



# THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

2008 Vol. 26, No. 6

Special Enlarged Edition Featuring Christmas Stories From Vietnam



THE YEAR WAS 1972, NIXON HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THE WAR WAS OVER. DAN FOX WAS ASKED TO FLY UP TO DALAT TO PICK UP A "SMALL" PINE TREE TO DECORATE THE DAY ROOM FOR 525TH MI GROUP. THE FULL TEXT OF HIS "FLYING CHRISTMAS TREES" STORY BEGINS ON PAGE 6.

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Our Christmas tree placed under a cargo parachute - this was the chapel on the "Golf Course" of the 1st Air Cav. Division, An Khe, Vietnam in December of 1965.

*James Oden ~ 478th HH (Sky Crane) Co. Rogers, AR*

The man who took this picture lets us know.... "As far as I can remember, this is an Army Caribou. I had just purchased my camera at the PX at Quan Loi and was waiting to cross the runway when it landed, they would resupply the area often. I just happened to be waiting and I loaded my camera and took the picture. It was December of 1969.

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

## PRESIDENTS COLUMN

Well, 2008 is almost gone, Christmas is rapidly approaching and I would like to wish all VHPA members and their families a very Happy Holiday. I hope 2008 was a good year for all of you and that 2009 will be even better.

This was a great year for the VHPA. Our reunion in San Antonio was excellent, our membership is up over 8,000; the highest ever, we currently have 11 active chapters with 5 in the process of activation (Boston, South Carolina "Palmetto Chapter", Fort Rucker, North Alabama and Virginia). Hopefully they will all be operational by the first of the year.

Our EC and RC have firmed up the 2011, 2012 and 2013 reunion cities. As I mentioned in my earlier column Orlando, New Orleans and San Francisco have been approved. The dates are still being negotiated, but it looks like Orlando and New Orleans are going to be a few weeks off the 4th of July and San Francisco will be back on the 4th. We will see if the changes cause any fluctuation in members attending.

VHPA has donated \$500 toward the presentation of "Touch of Home" shown at Arlington National Cemetery on 9 November. Some of you may have seen it at the San Antonio Reunion. It is an excellent production done by Cheryl and Pat Fries of Arrowhead Films. They are also responsible for "In the Shadow of the Blade" and great friends of VHPA. Jim Fulbrook, our Junior Member at Large, represented us at the program.

John Penny has volunteered to be our in house Book Reviewer. There will be reports in the AVIATOR on books he has reviewed. Look for his columns in this and future issues of the magazine. This is a good example of volunteerism. John has generously agreed to donate his time to review books deemed of interest to VHPA members. If you



Jack Salm

would like to volunteer please let me know of your desire to help. We always need assistance. Mike Law has been looking for folks for the Membership Committee. If you would like to volunteer you service contact Mike at [REDACTED]

Several Reunion venues that have not been overly publicized as needing help are the War Stories and the Historical Presentation Forum (HPF) overseen by Gary Roush and Jim Fulbrook along with the Golf and Poker Tournaments which are organized by Mike Whitten and me. We all can always use assistance in organizing these events.

Some of you may not be aware that the Membership Directory is available in three formats, online at <http://www.vhpaservices.com>, by CD (these two formats include e-mail and phone numbers) and the paper form. Also available are DVDs of the 2006 (\$20), 2007 (\$30), and 2008 (\$30) reunion war stories and historical presentations. They each contain at least six hours of viewing and make great Christmas gifts.

*Again, HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL.*

*Jack Salm, President*

**E-mail items to The Aviator at:  
[editor@vhpa.org](mailto:editor@vhpa.org)**

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Looking for memorabilia from Air Cavalry, Assault Helicopter, NETT, UTT, ICCS, Support, Medical, Transportation and Special units. Patches, Uniforms, Headgear, unit "Business" cards, Propaganda, Printed matter, Plaques, Souvenirs, Party Suits & Novelty items are all of interest. This material is wanted for use in historical exhibits and information for a book. I have numerous references. What can I do for you?



John Conway  
[REDACTED]

Eve [REDACTED]

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**I WAS CONTACTED A FEW YEARS AGO** by the pilot that was with my brother, W01 Tommie A. Rolf, when he was killed in Vietnam on May 20, 1968. It was such a shock to get that phone call, that I do not remember too much of the conversation. I would like to e-mail the man who called, but do not have his name anymore. Can you help?

Sincerely,  
Kathleen Anplina

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**DEAR SIR,**

Someone left a copy of "THE 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION - VIETNAM 1965 - 1969 in the 1/9th hospitality room in San Antonio. The inside cover has the name LARRY W DAVIS, among other names, written in red ink. The phone number listed for him in the directory does not reach him. I would love to return this book to its owner. My phone number is [REDACTED] and my E-mail is [REDACTED]

Jim Pratt  
B/1/9 Cav 1967

**HI, MY NAME IS GEORGE MURPHY** (Call Sign "Pathfinder 18") I am trying to locate a Pilot from this unit a James Manifold who is on the membership manifest but with no address listed.

On May 22, 1969, he was the Flight Commander on an insertion to a hilltop just south of Dak To, his Co-Pilot was killed on the way in (Douglas F. Moore) and after a long three hours he came back in to get myself and three others out. If you have any information for me please contact me at [REDACTED]

Thank you,  
George Murphy

**DEAR MEMBERS,**

On October 25, 2008, Florida State University honored the wounded warriors at the pre-game football contest before their game with Virginia Tech. That was a very moving ceremony and it is good to see the students support such an event.

Next came a flyover by four CH 47s at about 100 feet above the stadium. WOW! Crews were hanging out the windows and out of the rear of the aircraft waving to the crowd. The a/c came from the 169th stationed at Hunter Army A/F. At half time the pilots and crews were recognized in the end zone. The FSU cheerleaders even joined them there for pictures.

My was I happy and proud to see the outpouring for the military. Incidentally, our Seminoles won the game 30 to 20. Go Noles.

Sincerely,  
Gene Kobes (LTC Ret)

**DEAR EDITOR OF THE VHPA AVIATOR,**

*Subject: Request for In-Country Army copter "nicknames"  
1961-73 Vietnam*

This is John Brennan, active member of the VHCMA and the 114th Avn Co Assn. I'm collecting "nicknames" (i.e. FLYING COFFIN, IRON BUTTERFLY) that in-country Army copter crews painted on their aircraft during their Vietnam tours, 1961-73.

Future book by an aviation publisher is in the making and I have cataloged over 2,000 names to date. I expect that number to exceed 2,500 when complete. I would very much like to include as many PERSONALIZED copter names as possible. Photos of "names" are fine but are not necessary to be included in the database section of the book, the "names" alone will do.

The second part of this book project is the photo collection of heli-copter "nose art" that includes those "names", artwork, graffiti, and/or everything & anything that was painted officially and unofficially on in-country Army copters in 1961-73.

Please send your "nickname" info and/or scanned "nose art"  
pic's to [REDACTED]

Regards, John Brennan, former SP5, 114 AHC,  
Flight Operations Coordinator, Vinh Long AAF, Mekong  
Delta, 1970-71



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Lash Wisener, the contributor of our last issue's "Old Eddie" article **DAVID,**

I just wanted to give credit to an excellent author (Max Lucado, In The Eye of the Storm, pp.221, 225-226) for his description of the 'Old Eddie' survival story that was in the article I sent in, and was published in the September/October issue of the Aviator Magazine.

I also want to thank the VHPA for publishing the article and for the comments that came from Ernie Rickenbacker's son Scott on the death of his father. I feel like I have lost an old friend. I send my condolences to the family and friends. Ernie was a good man, an exceptional aviator, and he made a check ride fun!

*Always,  
Lash Wisener  
Panther 37*

### TO THE EDITOR,

Please let your members know that the Naval Institute Press (NIP) has just published my Vietnam memoir of piloting a Huey gunship while I was in the Marines. The title is "Gunbird Driver" and is available on Amazon.com (books) as well as at the NIP.

This may seem self-serving, but I promise little money is in it for me. I just thought folks might be interested in the Marine experience. Little is out there from that point of view.

*Have a great day, Dave Ballentine*

*Gary Roush informs me that we have had about 40 USMC helicopter pilots that have joined the VHPA over the last few weeks. Hopefully we will have plenty of interest in your book from both them and our Army members. Editor*

### ATTENTION all Army Aviation Related Publications AAAA has opened the submission window for its 4TH ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST!

*Any AAAA member in good standing  
may participate in the 2008 Photo Contest.*

**Awards will be given to the best photographic works  
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**For complete rules and entry forms,  
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**This is one of your great AAAA membership benefits.  
Check it out and enter to win!**

## WORDS OF WISDOM FROM BOB HOPE

May 29, 1903 - July 27, 2003

The man that made Christmas in Vietnam  
so memorable for so many...



### ON TURNING 70

'You still chase women, but only downhill.'

### ON TURNING 80

'That's the time of your life when even your  
birthday suit needs pressing.'

### ON TURNING 90

'You know you're getting old when the candles  
cost more than the cake.'

### ON TURNING 100

'I don't feel old. In fact I don't feel anything until noon.  
Then it's time for my nap.'

### ON GIVING UP HIS EARLY CAREER, BOXING

'I ruined my hands in the ring ... the referee kept stepping on them.'

### ON NEVER WINNING AN OSCAR

'Welcome to the Academy Awards or,  
as it's called at my home, 'Passover'.'

### ON GOLF

'Golf is my profession. Show business is just to pay the green fees.'

### ON PRESIDENTS

'I have performed for 12 presidents and entertained only six.'

### ON WHY HE CHOSE SHOWBIZ FOR HIS CAREER

'When I was born, the doctor said to my mother,  
'Congratulations. You have an eight-pound ham!'

### ON RECEIVING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

'I feel very humble, but I think I have the strength of character to fight it.'

### ON HIS FAMILY'S EARLY POVERTY!

'Four of us slept in the one bed. When it got cold,  
mother threw on another brother.'

### ON HIS SIX BROTHERS

'That's how I learned to dance. Waiting for the bathroom.'

### ON HIS EARLY FAILURES

'I would not have had anything to eat if it wasn't for the stuff the audience threw at me.'

### ON GOING TO HEAVEN

'I've done benefits for ALL religions. I'd hate to blow the hereafter on a technicality.'



# FLYING CHRISTMAS TREES

I recently began working a project to rescue my old Vietnam slides from 72' & 73' before they are completely destroyed from the ravages of time. Many of you know what a daunting task this can be . . . scanning your old slides and then laboriously repairing the spots of mold and blotches of dust, etc. This digital repair process can often take hours just for one slide, depending on its condition.

Anyway, I "bit the bullet" as the old saying goes and started scanning.

As I looked at the slide images I had captured so long ago I began to relive those hectic days remembering the sights, sounds and visceral feelings I experienced while flying combat assault missions at An Loc with the 1st Air CAV, A/229th while stationed at Beinh Hoa Air Base and then later flying with the 358th Aviation Detachment supporting the 525th Military Intelligence (MI) Group.

Time not only affects the deterioration of our slides but it also affects the deterioration of our memory of these past events as well. I like to refer to my memory lapses as "senior moments" as I realize that I am not the young . . . "wobbly one" that I once was when I was flying in Vietnam. That said . . . I found the images I had captured in Vietnam to be literally "hard wired" into my brain cells and these memories are still as fresh and vivid today as they were when I took the slides almost 36 years ago.

I remember the U.S. Vietnam war effort was on a "draw down" toward the middle of August in 1972 when the 1st Air CAV was re-deployed back to the states, but since I didn't have enough "time-in-country" I was reassigned to the 358th Aviation Detachment to complete my tour. The 358th was known as the Volunteers "Delta to the DMZ" with a vital aviation mission to support the 525 MI Group's



Refueling 880 for the flight home. Note how the troop doors have been removed to make room for the trees.

"human intelligence" gathering mission in each one of the corp areas throughout Vietnam.

I was quickly moved to Saigon and began flying out of Hotel Three near Tan Son Nhut Air Base. A few weeks later one of our Huey's crashed in a mountainous area in the central highlands near Dalat and it took nearly 35 hours to rescue the severely injured crew, thankfully they all survived. I was then transferred up to Nha Trang to be a member of the replacement flight crew supporting the 525 MI Group's Corp Headquarters Detachment.

When I first arrived at the Detachment I found everyone was friendly but somehow cautious of the "new kid on the block". In hindsight, I guess I should have expected this reaction following the previous flight crew's recent accident. I did realize that I had to prove myself before I would be completely accepted as a true member of their organization so I spent the next few weeks learning everything I could about the MI organization and how they accomplished their mission in Vietnam but just to make things a little

tougher for me I discovered that these guys all spoke a new language called "MI" and I just spoke "Aviation".

I recall we were on a flight in early November and were told to tune in to a radio broadcast at precisely 12:00 noon to hear an announcement from President Nixon. As we circled Qui Nhon we listened to Nixon's voice on our ADF saying: "the

war is over" and by early December the Detachment's morale was pretty low. Everyone was homesick for the holidays, military units were leaving country at an accelerated pace and besides that . . . the war was supposed to be over!

It was decided that everyone needed a little holiday cheer to boost their spirits and raise unit morale. It was also decided that a real Christmas tree was needed for the upcoming holiday party in the

day room; however the only place to get a real pine tree was way up in the mountains near Dalat. I immediately volunteered to fly a Christmas tree back in our Huey on

our next flight up to Dalat the following day and made a phone call asking them to get a couple of small trees ready for our visit.


We arrived at the MI Detachment's outpost in Dalat early the next morning and the trees were waiting for us. So far the plan was working perfectly but when we tried to load them inside our Huey for the flight back home they wouldn't fit!

We tried everything we could think of and even considered



The Author, Dan Fox stands by Huey #810 at Dalat Lake in 1972.





cutting the trees in half at one point. Finally we removed the two access panel doors so the trees could hang out both sides of the helicopter. The flight back to Nha Trang was fairly uneventful but I must say this was the first and only time I ever had to reach through tree branches to tune my radio!

When we landed everyone was

excited and pitched in to set up the Christmas trees and decorate them with some lights and ornaments. A couple of days before the party I was also able to get a small pig from the vile so we could have a roast for our Christmas party.

Needless to say, everyone had a great time at our holiday party that day and after my "flying Christmas tree" mission I realized I had finally

proven myself, our flight crew was "golden" and we simply could do "no wrong" as we continued to fly for the 525 MI Group Detachment there in Nha Trang.

**As they say . . .  
"the rest is history".**

### ***Christmas of 1963 was approaching.***

I was a 1Lt stationed at Soc Trang with the 93rd Trans Co and those bedeviled CH-21's. The Special Forces had numerous camps located in the Delta. We worked closely with them and I had a special place in my heart for those guys for what they did and what they were exposed to. I scrounged bread, fruit, vegetables, anything I could get from our mess hall, of course I added some booze.

My Commander, Maj. Ed Seymore, gave me permission to fly a chopper on Christmas Day after informing him of my intentions. I don't recall for sure who was with me that day but maybe it was Lt. C.J. Miller or Lt. Passo. Anyway we made a sign from butcher paper that said "Merry Christmas Special Forces". We flew into the camp unannounced, shut down,

unfurled our sign and taped it to our chopper before anyone got to the landing zone. When a couple of the Special Forces walked out and saw the sign they almost wept. They knew they had not requested a chopper and were actually lounging on a day off. When we presented them with the goodies they were speechless. As we flew back to Soc Trang I was satisfied that we had brightened some very special people's Christmas day.

Christmas Eve of 1967 found me at LZ English. Someone had the idea that flying a Huey around the firebase playing Christmas carols would be a good idea. Unfortunately the aviators of A Co. 229th Avn Bn, 1st Cav Div. were in an intoxicated state and didn't cotton to the Huey and its carols. Some of them dug up their pen-gun flares and when the Huey came over,

they launched the flares at the Huey. Col. Rattan, the 1st Brigade Cdr, came up the street looking for me as I was their commander, he was irate to say the least. His concern, which quickly became my concern, was that the ammo dump might be ignited by the flares for it had gone up in a big bang only days before. Certain things you never forget, particularly about Christmas. I remember it well. Another Christmas spent half a world away.

**Eugene A. Beyer  
Bandit 6**

**A/229th Avn Bn. 1st Cav. Div.**

Now enjoying Christmas at  
PO Box 1805, Johnson City, TX. 78636

### ***A Christmas Story by James "Scotty" Scott***

I arrived in Vietnam around Thanksgiving of 1969 and was assigned to A Company - "The Pelicans" - of the 123rd Avn. Bn., Americal Division in Chu Li. I had been in the Company only a short time when I received a letter from my wife telling me that my Grandfather had passed away. I was still recovering from the loss of my family member back home when a tragedy struck the Pelicans. One of the first guys to befriend me when I got to A Company, Ward Hooper, and all others aboard, including a Chaplin, were killed when one of our Huey's hit the side of a mountain.

Both of these events  
and the idea of  
being away

from home for Christmas for the first time left me a little depressed and a lot homesick. My spirits were lifted somewhat when I found out that Bob Hope and his troop were coming to Chu Li and since I wasn't scheduled to fly, I was going to get to go down with a couple of other pilots and see the big holiday show.

To my dismay on Christmas Eve, the day before Bob's show, I was informed that the schedule had been changed and I would be flying the next day. The next morning, Christmas Day, was an early wakeup. I got dressed, got some breakfast, and reported to flight Ops. My AC, sorry I can't remember his name but I can see his face clear as day, and I were told to fly to the 196th Infantry headquarters and get our flying orders for the rest of the day.

Once at the 196th we were told we would spend the whole day flying mail, clean uniforms, and hot food - turkey, dressing and all the trimmings, to units in the field.

Our crew spent the next 10 hours doing just this. We would find a given unit and land to unload our cargo. The soldiers would come running to the aircraft just like it was Santa's sleigh. Everywhere we landed we were met with big smiles and handshakes. To them these letters from loved ones and a hot meal meant a way to help ease the pain of being away from home, family, and friends during this time of celebration and hope.

