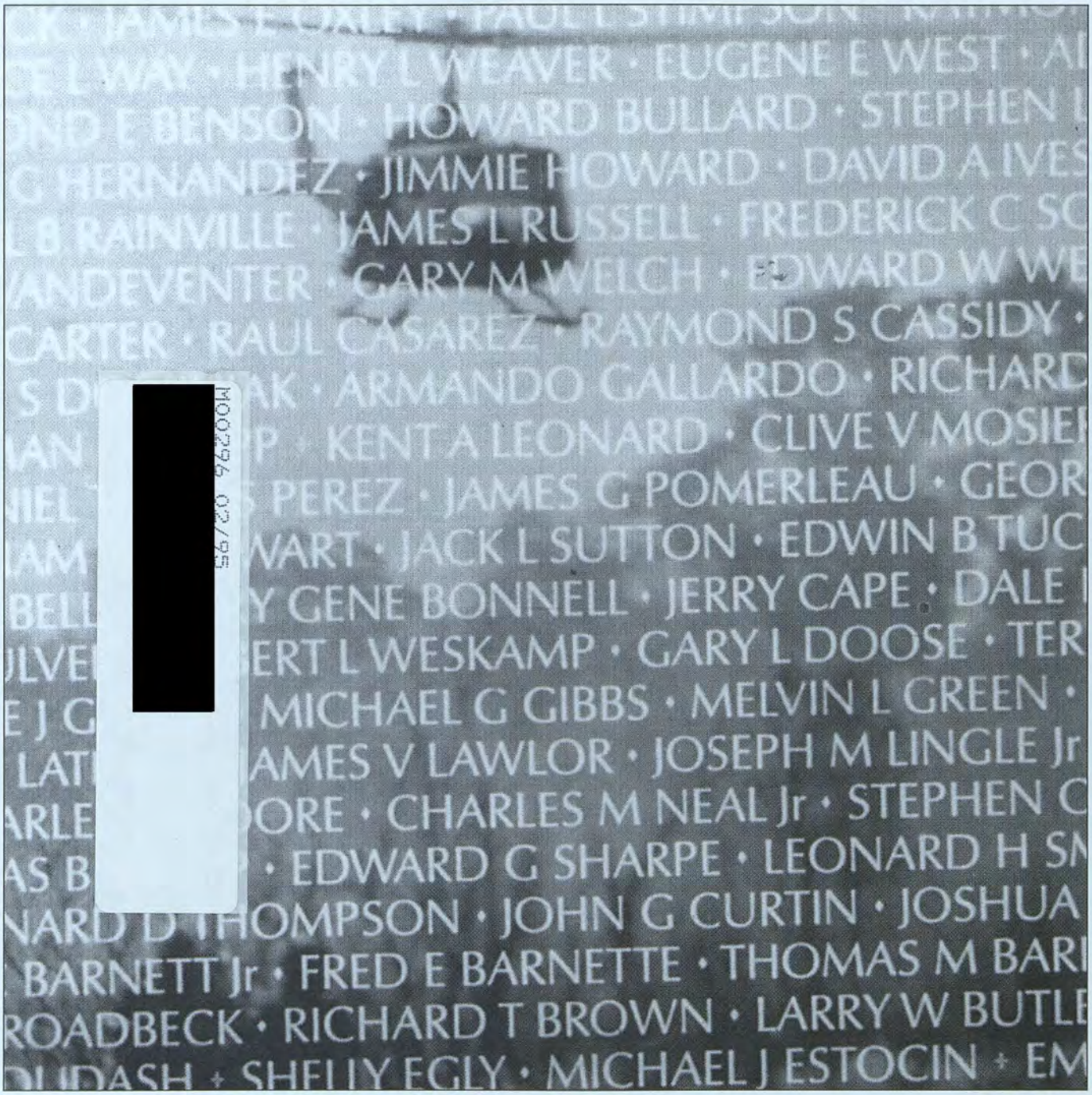
The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ® June 1994 Vol. 12, No. 3



Mike Diehl photo

A Huey is reflected on the face of The Wall, which will be on a side tour during this year's VHPA Reunion.

From the President

It hardly seems possible this is the last president's letter for me to write. The year has gone by very quickly, yet we have so MUCH to do. As I write this, the reunion is still eight weeks away and the adrenaline is building in me already!

I am pleased to report that your association is still in excellent hands. I am so impressed with the caliber of people we have elected to office and those who we have appointed. It would be difficult to find a more dedicated group of people. But I suppose that is typical of what one can expect from a bunch of military helicopter pilots, right?

Over the next few years, we will be trying a few different things. I know, I know — if it ain't broke, don't fix it! We're not trying to fix anything, just polish it up a little bit. We have tried to be responsive to the needs and requests of the membership; I think we have done a pretty good job of it. But we can always do better and that's where the polish comes in. The Calendar and the Historical Reference Directory are two excellent examples. If you haven't seen them yet, you don't know what you are missing.

Without giving away future plans, I will just say that I am looking forward to my final year on the Executive Council and looking even further ahead at the MANY years I will have to enjoy the VHPA. I hope to continue to be a part of the VHPA in some sort of capacity; this group kinda grows on you!

In closing, I want to welcome those who are new to the VHPA and congratulate those of you who have been a part of it for a while. There's nothing else like it, is there? Enjoy!

— Phil Marshall, 1993-94 President

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter
Update requested.

Ohio River LZ Chapter
Paul Cotter, President
[redacted]

Great Lakes Chapter (Northeastern Illinois)
John Becker, President
[redacted]

Bruce Rodewald, Vice President
[redacted]

North Carolina Chapter
Gary Kimbrell, President
[redacted]

New England Chapter
Update requested.

Mardi Gras Chapter
Don Hunt, President
Lee Overstreet, Vice President
New Orleans, LA

Florida LZ Chapter
Barry Speare, President
[redacted]

VHPA briefs

Veteran posters available

Coors Brewing Co. has introduced another in a series of commemorative veteran posters.

The most recent, "D-Day Veterans," honors the 50th anniversary of the Normandy invasion and is a reproduction of the original painting by George Skypeck.

Rex Gooch has a limited number of the posters, which he is offering free to fellow VHPA members.

To obtain a poster, contact: Rex Gooch, [redacted]. Or call him at [redacted]

Packet available to vendors

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's sales tax laws may have an impact on vendors at the VHPA Reunion in Philadelphia.

Ken Fritz has a "Packet, VHPA Vendor Mission Briefing, genuine, 1 each" that will explain the rules of engagement.

Ken Fritz can be contacted at [redacted]. Or call him at [redacted]; fax is [redacted]

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VNCA

VHPA OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND STAFF 1993-94

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PAST PRESIDENT .....Mike Law
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Seeking

I am trying to locate a close friend, Harold Pierce. I have not seen or heard from him in several years. It is important that I contact him soon.

Harold was an officer with the Army in Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Div Arty, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam.

Domenic Russo
[redacted]

I would like to hear from anyone who served with my cousin, WO William R. Lee, B Troop, 1/9 Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. We called him "Bobby" at home.

He was killed in action on Jan. 31, 1968, at Thau Thieu. His tour began Jan. 14, 1968.

Tammy Whitaker
[redacted]

I lost touch with U.S. Army CWO William "Bill" G. Beatty Jr. (class 69-17) while we were in Vietnam. Bill's last known location was 1/9 Cav. "Blue Max," 1969-70.

Jim Barton (class 69-17)
[redacted]

Council sets agenda deadline

The Executive Council is responsible to the membership for the operation of the VHPA.

In order to meet these responsibilities and to facilitate orderly discussion of issues, the Executive Council needs to have annual business meeting agenda items submitted to it in time for it to review during its telephone conference meeting prior to the annual business meeting.

