



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

February 1994 Vol. 12, No. 1

Jolly Green Giant uses hoist



Bill Byrd photo

An Air Force HH-3E from the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron at Da Nang hoists a man.

From the President

This organization means many things to many people, but regardless of what it means to you, there is none like it. This is the only veterans organization that I belong to, because this is where I belong. I have joined two other vet groups, but in both cases let my membership lapse because I did not feel part of them. Not so the VHPA; two hours after I showed up at my first reunion in 1986, I was writing a check for life membership. I was hooked then and I still am.

This issue is being sent to every person in our database, so for some of you, this is the only glimpse of the VHPA that you get; we truly hope it is a positive one. An awful lot of effort by a lot of peo-

ple goes into this organization. We certainly don't do it for the money; this is ALL volunteer. We do it because somewhere out there, some of your past stick buddies are looking for you. Besides, who else but us would you want to hang out with, anyway? And who else but us can you identify with better; friends who know a LOT about what was probably the most intense part of your life: A 365-day adrenaline high!

The long and short of it? The invitation for you to join is here; it always has been. We are going to have a great time in Philadelphia this summer. At least try to make the reunion even if you decide not to join; even if for just a day. If you've never been to one, you won't believe it.

And if you don't make the reunion, at least the newsletters and membership directory are WELL worth the 30 bucks. Think about it.

— Phil Marshall, President

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter

(Update requested)

Ohio River LZ Chapter

Paul Cotter, President

Great Lakes Chapter (Northeastern Illinois)

John Becker, President

North Carolina Chapter

Gary Kimbrell, President

New England Chapter

(Update requested)

Mardi Gras Chapter

Don Hunt, President

Lee Overstreet, Vice President
New Orleans, LA

EDITOR'S NOTE: Chapters are responsible for providing the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of chapter officers to the VHPA Newsletter, 7 W. Seventh St., Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202, for this listing.

Seeking

I was on active duty at Fort Rucker from 1965-1967 as a control tower operator at Lowe AHP and Cairns AAF, and spent off-duty time as a flight instructor at the local civilian field, transitioning returning Vietnam vets to fixed-wing aircraft.

There were two fine fellows with whom I have lost touch and would like to locate again, if they are willing.

If you have a current address for either CWO Earl Palmer or CWO Vernon Albert, I would appreciate hearing from you (or them).

Capt. Burr Rubey
Saudi Arabian Airlines
P.O. Box 167; CC-942
Jeddah 21231, Saudi Arabia

I would like to make contact with John Siarra. John was a naturalized American citizen originally from Romania.

He was a captain when I left B Company, 227th AHB, 1st Cav in April of 1969.

I appreciate any information.

George A. Smith, D.D.S.
"Musher 11"

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Taps

Burt Allen Jr.

Retired Lt. Col. Burt Allen Jr. of Newton, AL, died Nov. 24 after a lengthy illness. He was 59.

He was born Feb. 24, 1934, in Obion, TN. Allen entered the Army in 1953, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 1981.

He was a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars, and received numerous awards and decorations, including the Silver Star and Purple Heart medals.

During his service in Southeast Asia, Allen was a helicopter pilot in South Vietnam and Laos.

After his retirement from the Army, Allen was employed as a flight instructor for 11 years.

He is survived by his wife, Norma W. Allen of Newton; a daughter, Donna Hodges of Panama City, FL; a son, Larry Allen of Newton; two brothers, a sister and two grandchildren.

Carl G. Gates

Carl G. Gates, a Vietnam veteran and a major in the New Jersey National Guard, died Oct. 21.

Gates, 43, was a flight instructor at Mercer County Airport, NJ, for 17 years and also worked as a pilot for the U.S. Customs Service.

He was born in Bridgeton, NJ, and had lived in Mercer County most of his life.

Gates is survived by his wife, Patricia; a daughter, Jennifer; a son, Stephen; his father, Charles W. Gates Jr.; and two sisters.

Mini-reunions

101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)

Pilots and crew members who served with the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) in Vietnam or at Fort Campbell, KY, are invited to a division mini-reunion on the morning of July 3 in Philadelphia.

The mini-reunion is the first by a division-size group to be held at a VHPA Reunion.

The combined division mini-reunion will last about one hour and then separate into company size and battalion size mini-reunions.

During the mini-reunion, a briefing will be given about aviation units now in the division and their role, and a silent toast will be given to pilots and crew members who have died.

Richard W. "Rick" Freeman

(Home)

2/17 Cavalry

All pilots and crew members assigned to the 2nd

Squadron, 17th Cavalry are encouraged to attend a combined squadron mini-reunion in Philadelphia.

The combined Squadron mini-reunion will begin after the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) mini-reunion.

Robert L. "Bob" Acklen Jr.

(Home)

Class 64-2W

Flight school Class 64-2W, a WORWAC class with 66 graduates, will have its 30th year reunion during the VHPA Reunion in Philadelphia.

From this group, 33 graduates have been contacted, 10 are deceased, 16 have no recent known address, and seven are otherwise "unaccounted for."

Contact: Barry McHenry,

Or call (

Pat McLarney

Firebucket mission started by 'Geronimos'

I just received and thoroughly enjoyed the December Newsletter. The article about the Chinook firebuckets of the 213th was of particular interest since they inherited that mission from my old unit, the 205th "Geronimos."

The background on the firebuckets goes back to 1969. The buckets originally belonged to the 147th ASHC at Vung Tau and were electrically operated. They had trouble getting the electrical system to operate and gave the buckets to the 205th ASHC.

We had a Boeing tech rep, whose name I cannot recall, with our unit at Phu Loi. This tech rep converted the bucket doors to hydraulic doors using speed brake actuators from a Mohawk airplane and tapped hydraulic power from

the utility system of the Chinook, actually running a line from the test panel on the right rear outside of the Chinook.

I became involved with the testing of this system, along with CWO Phil Hocking, and became unofficially the first "Firebucket IP." I was tasked to check out all the other pilots in our unit and we had the mission of firebucket standby until I left the unit and, I assume, until that unit was turned over to the Vietnamese.

As did the 213th, we responded to fire calls from Bien Hoa to Saigon to the vicinity of Nui Ba Din. We fought fires in buildings, minefields, ammo dumps and open grassland. On one occasion, Phil Hocking and I went to Dalat and demonstrated the use of the firebuckets to U.S. AID personnel.

It is nice to know that the work we did on that project was carried on long after we departed Nam. I am sure that they used what we learned and improved on it. Incidentally, WO1 Charles "Chuck" R. Foist, mentioned in the article is

now a police lieutenant in charge of the Dallas Police helicopter section and is retired from the Texas National Guard.

One other small note. The 213th ASHC was known as "Black Cats," not "Black Hawks."

Billy Hampton
Mesquite, TX

War library being assembled behind bars

I am putting together a library totally dedicated to the Vietnam War and the men who served there. As the library will be located within a maximum security prison, we are limited to what we will be permitted to have in it. And the items and materials that will be there will all have to be donated by ourselves and other Vietnam veterans.

We will be permitted to have

Continued on Page 5



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**

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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 100% 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

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Advertisement

I commissioned Colonel Darrel L. Combs, U.S.M.C., one of the nation's top award-winning military artists, to sculpt a Vietnam helicopter pilot. Darrel 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 [REDACTED]

This figure will make an excellent gift 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 seen — or probably ever will see.

