever flew an aircraft without a preflight.

Fred yelled, "We don't have time!"

I jumped in and cranked her up.

Curse you, John Wayne.

From this distance I sometimes wonder what over and above the bleeding and dying grunts had compelled me to climb into that bird and yell, "Clear! Coming hot!!"

It does no good to wonder anymore. It is certainly evident we who flew Dustoff had a very special mission in that war. It was a job that will probably never be duplicated because of all the diverse facets of that war and the new weaponry of today.

We saved lives which in any occupation is a noble pursuit, but in Nam, in a war I doubt if anyone considered it a particularly noble pursuit. It was pulling bleeding, torn apart, hurting people out of the most unimaginable circumstances.

ARVN's, RFPFs, civilians, the enemy, GIs, pilots and even babies. We picked them all up — night and day, rain or shine. Sometimes the wounded evacuee, after being hauled

safely on board, would, if able, hug the nearest crew member in a show of gratitude for being pulled out of a tight spot still breathing.

At other times, gratitude would be expressed in bars, on those rare occasions when you were not on duty and you could get to a bar. If the grunts discovered you flew Dustoff, you could not pay for another drink.

There were reasons beyond counting for flying Dustoff, but they all boiled down to a personal feeling that if it were me lying out there bleeding, could I count on someone flying in to get my butt out? We did our damndest, especially when it came to getting U.S. troops out and to a hospital.

Dustoff built a helluva reputation, some said at too great a cost to our own crews' lives, for hanging it out and doing the job. I think not one of us will ever have a regret for what we

*See GRUNTS, Page 21*

## VHPA briefs

### Offer no longer in effect

Honor & Pride ran a note in the last Newsletter offering to replace 1996 Reunion T-shirts that had faded colors because a dye lot error was suspected.

Because fewer than 12 of more than 500 shirts have been returned, this free return policy is no longer in effect.

Thanks to Honor & Pride for standing behind its products.

### Keep headquarters posted

Please do not fail to tell VHPA when you move. Call **Removed VNCA** so you don't miss a newsletter or renewal notice.

Chapter members also are urged to ensure their VHPA membership is in good standing.

### Company plans mini-reunion

The 176th Assault Helicopter Company will have a mini-reunion at Orlando.

In Atlanta we had 52 pilots attend.

Please contact Ken Fritz to get in on this gathering of the best pilots who ever flew in I Corps.

## Viet Nam Today

*A tour exclusively designed for Viet Nam Veteran Pilots visiting important military sites including Birmingham, Bastogne, Ashau (Tabat), Khe Sanh, Laotian Border, Vandy, Rockpile, DMZ, Camp Evans, LZ Sally, Hue, Phu Bai, and Camp Eagle.*



September 19 - October 3, 1997

\$3195 per person

(all inclusive with international air)

*Additional tour highlights include:*

- Meetings with Viet Nam Veteran counterparts
- Exploring Cu Chi tunnels
- Snorkeling in Nha Trang
- Climbing Danang's Marble Mountain
- Delivering in-kind donations to an orphanage in a Montagnard village
- Overnighting in the Ashau Valley
- Golfing in Hanoi

*Optional in-country helicopter tour under construction*

*---call for more information!*

**SPACE IS LIMITED!**

For further information or detailed itinerary

**CALL 800-419-4446**

Tour Exclusively Designed by

**GLOBAL SPECTRUM + Viet Nam Travel Specialists**



## Grunts were in heavy contact on ground

*Continued from Page 20*

did as Dustoff crews and most probably would do it again.

That night, though, none of us in the crew of Dustoff 913 was thinking about free drinks as I cranked 460 and backed her out of the revetment.

With the .45 covering my family jewels and Fred talking on the radios while pointing out directions to me, we were on our way into the night skies.

Shortly after takeoff, Fred tuned in to the tactical push and we heard the urgent mixed chatter between Dustoff 93, the command-and-control bird and the grunts on the ground.

The grunts were in heavy contact. They reported two KIAs and 20 WIAs, several of whom were seriously wounded. From the rapidly closing distance, you could see flare after flare being dropped on the site that was to be our LZ.

From his position on the trail, Jim

Zwit tried to slide on his back toward friendly lines. It was a useless effort because of the pain.

Out of nowhere, somebody crawled up and tried to bandage his wounds. It was Staff Sgt. Kron, a slow-talking, slow-moving buddy from Tennessee. Kron did his best to patch the wounds, but met with little success.

