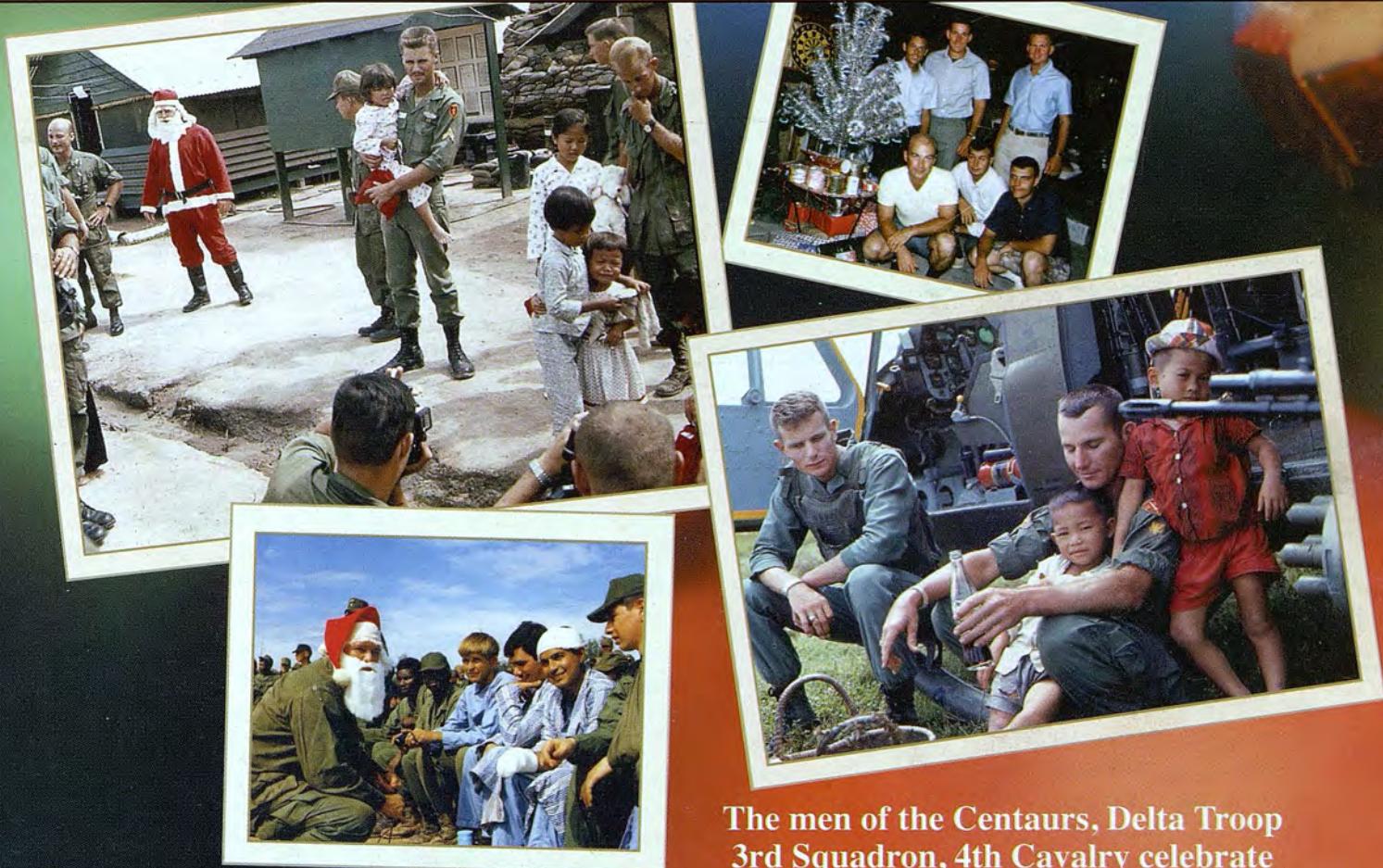




The VHPA AVIATOR

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The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ~ November/December 2009



The men of the Centaurs, Delta Troop
3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry celebrate
Christmas of 1966 in Chu Chi, Vietnam

with orphans from the nearby town, Bob Hope and of course each other. Full details of these photos and the story behind them may be found on page 8 of this issue.

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From the President of the VHPA

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!



It seems strange giving those greetings in September, but that is how the planning cycle works for The VHPA Aviator. I think most of you will agree that the

Gary Roush Aviator is the primary benefit that you receive from your membership in the VHPA. Those who contribute to the Aviator start sending things to David Adams several weeks before you actually receive the magazine. That means everyone has to plan ahead. A special thanks to David for his fine work as the editor of our great magazine. If you want to see the progression of the Aviator over the past 25 years, you can see that on our web site at <http://www.vhpaservices.com>. That site has a copy of the very first mimeographed sheet sent out by our founder, Larry Clark, to this magazine. It shows how much things have changed over the years. What has not changed is our comradery as we re-connect with our friends from long ago.

This is David's Christmas issue. He has done a great job collecting Christmas stories from Vietnam. My Christmas story should be told by my hootch mate, Mike Ryan. Mike wanted to provide a Christmas tree to the troops stationed on top of Nui Ba Den mountain in December 1968. He selected a palm tree at the newly formed patrol base called Mole City near the Cambodia border and recruited their help in putting a sling around the base of a tree so Mike could pull it out by the roots with his Chinook. The idea

was to have a live palm tree perched on top of that barren mountain top; however, Mike either picked a tree that was too large or underestimated the power of the tree's root system. In any case, he was not able to pull it out of the ground. He agreed with the grunts to return the next day with some C4 to cut the tree loose. Unfortunately, that night the patrol base got overrun and the tree was destroyed. Too bad Mike was not successful. That live palm tree would have been a great addition to the tourist attraction now located on top of Nui Ba Den.

Your Executive Council (EC) has been hard at work preparing for the 2010 reunion in San Diego, CA. Dave Rittman and Joe Blitzke decided to retire after many years of putting on fantastic reunions so Mike Law has volunteered to fill those big shoes. Bill "Moon" Mullen has volunteered to help Mike. The three of us made a site visit to the Marriott in San Diego in August and we think this hotel site is one of the best ones we have ever had. Our plan is to have reunion registration open by mid December so you can do some advanced planning. This means that most things for the July 2010 reunion have to be decided by the end of September to provide you with the first rough draft in this issue. Final plans with prices have to be in place by the end of November so those will be available mid December on our web site.

Also new for the reunion is a new reunion services contractor. We had four companies participate in the bid process earlier this year and the National Reunion Committee (Dave and Joe) recommended that we switch to Military Reunion Planners (MRP) from The Reunion Brat. This means you will see some new faces at the reunion. Ray Casey is the president of MRP and he has jumped

in with both feet to make the San Diego reunion one of the best ever. More on the reunion in the next issue.

The 2009 War Story and Historical Presentations DVD has been completed and is an impressive addition to our DVD collection including 2006, 2007, and 2008. These DVDs have two purposes. First they are a good source of entertainment for you and your family and second they record our history for all time. They are perfect for Christmas presents too. They are a good way to answer questions from your grandchildren about "what did you do in the War?" You can respond, "here, watch this and it will give you an idea about what I did." To purchase one or all DVDs, use the order form that is on the back of the mail sheet that came with your directory or call HQ on 800-505-VHPA (8472). You will be glad that you did.

Copies of these DVDs are sent to our official archives at Texas Tech University. The Vietnam Center and Archives was selected by the VHPA as our official archives over 10 years ago. We found them to be the best funded and most stable of all of the locations we considered including the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker. If you do a search on their web site at <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu> you will find reference to the VHPA on many documents. This is where your memorability should go once you and your family are finished with them. See Victoria Lovelady's article in this magazine.

The 2009 membership directories have been completed and shipped. If you have not received your 2009 directory by the time you read this, please call HQ on 800-505-VHPA (8472) to find out where it is. The his-

continued on pg. 17

E-mail items to The Aviator at: editor@vhpaservices.com

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The Vietnam Center and Archive: Preserving Your History for Future Generations (2841)

By: Victoria Lovelady, Communications Coordinator at the Vietnam Center and Archive

How are the items from your service in Vietnam being stored? Do you know if they are stored in boxes that were specifically made to preserve your items? Do you know if their location is safe? Most importantly, do you have a plan of where your items will go in the future?

Founded in 1989 by a group of local veterans, the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University collects and preserves Vietnam related materials. Because our founders were Vietnam veterans, we have a strong commitment to preserving the voices of our nation's servicemen and women. We believe all of the sacrifices made during the Vietnam War were significant and the individual collections of the men and women who participated in this event are important and worth protecting for future generations. We have been the official repository for the VHPA since 1998 which means that we have the official records of the association. However, to date we have only received personal collections from a handful of your members. By donating your Vietnam related materials, you are not only preserving your own

history but the history of the VHPA.

Have you ever watched a news report or documentary about the Vietnam War and thought to yourself, "That's not the way it happened?" By acting now to preserve your war related materials, you are insuring that your personal history will be heard by researchers for many years to come. Your items tell a story that is important and will help our understanding of this important moment in history. Many veterans have donated diaries, letters they received from family members and ones they sent back home, flight helmets, uniforms, metals, photos and other related items that detail their experiences. We not only collect material, but we also conduct oral histories with veterans who are willing to participate. This is an excellent way of ensuring your voice is heard. We believe it is only through you – the people who actually served – that we will come to understand this event. Without you, the important details may be lost forever.

There are other reasons why donating your items to us is so important. Many veterans keep their memorabilia in boxes that are not meant for long term storage and these boxes most often contain acid which can discolor and ruin precious items. Some veterans also keep their items in large plastic containers.

These containers can't "breathe" so if moisture from humidity or temperature fluctuation gets into them then it can't escape resulting in mold growth. In addition to this, many veterans store their items in their garage or basement. These are not ideal locations for important items to be stored.

Both places usually contain a lot of moisture. Most garages are not temperature controlled and delicate items can become damaged quickly in an environment such as this. We have seen many collections that con-

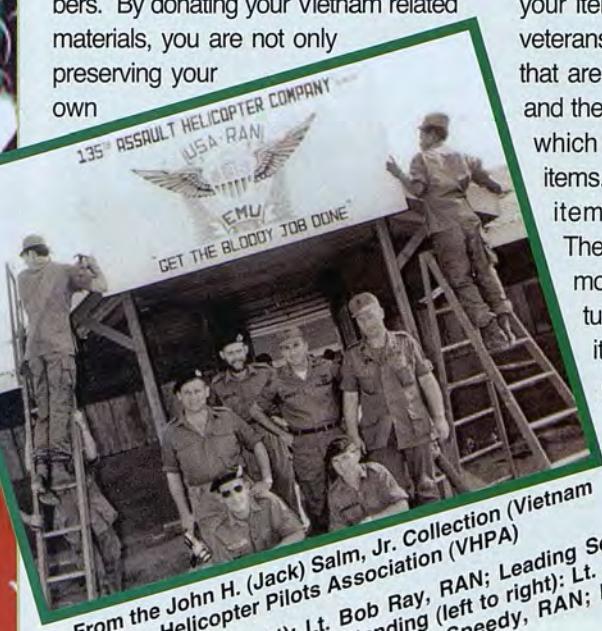
tained mold, insect damage, were yellowed or discolored by acid from the boxes or albums

they were stored in, or were damaged in a house fire. In our facility, all donated materials are housed in expensive acid-free boxes to ensure that the items are protected and free from the deterioration that can happen when stored improperly. Our facility is also climate controlled which prevents humidity and temperature changes from damaging our materials. We have a professional and dedicated staff armed with the knowledge necessary to properly store and preserve your items.

We accept any items you have that are related to your Vietnam experience. We accept donations as small as a single item or as large as hundreds of boxes. Donations do not have to be organized and do not have to pertain to a famous person, event, or organization. We accept all forms of original material including papers, books, films, audiotapes, photographs, slides, negatives, artifacts, and maps. Material that is donated to the Archive does not circulate, meaning that it cannot be checked out or leave the building for any reason. This ensures that the materials can be preserved for future generations. We are, however, in the process of digitizing our items and placing them on our website so they can be accessed by anyone with an internet connection. If you do not want your items made available online, please let us know. We are happy to make special arrangements such as this.



CPT Mike Sloniker, pilot and SP4 Erb, gunner (now deceased) of A Co, 229th AHC, 1st Cav Div. Taken in November 1971 at Hotel 3 in Vietnam



From the John H. (Jack) Salm, Jr. Collection (Vietnam) Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA)
Kneeling (left to right): Lt. Bob Ray, RAN; Leading Seaman R.M. Brennan, RAN - Standing (left to right): Lt. cdr. Graham Rahrshem, RAN; Lt. Max Speedy, RAN; Maj. Paul Raetz; 1SG Judy

continued on pg. 21



*And out of the back came a bunch
of Santa's Helper's dressed in short skirts...*



Caribou crew, complete with S***-eating grins, rubbing it in a little.

The date is December 25th, 1970.

The 57th AHC (Gladiators), flying out of Pleiku, maintained a UH-1H for the II Corp General, who was Lt. Gen. Ware at that time. That Huey was the only aircraft in the 57th that had a complete set of working instruments and even a working clock. General Ware was helicopter rated but had low flight time, so when he wanted to go flying, he was always accompanied by an IP.

Having received my IP rating in-country, I was assigned to fly with the General on Christmas Day, 1970. I believe we were the only aircraft in the sky and the radios were really quiet, which was very unusual. We flew into an airstrip SW of Pleiku where General Ware would have a noon Christmas meal with some of his field commanders.

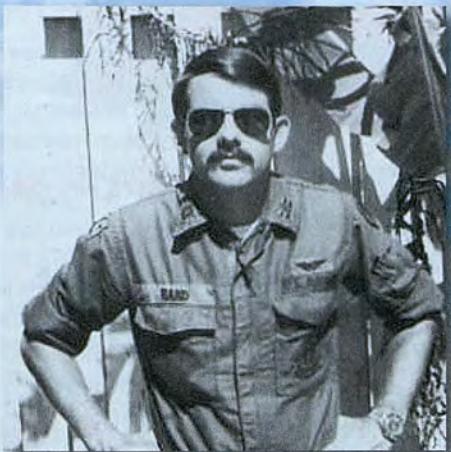
While the crew and I sat in the aircraft enjoying our Christmas meal of C-rations, a Caribou fixed wing aircraft circled the airstrip and set up for final. I could hardly believe it, the nose of the aircraft was painted like a huge Santa Clause and it also had Merry Christmas painted along its tail. But the best part of the whole deal was that after it taxied to a stop on the ramp next to us, up went the cargo ramp and out of the back came a bunch of Santa's Helper's dressed in short skirts and loaded with candy and other treats!

What I thought was going to be a very dull Christmas Day turned out to be one that I'll always remember.

ENJOY THE
PICTURES!

C.J. Unruh
Gladiator 17, 1970-1971

CHRISTMAS 1970



Bill Rand in 1970, giving his best Tac Officer impression...

GOD ON GUARD

At about 0900 hours on Christmas I was flying as the pilot for the commander of the 7/17 Air Cav., LTC Ernest A. Smart. We were making Christmas day visits to all the outlying troops, and were headed to Camp Holloway from Qui Nhon. It was clear, calm and cool at 6000 ft in our H model as we approached the Mang Yang pass from the east. Even the radios were quiet due to the holiday cease fire. This quiet was interrupted by a voice that can only be described as resonant and sonorous like James Earl Jones times a thousand. It said:

***"Attention Viet Nam, - Attention Viet Nam,
This is God on Guard....Happy Birthday, Son"***

In the stunned silence that followed, we all looked at each other asking the unspoken question.... "could it be?"

*It has been almost 39 years since I heard that radio call
and I still get goosebumps.*



Picture of Christmas Nose Art of a Huey from the 335th Assault Helicopter Company, taken during the Christmas season of 1970. We flew out of Dong Tam mostly in the delta region of Vietnam.



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Merry Christmas Gentlemen

AFTER THE STORM

And so the stormy sea subsides,
But leaves its frothy tongues askew
On littered beach I wander 'bout
And look for something new.
Flotsam here and jetsam there
Are what's left to remind
Of tempest's rage, and sailor's cries
On ships that left the land behind.
I kick at drifts and frothy clumps
But nothing do I find
Of valiant sailors on the sea,
To ease my troubled mind.
The Sailors of the Sea of Life
I want again to see.
Their voyage wrecked, their cargo lost,
Their loss a part of me.
On littered beach there's one who seeks
The answers lost in time
But what I seek is Vietnam
And, Comrades that were mine.
No Trace I find on battered shores
Of Friends lost long ago
Nor do I find the answers
To pain that plagues me so.
I wade in frothy tongues to seek
The wisdom of the Sea
And Answer just one question:
Why them and why not me?

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FROM THE EDITOR OF THE VHPA AVIATOR

Corrections and comments on our last issue's stories about the Battle for An Loc...

I ran several stories in the last issue designed to be follow-on stories about the Battle for An Loc, which was first featured as the cover story for the July/August issue of The Aviator. In this last issue there were two mistakes I would now like to clarify.

First, I'm afraid we botched acknowledging the correct author of our primary story, the "Hawk's Claw" story about the 101st ABN's Tow Team that ran on page 12 of the issue. It turns out that VHPA Member Scott Fenwick not only supplied all the great photos in the article, he was also the author of the majority of the story. I apologize profusely to Scott (my flight school classmate by the way) for not crediting him with all the work that went into that story. It turns out that Steve Riddle only wrote the Personal Tow Missile part of the article. Scott also wants me to make it perfectly clear that he was with the First Cav division at the time of the mission, plus owes all his "luck" during that time to the great gun cover provided by the 361st Pink Panthers. .

Next, I must also admit that I miss-interpreted the e-mail that John Parker's sent me that also I ran in the last issue. It turns out that John wasn't looking for more information on the battle; he was actually trying to let me know that he was a part of the battle and he simply wanted to supply more details on it.