Steve Pullen/Banshee 11



Continued from Page 4

and make available the following items: Photos, books, after-action reports, morning reports, maps, and other form of paper reports and materials that we may be able to get.

The library will be open to the general public and plans have already been made to bring entire classes of children from schools all over the State of New York of all age groups to view the library in hopes of presenting the Vietnam War the way it was.

The school districts, as well as the individuals who come to the library, will be permitted to make donations to a fund that has already been established for the families of MIAs who are in financial difficulty. I sincerely appreciate any assistance that you may give by letting our needs be known to the guys in the association. Please keep in mind that we do not want anyone to send money, nothing by pictures, documents, maps and the other above-named paper items. Anything else of paper that anyone has and wishes to be placed in the library will also be appreciated.

James V. Supino
Retired staff sergeant
Attica Correctional Facility
91-A-9277
Attica, NY 14011-0149

Greenhalgh steps down as chairman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bill Greenhalgh, chairman of the VHPA Historical Committee, wrote the following letter to members of the committee, and to the VHPA membership.

I am stepping down from my position as chairman of the Historical Committee with the VHPA. Circumstances have forced me to direct my energy elsewhere. For a time, I will have too much on my mind to devote the necessary attention to the duties as Historical Committee chairman.

I want to thank you for all of your help over the past few years

Chinnery book sparks interest

I have recently read a copy of the book "Vietnam: The Helicopter War" by Philip Chinnery, from which I obtained your organization's address.

I have maintained a deep interest in U.S. aviation activities during the war in Southeast Asia and I am currently conducting private research with the aim of (eventually) publishing my own series of books on the subject.

One of my main areas of research is the U.S.A.F. operation of helicopters during the war.

R. Davies

with the Historical Committee. I hope that the person who takes up the reins will have the good luck I have had and will find people with the enthusiasm you have shown to help in our quest to find and/or recreate the histories of helicopter units in Vietnam.

All records and information gathered, with your help, will go to VHPA Headquarters until a new Historical Committee chairman is found. If anyone is interested in this job, please contact Phil Marshall, VHPA president.

Along with the records will be sent a list of all individuals who have helped on the committee, with hopes that you will be able to continue to support the committee and assist whoever is found to be the next committee chairman.

I am also sending a list of current committee members to VHPA President Phil Marshall. If you think you can assist in information about your unit, to act as the unit representative, please contact Phil. I believe it is important that our history be preserved and that the accurate history of each unit be told — when possible. Unfortunately, there are still huge gaps.

I wish you all good luck and hope the very best for each of you in your endeavors. I thank you for your help; it has been much

appreciated and has gotten me past many barriers. I thank you not only for your help on the Historical Committee, but for your friendship.

Don't be complete strangers — feel free to write anytime. Although I won't have the ability to find things as readily as before, as my contacts become lost, I will help if I can. If you are ever in this part of the country, stop by — or at least call.

Again, many, many thanks.

Bill Greenhalgh

Author looking for OH-58, H-46 photos, material

I'm looking for photographs and information on OH-58s and H-46s, from their initial deployment in Vietnam to the present. I hope to tell the story of both aircraft through the use of photos and text. Your help with this is appreciated.

If your members feel they might be able to help me with either project, please have them contact me.

Bryan H. Wilburn

Can anyone recall deceased flight surgeon?

We know of one flight surgeon who is listed as deceased in Vietnam.

His name was Capt. Richard Alan Aaron, SSN [REDACTED], deceased I Corps area around Feb. 6, 1971, maybe near Quang Tin, and perhaps died in a rotary wing mishap.

We would like to know if any VHPA members recall him?

Lt. Col. Kevin T. Mason

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Aviation author researching Huskie, Hornets

I am an aviation author and presently am researching the Kaman HH-43 "Huskie" helicopter and the 20th Special Operations Squadron "Green Hornets" of the U.S. Air Force for books devoted to the complete history of both subjects.

Therefore, I'm most interested in knowing if you could feature an ad in a forthcoming newsletter requesting assistance in the form of photos and information from your members. Material would be carefully handled, copied, promptly returned, and fully credited. In addition, contributors will receive a complimentary copy of my book upon publication.

Any assistance you could provide in this matter would be most helpful in producing accurate and detailed accounts of these subjects.

Wayne Mutza
VHCMA No. 7

Dust-off pilot says thanks for directory

Thank you very much for the latest edition of THE directory and particularly for the dedication to those of us who flew Dust-Off.

Please be kind enough to update your files to reflect that I was "Dust-Off 91" in the 326th Medical Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division stationed at Hue/Phu Bai from February of 1970 until March of 1971.

We had three platoon leaders during that time. Then-Maj. Thomas Murphy who taught this fledgling Peter Pilot, above all, to always be a professional. Capt. Thomas Harker who taught me, above all, equanimity under fire, and Maj. William Busch who,

above all, taught me how to drink the REMFs under the table.

I find none of them in the directory. Furthermore, then-CW2 John Schey (spelling is correct, I think), who taught me how to make the ship a part of myself, is nowhere to be found.

Almost 25 years, and a hell of a lot of cold Coors later, I still frequently reminisce about the debt I owe these and so many other of the "guys," including, I am loathe to admit, a number of gunship and slick jocks whose names I've never known. To you and all of them, a heartfelt "Thumbs-Up."

Laurence Rosen, M.D.
"Dust-Off 91" (The Rabbi)

Sequel planned, help needed from members

I am in the process of developing a book as a sequel to the Moore and Galloway book "We Were Soldiers Once, And Young."

I am doing fairly well in gathering names of crew members who were in the helicopters supporting the 7th Cav at LZ X-ray and LZ Albany during the 14-20 Nov 65 battles. I am having some difficulty in locating others, however.

Could you help me out and ask your membership computer to list all members of the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), who were assigned in 1965?

Also, is there another organization like the Helicopter Crew Members Association that could include crewchiefs and gunners?

Paul P. Winkel Jr.

EDITOR'S NOTE: VHPA members who were in the 229th during the battles in the two landing zones may write to Winkel at the above address. The Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association may be contacted at P.O. Box 752592, Memphis, TN 38175-2158 or by calling [redacted]

54th Signal has a lengthy, proud history

The 54th Signal Battalion has a long history. It was activated in early 1941. One company was on board ship en route to the Far East on Dec. 7, 1941, but was immediately recalled and sent with the entire battalion to Iceland in 1942.

In 1944, it was shipped to England, where it was selected by Gen. Ridgeway to become his XVIII Airborne Corps signal battalion. Elements of the battalion were involved in the Battle of the Bulge and the crossing of the Rhine. It was deactivated in late 1945.

The 54th was reactivated in 1962 at Fort Hood as the III Corps signal battalion, then sent to RVN in the summer of 1965 to become the corps signal battalion of what became IFFV, headquartered at Nha Trang.

I was the XO of the 54th from July 1965 through its difficult first year in RVN (rotated in August 1966 myself). I commanded the main body of the battalion which arrived at Cam Ranh Bay on Sept. 15, 1965. Our base of operations was at Nha Trang, although we had a company headquartered at Pleiku and teams all over the IFFV tactical area.

The battalion was deactivated in 1971, then reactivated in 1982 at Fort Hood, this time as an element of the 3rd Signal Brigade assigned to III Corps. It was deactivated in 1989, only to be reactivated again in 1991 in Saudi Arabia.