While trying to pull Zwit to safety, a bullet slammed into Kron. Unable to pull Jim back and wounded, Kron crawled back to his lines.

Moments later, someone else crawled to Zwit, grabbed him by the shoulders and tried to drag him back.

It was Phil Brummett, a fellow platoon member who Jim hated and who hated Jim in return because of a run-in earlier in their tour of duty.

Although in pain and shock, Zwit remembers being surprised by Brummett of all people coming to his aid. Brummett's attempted rescue was

short-lived.

A mortar round landed near Jim's legs, wounding his left leg as its explosion tossed him and Brummett. That explosion, followed by another, signaled to both men death was certain if they did not move fast.

From somewhere deep inside, Zwit found the strength to leap to his feet with Brummett at his side and run to the cover of the friendly lines. They both dived over a fallen log and hit the ground as bullets impacted into the other side of the log.

As we flew closer, the LZ grew into a living nightmare vision in a glass bowl that was surrounded by darkness. Low-hanging clouds and smoke from the flares being dropped eerily reflected the orange-white burning magnesium glare and the bright lights of explosions. Bursts of red and green tracers were piercing the night sky in stitches and erratic

*See SILHOUETTES, Page 22*

### Bro Vau Watch Co.

1301-F Corporate Drive East  
Arlington, TX 76006  
(817) 695-1553/(817) 261-0898 FAX

#### The VHPA watch

Bro Vau Watch Co. is offering special watches to members of the VHPA.

Each watch, which sells for \$36, has the VHPA logo imprinted on the face. Each carries a LIFETIME warranty, except for battery, strap and strap pins.

To order a watch, complete this form and then mail or fax it to Bro Vau Watch Co., along with a credit card number, a check or money order.

Ship to:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

City:

State:

ZIP:

| Quantity: | Type              | Unit    | Total  |
|-----------|-------------------|---------|--------|
|           | Man's             | \$36.00 |        |
|           | Woman's           | \$36.00 |        |
|           | Sales tax         |         | \$2.78 |
|           | S&H (\$3.50 each) |         |        |
|           | <b>TOTAL</b>      |         |        |

(Check, money order, VISA, M/C)

## They're a lot more than just pretty pictures . . .

The VHPA is running a special on 1995 and 1996 calendars ordered as a package deal.

For \$10 — plus \$5 P&H — you can buy a 1995 and a 1996 VHPA calendar.

Better yet, you will be getting the best photos ever taken of helicopters in action in Vietnam — while supporting the VHPA, YOUR association.

Call VHPA headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA and order your calendar package today.

# Silhouettes of choppers weaved in and out

*Continued from Page 21*

ricochets bounced in every direction.

Silhouettes of blacked-out helicopters weaved in and out of this bizarre scene planted in the treetops of a hill not far from FSB Bastogne.

I flew us in close to the LZ, then Fred transferred the controls from me, the peter pilot in the next seat, who a few minutes before was a total stranger.

Now my job would be to talk to the guns, monitor the engine and trans instruments and stay ever so lightly on the controls.

In any Dustoff LZ, the pilot not actually flying was always light on the controls in order to immediately take over if the other pilot took a round. If Fred got hit that night and lost consciousness, his instructions to me were to climb, fly north and call Phu Bai Approach.

Sounded simple, but in those surreal moments I just listened and never really considered the area was a strange mountainous AO, it was night, I had never flown here before and to get a combat-damaged aircraft out of this mess might not be that easy.

We were almost on top of the LZ now and we could see Dustoff 93 at a hover trying to complete a hoist as tracers continued to flash all around

his Huey. He was having a difficult time and taking hits that forced him to break off.

Dustoff 93 had one wounded on board as he was forced from the site. We watched 93 begin to depart the LZ. Then Fred slipped 460 down the hillside a little and quickly popped her back up to take 93's vacated spot almost on 93's tail. We were then at a stationary hover in the middle of the nightmare.

The crew in the back had flipped to hot mike. They were now transmitting every breath and word, plus the sound of the battle outside the aircraft. These sounds, mingled with the staccato blasts of automatic weapons and explosions, became the background music for this movie.

The medic started the JP down while constantly informing us of the JP's progress.

"The JP's on the way down 10-20 . . . two feet to the right . . . 40-20 from the ground . . . almost there . . . it's on the ground."

