

In the Shadow of the Blade

September 5, 2000

Dear General Smith:

For more than twenty years, I've had the privilege of shooting film and video from helicopters flown by Vietnam veterans. For at least fifteen years, I've had a dream to make a documentary about the Huey experience. Listening to them talk as we fly across a peaceful country, I've thought—over and over—that theirs are stories America should hear. I'm hoping to make that dream come true in a way that will create both a moving and dramatic feature film documentary and a new Huey Experience for thousands of Vietnam veterans.

I want to take a restored Huey, a chase chopper, and a ground team across the country to invite veterans and their loved ones in to tell their stories on film. From the preliminary research we have done by taking a crew to the VHPA reunion in Washington, D.C. and interviewing veterans around the country, we have found solid validity in this idea. They are ready to talk. America is ready to listen. And doing it in the shadow of the Huey's blades is a unique and symbolic idea which we think will bring veterans together in a new way and will, at last, allow America to pay them a well-deserved tribute.

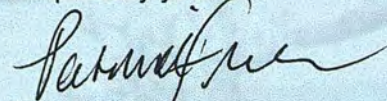
We believe that the Bullwhip Squadron Reunion in Fort Rucker may be the lightning rod that starts us off, and we'd like to bring our cameras and crew in to interview the veterans of the most decorated unit in Vietnam. Although we weren't slated to begin shooting until 2001, this event seems so important that we don't want to overlook it.

The enclosed materials include our preliminary proposal, as well as some tapes that will give you an idea about our work. The final proposal, which we will take to investors, will include a short treatment of the film including footage we get at the Bullwhip Squadron Reunion.

We hope to add your support and the support of Generals Allen, Shoemaker, and Brady to that which we have received from many veterans with whom we have made contact. At this time, our primary need is for permission to attend and film the reunion. We hope that, while we're there, we can talk more about the possibilities for this project.

We'd like to think that both the process and the film will be a patriotic contribution. Please contact me or my wife and co-producer Cheryl Fries at the numbers listed below. We will be willing to provide further information if you need it.

Respectfully yours,



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cc: General David Allen
General Brady
General Robert Shoemaker
L.A. De Fleron



In the Shadow of the Blade

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE

Preliminary Proposal
Prepared for General James Smith
September 5, 2000

In the Shadow of the Blade

Standing in the Shadow of the Blade

There's a woman crying
at her daddy's grave
There's a mountain rising
from a long ago day
There's a jungle pouring
a hard, cold rain
Standing in the shadow of the blade.

A round moon rises
in the elephant grass
came in hard
grew up fast
living moments that
never will pass
Standing in the shadow of the blade.

Flying it hard
flying in rough
doing it all still
wasn't enough
living and dying
fighting and crying
Standing in the shadow of the blade.

In everyman's life
you know it's true
you learn to do
what you have to do
and the man beside you
he knows it too
Standing in the shadow of the blade.

Some bad things happened
but no one knew
that a lot of good things
happened too
and it's time we say it
it's overdue
Standing in the shadow of the blade.

--cheryl fries 7/00

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE:

The Huey Experience in Vietnam
A FEATURE FILM PROPOSAL

TO THOSE WHO SERVED

A young woman sits in the cockpit, fighting tears, as she imagines her father's last moments in a Huey. Just outside, the former crew chief who held the dying pilot in his arms leans against the helicopter as if to do so would keep it aloft. They tell the story. How he found her, thirty years later. How he brought her here, in tribute to her father, in search of healing for himself.

It's been thirty years since they flew Hueys, but gathering around the helicopter brings it back to three former pilots. There is something of the twenty-year-old hotshots they used to be as they reminisce. "You were a magnet ass," one teases the other, "How many times were you shot down?" "If you'da watched your fuel better in Duc Pho, it'da been one less," he answers. They tell the story. Just another day at the office, just another firefight.

Two men in their fifties embrace and hold on. They do not speak. The moment is heavy with the weight of sacred things. When they are ready, they talk. One was a grunt, infantry, the highlands. The second flew Dustoffs. One was shot. The second risked his life to pull out those who were shot. This is a symbolic meeting, an exchange of gratitude that speaks for thousands.

He is soft-spoken, a gentle man with a charming southern accent. He has brought one of his paintings of Vietnam to the Huey. He talks tenderly of the white dog, his company's mascot. He was a door gunner. He killed people. He ends every conversation with two words: Semper Fi.

THIS IS OUR FILM

"The Huey was the best money the U.S. military service ever spent on any aircraft."

Sgt. Major L.A. De Fleron
U.S. Army

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THE HUEY EXPERIENCE

Today Travis Blair pilots a Bell 206B helicopter, ferrying real estate speculators, television journalists, and filmmakers like Patrick Fries over the scrubby hillsides of Central Texas. Mostly he follows the client's directions, follows the rules. But one day as he and Fries head home after a day of filming, Blair spots a running buck on the grasslands. "Hold on," he says, banks quickly, and takes his bird down to fifteen feet. The chopper soars above the beast, matching every move. It's a good run. When the deer darts away, Blair takes it back up, glances toward Fries, and shrugs. "Vietnam," he says.

Like 40,000 others, Blair learned to fly a helicopter in Vietnam. Like most of them, he was in his early twenties, a hotshot, fearless, the kind of guy the U.S. military needed to take troops and supplies into active firefights. Blair and his kind faced death every day. Now he's reached fifty. Dipping his chopper into a deer chase is nothing. After all, nobody's shooting at him.

"Tell me about Vietnam," Fries says. And a film is born.

Every modern war has its icon, the technological development essential to the conflict, the one that changes the course of battle and becomes, ever after, symbolic of the time. The Civil War's cannon, World War I's machine gun, World War II's tank -- each left its mark on the landscape and the soldier. Vietnam's icon was the helicopter. And when it came to helicopters in this horrific battle land, none was more important than the Huey. One way or another, the Huey affected most American soldiers in Vietnam; pilots like Travis Blair, John Flanagan, and Mike Waugh flew them into unimaginably difficult situations. Soldiers like Jon Chaffin and Barry McAlpine rode them in, and then out of battle. A former Army Special Forces Specialist, Robert Pryor, is alive today because of a Huey medevac "Dustoff." And more than one Vietnam veteran can tell you about a Huey ride to a firefight.

Everyone who served in Vietnam has a Huey story. Many of them will talk about the Huey in the fond tones one uses to recall a beloved childhood pet. They'll tell you how it felt and how it smelled. And every one of them will tell you how it sounded. The WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP of the Huey was Vietnam's soundtrack, echoing through the landscape like a drum call to war. Even now, thirty years and more later, most veterans will tell you they can sense an approaching Huey long before anyone else can either see or hear it.

The geographic and political realities of Vietnam called for a new kind of warfare, one the U.S. Army termed "Airmobile." Remote battle zones, mountains topped in old-growth hardwood jungles, and poorly developed roads eliminated motor vehicles as a means of quickly moving masses of troops and supplies. Helicopters took over. In Airmobile warfare, flocks of helicopters took troops and supplies to strategic locations, monitored operations from the air, engaged in battle, and evacuated forces. The famed U.S. Army 1st Cavalry joined aviation units already in Vietnam to pioneer Airmobile operations, trading its horses for helicopters and creating an archetype followed by the 101st Airborne, the 1st Aviation Brigade, and several other aviation units and smaller detachments.

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Many helicopters were used in Vietnam, but none was as widely employed as the Huey. The UH-1 "Iroquois," popularly dubbed the Huey, is known as "the workhorse of the Vietnam War," used by all military forces for utility, evacuation, and assault. Hueys transported troops and supplies to the lines as the horses for a modern cavalry. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps made them into gunships, modifying them with machine guns and air-to-ground rocket pods and putting them to work in frontal assaults. Hueys carried officers to develop battle plans, soldiers to battle, nurses to orphanages, and "Donut Dollies" to entertain troops. Outfitted with broadcasting systems, they ferried Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) messengers. And, perhaps most significantly, Hueys were the technology behind "Dustoffs," evacuations of the wounded so-named by a pilot who gave his life doing it. The ability to swoop into the battle, load the Huey with wounded, and fly to evacuation hospitals, started in Korea and refined in Vietnam, has been called "one of the major medical innovations of the Vietnam War." This quick transport meant that more than 90 percent of wounded soldiers who reached a medical facility survived. The courage and skill it took to pilot an unarmed helicopter into the middle of an active battle in order to ambulance out wounded soldiers was the stuff heroes are made of. The medical evacuation technology gained in the Huey experience of Vietnam came home to become the air rescue operations we today take for granted.

The Huey is an enormously versatile helicopter, easily modified for various missions. The interchangeable interiors of the Huey allowed for easy conversion from troop carrier to ambulance. It was also an amazing machine, capable of flying in extreme stress and relatively easy to get in and out quickly—a feature crucial in troop extraction and rescue missions. Those who flew and maintained them, the pilots and crew chiefs, are fiercely loyal to the Huey, even though many have flown many other aircraft.

When you talk to people who served in Vietnam—soldiers, nurses, medics—you'll find that most have a Huey story: the ride in to the landing zone, filled with fear and anticipation, and the ride out, exhausted and relieved. How the Huey brought the wounded, the ammunition, a rare treat of chocolate bars or beer. Like any good icon, the Huey was always there, and its ubiquitous presence still hovers in the collective memories of Vietnam veterans, whose lives, thirty years later, still feel the shadows of the blade.

FLIGHT PLAN

The spring skies over El Campo Texas are clear and, to the casual observer, empty. Suddenly the Vietnam veterans who have gathered in the town's center for the unveiling of a statue honoring Roy Benavidez are looking up. They sense it well before the rest of the crowd hears the WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP. The Huey appears on the horizon and men remove their hats. They are here to pay tribute to a hero. The action in which Benavidez earned the Medal of Honor was an horrific six-hour battle between six men of a recon team and over 300 NVA soldiers. During that battle several Hueys were shot to pieces. Some of them crashed but most kept coming back. A Huey riddled with more than 200 bullet and shrapnel holes in it when it finally landed rescued Benavidez, eight survivors of his team and the crew of a downed Huey. The rescue chopper was so badly damaged it was scrapped after that mission. Many other helicopters on the mission had 50 or so holes in them and kept flying. The successful outcome of that battle was a credit to the designers and manufacturers of the Bell Huey, as well as to the airmen who flew them.