In RVN, the 54th had a substantial aviation section, with both fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

If I remember correctly, while I was XO, we had two Hueys in addition to two H-13s and three or four fixed wings. The aircraft were used for IFFV courier runs, transport of communications equipment and personnel in support of tactical operations, and general support of the battalion, such as the pay run to Pleiku that went on Oct. 31, 1968, just north of Nha Trang.

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Actually, our first aircraft loss came only about six weeks after arrival, in November 1965, when we lost an H-13 in the South China Sea just below Nha Trang. I was aboard the LST that found the wreckage and pulled it up.

Aboard were pilot CWO Lindsey Crow and courier Spec. 4 John McDermott. They were the first two casualties of HQ IFFV. The Nha Trang troop cantonment area later was named Camp John F. McDermott and the 54th BOQ/officer's club was named Crow Hall.

A number of former members of the 54th held a reunion at Fort Gordon/Augusta, GA, on Sept. 15, 1990, the 25th anniversary of the arrival of the battalion in RVN.

A second reunion was held last year at Fort Knox/Radcliff, KY. At that meeting, a decision was made to form the 54th Signal Battalion Association, and to make a major effort to locate former members of the battalion.

Present plans are to hold reunions on even-numbered years, the next to be in the fall of 1994.

Perhaps as many as 10,000 persons have served with the battalion and attached units in its approximate 25 years of active service since February 1941. We have the names of about 7,500 of them, and about 700 verified addresses, so far.

One of the pay officers killed in the UH-1 crash was Lt. Phillip Battaglia Jr. His father contacted me some months ago and asked for more information on his son's service in RVN. As a result, I have been in contact with several battalion members of the time, including Teryl Makin, a radio operator who was monitoring the channel that morning.

He says he heard the pilot report rocket fire and the loss of a rotor, followed by some very long seconds of screams. He is still very emotionally disturbed by the memory of the crash, especially since he was quite friendly with Lt. Battaglia.

Makin and a couple of other sources indicate that there were 10, possibly 11, persons aboard, all from the 54th.

The pilots were apparently CW2 Steven I Cavin and WO1 Paul R. Driscoll. There apparently were four enlisted men aboard, probably two aircrew members. The others aboard were all lieutenants — pay officers sent out to pay the battalion's 167th Signal Company headquartered at Pleiku and the numerous teams of the 54th scattered throughout the tactical zone. One was Battaglia, another apparently was a Lt. Peter Mahoney (thought to be from Pasadena, CA, according to another lieutenant in the battalion at the time).

I'd appreciate it very much if a notice could be published in your association newsletter.

Elmer A. Goetsch
Secretary-treasurer
54th Signal Battalion
Association

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This return to Vietnam is a rare opportunity to witness first-hand the changes two decades of healing process can make. Pending final acceptance, we will be joined by Sydney Shanberg, the award-winning journalist whose Vietnam and Cambodian experience was the subject of the major motion picture, *The Killing Fields*.

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Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

Women honored on Veterans Day

MIKE SLONIKER
VHPA MEMBER

I never know what to expect when I go to the Vietnam Memorial on Memorial Day in the spring, and Veterans Day in the fall.

Last year, the 10th anniversary of the memorial was a weeklong celebration during which each name was movingly read aloud by volunteers, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and fellow veterans from the Sunday before Veterans Day to Veterans Day on Wednesday, Nov. 11, 1992.

Memorial Day 1993 was a day of unrest and controversy as President Clinton spoke at the Memorial. Some voted with their feet and were not present when he spoke. Others remained and tried to shout him down or turn their backs on him.

It did not appear to be a place of healing and celebration of the lives of those who did not survive.

Nov. 11, 1993 was entirely different all together.

There were women everywhere, and they were our fellow Vietnam veterans. What a stark contrast! The sound of female laughter and voices could be heard everywhere. Whether you found your nurse or not was inconsequential; you would get a hug regardless.

They were very organized, with many reunions in the local Northern Virginia or Washington hotels.

Some attended the annual reunions, for example the 1st Cavalry's Ia Drang Valley reunion and dinner, and were given seats of honor and recognized to standing ovations.

The Donut Dollies had a reunion at the Sheraton National, and it was great to see so many in one place.

Who were these ladies and how many were lost in Vietnam? Below is listed their names and hometowns:

Lt. Carola E. Drazba, Dunmore, PA; Lt. Elizabeth A. Jones, Orangeburg, SC; Capt. Eleanor C. Alexander, Westwood, NJ; Lt. Hedwig D. Orlowski, Detroit, MI; Lt. Sharon A. Lane, Zanesville, OH; Lt. Pamela D. Donovan, Boston,



Mike Sloniker photo

A statue honoring women Vietnam veterans was dedicated in November.

MA; Lt. Col. Annie Ruth Graham, Durham, NC; Capt. Mary J. Klinker, Lafayette, IN.

The first women killed, Drazba and Jones, were assigned to the 51st Field Hospital in Saigon. They died when their helicopter had a wire strike over a river.

Many of the nurses said they were discouraged from riding on helicopters, except to accompany patients to the next higher treatment facility, after this accident.

On Nov. 30, 1967, Alexander, Orlowski and two male nurse anesthetists died in a plane crash.

On June 8, 1969, Lane was killed instantly during a dawn Viet Cong rocket attack on the 312th Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai. She died in her ward while caring for her patients.

The nurses remember the frustration of trying to protect the patients during mortar or rocket attacks. Many times all they could do was to put a mattress over the patient, much to the chagrin of the patient.

Two nurses died of medical problems.

On July 8, 1968, Donovan died of pneumonia. On Aug. 14, 1969, Graham died of an internal hemorrhage while serving as chief nurse of the 91st Evac hospital.

Klinker was the last nurse to die in Vietnam. The 27-year-old flight nurse was killed on April 4, 1975, when the C-5 Galaxy aircraft, on which she was flying with 243 Vietnamese orphans, crashed

shortly after taking off from Saigon.

On my first tour, in September 1968, I was an ambulatory evacuation to the hospital at Cu Chi. I had some small shrapnel in my wrist that the unit medic insisted must be treated because it needed stitches and I needed a tetanus shot.

In the medevac helicopter, I held an IV containing saline solution for a much more seriously injured soldier. I was embarrassed to be there because of the serious injuries I was witnessing in the triage area, and what I considered to be scratches on me. I was questioned and my wounds were considered "minimal."

I never knew what happened to the young soldier I accompanied, but was puzzled when he was classified "expectant."

This year a really nice nurse, who was stationed at the 95th Evac in 1969, explained triage to me. She said triage cases were assigned a priority, so the medical professionals could do the greatest good for the greatest number.

"Immediate" meant the patient could be saved, "delayed" meant he could get to the operating room later, "minimal" was for someone who was going to be fine, "expectant" for a soldier who was likely to die.

I will never forget that young man from 3d Bn, 187th INF, 3d Bde 101st, but his name is known only to God and the nurses.

Memorial dedication touching event

JIM SCHUECKLER
VHPA MEMBER

The dedication of the Vietnam Womens Memorial was awesome!

Lee, an artilleryman, and I drove the nine hours to DC the day before.

Veterans Day morning dawned clear, crisp, and beautiful. At about 8:30 I started to place letters at The Wall, one for each panel.

On VHPA letterhead, the large letters at the top said, "We remember our sisters," followed by the names of the eight military and 55 civilian women killed or missing. Then the names of the helicopter pilots on that particular panel. One panel has 86 helicopter pilots' names, seven panels have none. We included four Australian and six U.S. civilian pilots' names.