For a split second, it seemed the bad guys did not know we had arrived. Then, "We're taking fire at six-thirty!" "Taking fire at nine!" "Taking fire at 11!"

"At 1910 hrs, the enemy commenced firing 60mm mortars on friendly positions. Rocket-propelled

grenades and automatic weapons fire and satchel charges also were employed by the enemy. Most of the casualties were the result of mortar fire tree bursts. The machine gun fire was employed in well-controlled bursts and was used primarily against medevac ships when they attempted an extraction. The volume of fire that was directed against the medevac ships made evacuation of casualties extremely difficult," read the Company D/501st unit after-action report.

McFadden, sitting in the hell-hole was screaming, "I can see them running on the ground shooting at us!!" and blasting away with the Thompson. Pickens was clearing the bird and firing his weapon. The medic was guiding the hoist.

All three crewmembers in the back were reporting fire and I could see tracers blazing over the nose of our Huey.

Fred, amid the pandemonium, was keeping the bird as steady as possible.

I tried to remain calm but could not remember the call sign of the Cobra gunships that were covering us. When we started taking fire, I simply called them "guns" and gave them the contact in clock headings off our nose.

As the reports of fire came in from  
**See THE COBRAS, Page 23**

## Calendar

### Feb. 15-17

East Coast Mini-Reunion at the Quality Inn and Suites in Landis Valley, PA. Bring RVN scrapbooks and slides.

Call the hotel at (717) 569-0477. Be sure to mention you're with the VHFCN/VHCMA/VHPA.

Contact: Paul S. Pelland, Big Red 1, Lai Khe, September 1967-68. Lancaster, PA. Voice: ( ); fax: ( )

### April 11-12

Little Bear reunion for members of A Company, 25th Aviation, 25th Infantry Division at the Grand Hotel in Pensacola, FL.

Contact: Jim Kelly at ( )

### Aug. 20-24

The Army Otter-Caribou Association will hold its 12th annual reunion in Albuquerque, NM.

Contact: Bruce D. Silvey, P.O. Box 20471, St. Petersburg, FL 33742. Call (800) 626-8194.

### Oct. 30-Nov. 1

Former members of the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion will have a reunion in St. Louis. Events include visits to riverboat casinos, live entertainment and tours.

Headquarters is the St. Louis Marriott Hotel, which has special rates for the reunion. For room reservations, call (800) 228-9290.

Contact: Vernon G. Gano Jr., president of the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion & Camp Holloway Association, at ( ). Home: ( ) 3590.

# The Cobras opened up, firing rockets

*Continued from Page 22*

the back of the bird, I quickly covered most of the clock and told the guns we were targeted from 360, which, as it turned out, was fact. The Cobras opened up, tossing in rockets as they skimmed and circled us in the flare light.

Expecting at any second to see the engine gauges start unwinding, indicating something vital had been hit, my eyes were everywhere — in and out of the cockpit. "He's on the JP, break ground. Comin' up . . . 10 feet . . . 20 . . ."

I kept thinking, why was it taking so long? It was almost as if time had slowed and everything was moving in slow motion. We could not leave until we had the patient close enough to the helicopter to at least have him clear the treetops when we left the LZ.

To just sit there and wait while you were silhouetted against the flares as the target of opportunity for the bad guys was not easy, but it sure was an adrenaline rush. There was too much noise and commotion to tell how many hits we were taking.

"Twenty feet from the bird . . . 10 feet. Got him! GO! GO! GO!" Fred grabbed an armful of collective and

nosed 460 over as I called out max power and radioed to the guns our departure heading.

In an instant, we bolted out of there and were on the way to Phu Bai with a grunt who had a gunshot wound through the chest. It was not Jim Zwit.

Once out of any hot LZ after a pickup, it was always the same. The break in tension was an explosion of relief for the crew. Clear of danger, we all jabbered loudly about what we had just survived.

It was amazing how, despite the fact that after flying into LZs in one of the noisiest machines known to warfare, unless taking fire we would all whisper in hushed voices over the intercom during the extraction as if talking in even a normal voice would alert the bad guys to our presence in their AO.

Then, after departing the LZ and in the relative safety of the air, our voices would rise a dozen decibel levels because Chuck could not hear us now.

The flight to the 85th Evac was uneventful, but it provided me with an opportunity to see more of the AO. Our patient was unloaded at the hospital pad; then we repositioned to

POL to refuel and check for combat damage.