The Executive Council adopted the following procedure during its February telephone conference meeting:

Members desiring to place an issue before the membership at the annual VHPA business meeting for a vote by the membership must submit the item to the Executive Council 45 days prior to the date of the annual meeting.

The Executive Council welcomes input from the membership as to the operation of the VHPA.

Seeking VHPA office?

The names of VHPA members who wish to run for the VHPA offices of vice president and junior member at large of the Executive Council must be submitted to the Nominating Committee chairman (NCC) prior to the 1994 reunion.

Nominees must be interviewed by the NCC before the NCC submits the nomination to the Executive Council for inclusion on the ballot.

Nominations will be accepted by the NCC at the reunion prior to 6 p.m. Saturday, July 2, 1994.

Nominations may be mailed or faxed to:

Charles R. Rayl
Chairman
Nominating Committee
[redacted]

Cruise for pilots almost a reality

The cruise for Vietnam helicopter pilots, family and friends is about to become a reality, reports Greg Ross.

Ross has negotiated a group package with Carnival Cruise Line for a seven-day cruise to the southern Carribean.

The cruise will depart San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Feb. 26 and return on March 5.

Those departing from west of the Rockies will have minimum cabin requirements and may be required to pay an additional $100 per person air fare.

For a brochure on all the particulars, contact Ross at [redacted]

The cruise is a private function and is not sponsored by the VHPA.

Vietnam War relics will be displayed at VHPA Reunion

I will be showing my memorabilia display during the VHPA Reunion in Philadelphia. This will be the fourth time I have brought the display to a VHPA reunion.

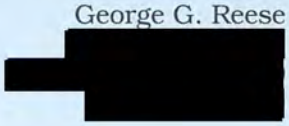
I will be looking to add to my collection of Vietnam War relics. I will buy items such as blood chits, maps, party suits, flags medals, rifles and pistols, flight gear, unit histories, bayonets, insignia, lighters with crests and/or inscriptions, captured NVA and VC weapons and gear, flight helmets with artwork, Cheap Charlie boonie hats and jackets, and Special Forces items.

Items received will be kept in my collection and will be displayed on occasion, such as at the VHPA Reunion.

I ask that you provide historical and biographical information with items so that it can be displayed with the relic.

Also, I would like interesting slides and photos for my display.

George G. Reese

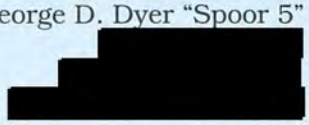


What are the origins of hats, solo wings?

Can anyone provide information concerning the origins of the class hats and the design of the solo wings? Regina G. Burns, archivist, U.S. Army Aviation Museum, Fort Rucker, conducted a search of the museum archives with negative results.

Any leads would be appreciated. Thanks!

George D. Dyer "Spoor 5"



Lam Son 719 articles to be released again

Greetings, fellow VHPAers. I wrote a three-part article series in Army Aviation Digest in June-August 1986 on "Lam Son 719." This was a major battle in Vietnam in 1971, involving more American aviation and artillery than any other battle during the war; in support of some 25,000 ARVN troops incurring into Laos. It is arguably the single best example of Army Aviation in a true mid-intensity conflict, against a formidable foe.

This article series and a lecture videotape I did in 1986 are still heavily used and cited at Fort Rucker and the Pentagon. The article series was 33 pages long, with dozens of photographs. The current Aviation Digest editor, Patricia Kitchell, told me that the article series and its photographs are still the most frequently requested articles of any in the history of the digest.

After speaking with Ms. Kitchell, we came up with an idea of doing a reprint of the article series at the 25-year anniversary of the battle; in the January-June 1996 issues (the digest is printed every month now).

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VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO: VHPA
7 W. Seventh St.
Suite 1990
Cincinnati, OH 45202

FAX NUMBER FOR CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (513) 721-5315

Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only.)	$20/set	_____
1992 VHPA Directory (VHPA members only, includes 7/17 Cav history.)	$10/each	_____
1993 VHPA Directory (VHPA members only, includes Dustoff history, and 3 indices.)	$10/each	_____
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory	$15/each ($5 P&H per order)	_____
VHPA bumper stickers	$1/each	_____
GRAND TOTAL		_____

Send check/money order or charge to your VISA, MasterCard or Discover card.

Name _____

Member No. _____

Credit card No. _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____

Continued from Page 4

We will use most of the original text, but the real change we want is to include an array of new photographs taken during the battle and printing them as an additional insert. This will be a first for Aviation Digest. A fourth article will hopefully be done as a tribute to those aviation personnel who lost their lives during the 45-day battle.

So, what we are looking for are more photographs and documents related to Lam Son 719. If you are familiar with the article series already, we would appreciate any input the VHPA community might wish to provide.

Depending on the response, we hope to print a collection of comments on Lam Son 719 in the fourth issue. Maybe we can even get something more into our VHPA Newsletter here, and I understand our next Membership Directory will feature Lam Son 719, as well.

If you participated in "Lam Son 719," we are particularly interested in hearing from you, even if you do not have any documents or photos. Maybe you know of someone else who does. Either way, send us your name, address, duty assignment, and comments on activities and involvement so that we can get back to you if need be, or at least have a mailing list for future reference.

These days, I have two boys, ages 3 and 4, who keep me very busy, and I still have a few more years to go to retire. It is my intention to turn the Lam Son 719 story into either a series of freelance publications or, hopefully, to actually write a nonfiction book that will chronicle the battle without a lot of anecdotal, unverified war stories. That will be a few years down the line, but I am determined to get to it.

So, if you have something to contribute, please contact me as soon as possible. My assistants in this effort will be Doug Womack and Mike Sloniker. Please send material to Doug Womack's mailing address:

Douglas M.F. Womack
[redacted]

I am planning on attending the reunion this summer in Philadelphia. Doug, Mike, or I will be available at the reunion to review your material. We will have copies made and will return all original stuff to you. The same applies if you send material to Doug. We are not rich or on any kind of budget for this, so if you can provide high quality copies in the first place, that will be appreciated (indicate as such). Thanks for your input, guys. See you in Philly.

Jim E. Fulbrook, Ph.D.
"Snakebite Charlie"
a.k.a. "Rattler 20"

Advertisement

I commissioned Colonel D.L. Combs, U.S.M.C., one of the nation's top award-winning military artists, to sculpt a Vietnam helicopter pilot. He has accurately produced an extremely detailed figure in white metal that stands 6.5 inches high and weighs almost three pounds. The figure is wearing: Soft cap, two-piece Nomex flight suit, chicken plate, survival vest, .38-caliber pistol with holster, while carrying an APH-5 helmet in one hand and a CAR-15 in the other.

The figure comes in three finishes: Pewter, Bronze and Painted (a painted figure is shown). The cost for the Pewter and Bronze figures are $100 each, while the cost for the painted figure is $125.

Figures are shipped priority mail and the shipping charge is $6.25. When ordering, allow four to five weeks for delivery. Payment must be by money order or cashier's check. No personal checks, please. Send checks with orders to: Stephen R. Pullen, 59 Ingalls Road, Fort Monroe, VA 23651. If you have any questions, please call Pullen at (804) 722-9519. If, for any reason, you are not satisfied with the figure, please return it to me C.O.D. for a refund.

For the Reunion in July, I will have a companion figure of a crew chief. He will be wearing jungle fatigues, APH-5 helmet, pistol with holster and a chicken plate. He will be carrying a toolbox in one hand and an M-60 machine gun over his shoulder. More information on this figure will be in the next Newsletter.

These figures will make excellent gifts or a welcome addition to your office or den. It will remind you of a long time ago when we flew helicopters and made aviation and Army history in the greatest helicopter war the world has ever seen.