We finished after dusk and flew home in the dark. I was tired, it had been a long day. But, as I sat on my bunk that night, I thought to myself that this day of flying far over shadowed a missed performance of any show. This had been a wonderful Christmas. One I'll never forget.

**James "Scotty" Scott  
Pelican 15, 37**





## FOR JIMMY

There was a time in Vietnam  
I did not know my friends.  
A newbie pilot there I was,  
But God His blessing sends.

I knew a man in that far land,  
To me he said, "Clear Right."  
He charged that sixty up for bear,  
And stood ready for the fight.

This pilot stood in awe of him  
And watched in disbelief.  
He flew all day and worked all night.  
I simply called him "Chief."

There is no simple answer  
To why I love him so;  
I guess because he went with me  
Where no one wants to go.

©Copyright November 2007 by William N. Janes, Sr.

*Author's Note: I wanted to remember the special relationship between Aircraft Commanders and Crew chiefs in Vietnam, and especially mine.*

*Wino, this one is for you, Bill  
November 4, 2007*

## LELA RUCK Awarded VHPA Scholarship

My name is Lela Ruck and I am currently a junior at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) where I am majoring in microbiology with a minor in chemistry. Throughout my life I have been truly blessed because I have received a wonderful education. The support of my family, including my parents, has created an environment where learning and excelling was always praised and encouraged. This environment helped me to become an intelligent student and a leader.

Both my grandfather and my father spent time in the military. My grandfather, Fred M. Ruck, was a 30 year veteran who retired from his position as Inspector General at Fort Bliss, Texas in 1970. My father, Lance E. Ruck, was drafted in 1968, and served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1970-1971 with B/158/101 in Northern I Corps. He is a life member of the VHPA and the 101st Airborne Division Association, where he currently serves as National Parliamentarian. Although my father and grandfather were both retired from the military by the time I was born I still consider myself to be from a military family. Being a part of a military family I feel that I was taught strong values.



These values have made me a better student, a better friend, a better daughter, and a better person overall. Having these strong values helps me to feel confident and drives me towards my ultimate goal of helping others.

I am truly grateful that I was chosen to receive this scholarship. This scholarship has shown me that my hard work can be rewarded. It will help me to continue in my pursuit to attend medical school and become a physician. One day I hope to help people on a personal basis as a physician and on a grander scale by doing research that may someday benefit everyone. Thank you for helping me to reach my ultimate goal.

Thomas H. Payne of the VHPA Scholarship Committee reports that Lela is the recipient of the VHPA Memorial Scholarship Honoring the 361st Aviation Company, "Pink Panthers"; so named because they donated the monies that fund the scholarship.

Thomas H. Payne of the VHPA Scholarship Committee reports that Lela is the recipient of the VHPA Memorial Scholarship Honoring the 361st Aviation Company, "Pink Panthers"; so named because they donated the monies that fund the scholarship.

## Black Stetsons in Vietnam

### "Rotorheads Return"

10 - 26 May 2009

Tour Hosts: 1LT James "Mike"

Sprayberry, USA MOH

& Julie Kink (L'il Sis)

Tour Leader: John Powell, 1/9 Cav

Note: If you enjoyed John Mackel's AA Report "Return to Vietnam" this is the tour for you!



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# THE 1972 BATTLE OF KONTUM REUNION

*Jack Heslin and Jim Stein*

After 36 years, MACV Team 33 held its first reunion. The reunion was held on the weekend of 18 – 21 April 2008 in Denver CO. The event came about as a result of team members making contact through the Battle of Kontum web site authored and hosted by Jack Heslin - [www.thebattleofkontum.com](http://www.thebattleofkontum.com). The reunion was organized by MACV advisors Jack Finch and Ray Hall. Two VHPA members were also present for the reunion, Jim Stein and Jack Heslin. MACV Team 33 supported the 23rd ARVN Division during the Battle of Kontum which was part of the spring offensive of 1972. The battle was one of the largest battles of the Vietnam War and resulted in three NVA divisions being defeated at the City of Kontum in the Central Highlands. The battle was considered pivotal in the successful defense of the Highlands. During the battle more than 6,000 ARVN soldiers died and an estimated 18,000 NVA soldiers were killed. Reunion attendees brought "Show and Tell" items such as maps and photos. Jack Heslin brought copies

of taped interviews of the advisors made during the battle back in June 1972. Many of the advisors were able to hear their own taped interviews for the first time.

The reunion was very successful by any measure - Team members and guests had an opportunity to share stories and share memories from the 1972 Battle of Kontum. The exchange of memories between the aviators and the MACV Advisors was very meaningful and for the first time, we were able to meet face to face after 36 years. The presence of Gen Ly Tong Ba the 23rd ARVN Commander and his Division Surgeon, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai added a great deal to the reunion. Many of the participants wanted an opportunity to meet other pilots who flew in the battle. A suggestion was made that the group may come to a future VHPA reunion so that they would have an opportunity to meet some of the pilots who supported them. An additional page was added to the "Battle of Kontum" web site that provides comments and pictures from the reunion, all are welcome to visit the

site. Those who participated in the reunion are listed here: Gen Ly Tong Ba, CG 23rd ARVN Div, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai, Medical Doctor, 23rd ARVN Div. Jack Truby, Senior Advisor, J.W. "Bill" Bricker, Deputy Senior Advisor, Jack "Spook" Finch G-3 Air Advisor, Richard C. Gudat, G4 Advisor, Ray Hall, Signal Advisor, Thomas P. McKenna, Senior Advisor, 44th Regiment, Wade B. Lovings, Deputy Advisor, 44th Regiment, Stephen "Mark" Truhan, Ranger Advisor, Ben Het, Jim Stein, Scout Pilot B/H Troop 7/17th Air Cav and Jack Heslin, S-3 52nd CAB / Asst. S-3 17th CAG.

The 17th Combat Aviation Group provided most of the Army aviation support during the battle. The units listed below reflect the 17th CAG in May of 1972: 57th AHC Gladiators, 180th ASHC Big Windy, 361st AWC Pink Panthers, 604th Transportation Company, Security Detachment, Hawks Claw – Abn TOW 2 NUH-1B (arrived in Pleiku April 29th), H Troop (Air) 7/17th CAV (Provisional), H Troop (Air) 10th Cav (-) (Provisional)



TOP Row left to right: Jack Finch, Doctor Giap Phuc Hai, Gen Ly Tong Ba, Mark Truhan, Jack Heslin, Bill Bricker, Ray Hall

BOTTOM Row left to right: Richard Gudat, Jim Stein, Tom McKenna, Jack Truby

## AVIATOR PRIVACY STATEMENT

The VHPA Aviator contains member privacy information the VHPA considers proprietary and confidential. This information, including but not limited to the VHPA Chapter list, shall not be used for commercial solicitation purposes or for any correspondence related thereto without prior written authorization from the VHPA president.

Correspondence relating to commercial purposes or solicitations shall only be sent to those officers, committee chairmen, and staff listed on page 3.



# THE LAST RECON PLATOON

On 15 May, 1969, two days after having located what became known as "Ham-burger Hill", B Troop 2/17 Air Cav, 101st Abn Div was sent at dawn south to Chu Lai. The Americal Division had declared a tactical emergency and the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division was ordered to augment this division in what was called "Operation Lamar Plain". By 1000 hrs B Troop was fully operational in the AO (area of operations) east of Tam Ky, or Death Valley as we knew it.

On 2 June 1969, in response to a few potshots the B Troop Aero rifles (Infantry) are inserted at 1240 hrs on Hill 376, in the vicinity of Tam Ky, RVN. Eighteen men, including a medic and 2 Vietnamese scouts who fled the area are immediately surrounded by hundreds of well-bunkered NVA troops. The Platoon is pinned down for several hours and suffers heavy losses. Only a few are able to return fire. Several infantry companies are inserted later in the day and the siege is broken but not without heavy losses on both sides. The following day at noon the survivors are returned to Tam Ky, the bodies and the blood stained equipment of our KIA's are also returned. We had inserted our men but we never extracted their souls.

This action was a bitter pill for the Banshee troopers. We did not realize then that we would carry this event deep inside us for years to come. To one degree or another, we have carried a sense of helplessness and guilt, which have haunted us all these many years. Fortunately, a yearning to return to the Hill would become a reality.

26 May 1999, the Last Recon Platoon once again assembles at Los Angeles International Airport. One by one, the platoon's members fly in from all over the United States. At 0115 hrs the platoon departs enroute to Vietnam, arriving in Saigon on 28 June. MISSION: to land on Hill 376 and extract the five souls left

behind on 2 June 1969.

30 May 1999, the Last Recon Platoon flies into Danang and sets up a base of operations at the Furama Resort in China Beach.

1 June 1999, the Last Recon Platoon, a Task Force from B Troop 2/17 Air Cav, reinforced by aviation assets from the 5th Mech Division and the Americal Division, augmented by a volunteer dependent contingent, departs Danang enroute to Tam Ky arriving at the assembly area at approximately 0800 hrs. A Vietnamese scout who had previously reconnoitered the area leads the party to the top of Hill 376 after stops at three staging areas. It is Children's Day in Vietnam, plenty of candy is brought along for them at every stop. Vietnamese porters provide logistical support. The final assault is launched from Mr. Minh's home, the last hamlet on the hill.

The Task Force reaches the summit at approximately 12:40 hrs where a 2 June 1969 survivor finds that nothing has changed. Evidence of bunkers has not been erased by 30 seasons of monsoons. The boulders where the platoon leader and three others took shelter are still there, silent witnesses to a tragedy. The grass is taller, the only change. The survivor tells the story, step by step, walking through the area, marking the place where our KIA's fell, where the platoon was positioned. A story of anxious hours, of colored smoke, of death, of gunships firing rockets, of fear and of bravery. Of heavy monsoon rains that precluded reinforcement for several hours.

The tactical situation having been described, the positions marked, it was time for the 91st Psalm. A cobra pilot who spent hours on station talking to the survivor read it. After 30 years they realize who they were. They had known the voices and call signs but not their faces.

Name tracings from the Vietnam Memorial are read one by one and one by one they are burned, the ashes symbolically

left on the hill for the wind to play with:  
Richard Brech  
Joseph La Pointe - Congressional Medal of Honor  
Dennis Prince  
Jimmie Reed  
Emanuel Saunders

*Their souls are now free  
to wonder the heavens.  
We never forgot them.*

As if on cue, the same monsoon rain of 1969 begins to fall and at the same time, reminding us that there are forces more powerful over which we have no control. The return to the staging area is wet but joyous; a sense of fulfillment is felt by everyone, we are free at last. We sought and found inner peace. We sought and found closure. We extracted them. The war is over.

## Banshee 46

(The following day at 1230 at a Church in Tam Ky a memorial service was held. The church was decorated with fresh flowers and a choir of young Vietnamese girls, looking beautiful in white ao dais, plus young boys in white shirts and ties, sang for us. Through large open windows bright sunlight entered the nave and in the midst of the service butterflies, the symbol of life, flew in and out of the church)

*The Author, Banshee 46 was the call sign of then Fist Lieutenant Fernando De Pierris, Lift Section Leader, B Troop. He led the assault on the hill and returned once to bring the besieged platoon ammunition on what he thought would be his last mission. Miraculously, the NVA did not shoot him down. On 2 June 1999 him and his group met with NVA counterparts who also fought on Hill 376. When he asked them why they had not shot him down, a 71 year Vietnamese colonel replied: "because if we had, we would not be here today talking to each other".*

## FORT WOLTERS' MOST FAMOUS ROTOR BLADES NOW GRACE NATION- AL VIETNAM WAR MUSEUM SITE

On August 16th, 2008, at a well attended party, The National Vietnam War Museum raised one of its three UH-1s on the museum property. While the Huey is a symbol of the Vietnam War to all the participants, another artifact with even more meaning to the majority of Vietnam era helicopter pilots, joined the Huey a few weeks later. With no pomp and circumstance, the refurbished rotor blades

that stood at the old Mineral Wells Holiday Inn were installed at the museum site, just to the west of the mounted Huey.

All of us who took that post solo dip in the Holiday Inn pool remember walking proudly past the crossed blades, and a great many of us returned in dry clothes to be photographed posing in front of them. Now, with the blades refurbished by the Fort Wolters Chapter, and permanently emplaced on the museum property, VHPA members traveling to or through the DFW/Mineral Wells area can stop at the museum grounds and update those cherished memories with a contemporary photo.

For more about the museum activities,  
visit our website at  
<http://www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org>.





# CHRISTMAS DAY 1970

BY KEN BRADLEY, OUTLAW 66

**The latest rumor** was that there would be a cease fire truce tomorrow, Christmas day 1970. News like this is too good to be true. Some pilots checked flight operations for mission assignments others headed to the club early. During the evening the mission board stayed blank. Maybe the rumor was true after all.

It was time to head to the showers to cleanup then head to the club to join the celebration. With only cold water available the shower would be quick. The only time anyone took a long shower was the night a pilot persuaded a stripper from a traveling show that she could use the shower. I did say the water was cold. Anyway that is another story.

The celebration at the club had started early and no one was feeling any pain. The beer can castles towered higher and higher. About 1:30 a.m. I crashed on my cot knowing there would be an entire day to recover. The bed started shaking around 3:30 a.m. Christmas morning. Out of the semi conscious haze a voice was saying get up, get up, get up. You have to fly. Trying to decline because of drunkenness and hangover didn't work. The voice just replied they couldn't wake up any other aircraft commanders except the XO. They didn't know what the mission would be but they needed two slicks and we were to take off immediately for Ca Mau.

Ca Mau is located towards to bottom end of the Vietnamese delta between the U Minh and Nam Can jungles. The U Minh jungle is to the west and the Nam Can is located to the south. The local VC used the airfield as their practice firing range. Local kids would occasional-

ly deposit an armed grenade under a helicopter first aid kit. If it was not found before takeoff the vibration of the helicopter would shake the grenade loose so that it and the helicopter would explode.

Some how they had found a new'by for the co pilot, so with the gunner and chief resuming their sleep in the back, we pulled pitch and headed south. The XO took the lead and we followed at a safe distance. This was a very loose formation. As we turned away from the lights of Vinh Long visual contact with the ground became non existent. There were no lights on the ground, no stars in the sky and no moon. Only the instrument lights and the navigation lights of lead were visible.

The window in my door was wide open so the fresh air would help suppress the drunken urge to redecorate the cockpit. Feeling the need to hold my head out the window I told the co pilot "you've got it". The quick reply "no I can't" brought my head back in real fast and any urges would just have to be suppressed. I'm sure he thought he was about to die and I was sort of wishing I would.

The lights of Can Tho were a welcome sight. There was ground below us after all. As we got closer to the city the lights seemed to move from the right of lead to the left and back again. "Lead am I weaving or are we weaving?" Lead answered that he was weaving meant we both were weaving and that somehow that made me feel

a little better. Passing Can Tho put us back into total darkness. Having made it this far gave us a little hope that we would actually make it to Ca Mau. Fortunately the rest to the flight was uneventful and the fresh air was not needed quite so much.

After dawn with the aircraft refueled and inspected we waited for our mission. Eventually an officer arrived and the XO was given the mission to take the Christmas

where. We landed so many places and handed money out to so many Vietnamese troops that I am sure that we were also paying the VC. That day they were friendly VC.

By late morning the paymaster mission was complete and instead of sending us home we were then assigned to haul supplies for a US support base on the eastern edge of the U Minh. Early that afternoon the XO arrived with the chow at the

same time we returned. None of the crew had eaten since yesterday so they got in the chow line. The chief had his plate full and the gunner was not far behind when a Lt Col came over and ordered me to get the crew out of the line. He said the crew got hot chow and slept in nice beds every night and they could not eat in his chow line. The chief and gunner sat their plate's right where they were and returned to the aircraft with



*Still up to his old tricks - Johnny Grant, the "Unofficial Mayor of Hollywood" poses with the Pussycat Dolls in May of 2003. Mr. Grant passed away on January 9, 2008, the USO has quite a tribute to him on their web site: [USO.org](http://USO.org)*

meal to the remote U.S. troops in the Delta. Taking holiday chow to the troops is a real feel good mission. Our mission was to take a Vietnamese paymaster to give Christmas bonuses to the Vietnamese troops in the U Minh. Bummer, they woke us up for this?

We flew into clearing after clearing with some landing areas only a few hundred yards apart. In some places we could hover down only part way in the trees and the paymaster would drop the cash. I kept expecting the traditional greeting of ground fire. The truce held. There was not a single shot any-

the co-pilot.

Still hung-over I was in no mood for this bullshit. My crew would normally see more combat in one week than this ass would see in most of his tour. My crew was going to get fed even if we had to fly all the way across Vietnam. As I stormed into the command bunker to tell them we were leaving and would not return until the crew was fed, a message arrived to divert us to another mission. We were to report to Rach Gia.

Once airborne I called Paddy control and told them I would report for this new mission as soon as the crew



was fed. After a short delay, Paddy control told us to go direct and that food would be provided. As we sat down at Rach Gia an officer came up and asked for my call sign to verify if we were the right aircraft. With only two helicopters flying in the entire delta, it shouldn't have been hard to figure out we were it. After giving my call sign, Outlaw 66, the officer waived to a vehicle and Mr. Johnny Grant and some Hollywood starlets brought us sandwiches and sodas. The day had definitely changed and the entire crew was wide awake.

Mr. Grant had brought these starlets to Vietnam to boost troop morale. They were spending their Christmas for the soldiers and our job was to get them out to as many of the remote locations as possible.

The first stop was a small base at the North end of the U Minh and the girls sang and danced while we were fed even more food. These

guys at this base knew that as long as the crew was eating the girls were there. Eventually we figured out the same thing and cranked up for our next stop.