Inspection revealed one round had entered a little too close to the 42-degree gearbox. Fortunately, it did not cause any serious damage.

The left side, as well as the underside of the bird, had tiny pock marks covering large areas. It was as if they were trying to bring us down with a shotgun.

Since 460 appeared to be in one flyable piece, we had a quick vote about going back out to the hilltop to make another attempt at pulling out wounded. The outcome was a foregone conclusion and before I knew it we were again communicating in hushed voices as we closed for a second time on that boiling man made thundercloud on the hill.

On the ground, Jim Zwit waited his turn to be hoisted out of the nightmare. His best friend, Bob Hein of 1/501, helped drag Jim to further safety.

Jim recalls Hein kept saying, "Don't worry about it, you're going to be all right." Jim was real thirsty and asked, "Get me some water." Hein went to get it and never came back.

*NEXT: Second trip more violent.*

## Taps

### Charles H. McKeen

Charles "Chuck" Harold McKeen died when the helicopter he was flying drifted into power lines and crashed near Tuscumbia, AL.

McKeen, 50, was spraying chemicals on trees when the accident occurred in August.

McKeen, who was a resident of De Queen, AR, was working for Chem-Air of Shreveport, LA, at the time of the accident.

He graduated with Class 68-9 and served in Vietnam with the 60th Assault Helicopter Company in

1968-69 and the 68th Assault Helicopter Company in 1972-73.

### Joseph H. Murray

Retired CW4 Joseph H. Murray died Sept. 19 in his Daleville, AL, home after a lengthy illness.

He graduated with Class 58-11, and served in Vietnam with the 8th Transportation Corps Company in 1961-62, the 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company in 1967, and the 205th Assault Support Helicopter Company in 1967-68.

He is survived by his wife Helga.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Obituaries may be sent to The VHPA Newsletter by e-mail by addressing them to:** [REDACTED]

## VHPA Newsletter advertising rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

Full page — \$500

One-half page — \$250

One-quarter page — \$125

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

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

# Miracle at Wall: Veterans Day 1996

JOHN PLUMMER  
VHPA MEMBER

In July of 1972, I was the assistant G-3 air for Third Regional Assistance Command (counterpart to ARVN III Corps Headquarters).

Part of my job was coordinating airstrikes for III Corps. The ARVNs should have been doing it since most of the missions were in support of ARVN forces and flown by VNAF A-1E's and A-37's.

One afternoon, I received a request to set up an airstrike mission in support of an ARVN ground operation near the village of Trang Bang, which is just west of Cu Chi.

Once I determined the target coordinates, I called the district headquarters to inquire about the location of civilians in the area. I was told twice the area was clear of civilians and the target area was inhabited only by main force VC military units.

So I went forward with the airstrikes: Six A-37's and four A-1E's, all equipped with 500-pound bombs and napalm. We soon got word it had been a successful airstrike and all targets were destroyed. ARVN was moving into the area. Mission accomplished, well done, just another day of killing Cong.

The next morning, as I went into the mess hall, I picked up a copy of the "Stars and Stripes." On the front page, right under the headline, was the famous picture of Kim Phuc, the nine-year-old girl, running down the road toward the camera, naked and horribly burned by napalm.

As I read the caption under the picture, I realized she was from Trang Bang and had been hit with the napalm I had directed the day before.

My heart was in my shoes as I realized it was I who was responsible for her injuries, it was I who had sent the bombs into her village. That picture raced around the globe within hours.

For years, every anti-war organiza-

I was so sorry and knew I'd never be able to get over the pain unless I could see her and tell her.

tion and every communist nation used it for propaganda. They said this was the way America fought its wars, bombing innocent women and children.

Over the years, I came to grips with the fact I was only doing my job and I had done everything I could to make sure the area was clear of civilians, but I was stabbed in the heart every time I saw the picture of Kim Phuc.

I was so sorry and knew I'd never be able to get over the pain unless I could see her and tell her. But I also knew there was no way I'd ever be able to do that because if she was still alive, she'd still be in Vietnam.

I told very few people about the incident, even though there was seldom a day that went by I didn't think of her.

In June of this year, one of the TV network programs did a sequence on "20/20" or some such program entitled: "Where Are They Now?" The subject that night was Kim Phuc.

I sat and watched in stunned silence as I learned she had been used by the communists for many years as an object of propaganda. She was

I had to get this horrible event off my back, where it had become an almost unbearable burden.

sent to Cuba to study; there she fell in love with another Vietnamese student. They eventually got married and went to Moscow on their honeymoon.

