

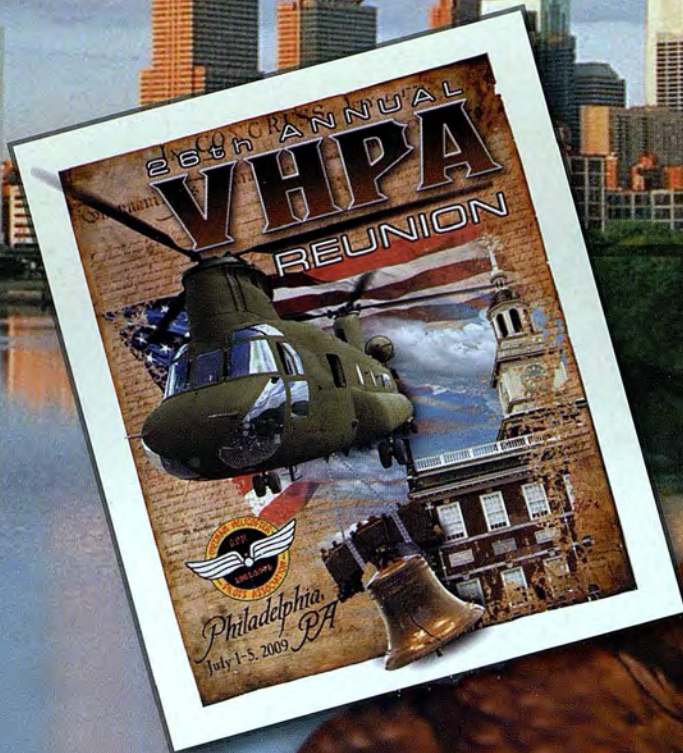


# THE VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ~ Vol. 27, No. 2 May/June 2009

*Full Reunion Details on Pages 22-29 of This Issue...*

*Philadelphia, Pa  
1-5 July, 2009*



**Come On Guys -  
Save Some "Scratch"  
Register for the Reunion  
before May 1st!**

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# BOOK REVIEWS

By VHPA Life member JOHN PENNY

John Penny, a VHPA Life Member, served with A/377 and is semi-retired from his career as a helicopter pilot, and teacher. He lives in Ellensburg, WA, with his beloved wife of 30 years, Janet.

## AMERICAN WARRIOR:

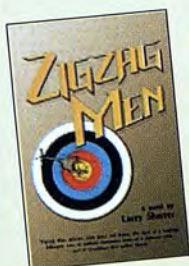
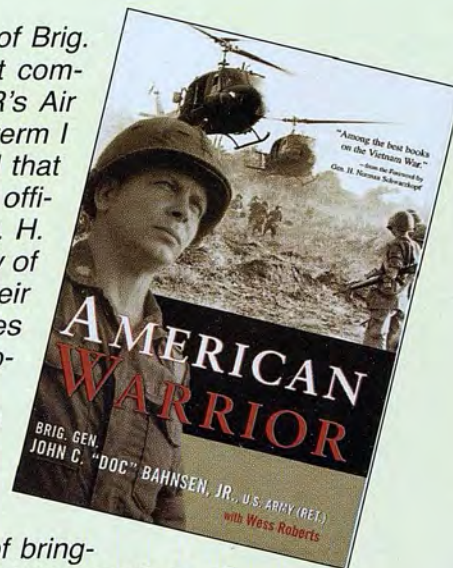
A Combat Memoir of Vietnam is the personal, compelling story of Brig. Gen John C. "Doc" Bahnsen's army career including his combat command tours with the 118th AHC, and subsequently the 11th ACR's Air Cavalry Troop and 1st Armored Squadron. "The real deal" is the term I have most often heard from VHPA members whose tours crossed that of Bahnsen's own. This assessment of one of the most decorated officers of the Vietnam War is echoed in the book's foreword by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, ret., as well as from a former Secretary of the Army and 20 flag-rank officers who served with Bahnsen. Their unstinting praise of Bahnsen's charismatic, bold leadership describes a combat leader uncompromised then and now by regrets or apologies for the violent way of the warrior.

Bahnsen's description of his aggressive, combat focused no chicken shit style of leadership makes for an engaging read to say the least. What makes this wartime memoir stand out is Bahnsen's generous recognition of those who served and sometimes died under his command. Bahnsen does an excellent job of bringing the reader onto the battlefield of some of the most intense combat operations of the war. He combines this with a running description of the emotions and decisions going through his mind at the time.

The memories of those intense moments are also spoken in the words of many of the men who served with Bahnsen. Whether they were in the same flight, the same aircraft, or alongside him when the battle moved to the ground (this happened often with Bahnsen) their voices add considerable credibility to accounts of combat so intense that those who were not there might doubt them. Bahnsen's sense of integrity comes through as he praises and honors those he commanded during those challenging times. In my discussions and reminisces with VHPA members, I am often reminded that my individual tour in Vietnam was much different from that of so many other aviators. For most of us, we arrived "in country" alone and caught the "freedom bird" out just as alone. I think one reason we read books about Vietnam is to better understand the experiences of others who served there.

American Warrior brings the units and battles that were "Doc" Bahnsen's Vietnam experience to life once again in the voices, deeds, and sacrifices of those who were there. I am also reminded that "Doc" Bahnsen, a 2007 inductee into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, is scheduled to give a talk during the Philadelphia Reunion this year as part of the VHPA's continuing Historical Presentation Forum series. I encourage you to be there if possible.

American Warrior: A Combat Memoir of Vietnam (448 pages with photos, \$24.95)  
by Brig. Gen. John C. "Doc" Bahnsen, Jr. with Wes Roberts,  
ISBN-13: 9780806528069 is available from Citadel Press or Amazon



VHPA member Larry Sherrer has written *Zigzag Men*, a fictional account of his Vietnam tour in an Air Cavalry Troop. It is a labor of 36 years from steno pad to computers and through all the ups and downs life can bring. He states that "Zigzag Men was my way of making that disastrous war more understandable for those who weren't there, to lend insight into how it is possible that all veterans can have such diversely unique stories, and yet have those stories, somehow, all weave together into one. But most of all, I wanted to capture a sense of the friendships that exceed all others, those that form in wartime."

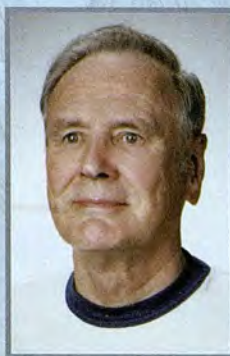
*Zigzag Men* (284 pages, \$15.00, ISBN13: 9780979741708) is available from Powell's and Amazon as well as digitally from Mobipocket and Amazon's Kindle.



# FROM OUR PRESIDENT...

With the economy acting the way that it is, I think the membership will agree with the EC that we need to make some expense saving moves to this year's Reunion. In my last column I mentioned that we would not have coffee available (at \$7.50 per/cup) at the ABM. We have also elected to eliminate the AV support at both the ABM and the banquet feeling that the cost, approximately \$37,000, for both events was also just too expensive. We have strived to cut other costs whenever possible keeping in mind that we did not want to directly, or indirectly affect the overall presentation of the events. At the time this issue of The Aviator goes to press we are still looking at alternate possibilities for AV support and it might still happen, or it might not. You may also notice that the registration fee for the Reunion has been reduced by \$15. This was the result of a vote of the EC to apply the profits from the San Antonio Reunion to the registration fees for this year's Reunion in Philadelphia.

When you receive this copy of the AVIATOR we will be about 65 days from the reunion and you still have some time to take advantage of the early registration rates and other money saving offerings (i.e. discounted room rates). Early registering is encouraged as we know that the 4th of July Holiday in Philadelphia, one of the birthplaces of our nation, will be crowded and when push comes to shove, it may be difficult to



Jack Salm

accommodate last minute attendees. We are keeping a close watch on registration for this year's Reunion and we hope to have a full house in Philadelphia.

I would like to thank Mike Law and several members of the Southern California Chapter for manning the VHPA booth at the HAI meeting in Anaheim, California in February. Also congratulations are in order for Dave Adams on his production of the AVIATOR. Since he took over the publisher duties the magazines have been outstanding and our publication is one that we can be proud of. Both of you please keep up the good work. I would also like to thank the Ohio River LZ Chapter for inviting me to attend their 22nd Annual Reunion on 6 & 7 March of this year. It was a well run and well attended function. Their hospitality was greatly appreciated and the appearance of Gen Hal Moore and Joe Galloway, plus my opportunity to fly a Bell Jet Ranger added to my enjoyment of the gathering.

*Don't let the time sneak up on you,  
register early for the Philadelphia Reunion.*

*Look forward to  
seeing you there.*

*Jack Salm  
President*

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

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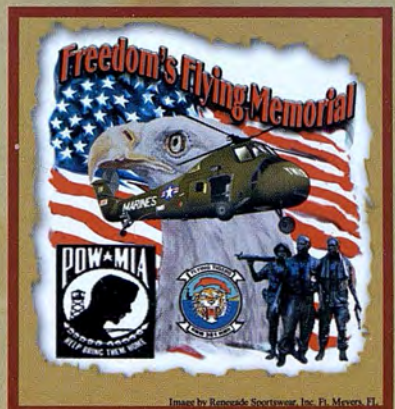
# An "Ugly Angel" Ghost



A.C. Daniel & Ron Hatton getting the aircraft ready to remove the transmission/rotor head assembly from the air-frame.



August 17, 2008. YN-19 Departs the parking lot of The National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia



Images by Renaissance Sportswear, Inc. Ft. Myers, FL



The fabulous four at Cochise, AZ: Seppo Hurme, A.C. Daniel, Ron Hatton and Al Weiss.

## AN "UGLY ANGEL" GHOST

In aviation museum parlance the word "ghost" means an aircraft's reincarnation of its former self.

Please visit [www.34restoration.org](http://www.34restoration.org) for the wonderful story of how several normally sane Vietnam Era USMC brothers, mostly from HMM-361, with the aid of about \$350,000 took almost five years to pull off this miraculous restoration of a UH-34D that actually flew with their squadron in Vietnam. The 1991 VHPA Directory was dedicated to SHUFLY – the code name for USMC Operation that centered around the initial deployment of HMM-362 (Archie's Angels) to Vietnam and chain of UH-34D squadrons that took over the missions. The VHPA is once again indebted to VHPA and Pop-A-Smoke member Seppo Hurme and his dear friend Al Weiss for these photos.



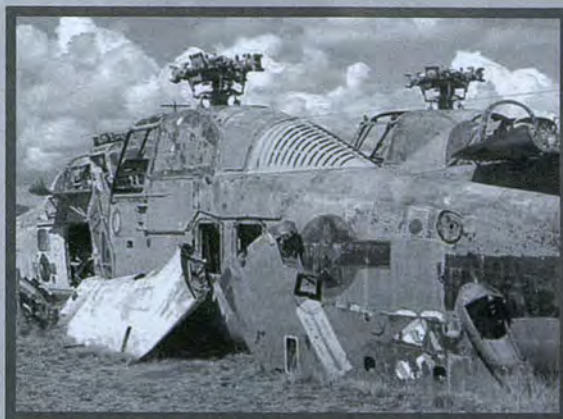
**Marine Helicopter Squadron 361** (*The Flying Tigers*) was formed on February 25, 1952 and is still operational today. The Flying Tigers were one of the first Marine Corps helicopter squadrons to be sent to Vietnam in 1963. The Flying Tigers are the second most decorated helicopter squadron in the United States Marine Corps, as well as the third oldest squadron.

The Flying Tigers of HMR-361 participated in the Atomic Bomb Test "Operation Hardtack" in the spring of 1958. The Sikorsky HRS-B (UH-34) helicopter participated in both the Mercury and Gemini Space programs during the 1960's. The Flying Tigers served in Vietnam from 1963 to 1969 flying the Sikorsky UH-34 during that time.

There were 58,202 American men and women killed in Vietnam with an additional 303,704 personnel wounded. The primary missions for the Flying Tigers were resupply of troops, troop insertions and medical evacuation services. Without the Flying Tigers unknown numbers of American soldiers would have lost their lives.

In 2000 we formed a 501 (c) (3) corporation to support the mission of flying our restored CH-34. The association now has over 200 former members of Marine Helicopter Squadron 361 along with retirees and community volunteers. Full details may be found at our website: [www.34restoration.org](http://www.34restoration.org) New members and donations are always greatly appreciated.

*This photo from our Vietnam days shows a Marine helicopter from HMM-361 brings ammunition to a howtar position during Operation STARLITE. The howtar is a 107mm mortar tube mounted on a pack howitzer chassis, hence the name howtar.*



*More HMM-361 helicopters that flew with us in Vietnam. These airframes also contributed to the mission by yielding serviceable parts.*



*Assorted spare parts that we were allowed to salvage from other airframes.*

*Aircraft on flatbed ready to go. Al Weiss is beaming in the cockpit. Note the transmission/rotor head assembly that is mounted in front of the airframe. The height of the UH-34D airframe necessitated removal to obtain adequate clearance under highway overpasses.*





# VHPA

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### To The Editor,

To whom it may concern, I am a non member of VHPA because I was an enlisted man in Vietnam not a pilot. I am however in contact with one of your members that deserves honor and recognition for saving my life, and the lives of others. The pilots name is William Petrak Jr., he was the Commander of the 569th Maint, Company of the 7/17th Air Cav. He was also our test pilot.

I was a member of the engine shop and flew with him and his regular maintenance crew on a test flight for a UH-1 that was having engine problems. The engine failed during the flight and he auto-rotated us all down to safety, and with just minor damage to the aircraft. He was a Captain then, but later flew with Ohio NG and I believe he retired as a WO4. I have had the pleasure of thanking him already, but if there is any way you might take it a step further by sharing my gratitude with your members I think it would be great.

Thank You,

**Ronald L Haler**

### To the Editor

I want to get in touch with any of our membership who were also Otter, Caribou or PV qualified while in the Army. If this is you, please contact me at the below address, we want to invite you to also join the Army Otter Caribou Association.

The AOCA has been in existence since 1985. We hold annual conventions around the country like the VHPA, we also publish an official magazine, "The Log Book" three times a year with lots of interesting "war stories" from members. Our official website is: [www.otter-caribou.org](http://www.otter-caribou.org) and you are welcome to visit it anytime.

**Don Jordan**

### Dear Editor,

I am Warren Motts Director of Motts Military Museum in Groveport, Ohio. We have U.S. Army helicopter AH-1G tail number 67-15480 now on display at Motts Military Museum and I thought you would like to add this to its history so if any of the veterans what to see it they can.

I am looking for someone who flew the aircraft in combat in Vietnam, if you find them have them get in touch with me as I would like to put their name on the craft and get their story recorded for history.

Thanks so much,

**Warren E. Motts, Founder/Director  
Motts Military Museum  
[www.mottsmilitarymuseum.org](http://www.mottsmilitarymuseum.org)**

### To the Editor,

Seeking Information on Cpt. Jan A. Lichtig.

I was stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky as a Tank Commander and my neighbor and my best friend during the period of 1976-1979 was Cpt. Jan A. Lichtig.

He was an Army Aviator and I noticed this name on your website

## 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 above, in the VHPA Officers, Committee Chairmen and Staff 2008-09.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

as being deceased. Can anyone in your organization provide me any further information so that I can confirm whether it's the same Jan Lichtig (he was originally from Michigan)? His wife was Kathy and they had two children, Brandon and a little daughter at the time.

Thanks,

**Cpt. Arthur H. Presser, USAR,**  
[Redacted]

## **An open letter to our President, Jack Salm**

First a little background about myself. I retired from civilian life after 40 years of flying helicopters, I'm a Member in good standing in the VHPA, a Member of VFW, American Legion, MOPH, MOAA and I'm on the Board of Directors for my local Veterans Memorial.

To me it is a sad truth, but I think that the Vietnam era veterans just have not stepped up to the plate when it comes to joining Veterans support groups. For my whole working career, I moved often and after working 6 or 7 days a week, I had little time to devote to anything outside the family's needs. And, I will admit after Vietnam, I did go Ex-pat for several years partially because of the treatment we received on our return home from our civilian peer group. But now that I am retired and I am channeling a lot of my free time towards making up for all that lost time. And I would encourage all our members to do the same.

Here is my question: I am curious how active the members of our group (the VHPA) are as a whole in supporting these needed Veterans functions? Does the VHPA encourage the members to join their local veterans groups and/or could we somehow "officially" encourage involvement in such groups by our membership?

*Please let me know the  
organization's feeling on this.*

Regards,

**Jim Grant**  
[Redacted]

## **Dear Editor,**

Last month I emailed you what I truly believed was a correction to which unit had UH-1H helicopters first in VN. You dutifully published my letter in Vol 27, No. 1 of The Aviator. I now have to retract my "bold" statement. A former colleague from my unit, 176th Avn Co, called me to advise me of the error of my ways. I thank him for that. I could have sworn that all those years ago I was flying

UH1H's.

Because of my colleague, I checked my flight records (yep...I still have them) and it shows that our aircraft in the 176th were indeed UH1H's. I sincerely apologize if I have skewed historical accuracy in any way. I know now, as possibly some of you do also, that as we age, our memories may not always be accurate. So much for our aging minds. I was not in any way trying to demean anyone's claim. So I congratulate all the 240th Avn Co (Greyhounds) on being the first in country with the UH1H. I know it was a great unit with many great personnel.

Since I seem to be having selective memory maybe it's time to write down stories about my experiences there. Maybe we all should start doing that now, if we haven't already. We lived in an absolutely history making time and should do our best to leave a record behind. Of course if we do err, and we have great former colleagues, they can help us out as did mine.

*Mea culpa, mea culpa.  
Keep up the good work.*

**Don Long**

**Minuteman Charter Member**

## **To The Editor**

I am interested in any contact info on pilots that flew with C battery, 4/77 ARA in 1970 and 1971.

Regards,

**Fred Eldridge**

**Fred.Eldridge@gmail.com**

## **To The Editor of The VHPA Aviator**

I just wanted to give the membership an update on my search for information that ran in your last issue where I requested help with finding out about the death of my cousin, Garry M. Shannon.

Since your publication of my request, I have received several responses. One of those was from Colonel Peter Bradley, retired, who had assumed command of the 227th Aviation Helicopter Battalion as a direct result of this incident, and the other was from maintenance officer Bill Maddox, retired, who served as direct supervisor of my cousin during his duty in Vietnam. Colonel Bradley was able to confirm that the pilot and co-pilot both survived the incident, and he was able to tell me that pilot Jimmy Williams was the 227th Charlie company commander at the time of the incident. Because Williams was wounded during the mission and his injuries led to the crash of the chopper, Bradley was summoned to take command of Charlie company.

Bill Maddox was able to confirm this information and also provided the name of the other door gunner on board the chopper at the time of the incident. His name is Lawrence (Larry) T. Fields. Maddox told me that Shannon and Fields were not only crewmembers together, but also shared their living quarters when not on duty. They reportedly were very close as friends. I was able to do some investigating on my own and was able to locate and speak to Larry Fields. He was able to confirm the connection, and although I am grateful for the contact, I worry some for Larry. He took the circumstances of the incident very hard, and I felt concerned that I might be opening a painful door for him. Nevertheless, we all have agreed to keep in contact, and I hope with time that Larry can feel better about things from that part of his life since we've talked.

I am eternally grateful for your organization's willingness to help and for your efforts to assist me in this quest for information. I appreciate the concern of your members and their willingness to assist the family of one of their own, just as they willingly assisted each other during their time of duty. Their dedication to service continues.

*May God bless you all.*

Sincerely,

**Greg Gooden**

## **To The Editor,**

I'm trying to find someone who bought the class ring from Ft Rucker back in the 60's so I can try and find the manufacturer. I was unable to purchase the ring back then, but I am trying to get one now if at all possible.

Regards,

**Robert T. Pillion**

**Class of 68-21**  
[Redacted]

## **To the Editor,**

I enjoyed reading the articles pertaining to MG James F. Hamlet in the "VHPA Aviator." I had a close relationship with General Hamlet in the 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion. I was the assistant operations officer and flew with him nearly every day for six months in 1967. The previous six months, I was a flight leader in Company C. LTC Hamlet (his rank at that time) was in the air in his command and control chopper whenever there was a 227th combat assault in progress. The second day we flew together, he gained immediate respect by the battalion personnel. One of the lift ships went down



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CONTINUED

due to maintenance. Colonel Hamlet and I slipped into that slot and carried troops the rest of the day. All of the leadership accolades apply to General Hamlet. It was a joy to work for him. At the end of our tenure together, he wrote to the commanding general at Fort Rucker recommending me for test pilot duty, which was approved.

I played keyboard professionally after retirement. I was playing Christmas music at the Fort Rucker bank when General Hamlet made a visit to the post. I met him at the officer's club and he invited me to ride with him as he visited units on post. We had a great time talking about our experiences together in Vietnam. We kept in touch by phone until he died a few years ago. I considered him one of my best friends.

**Louie A. Barber, Major US Army  
(Retired)**  
[REDACTED]

## Gentlemen,

I am an oral historian and documentary maker and am currently completing a documentary and oral history project on the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral on May 12-13, 1968, Bien Hoa Province, Vietnam (Operation Toan Thang II). It was the biggest and bloodiest battle Australians were involved in during the Vietnam War with the largest amount of casualties suffered. Without a doubt what saved the Australian FSB was the air support received from US attack helicopters and a "Spooky" gunship.

I am trying to locate any & all pilots or crew members who were involved in the air support on those two fateful days. I would like to interview you for our oral history archive and the documentary I am planning. I am sincerely hoping that someone in your Association may be able to help me in my search.

*Your assistance is greatly appreciated.  
Kind regards,*

**Leonie Jones  
University of Southern Queensland  
TOOWOOMBA, AUSTRALIA**  
[REDACTED]

## To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator

REF: Blue Max story in your last Issue

In a day and age that many claim to be heroes of the Vietnam War who were not even there, it is refreshing to read such an accurate article about the Vietnam War. I'm referring to the article about the "Blue Max" ARA battery and their actions during the Easter Offensive of 1972. I feel that I'm qualified to comment about the article

because I was there. I flew cobras for F/9 Cav, 229th AHB, 1st Cavalry Division, during this same time frame. Like everyone else we were short-handed so like most of the other cobra pilots we had to fly every day. I was there when Blue Max lost each of their four cobras and their air crews. I was also there on 21 June 1972 when one of Blue Max's cobras was blown in half by a SAM but both pilots survived. F/9 lost 4 pilots during this time frame to include 1LT Lou Breauer and CW2 Bredette Townson whose cobra was also brought down by a SAM.

I not only want to comment about the accuracy of the article, but more important about the uncommon valor of the Blue Max pilots. Once the first SAM brought down the first cobra the guns from F/9 countered by dropping down to tree-top level that was loaded with more intense small arms fire, but at least we had a much shorter distance to fall once shot down.

Unfortunately the ARA battery could not perform their mission from tree top level and had to continue to fly at 1500 feet in order to be able to deliver their ordnance. This meant daily exposures to SAMs. Both F/9 and Blue Max staged out of the same area during the battle of An Loc. Our aircraft set side by side on the small air strip at Lai Khe so I got to meet and talk with the ARA folks on a daily basis. Despite the daily exposure to SAM I never once heard a Blue Max pilot talk about not flying a mission. Every time they took off they knew there was a good chance that they might not come back. I have never witnessed such uncommon valor before or since.