On this day, Huey veteran pilot Mark Byrd's statue will honor Benavidez in the shadow of the Huey's blades.

Our cameras will roll.

In the Shadow of the Blade

When you take a Huey anyplace, anytime, people will come.

We know it's true because it's been done in small ways many times; it just hasn't been filmed.

All across America Vietnam veterans and their loved ones are waiting to tell their stories, stories that haven't been told in popular films or documentaries. They are waiting to touch, to smell, to hear a Huey, to show their children what they flew, where the bullet holes were, how they made it out, how others didn't. Many of them have never talked about it. But the presence of the Huey brings it back and draws it out. It's the real story of a war, told by the people who were there, as only they can tell it.

If we fly it, they will come.

In the Shadow of the Blade will take a restored Vietnam-era Huey to locations across the country to film interviews with and profiles of Vietnam veterans and their family members. The filming process will include both veteran-organized reunions and impromptu gatherings around our fly-in events, which will be promoted through local veteran groups and media.

We'll fly from Florida to California, to the Vietnam Memorial in Angel Fire and the training grounds at Fort Rucker. We'll go to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion in Denver and the Benavidez memorial statue unveiling in El Campo. We'll set a flight path and chase the stories. And we'll make our final approach in the capital of the nation served by these veterans, at The Wall which honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

THE MISSION

For an audience who served, for an audience who sacrificed, for an audience who watched, for an audience who lives with the legacy of Vietnam, In the Shadow of the Blade will be a feature-length film communicating the following messages:

The Huey helicopter is the significant symbol of the Vietnam War, uniting infantrymen, pilots, crewmembers, medical personnel... everyone from grunt to general. Anyone in Vietnam during the war has a Huey story to tell. The presence of a Huey helicopter helps some veterans, many of whom have never talked about the war, tell their stories.

Vietnam veterans served when called. In circumstances that were often dangerous and horrific, they performed with valor.

Like all war veterans, many Vietnam vets are sometimes haunted by their memories, sometimes thrilled by them, but the vast majority have gone on to build successful and happy lives, continuing to serve their country and their society.

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Many veterans have found artistic creativity to be a positive means of dealing with war-related memories.

Lifelong allegiances were forged in the comradery of those serving in Vietnam.

It was a war. The stories are dramatic, touching, sometimes funny. Every one is interesting. Every one is moving.

668 helicopter pilots and 1,471 helicopter crew members were killed in action in Vietnam. U.S. Army aviators suffered the highest per capita ratio of casualties of any contingent of U.S. combat troops participating in the Vietnam War. This is for them.

And, perhaps most importantly,

As veterans are drawn to the presence of the Huey, meaningful reunions between veterans or survivors will occur as a result of the fly-in events. Reunions between pilots and crew, between rescuers and the rescued, between family members of the lost and those who knew them. The experience itself will be a worthy venture.

It's not just a film, it's an experience.

All over America, veterans are reuniting for the first time in more than thirty years to tell old stories and create new ones.

In just three months of research we have uncovered hundreds of Huey stories from veterans and their loved ones who are just waiting to talk. All we have to say is "Huey." And this is how they answer.

"I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'D HAVE MADE IT WITHOUT THE HUEY."

Keith Bodine hasn't been in a Huey since he left the Army in 1967, but he thinks he's ready. For a long time after his 2000 hours as a UH-1D slick door gunner, he wouldn't even look at the sky if he heard a helicopter. "I just wanted to put it behind me," he says. But now this father of four who enjoys throwing a line in the water is ready to talk about it.

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Bodine was twenty-one years old during his time in country. "I made my first kill and picked up my first American KIA on my birthday, June 24, 1966." His Huey, part of the 229th Assault Helicopter Division, off loaded rations and on loaded bodies that day. "They ran out of body bags so the top KIA weren't in anything. They were stacked on top of each other. I kept thinking about one, a red-headed kid, about 18 or 19. He had on a new watch and a graduation ring. I just stared at him all the way back to Pleiku, thinking how sad his parents were going to be. He was a handsome kid except for the hole in his head. He had blue eyes, red hair, and a few freckles. It was just the young face and the peacefulness in his eyes that I kept thinking about. It made the war real to me like nothing else has. I swore I would not get killed and end up like that kid."

That kind of determination was important for a door gunner, who had a very dangerous job in a place where every job was dangerous. Bodine gives some credit for his survival to the pilots, a lot to the crew chiefs—and much to the helicopter. In 2,000 hours he experienced only one engine failure in birds that were sometimes flying 24 hours a day. "You can't beat a Huey," he says, when he tells the story about the time his helicopter was pushed off the side of a mountain by the wind. As they fell, Bodine thought they were doomed, but the pilots were able to keep control while bringing the engine up to full RPMs and the Huey lifted out, earning the flyer a Distinguished Flying Cross and testifying to the capabilities of the machine. "I don't know how we'd have made it in Vietnam without the Huey," Bodine says.

The war has haunted Keith Bodine for more than thirty years and he has some unfinished business with it. But he's ready now. And the thought of gathering around a restored Huey sounds like a real reunion to him.

"IT'S NOT JUST A NAME ON THE WALL. THERE'S A PERSON THERE."

Sitting in the Huey is hard for Kim Douglas, but it's something she has to do. Thirty years ago, her daddy, First Lieutenant Leslie Forrest Douglas, Jr., was shot down in the slick he was piloting, a Huey much like this one. "It's hard," Kim says, wiping her eyes, "It's hard to think this is what he was doing... this is where he was when he passed." But it helps, she says, to piece together the story of the man who saw her only twice.

In 1996, on the anniversary of her father's death, a man named John "Goosie" Goosman left a message on Kim's answering machine. Listening to him talk overwhelmed her, and she had to stop the tape and sit on the floor to cry. As a 19-year-old door gunner, Goosman was the last person to see her father alive, the sole survivor of the spider's nest anti-aircraft assault that blew their Huey from 5500 feet. "I pulled your daddy out of the bird," Goosman said. "He died in my arms." It happened on June 30, 1970. Douglas was twenty-five. Kim was barely one. They share the same birthday.

Kim kept the tape, adding it to the cache of items she so carefully preserves as she pieces together the story of her father: his Mississippi State sweatshirt and diploma, a letter he wrote her mother just before he died, a reel-to-reel film of her parents' wedding. Meeting Goosman, soon after his call, opened a treasure of new information for Kim. He got her to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion in Washington, D.C., where she met four other men who knew her dad, sat in the cockpit of a Huey and cried, and stood beside the Table of Honor set for pilots KIA. On the thirtieth anniversary of the death of First Lieutenant Leslie Forrest Douglas, Jr., his daughter and his door gunner went to the Wall together. It was the first time either had been there. It was also the first known time that a survivor and a family member went to the Wall together.

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Kim still cries when she talks about her father, cries for the times she never had with him, cries for the way his death haunted her mother and destroyed her grandparents, cries for the loss to the world of Leslie Douglas, a handsome, intelligent, moral, family man. An excellent pilot. But she knows that telling his story gives him immortality, so she continues her quest. For Goosman, helping Kim is painful absolution. Standing at her side, leaning on the Huey, Goosman is also choked up. But he has something to say to the camera. "It's not just a name on the Wall," he wants the world to know. "There's a person there." In the shadow of the rotor blades, he wipes his face, then, absently, pats the pilot's seat once.

"I AM PROUD."

Terry Waggoner is a staff optometrist with the Naval Hospital in Pensacola, Florida. He is married and the father of three. For fun, he is building a two-seat experimental 496 Ultrasport helicopter in his garage. He hopes to "be buzzing the Florida beaches in about a year." His passion for helicopters is common among the men who, like him, flew Hueys in Vietnam.

Thirty years after his tour as a Chief Warrant Officer in the 191st Assault Helicopter Company, Waggoner has some stories to tell. "My tour in Vietnam was endless tedium interrupted by stark terror," he says. He arrived in country at the end of the TET Offensive, when hell was breaking loose. "By the end of my first two weeks in country, half of the aircraft in my company were not flyable or had been shot down and needed to be sling-loaded home by a Chinook or left in the jungle. At the end of that two weeks, I was convinced I was not going home, and if I did go home, it was going to be in a body bag. That is a hard realization for a young man who just turned 20."

Luckily, Waggoner says, this type of action was not the norm. "Things quieted down after that. Our missions turned routine with just occasional sniper fire. Mainly my company provided a taxi service of insertion and removal for search and destroy missions." But, for someone who wasn't there, this casual explanation fails to foreshadow the story that follows, when Waggoner talks about one of "the couple of times" he was shot down.

"One time I was flying company lead and took a small arms round through my turbine engine. The formation was just departing a Landing Zone when my ship started to sink. The other nine ships that were flying formation on me started to follow me down, thinking I was making another insertion or picking up troops. I had my nose in a map and my "peter pilot" (a new pilot in country flying as copilot) was at the controls when I noticed the engine did not sound right (it did not have that turbine drone that robs you of your hearing) and my rotor RPM alarm was screaming like a banshee. All the training my peter pilot had in flight school about engine failures went out the window. He did not lower the collective and the main rotor blade was coming to a stand still. We were about to drop like a rock from 1000 feet.

"I slammed the collective down and nosed the aircraft over to build up rotor RPM. This made my air-speed way too fast on approach to landing. I 'really' flared trying to slow my forward motion, stopping just short of sticking my tail rotor in two feet of mud which

would have surely rolled and destroyed the aircraft. I hit the ground going about 20 knots and slid toward a rice paddy dike some 100 yards away. The ship came to a rest with the floor windows smudged into the side of the dike. The next thing I felt was an M-16 being shoved into my arms by my crew chief.

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"I had blurted out 'lead aircraft engine failure, Number 10, break off and follow me down' just before we made our 'splashing' touch down. Wading in thick mud up to our behinds, we loaded our weapons (M-60 machine guns), maps, and radios on to the number 10 aircraft. Loud thuds that made perfect ringlets in the mud and water started to encircle us. We were receiving heavy small arms fire from the surrounding tree line.

"With all of us on board and number 10 aircraft in the air, we circled my downed Huey one time. Viet Cong were all over it like ants on a sugar cube. If number 10 had not been right behind us to pick up my peter pilot, crew chief, door gunner, and myself, we all would have had a forwarding address at the Hanoi Hilton prisoner-of-war camp."