Steve Pullen/Banshee 11

Helicopter pilot writes 'ode to an ugly aircraft'

As old pilots are often want to do, I am sitting here, waxing forlornly about my misspent youth in numerous types of aerial conveyance, and one aircraft comes to mind more often than all the others combined.

This particular aircraft was so ugly that Mother Teresa would have been tempted to walk rather than be seen riding in this ugly duckling. I refer to none other than the UH-1 "Iroquois." Most would come to know this dismal aviation failure as the "Huey." Short of leg and with a belly that would embarrass a Sumo wrestler, this beast would be the learning ground for thousands of young Army, Marine, Navy and Air Force pilots.

The Huey was designed by the Marquis de Sade and the seats custom-tailored by Torquemado, the grand inquisitor. Many pilots have crawled — nay, clawed — their way out of these seats begging to be whipped with a cat-o-nine-tails to take their minds off the agony eight hours of flight in these torture chambers would impart on the human body.

Cooling was provided by simply opening the doors and flying as fast as your blood pressure would allow. Of course, this led to limited success in 120-degree temperatures and 99 percent humidity, but it had a certain psychological effect and, at least, led

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you to believe you were doing something to relieve your misery.

In the winter, there was no heat because some wise sage in the procurement department believed that it never gets cold in Southeast Asia, so why waste the money on heaters for Army helicopters? Besides, no Army units would be flying out of Khe Sanh or Phu Bai or A Shau into Laos. Well, we know better than that, don't we? Mid-winter over-mountain flights in an open aircraft at sub-zero temperatures is not fun. Of course, the rain coming in through every little hole did offer some distraction.

Takeoff and weight-and-balance considerations in the Huey were given very scientific and well-thought-out calculations: "If you can fit it in, we can fly it out." As one might guess, there were a few surprises and a tree branch or two that went along with this bit of aviation wisdom.

The Huey was and, I'm confident, still is a totally unstable flight platform. This flying machine was like a beautiful woman — if you didn't watch her every minute, she would wander off and leave you wide-eyed and dumb-struck. Many a Huey driver has taken his eyes off the world to peek at a map, pick up a pencil or wind his watch only to look up and realize he had been transported from an aircraft totally in trim and in level flight to being astride an aircraft going straight up or straight down. No middle of the road for this gal.

The Huey was all these terrible things and more, but to those of us fortunate enough to have flown her in our youth, we also remember what a wonderful old friend she was.

The Lycoming T-53 was not a particularly fine engine, but there are many of us alive today because of the durability of this stovepipe with an attitude. The stories abound about pilots bringing home Hueys with so many bullet holes in the engine you could look in and see the fire, and how many turbine blades can be lost before the engine fails? I don't know, but I've seen 50 percent of the blades gone and the old Lyc still huffing and puffing.

How many pilots have sat in a Huey and listened to the rattle of gunfire and felt the impact of round after round as the grunts loaded their wounded, themselves, their fallen comrades and their equipment into this ungainly beast only to be rewarded when their sturdy old Huey once again rose from the earth and safely out of harm's way?

How many men are alive today because the Huey was there to pluck them from the battlefield and carry them to the nearest hospital for treatment of their wounds? This same task is still going on every-day in hospitals serviced by shiny, new helicopters which are nothing more than the offspring of Huey. Most of the pilots who fly these aircraft and save lives daily learned their lessons in that ungainly green monster known to millions simply as Huey.

From the four corners of the globe and from industries as diverse as health care and oil exploration, the Huey served as a test bed for both man and machine. The new helicopters are bigger, faster, have more engines and are certainly much more comfortable. But no other aircraft has served with more honor, from the jungles of Vietnam to the deserts of Iraq, where the Huey was used to back the less-dependable modern helicopters, the Huey has always served masters well.

There is not a single Huey pilot alive who has not, at the end of a very trying and dangerous day, run his hand down the wrinkled tailboom, given the old girl a little pat, and said, "Thanks for bringing us through, one more time."

Patrick P. O'Connell
Black Cat 26
North Highlands, CA

Writer seeks photos of H, D model Hueys

I would like to find some nice copies of Huey photographs, H model or D model.

Do you folks know of a source where I might obtain some? I would like color photos, if possible.

If you know of a person or business that I might contact, please advise.

Joe Whisenhunt
[redacted]

Continued on Page 7

HUNTERS & GUIDES
A•F•R•I•C•A

DEAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS,

It is with great pride that I write to you of my affiliation with the finest safari company operating today in South Africa and Zimbabwe. **Hunters & Guides Africa**

Seven of the best professional hunters in the business have come together to establish an organization that is totally dedicated to provide their clients with an unparalleled hunting experience.

Our classic tented safaris are strictly catered to meet our customer's highest standards. We offer exclusive hunting for the "African Big Five" plus a complete bag of plains game. Rifle or bow hunting is available.

If you or any of your associates are considering an African Hunt, I would certainly appreciate the opportunity to present to you our programs. When one is contemplating a journey halfway around the world to fulfill a life long dream of Safari; who can risk accepting second best or booking with an outfitter who is not 110% professional.

Travel arrangements, passport/visa, gun permits and even recommended taxidermists will be handled.

I will close by saying thank you for extending the courtesy of reading this letter. I hope I can be of service in the near future.

Cordially yours,

Michael P. Chase
United States
Regional Agent

92ND AHC
DONG BA TIN 1971
STALLIONS

3RD AHC
PLEIKU 1971-1972
CHICKENMAN

Continued from Page 6

Models available to help with women's memorial

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project urgently must finish raising $600,000 to retire the loan made to cover the design, construction, landscaping and perpetual maintenance fee for the memorial dedicated in November 1993.

We ask that you kindly include information about the availability of small models of the memorial in your upcoming issue.

Funds from the small models will help the VWMP retire its debt and continue its efforts on behalf of women veterans. We sincerely appreciate any help you can give us.

Diane Carlson Evans, RN
Chair and founder, VWMP
[redacted]

VHPA members fly combat together again

In January 1973, WO1s John M. Harris and Geary W. Younkin flew UH-1 combat missions together as members of the 1st Platoon, 18th Aviation Company, out of Can Tho, South Vietnam.

After departing country, they lost touch and never saw one another again — until they literally bumped into each other between a row of tents in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Younkin, now a master warrant officer 4 — and soon to be a chief warrant officer 5 — was in Somalia as the standardization officer for Task Force 4-4, which consisted of all the Army Aviation assets in country from Fort Carson, CO.

Harris, now a chief warrant officer 4 in the National Guard's 1/18th Cavalry, was in Somalia as a TDY member of the U.S. Embassy staff.

MW4 Geary Younkin (left) and CW4 John Harris stand beside the Cobra they flew in Somalia in January 1994. The aviators flew combat missions together 21 years earlier in Vietnam.

A Cobra pilot back in California, Harris had come to the task force to inquire if he could satisfy his weekend drill and flying hour requirements by flying Cobras with the active Army. As the AH-1 SIP, Younkin reviewed Harris' flight training records and determined he was current and qualified by all Army regulations.

On Jan. 30, Younkin and Harris suited up in their rescue harnesses, "chicken plates" (no high-tech composites, they look the same as in Vietnam, but they seem to have gotten a lot heavier in the past 21 years!), slapped on their 9mm pistols and got ready. They did not have to wait long, for as soon as they went on standby, they were alerted for a mission.

A scout ship reported that a crew-served machine gun was being emplaced by one of the Somalia clans atop a hotel just under the "Eyes Over Mogadishu" patrol route. As Younkin and Harris cranked the AH-1F, they noted that the aircraft had two TOW missiles, six MK-66 HE rockets and 400 rounds of 20mm ammo for the turret gun, and they were fully mission ready.