To all those who died I salute you and I also hope that my comments here make their way back to the loved ones of those who fought so gallantly and died. I want you all to know that after nearly 40 years, your loved ones sacrifices have not been forgotten.

**LTC (Ret) Curtis Dane Hatley,  
Weapons Platoon, F/9 Cav, 229th AHB,  
1st Cavalry Division**  
[REDACTED]

## To The Members of the VHPA

SUBJ: TAIL OF THE LOST FILMS

It's strange how history follows you. I live in San Diego California and work for Northrop Grumman. A while ago a good friend, a fellow employee, asked me if I knew of any helicopter organization that had some history of Army aviators. He's retired Navy, flew Intruders in 1969 at about the time I was flying for the 61st

AHC. Immediately I mentioned VHPA. He said he had a strange tail, a friend of his (also a Naval Aviator) had and he'd like me to hear it.

It seems his friend had a dad who was in the Army in Vietnam in the late 60' early 70's. He died in 2008 and this guy had to clean out his dad's garage. One of the things he found was a box with old film and the name CW2 Steven D Hodge on it. It's believed that Steven was in Vietnam in 1971-72.

One of the film reels says "Apr. 72, Fly over", another says "120th Avn. Group" (I couldn't find that in the membership directory), he has no idea how his dad ended up with the film. Anyway this Naval Aviator started doing research and found that apparently after Vietnam, Steven D. Hodge went to Ft. Richardson Alaska. He also found out that later, after leaving the Army, he thinks, that Steven was killed in a helicopter accident.

What I was asked to do is see if any of our membership knew Steven and if you did, do you know of any family that might want these films which I now have.

**John D. McArthur  
Senior Manager, Contracts,  
NORTHROP GRUMMAN  
Space and Mission Systems Corp.  
home [REDACTED]  
work 858-514-9190, e-mail:  
[REDACTED]**

## Members of the VHPA,

I have been trying to locate the songs of the WOC Merry Men recorded in Viet Nam around 1967. I have Goggled my self to death and found nothing. My goal is to put together a collection of military songs spanning WWI to present. I have a good friend with a state of the art Karaoke set up that plays at VFW's and Legions. I thought some patriotic music would be nice. Maybe we could put on a good show. Hope someone out there in the VHPA ether could help.

**CW5 Greg Smith (ret)**  
[REDACTED]

## Gentlemen

About ten years ago Steve Pullen (Ban-shee 11) advertized porcelain Vietnam era pilot figures in the VHPA magazine.

His VHPA info is no longer current and I have been trying to get one but to no avail. If anybody has one and is willing to part with it, I am interested.

**Lee Dike  
Vulture 28, 162nd AHC - 70-71  
(Cell) [REDACTED] E-Mail:  
[REDACTED]**



## Editor's Note...

Last year we received an e-mail from a Retired Col. William Reeder who was passing along another e-mail sent to him from a Vietnamese Sky Raider pilot who was shot down about 30 years ago in Vietnam. That pilot was Thuy tien Nguyen and Thuy was asking for Col Reeder's help in finding the aircrew that had rescued him when he was shot down that day.

The reason Thuy was asking for Col Reeder's help was that he (Thuy) had read a story on their Vietnamese Sky Raider pilot's website

where Col. Reeder had just reunited with Thuy's fellow Sky Raider pilot, a Vietnamese officer named Xanh Nguyen. Col Reeder and Xanh became fellow POW's when they were both shot down on May 9th, 1972, and after years of searching for each other, they were able to reunite last year.

At my request, along with Thuy's letter, Col Reeder also sent us a story about his & Xanh's time as a POW detailing how miserable their treatment was and how neither one of them

would have survived the ordeal if it wasn't for the bond they built between them.

Both stories need to be told. I invite our membership to read Col Reeder and Xanh's story and to search your memory to see if you are a member of, or perhaps know of the aircrew that rescued Thuy tien Nguyen all those years ago.

David Adams  
Editor, the VHPA Aviator

## MY FRIEND XANH



Col Reeder in Vietnam.

*I began my second tour of duty* in Vietnam on December 7, 1971. President Nixon's policy of withdrawal through "Vietnamization" was well underway. The burden of fighting the war was being passed more fully to the Vietnamese and U.S. troops were being brought home at a dramatic rate. Indeed, and ironically in retrospect, the plan seemed to be going well. There was little enemy activity inside South Vietnam and the insurgent guerrilla war had pretty well ended.

But the regular army forces of North Vietnam were growing in strength just across the borders in Laos and Cambodia, as our missions in support of MACV-SOG clearly showed. The relative calm that had settled over the guerrilla war in the South was not to last long.

In the spring of 1972, the North Vietnamese launched their major offensive of the war. It became known as the 1972 Easter Offensive. It was not an uprising of the insurgent Viet Cong, as had been the case in the Tet Offensive of 1968. Instead, this campaign was a series of conventional attacks by the regular North Vietnamese army across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) from Communist North Vietnam, and from sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia with advances designed to cut the country of South Vietnam in half through the Central Highlands, and to strike the South's capital city of Saigon. The Communists failed in 1972 after some very hard fighting by the South Vietnamese army and air force, and the determined help of those American forces remaining.

The offensive began in April 1972 with advances of North Vietnamese forces toward Saigon from out of Cambodia, and attacks toward the ancient capital of Hue from out of North Vietnam across the DMZ. The final movement of this well orchestrated battle plan came from northern Cambodia and southern Laos as the North Vietnamese army attempted to replicate the 1954 successes of the Viet Minh against the French in wresting control of a wide belt across the central part of the South, and destroying French military capability in the process. In 1972, the Communist armies achieved some initial success, but were denied every major objective. In the north, they advanced only to Quang Tri, and were there defeated by South Vietnamese airborne. In the south, they moved only as far as An Loc before being defeated. And in the Central Highlands, they captured some outposts surrounding Kontum, but were again defeated.

I recount this bit of history as background to a personal drama that played out at this time for me, and for a South Vietnamese Air Force pilot named Xanh Nguyen, or actually Nguyen Xanh by Vietnamese

## VIETNAMESE A-1 SKYRAIDER PILOT SEEKS AMERICAN RESCUER

*Dear Colonel Reeder,*

My name is Thuy tien Nguyen, one of the Jupiter 530 Squadron members in Pleiku a long time ago. We flew A-1 Skyraiders. I learned about you finding Xanh, and I hope I might have similar luck. I am trying to find the American helicopter pilot who rescued me on May 27, 1972. It was around two or three o'clock in the afternoon while on a mission south of Kontum. My A-1 was on fire. I bailed out, and a UH-1 came and rescued me, bringing me back safely to Pleiku airbase. At that time, I never thought I'd be in the United States, and never thought to ask for my life saver's name.

Now that I am here, thinking back, I would like to say thanks to all the Americans who came to our country to fight the Communists with us – especially all the crews at Camp Holloway, and most specifically the crew that rescued me on 5/27/72. For the last 30 years I have thought of the pilot and that crew, but have been unable to locate him. Xanh and you are lucky. I am trying to find an effective way to find my rescuer, so we can have a reunion like you and Xanh. I want to express my appreciation to him and buy him a steak dinner.

Thank you,  
Thuy



A-1 Skyraiders

name ordering, for they always place the last name first. When the 1972 Easter Offensive began, I was an AH-1G Cobra attack helicopter pilot with the 361st Pink Panthers, flying from the American base at Camp Holloway, near Pleiku, in the Central Highlands. Lieutenant Nguyen Xanh was with the VNAF Jupiter 530 Squadron, flying A-1 Skyraider fixed wing attack airplanes from Pleiku airbase at the same time. We did not know each other, had never met or even seen each other.

On May 9, 1972, I was launched at dawn on a tactical emergency as mission lead of a flight of two Cobras to support the besieged army camp at Polei Klang – almost due west of Kontum and not too far from the Cambodian border. There were North Vietnamese infantry and tanks attacking the base, and the situation was grim. We made several runs and expended all our rockets, grenades, and machine gun ammunition and headed to Kontum airfield to re-arm and re-fuel. My other crew member in the front seat of the Cobra, my co-pilot/gunner, was First Lieutenant Tim Conry from Phoenix, Arizona. Tim was the most outstanding young officer I had known,

Cont. on page 10



*Cont. from page 9*

and for that reason, I tucked him under my wing as his platoon leader, and from his arrival in the unit, he always flew with me. He excelled as an aviator and as a man. And he would become a hero that day.

On our way back out, we were diverted to a larger attack taking place at another camp situated right at the Tri-Border, the spot where the borders of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia all come together. The place was called Ben Het. There was a Vietnamese ranger battalion of about 300 and two American advisors, Mark Truhan and Bob Sparks. They were under attack by elements for two North Vietnamese divisions (several thousand soldiers) supported by tanks. The tanks had penetrated the perimeter, and enemy infantry occupied much of the base.

En route to Ben Het, I glanced toward Poley Klang as I flew abeam. There was a lot of activity, and I could see A-1 Skyraiders in their bombing patterns. I then saw one of the A-1s hit and crash in flames. The pilot ejected and I could see his parachute. I radioed for permission to go to Poley Klang and cover the rescue. Permission was denied. I asked again, denied, more tersely this time, again. I didn't yet know the degree of urgency at Ben Het, but was infuriated at the moment for not being allowed to help another pilot in obvious need.

I flew into a hornets nest at Ben Het. When we arrived, we saw tanks within the perimeter wire, and enemy infantry everywhere. The friendly survivors had consolidated in the command bunker at the center of the camp and were fighting hard to keep the enemy at bay. We fired some ordinance and then supported a special helicopter with a new type of tank killing missile. When we'd expended all our ordinance, we returned again to Kontum to once again re-arm and re-fuel. We then launched back out on our third combat mission of the day, returning to Ben Het.

After take-off from Kontum, we were asked to escort a re-supply helicopter into Ben Het. The beleaguered force was running desperately low on ammunition, and had no more anti-tank ammunition at all. We joined with a Huey helicopter carrying the ammunition re-supply, and escorted him into Ben Het, low level, on the tree tops, as we'd done so many times before on our special operations missions across the border. We approached the camp with guns blazing, ours and theirs. In my front seat, Tim was laying down a well aimed path of protective devastation with the mini-gun and grenade launcher in our turret. I was firing pairs of rockets. At the same time, we were engaged by numerous enemy small arms and anti-aircraft weapons as we continued inbound. The Huey successfully completed its critical mission, largely because of Tim's carefully directed suppressive fire. The Huey came to a very brief hover, kicked off the ammo boxes and lifted out. We turned to cover his departure and immediately began taking hits from several enemy weapons. My Cobra came down spinning and burning. We crashed and exploded a moment later. Tim and I just got out. He died later that day. I had a badly broken back, burns on the back of my neck, a piece of shell fragment sticking out of my ankle, and superficial wounds on my head and face. I was in the midst of many hundreds of attacking enemy soldiers. Mark Truhan, one of the two American advisors at Ben Het, sent out a force to try to get to me, but after a number of casualties, they had to abort their mission. Gutsy move. Their own survival was tenuous. I could crawl about in great pain, and did move to cover and then out of the immediate area, able to evade my foes for three days before being captured.

I was interrogated for a couple of days; treated pretty brutally. I was a physical mess. My back was broken. My ankle wound had filled my boot with blood that was now dried solid. I was three days unshaven. I'd had no control over my bowels or bladder and had soiled myself badly. And I'd had several leaches cling to my body, all of which I'd pulled off, except for one which unknowingly was half way into my left nostril. My captors got a laugh from that.

I was questioned, beaten, threatened, and had my arms tied behind my back with the ropes increasingly tightened during interrogation, until finally both my shoulders dislocated as my elbows were

pulled tightly together against my broken spine. Finally, the interrogations ceased, and I was marched for three days to a jungle prison camp that, by my estimation, must have been just across the border in northern Cambodia. I was given my boots back, but no laces and no socks. After three days of walking, my feet were like raw hamburger by the time I limped, in much pain, up to the entrance to my first prison.

The site was typical of the image many have of a jungle prison camp. It was carved out of the triple-canopy rain forest and built of bamboo. The camp was surrounded by a bamboo wall that was reminiscent of an old cavalry frontier fort in the American West. There was one wall concentrically within another, with a ditch dug between the two, almost moat-like. In the ditch were many punji stakes — pieces of bamboo, knife sharp, dipped in human waste and stuck in the ground. If you fell on these, you'd die of a wound to a vital organ, or bleed to death, or at least die of infection if you were not killed outright. Across this ditch was a log that one had to balance across to gain entry to the camp.

Inside the walls were many bamboo cages that housed the prisoner population. There were South Vietnamese military, there were indigenous mountain people referred to as Montagnards or Moun-tainyards who had allied with U.S. special forces, and there were two Americans, myself and another helicopter pilot, Wayne Finch, captured a month earlier. At least a couple hundred prisoners altogether.

Conditions in this camp were deplorable. We lived like animals. We were kept in cages, most of which were not tall enough to stand up in. That wasn't necessary anyway, because they kept our feet in wooden stocks. With my broken back, I could not lie back; so I slept sitting up. And every night rats scurried through the cages and nibbled on my ankle wounds, and I couldn't move my feet in the stocks, and couldn't keep them away, and I hate rats to this day.

The only time we got out of these cages was for a daily toilet call at the camp latrine. The time never seemed to be the same on any given day, and if a prisoner's internal schedule could not wait for the appointed time (many suffered dysentery) then he went all over himself in the cage. When they did let us out, it was a walk to the "facility" in one corner of the camp. On my first visit, I discovered that the latrine was a couple of holes in the ground that you squatted over to relieve yourself. Problem was that many of the sicker prisoners were not able to hold themselves until getting all the way to the holes, and left their waste in piles all around that area. Some of the very sickest prisoners, near death, were placed in hammocks right next to the latrine, and they would either lay there and soil themselves, time after time, or roll out of their hammock, if they could, and take a couple of steps and go there on the ground. The result was a substantial accumulation of human waste all around the holes that were the latrine. Those able to control themselves were forced to walk through that waste field and squat over the holes. On return to our cages, we had no way to clean ourselves.

I don't remember water being a problem. It was delivered in pieces of bamboo, and there seemed to be sufficient quantities. It was supposedly boiled, but I still came down with bloody dysentery. Food was a problem. Our diet was almost exclusively rice. We'd get one grapefruit sized ball mid-morning, and another mid-afternoon. Occasionally, we'd get the treat of a tuberous root called manioc. It is very much like (and may be the same as) yucca in Latin American countries. My weight went from around 190 pounds to something around 120 in just a few weeks. I was skin hanging on bone with beard that grew very long over time. I did not shave for over five months. And I received no medical attention at all. And no one fared any better. The South Vietnamese next to me in my cage had a severe chest wound that had been bandaged long ago, but I never saw the dressing changed, and the hole in his chest wall was never repaired. He was young and strong, but I'm certain he did not survive.

We lived like animals, and under these filthy, starvation conditions, without medical care, it seemed that someone died almost every day.

*cont. on page 32*



## VHPA MEMBER ADVISORY:

### WARNINGS AND CAUTIONS ON THE PHILLY REUNION

Here's a quick review on the VHPA economic situation and the Philly Reunion. Please read...First, the VHPA is very solvent because we invested well for many years now. Every year, the biggest risk and expense is the annual reunion. Most years, our reunions have come out ahead expense-wise, but we did have a bad year in Phoenix a few years back. Last year, we came out ahead in San Antonio and as a result, this year's registration fees are reduced based on last year's proceeds. So, while our reunions may seem pricey to many members, we really do try to keep costs down and compared to most other large scale reunions, we are on par cost-wise and well below most typical professional meetings.

Either way, the reunion is a major part of our organization along with our excellent VHPA Aviator magazine and our directory and historic material. We are lucky to have a very dedicated and experienced group of committee members who put the reunion together to include our Hqs staff and the Reunion Brat support service. These groups plan our reunions several years in advance. This entails signing contracts with hotels that

guarantee a minimum number of room days attendees will stay and things like that. This is necessary in order to negotiate lower room rates and get the commitments needed from the guest hotel to pull off our reunion.

If we do not get enough members to attend any given reunion, we stand to lose lots of money due to unused rooms that we still have to pay for. We're talking thousands of dollars at risk here! Every year we closely monitor the number of registrations per month. At this point, we are way behind with registrations. That's not surprising given the crappy economy, but this does raise early alarms at the potential for us to lose money on the Philly reunion. No one could predict this bad economy and most of us have lost big chunks of change in the financial markets and on our homes. But life goes on and in times like this, we still need to do things that renew us and take our minds off business and politics.

So, if you are planning to attend the reunion, please register ASAP so we can better gauge expected numbers. If you are sitting on the fence, please decide to join us at the reunion in Philly this 4th of July weekend after all. The articles in this

issue of the Aviator show that we are offering more at the Philly reunion than we ever have in a reunion as many of you have asked us to do. Please join us, reconnect and have a great time! Note that our contract with the Marriot allows us to return a percentage of the rooms to reduce our risk, but if we do this, we might come up short with reserved rooms for members who sign up late – the bottom line, please sign up early to avoid a possible hassle with room availability. If our registration numbers come up, we won't return rooms. So, that's our warning and caution.

*Summary: The VHPA has no toxic assets and will not need a bailout. However, we could use an economic stimulus by you attending our reunion. If we come up short this year, the plan will be to add some costs into next year's reunion, in San Diego, which we hope to avoid. Thanks for your support.*

*Your VHPA Executive Council: Jack Salm, Pres., Mike Whitten, past Pres., Gary Roush, VP, Woody McFarlin, Sr Member-at-Large, Mike Law, Midterm Member, and Jim Fulbrook, Jr Member. If you have questions on the issues here, please contact any of us.*

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.**

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### HELP AND OR CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED...

Dr. James W. Williams, (Jim to us VHPA Members) has teamed with several of his friends and have undertaken the very complex job of getting our fellow Army Aviator, the recently deceased (Major) James T. Newman, inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame.

*Anyone desiring to either help with and/or contribute to this worthy effort is invited to contact Jim at:*



# EVERYBODY KNOWS WOODY... *by Mike Sheuerman*

Each Unit in Vietnam had one or two of these. The type of guy everybody liked and admired - great pilot, great mission lead, outrageous character, fun loving soul and just a great person to be around. One of ours was Woody - CW2 Joseph A Woodard. He knew everybody and everybody knew Woody. From the guys in B/7/17 CAV, to the Bikinis and Bucs of the 170th, to the Gladiators of the 57th, to the Crocs and Gators of the 119th - everybody knew Woody. What a guy.

Woody graduated in WOC Flight Class 70-3/70-1 followed by Cobra School and then arrived in the 361st in February '70 at the ripe old age of 19. Aside from the five 30 day extension leaves and too numerous to count R&R's to Bangkok over the next two years, he spent his time flying Snakes with the Panthers. He was such a good pilot that he made AC in less than four months. He was an "Old Guy" when I arrived in May of '71. And out of country on one of his many R&R's to Bangkok with Cousin Brucie and Lash, his best friend to this day.

In 1992 I learned from Lash that Woody was flying Med/Evac out of Shreveport and Longview. It took us several years to get together. He is married to Julia, a doll who understands him and lets him be Woody. He has two great sons, Michael and Andy. But it was the same old Woody, fun loving and great to be around. And a great connoisseur of fine ale. He loves Milwaukee's Best. In early 2000 when Lash was having open heart surgery, Woody and I drove to Huntsville, Alabama just to have dinner with him. We spent the night, had breakfast the next morning and drove back to Texas.

Over the last several years I'm always running in to people who know Woody. Heres a

couple of examples. One of my clients is Sigel's Liquors (owned by an old SF guy from CCN). I called on one of their Sales Reps three or four years ago and noticed pictures of AH-1G's and AH-1S's all over his office. His name is Robert Britt, He attended Flight School in late '72 but never flew in Vietnam. He was stationed in Germany in '76. I mentioned some of the guys I had flown with Vietnam were also flying Cobras in Germany then - Lash Wisener, Jim Watkins, Dana Johndro and Woody Woodard, "I KNOW WOODY! What a guy. We were good friends. What's he doing these days? Do you have a phone number or email address?" was his reply.

This weekend Hunter and I went camping with a Boy Scout Troop. Hunter needed to camp with a Troop to get his "ARROW OF LIGHT" in Cub Scouting. (Yes, everyone should be 50 when your first child is born.) The trip was to an Observatory southwest of Houston on Saturday with a trip to NASA on Sunday. One of the boys in the Troop is a cousin of an Astronaut that flew three missions on the shuttle in the early and mid 90's. He met us and gave us a special briefing about his time in space. His name is Rich Clifford. He is a ex Army Helicopter Pilot. He attended West Point, graduating in 1974. After a year's troop duty at Ft Carson he attended Rotary Flight School, graduating # 1 in his class in 1976. He then went to AMOC before being assigned to Germany as Service Platoon Leader, Attack Troop, 2nd Armored CAV. He always wanted to be an Astronaut and, after applying 4 four times, was accepted.

After his talk (do you realize the Shuttle travels at a ground speed of 17,500 miles an

hour or 5 miles a second ) I went up to speak with him. I told him how much we enjoyed his talk, told him I attended Army flight school in 1970 ( I skipped my rank in the class ) and had quite a few friends who flew in Germany in the mid 70's - Lash Wisener, Jim Watkins, Dana Johndro and Woody Woodard. "I know Woody. What a character. What's he doing now? Where's he living?"

All this reminds me of the time Woody and I went to Rome, Italy on a business trip. While there we went to see the Vatican. Pope John Paul was going to bless the crowd from his balcony and Woody wanted to be there for some reason. It was really crowded but we got a pretty good place up close. That's when Woody told me he knew the Pope personally. He had flown him somewhere several years before while he was stationed in Germany. Of course I didn't believe him. He then told me he could get in to see the Pope and,

when the Pope came out on the Balcony, he - WOODY WOODARD - would be standing next to the Pope. Before I could say " BS " Woody disappeared in to the crowd. About 45 minutes later the doors on the balcony opened and the Pope came out. AND NEXT TO HIM WAS WOODY WOODARD! I was dumbfounded and amazed. Then it dawned on me that this might not be the actual Pope but just some guy in the Vatican. Standing next to me were a group of Nuns. I said " Excuse me, Mother Superior, is that really the Pope?"

*"I don't know for sure but the guy next to him, THAT'S WOODY WOODARD" was her reply.*

*Everybody knows Woody.*

"Excuse me,  
Mother Superior,  
is that really the  
Pope?"

## What new with the VHPA Calendar Project? What is the status of the 2010 Calendar?

I am pleased to announce that Turner Publishing has the material for the 2010 VHPA Calendar. This will be the VHPA's seventeenth calendar. You will see production copies and purchase them at the VHPA Reunion in July. To guarantee that Turner can start selling next year's issue in July, the VHPA must deliver the source photos, narratives, etc. in early January. Once again we made that schedule.

### **...Why is the 2009 VHPA Calendar sold out already?**

Well everyone involved was surprised when this happened. Sadly many of our faithful repeat customers tried to order copies in January and were disappointed. Normally Turner prints about 1,500 to 1,600 copies and traditionally there are less than 100 still available in May or June. We've

seen this trend for the last several years. As many of you know, for the last several months VHPA HQ has been mailing a TON of invoices and membership recruiting information to every state (but with special emphasis for the states within driving distance of this summer's Reunion). These mailings included a very nice calendar order form and we believe this resulted in a much higher purchase rate for this issue versus previous issues. We have heard many wonderful comments such as: "Wow! If I'd known how good the VHPA Calendar is, I'd have been buying copies for years!"