As the plane was returning to Cuba from Moscow, it stopped in Newfoundland to refuel. Kim confidently took her husband's hand and, together, they marched off the plane to freedom. I also found out she was currently living in Toronto.

I knew at that moment, that somehow I had to find her and let her look into my eyes and see the sorrow I felt over what had happened to her that fateful day in the village of Trang Bang. I believed that if she could look into my eyes, she'd be able to see into my heart and know the pain I carried.

Whether she could forgive me or not, at least I'd have the chance to ask for that forgiveness. I had to get this horrible event off my back, where it had become an almost unbearable burden.

In July, I was at the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association annual reunion in Santa Clara, walking through the vendor room. There was a Vietnamese poet named Linh Duy Vo who was selling some books of poetry he had written.

Next to one of the book stacks was a mounted picture of the nine-year-old girl from 1972. I was once again slapped in the face and stabbed in the heart when I saw that now-familiar look of horror on her face.

I asked Linh why he had the photo. He explained he had become good friends with Kim and the photographer, Nick Ut, who had taken the original picture.

I broke down once again as I shared my connection to Kim with Linh. I discovered Linh was a Christian when he asked me if he and his daughter could pray for me. When I answered "yes," he, his daughter and I knelt down right there in that busy roomed as they prayed for a release

See JAY, Page 25

# Jay was surprised to hear the story

*Continued from Page 24*

from my pain.

I was stunned when I returned to the VHFCN area and dropped into the chair next to my friend Jay Riseden. I told Jay what had just happened.

Jay was surprised to hear my story, but went over and met Linh.

After I returned to Virginia, Linh would call and leave messages on my answering machine, but I just couldn't call him back. I had to process everything and sort out what was happening so quickly around me. Linh used Jay as a liaison to me because of my refusal to talk with him.

Let me hasten to add that this was no fault of Linh's, it was just my stubborn refusal to open up any further the wounds in my heart.

Then, a few weeks ago, an incredible chain of events began that culminated at The Wall on Monday.

Linh called Jay and told him he had to get in touch with me to let me know Kim Phuc was going to be at The Wall on Veteran's Day.

A Canadian film crew was doing a documentary on her life and Linh had spoken to her about me. He had even given her my name and told her I was a minister.

I knew I wanted no part of any documentary, but I did want to see Kim.

Jay had been wonderful about protecting my privacy and had gone out of his way not to intrude or interfere with my wishes to avoid any kind of publicity about my connection with "the girl in the photograph."

When Jay relayed to me last Wednesday (Nov 6) that Kim was coming to DC, I was flabbergasted, but I also knew I HAD to see her.

During that wonderful weekend, I spoke only with Jay and Mike Sloniker about the unfolding events.

Finally, on Sunday night at our house, a group of friends from the Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network Internet group to which I

Just before 1 o'clock, the crowd began to gather for the formal part of the day.

belong was sitting around talking when I told them about what was developing.

I simply asked them to be there at The Wall on Monday, if they could, to help me get a few moments with Kim.

We had absolutely no idea how this thing would play out, because we didn't know when she'd be there, who she'd be with, whether she'd have a press entourage, or what. Naturally, they agreed to help.

When Joanne and I and Bert and Pam Stainton arrived at the Soldier's Statue the next morning, there were about 15 of our VHFCN brothers and families gathered there waiting for me. As we walked up, I was pleased to see the word had gotten around and they were ready to help in any way they could.

We waited around all morning, searching the crowd for a Vietnamese face because we still didn't know anything except she was supposed to be there some time during the day.

Just before 1 o'clock, the crowd began to gather for the formal part of the day. Suddenly, off to our left, we saw a mob of TV cameras and mike

Being in a pretty precarious emotional state already, this just pushed me over the edge.

booms moving down toward the VIP stand.

I wondered who it could be until I suddenly saw her, this little Vietnamese woman surrounded by the sharks of the news media. Jay tried to speak to her, but was brushed away by one of her escorts, a big man in a black overcoat.

She was shown to a place of honor on the stand and the program began. Let me interject here that the Net guys were around me like a duck on a June Bug, ready to help at a moment's notice.

To my surprise (because her name wasn't even in the program), Kim was introduced by Jan Scruggs, the man behind the building of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.

In his introductory speech, he told about that day in Trang Bang and said Kim had two brothers killed during the attack. I was nearly knocked off my feet by this because I had never heard it before.