I started at the east end of The Wall, silently reading the names of the pilots on each sheet before I set it down. I was on the third or fourth panel when I noticed an elderly couple pick up the letter I had set at the first panel.

I was just about to say, "Please don't take that," when the woman's finger scanned down through the names of civilian women casualties and stopped about halfway down. The couple stood motionless for a few seconds and then embraced. That made all the work worthwhile.

I had just finished reading the names of four pilots I knew when a woman standing next to me began to sing: "May God Protect the Men Who Fly." Just loud

enough for The Wall and my eavesdropping to hear, she sang many verses in a clear, beautiful, voice. I had only heard that song once before, at a friend's funeral. I was glad the letters I was still holding were in plastic sheet protectors.

When she stopped, I asked: "Who?"

She touched a name and said, "My dad, Air Force."

We hugged and talked briefly.

Lee and I then headed for Constitution Avenue to watch the march. The color guards and band went by, and then the first group of nurses.

At first, people on the sides were yelling "welcome home!" — but then some started to run out to hug the women. To the first woman I hugged, I said, "Welcome home." We were just releasing the hug and then I said, "I'm glad your day is here." She tightened the hug, and we stood there for a while as the parade went around us.

A few more "welcome home" hugs and "thanks," where the women responded by crushing my ribs.

When the parade dissolved into the crowd near The Wall, I realized I had forgotten one part of my original mission.

On Christmas Day 1969, I flew two Red Cross Donut Dollies around to visit the troops in the boonies on the most memorable and enjoyable day of my tour. I had a picture of them standing next to my Huey, but I didn't remember their names.

After hugging the first Donut Dolly I saw, I showed her the picture and she said, "That's Ann (last name), and she is here today!"

Others identified Sue, who was also there.

They wanted to see the rest of my pictures, offered encouragement and help, and asked for my name and address in case they found Sue or Ann.

Lee and I were invited to come to the Donut Dolly hospitality suite and dance Friday evening. But we had agreed, we had to be on the road by 3 p.m., since we both had to work Friday.

About 2:45, Lee and I agreed to head toward the car. Wait! There's one more group of Donut Dollies! "Welcome home." Hug. "Do you know either of these girls in this picture?" "That's my sister!" Hug.

I explained we had to leave, and to give her my best wishes. Sister said, "Oh no, you don't go until we find her." She took me under tow. Ann recognized me.

Finally, we exchanged addresses and one-sentence descriptions of the last 24 years. Ann had taken many pictures that same Christmas day, but did not have them with her, would send.

Sue, the other Donut Dolly, called me at work a few days later! She had several of my business cards I had given to other Donut Dollies. We had a great chat! Christmas Day 1969 was also special to her, and she has lots of pictures.

We will be exchanging letters and pictures.

New chapter being organized in the Tampa Bay area

BARRY SPEARE
VHPA MEMBER

When the 1993 VHPA Directory arrived, there was a section that divided the membership up by state and city.

A few of us got together and decided to make a few phone calls to VHPA members in our respective towns, and this was our experience when we made the calls:

Fifteen phone calls were made to VHPAers listed in their current city phone directory, 11 contacts were made immediately, 10 were active members, all 10 of whom welcomed the call and asked, "can I help?"

We would like to organize a Tampa Bay/or combined Central Florida Chapter of VHPA.

Bottom line to all of this is we all have something to share. We

could try to get together a couple times a year, or even quarterly. By organizing as a chapter, we would have the "collective pull" to bring the VHPA Reunion to Tampa Bay in 1997 or 1998.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Barry Speare reports a response of almost 50 percent to a questionnaire sent to 200 prospective chapter members, of which 99 percent have been positive.



One of Philadelphia's historical attractions is Elfreth's Alley, the nation's oldest residential street.

It's time to make hotel reservations

RALPH HARVEY
REUNION CHAIRMAN

The "City of Brotherly Love," AKA Philadelphia, is the site of the 11th annual VHPA Reunion on June 30-July 4.

It's time to make your reservations to visit the town with the world-famous Mummers, more than 100 museums, block parties, and America's most historical square mile (to name a few).

Philly has a unique blend of history, shopping, dining, and is a well-known town for 1960s and '70s entertainment.

The past becomes the present in Olde Town, where you can see elegant colonial mansions with an impressive guest list, including Betsy Ross, Ben Franklin, and William Penn.

See these historians dressed in 18th century costumes with colonial fare and entertainment.

Philadelphia is a great city to bring the family for a tour of the

Transportation

- **Air** — Philadelphia International Airport
- **Train** — AMTRAK (a travel discount is currently being negotiated)
- **Car** — Interstate or Pennsylvania or New Jersey Turnpike.

various museums and to see America's history. Come and touch the Liberty Bell, go across the river on the ferry to the New Jersey Aquarium and touch a shark. Walk through our famous zoo or explore the Franklin Institute, a science museum with many hands-on exhibit areas. Here you can even walk through an enormous replica of the heart.

The list is endless for activities outside the hotel.

Philadelphia is fast becoming one of the shopping meccas of the country. It has a unique blend of specialty shops. Antiques, jewelry, outlet shopping are all a short

distance from the hotel.

As far as dining — there are more than 500 new restaurants where you can enjoy the finest in traditional or ethnic cuisine.

There is a saying here that there are four schools of classic cuisine: French, Chinese, Italian, and Philadelphia. Philly cuisine is cheese steaks, soft pretzels, Tastycakes and Italian water ice.

Do yourself a favor and don't miss any of these scrumptious foods.

A shuttle bus will run between the Wyndham, the overflow hotels, certain historic areas, Penn's Landing and other locations.

Crewchiefs have been invited to all mini-reunions.

June 30 is around the corner and so is a memorable VHPA reunion!

Start making plans to spend some time in a great city with lots of fun, food, history and entertainment.

Overflow hotels booked for reunion

Gentlemen and ladies, it is getting time to make some decisions regarding your lodging in Philadelphia.

Our reunion hotel and Headquarters Hooch is the **Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel**. We have reserved 650 rooms at the Wyndham for the weekend at a rate of \$69, plus tax, per night.

The Wyndham is the largest hotel in town and also one of the nicest, but we expect to fill it and, therefore, we have made arrangements at other hotels, also.

The reservation phone number is **(215) 448-2000**. If you want to stay at the Wyndham, I suggest you make your reservations early, if not today.

Our overflow hotels consist of:

- **Holiday Inn Midtown**, which is not to be confused with the Holiday Inn Centre City where the Helicopter Crew Members Association is headquartered.

The Holiday Inn Midtown is a few blocks from the Wyndham, but is near most of the other overflow hotels. The hotel can be reached at **(215) 561-7500**. The rate for the Holiday Inn will be \$65 per night.

- **KormanSuites Hotel**. While slightly farther away than the other overflow hotels, this hotel has very nice apartment-type suites for \$69 per night, but it is six to seven blocks from the Wyndham.

The KormanSuites can be reached at **(215) 569-7000**.

- About halfway between the Wyndham and the historic area is the **Doubletree Hotel**, also at \$69, plus tax, per night.

While a little farther from our activities, it is a very nice hotel and has lots of amenities to offer. The phone reservation number is **(215) 893-1600**.

- Then there is the **Hotel Atop the Bellevue**, a luxury hotel that offers a more historic flavor of the city. This hotel is located near the Doubletree.

Because it is a luxury hotel, the rates are \$90 per night, plus taxes, for rooms that normally rent for close to \$200 per night. Contact Meg Evans directly for reservations at **(215) 790-2816**.