The plan for the rest of the day was to fly to the advisors furthest south in Vietnam and work our way North towards Cambodia. At each location there would be 2 to 4 U.S. advisors to a Vietnamese unit. These were the guys that spent day after day with the mud up to their butts, their lives depending on each other and a small force of Vietnamese that in some cases included VC. When the girls got out you could almost see these guys start floating in air. For the next 5 minutes the guys would talk to the girls and then we were off to the next location or to hot refuel. Often the girls would outnumber the advisors.

The sun got lower as we headed further north. By dusk we still had a couple of stops to make and no one

knew how long the Christmas truce would last. Under normal times we would have received fire at many of these areas. By the next stop it was getting dark but everything went OK. The last planned stop was a particularly bad area. The VC had the landing areas zeroed in and normally if you were on the ground more than a few seconds a mortar round would be headed your way. The game was that you would land, count to nine or ten and then hover to a new spot, then watch the mortar round explode at the first location. By this time you would have unloaded the supplies and would be pulling pitch.

As we approached this location the U.S. advisors reported signs of VC activity and they felt that it would be unsafe to land. The rest of the crew handed their helmets to the girls and the chief and gunner set them up so that they could talk to the guys on the ground while

we flew overhead.

After returning to Rach Gia, Mr. Grant leaned forward and asks if the crew would like to join them for supper. A quick glance at the crew showed the only possible answer was yes. It was a short ride into town and a Christmas supper the entire crew would remember. Then back to the Huey and reality.

The night flight back to Vinh Long some how did not seem as dark as the flight out that morning. Paddy Control told us that our unit, the 175 AHC was inquiring about us. We told them we were ok and on our way back to Vinh Long. The co pilot even tried his hand at night flight of the last aircraft flying in the delta on that Christmas day.

The crew and the soldiers on the ground owe a special thanks to Mr. Grant and the starlets that risked their lives to do so much for others on that Christmas day. Thank You.



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## Dear Mr. Roush,

Attached are some pictures from a Zippo lighter which I found in a old local cigarstore here in Arnhem (Holland) about 6 years ago. I am now trying to find out where it came from and also if the original owner might still be alive.

I have already contacted the webside from the 155 th, but they cannot help me other than to suggest I try you and the web site of the 162 th.

There are some little details I have already found out, first there is some texture scratched by hand in it (if you look closely) that says: 'Pouc Vinh' or close to it. Also, one of the members of the 155th has let ma know that the Vultures were the slick platoon's call sign for the 162nd ASHC.

Also scratched and inscribed on the lighter is the words: Frank Bay, Phouc Vinh RVN, 1965-1966. I've learned that the 162nd was stationed there in those years.

Hopefully some of your members can give me some information about that, or the zippo lighter itself such as where it might have come from and if Frank Bay might be the name of the owner himself.

If the owner is still alive and can be found, I will be glad to send it to him for free.

Thanks in advance and hopefully it will not take too long a time to help me.

## Best regards,

Erik Velthuis  
Eefde (near Arnhem)  
Holland



## \*\*\*\*\* THE HERITAGE CONTINUES \*\*\*\*\*

On the afternoon of 27 November 2006, Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Cooper of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment—the "Night Stalkers"—was leading a formation of six helicopters north of Baghdad. The formation comprised two AH-6 Little Bird attack helicopters (one flown by Cooper), two MH-6 troop-carrying Little Birds, and two MH-60 Black Hawks carrying Special Operations soldiers. When the formation was 50 kilometers from Baghdad, Cooper heard his wingman shout "Mayday!" An insurgent had hit the helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade, severing the tail rotor. Despite the damage, Cooper's wingman was able to land his helicopter without sustaining major injuries, and the other helicopters in the formation landed to assist.

The Black Hawks soon evacuated the downed pilots, leaving behind 20 special operators and the Little Bird pilots to set up a perimeter around the disabled helicopter. Forty minutes later, eight enemy anti-aircraft gun trucks approached the crash site, and Cooper took off in his Little Bird to investigate. He immediately came under attack by the enemy force but stayed in the air to



Adm. Eric T. Olson pins the Distinguished Service Cross on the uniform of Chief Warrant Officer 5 David F. Cooper during a ceremony Friday at Fort Campbell. Cooper is assigned to the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Fort Campbell. He was given the award for his heroic efforts during a firefight in central Iraq in November 2006. He is the first living servicemember to receive the award since the beginning of the Iraq war. (Beth Liggett Cogbill/The Leaf-Chronicle)

draw fire away from the exposed U.S. soldiers on the ground. Meanwhile, two more trucks unloaded enemy forces into a house about 800 yards away, where they began to set up mortars and machine guns.

Cooper immediately began attacking the numerically superior force using his Little Bird's miniguns and rockets. When his helicopter ran out of ammuni-

tion, Cooper landed and the men on the ground quickly unloaded the rockets from the downed helicopter and put them on Cooper's, despite intense enemy fire. Cooper took off and again started to pummel the enemy despite the bullets that were striking the helicopter inches from his face. When low fuel forced Cooper to land again, the soldiers on the ground used a Leatherman tool to remove an auxiliary fuel tank from the disabled helicopter and attach it to Cooper's Little Bird. Cooper went back into battle a third time, finishing off the trucks and mortar positions once and for all.

For Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Cooper's "complete disregard for his personal safety and extreme courage under fire," he became the first Night Stalker to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. "I just happened to be the guy there that day," Cooper said. "Any one of the Night Stalkers that's in this formation would have done the same thing I did. Note: The Distinguished Service Cross (the Army equivalent of the Navy Cross and the Air Force Cross, is second in precedence only to the Medal of Honor)



## 36 YEARS LATER

### A WAR STORY FROM JOE SHEPHERD, SCALP HUNTER 15 & PANTHER 26

The morning was clear and calm with fluffy popcorn clouds hanging around at several thousand feet. Even on this January morning in 1969 the temperature on the coast of central South Vietnam was quite comfortable. The day looked to be a great day for flying. No clouds to speak of; very little wind; and best of all we would not be flying in the coastal mountains. Our mission on this day was to stage out of Phan Rang, up the coast between our base camp at Phan Thiet and the huge complex at Cam Rahn Bay.

B troop, 7/17 Cav had been operating out of Phan Thiet since September. Our operational area extended up the coast to Cam Rahn Bay, west into the mountains to Dalat and Bao Loc, and south on the coastal plains to Vung Tao. Most of what we encountered were well organized VC units, with an occasional brush with NVA units in the mountains. On this day, January 5, 1969, we were in search of the ever illusive cache. I can't recall if it was weapons or rice this time, but we had conducted many such aerial recons and had never found one. The atmosphere surrounding this mission was similar to a Sunday drive. Heck, we were staging out of an Air Force base (they probably had flush toilets), the terrain in the A/O was flat, the sun was shining, and I do believe I heard a bird chirp.

This was my fifth month of flying scouts. By now my aircraft, triple deuce, had become an extension of my body. We were the only team, me and triple 2, of the ten scout pilots, who had not been hit by enemy fire. Yes, we had taken a little friendly fire. Most notably, the shrapnel from a 2.75 inch rocket that I had adjusted in a bit close when our Blues were pinned down by fire from a bunker. And, okay, there was the bullet hole in the mini-gun cowl, where an excited observer returned fire as we were breaking away from



some bad guys. But, other than that we were virgins when it came to enemy ground fire. Of course, I attributed this to my acute senses, great scouting techniques, and phenomenal flying abilities. All of these by the ripe old age of 22.

My co-pilot that morning was 1LT Tom Sweet. Normally we flew with an enlisted observer, but Tom had just started flying scouts after spending a little time in the lift platoon. So he was working on getting his 50 hours of scout co-pilot/observer time. He was a quiet guy, which I attributed to his being fairly new to the unit. Even though he was an infantry officer like me, he didn't hang out at the O club with the scout and cobra pilots after a hard days work.

The first pink team of two scouts and two cobras launched early and went directly to the designated A/O for that day. Tom and I, call sign Scalp Hunter 15, along with 1LT Rick Richard, Scalp Hunter 18, and his observer W/O George Gregga, followed our one cobra up to Phan Rang to refuel and standby. Maintenance problems had cut our team by one cobra, so we were a bit light on gun cover. While we were refueling, the Blues landed and set up their radio with a whip antenna, to monitor the mission and respond if required.

About mid morning the other team, along with the troop XO, flying C&C, returned to refuel. We received a quick situation report: nothing out there! The XO changed our

search area a little and we launched. The XO said that he would meet us in the A/O later. Upon arrival, Rick and I went down to check things out. As was usual, we kept up some air speed until we were familiar with the area and comfortable that we weren't flying into a hornet's nest of enemy activity. Rick was flying my wing, off-set to my six, and the cobra was circling at 1500 AGL. All was normal until Tom said

that he saw what appeared to be people in a small grove of trees. I reported this on the radio, and we hovered over the clump of trees for a better look. Sure enough, there were 10 to 15 armed men trying very hard not to be seen, on the ground below us. Again, I reported this to our gun cover, and suggested that with this terrain and lack of cover, if we could get the Blues out here we could probably capture these guys. Rick and I discussed how to best keep them from running away. He would cover one side of the clump of trees and I would cover the other side. We were both armed with mini-guns, and both of our co-pilot/observers were armed with grenades and CAR15s. Several times the VC sent out a scout to check for an escape route and each time we faced them down. One time I was hovering less than ten feet off the ground with an armed and camouflaged VC no more than twenty feet in front of me. He was checking the distance between his cover and the next group of trees. Unfortunately for him, I was in between.

After what seemed like an extended period of time, but probably only 10 or 15 minutes, I radioed the cobra for an update on the arrival of the Blues. He reported that he had been unable to raise them, but that he was still trying. Not long after that conversation, Rick, in an unusually high pitched voice came over the radio; "They're coming out my side!" I pulled power and popped up over the trees to see Rick making a gun run with his mini-gun and a group of VC. I fell in behind him and added a long burst to the running targets. They broke off their attempted escape and returned to the clump of trees. We returned to our positions to keep them corralled while we waited the arrival of the Blues.

The enemy's next attempt at escape was better planned and properly executed. They came out of the trees, on line, firing every weapon they had, in my direction. Never having taken an enemy round, triple deuce and I responded as any good scout team would. At a hover we engaged the 15 or so enemy soldiers with a horrendous amount of mini-gun fire. I could see tracers hitting people less than 50 yards to my front. The noise was unbelievably loud as I kicked pedal to spray the entire line of advancing soldiers. As individuals crumpled before me, I heard Tom yell over the intercom, "I'm hit!" About that time the wind screen erupted in front of us. Now I need to stop here for a moment to explain something. I had been shot in the back in a hunting accident when I was in high school. So the next sensation I





I understood very well. I felt a sledge hammer blow to my right thigh, my leg flew up and off the pedal, and the aircraft yawed to the left. The engine out light was flashing and I had a low RPM audio in my helmet. With just enough inertia in the blades to give some lift, I pulled power and we flew directly over the enemy in front of us. But we didn't have enough power to clear all of the trees. One final tree kept us from landing in the field beyond the clump. Just prior to impact, I turned triple 2 sideways and we hit the base of the tree. All of the blades stacked against the large tree trunk and the skid collapsed on my side. I unbuckled and slid out onto the ground behind the tree. Tom came around the aircraft and slumped down next to me. AK-47 rounds started to hit the tree right above our heads. My first thought was RUN! Then I realized that Tom was in not shape to run. He had been shot three times and his upper left arm had a gaping exit hole with pieces of bone sticking out. He was hit in the right forearm and through his ribs on the right side. His hand still worked, so I took out his pistol and gave it to him. I bandaged his left arm

as best I could with his first-aid dressing. And this is when I learned more about Tom Sweet and why he wasn't loud and didn't hang out at the O club with the scouts and gunnies. He said, "You shoot, I'll pray."

As I sit here more than thirty-eight years later, I know without a doubt that my shooting and grenade throwing did not make the difference that day. Yeah, the cobra expended all its ammo; Rick and George shot everything they had, and threw all their grenades, one of which went off right next to us; And some wonderful, brave pilot from the 48th ASH, responding to the cobra's call on guard, tried to get in and pick us up, to no avail; All valiant attempts to save our butts. But it was Tom's prayer that did it.


I have reviewed this incident a hundred times over the years, and by all calculations Joe Shepherd and Tom Sweet should be dead. Thirty-five bullet holes in poor old triple deuce; Most of them in the cockpit; Six rounds hit my seat alone; More hit Tom's seat. Not to mention a bunch of really ticked off VC wanting to avenge the deaths of their comrades. We were screwed...but for the prayer of a righteous man.

The Blues never did arrive. They forgot to change the frequency on their radio: 5th of the month it was! Finally, Rick saw that if he didn't land and get us out we would not survive the ordeal. He pulled the guts out of his trusty OH-6 and we cleared the tree line with inches to spare. He deposited us at the first aid station at Phan Rang Air Base. We were both transferred to Cam Rahn Bay and then to Japan. Tom went home and after six weeks I returned to RVN to fly another day.

Over the years I have tried to contact Tom. I talked with mutual friends, old Vietnam buddies, I even sent my son who was TDY at Fort Sam to look for him in San Antonio. Then, a couple of years ago he showed up in the VHPA directory. On January 5, 2005, thirty-six years to the day of our last mission in triple 2, I wrote him a letter; A letter to an address in San Antonio thanking him for his prayer. Two months later he called me from Oklahoma. It was a sweet reunion! Neither of us understands how he got the letter because he had been in Oklahoma for ten years. But then, we've both seen that kind of thing before.

**Richard Yood, MAS**  
Gladiator 21

  
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**Contact Mike Sheuerman at: [Membership@VHPA.org](mailto:Membership@VHPA.org) for details**



# CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER

A few minor changes regarding our 2009 Annual Reunion. The reunion will be held on March 6-8 2009 at the Hotel Louisville Downtown, formerly the Holiday Inn, located on Broadway in downtown Louisville. The hotel has been purchased by a management company that has changed from the Holiday Inn affiliation. All phone numbers remain the same.

The weekend will begin with a gathering on Friday night in the 4,000 sq.ft. Hospitality Room on the upper floor. We expect an excellent turnout as our guest speaker is Joe Galloway, Joe was the reporter who "actually" participated in the 1965 Battle of the Ia Drang Valley memorialized in the book, "We Were Soldiers Once and Young" by Hal Moore and Joe.

Saturday night dinner price is set at \$35 per person. We will have the banquet set up so you can efficiently get your meal from the buffet. We will have two separate serving tables with two lines each. In addition there will be a separate salad table allowing those wishing a salad to quickly get through the line. An additional table will be set up for pies, cakes and sweets. We found this setup worked very well allowing everyone to eat at the same time.

Again this year Bob and Gail Poe of Whirlaway Helicopters are providing an opportunity for you to fly again. If you did not attend the 2007 reunion and/or did not have a chance to fly a helicopter - this is your chance. Sign up for this will start on Friday night in the Hospitality Room. Your spouse/friend/kids will have the opportunity to fly in the back as you return to the skies. Any fear you can't do it after all these years? Well, if two years ago is any example you will be pleasantly surprised. As you can guess, weather will remain the only factor that could cancel this wonderful opportunity for those that prefer another choice we will have a tour of the Patton Museum at Fort Knox running at the same time as the flight operation at Clark County Airport.

Go to: [www.ohriviz.org/](http://www.ohriviz.org/)  
for more information

**John Flanagan, Pres**

## WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

The chapter members participated in the Veterans Day Parade in Auburn, WA on 8 November. Twenty five members were on hand wearing our new chapter jackets. The Auburn parade is the largest west of the Mississippi River. There were over 300 marching units from all over the West. Our "Huey" is always a crowd pleaser.

Chapter members have donated over 300

books to the VA Hospital at American Lake.  
**Merry Christmas, Paul Fleming, Pres.**  
**CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH**

VHPA-CCN will be joining in the 20th Anniversary celebration of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in downtown Sacramento on 13 December 2008. The "Huey" and the MOC will be there. The anniversary festivities are being held from 10-14 December and CCN will be there in force on the 13th.

VHPA-CCN will have the annual Christmas Party at Ken Fritz's house in Orangedale, CA. E-mail [redacted] for details and to RSVP so we have a headcount for the food, beverages and dance floor space.

**Ken Fritz, Pres.**

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

Our next breakfast meeting is scheduled for 6 December at 0800 at J. Christophers Restaurant in Marietta, GA.

**Bill Stanley, Pres.**

## NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

We are in the process of forming the New England Chapter. If you live in this area and are interested in becoming a member please call Bill Williams at [redacted] or [redacted]

Our meetings are scheduled the 1st Monday of the month at 0900 at Joe's American Bar and Grill, Dedham, MA.

**Bill Williams, Pres.**

## SOUTH CAROLINA "CELEBRATE FREEDOM" CHAPTER

If you live in the South Carolina area you are cordially invited to join our newly formed chapter. If you have also received a mailed invitation I hope you are already a member. Please contact Larry Russell at [redacted]

**Happy Holidays, Larry Russell, Pres.**

## ALABAMA CHAPTER

Northern Alabamans are invited to join the new chapter being formed. Please contact La Rue "Lash" Weisner at [redacted] or [redacted]

## VIRGINIA CHAPTER

The newly formed Virginia Chapter is recruiting new members. If you reside in the Richmond-Petersburg area or the surrounding environs and are interested please call Tom Mitchell at [redacted]

**Tom Mitchell, Pres.**

## FORT RUCKER CHAPTER

The Fort Rucker Chapter is now forming. If

you live in southern Alabama or northern Florida and would be interested in joining us please contact John A. Crowley at [redacted]

**John Crowley, Pres.**

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

SCC recently participated in the "First Annual Palm Springs Air Museum Chili Cook Off and Open Cockpit Day". The event was held on Saturday November 15 at the Palm Springs Air Museum, located in beautiful Palm Springs, CA. The event was sponsored by the Palm Springs Air Museum volunteer staff with the proceeds going to the volunteer fund. The chapter was represented by several member chili cooks. As luck would have it the chapter booth was assigned a prime spot - in the hanger next to their B-17. The museums first annual event was a resounding success and we hope to participate in future events.