I want to thank both men for being so gracious in putting up with my mistakes. Scott's a great guy and he even provided us with a link to the official web site for their program, it can be found at: <http://tri.army.mil/1c/CS/Csa/xm26tow.htm> The site not only gives us all more photos and information of their B-Model Huey Tow Missile system, plus it also provides the names of all the men appearing in that main team photograph that we ran on the cover.

John Parker also supplied me with even more

details about his part of the battle, his comments read:

David,

I was with Blue Max at An Loc and then in I Corp when we went North in late June of 72 to help in that AO. We participated in a combined Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine operation that actually initiated out in the South China sea and then went inland, low level, to attack the front line; probably one of the few times, if not the only time, that happened in the war.

We worked that AO until the 1st Cav Div stood down in August of '72. At that time I was infused to H Trp 17th Cav at Holloway (the same AO where I flew 1st tour) where I served until after the cease fire, standing the unit down and going home March '73. We saw Bien Het fall in the fall of '72 after we had spent so much time supporting it in '68/69. We also saw the POL point burn at Kontom, the last one North, which ended the mission North of that area.

I also received first hand information from pilots in I & II Corp that had gone thru the offensive in that AO. Also found out that a friend from my Cobra transition at Bien Hoa was a scout pilot with the 17th Cav and was shot down during the Spring offensive and was MIA. Later, at Fort Sill I talked to Bill Reader and found out Wayne had died on the way to Hanoi.

Regards,

John Parker

Gambler Guns '68/69 . Blue Max '72 . Ruthless Riders 72/73

Last, we here at the staff of the VHPA Aviator ask that all of our contributors make an extra effort to let us know if you are sending us an article, or a photograph to run that's not personally written or taken by the you, the contributor. We just want to make sure that everyone receives proper credit for their work.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We received this letter from the author of The VHPA's Legacy of Valor Museum Website, Jon Conway

My thanks to everyone who came forward with information and comments on the Legacy of Valor museum website article in the last issue of The VHPA Aviator, but I need to point out a couple of problems that inadvertently ran in the story. I first need to point out that the e-mail address posted in the article was incorrect, it actually is:

It's has also been brought to my attention that my good friend, Al Demailo was somehow left off the very brief list of contributors that were mentioned in the article. This was painfully ironic as his uniform was clearly shown in the photo that accompanied the article. My efforts would have fallen far short of the goal we have set had it not been for Big Al and many others who have offered their contributions, suggestions and guidance over the past 10 years.

Thanks again and Happy holidays to you all!
John Conway
www.vhpamuseum.org

Dear Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

Sorry it has taken so long for me to write but, as so many of us, I've been swamped this summer with a lot of "stuff".

I seem to remember someone saying at the business meeting in Philly that, due to the aging of our group, the "Taps" section of The VHPA Aviator was getting quite large and becoming a problem.

Personally, I cherish the news, as sad as it may be, of my fellow Pilots passing but agree that one day the obits will begin to take over the whole newsletter. After some thought, a possible solution that I have come up with is to develop a standard format for obits such as Name, Age, Branch of Service, Rank, Date of Passing, Flight School Class and Date of Tours and Units and then have some kind of symbol, next to the name, to indicate that there is a more extensive obit that is posted to the web site or can be requested, as a hard copy, from Headquarters. Just a thought.

Thanks for all you do to make us a great newsletter!
Carl Kimmich, "Polecat 47"

David Adams, the Editor of the Aviator answer Carl's letter:

On the matter of the extended Obituaries – for now let's all quit worrying about it. Yes we did have one issue that required us to devote several pages to our fallen brothers but we've done much better in these last two newsletters – so Kuddo's to all our members for hanging around these last few months and please keep it up!

Next – I feel that everyone does need to know that my Number 1 Rule for publishing anything that's written by a member, either as an obit or otherwise, is to try and print their story as close to the original as possible. All of these stories come from the heart of the author and while I often try to clean up a little of the syntax, even that's

continued on pg. 20

More on our Front Cover photos...

The picture of the Christmas Party for the Chu Chi orphans was sent in by Centaur 40, Tony Robinson. He writes on the back "Christmas of 1966 in Chu Chi, 105 degrees in the shade and we're having a party for the Orphans of Chu Chi in front of flight operations. Everybody is hot and miserable, to include Santa himself".

The picture of everyone huddled around the aluminum

Christmas at Cu Chi- 1966

The kids, the kids! Heck some of us had kids back home, some wanted kids, and some of us were still kids. Christmas is coming! What do we do without kids?

Cu Chi is not too far from Saigon and far away from home. Cu Chi with its VC tunnels, The Iron Triangle, Hobo Woods and "The Black Virgin" We have been here since April. Fighting the VC one day and pacifying the next day. We



lived the ying-yang", or hurting one day and the next one helping with food, medical care and human kindness.

Word spread Bob Hope was coming, Bob Hope was coming! And he was bringing Joey Heatherton and Phyllis Diller. Who was he coming for? Well for us and we enjoyed, perhaps from three hundred feet away, but there was still something missing.

Cu Chi was a good size village outside our main gate. Often our choppers and crews would sit there waiting for the convoy from Saigon to Tay Ninh. We would rap with the kids. GI do you want a shine? Why

Christmas tree was submitted by Mike Vaughn, a crew chief in D/3/4 Cav. He writes "For Christmas it was metallic Christmas trees, too many fruitcakes, and sharing with fellow brothers without our friends back home. We had the kids from Chu Chi over for a party, Santa made them cry. What else is new, that happens back home too".

The other two photos, Bob Hope (*behind that beard*) and the kids playing around the Huey gunship were provided by VHPA Member Carl Burns.

not, it would last ten minutes at best. GI what you got? How about rice krispies? You are #1 GI you got cigarette? No! GI you #10. Did your older brother plant that land mine this morning? The reply just a blank stare.

It was mostly the grunts and crew members who planned the holiday feast. The supply sergeant and mess sergeant added their magic. Guys shopped at the PX, families sent stuff from home and elf bags were filled. The Cu Chi kids were given a proper Christmas feast with apples, turkey, potatoes and pumpkin pie.

Magically Santa appeared to hand out the elf bags filled with presents. And the Cu Chi kids both smiled and cried. Just like back home.

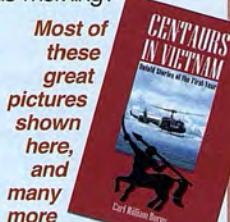
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Delta Troop (Centaurs)

3/4 Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division

Cu Chi, Vietnam, 1966

Carl Burns



Most of these great pictures shown here, and many more stories and photos appear in Carl Burns' book, *The Centaurs in Vietnam, the untold stories of the First Year*. Available from Trafford Publishing and on-line from Amazon.com, this book will be reviewed in the next issue of *The Aviator* by our own John Penny – watch for it!

VSO

Friends of Vinh Son Montagnard Orphanage



The School at Dak Rova, 1 of 5 Schools Serving the Montagnard Children

Vinh Son Facts

- Population - more than 500 Montagnard children in five facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal
- Location - Kontum, Vietnam
- About \$12 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for one month



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

11 August 2009
Mineral Wells, Texas



Vietnam Memorial Garden Opens – Visitor Center Next

On May 30, The National Vietnam War Museum unveiled its permanent replica of the Vietnam Memorial to the public. The ceremony included an opening skydive by Dana Bowman, representatives from all five service branches, the South Vietnamese military, and the Patriot Guard riders, as well as a traveling replica of the Liberty Bell. Over 2,000 people lined the museum grounds and the bordering highway to watch. As part of the ceremony, COL Charles Bogle (USA, Ret.) and his son LTC Brian Bogle, placed his brother's Purple Heart in a specially prepared concrete pad at the juncture of the two wings of the wall.

Prior to the unveiling, guests were entertained by a rousing speech from Joe Galloway, especially welcomed by the many 1st Cavalry Division Vietnam veterans in attendance. While volunteers removed the over 300 feet of parachute nylon to reveal the wall, members of each service branch raised their respective flags on staffs mounted to the rear of the wall. Following a ceremonial Native American blessing of the wall and a rifle salute, visitors were provided with materials to take rubbings if they desired.

The wall, like all the museums gardens is open to the public 24/7, and we are in the process of planting a garden of Arizona Cypress



Guest speaker Joe Galloway

around it to provide a park-like setting for visitors. We are also in the process of securing a weatherproof kiosk to provide computer access for visitors to locate specific names on the wall.

Now that the Vietnam Memorial project is near completion, we have begun our next major undertaking, The National Vietnam War Museum Visitor Center. Earlier this year, we acquired a manufactured home of approximately 2600 square feet, with an interesting history.

Until January 2009, it served as the headquarters for the Secret Service at President Bush's Crawford ranch. Unfortunately, it is not currently ADA compliant, but we have a project manager who is working to bring it up to code, and we hope to have it open later this year to serve as our temporary Visitor Center until the permanent museum building can be built. The Visitor Center will house our offices, gift shop, and rotating exhibits when it opens.

Please visit our website for more information about the museum, our gardens, future events, and donation opportunities at:

www.nationalvwnwarmuseum.org.

The National Vietnam War Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in the state of Texas.

Edward T. "Edd" Luttenberger
Communications Director

The National Vietnam War Museum

* Give **YOURSELF** the gift of great art! *

FIRST BOOTS ON THE GROUND by William S. Phillips

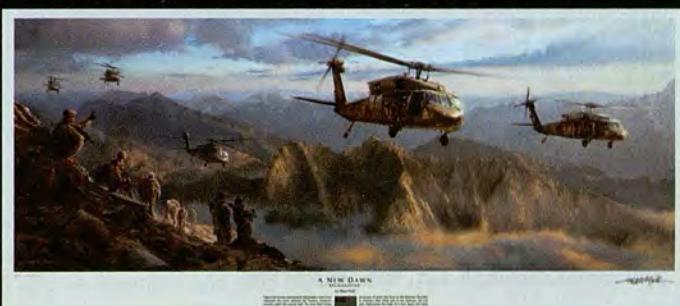


31" x 19"

TRIBUTE TO THOSE who FLEW & FOUGHT in VIETNAM

Soldiers of the 7th Cav deploy onto LZ X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley.
SIGNED by Gen. Hal Moore, Bruce Crandall (MOH) & others!

A NEW DAWN: AFGHANISTAN by Matt Hall



31" x 16"

The PERFECT GIFT for a VETERAN of AFGHANISTAN

High in Afghan mountains, a patrol of U.S. and Afghan soldiers hunt for Al Qaeda & Taliban forces. Overhead, a flight of Black Hawk helicopters shatter the morning's calm as they thunder-by on a mission.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THIS STORY, BY DAVID ADAMS

I originally received Chris' story last May but photo complications kept me from including it in our July/August issue. I again planned to run it in our September/October issue but then I noticed that Chris' shoot down occurred in December of 1972 and seeing as how contributions to this, our Christmas in Vietnam issue, weren't exactly pouring in, I asked him if I could delay his story one more time. His answer to that e-mail, which follows next, provides us all an insight into what eventually was a very memorable Christmas for him.

July 27, 2009

Heck David, you are doing me the favor of printing the story so I don't mind the wait. Printing it in the December issue is really quite fitting as it will be the 37th anniversary of the opportunity to have more anniversaries.

You know I ended up spending Christmas of 1972 in the hospital at Wright Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio. They treat-

ed this Army guy pretty well. I got there on December the 17th, the day before my birthday, and I was really craving two things, a cold Budweiser beer and a Pizza Hut pizza. Sure enough, on the evening of the 18th one of the nurses came and wheeled me into the office behind the nurse's station. On the way there they made me swear I would not tell anyone in the hospital what I was about to see. Of course I made that promise, after all I was an Officer and Gentleman in addition to being an Army Aviator. There on the table sat one can of cold Bud and a pepperoni pizza. I have never had a better meal in my life. I can only hope that after 37 years, that nurse will forgive me for now breaking that promise.

As an aside, there is a picture of the rescue of my crew, taken by Neal Thompson that runs on page 60 of a book by Lou Drendel titled "Modern Military Aircraft - HUEY". In the book there is also another great story about the last shoot down suffered by F Troop 8th Cavalry.

Regards,
Chris

I am sorry about the length of this story but there are few events in ones life that equate to a near death experience. I just feel a need to tell my story of:



“Not such a bad day, 7 December 1972”

F Troop, 8th Cavalry, Republic of South Vietnam

Some of the players:

I believe the mission commander was:

CPT T.E. Dougherty, UH-1 A/C, CPT McCord, UH-1, co-pilot Crew Chief/Gunner for UH-1H, Tail number #056

Sp4 Dennis M. Guyette (hero), Sp4 John S. Cannon (hero)

CW2 John Williamson, Lead Cobra pilot, front seat gunner unknown

CW2 Duane Shirley, Cobra pilot, front seat gunner unknown

Lead Scout, OH-6A tail number #209

(Light Observation Helicopter also known as a Loach)

1LT Chris Cole, section leader, Call sign Blue Ghost 13,

Sp4 Don Russell, CE, Gunner (a real hero)

Trail Scout, OH-6A, 1LT Crawley, Call sign Blue Ghost 16,

current scout platoon leader (he was a new scout pilot, he replaced CPT Mike O'Byrne after he was wounded a few weeks before).

Sp4 Tom Cortwright, CE, was his Gunner

MY STORY -

On the afternoon/night of December 6, 1972 the city of Saigon was hit with 122mm Rockets fired from somewhere West of the city. I understand that this is the first time that had happened in a number of years. The powers in charge were not happy with this development. We were in the process of bombing North Vietnam to bring them back to the peace talks at the time and to have the capital of South Vietnam attacked was not well received. F Troop 8th Cavalry, stationed at Lassiter Field, Bien Hoa was given the mission to find the launch sites and to look for other threats to the city.

On the morning of 7 December a Red Team took off. At that time our Red Teams were composed of five helicopters crewed

by 12 troop members. There was a UH-1H, Command and Control with a Mission Commander/Pilot in Charge, Pilot, Crew Chief and Gunner and somewhere along the line we picked up an Officer from the South Vietnamese Army to give us clearances. Then there were two AH-1 Cobra Gun ships with Pilot, co pilot-gunner. Leading it all (following instructions from the mission commander) were two OH-6A's LOH's, lead and trail. Each OH-6 was crewed with a pilot and crew chief-gunner.

Well off we went, just another day in the moving office. I think we climbed to altitude, 1500 feet or so and went around the north west of Saigon. I believe we landed at Tan An to pick up the South Vietnamese Officer. From that point on I was scouting, never getting more than a few feet off the ground of above the trees. I went where I was told and for the most part I had no idea where I was. The UH-1 was up there about



Photo of the story's author, Chris Cole and his gunner from his Cav Troop, PFC Roger Milliman taken a couple weeks before the shoot down on 12-07-72. We were at Tay Ninh that day, scouting along the Cambodian border.

1500' and the Cobra's orbiting over me at around 1000'. My trail was just following me around much like I did while learning what it was like to be a scout.

The morning was pretty uneventful. I found an area that certainly looked recently occupied with burn marks indicating launch sites, some boxes and jugs lying around and trails. We had the Cobra's fire the area up with rockets and some nails. We cruised by again but still no activity. We checked out a few more places, still nothing. Now it was time for refuel and a little lunch back to the strip at Tan An. In route we got up to a couple hundred feet and I got in formation with one of the Cobras so I could take some pictures of them and they got a couple of me. I couldn't realize what that picture would mean to me later.

Quick refuel and shut down for a C ration lunch and cokes from a vendor at the fence line. I remember a large pond next to the taxi way and we decided to see if there were any fish, in went a couple of concussion grenades and up popped a fish or two. Since we couldn't do anything with the fish, we stopped blowing them up. It was time to go back to work anyway.

Off we go again, Scouts in the lead again, Cobras as the big bad brother and being guided by the loving hand of the Command and Control aircraft. On the road again. More of the same old stuff, tree lines, trails, rice patties but no signs of life or of the bad guys. And then I say something to the effect, "Well hell, there's that area over there that we were at this morning, lets check it out again, I know I saw something there."

Well the C&C agreed so off we went. I zipped over to the area and passed over the spot I had observed that morning. It looked different, something had moved. Could have been from the firing earlier but who knew. We needed to check it out more closely. I swung by again; yes things were different, need another look, a little slower and closer this time. Out I go and to come back in for another pass.

Just as I began to nose up to decelerate, I hear a radio call from the Trail LOH, "I think we took fire that last time." That is not what you want to hear at that exact moment. My mind is now in overdrive, I had been shot at before, and I knew what taking fire was like. I knew or I thought I knew the difference between "I think we are taking fire" and "we are taking fire." All this and more in just a split second, at the same time I am almost coming to a high hover, this is not good. I begin to key the mike button; I already know what I am going to say "What do you mean, you think?" I am adding a lot of collective (power) and putting in forward cyclic, need to get out of here and find out what is going on, after all the trail pilot is still a new guy, first time I have flown with him.

The next moments went by in an absolute flash and in slow motion in the minds eye, you can see what is going on but can't do anything about it. I know I pulled a handful of collective and stuck my tail way in the air, gotta get out of here, noise, trees, spinning, more noise, grinding, medal breaking and crunching, dead stop, unusual attitude and silence. I am in my seat, the

helicopter is sitting, no lying on its right side. There are trees in front of me, the wet ground is at my right hand in the doorway, I am still strapped in and everything has gotten real, real quiet. No radio, no intercom, nothing from my gunner. My mind has not caught up with where I am. Slowly I recognize this is not good. I can't get out of the helicopter, my door is blocked, I can't get up but I don't know why, no pain. I am just sort of numb but I know I have to get out of there. I look up at the left side door and it is blocked, something is sticking in the door, it is the tail boom, I can't get up to move it. I can't get out. Well maybe through the windshield. It isn't broken, how do I get through it? Maybe I can shoot a couple of holes in it and then break through. I take my 45cal from the shoulder holster and crank a round into the chamber, I am about to shoot when the stuff blocking the left door starts to move, now total panic, I am dead.