- **Embassy Suites**, across the street from the Wyndham, is offering luxury suites for \$95 a night for one to four people. Each additional guest after four is \$15 per night.

These rooms include a kitchen area, wet bar and microwave, and a balcony.

The rate includes a free cooked-to-order breakfast and two hours of complimentary cocktails each afternoon. Embassy Suites can be contacted at **(215) 561-1776**.

Some of the above hotels have two-bedroom suites for those of you with larger families or those

who want to double up with another member or with another family. They also are offering those suites at greatly reduced rates.

When calling any of these hotels, be sure to mention you are with the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association to get the correct rate.

To make things easier for you, we will be running a shuttle bus between the Wyndham Franklin Plaza, the overflow hotels and the historical area on Friday, Saturday and Sunday during the day and the hotels only in the evenings for the dances and banquet.

Please be sure to make your reservations as early as possible!

While we have made arrangements for what we feel will be an adequate number of rooms, we are optimistic this will be our largest reunion ever and attendance may exceed our planning and expectations. There will be a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in town that may take up all available "close-in" rooms that we don't.

Your reunion committee has gone to a lot of effort to secure these accommodations for you and we feel they are the best available. We sincerely think you will enjoy your stay in Philadelphia and if this is going to be your first reunion, it should be a VERY memorable one.

Schedule of events for VHPA Reunion '94

Thursday, June 30

- Early registration.
- On your own.
- Entertainment at night.
- Trips to Washington, DC.
- Trip to Atlantic City Casino.

Friday, July 1

- Registration.
- Static Aircraft Display at Philadelphia Navy Yard. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Mini-reunions.
- Cocktail Party at the Wyndham, with live entertainment and dancing.

- Crewchief party at Holiday Inn. All VHPA members invited.

Saturday, July 2

- Registration.
- Golf Tournament.
- 5k Run.
- Luncheon — Guest speaker will be retired Lt. Col. Jay Strayer, Son Tay Raid pilot.
- Mini-reunions.
- Dance — Live band and dancing. 8 p.m.

Sunday, July 3

- Registration.
- Non-denominational church

service. 8 a.m.

- Morning — membership business meeting.
- Morning — Ladies function.
- Mini-reunions.
- Cocktail party and Banquet. 7 p.m.
- Live band and dancing.

Monday, July 4

- Check-out day, or
- VHPA members have been invited by the City of Philadelphia to participate in the annual July 4th Parade with the North Carolina Chapter and helicopter float.

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 until noon.
Exact price to be determined,
details in next Newsletter.)

Cost: Approximately \$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.

Questionnaires mailed to former members

This past year, an exit questionnaire was mailed to some 1,800 former members of the VHPA who had not renewed their membership. While this number represents a minority of our membership, it is a sizeable one. The intent was to solicit views and find out if there was a common level of dissatisfaction with the association that led to a decision not to renew.

Our membership continues to grow and has never been larger. However, the larger the membership, the better we are able to achieve the goal of accounting for all of us.

This letter is to let you know that your comments are read and complaints are addressed where possible.

If you received a questionnaire and returned it, thank you. Well over 50 percent of those returned

renewed their membership.

While all suggestions are read, not all can be complied with. For instance, we cannot function on \$2 per year dues. We can do things like assisting you in getting a local chapter started, we can help you locate someone if they are in the database or point you in the right direction if they are not.

This issue of the Newsletter is being sent to everyone in our database and, hopefully, will address some of the misconceptions that led to a decision by some to leave VHPA:

• **VHPA has turned into a business instead of an association.**

True — but only in the sense of running this organization within an allocated budget and being accountable to members. Almost all of VHPA's work is performed

by volunteers.

• **I receive literature from everyone selling a product. I think VHPA sold our Directory listings.**

Wrong! VHPA never has sold the Directory listings.

There were a number of good suggestions concerning VHPA in general, i.e., let's adopt a project, sponsor an award for the top rotary wing graduate at Fort Rucker, plan a trip to RVN, start a museum, make a documentary. Some of these suggestions are beyond our scope or our means, but others are realistic, worthwhile and should be considered.

Thank you again for your input. I hope the foregoing explanation has provided some clarification to several points of discontent.

Jack Glennon
Membership chairman



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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UNITED AIRLINES



Where all the miles
are free®

Carlson Travel Network®

Media Travel USA

1-800-283-TRIP

Same war; different aircraft flown

I attended the last two reunions and was happy to see the camaraderie enjoyed by the Cav and Huey guys.

Having flown Chinooks in I Corps during 1968 and '69, I naturally come to the VHPA functions looking for Hook drivers. Many CH-47 pilots were doing second tours in Vietnam, having flown with AHCs during their first. Not me; I was a 19-year-old WO who got my wings in 1968-67, stayed at Rucker for a 35-hour Chinook transition, then shipped out to Vietnam to join A/159 ASHB in "Screaming Eagle," 101st Airborne country.

Being young and energetic, I loved flying with the Pachyderms. But, thanks to Tet of 1968, only one ship was up when I arrived, so getting enough time to feel confident seemed an impossible dream.

Twenty-five years later I still marvel that the Army allowed me to be the AC of a \$3 million, 40,000-pound aircraft, with only 230 hours in country!

The VHPA is an interesting collection — we are all the same because we flew helicopters in the "Conflict;" yet we are all different because of the aircraft we flew.

Let me explain. I remember approaching a firebase overlooking the A Shau Valley with five tons of Class V in a net. Starting down with the hook armed, we noticed an OH-6A shut down on the pad. I immediately told the radio operator to have the pilot move the LOH so we could drop our load without blowing him off that mountain. (Peak downwash velocities for a fully loaded B model Chinook can be 170 knots.)

After some "discussion," the 6 driver finally cranked it up and departed, kindly remarking over

the radio, "Who the #@%\$% does he think he is? What makes him so special just because he's flying a #@%&@\$\$# tandem-rotor machine!"

My point is this: Many places and situations that were safe for LOHs, Hueys, and Cobras were completely dangerous for Chinooks and Cranes!! We weren't better, just different, and it took a different set of skills to get our job done without destroying ourselves or the place we were trying to support.

Once, while hovering over a metal ramp at Camp Evans with a load of pax, I watched in horror as a piece of the ramp suddenly detached itself and, like slow-mo, sailed 20 yards and crashed into a Jeep.

(AAP, or aluminum asphalt-covered plate, used for planking airstrips in I Corps, was similar to PSP but lacked perforations.)

I still shudder to think what might have happened had it hit personnel, other aircraft or our rotors!

Every Chinook crew member has stories to tell about downwash damage to tents, hooches, etc.

Here's a quick story that's funny because no one was hurt. FSB Elephant's Nest was in bad need of resupply because for more than a week they had no deliveries during the 1969 monsoons.

After circling for days below the cloud base, we finally saw a break and headed up through the swirling mist with our heavy care package of ammo, food, water and mogas. The long sling forced us up into the clouds.

Just as we were about to give up and punch it off, along came a large sucker hole that allowed

visual contact with the pad. For one fleeting moment, I caught a glimpse of a one-holer sitting on the edge, then the blast from our rotors sent it crashing down the mountain into the concertina. Slowly (and much to our dismay) the broken crapper door opened . . . I'll never forget the look of wide-eyed fear on the face of this large, black NCO who'd been sitting peacefully only moments before.

Pulling thrust to depart, I made a mental note to avoid that FSB for a while!!

Finally, an event that really made me happy to have been in Vietnam.