However, before they had obtained clearance from higher headquarters to fire, the weapon was removed.

Later during the same mission, a second scout reported sighting a ZU-23-2 machine gun, and Younkin and Harris responded to check it out and decide if it should be engaged.

After making an armed pass out of the sun, using the 13-power optics in the Cobra TSU, they determined the weapon was derelict and not operational.

Despite the fact they only got to test fire the 20mm into the Indian Ocean, Younkin and Harris had a great time feeling the old adrenaline rush again together.

A few weeks later, they flew together again, this time on an NVG (night vision goggle) combat mission, but that's another story.

Harris was able to complete his drill requirements and believes this may have been the first time an Army National Guard aviator logged combat time while completing a weekend drill!

Overall, both individuals agreed the single best thing about being in Somalia was they were reunited after 21 years. They now vow to stay in touch and visit regularly at the VHPA annual reunions.

John M. Harris
VHPA life member
[redacted]

Taps

Clyde E. Lassen

Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Clyde E. Lassen, 52, died April 1 at his Pensacola, FL, home of cancer.

He was born on March 14, 1942, in Fort Myers, FL.

Lassen served 22 years in the Navy, starting as an airman recruit in 1961, and working his way up to commanding officer of Helicopter Training Squadron 8 at Whiting Field.

During his tour in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, he rescued two downed F-4 pilots in 1968. For this rescue, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. His other awards included the Bronze Star Medal with V, the Air Medal and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

After retiring from the Navy in 1982, Lassen became a well-known Realtor in the Pensacola area until six years ago when he decided to devote full time to managing his own rental properties and developing a two-acre homestead in North Pensacola.

He is survived by his wife, Linda; a son, Daryl; a daughter, Lynnell, his mother, Jacqueline Lassen; a brother, Gary Lassen; a niece and a nephew.

Max Eugene and Martha N. Pass

Max Eugene Pass, a Vietnam helicopter pilot, and his wife, Martha N. Pass, died April 15 when their private airplane crashed in Lee County, AL.

Mr. and Mrs. Pass were residents of Bartlett, TN.

Pass, 41, was a United Parcel Service truck driver. Mrs. Pass, 44, was an office manager for Blazer Finance.

The couple was returning from a vacation in the Bahamas and Florida at the time of the accident.

Frank J. Sheperis

Frank J. Sheperis of Merrick, NY, died Feb. 21 of an apparent heart attack. He was 50.

Sheperis was a member of WORWAC class 67-1 and served as a UH-1C pilot with the 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, based at Pleiku in 1967-68.

After leaving the military, Sheperis established a number of his own businesses in construction-related fields. Most recently, he was owner of Hydraulic Maintenance Inc. of Freeport, NY.

He is survived by his daughter, Laura; his mother, Eileen Petraco; and his sister, Ellen Shepardson. His sister is the wife of John Shepardson, a fellow 67-1 graduate and 7/17th UH-1C pilot.

The VHPA Database Committee requests information, such as flight school class number and Vietnam units, on pilots whose names appear in this report.

VHPA Historical Reference Directory volume available

During the last week of April, Volume 1 of the VHPA Historical Reference Directory was shipped to people who ordered it.

Anyone, VHPA member or otherwise, can purchase a copy for $15, plus a $5 shipping and handling charge per order.

Volume 1 contains the following in formation:

- 137 pages of unit histories for the following units: The 57th AHC, the 116th AHC, the 145th CAB, the 191st AHC, the 192nd AHC, the 281st AHC, Dustoff and Medevac in Vietnam History, the Marine Corps Operation SHUFLY, the Navy HA(L)-3.
- 29 pages of U.S. Army Flight Training Class Rosters from classes 58-2 through 66-24, the last class in 1966.
- 23 pages for the VHPA Radio Call Signs database, printed alphabetically by call sign and then by unit.
- 124 pages for the VHPA Helicopter Incident Database from November 1961 through December 1965.

Briefly, the Incident Database contains information on every helicopter accident, battle damage, and loss; helicopter unit events (arrivals, relocations), battle summaries, details about any helicopter pilot, crew member, or anyone assigned to a helicopter unit who died, was MIA, or a POW in Southeast Asia. This database includes all the KIA and After Action Report information known to the VHPA.

- 34 pages for the index. The volume is fully indexed by name, units, and helicopter tail numbers.

In summary, if you are interested in data and all the details, this is your book!

VHPAers man booth at AAAA

For the third consecutive year, VHPAers manned an information and membership booth at the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) meeting.

Retired Maj. Gen. George Putnam is a strong VHPA supporter and, as a AAAA board member, has been instrumental in getting the two organizations together. Terry Coakley, executive director of AAAA, and the AAAA staff have gone the extra mile to help the VHPA.

More than 120 Vietnam-era pilots visited our booth, lusted after our VHPA 1994 Calendar, told war stories and generally shared a good time. We signed up 30 new members, had 18 members renew their dues, received Directory information for 17 new potential members, and collected database update information for 20 members and six KIAs.

Phil Shaeffer and Larry Bruce
Co-organizers

Dick Crawley photo

This photograph, taken during the early days of Lam Son 719, was taken by Dick Crawley "Blueghost Green," a lift pilot with F/8 Cavalry. Crawley, who now lives in Jackson, MI, says this is his favorite photo.

Directory dedicated to Lam Son 719

It is the VHPA's custom to "dedicate" the annual Membership Directory based on a major theme in the history section for that year.

The front and rear covers contain pictures that relate to this theme.

In 1992, the theme was the 7/17th Air Cav Squadron; in 1993, it was Dustoff and Medevac; and for 1994, it will be Dewey Canyon II/Lam Son 719.

This is the VHPA's first attempt to document a major operation. Lam Son 719 was certainly major in every way. It started in late January 1971 and was completed by early April. During this battle, the Army lost at least 106 helicopters and the Marines lost two of their big Sea Stallions.

The goal of the history section in any VHPA Membership Directory is not to write the definitive work on the subject, but to provide a format for individual VHPAers to provide their personal comments.

Other works (like "Into Laos," the Army Aviation Digest, the USMC History) are used to help organize the personal comments. So, whatever is poignant in your mind and is important to you about those times, we want to record. It could be about the rats in the bunker you shared with four other guys at Khe Sanh, it could be as a pilot over an LZ in Laos, it could be when you watched something interesting or tragic. We want to record that.

If you were involved in Lam Son 719 and if you want to contribute to the VHPA 1994 Membership Directory, please call Mike Law at [redacted] (home) or ([redacted] (work).

At the minimum, we want two or more comments from every helicopter unit that participated. At a minimum, we want to record something about every crew member who died during these operations.

We already have about 10 pages of material, with at least another 10 pages queued for insertion into the draft. Draft copies of the history will be available for review at the reunion. The committee will have a booth at the reunion to actually take input from VHPAers and VHCMAers for this history.

We will gladly pass on anything we have to Jim Fulbrook so he can consider it for his efforts to update the Army Aviation Digest series on Lam Son 719.

Mike Law
Directory Committee chairman
[redacted] (home)
([redacted] (work)

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VHPA Newsletter

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Tom Pettit, Director
Department of Independent Studies
600 S. Clyde Morris Blvd.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-3900

Countdown to reunion under way

Ralph Harvey
Reunion chairman

The final countdown is under way for the greatest reunion of them all — the 11th annual VHPA Reunion in the "City of Brotherly Love," Philadelphia!