And there's more. Stories of watching his crew chief take hits while pulling eight wounded grunts from the machine gun emplacement they had inadvertently landed next to. Having to evacuate a fire support base that was being overrun at two in the morning. Watching in slow motion a helicopter crash and kill all on board because an inexperienced pilot kicked in left pedal instead of right pedal and drained off power from the engine during a critical maneuver. "But" says Waggoner, "let's save these for another chapter."

Waggoner went on to instruct Army pilots in flying Huey Instrument Flying Regulations, to become an optometrist, to make a family. Like many veterans, he has continued to serve his country and contribute to his society. "I am proud of my one year tour in Vietnam flying Hueys."

It's a perspective we don't hear enough.

"AN AMAZING PIECE OF MACHINERY"

They call him "Zooby." He did three tours in Vietnam from 1968-70. He was a Huey crew chief. He was part of the 128th Assault Helicopter Company, the "Tomahawks." "We were an ass-kicking unit," he'll tell you. You get the feeling he means it.

His real name is Edward Zubrinic and he lives in California now. When he was twenty-one, he served in the Nam. "Apparently I had a reputation over there," he says, but he won't tell you why. What he will tell you is a thing or two about the Huey.

His was number 724. "It became a part of me," Zooby says. "I flew it every day. It was a piece of equipment that got you home every day. You took care of it and it took care of you. Your life depended on it. And we saved a lot of lives with the Huey." As a crew chief, Zubrinic was responsible for his aircraft's maintenance, and, like all Huey vets, he has stories no mechanics manual can explain.

"One time we flew a mission into Cambodia. We came back with 42 bullet holes. Lost the tail rotor. We got back. Why didn't it go down? I don't know. Mechanically it should have gone down. It was an amazing piece of machinery. It got us back." Zubrinic has respect for the Huey, and this man knows aircraft. He's been an aircraft mechanic for thirty years.

Although he hasn't been on one since Vietnam, Zubrinic still goes out to look whenever he hears a Huey flying over. He'd like to get on one, look around, fly. He'd like to track down his pilots and door gunners, pay tribute. "If it wasn't for them and for the Huey, we wouldn't be here today," Zooby says. You get the feeling he means it.

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"THERE'S STILL A LOT TO BE PAINTED."

In a studio in Georgia a man is painting. He is a gentle, soft-spoken man who spends most of his time creating pictures on canvas. His persona belies, in many ways, his history. But if you look closely at his work, you'll see Vietnam, and if you talk to Aurence, he'll tell you a story or two about Hueys in country.

In 1966, when he was eighteen years old, Aurence was a slick gunner in the U.S. Marine Corps. His job, as he describes it, was to "fly a route" three weeks out of four, resupplying troops, providing air support, and medevac-ing wounded. He is casual in his descriptions. "It was hairy some days; it was fun some days." But there are episodes, he says, where you didn't see, you didn't hear, you didn't tell. Until a few years ago, Aurence had nightmares.

And then he started painting. His wife, an artist, encouraged him to dip his brush into the paint. What emerged is a collection of folk art prized by collectors, much of it about the Vietnam War. "I have my memories—the way I see things—I can put on canvas. It's my own interpretation." In all of his paintings, Aurence draws fireballs, his "messages from Nam." And all of his in-country work features a White Dog, his squadron's mascot at Marble Mountain whom he saw as his guardian angel. Sometimes Aurence draws a Black Dog, the White Dog's nemesis. There are soldiers, hooches, jungles. The paintings are vibrant, almost screaming. And, since he started making them, Aurence hasn't had a nightmare.

Hueys and their sister helicopters are as ubiquitous in Aurence's work as they were in Vietnam. And, to this day, he says, "When I hear a helicopter, I look up." It's a sound that takes him back in time and into the studio. "There's still a lot to be painted," he says. And many would agree.

DRAGONFLIES

The first thing Joe Kline saw in Vietnam was a breathtaking landscape: lush green treetops of old-growth forests rising into misty ancient mountains. The second thing he saw was a Huey. As the airplane descended, bringing new troops, a Dustoff lifted, flying off to pick up the wounded. It looked, he said, like a dragonfly taking flight. When Kline, a UH-1H crew chief with the Kingsmen, describes Vietnam, he talks in images. After all, he's an artist.

"I've always had artistic talent. When I was in first grade I was drawing airplanes," Kline says. For the last thirty years, when he wasn't working as an engineer or fathering his three daughters, Kline has painted aircraft, specializing in Vietnam machines and becoming something of an expert on technical accuracy. "Ninety percent of my customers are pilots or former crew members. It's crucial to get the details correct." The work is gratifying for Kline, allowing him to meet and talk with people, and earning him the heartfelt thanks of people like Kim Douglas and John Gooseman, for whom he painted, complete with individual markings, Lt. Leslie Douglas' Huey.

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The son and grandson of veteran pilots, Kline knows aircraft—and he has a lot of respect for the Huey. "The Huey is to helicopters what the DC-3 is to fixed-wing aircraft. It is basic, tremendously versatile, and easy to modify. For a helicopter, it could take a lot of abuse." Kline chuckles when he shares the old adage that "an airplane wants to fly; a helicopter wants to crash," and hails the Huey for its reliable single jet engine and its ability to beat the air into submission. "One of the first things that really blew me away about the Huey," he says, "was when I touched it. You would expect the skin to be thick like a car, but it was thin-gauge aluminum, like a Coke can." You would think this discovery would make Kline want to avoid flying, but the opposite was true. After two months as a rear mechanic, he volunteered as a Crew Chief.

"I turned 21 in Vietnam," Kline says, "it was a defining time in my life." In the air, he learned things about himself, things about strength and weakness and confidence that make his choice to fly "one of the best decisions of my life." He still has strong friendships with guys he knew for three months thirty years ago. And he still loves the Huey. "A few years ago they were using Hueys to spray the Mediterranean Fruit Fly near my house, and every time I heard one coming I would run outside and watch, even though it was dark and I was probably being sprayed myself. My wife thought I was crazy. But it's a sound you never forget."

Kline has some haunting memories. But he's lucky, he says, to have his artwork as a means of expression. And his respect for the men on the ground is profound. "We had just one job," he says, "to support the infantry." He's never forgotten that—and he's never forgotten them. Once, he says, when his slick was flying PsyOps (Psychological Operations), they used their speakers during a flyover to wish a knot of infantrymen "A Merry Christmas from the Kingsmen." Seconds later he saw a flash of artillery where the men were. He learned the next day that eight men died that instant. He paints in their honor.

And when he talks, you hear the pictures. How the Kingsmen proudly parked their mud-covered, gun-battered Hueys next to the shiny, new VIP birds. How lines of Hueys flew in carefully timed formations, soldiers themselves. How tracers and flares lit the night skies in ghostly, surreal colors. How, to this day, whenever he sees a dragonfly, Joe Kline thinks of a Huey helicopter.

"NO ONE LOVES A PILOT MORE THAN AN INFANTRYMAN."

Thirty years to the week after he arrived in country, Jon Chaffin hears the signature WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP of a Huey flyover and thinks about the flight that saved his life. The July 4th reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association gives him a chance to shake the hands that held the helicopter's controls—hands that, if you looked at the chest they were attached to, held some heavy brass.

In October, 1970, 21-year-old Pfc Chaffin, of the 101st Airborne, was patrolling in the mountains less than 50 miles from the DMZ when his company came under mortar attack and moved into an area infected with a jungle-induced intestinal virus that dropped three out of four of the eighty-five men suddenly to the ground, feverish and too weak to move even though they knew the enemy was nearby. For two days they lay on the ground, two men to a poncho tent, in the incessant monsoon rains, shivering. Jon stayed awake for the 48 hours the virus lasted, monitoring the radio with a fellow grunt who'd been in Vietnam just two weeks.

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On the third morning, the virus passed and the rain stopped but the heavy fog made air rescue impossible, so the company decided to walk out, navigating through mountainous terrain, crossing a river neck deep, never stopping. When darkness fell, the men ran, afraid of losing their way forever if they couldn't see the man in front. After twelve incessant hours they slept in the water of a runoff ditch, only to get up and start again. They were exhausted, weak, wet. And, though they didn't realize it, they were lost.

But Assistant Division Commander Sidney Berry knew it. In his dry headquarters he looked at the fog-filled sky and turned to fellow pilot, Major John Fox. "We've gotta find those men, John." "Well, we can't do it sitting here, sir," replied Fox. Berry wouldn't risk the lives of helicopter crews in the severe weather conditions, but he was willing to risk his own. He ordered two Hueys to the skies: his, piloted by Fox, and another carrying the Brigade Commander. Over enemy territory, in cloud cover so thick the pilots had to blow holes through the mist with raised blades in order to see, they searched for Chaffin's company.

When Chaffin heard the WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP of two helicopters flying low over the horizon, he and the men around him used their reserve energy to yell and wave. The two Hueys, dangerously overloaded, made several trips to ferry the 85 men to safety. Most, like Chaffin, were too exhausted and ill to notice the top brass in the front seats. Only much later did Chaffin learn he was rescued by the man who would retire as Lt. General Sidney Berry, the man who, after being chastened by the Division Commander for his actions that day, went on to become Corps Commander in Europe and the Superintendent of West Point.

Standing near Berry at the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., watching Hueys fly over, Chaffin is reflective. His respect and appreciation for Berry are great, but to him all Huey pilots are giants. "No one loves a pilot more than an infantryman. I have never loved a group of men so much in my whole life. The guys in the air treated infantry like kings. They may have hated the war. They may have hated the Army. But they loved each other."

Today Chaffin is a contractor living a peaceful life. But the eight months he spent in Vietnam is with him every day. "Sometimes, when I water the grass, I can smell the jungle," he says. And hearing that WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP takes him right back to the day he got out.

"WHEN THE MEMORIES BEGIN"

Like a lot of Vietnam helicopter pilots, John Flanagan uses his call sign in his email address. Thirty years later, there's still Saber Blue in his blood. Flying Huey "slick" missions for "Blues" --reconnaissance infantry platoons--in 1967-68 was the kind of experience that imprints on a person. This retired Army officer is still friends with Jim Pratt, his first aircraft commander in Vietnam. "We flew together on a daily basis and became quite good friends and an exceptional flight crew. We went through a lot together," he says. His Huey story captures the slick pilots' experience and illustrates how important these helicopters were to the men on the ground. Just say "Huey" to Flanagan and the stories begin.