When seasonal rains flooded the rice paddy country northeast of Hue-Phu Bai, a large group of civilians became stranded on a bridge. We landed the aft gear on the bridge and, as we "hovered" the cockpit over the water, 105 little people scrambled up the ramp. Yes, there were lots of babies, but the FE confirmed the 105 head count! Dropping them safely in the Hue Citadel, we felt glad to have helped saved so many lives in a place where it was easy to die.

Yeah, I know, "two palm trees making love to a dumpster" . . . See ya in Philly!

Earl C. Doty

1968 A/159 ASHB, 101 ABN

1969 B/159 ASHB, 101 ABN

EDITOR'S NOTE: Earl makes some good points. Maybe we need a "CH-47 Drivers" mini-reunion in Philly? We know how to do unit mini-reunions, is it time for something else as well? Earl says he might be up for helping set one up if there's enough interest. Give him a call at [REDACTED] if you flew Hooks.

Vendors should contact Fritz about Pennsylvania taxes

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania sales tax laws may have an impact on vendors.

Although the G-men there have the LZ surrounded, Ken Fritz says Pennsylvania is not a hot LZ; they are friendly.

Ken has a "Packet, VHPA Vendor Mission Brief-

ing, genuine, 1 each" that will explain the rules of engagement. This is not available through any other source, so contact him soon for the packet.

Ken Fritz can be contacted at [REDACTED]. Or call him at [REDACTED].

VHPA for pilots from all branches

Perhaps the best part about serving on the Executive Council and being the Directory editor for so many years is getting to talk and to correspond with so many VHPAers. I have learned so much from you guys and I try hard to help the VHPA become what you want it to be.

Last year we mailed a membership promotion to former Marine Vietnam-era helicopter pilots. While many Marine pilots joined, several replied with ideas like — “No, the VHPA is just for Army guys. You don’t really show us non-Army guys much at all.”

I can also remember receiving a great letter from a faithful VHPAer who flew helicopters for the Air Force saying, “I know the VHPA is mostly Army guys and I enjoy reading about their experiences, but every now and then could the Newsletter carry just one story about Air Force helicopters in Vietnam?”

While thinking about ways to help fulfill the needs of these helicopter pilots, I was reading Phil Chinnery’s “Vietnam: The Helicopter War” published by the Naval Institute Press and came across “The Da Nang Jolly Green Giants” story on Page 111.

This is exactly what the Newsletter needed — a great story that involved helicopters from the

Air Force, two Marine squadrons, and at least one Army unit. Here is a story that has something for everyone in the VHPA!!

The research for this battle required a couple dozen phone calls, some outstanding help from the USMC Museum, and the contributions from several great VHPAers. In addition to the five articles from pilots, interested readers should know the following:

1. “War Story” by Jim Morris, published by Dell Books includes the account of a Special Forces captain who was wounded in this battle.

2. The 281st AHC Association had a reunion in 1989 in San Francisco but has been rather dormant since then. Duane Brudvig, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is the association’s leader. He was a doorgunner in the 281st in Vietnam, is a VHCMA member, and has agreed to “reactivate” the association via a mini-reunion during the VHPA Reunion this summer in Philly.

3. The HMM-265 Association had a reunion some years back but I have been unable to obtain a current point of contact for the association.

4. There are two associations for Air Force helicopter pilots. The USAF Helicopter Pilot Association,

P.O. Box 112, Mascoutah, IL 62258-0112. Frank Harvey is the current president. FYI, in 1969 he was an Army CW2 in the 118th Assault Helicopter Company. Also the Jolly Green Association, P.O. 187, Scott AFB, IL 62225.

As with most research efforts, we have a nice list of unanswered questions concerning this battle. Consider:

- The 1st Marine Air Wing combat log clearly states that two UH-1E gunships were lost during this battle. I have talked to lots of VMO pilots and read lots of combat logs, but I still don’t know which VMO squadron lost these birds or the names of the pilots.

- The 1st Cav was involved with Operation PEGASUS (which ended the “Siege of Khe Sanh”) until April 15 and then moved into the northern end of the A Shau Valley, with Operation DELAWARE starting April 19. I believe they were the only ones with Cobras in I Corps in early 1968. I have not been able to identify which unit(s) supported the Samurai IV operations.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank everyone who helped with this effort and to announce that mini-reunion space will be reserved at Philly for the “Samurai IV Club.”

Mike Law
Past president and
Directory editor

Mission finished in Hanoi five years later

On Feb. 1, 1968, HMM-165 became an “extra squadron” for MAG-36 when we moved back to Phu Bai from the Valley Forge, which was leaving for the Philippines.

All the activities associated with Tet of 1968 were top in most people’s minds, but MACV assigned us to their SOG and Delta operations in addition to the medevac and Sparrow Hawk (downed aircraft rescue) missions assigned from our commands.

Our squadron had over 14 operational CH-46s, so we could support several different missions on any given day. Usually, we had between two and four supporting

SOG and about the same for Project Delta.

It was our custom to assign a flight leader to a mission for a week at a time. He would attend all the briefings, coordinate the activities from our end and fly the mission. This helped ensure continuity of communications and to establish good a working relationship.

I was the flight leader for the Project Delta mission for the last week of March 1968.

During this week, HMM-165’s commitment was four CH-46s to augment the Army’s 281st AHC. I remember attending the briefings conducted by a short Army lieu-

tenant colonel with bushy hair.

He had a difficult mission, but put together a good operation plan. He was brave and optimistic, and had his own organic air force with the Army AHC plus our USMC augmentation.

I was impressed with his units’ organization, but very concerned over a determined, well-armed enemy and the weather which channeled our routes and denied us the fixed-wing support we desperately required.

The infantry was already in the field and our missions consisted of picking them up at one location, moving a few miles, and

Continued on Page 16

Enemy determined and well-armed

Continued from Page 15

putting them down, plus any resupply and medevac that might be required.

On the 29th, the insertion zone was inside a horseshoe-shaped area. The infantry CO wanted a "big prep" (air strikes, the works) but the ceiling was below the ridge lines, so the fixed-wing guys couldn't help. We had to make due with artillery and gunships.

As was the NVA's custom, the first ship to land was virtually unopposed. As the insertion continued, one CH-46, flown by Capt. J.E. Morgan, was shot down, but another, flown by Capt. J.C. Jones, landed and picked up that crew. I believe two Army slicks were also shot down; I remember seeing one go into a river.

My aircraft took hits and lost one engine, so I had to take it back to camp.

I returned about two hours later in another aircraft. While I was gone, several bad things happened.

First, the Army inserted a maintenance team to prepare Capt. Morgan's CH-46 for extraction with a crane.

After awhile, it was determine the area was too hot to retrieve the ship at this time, so Capt. Romero went in with a CH-46 to get them out. He was shot down about 300 meters from the zone resulting in four KIA (including Romero's gunner, LCPT Barr) and six wounded.

Second, Capt. Montague and Lt. Archer received heavy fire

while trying to land near Romero's ship. They attempted to pick another suitable zone near the crash site, when they had a blade strike a tree and the aircraft crashed.

I think, later that evening, a UH-1E gunship from one of the VMOs was shot down. Anyway, it was a mess!!

The 281st had at least two down, my squadron three, and one UH-1E. Collectively, we had aircraft spread over about a six-mile area - not a good day for our side!

I remember that night and the next day everyone was excited. Saigon was very upset because of all the aircraft lost so far. The weather wasn't helping at all. We still had the infantry on the ground in a very dangerous situation. Consolidation and recovery was the order of the day.