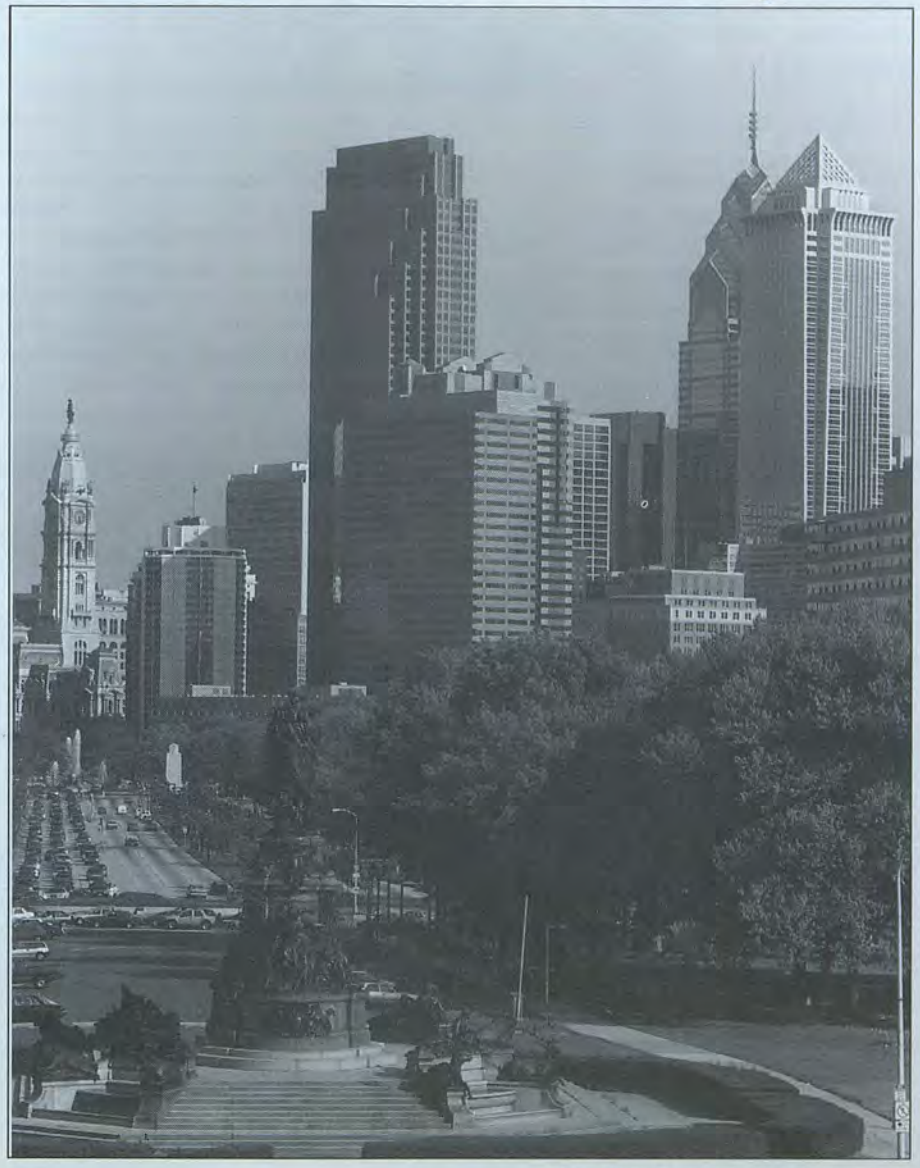
Here is a rundown on getting to Philadelphia and what to do after you arrive:

- **Hotel:** Reservations can be made by calling the Wyndham Franklin Plaza at (215) 448-2000. If you haven't made your reservations, please do it ASAP! The rooms are filling up fast.
- **Parking:** There is a hotel parking garage under the street level. The fee is $7 a day.
- **Transportation:** If you fly, the Limelight Limo Service will be available and can be located at each terminal. The fee is around $8 one way. Check for the round-trip fee.
- **Trips:** The Casino in Atlantic City or the Washington trip to The Wall will depart on Thursday. So, if you plan to take either of these trips, I suggest you arrive on Wednesday.

The Casino bus will leave at 9 a.m. and return at 5 p.m., while The Wall bus will depart at 8 a.m. and return at 6 p.m.

Please remember to mark your reservation form and send the correct amount of money for the trip.

- **General information:** We are planning various activities throughout the reunion for the kids. Volleyball, basketball and swimming will be available in the hotel athletic club. Check your registration packet for further information.
- **Mini-reunions:** These will be ongoing throughout the reunion. Crew members have been invited. Assistant reunion chairman Bob Anderson is handling the mini-reunions. For scheduling, please call Bob at [redacted].
- **Shuttle buses:** Buses will be available Friday-Sunday for travel between the Wyndham and the overflow hotels. Shuttle buses also will travel to certain historical areas, Penn's Landing, shopping areas and other locations.



Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Philadelphia skyline will be a familiar sight at this year's reunion.

During the July 4th weekend, the North Philadelphia Airport will be hosting an air show. All VHPA members and their families are invited.

Below is a schedule of planned activities during the reunion:

Thursday

If you don't go on the trips, the day is yours to see Philadelphia and its many sights. There are lots of historical things to see — museums, laser light shows, jugglers, a parade, just to name a few.

Evening entertainment will be by a DJ.

Friday

At 9 a.m., board a bus and tour the Philadelphia Navy Yard, where there will be a static display sure to interest all. There also will be an optional tour of the Navy Yard available.

The buses will return about 3 p.m. The crew members have been invited to this event.

A cocktail party and live entertainment will fill the night from 9 p.m.-1 a.m.

In addition, all VHPA members

Continued on Page 12

Crew members' party will start at 7 p.m.

Continued from Page 11

have been invited to join the crew members at their party, starting at 7 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Centre City at 18th and Market.

Saturday

The Golf Tournament starts with a 7:30 a.m. "shotgun" start. Please mark your reservation form and include a check for $50. This fee includes transportation, greens fee and cart.

IMPORTANT: For those already registered but who have not paid for the golf, please send along a check for the $50 fee. Sorry about the inconvenience.

The 5k run will be held early in the morning in beautiful Fairmount Park, along Boat House Row. The time schedule will be in your registration packet.

Retired Col. Jay Strayer, a Son Tay Raid pilot, will be our luncheon speaker. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. and lunch will be served at 1 p.m.

Evening entertainment will consist of dancing to a live band.

Sunday

A non-denominational church service will be held at 8 a.m. I am still seeking a volunteer(s) to conduct the Sunday services. Please contact me at [redacted].

We are doing something different for the Ladies Function this year. There will be an hour to socialize and then another hour or more of bingo, with cash and prizes. Any volunteers to assist the committee would be appreciated. Ladies, please call me with your name and number.

The Membership Business Meeting will be held in the morning.

In the afternoon, you will have free time to see Philadelphia's historical areas and join in the many Fourth of July activities, which will be commencing throughout the reunion.

The evening banquet will begin with cocktails from 6-7 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. There will be dancing to a live band after dinner. Dress for dinner is a coat and tie.

Monday

This is checkout day. At this time, VHPA participation in the Fourth of July Parade is in a holding pattern. Be sure to check your registration packet for further information.

IMPORTANT: Centipede Tours will not be providing the extra side trips, so don't call for reservations. We currently are working on this, and information about tours will be provided in your registration packet.

Make your reunion reservations today! Break out your red, white and blue, and come join the City of Philadelphia in celebrating the Fourth of July. It's America's birthday bash in America's birthplace!

See you in Philly!

Vendors out in force at the Philly reunion

The reunion vendor list grows as this goes to press.

VHPAers this year will enjoy the vendor tables' largest and best ever selection of aircraft models, shirts, hats, jewelry, art, collectibles, glasses, books, cassette tapes of authentic Vietnam pilot songs, etc.

The best part is the chance to meet the guys we flew with and learn about their new interests.