### **HQ has a "waiting list" for the 2009 VHPA Calendar...**

Because so many people were unable to obtain a copy, we started a "wish list" or "waiting list." We need at least 200 requests

to reprint this issue. If you or any of your friends want to join this list, please contact HQ soonest at 800-505-8472.

### **...How do I get some of my Vietnam Era photos considered for the 2011 Calendar?**

We have already started gathering material for the 2011 issue. If you have photos that you believe deserve a wider audience or have friends with good photos for our consideration, please contact me soon. Thanks again for all those who have shared their priceless photos and priceless stories with the VHPA. While you can email me low-resolution versions of your pictures, please remember that I may need to borrow your originals to obtain high-resolution scans.

**Mike Law, VHPA Calendar Editor**



# VHPA SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE APPROACHING

VHPA Members, please show this to your kids, grandkids, great grandkids, and great, great grandkids.

Now is the time to start preparing your applications for the THREE VHPA SCHOLARSHIPS awarded annually on merit by AAAA. There are only TWO REQUIREMENTS needed to apply. 1) The applicant must be the direct descendant of an dues current member of our organization, a deceased member of our organization who was dues current when he passed away or a helicopter pilot who was killed in action while serving as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. 2) The applicant or the applicant's sponsor must be a dues current member of AAAA. That's it.

And the good news is this. Even though you are applying for the VHPA Scholarships, you are also considered for most, if not ALL, of the other AAAA scholarships, grants and loans. Last year three applicants were awarded our VHPA scholarships and over 20 more of our applicants received one from AAAA. More than 60% of our applicants received an award of

some kind - scholarship, grant or loan.

This program is good for College, Grad School, Medical School, Law School, Trade School, etc. And you can apply every year. Even if you received a scholarship last year or the year before, you are still eligible this year.

Here is what you need to do. Go on line to [www.quad-a.org](http://www.quad-a.org) and click on "Scholarships." There you will find all the information you need to get started. **THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS IS MAY 1. I say again. THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS IS MAY 1.**

This is a great program for our descendants. Please ask them to take advantage of it, get involved and apply.

**Tom Payne**  
*Scholarship Committee-Chairman*

**Mike Sheuerman**  
*Scholarship Committee-Fund Raising*

## SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEEDS DONATIONS

The economy is effecting our VHPA Scholarship money and it's ability to generate enough funds to continue to award the three VHPA scholarships currently given out each year or add the fourth one. AND WE WERE SO CLOSE TO #4. Last year it took about \$27,000 in deposited funds to generate the \$1000 needed for each of our scholarships. In fact, before the big downturn, VHPA was closing in on having enough money on deposit with AAAA to fund a fourth VHPA Scholarship. We were a little over half way to our fund raising goal to make #4 a reality. With the downturn, that money is helping keep the first three on line.

Here's what I'm asking-I want to see VHPA with 5 Scholarships by May of 2012 and 7 by May of 2015. And it's

easy to do. All we have to do is each of us cut out one little thing a week. Here's what I'm going to do.

I LOVE COKES. I could drink 10 a day. Being a good Georgia boy and loyal to my upbringing I drink Coca-Colas every day. Cokes cost \$1.39 each here in Texas, \$1.50 with tax. If I give up one a week and send the money to the VHPA Scholarship fund, that's \$78 a year. If I gave up one a day and sent the money to the VHPA Scholarship fund, that's \$547.50 a year. Now just think for a minute if 100 of us did that, a 1000 of us did that. The Scholarship Fund would be very well funded. All it takes is a very little sacrifice. What I'm asking you guys to do is give up 1 beer a week, or give up 1 Starbucks a week, or 1 Krispy Creme

donut a week, or 1 of whatever you "crave" each week and send the money to the VHPA Scholarship Fund. To put my money where my mouth is I'm giving up ONE COKE A DAY and pledging that money to the VHPA SCHOLARSHIP FUND. Who knows, when Hunter, now 11, applies for the VHPA Scholarship the first time in 2016 I might just get a break on his tuition.

**Anybody else? Let me know at**  
[mike@hunterandassociates.com](mailto:mike@hunterandassociates.com)

**Mike Sheuerman**  
*Scholarship Committee, Fund Raising*

## DIRECTORY REMINDER

As announced in a previous Aviator, the Executive Council has decided to begin charging for the paper directory beginning with the 2010 issue. It turns out that our expenses for the membership directory are almost \$10 each and we have a superior alternative directory in the password protected online directory that is updated a minimum of once per week, but most often daily. The online directory is located at [www.vhpaservices.com](http://www.vhpaservices.com). The annual expenses for this web site is under \$1,000 per year so it is truly cost effective versus the almost \$60,000 per year that we spend on the paper directory. As a result, the EC elected to solve our

financial shortfall by making the online directory primary and the paper directory an additional, for fee, product instead of increasing dues.

Beginning with dues expiring on 1 September 2009 or after (for the 2010 directory), you will have a choice of keeping your dues at \$36 by switching to the online membership directory only or paying \$10 more to receive the paper or the CD directory. If you are a life member and want to receive either the paper or CD directory, there is a charge of \$10 beginning with the 2010 directory. If you would like to switch to the online directory right away and not receive the 2009 paper directory in

October, please notify HQ at [HQ@vhpa.org](mailto:HQ@vhpa.org) or 800-505-8472.

**If you have any questions about this change, please let me know.**

As another reminder - the cut off date for new information in the 2009 directory is 15 August 2009. Please be sure that your information is up to date by the 15th. By the way, you can now do this online by going to [www.vhpaservices.com](http://www.vhpaservices.com) and selecting "Update my Information" at the bottom of the left column.

**Gary Roush**  
*Vice President and Directory Editor*  
[webmaster@vhpa.org](mailto:webmaster@vhpa.org)



## From the Editor of The VHPA Aviator

**Good Morning all, I hope this finds you well. I want to talk about the next few issues of the Aviator.**

I want to orient the next (July/August) issue of The Aviator on the Battle for An Loc. The battle occurred in April - June 1972, or almost exactly 37 years ago. Some of the highlights of the battle include the fact that this is where General Giap chose to engage South Vietnamese and U.S. forces using three divisions of North Vietnam (NVA) regular forces. The attack was well-balanced and used armor, infantry and artillery forces and if he had been successful; then the three NVA divisions would have been able to move on Saigon, only 90 kilometers away.

VHPA Member Dan Fox has already provided me with some excellent photos and some great text describing how he was a part of the battle. What I'm now looking for is the same thing from some of the attack, scout, support and other lift pilots that might also have been involved in the battle. Being an old attack pilot myself, I know TOW missiles were also (first?) used by Army aircraft during the battle so if you know anything about that - then let me hear from you. I realize most of us had left Vietnam by June of 1972, but no matter what story you might have about this battle, let me try to get it out there for all to enjoy.

How long you have to get your thoughts together and into me? Honestly, I would like to have your input by May 15th; hopefully that's about 3 weeks away from when you are now reading this. Also, don't sweat the small stuff on this deal, send me what you can. I'll be glad to help smooth it out and polish it up, that always makes my 12th grade English teacher and #1 fan, Mrs. Beckett, proud.

I hope everyone enjoyed our "Christmas in Vietnam" Issue this last year; it was a blast to put together and brought back lots of memories, most of them good. We are going to move up the dates for the delivery of this year's November/December's issue to a more normal, mid-November arrival in your home. This change was made so our paid advertisers will hopefully see some holiday sales from our readers. Yes all our advertisers pay to be in this newsletter - so please support them whenever possible. Because of the new production schedule, I'm asking that all submissions for this year's "Christmas in Vietnam" issue be sent to me by Friday, October 2nd, 2009. You don't have to wait till then to send in your story, we'll be glad to keep it here so Kay can work on the set up at her leisure.

I know we've got some problems with the magazine. I know we fail to get every story that's sent to us into the magazine, but to do so would cost a fortune at the printers and so we do our best on that. If your story doesn't appear immediately after you send it in, please wait at least one more issue before you complain about it; we might surprise you in the next, "alibi" issue. My apologies go out to William N. Janes for the botch job we on printing his excellent "All the News that's Fit to Print" story that ran in the last issue. If you're wondering where the end of his story, that started on page 21 went, you can strangely enough find it starting at the top of page 20. We also know that our type size can get uncomfortably small, that's because we are trying to squeeze in an extra story or a last minute TAPS entry. We are constantly working on that problem but to us, a two-month delay of a death notification is unacceptable so no apologies are offered there. Unfortunately Kay (my Graphic Designer) enjoys the eyes of a 26-year old and I've been paying for that for over 14 years, both in my former Real Estate magazine and in the layout of The VHPA Aviator.

On a lighter note, I had to laugh when Mike sent me his "Everybody Knows Woody" story that runs on page 12, you see I started in Flight Class 70-1 along with Woody Woodward. I don't remember him being so young (probably because I was just 22 myself), but I do remember him being a fun-loving guy that everyone liked, and ended up knowing.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any further questions or comments. My direct e-mail address is:

[REDACTED] (I know, I know - but SnakeDriver was already taken...). My phone number is [REDACTED] but I prefer e-mails if at all possible, gives me something written to misplace. My snail mail address is available by request or on our website: VHPA.org, member search for David Adams in Texas.

Last, I want to thank our President and our EC for all their support this last year, I'm sure you've noticed where we've gotten thicker and added color with each issue and that doesn't happen without these men supporting the increased costs. And please keep those submissions coming, Kay loves the work - but we both really wouldn't mind processing fewer obituaries....

*Still Loving My Job as Your VHPA Aviator Editor - See you in Philadelphia!*

*David Adams*

## VHPA Member Les Combs passes on this Vietnam Story about the kidnapping of a Red Cross Team in 1969...

One day in 1969 I had a day off from flying and was invited by a PA&E employee who was housed with us to take a jeep ride from Phu Bai (Hue) to Danang. At the crest of the Hai Van pass, we stopped at an scenic overlook and chatted for a while with a German Red Cross team before proceeding on to Danang.

While we were clearing the foot of the pass, we were intercepted by a small group of individuals who suddenly appeared from an outcropping on the side of the road. They were dressed in various remnants of uniforms and armed with M-16s and AK-47s. The apparent leader looked in the jeep, smiled and waved us on. Unfortunately we were without commo at the time and couldn't report in on the incident. I think it was two days later, the Stars and Stripes reported that a German Red Cross team was missing. I remember seeing a news cast of their release by the NVA about the same time of the US POW release.



## ATTENTION ALL FORMER GHOSTRIDERS AND AVENGERS

**The 189th Assault  
Helicopter Company is  
planning a 2009 Reunion  
From October 8-11 in  
Atlanta, Georgia**

Planned activities include a tour of the Atlanta area, the Georgia Aquarium, the world of Coca-Cola and HUEY rides provided by The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation along with several no-host cocktail parties and a closing fellowship dinner.

Full details on the events, and the accommodations may viewed at their website: [www.189thahc.org](http://www.189thahc.org) or they can be obtained from Gerry Sandlin or [REDACTED] Yuma, AZ 85365.



# *What the Hell is Going On? Can Anyone Help Me?*

As veterans or retired service members, we are authorized to have one free re-issue of our medals, badges etc. You must submit the request in writing along with a copy of your DD 214, to the Military Records Unit in St. Louis, MO. Eventually, you will receive your requested items from an organization called TACOM which handles issuing the actual awards etc. based upon St. Louis' authorization.

When I received my re-issue, I noticed that I they had sent me a set of Air Crew Members Wings. I was inclined to believe that TACOM had made a mistake and called them to see if they could send me a set of Aviator's Wings, they said they only provide what ST. Louis authorizes. Subsequently, I emailed St. Louis regarding my Aviator's Wings explaining to them that I had been

through the Rotary Wing Aviator's Course, as reflected on my DD 214, and had been awarded and AVNBDG. I was a pilot not a Crew Member (Door Gunner, etc.).

To make a long story short, I finally called the customer service number in St. Louis and spoke to a civilian clerk who told me that the Aviation Badge was now for crew members and that the Regulation AR 600-8-22 had been changed in 2000 and he, or someone of the many I talked to, told me that now it was the award for crew members. This same issue happened to Ron Radcliff except he got 3 crew members badges as he had requested 3 sets of medals etc. I asked to speak to the clerk's supervisor who told the clerk to tell me "that a pilot is a crew member and that is that". I asked to speak to the Cdr. of the facility and

was told that his phone number was confidential.

I have spoken to the IG's office at Ft. Rucker, the Aviation Branch and written the Cdr, USAHRC. The Aviation Branch, CW5 Keafer called Rucker and a WO1 was assigned to research the situation. Of course, he could not speak to anyone in uniform in St. Louis and got the same run around that I did. I wrote to the Cdr., USAHRC, and got a reply that they were researching the problem.

I could go to a local base and buy a set of Aviator's Wings. However, how many people have gotten the same set of crew members wings that myself and Radcliff got? I am sure they just put them in file 13 (at a cost to the military) or perhaps they that have even mistakenly been added to a deceased' plaque of honor.

To me its a matter of principle

- if I am authorized Aviator's Wings then someone should have been thinking about folks who got their wings many years ago and made an exception in any new AR. I have been retired from the Army for 23 years and I can not help what was called an AVNBDG in 86 when I retired is now called something else. Anyone with half a brain could look at the DD 214 and see that I attended the Aviators Course in 1971. I do not know if the VHPA has any clout regarding a matter such as this has effected two of your members, myself and Radcliff.

Thanks for reading my vent. Let me tell you its a bureaucratic nightmare trying to get this issue which appears to be easily solvable, solved.

**Joe Litton**  
**F Trp 4th Air Cav**  
**71-72, Centaurs**

e-mail: [REDACTED]

## *It's not over 'til it's over – By Gary Roush*

On 19 February 2009, I got an e-mail from potential member Ray Miller saying, "I knew Jay Carey well, but lost touch over the years. I was very saddened to see that he had died, but something is amiss with his DAT entry. The name, units, rank, are all correct for the Jay I knew and flew with, but the birth date and hence his age are incorrect. The Jay Carey I knew was born in 1946 or 1947, so he would have been 45 or 46 when he died. Can you resolve this discrepancy?"

Ray was referring to William Jay Carey in flight class 67-11 who flew for the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company in 1967-1968 and the 271st Assault Support Helicopter Company in 1968. Jay had

joined the VHPA early on and dropped out in 1989 and we had lost contact with him. About six years ago we had a massive drive to locate people and needed their SSN to do that. Somehow we erroneously connected Jay to another William Carey who was an officer in Vietnam born in 1922 but was not a pilot. It was this older William Carey's SSN that we used to search against the Social Security Death Index in 2004 and that Carey died on 11/17/1991. Everything seem to fit so we added Jay Carey to our died after tour list.

In researching this, it became obvious that we had made a mistake so now the problem was to find the right Jay Carey. The VHPA

subscribes to a service to search for men's addresses. I plugged in William J. Carey and got a very long list. Without his SSN there was not a good way to select the right one. I did notice that only one on the long list used the name Jay as in William Jay Carey. I copied down that address and sent it to Ray Miller.

Here is Ray's response the next day: "I have spoken to Jay. He does indeed live in Austin TX, and is alive and well. Thanks for your help."

I have since been copied on an e-mail exchange among several old acquaintances renewed. It is great to bring someone back to life.

Here is a note Jay sent to some of his buddies: "Can

you believe it! Ray Miller just called me out of the blue. He lives in Los Alamos, NM. He was doing some web surfing with the VHPA and saw that I was dead. So he tracked me down and brought me back to life. I talked on the phone with him and he remembers you and has seen some of the stuff you had been sending to the web site. We have all got to go to VHPA convention sometime soon."

This is what the VHPA is all about - reconnecting with our friends from the past, dead or alive!

The moral of this story is check the facts. If something is out of place or does not make sense, please let us know.

**Gary Roush**  
**webmaster@vhpa.org**



# CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH (CCN)

The last few months have been a bit slow for most of us as we watch the never ending bad financial news in the media, in our mail boxes and in our personal lives. In spite of that, we are looking forward to the annual reunion Philadelphia where there are many things to see and do as we refresh our memories and enjoy being with the best friends we have ever made – anywhere – anytime. Our country was born in Philadelphia and we see it as a place steeped in history that can cleanse us of our miseries at least for a short time. We will be seeking a real forward view of life after a few days of visiting with old friends (pun intended) and making new friends. And it looks like we'll be taking the MOC to Philly, too. Look for our smiling faces and we'll look for yours!

**Ken Fitz, President**

## ALABAMA CHAPTER

Please contact La Rue "Lash" Weisner for information on the new chapter in the Huntsville area. I can be reached at [REDACTED]

**La Rue Weisner, President**

## ARIZONA CHAPTER

The next meeting of the Arizona Chapter will be on 16 May at a time and place TBD. For particulars please contact Bill Sorenson at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

**Bill Sorenson, President**

## FORT RUCKER CHAPTER

We are still in the formative stage of starting our chapter and are actively soliciting members. If you live in the southern Alabama or northern Florida area please contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

**John A. Crowley, President**

## FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

The Fort Wolters Chapter met at Logan's Roadhouse in Hurst, TX on March 7. Our speaker was Sky Page who served with the 1st Marine Division along the DMZ. Since he has retired from his civilian career he has been teaching English at a language school in Vietnam. On May 30 the Vietnam Memorial Wall will be dedicated at the National Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells, TX. The ceremony starts at 11AM. There will be a Vietnam Art Exhibit from June 5 thru June 27 at Will Rogers Coliseum in Ft. Worth. Our next chapter meeting will be on June 6 at Logan's Roadhouse in Hurst, TX at 11 AM. Our tentative speaker will be a veteran's service officer (VSO) from the Texas Veterans Commission. He will be informing us about

the services provided by the commission.

**Virgil Laughlin, President**

## NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

Our initial meeting was snowed out, but we continue to march and we are on track for the first Monday of each month at noon At Joe's American Bar & Grill in Dedham, MA. Anyone interested in joining us please show up and we will welcome you into our group. Contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

**Bill Williams, President**

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

On Saturday and Sunday Memorial Day weekend chapter members will be at the air show in Lumberton, NC. We will have our helicopters for static display, the OH-6, an H model Medevac and a Mike model with guns and rockets plus the Cobra.

**J.D. Lawson, President**

## OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER

The 22nd reunion of the Ohio River LZ Chapter was held on the weekend of March 6th-8th, 2009 in Louisville, Kentucky. The gathering began early Friday at the hospitality room with many more attendees than normal arriving earlier than in previous years.

Saturday started with part of the group leaving Louisville and going to Fort Knox to visit the Patton Museum. The museum is wonderful display of memorabilia primarily devoted to the Cavalry and Armor in the US Army. The other part of our group went over to the Clark County airport where Whirlaway Helicopters is located. Whirlaway Helicopters is owned by VHPA member Bob Poe and his wife Gail. Bob & Gail again made a very generous gesture by donating two helicopters to allow VHPA members to fly for the first time in nearly four decades.

There were 235 attendees at the Saturday evening dinner including the President of the VHPA, Jack Salm. Our after dinner speech featured Retired General Hal Moore and Joe Galloway as our featured speakers. After the dinner General Moore and Joe signed their books "We Were Soldiers Once and Young" and "We are Soldiers Still" for many of the members and guests present.

The evening was a wonderful celebration of duty, honor and country and the bringing together of those that served and the family members and friends that supported them. Every year we continue to reach out to those that have never attended our gathering. We especially reach out to those that never attended ANY vet related event on the four decades since their return home. This year there were over 30 vets attending that had not joined the

Ohio Valley LZ Chapter but more importantly there were over two dozen vets in attendance that never attended anything since Vietnam. These are the ones that we continue to try and reach (as they are the beneficiaries of what we all have realized.) We are proud to have served, proud of those that we served with so many years ago and honor those that gave their last in service to their country.

There will be the full story, including pictures, of this year's meeting in the next issue of The VHPA Aviator. Our 2010 reunion will be held the last weekend of February in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

*Submitted by VHPA member – Bob Hamilton*

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

In May we will be taking the Helicopter War Museum to Westcliffe, CO for their veterans celebration on Armistice Day for a parade in the morning and a Vietnam style party at night. In June we will have Bar-B-Que at the Leprino Foods hanger at Rocky Mountain Airport. We will have a small helicopter and our own IP, Jerry Marshall available for short flights. In August our meeting will be at the Cripple Creek, CO veteran's day celebration. We will have the Helicopter War Museum there and will stay at the casinos.

**Rick Beaver, President**

## SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

Our Chapter met on Saturday March 14th to a chilly and rain dreary day, much to our disappointment because two new members were going to fly down in a beautifully restored Gull wing Stinson. But they persevered and arrived by POV. Ruddy Ribbeck, the Gull wing owner, is the Chief Pilot for US Helicopters and flew with the 1st/9th and 146th Avn Co., he now lives just southwest of Charlotte, NC. Our right seat man was Lewis Sein the NC FAA FSDO. They're both snake pilots and should make a huge asset to the chapter. I'm not sure if our next meeting will be at the usual date and time since the Doolittle Raiders 67th Reunion is the next weekend and we are heavily committed to support that celebration. Feel free to contact me directly for more information on these two events.

**Larry Russell, President**

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

On Feb. 22, 23, 24 2009 several members (Ralph Mc Craig, Ralph Butcher, Sven Akesson, Carl Cortez, Russ Janus and Holguin from the chapter along with Mike Law worked a booth at the 2009 Heli-Expo Job Fair in Anaheim (Convention Center), CA.

On March 14th over a dozen members and some wives attended our third annual St. Patrick's Day Meeting/Lunch at the American



# 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**  
Vireil 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**  
Dave Garner

**Rocky Mountain Chapter**  
Rick Beaver

**Southern California Chapter**  
Ed Holguin

**Washington State Chapter**  
David Eck

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.

## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

**S. CALIFORNIA CHAPTER (cont.)**  
Legion in Newport Beach, CA. My wife Phyllis cooked corn beef and cabbage. It was sooo good everyone went back for seconds. During the meeting Dale Berry and Carl Cortez discussed the possibility of acquiring a Huey that had flown in Vietnam for our chapters use. It needs some cosmetic work (no engine). Dale Berry and Robert Platt each pledged \$1,000.00 towards the restoration when/if we can get it.

On May 2 (Saturday) I will be having our second annual Bar-B-Que/Pool get-together at my home in Walnut, CA (25 miles east of Los Angeles). Last year everyone enjoyed the Mexican food and beer. Anyone wishing to attend is more than welcome, just e-mail me at: [redacted] and I'll give you directions. Also we have been invited to participate in the 8th Annual Wings, Wheels and Rotors Expo, Sunday, October 25, 2009 at 9 AM-4PM. Los Alamitos Army Airfield. Look for our booth.

**Ed Holguin, President**

### VHPA OF FLORIDA

On April 4 members of the chapter will be participating at the fund raiser for "Haley House", "Nam Knights Motorcycle Club" and the AMVETS. April 21-27 we will be in Lakeland, FL for the

Sun N' Fun Air Show. On February 25 we were at Stetson University in Deland, FL at a book signing with Gen Hal Moore and Joe Galloway (see article and pictures elsewhere in the magazine).