We were fighting a seasoned, well-organized enemy who was using the weather as a supporting division. We would never attempt an insert in such a restricted enemy stronghold.

However, this wasn't an insert. It was an emergency extraction of soldiers, squadron mates — Americans.

There are no limits to the efforts and risks you take and justify in that situation. We have all seen it on occasion; uncommon valor was routine.

Before I finish this story, I want everyone to know the Air Force Jolly Green guys who came in the next day are some of the bravest

men I have ever seen. Anyone Army, Navy, Marine would have been proud to have them in their unit — let me tell you that!

At first we thought Montague, Archer, and their crew were dead. But two days later, a Marine accident investigation team was able to get into their ship. They reported no signs of blood or bodies, and that the restraining harnesses had been cut.

A few days later, Hanoi Radio mentioned them by name, so we knew the NVA had them.

Compared to the other services, the Marine Corps had a small number of POWs — 26. Because of that small number, the Marine Corps assigned escort officers who personally knew the POW and, if possible, were acutely aware of the circumstances surrounding their capture.

So, in 1973, I represented the Marine Corps in Hanoi and flew out with Montague and Archer to Clark Field on the third "Operation Homecoming" flight.

For me, Operation Samurai IV was now mission complete.

Dan McDyre

1967-68, HMM-165

1972, H&MS-36

1973, 1st MAW

EDITOR'S NOTE: SOG stood for Studies and Observation Group, which was a cover name for MACV's cross-border operations. Project Delta was the code name for classified special unconventional warfare missions conducted within South Vietnam.

'Wolfpack 35' describes first part of battle

I was "Wolfpack 35," a fire team leader in the gun platoon of the 281st AHC during the first part of this battle.

I can also provide some background information about this period. Earlier in the month, 5th Special Forces had us move most of our company (five UH-1Cs and 11 UH-1Hs, I'd guess) to Hue-Phu Bai.

Our base area was a cemetery

on a curve in Route 1 a couple of miles from the 101st. We were there to support the Long Range Recon teams of a Project Delta operation to recon the road from Hue to the A Shau.

The Special Forces assigned a pretty good sized Mike Force, a mixed group of Americans, Vietnamese, and Montagnards led by the Special Forces — bad folks but good fighters, as a backup in case

we got into deep stuff and needed help.

The Marine CH-46s with gunship escorts were assigned to help insert the Mike Force when and if it was needed.

One afternoon, I'd guess it was about March 25, we were on our way home after an insertion when we spot an NVA convoy on a very well-maintained road.

Continued on Page 17

Maintenance officer inserted into LZ

I was "Wrenchbender," the aircraft maintenance officer in the 281st AHC which supported the 5th Special Forces and Project Delta operations.

During the insertions early on the 29th, one of our Hueys went down in the LZ about 50-100 yards from a Marine CH-46. Early that afternoon we inserted two maintenance teams — the Army team consisted of myself and four maintenance specialists and the Marine team had an NCO plus about four specialists.

I remember the Marines were "armed to the teeth" and I felt rather naked with just a .45-caliber pistol and a rifle, plus some personal survival gear.

They told us the LZ was secure and we hoped to be able to make some emergency repairs to the Huey, then fly it out. However, both teams had their

aircraft rigging equipment.

As we passed over the northern side of LZ, I remember watching them push out these large canisters of CS gas.

A few days later, the thought crossed my mind — if it was secure why the CS gas? Oh when you are young — how naive you are!!

The minute we landed, the Marines took off for their CH-46 and I never saw them again.

It was rather weird, I thought, because we saw no one at all on this secure LZ! We started working on the Huey.

I remember a specialist 5, his name escapes me, climbed up to inspect the rotor head. We hadn't been there long when an RPG goes off under the tail

Continued on Page 18

NVA convoy spotted on maintained road

Continued from Page 16

We rolled in and had a couple of the trucks burning nicely when we saw this jeep speed off to hide in some trees. The C&C ordered up an airstrike and we watched as these F4s literally blew the side of the hill, the road, and the trucks away.

I remember remarking to the other pilot, "If we come back here and they have that road working again, I quit!"

We returned the next day about 10 a.m. and could easily see the tire tracks on the new road the NVA had put in that night! They were tough people!!

On the 28th, we inserted a BDA (battle or bomb damage assessment) team of 12-14 men to recon the area where we'd seen the truck convoy. The next day they decided to reinforce this team.

The weather prevented us from using air strikes to prep the area. We set up two daisy chains of guns for the first insertion with the slicks coming in on the trees between us and landing to the south. We lost two gunships to battle damage that morning.

WO Don McCoig was the AC in the second "Intruder" ship and it was shot down on the first insertion. Someone landed and pulled Don and his crew out.

One of the CH-46s was also shot down in the LZ. The NVA had some 14.5mm AA guns positioned around the LZ and if you got very

high off the trees, they'd nail you.

I definitely remember that we had a slick go down in a river as Dan McDyre mentions. I recall directing another slick to the water's edge where they picked up the crew. The AC was shot through the legs and I understand that one of his legs is two inches shorter today.

We huddled up and decided that if we used some smoke to screen the LZ we could bring in the next insertion and maybe get our downed birds out.

Don volunteered to fly the mission. I remember him joking that he needed one more ribbon to make either his second or third row. Everyone else remarked that they could care less about ribbons at that point!

The CO told Don he didn't have to fly any more that day because he had been shot down once already and it was company policy that once a day was enough. Don persisted and no one else volunteered, so he flew. WO Robin Hicks was the other pilot.

I escorted Don on the smoke pass. They took fire and I saw the ship doing all sorts of crazy gyrations. Robin called out that Don had been hit in the head and was slumped over the cyclic. They were streaming fuel like mad.

A few seconds later, Robin said one of the guys in back had gone forward to pull Don off the controls so now he was leaving for

camp.

I told him not to do that because I didn't think he'd make it out of the valley and if they crashed out there, we'd never get them out. Robin agreed and landed back in the LZ.

Robin and the rest of the crew spent that night and maybe one more on the ground. They had to move several times because of the tactical situation.

Robin carried Don's body everywhere they went and still had it with them when they made it out.

The Charlie Model I was flying had a problem and wouldn't fire rockets. Trying to work on 14.5mm AA guns with just our miniguns was pretty grim.

After Don got killed, we ran a different pattern to lay down the smoke trying to avoid the AA guns, but that didn't work either.

Late in the day we used two Marine gunships and lost one of them, with the other picking up the first crew. Our other Wolfpacks had lots of battle damage — I'd guess we had only one serviceable gunship by the end of that day. So I sat out the rest of that battle.

By the way, I flew a U-21 in Desert Storm with the 138th Aviation Company and wonder how many other VHPA members flew over there. Both wars will be impossible to forget!

Lance Ham
67-68 281st AHC

Jolly Greens fly into A Shau Valley

On March 30, 1968, Air Force Capt. Jerry Griggs was the pilot in command and I was the pilot of a HH-3E Jolly Green from the 37th ARRS at Da Nang.

We were part of a flight of four Jollys led by Maj. Joe B. Green into the A Shau Valley to help rescue some downed air crews.

As I understand it, the NVA shot down a Marine helicopter in the A Shau on the 29th.

As bad luck would have it, by the end of that day, three more Marine helicopters were down in the same area.

I don't know all the details about this, but I would like to know more. There were eight survivors who spent the night fighting off NVA attacks.