This year we have a new group of vendors as well as some old familiar ones:

Joe Kline Aviation Art, Marty Heuer's "High Priced Help," Vietnam Helicopter Crew members Association, Nick Skrinikoff's desk top model aircraft, Dan Schifflet's "Air Cav at Work" prints, Greg Ross' rings and pendants, Stephen Pullen's prints and pilot figures, George Reese's memorabilia collection, Dennis Crouch's Honor & Pride vet's mugs and embroidered shirts, Sam Thornton's Griffin Air Replicas, Bernard Grady's book, Tim Doreen's Judy & Co. shirts, and many others.

Honor & Pride will be featuring high-quality U.S. made caps and polo shirts with the VHPA logo embroidered on them. To make sure you get your color and size, you might want to contact Dennis Crouch at [redacted]

— Ken Fritz

POW rescue attempt

Col. Strayer to describe Son Tay raid at reunion

Before dawn on Nov. 21, 1970, a helicopter-borne force landed at Son Tay prison, 21 miles from Hanoi.

The force's mission was to rescue some 60 U.S. prisoners of war thought to be held at the prison.

Though the raiders engaged in a fierce fight with the North Vietnamese, they took off without a serious casualty.

Yet, they left without a single POW. The American prisoners were not there.

What went wrong?

During this year's VHPA Reunion, the pilot of one of the lead helicopters, will describe the events leading to the Son Tay mission, the raid itself and lessons learned from it.

Retired Col. Jay M. Strayer will speak at the Saturday luncheon during the reunion in Philadelphia June 30-July 4. Cost of the luncheon will be $20 per person.

Strayer retired from the Air Force in February 1985 after a 29-year career. He served 25 months as a rescue crew member in Southeast Asia.

During his military career, he accumulated 5,000 hours of flying time, primarily in helicopters.

Strayer currently lives in Jamestown, OH.

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

11th Annual Reunion Philadelphia, PA June 30-July 4, 1994

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to: VHPA, 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202

FAX signed credit card registrations to: (513) 721-5315

Name: Member No.: Expected arrival 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 6/1/94*		@ $ 25.00	
Registration after 6/1/94*		@ $ 35.00	
Saturday luncheon (Jay Strayer, Son Tay Raid pilot.)		@ $ 20.00	
Banquet July 3		@ $ 35.00	
Trip to "The Wall" (Meals not included.)		@ $ 30.00	
Atlantic City casinos (Meals not included.)		@ $ 20.00	
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		

Indicate if you want to participate in these activities	
Static aircraft display at Navy Yard: (Friday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. May include ship tours; meals not included.) **Cost: No charge**	
Golf tournament: (Saturday, 7:30 a.m.-noon. Fee includes transportation, greens fee and cart.) **Cost: $50**	
5k run: **Cost: No charge**	

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

❑ Enclosed is my check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion '94"

❑ Please charge my: MasterCard VISA Discover (circle one)

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 prior to the Reunion. All refund requests must be submitted to VHPA headquarters no later than Aug. 5, 1994, and must include all tickets received, plus proof of payment. Refunds will not be granted for fixed-price events (the Banquet is a fixed-price event) that lose money unless the entire Reunion has a positive cash balance. The VHPA headquarters will process and pay all refund requests within 10 days of completing the Reunion accounting balancing.

Mini-reunions listed for July 2, 3

Schedule mini-reunions

Saturday, July 2

0900	101st Airborne Division	Rick Freeman
0900	7/17 Cavalry	Mike Hurley
0900	Air Force Helicopter Pilots Association	Frank Harvey
0930	New England Chapter VHPA	Bob Whitford
0930	Soc Trang Airfield	Tony Robinson
0930	D Troop 3/4 Cav 25th Division	Tony Robinson
1000	2/17 Cavalry (101st)	Bob Acklen
1000	A/2nd/17th (101st)	Bob Karig
1000	C/101 & 188th AHC	Bob Crow
1400	240th AHC	Jerry Ewing
1400	Class 64-2W	Barry McHenry
1400	119th AHC	Bob Heisterman
1400	Dustoff	Phil Marshall
1400	187th AHC	John Quesenberry
1600	361st ACE	Jack Jordan
1600	189th AHC	Steve Schmidt

Sunday, July 3

1100	New England Chapter VHPA	Bob Whitford
1100	Soc Trang Airfield	Tony Robinson
1100	227th Battalion 1st Cav	Lou Bartolotta
1100	C/101 & 188th AHC	Bob Crow
1100	D Troop 3/4 Cav 25th Division	Tony Robinson

Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association

The following mini-reunions have been organized by the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association. (VHPA members have been invited to the VHCMA-organized reunions.):

- 14th CAB HQ at Holiday Inn Centre City. Units include the 18th AVN Company, 71st AHC, 92nd AHC, 116th AHC, 132nd AVN MH, 135th AVN Company, 161st AML, 174th AHC, 176th AHC, 178th ASHC, 196th MH, 282nd AHC. Contact: Harvey York at (
- 229th AHB, 1st Cavalry Division. Holiday Inn, July 2, 0800-1600. Contacts: Charlie Rains, VHCMA, or Tom Johnson, VHPA, (home).
- 155th AHC. Contact: Tom Mullen at (
- 335th AHC. Contact: Dominic Fino at (.

NOTE: Mini-reunions have become a regular activity at VHPA reunions. The mini-reunions listed above are those that have been scheduled as a part of official reunion activities. Other mini-reunions may be organized on an informal basis, and may not appear on this list.

Bob Anderson, assistant reunion chairman, is in charge of scheduling mini-reunions. He can be contacted at

Any changes to this list will be posted in the reunion registration area at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza.

Hotels, phone numbers, rates listed

Here is a list of hotels — with reservation telephone numbers and room rates — catering to VHPA members attending the 11th annual reunion in Philadelphia:

Headquarters hotel

Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel, reunion headquarters. Call: **(215) 448-2000**. Rate: $69 per night.

Overflow hotels

- **Holiday Inn Midtown**, several blocks from the Wyndham. Call: **(215) 735-9300**. Rate: $65 per night.
- **KormanSuites Hotel**, six blocks from the Wyndham. Call: **(215) 569-7000**. Rate: $69 per night.
- **Doubletree Hotel**, halfway between Wyndham and the historic area. Call: **(215) 893-1600**. Rate: $69 per night.
- **Hotel Atop the Bellevue**, luxury hotel near Doubletree. Call: **(215) 790-2816** and ask for Meg Evans. Rate: $90 per night.
- **Embassy Suites**, across street from the Wyndham. Call: **(215) 561-1776**. Rate: $95 per night for luxury suite occupied by 1-4 people.

'Flying' along Information Superhighway

Mel Canon

I took a flight the other day, just for the fun of it. I climbed into the seat behind the controls and started flipping switches.

I flipped the red master switch, gripped the controls lightly and the purr of the engine was music to my ears. As the machine continued through its start-up cycle, the video display started coming to life and, within seconds, the screen was glowing brightly.

I pulled pitch and was on my way, heading for a low-level flight down the Information Superhighway.

I wasn't flying a helicopter this time; I was maneuvering my computer through the maze of information corridors on the Internet, an electronic global airway of sorts, with a heliport on top of my desk.

For those of you who have not yet discovered the vastness of cyberspace, I am talking about computer on-line operations.

A few years ago, I didn't know a PC from an MP and now I'm taking trips all over the world on one, PC that is. The trips are all via the keyboard and video screen, of course, but I have touched places as far away as Germany and as near as my next door neighbor.

I've established friendships all over the world via the computer and am accumulating more and more acquaintances daily.

I logged onto America On-Line, my personal on-line service, one day and shot an approach to the Veterans Bulletin Board. There was a notice from a vet who was just dropping a line in the water for nibbles from anyone who had flown with the 1st Cavalry Division in RVN. I answered his query and learned that we had flown for the same unit at different times and that we were both VHPA members.