The tail boom is pulled away and I see a head, wearing a flight helmet silhouetted against the sky, it is Sp4 Russell and I almost shot him. My senses are still not working, I can't hear anything, smell anything or feel anything. I just have the desire to get out. My gunner reaches his hand in and pulls me up to the left side of the bird; we both slide off to the front and land in the muck.

At this point instinct and hopefully training takes over. I know I am hurt but I don't know how badly or what happened. I just can't feel my legs and they are not moving. I am sitting on them as they are tucked up

under me. I pull my flight helmet off and then my chicken plate because they are weighing me down. Sp4 Russell is firing his 45 back toward the rear of the aircraft and I realize we need to get out of there. I look around and pick a direction hopefully away from where I think the bad guys might be. Now I can begin to hear. There are helicopters and guns going and going, explosions on the ground behind the crashed aircraft. We picked the right way to go. The Cobras were shooting up the area we were in. Now we need to get out of there. Problem is I can't move very well. I can pull myself with my arms or push myself kind of like bouncing on my butt, but my legs won't work. No pain, they just won't work. We move a few feet more from the aircraft and I see that Russell has stopped firing and has thrown his gun down. I get his attention and give him my 45. He promptly empties the clip and throws it down. That bothers me a little because I have more clips of ammo but we still have other things to worry about.

As I continued to bounce along our chosen route we see the command and control Huey coming in for a landing in an area just a short distance from us. We start moving toward the Huey, but I am not making good progress, I can see the right side crewman waving, urging us on. We are in the line of fire for the gunner so he is unable to provide covering fire. I just can't move any better than I am. Russell is helping me now but we are not moving too fast, I am pretty much dead weight. Now the gunner and crew chief are getting out of the Huey and running to us, they grab me under both arms and drag me to the aircraft, hoisting me onboard and pushing me to the



(L-R Back) 1Lt Cowley, SP5 Lampman, 1Lt Frank Hoover, 1Lt Chris Cole,
 (L-R Front) PFC Tetton, SSG Gregg, 1Lt Rich Lawton,
 CW2 Fred Pope, 1Lt Steve Bremwell, PFC Povelka
 Photo of some of the members of our scout platoon, taken in
 our company aircraft revetments in December of 1972

center. As I am being loaded I can look up and see CPT McCord, right side of the Huey, with his arm out his window firing his 38cal. I think it passed through my mind then that that was not a good thing. Another thing I saw and remember very clearly was the South Vietnamese Officer cringe and pull away from me as they were putting me on the helicopter, he did not offer any assistance at all.

There I am now, in a little ball in the back of the Huey and now I begin to feel pain.

I guess the way the brain worked was as long as I was at risk or had something to take care of, I didn't have time for pain, but now, it was time to hurt. I think I passed out a little at that point. I wake up as I am being taken out of the aircraft at 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon. (I learned latter that the C&C violated airspace rules for Tan Son Nhut, getting me to the hospital, ATC would not clear him for a direct approach. He ignored them). I remember landing at 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon, being loaded on a stretcher put in an ambulance, taken out again and into a hospital emergency room. Sp4 Russell was with me all the while; he wouldn't let anybody touch me until there was someone there to help. Later in the hospital I dictated a Silver Star recommendation to the Group Commander from my hospital bed; I think he received the Bronze Star with V device. The two Huey crewmen were recognized with Air Medals with V device.

Turned out the Russell was unhurt, bump on the head from bouncing around in the back as I crashed us into the ground. Me; I was shot in both thighs from the bottom and out the top on the right leg and a bullet in the left leg (still there today). I still don't know if we took fire on that earlier pass, but it turned out that I came to a near hover directly over the bad guy's hole and he let go on full automatic, zipping me from stem to stern. I damn near landed on top of him.

This was the second time I had been shot down. You could look at this event as if I had had a bad day and in a shortsighted way so did I. Slowly it dawned on me that I was OK. In retrospect it wasn't such a bad day after all. I was exceptionally fortunate. Yes I was seriously injured but nothing serious was damaged. I was to recover pretty fully in about three months and returned to limited duty. It was about 3 years latter that I had the last medical procedure to remove some shrapnel.

I could have been killed, I wasn't. I could have gotten my gunner killed, he wasn't. No one involved in the rescue were killed or injured. And I thank God for that. I could have been much more seriously injured, paralyzed, lost a limb but none of that happened. I had a bad event followed by immediate blessings. The



III fated Loach Tail Number 209, picture taken the day of the shoot down, 12-07-72



Chris receiving some TLC from the nurses of the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon, the day after the shoot down, 12-08-72.

wounds were not that bad, if you are going to get shot, I did it the best way. Nothing too serious was hit. No arteries, I didn't bleed to death. No bones hit, no big nerves, just meat. The doctors removed some stuff from my right leg, a torn up bullet and pieces of helicopter. They left the bullet in my left leg. I could stand in about a three days but I couldn't walk. The Army had me medi-vaced back to the United States.

It was some trip, but not for this story. I made it to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, closest hospital to my parent's home (Toledo, Oh). There I went through rehab and got my legs straightened out and walking again. Not a fun time, real punishment for breaking Uncle Sam's perfectly good helicopter. When I got to Wright Patterson Air Force Base Hospital, nobody cared about Vietnam. No one ever asked what happened. Same thing happened later at Ft. Knox, Medical Holding Detachment. By now the truce had been signed, the war was over. Everybody was a Vietnam vet, you were just another one. I recovered enough for the Army to want me back so finally in March 1973 the flight surgeon cleared me to fly again and the Army sent me to Ft. Campbell to be a ground pounder, an Infantry Platoon Leader. They said it would be good for my career.

Ultimately it was in 1976, while in Germany, when I had my final operation on my leg to remove some more stuff, that, I was able to put my Vietnam wounds behind me. Always a little weakness and I walk a little funny, but then I always did; now I have an excuse.

Again, it could have been a horrible day for me and for others. It did not turn out that way. Everyone involved were heroes in my book. They performed their jobs in a magnificent manner. I was the only one hurt and I recovered. No second-guessing necessary, they can take pride in performing their duty and move on with their lives. There were other days where we witnessed terror and lost our friends. We need to remember them and celebrate December 7, 1972 as a great day, it was for me.

No bad memories on my part. And every day since, even the bad ones have been a blessing.

Chris Cole
Lieutenant Colonel
United States Army, Retired
Humble little scout pilot

CHRISTMAS EVE IN AN LOC



Introduction...

David,

I just received my Sep/Oct 2008 copy of the Aviator, I live in Thailand so delivery is often delayed long after the other members have received their copy. Anyhow, when I saw your note about sending in Christmas stories in Vietnam, I dug through some old files and found a letter that I wrote a few years back to my Boss at the head office of the company I work for.

The back story is that at the time I had been with this company for almost 25 years and they had recently hired a retired State Department type as a sort of general manager or director. She came up with the brilliant idea of personal evaluations that were just like our old OER's. Of course, I took that idea about as seriously as I took an OER while as a CW-2 in the Army....NOT!

In her evaluation of my performance (she had never actually seen me "perform" as I work 500 clicks up-country from her) she indicated that I, "rarely communicate with the branch coordinator or other academic staff except with cynicism and aggression..." This write up prompted the written response I sent to my boss, of which I am also sending you a copy.

Of course, I don't know who the Rangers belonged to, of just who the NVA units were that we faced that day...or exactly how many men either element had. I just know that there were a shit load of NVA soldiers around us and they all had guns...and they were very pissed off at both the Army the Rangers and our 129th Cobras.

The story is as accurate as I can make it...no embellishments...maybe

a few minor details are out of whack, but this is the best I can recall.

Take care,

Ron Smith, Callsign Jester
129th AHC, Cobra Gun Platoon
Lane Army Heliport, An Son RVN
July 69 - July 70

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

*PS – If any of the members ever find themselves in Bangkok while either going or coming from Nam, tell them to give me a call: (my mobile number over here is: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (from abroad) and in country dial [REDACTED] Turns out we left plenty of beer over here and I need some help drinking it, but remember, the song is 100% correct, "One night in Bangkok makes a hard man humble..."*

DECEMBER 24, 2005

Phil,

Here is my response to my most recent performance evaluation in which _____ refers to me as cynical and aggressive.

On this day, December 24th, in 1969, at this very time, I was the pilot of a B-model gunship for the 129th Cobras in Viet Nam.

A company-sized element of US Rangers in the fish-hook area of the An Lo Valley were in a fire fight with an estimated battalion-sized element of NVA Regulars. We were called to provide fire support. We were armed with 2.75 inch aerial folding fin rockets with 17 pound, high-explosive warheads...mini-guns...30 mm canons, and M-60 machine guns.

The rangers were hit in a small valley with low cloud cover. We had to fly extremely low to provide gun cover and we sustained heavy enemy fire.

We re-fueled and re-armed about 5 times and fought into the night. Soon our mission became gun cover for medivac helicopters removing dead and wounded Rangers.

Enroute to base that night, the aircraft commander of my ship (he was not familiar with the area of operation) flew too low and, only after I warned him, pulled up at the last second and narrowly avoided hitting a small fire support base on a knoll at the mouth of the An Lo. (Even the boss can be wrong and it ain't always good to keep our mouth shut.)

We did make it home to base camp.

The next morning, Christmas Day, was my day off. We used call signs instead of real names in Nam. Mine was Jester (seems as if I didn't like to take life too seriously...never knew when it would come to an abrupt and unexpected end.)

I got to celebrating Christmas a bit early that day. At about noon, the commanding general of our Group paid us a visit to have Christmas Dinner. At the end of the dinner, the general asked if someone would lead us in an appropriate Christmas song. I volunteered and stood (on somewhat wobbly legs) and began, "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Jesus, happy birthday to you."

The general was not amused, and his entourage was, of course, obligated not to be amused as well. After the general ascertained my name and unit, he let me know of his disapproval of my cynicism. At this, I pointed out that if he really wanted to see cynicism, I could take him to a certain area of the An Lo Valley where what was left of a company of Rangers was still dug in with dead and wounded still around them. And they didn't have any f__ing Christmas turkey, and that somehow, I don't think that they were breaking out in a chorus of Jingle Bells or Joy to the F__ing World either. The general, although still not amused, left.

***This was pretty much a typical day.
We just got turkey, that's all.***

So, I guess I can be somewhat cynical at times...and, you bet, aggressive at others. Yet, I also found that it was always good (at least for me) to keep a sense of humor.

By the way, I celebrated my 21st birthday three months later.

Merry Christmas

Ron
Cobra Jester
129th Assault Helicopter Company
Cobra Platoon, Lane Army Heliport
An Son, RVN, 1969-1970

IFR Approach into Thu Dau Mot

Or, how I really learned to appreciate Christmas back in 1964.

By Doug Moore, Colonel, US Army Retired

I'm sure most aviators have done dumb things during their flying careers, but Walt Harris and I did something incredibly stupid on a dark and foggy night in Vietnam. Fortunately, we got away with it! Walt left the Army shortly thereafter to become an Episcopalian Minister and later retired as an Air Force Chaplain, so I'm convinced someone was looking over our shoulders while we had our brains disengaged.

In 1964, we were assigned to the 57th DUSTOFF at Tan Son Nhut Airbase in Saigon. This was well before the American combat units arrived and there were only about 20,000 Americans scattered around the countryside in an advisory and support role. Our small unit of five helicopters was responsible for covering the entire III Corps area and we often flew long distances to complete our missions. That was okay except at night and when the weather turned sour.

Each of our pilots felt duty bound to give it our best shot when someone was wounded, so we began looking for assistance from the Air Traffic Control Center at Tan Son Nhut where the small contingent of US Air Force controllers agreed to help. They began by placing a tactical map on a wall in their operations shack and we marked the villages and Vietnamese military bases that we went to on a regular basis. As time permitted, we flew over those places at high enough altitude until the controllers could "see" us on radar and record the azimuth and distance on 3X5 cards. Within a short time, they had a rudimentary system to give us radar vectors when needed.

Since we were about the only folks that routinely flew single ship missions at night or during bad weather, the Air Force controllers (Call Sign: Paris Control) got to know us well and it was comforting to hear familiar voices giving us headings and distance. It didn't take long for them to learn how long we ought to be on the ground, especially for night pick-ups and, if we were on the ground longer than usual, we'd hear them calling, "DUSTOFF, this is Paris Control, are you off yet?" Oftentimes, they couldn't hear our response because we were belly deep in a rice paddy or down in a hole in the jungle and you could hear the concern rising in their voices until we were airborne and returned their calls.

Just before Christmas of 1964, Walt Harris and I stressed this system to its limit. In early evening, dense fog began forming and a Viet Cong sapper unit used its cover to infiltrate the base camp of the Vietnamese Army's Fifth Infantry Division at Thu Dau Mot, a fairly large town about 20 miles north of Saigon.

Once inside, the Viet Cong placed several satchel charges and retreated to positions outside the compound. At that point, they began firing into the compound and as American advisors and Vietnamese soldiers poured out of the buildings to man their defensive positions, the satchel charges were detonated. As I recall, two Americans were seriously wounded and several Vietnamese were wounded or killed.

It was drizzling rain when their call for help came in. We decided to give it a try, so while



I cranked our UH-1B "Huey" helicopter, Walt called the tower to get the latest weather. The tower said they were estimating 500 foot ceilings and less than a mile visibility, so Walt asked if anyone else had been out recently. The tower told us the only other traffic that night had been a C-47 that landed at Bien Hoa an hour or so earlier and its pilot reported heavy fog over the Saigon area with tops at about 3000 feet.

I took off to the north and ran into a bank of fog before crossing the main runway. I told the tower we had gone IFR, so he switched us to Paris Control. When Paris answered, I asked for permission to continue climbing to see whether we could break out on top and, if we couldn't, I told him we would be requesting a GCA back into Tan Son Nhut. The controller told us Bien Hoa Airbase, located about 25 miles to the northeast, was reporting 1500 foot ceilings and 3 miles visibility, so he gave me a heading towards Bien Hoa and told me to continue climbing.

At about 3500 feet, we broke out into a brilliant, moonlit night. The visibility was unlimited horizontally and above us, but underneath was a solid layer of fog. From that altitude, we could see a hole over

Bien Hoa and its airfield lights were sparkling in the distance.

Since we were on top, I asked Paris Control to vector us over Thu Dau Mot, hoping we might find a hole there too. The controller gave me a new heading and told me to remain clear of clouds. A short time later, he told us Thu Dau Mot was 10 miles at our 12 O'clock, so Walt switched to the ground frequency and made the first call.

The fellow who answered said he was a former military pilot and would remain on the radio to help. Walt asked for a casualty report and for the weather at his location. He responded that several of the casualties were badly wounded and said the fog was so thick until he couldn't see the tops of the trees where he was standing.

A few minutes later, Paris told us we were approaching Thu Dau Mot, but we couldn't see any lights below us. Walt asked the fellow on the ground what kind of signal device they planned to use and was told they had built a huge bonfire, hoping its heat would cause the fog to lift over their immediate area.

Although our helicopter was minimally equipped for IFR flight, Walt and I felt comfortable flying on instruments and neither of us wanted to declare failure yet, so we began discussing a hare-brained scheme. We knew the Saigon River ran generally north and south and skirted along the western edge of Thu Dau Mot. As the river passed the southern boundary of the village, it made a ninety-degree turn to the east for a short distance and then turned south again towards Saigon.

We also knew their helipad was on the north bank of the river just after it made its turn to the east and knew Paris Control had a good fix on its location using the system we had devised earlier. With that in mind, we asked the controller to vector us to a spot about 15 miles to the north and about a quarter mile to the west of Thu Dau Mot, hoping that would put us on a track over the river.

Once there, we intended to begin letting down, hoping we could eventually see lights from the village or reflections off the river. If we could find the river, we planned to follow it to where it turned to the east and figured we could see the helipad lights from there. When I explained our plan to the controller, he was very skeptical about helping us. He said his radar wasn't accurate at that distance and was concerned about losing us in "ground clutter" or interference as we got closer to the ground. I told him we could let down to 1000 feet and still be clear of all

obstacles in the area, so he finally agreed to work with us.

We began our descent into the fog layer below us while the controller provided headings to keep us over where he thought the river might be. At the same time, Walt and I had to decide how low we could safely go. We knew the elevation of the helipad, so we added 300 feet to allow for small hills and large jungle trees in the area and surmised we could let down to 500 feet without crashing into anything.

As we started down, the crew chief and medic slid their doors back and began looking for lights or reflections off the river. When we reached 1000 feet, we were still socked in. I asked Walt if he was willing to go down to 600 feet and he agreed. When we got there, we still couldn't see anything, so we decided to go a little lower. As we neared 500 feet, the medic spoke up, "Sir, I think I saw water directly below us, but then I lost it."

We were still in the clouds, so I suggested we ease down another 50 feet and if we didn't break out, we ought to call it quits and go home. Walt agreed, so I began another slow descent. We had let down a few more feet when our crew chief shouted, "Sir, there's a fire to our left rear!" I looked back through the open cargo door and saw a huge fire at what seemed to be the same altitude as us. I made a quick turn to keep from losing sight of it and switched on the landing light and searchlight while turning.

Just as I got our nose lined up on the fire, the searchlight became fully extended and lit up the area in front of us. To our surprise, we found ourselves looking into the top of an enormous jungle tree, so I jerked up the pitch lever to climb over it. Unfortunately, I was too late, so we brushed through the top of the tree and came to a hover over a huge bonfire that must have been 150 feet straight below us.

The fellow on the ground began yelling over his radio, "DUSTOFF, you're right over me! I see you! You're right over me! Come straight down and you'll be okay, but watch out for the radio antenna to your right!" With the crew chief and medic hanging out of their doors to clear us, we hovered straight down and finally reached the ground.

As our eyes grew accustomed to the dim lights all around us, Walt and I became totally confused. We weren't on the helipad where we had been expecting to land! Instead, we were on the ground inside the Fifth Infantry Division's headquarters compound with buildings, large radio antennae, military vehicles, and trees all around us.