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On May 27, 1967 Flanagan was flying "peter pilot," or junior officer, under Pratt's command. "We were doing a series of village sweeps with the Blues north of Duc Pho. We would make a combat assault to one end of the village and drop the Blues off. They would sweep the village and we would pick them up at the other end. Along the way, they would blow some bunkers, have some minor shoot-outs, and perhaps burn a hooch or two if the occupants wouldn't come out. The Blues' job was to find the enemy, and make and maintain contact with him until we could send in reinforcements of normal infantry units. After the reinforcing infantry went in, we would extract the Blues. We did this all morning. In and out, in and out, refuel, in and out.

"It was getting to be lunch time and we had just picked the Blues up from what seemed to be the umpteenth village. We were all ready for some chow and the Blues settled in for the ride home. Enroute, we got a call from operations telling us to put the Blues in at a place where they had a report of an NVA regiment in the vicinity.

"Well, the scouts and the guns go over and select a Landing Zone (LZ) for us and cover us on the approach. It was a tiny, two-ship LZ, so our first two ships went in and dropped their guys off. No sweat. Our ship, Blue 39, and Mac McAnally's followed. We came in just seconds after they took off. Just as our Blues jumped, all hell broke loose. We got out but the Blues were reporting taking fire from 360 degrees. One was already wounded. We needed to get reinforcements in and get the wounded out, quick.

"We went to pick up the ready reaction force that was standing on strip alert, luckily just a short distance away. We picked them up and headed back and were put into a holding pattern until the situation could get sorted out. As we orbited and orbited, the gunships and scout teams were covering the Blues and trying to gain control so we could safely drop the reaction force. We did everything we could to conserve fuel, slowed down to best cruise, beeped the RPMS back about 6200. Being the "tail end Charlie" at the rear of the helicopter formation fighting dirty air on landing and takeoff always costs more fuel, so we were really concerned about being able to make the approach and get back without running out of fuel. Because we were low, we were told to move up in the formation, ahead of McAnally.

"We went in through the fire, waited while the chopper in front picked up the wounded, and got out with no problem. There was fire coming from everywhere, but no hits on our aircraft. We made it back to the refueling point, shot a direct approach to the ground, and throttled the engine back as the crew chief began refueling. We believe the engine quit just as he began refueling.

"Although we had no problem that doesn't mean everybody was happy. As we were leaving the LZ, we could hear McAnally and the other chopper going in. The fire intensified as we made our climb. We heard McAnally say, 'I'm going down.' We couldn't do anything because of our low fuel status but the guns provided cover and somebody got the crew out. Mac still blames me and Jim for getting him shot down; if the formation had stayed intact, we would have been the tail end. But Jim and I never received a hit the entire time we flew together. Mac seemed to attract them. We called him 'Magnet Ass.'

"It was a busy rest of the day. We had two ships down so two of us had to do runs shuttling stuff—ammo and supplies—to the Blues and to direct ground troops into the area. Meanwhile the fight went on all night. The next morning I flew in to resupply the Blues and there, neatly lined up, were 30 enemy bodies. The Blues didn't like other folks taking credit for their kills, so they would drag the bodies inside their 'perimeters.' When we came in we saw a couple of Blues sitting close by the bodies eating their C-rations for breakfast.



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"The Huey was, and for the most part, still is a wonderful machine. It was fully capable of performing under the toughest conditions with great reliability. I've seen some of our Huey gunships come back off of missions with cowlings flapping, holes all over the place, chin bubbles and windscreens shot out, and still they got the crews back. When Jim and I lost our tail rotor at Two Bits south and crashed, (there was a fatigue crack in one of the blade hubs which caused the blade to depart), the tail rotor, main rotor and main transmission all departed the aircraft, yet the turbine engine continued to run.

"I flew the Huey up till the time I retired in 1986. I flew her in combat, I flew her as part of a VIP flight detachment, I flew her as a grass seeder hauling a big bucket of grass seed over the tank training areas of Ft. Knox, I flew her in rain, snow, in solid instruments. I flew her under almost all conditions imaginable. And she was a charm! Not the fastest, nor the most equipped, but a great machine, with just the right amount of equipment to make you really fly her. No autopilots or auto hovering for the Huey. The pilot really had to fly her.

"The Huey took the troops into the battle to find the bad guys. They stayed above the troops providing aerial gunnery with rockets, and machine guns. It gave the ground guys an eye in the sky to snoop and poop in front of the troops, on the flanks and behind the troops. It brought them food, it brought them ammo, it brought them replacements, it brought them medical aid, it brought them out when they were hurt, out when the day was done, and home when they died. And then the Huey did it again the next day. At base camp or at the firebases, it brought them beer, soda, mail, candy. Everything they needed they got by Army air, and usually by the Huey.

"Soldiers who served in Vietnam love the Huey and identify with the Huey. Regardless of their role in country, VN veterans will stop and look up when they hear the sounds of the Huey. That's when the memories begin."

"I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO SHAKE HIS HAND."

Robert Pryor says that Vietnam made him an addict. "I'm addicted to backpacking," he says. "I love to backpack in the North Cascade Mountains. I started humping a backpack in Special Forces. I loved it then, and I love it now. I don't hunt though. I gave that up on June 20, 1969. I don't even carry a firearm when I'm out in the woods." You get a tremendous feeling of respect for life and its joys from Robert Pryor, a man who has parented two birthchildren and four adopted children, a man who has been married 24 years, a man who has served his community as a city councilman and a watermaster for his local irrigation district, a man with a great sense of humor and a knack for telling a story. A man who is alive today because of a Huey helicopter. His story is a testament to heroism—his, his comrades', and, somewhere, a pilot's and his crew's.

Pryor was twenty years old in 1969, an engineer on a Special Forces A-Team located at Bunard, Pouc Long Province, Vietnam. In the early morning hours of June 20, the camp came under attack and Pryor's life was changed forever. "We were extremely short-handed" as some regular members were out on leave. The attack was sudden and fierce. "The camp was nearly destroyed, and I was severely wounded...with multiple wounds to the head, chest, abdomen, back, and all extremities, in eminent danger of bleeding to death." Pryor was lying wounded in the trench where he'd been hit while checking the perimeter. His comrade, Sergeant First Class Charles Hinson, found him, checked to see if he was alive, then hoisted him onto his shoulders and carried him through the dangerous night back to the bunker.

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There was no medic in the camp at the time. "The last thing I remember before slipping into a coma was our Commo Sergeant, Sergeant First Class Carl Cramer, pleading over the radio for any kind of help, and that he didn't want me to die there on the floor of the bunker," says Pryor. Cramer asked for a Dustoff. When they were called, the Hueys came. And this one performed a drama no Hollywood movie could outdo.

The camp's helicopter Landing Zone was sitting between the enemy and Pryor. There was no way a helicopter could make it in safely. The only possible place for a Dustoff medevac landing was a very small inner perimeter, dodging not only enemy fire but antennae, fences, and even a flag pole—all in the dead of night. Because of the attack, the Special Forces soldiers couldn't light the area. So Hinson took his flashlight out there, and the determined pilot put his faith in that pinpoint and Hinson's directions. Hinson says, "the chopper tried to come in twice but ricochet bullets caused him to abort. Then a man was sent to the bunker and stopped the firing long enough for the chopper to land and take Robert out." Pryor adds, "The pilot's pin-point precision saved the day, and my sorry butt."

Pryor had 30 major wounds and countless minor ones. Portions of his skull and the underlying brain matter were removed at the 24th Med-Evac hospital in Long Binh, leaving a four-and-a-half inch hole in his skull. Thirty years later he has seizures, muscle loss, vision loss, memory problems, and "several other lesser conditions." He was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross. He remains patriotic. "America owes me nothing. We all enjoy the freedom and prosperity that living in this great land has to offer. We must all do our part to repay our nation for the luxury of living here. Some repay that obligation by serving in the military, others repay it by doing other things to make this a better place." Pryor has done both.

Robert Pryor will soon be reunited with the men who were his fellow Special Forces teammates on June 20, 1969. As for the brave and skillful pilot and crew who saved his life, he has no idea who they are. "I'd like nothing more in this world than to shake their hands," he says. Maybe it will happen. We hope so.

"I WAS ONLY THERE TO HELP."

When Glenna (Donelson) Hardy graduated from nursing school, she joined the Army Nurse Corp in search of adventure and travel. The recruiter told her not to worry about Vietnam; she would only go if she volunteered. The first day of Basic Training she heard something different: "Ninety-nine percent of you will be going to Vietnam." A year later, she was there.

Hardy served in the 67th Evac Hospital at QuiNhon in 1969 and 1970. She was 22 years old. Ask her about the television version and she'll say, not surprisingly, that "China Beach was glorified." Sure, there was adventure, maybe a little romance, but working 12-hour shifts six days a week did not allow the free time actors had. The War left deep scars in its health-care professionals, many of whom never practiced again. And when you ask a nurse about the WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP of a Huey, she'll say it's something she learned to dread.

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"For the guys in the field, a Huey was a lifesaver. For nurses it was more wounded." Hardy worked in post-operative recovery and surgical intensive care, so she admits she didn't see the worst of ER and triage. But she saw a lot. "Nurses saw lots of young men dying. It created enormous pressure. You have to come to terms with things, with living and dying, with war. The only way I could deal with it was by knowing I was only there to help. I didn't cause the war and hoped maybe some soldier would go home alive because I was there. I learned to go to sleep without thinking—to never remember dreams." Hardy has continued to work as a Registered Nurse in the years since the War, but her life has been affected. "I'm on my third marriage. It's common. A lot of Vietnam nurses have pushed the War into their subconscious and moved on. But you can see the effects. It seems like we're just now coming out, writing and talking about it."

Hardy tells a Huey story that illustrates something most people don't know. Americans in Vietnam contributed greatly to civilian health care and the care of orphans. One time, Hardy was with a group of nurses and pilots who were flown by Huey to one of the Catholic orphanages near the coast. They delivered food and medical supplies, then enjoyed a swim and picnic. When it was time for their Huey pickup, no one came. They had been called out to action. The nuns grew more and more nervous as the sun began to set; their neutral status could be dangerously compromised by an overnight stay by Americans. Finally, they loaned the nurses their jeep and sent them driving through dangerous territory. Fortunately they made it back to the hospital safely, but a helicopter ride would have been less perilous.