We now have a great on-line relationship and I'm looking forward to visiting with him in person one day soon, at a reunion hopefully.

I don't see much of the real cockpit anymore, but I've sure learned some sweet maneuvers on this PC. If you're not checked out on them yet, you should give it a try. To pull pitch with one of these machines is a real thrill you'll not soon forget.

The world is at your fingertips and the airways are full of friendly fliers. I've yet to land in hostile territory.

My Internet e-mail tail number is: [redacted].

See ya soon and happy flying down that old Information Superhighway.

Book Now and Save to Philadelphia!

Exclusive VHPA Travel Discounts to the 1994 Reunion

Call the official travel agency of VHPA and receive exclusive airline and car rental discounts for travel to Philadelphia. These are special VHPA rates, available only through Carlson Travel Network/ Media Travel USA.

You save money & VHPA wins too! CTN/Media Travel USA will make a cash donation to VHPA for each airline ticket purchase. Make plans now to meet in Philadelphia June 30 - July 4, and take advantage of the exclusive discounts provided by these companies:

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In early days, old road maps used

I've enjoyed reading the recent Newsletter articles about Marine Corps CH-46s and CH-53s; but I'd like to tell about the times when we flew "real helicopters" in I Corps!

I was part of Lt. Col. Ross' HMM-361 that replaced HMM-261 on Oct. 2, 1963, as the SHU-FLY squadron. We flew the "Huss," CH-34Ds.

The things many pilots took for granted after the big helicopter buildup in 1965 simply did not exist in 1963.

For example, maps — we only had old French highway maps of the area. Each pilot carefully plotted the ARVN and Special Forces camps on his map. Naturally, this didn't work too good when a section was sent some 'yard vil in the A Shau Valley. Whenever this happened, a bug eater (Marine slang for a Special Forces soldier) guide would show up, ride with us and point out where to go and, more importantly, where not to go.

• **Gunship escort:** The SHU-FLY squadrons had an outstanding relationship with the Army's Da Nang-based gun units. Even off duty, the Army and Marine pilots spent time together and really became friends.

So, we requested gun escort whenever possible and those guys were beautiful.

One good friend was 1st Lt. Ken Averett, who was flying escort for an insertion. My section was just about to touch down when we started receiving fire from the front. I keyed the radio and said, "Ken receiving fire from 1 o'clock" and just as the word "o'clock" sounded, the entire tree line at the 1 o'clock position exploded from Ken's rockets.

Sort of brings a tear to your eyes — outstanding gun support!

• **Leading by example:** The Corps always had a strong tenet that combat commanders must lead by example. Lt. Col. Ross and my platoon leader, Maj. Frank Huglin, were very good.

Most of the time, they were the first ships into PZs or SAR insertions. Several times we'd watch from 2,000 as they'd try several different approaches to a zone.

Frank was a determined individual and even though his ship was hit several times and there were ARVN wounded or dead on it, he would still make the first touch down; then the rest of us would follow.

• **Maintenance and availability:** I'd give high marks for our

Continued on Page 17

Greg & Stephanie Ross
Greg is a life member of VHPA

Visit us in Philley
June 30-July 4
at our exhibit
RINGS WITH WINGS
You can write or call us

[redacted]

YOU ASKED FOR IT!

Many of you expressed an interest in getting together during the winter season and thought a cruise would be the ideal way to do it. Through a friend in the travel business we have arranged a **"Meeting At Sea".**

COME ABOARD CARNIVAL CRUISE'S
The "Fun Ship"
Festivale
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Miracles occurred in maintenance

Continued from Page 16

maintenance and log support personnel. True miracles happened overnight, most every night! The Marine Air Wing in Okinawa had USAF C-124 Globemasters bring in replacement H-34s within a day or so after an aircraft was lost.

• **Use of the OlBs:** (EDITOR'S NOTE: Like the Army CH-21 companies, the Marine Corps squadrons had a few organic fixed-wing observation aircraft).

With the monsoons and mountainous terrain, many missions were questionable from the very start. We'd send the OlBs into the valleys ahead of the H-34 flights to check on the weather, establish radio contact, work with the VNAF T-28s strike, etc.

You don't hear a lot about the OlBs, but they performed a very valuable job. Most all of us were dual rated, especially the flight leaders. So you could take an OlB into the area, look it over without making too much noise, come back, jump in a Huss and run the mission.

• **Operating policy:** We had a rather strict policy of never shutting down in the field unless it was absolutely unavoidable.

We often saw Army Hueys parked out in the weeds (EDITOR'S NOTE: Marine slang for a Special Forces camp) and thought it would be fun to get to know the locals a little better and maybe eat lunch with them; but we never did.

• **Downed bird:** If a bird got hit, the policy was to get it home before dark, if at all possible. In the year and a half Marine Corps H-34s had been in Vietnam, we had developed some armor protection for the especially vulnerable engine components.

We still needed a replacement engine rather frequently, so we had a QEC (quick engine change) drill. We kept a stripped down H-34 in the maintenance area loaded with selected tools plus a spare engine nearby that had already been rigged for QEC.

I'd like to close by relating a story that gets better every time I tell it! See, the electricity went off in the quarters compound about 2230 every evening.

We generally timed the start of the evening movie so that everyone could get back to his room with the lights still on. The movie was delayed several minutes on the off chance that some of the senior officers who usually worked late might still come in to see the movie.

One evening, we were about 40 minutes into the movie when the lights came on and "Ten Hut" sounds. Everyone jumped to their feet and the bird colonel SHUFLY commanding officer entered and took his seat.

He instructed the operator to rewind the movie to the beginning and show it again. Now there wasn't enough time to complete the movie before the lights went out and most of us didn't carry flashlights.

Several of us decide to even the score, so to speak. We borrowed one of the Vietnamese cows that used to graze in the old French mine field just outside the compound and put her in the colonel's room.

A few weeks prior to this, someone had pointed out that a VC sapper could simply run down the hall of the BOQ, kick open doors and roll in a grenade. The solution was to install a sliding lock on the inside — so you could lock yourself in your room.

Well, the colonel had taken this lock concept to a new high. He had about four on his door. When he went to bed, you could hear click, click, click, click.

On this particular evening, a small crowd — said to include all ranks up to major — had been alerted to gather, listen and observe.

The electricity went off before the movie ended and everyone repeated a few well-known phrases as they stumbled home in the dark.

The colonel entered the room, four clicks, there was a momentary pause, then high-pitched screams! Even in the dark, the smell and heavy breathing would be enough to suggest he wasn't alone in that room!

The investigation never accurately determined the "cow borrowers" but the colonel gave "extra duty" to several individuals, myself including. This "extra duty" included standing in the colonel's office for three or four hours on several consecutive days and being chewed out whenever the occasion presented itself.

Near the end of the "extra duty period," the colonel chewed on us again and left the room.

Lt. Col. Ross was in the room and, when the colonel was out of range, started laughing hard and asked: "Do you guys know the reason I never go on R&R?" And before we could answer, he continued: "It's because I never lack for entertainment with you guys around! Now get out of here — I never want to see your faces again."

Dan Ross
HMM-361, 1963-64

Items can be sent to Newsletter via e-mail

VHPA members now can communicate with the Newsletter editor using electronic mail — or e-mail.

Articles, notices and letters for publication can be sent to the Newsletter directly via CompuServe Mail or over the Internet through other on-line services.

To send e-mail to the Newsletter editor over CompuServe, address it to: "VHPA Newsletter editor at 74127,442."

If using another on-line service, the Internet address is: "[redacted]"

Photograph brings back memories

I let my VHPA dues lapse for some time.