SCC participated in the "7th Annual Wings, Wheels and Rotor Expo" held at Los Alamitos AAF on the Joint Training Base located in Los Alamitos, CA. The annual event was held on Sunday Oct 26 and showcased military and civilian fixed and rotary wing aircraft in addition to over 69 classic vintage cars and motorcycles. As usual the chapter members were pounding the pavement looking for potential members. The chapter has participated in this event for the past several years.

The SCC is gearing up for another chili cook-off. We hope to round up a team to participate in the "2d Annual BBQ and Chili Cook-off" sponsored by the city of Hawthorne, CA. We don't have the exact dates yet, but we anticipate the event will be held in conjunction with their annual holiday parade. A recent check of the city's event calendar revealed that a date has not yet been posted. Any local folks wishing to participate in the event can contact Carl Cortez at [redacted]

**Ed Holguin, Pres.**

## FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

Our chapter will install a memorial at the Dallas/Fort Worth National Cemetery at 11 AM on December 6, 2008. This is a granite monument dedicated to those who flew in Viet Nam. Afterward we will meet at a local restaurant for our Christmas Party. Food and adult beverages will be available. Please join us.

**Virgil Laughlin, Pres**



# VHPA CHAPTERS

*We have 5 new chapters in the formation stage. They are:*

**South Carolina** (Celebrate Freedom) Chapter  
Larry Russell, Pres.

**Ft. Rucker Chapter**  
John A. Crowley, Pres.

**Arizona Chapter**  
Bill Sorenson

**California Chapter North**  
Ken Fritz

**VHPA of Florida**  
Donald L. Welch

**Fort Wolters Chapter**  
Virgil Laughlin

**Georgia Chapter**  
Bill Stanley

**Mid South Chapter**  
"Pete" Norman IV

**North Carolina Chapter**  
J.D. Lawson

**Alabama Chapter**  
La Rue "Lash" Weisner, Pres.

**New England Chapter**  
Bill Williams, Pres.

**Virginia Chapter**  
Tom Mitchell, Pres.

**North Carolina Chapter**  
J.D. Lawson

**Ohio River LZ Chapter**  
John Flanagan

**Rocky Mountain Chapter**  
Rick Beaver

**Southern California Chapter**  
Ed Holguin

**Washington State Chapter**  
Paul Fleming

The VHPA and Chapters share information and guidance with one another for the mutual benefit 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.

## VHPA OF FLORIDA

We participated in "RIBFEST" a huge gathering of food lovers in St. Petersburg on 14-15 and 16 November and raised about \$400 for the chapter. We visited three schools on 18-19 and 20 with our OH-6. This is an ongoing project to brief the students on Vietnam and the conflict there.

**Don Welch, Pres.**

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

Our chapter will be celebrating at Greg Mann's party on Dec 13 and doing our Cookie and Hot Chocolate Party" with the veterans at the VA Nursing Home in Denver on Dec 14. We bring a lot of sugar free cookies, cider and hot chocolate to share with them in their Day Room and take carts of it up to the vets who can't get to the Day Room. It is always a warm, good feeling to sit and listen to these guys and know they enjoy our company.

Mike Law, a member of our chapter, will be the guest speaker at our Veterans Day celebration at Angel Fire this year plus a few of our guys will be there with him to display some of our Helicopter

War Museum shadow boxes in their museum. We maintain an ongoing positive relationship with Angel Fire.

**Rick Beaver, Pres.**

## MID SOUTH CHAPTER

We have torn down the engine in my TH-55 and have sent off different parts to be re-machined. We now plan to start in 2009 rotating the location of the quarterly meetings of the chapter with the first meeting being in Clarksville, TN. The 2d meeting will be in the Nashville area and the 3d meeting in my hanger in Lebanon, TN with all families invited. Hopefully this will stimulate participation and give us something to look forward to between annual reunions at national.

I am cordially inviting any VHPA member who is travelling on Interstate 40 East/West to stop at exit 239 (Lebanon-Watertown) and come in to UNCLE PETE'S TRUCK STOP and present your VHPA membership card, the first drink is on me (coffee, tea or soft drink).

**Pete Norman IV, Pres.**

## CELEBRATE FREEDOM FOUNDATION™



### VHPA CHAPTER



**COME FLY WITH US!**

### Greetings Everyone,

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm a life member of VHPA and the President of a new VHPA Chapter, the Celebrate Freedom Chapter.

As you'll see with the artwork on these postcards we are sending out, we have some interesting aircraft being made available to our chapter through the Celebrate Freedom Foundation. Hopefully this opportunity will get more of our members fired up about joining the Chapter which will be part of Charlie Troop.

Along with being the new Chapter President, I'm the Webmaster for VHCN.org; ARMYAV.Org; helicopter.org; joekline.com and several more.... I'm also working on new pages for the our Celebrate Freedom Foundation (CFF) site. Check it out at [www.celebratefreedomfoundation.org/1stcav](http://www.celebratefreedomfoundation.org/1stcav). This site isn't completed but I'd appreciate your comments on what is there now.

*Our first official meeting will be next month at our hanger.*

**Hope we get a crowd!**  
**Larry Russell**



# After Action Report - Return to Vietnam

Part 3 of a 3 Part Series ~ By John Mackel

## Chapter Six – the Second Half of Our Trip, North to Da Nang

Early the next morning we headed north to Da Nang. This ended the first half of our trip and now we were headed to an area of VN that I had heard a lot about but had never seen. So far we had been in country six days. Before I describe the next phase of this trip I have to say I need another trip to the old AO and next time I want to travel further north of Song Be. I said this earlier but I didn't get enough time to see all I wanted to see. I spent a year in VN in and around Phouc Vinh and came back for a week. It wasn't enough but it was something I would recommend to all VN vets. I can think of a lot of reasons to go back and re-experience VN. You don't need to go back to cleanse your soul or shake out the ghosts, not that some shouldn't go for that reason but in my opinion most of us missed the cultural experience. We never got to know the people. They are good, hard working, dedicated family people that experienced very difficult times in the 60's and 70's. I know we corrupted a bunch of them and some took advantage of us but what can you expect. I never knew the people or the country and the first time I didn't really care to see it up close and personal. I wanted to fly helicopters, do what was expected of me, not die, and come home. Those were valid expectations but now I had a chance to see it from another angle and it was worth it in my opinion.

Going to Da Nang required another trip to Tan Son Nhut airport. I checked out the 90th Replacement Depot again and all the revetments and then we took off in a Boeing 767 Air Vietnam passenger jet. At least the Vietnamese buy American cause it's the best. Makes me a little guilty about thinking of buying a Toyota product. Tang almost got left because Jeanie had a little too much weight in her baggage and Tang had to deal with the baggage guys. Tang was the man.

As some of you know Danang is located in a beautiful spot on the coast surrounded by

mountains. We stayed at the Green Bamboo Hotel, a medium size three and a half star place somewhere in the middle of the chaos of the city. Now we were in Marine Country and the marine vets were starting to stir. This was Tang's hometown and Garr's turf and it seemed they knew everybody in town. We arrived in Da Nang early and after checking into the Hotel we drove west of the city and visited the location where Dick Walker had set up an artillery position in 1965. Dick was part of the first detachment of Marines to land at Da Nang in 65 and was given the mission of sealing off the Dai La Pass into the city. The geography was the same but "development creep" had set in. Now the rice paddies were gone and houses and industrial warehouses had started to move out to where he had been. It took Dick a little time to wander over the terrain and remember where his HQ was situated and where the artillery pieces had been set up. He

gave a little background to what was going on and how things were set up. It was interesting not only because of the history of the area but he was in VN almost 4 years before me.

From the Dai La Pass we head to the South China Beach area. The old US revetments that housed F-4 Phantoms are still there but now the area has been taken over by the Vietnamese military. We can see Marble Mountain in the distance.

We stop and take pictures and then we take off for Hong Hai, an old port city where Garr, Powell and the Government Tourist Agency wanted us to visit for the silk clothes stores and history. We watched silk worms in action and I purchased a silk robe (fantastic and cheap), and scarves, pajamas and ties for



The Citadel at Hue, scene of vicious fighting by both US Marine and US Army soldiers during the battle of the Tet Holiday in 1968.

sons, daughter in laws and grandchild. Also went to really nice restaurant out in this area with little ponds. It was extremely Oriental and serenely beautiful.

The next day we resumed our tour of the area around Da Nang. We visited Marble Mountain and hiked up thru it's hollow middle. It was a tough hike up through the mountain but the hike down on the outside after we reached the top was no stroll in the park for a bunch of older middle-aged folks. The view however was worth the effort. Once down there is some beautiful marble merchandise at the shops at the bottom. After this we drive around the area and visited some sites that have some real meaning to the marines that were with us. TT Woods, Hill 55, and Dodge City were some of the areas that Garr pointed out where the marines had done some heavy fighting. Just west of Hill 55 Tony had been wounded and come very close to dying. He pointed out where he was just west of Hill 55 while we told his story of how he was wounded during a firefight with the NVA. He was a very very lucky guy. Really some beautiful country and the people treated us very well. That night we all piled into rickshaws for a short ride to dinner and sightseeing. Nights in VN cities are active. I think everyone eats out and everyone moves around on scooters.

Early the next day we packed up and headed for Hue. It was at this point that Mike Sprayberry separated from our group. He headed west with Tony, his GPS and Tang for a little side trip to the A Shua Valley. He wanted to revisit the site where he and his unit, D 5/7 Cav, 1st Cav Division, had had a major run in with the bad guys. The plan was



Road sign on the way to Khe Sahn. Believe me you get a very different perspective of Viet Nam from the ground Vs. from a helicopter at 1,500'.





# WE'RE SO ALONE!

## UH-1D AC/IP, WO-1 JOHN L. KELLER, 1ST FLT PLT, A/227

A Company had been at OASIS since 1 November, 1966 and it looked like we were going to get a chance to head back to the Golf Course and enjoy some company area living for a time. Boy! Was I ever wrong, again! It seems they didn't consult me when Division decisions were made, but in my mind I knew I could count on a few nights in our old, patched, leaky, rat-infested GP Medium that housed the First Flight Platoon. What was I thinking??

Christmas time was a special time for all of us in the Company area, since the PSY-OPS loudspeakers flew overhead with Christmas music to ease our burden and our minds. Who were they trying to kid? We were combat veterans with only one thing in mind: serve our tours, get home, get drunk, and get \_\_\_\_! Not all necessarily in that order. The Helio-Courier blaring out the music must have been a real nice target for "Charles" to home in on? Back and forth over the camp it flew with, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," and all of the other usual Holiday songs. We did see snow in an area northwest of Dak To when placing a mortar section onto a high, knob in the mountains overlooking the Cambodia and Laos border area. Our OAT verified that it was 33 cold and wet degrees! Army "long johns" were on and a medium weight flight jacket was the apparel of the day.

On Christmas Day, I had flown 63-08797 over to An Khe via Pleiku. We were taking "stuff" back to the Golf Course because the Company had been notified of a shift to LZ Hammond. I was to return #797 to Oasis later that afternoon, so my crew and I didn't even get to partake of the super-duper Christmas diner from Mermite cans. Weather was always a factor during any flight this time of the year. Based on the aircraft instruments, it was a toss-up to determine if it was safer in the clouds or scud-running along the roads.

Our flight back to the Company area at Oasis was only 50 minutes and we shut down in the usual area with the other birds. Our mess tent had already been broken down for convoy transport, so it was C-RATS for my crew and others. By the way, heat them up any way you can! Jet fuel mixed with sand in a can worked very well and the

fat from the Ham and Lima Beans meal didn't taste so bad when it was LIQUID instead of congealed. After "dinner" we were ready to settle in when Platoon Leader Captain Primm notified us that we would stay at Oasis overnight and fly into Hammond the next day. They were taking #797 and I was to fly 63-12961 over on the 26th. Comforting, just plain comforting! The convoys were loading our unit gear and the C-130's and C-123's were taking all of the troops to Hammond. Nice ride, you guys! About 2200, our ships left for the "flight of a lifetime," in the clouds over all of Central South Viet Nam. My, My, How lucky they were! NOT!! The later told stories of that night enroute to Hammond; with some stopping at the Golf Course, will cause a chill down your spine to this day! BONZAI was a word I heard WO-1 Dick Lamonica say several times when he retold the tales. To listen to him tell it, you'll "bust a gut!" One flight of four came out of the clouds (not together) near An Khe and landed while the other flight (mid-air, IMC breakup) made it almost to Hammond, but not without damage.

Two of us slept in the "Bell Hotel" while the other two crew for #961 slept in a sandbag bunker that had a half-roof over the top. The M-60's were readied along with M-16's. We were assured that U.S. Troops or ARVN would be in the area till late the next day (26th). Imagine when I awoke at sunlight that morning and there wasn't a perimeter, anywhere! I looked to the former perimeter that surrounded the A Company area and there were Vietnamese civilians or maybe VC searching through our old garbage pits and the perimeter bunkers to salvage anything of value. Where in the hell were the troops?? I looked over at the runway and ALL of the aircraft were gone! ALL of the U.S. Troops were gone and the few ARVN troops in the area were scrounging throughout the camp to salvage whatever they could. What happened to the plan? The crew and I were the only Americans in the area. Our weapons at the ready, we ate a cold, C-RAT meal and saddled-up for our own cloud flight into Hammond. We perfected our IMC skills by contacting PEACOCK CONTROL at Pleiku and requesting IFR to Hammond. Based on the reported weather, we would have to perform a "down to minimums" GCA/PAR at Hammond. Whew! I

hadn't done one of those forever. It was kind of peaceful in the clouds and all of the flight instruments actually worked! Our descent into Hammond was terminated at a hover at the touchdown spot; without seeing the ground. As we hover-taxied off the runway, I called Company Operations to get an idea where we should shut down. It was raining heavy again within ten minutes of touchdown and refueling in the rain would be our usual over the next few weeks. We had an additional mission to LZ Uplift and then came back to Hammond for the night, or so we thought? It had been seven days since a shower, shave, or change of fatigues. At least we were able to shave, cleanup with hot water from the steel pot, and have a change of jungle fatigues.

We were not through with Oasis. The same day, after cleaning up, we were informed that we had to go back to Oasis with two ships to perform some "hash and trash" missions. Well, #961 was ready, but the weather wasn't! Again, it was into the clouds for the 40 minute flight across the Central Highlands. After 30 minutes of IMC, we were in the clear and cancelled IFR with PEACOCK CONTROL. Hey, I like this IMC flying! We had to stay at Oasis again, but this time inside a different perimeter with U.S. and ARVN troops guarding the area. Later on the next day (27th) we were able to head back to An Khe and the Company area. Picking up some pieces and parts (supplies) we flew back to Hammond and then onto LZ Uplift. It seems that Hammond was being taken over by a Brigade and 11th Group, so A Company was headed to Uplift for the duration. After building a new platform bunk area out of ammo boxes, I was able to keep my gear dry in our hex tent. We celebrated the New Year 1967 at Uplift with a "MAD MINUTE" that lasted for five and had many cluster flares shot from the perimeter. Oh well, another year, but still wet! Little did we know we would soon become "The Beach Boys of Phan Thiet?"

*Enjoy this story of Christmas of 1966  
in the Central Highlands?*

*It is one of many stories the author has  
written and has posted at:*

*[www.a227ahb.org](http://www.a227ahb.org) Look them all over and  
send John your appreciation! Editor.*





# A FORTY-YEAR VIETNAM TOUR FINALLY COMES TO AN END

*A Forty-Year Vietnam Tour  
Finally Comes to an End*

*By: Art Jacobs, VHPA Life Member*

Arlington, Virginia. On the morning of 16 September 2008, Steve Davidson, a classmate of mine from 67-17, and I witnessed something poignantly beautiful and yet heart-breaking. The remains of CWO Art Chaney, KIA 3 May 1968, were finally laid to rest. For thirty-nine long years the military records for our friend and comrade from the 1st Air Cavalry Division, simply read "BNR" (Body Not Recovered). And then, at last, in the late Spring of 2008, Art's remains were discovered, and in the Summer of 2008, positively identified.

Steve, along with his wife Connie and I, got to spend two filled-with-memories but bitter-sweet days in Washington, DC with Art's parents, retired Air Force Colonel Hugh Chaney and his lovely wife, Lillian. We heard all the stories of Art's sports prowess, academic accomplishments, and his many dating charms while he attended James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia.

For as many times as I have attended a military burial with full honors, the part that never fails to put my heart in my throat is when the carefully folded flag is gently handed to the next of kin. A young Major, a Fort Myer Chaplain, knelt in front of Hugh and Lillian. For a moment, they all held the flag together and clasped hands as he whispered his, and, our grateful nation's condolences. I stood there, sadly watching an 80 year-old man, and his life-long companion, bury their 20 year-old son. I cried with them, and for them. How difficult that moment must have been – you are not supposed to outlive your children. But, at the same time I saw a very proud career military officer and his dedicated partner achieve important closure, and receive the long-delayed honor

for their son, and soldier.

I'll briefly take you back to the months and days leading up to Art's death: After more than a few memorable and sun-filled weekends at the beach in Panama City, Florida, we graduated from flight school on 24 October 1967, full of our normal quota of piss and vinegar, and knowing full well where we were headed.

Troop 1 / 9th in Korea in 1965! I had been with A Battery, 1 / 21st Artillery on the Korean DMZ, just before the Cav went back to Fort Benning, Georgia as part of the 11th Air Assault project to become the very first Airmobile Division. Since I was in the FO Section of A Battery, I spent most of my time with A Troop, the unit we directly supported for artillery.

From my tour in Korea, I was already steeped in the culture of the Cav before I got to flight school. Steve and Art also knew the lore – the wild west history of the Cav with General Custer, and the Cav's war record; First in Manila, First in Pyongyang, and then the heroic saga and victory of LZ X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley in November, 1965. Whatever we didn't know about "The" Cav, our instructors in flight school telling us that it was the premier helicopter outfit in Vietnam only added luster to the dashing image we had in our minds of crossed sabers and bravado.