**Jim Basta**

### VIRGINIA CHAPTER

For those interested in becoming members of the new Virginia chapter please contact me at [redacted]

**Tom Mitchell, President**

### WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

Our quarterly meeting was held at Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que in Tacoma on Feb 14. Gen. (Ret.) John Shalikashvili, our honored guest, was unable to attend due to illness, but John Lee, Director of WA Veterans Affairs spoke to members about current changes in the VA system. Bob Brown was nominated as Junior Member. Our book donations continue to the VA Hospital at American Lake. Dan Fox gave members a DVD he compiled of his tour in RVN. It was very much appreciated by all. Our next meeting will be at the Olympia Air Show on Sat. 20 June. If you are in the area drop by and visit. The chapter is also planning to be at the Special Forces picnic in July.

**Dave Eck, President**

## WANTED

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**

Eve. [redacted] • Toll Free Weekdays 888-870-5408





# AN OLD FRIEND LOCATED – HUEY 217

In a recent issue of the Aviator, Mark Hansen wrote an article titled "UH-1H 69-15217 – Extreme Makeover" about a Vietnam era Huey flying for the US Forest Service. When I realized this Huey had served with Lighthorse, C/3/17 Air Cavalry, I wondered if I might have flown this Huey. Fortunately, I maintained a log of my flight hours in Vietnam. I retrieved my tattered flight logbook, and, to my delight, I found that I had logged 23 hours in Huey 217 from November 1971 to January 1972.

I arrived in Vietnam in mid-November 1971. As a "FNG" or "Newbie" pilot assigned to the Cav, I was flying co-pilot in the Huey and gaining "in-country" experience with every mission. My logbook shows I had flown Huey 217 as Command and Control aircraft for several Cav Pac combat assault missions as well as an extended river convoy escort up the Mekong River to Cambodia. I also flew several Firefly missions for Vinh Long Army Airfield. One of the Firefly missions was particularly memorable since we were called to make a night medivac in a driving rainstorm.

## Midnight Medivac

On November 23, 1971, I was flying co-pilot on a Firefly mission with WO1 Tom Tolar. I had developed great respect for Tom and other young Warrant Officers. After flight school these 19 year-olds were placed in charge of a relatively sophisticated aircraft and most had become very accomplished pilots. Tom Tolar was no exception. He

was one of the most proficient pilots I had flown with and I especially liked to fly with him. He was always good humored and I trusted him as a pilot. As it turned out this was another night where Tom would impress me with his flying skills.

It was raining consistently through the evening hours. Around midnight we received a call from the local MACV



**Tom Tolar shows our author Rex Gooch, the hole in the chin bubble of 217 sustained after Tom was shot up on 3 December, 1971.**



**Rex Gooch, our author, "Back in the day" while serving with C troop, 3/17th Cav**

(Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) compound. An Army Lieutenant was having an appendicitis attack and needed medical evacuation. With a sense of urgency, Tom and I climbed into Huey 217, fired up the turbine engine and headed for the MACV compound about 5 miles southeast of Vinh Long. The rain continued, yet we had decent visibility.

We landed at the MACV landing pad and picked up the ailing lieutenant. He was in considerable pain and needed immediate medical attention. We lifted off and headed for the Navy Hospital at Binh Thuy, several miles up river from Can Tho.

This trip would normally be an easy 20-minute flight, however, the rain and overcast skies soon made the flight treacherous. Mid-way to our destination, we encountered heavy storm clouds and lost all visibility. We continued flying in IFR conditions, homing in on Can Tho's radio beacon. As Tom focused on the instruments and flew the Huey I tried to make visual contact with anything outside the helicopter, but that was impossible. It was pitch dark and we were engulfed in clouds and heavy rain. I could not see anything to the front, sides, up or down. The closer we got to our destination, the harder it rained. Once we neared

Binh Thuy we radioed the Navy hospital and arranged to home-in on a PRC-25 field radio to direct us on our final approach path.

Tom kept in constant communication with the ground personnel at the hospital and adjusted his descent accordingly while I continued to watch for any glimpse of land below us. It seemed to take forever as we descended through the heavy clouds. Still, I could see nothing to the front or either side of the aircraft. As we continued our descent it was obvious from our altimeter that we were either going to see or hit something soon.

Suddenly, as we descended through 50 feet of altitude, we broke out of the clouds and the Navy Hospital helipad was directly in front of us. As we neared the helipad I could see a couple of radio antennas to our front and large concrete pillars to the right side. It seemed a miracle that we made our approach so precisely to miss all the obstacles in the immediate vicinity. As I reflected on it later, I thought it was not a miracle but, instead, a very skillful pilot with a little luck. After leaving the ailing lieutenant at the hospital, we waited for the storm to break and then headed back to Vinh Long to continue our Firefly mission.

## Another Mission with Huey 217 - Taking Fire

On December 3, 1971, I had my first encounter with enemy fire. Our mission was to fly into the U-Minh forest and extract a company of ARVN soldiers that had been inserted in the area three days earlier. The U-Minh forest was dense jungle on the western border of the Delta known to have heavy VC (Viet Cong) activity. I was flying co-pilot for WO1 Wes Bartley. Wes was another very talented warrant officer. I had flown with Wes several times and I admired his skill and professionalism as a pilot. We were flying Huey 739 and were Chalk One in a flight of three slicks.

Our LZ was a small L-shaped opening in the jungle that was just large enough for three Hueys to land. The small LZ required that Chalk Two land to our left rear and Chalk Three land directly behind us. WO1 Tom Tolar was flying Huey 217 in the Chalk Three position. We flew in tight formation into



the LZ. Upon final approach to the LZ Wes instructed me to keep my hands and feet lightly on the controls in case he was shot (standard procedure). We alternated who flew into and out of the LZ and he performed the same backup for me when I was flying.

We made three sorties into the LZ picking up ARVN soldiers and taking them to an ARVN CP (command post) at Chi Mi several clicks to the south. On our fourth and last sortie, our skids just touched down when all hell broke loose. We were receiving enemy fire from both flanks and it seemed to be focused on the two Hueys to our rear. At first I was oblivious to what was happening. I heard pop-pop-pop and didn't realize it was gunfire. The helicopter noise and my flight helmet were masking the sounds. I was flying in the right seat and turned to look out the left cargo door. I saw the crew chief in Chalk Two, SSgt. Mullins, slump over his M-60 machine gun. Reality sunk in, and I suddenly realized we were under attack. Explosions, probably mortars, were hitting around us and the enemy small arms fire continued to pop-pop-pop. To this day, I can still see the events in my mind as if it happened yesterday. This all happened extremely fast. Yet, as it re-plays in my mind, it was as if it was happening in slow motion.

The Huey crew chiefs and door gunners returned fire into the dense jungle. The radios blared with pilots yelling "Get loaded", "Get the hell out of here" and "Our crew chief has been hit." Wes called, "Taking fire 4 o'clock, taking off 12 o'clock" and pulled pitch to take off. I immediately heard "Chalk

Two's up" and "Chalk Three's up" as we lifted out of the LZ and proceeded over the dense jungle. Then I heard Tom Tolar in Huey 217 call, "Chalk Three, Breaking left."

After we climbed out of the range of small arms fire, I loosened my touch on the controls and turned to look out the left cargo door. I saw Tom Tolar in Huey 217 arcing left and flying low over the trees. I heard our "Crusader" gunships calling, "Inbound, Nails" and saw our Cobra's diving towards the LZ, blasting the perimeter with rockets. I saw red puffs of smoke indicating they had fired nails.

Later, Tom told me he had taken numerous hits in Huey 217 and continued to take fire as he was the last to exit the LZ. He broke left to place a line of trees between him



**Tom Tolar, another pilot of 217 when it served with C Troop, 3/17th Cav. Both Tom & Rex owe a lot to this marvelous H-Model, Serial Number 69-15217**

had punctured his lung and he needed to be medivaced quickly. We loaded Sgt. Mullins and flew directly to the Navy hospital at Binh Thuy. After surgery to repair his wound, SSgt. Mullins recovered and returned to our unit several weeks later. I had my baptism in fire after being in country less than three weeks. And, I don't know for certain, but possibly it was Huey 217's baptism in fire as well.

Later, a Chinook from the Hillclimbers at Can Tho arrived to sling load Huey 217 back to Vinh Long. Soon Huey 217 was repaired and back in action. My flight log shows I flew Huey 217 again on December 27 as Command and Control aircraft for a Cav Pac mission.

### Present Day

Today, Tom Tolar and I are best of friends. We see each other at most VHPA reunions and frequently talk on the phone. I also contacted Wes Barkley as I prepared this article. Wes and I flew Huey 217 on a Firefly mission on January 15, 1972. We were all delighted to learn our trusted Huey 217 is now seeing duty with the US Forest Service.

I recently made contact with Rick Dominy at WorldWind Helicopters, Inc, Huey 217's owner, and shared my flight log data with him. Who knows, maybe someday Tom, Wes and I can be reunited with Huey 217.

**Rex Gooch  
Longknife 23**

**C/3/17 Air Cavalry  
Vinh Long 1971-72**



**Rex's unit's old UH-1 217 as it now looks as it continues to serve with the U.S. Forest Service**

and the enemy fire. Some of the flight thought Huey 217 was going down and watched as Tom continued flying low-level back to the ARVN CP at Chi Mi. Chalk One and Two rejoined Tom and Huey 217 at Chi Mi. We off-loaded the ARVN soldiers and assessed our damage. Chalk Two and Chalk Three slicks had taken numerous hits from small arms fire, probably AK-47s. Tom Tolar was lucky because one bullet came through the Plexiglas chin bubble of Huey 217, and had just missed his feet on the pedals. I took a photo of Tom sticking his hand through the hole in Huey 217's chin bubble. Huey 217 had also taken two hits in the fuel cell in the cabin floor. Little did Tom know that he had been rapidly losing fuel as he flew back to Chi Mi.

SSgt. Mullins, crew chief on Chalk Two, had taken a bullet in his back and it lodged in the chicken plate (armor plating) he was wearing on his chest. It

## NOTICE

**The Department of Army is sending out  
Letters of Thanks and a Certificate of  
Appreciation**

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**Both are signed by the Army Chief of  
Staff, and the**

**Secretary of the Army. Full details are  
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Thanks for your service.**



# Destiny Joins Fate

By J. Bruce Huffman

The sun pushed its way over the horizon of the South China Sea, that September morning in 1968, as I wandered down to the TOC (Tactical Operations Center), with my map under my arm, to get the final briefing for the 'first light' mission that morning. WO Burns was my 'Red Bird' and would drive his UH-1B to always be in a position to rain hell on any foolish NVA unfortunate to find his way into his gun sight reticule and threaten my low bird.

Ernie and I reviewed the final details of the mission and covered the tactical frequencies we'd be operating on, who would monitor the emergency radio channel, and what frequency we'd communicate in VHF on to stay out of each other's way. The mission was a simple one; check in with a D Troop platoon that had been in an NDP (night defensive position) monitoring trail activity between the 'Street Without Joy' and the distant NVA base camps in the mountains west of Camp Evans. I was to be on the alert for military age males, without proper ARVN identification, and we would 'snatch' them for detailed interrogation at the base camp. Our Blues (Infantry Platoon) were standing by, in a lager at Evans, with the Lift (assault helicopters) monitoring the operation from the TOC.

We finished the rest of the coordination briefing and made our way to the revetments to preflight and get cranked up and begin the hunt. My crew was already there and loading up 'Zero Seven Niner' (OH-6A, 67-16079) with the tools of the trade (e.g. fragmentation grenades, white phosphorous, a few thermite and concussion grenades, ammo for the 'chunker' (M-79), clips for the M-16 (1 tracer - 3 ball), a half load for the mini-gun, and enough M-60 ammo for Gossages' free gun to give him plenty to work with.

We weren't going on a bear hunt but if we saw a bear; it

would be in some serious shit. I loved my crew and was proud of the way we'd come together to fly safe, fight hard, and come back home at the end of the day to yet another cold Balantine beer. My crew chief and gunner was SP4 Douglas Gossage. Doug came from Missouri and could throw a grenade, from any combination of bank and airspeed, through the opening of a bunker with predictable consistency. When his M-60 would talk, six rounds later the target would be down. Doug had just turned 19 years old. Our observer was SSG John States who had been trained in armor reconnaissance at Ft. Knox. John was from Baltimore and got airsick frequently and had trouble reading the map early on. SSG States had the heart of a lion though and on those days when we would 'find 'em' he was skilled at sending the bad guys on a very long 'dirt nap'.

As we began the mission, we flew east over the featureless terrain of the coastal plain toward Quang Tri. The crews had 'checked' their guns and our 'Pink Team' was in the hunt. The mission was a success. We bagged no less than 6 guys, who later turned out to be NVA, which had been in the villages the night before and failed to get home before we turned them into prisoner pumpkins the following morning.

We had refueled and armed at LZ Jane earlier and had completed our last refueling at Camp Evans. All in all it had been a good morning and I was looking forward to shutting down and pulling out my lawn chair to work on my R&R tan. I landed to a hover on the nasty oiled dirt strip we shared with Bravo Troop and saw WO Wallace running toward my bird. WO John Wallace was relatively new but had shown skill and aggressiveness. I sat the bird down and Wallace leaned in said "Get out!" "I need your bird and crew."

"Lobes Echo is in contact and the snake is cranking." I said, "We've already been up for 3.8 hrs. Give me the damn brief or get your own bird up!" John replied, "We don't have time, it looks like it could be a Prairie Fire!"

I stepped out of the LOH, picked up my 'chicken plate' and helmet, and watched as John flew over the concertina wire and turned west headed for the foothills leading to the Ashau. Less than thirty minutes later Cavalier 'White' (1Lt. James G. Ungaro) walked into my hooch to tell me that "Wallace is down and they are all dead!!".

*Charlie Troop's tribute to our missing warriors: WO1 John C. Wallace, SP4 Douglas E. Gossage, and SSG John Wayne States. KIA, 26 September, 1968.*

WO Wallace had 'checked in' with Lobes' Echo and found out they felt they were engaged with at least a Battalion of NVA troops. Echo was under canopy on the high ground that overlooked a depression held on three sides by the NVA. Echo was a company sized unit against a much larger enemy force but they had the high ground and they also had the 'great equalizer' on their side; firepower.

John made the initial pass and discovered a 12.7 mm heavy machine gun in a doughnut bunker and had Gossage mark it as they blazed by. The AC of the snake refused to shoot due to the proximity of the friendly positions. He had recently been involved in a 'short round' incident that had wounded US troops and had been badly reprimanded and humiliated by an officer that should have known better for doing exactly what the US ground commander had requested. While the high bird was fooling around trying to get some artillery cranked up, Wallace decided

to take out the gun.

He flew in and with a combination of M-60 fire and fragmentation grenades got the 12.7 mm. Unfortunately the other two positions that were protecting the NVA regimental CP got him. The aircraft landed in the wrecked position of the first gun. SSG States stepped over what had once been the front console and canopy and went head to head with an NVA who got in the first shot. WO Wallace unstrapped and went out the right door and began a run for his life, toward Lobes' Echo who was laying down an intense base of fire to cover him as he ran uphill with less than a 100 meters from the downed bird to the ARVN position. Wallace was hit in his legs 40 meters from relative safety. He went down hard and before he could get up an NVA officer, in full view of the US advisor working with the ARVN troops, shot him in the neck with a pistol. SP4 Gossage had everything he needed; lots of ammo and plenty of targets. The ARVN Rangers said that the sound of the M-60 rattled on until finally the NVA fired an RPG-7 into the downed bird and the gun went silent. When our recovery was completed, the bodies of 12 NVA were found in and around the remains of 'Zero Seven Niner'. Gossage had done his duty!

Plaque given to Charlie Troop by Company E, 1st ARVN Ranger Division commemorating the heroism of WO1 John C. Wallace, SP4 Douglas E. Gossage, and SSG John Wayne States. KIA, 26 September, 1968.

*I often reflect on 'what if?' about their loss but realize that on that day their fate intersected their destiny with terrible consequences. It was an honor to have served with them; warriors to the end!*



## VHPA Members in the news...

Al Fink grew up in Maryland around wooden boats. He flew Army helicopters in Vietnam for a year and was a United Airlines pilot for nearly three decades. Those three events helped shape his life. Now retired, he spends much of his time restoring wooden boats, airplanes and cars on his ranch on the eastern edge of Victor.

Fink, who will turn 64 on Friday, heads right to his boats or planes after breakfast. He works until about 2 p.m., takes a nap in his nearly 100-year-old house, then does yard work and chats with people with similar interests online. That's his typical day.

An international pilot with United Airlines for 28 years, Fink has been restoring wooden boats for some 20 years, and began trying his hand at



putting aircraft together when he retired four years ago.

He began restoring boats when he saw a classified ad two decades ago in the Lodi News-Sentinel

stating that someone in Manteca wanted to sell a boat. A short time after buying the boat, Fink took it out to Lake Camanche, only to find that the suction tube was pumping water into the boat rather than out of it.

"So I totally rebuilt (the boat)," Fink said. And the rest is history.

He now has 13 boats on his 16-acre ranch, not to mention his airplane, four cars and a truck.

Fink often seeks nostalgia when finding a vehicle to restore. He has a 1960 Century Resorter 19 that is the identical model that his father, Bud

Fink, used to have. Another boat he's putting together is a 1931 model built by the Horace Dodge Boat and Aeroplane Co. — it's one of only about five remaining, Fink said. He plans to replace every piece of wood on the Dodge.

"I like to buy basket-cases and completely rebuild them," he quipped.

Fink got more into his hobby when people would bring their boats to see if he could fix them up. He's restored and then sold about a dozen boats during the past 20 years. "He does absolutely gorgeous work," his wife Linda said. "When he does finish, they are beautiful."

Fink got the flight bug after piloting a helicopter for a year in Vietnam and continuing as chief flight instructor for helicopters and planes for seven years beginning in 1970 at San Carlos Airport on the San Francisco

Peninsula. During the same time period, he flew newborn babies on an air ambulance to Stanford University's neo-natal unit.

It's a whole different thing to restore planes, so why did he branch out from boats to airplanes? "The devil made me do it," Fink replied. He's only restoring his first two planes, one of which he has in his driveway and another — which he bought from a friend in Colusa with whom he used to fly helicopters in Vietnam — is at an Army friend's restoration shop in Hollister.

And if that's not enough, Fink has three Corvette Stingray automobiles — one a 1963 model and another from 1965. But the one that means the most to him is a yellow 1967 Corvette that was his father's car. "I can never have too many wood boats or airplanes," Fink said.



CW4 Bobby Cormack (ret) (far right) poses with his wife Kathy, his son Pat and his wife Jessica in front of a Huey on display at the Army Aviation Museum in Fort Rucker, Alabama this last February. Bob had just had the pleasure of pinning on Pat's WO1 bar after his completion of Warrant Officer Candidate school. Bob served in Vietnam with 101st Avn of the 101st ABN from 68-69 and with the 120CAC and the 1st Tow Detachment in 1971 & 1972 under the call sign Blackwidow 20.

## A Classmate With A Mission

by Joe Bilitzke, VHPA Past President

Sunday afternoon and the NFL games were ending. Living in California and the Pacific Time zone, the football games end and the news programs begin.

Sitting with one eye on my newspaper and one eye on the television, I saw that the CBS Evening News was on the screen. One of the stories to be presented

involved a Vietnam veteran — a helicopter pilot. Needless to say that piqued my interest and I made a mental note to pay attention to the end of the news broadcast and went back to reading the paper.

OK, time for the segment. Dropping the newspaper, I watched the story unfold on the news. A Vietnam vet and former helicopter pilot founded an organization, the Veteran's Airlift Command (VAC). I looked at the picture flashed on the screen.

I sure didn't recognize the young helicopter pilot. Cut to another face on the screen. This time with gray hair and gray beard. Then I heard the name of the founder of VAC, Walt Fricke. WALT FRICKE! I know him. He lived down the hall from me at Ft. Rucker. He was a

classmate in 67-21. Needless to say, the newspaper now lay on the table next to me. The news had my full attention.



As it turned out, Walt and I graduated a month or so apart (he was held over at Ft. Rucker) and both left for Vietnam a few weeks later.

Walt was assigned to the 68th AHC, but his tour was cut short. On October 26, 1968 he was hit by shrapnel from one of his rockets and seriously wounded. Shortly afterward, he was on a C-141 medevac flight home. When he landed, he spent six months recovering at Ireland Army Hospital at Ft. Knox. In Walt's words, "I spent six months in a hospital 700 miles from my Hometown recovering from combat injuries sustained while flying a helicopter in Vietnam. My healing began in earnest when my family was able to gather the resources to make a trip to visit me." It was this

experience that led to the founding of Veteran's Airlift Command in 2006.

The mission of the VAC is to "...provide free air transportation to wounded warriors, veterans and their families for medical and other compassionate purposes through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots." Walt has built this organization into a nationwide service, flying over 1200 passengers and more than 650,000 miles on behalf of wounded veterans and their families.

On flights provided by nearly 1000 aircraft owners, wounded veterans and their families are reunited at no cost to them. As a volunteer pilot, what a great way to provide a service to those who came after us. What a great way to build hours and flight experience while engaged in a worthwhile cause.

Walt has assembled a distinguished Advisory Board for the Veteran's Airlift Command. Among them are former U.S. Senator Robert Dole (Honorary Chair-

man), General Richard B. Myers retired as the 15th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NASA astronaut, Tom Henricks, and Captain Scott Smiley (USMA 2003, Infantry, Airborne Ranger, Combat Diver), blinded as a result of a terrorist car bomb in Mosul, Iraq.

For his service to our troops, Microsoft Corporation honored Walt with the Microsoft Above and Beyond Medical Attention Award in 2007. Walt also continues flying his T-28 with the Trojan Horseman, the T-28 Aerobatic Formation Demonstration Team. But his duties as Air Boss of the Veteran's Airlift Command remain closest to his heart.

If you're still flying, whether or not you own an airplane, you can volunteer your time and your aircraft to the VAC. Take a look at their website at [www.veteransairlift.org](http://www.veteransairlift.org) to learn more about the organization and their service to our newest wounded and disabled veterans.

I'm proud to know that a classmate is providing such outstanding assistance in the service of our military. Keep it up, Walt. I hope to have the opportunity to see you again. When we do get together, I'll buy the next round.





# VHPA REUNION ★ 2009

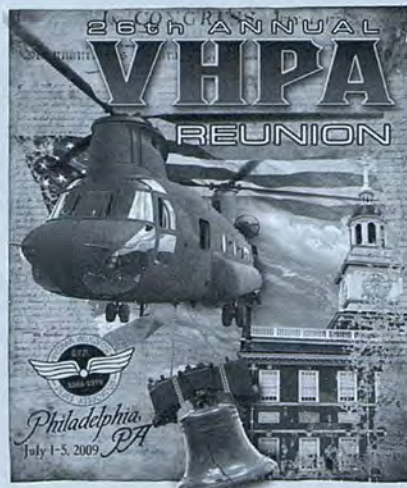
Philadelphia, Pa

## Reunions by Jack Salm

**REUNIONS.** They can be great or they can be lousy, most of it depends on you- the participant. Some of you have been to all 25 reunions, from the first in Phoenix in 1984 to the latest in San Antonio in 2007. Most of us have attended some Reunions, some of us have attended none. If you have not attended a reunion it is your loss, you should place attendance at a reunion high on your priority list of things to do.