Glenna Hardy has had a full life since the War. She has raised two daughters. She has continued to save lives in operating and emergency rooms. But you can sense her sadness when she talks about that time thirty years ago. "When I first came back," she says, "I was filled with dread every time I heard a Huey." But days and years have passed now and she's ready, maybe, for another Huey experience.

"COWBOYS RIDING A GREEN BIRD"

Today, Dr. Barry McAlpine heals people. Thirty years ago, he had a different kind of job. As one of the "Blues," as the Army called its reconnaissance infantry platoons in Vietnam, McAlpine spent a lot of days as a warrior in the villages and jungles that were Vietnam's front lines. The Blues were the scouts for the modern-day Cavalry that played an essential role in the Vietnam War. "Every day was a story," McAlpine says, "We made air assaults every day, sometimes six or eight in a day. That was our job."

McAlpine speaks casually about the experience but when he drops the line, "my third Purple Heart," you know this man was a soldier. Hueys were an essential part of his mission.

"Our job as Blues was to start the fight. Every morning at first light, we'd saddle up in our Huey. They'd have a place scouted for us. It is an amazing thing; our pilots were unarmed. They'd drop us in these Landing Zones, then come get us out. We'd start the fight, get a handle on it, then reinforcements would come in. This was our job—six to eight times a day. If we had wounded, Huey pilots would come and get us. They didn't care if they were getting shot at, they came anyway. I would love to have a chance to take my wife and daughters into a Huey and fly around... It'd bring back some fond memories."

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McAlpine, like all ground soldiers, has enormous respect for Huey pilots and their skills. As an example, he tells the story of his extraction after being wounded for the third time. "I had been hit in the face by some shrapnel. It wasn't serious but it looked it because there was a lot of blood running down my face. They brought the Huey into this hot Landing Zone. They didn't land, because it was too dangerous, just brought it in fast and I had to belly flop in and they took off. We were flying down this river and I saw this bridge in front of us. We were approaching at about 80 knots. Those darn 19 and 20-year-old pilots flew under that bridge! These were cowboys riding a green bird...damn near scared me to death. I told 'em, if Charlie doesn't kill me, you guys will. But they didn't. These guys knew how to fly helicopters. They got me home."

Thirty years later, McAlpine is still friends with some of those pilots—John Flanagan, Jim Pratt. And, even though this man went face to face with the enemy every day in Vietnam, he makes a point of giving credit somewhere else. "Those Huey pilots were the most courageous people," he says. And that means a lot.

"BECAUSE WE WERE THERE"

William Robert Stanley, Senior served two tours in Vietnam, the first as a Huey "slick" pilot with the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, and the second with the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion as the Aviation Safety Officer and Commander's pilot. He took hits in both tours, but says, with a small laugh, that he got more medals the second time. "You get more awards with a Colonel as a witness." In Vietnam, Stanley lost 58 people he knew, but he made it out. And now he pays tribute to those, like him, who served in what he calls "The Magnificent Minority" from Vietnam.

Of the 2.5 million who served in Vietnam over the course of the war, 87,000 flew in helicopters as pilots and crew members. This Magnificent Minority, Stanley says, "were the people who made an imprint on the war most people don't know about." As a tribute to them, Stanley carves wooden replicas of the patches they wore. And, even though he has a service-related disability and lives on a fixed income, William Stanley's carvings are not for sale.

He gives away his carvings, "remembrances of that time long ago" upon request or to veterans—or their survivors—he meets in both the real and virtual worlds. "I'll send one cold to someone with a good web-site," he says. After being with them at the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Reunion in Washington D.C., he sent carvings to Kim Douglas and John Gooseman in honor of Lt. Leslie Douglas (see "It's Not Just a Name on the Wall"). He accepts donations for materials, which can get expensive; each carving is from kiln-dried black walnut, sanded, sealed and waxed. Behind the carving is anywhere from one-and-a-half to three hours of Stanley's time, sometimes more, depending on the size, and Stanley has sent out more than 600. His payment, he says, is in the boxes of thank-you letters he has received and the way that the carvings have exorcised "the demons of my mind."

"I feel," Huey veteran William Robert Stanley, Sr. says to his fellow vets, "there should be something you get for your service. This carving is something you earned long ago. I do this because we were there."

"I STILL SEARCH THE SKY."

When Jeanne Marie Christie was 21 years old, she volunteered with the American Red Cross as a "Donut Dollie." The year was 1967. When she told her father she was going to Vietnam, he said, "If you do this it'll be the biggest decision of your life." Thirty years later, Jeanne says he was right.

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The official term for the Donut Dollies was Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO), but Jeanne says "try to say that to 100 guys with the sun shining through your dress." Donut Dollies, the name they were given in World War II, was much easier. Their mission was to improve morale, to relieve warfare stress, to remind soldiers of home. "They looked at us—the Round Eyes—and they saw their wives, their sweethearts, their sisters and mothers. We did stupid things to make them laugh. We listened. We broke the ice. The thing was, they couldn't laugh and cry at the same time, so we made them laugh."

The 627 Donut Dollies of Vietnam traveled the country to entertain troops, sometimes in vehicles, but mostly in Hueys, earning them another monicker: "Chopper Chicks." Jeanne describes the experience as surreal. "First you'd have the thrill of flying in a Huey, the undescrivable freedom of going over this beautiful country. I always felt safe with the door gunners on each side. We'd head into a firebase and there would be all our guys waving, hooting and hollering, or just staring. We'd get out and play dumb TV-show games like Jeopardy. We'd talk to our guys, drink an orange soda with them. Then the chopper would come and we'd go on to the next one. Once, we sat in our Huey on a hill near a firebase under attack. It was sickening, watching, knowing guys were dying in that valley. But it was like Kennedy said, 'ask not what your country can do for you....'"

It's been thirty years but Jeanne Christie hasn't forgotten either the pilots or their Hueys. "Chopper pilots were confident, quick-thinking, a little cocky, and notoriously crazy. You couldn't help but respect them." One in particular gained her affection. Special Forces Major Don Jutz was from Wisconsin, like Jeanne. "He became my patron. Anytime I needed a chopper, he flew me, like a personal chaeuffer." Jeanne doesn't know where he is now, but she'd like to see him. And she'd like to see Claude Thomas, a pilot she met ten years after the war who listened to her pour her heart out in a Boston Veteran center, helped her deal with "some issues," became, as she says her "lifesaver."

And Jeanne Christie always loves to see a Huey. She still has a sense for the coming vibration, even before she hears it. One time, while selling one of the Hungarian birddogs she raises, she said she heard the WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP and looked up. "These people are trying to talk to me, but I'm gone. I'm frozen in time. I'm totally possessed. I'm watching the sky. Then I see them, flying low over the crest. Four Hueys. I look at them and say, 'Excuse me, I've been to Vietnam,' then I just watched them go over."

"You know," Jeanne says, "Whenever I hear a Huey I still look. I know they're not coming for me anymore but it's ingrained. I still search the sky."

"SO THEY WILL UNDERSTAND"

Bill Peterson will say he's not a writer, but excerpts from the book he's writing about Vietnam show otherwise. As a nineteen-year-old Huey crew chief in the 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion in 1967-68, Peterson kept a promise he'd made to his dad to write home often. His father, a WWII veteran, kept all the letters, which are providing the basis for the book. But those letters inspired a much earlier publication, one familiar to many Vietnam veterans: the White Robe Six Tract. The gift of writing, apparently is a Peterson family trait.

Peterson's uncle, Oliver Peterson, a Navy chaplain, wrote the White Robe Six tract in 1968, inspired by his nephew's letters. Gene Peterson, Bill's father, paid for printing. Forty thousand copies were distributed around the world, most in Vietnam. White Robe Six had just one purpose: to provide spiritual comfort to the men who were serving. To this day, the younger Peterson says, he gets requests for copies.

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As the tract explains, "it (was) common practice to assign radio code names to military units and aircraft to enable the caller and the called to identify each other while hiding their identity from the enemy." To this day, many helicopter veterans use their call signs in license plates and email addresses. Monikers like "Apache 21" or "Gladiator 13" remain an ingrained part of the vet's identity. "White Robe 6" was the call sign given to someone who was "not a voice audible on radio circuits but in the inmost recesses of the soul." In Peterson's words, soldiers "tuned to the proper wavelength" heard the voice of White Robe 6 "in answer to the call of the trusting heart." The chaplain's inspirational message comforted countless men in service. Now Bill Peterson hopes to accomplish something else with his writing.

It's part catharsis, part education. "Not a day goes by that I don't remember the details of missions I flew over there, even though I can't remember what I had for breakfast," he jokes. "I can sit down and write for two hours and come away exhausted. It brings back the adrenaline." But he writes, as his uncle did, for someone other than himself, for a greater purpose. "My hope and goal is that the families who had loved ones participate in the helicopter war will read this book, and have their eyes opened as to what the helicopter crews experienced in Vietnam. So they will understand."

WAVING AT AN OLD FRIEND

John M. (Mike) Waugh has a dual perspective on the Huey. Released from the Army as a Captain, he served two tours in Vietnam: one on the ground as a Battalion Operations Commander and one in the air as a combat assault pilot. From the ground, he says, "Hueys gave us a sense of security as the connection to base camp when we were in

the field. They could bring help if things got hot, and the helicopter flying above the action could see things better and did not have to contend with the noise and confusion on the ground. The Huey gunship was a welcome arsenal of protection. And Hueys were our taxi. They brought mail, food, supplies, almost anything. As a Commander, I used Hueys to take me from our battalion HQ to fire bases, which allowed me to see our area of operation from the air-- a different and valuable perspective."

In the air Waugh had another experience, "Nothing has given me more of a thrill than dipping the nose over a little more than necessary and skimming along the runway and then pulling up into flight." His Huey, he says, was "a powerful ship," capable of exceeding the 50-pound red line in a "sign of a strong engine that could carry a lot and still have the power to get off the ground." This meant he could get more troops on board to get out of a tight spot and carry more supplies to troops in the field. Every Huey he flew, Waugh says gratefully, got him out alive. "It was always an aircraft I had faith in."

Anyone who flew or served in Vietnam would be hard pressed to focus on just one story from their time in country, but a favorite of Waugh's is "the one that shows how I owe my life to the poor flying posture of an Aircraft Commander."