The three of us survived the hell of the Tet Offensive in Hue, although I was shot (only a flesh wound) on my very first day as an Aircraft Commander! Art and I saw each other a number of times in April – our tents about a 100 meters apart at LZ Sharon just outside of Quang Tri. I last saw Art on 1 May. I walked over to A Troop to say hello, and, as was our convention, popped into his tent loudly asking, "Where's that SOB Chaney?" We shared a warm beer, harassed each other as usual, and made fun of an FNG pilot who still thought the Sundry Pack Chocolate Tropical Bars tasted good (made from candle wax if you ask me).

On 3 May, Art was flying front seat in a AH-1G Cobra. He and Bobby McKain had left LZ Sharon that morning to fly gunship cover for a recon mission near the border of Laos just west of the infamous Khe Sanh. While in a dive engaging an anti-aircraft position, their ship took direct hits and exploded in mid-air. Other helicopters in the area spotted the burning wreckage on the



Art Chaney's parents, Colonel Hugh & Mrs. Lillian Chaney, USAF, Ret., along with several of Art's comrades, attend the services held for their son in Arlington National Cemetery on September 8, 2008.

The three of us could not believe our good fortune however, in being assigned to the 1st Air Cavalry Division. After I was to attend the Air Rescue Training School at Fort Sam Houston, I would get to fly Medevac missions with the 15th Medical Battalion of the 1st Cav. Steve went to A Company, 227th. Art went to A Troop, 1 / 9th. I was secretly a bit envious of Art Chaney, because I had actually been TDY with A



ground, but could not get close due to the intense enemy ground fire. The approximate coordinates were called in. Numerous, fruitless attempts were made to recover the lost ship and crew...but then, as usually happens, the center of action and the war moved on. In the Autumn of 1968 the 1st Cav moved to III Corps and the "incident" of 3 May inexorably slid into the cold case file.

I first learned of Art's death on 5 May when I nonchalantly showed up at his tent with our usual "SOB" greeting for each other. And then there was "that" moment, that awful slow-motion moment that will be seared into my brain forever; cold eyes pierced me and I heard a low voice tell me that Art had been killed two days ago. I blankly gazed at the floor, at a foot locker, at the little flap of canvas at the top of the tent for ventilation – anything except the eyes of that boy-pilot packing up Art's personal effects and staring back at me. I don't

remember walking back to 15th Med that afternoon – I just recall how physically small, weak, and all alone I felt.

**Déjà vu I - 1971:** On my second tour I was with the 238th Aerial Weapons Company; the "Gunrunners" out of Tuy Hoa. We were tagged to be opcon to the 101st Airborne and be part of Lam Son 719, the ill-fated invasion of Laos. Our base camp was at Dong Ha, just south of the DMZ, but we always had at least two platoons standing by at Khe Sanh. Most of our missions were due west into Laos along Highway 9, but I managed to find simple excuses to dog-leg southwest over the old Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei and head toward the border and the imposing cliff called Co Roc. I know it was silly, but I

low-leveled in and out of Laos a number of times just so I could scan the landscape in vain...somehow, maybe somebody missed something.

**Déjà vu II - 1997:** I returned to Vietnam on a month-long archeological / historical tour sponsored by The Art Institute of Chicago. We started in Haiphong and Hanoi in the north, ending up in Saigon in the south. In Hue, I sat at a restaurant on the Perfume River looking across at the



Art Chaney in Vietnam, April 1968



Art Chaney

Citadel. I took a picture of the red flag with the yellow star, remembering the last time I saw that same flag there during Tet. I chatted with one of the waiters; he was

willing to take me to Khe Sanh on his motorbike, but we both knew I wouldn't be able to secure the necessary permission of the local authorities in time before the tour moved on to Qui Nhon.

**Déjà vu III - 1999:** I met a young West Point LTC (and I remember when any LTC was old) who was about to go to Hawaii and be assigned to one of the Southeast Asia MIA recovery teams. I filled his poor head with as much detail as I could remember about 3 May 1968 and Art Chaney. LTC Mike Lerario was good to his word and emailed me periodically. Beyond a few tantalizing tidbits he was privy to that were not generally available to the public, he offered little hope concerning the case file of one

Arthur Fletcher Chaney.

Finally, the News: At the VHPA Reunion in San Antonio just this last July, Steve Davidson rushed up to me to tell me that Art's remains had been found. There was a lot of confusion around the circumstances, but one version was that an AC-130 crew, shot down some two years after Art in the same vicinity had been found, and that when some of those aircraft parts turned out to be not "airplane" but "helicopter" and when some of the bones found were not of the Air Force crew, the forensic guys in Hawaii went into overdrive to solve the mystery.

Colonel Chaney and his wife were besieged with requests from the media and all kinds of groups who had heard the news. They wanted interviews, they wanted to be present, they wanted to film the funeral, they wanted "their" story, and they wanted Art Chaney on the 6 o'clock news. To his credit, Hugh Chaney turned them all down – his son's burial would be dignified – it would not become a media circus, or some idiot's attempt at dredging up some anti-war crap. Only

one article appeared; a simple, beautiful, and respectful piece by Mirza Kurspahic in the small-circulation Vienna Connection.

***I have sent this letter to the VHPA in hopes of having it published in The Aviator because Art Chaney was one of our brother pilots who did not come home, and his story should not be forgotten. Steve Davidson and I would like him to be remembered for the great guy that he was. It was a joy to have known Art Chaney. It was our solemn privilege to have been with Colonel and Mrs. Chaney on 16 September 2008. And, it was our distinct honor to have been in attendance to see our buddy Art Chaney finally laid to rest. We left Arlington that day content in knowing that he was left in the best possible company.***



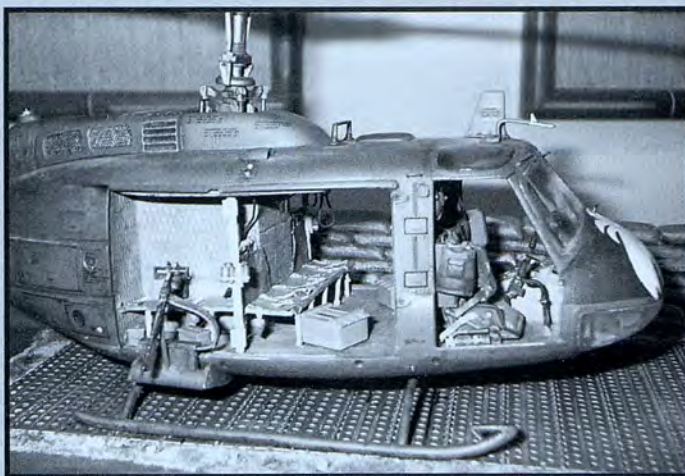
# MILITARY MODELING INTEREST

I am curious if there are members in the Vietnam Helicopters Pilot's Association (VHPA) that are interested in sharing information and techniques about military aircraft modeling and possibility meeting at the Annual Reunions.

My name is Vernon Estes, I graduated flight school in 1964 (Class 64-2) and have been an active member of the VHPA since about 1987. In 1965 I deployed to Vietnam on my first tour (first of many; 53 months in country) with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). I served with the following units in Vietnam; B/2/20 ARA, 1st Cav Div, 120th Aviation Company (2 tours), HHC and the 1st Avn Bn, 1st Inf Div.

After retiring from the Army in 1982 I managed a Security Helicopter Operations for the Department of Energy (Hanford Nuclear Site) located in Richland, WA. The unit was terminated in 1992 and I retired from Hanford in 1996.

Upon retiring from Hanford I was a bit lost as to how to spend my leisure time. During the latter part of my military career I started modeling military aircraft and thought that it would be nice to resume the hobby. Since I started modeling I have concentrated on US Army aircraft.



The following photos are of a 1/32 scale model of a UH-D Huey that I built for a friend who served in the 116th Assault Helicopter Company located in Cu Chi, RVN. I spent about one year (some laziness involved) building the model and made 41 changes to make the aircraft historically correct. The aircraft was weathered to make it appear used. Custom made decals were used to reflect the correct unit markings and aircraft ID numbers.

I had to scratch build some features and use after market parts,

examples of items that I had to scratch build are; troop compartment seats, M-60 gun mount, troop cabin side storage panels and map case. Some of the after market parts used; armored seats, CAR 15 rifles, smoke grenades and other items I won't mention here.

If you are interested in the hobby would you be willing to attend a mini reunion at the annual reunions? I think building models of the units that we served in and displaying them, either using photographs or actual models at a mini reunion would be great. Also, someone should be designated to act as the coordinator and point of contact. I would not be a viable candidate to lead the group because of health reasons and other commitments, but would like to participate in group activities.

I can be contacted at [REDACTED]  
or email me at;  
[REDACTED]



## RECENT VA NEWS RELEASE

New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes during National Anthem

WASHINGTON (Oct. 30, 2008) -- Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

"The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation's armed

forces," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag."

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem.

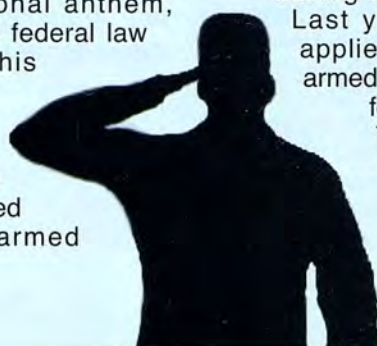
Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered

the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on October 14, 2008.

The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008.





## After 35 years, a Texas A&M class ring and its owner are reunited

By DAVID MAY  
Mineral Wells Index

**MINERAL WELLS** ~ Thirty-five years ago, Army pilot-in-training Tommy Mayes landed his TH-55 helicopter in a clearing in the scruffy Palo Pinto Mountains northwest of Mineral Wells.

He stepped out of his whirlybird trainer and surveyed the area before preparing to lift off. At some point, he apparently bent over and something important fell out of his shirt pocket.

About a year ago, Peggy Harvey found that item and on Sunday, she was able to hand Mayes his Texas A&M class ring.

This wasn't just any class ring. It was special because it contained a diamond from the wedding ring of his mother, who died about a year ago. "I'm sorry she's not still alive to see the ring again," Mayes said. Having made the drive from San Antonio to Mineral Wells to be reunited with his sentimental piece of jewelry, Mayes smiled widely as he slipped off his replacement Aggie ring and slid, twisted and slightly forced on the ring he long ago figured he'd never see again. Mayes, a 1968 graduate of Richland High School in North Richland Hills, gazed in wonderment at the ring's excellent condition, with the small diamond still intact.

He said one of his friends told him years ago that, "At some point, when you least expect it, you will get a call out of nowhere" from someone claiming they had found his ring. It wasn't a phone call out of nowhere, but rather an e-mail out of nowhere. Mayes said he and his wife, Gretchen, had returned from a recent vacation when he had an e-mail in his inbox from Harvey, a Mineral Wells High School math teacher, asking if he had lost a class ring near Mineral Wells.

"I couldn't believe it," he said. "This wouldn't happen to just anybody." He was able to describe the ring to a Texas (A&M) T to Harvey. Harvey began investigating to find the lost ring's owner first by looking at the ring with its A&M insignia, noting it belonged to a Class of 1972 graduate, and reading the name, a cursive inscription, on the inside of the 10-karat gold ring. She said she could clearly read the owner's first name, but

the last name of Mayes was not as easy to determine.

She eventually got in touch with Don Crawford, executive director of the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets Association. Texas A&M has a large and active alumni base, and with his help they

were able to make an educated guess as to who the owner of the ring would be. Through a friend of Mayes, Harvey was recently able to make contact with Mayes. Harvey and her husband, James, live near the end of Devil's



Hollow Road off State Highway 337 between Mineral Wells and Possum Kingdom Lake in North Texas where the Palo Pinto Mountains rise and fall all around them. Harvey, who said she "finds things," said one day she was walking on the property, in an area she had walked hundreds of times of before, but this time happened to see something shiny barely sticking up through the sand and small rocks.

"Out of curiosity I dug it up," she said. "It had sand and dirt and rocks all around it. I took it in and cleaned it up." Once realizing what she had, she began the task of trying to find its owner.

It was with even more luck the ring was undamaged. The Harveys had cut a road across the property just feet from where the ring was partially buried. She said when a septic system was put in, the dirt could have easily been dumped on top of the ring.

She said seeing the expression on Mayes' face when she handed him the ring "made it all worthwhile." She said she persisted in finding the ring's owner for the past year because, "I felt he'd like to have the ring back." Maybe it was a payback of sorts. Harvey said in college she lost her high school ring. She said a man found it, tracked her down and returned it.

Mayes, a 1972 graduate of Texas A&M, was stationed at the former Fort Wolters Army base in Mineral Wells in early 1973. Fort Wolters was a primary helicopter pilots training base during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Training

helicopters in those days filled the surrounding North Texas skies, and one of the tasks the young pilots had to do was land and take off in certain areas. Colored tires marked certain zones, and pilots had to properly land in areas that carried different degrees of difficulty. On this day, Mayes was to land near a yellow tire in a clearing about 6 miles northwest of Mineral Wells. "The different colors of tires signified different degrees of difficulty," said Mayes. "A yellow tire area was a pretty difficult landing area."

One day in 1973 — Mayes thinks it was probably in April — he was about to take off from Fort Wolters when he noticed he was still wearing his class ring. Pilots were instructed not to wear jewelry when flying. Mayes said he would usually remove his ring and place it in a zippered cargo compartment on his flight pants. "I was in a hurry and I took it off and dropped it in my shirt pocket," he said. "I forgot to zip it up." After finding his yellow target and landing, Mayes said he got out and walked around. "I was probably smoking a cigarette and throwing rocks," he said. "I guess I bent over and it fell out." After returning to the base, Mayes realized his ring was gone. "I felt really bad about losing it, for a lot of different reasons," he said.

He went back to the landing site looking for it. He asked other pilots landing there to look around for the ring, but no one could find it. About a month later Mayes was sent to Fort Rucker in Georgia to advanced helicopter pilot training, and he figured he left behind forever his cherished ring. Mayes served in the U.S. Army for 22 years, eventually commanding a medical battalion supporting the Army's 101st Airborne during the Persian Gulf War. He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel and now works with a San Antonio "home infusion" company that helps people receive therapy and medical treatments at home.

He said he regretted that his mother did not live to see the ring again. Mayes said his father died when he was 14. His mother remarried, but gave him a diamond from the wedding ring that his father gave her so he could include it in his A&M ring.

*From Fort Worth Star Telegram*

*Oct 7, 2008*

*Sammie Gay Neill Williams, HSP*



# FAMILY TO RECEIVE PILOT'S 150 MEDALS

## HE FLEW MISSIONS OVER VIETNAM

By Denise Lavoie, Associated Press  
Boston Globe  
October 18, 2008

Helen Tilgner remembers seeing a scar on her father's left knee when she was 7, and realizing he had won a Purple Heart for being shot during combat in Vietnam.

But she had no idea that her father had won medals for more than 100 military honors until this year - 26 years after he died when his helicopter crashed in Malaysia while he was flying for a private medical rescue company.

Today, Senator John F. Kerry will present Tilgner and her two sons - both in the Army - with the awards won by her father, Chief Warrant Officer Armit Tilgner, three decades plus after he flew missions in Vietnam.

"I feel like it is recognition that he should have had long ago, to

be remembered with honor, and it's a legacy I get to pass down to my sons so they are better aware of who he really was," Tilgner said.

Armit Tilgner was an instructor pilot with the First Aviation Brigade's 128th Assault Helicopter Company. He served six tours in Vietnam, winning numerous awards, including four citations for the Bronze Star, five for the Army Commendation Medal, three for the Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal, two for the Valorous Unit Award, and the Air Medal for 135 missions.

But he never talked about his military honors, so his family only knew about the Purple Heart.

Tilgner retired after 20 years in the Army in 1973 and went to work for a private medical helicopter company, transporting sick people from remote villages

in Malaysia to hospitals. In 1982, he was killed at age 48 when his helicopter crashed during a severe thunderstorm.

Helen Tilgner, 23 at the time, remembers getting a telegram that his body had been found, but she never knew where he was buried. About five years ago, she began searching for information, and contacted Kerry, himself a decorated Vietnam War veteran. He found someone who located her father's remains and sent photos of his grave in Sarawak, Malaysia.

After that, Tilgner discovered her father's discharge papers in her mother's house. On them, she saw a list of codes, and asked an old Army buddy of her father's to translate them for her. The codes all stood for medals her father had won.



"Once I got them decoded, I started flipping out," she said. "I had no idea."

She contacted Kerry again, this time to see if he could have her father's medals replaced. No one in her family knew where her father's original medals were. Kerry said he was stunned by the number of awards Tilgner received and touched by the story of the two grandsons who have followed his footsteps.

Sergeant Jason Kendrick, 28, has done two tours in Iraq and is to fly out for his third next month. Specialist Jerrod Kendrick, 27, returned in May from a 13-month tour in Afghanistan.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Preventing the Loss of your Airman Certificate Privileges

Angelo Spelios  
Your friendly FAA inspector  
(until January 3, 2009)

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued new regulations regarding the duration of pilot certificates, flight engineer certificates, mechanic certificates, and aircraft dispatcher certificates. FAR 61.19 states that the holder of a paper pilot certificate issued under this part may not exercise the privileges of that paper certificate after March 31, 2010. FAR 63.15 states that the holder of a paper flight engineer certificate may not exercise the privileges of that paper certificate after March 31, 2013. FAR 65.15 states that the holder of a paper mechanic or a paper aircraft dispatcher certificate may not exercise the privilege of that paper certificate after March 31, 2013.