The former military pilot who had been on

the radio ran to my side of the helicopter and jerked the door open while excitedly telling me he hadn't seen us until we were directly over him. I hope it didn't show, but I was really hacked off at him because he hadn't told us he was bringing us into the headquarters compound. As a result, we had left the relative safety of the low ground by the river and had unknowingly flown over the highest terrain in the area.

When I finally got a chance to talk, I asked why he hadn't used the helipad. He looked away for a moment before telling me it had been captured shortly before we arrived and the Viet Cong had a .51 caliber machine gun setting off to one side, waiting for us. He said he didn't tell us he was bringing us into the headquarters compound because he was afraid we might not attempt a landing there.

Walt and I began surveying the tall trees and other obstacles surrounding us and



were concerned whether we had enough power to take all of the casualties. We knew the weather wouldn't allow us to make another trip, so we decided to load them all. I asked Walt to monitor the gauges and then pulled in all the power I could. For a moment, I wasn't sure we would make it because the EGT was pegged at the red line when we finally cleared the tops of the trees and leveled off to gain airspeed. We were immediately immersed in clouds again, but this time it felt good because we knew the "bad guys" were manning a heavy caliber machine gun less than a quarter mile away.

As we neared Saigon, I asked Paris for permission to cross Tan Son Nhut at midfield in order that we could follow the main street to downtown Saigon where the US Navy Hospital was located. There was no other traffic, so Paris Control switched us over to the tower frequency and our request was approved.

At about 500 feet, we began breaking out of the clouds and saw the dim lights of Saigon in front of us. As we reached the edge of the city, we noticed tanks and trucks

at all of the major intersections and troops seemed to be moving everywhere, so I asked the tower operator what was going on. He calmly replied, "Oh, there's another coup going on. It started a few minutes ago."

We descended to less than 200 feet, but still had to dodge around large patches of fog to maintain visual contact with the streets below. It soon dawned on us that if we continued following the main street into Saigon, we would pass right in front of the Presidential Palace and might get our butts shot off, especially while a coup attempt was underway, so Walt gave me a quick heading change to the west and we approached from the Cholon side.

Two US Navy ambulances were waiting when we landed at the Vietnamese National Police soccer field which doubled as a helipad for the Navy Hospital, so we asked the drivers if they would take the Vietnamese casualties too. They agreed, so after a short

flight back to Tan Son Nhut, we inspected our aircraft to see what kind of damage had been done by our contact with the tree. The only visible signs were a few paint scratches behind the right chin bubble and a small limb hanging from the right skid.

The following summer, I returned to Fort Sam Houston for the Officer's Career Course. One evening, my wife and I had to attend a Commandant's Reception and were standing in a long line waiting to greet the Commandant when I noticed several people sitting at a table against the far wall of the Officer's Club. I wasn't certain, but they seemed to be looking our way and didn't appear to be part of the official reception.

A few moments later, one of the couples got up and began making their way through the crowd towards us. Neither of them looked familiar, so I was surprised when the man asked, "Are you Doug Moore?" When I said yes, he turned to his wife and said, "Honey, this is the guy that saved my life!" Pete Bishop had been an advisor with the Fifth Vietnamese Infantry Division and was seriously wounded during the attack on Thu Dau Mot. He said he remembered lying on the ground that night, praying that we would get in to pick him up, but didn't believe anyone could land in that kind of weather.

I think Pete would agree with Walt and me that someone was looking over our shoulders that night. All I know is that the Christmas drinks, and even the GI Issue fruitcake tasted a little sweeter that year. It must be true that God looks after dogs, children, and wayward aviators.

The XM-47 Mine Disbursing System

by Robert D. (Bob) Williams



The system XM-47 Mine Disbursing System consisted of a main pod that nested four double walled tubes holding thousands of small beanbag-size cloth bags containing ground glass and explosive material designed to detonate at six pounds of pressure. The device would blow off a foot or a hand.

The mines were rendered inert in the tubes by liquid nitrogen. They were supposed to stay inert for about 15 to 30 minutes after landing on the ground and then again become inert after a month depending on atmospheric conditions. A shaped charge at the rear of the pod opened an orifice at the head of the tube allowing a compressed air piston to push the mines out.

We flew these mine laying missions at treetop level with gunships flying escort. The system itself constantly malfunctioned to include false warning lights indicating that the mines had not fully ejected, if these lights activated we climbed to 500 feet and jettisoned the pods that then detonated like a 500-pound bomb. Often we returned to rearm and discovered that there were still armed mines laying half out of the tubes. When that happened, explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) personnel came out, gingerly removed the mines and deactivated them in barrels of oil. I cancelled the program when I received a new batch of tubes and the mines exploded as they hit the ground which indicated that the mines were hot coming out of the tubes! I flew the last mission of the program only after two DA civilians, who did not believe that the mines were defective, personally watched the mines explode as they hit the ground. Anyway, thank God, that was the end of that Rube Goldberg project and nobody got blown out of the sky while try-

ing to scatter these "mini-bombs".

The group photo shows COL Potter Campbell, CO of the 12th Combat Aviation Group at Long Binh, I (LTC Bob Williams – the XM-47 mine laying system project officer) am inside the helicopter along with the project CSM and Crew Chief ready for our first mission in early 1967. The in-flight photo shows UH-1C 59439 (#65-09439) laying mines near the Cambodian border on suspected VC supply trails.

I joined the Army in 1944, attended Infantry basic, and then went to the Philippines (Leyte, Mindoro, and Mindanao) where I served as a company Aid man and later a section Staff Sergeant. I received a direct commission to 2LT in Artillery Branch, then went to flight school under the status of forces agreement at Connelly Air Force Base and received my Air Force Liaison Pilot Wings in 1950. I completed helicopter school in 1952 at San Marcos AFB.

I served with the 7th Inf Div in Korea for six months and then the 44th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital helicopter section. In 1964-1965 I commanded a CH-37 Mojave Company and then two Huey Companies before going to Vietnam in 1966-1967.

In Vietnam, in addition to the XM-47 project, I flew the lightship on firefly missions, sinking sampans on the

river networks as well as flying Cambodian irregulars back into Cambodia where they gathered intelligence. After Vietnam I worked on the Lockheed Cheyenne helicopter project as well as flying test missions involving cannon and rocket systems on a Mike Model Huey and a Cobra before I retired in 1969 with 25 years of service at the ripe old age of 42. Then I went to work for Puget Sound National Bank for 23 years. Owning and flying floatplanes is my current hobby.

Dear VHPA,

Recently I received a letter from the AAAA informing me that I was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, donated by the VHPA. My father, Dr. Jim Fulbrook, is a life member of the VHPA. I sincerely appreciate the scholarship and wish to thank the VHPA for sponsoring this award. The funds will come in handy to cover expenses as I start my junior year at Virginia Tech in their Honors Program. For your information, I am a Biochemistry major with a minor in Chemistry and following the pre-health professional curriculum concentration. I am also minoring in leadership as a Cadet in Air Force ROTC at VTech. My current cumulative grade point average is 3.85 on a 4.0 scale. My career goal is to become a medical doctor and perhaps specialize in orthopedics or oncology. Once again, thank you to the VHPA for providing this opportunity to me as a family member of the VHPA. I assure you the award will be well used.



Cadet David J. Fulbrook

From the President of the VHPA

tory section is focused on "Memory Maps" this year. Jim McLaughlin and Ron Bower have been working for several months on this project and are making really good progress. We hope to have a "Google Earth" type South Vietnam map on our web site early next year so you can zoom in on the 1:50,000 maps you used in Vietnam with many overlays of LZs, base camps, KIAs, crashes, etc. The idea is to bring back the memories and provide you with an opportunity to contribute your part of our history to this project.

The membership directory is the second most important product of the VHPA. It is the anchor that holds us in place. Some would say that its size is enough of an anchor, but looking critically at it this year it is clear that there are holes that need to be filled. The biggest holes are Vietnam unit assignments for many men and next are flight class lists. The best way to check these two lists is to go to the index sections and see if everyone in your unit is listed or

everyone in your flight class is listed. If men are missing, please check to see if you have orders or graduation programs that can help us fill some of these voids. Please send copies to me.

The most challenging thing with the directory is keeping contact information up to date, especially e-mail addresses. The best way to update your information is to go online to <http://www.vhpaservices.com> and click on "Update My Information" at the bottom of the left menu list. You can also call HQ with any changes. This is especially important if you are planning to attend the reunion. We have a lot of information to communicate about the reunion and e-mail will be the most efficient and cost effective way to do that. Please keep your e-mail address up to date.

Speaking of e-mail addresses. We periodically send out notices of interest, but try to keep these to an absolute minimum. Two September notices went out in selected geographical areas announcing the

retirement of Hueys from National Guard units. As a result, several of our members were able to attend these ceremonies. Jim Fulbrook was a guest speaker at one and Tom Payne was a guest speaker at another. There will be after action reports about these events in the next issue. There is also an event at the President Reagan Library for Veteran's Day where I am an invited guest. More on that later too.

Have you checked out our web sites lately? <http://www.vhpa.org> is a window to many interesting things like flight class pictures, unit histories, war stories, research sites, museum sites, KIA and DAT information and much more. If you have any of this kind of information to contribute, please send it to me.

We hope this finds you in good health and hope you have the opportunity to spend the holidays with your loved ones.

Gary Roush
president@vhpa.org

The Vietnam Center and Archive: Preserving Your History for Future Generations

If you are interested in donating your items, the process is simple. Call us at (806) 742-9010 or email us at vietnamarchive@ttu.edu and we will discuss the process with you and make the necessary arrangements. This is the best time to discuss any concerns you may have such as our digitization process. Once we receive your items, they will be accessioned, meaning we will send you a brief synopsis of the items sent. Then we will send you a deed of gift that includes the accession. The deed of gift transfers legal ownership of your items over to us. Your name will be used in the collection title (example: The John Smith Collection) and the VHPA can

also be credited if you notify us that you are a member of the organization (example: The John Smith Collection, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association). After receiving a signed deed of gift, archive staff will then process the materials. This includes light preservation treatment and housing the materials in acid-free sleeves, folders, and boxes. After the collection is processed, a finding aid will be created. This finding aid is an inventory of the contents of the collection and usually includes a brief overview of the collection and information about the donor. The finding aid is used to help researchers find information that may be located within your materials.

The materials will then be housed in a climate controlled environment designed to extend the life of the materials. Researchers are then able to view the materials in our secure Reading Room or online if you allow us to digitize your items.

If you are interested in becoming an oral history participant, please call us at (806) 742-9010 or email vaoralhistory@ttu.edu. For more information about us or to see our digitized items, please visit our website at www.vietnam.ttu.edu.

Please help us preserve your history and the legacy of the VHPA by contacting us today.

The Staff of the VHPA Aviator and the Headquarters wish to take the opportunity of Veterans Day of 2009 to

United Airlines Passengers pay respects to returning Vietnam GI

By Kathleen Kreller - The (Boise) Idaho Statesman via AP. Oct 1, 2009

BOISE, Idaho — Passengers on Tuesday afternoon on UNITED AIRLINES flight from Denver to Boise refrained from the typical chaos of getting off a long flight and instead sat quietly in their seats while two somber passengers deplaned.

The crowd was hushed until it gave a standing ovation to Ron and Jeff Phelps, and their precious cargo.

The Phelps brothers were bringing their father home. Chief Warrant Officer Don Phelps, a decorated helicopter pilot who was killed in 1965 during the Vietnam War. His aircraft, his body and the bodies of three crewmates were missing for nearly 44 years until the crash site was uncovered earlier this year.

"As we were landing, the flight attendant was choking back tears. She said United Airlines is honored to be transporting the remains of a soldier fallen in Vietnam," Ron Phelps said Tuesday night. "As we were getting off, we got an ovation from everybody on the plane. Emotionally, I was already pretty well spent. ... but was it. I was tearing up also."

The brothers were returning from the military's special forensics lab in Hawaii where their father's remains had been identified. When they stepped onto the tarmac at the Boise Airport, their mother, brother and sister were waiting, along with a military honor guard in crisp blue uniforms. It was an emotional family reunion as the flag-draped casket emerged from the airplane's belly. The red, white and blue stood in stark contrast to

the gray skies and the gunmetal-colored commercial airliner.

Lori Phelps, the youngest of the couple's children, sobbed as she caressed the casket of the father she had never really known. Dan Phelps was somber and quiet. Phelps' widow, Dee Phelps, dabbed at her eyes with a blue and white gingham handkerchief. The first thing I said, I leaned over and said, "Mom, I brought him home" Ron Phelps said. "It is a happy occasion. There might be a little closure here, and please just think happy thoughts."

Law enforcement officers, veterans and a group of Patriot Guard Riders on motorcycles escorted the family and the casket in a funeral hearse to Cloverdale Funeral Home in Boise.

Phelps, who was 28 when he died, had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroism. He flew more than 125 combat missions in less than four months. For decades, the family waited and hoped while the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and family advocacy groups searched and lobbied the United States and Vietnamese governments to continue searching and to allow better access to crash sites.

Phelps is the third missing-in-action serviceman to be brought back to Idaho since the Vietnam War ended. He was buried at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in Boise on October 20th, 2009



...ters of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association
thank all of our members for their service to our country.

We will never forget.

I Miss Vietnam...

I miss getting up in the morning and heading to the shower to wash off my hangover.
I miss putting on the clean flight suit that mama son washed the day before.
I miss grabbing my helmet and chicken plate and strapping on my S&W 38 special
in the cheap holster I bought in the ville.

I miss walking across the hero bridge to the Bird Cage in the early morning light, already warm and humid.
I miss hanging my helmet by the left seat of Red 7 and putting my chicken plate on the seat.
I miss doing my pre-flight on that magnificent Huey, while my crew readied their M-60's and stowed their gear.
I miss pulling Red 7 out of that revetment like it was no big deal, because I was good at it.
I miss setting down in the lane while the flight formed.
I miss lifting off and climbing over the river in a flight of 4 Red Tails.
I miss cruising along at 2000 feet in a diamond formation and giving it to my peter pilot so I could have a smoke.
I miss listening to the Carpenters on AFVN while we chugged over the rice paddies in the early morning calm.
I miss landing in the PZ to my clump of grunts.
I miss heading toward an unknown LZ.
I miss landing to a popped smoke with full suppression and the guns prepping the LZ along side.
I miss unassing the troops and pulling pitch to get the hell out of there.
I miss chugging home to the Bird Cage, hot and sweaty after a day of combat assaults.
I miss washing down my bird and walking back to the compound
I miss throwing my gear in my room and heading for the Officers Club.
I miss my papa son's on the rocks
I miss the girls we loved to tease who waited on us in the club.
I miss my buddy teaching me how to fly a motor bike
I miss my buddies.
I miss the whole thing.
I hope that we come back again another time, so I can do it all again.
I want to fly in the Red Flight again.



Tom Payne sent us this "list" of some of the things he and his friends sat around and remembered, while at this year's Reunion at Philly. Things about flying and living with their buddies while in the 118th Thunderbirds in 69-70. All the men who contributed to the list were in the 1st Platoon or "Red Flight" of the 118th Assault Hel. Co. "Thunderbirds" who were in Vietnam from Nov. 1962 to Mar 1971. This was one of the original helicopter companies in Vietnam and their stay was one of the longest. They were in Bien Hoa, the whole 9 years.

Dennis Gulich is the primary author of this list, he may be contacted at: [REDACTED]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

Con't from pg. 27

done just to help the other members enjoy the story, and to show the author that I will do all I can to help them publish a great product.

For the obituaries I receive, if I feel they are too long and involved, I will cut them back. Primarily because I just don't feel it's important for our members to know the name and hometown of the surviving granddaughter, but that's about all that I will cut. I know all of our obits are very important to the family concerned and I don't think we should short, or change them if we can. Yes, I was tempted to change the obit that told of a member that passed away while drinking beer at Hooters, but you know what, that guy deserves the same respect as the retired General who suggested that McAuliffe answer the Germans at Bastogne with "Nuts".

I personally feel any savings we realize in printing costs by cutting back on the obituaries is just a dumb way to save money and so far, your great EC has backed me 100% in this. So, until we are forced to move even a part of our obituaries to our website, they'll continue to run as they are.

But thanks for all your work, and all your concern, we'll keep your idea on file for future use.

David Adams

Gary Roush has already informed the author of this letter that the VHPA does not take a position on, or sponsor the types of activities that the National League of Families are involved in, so issues like this are left up to individual members to champion. Having said that – we're publishing this request for help as a "Letter to the Editor" in case any of our members are interested in their cause.

Gary, I've just finished reading the Sep/Oct 2009 issue of The Aviator and found it very interesting. I served three tours in Nam, 1966, 68 and 73. My first tour was with the 162d and 116th AHC, spent 18 days on a ship with the 162d, landed at Vung Tau and flew in C-130's to Phouc Vinh, north of Saigon. I was with the last group of Americans (1st Avn Bde) that departed Saigon on March 27th, 1973, the only Americans left were assigned to the Embassy. When I boarded the C-141 at Tan Son Nhut, a North Vietnamese Army Major checked off my name, unfortunately I did not have my camera.

I am writing this to alert the members of the VHPA as to the financial status of the National League of Families, POW-MIA's of Southeast Asia. I have been actively involved with this issue since 1982, when I

was appointed the Executive Director of the Georgia Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. In October/November 1966, I was the team leader of a heavy gunship section that departed Phu Loi for Khe Sanh to support SOG with their missions, almost all in Laos and the DMZ. On one fateful mission, we lost the entire team of 3 Senior American NCO's and 8 Montanyards, we did recover the Vietnamese interpreter a couple days later, he made his way to a hilltop a couple miles away and had a radio. The three Americans are still listed as MIA. I never knew their names as they did not wear name tags or other insignia and I still remember them to this day.

Last year I was asked to be the National Veteran Adviser for the League and I agreed immediately and was involved with the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the League on July 24-26th 2009 in Arlington, VA. Admiral Timothy Keating, USN, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command was our Keynote Speaker, he is scheduled to retire shortly after 42 years of service, he is a strong supporter of the League of Families and gave the best speech that I have ever heard on the issue.