"We had just deposited a load of troops that we had taken out of the field at a fire support base and were getting ready to go back to the LZ for another load" when gunfire and trees left them only one option: flying in the open down a dirt road. "Our flight of four aircraft departed the fire base at very low level, with my aircraft in the lead. A minute down the road, we were ambushed. I became aware that we were under fire when one of the instruments in the aircraft exploded on my knee. I then heard the door gunners in our aircraft returning fire. I was suddenly aware of the fact that this sheet metal aircraft was not very bullet proof. I had this sense of bouncing in my seat in order to somehow dodge bullets that must have been coming my way. The Aircraft Commander was flying the aircraft at the time. I grabbed the controls to 'help' him in this effort, and when he later complimented me for getting the controls in case one of us was shot, I informed him that I was just trying to get us out of there quicker! At one point in all of this I remember seeing some white flecks drift down in front of my eyes.

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"Shortly after we passed through all of this firing and once we were out of the 'action,' a series of warning lights illuminated. Both fuel boost pump lights, the engine oil light, the transmission oil light-- all came on at once; any one of these at any time meant 'Land Immediately'. So we landed at the perimeter of a 'secure' fire base occupied by ARVN troops and immediately came under mortar attack. Our three trailing aircraft had landed a short distance away and picked us up and we flew to the security of Tay Ninh to refuel and regroup. Then some evidence of what we had been through began to show itself.

"My home state was Texas and at the time I arrived in country one of the flight helmets offered to me had the Texas state flag painted on the visor cover. This is the helmet I was wearing on this day. When I attempted to remove it, I had great difficulty raising the visor. I finally managed to squeeze the it off of my head, only to find that what was keeping me from raising my sun visor were two new holes in the visor cover. An AK 47 round had bracketed one hole going in and one going out--right through the Lone Star in the Texas flag! The white flecks I had seen were flecks from the helmet's styrofoam liner.

"I took the rest of the day off.

"The next day, after our Huey was returned, I checked the damage. As if the incident with my helmet wasn't enough, here was one more. There on the roof was a hole that could only have been made by a B-40 rocket! Looking through the line of sight of this hole showed me the path of the B-40 was clearly through the Aircraft Commander's window, and up through the roof. All I could think of was Bishop's posture.

"The Aircraft Commander I had been flying with that day, Gaylord Bishop, had a hunched forward flying posture. He did not sit straight up in his seat. So I guess I owe my life to the fact that he never heeded his mother's advice to 'sit up straight.' Clearly, if he had, he would have been hit squarely in the head by this rocket. Who knows what would have happened then.

"I still have my helmet with the holes in the Lone Star. It always reminds me of Warrant Officer Bishop. I was his commander on the ground; he was the commander in the air. He was an outstanding pilot who stayed in the Army after his tour in Viet Nam and died in an aircraft accident in December of 1989. Bishop was one of the finest people I have ever known. He and his roommate, Dale Onstine, are the only two people I have ever known that I would trust my life to."

Telling the story makes Waugh reflective. Thirty years later, he lives a much more quiet life. But Vietnam, and its mascot, the Huey, never leave him. "When I graduated from Flight school in 1971, the Student Company Commander spoke at our graduation dinner. I remember him making the statement that every pilot will look skyward when they hear the sound of an aircraft overhead. I do. I can always distinguish a helicopter from a fixed wing. But the Huey has the single most distinctive sound of them all.

"After returning from the VHPA reunion recently, while mowing my lawn I thought I heard the WHUMP WHUMP of an approaching Huey. At first I wondered if it was just in my mind since I was thinking about the reunion at the time. I stopped my lawn mower and sure enough, it was a Huey. I watched it go by. About 45 minutes later, I heard it again, coming in the opposite direction. I stopped again and just watched it coming my way. I couldn't resist taking off my hat to wave. I wasn't waving for the pilots, I was waving at an old friend, the Huey."

In the Shadow of the Blade

A FAILED NIGHT RANGER EXTRACTION, PHAN THIET, 1969

Jim Schueckler flew Hueys in Vietnam, and, if he flew as well as he writes, he's a guy you'd want as your pilot. This is one of his stories, in his own words. It says a lot about Hueys and a lot about their pilots. Nobody could say it better.

Dedicated in memory of CPT Thomas E. "Okie" Campbell, WO1 John P. Wright, SP5 Chubby D. Lowrey, and PFC Ezequiel Torres, Jr. Rest in peace, brothers.

Flying at night in Vietnam scared the hell out of me. Here in the good old US of A, flying at night is not so dangerous. In most places here, there are thousands of lights on the ground to give references of where the ground and horizon are. Vietnam wasn't like that. The high humidity caused a haze that totally obscured the horizon, and there were no lights on the ground in the mountainous jungle areas. Flying at night in Vietnam was instrument flight. Nobody flies on instruments when close to the ground, but our missions required us to be close to the ground. You can't hover on instruments, because to hover you need very fast information to the brain about the aircraft's attitude and position.

My Peter Pilot was a newby, about as long as the Mekong River. In Vietnam about a week, he had his "in-country check ride" just the day before. As aircraft commander, I introduced him to supporting C Company of the 75th Rangers, using a Huey H-model slick. We dropped a few Ranger teams in the jungle, took supplies to some of them, brought one team back, and did a few other ash-and-trash missions to firebases and compounds near Phan Thiet. We had thought our workday was over.

One Ranger team was to stay out in the boonies overnight, but got into a firefight with an undetermined number of VC at about 10 PM. Our gunships and one of our slicks dropping flares went out to support them, and their platoon leader was in an Air Force FAC Bird Dog. We were called to operations: "Go pick up the team. Use McGuire rigs because they can't find a clearing. They are under trees that are forty to fifty feet high."

I had made McGuire rig pickups before--in daylight. The Rangers on the ground would put on a body-harness with a locking hook at chest level. We would hover above the trees. A Ranger-guy in the back of our Huey would drop long ropes with rings on the end. Very simple: the guys on the ground would connect their hooks to the ring, tell us on the radio or with a thumbs-up that they were ready, and we would pull them straight up until they were clear of the trees. We would fly back home or to a nearby firebase with the men hanging far below the Huey. We had to remember to terminate at a very high hover, then go straight down very slowly. We used to joke that nobody was sure if McGuire was the name of the man who invented the process, or the one who died the first time it was tried. (Children: do not do this at home).

We got airborne within a few minutes and joined the FAC, the gunships, and the flare ship in the air above the embattled Rangers. The area was well illuminated by the flares that our sister-ship was dropping from high above, so I asked the Peter Pilot to fly the approach. We were only a few hundred feet up, with our searchlight on, when tracers came up towards us from several different places. I turned off the lights, grabbed the controls, turned real sharp, and got out of there as fast as I could.

In the Shadow of the Blade

More nervous now, I remained at the controls. We went back, just above the trees, with no lights on except the navigation lights that can only be seen from above. The flares were swinging under their parachutes, making the treetops look like an eerie, rolling, sea. The Ranger on the ground directed me to him by the noise I was making.

The men on the ground were talking on their FM radio, and folks in the air were on UHF, but only the FAC and we were trying to use both. On the first pass, I was trying to talk with the Rangers on the ground, but the almost continuous air-to-air talk would frequently cover them. I set switches on the intercom units and then told my Peter Pilot: "You talk to the guys in the air, I'll talk to the guys on the ground."

My almost fatal mistake was that I did NOT tell my Peter Pilot that I could no longer hear the air-to-air conversations.

Finally the man on the ground said we were directly overhead. The Ranger in the back of our Huey dropped the ropes. They tangled. He pulled them back up and tried again. We couldn't see the men on the ground, but the one with the radio could see our silhouette against the glow of the parachute flares, so he gave us directions: "Back up, go to the left, no that's too much, go right..." He had to scream into the radio to overcome the sound of our rotor. I was pouring with sweat and my heart was pounding for what seemed to be an eternity. Finally the Rangers were connected and gave the signal to pull them up. Because the ropes were over the skids, not at the center of gravity, I had to rise very slowly.

Then the lights went out.

Black. VERY black. All around us.

It seemed as though nothing existed outside of the Huey except darkness.

The slick dropping flares had called out by radio when they had thrown out the third last, then second last, then last, flare. My Peter Pilot didn't know that I couldn't hear that radio. I hadn't heard the warnings.

There were no more flares. No more light.

From the feeble red glow of the dimmed instruments and the seat of my pants, I could tell that we were spinning. Fast. Spinning like a top, around a bunch of ropes now tangled in the trees. Full opposite pedal did not stop the spinning because we were pivoting around the ropes over the skids.

I couldn't go up because we were tied to the trees, but I couldn't go down for fear of hitting a tree, losing the tail rotor, or otherwise destroying the aircraft.

But I couldn't see ANYTHING outside!

"Okie" Campbell, our gunship platoon leader, saw my navigation lights spinning. He raised the nose of his C-model Huey and punched off a salvo of rockets high into the air. From that few seconds of rocket-flame glare, I was able to stop the spinning. My frantic groping also had finally found the landing light switch. Click. I'd rather get shot at than do that spinning again.

Now able to see the tree tops, I reduced power to stop the spinning.

In the Shadow of the Blade

More nervous now, I remained at the controls. We went back just above the trees with no lights on except the navigation lights that can only be seen from above. The flares were waiting under their parachutes, making the landscape look like an eerie, rolling sea. The Ranger on the ground directed me to him by the noise I was making.

The men on the ground were talking on their FM radio, and talk in the air was on UHF, but only the FAC and we were trying to use both. On the first pass, I was trying to talk with the Ranger on the ground, but the constant continuous air-to-air talk would frequently cover them. I had switches on the intercom unit and then told my Pilot: "You talk to the guys in the air, I'll talk to the guys on the ground."

My almost fatal mistake was that I did NOT tell my Pilot that I could no longer hear the air-to-air conversations.

Finally, a man on the ground said we were directly overhead. The Ranger in the back of our Huey lit the flares. They tangled. He pulled them back up and tried again. We couldn't see the men on the ground, but the one with the radio could see our silhouette against the glow of the parachute flares so he gave us directions: "Back up, go to the left, no that's not it, right, go right." He had to scream into the radio to overcome the sound of our rotor. I was pouring sweat and the heat was burning for what seemed to be an eternity. Finally the Rangers were overhead and gave the signal to pull them up. We started the ropes were over the skids, not at the center of gravity. I had to rise very slowly.