You can replace your airmen paper certificate(s) with a new plastic credit card size airmen certificate by logging on to <http://www.faa.gov> and clicking on "Replace a License Certificate" under "Pilots" on the right side of the page. Then click on "Login to" and select "Request an Account" at the bottom of the page that comes up. Follow the instructions to obtain

a new plastic certificate. Each certificate will cost \$2.00, which you will pay with a credit card online. You may also, at the same time, if your certificate number is the same as your social security number, request that your social security number be removed as your certificate number.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of which the United States is a member, issued a requirement that as of March 5, 2008, all private, commercial or ATPs, as well as flight engineers, operating internationally as required crewmembers of an airplane or helicopter have an airman certificate with an endorsement of language proficiency. In the case of persons holding a U.S. airman certificate, the language proficiency endorsement will state "English Proficient." U. S. airmen certificate holders have until March 5, 2009, to comply with the ICAO Language Proficiency airman certificate endorsement requirements. After March 5, 2009, U. S. airmen certificate holders may not operate internationally without this endorsement.

If you replace your airmen certificate as described above, the "English Proficient"

endorsement will be added to your certificate automatically because the ability to read, speak, write, and understand English is already a U.S. regulatory requirement. The FAA Registry began issuing all new certificates with this endorsement on February 11, 2008.

*If you do not have access to a computer, you may mail your request to:*

Federal Aviation Administration  
Airmen Certification Branch,  
AFS-760  
P.O. Box 25082  
Oklahoma City, OK 73125-0082

Include a signed, written request stating your name, date and place of birth, social security number, and/or certificate number, your current address, and the reason you need a replacement. You must include a check or money order for \$2.00 (U.S. funds), made payable to FAA for each certificate you are requesting.

Even if you are not currently exercising your airman privileges, you worked very hard to obtain them. Please take a little time to retain those privileges by requesting replacement certificates.



# ★★★★★ PHILADELPHIA REUNION JULY 1-5, 2009 ★★★★★

... an advance update on some very special events and date schedule changes

In the last "Aviator" many of the very significant and positive changes in Philadelphia relative to our last reunion years ago were discussed. Now a vibrant and active City both day and night, Philadelphia has a host of things to do and experience, and could be compared to our experiences in San Francisco or even Washington DC. Our hotel is only one block from City Hall right in the center of everything in the Center City area. If you missed the article, it is available to read at [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org).

Planning for the reunion has identified a number of exciting and key events this year in addition to being able to meet that special someone you haven't seen in 40 years (it happens for most almost every year). A very key change is that the reunion, relative to some possible previous info passed on at the Business Meetings or possibly elsewhere in the past has been shifted one day earlier to take advantage of some very special activities taking place. Details on the revised reunion dates are as follows:

■ Tuesday June 30th—Early Bird Gathering

■ Wednesday July 1st —Welcome Reception — first day of "official reunion"

■ Thursday July 2nd —Golf Tournament AM, free night

■ Friday July 3rd — Business Meeting & Spouse Events AM, Banquet at Marriott Hotel evening

■ Saturday July 4th — Special July 4th Activities, entertainment and dinner at Franklin Science Museum (right in the middle of all the events) and major, major fireworks just outside the Franklin.

■ Sunday July 5th — depart for home

To take advantage of some fabulous City sponsored activities on July 4th, we have reversed the days for what typically is the final banquet, which will take place the



evening of Friday July 3rd. That permits us to attend some very, very major events in the Parkway/Museum District of Philadelphia the afternoon and evening of July 4th. The City will not release it's schedule until after the first of the year when their budgets are approved, but typically each year they have a major name performer in the parks between the Franklin Institute Science Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which are connected by the three block long Ben Franklin Parkway, which is for the most part park land. Then at dusk, they have a very major fireworks display right in the same area...LARGER than DC, we are told.

To take advantage of all this, we have arranged for a completely private and exclusive use of the Franklin Institute Science Museum right in the middle of everything that evening. Shuttle buses will take you about 7 blocks from the hotel to the Museum (about 1/2 of a mile), and then there will be an elegant catered buffet in the spectacular Franklin Rotunda area. We have total run of the Museum all night, which of course is air conditioned and has numerous rest room facilities... always in short supply during major City events like this. Thus with your special badges provided at the time, you can enter and depart the museum as you wish to view the fireworks, enjoy the major performances (subject to City confirmation).... And like what we did after the fire-

works in DC, we will have our own quality entertainment at the Museum after the fireworks until such time as we can get the busses into the area to shuttle you back to the hotel.

As this is an "East Coast" reunion, for those of you flying, you don't have to take the early AM flight out the next morning...so you can enjoy the evening, and still get back to your home at a respectable time later the next day. The airport is only 15 minutes from the hotel ... which on Sunday there should not be a traffic problem. So you plan on enjoying the whole very special evening on the 4th.

While the annual golf tournament will take place early Thursday AM, July 2nd...that evening is planned as "free" so you can enjoy the City with your friends and family. There are many quality restaurants within walking distance of the hotel, and a host of activities to see and do.

As in years past, mini reunions, the Historical Presentation Forums, War Stories, Poker Tournaments, and other special activities will be scheduled throughout the reunion...details in our next newsletter when our final schedule is available.

The Business Meeting will be held this year on Friday, July 3rd at approximately 10 AM. This year we have something real interesting for the spouses and guests while the pilots are at the

meeting. Current plans call for two events that we are working on now. It's not common knowledge, but the Broadcasting Center for the QVC Shopping Network is in the suburbs of Philadelphia, and we are working on arranging special dedicated tours while they broadcast. For an alternative 2nd activity, we have made arrangements with the Philadelphia Museum of Art for a special private brunch at the museum, followed by tours of some of the very special exhibits they have there.

As you can see, this will be a very special reunion. One very important heads up...unlike in some Cities in the past, we are not the only major groups in town over the 4th of July, nor even in the Marriott itself, which is a very large facility Hotel rooms are at a premium, and our rate of \$115 is extremely value orientated relative to the costs for other groups. It is not likely we can obtain rooms beyond our room block, and thus once gone, we are sold out. The key this year is to register early...and lock down the key events, some of which area also capacity limited.

A bit of travel logistics... another key change from our last reunion back in 1994 is with the airline service into and out of Philadelphia. PHL is now a major Southwest hub, and as a result the airfares for most of the airlines are very competitive and reasonable if you book ahead of time...another reason to book early. Also, with the Interstate Highway system, you are only 2 hours South of New York, and about 2 hours north of Washington DC. Many of you will be able to drive...and of course there are passenger trains all up and down the Northeast Corridor that stop in Philadelphia. Bottom line, transit this year to the reunion is easier than ever!

SOUND LIKE FUN?

YOU BET .... SEE YOU  
IN PHILADELPHIA NEXT JULY!

**Please Note - If any members are interested in selling any item(s) through the vendor room at the Philadelphia reunion, they need to contact Woody McFarlin immediately or on my home number**



## AN UN-MERRY CHRISTMAS STORY FROM HMM-165 IN DEC 1971

Sometimes we have Vietnam Era slides and memorabilia "in the back of our closet" that: (a) is really quite valuable, (b) is certainly part of the VHPA's (and in this case Pop-A-Smoke's) legacy, and (c) lots of other people will find VERY INTERESTING. VHPA and Pop-A-Smoke member Steve Swaim is a classic case in point! Briefly Steve volunteered for military service with the Marine Corps, completed OCS in 1969, graduated from Fort Rucker with Army Flight Class 70-

30, completed additional USMC and USN training to include CH-53 pilot rating in 1971, and deployed on the USS Tripoli with the CH-53 Det that augmented the CH-46 equipped HMM-165 when it deployed from Okinawa as part of the 33rd MAU (Marine Amphibious Unit) in late 1971. During the October meeting Rocky Mountain Chapter of the VHPA (RMCVHPA) Steve heard Mike Law, the VHPA Calendar Editor, say that he needs USMC CH-53 and AH-1J photos for

the VHPA's photo collection. Steve said, "Hey, I flew 53s in Southeast Asia and I have some slides." A few days later Mike and Steve reviewed the slides plus Steve's copy of the HMM-165 1971-1972 cruise book. As is often the sad case, 'IN MEMORIAM' is the first page of the cruise book. Combining data from the cruise book, Pop-A-Smoke's website, and various VHPA databases we have the following:

These four died in a CH-46D crash on 20 Dec 1971.

Their names are NOT listed on The Wall.



1LT Lou Cerrotta  
pilot



1LT Steve Dean  
co-pilot



CPL Keith Miller  
crew



CPL Merle Schnakenberg  
crew



1LT Bob Aldrich  
pilot



1LT Al Scurlock  
co-pilot



CPL Gregg Davis  
crew-chief

These three died in a CH-46D crash on 27 Dec 1971.

Their names are listed on The Wall.

### Why would one crew from the same ship on the same cruise be listed on The Wall and one not?

VHPA and Pop-A-Smoke member Al Zygowicz provides, "I joined HMM-165 in January 1972 as one of the CH-46 pilots to replace those guys we lost in December. While I wasn't present when those aircraft crashed I am very familiar with these events. About this time another CH-46 crashed at Tustin (Marine Corps Air Station Santa Ana, CA) and they discovered that the 'Jesus nut' on, I think, the aft rotor system was not properly torqued. The Marine Corps correctly grounded the CH-46 fleet until it was determined that only certain aircraft from a specific overhaul facility had this problem. When HMM-165 did a detailed inspection they found several aircraft with improper torque setting so there were lots of potential accidents just waiting to happen. But returning to the question about why one crew is on The Wall and the other not - I have no knowledge. Both crashes occurred when the USS TRIPOLI was in the Indian Ocean."

Next we turned to the HMM-165 Executive Officer, Major Donnie Griffay. Sadly, LTC Paul Moreau who was the Squadron Commander at that time has passed away. Donnie says, "We passed through South Vietnam's waters in early December 1971 so we all started getting our combat pay. After India invaded East Pakistan on December 6th and threatened to continue into West Pakistan, President Nixon ordered the USS TRIPOLI group and the USS ENTER-

PRISE group into the Indian Ocean to "pursade" India not to continue their invasion. Then the Russians dispatched a heavy cruiser into this area. At that time we were flying a lot of "sector search" missions with our CH-46s. I have a vivid memory of the night of the 20th. LT Cerrotta's crew downed their assigned aircraft during their pre-flight inspection and were assigned another aircraft. My aircraft was due to launch second but launched first when they had to change aircraft. It was a black, dark night. I had lots of instrument experience as a fixed-wing pilot and remember telling the other pilot to work with me as we made an instrument take-off to leave the boat and get up to a safe cruise altitude. Not long after that, LT Cerrotta took off and appeared to just fly into the water not far from the ship. The aircraft sank and the entire crew was lost. Then a week later LT Aldrich and crew are lost over open water and about that time we learned the details about the Tustin and Atsugi crashes. Now, my memory of the Tustin and Atsugi CH-46 accidents is a little different from Al Zygowicz's. I believe the first crash was at Atsugi, Japan and it was transporting Marines on training exercises in the Fuji area. Nine Marines went down with the aircraft. Since the accident happened on or near the base there were witnesses and the crash was immediately investigated. This investigation revealed the nut failure that Al

described. Returning to HMM-165, our maintenance guys determined that we could not do accurate tests or corrective actions while at sea, so LTC Moreau grounded our CH-46s and flew our missions with CH-53s and UH-1Es since we were a "composite" squadron at the time. Now because of our operational status, this decision was reported quickly up to the Department of Defense. I remember there was some concern but no one over rode our decision. Naturally after we experienced our second loss and after learning about the Tustin and Atsugi crashes, we had second thoughts about LT Cerrotta's crew "flying into the water" on that dark night. We had been on the boat with the reinforced infantry battalion for over a month, flying some scary missions, lost two full crews, and ... well those were challenging days. It was anything but a Merry Christmas for sure! I remember as something of a morale boost when we got to the Philippines, LTC Moreau flew the first CH-46 off the USS TRIPOLI. Then the rest were flown ashore. When the 'Jesus nuts' were checked there were several that were ready to fail, so we could have lost even more. I believe the decision to ground the CH-46s saved many more lives during that period of time. Now, I don't know what criteria was used to determine who goes on The Wall and who doesn't. But in my mind - if one crew is on The Wall then the other



should be as well. Both crews were lost in the same general area of the Indian Ocean. In June 1972 HMM-165 would be off Da Nang and support the Vietnamese Marine Corps units as they retook Quang Tri from the NVA. That was another scary time for sure!"

With the assistance of Gary Roush, the VHPA's Database Committee Chair, we

passed this matter to Ken Davis who is a member of the Virtual Wall Committee and a retired Navy aviator. Ken wrote: "The Indian Ocean was NOT part of the Vietnam area as defined by Congress – but that didn't stop the three USMC guys (Aldrich, Davis, and Scurlock) whose CH-46 went down in the Indian Ocean from getting approved for addition to the Wall in May 1986. Davis' body was recovered,

but the two pilots were not. They were in CH-46D 154013. The HMM-165 Command Chronology for Dec 71 addresses the incident but does not give the names of the crewmen. The Command Chronology also addresses the loss of a CH-46 on 20 Dec 71 with four dead/BNR. Those four apparently didn't have the same pull as one or more of the three in 154013 because they are not on the Wall."

## ONE GOOD REASON YOU WENT TO WAR ~ TAKE PRIDE FELLOW VHPA MEMBERS

A very tangible result of the time, effort, and sacrifice all who served in the Vietnam War made is proof of the moral correctness for which Americans went into battle: That others may enjoy freedom, too. No doubt due to the duress of conflict and deprivation, after being abandoned as a new-borne, Kimberly Mitchell was scooped up off the street in Da Nang in 1971 by Air Force Technical Sergeant James Mitchell. Thirty-six years later after being rescued wrapped in a blanket, LCDR Kimberly Mitchell, United States Navy, has demonstrated that the spirit of America does not require a generation of gene residency in the United States to assimilate the character of that which makes our nation great, liberty and justice for all.

The accompanying photo shows LCDR Mitchell, in her additional duty as a White House Social Aide, engaging with the governor of Wisconsin and his spouse during an official function hosted by the President of the United States. The governor leads the state where LCDR Mitchell was taken after Vietnam to be raised in the traditional American bastion of fortitude and character building, a family farm. While the weather could not be more opposite than that of her birthplace, the moral fiber of her being responded strongly to the challenges of rural existence and she earned herself a position in the United States Naval Academy

my Preparatory School (NAPS), a distinct honor in itself but one which requires stamina, perseverance and uncommon drive to make it to the ultimate goal, a chance to start it over again as a midshipman at the Naval Academy. After graduating from NAPS in the spring of 1991, Kim report-



LTDC Mitchell with the Governor of Wisconsin and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Doyle

ed to the Naval Academy and was sworn in with the class of 1995 to begin Plebe Summer. Little did she know, but Kim would be experiencing being sworn in as a plebe at the Naval Academy twice: Two weeks prior to reporting to the Naval Academy for Plebe Summer, the man who brought her to the land of opportunity, who adopted her as his own daughter, and who instilled in her American concepts which were to take her from the farm to be a naval officer at the White House, was killed on their farm by a lightning strike. When he was overdue, Kim was sent out to retrieve him and found him. Not much later, Kim reported to the Naval Academy

and was within days of completing Plebe Summer when she had to make the decision, to depart the Naval Academy to assist her mother in running the farm back in Wisconsin.

After a year settling matters at home, Kim was able to start again at the Naval Academy for

Plebe Summer "Round 2" with the class of 1996 – imagine the joy of the drill instructors upon seeing the former year's drop-out's name at muster: "Mitchell, Kimberly! MITCHELL???? MITCHELL???? DROP, PLEBE!!! That is exactly what transpired. She made it through the next four years and graduated in 1996, majoring in Ocean Engineering and selecting the surface warfare community upon graduation. Following her initial training at the Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, RI, she reported to her first duty as the Damage Control Assistant in USS STUMP (DD 978), then as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of Detachment Bravo at Assault

Craft Unit 4, then she participated in the Washington Navy Intern Program where she received a masters degree in Organizational Management from The George Washington University. For her department head tours, she reported to USS CROMMELIN (FFG 37) as an operations officer and then she served on the staff of Commander, Destroyer Squadron Five Zero stationed in Bahrain as the future operations officer/maritime security operations officer before arriving at the Navy International Programs Office, the foreign military sales instrument of state diplomacy. It became apparent that the officer had a penchant for tough challenges and she took over the programs which supported the Global War on Terrorism – directing security assistance to Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. And, she still found time to perform the additional duty as a White House aide supporting presidential activities. In everything she does, she becomes totally engulfed and never fails to give everything she has.

Navy IPO, however, has enjoyed the verve and strength of a brilliant officer who brought even more distinction to its series of high level events, simply when she annotated the sign-out board: LCDR Mitchell – WHITE HOUSE.

Robert J. Schissell (RJ)  
Scalp Hunter Lead, B/7/17th  
1969-70



# TAPS



## ALBERT P. (A.P.) WHALEY, JR.

Albert P. Whaley, Jr. (A.P.) of Lanark passed away at his home in Lanark, Alabama on July 28, 2008.

He was born in Charleston, S.C. on November 4, 1942 and graduated from St. Andrews High School. He joined the U.S. Army and was first stationed in Ft. Jackson, S.C. He, among many other things, was in the Norfolk Air Defense Command and the Philadelphia Air Defense Command. He went to flight school graduating with flight class 67-5 and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. He was in Vietnam less than 30 days during his first tour when he was shot down and received the Purple Heart. He also earned the Bronze Star with Oak Cluster.

Upon returning for his second tour, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross Award. Leaving Vietnam he was stationed in Alaska and received the Legion of Merit Award. He then went to Ft. Rucker, AL and flew for the U.S. Army Precision Demo Team with the Silver Eagles Helicopters. He was also a flight examiner at Ft. Rucker.

After serving 20 years in the Army, A.P. retired and was presently the owner/operator of CAT V Charters in Carrabelle.