The thought of living through that still scares me half to death!!

That evening, the Marines asked for some help from the 37th ARRS. The rescue operation was planned for midday on the 30th in the hope the weather in the valley would lift enough to allow the jets to provide fire support.

It was about noon when we arrived. We actually thought the area was a former LZ because of all the equipment on the ground.

The ceiling was still too low for the jets to operate, so they only had armed helicopters support. Two Marine UH-1E gunships had been shot down, so now there were 14 survivors.

While we waited for two Army gunships to work the area, our No. 2 bird took heavy ground fire and was forced to leave for Hue to check for serious damage.

The survivors had congregated around a couple of shell holes on the side of a hill. The seriously wounded were in one hole and the able-bodied survivors were manning a defensive perimeter.

The site was ringed by 150-foot-high trees.

The enemy fire was so intense the Marines waved Maj. Green away when he made his first pickup attempt.

Green made a second approach from the southwest, dropping over a hill on a fast approach to a hover.

They continued to receive heavy ground fire, despite the best efforts from two Army Cobras to suppress the enemy fire.

By the time the four most seriously wounded were on board, the aircraft had been damaged to the

point where Green had to withdraw to Hue. As he departed the pickup point, he warned everyone the enemy had fired a B-40 rocket at him.

He said something like: "I was sitting in the right seat when the rocket came over my right shoulder from about our 4 o'clock.

I assume it was a B-40 since a phosphorous trail appeared momentarily just outside the cockpit. It was probably fired from about 200 yards out, and I guess it passed right through the rotor blades."

The clouds lifted enough for some A-1s to pound the enemy surrounding the remaining 10 survivors. Jerry and I were the next to go in and we were able to pickup four more.

The Cobras set up a daisy chain to provide continual cover. The third Jolly Green got the last six guys. We were more than glad to leave the area!

Joe Green and Jerry Griggs, in my opinion, were probably the best pilots in our detachment and certainly the bravest men I have ever met.

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CS canisters pushed into 'secure' LZ

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boom and bullets start flying all around.

The fire was coming from the north side of the LZ. In my mind I can still see this specialist 5 doing a perfect swan drive off the Huey.

I gathered my people and we ran to the other side of the LZ, past an old burned up Huey, to a bomb crater. In the process I literally had my rifle shot out of my hands and the survival gear shot off my leg!

I remember seeing bullets coming right at us and impacting in the dirt right in front of us! None of us were hit which was pure luck but I was very glad for that!

I still had a survival radio and told the C&C that things were too hot, that we were in the bomb crater, and it would be nice if they could get us out!!

A few minutes later this Special Forces captain shows up from the trees behind us. We talked for a few minutes. He says they are getting ready to leave the LZ — it is just too hot to stay and they had a mission to accomplish.

A couple of minutes after that, one of our slicks

lands with some more ARVN and we jumped on it.

When we got back to camp, the pilot said that he was very surprised to see us getting on his ship — he only thought he was inserting troops.

This proved to be the last slick to perform an insertion and, thank God, an extraction that day. What a day!! But things would get worse because the next day WO Don McCoig was killed.

I'd like to close by commenting on Lance's statements about how badly the 281st was shot up.

The "Wolfpack" was out of action for better than a week with only two Charlie models flying and I believe the "Intruders" were down to four birds.

Wendell Allen

1967-68, 281st AHC

1970-71, F/8 Cav AMERICAL

EDITOR'S NOTE: The 1st Marine Air Wing combat log states that the CH-46 sent to get this Marine maintenance team later in the afternoon, was shot down leaving the LZ. In that crash, four were killed and six wounded. The survivors were among those rescued by the Jolly Greens on the 30th.

Aviation CO describes operation

I was the CO of the 281st AHC during this time. My XO, Bob Sinclair, was flying C&C on the 29th and 30th.

I was finishing the arrangements for field support and preparing the rest of the 281st forward group to move north. The Delta Operation had the code name "Samurai IV."

I'd like to describe what went on after the 30th.

Dan McDyre's statement about the higher commands being very excited because of all the aircraft we lost is certainly true.

Saigon, the Special Forces, the 17th Group in Nha Trang asked for frequent reports. After the operation I was "requested" to present a very detailed after action briefing.

A day or two after the 30th, the CO of the Marine Squadron, Lt. Col. Romine, arrived as the flight commander of the CH-46s for the day.

He said to me (a major): "Now I'm not here to run this show, just fly the support mission as we have for some time now. But I've been getting lots of calls from lots of senior Marine commanders concerning all the aircraft and people we've lost. I'm just here to see first hand what is going on."

I said, fine, and briefed him as best I could.

Well, on that day, most every one of us got shot at and hit. Indeed, I believe Romine's ship took some in the cockpit because I can remember thinking when they reported battle damage, "Damn, that's all we need — a senior Marine officer hurt out here too!"

We talked after the mission. He was OK. He shook my hand warmly and said he now understood — that we were up against

Those Cobras put down some great fire.

a very well-organized and well-armed force, and were fighting them on their ground.

Rather accurate summary I thought!!

Over the next week or so, we made other Mike Force insertions and extractions to probe the NVA strengthen and it didn't get any easier.

When the weather permitted, we had some great strikes by VNAF and USAF aircraft, but they were limited by the rotten weather.

The weather was generally characterized as mostly a solid cloud cover with low ceilings during this entire period.

Once, a Jolly Green came flying through our area from some place further to the west and he was streaming fuel from places I didn't think they even had fuel!

We tried to maintain a two ship "rescue force" whenever we were conducting insertions or extractions. I sent one ship to follow the Jolly all the way back to where he could make Phu Bai. He really looked bad!

Lance Ham's statements about the company not having many operational helicopters after the 30th is also true.

We brought some more slicks up from Nha Trang, but were very short on gunships for several days after that.

I have strong memories of the final extractions connected with

this battle. We got to the place where the Mike Force would not be able to defend itself when the last two ships came in.

For all the reasons Lance mentions, we didn't have enough gunships.

I remember putting out a general call for any guns that could help us. To my great joy, two 1st Cav Cobras answered! They were fully armed and their mission had just been aborted.

Those Cobras put down some great fire and without a doubt saved lots of lives!

Still, the last ship to leave was a badly overloaded Marine CH-46 and they got laced bad! They didn't say a word — maybe they were accustomed to getting shot at — but to this day, they still have my respect!

In summary, I can't say enough good about all the people who flew in support of Samurai IV.

Clearly, the platoon leaders and aircrews from the 281st were outstanding.

I know it was "different" for the Marines to fly in support of an Army-run operation, but every one of them can hold his head up proud, so far as I'm concerned. They did everything asked of them in a timely, professional manner.

I didn't witness the Air Force helicopter guys work out, but at one point an F-4 tried to help us under the clouds and was shot down. We picked up one pilot, but were unable to recover the other man.

The list of names for the 281st in the 1993 VHPA Directory is great but there are lots who fought in this battle who are not there.

Don Ruskauff
1967-68 281 AHC

Pilots receive Air Force Cross for actions in valley

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They both received the Air Force Cross for this mission and they deserved every bit of it!!

I think it would be interesting to have all the Air Force, Marine and

Army guys involved in this battle meet at the VHPA Reunion next summer.

Bill Byrd

1967-68 37th ARRS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Any reader

that knows how to get in touch with Joe or Jerry or any other USAF pilot from this mission or with more information about this mission is encouraged to contact the VHPA.

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