Finally, I was talking to Herbie Hirst who attended last year's Reunion in Arizona. He was telling me how great it was to talk with several of our mutual friends, so I sent in my dues and ordered a VHPA Calendar pretty much on faith. I am impressed!! The Newsletters are great, the Directory is great, the Calendar is super — nice work!

Recently I discovered this old photo and a flood of memories (plus a few tears) came back. I'd like to relate this story as a tribute to the three men who flew with me that day but who are no longer with us.

A flash shows where a cache of Viet Cong ammunition explodes after being hit by a helicopter-fired missile.

In March of 1966 I joined A Battery 2/20 ARA just about the time many of the "originals" were getting short. I was an Artillery officer and worked hard learning to fly gunships in Vietnam.

In late April or early May, we received some SS-11 French antitank missiles.

Somehow they got assigned to my section and it became my job to "make them work." Our maintenance and avionics people spent hours reading wiring diagrams then we'd take it up to see what happened.

I'd guess I'd fired about 30 or 40 missiles, mostly in training or against some old bunkers when, on Oct. 9, we received what proved to be a very "dicey" mission.

It seems that Navy patrol boats had been taking heavy automatic weapons fire at night from some caves on a rocky peninsula north

Continued on Page 19

Provisional brigade active during existence

I would like to add the 9th Air Cavalry Brigade (Provisional), 1st Air Cavalry Division to the roster of helicopter units published in the 1993 Directory.

Shelby Stanton mentions this unit in his "Anatomy Of A Division — The 1st Cav in Vietnam," published by Warner Books.

The 9th Air Cavalry Brigade was officially created by division order on Dec. 5, 1970, but had been conducting combat operations as an ad hoc brigade since early September. It was officially terminated on April 10, 1971.

Maj. Gen. George Putnam became the division commanding general after Maj. Gen. Casey died in a helicopter crash in July.

I returned to the 1st Cav in early August 1970 to command the 1/9 Air Cavalry Squadron for the second time.

Gen. Putnam was deeply concerned about the size of the division's AO, which exceeded 4,500 square miles, and how best to cover it with the assets he had available.

Although the 1/9 was accounting for over half of the division's contacts and enemy casualties, its three air cav troops were simply spread too thin. We both concluded that the division needed more air cavalry.

The idea of provisional air cav troops and a provisional brigade using the 1/9 Cav as a base evolved from several conversations between myself and Gen. Putnam on the subject.

At his direction, the division staff presented several proposals, but the one he approved was to form two provisional troops utilizing the gun platoons from the 227th and 229th and UH-1s and LOHs from other division assets.

"E" Troop, 1/9, was formed under the command of a great air cavalryman, Maj. Bert Chole, on Sept. 1, 1970, and was an immediate success. "F" Troop followed in early December.

In the meantime, Lt. Gen. Mike Davidson, commanding general of II Field Force, OPCONed the 3/17 Air Cavalry Squadron to the division on Oct. 26 after we briefed him on our air cav activities. Then, in early November, the 334th Attack Helicopter Company was reorganized as "E" Troop, 3/17 Cav (Prov).

On Dec. 5, 1970, division frag order 339-2 officially established the 9th Air Cav Brigade (Prov). As commanding officer of the 1/9 Cav, I was designated overall coordinator (in effect, commander) of all air cav assets in the division.

Continued on Page 19

Brigade had 216 combat helicopters

Continued from Page 18

Throughout its existence, brigade elements basically provided air cav support to the division's infantry brigades and on occasion to ARVN units who reacted to our recon and surveillance efforts within their AOs.

At the apex of its existence — December 1970 — the brigade had the two air cav squadrons, and three provisional air cav troops, plus H Company, 75th Rangers.

Personnel strength was some 2,400 and there were 216 combat helicopters (74 AH-1Gs, 62 UH-1s, 50 OH-6s, and 30 OH-58s).

On Dec. 31, the brigade conducted a special operation to find a reported POW camp west of Dau Tieng. We had several small contacts and made several insertions of attached infantry to check out suspected locations, but never found anything that resembled a POW camp.

I departed the division in late January 1971 and the late Col. Carl Putnam assumed command. Several brigade units participated in "Lam Son 719" in February but after that, the brigade sort of withered away as the 1st Cav began standing down.

The 1st Cav's experiment was truly a great pioneering effort on the part of many far-thinking professionals of all ranks.

It was the forerunner and provided some valuable lessons learned for the air cav brigades that were formed after the war. I refer specifically to the first official ACCB of the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, which I commanded in 1972 and 1973.

Many honors have come my way in 26 years of service and since. The highest honor, however, was to serve with many great soldier aviators in Vietnam, especially the young warrant officers, lieutenants and captains whose collective and individual heroism and unbelievable flying skills made the 1/9th Cav Sqdn and the 9th Air Cavalry Brigade (Prov) truly special.

Bob Nevins
1967 1/9 Cav, 1st Cav Div
1970-71 1/9 Cav and 9 ACB (Prov), 1st Cav Div
1972-73 ACCB 1st Cav Div Fort Hood

Boats take automatic weapons fire

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of Qui Nhon. By day they could not identify the origin of the attacks; so that morning they inserted a 1st Cav LRRP team.

The patrol began searching the narrow beach front and scanning the mountainous cliffs and hill mass above them. They were taken under fire from above, which pinned them down on the beach and they were clinging to the rocky ledges for cover. They called in the Air Force, but they could not fire at the narrow "pillbox" without hurting the LRRPs.

Our battalion CO, Lt. Col. Morris J. Brady, called us in with the warning to be careful of the LRRPs.

CW2 Alex (Alejandro Makintaya) flew the aircraft, Smitty was the CE, and Jonesie was the gunner, and I flew the wire-guided missile.

We launched the first missile about 800 meters out and kept it on track until the very last instant when some mild turbulence buffeted the aircraft and caused the missile to impact about a foot high and to the right of the pillbox opening.

During that eternity, we had to stay as level and as stable as possible because the missile control gyros and joy stick were in our aircraft.

Naturally, the VC were shooting at us plus knowing the LRRPs were in trouble and with a cast of thousands watching; well it was anything but dull in that Charlie Model!!

Alex and I rousted each other for many months after that about the "mild turbulence" vs. who flinched and what caused that first shot to miss. He was a very good pilot and was certainly cold as ice that day.

On our second pass, Smitty and Jonesie knew where to fire so they tried to suppress the 12.7mm gunners with M60s. Alex went on instruments — so we'd know for sure who flinched. The second shot ran hot and straight and normal. Smitty, Jonesie and I saw the tail fins shear off as the missile entered the mouth of the natural bunker but . . . nothing happened!!

We all swear — Oh, no, a dud! Then this "Guns of Navarrone" type fireball erupts from the bunker. Jonesie took this picture and later talked with the LRRPs when they returned.

The LRRPs got into the cave. Apparently the missile exploded against the back wall — in the midst of their ammo cache. They reported 102 VC KIAs from that blast and in an adjoining cave another 55 became instant "Chieu Hois."

I don't think there were any heroes here — only soldiers all willing to go back a second time and do it right!

Smitty and Jonesie were still together in that same ship on Jan. 24, 1967, when it was flown by Capt. William Hingston, a West Pointer and a good friend.

I was flying wing on them that day helping check Bill out as a team leader. The front of the ship took a lot of fire, they crashed and only the badly injured co-pilot survived. Some time before, Jonesie had given me the roll of film to get developed; that's how I ended up with this picture.

Sadly Alex was killed on Sept. 11, 1971, during his second tour. So, you see, I am the only one left to narrate this history, to send you their picture, and to dedicate it to these brave men who have gone ahead.

Rodger L. McAlister, FALCON 27 ALFA
March 66-March 67 A/2/20 ARA 1 CAV

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