He is survived by his wife, Becky, of Lanark; three daughters, a son, 8 grandsons, one great-grandson, two great-granddaughters, one sister, and a niece. The family members would like to express their thanks and gratitude to his friends on Dog Island and the members of the American Legion Post 82 in Lanark. Contributions can be made to the American Legion Post 82 of Lanark, and Big Bend Hospice.

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## CW4 CHARLES "DAVE" DAVIDSON

CW4 Charles "Dave" Davidson, 65, born January 31, 1943 in Beaver Falls, PA passed away November 3, 2008. Dave was a career Army Pilot. He loved the outdoors, puppies, traveling, music, guns and cars. He is survived by his wife, Renee, whom he spoiled rotten, of Colorado Springs; six children, Connie (Eric) Anderson, Mark (Mary) Davidson, Rusty (Natalie) Kline, Scott (Cathy) Davidson, Lisa (Travis) Caraveau and Aliene (Don) Mitner; thirteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Dave was loyal, honorable and dedicated to his family. He was loved beyond words and will be missed by all that knew and loved him!

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHARLES R. "CHUCK" JONES

Retired Army Chief Warrant Officer

Charles R. "Chuck" Jones, 77 of Fayetteville, NC passed away Thursday November 30, 2006 in Cape Fear Valley Medical Center with his family by his side.

Mr. Jones was a retired chief warrant officer with more than 22 years of honorable service to his country. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War, where he was a helicopter pilot. He graduated from the class 58-5, in Fort Rucker, AL. Before joining the Army he was a volunteer fireman in PA. After retirement he worked for M&O Chevrolet Co. He was an avid hunter and fisherman who really enjoyed the outdoors. He was also one of the oldest members of the Fort Bragg Gun Club.

He is survived by his loving wife of more than 50 years, Ryoko Oshimi "Betty" Jones of the home; two sons Charles R. Jones Jr. of the home and Clifford W Jones of Parkton; a daughter Louise Jones Smith of Fayetteville; a brother, Frank D. Jones of Del City, OK; a sister Olive N Bohn of CA; stepmother, Mable Jones of Orrstown, PA; and two grandchildren, Raymond Gerber, and Brian Gerber and his wife, Amanda. He is also survived by two half-brothers and two-half sisters.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DARRON (DAR) SPALTY

Darron (Dar) Spalty, 62 of Lancaster New Hampshire passed away in October 11, 2008 from a long illness.

Darron was a member of flight class: 67-5 and flew with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company at Ban Me Thuet in 1968.

After leaving the Army, Darron worked for ERA Helicopters from June 1980 to present. He is survived by his wife Janice and son Steve.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DAN CORBY

Dan Corby, 62 passed away on October 31, 2008 in Woodinville, Washington.

Dan was a member of flight class 69-41 and flew under the callsign Thunderbird 9 during missions for the 336th, Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-1971. Dan was a highly decorated Army Helicopter Pilot serving his nation proudly in Vietnam flying many missions and receiving the Bronze and Silver Stars, two Purple Hearts and three Distinguished Flying Crosses; some two dozen medals in all. He was even shot down three or four times.

Daniel Charles Corby, Jr. Born July 2, 1946 in San Francisco, CA and was the loving father of and survived by, Mike, Kai Bond (Erik), Dan and Malia Corby, and their mother Brenda Gomez. He is also survived by his father, Daniel Corby Sr., and his siblings, Pat Weber (Bill), Peggy Lyons (Greg), and Mike Corby; and their families. Dan was 62 this last July. He grew up in Seattle. Went to Assumption Catholic Parish and graduated from Seattle Prep in 1964. Dan Graduated from Seattle University undergrad and Gonzaga Law School and University of Washington MBA programs. Dan flew with PAN AM airlines while in school.

Dan left the Army after his service in Vietnam and in the spring of 1975 he joined Dean Witter & Co. Over the past few years Dan was not without his health and medical issues but most recently was battling back and was hopeful and optimistic

about the future. He was so delighted and proud to give his daughter Kai away to her new husband and childhood sweetheart Eric Bond this past August 4th, to see his son Michael graduate from College this past spring, to see his son Danny being accepted into a special music program at Western WA. Univ. and for Malia working and moving forward with her Associates Degree at Bellevue College.

Friends of the family are invited to sign the online guestbook at [www.legacy.com](http://www.legacy.com)

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## DAN SLAYDEN

Dan Slayden, 66 died at his home on September 10, 2008 in Vidalia, Arkansas of complications from cancer caused by his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Dan graduated from flight school with class 66-23 and served in Vietnam in 1966-1967 with the 170th AHC (call sign Bikini 29) and in 1969-70 with the 334th AHC (call sign Raider 29).

He is survived by his wife Joan Slayden, his son Scott Slayden and his daughter Kerri Lewis. He was a very good man and will be well missed by all that knew him.

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## CW2 DAVID R "DAISY" ODELL

CW2 David R "Daisy" Odell, Panther 33, 1/71-1/72, passed away in 2005. He attended 67-15 and flew with the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers." At the time of his death he lived in Kansas.

\*\*\*\*\*

## DELBERT WAUGH

Delbert Lee Waugh 69 years old, of Muncie, Indiana was killed on October 18, 2008 in the crash of his Air Ambulance helicopter. The tragic and untimely crash which resulted in the death of Del and three others, leaves an enormous and painful vacuum in the hearts of those of us who knew him and loved him.

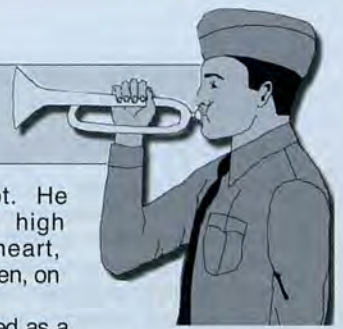
Raised in Muncie, Del graduated from Ball State University and immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army. Pursuing his passion for adventure he volunteered for Parachute Jump School, donned the famous red beret, and spent three years with the 82nd Airborne supporting military operations in Vietnam. Upon completion of his tour with the 82nd Del was accepted as a student pilot in the U.S. Army Flight School. After graduation he returned to Vietnam as the pilot of a helicopter gun ship and rescue pilot, where he supported our ground troops who were constantly under fire. On one mission, while he was attempting to extract wounded fellow soldiers from the jungle, he was shot down and wounded himself. Dauntless in his resolve to survive, he evaded capture for several days and was finally rescued. After his convalescence he returned to the air and completed his tour of duty.

While most would be content to say, "that's enough" Del volunteered again and returned to Vietnam. I don't know what makes a true hero, but Del was indeed one of them. In a succinct summary, Del was shot down twice while placing himself in harms way to save his comrades. For





# TAPS



his selfless gallantry he was awarded The Legion of Merit, two Purple Hearts, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star with the Device for Valor, two Vietnam Crosses of Gallantry with Palm and Silver Star, 12 Combat Air Medals and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Many, many men owe their lives to the singular courage of Del Waugh. Following his active military service Del remained in the U.S. Army Reserves where he continued to fly and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Del became the Commanding Officer all Reserved Army Aviation in Indiana and Michigan. He served as an Army Aviator and Flight Instructor for more than 25 years, and accumulated more than 7000 flight hours.

Following his Military career Del pursued several business ventures, working at one time for Ross Perot at Electronic Data Systems (EDS) in Dallas. He attended graduate school at Texas Tech while working for EDS, but his passion for flying remained a constant itch which he had to scratch. When the opportunity to fly for Air Angels, as an EMS helicopter Captain presented itself, Del could not resist. After passing the FAA Medical Examination, Del returned to the thing he loved most, and took off once more flying through the night on missions of mercy where he died trying to save a small child.

Del is survived by his son, Bradley Waugh; his daughter-in-law, Jessica and his two grandchildren, Bailey Jean and Brennan Jay. Del will be missed. Heroes are all too hard to chance upon. They are like eagles, they don't flock in groups they must be found one at a time. True good and loyal friends are even harder to find.

Friends and family may visit his online guest-book at [www.indianafuneralcare.com](http://www.indianafuneralcare.com) In lieu of flowers please contribute to the VFW National Home for Children.

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## EUGENE J. ZACSEK

WO1 Eugene "Gene" J. Zacsek died on September 14, 2008 in Glendale, Arizona.

Glen served in Vietnam with the 179th AHC in 1969-70 where his call sign was Buc 2. He was an excellent gun pilot and IP. Took his job very seriously and was a bit of a loner in Viet Nam. He received a direct commission to Capt. after returning from RVN and remained in Army for several years, but did not retire.

He stayed in aviation for some years after his service by owning his own airplanes and he was a world class automotive technician, he retired

from a national auto dealership chain 3 years ago. His hobbies that included antique car building, house add-ons and spending time with his family and friends.

Eugene is survived by his wife Jeanne, three daughters and one son.

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## GARY WAYNE DOMBROSKI

Gary Wayne Dombroski, CW4 US Army Aviation (Ret.) of Mesa, AZ passed away peacefully on Sept. 27th, 2008 in the loving arms of his "Steel Magnolia" wife of 35 years, Jerry. Born September 11, 1948, the son of the late Waddy and Shirley P. Dombroski of New Windsor, NY Gary served with honor with the 101 Airborne Division., Co. D., Vietnam August, 69-August 70. No one could have been proud of flying with the D Trp, 101 Hawks. Gary wrote the original Maintenance Test Flight (MTF) guide for the AH-1 Cobra while assigned as a Cobra Maintenance Test Pilot (MTP) instructor at Ft. Eustis, VA. It was later adopted as an official Army Publication for use throughout the Army and Cobra community. He was the first MTP rated in the AH-64 Apache and was instrumental in the writing of the Apache MTF manual. Directly or indirectly he touched the lives of all MTPs who flew those aircraft who followed him. He continued to serve Army Aviation after his retirement as one of the original AH-64D Longbow training developers at McDonnell Douglas in Mesa, AZ before he left for health reasons. Gary is survived by his wife, Jerry of the home, and his step-daughter, Tracy Brame of Mesa, AZ. They were by his bedside as he took his final flight. He is also survived by his brother, Allen (Ann) Dombroski of Marlboro, NY; his sister, Karen (Frank) Messina of New Windsor, NY, and several nieces and nephews of NY.

The following is a personal tribute from a very dear friend of Gary's:

*"I've known Gary for more than 35 years, and he was my mentor when I was assigned as a Cobra MTP at Ft. Eustis, VA. He taught me invaluable lessons which I applied during my entire Army Aviation career. He was serious when warranted and had a wonderfully dry sense of humor. Taking a check ride with Gary was never boring and always a learning experience. He was a devoted husband to Jerry, a dear friend to me and many others, and a servant to his country and the US Army."*

CW4 John M Willingham. US Army Aviation, (Ret.)

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## JACK FISHER

Jack Fischer, 66, of Carbondale lost his courageous and well-fought battle with cancer on Sunday, Sept. 14, 2008, surrounded by his loving family and friends.

Jack was born April 6, 1942 to Harry and Lucille "Tyke" (Phillips) Fischer.

Jack was a great story teller, avid hunter, fisherman and an outstanding helicopter pilot. His family was the highlight of his life. He was a wonderful son, compassionate brother, loving husband, a hero of a father, and a very proud grandpa.

Jack graduated from Glenwood Springs High School in 1960. He went to Mesa State College for a year but followed his real passion and

became a pilot. He married his high school sweetheart, Bonnie Mortensen, on Aug. 22, 1964.

He then worked as a pilot in Grand Junction for Monarch Aviation until he joined the U.S. Army. He served his country as a Warrant Officer in the 1st Air Cavalry from 1966-70 as a Huey Gunship helicopter pilot. He received 33 air medals including the Bronze Star for valor and the Distinguished Flying Cross for flight actions in combat on Dec. 6, 1967, the day he learned of his son Steve's birth.

He worked for the Aspen Skiing Company for 17 years as a snow cat operator on Aspen Mountain and manicured the rough at Aspen Glen for 10 years.

Jack is survived by his wife, Bonnie; sons Steve and Van; daughter Joo Hee Rose; his mother Lucille "Tyke"; brothers Roger and Ron; and sister Judy Cooper. He has six, soon to be seven, grandchildren, Keagan, William, Matthew, Hayden, Tenshi, Tianshi and Van's first child due in May '09.

\*\*\*\*\*

## LT. COL. JAMES STEPHENS

Lt. Col. James Stephens, 63, of Denver, died Friday, Aug. 29, at Allen Hospital, Waterloo. He was born May 7, 1945, in Winona, Minn.; he married Sandra Goodsell on March 3, 1976, in Breckenridge, Colo.

Lt. Col. Stephens graduated from Waterloo West High School, then entered the U.S. Army and served one tour in Vietnam. He was a member of Flight Class 66-21 and served with the 71st AHC in 1967-68. He then attended the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in business. After graduating he entered the Iowa National Guard as a flight instructor and safety officer and also worked for the National Guard Department of Defense Civil Service. He also attended the University of Southern California, Arizona State University, and the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

He is survived by his wife; one son, a grandchild; and two sisters. Burial will be in the Washington Chapel Cemetery, rural Cedar Falls, with honors by Denver American Legion. Memorials: may be directed to Denver American Legion Post 653. Condolences may be left at [kaiserconson.com](http://kaiserconson.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

## JON DENNIS ROWE

Jon Dennis Rowe, 63 of Mansfield, Texas passed away on October 20th, 2008 after a short bout with cancer.

Jon was born and grew up in Asheville, N.C. In his youth, he was an enthusiastic sportsman, avid baseball player and always quick with a joke and a laugh. He left Asheville in 1966 to fly helicopters for the U.S. Army and graduated with flight class 68-50. He served under the call sign Blue Max 69 in both the Camp Evans/An Loc and Danang AO's with C Battery, 2/20 ARA, 1st Cav Division from April 1968 through April 1969.

Jon graduated from the University of Texas at





# TAPS



Arlington with a degree in business and was a leader in many businesses throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area over the last 30 years, most recently at Thermacor Industries in Fort Worth. Jon was happy to have spent the last years of his life traveling and connecting with old friends. He loved his family, cooking, fishing and the outdoors. Jon is survived by his mother Willa Bella Rowe; his brothers, Tom and Gary Rowe and their wives, Betty and Carol; daughter and husband, Jessica and Jaime Foster; son and wife, Jason and Krista Rowe; their mother, Jini Lynch; and grandchildren, Austin, Zoe, Sofi and Leia. The family requests that those so wishing make donations in his name to the American Cancer Society.

\*\*\*\*\*

## JOSEPH DAVID CHASE

It is with a very heavy heart to report to you that my husband CPT Joseph David Chase suddenly was taken away from us by a massive and sudden stroke on Aug 23, 2008. My husband was a member of 1st Cav and flew two tours of Viet Nam around 1969 and 1970. He flew a gunship Huey and was shot at and crashed twice, but for some reason it was God's will that I should meet and marry this wonderful man.

On August 23, 2008 my hero of a husband was taken from me and as Veteran's Day is upon us again, please smartly salute my darling husband, our survivors, and our active duty troops.

*Thank you for letting me express my thoughts and thanks.*

*Regards, Anita M. Barroso-Chase  
Widow CPT Joseph David Chase (RET),  
1st Cavalry Division*

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## KARL BENTLEY HILL

Karl Bentley Hill, Jr. was born February 11, 1941 in Shanghai, China to Karl B. Hill, Sr. and Marie Hulser Hill. Bentley's father was the President of Occidental Life Insurance in the Far East. When the Japanese invaded China, the infant Bentley and his family moved back to Newport Beach, California. They returned to Shanghai, but left again when the Red Chinese came to power in China. The family moved to the Philippines, where Bentley was raised until age 9. Bentley moved to LaJolla, California where he began playing tennis at the LaJolla Beach and Tennis Club. Bentley was nationally ranked as a tennis player and as an adult became the Armed Forces Champion. He continued to play tennis for the United States Army around the world.

Mr. Hill graduated from the University of Arizona

where he was a member of Phi Delta Theta and received a Masters Degree from Command General Staff College. In 1967 Lt. Colonel Hill was instrumental in forming the 192nd Assault Helicopter Company in Ft. Riley, KS. After training his company he moved with them to Vietnam. In 1972, on his second tour in Vietnam, Bentley was a Platoon Leader of the famed "Pink Panthers", where he piloted the Cobra gunship. A few months later, Colonel Hill was chosen Commander of the top secret Air Tow Rocket Detachment, the most sophisticated missile the U. S. Army had at that time.

Bentley later served in NATO headquarters in Europe and as Aide de Camp to General Flanagan. He retired from the Army and moved to Colorado Springs in 1982 where he became a commercial real estate broker. He spent wonderful days playing tennis and golf at the Country Club of Colorado and in tournaments around the western U. S. The last years have been full of travel with his wife, Ellen, to Asia, South America, Antarctica and Alaska. Bentley is survived by the wife he so dearly loved, Ellen Casey Hill. He is also survived by a son, Karl Bentley Hill III (Heidi), grandchildren, Karl Bentley Hill IV and Honah Leigh Hill, and his much loved step-daughter, Elizabeth Tippet Casey.

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## LTC (RET) MR. WILLIAM D. RAY, III

Mr. Bill Ray, 76, passed away Thursday, November 13, 2008 in Savannah, Georgia. Bill was born on November 24, 1931 in Montgomery, Alabama and was raised in Bartow, Georgia.

Bill was a graduate of the University of Georgia and a member of Kappa Alpha Fraternity. He received his masters degree from Troy University in Alabama. He served our armed forces for over 27 years and was a Vietnam Veteran, Master Aviator and Ranger. He is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, 21 Air Medals and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

Bill was a member of the First Baptist Church of Pooler and the Harvesters Sunday School Class. He was also a member of the Rotary International and was a Paul Harris Fellow. Bill is survived by his loving wife, Gail Holland Ray; sons, MAJ (Ret) David G. (Linda) Ray, Currituck, N.C., LTC (Ret) George D. Ray, Clemmons, N.C.; daughters, Salita R. (Adam) Hill, Savannah, Jule (Dale) Edmonds, Augusta; stepchildren, Yancy Stokes (Step-nanny), Florence, S.C., Karen (Jeff) Moore, Rincon, Mendel (Alana) Stokes, Hartsville, S.C., Wendy (Steve) Moore, Hartsville, S.C.; grandchildren, 2LT Derek Ray, Justin Ray, Lauren Ray, Kelly Ray, Josh Edmonds and Haley Edmonds; fourteen step grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

\*\*\*\*\*

## WILLIAM DAVID AUSTIN, SR. 1931-2008

William David Austin, Sr., age 77, lost his short but courageous battle with cancer and died peacefully at home on September 29, 2008.