I participated with representatives of the AMERICAN LEGION, VFW, DAV and JWV on Veterans' Role in this issue, with emphasis on the survival of the League and their important contributions to the recovery of our comrades. Because of their tireless work, 852 remains of our comrades have been recovered and reunited with their families. There are 1731 still missing and for the first time I was able to learn the names of the three courageous Americans lost on a hilltop in Laos in 1966. We will not quit until they and others are brought back for a proper burial and closure can be had by the families.

Because of the hard work of the League and other organizations, Veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East will be found and returned. Now the National League of Families POW-MIA's needs our assistance. They operate on a shoe-string budget and monies are not coming in to support their efforts and they may have to close-up-shop sometime early next year. Please consider publicizing their plight in the VHPA magazine, I know our members will assist, if they know the situation. The League is a non-profit organization (501-C-3) and donations are tax-deductible. Their address is National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, 1005 North Glebe Road, Suite 170, Arlington, VA. 22201.

Thanks in advance for your consideration

and I would especially like to congratulate my good friend, Woody McFarlin for his selection as Vice President, I worked with Woody quite often when I lived in Georgia.

Sincerely,
Ron Miller

To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

As you are probably aware by now through Gary Roush (VHPA) we, The Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum, are desperately in need of an ex 135th Taipan "Charlie" model gunship so as to keep our dream alive.

This dream, if I may say so is to have the Royal Australian Navy's Helicopter Flight Vietnam's history displayed at their small but effective Museum at their home base at HMAS Albatross 100 miles south of Sydney NSW Australia.

The four flights served with the US Army's 135th AHC over a four year period from October 1967 until June 1971 with great success. Their bases were: Vung Tau, Blackhorse, Bearcat, Dong Tam.

Now then, to achieve our goal we are in a position to utilize our government's resources to acquire one airframe for display, but first we need to know the current location of a genuine 135th "Taipan" Gunship, in either a Charlie or Mike model. Once this airframe is located, we can get our Navy to talk to you US Army at top brass level. Also this will short cut all the necessary bullshit!

The Museum does not need a "Hotel" model Huey; we already have a nice one from the 135th EMU.

If there is any one with in the VHPA or who can help locate this piece of history then it will be of great help in expediting this matter.

I thank you all in advance for your help, we need it. So as the 135th's motto once said "Get The Bloody Job Done". We of the Royal Australian Navy respect this.

Yours,

David Benge, On behalf of
Commodore DD Farthing RAN DSC Ret.
The RAN FAA Museum, HMAS Albatross.
E-mail: [REDACTED]

We received a follow up from the Author of our earlier "What The Hell" story ...

Several volumes past, I wrote an article titled WHAT THE HELL. Subsequently, the Aviator contacted me by e-mail regarding the status/resolution of my problem. My problem concerned the Basic Aviators Badge which prior to 2000 was known as the Army Aviation Badge. Over a year plus ago, I had requested from the Military Per-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

sonnel Records Center a re-issue of my awards and decorations. After months I received my requested awards etc. from The Heraldry Group. However, instead of The Basic Army Aviators Badge, I received the Basic Crew Members Badge. The Military Personnel Records Branch based the badge on a year 2000 AR Change by which the ArmyAvnBdg became the Crew Members Family of Badges Badge - I would assume Basic, Senior and Master Badges. To make a long story short, I called The Heraldry Group who referred me back to the Military Personnel Records Branch and the hassle began. After letters to The Department of the Army and talking with numerous folks, I finally called my Congressman and guess what after several months a letter was sent by DA confirming that my 1986 DD 214 (ArmyAvnBdg) was correct and my officer records brief also provided additional documentation regarding my authorization of The Basic Aviators Badge instead of the Enlisted Crew Members Badge.

Several months later a DD 215 was issued by DA correcting my DD 214 to reflect I was authorized The Basic Army Aviator's Badge plus after several try's DA sent me a set of the correct wings.

After writing and having published the VHPA article and while navigating through the red tape to have the proper badge issued, I received e-mails from other Aviators who were having the same problem. I guess that whoever decided to make the change in 2000 forgot about the thousands of aviators who may have a DD 214 which indicates they were issued

an ArmyAvnBdg as they most likely separated from the service prior to the year 2000. By the way, when I answered your initial inquiry, I provided you a copy of the letter from DA and gave you my permission to publish it as an answer to the problem. In the DA Letter it was mentioned that St. Louis was misinformed or words to that effect and gave me misinformation.

Joe Litton, Former 1LT
F Trp 4th US Air Cav, 1971-1972
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Editor's note, the letter from DA that Joe references in this story came to me as a picture file complete with a DA letterhead. As such, and not an actual (text) letter, we just didn't have the room in the issue to print it large enough to be legible to our readers. If you want your own copy of the letter, contact Joe directly and I'm sure he will be glad to share it with you.

The VHPA has been notified that

Member Mike Sloniker has obtained a copy of a 1971 North Vietnamese document about Lam Son 719. He received it from Bob DeStatte before he retired from the POW MIA office in DC.

Mike is working to get it converted to a better PDF format that can be shared by all, and placed on the VHPA Website. You are requested to contact Mike (mike.e.sloniker@lmco.com) directly if you are either interested in this report, or can help him in his conversion work

Dear Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

In the last issue J. Willingham ("The Doctor") wrote a letter asking the VHPA not to forget H Troop, 1/10th Cav, "The Buffalo Soldiers". Since there wasn't an e-mail address listed for him, I would like to let him know about my unit, D Troop, 1/10th Cav, 4th Inf. Division.

D Troop, 1/10th was in country from 1965 - 1971 and then was stood down. I'm not sure, but I believe D troop was then redesignated H Troop at that time. I wanted to let J. Willingham know the 1/10th hasn't been forgotten and invite him to join our group of 10th Cavalry Troopers.

And, if there are any other members out there interested in joining our Association, also please feel free to contact me.

Regards,
John Gayle

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear members of the VHPA,
As an old grunt, I just wanted to thank all your members for their wonderful support 40+ years ago. It's not much of a stretch to say that many more names would be on that big black Wall if not for you guys.

I am one of the founders of a reunion group, B 2/5 First Cav, and I can truthfully say that all you guys will always be special in our hearts. Even if you did drop us over 8 feet of elephant grass, in a swamp.(LOL) Don't know if you have a place on your website to pass this on, but just know that you will always be one of our best friends!

Don Hill
B/2/5 1970

A message from HQ:

It is a very busy time for your headquarters in California. We are beginning our annual "target" mailings to build membership. Our goal is to have 20,000 letters out by the end of January. The 2010 VHPA Calendar is on sale with Turner Publishing, we have order forms available. Please send your calendar orders and payment directly to Turner Publishing. There are still t-shirts available from a few reunions, please call for sizes. Remember HQ is here for you, from address updates to product orders and beyond. If there are any questions you may have we are in the office Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m. (PST). You can call 1-800-505-VHPA (8472), e-mail hq@vhpa.org, or write VHPA HQ 5530 Birdcage Street STE#105, Citrus Heights, CA 95610.

Looking For....

A note from the Editor - Just after wrapping up our last Issue, the VHPA received a note from our Australian Friends concerning their intention to try and get in touch with as many of our members as possible who might have been on the scene of a battle between their forces and the NVA, a battle that they have tagged as The Battle for Fire Base Coral. Their first e-mail didn't contain a lot of details so we asked them for more information; on 14 August we received this from Denny Nevala:

The first battle at FB Coral was on May 13, 1968. At about 3:30 am, the NVA launched a night assault on a new Australian position about 20 kilometers north of the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complexes. The second major attack was three nights later. On the first night the Aussie mortar positions were overrun, and those who survived credit close- in gunship support as having saved their lives. In the May 16 night fight, gunships were being shot at from NVA machine guns outside our wire. The NVA would wait until a helicopter passed, and then shoot. What many of us remember is the gunships tiring of this, started sending a lead gunship through with all its lights on. A second gunship with no lights was trailing, and totally blasted the source of the inevitable ground fire on the lead ship.

Australian and New Zealand veterans of these fights would very much like to identify and get in touch with those pilots, and perhaps some of the dustoff pilots that supported the first night's fight. Spooky pilots too, if anyone knows how to access these guys.

Regards,
Denny Nevala

Human Resources Consultant, Phadia US Inc.
Phone: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

On September 9th, we received another follow-on e-mail giving more details of the battle and letting us know that if any of our members are interested in the battle, the Veterans of the 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association now offer a DVD of the action, their e-mail reads:

Gary,

I have been copied on your previous

emails with Denny Nevala regarding the battle of Fire Support Base Coral. Here are some more details to help your members remember the fight.

The 12 Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery (with 105mm howitzers, popguns compared to yours) and 1 Royal Australian (Infantry) Regiment plus supporting units took a position outside Saigon to engage NVA and local VC returning from the attack on Saigon at the Mini TET in May 1968. The site had previously been occupied by US Infantry engaging main force NVA Regiments. As the US forces, extracted, Australian forces started re-constructing the FSB late in the afternoon and were attacked early on the morning of 14 May by an estimated 5,000 NVA. A gun was taken but recaptured and two Arty boys were killed and many wounded. The battle continued at different levels for 26 days and in the end, 25 Aussies were killed and over one hundred wounded. The FSB was reinforced by Australian Tanks and US 2/35 Artillery plus substantial US air support, without which the battle would have been lost.

It is generally conceded that, if the NVA had annihilated the Aussie FSB, Australian troops would have been withdrawn in 1968. The Battle of FB CORAL story is not well known in Australia, so we have produced a DVD to help get the message across. Full details and an order form of the DVD are available directly from me.

Regards,
John Allen
Secretary, 12 Field Regiment
(Vietnam) Association

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Looking for information on my old TAC Officer,

Over the years I have been trying to remember the name of a TAC Officer I had at Hunter AAF but to no avail, this old man's memory has continued to get worse.

I would like to ask the membership if they know of a list of what Warrants did when they came home from Viet Nam such as TAC Officers, Instructors, IP's etc. I graduated from Class 69-23 A 3 from Hunter AAF on August 12, 1969. The Army then sent me to a Cav Unit and I became a Cobra Pilot. Any help anyone could give would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks and have a great day.

Donn " Mixer " Wilimzik

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Looking for information on James Cooper Wright,

I have been looking for James Cooper Wright, Class 68-510/68-16.

As a former US Army Captain, Jim served in the 62d Aviation Company in 1968-69. Jim and I served together in RVN, and subsequently he served at Ft. Stewart while I was at Hunter AAF in 1969-72. I last saw Jim in San Antonio in 1977-78 after he had ETS'd from the Army. He had returned to his home state of Texas. Jim and I were "tent" mates in RVN, flew together and became very close friends.

I have written well over 150 letters in the past 10 years in search of Jim Wright. Apparently the name Jim Wright is VERY common in Texas!! There are thousands of Jim Wrights in Texas. I found some info in the VHPA directory which places Jim in Albuquerque, NM, but I don't believe it is accurate. I have now sent numerous letters to various addresses in both NM and Texas and they all are return as unknown.

Perhaps someone in the VHPA would know him and know where he is. Any help is much appreciated!!

Bob Lyle

Coachman 1-9, 62d Aviation Company
Class 68-505/68-3

Looking for information on a Huey crew shot down on November 18, 1968,

I am writing on the recommendation of Gary Roush. He said the best way to locate the pilot(s) and crew of a particular Huey shot down in RVN was through your newsletter, the VHPA Aviator.

I was a medic with MACV SOG out of FOB2/CCC in Kontum between May of 1968 and April of 1969. On 14 to 19 November, of 1968 I was the medic accompanying a SLAM Company on a search and destroy mission in target area Juliet 9 north of the "Bra" formed by the double loop of the Dak Xou river about 15 miles inside Laos. On 18 November, 1968 we were ambushed by 2 companies of NVA along Rte 96 and had taken 29 wounded, a good number of which were critical.

I have done some research into the helicopter units who may have been supporting us during that timeframe and have evidence from Paul Wilson, of the 170th AHC, given to me by Seth Robertson, door gunner with the 189th AHC, that the group supporting FOB2 during that timeframe was the 57th AHC. In looking through the 1968 history for the 57th AHC posted on their website, they note that "two aircraft were lost to enemy fire," in November, 1968.

I am trying to locate the crew and pilots of a Huey shot down in the above mentioned target area on the afternoon of November, 18th, 1968. The Huey came to a hover over our perimeter and began to descend when it came under heavy fire from 3 each 37mm anti-aircraft guns and 1 vehicle-mounted, 51 caliber machine gun the enemy had driven into the battle area. Flames burst from the underside of the Huey and it lost power and auto rotated over our perimeter crashing about 100 yards beyond. SFC Robert Howard ran out to the crash site and a few minutes later returned with the pilots and crewmembers along with the chase medic, SSG Anthony Dorff from FOB2 who was also on board. The story I was told by one of the crewmembers was that a 51 caliber round came up through the floor of the Huey and hit the flak jacket he was sitting on and bounced his head off the roof of the Huey. Both he and chase medic Dorff hurt their backs in the crash. The other crewmember and pilots seemed to be ok or at least didn't complain about or report any injuries.

Shortly before dark, the 57th did get in 2 Slicks to evacuate our wounded. Since we could not get all of our wounded medivac'd before dark, the Pilot (or Co-pilot) of the Huey volunteered to stay in the target area overnight with the SLAM Company. This was a pretty ballsy thing to do as we were all running low on ammunition and didn't know whether we would survive the night. He sent out the chase medic and his other crewmembers on the second medivac chopper, but stayed in our area himself.

The account of this battle is described in a book I co-authored titled "SOG Medic - Stories from Vietnam and Over the Fence" published by Paladin Press in 2007. I now regret that I did not give proper credit by name to both the 57th AHC and that brave pilot, but both were unknown to me at time of publication. If the book ever comes up

for another printing, I will make sure the unit and pilots and crew are recognized for their valor. If there is anyone out there who can help me identify and link me up with the pilots and crew of that Huey, it will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks for your consideration.

De Oppresso Liber:

Joe Parnar

E-mail: [REDACTED]

★★★★★★★★★★★★
Looking for information on my late father-in-law, Wayne L. White,

My name is Natalie Zador and I am emailing you about my late father-in-law Wayne L. White. I am trying to find pictures of him when he was going through flight school and in Vietnam for my husband and his mom. I was wondering if you would know of anyone or could point me in some directions on where to start. Here is his info you have listed:

CPT Wayne L. White was a potential VHPA member who died after his tour in Vietnam on 04/15/1997 at the age of 53. (from) Upper Marlboro, MD

Flight Class 68-30, Date of Birth 12/07/1943, Served in the U.S. Army

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Natalie Zador

E-mail: [REDACTED]

★★★★★★★★★★★★
Looking for Jan Franklin Watson,

I'm trying to find a picture of a class that would have graduated in 1964 or 1965. Jan Franklin Watson is the particular person I'm looking for. Jan graduated and then went on to Ft. Rucker and then on to Vietnam. His home state was Georgia.

If anyone has any a picture of the class, or if any info is available from men who served with Jan, I'd appreciate the chance to talk with you very much. Jan passed away in 1980 from Leukemia.

Regards,
Theresa Edge
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Looking for Info on info on Vietnam & Korean "found on post" helicopter,

Here is a story which may be of interest which I have been relating for the past 34 years. It is how I came to find one of the UH-1H's which I flew in the 18th Avn Co, which was in turn loaned to Air America for the ICCS mission following the January 73 Cease-Fire, in South Korea in the spring of 1975. Many people have tried to call "B.S.!" on this but it is true. However, there are a few unanswered questions which are apparent that I hope someone in the VHPA membership may

be able to finally answer.

In May 75, I was a CW2 assigned to an Army unit in Uijongbu, South Korea. One day, the maintenance officer said he needed another pilot to go with him to our Direct Support (DS) unit in Pyongtech and I agreed to go. In passing, he mentioned on the trip down that the DS unit had recently received a UH-1H from Air America. My response was "that's impossible; Saigon fell almost a month ago and here we are in South Korea; how could that have taken place?"

When we got there, I went to a hanger and there it was; this Huey had just been repainted in Army olive drab green. However, it was still possible to see the silver and blue Air America paint behind several inspection panels. I was really amazed that the aircraft had its Army historical logbook still intact; I looked in and verified that there were entries made in 72 while this ship was assigned to the 18th Avn Co., for MWO's (modification work orders) such as the installation of the IR suppressor kit (toilet bowl exhaust). About this time, one of the test pilots related to us his understanding of how this Huey had made it to South Korea.

Apparently, during the fall of Saigon, after making multiple lifts out to the evacuation fleet, the crew found itself running short of fuel. Instead of ditching, they spotted a civil freighter steaming around South Vietnam and elected to land on it, with no commo. The aircraft incurred zero damage and was allowed to stay in place but the ship's captain advised that his next port of call was to be Inchon, South Korea. The tale was then related to us that when the ship eventually arrived in Inchon, the Captain called the U.S. Embassy in Seoul and said something to the effect that "I have a US Government aircraft on my ship; please send someone ASAP to come and get it!"

I believe that the next step was for the Defense Attaché to contact the DS unit, who in turn took a low-boy trailer to Inchon, got the aircraft & brought it back. A 100% inspection was conducted, it was re-painted, and placed back on the property book as "found on post" where it became an 8th Army float/replacement aircraft. When I got back to Uijongbu, I verified in my logbook that I had in fact flown the same aircraft in Can Tho.

After all these years, among many questions, I would love to find out who the Air America pilots were who landed on the freighter; what the exact circumstances of the landing were; how did they leave the freighter and who had the foresight in the scramble of the evacuation, to hand-carry out the historical logbook?



Christmas Trick or Treat

IT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY, 1967 and I was an FNG assigned to HHC, 1BDE, 1CAV. I had been with my unit only a few weeks and was flying sandbag in a UH-1H that normally flew C&C for one of the maneuver Battalions and the occasional ass and trash mission. I think my AC was Dave Gray.