As we have grown as an organization our reunions have progressively gotten better. The early ones, Phoenix (1984), Houston (1985), Washington DC (1986), Long Beach in 1987 (on the Queen Mary) were all fairly modest events. In fact there were probably only 400 members at the event on the Queen Mary and this was an unusual reunion if only for the location. The 1988 event in Fort Worth with its return to Fort Wolters and the 1989 Reunion in Chicago were also worthy of note. New Orleans in 1990 was a fun time as only New Orleans can be. Reno (1991) was fun if you like to play the odds and gamble a little. In 1992 we were in Atlanta and this was another outstanding celebration. Phoenix (1993) had an excellent array of activities, plenty to do for everybody. Philadelphia in 1994 (where we're meeting again in 2009), like Phoenix, has lots to do - Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell and many other Historical sites.

Kansas City (1995), Santa Clara (1996) and Orlando (1997) were all excellent events, each one had its own highlights. Nashville (1999) was fun the Grand Old Opera and the Jack Daniels Brewery. D.C. in 2000 was a wonderful time with the parade and the recognition we received, the fly over during our visit to the Wall and the side trips we made on our



own all made it an outstanding gathering.

In 2001 we were in Denver. Trips to the Coors Brewery, the State Capitol, the Air Force Academy and the BBQ in Colorado Spring were all great events. 2002 Found us in fabulous Las Vegas. What can you say about Vegas? You either love it or hate it but probably it was our largest get together. The entertainment was first class, and so was the food. Some of us lost a few bucks, but that's Vegas. Orlando (2003) was a great, family oriented reunion. With all of the theme parks (Disney World, Universal Studios, Sea World, etc.) if the kids were with you they had a great time too. We also enjoyed one of the best fireworks displays we have ever seen. Dallas (2004) was highlighted by the first KIA/MIA Family Breakfast, the rodeo in Irving and the visit to Fort Wolters with its ceremony to dedicate the site of the Vietnam War Museum. San Francisco (2005) was one of the best. SF is a great tourist town with trips to Alcatraz, the wine country, shopping for the wives all capped off by a spectacular fireworks show and dinner cruise. The entertain-

Home of the Liberty Bell  
and Site of the  
26th VHPA Annual Reunion

1 - 5 July, 2009



ment that was furnished by both Susan McDonald and Eric Burdon and the Animals was first class.

In 2006 we returned to Washington, DC for the 3rd time and again, a good time was had by all. Sure it was hot for the parade but we persisted, dinner at the Smithsonian Air Museum is something many of us will never forget and fireworks on the mall reminded all of us just how great (and how crowded) this nation can be. Phoenix in 2007 was another excellent Reunion, a great resort hotel, again an excellent private fireworks show but unfortunately a smaller crowd. San Antonio hosted us in 2008, the weather cooperated, the margarita's were fantastic and last year's Reunion turned out to be one of the best ones ever.

And this year it's back to Philadelphia where there's always plenty to do. We've lined up site seeing trips, a visit to a Helicopter Museum, a visit to the home of QVC for the ladies, a luncheon cruise on the harbor and we've reserved the Franklin Institute for the entire evening of the 4th. It's a perfect place to enjoy dinner and then see one of the finest fireworks shows in the country. If you haven't registered for the Philadelphia Reunion, I urge you to do so as soon as you can.

*This will be another in a  
long line of great Reunions.*

[www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

This is the home of the 26th VHPA National Annual Reunion in Philadelphia, July 1-5, 2009. This site is where the latest and newest information on the Reunion is first posted for the membership, info such as events, schedules, hotel room information and everything else to do with the Reunion.

*As new information becomes available, it will be immediately published on this website.*

Charles Holley  
VHPA Reunion Webmaster



# VHPA REUNION ★ 2009

Philadelphia, Pa

## 4th of July in Philadelphia... an event not to be missed!

Similar to how we structured the Washington DC events two years ago, we have moved the typical "final night" banquet one day earlier to July 3rd so that we all could take advantage of some very, very special activities on July 4th.

Philadelphia is a completely revitalized City from our last reunion there in 1994. Vibrant and exciting, there is much to see and do on a daily basis ... and 4th of July is truly a special day.

We have made arrangements for exclusive and complete access to the entire Philadelphia Franklin Institute Science Museum for the evening...right in the middle of all the activities. The City plans for a major concert by a name performer, a big street parade and a huge fireworks display, all within easy walking distance of our event location.

The official web site for the City of Philadelphia's 4th of July activities is listed below ... you can access it to see all the activities that they are planning for this year:

<http://www.americasbirthday.com>

Our plans for the Museum will be molded the best we can around the City's schedule once it is announced, but the plan thus far is as follows:

1. Bus round robin transportation will start late afternoon on routes designed to get you to the Museum area about 6 PM which is when we obtain exclusive access to the Museum. This will be a ticketed event, and along with your VHPA Registration Name Badge and a 2nd unique security ID device, you will be permitted unlimited access in and out of the Museum all evening until midnight.
2. Open cash bars will be available all evening at various locations around the Museum
3. From about 7 PM to 8:30 PM there will be a complete buffet dinner served in the spectacular, fully renovated Franklin Rotunda (a truly breathtaking part of the Museum)...and the open bars will continue.
4. After the fireworks, there will be entertainment at the Museum until we can get



the busses back to start the runs back to the Hotel. It is possible to walk, it's about 7 long blocks (or 1/2 of a mile), however buses will be available as soon as possible.

5. We have total run of the museum all night, including shows at the Planetarium. The entire facility is air conditioned and has numerous rest room facilities ... always in short supply during major City events like this

In short, this will be a very special evening, indeed. Our planning will continue as the City unveils this year's schedules and activities. In the interim ... register now!! Reservations for this event are limited, and thus early sign-ups are recommended. Given the event logistics, bus availabilities, and complexity of catering a major event on the 4th of July, it is unlikely you will be able to get a ticket for this event at the reunion....We will almost certainly be sold out in advance.

**See you there!**  
**David Rittman**

## Reunion Luncheon with MG (Ret) Andy Andreson

\*\*\*\*\* Scheduled on 4 July \*\*\*\*\*

At the Philly reunion, we have scheduled a guest speaker luncheon for Saturday, 4 July, starting at 11:30. This year, our speaker will be Ronald K. (Andy) Andreson, MG Retired. MG Andreson is a lifetime VHPA member. He has been decisively engaged in the evolution of Army Aviation for many years. He is a past President of the Army Aviation Assoc. of America (AAAA) where he is still actively involved to include the AAAA scholarship program, which manages our VHPA scholarships. We did a luncheon last year in San Antonio with Jug Burkett (Stolen Valor author) as our speaker where over 250 people attended.

MG Andreson's luncheon event is titled, "Army Aviation Today" and will include a slide presentation put together by AAAA on the current state of Army Aviation. He will cover many topics related to recent and current events and speculate on

future developments. After his talk, there will be time for a Q&A session for attendees. Of course, Army Aviation today has incredible technical advancements, but many of the tactics and doctrine of current Army aviation still owes its origin to the Vietnam War era. This is your chance to get a cutting edge overview from someone in the know.

MG Andreson is a USMA graduate. He attended flight school in Class 59-12. He served in Vietnam in 1967-68 with the 407th TC DET and 162nd AHC, and again in 1971-72 with the 1st TC BN. Briefly, MG Andreson was: a Program Manager (PM) for the RAH-66 Comanche Helicopter program, a PM for the Blackhawk helicopter (UH-60), he served as the deputy CG for R&D at the Army Aviation Systems Command, and he played roles in the acquisition of the T700 and T800 turbine engines, as well

as the Electro-Optical Sensor System (EOSS). Since retiring, he has served as a consultant and industry executive with several defense contractors. Finally, MG Andreson has an MS degree in Aerospace Engineering from Georgia Tech and he has a bunch of other awards and accomplishments in and out of the military over the years.

As we said, the luncheon will take place on 4 July, starting at 11:30. The cost will be \$25.00: the menu is still TBD. Like last year, we are trying to keep this event as low cost as possible for the lunch items. Look for this event on your registration form when you fill it out. This is one more great reason to attend the Philly reunion.

**Questions contact Dr. Jim Fulbrook**

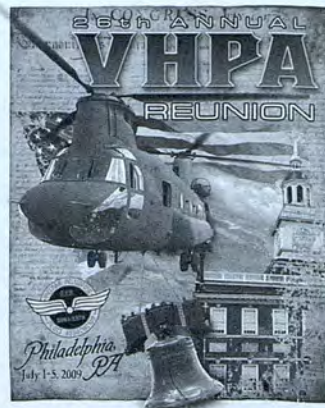


## VHPA REUNION ★ 2009



*Getting geared up for the  
VHPA's 26th Annual  
Reunion July 1 - 5, in  
Philadelphia.*

*Full details on pages  
22-29 of this issue...*



### *Reunite in Philadelphia – By Ken Fritz*

Your best friends will be there enjoying history, food, art, fun, science, and your best friends!

Did I mention food? Everyone knows about Philly cheese steaks, but here are some tips on places to go if you seek the best: Pat's and Geno's compete for the best sandwiches in the South Philly Italian Market area where the sandwich originated; the hippest place is Jim's on South St.; Tony Luke's and John's Roast Pork are local favorites, too. Lots of Asian dining is found in South Philly, even though it's a traditional Italian neighborhood. Check out more places in the area of 9th St and Washington Ave, too. Home to butchers, grocers, Amish farmers with their homemade jams and jellies, fishmongers and other good food, the Reading Terminal at 12th and Arch streets is good for an afternoon of people watching and eating. Life is too short to eat bad food – especially alone. History is everywhere you look and most of it is free to enjoy. The Liberty Bell and

Independence Hall are next door to each other. There you can see where the Declaration of Independence from Britain was signed on July 4, 1776. Across from Independence Hall is the National Constitution Center – a new interactive history museum showcasing the birth of our great nation with over 100 exhibits (\$12 admission). For \$5, you can look out over the city from the 500 ft. high observation deck at the very impressive Philadelphia City Hall. The city's first department store building, Wanamaker's is now a Macy's, but the world's largest operating pipe organ is still there to blow your socks off with 28,000 pipes with daily performances. Fairmount Park covers more than 9,000 acres within the city and some of its notable features are the 18th century homes open for tours and 215 miles of trails. People watching in the tony Rittenhouse Square is free and fun, too.

Did I mention food and beverages? Yeungling is Philly's own beer. Ask for a

\$2 lager during Happy Hour at most city taverns and that's what you'll likely get – except at Monk's Belgian Café where they have a huge variety of beers from around the world. And check out the brews at the Standard Tap, a favorite local tavern, located at 901 2nd St. Life's too short to skip good beer with your best friends – especially alone.

Perhaps the best way to travel the city and see the highlights is on the Phlash Bus - \$2 per ride or \$5 for an all day pass. It loops around making 21 stops and connects the historic districts, the museums and connections to other mass transit.

Now you have a better idea of what's in the city - just think about how many of your best friends will be there to enjoy the reunion and the sights with you. Call them, write them, let them know you'll be there and ask them to meet you at the reunion. If you can't contact them, show up and start looking for them while you meet new friends at the reunion - don't let a year pass without seeing your buddies. You're not getting any younger and neither are your friends.

*See you at the reunion!  
Life is too short to miss  
out on spending time  
with your best friends.*



### *Golf In Philly*



Welcome to Cobb's Creek Golf Club. This years Reunion golf outing will be at a municipal course that's located close to the reunion site and that still offers a great experience for all of us. Per-

haps it's a bit of a scale down from years past, but we all thought it would be best to take a more conservative approach to this year's golf outing.

We will drive at the fast and wa After we ha stay for a ho for the usua ity has a sof policy, but and it has n have a 073 ish before it able and w our other fri Believe it c Boeing to sp





**For more about Philadelphia,  
check out these sites:**

■ [gophila.com](http://gophila.com)

■ [citypass.com/city/philadelphia.html](http://citypass.com/city/philadelphia.html)

■ [phillyfunguide.com](http://phillyfunguide.com)

■ [phillyhalfoff.com](http://phillyhalfoff.com)

*Let us remember them together*



## KIA/MIA Gold Star Family Breakfast

8-9:30 am Thursday, July 2

**Marriott Private Dining Room**

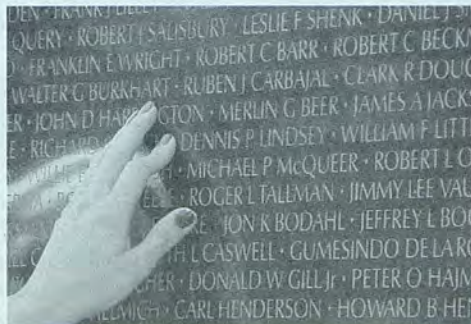
(inside the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown)

**If you plan  
to attend the  
breakfast and  
did not  
register  
online:**

please call Julie  
Kink's room at  
the hotel with #  
of people or sign  
up at the **Family  
Contacts** table in  
the vendor area

Pre-reunion  
questions:  
Julie Kink,  
kink100@att.net

Join other family members of helicopter  
pilots & crew members who were killed or  
missing in action for an informal get-together  
over breakfast. **Veterans welcome, too!**



depart the hotel at a time to ar-  
course for a continental break-  
arm-up before we hit the links.  
have played out round we will  
not lunch and give away prizes  
ual awards. As usual the facil-  
oft spike, golf shirt and no jeans  
t we have had that for years  
not been a problem. We will  
30 shotgun start so we can fin-  
it gets too hot and uncomfort-  
will return early enough to join  
friends for the rest of the day.  
t or not, we are negotiating with  
sponsor the whole tournament.

If that comes through, you will all be re-  
ceiving most of your event fees back, a  
first for any event at a VHPA reunion!

I will be e-mailing out the list of regis-  
tered golfers by mid May so you can pick  
your team. Those of you who don't elect  
to join a team will be chosen by my  
grandson to play together. *Remem-  
ber, all the latest Golf Event news  
can be found on our website:*

**www.VHPAReunion.org**

*See you in Philly.*

**Mike Whitten VHPA  
Golf Chairman**

## HISTORIC PRESENTATIONS & WAR STORY CONTEST at Philly Reunion

Here is an update on what we  
have planned for the Historic  
Presentation Forum (HPF) and  
the War Story Contest (WSC) at  
the Philly Reunion. This year  
we have two sessions of HPF  
planned. One of our speakers  
will be John C. "Doc" Bahnsen  
who wrote a book titled, *Ameri-  
can Warrior: A Combat memoir  
of Vietnam*. Doc Bahnsen is a  
true war hero who will discuss  
his book, operations, experi-  
ences, and more. Tom Marshall  
is an author who wrote: *Price of  
Exit*. Tom will headline the sec-  
ond HPF session. Tom was a  
Loach pilot during the Lam Son  
719 era in I Corps in '71 and he  
will discuss some of his experi-  
ences. Doc and Tom are both  
VHPA members.

We also have an HPF pres-  
entation planned by Ron Bower,  
who is working with Jim  
McLaughlin (also VHPA mem-  
bers) to develop an interactive  
digital map called "The Vietnam  
Memory Map." Think Google  
Earth and more on this, a sure  
crowd pleaser. Finally, we also  
have a presentation planned by  
a group that does trips to Viet-  
nam, which will tell you more  
about as the information is pro-  
vided. Look for a couple of  
other HPF additions as we get  
closer to reunion time and set  
in the day and times.

This year we will have two ses-  
sions of the War Story Contest  
(WSC). Doug Womack will MC  
the first session again with such  
headliners as Mike Sheuerman  
and the usual suspects who will  
entertain us with their "This ain't  
no sh\_t stories" about the 'Nam.  
Mike S. will then MC the second  
WSC for more fun and frivolity.  
This year we have added  
props for the speakers to wear  
who will down beer to wet their  
whistles and memories (we're  
trying to get some Black Label  
on station).

When you register this year

there is a one-time charge of  
\$10.00 to attend one or all of the  
HPF and WSC events. In addi-  
tion, for your \$10, each attendee  
will receive a free copy of the  
DVD of last year's HPF/WSC  
events - 7 hours of great stuff to  
include Jug Burkett (2 talks),  
John Plaster (2 talks), and Joe  
Kline (aviation artist), the WSC,  
and the Fries' Arrowhead pro-  
ductions on the Donut Dollies  
and more. The DVD is a \$30  
value, so don't get your Nomex  
panties in a wad over a \$10 cost  
because we need to cover AV  
and development costs on  
these events. We want the  
events to pay for themselves,  
rather than come out of the reg-  
istration fee, which are lower  
this year. We put these events  
together to entertain and inform  
you and your guests - all are in-  
vited. This is our 4th year doing  
these and each year attendance  
has gone up, so don't miss out  
and sign up when you register!

Last notes on HPF/WSC:  
The time is now to sign up to  
give your war story at one of  
the WSCs.

**Contact Jim Fulbrook at**

or email at [REDACTED]

to get on board or to ask ques-  
tions. We will take guys from the  
audience for the WSC, but we  
really do need a list to start,  
please (provide name, contact  
info and title of story). We are  
also open to adding any other  
HPF speakers if you are inter-  
ested or know of someone who  
would be appropriate for our  
members. Yes, we will do a  
DVD again this year as well and  
look out for the luncheon HPF,  
which will feature MG (Ret)  
Andy Andreson speaking about  
"Army Aviation Today" on behalf  
of AAAA. OK, that's it - now are  
you convinced you should come  
to Philly? **Don't let this crappy  
economy spoil your fun!**



# VHPA REUNION ★ 2009

Philadelphia, Pa

## *Reconnect with your own Mini-Reunion at Philly*

VHPA members should keep in mind that one of the primary reasons for our reunions is to reconnect with past compatriots from your RVN unit and flight school. The best way to meet up with unit members is to schedule your own mini-reunion. If your unit does not have a mini-reunion, why not take the initiative to start one up, or you could combine with other sister units you are familiar with if you wish. We have also had mini-reunions for such areas as flight classes, tandem rotor, Dust-off, and Operation Lam Son 719.

The webpage from the VHPA website where you can go to schedule a mini-reunion or to see what units are signed up is [vhpareunion.org/minireunion.htm](http://vhpareunion.org/minireunion.htm). Mini-Reunions are typically scheduled in 4-hour blocks and are available for booking at Philly on Thursday, July 2, 8-noon and 1-5pm; Friday, July 3, 1-4pm;

Saturday, July 4, 8-noon. If slots are filled (sold out) for set-aside rooms, you can still schedule a mini-reunion during these periods if you provide your own room. Mini-reunion meeting rooms can have audio-visual equipment, but as always you will need to request it ahead of time. A group may request a second four-hour block for a mini-reunion. However, this second block will be granted on a space available basis with priority for the particular space given to units requesting only one block. Use the "Comments" section of the mini-reunion scheduler to request a second block and for AV equipment. Keep in mind that mini-reunion rooms are not to be used as TOCs (continuous hangouts).

Finally, once you schedule a mini-reunion, your unit and contact info will appear in the slot on the webpage. How-

ever, you still should make an effort to get the word out to your buds. Use your directory to contact members (encourage them to re-up with the VHPA if they are not current), write a short article for the VHPA Aviator, post notes at the reunion message board, and schedule early so we can list your unit in articles such as this. In that regard, the mini-reunion schedule lists the following units (as of 31 March): 175th AHC, 48th AHC Blue Stars, 229, AHB 1st Cav, 192nd AHC, F Troop 4th Cav, 7/17th Cav, HHC 3 Bde 1st Cav (Snoopy), and the 361st ACE/AWC Panthers. We expect more to schedule by the time this issue of the Aviator is received so check the webpage and get your own reconnection going on! The link for the mini-reunion list for San Antonio 2008 is:

[vhpareunion.org/minireunion\\_2008.htm](http://vhpareunion.org/minireunion_2008.htm).

## *REUNION NEWS: MEMORIAL SERVICE EVENT*

This year at the Philly Reunion we will reestablish a Memorial Service to our list of events. In the early years of the reunions, there was a Memorial Service, but somehow we got away from it and we think it's time we brought it back.

The service is scheduled for Saturday morning and will go from 10:00 to 11:00 am. There is no charge to attend and all reunion attendees and guests are invited. The Memorial Service will be conducted by an ordained minister, Pastor Mike E. Smith (67-68, B/7/17 CAV). Rev. Mike Smith did the service at the Wall at a DC reunion some years back. The service will honor the Vietnam era fallen (some 2,200 plus compatriots) and those who will have died since Vietnam. A recent database update by Gary Roush resulting from a Social Security Index search added 1,249 men to the deceased list, so there are now over 7,000 aviators who have died since Vietnam! The service will include music, prayer, and acknowledge the fallen to include recent Taps entries from the Aviator. If time permits, some testimonials for fallen members may be given by attendees. Informal dress will be fine. Please plan to attend this event to honor our fallen.

**For more info, contact Dr. Jim Fulbrook,**



## *Good News for the Reunion*

*~The VHPA's California Chapter North will be bringing their MOC to Philadelphia!*

The last few months have been a bit slow for most of us as we watch the never ending bad financial news in the media, in our mail boxes and in our personal lives. In spite of that, we are looking forward to the annual reunion Philadelphia where there are many things to see and do as we refresh our memories and enjoy being with the best friends we have ever made – anywhere – anytime.

Our country was born in Philadelphia and we see it as a place steeped in history that can cleanse us of our miseries at least for a short time. We will be seeking a real forward view of life after a few days of visiting with old friends (pun intended) and making new friend. And it looks like we'll be taking the MOC to Philly, too. Look for our smiling faces and we'll look for yours! Life is what you make it, so make it to the reunion for a good time with your friends from Northern California – and BTW, we have chapter members from Pennsylvania who will be sure to show us all the right places to go, right John?



# VHPA REUNION ★ 2009

Philadelphia, Pa

## *Reunion Banquet Seating Update* by Joe Bilitzke, National Reunion Committee

Work continues to make your banquet seating process as easy and fair as possible. For those of you who are reunion old timers, you remember the early days of banquet seating. The doors to the banquet were opened and what followed looked like the beginning of the Ben Hur chariot race! There was a stampede to save entire tables or groups of tables for units, classes, or simply those who wanted to sit together.

We've been able to eliminate this open seating with the current system. Once at the reunion, a member presents a banquet meal ticket, and from a large floor plan of the banquet area, picks an empty seat at an available

table. The seat and table number is noted on the banquet ticket. When the banquet doors open, your table and seat are available. Just like airline seating. OK, I'll admit, like airline seating, there have been some problems, but nothing Linda Irvine, our Reunion Brat, hasn't been able to fix.

The primary complaint comes from those who register early for the reunion, and on the registration form, choose with whom they want to sit. Then once at the reunion, they have to stand in line and go through the process all over again. But the seating preference has been going to those who are early arrivals at the reunion. Members who registered

early (usually on our web site) lost out if they couldn't get to the reunion on the first day. "Not fair" is a valid criticism. So this year, we're trying a little harder to fix it.

When you register for the reunion, your name and seating choice go on a master list. The list is chronological – the earliest to register are at the top of the list. From this master list, a banquet seating roster is maintained. This is the same roster you've seen posted multiple times daily during past reunions. Only this year, you won't have to stand in line unless you don't register until you arrive at the reunion.