Dave or "Cap'n Dave" as he was affectionately known was born in Opelousas, LA on April 10, 1931, then grew up in Pensacola, FL. He joined the Army in 1948 at the age of 16 and retired after 20 years at the age of 36. During his military

career, he was a recruiting Sgt., paratrooper, helicopter pilot and instrument instructor, served in Greenland, Germany, Korea, Vietnam and numerous states, retiring with a rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3. He was the recipient of the WWII Victory Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the Air Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, as well as the Army Commendation Medal.

He loved to fly and went on to a second 20 year career with ERA Helicopters out of Anchorage, Alaska. He transferred to ERA's Gulf Division and flew crew changes to the oil rigs all along the coast, then worked out of the Rowan Oil/ ERA corporate hanger at Hobby Field in Houston, TX. When he retired the second time, he returned to the Pensacola area. For several years he managed a condo in Orange Beach and was a well known face and friend to many at the Flora-Bama. His final home was in Lillian, Alabama.

To his children he was a hero, providing them with a comfortable life filled with travel and many adventures. Truly he was "the wind beneath our wings"! To his friends, he was generous and quick with a joke, always fun to be around. He was an avid race fan and car collector, loved to dance, bowl, hunt and fish and generally have a good time.

He is preceded in death by his father and his mother. Left to cherish his memory are his loving children: son, Wm. David "Chip" Austin, Jr., and daughters, Vivian Reed (David) of Frisco, TX and Darlene Owens (David) of Pace, FL; one grandson, and two great-granddaughters. He is also survived by one brother, one aunt as well as six beloved nieces, numerous cousins and other relatives.

\*\*\*\*\*





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2nd				
3rd				
4th				

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# The "Greyhounds of Vietnam"

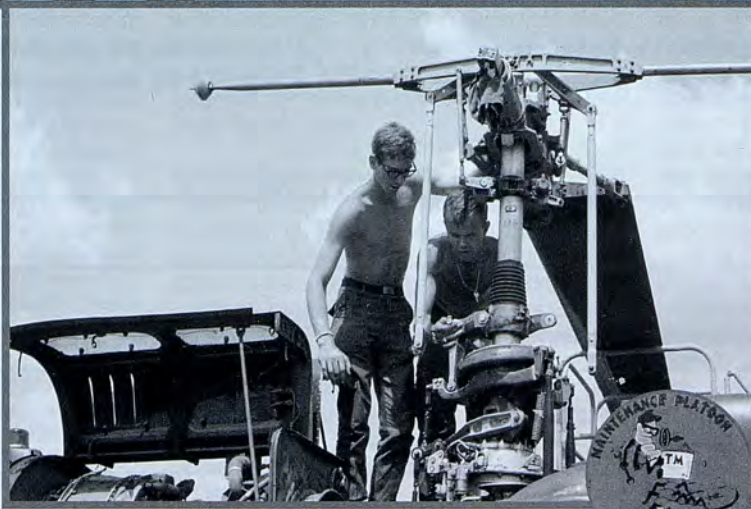
Included in the October 2000 issue of *Greyhound Today*, a newsletter for the Greyhound Corporation was a story about a modern-day Reunion of Vietnam Veterans from the 240th Assault Helicopter Company, the "Greyhounds of Vietnam". A copy of that article follows....

In a St. Louis hotel ballroom last August, 40 people locked hands, formed a circle and sang a patriotic song about America. Reflections from a disco ball danced across the flag-covered walls and bounced off military insignia on the lapels of the guests while music boomed from the speakers in front of a 22-year-old disk jockey.

This was the setting of the Vietnam veteran's reunion of the 240th Assault Helicopter Company "Greyhound" unit and before the reunion became less festive, the mood was quite serious.

A string of men including pilots, gunners, the company clerk and two of its commanding officers walked to the podium, gripped its sides and recounted memories of Vietnam. "I never heard anyone say they were too tired. We just kept going," one said. "The leadership of our unit was among the best in country. I would have done anything for Major Hoffman - then and now" recounted another. Ground units requested us. They wanted men picked up on time because

Orderly Room  
"Go Greyhound  
and Leave  
The Flying To Us"



their survival depended upon it" a slightly graying pilot told the crowd.

When the speeches finished, the DJ picked up his microphone, thanked the veterans for their contribution to a history he had only read about, and dedicated the Lee Greenwood song Proud to be an American to the group.

The 240th arrived in Vietnam in May 1967. It

Maintenance Tech's (members of the Kennel Keeper Platoon) on the flight line working on a swash plate and rotor head.

became "combat ready" barely a month later at Camp Bearcat, a five-acre mud puddle with a heliport on one side. The unit quickly drained the swamp, set up tents, received equipment and readied for missions. But they didn't have a call sign. Someone



THE GREYHOUNDS

240th AHC Command Element  
(October 1967) L to R - 1st Sgt. Manuel Perez, Co Glenn F. Hoffman, XO Edward "Jack" Derr



240th AHC refueling area in Bearcat. We could refuel the entire operating element in minutes and all at once, a big advantage for a short-turn CA mission.

suggested the name "Greyhounds" because the 240th would be the first to fly the UH-1H (Huey) helicopters that had more power, room and speed - qualities in common with our bus carriers back home. The unit soon embraced the name due to its connection to safety, service and dependability.

In 1967, 240th commanding officer May. Glenn F. Hoffman wrote to Greyhound from his post in Vietnam. Hoffman informed the company that his newly formed unit had chosen "Greyhounds" as its call sign. No, it wasn't the most furious sounding name for an assault helicopter com-







Major Glenn F. Hoffman, the Commander of the 240th AHC and the source for all these photos, standing by his C&C helicopter at Camp Bearcat. Glenda Sue is Major Hoffman's youngest child.

pany, he wrote, but it did have a connection to home. His men also used the calling cry "Leave the flying to us".

Hoffman asked the company to supply Greyhound logos or memorabilia to help boost morale. The company responded by licensing the use of its logo and sending 60 Greyhound dog decals for the helicopters. Smaller mementoes like tie-tacks and baked goods soon followed along with letters from Greyhound employees.

Maj. Hoffman wrote back and told the company how much the support meant. "In the midst of Vietnam, support from Greyhound Lines made us feel recognized on the home front," wrote Hoffman. "Our identity as Greyhounds' catapulted unit pride and esprit-de-corps beyond description". The Greyhound decals found themselves on all the choppers, vehicles and company signs. "They also found their way into the hearts of our men".

Hoffman also put a decal on a mirror which hung over a bar in the officer's club.

Years later, the emotion was still strong as the now Ret. Lt. Col. Hoffman wrote a letter to the company inviting its participation at the reunion.

Field Safety manager Chuck Easley represented Greyhound at the event based upon his 31-year career at Greyhound Lines and his service in Vietnam from 1964-65 in the 101st Airborne Division. This was the first military reunion for the former parachute rigger and infantryman who shared sto-

The Greyhound flight parking revetments' at Camp Bearcat with our tent city and BN mess hall in the back ground.



Camp Bearcat, near Long Than North.

ries and memories from his time in country.

Easley presented a gold safety pin, one of the company's service recognition awards, to Lt. Col. Hoffman. Hoffman commented that he still gets a lump in his throat each time he sees a Grey-

hound bus on the road.

"I can understand the pride of association the 240th has with the Greyhound name," said Easley. "Now it's our turn to feel proud of the connection Greyhound has with the 240th AHC."

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## POEM'S MEANING IS TIMELESS...

*I'm sure my Dad was no different from the father's of many of our members, a veteran of World War II and a true personification of this country's "Greatest Generation". My Dad flew a B-24 Liberator bomber in Italy and North Africa during the war and afterwards he maintained close ties with the remaining members of both his mission crew and his bomb group until he died this October, just weeks short of their planned 55th reunion.*

*This summer I was in Houston preparing the family home for his return from a hospital stay and had a chance to look through the Newsletter of the Veterans of the 15th Air Force. Inside I found a poem written by one of their members and although it was written for another war, and another generation, to me it is timeless in its meaning. With Mr. Karstensen's permission, I am pleased to pass it on to our members, and perhaps also to our sons and daughters....*

*David Adams,  
Editor of The VHPA Aviator*



1LT C.D. Adams, bottom row, 2nd from left.  
Taken after their 35th mission in southern Italy, 1944

About the author...Bob Karstensen flew 36 missions in B-24's with the 451st Bomb Group in World War II as a Nose/Upper/Waist Gunner. He fought throughout the 15th Army Air Force's AO including the oil fields of Ploesti; he earned a Purple Heart for injuries received in a mission over Vienna, Austria. Bob is now the President and Co-Founder of the "Former Members Of The 451st Bomb Group" and publishes their newsletter called "Ab Lib". If you enjoyed his poem, I invite you to send him an e-mail at [redacted] and let him know....David Adams.

## INTERLUDES AND VISIONS

By Bob Karstensen, 15th Army Air Force

The die is cast, the bell has rung,  
The parade has ended, his finale sung.  
The engines have shut down, one by one  
The cockpit is empty, his job now done

But wait...is that cockpit really still?  
Don't you hear the cadence of a check list drill?  
Can't you hear the starter begin its whine?  
Can't you see the props cut an arc so fine?

Does you body recoil at the noise you hear  
as those four big engines charge the air?  
Can you sense the power that's the pilot's tool  
when he firewalls the throttles to pour on the fuel?

Do you feel the tension or has it dimmed by time,  
When you set by the runway, all revved up and prime,  
And to know the pilot, on the early roll  
Is lining her up with his rudder control?

Can you feel the drama as you lift and climb.  
n' search for your leader, flight log the time?  
Can you see the earth slip away beneath your wings.  
And not remember just some of these things?

Does the tone of those voices, spoke in haste, not in dread,  
Give an uneasy feeling of what lies ahead?  
Could that knot in your stomach return once again  
To the words "I see fighters...keep an eye on 'em men!"

Would the smell of raw cordite, in the high atmosphere,  
Give you feelings of anger, or tremors of fear?  
Could you forget the numbness of the subfreezing cold.  
Would your blood run hot from these visions retold?

Would you still feel compassion, for the ship and its men,  
Who are drifting away, trailing smoke without end?  
Do your thoughts still evoke those pleas turned to shouts  
"Tom's ship really had it!...Why don't they bail out?"

Do you still count the chutes as you did way back then?  
".....that's seven and eights...come on nine and ten!"  
Does your mind still consider, if that had been me,  
Would my comrades remember, would my folks pray for me?"

So a look at the cockpit that is empty and still.  
Brings back shadows of comrades, of dangers and thrills.  
Tho we close down the hatch, turn away the engines roar,  
But forget what has happened? I can guess, nevermore



# BOOK REVIEWS

By VHPA Life member JOHN PENNY

John Penny, a VHPA Life Member, served with A377 and is semi-retired from his career as a helicopter pilot, and teacher. He lives in Ellensburg, WA, with his beloved wife of 30 years, Janet.

**I recommend that all of you get your hands on "LOACH"** by Wayne Mutza; not just the Loach drivers. After 10,000 hours of flying all kinds of helicopters in all sorts of places, I still remember that fast, nimble, and very crashworthy sports car of the air with great fondness. This is in spite of being bullied around the POL by the Chinook drivers and having sand blown in my face by you Huey guys. The thrill was never quite the same again, and those of you who transitioned into the OH-58 after return from RVN know what I am talking about. I have kept a faded photo of 67-16071 and a very young pilot (me) on the refrigerator to remind me of those times so long ago.

Wayne Mutza certainly knows his way around the OH-6A having served as a crew chief and observer/gunner on the Loach while in RVN. He has done an OUTSTANDING job of presenting the history of the OH-6A from its sometimes cloudy and controversial procurement process, its trial by fire in SE Asia, transformation to special operations use, and its numerous modifications to enhance its longevity in law enforcement and civilian uses. I was worried that this book might be one of those "techno" war bird books with all those detailed drawings, system descriptions, and statistics. It is, however, a well written and engaging story of all things Loach. The book is enhanced by numerous color photographs, several of which document the amazing survivability of this aircraft.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter on Aeroscout operations which relates the heroic story of those who flew the OH-6A in harm's way on a daily basis and includes the experiences of several VHPA members. Although the OH-6A was designed as a multipurpose aircraft it made its mark in the low level, up close and personal environment of the air cavalry concept. This story is well written and woven with the memories of those who were there. Also noteworthy is the chapter on covert or "black operations." I don't plan on asking where Wayne got all his information on the "little birds" in these operations, but it is very interesting to say the least. It is nice to know that an aircraft type that I flew, although heavily modified, is still out there quietly serving in many untold ways.

You folks who moved into law enforcement flying will appreciate the chapter on the law enforcement uses of OH-6 variations. Also included is a well documented chapter on the aircraft's current global inventory. Wayne has also done a great job of documenting the physical legacy of these aircraft which he refers to as "ghosts": the functioning and static "warbird" displays still out there in air shows, museums, and hangers. The section on pocket patches was a nice touch and provides a colorful history of the many units who flew this aircraft. I was gratified to see a patch from my old unit.

I still recall my first dual flight in the OH-6A at a stage field near Ft. Rucker and my instructor's (Mr. Nichols – no kidding!) comments on my first lift off as we hurtled toward the perimeter fence. I soon learned that a little aft cyclic was all I needed. I did manage to ham-fist my way through the OH-6A transition and grew to respect this flying machine. "Loach" is a sentimental journey in some ways, a reminder of adrenaline pumping and heart pounding times all those long years ago. It is also an up to date biography of the life(s) of this amazing aircraft.

Reviewed by John Penny

*"Loach—The story of the H-6/Model 500 Helicopter" (144 pages, \$29.95) by Wayne Mutza,*

ISBN: 0-7643-2343-1 is available from Schiffer Publishing LTD at [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com) or by phone: 610-593-1777



**"Vietnam Scrapbook – an Army Pilot's Combat Tour"** by Bob Steinbrunn is an excellent memoir of one helicopter pilot's tour of duty in Vietnam. Bob has done a great job of documenting his exciting and dangerous year flying the not so friendly skies of Vietnam. Bob has written this book as a legacy for his children because he didn't want his photographs to fade away along with the pilot who took them. He also wants to answer the question "What was it like to be a helicopter pilot in Vietnam?" – A question I am sure we have all been asked. "Vietnam Scrapbook" is Bob's very personal answer to that question and will serve his legacy well.

When Bob sent me a copy of Vietnam Scrapbook he expressed some concern for the quality of the photographic reproduction, but they look wonderful to me. In fact, the pictures make this book. He has done a great job of illustrating his tour with the A7/17th and the 189th AHC (Ghostriders) with a wide variety of color photos. In addition to photos of aircraft he flew and the day to day operations in the AO, he has included some really nice shots of the many of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft types (some worse for wear) that he encountered around the airstrips of Vietnam. They are now either overgrown relics lost to the jungle, scrapped for other uses, or gone to some aircraft bone yard.

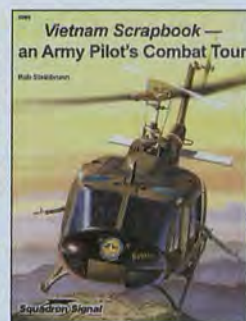
Bob has been very thorough in describing his journey through the "pipeline" to Vietnam, his many experiences 'in country', and even his "freedom bird" trip home. He discusses many of his missions including Special Forces support and LLRP insertions in the highlands around Pleiku while operating out of Camp Holloway - just to name a few. He also talks about his back seat ride in an Air Force A-1 Skyraider on an actual combat sortie!

The legacy of all of us who served as helicopter pilots in Vietnam has become more important as we get older – our time is running out. The VHPA is working to preserve that legacy in several ways but we are the only ones who can tell our own personal story. Bob Steinbrunn has done what more of us should be doing to insure that legacy is passed on by voices that were there.

Reviewed by John Penny

*Vietnam Scrapbook – an Army Pilot's Combat Tour (80 pages, \$17.96) by Bob Steinbrunn,*

ISBN: 978-897475655-0 is available from Squadron Signal Publications at [www.squadron.com](http://www.squadron.com) or by phone at 877-414-0434







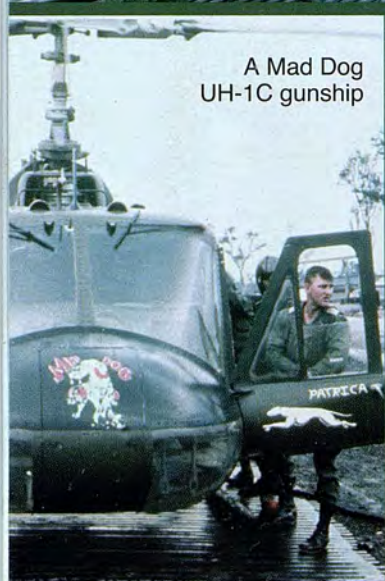
240th AHC Table at the 2008 Reunion Banquet



1LT David Wehck  
MAJ Glenn Hoffman

Members of the  
240th Assault Helicopter Company  
(The Greyhounds) get together  
and share memories and photos at the  
2008 VHPA reunion in San Antonio.

More stories and pictures of their unit run on page's 32 & 33.  
Glenn Hoffman contributed everything on this page



A Mad Dog  
UH-1C gunship



UH-1H #66-16601 was the C&C ship until  
it was destroyed on 25 June 1968



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