Being in a pretty precarious emotional state already, this just pushed me over the edge. I began to shake all over as wracking sobs were torn from my body. I felt like I was going to scream at the revelation that not only had I been responsible for Kim's burns, but that I had also killed her two brothers.

But suddenly I felt arms around me. Lee Westbrook had me from behind, Joanne (my wife) had me on the right side, somebody else on the left. Jay backed up to me in my front so I'd have privacy in my grief.

All the net guys surrounded me like elephants surround their young when danger threatens. Each person reached out and laid a hand of care and support on me as though to help me carry the burden.

Kim began to speak and I can't say that I heard much of what she said except one sentence. She was referring to the pilot flying the plane that dropped the bombs, but I knew it also applied to me, when she said, "If I had a chance to talk with him, I

*See SHE, Page 26*

# She came hoping to meet Plummer

*Continued from Page 25*

would tell him I hold no animosity and forgive him."

Naturally, this sent me back into paroxysms of sobs once again. (I found out later that she came to The Wall hoping to meet me.)

At the conclusion of her speech, she and Col. Norm McDaniel, a U.S.A.F. pilot who had been a POW, went down to the apex of panels 1W and 1E as wreaths were laid by various unit and veteran organizations.

As I began to work my way forward, under the ropes of the press section and through the crowd, I could feel my brothers and sisters from our net family as they moved with me. I'd stop and they'd stop. I'd take a step to my right and they'd take a step to their right. I'd step forward and 15 people would take a simultaneous step forward. They weren't going to let me out of that circle of protection.

When Kim had mentioned in her speech that she hoped some day to meet the one responsible for her injuries in order to give him her forgiveness, I had written a note on a piece of paper (provided by Brian Piggott). The note said, simply: "Kim, I AM that man. I'd like to speak with you privately for just a moment," and signed it "Rev. Plummer," since I knew she was aware I was a minister.

I stepped over to a Park Service police lieutenant standing inside the rope and gave him the note and my business card. I leaned over so no one else could hear and whispered, "I'm the man Kim is looking for. Please give her this note."

Without a word, he took off like a shot to deliver the note to her.

Suddenly, Dante Edwards, another friend, came running through the crowd and grabbed my arm and began to shout "Come with me, come with me."

I tried to explain about the police officer, but Dante literally pulled me through the crowd and up the hill and over toward the west wall. He and

**Libby grabbed my hand and we began to follow Kim and the guy in the black overcoat who had brushed Jay off before.**

Tom Matason had made contact with a secretary from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund who was hosting Kim's visit. Her name is Libby Hatch, but will forever be known to us as "the Lady in Pink."

Libby grabbed my hand and we began to follow Kim and the guy in the black overcoat who had brushed Jay off before. Turns out, his name is Ron Gibbs and he is on the board of directors for the Fund.

As Libby and I followed Ron and Kim, Park Service police and the net crew formed a protective barrier around us. I still had not spoken to Kim. In fact, she didn't even know we were there.

Libby reached out and got Ron's attention and told him, "This is the man Kim is looking for."

Kim stopped and started to turn, but Libby pushed her forward telling her to keep moving. We got to the upper walkway and turned to the right toward a police cruiser sitting at the curb.

As we walked, Libby and I following Kim and Ron, Ron leaned over to Kim and said, "You know the man you've been wanting to find?"

**All I could say was, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," over and over again.**

She very quietly answered, "Yes?"

Ron said, "He's right behind you, but keep moving." But Kim couldn't take it any longer. Before we ever got to the car, she stopped and turned, looked up into my face . . . and saw my eyes. She knew my grief, my pain, my sorrow. She held out her arms to me and embraced me.

All I could say was, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," over and over again. All the time, she was saying, "It's all right, it's all right, I forgive, I forgive."

We were only able to spend about two minutes alone, surrounded by friends who understood our need, before the media spotted us and headed our way.

Kim was escorted into the police car, which sped away with Kim waving out the back window at me until the car was out of sight.

I was floating. I was free. I was finally at peace.

Jay suggested we all go over to a secluded spot so we could process what had just happened. I was in a daze. Someone, took my hand. In fact, we all grasped hands in a circle as I prayed one of the most grateful prayers I ever prayed.

God, through a set of circumstances that only He could have arranged, delivered me from the demon of remorse that had torn at me for 24 years.