If you register early and make your choice for ban-

quet seating, you'll be placed with the unit or group you requested, whenever possible. You'll see this on the posted roster and on the seating graphic when you arrive. The only time you'll have to stand in the seating reservation line is to make a change to your earlier requested seating.

***So continue to register – the sooner the better – and get the seating with the group you requested. If you don't specify a group, you'll be placed at a table as close to the stage as available. First to register, first to have a front table. See you in Philadelphia.***

## *VHPA Executive Council (EC) Elections ~ Want to get involved?*

The VHPA is run by an Executive Council (EC) of six members: past Pres., presiding Pres., VP, and three members-at-large (senior, midterm and junior). These are volunteer positions held by VHPA members. Every year an election is held to fill two positions: VP and Junior Member-at-Large (Jr M-a-L). This notice fulfills VHPA policy to notify members and seek nominees for the VP and Jr M-a-L positions.

A member can volunteer as a nominee or someone can nominate another member, although we suggest you check with the person you intend to nominate to ensure they are willing to serve. This year, Dr. Jim Fulbrook, the current Junior Member-at-Large is the election coordinator. A person must contact Jim in

writing no later than midnight, 15 June 2009 to be nominated. Contact may be done by email [redacted] or USPS mail. Jim's address is [redacted] Fairfax, VA 22031 (phone: [redacted] for info). A phone call will not due as a nomination.

When a nomination is received, Jim will provide an application packet and form that must be completed and returned ASAP by the nominee. The form asks basic information about the nominee to include military and civilian backgrounds that can be briefly answered. The names of nominees for either position will be posted to the VHPA website by 20 June 2009. The election will take place at the Annual Business Meeting

(ABM) during the 2009 reunion in Philadelphia. Rules for conducting the election will be provided in the application packet and any VHPA member may contact Jim for this information. Note that a member may attend the ABM without being registered for the reunion itself.

So, what does being an EC member entail? First, the EC has telephone conferences regularly to discuss and make decisions over issues concerning the VHPA. There are more issues to consider than one might expect and the job is an important one. There are also many email exchanges in addition to the telecons. You may also be asked to serve as a representative of the VHPA at events or assist with some committees or help with the reunion.

To be on the EC, you are expected to attend the reunions because the face time with the other EC members, required meetings such as the ABM, and a general show of support are important. The Jr Member-at-Large is a three-year position where each year you move up to become the Midterm and then Sr M-a-L. The VP also moves up to become the President of the EC the next year and the past President the year after that, so the VP election is very important. The Sr M-a-L must run for the VP position. In other words, the jump from Sr M-a-L is not automatic. If you have additional questions, contact Jim Fulbrook. ***Remember the deadline to notify Jim in writing to be nominated is 15 June.***



# VHPA 26th Annual Reunion • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • July 1-5, 2009

## NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Register Online @ [www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org) or mail completed form to: VHPA Headquarters,  
5530 Birdcage Street #105, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698. Fax signed credit card-authorization to: 916-966-8743.

Member Name: _____	Member #: _____	Wheel Chair: Y or N
Address: _____	State: _____ Zip: _____	Address Change: Y or N
Email: _____	Email Change: Y or N Phone: _____	Phone Change: Y or N
Wife/Guest Name: _____	Home Town: _____	Wheel Chair: Y or N
Additional Guests: _____	Home Town: _____	Wheel Chair: Y or N

EVENT	DATE	# OF PEOPLE	COST	TOTAL
Registration through 4/30/09*			\$40	
Registration 5/1/09 and after*			\$50	
Registration for under age 21			\$10	
No Host Early Bird Reception	June 30		No Cost	
City/U.S. Mint Tour I	July 1		\$37	
Reception for 1st Time Reunion Attendees			No Cost	
Welcome Reception with Buffet			\$58	
Helicopter Museum Tour			\$37	
Golf Tournament	July 2		\$100	
KIA/MIA Gold Star Family Breakfast			No Cost	
City/U.S. Mint Tour II			\$37	
Spirit of Philadelphia Lunch Cruise			\$70	
War Story Contest (WSC) I			\$10**	
Historical Presentation Forum (HPF) I			\$10**	
Poker Tournament I			\$25	
Member's Annual Business Meeting	July 3		No Cost	
Spouse/Guest Function, QVC Tour & Shop.			\$48	
(or) Spouse/Guest Function, Art Museum Tour			\$47	
Historical Presentation Forum (HPF) II			\$10**	
Poker Tournament II			\$25	
Reunion Banquet & Dance			\$80	
Non-Registered Guests at Banquet			\$100	
Memorial Service	July 4		No Cost	
Lunch with MG Andy Andreson, Ret			\$25	
War Story Contest (WSC) II			\$10**	
Franklin Institute w/Dinner & Fireworks			\$88	
<b>Total from right side of form</b>				\$
VHPA Dues (if not dues current)	1 Year		\$36	
VHPA Dues (if not dues current)	3 Years		\$99	
Life Membership (full-\$540, or 3 installments of \$185 ea)				
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				\$

T-SHIRTS		
QTY	SIZE	TOTALS
	S ~ \$18	
	M ~ \$18	
	L ~ \$18	
	XL ~ \$18	
	XXL ~ \$19	
	XXXL ~ \$20	
<b>TOTAL</b>		\$

BANQUET MEAL	
QTY	ENTREE CHOICE
	BEEF
	FISH
	VEGETABLE

### TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Membership Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Scholarship Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

General Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Vietnam War Museum Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### REFUND POLICY

**IMPORTANT:** Please review the details of the VHPA Refund Policy, including the limited opportunity to purchase a Refund Guaranty while completing your registration. This opportunity is available only during your initial registration.

Full details are posted on the Reunion website:  
[www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

**Refund Guarantee Fee**  
(10% of total events) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### CREDIT CARD PAYMENT INFO

VISA or MC#:

Exp. Date:

Signature:

\* Each person 21 and older must pay the full registration fee, except for banquet-only guests.  
\*\*Only one \$10 admission fee is required to attend any or all sessions of the WSC and HPF events.  
Each attendee will also receive a free DVD of last year's HPF/WSC presentations (a \$30 value).

Full details are posted on the Reunion website:

[www.vhpareunion.org](http://www.vhpareunion.org)

In lieu of a CC, you can mail a check or money order to address above, payable to: "VHPA Reunion 2009" with this completed form.



# VHPA REUNION ★ 2009

Philadelphia, Pa

## REUNION SCHEDULE ~ PHILADELPHIA 2009 ~ 1 - 5 JULY 2009

- ★ Tuesday 6/30/09
  - Early Bird Reception
  - President's Reception
- ★ Wednesday 7/1/09
  - City/U.S. Mint Tour I
  - Reception for 1st Time Reunion Attendees
  - Welcome Reception Buffet
  - Helicopter Museum Tour
- ★ Thursday 7/2/09
  - Golf Tournament
  - KIA/MIA Gold Star Family Breakfast
  - City/U.S. Mint Tour II
  - Spirit of Philadelphia* Lunch Cruise
  - War Story Contest I (WSC)
  - Historical Presentation Forum I (HPF)
  - Poker Tournament I
- ★ Friday 7/3/09
  - Member's Annual Business Meeting
  - Spouse/Guest Function, QVC Tour & Shopping  
(or) Spouse/Guest Function, Art Museum Tour  
(Members in Business Meeting)
  - Historical Presentation Forum II (HPF)
  - Poker Tournament II
  - Reunion Banquet & Dance
- ★ Saturday 7/4/09
  - Memorial Service
  - Lunch with MG (Ret) Andy Andreson
  - War Story Contest II (WSC)
  - Franklin Institute w/Dinner & Fireworks
- ★ Sunday 7/5/09
  - Departure

***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 at or on my home number***

## 1ST AIR CAVALRY BRIGADE GETS THE BLUES

Excerpted from WWW.ARMY.MIL/News  
Dated Nov 17, 2008

By Sgt. Nathan J. J. Hoskins 1st ACB  
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

**FORT HOOD, TEXAS** - The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division has roots that start all the way back in the jungles of Vietnam. So it's no wonder that the 1st ACB "Warriors" dig deep into that weathered past to resurrect what is known as the Blues Platoon.

A Blues Platoon is a platoon of ground Soldiers that attach to an aviation unit to conduct deliberate and hasty operations, said Maj. Justin Hall, the S-3 Officer for the Warriors.

This is not only a historic event, but an exciting event as well because this will enable the "Warriors" to react to a multitude of missions quicker than before, said Hall. There will be a total of three Blues platoons within the 1st ACB - all will be attached to the 3rd "Spearhead" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB.

"Spearhead" is an assault heli-

copter battalion made up of about 30 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. One of the Blues Platoons has already arrived for training from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. The other two will come from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. The Soldiers were greeted by Col. Douglas Gabram, commander of the "Warriors" and Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela, the senior noncommissioned officer for the "Warriors", during a briefing at the 1st ACB headquarters, West Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 3. Gabram, a Cleveland, Ohio, native, discussed the heritage and proud tradition of the Warriors and went into some of the missions they may take part in once they get their boots on the ground in Iraq.

"You'll go out onto the flight line and you'll see that our helicopters have the same patch on the nose as the Huey's did during Vietnam," said Gabram. The Blues Platoon will take part in many operations ranging from

downed aircraft recovery, unmanned aerial vehicle recovery, hasty checkpoints, air assaults and more, he said. He also discussed how they'll be giving up their tanks to mount up on their new steeds - Black Hawks and CH-47F Chinooks.

Because these are new animals to the tankers, there will be extensive training which will lead up to a rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., and ultimately their deployment to Iraq.

Lieutenant Col. Jeffery Metzger, the commander of the "Spearhead" Battalion, was also there to talk to his new Soldiers. He stressed the importance of training in this situation. There will be many people counting on their ability to react quickly and expertly. "One or two things are going to happen (when someone needs help) ... they're going to call for the 1st Air Cav. to help them or they're not," said Metzger. "So what that means is that you've got to be the A-team - you've got to be the best at what you're doing."

With only about half the platoon ever being deployed before, the new "Warriors" are still motivated to do their new job, said 2nd Lt. Austin Huckabee, the Blues platoon leader. "It feels very, very prestigious (to be in the Blues Platoon) ... if our (unit) feels that we can best serve the Air Cav. Brigade, then we're very honored that it's us and we'll try our hardest to live up to everyone's expectations," said Huckabee, who hails from San Angelo, Texas.

With a daunting training schedule ahead of them, Gabram had some words of wisdom to impart on them before he let them go. "You can sit around and read about history or you can move out and make history ... we're going to make it," said Gabram. And they are making history. As the first Blues Platoon since the Vietnam Conflict, many eyes will be on them, but the new Blues Platoon is ready, said Huckabee. "It's a very prestigious history and we're glad to be writing the next chapter in that history," he said.



# Vietnam Memorial Garden Project Officially Begun

On Saturday, January 17, a bright, mild winter morning in North Texas, ground was officially broken for The National Vietnam War Museum's most ambitious project to date. About 100 people joined the Board of Directors and major donors of the project to launch the Vietnam Memorial Garden effort.

At the groundbreaking were representatives from the Brazos Foundation, Kirk Horton and family, and the Friends of the Museum. Two other major donors – Baum, Carlock, Bumgardner Funeral Home, and Mrs. Betty Boyd Dettre, widow of Major General Rexford H. Dettre, Jr. (USAF Ret.), were unable to attend, but were represented by members of the Board of Directors. The major donors were presented with a specially designed plaque commemorating the event, while



the other attendees received an annotated plastic shovel as a token gift.

When it opens to the public in May of this year, the garden will feature a permanent one-half scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Located in a grove of Arizona Cypress backing on U.S. Highway 180, the gleaming black aluminum panels will contain the most up-to-date listing of names available. Because of its design and construction, the museum will be able to update the panels on an annual basis to match the wall in Washington.

With the site currently graded, project manager Ralph



Members of the Vietnam War Memorial Museum's Board of Directors and major donors of the project break ground on the Museum's Vietnam Memorial Garden. This is where they the permanent, half-scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. will be built.

Lister is scheduled to begin construction on the wall in early February, weather permitting, with labor being provided by the Friends of the Museum. The Vietnam Memorial Garden, which will house the wall, will be designed and constructed by the Parker County Master Gardeners and the Palo Pinto County Master Gardeners, again with an assist from the Friends of the Museum. The garden will not be completed until after the Memorial Day ceremony to allow visitors to congregate in that area for the wall's public debut.

The Board of Directors would like to extend a special invitation to all VHPA members and their families who are able to attend the dedication on May 30th, 2009.

We'll gather the museum site, 12685 Mineral Wells Highway (U.S. 180), in



Joe Galloway for time for the 11:00 a.m. ceremony. We are expecting participation from the American Legion and the VFW, the Patriot Guard Riders, a uniformed bugler, 21-gun salute, color guard, food vendors, and special guest and keynote speaker Joseph L. Galloway, co-author of *We*

*Were Soldiers Once...And Young and We Are Soldiers Still*. This is a once in a lifetime event. Don't miss it.

On May 30th, 2009 Joe Galloway will speak at the Vietnam War Museum's official dedication of their replica of the Washington Vietnam Wall memorial. Mr. Galloway was praised by General Norman Schwarzkopf as "the finest combat correspondent of our generation" and honored with the National Magazine Award and the National News Media Award. Galloway spent 22 years as a foreign and war correspondent with Knight-Ridder Newspapers, including four tours of combat duty in Vietnam. He received the Bronze Star for rescuing wounded soldiers under fire in Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam in 1965. He accompanied troops in the assault on Iraq during Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-91, covered the India-Pakistan War of 1971, and served as UPI bureau chief in Moscow for three years. Galloway also wrote the bestseller *We Were Soldiers Once – and Young*, which was made into the critically acclaimed movie *We Were Soldiers*, starring Mel Gibson. He was a consultant to Colin Powell in the State Department in 2001-2002.

## HONOR & PRIDE

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# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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## Membership application/change of address

☐ New application

☐ Address change

☐ Directory correction

Membership dues:

☐ Annual: \$36

☐ Three years: \$99

☐ Life: \$540\*

Aviator subscription only:

☐ Annual: \$36

☐ Three years: \$99

Add \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as my contribution to: ☐ Membership Fund ☐ Scholarship Fund

NAME

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ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

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E-MAIL ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

☐ Please charge my MasterCard/Visa credit card

☐ Add \$20 for printed Membership Directory

☐ Enclosed is a check/money order payable to VHPA

☐ Add \$20 for Membership Directory on CD

Credit card No.:

Expiration date:

SIGNATURE:

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS:

SERVICE BRANCH:

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS:

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:

Information about each Vietnam unit:

Dates in units			Unit	Location	Call sign
	From:	To:			
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					

Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association? Referred by? Was membership a gift? From whom?

\*NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$185 each.



The bodies would be carried out and buried on a hillside just outside the camp.

On July 2, 1972, I was taken outside my cage and lined up with a group of prisoners. There were about 25 South Vietnamese and one other American, Wayne. I would soon learn that one of our group was a pilot who had been shot down the same day I had, in an A-1 Skyraider at Polei Klang. The very same Vietnamese pilot I'd asked to go rescue, but been refused. His name was Lieutenant Xanh. I would never forget his name. Never.

We were addressed by the Communist camp commander and told that we were going to travel to a new camp, a better camp, a place where we'd get better food and medical care; where we'd get mail and packages from home. He said the trip could take as long as eleven days, and that we should try hard to make it. I envisioned another jungle camp, somewhat better situated, staffed, and supplied, somewhere not too distant in northern Cambodia, or just across the border in Laos. The comment about trying hard to make it did not register in my mind at all — until some days later.

I set out barefoot with all of us tied loosely to one another. After a few days, we'd no longer be tied because we all struggled to just keep moving forward. I was weak from malnutrition, sick with untold disease, and suffering from wounds that were infected and worsening with the aggravation of the journey. I soon began to become plagued by more leaches, on top of everything else. They'd suck blood and cause infections of their own. I must have been a site. Lieutenant Xanh was there suffering the same conditions, fighting his own personal demons, that every step of the way, threatened to destroy your physical ability, or derail your mental willingness to continue. And if you did not continue to march, you would die. In normal life, you have to take some overt action to die. You have to kill yourself. As a prisoner of war, under these circumstances, that truth is reversed. You have to reach deep within yourself and struggle each day to stay alive. Dying is easy. Just relax, give up and peacefully surrender, and you will die. Many did. They died in that first jungle prison camp, and they died along the trail. Some would complete a day's journey and then lie down to die. Others collapsed on the trail and could not continue. The group would be marched ahead, a rifle shot or shots heard, and the pitiful suffering prisoner was not seen again. We lost at least half a dozen of our small band of 27 captives, and by the time the journey was over, Wayne Finch, the other American in our group, would be dead as well.

The trip turned out to be not an eleven day hike to a new camp in the same vicinity as the one we'd departed. It turned out to be a journey lasting over a three months, taking us several hundred miles all the way up the Ho Chi Minh Trail into North Vietnam and then on to the capital city of Hanoi. It was a nightmare, a horrid soul wrenching nightmare. Every step, every day wracked my body with pain. My infections became worse; disease settled in me. I was near death. My leg swelled at least double in size, darkened in color, filled with puss. It swelled so much, long cracks formed in the skin and puss and bloody stinky fluid oozed from the cracks. I drug my leg like a pendulous sodden club, and its every movement lashed my whole being with the most searing pain; pain that kept my face contorted and a cry shrieking within every corner of my consciousness; pain that was burning a blackened scar deep into the center of my very being.

My bloody dysentery worsened, and I got three different kinds of malaria and several intestinal parasites. And I hovered near death as I tried to reach the end of each horrible day's journey of eight to ten awful, grueling miles. Each morning I'd begin a personal battle to stand and loudly moan or scream to myself through clenched teeth and pressed lips, as blood ran into my leg and brought a surge of new pain as gravity pulled blood and bodily fluids down into the carcass of

leg and pressure grew against decaying flesh and failing vessels. And there was Lieutenant Xanh, suffering badly himself, but always encouraging me, always helping as he could. We'd eat a paltry morsel of rice for dinner, and he'd tell me this was not how Vietnamese ate. There were many fine foods in Vietnamese culture. A Vietnamese meal was a delight. Don't judge the cuisine by what we were given to eat. I believed him, and did not. And he was right, of course. I tried to maintain a sense of humor. It was hard, but it was necessary. Your spirit is the most important factor in survival, and a sense of humor, even under the very worst conditions, helps maintain spirit, and in spirit lives hope. And again, Lieutenant Xanh helped. He was always concerned about me, and did all he could to help me remain positive, to be hopeful. As bad as things got, I never gave up hope, not even the day I would have died had it not been for Xanh.

I mustered all my will each day just to wake, stand, and take a step.

Then I fought hard for the remainder of the day to just keep going, to keep moving along the trail. I could barely walk, but somehow I continued, and survived each day, to open my eyes in the morning to the gift of one more dawn.

On the worst day of my life, I fought so very hard. I faltered. I dug deeper. I staggered on. I faltered again, and I struggled more, and I reached deeper yet, and I prayed for more strength. And I collapsed, and I got up and moved along; and I collapsed again, and again; and I fought, fought with all I had in my body, my heart, and my soul. And I collapsed, and I could not get up. I could not will myself up. I was at the end of my life. And the enemy came; the guard looked down on me. He ordered me up. He yelled at me. I could not. It was done.

And then there was Xanh. Looking worried; bending toward me. The guard yelling to discourage his effort. He persisted in moving to help me. The guard yelled louder. Xanh's face was set with determination, and in spite of whatever threats the guard was screaming, Xanh pulled me up onto his frail, weak back, pulled my arms around his neck and clasped my wrists together, and pulled me along with my feet dragging on the ground behind him. Xanh drug me along all the rest of that day. Occasionally, he was briefly relieved by another prisoner, but it was Xanh who carried the burden that day. It was Xanh who lifted me from death, at great risk to his own life, and carried me, and cared for me, until we completed that long day's journey.

The next morning, I went through the normal agonizing ritual of waking up, and standing, and dragging my leg through those first determined steps. It was more of a struggle than ever before. I mustered the will, and I went on. At the edge of the encampment was a broad log that spanned the rapids of a river. I started across, tried to balance. Pain awful, very weak, equilibrium gone. No sense of balance, worthless leg is throwing me off; begin to slip off the side of the log, then falling onto the rocks in the rushing water below. Xanh and Wayne moved back off the log and came to my rescue. They pulled me from the river and onto the bank. They pleaded for the group to remain at this camp until I was able to travel again. They were ordered away. They would not leave me. They were drug away and forced across the log bridge at gunpoint. And they were marched away with the rest of our prisoner group. I never saw Xanh again.

As far as my fellow prisoners knew, I was left at that camp to die, as others had been. But for some reason, the Communists decided to give me penicillin injections for several days. I began to show some improvement. After a time, I was able to stand, and as soon as I was able to walk again, I was put back on the trail, this time traveling with groups of North Vietnamese soldiers moving north, and accompanied by my own personal guard. It continued to be an agonizing trip, but the worst was behind me. I even found the opportunity to escape once when I got one turn ahead of my guard on the jungle trail. But he





quickly tracked me down, and once he decided not to shoot me in his rage, he recaptured me, and the journey continued. Eventually, I joined with another group of South Vietnamese prisoners as we entered North Vietnam. I was still in pretty bad shape, and very much appreciated this group of South Vietnamese prisoners who helped me continue my awful march north. One in the group became a special friend, to whom I also owe my life. He is Lieutenant Colonel Ke Nghiem. Ke had secreted a gold Cross pen away in the lining of his uniform, for use to gain him some future advantage during his captivity. Instead, at one point when I was very ill with malaria, he traded the pen for six potatoes and then ensured they were prepared and fed to me, one each day. Ke also became my motivator and mentor in the ways of surviving in this beautiful, but hostile land. My journey continued painfully, agonizingly, but ultimately I reached Hanoi. There I went into North Vietnam's prison system, and ended up at the infamous Hanoi Hilton from where I was released at the end of the war.

I inquired about Lieutenant Xanh after I returned to the United States. I could not find any information. I asked Vietnamese military students attending U.S. Army courses. No one could find any information. After the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, I intensified my search. No information. After several years, I was reunited with one former member of my first group of South Vietnamese prisoners, Tang van Pham, and also one from the second, Ke Nghiem. They sought information for me. First nothing, and then word that Xanh had been re-imprisoned after the fall of Saigon, and then the conclusion that he'd probably died after years of imprisonment. But I still hoped to find some information about what had happened to Xanh

and maybe a little about him and his family.

I'd done internet searches in recent years, always with no luck. Then a few weeks ago, I tried again. I stumbled onto a site for pilots who'd flown A-1 Skyraiders in the Vietnamese Air Force, some from Xanh's old unit. I dropped a note to the webmaster, and within days found myself in e-mail contact with Xanh, and then a phone call – the first time we'd spoken in 35 years. I then saw Xanh a short time later in an emotion filled reunion in Southern California. I met his wife and spent two wonderful days sharing stories, good food, and enjoying each other's company. At our first encounter, I looked upon an older man, but instantly I saw the soul of my beloved friend in his eyes. I'd not seen him since I watched him forced across that log and marched away, knowing that I owed him my life; what there was left of it. But there in the jungle, I made a promise to myself and to Xanh. Since he'd worked so hard to help me live through those two toughest days of my life, I felt like I owed



Xanh Nguyen & William Reeder at their reunion 35 years later.

him my very best to try to do my part to make his efforts worthwhile – to survive the rest of my journey and somehow get home at the end of it. What he'd done for me saved my life, and Xanh's selfless actions gave me even more determination to overcome everything between me and the freedom that waited at the end of my captivity. Xanh Nguyen has always been a great man, and now he is a great American. I am so thankful he was my friend when I needed him, and I am grateful I have found my friend again.