In any event, we were assigned a mission to fly an Australian rock band from LZ English to FSB Mustang, in the middle of the An Loa Valley, one ridgeline over to the west. The An Loa Valley had been the scene of major fighting earlier in the year and had been de-populated, de-forested and pretty much de-everything else. The rice paddies had a sheen of chemical residue clearly designed to make them infertile and the valley uninhabitable. It worked.

My AC and I flew over to pick up the band and discovered that not only was it a band, it was a very special band. It was an all girl Australian band dressed in mini-skirts. Now as I said, I had only been in country a few weeks, but it was clear to me that this was a gift from the Gods.

We loaded the girls and their gear (for some reason our CE and DG were particularly solicitous), cranked up and departed for Mustang. I got to fly more than normal so the AC could carefully scrutinize the back seats to insure our passenger's needs were being met. After landing and shutting down, the girls and their equipment were unloaded and carried into the FSB.

Mustang, like most 1st Cav. bases was spartan to say the least. The muddy entrance path wound through concertina

wire, minefields, berms and bunkers. Built more to discourage the enemy than to encourage guests, it was not exactly welcoming.

When I caught up with the entourage, they were in the process of setting up the band's equipment for their performance, wiring it to a 10K, and getting the word out to the troops that the USO had arranged a special treat. As the troops who weren't guarding the perimeter gathered, it was clear that there wasn't much joy in Mudville.

Fire Support Base Mustang, 19 May 1967, during Operation Francis Marion



105MM towed cannon set up on Fire Support Base (FSB) Shiloh in the late 60's.

Like most Cav. firebases, there was a decided lack of performance space. This (or perhaps the miniskirts) explained why the stage was set on top of the mess bunker. The girls, miniskirts and all, were perched about 10 feet above their audience.

The looks on the trooper's faces ranged from sheer joy to utter despair, sometimes at the same time. Some couldn't watch and simply walked away. Some couldn't take their eyes off

the promised land. The girls performed their act and I can't honestly recall what they played. It could have been Mo-Town, it could have been Mozart, but I believe in my heart that Don Mclean was in the audience that day and, even though he didn't write it until 1971, I'm pretty sure he started mulling over the words to American Pie that day.

Interested in advertising in The VHPA Aviator?

1/4 page black and white ad - \$125.00, 1/2 page black & white ad - \$250.00

Full page black & white ad - \$500.00, full color & prime placement ads are now available, rates by request. Contact Mike Sheuerman at: Membership@VHPA.org for details.

Con't from pg. 23

Hope you find the above interesting & maybe some other VHPA members who are former Air America pilots, can hopefully fill in the gaps.

John M. Harris

Email: [REDACTED]

Looking for a Hawk's Claw crew...

Your recent article concerning the "Hawks Claw" (TOW Missiles used mostly against tanks/other hard targets in April/May 1972), in the September/October issue peaked my interest in providing this article, in hopes that others might remember the incident or may have heard of it.

I was flying in a Command and Control ship somewhere north of Kontum with some pilots from the 57th Avn Bn, when

we spotted what appeared to be two (2) PT-76s rolling around the hills just north of where we had just hot refueled. We had taken off to have a look see when we saw them. The call went out to "Scramble the Hawks Claw."

Shortly after that, here came an old "B" model huey, with great big pods hanging off the sides, that reminded me of the old cowboy and Indian movies, where the cavalry comes riding over the hill to save the day. Anyway, as the Hawks Claw arrived over the area, we passed the coordinates of where we had seen the PT-76s and then the real show began.

The old "B" model ascended to about 7500' msl and began a gun run on one of the enemy. We could easily see the Tow being fired. The missile went straight to the first PT-76 and the smoke went up. HIT ONE. Then, a second missile was fired and the second PT-76 went up in

smoke. HIT TWO. What a spectacular sight we had just witnessed.

I never met any of the pilots or crew of the Hawks Claw but what a thrill they gave me that day. Soon after that, I returned to my real job in Long Binh as the Aide de Camp to MG Robert Mackinnon, CG of the 1st Avn Bde. Did I have a "war story" to tell him.

By the way, I finally attended my first reunion (in Philadelphia) and what a grand time I had, seeing aviators I hadn't seen in almost 40 years and meeting some really great guys for the first time.

*Sincerely and Welcome Home
from a job well done.*

Terry Jessup
Hawk 6A, '71-'72, Outlaw 5, '71

Note to VHPA members about AAAA' and the VHPA Scholarship Program

From Jim Fulbrook, Executive Council Member-at-Large:

In the past few years, we have had some success in raising funds to offer scholarships. AAAA has been very effective managing these awards. Please keep in mind that either the VHPA member or the student themselves must be a member of the AAAA for at least one year to apply. AAAA has a very inexpensive student membership you can get to have them qualify if you wish to go that route. Make sure you request the scholarship application early, as the paperwork for the VHPA/AAAA scholarships is more detailed than most award programs. Every year, AAAA gives out a lot of scholarship money and for several years now, VHPA applicants have been awarded AAAA scholarships rather than being considered only for the 2 and now 3 scholarships that we are offering. In other words, they have been very generous in that regard.

My son, David, was the beneficiary of this, although we were AAAA members for several years before we applied. Two years ago, when David was a senior, he received a two-year \$2K scholarship (\$1K per year) from AAAA, which was their 50th anniversary award that year. At that time,

David had over a 4.0 cumulative GPA in high school because he took mostly honors and a number of AP (Advanced Placement) courses. The point here is that the AAAA/VHPA scholarships are based on merit, need is not considered, and the rigorous review process where names are redacted avoids any internal favoritism as well.

So, the points here are: 1) Join AAAA, 2) Request the app and apply early, 3) Be realistic as the student must have competitive grades, 4) Be rigorous and timely in doing the application, 5) Be optimistic because your family member could easily get a AAAA award rather than one of the few VHPA awards, 6) Support the VHPA program by donating, 7) and keep in mind that a student can apply for a AAAA award more than once (and win) as a high school senior or as undergraduate or even graduate students, as long as they are full time students. If you have questions, we'll be glad to assist, contact Jim Fulbrook at [REDACTED] or Thomas Payne at [REDACTED]

Good luck with it.

Good luck with it.

The VHPA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM REALLY WORKS

Guys, this program works, I MEAN IT REALLY WORKS. This year thirty of our descendants; kids, grand kids, great grand kids, whatever; applied for the three VHPA scholarships we currently give out each year through the AAAA MERIT Scholarship program. Three were selected based on merit and twelve other VHPA applicants received other AAAA scholarships. Fifty percent of our applicants, 15 out of 30, received merit scholarships totaling \$16,500.

Over 375 applications were submitted to AAAA. At thirty, VHPA applicants were approximately 8% of that number. A total of 157 merit scholarships were given out by AAAA. VHPA applicants, at fifteen, received almost 10% of the scholarships given out. Our applicants do extremely well.

As of December 31, 2008 VHPA had approximately \$80,000 in scholarship funds on hand with AAAA to generate enough interest to fund the three VHPA scholarships. When you realize VHPA descendants received a total of \$16,500 in scholarships this year alone, almost 21% of the monies VHPA has on deposit with AAAA, you see a tremendous return on investment. And we didn't touch the corpus. In the last two years alone our descendants have received over \$44,500 in total AAAA scholarships. THIS PROGRAM WORKS!

TWO THINGS I WANT TO STRESS -

1. It is never too early to get your descendants interested. Get them to go on line today at www.quad-a.org and check out the program. You must be dues current with VHPA and they must become an Associate member of AAAA before they apply for a scholarship. That's it.

2. The more money VHPA has on deposit with AAAA, the more VHPA scholarships VHPA has to award. Currently VHPA has approximately \$90,000 on deposit. We raised over \$10,000 at the Philadelphia Reunion which has been deposited in our account. At current interest rate it takes about \$28,000 to generate a \$1000 scholarship each year, about 3.5% a year. VHPA needs approximately \$50,000 more on deposit to generate the goal of five VHPA scholarships per year. VHPA has over 8500 dues current members. As Fund Raising Chairman of the Scholarship Committee I'm asking 500 members to each send in \$100 for the VHPA Scholarship Fund. Make the check out to VHPA SCHOLARSHIP FUND. Send it to HQ. VHPA needs the funds in by November 30 so we can get them deposited prior to December 31 of this year. I'm not asking you to do anything I haven't done or won't do. This year I've donated \$647.50 so far and will pledge another \$100 right now. Please help VHPA add to this program. IT WORKS. The results speak for themselves.

*Thanks in advance for your donations
to the VHPA Scholarship Fund.*

Mike Sheuerman
Life Member
Scholarship Committee, Fund Raising

Summer Classes for Women being offered at THE ADULT LEARNING CENTER

Subject 1

Up in Winter, Down in Summer
- How to Adjust a Thermostat
Step by Step, with Slide Presentation.
Meets 4 wks, Monday and Wednesday
for 2 hrs beginning at 7:00 PM...

Subject 2

Which Takes More Energy
- Putting the Toilet Seat Down,
or Bitching About It for 3 Hours?
Round Table Discussion.
Meets 2 weeks, Saturday 12:00 for 2 hours.

Subject 3

Is It Possible To Drive Past
- a Wal-Mart Without Stopping?
Group Debate.
Meets 4 weeks, Saturday 10:00 PM for 2 hours.

Subject 4

Fundamental Differences Between
- a Purse and a Suitcase
Pictures and Explanatory Graphics.
Meets Saturdays at 2:00 PM for 3 weeks.

Subject 5

Curling Irons - Can They Levitate
and Fly Into The Bathroom Cabinet?
Examples on Video.
Meets 4 weeks, Tuesday and Thursday
for 2 hours beginning at 7:00 PM

Subject 6

How to Ask Questions During Commercials
- and Be Quiet During the Program
Help Line Support and Support Groups.
Meets 4 Weeks, Friday and Sunday 7:00 PM

Subject 7

I Was Wrong and He Was Right!
- Real Life Testimonials.
Tuesdays at 6:00 PM Location to be determined.

Subject 8

How to Parallel Park In Less Than
20 Minutes Without an Insurance Claim.
Driving Simulations.
4 weeks, Saturday's noon, 2 hours.

Subject 9

How to Shop by Yourself.
Meets 4 wks, Tuesday and Thursday for 2 hours beginning
at 7:00 PM.

Subject 10

The Stove/Oven-What It Is and How It Is Used.
Live Demonstration.
Tuesdays at 6:00 PM, location to be determined.

This catalogue of Summer Classes for Women was
provided by VHPA Member Robbie Cryer

VHPA CHAPTERS

We have 2 more new chapters in the
formation stage. They are:

Montana Chapter

Todd Brandoff, President

Southern Missouri Chapter

John Sorensen, President

South Carolina

(Celebrate Freedom) Chapter
Larry Russell, Pres.

New England Chapter

Bill Williams, Pres.

North Alabama Chapter

Jim White, Pres.

North Carolina Chapter

J.D. Lawson

Arizona Chapter

Bill Sorenson

Ohio River LZ Chapter

Dave Garner

California Chapter North

Ken Fritz

Rocky Mountain Chapter

Gary Hurelle

Southern California Chapter

Ed Holguin

VHPA of Florida

Donald L. Welch

Washington State Chapter

David Eck

Georgia Chapter

Carl "Skip" Bell

Mid South Chapter

"Pete" Norman IV

The VHPA and Chapters share
information and guidance with
one another for the mutual ben-
efit of their members. Chapters
are separate and independently
managed organizations not
under control of the VHPA.
Neither the VHPA nor any
Chapter is authorized to act as
agent or representative of the
VHPA or any other Chapter.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

A small group of stalwarts met in August for a cookout at Pinky Adams Villa in Scituate, MA overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Pinky has offered to make this an annual event, so next year it will be held on the 12th of September. We continue to meet for lunch on the first Monday of each month at Joe's American Grill in Dedham, MA. I have been contacted by a number of pilots interested in joining the New England Chapter, plus I would like to put a call out for a volunteer or two to help better organize and focus the chapter. Please call or e-mail me.

Bill Williams, President

WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

Our October meeting at Fort Lewis was cancelled when our sponsor, who was scheduled to brief us on Chinook operations Afganistan, was called for deployment two weeks early.

The chapter did participate in the Veterans Day Parade in Auburn, WA on 7 November, approximately 25 members marched in the parade, one of the largest west of the Mississippi. We also towed the Huey on a new trailer! Our next activity will be some time after the holidays. *The Washington Chapter would like to wish all of our fellow Vietnam helicopter pilots a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

Dave Eck, President

NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

The North Carolina Chapter had two aircraft in Silva, NC at the "Moving Vietnam Wall" the weekend of 17 October. We also participated in several events on Veterans Day. Our next meeting will be our Annual Meeting and it is set for February 2, 2010.

J.D. Lawson, President

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

August 22, 2009 about a dozen members met at Russ Janus's house to share input regarding the August 26 San Diego Reunion. On August 26, several members (Tom Crosby, Mike O'Neil, Russ Janus and Carl Cortez) met with both VHPA staff (Mike Law, Gary Roush, Moon Mullen), the Military Reunion planners and several Marriott staff members in San Diego. All of us got together to see how our chapter can help make the 2010 Reunion one of the greatest Reunion's ever! On August 29

about a dozen members met with Mike Law, NRC Chairman, in San Diego to discuss "getting back to basics for the 2010 reunion" by trying to try to cut entertainment and staffing costs by having the Southern California members volunteer for some of those paid positions. During the meeting Bob Whitford volunteered to help coordinate the Golf Tournament, Mike O'Neil volunteered to help coordinate the Coronado Parade. Tom Crosby volunteered to help locate vehicle parking locations, John Gretzinger volunteered to coordinate an unofficial motorcycle ride/tour and Carl Cortez will be working with Joe Klein on the reunion logo.

This years Veterans Day celebration on November 11, 2009 is scheduled for the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, CA and is focused on honoring Vietnam Veterans and the UH-1 Huey. There will be a Huey flyover and landing for static display, there will also be a showing of the movie "In the Shadow of the Blade". All VHPA members were invited to attend.

Last, we sponsored a booth at the Wings, Wheels and Rotor Expo at Alamitos AAF, Los Alamitos, CA on August 25th. I wish to thanks all our Chapter Members who helped staff our display. We also have elected Tom Crosby to be the next President of our chapter.

Ed Holguin, President

GEORGIA CHAPTER

The Georgia Chapter has continued its bi-monthly Saturday morning breakfast meetings. At our last meeting we were honored by a visit from National Past President, Mike Sheuerman. Mike was in the Atlanta area for a North Georgia College and State University reunion.

The chapter is continuing to assist in local efforts to educate young people about the Vietnam War by furnishing speakers to high school/college classes and by providing funding to assist one of the local high schools on a field trip to the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (located south of Atlanta).

We also assist other Vietnam veterans groups in the area with their projects by providing personnel and other resources within our capacity. Our main activities are the breakfast meetings--the folks who participate in them really enjoy the opportunity to get together with people with whom they can identify and share the bond that all combat veterans share.

HOLIDAY SEASON... Almost all of the Chapters have told us that they are going to do something special to celebrate the Christmas Season. Unfortunately a lot of these plans still aren't 100% formed up by the time we go to press. So, rather than putting out some bad information, we invite you to get in touch with the leader of your area chapter. That will give you plenty of time to make your own plans.

INTERESTED? I am looking for two individuals who might be interested in starting up chapters in Alaska and Hawaii and two individuals who might want to take over and carry the ball for two existing chapters in Virginia and Fort Rucker. It is not a difficult task, I will be happy to give you all the assistance you might need.

Call me at [REDACTED] or e-mail me at: [REDACTED]

Jack Salm, Chapter Liaison Officer

If there are any former Vietnam helicopter pilots in the Atlanta area who would like to join our group please see our website at www.ga-vhp.org or contact me at: [REDACTED] or via telephone at [REDACTED]. On behalf of the Georgia Chapter I wish all of our fellow Vietnam Helicopter Pilots the happiest of holidays - you certainly have earned them.

Skip Bell, President

SOUTHERN MISSOURI CHAPTER

The Southern Missouri Chapter of VHPA is still in its infancy, but looking to grow during 2010. With I-70 as the northern boundary, all pilots interested in "getting in on the ground floor" and helping us grow can contact John Sorensen,

My phone number is [REDACTED] and my e-mail address is [REDACTED]

Southern Missouri wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and Happy New Year.

John Sorensen, President

TAPS

ARTHUR L. MORGAN, JR.

CW5 (Ret.) Arthur L. "Art" Morgan, 64 of Mt. Zion, IL, passed away April 13, 2009 after a nearly 2 year battle with Leukemia. Mr. Morgan is survived by his loving wife of 40 years, Colleen, 2 daughters and one grandson, Jacob Arthur Harris who was born seven weeks after Art's death.

Art spent his life in service to his country, his state and his community. After graduating from flight school Class 68-29, Art served in Viet Nam with the 101st Airborne at Camp Eagle from Dec 1968 until Nov 1969. After active duty, Art was an instructor pilot with the Illinois National Guard from 1973 until 2002. After retiring from the National Guard, Art spent four years as an EMS pilot with Air Methods Corp., where he was instrumental in setting up a new base in Effingham, IL.

Art will be remembered for his devotion to his family, his dedication to his church, his professionalism as a pilot, and above all, his unique dry sense of humor.

CHARLES "CHARLEY" J. BURNS

Charles "Charley" J. Burns, "Reb" to his dear friends, 63 of Oceanport, passed on Sunday, June 28, 2009 at St. Barnabas Hospice in Monmouth Medical Center, Long Branch, NJ.

Born Nov 10, 1945 in Louisville, Kentucky and later moving to Eatontown, Charley lived in Oceanport since 2002. He was a graduate of the University of Dayton and received his MBA from the University of Maryland. He was a Military Program Manager for ACET in Shrewsbury.