Then the lights went out.

Black. VERY black. All around us.

It seemed as though nothing existed except the Huey and the darkness.

The clock dropping flares had called out of the air. The flares were out about ten seconds from then. My Pilot told me not to panic. I was in a panic. I was in a panic. I was in a panic.

There were no more flares. No more light.

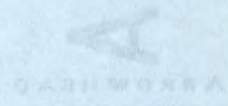
From the radio, we heard a man on the ground and his voice. I could tell that we were in a bad spot. He said we were a good distance from the ground. I was in a panic. I was in a panic. I was in a panic.

I couldn't go up because we were tied to the tree, but I couldn't go down for fear of hitting a tree, losing the tail rotor, or otherwise destroying the aircraft.

But I couldn't see ANYTHING outside.

"Cliff," Commander, our gunship leader, saw my position light shining. He missed the noise of the Huey and pointed off a salvo of rockets that lit the air from that low altitude. A flash of light. I was able to stop the spinning. My gunship had just finally found the landing point. I told the Pilot to get out of there as fast as that spinning.

Now able to see the tree top, I reduced power to stop the spinning.



In the Shadow of the Blade

The Ranger in the back of our Huey cut us free of the tangled ropes as he screamed in anguish because he thought his buddies in the darkness below us were dead or soon would be. I felt terrible, wondering how many men I had just killed. As soon as the Ranger said we were free, I pulled maximum power to low-level out of there. After building airspeed, I switched off the landing light and climbed like a bat out of hell.

Within a few minutes, we found out by radio that the Rangers did not fare too badly. They were just a few feet off the ground, and only one was cut from the trees. The Ranger platoon leader had seen it all from the back seat of the FAC plane, and he asked the Rangers on the ground if they would prefer to spend the night where they were. I thanked God when they said they wanted to stay on the ground.

The VC were either killed by our gunships or thought that our mission to pick up the Rangers had been successful. There was no more enemy contact, and the Rangers found a big clearing to be picked up the next morning.

About two weeks later, another one of our slicks was trying to extract some Rangers from a clearing on a hill at night. The main rotor hit a tree and the aircraft rolled over, killing one Ranger and injuring several others and the crew. A second gunship team went out to support their recovery. Okie's last radio message said they had inadvertently flown into a cloud; a very bad thing to happen while low in that rugged terrain. We searched all night, finding the wreckage and the bodies of Okie, John, Chubby, and Zeke the next morning. That day our company commander and the Ranger company commander agreed to have no more night extractions. Gunship fire and dropping flares all night if they needed it, but no more night pickups.

DUSTOFF: A JOB WELL DONE

Some of the most modest men you'll ever talk to are among the most heroic soldiers who served in Vietnam: the pilots of the medical evacuation missions known as "Dustoffs." Ernest Sylvester, as Commander of the 571ST, "Original Dustoffs," in 1964-65 and later as a member of the 67th Medical Group in 1970-71, was one of these brave pilots.

Their mission was simple: airlift the wounded and fly them to a hospital. Accomplishing their mission was more complicated.

Dustoff Hueys were unarmed, painted with the Red Crosses that designated them as ambulances. Unfortunately, the North Vietnamese Army didn't follow Geneva Convention guidelines. To them, the Red Cross was a bullseye. Because the wounded were, naturally, in active battle zones, Dustoffs were particularly vulnerable to enemy fire. "Our strategy was to out think the enemy," Sylvester says. "We moved fast. We would fly in at high speed, make a quick stop, turn the rear to the bullets, and fly it out as quickly as possible." Many Dustoff missions happened at night, like the one that saved Richard Pryor. Hearing about his harrowing rescue, Sylvester has this response: "Sounds like a typical mission."

Dr. Dean Buesseler, retired Texas Tech University professor, flew with Sylvester for a time in Vietnam in order to study medevac technology. According to him, the information our Armed Services learned in Vietnam about medical evacuations is directly responsible for the helicopter rescues U.S. civilians take for granted today. More than 90% of the Vietnam wounded who survived the first twenty-four hours were saved thanks to helicopter evacuations. Today, most people in our country stand the same odds after accidents, thanks to Vietnam Hueys.

In the Shadow of the Blade

The Ranger in the back of our truck cut us free of the tangled ropes as he screamed in anguish because he thought his buddies in the darkness below us were dead or soon would be. I left tentatively, wondering how many men I had just killed. As soon as the Ranger said we were free, I pulled maximum power to level out of there. After pulling airspeed, I switched off the landing light and climbed like a bat out of hell.

Within a few minutes, we found out by radio that the Rangers did not have too badly. They were just a few feet off the ground, and only one was out from the trees. The Ranger platoon leader had seen it all from the back seat of the FAC plane, and he asked the Rangers on the ground if they would prefer to spend the night where they were. I thanked God when they said they wanted to stay on the ground.

The VC were either killed by our gunfire or through that our mission to pick up the Rangers had been successful. There was no more enemy contact, and the Rangers found a big clearing to be picked up the next morning.

About two weeks later, another one of our slots was trying to extract some Rangers from a clearing on a hill at night. The main rotor hit a tree and the slots rolled over, killing one Ranger and injuring several others and the crew. A second gunship team went out to rescue them, but they were too badly injured to be rescued. They had inadvertently flown into a cloud, a very bad thing to happen while low in the night. We searched all night, finding the wreckage and the bodies of one, four, and five. The third team during that day our company commander and the Ranger company commander agreed to have no more night extractions. Gunship fire and dropping were all right, but no more night extractions.

DOCTOR: KNOW YOUR GUNS

Some of the most modern men you ever saw in the world were in the Vietnam War. They were the doctors of the 671st Medical Group, 1st Cavalry Division, who were in the 671st Medical Group in 1970-71. They were one of the best medical groups in the world.

Their mission was simple: save the wounded and fly them to a hospital. A complicated and dangerous mission was this one.

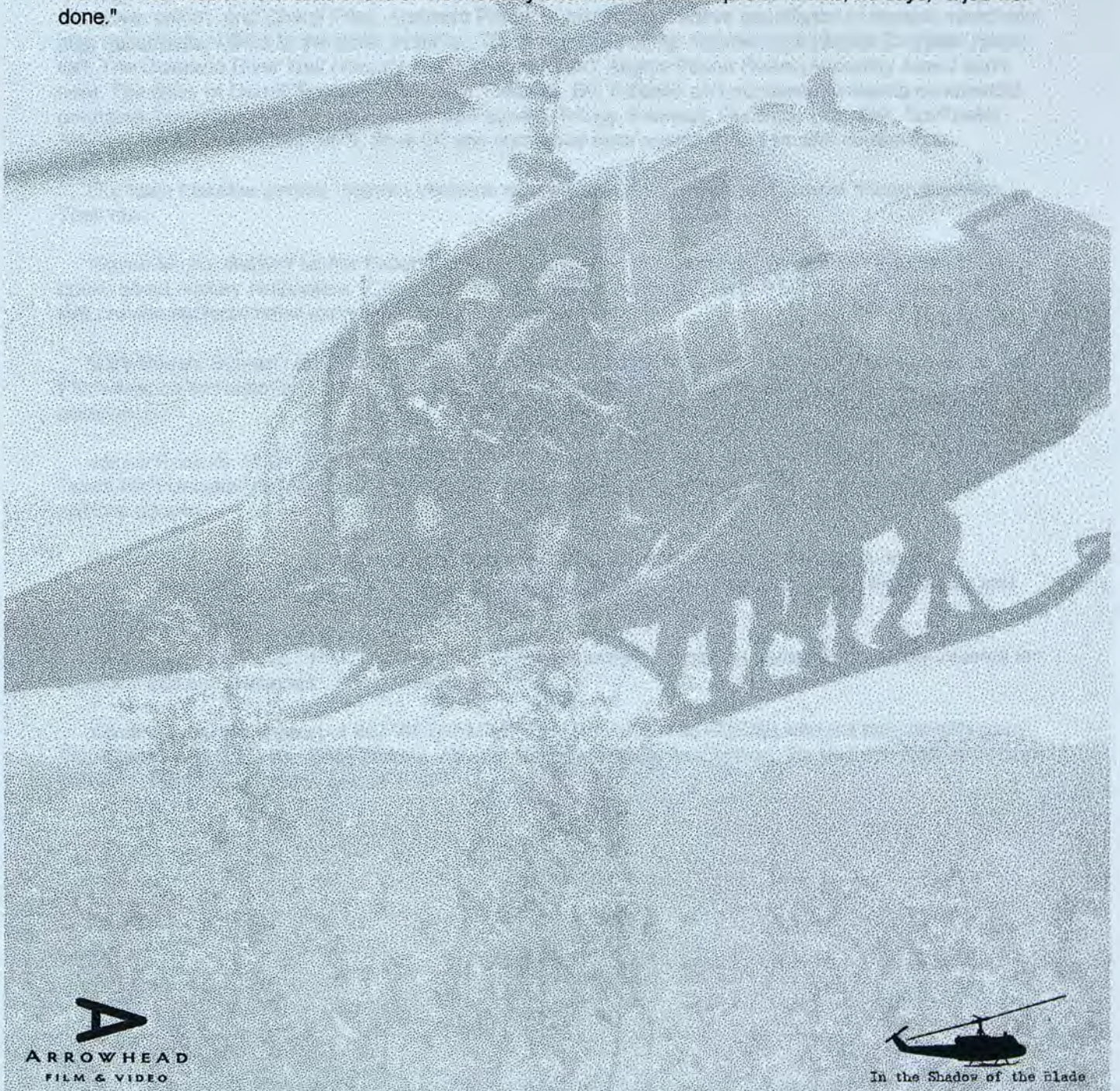
What they were trained to do was to fly over the battlefield and pick up the wounded. They were the doctors of the 671st Medical Group, 1st Cavalry Division, who were in the 671st Medical Group in 1970-71. They were one of the best medical groups in the world. They were trained to fly over the battlefield and pick up the wounded. They were the doctors of the 671st Medical Group, 1st Cavalry Division, who were in the 671st Medical Group in 1970-71. They were one of the best medical groups in the world.