*William S. Reeder, Jr., Ph.D.  
Colonel, U.S. Army (retired)*

*See You in Philadelphia at the 2009 Reunion!*



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## Vietnam Overview

### "Rotorheads Return"

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



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# *The Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall will be on display in Piedmont, Oklahoma for the upcoming 4th of July weekend*

For more information contact:

Marv Lynn Heath

Amy Lawter



The memorial is dedicated to Vietnam veterans and honors all service men and women of the U.S. military forces. Dignity Memorial funeral, cremation and cemetery

sands of visitors.

Piedmont is preparing for more than 30,000 visitors to this event and is calling for volunteers to help host it. Interested should please contact Brooke Kuns: [redacted] at Piedmont City Hall at 373-2621. For updates on The Dignity Memorial® Vietnam Wall visit our Piedmont community website:

[www.piedmontok.org](http://www.piedmontok.org)

**March 20, 2009** – Piedmont, Oklahoma -- The citizens of Piedmont in partnership with Chapel Hill Funeral Home and Memorial Gardens are bringing The Dignity Memorial® Vietnam Wall to their city throughout the nation's birthday holiday weekend -- July 2 (youth education day), 3, 4 and 5, 2009. This traveling, three-quarter-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. will be exhibited at Stout Field, the town's high school football field, 24 hours around clock, free to all. Piedmont is northwest of Oklahoma City on Highway 4. Edmond Road, also called 178th, and Highway 4 is one of the city's major intersections.

providers created the memorial as a service to those who might never travel to the nation's capital to experience "The Wall" firsthand. The 240-foot long, eight-foot high, faux-granite replica contains the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. To see the memorial, to touch it and experience its magnitude, offers unforgettable moments of reflection and healing to thou-



## *A Difficult Assignment by Jack Salm*

One of the most difficult assignments one can perform is the notification of the Next of Kin that his or her loved one has been killed in service to his country. It was September 1967 and I was a week shy of my DEROS. I had been exchanging tapes with my wife and was aware of the fact that the son of family friends was on his way to Vietnam. Bill's father had asked my wife if she would ask me if I could show Bill around upon his arrival? I thought this would be pretty tough to do as I was in the Army and stationed in Nha Trang while Bill was a Marine who would be coming in-country through Danang. I was quite surprised when I received a call from Danang and was asked to be Bill's escort officer, I knew his Dad was powerful politically but getting approval to help Bill acclimate to Vietnam was quite an accomplishment, even for him. I said sure, I will be a glad to help get Bill

in-processed, and then it was explained to me that I was being requested to escort his body home. Bill had only been in country two days before he was killed while performing his duties as a forward observer in Con Thien.

After the initial shock wore off I packed, caught a flight to Cam Ranh and was on my way, Bill's body had already started homeward from Danang. Bill's parents have now passed away without ever knowing that I didn't catch up with their son's body until Dover AFB, and from there I escorted his remains into New York City proper. At Bill's home I had the difficult task of both sleeping in his room and trying to explain to his parents, and the likes of men like US Senator Jacob Javits, New York City's Mayor Lindsey and many other high power political figures how this could have happened. "How could this lad be killed in Vietnam

only two days after he got there?" they asked me over and over and honestly, being unfamiliar with Marine policy, I didn't have a clue. I knew when I arrived in country and was assigned to the 48th AHC "Blue Stars", it was a least a week before I ever went on a combat mission. I hope my answers were credible, I know that when it came time to present the colors to Bill's mother I had rehearsed at least a hundred times what I was going to say. I opened my mouth but nothing came out, I was terribly embarrassed. But his mother, with tears in her eyes, patted my hand, accepted the flag and gave me a tiny smile.

That was the first, but unfortunately not the last time I have had a notification of Next of Kin detail. The first is always the most difficult especially since Bill's family were good friends of my family.





## Bob Ferry

LAKE SAN MARCOS, CA ---- Bob Ferry understood the importance of spending quality time with his children, but he just wasn't into pony rides. Helicopters were his thing.



The real fun began when his son reached adulthood. Father and son would get together during their lunch hour and take a spin. "We'd be up about 35 feet, going 150 miles per hour and he'd turn the engine off and pull it up a couple hundred feet," Ferry's son, Dan, recalled last week. "He'd spin it and bring it down with the engine off." Welcome to the life of a test pilot's kid. "It would scare the heck out of me," said Dan Ferry, now 58. "To my father, that was fun. I may be crazy, but test pilots are nuts."

Bob Ferry wasn't just any test pilot, but a highly decorated one for his work with helicopters, both in the U.S. Air Force and as a civilian. His long career was highlighted by being the first military pilot to complete a tilt-rotor conversion to airplane mode and for setting a still-standing world record for distance-flying in a helicopter.

A Korean War veteran and one-time fighter pilot, Kerry passed away Jan. 15. He was 85.

Ferry is credited with flying 10,800 hours in 125 types of aircraft. His son estimates that 8,000 of those hours were in helicopters. He was widely hailed as an expert in helicopters, winning several awards and being named a fellow in the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. On Feb. 6, 1959, Ferry became the first military pilot to successfully demonstrate a tilt-rotor conversion to airplane mode while testing the Bell XV-3 tilt-rotor aircraft. In his report, he gave the opinion that despite the design's deficiencies, the "fixed-wing tilt-prop" was a practical application for

rotorcraft. His work opened the doors for the development of the XV-15 and V-22 Osprey aircraft. As chief test pilot for Hughes Helicopters, he also flew the first flight of the U.S. Army's AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. He once even piloted a Hughes OH-6A nonstop from Los Angeles, CA to Daytona Beach, FL, earning him the Sikorsky International Trophy.

That Ferry lived as long as he



did and died from natural causes could be regarded as remarkable, considering the inherent danger in his work. His family said he cheated death on several occasions. "He had a lot of angels on his shoulder," Dan Ferry. "He loved it, just loved it," said his wife, Marti Ferry. "Sure, it was dangerous, but why wouldn't I want him to do it if he loved it so much? He was very good at it. He liked living on the edge. He would have been miserable at a desk job."

Robert George Ferry was born Nov. 29, 1923, in Minneapolis. After graduating from high school in 1942, he went to San Francisco to work briefly as a shipyard welder while awaiting entry into an Air Force cadets program. He earned his pilot's wings at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona but with World War II concluding, Ferry decided that opportunity might be better in the helicopter field. The next year he was off to helicopter school in San Marcos, Texas, where he met his future wife. Marti Holt was living in Austin, Texas, at the time and drove with some friends to San Marcos for a "wolf dance"

designed to entertain the military. Ferry and Holt met on the dance floor that night and ended up dancing together for 62 years.

After flying 90 combat missions in Korea, Robert Ferry was accepted into the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California. He worked there for five years as his career took off. He spent three years in Germany, then moved to Culver City to work for Hughes Aircraft Co. Ferry made his move in 1975 to run test operations for Hughes at Palomar Airport. He settled, and eventually retired at Lake San Marcos.

Over the years, he was honored with the Iven C. Kincheloe Award as test pilot of the year by the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, the American Helicopter Society's Frederick L. Feinberg Award and the USAF Helicopter Pilot Association award for flight testing. He also received awards from the Italian Air Force, the Hamburg Senate for rooftop rescues, and aviation expert Dr. S. Harry Robertson for his flight achievements. He was inducted into the Aerospace Walk of Honor in 1997. Ferry is survived by wife Marti Ferry, son Dan Ferry, daughter Cindy Ferry and a grandson.

*Editor's Note - Bob Ferry did not serve in the Vietnam War as a rotary-wing Aviator and as such, was not eligible to be a VHPA member. At the same time, his numerous contributions to both Army Aviation and Military Aviation should not go unnoticed.*

## Chuck Sellers

Retired CW5 and VHPA Member Charles "Chuck" William Sellers, Jr. passed away at 63 from colon cancer on January 22, 2009 in his Gilbert, Arizona home.

After completing US Army helicopter pilot training with flight classes 68-9 and 68-11, Chuck served with D/101st AHB 101st Abn Div in Vietnam during 1968. He joined the Arizona Army National Guard after leaving active duty. I met

Chuck when I joined the Arizona Guard and I'm proud to say that I was his friend for over 35 years. We flew together, rode Harleys together, drank together and laughed together. I miss his company. Chuck retired from the National Guard in 2001 as a CW5, his last assignment was the Commander of Det 31 OSACOM (Operational Support Airlift Command) flying the C-12 Huron.

His wife, Becky, took this wonderful photo about ten years ago. She explains, "Earlier that day our daughter brought our granddaughter Tatum over to the house dressed in a camo suit so we could baby-sit. Chuck came home from work, scooped up Tatum, sat down and we started talking. She went to sleep in Chuck's arm with her right hand raised as if to salute, I grabbed our camera and asked Chuck to salute. The pictures now a family treasure!"

Chuck was an avid, completely professional military and civilian pilot. In addition to the VHPA, he was a member of The American Legion Post #39, American Legion Riders (ALR), Harley Owners Group (HOG), National Rifle Association (NRA), Veterans of Foreign War (VFW), US Warrant Officers Association (USWOA), and Aircraft Owners Pilot Association (AOPA).

*Submitted by Brad Lewis*





# TAPS



## Alex Woods Jr.

Alex Woods Jr. passed away in a single car crash on January 13, 2009. He was born on the 4th of July, 1942 in Spokane, WA. He came to Reno after retiring from the Army in 1992 to serve as the Washoe County School District's Director of High School Junior Reserve Officer Corps programs. He was a 1960 graduate of Gonzaga Preparatory High School in Spokane, where he was a star basketball player. Woods went on to Eastern Washington University on a basketball scholarship, graduating in 1964, with a ROTC commission as a Second Lieutenant. Later, he earned his Master's Degree in Education at Wayne State University.



Alex served 28 years on active duty, commanding units from a 40-person platoon to a brigade with over 2,000 service members. His leadership example always emphasized the positive. He believed in teamwork, loyalty, and doing what was right for his subordinates. Woods served two combat tours in Vietnam and seven years in Europe during the Cold War. Among his decorations are the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Master Aviator Badge, Senior Parachutist Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge, Two Legions of Merit, Two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Silver Star, three Bronze Star Medals, the Purple Heart, five Meritorious Service Ribbons, 28 Combat Air Medals, and the Air Force and Army Commendation Medals.

In the mid-80s, Col. Woods served as the national marketing director for all US Army ROTC programs. He then went on to command all the college and high school ROTC programs in the five western states before retiring and joining the Washoe County School District. Under his direction, the Washoe County JROTC program earned the highest praise from Cadet Command and designated the best program from the Eastern Seaboard to the West Coast.

Woods had a passion for golf and reigned as the current Northern Nevada Senior Golf Champion. It was on the greens that Woods forged and deepened his legendary friendships. A cheerful slap

on the back and bear paw handshake were his trademarks. The outdoors was the only spot big enough to embrace Woods' hearty laugh and robust optimism.

On or off the golf course, Woods promoted awareness of the military challenge coins. The coins were awarded for recognition of good deeds and service. Recipients of the Silver State Brigade Coin would find the memento slipped to them in a congratulatory handshake.

Woods was a familiar face at Hot August Nights and various classic auto shows. The beautiful vehicles and the stories behind them transported Woods to his younger years. As he gazed at the classics, Woods would speak of their features, accessories, colors and other details as if he were renewing a friendship.

In spite of his military excellence, golfing expertise and love of classic cars, he was lost in the domestic scene. After work one day, Alex wanted a sandwich. But first he had to call his wife Callie to find out where she kept the bread and fixings. After his snack, Alex would ease into his leather recliner and invite the dogs to join him. When they piled on, this combat veteran would gently run his hands along their soft fur and whisper sweet nothings. So established was this ritual that the dogs continued to hop onto his chair after their buddy passed on.

Woods is survived by his wife, Callie of Reno; mother, Patricia Woods of Spokane, WA.; daughter, Sandy Peters and son, Rob Woods, both of Rocklin, CA; grandchildren, Tylers Peters, Alexxa Peters, Cody Peters, and Gracie Woods of Rocklin, CA; stepdaughter, U.S.A.F. Major Courtney Hamilton of Tucson, AZ; stepson, Hunter Hamilton of Los Angeles; his former wife, Barbara Woods; and his beloved dogs. Woods was preceded in death by his father, Alex Woods Sr. and his sister, Linda Woods, both of Spokane, WA.

A military memorial was held on January 22, 2009 at Reno High School. Hundreds of mourners and various dignitaries honored their friend. Woods was cremated and his mother was presented with the ashes by his wife, Callie. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that any donations be directed to 20th JROTC District Office, Reno High School. You may also honor Col.

Woods by flying the American flag and remembering the American soldier for service to this great country.

A Hooah, Sir. We will always remember with gratitude your profound contributions to so many. Rest now, and rest easy. Rest in peace. These proceedings are closed. With honor.

## CW4 (retired) Bobbie L. Stanfill

CW4 (retired) Bobbie L. Stanfill, 72, passed away on October 9, 2007 at Southeast Alabama Medical Center of cardiac failure resulting from struggles with both diabetes and kidney problems. Bobbie trained in classes 68-9 & 68-11, and graduated at HAAF. Upon completion of AMOC at Ft. Eustis, VA, he flew in the 281st AHC in Nha Trang from November of 1968 to December of 1969 and was in the Maintenance Department there.

Bobbie entered the army in February 1952 and completed 32 years of service retiring on July 31, 1984. During his service he served three tours in Vietnam and also Germany and Korea. Earlier he became a member of the 5th Special Forces and was a combat medic. He served in Okinawa, Vietnam, and Thailand with the Special Forces as a Staff Sgt. E-6. He also served with the 82nd Airborne at Ft. Bragg, NC and became a master parachutist. He later served at Ft. Rucker as an IP and senior flight instructor. During his last ten years of service he also worked as a civilian LPN at the Dale Medical Center Emergency Room. Following his retirement from the armed services, he was a medical technician at Lyster Army Hospital until his retirement in March 2004.

Among the awards and decorations he received during his career were the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, and the Master Parachutist Badge.

Bobbie made his home in Ozark, AL and is survived by his wife of 54 years, Ann Stanfill, one son, Bobbie, Jr. and wife of Kauai, HI, daughters, Kathy of San Antonio, and Janice and husband Lindsay Beddingfield of Montgomery, AL.

Bobbie is best remembered by a quote from one of the crewmen that flew with him in the 281st: "He was one of the good guys, always treated the crews with respect and as equals, possibly because he

had been enlisted and came from the SF community. He will be missed".

## Bill Biebel

Maj. William J. Biebel (retired USAF), 67, touched the face of God on Feb. 17, 2009. Born Dec. 9, 1941, Bill was the eldest son of the late John F. Biebel, Jr. and Marie (Burke) Biebel. He married the former Elizabeth (Betsy) Williams Sept. 4, 1965.

During a 21-year career with the U.S. Air Force, Bill flew HH 53 "Jolly Green" helicopters, rescuing downed pilots in Vietnam, and later flew B-52 Bombers in the U.S. and Vietnam, serving also as a lead flight instructor for Certified Flight Instructor Course at Castle Air Force Base, Calif.

After more than two decades of loyal service to his country, Bill retired from the military in 1985. Returning to Green Bay and a second career with Metropolitan Life, Bill continued to embrace the creed of his helicopter squadron, "That others may live." His survival and fighter instincts remained intact through his long struggle with cancer. In living and in dying, Bill touched many lives.

His sense of adventure — before, during and after the military — led him to experiences and activities most men only dream of. He loved acrobatic flying and had a lifelong love of Porsches which he raced at Road America (Elkhart Lake) and Black Hawk Farms (Illinois). He was devoted to family, was a lifelong Green Bay Packers fan, and had a special place in his heart for the Hmong people stemming from his military experience.

Bill is survived by his wife, Betsy; daughter, Kerrie; son, Steve; two grandchildren, three sisters, one brother, one brother-in-law, one sister-in-law, numerous nieces, nephews, special cousins, relatives, and friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorial funds will be established for Unity Hospice and a Nursing Scholarship for Hmong students at Bellin College of Nursing. Online condolences may be expressed at [www.hansenfuneral\service.com](http://www.hansenfuneral\service.com).



# TAPS

## Craig Buchman

To the VHPA Aviator, this to inform you of the passing of Craig Buchman. He died on February 17th of, I believe, heart & lung disease at the VA hospital in Seattle. Craig graduated with flight class 68-17 was a Warrant Officer slick pilot with the Robinhoods, 173rd AHC, at Lai Khe from late '68 to early '70. He flew under the callsign Robinhood 20.

Hopefully more to follow.

Steve Kernstock

Robinhood 22/Crossbow 33

Lai Khe, Dec 68-Jul 70

## David Earl Russell

David Earl Russell, LTC, USA, Ret., of Annapolis, MD, passed away on Sunday, January 11, 2009, at Anne Arundel Medical Center, surrounded by his loving family and friends. Col. Russell was born in Los Angeles, CA on August 31, 1940 and was the son of the late John J. Russell and Oneida Lee (Fanger) Russell of Redding, CT.



LTC Russell was commissioned in 1964 as a Regular Army Second Lieutenant from Providence College where he was a Distinguished Military Graduate. LTC Russell's long and distinguished career included assignments as an Armor Company Commander in Germany, Senior Advisor to a Vietnamese Ranger Battalion, the Commander of A Troop, 3/17th Air Cavalry ("Silver Spurs"), and Secretary of the General Staff, 1st Aviation Brigade, Republic of Vietnam.

From 1973-1975, LTC Russell and his family were posted to the American Embassy in Vientiane, Laos where he was the Assistant Army Attaché, a diplomatic position. Following his return from Laos, LTC Russell served in a myriad of positions including: Commander, United States Army Special Research Detachment at the National Security Agency (NSA); Director, Department of Joint and Combined Operations, and Professor of Middle Eastern Studies – both at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

LTC Russell's military honors included the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Combat "V" (22 awards), Bronze Star (4 awards), Meritorious Service Medal (4 awards), Master Army Aviator Wings, Parachute Badge, the Ranger Tab, and numerous other awards and decorations.

After retiring from the Army in 1984, LTC Russell co-founded American Flight Group, Inc., in Annapolis, Maryland, an executive aircraft charter airline. He later became the company's President and CEO as well as a chief pilot for the company, which operated through 2006. LTC Russell was qualified to fly aircraft ranging from attack helicopters to executive jets. During his 51-year military and civilian career, he logged over 20,000 flight hours.

LTC Russell earned his B.A. in Political Science from Providence College, his M.A. in Political Science (Arab World Studies) from the University of Rhode Island, and his M.S., in Naval Arts and Sciences, from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI. He also attended the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA, where he studied Modern Standard Arabic and French.

LTC Russell had a great love and passion for aviation, opera, classical music, Broadway show tunes, sailing, the City of Annapolis, the Naval Academy Midshipman to whom he opened his heart and home, and most importantly, for his four children and the many people who called "the Colonel" their friend.

LTC Russell is survived by his daughter, Kimberlee Russell Fleming of Marathon, FL; his three sons, John D. Russell of St. Petersburg, FL, Colin F. Russell and Dennis C. Russell of Annapolis, MD; his sister, Jacqueline L. Russell of Redding, CT; his aunt, Nancy Russell of Queens, NY; his sister-in-law, Marti Russell of Sterling Heights, MI; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother Linwood Russell and his sisters,

A graveside service, with full military honors was held at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA, on Monday, April 13, 2009. Contributions be made in memory of LTC Russell to the Wounded Warrior Project, PO Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675-8517.

## Denver Gene Kidd

Denver Gene Kidd, age 78, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, formerly of Pine Knot, Kentucky, passed away Tuesday, January 13, 2009. He was laid to rest at the T. Chitwood Cemetery in Pine Knot with graveside military honors provided by the US Army Casualty Detail of Fort Campbell.



Born July 24, 1930, he was the son of the late Jessie Earl and Madge Lee Kidd who precede him in death. Also preceding him in death is his brother Dean Kidd.

He is survived by his daughter Kathy D. Barnes of Smiths, Alabama and his son Dr. Michael G. Kidd of Hope Mills, North Carolina. Mr. Kidd also leaves behind six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren and several brothers and sisters spread throughout the United States.

Mr. Kidd was a 33 year veteran of the US Army where he rose to the rank of CW4. He was a tank commander during the Korean War assigned to the 72nd tank battalion as an SFC. Mr. Kidd spent two tours in Vietnam as a pilot. His first tour was with the 3rd Radio Research Unit as a fixed-wing aviator and in his 2nd tour he deployed with the 1st Air Cavalry Division as a Chinook pilot. Mr. Kidd was awarded seventeen Air Medals during his two years in combat in Vietnam. He was a master Army Aviator and Chinese Army Aviator.

## Lt. Col. Donald McRae

Lt. Col. Donald McRae of St. Petersburg died Sunday, March 15, 2009, at Edward White Hospital. A native of St. Petersburg, he was a retired city administrator & manager of McRae Funeral Home. A retired Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army, he will be greatly missed by his loving wife, Josephine McRae; nephew, Dr. Paul McRae (Donna); cousin Ervin Reed (Nevirda); niece Mildred Reliford (Leonard); sister-in-law Berta Carter; grand nieces & nephews, McRae staff; devoted friend Goliath Davis, & other relatives and friends.



tives and friends.

IN 1964, Don served a tour in Vietnam with HHC, 145 AHC of the 6th AB.

## Francis "Frank" X. Delvy

Francis "Frank" X. Delvy, 78, passed away from natural causes on January 22, 2009 in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Frank graduated with flight class 60-9FW and served in Vietnam from 1965 till 1967 with D Troop (Air), 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division in Chu Chi, Vietnam and flew under the call signs of Centaur 20 and Centaur 3.

## Frank Hanly Radspinner

Frank Hanly Radspinner passed away Monday, Feb. 23, 2009, after a brief illness. Services were held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Fort Worth. Interment was at Pickwick-McAdams Cemetery, Possum Kingdom Lake, Graford, Texas. The family respectfully requests memorials be made in Frank's name to The Citadel Foundation, Class of '55 or the Army Aviation Association of America Scholarship Fund.



Frank was born April 26, 1934, in Darlington, S.C., his love of aviation started when he piloted his first flight at age 11 and continued throughout his life. He graduated from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina in 1955.

After entering the U.S. Army, Frank served Army aviation in Asia, Europe and the Antarctic, where he flew the first helicopter flight to the South Pole. Mount Radspinner was named in recognition of his accomplishment. His service in Antarctica resulted in the Distinguished Flying Cross. A master Army aviator with more than 4,300 flight hours, he served over 30 months in Vietnam, receiving the Meritorious Service Award, Bronze Star, Air Medal with six oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Award, Vietnam Service Medal (seven campaigns), Vietnam Campaign Medal/60 device, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Antarctica Service Medal and many other related honors and awards. His contributions to aviation



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in both the military and commercial and volunteer communities spanned more than 50 years.