Just before we started our prayer, two young women approached our group, but Brian explained this was private and they backed off. After the prayer, they approached again, and it was Jay this time who asked them to respect out privacy.

One of them said they needed to speak to Mr. Plummer. When I heard them mention my name, I was curious as to how they knew me. They said they were with the documentary crew that was doing Kim's story. Kim had asked them to tell me where she was staying and ask me to come talk with her.

Bert and Pam Stainton and Joanne  
*See KIM, Page 27*

# Kim, Plummer tastefully interviewed

*Continued from Page 26*

and I went to Kim's hotel, where there was more crying and hugging. We met the documentary crew, who turned out to be wonderfully understanding about my privacy. We met Ron Gibbs, who we discovered was a pretty good guy after all. And we got to spend two hours with Kim.

She and I talked and prayed together (she had given her life to Christ in 1982). She even suggested that we do ministry together. She wants to come to my church and give her testimony alongside me, then wants me to go to her church in Toronto and do the same thing.

She also was able to persuade me

to appear with her in the documentary. We were very tastefully and politely interviewed. The discussion was more about us finding each other after so many years than about the event that started everything. I also found out that it was not her brothers, but her cousins, who were killed.

I have never met a more giving, loving woman of faith than Kim Phuc — anywhere, anytime. Being with her was almost a mystical experience as we heard her witness about all the things the Lord has done for her.

She was warm and accepting of us all, and she blessed my heart in a way that few human beings have ever blessed me before. We couldn't stop

hugging and holding hands. I felt as though I had known her all my life. It was if we were brother and sister who had been separated in our youth and finally united.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude for all those who had a hand in this. From Linh Duy Vo to Jay Riseden to Dante Edwards and all our net friends who protected us from the media.

It was an incredible ending to an incredible four-day experience and I thank God for all who helped. The last thread is now tied up. I am at peace. My war is finally over and I'm free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!

# Grenades added while in the field

DREW BOUDRIEAU  
VHPA MEMBER

The crew chief and gunner would tape smoke grenades to the support posts beside their seats so they would be accessible if needed in a hurry.

We were not supposed to carry any other type of hand grenades because it was feared they might get hit by ground fire and explode.

Well, this was another rule we would forget to follow while flying in the field. As soon as we were out of sight of the Manor, all types of grenades would magically appear.

The most popular type were the baseball type and white phosphorous (WP). Some of these also would find their way to the support posts.

When a new crew chief came to the unit, he would fly as gunner for a few missions with an experienced crew to get the feel of how things were done.

On Dick Sear's first mission (he would eventually become Bob Fisher's crew chief), he had the pleasure of flying with my ship. This was when John Mull was my crew chief.

After flying for awhile, we had to shut down on one of the pads at Americal because the weather got

I unscrewed the fuse and lever mechanism from the body and showed it to Dick.

really bad.

We were all sitting in the back with the doors closed because it was raining.

While we were talking about different things, I reached over and got a smoke grenade off the seat. I unscrewed the fuse and lever mechanism from the body and showed it to Dick. I explained that the time delay on a smoke grenade was about one second.

I then reached over and got a WP grenade and told him that the delay on an explosive grenade was eight seconds, because obviously you wanted it to be far away when it went off.

I started to try to unscrew the fuse

from the WP grenade and he asked what the heck I was doing. I said I wanted to see what it looked like.

At this point he mumbled something about me being crazy and got out of the aircraft. I was unable to do anything with the grenade, so I put it back.

Then an idea came to me. I unscrewed the fuse from a smoke grenade and pulled the pin, holding the lever so it would not go off. After a couple of minutes Dick got tired of getting wet and decided I wasn't going to blow us up.

Just as he slid the door open, I threw the fuse out the gap and yelled, "Oh shit!"

In the one second between the handle flying off and the fuse making a loud "Pop" outside, Dick had turned and made it about 10 feet away.

I think when he came back he would have punched me, but he couldn't stop shaking long enough before we had to fly again. We eventually became good friends and he never tired of telling the story to every new crew chief he flew with.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Drew Boudrieau served as "Minuteman 14" during his tour as a helicopter pilot in 1968-69.

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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Information about each Vietnam tour:

| Date of tour |       |     | Unit | Location | Call sign |
|--------------|-------|-----|------|----------|-----------|
|              | From: | To: |      |          |           |
| 1st          |       |     |      |          |           |
| 2nd          |       |     |      |          |           |
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