Dr. Doug Bessie, retired Texas Tech University professor, flew with Bessie for a time in Vietnam in order to study medical technology. According to him, the information our Army doctors learned in Vietnam about medical evacuations is directly responsible for the medical advances U.S. divisions have for ground troops. More than 50% of the Vietnam wounded who survived the first twenty-four hours were saved by a helicopter evacuation. Today, most people in our country think the same goes for accidents, thanks to Vietnam. Hays.



In the Shadow of the Blade

Sylvester gives much of the credit for Dustoff success to the helicopters that flew them. "The Huey is an absolutely unbelievable machine. It forgives many problems. One time I took 21 rounds and still flew seven people to safety. We had it rebuilt and flew it again." In an operation out of Lam Son in 1971, Sylvester oversaw 1214 rescue missions, losing only eight aircraft and six men. Nearly 4,000 were rescued. Many times, the fire bases were surrounded by aircraft enemy and antiaircraft weapons and the Dustoff aircraft and crew were the only ones to make it in. They rescued not only the wounded but the besieged, many of them hanging onto the helicopter's skids, desperately seeking safety. Sylvester's summative comment on the mission is characteristic of the modesty one finds in Dustoff pilots. It was, he says, "a job well done."



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In the Shadow of the Blade

In the Shadow of the Blade

Sylvester gives much of the credit for Dustoff's success to the helicopter that flew them. "The Huey is an absolutely unbelievable machine. It forgives many problems. One time I took 21 rounds and still flew even people to safety. We had it rebuilt and flew it again," in an operation out of Lam Son in 1971. Sylvester oversaw 121A rescue missions, losing only eight aircraft and six men. Nearly 4,000 were rescued. Many times, the planes were surrounded by enemy and anti-aircraft weapons and the Dustoff aircrew and crew were the only ones to make it in. They rescued not only the wounded but the besieged. Many of them hanging onto the helicopter's skids, desperately seeking safety. Sylvester's summative comment on the mission is characteristic of the modesty one finds in Dustoff pilots. It was, he says, "a job well done."



In the Shadow of the Blade

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE THE TEAM

The Arrowhead Film & Video IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE team brings a cumulation of several decades of filmmaking and helicopter flight experience—and immeasurable passion – to this project. Our full-service production facility owns the cameras and editing systems we need to make this film. Our multi-talented team of Patrick Fries, Executive Producer and Director; Ramzy Telley, Director of Photography Vance Holmes, Second Director; Jim Moore, writer; Rich Terry, Creative Director; Kathy Hargrove, editor; and Cheryl Fries, Assistant Producer brings the creative experience of several award-winning documentary films to the table, including The Adventures of the Abilene Boys (Walter Cronkite, narrator), The Colorado River Trail (Tommy Lee Jones, narrator), Angola Prison Rodeo (Academy Award nominee), The Story of Darrell Royal, The Case of Texas vs. Big Tobacco and experience creating commercial programs for many clients, including Hewlett-Packard, Trilogy, Pennzoil, PepsiCo, Taco Bell, Southwest Airlines, Southwestern Bell, UPS, Shell Oil and numerous state agencies and smaller companies.

Our team includes several Vietnam Veterans who will provide technical and subject matter expertise. They are:

Wayne Mutza, Subject Matter Expert. U.S. Army veteran helicopter pilot (Vietnam). Writer of twelve books about military helicopters. Consultant for documentaries for BBC and S E H Productions of Wings. Will provide subject-matter expertise related to the Huey helicopter.

Gary Roush, Subject Matter Expert. U.S. Army veteran helicopter pilot (Vietnam). Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association historian. Will provide subject-matter expertise related to helicopter veterans and contact assistance.

James Reckner, PhD., Subject Matter Expert. U.S. Army veteran (Vietnam) and historian. Director of Texas Tech University's Vietnam Center and Vietnam Archive. Will provide historical information and archival access.

Bobby Ross, Aviation Expert. U.S. Army veteran helicopter pilot (Vietnam). Federal Aviation Administration accident inspector. Will provide aviation advice and assistance to ensure flight safety and compliance.

Michael Davis and VET-NET, Davis and VET-NET volunteers will screen participants' service records for accuracy and completeness. See addendum.

We also have the support of key VIETNAM VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS who will help us with communications and contacts. They include Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Network, Hel-vets and VET-NET.



In the Shadow of the Blade

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE THE TEAM

The Award-Winning Film & Video IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE team brings a combination of several decades of filmmaking and helicopter flight experience—and immeasurable passion—to this project. Our on-site production facility owns the cameras and editing systems we need to make this film. Our multi-talented team of Patrick Phee, Executive Producer and Director, Ramon Kelly, Director of Photography, Venice Holmes, Second Director, Jim Moore, writer, Bill Kelly, Creative Director, Kelly Holgrove, editor, and Cheryl Phee, Assistant Producer, brings the creative experience of several award-winning documentary films to the table, including The Adventures of the Alamo Boys (Walter Cronkite, narrated), The Colorado River Trail (Tommy Lee Jones, narrated), Angels in Iron (Academy Award nominated), The Story of Daniel (David Byrne), The Last of the Texas Rangers (Big Texaco and experienced commercial producers for many years, including Hewlett-Packard, Thurgood Marshall, PepsiCo, Taco Bell, Southwest Airlines, Shell Oil and numerous state agencies and smaller companies).

Our team includes several Vietnam Veterans who will provide history and subject matter expertise. They are:

Wayne Mullis, Subject Matter Expert, U.S. Army Vietnam helicopter pilot (UH-1H), winner of several books about military helicopters. Consultant for documentaries on UH-1H and OH-6A production of films. Will provide subject matter expertise related to the Huey helicopter.

Gary Pouch, Subject Matter Expert, U.S. Army Vietnam helicopter pilot (UH-1H), Vietnam Veteran, former Association historian. Will provide subject matter expertise related to Huey helicopter and its history.

James Beckner, PhD, Subject Matter Expert, U.S. Army Vietnam helicopter pilot (UH-1H), Vietnam Veteran, Texas Tech University's Vietnam Center and Archive director. Will provide subject matter expertise related to Huey helicopter and its history.

Bobbie Phee, Aviation Expert, U.S. Army Vietnam helicopter pilot (UH-1H), Vietnam Veteran, former Association historian. Will provide subject matter expertise related to Huey helicopter and its history.

Mike O'Leary and VET-NET D. We and VET-NET volunteers will screen this film. Please provide feedback for accuracy and completeness. See additional.

We also have the support of key VIETNAM VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS who will help us with coordination and outreach. They include Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Network, HVC and VET-NET.

In the Shadow of the Blade

ORIGINAL MUSIC: THE HIGH PRICED HELP

In 1967, at an officer's club at Lane AHP, Vietnam, four Huey pilots who made music when they weren't flying recorded an album. They called themselves The High Priced Help, and provided volunteer entertainment to the units of the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion at Lane, and at hospitals, clubs, and many field locations throughout Vietnam. We are honored to use their original Vietnam-era music—all composed and sung in 1966-67—which will be recognized by thousands of veterans and captures the war experience in a way only music can. They are Marty Heuer, Chinch Wollerton, Scat McNatt, and Jack Westlake. Music used courtesy of Border City Records.

THEME SONG: Words by Cheryl Fries. Music by George Oldziey.

AUTHENTIC 8MM FILM FOOTAGE OF THE VIETNAM WAR provided by veterans Bobby Ross, NEED NAMES HERE

COCKPIT VOICE RECORDINGS provided by

VIETNAM PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY NEED NAMES HERE

THANKS ARE DUE FOR....

INFORMATION, CONTACTS, FILM FOOTAGE, COCKPIT VOICE RECORDINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, MUSIC, AND, MOST VALUABLE, SACRED MEMORIES AND STORIES THAT HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR THIS PROPOSAL BY:

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association
The Vietnam Helicopter Flight Crew Network
Heli-Vets
VET-NET
Travis Blair
Gary Roush
Bobby Ross
Jim Ratliff
William Robert Stanley, Sr.
Bob Carr
Kim Douglas
John Gooseman
Jon Chaffin
Keith Bodine
Aurence
Joe Kline
Jim Schueckler
Marty Hauer
Ernest Sylvester
Terry Halladay
Glenna Donelson Hardy
Mel Canon

Mike Waugh
John Flanagan
Jim Pratt
Dr. Barry McAlpine
Bill Peterson
Robert Pryor
Rev. Bill McDonald
Jay McGowan
Lou Rochat
Larry & Carol Brown
Lee Westbrook
Mark Byrd
Jeanne Marie Christie
Terry Waggoner
John Lipski
Squadron Signal Publications
Border City Records
Wayne Mutza
Micheal Davis



In the Shadow of the Blade

ADDENDUM ONE: PARTICIPANT SCREENING

Dear Vietnam Veteran:

Thank you for participating in the documentary film In the Shadow of the Blade.

Out of respect for your experience and in order to protect the film's integrity, we have developed a process to verify the service of participants.

The veterans organization VET-NET has graciously agreed to conduct this screening for us. Your military records will go directly to them and only to them. VET-NET will provide us with service verification.

Unfortunately there are people who would try to pass themselves off as veterans. Our goal is to do everything we can to prevent such individuals from participating in our project. Not only do they stain the film's credibility but they grossly disrespect the true veteran's service experience.

We are asking all participants to submit the enclosed form SH-180 Request Pertaining to Military Records. Mail the form to the relevant agency listed on the back depending on your branch of service. If you have further questions or need for clarification, please call us or Michael Davis at VET-NET. He can be reached by telephone at (940)686-VETS or through email at VET-NET@over.to.

Again, we appreciate your participation in our project and, more, your service to our country.

Sincerely,

Arrowhead Film & Video
In the Shadow of the Blade production team

In the Shadow of the Blade

ADDENDUM ONE: PARTICIPANT SCREENING

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Unfortunately, there are people who would try to pass themselves off as veterans. Our goal is to do everything we can to prevent such individuals from participating in our project. Not only do they stain the film's credibility but they grossly disrespect the true veteran's service experience.

We are asking all participants to submit the enclosed form SH-163 Request Pertaining to Military Records. Mail the form to the relevant agency listed on the back depending on your branch of service. If you have further questions or need for clarification, please call us or Michael Davis at VET-NET. He can be reached by telephone at (940) 686-VETS or through email at VET-NET@verizon.net.

Again, we appreciate your participation in our project and thank you for your service to our country.

Sincerely,

Arrowhead Film & Video
In the Shadow of the Blade production team



IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE



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