An Army aviator, qualified in rotary and fixed-wing aircraft, he was commissioned in 1967. He was awarded the Bronze Star and five Air Medals for meritorious Vietnam service. His Army career spanned more than 20 years, including command assignments. He retired as a Lt. Col.

Charley will always be loved and deeply missed by his wife, Freya Flannery-Borns. His Funeral Service was on July 2, 2009 at Post Chapel Ft. Monmouth. Interment with chapel service and full military honors took place on Tuesday September 29, 2009 at 10:45 AM at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA.

In Charley's memory, the family requests donations be made to: Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Monmouth County, 174 Main Street, Eatontown, NJ 07724.

Submitted by Phil Lanphier

DANIEL EDWARD NORMAN

Daniel Edward Norman, age 62, of Maryville, TN passed away Saturday September 26, 2009 of food poisoning. He had a rare but

severe allergic reaction to shellfish.

Danny graduated from helicopter school with Warrant Officer class 67-15. He and several classmates were assigned to C/2/17th Cav at Fort Campbell, KY about the time that the 101st Airborne Division was ordered to Vietnam. It wasn't until several months later that C Troop was ready to deploy itself. Danny was a member of the aero-weapons platoon. C Troop was reflagged as C/7/17th Cav and joined the Ruthless Riders in Pleiku Vietnam during the summer of 1968. Danny received an in-country AH-1G transition and served with C Troop as White 29 until he DEROSED in 1969.

He then served as a helicopter pilot with the Tennessee Army National Guard until he retired. He also assisted in founding the U.T. Hospital Life Star program (1982-1988) and the Erlanger Hospital Life Force program (1988-1997).

He was a founding member of the National EMS Pilots Association and a faithful member of the VHPA. Following this air medical service, Danny founded Satellite Technology Implementation, Inc to improve the capabilities of air medical providers. He helped pioneer the use of GPS approaches for EMS flight operations. He was very active in HAI.

He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Louise, and son, Michael Edward Norman. He is interred in Grandview Cemetery. Donations may be made to Wounded Warrior Project, PO Box 758517 Topeka, KS 66675 or to the Blount County Public Library, 508 N Cusick St., Maryville, TN 37804.

GEORGE W. PUTNAM

George W. Putnam, 89, a retired Army major general who was a veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam and who held command positions with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and with a cavalry unit in Vietnam, died Aug. 6 at his home in Arlington County. He had congestive heart failure and cancer.

Gen. Putnam served in the Army for 46 years, beginning as a draftee in 1941 during World War II. He retired in 1987 as a two-star general, based in southern Europe for NATO. He received his officer's commission early in World War II and served as operations officer for a howitzer battalion in France and Germany. After the war, he was a part of the occupation force in Japan. He later served a tour in Korea and did three tours in Vietnam, the final one as commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Division during the Tet Offensive in 1968.

In his career, he also oversaw the Army aviation school in Fort Rucker, Ala., and helped develop plans for using helicopters to go behind enemy lines in Vietnam and retrieve

injured troops.

After his retirement, Gen. Putnam returned to the Pentagon to work as a civilian adviser until 1991.

George Washington Putnam was born in Fort Fairfield, Maine, and began his military service as a member of the Maine National Guard in 1936. In Japan after World War II, he met and married his first wife, Elaine Anderson Putnam, who died in 1973. In 1995, Gen. Putnam married Helen Guerin, the widow of a close friend, Army Col. Vince Guerin, who had died in 1976.

Gen. Putnam was a member of the Army Aviation Historical Society and Army Aviation Association of America, where he worked in the association's scholarship programs. A member of the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, with more than 1,600 hours flown in combat, Gen. Putnam was a judge in helicopter and aviation competitions around the world.

A son from his first marriage, Dr. James M. Putnam, died in 2005.

Survivors include his wife, of Arlington; a son from his first marriage; four stepchildren; six grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

*Submitted by Rick Rojas,
Washington Post newspaper*

JAMES S. WYLIE

James S. Wylie, age 61, of Orange park, Florida passed away on September 15, 2009 in Bonita Springs, Florida after a bout with pancreatic cancer.

James earned his Aviator Wings with flight class 69-45 and flew with the 62nd Combat Aviation Group out of Marble Mountain, Vietnam from 1971-1972.

Internment is scheduled for Charleston, South Carolina



JAMES V. SUDDUTH

James V. Sudduth, 73, passed away from an illness on August 8, 2009 at the Centennial Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

James graduated from flight school with Class 66-03, complete details of his duty as an aviator in Vietnam are not known at this time.

He is survived by his wife Penny of Five Points, Tennessee; one son; two stepsons; three daughters; one step daughter; one brother and two great grand children.

JOEL B. "J.B." SIMMONS JR

Joel B. "J.B." Simmons Jr., of Rolla, Missouri passed away Monday, Sept. 14, 2009, at the Phelps County Regional Medical Center at the age of 66. He was born in Tampa, Fla., on Oct. 17, 1942 to the late Joel B. Simmons



TAPS

Sr. and Dorothy B. (Barnes) Simmons.

J.B. was a retired U.S. Army Captain having served from 1960-1980. He graduated flight school with class 67-24 and flew in Vietnam with the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company from 1968-69, under the callsign Black Cat 21.

Joel later began a 21-year career with the U.S.G.S. in Rolla. He was a long time member and deacon at the Salem Avenue Baptist Church in Rolla. In addition to his parents, his brother, James A. Simmons, preceded him in death. He will be greatly missed by his surviving family which includes his wife Connie whom he married on November 7, 1963, both a son and a daughter, one brother, three sisters, three grandchildren and other extended family members and many dear friends.

Interment was held at the Idumea Cemetery in Laquey, Mo, on Friday, Sept. 18, 2009. Memorial contributions are suggested to the Idumea Cemetery Association or to the American Legion for the Veterans Memorial Park in Rolla, Missouri. Online condolences may be offered at nullandsonfuneralhome.com. offered at nullandsonfuneralhome.com.

MICHAEL C. LOCKLEAR

Michael C Locklear died in his sleep in the early morning hours of 21 August 2009. CW2 Locklear had suffered from a series of prolonged illnesses for several years.

Michael graduated with flight class 69-27, and flew with the 1st Sig Bde and the 229th AHB, 1CAV under the call signs Satellite 18 and Jaguar 18.

Services were held in Gadsden AL with interment in one of the national cemeteries. Michael was a fairly recent addition to VHPA and enjoyed the comradely of discovering long lost friends from his multiple tours in RVN. For further information or to send sympathies contact;

Tisha Hayes

COMMANDER NORMAN E. SCHRADER JR.

Commander Norman E. Schrader Jr., USN (Ret.), "Norm", 71, of Pensacola, Florida, passed away on August 24, 2009 in Atlanta, GA., while visiting his children. Norm passed out while driving south on I-75 with his daughter Elizabeth. She noticed that Norm was short of breath moments before he passed out and tried to take control of the vehicle. After traveling more than a mile she determined that her only option to stop the car was to rear end a truck. Norm died at the



scene. Elizabeth suffered only minor injuries. No one in the second car was seriously injured.

Norm was born in 1937 in Brooklyn, New York, graduated from Hempstead High School in NY and enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1956. During boot camp he was selected for the Naval Cadet program. He received his commission and designation as a Naval Aviator in 1958. In 1968 he volunteered for duty with Helicopter Attack Squadron (Light) Three. At that time HA(L)-3 was the Navy's only gunship squadron. He served with Det 5 from 3 April 68 to June 69 and flew 404 combat missions. In 1972 he returned to Vietnam with HS-7 to provide anti-submarine support for the USS Saratoga and the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin. This tour ended in December 1972.

In 1974 Norm assumed command of Helicopter Training Squadron 18 at NAS Whiting Field in Milton, FL. He retired as a commander at Whiting in 1977.

Following retirement from the Navy, he was base manager and flew for Air Logistics in Venice, LA for 17 years. In retirement Norm enjoyed serving as a volunteer at the National Museum of Naval Aviation and with the Blue Angels. He also served in the Volunteers in Public Service with the Gulf Breeze Police Department.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 49 years, Felicia (Fifi) of Pensacola, two daughters and a son. A funeral Mass was held in late August at Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Church in Pensacola. He is interred at Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola.

Submitted by Walt Lester and Senior Chief Bill Rutledge who served in HA(L)-3 Det 8.

ROBERT M. WRIGHT

WRIGHT, ROBERT M., 66, of Pelham, AL went to be with the Lord on Monday, August 3, 2009.

He graduated from Geneva County High School in 1960, after which he went to Auburn University where he graduated with multiple degrees. Robert graduated from flight school with Class 66-16 and flew in Vietnam with A Co/the 227th AHB, 1st Cav Division in 1966-67.

He retired from Alabama Power Company after 31 years. He was a member of Lakeview Pelham's First United Methodist Church. He was an avid Auburn fan and skilled wood crafts man.

He is preceded in death by his father Raymond Wright. He is survived by his loving wife of 40 years Rosemary; son Jason; daughter Brandi Mast; three grandchildren; his mother; one brother and two sisters. Interment was held on August 7th in the Southern Heritage Cemetery. In lieu of flowers donations can be

made to Lakeview Pelham's First United Methodist Church.

ROBERT S. ALLEN

Robert S. Allen, age 68, died on September 28, 2009 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Robert graduated flight school with class 67-05 and served in Vietnam with the 134th Assault Helicopter Company in 1667-68 and with the C troop, 7/17th Cav in 1970-71.

Originally from Elizabethtown, N.C, Robert proudly served his country in the U.S. Army, serving two tours in the Republic of Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. He retired from the service at Fort Hood in 1982 after serving 25 years.

Robert received numerous medals during his years in the military which include the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with Numerals 21, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal with one Silver and one Bronze Service Star, Overseas Service Ribbon with Numerals 3, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with 10-year device, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and the Master Army Aviator Badge.

Survivors include his wife, Pamela Allen of Bedford, TX; one son, one grandson, one brother and numerous family members and friends. Interment was held on August 10th at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

ROGER K. BEAN

Maj. Gen. Roger K. Bean (USA, retired) passed away on June 13, 2009 in Tomah, WI after a 30-year battle with Parkinson's disease.

He graduated from Eastern Washington State College in 1962 and was commissioned through ROTC. He completed helicopter pilot training with class 64-3. In 1965-66 he was a pilot with A/229th AHB 1st Cav. The VHPA does not have details about his second combat tour in Vietnam.

Later he earned his Master's Degree in International Relations from the University of Alabama and graduated from the Air War College. Gen. Bean's distinguished 32-year Army career included multiple duty stations throughout the U.S., Asia, and Germany. In addition to his two combat tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, he had two assignments at the Pentagon, Commander of Division Artillery and Chief of Staff of the 3rd Infantry Division, Commanding General of the 56th Field Artillery Command (Pershing), and Deputy Commanding General of US Army Pacific. During Desert Storm, General Bean was Acting Commanding General of VII Corps.

Roger's love for his country was second only to his love and dedication to his family. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Criss (Cornell) Bean and two daughters. Roger was known for his quick wit, fearlessness, and love of adventure. All who knew him knew of his love for flying, whether it was helicopters, powered parachutes, or gliders. Roger loved to be the solver of problems and the helper of those in need. Gen. Bean was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

THOMAS GAY COUTURIER

Thomas Gary Couturier, 64, of Bartow, Florida passed away after a battle with cancer on September 8, 2009 in South Haven, Michigan.

Thomas graduated flight school with flight class 69-37/39, details on his service in Vietnam are unknown at this time. He was the Past President of the Horticulture Research Institute of Florida, and the part-Owner/Manager/President of Goochland Nursery Inc. of Fort Meade, Florida.

He is survived by his wife of 36 years Patricia Couturier Bartow, one son, one daughter and three grand children.

WILLIAM "AUBREY" WALDROP

William "Aubrey" Waldrop, born June 12, 1946, in Brevard, NC, Transylvania County,

passed away June 11, 2009. He died unexpectedly while fishing near Patrick Air Force base.

Those who were with Aubrey in his flight school Class 68-23, or served with him in the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam, probably knew him as Lurch, a nickname borrowed from the TV character which he begrudgingly tolerated with good humor. The name was appropriate in a way; he had an erect posture, stood a head taller than most of those around him and his hands were the size of baseball gloves. Proportionate to his frame was a giant smile, a friendly gaze and a substantial appetite. Aubrey loved cooking for large groups and whenever word got out that he was cooking, a crowd would develop. A man of few words, his ideas and concerns were always taken seriously.

Aubrey grew up near Savannah, GA and joined the Army in 1967. After flight school in Ft. Wolters and Hunter/Stewart, he received a Cobra transition and served with the Big Red One in Vietnam from April 1969 to April 1970. His Call Sign was Rebel 21 and he went on to fly 1,095 combat hours. Aubrey also completed two tours in Korea, one in Germany and Ft. Mead, MD where he flew C-12s. Among his many awards and citations are the DFC, 40 Air Medals, one Air Medal with V and the

Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

After retiring from active duty as a CW-4 Master Aviator, Aubrey flew a variety of corporate aircraft internationally and was flying UH-1s for NASA at the time of his death. His passion for fishing and flying was evident by the way his face would light up. Anyone who knew Aubrey would recognize his special grin from a successful fishing trip or flight.

Aubrey is survived by his wife, Maria (Concha); two daughters, two step-daughters, three sisters, five grandchildren, one great-grandchild and seven nieces and nephews.

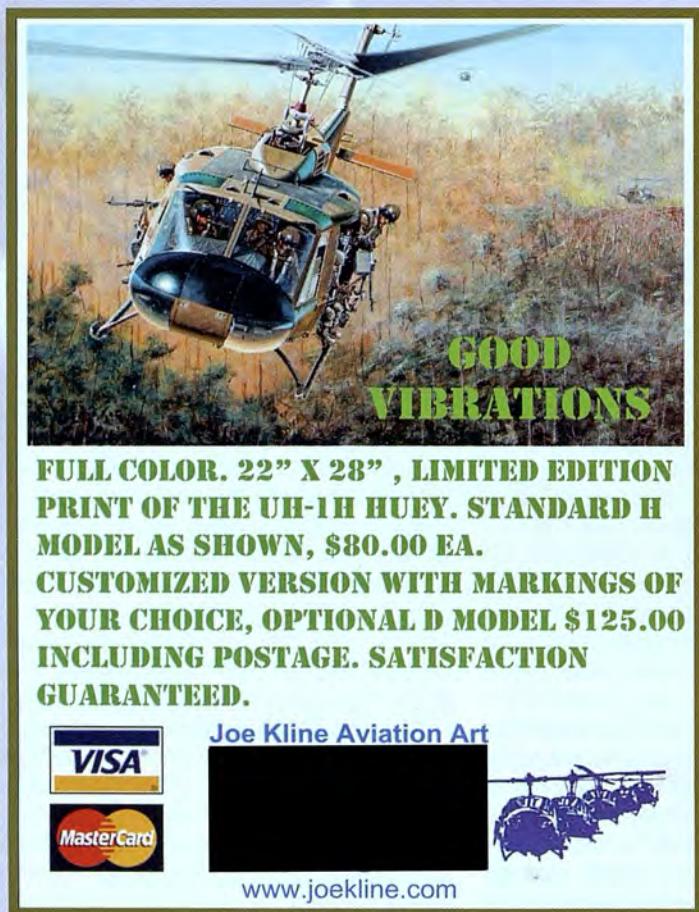
He is pre-deceased by his parents and two sisters. Remembrances can be sent to the Paralyzed Veterans of America (www.pva.org) or the American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org).

DAVID DONALD WILLIAMSON

David Donald Williamson, 65, died on October 5th, 2009 in Winnipeg, Canada from complications of cancer.

The VHPA believes Dave graduated with flight class 70-14 but this is unconfirmed, he did enjoy dual Canadian citizenship. The death was reported by Marshall Heckman

who stated that Dave indeed flew one tour in Vietnam, but wasn't one to talk about it very much.



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VHPA'ERS IN THE NEWS

Mississippi Army National Guard Retires Their Last Two UH-1 Huey's

On October 3rd, 2009, the Mississippi Army National Guard held a Retirement Ceremony in honor of the upcoming turn-in of their remaining two UH-1 Huey's. Hosted by the 1108th AVCRAD (Aviation Classification Repair Activity Depot), the ceremony was held inside their hanger in Gulfport, Mississippi. The VHPA's own Tom Payne was asked to be our representative guest speaker at the ceremony, Tom delivered a great speech to those assembled entitled *The Huey Brought Us Home!*

Here is an excerpted copy of Tom's speech along with some pictures of the ceremony for all to enjoy...

The HUEY Brought Us Home!

Hello, my name is Tom Payne and I am a past president of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. We have a membership of over 14,000 men who flew predominantly the Bell UH1 in SE Asia between 1961 and 1975. I flew in Vietnam for two tours, logging over 1,400 combat hours over nearly every part of Vietnam. I took many hits and was once shot down, I've had numerous systems shot out but the Huey was still flyable. That is why I can thankfully say, the good Lord blessed me andthe Huey brought me home and it is a bitter sweet feeling to be here today representing the airmen of all branches at the retirement of your last two Huey's!

There were 7,013 Huey's that served in the Vietnam War and almost all belonged to the US Army. Of that number some 3,305 were destroyed, killing over 2,200 pilots and over 2,304 aircrew members. The DOD shows that over 40,000 helicopter pilots served in Vietnam, but there's no telling how many non-pilot crewmembers served in the war. Because the Huey is the single most enduring symbol of the Vietnam War, it is not a far stretch to realize that everyone who fought in Vietnam loved the good ole Huey.

Along with their traditional transport and medivac roles, the B and C model Huey's also performed as gun platforms, or gunships beginning in early 1963. Those early armament systems were fabricated from systems "borrowed" from the Air Force but it wasn't long before an armed gun platoon was added to the TO & E of each Assault Helicopter Company. These gunships (armed with mini-guns and rockets) gave us just a hint of the different missions that were soon to be piled onto our beloved Huey's. By the war's end we were dropping flares and mines, we preformed "sniffer" missions to detect the enemy's body odor on the floor of the jungles, we pulled Psy-Ops missions with loud speakers and leaflet drops, we laid smoke screens for the protection of the ground soldiers, we mounted 50 Cal machine guns and light systems to look for the enemy at night and when that gun fired, it often rattled the floor rivets loose. Even the early anti-tank missile systems were first put on a Huey and although they were often too heavy to hover, these modified and "tough as nails" Huey, brought us home! The B, D and H model Huey's performed as a great Medi-Evac helicopter saving countless lives. In Vietnam they car-

ried as many as 17,000 patients in a single month with the Red Cross on the cargo door serving as a huge aiming point for the enemy, many of those birds took hundreds of hits.



Tom Payne poses in the cockpit of one of

the two "Guests of Honor" at last month's AVCRAD UH-1 Retirement ceremony. But of course the Huey's main job was transporting men and in the end, the most important people we carried on our Huey's were the "Grunts", the Infantrymen, and the Dog Soldiers. As Nick Donvito said in his book, "for Grunts like me, there was one great comfort in Vietnam.....knowing that if we were hit in the filth of the jungle miles from nowhere, our helicopters with red crosses would pull out all the stops to come get us, and within an hour we would be with doctors in sterile operating rooms." Yep, that says it all.....The Huey definitely brought the Grunts home.

Yes, it is a sad time when a legacy aircraft is retired and sadly, the final 64 Hueys still serving in the ARNG are scheduled to be retired by Christmas. In closing let me say that I appreciate very much the work done by our Army National Guard, your blood sweat and tears in the wake of Katrina and many more disasters is very commendable. Your aircrews did a fantastic job, you were out there doing a difficult job with an old "war horse", the Huey. So now, because of your fantastic performance and accomplishment of the mission.....you too

can say with pride,



"The Huey brought me home!! Long live the Huey in the history of the US military.

BG Alberto J. Jimenez was the featured guest speaker at the UH-1 Retirement ceremony. He first saw action in Vietnam as WO1 while flying with the 361st Pink Panthers, he is now the Asst. AG of the Maryland ARNG.

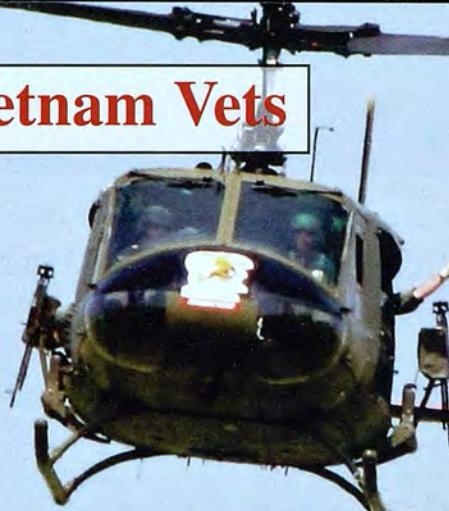


From left to right, VHPA Members: Tom Payne, Bill Griffin, Charles Fairchild, Bruce Terry and Jim Parker. Tom reports that by his count, 15 members of the VHPA were in attendance at the ceremony.

101st Welcomes Home Vietnam Vets



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On 16 August 2009, the 101st Airborne Division hosted a "Welcome Home" celebration for Veterans of the Division who had served in the Vietnam War. The following narrative of the event is provided by VHPA Member Mike Sloniker

We formed up as best we could before marching into Hangar 3. A motley crew of VN vets, standing as tall as we could, probably quite a sight. There were so many of us, the Division had to do the ceremony twice to

accommodate all the VN vets who showed up. We all received the same welcome home ceremony the returning troops from Afghanistan and Iraq get...except our front rank was lead by motorized wheel chairs and a couple of guys carrying oxygen bottles. Two MOH awardees up front, one from 2-17 Cav named White and the other was Jenkins, 2-39 INF, 9th ID. The cheering and clapping was totally overwhelming.

This was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I thought I didn't GAS about being

welcomed home. Men bury feelings deep. That is different now. Many VN vets had the same thought going into this, but now know the impact of this wonderful gesture organized by MG Schloesser and MG Campbell.

Oklahoma Army National Guard is going to hold this same type ceremony in OKC next year. One guy still on active duty and in uniform with us was CW5 Merchant a called up IRR from OKARNG who is at Campbell. Born in 1950, tour at Pleiku with the 170th AHC and the Bikinis in 70-71. He can still pass a flight physical....

We were all soldiers onceand young.

Mike Sloniker

The stands were full of cheering and flag waving supporters as the Vietnam Vets marched into Hangar 3



The in-flight photos are of helicopters and airplanes performing at an air show held this year at Fort Campbell. All the aircraft belong to The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation, the pictures are the property of ClarksvilleOnLine.com and are featured here with their permission.

Vietnam Veterans of the 101st Airborne Division prepare to enter Hangar 3 and kick off their "Welcome Home" celebration



VHPA Members Mike Sloniker and Clovis Jones share in the fellowship that filled Hangar 3 the day of the ceremony.



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BOOK REVIEWS

By VHPA Life member JOHN PENNY

John Penny, a VHPA Life Member, served with A/377 and is semi-retired from his career as a helicopter pilot, and teacher. He lives in Ellensburg, WA, with his beloved wife of 31 years, Janet.

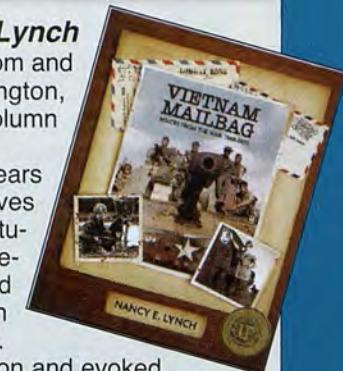
VIETNAM MAILBAG, VOICES FROM THE WAR: 1968-1972 by Nancy E. Lynch

is a rich portrait of the social history of the Vietnam War through correspondence from and with Delaware servicemen. In 1968, Nancy Lynch's newspaper, "The News-Journal" in Wilmington, Delaware, began a weekly column of letters from Delaware servicemen in Vietnam. Quickly, the column grew to 3-days a week and received over 900 letters.

Nancy Lynch kept all the letters she received. The stories they tell still resonate though 40 years have passed. Nancy states, "Unselfishly, they airmailed their unvarnished, war-torn, homesick selves to us week after week," giving readers of the News-Journal a "tell it like it is" perspective on their situation in Vietnam, AND their views of "goings on" back home. Readers connected with the servicemen and many sent letters and items to them and items for the Vietnamese children they interacted with. Nancy personally answered every serviceman's letter and encouraged readers of her column to write to our troops. Servicemen's families could also make requests for the official Delaware flag.

The book brings back the days when the words "you've got mail" had a totally different connotation and evoked visceral feelings. It reflects a time when we actually wrote letters and waited hopefully for mail call to bring us news from loved ones and friends. Like the ubiquitous "Dear John," letters these messages from "the world" didn't always have good news, but the lack of mail often led to feeling forgotten and conjured up evil thoughts about the mail clerks. Years ago, Nancy Lynch did a great service to those who served, and now, brings their voices back again including current interviews with some of the letter writers. I highly recommend this book. It is bigger than just Delaware, and it carries a message for all Vietnam servicemen and their families. You will hear those voices from long ago, which were much the same as your own, in this richly illustrated book of letters, photographs, patches, pins, and memorabilia.

Vietnam Mailbag Voices from the War: 1968-1972 (456 pages, \$40, or \$45 if a personalized autograph is requested) by Nancy E. Lynch, ISBN-13: 978-0-615-24454-9 is available from www.vietnammailbag.com

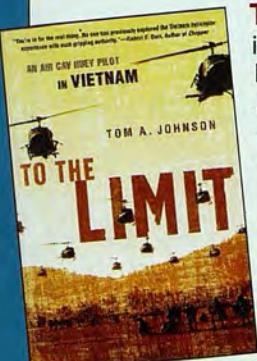


TO THE LIMIT: AN AIR CAV HUEY PILOT IN VIETNAM by VHPA member Tom A. Johnson

is simply the best book about a Vietnam helicopter pilot's day-to-day life and air combat experiences I have read. "To the Limit" is an engaging memoir of Tom's very intense tour of duty with A/229th AVN, 1st Air Cavalry, the journey he made to get there, and his survival. This book contains the most intense, articulate descriptions of helicopter combat to be found. Basically, it is a white knuckles ride with Tom Johnson from start to finish. It was difficult to set down and after completing it I had to put it aside to allow some time for it to all sink in and go back to verify my impressions.

One of the challenging issues of documenting "the helicopter war" is the uniqueness of our personal experiences there. It is an understatement to say Tom Johnson and his fellow pilots of the 229th were "in the thick of it." From the Ia Drang to Quang Tri this highly decorated unit helped write the book on the Air Cavalry concept in Vietnam and paid a high price in the process. As Tom points out, VHPA statistics show 1 of every 18 helicopter pilots that served in Vietnam were KIA. For his class of 67-5 it was 1 of every 13. Tom has given sobering recognition of their great service and sacrifice by writing this book.

To the Limit: An Air Cav Huey Pilot in Vietnam (396 pages, \$11.56) by Tom A. Johnson, ISBN-13: 978-0451222183 is available from Amazon.



Woven throughout this book is Tom's very personal story and journey from small town U.S.A. to the cockpit of a Huey in Vietnam. This is a story that resonates for many of us. He relates his experiences as a WOC at Ft. Wolters and Ft. Rucker and the personalities that shaped him into an Army Aviator. He also tells us about his special time in the cockpit of a Huey with an instructor whose words will echo in his mind and save his life in the A Shau.

If I were asked to recommend one book that best tells the story of Army helicopter pilots in Vietnam, this is the one to read. The stories are real and personal. Tom Johnson does a superb job of portraying the personalities, feelings, fears, lives, and losses of the pilots and crews as well as the chilling details of their combat missions.

To The Limit: An Air Cav Huey Pilot in Vietnam (396 pages, \$11.56) by Tom A. Johnson, ISBN-13: 978-0451222183 is available from Amazon.

OUTLAWS IN VIETNAM

by David Eastman

...is still available in paperback and now in the Kindle format from Amazon

(456 pages, \$16.50 in paperback, \$7.99 on Kindle)



ISBN13:9780914339977

GREETINGS FROM MILITARY REUNION PLANNERS

Military Reunion Planners (MRP) is proud to be providing reunion services for the 2010 VHPA reunion in San Diego. We are working closely with the VHPA Reunion Committee and are busy crafting an exciting tour and event program for your enjoyment in San Diego.

We reviewed the VHPA member reunion survey results and listened to comments and suggestion from both your Executive Council and the general membership in an effort to make the 2010 San Diego reunion the best ever!

We have an exciting program of events lined up for you, including tours of the venerable USS Midway, Old Town (the birthplace of California), the famous San Diego Zoo, and fabulous Balboa Park with its myriad museums, a lunch cruise on San Diego harbor, the Classic Rotors Museum, narrated city tours, 2-hour narrated harbor cruises, and a spectacular group dinner on the USS Midway.

Of course all of the old favorites like the War Story Contest and Historic Presentations are also planned. This year there is a special emphasis on re-connecting with your individual units through an enhanced mini-reunion program at the hotel. Speaking of which, you will surely love the stunning San Diego Marriott Resort and Marina Hotel set on the water within easy walking distance to the attractions of both Seaport Village and the Gaslamp District.

This year, MRP will be organizing the seating arrangement for the



banquet. We understand that seating has been a source of complaint in recent years. Last year, members were asked to identify units and preferences for seating and tables were assigned for you. No long lines, but lots of folks wanted to make changes because they didn't like how the assignments came out. In other years, it was done by signing up when you got there, but long lines occurred and confusion reigned. This year we plan to use a blend of techniques. We promise to be as accommodating as possible, but if you wait until the last minute to register or show up later to the reunion, don't be surprised if there isn't a seat at the table you would prefer. Rule of thumb: register early and show up early.

Military Reunion Planners has been in the planning business for over 20 years now and we have more than 150 clients of all sizes. We negotiate reunion programs, including hotel and tour contracts, and provide on-site execution of reunions, all over the country. We are proud to be providing reunion services for VHPA, which adds to our growing list of Viet Nam reunion groups. For more info about MRP, please call 817-251-3551 or visit our website at www.MilitaryReunionPlanners.com.

We look forward to seeing you in sunny San Diego!

Ray Casey and Rebecca Bittle
President Director of Tours & Events



MHT has the most experienced Vietnam Tour Leaders!

MILITARY HISTORICAL TOURS (MHT) is proud to offer VHPA two new choices in our series of historic tours to Vietnam. Come back with brother VHPA Aviators to visit places that have deep meaning for all helicopter pilots with names like: Saigon, Cu Chi, Dong Tam, Phouc Vinh, Bien Hoa, An Loc, Long Bien, Da Nang, Vung Tau, Quang Tri, An Khe, Pleiku, Tay Ninh, Dong Ha, Song Be, China Beach, Khe Sanh, Hanoi, Hoi An, Hue City, Quy Nhon, and many more. Only \$3495, includes round trip air from LAX.

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Vietnam Heli Ops Overview
"Rotorheads Return"
9-23 May & 27 Aug - 10 Sep 2010

Tour Leader: John Powell, 1/9 Cav

Note: Reread John Mackel's AA Report "Return to Vietnam" and sign up for this tour!



MILITARY HISTORICAL TOURS, INC.



27th Annual VHPA Reunion

Brought to you by



the SoCal Chapter

June 30 - July 5, 2010

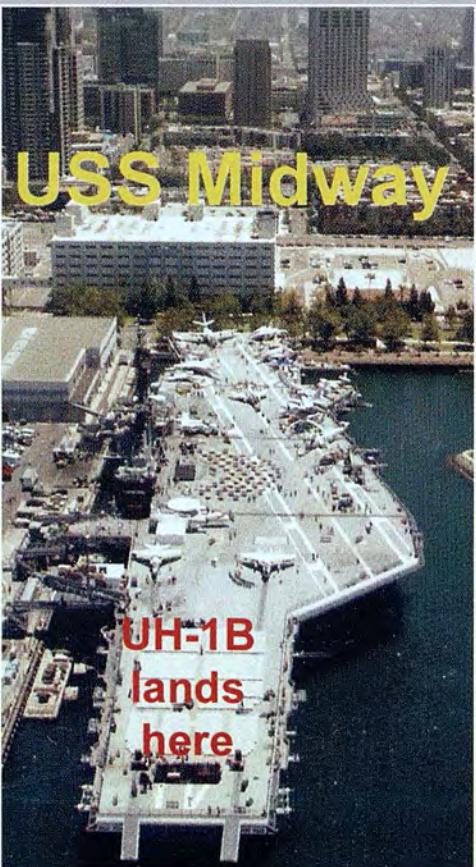
The VHPA's National Reunion Committee is teaming with the Southern California (SoCal) Chapter to bring you the...

2010 Reunion in the Marriott San Diego Hotel & Marina.

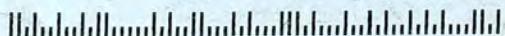
Schedule Highlights Include:

WED, JUNE 30 – Early Bird Reception
THU, JULY 1 – Golf, 1st Time Attendee Reception, Welcome Reception, Unit TOCs
FRI, JULY 2 – Annual Business Meeting and Spouse/Guest Event, Luncheon with guest speaker, BBQ Dinner on USS Midway
SAT, JULY 3 – Coronado Parade, Helicopter Rides (OH-58, UH-1B, CH-21), lots of city tours, dinner & evening with your unit or chapter or flight class or your other friends
SUN, JULY 4 – Memorial Service, Brunch, more tours, Banquet, Fireworks
MON, JULY 5 – Enjoy San Diego or return home

Visit www.vhpareunion.org about Dec 15th for details, ticket prices, registration and hotel reservations.



In addition to our traditional mini-reunions, War Story Contests, Historical Presentation Forum, and vendor room, this year we have a limited number of Unit TOCs (a business room dedicated to a unit for several days). We hope to add new games to the Poker parties and to have keg beer available most of the time. All in one central location.



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Gary Roush received this letter through our web site, it reads:

Members of the VHPA

My name is SSG Will Hurst. I work at the 11th Armored Cav Regimental Museum on Fort Irwin, California.

There is a tradition here where the units visiting us for training will paint their Co, Troop, Bat, BDE, or DIV Guidon on the huge "rock pile" that we have outside the gates (see the attached pic).

Anyways, I got word through a visitor that a unit that once trained and/or SRP'd while here enroute to Vietnam had painted their Guidon in a different area, next to what had been the main access road at the time. He said that everyone in that unit was KIA in Vietnam. The only information that he had about them was that they were "D 7 Cav" and he indeed pointed out the rock to me (see attached photos). His concern was that over the years, it had been maintained (repainted) regularly and that lately it was really starting to look faded and neglected. I couldn't disagree with him as we were barely able to locate the rock!

I've attached two photos, one from the roadside and one of the rock itself. Are you able to assist us with identifying exactly who this belonged to?

The Museum staff here on Fort Irwin would hate to think of something this significant becoming "forgotten" and left to be neglected. If this guidon indeed belonged to such a unit, then it would be highly significant as it would be the only rock (out of hundreds) here on Fort Irwin where the entire unit was lost.

Any information that you may about it would be invaluable appreciated.

Thanks for your time. Very respectfully,

***SSG Hurst, William P.
11 ACR Museum NCOIC***

E-Mail: [REDACTED]



Gary answered the young Staff Sergeant...

Hi Will,

It is probably either D/7/1 CAV or D/7/17 CAV, but there is not enough detail to make it out. In any case, no unit got completely wiped out in Vietnam that we are aware of so we think that is an exaggeration and not true.

I suspect the guidon was painted by a unit who went through training at your facility after Vietnam, we will be glad to run your photos and your RFI in our newsletter in the hopes that one of our 8,500 plus active members can help you in your quest.

Regards,

***Gary Roush, President,
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association***

***Do any of our members know anything about this mystery?
If so, send Gary an e-mail and he will pass it on...***