As the Army liaison with Bell Helicopter, Frank participated in the development of the then-new Bell Cobra helicopter. After retirement from the Army, Frank joined Bell Helicopter's international marketing department, where he continued his love of flying and helicopters in Asia and Europe.

A charter member of the Army Aviation Association of America, he continued to serve as a governor on the AAAA scholarship board. Additionally, he served with The Citadel Foundation board and was a member of the Possum Kingdom Chamber of Commerce board of directors. He was preceded in death by his parents and son, and is survived by his Wife of 30 years, Diana Braiden Radspinner; one daughter, one son, one granddaughter, one grandson and a host of extended family and friends.

*Obituary courtesy of Giffen Marr*

## **Maj. George E. Kinback Jr. USA- Ret.**

Maj. George E. Kinback Jr. USA-Ret., 75 died on January 6, 2006 in Weatherford, Texas from complications caused from receiving contaminated mail order medications.

He graduated from flight school in September of 1958 and served in Vietnam in 1966 till 1967 with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Xuan Loc. Maj. Kinback entered the Army in 1948 shortly after World War II and served in Central and South America, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and the USA. He attended primary flight training under Hawthorn School of Aeronautics at the Spence Air Base in February 1956, rotary wing flight training continued at Camp Wolters, Texas in 1958. During his many years of service he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for flood relief efforts in Nicaragua in 1960, the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions on 21 November 1966 in support of an ambushed 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment supply convoy. He was also awarded The Bronze Star Medal for his Vietnam Service January 1967 to June 1967.

The First Production Model of the TH-13T (Tail No. 64-17845) was released at Bell Helicopter, Fort Worth, Texas to Captain Kinback for flight to Ft. Rucker, Alabama, Janu-

ary 7, 1965.

He was preceded in death by his first wife Sue Kinback in 2001 but is survived by his 2nd wife, Doris Wright Kinback, (the ex-wife of CW3 Gilbert W. Wright who was also a helicopter pilot in Vietnam) of Weatherford Texas; his sons Alan and Eric Kinback, his daughters Kathie (Ghormley) and Kerri (Lewis); one stepson Robert Wright; two stepdaughters Donna Hilton and Teresa Gonzales; 13 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren

George was writing a book but entered the hospital and passed away before we could have it published. I (Doris) promised him I would publish the book for him. I started editing and compiling it in April 2006 and on August 20, 2006 uploaded the manuscript and photos to BookSurge my self publisher. The book was print ready on October 16, 2006. The title is, TELL ME A WAR STORY and it's available at Amazon.com. The book is a compilation of individual stories from George's experiences as an Army Aviator and instructor pilot during the period from 1956 to 1973.

## **Harvey Burry**

Harvey Burry was born to Sidney and Grace Burry on March 22, 1936 and passed away on January 4, 2007 from heart surgery complications. His favorite job, besides being a grandfather, was a helicopter pilot for the U.S. Army. After graduating with warrant officer flight classes 66-9 and 66-11, he served two tours in Vietnam. In 1967 he was "Jayhawk 10" with A/9th Avn Bn 9th Inf Div and then in 1970-71 he was "Hammer" with A/15th Trans Bn 1st Cav Div. He was a faithful member of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the VHPA.

His daughter, Angela Reed, recalls: "He dedicated 23 years of his life to this profession and once he retired from the Army, we knew he missed it to the end. He loved to play poker with his buddies and he also enjoyed reconnecting with other helicopter pilots. During holidays, he would help out in the local shelters serving meals to fellow veterans. He also visited Ft. Logan National Cemetery, frequently, to



help with the placing of flags on veteran's gravesites." Harvey is now laid to rest at Ft. Logan. He will forever be missed by his wife of 36 years, Rami, his three children, Angela (Mark) Reed, Denise Burry, Paul Burry, and his three grandchildren, Sydney, Grant, and Dylan.

I deployed with the 195th AHC and arrived in country on November 1, 1967. Some of us were sent to A/9th Avn Bn as part of our in-country orientation. On my third day of flying with Harvey we had an engine failure while lifting some troops out of a confined area in the jungle. We spent the next few days in adjacent bunks in the hospital. Harvey was evacuated for a broken leg; I recovered, returned to my unit, and completed my tour. Years later I bumped into Harvey at a Rocky Mountain Chapter meeting. We started telling war-stories and when we realized that we had crashed together on 9 November; we became even better friends.

*Submitted by Brian Wold*

## **Jacob E. Starr**

Jacob E. Starr of Peoria, Arizona left us for paradise February 10 in his home by the water. He was the youngest of four born to Jessie and Ethel Starr in Conroe, Texas, 6/16/1944. The Starrs moved to the Buckeye area when he was an infant. Times were tough and from a young age he worked alongside his migrant working family traveling from Texas west and north to Washington State as crops were ripe and work could be had. His dad passed away when he was 8 years old. His courage, generosity, and rare determination took root and grew in the cotton fields, classrooms, and football fields of the West Valley.

He married Marilyn Ann Webb of Buckeye, July 24, 1964 and together they brought up three daughters who gave them 7 grandchildren.

He entered the US Army as a private and courageously served two tours in Vietnam, first as an infantryman, then as a helicopter pilot. After 25 years of distinguished service, he "retired" as a Lieutenant Colonel. With relentless determination and not enough capital, he and Marilyn built Glendale Aviation into a successful business.

He was a talented man who lived an adventurous life of: fighting wars,

flying the skies, sailing by the stars, raising girls, surprising entrepreneurship, scuba diving...and loving others with courage, unflinching determination, and generosity known not only in the valley but the world even unto total strangers and testy pound dogs.

## **James "Jim" Robbennolt**

James "Jim" Robbennolt, 62, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, passed away on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, at Avera McKennan hospital.

He was born February 16, 1947, in Pierre, South Dakota, to Bill and Betty Robbennolt. He graduated from Agar High School in Agar, South Dakota, in 1965, and from the University of South Dakota in 1969.

Jim graduated with flight class 70-20 and from 1969 to 1973, Jim served his country as an officer in the U.S. Army as a helicopter pilot. He served in Vietnam in 1970 and 1971.

After his years of military service, he obtained a law degree from the University of South Dakota in 1976 and began to practice law. He practiced with the Olinger Law Firm in Pierre, South Dakota, from 1976 until 2002; from 2002 until 2009 he practiced at his own law firm in Sioux Falls.

Jim married Mari Becker of Onida, South Dakota, in 1967, he is survived by her, his two children, Paul (Jennifer) Robbennolt and Katie (Steve) Deters, both of Plymouth, Minnesota, four grandchildren and two brothers.

An obituary and online condolences can be viewed at [www.consolingmemories.com](http://www.consolingmemories.com)

## **James Alfred Blevins**

On Sunday, January 25, 2009, the Lord called for another of his children, CW3 James Alfred Blevins Sr. At the tender age of 73, James passed away due to complications from lung cancer.

Born September 2, 1935, at Peach Creek, he was a son of the late Alfred and Oma Blevins, formerly of Logan, where he was one of 10 children. Also preceding him in death were brothers, Earl and Buster, and sister, Lorene.

James, a helicopter pilot (class of '67-7) and Vietnam Veteran, retired from the U.S. Army in 1975 moving his family to Proctorville, Ohio, where he went to work for Island Creek Coal Com-



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pany. Moving to Richwood, in 1976, he worked as Island Creek's senior pilot located in Craigsville. In 1985, he moved to Lexington, Ky., and took over as chief managing pilot for Island Creek at the Bluegrass Airport. He retired for a second time in 2001 wanting to spend more time with his family.

Survivors include his devoted wife, Rochelle Mooney Blevins, and two children, James "Jim" Blevins Jr., and Helen "Heidi" Blevins; three brothers, three sisters, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

He had told his family that he "has done all he set out to do, accomplished everything he wanted to accomplish, and seen everything he wanted to see." It was time for him to complete his final journey where he wanted to fish with Peter and Jesus. James was interred at Camp Nelson National Cemetery.

## James Longsworth

James Longsworth passed away on October, 12, 2008

VHPA Member Ralph Barber passed us information about the death of his long-time friend James Longworth. In his notification letter Ralph wrote:

I received a call today from Jim Longworth's daughter that her dad, Spur 39 passed away. This was totally unexpected as I see Jim quite often and will miss him greatly. Please inform the troop of his passing and ask for their prayers for his wife Bachan and his daughter Cristy.

Jim was involved in a midair at Ft. Knox in 1967 while with A Troop, 3/17 Cav. Although he saved all but one of 11 souls on his ship, apparently it bothered him more than we knew. All I know is that no one ever blamed him. Christy has let it be known that it is OK to pass on to our members, and Jim's fellow Spurs, that he took his own life and the best his family and friends can tell is that he carried the burden of the accident at Fort Knox for all these years. It is his family's wishes that everyone know that he suffered from PTSD and suggest we all do a self-examination to insure we, or our close friends don't suffer as well.

## John W. Houser

Services for John W. Houser, Lt. Col. USA Retired were held on Tuesday January 27, 2009. John (Bullet) Houser, 76, died at home on Saturday, January 24, 2009. His passing was totally unexpected, even though he had had a heart by-pass in 1994. His recovery was complete and he enjoyed many years of a very active life, even planning for a knee replacement, which would have been done in April.

John is survived by his wife Denise, daughters and sons in-law Christina Houser McCown and her husband Bill of Calhoun, GA, Mary Elizabeth Houser Miller and her husband Steven of Marietta, GA, and Jennifer Kathleen Houser of Doraville; sons and daughters-in law, John Ralph Houser and his wife Sheila of Marietta, GA, and Thomas Patrick Houser and his wife Susan of Flowery Branch, GA, sister Jo E. McDowell and 14 grandchildren.

I first met John in August of 1950 as we were both entering The University of Kentucky. Over the next fifty eight years we spent time together on many Posts in CONUS. John left school to enlist in the Army, entering active duty on November 2, 1954. He was at Ft. Sill and decided to attend OCS for a commission, which he received in December 1955, remaining at Ft. Sill in the Field Artillery Basic Course. Still not content with the way things were going with his career, he applied for and was accepted to Army primary Flight Training which had recently been moved to Edw. Gary AFB, San Marcos, TX. The Air Force was teaching basic flight in L-21 and L-19 aircraft. Bullet was in Class 55-G a Yellow hat class, and the hat is prominently displayed on the wall of his home office.

Following the Tactics portion of flight school, Bullet was awarded his Army Aviator wings and assigned to the 284th Artillery Bn. at Ft. Campbell, KY in 1956. Campbell would soon become the hotbed of Airborne and Avia-



tion as the 101st Abn. Div. was re-activated in September 1956. The requirement for increased helicopter support created a need and many new aviators at Campbell were sent back to Rucker for helicopter transition. Bullet was among those selected and further improved his qualifications while attending a special Third Army Instrument School, held at Outlaw Field, Clarksville, TN.

During his almost twenty-four year career, Bullet spent more than seven years overseas; two years were in Vietnam, the rest in Germany. He was assigned to the 1st Aviation Co. flying Caribous in Thailand and Vietnam. He joined the 1st after being in the 61st Aviation Co. (CV-2) supporting the Howze Board Airmobile Concept test in spring 1962. John joined the 1st Avn. Co. in Thailand, moved with them to Vung Tau, Vietnam and was the assigned Maintenance Officer when nine aircraft were redeployed to the US as part of Secretary McNamara's reduction in force in December 1963. He would remain at Benning as a part of the 11th Air Assault Div. (Test), in an assignment to the 17th Aviation Co. (CV-2).

When the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was formed at Ft. Benning, John was assigned to the 10th Aviation Bn. and deployed with the unit to Dong Ba Thin as the Maintenance Officer. One of his first additional duties was the supervision of construction of the runway (lots of gravel and PSP), which was accomplished using a large number of Vietnamese civilians and eventually John found himself with a Viet Cong bounty on his head, which was, of course, never collected. He was always "on call" to fly to obscure parts of the AO to fix ailing Hueys. The latter part of his tour found him in the 17th Avn Bde., again using his expertise in maintenance and logistics.

When Bullet returned to CONUS he attended CGSC at Ft. Leavenworth and was assigned to the Corps HQ in Frankfurt, West Germany. Serving in the staff he became the G-4 even though he was a serving Air Defense Branch Officer. Attesting to his broad management and

logistics experience, he was later selected as the G-4 of the 3rd Armored Division, a position he held until returning to Fort McPherson, GA where he assumed the position of Aviation Maintenance Officer in DCSLOG, US Forces Command.

During his active service John's awards include the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Oak leaf cluster, Meritorious Service Medal with Oak leaf cluster, Army Commendation Medal with Oak leaf cluster, and seven other service awards. He also received awards from the Republic of Vietnam.

John retired from active duty on June 30, 1977 and remained in Atlanta, GA where, as he put it, "I put on a hard hat and learned property management from the ground up." In 1983, John met Herr Christoph Kahl and together they founded an international real estate investment company they named Jamestown, which is headquartered in Cologne, Germany and Atlanta, GA. Their vision and hard work grew Jamestown into one of the leading companies in the business. John was especially proud that Jamestown is the owner of One Times Square in New York City.

John never could slow down, spending five years on the board of directors of his vacation condo complex and dabbling in Atlanta real estate development as well as countless hours in his home workshop, which was filled with a multitude of equipment, repairing just about anything – for anyone who needed it.

Husband, Father, Soldier, Aviator, he was a member of The Vietnam Veterans Helicopter Association, The Army Otter-Caribou Association, and the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association, The American Legion and The International Bird-dog Association, as well as too many civilian organizations to mention here. The family suggests any memorial contributions be made to the Salvation Army of Atlanta PO Box 49247, Atlanta, GA 30369 or The Atlanta Union Mission, PO Box 1907, Atlanta, GA 30301

*Submitted by John's long time friend Jack Fust*



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## John W. Korsbeck

John W. Korsbeck, 62, passed away on May 1, 2008 in Malta, Montana after a long illness.

John graduated with flight class 69-5 and served from May 1969 through May 1970 with the 281st AHC in Nha Trang flying under the call sign Rat Pack 17. He later flew from April 1972 through April 1973 with the 60th Avn. Co. in Ninh Hoa. John was an enlisted member of the Army Special Forces and served one tour in Vietnam as a demolition specialist from 1966 to 1968 with Co. B, 3rd SF Group out of Ft. Bragg, NC. After Vietnam John went through fixed wing transition in October 1971 with class 72-10. From May '73 - June '74 he served as the IP, Trp. B 1-17 Cav, 82nd Abn Div, Ft. Bragg, NC and was Honorably Discharged as a CW2 in June of 1974.

John moved to Malta, Montana where he continued as a police officer, a meat cutter and an insurance agent who spent 29 years with Farmers Union Insurance.

John "Country" Korsbeck, RP 17, was active in the SOA (Special Operations Association) as well as the 281 AHC Association, and attended as many reunions as he could. In spite of several significant medical issues in the last few years, he kept up an almost daily stream of email jokes, cartoons, stories, and etc. to his friends, and never gave up the search to locate his old Platoon Leader from the 281st, LT. Dan (Ace) Miller. John is and will be missed by members of the 281 AHC Association.

He loved country music, and played in several local bands over the years. He is survived by his wife, Judy; son Kelly; daughter Kristie (Rutledge) and his mother, Ellen Korsbeck also of Malta, Montana.

## Larry Lee Loddewig

Larry Lee Loddewig, 61, of Orondo, Washington, died Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009. He had lived in Orondo for nine years and had been a hydro operator for the Douglas County PUD.

Larry graduated with Flight Class 69-21 and served in Vietnam with C/101 Avn (Airborne) from 1969-1970. He flew under the call sign Black Widow 12.

Survivors include his wife, Patricia Loddewig of Orondo; his mother,

Velma Loddewig of Apache Junction, Ariz.; and his sister, Bonnie Seatan of Wenatchee. No services were held.

## Robert E. Allwine

Robert E. Allwine, 84 passed away after a long illness on February 23, 2009 in Decatur, GA

Mr. Allwine graduated with flight class 53-JL and served from January through December 1962 with the 339th Trans Co in Nha Trang, Vietnam. Major All wine was the commander of the 339th when they were first alerted for Vietnam service on 31 December 1961, they were deployed by mid-January 1962, less than three weeks later. The unit's arrival brought the total number of Americans in Vietnam to over one thousand personnel.

He is survived by his daughters and son-in-laws, Becky A. (Gary) Earls from Morrow, GA and Nan A. (Mac) McNeill, from Martin, GA; and his son and daughter-in-law, Nash (Carolyn) Allwine of Greensboro, GA.

He was buried with full military honors on February 22, 2009 at Forest Hill Memorial Gardens in Forest Park, Georgia.

## Robert N. Treadway

Robert N. Treadway, 73, a retired Army colonel who served with the President's Emergency Mobilization Planning Board, died March 10 at Georgetown University Hospital of pulmonary fibrosis. He was a resident of the District.

Col. Treadway, who graduated in 1958 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, began his Army career as an artillery officer, but for most of his career, he was a helicopter pilot. He served two tours of duty in Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

He loved to fly, his wife said, and in later years, he relied on helicopters to land him on mountaintops and mountaintop glaciers around the world. He made his way down on skis, despite shifting crevasses and fickle weather. An award-winning photographer, he documented those adventures with his camera.

Col. Treadway was awarded the Silver Star in Vietnam in 1969.



When his unit came in contact with a large enemy force, he exposed himself to hostile fire by maneuvering his helicopter so that troops could be resupplied with ammunition. He also received two awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, four awards of the Bronze Star Medal and two awards of the Purple Heart.

He also served as a commander and staff officer in Korea.

Col. Treadway received a master's degree in systems development and management from the Florida Institute of Technology in 1974.

During his service with the President's Emergency Mobilization Planning Board, he was the Defense Department representative to the National Security Council interagency task force and was the staff officer responsible for large-scale military exercises.

After his retirement from the military in 1982, he became a principal for SRA International, a consulting and management firm. He served as a project manager for more than 16 years, supporting Joint Chiefs of Staff exercises. He retired a second time in 1999.

Robert Norton Treadway was born in the District. In retirement, he became a licensed Washington tour guide and enjoyed sharing the District's past with tour groups of all ages. He also enjoyed automobiles and completed the Richard Petty racing school. He was a member of Toastmasters International.

He was a founding member of the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association and, more recently, a co-founder with the West Point class of 1958 of the Wounded Warrior program to help soldiers who have been severely wounded. Group members act as surrogate fathers and provide one-on-one mentoring related to education, jobs and benefits. His marriage to Estelle Treadway ended in divorce.

Survivors include his wife of 26 years, D. Anne Martin of the District; three children from his first marriage, Catherine Goodrum of Warrenton, Valerie Salentine of Phoenix; two sisters; and eight grandchildren.

Steve Reilly of the CHPA added these details on the life of Col. Robert Treadway, U.S. Army (Ret.). As many of you know, in addition to his numerous accomplishments,

Bob was a Founding Member of the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association. He was one of the early crew who created the foundation for CHPA and served on CHPA's first Board of Directors. His contributions and hard work for CHPA were instrumental in the development and growth of the organization. Personally his sage advice and good counsel kept me pointed in the right direction on numerous occasions.

*Steve Reilly, Chairman of the Board, CHPA*

## Robert G. (Bob) Wams

Bob Wams was called home on 14 Nov 08 after a two and a half year battle with cancer. He was born on 30 June 1932 in Des Moines, Iowa, graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1950. Bob married the love of his life and soul mate, Judy Chandler in 1952.

Bob was a career soldier, enlisting in 1952 he completed jump school and was assigned to the 82nd AB, Ft. Bragg, NC. He completed helicopter flight school at Ft. Sill, OK, class #54J. Additional assignments in Japan, Washington, Alaska, Vietnam and Ft. Wolters, TX rounded out his 20 year career with retirement as a CWO-4. Bob's awards include the Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal w/oak leaf cluster, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Air Medal w/49 oak leaf clusters, Good Conduct Medal, the Parachutist Badge and the Senior Army Aviator Badge. Upon retirement Bob managed the Willowbend Polo and Hunt Club restaurant and also started his own furniture restoration and antique business.

Bob became a Christian in 1982 and made several mission trips with his church. He made 15 visits with the Bill Glass Prison Ministry, a trip to Russia with the Josh McDowell Ministry, and helped several of the Lost Boys of the Sudan.

Bob is survived by his wife Judy of Plano, TX, daughters Sharon Ashmore, and Kimberly Watters, and three grandsons. He was a faithful husband and father, a loyal friend, mentor, and patriot. . . we will miss him!



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## LTC Robert James Rodgers

Robert James Rodgers joined the Texas National Guard in 1953. He requested active duty and was the Honor Graduate in his Officer Candidate Class, attended Fixed Wing Flight School at San Marcus, Texas in 1958 and Rotary Wing Flight School in Flight Class 59-6 at Mineral Wells, Texas in 1960. After a fixed wing assignment in Germany he returned stateside in 1965 and was assigned to Ft Benning, Georgia to work on the airborne concept with 11th Air Assault and deployed to RVN with the 68 AHC before being assigned in Vietnam to C/2/20 ARA, 1st CAV in 1966. Serving as XO and CO of the 361st was his second and final tour and it lasted 16 months in-country.

Major Rodgers is survived by his two daughters and their husbands, two grand children and their spouses, three great grand children, three sisters and two brothers. His wife, Georgia passed away in August of 1008.

Mike Sheuerman sent the VHPA membership notification of Maj. Rodgers' death in an e-mail where he then added: I first met Jim and his lovely wife, Georgia, in 1992 when I attended my first VHPA Reunion in Atlanta, Georgia. I was not privileged to serve in the Unit while he commanded it. But I quickly learned the reverence in which he was held. Those who served with him called him "Major Rodgers." They rose to their feet when he entered the room. They wanted to be close to him and hear what he had to say. He had a calming air about him, a twinkle in his eye when he spoke with someone and a chuckle in his voice when he laughed.

Al Melvin tells a story that typifies the kind of leader he was - "I will never forget the trip to Viet Nam (for the Panthers) when we stopped in Anchorage, Alaska to refuel in the midst of a heavy snow storm. Since my parents lived there I called them and told them that we would only be on the ground long enough to refuel. They decided to rush to the airport to see me. The heavy snow slowed them down and it was soon announced that we should reboard. Major Rodgers was standing with



me near the entrance of the terminal building and he told me to wait there until my parents arrived. He waited with me. Shortly thereafter they did arrive and got to meet the greatest officer I ever served with. Major Rodgers told my parents not to worry about me and, after a few hugs and tears, he shook my parent's hands and we departed. To this day I am still awestruck that he would delay our mission just for me. Every time I think of great people God has privileged me to associate with, Major Rodgers comes to mind as the greatest of them all. I pray that God will give him and his family peace."

Mike goes on to say that sending the notice of his passing was sad. "I called several guys who were particularly close to Jim so they wouldn't be blindsided by the news. Guys responded almost immediately to my email to get details. Most wanted funeral information. Eight of us attended the service Thursday at 11AM. Barney flew in from Pittsburg Wednesday night, Bill flew in from Daytona, Jack drove in from Mt Vernon, Texas. The three of them stayed at my house that night and we drove the 175 miles to Brownwood early the next morning. Rich flew his plane in from Houston, George and his wife, Mary Ann, drove in from Conroe, Cliff drove up from Florence and Tom came from San Antonio. But all the rest of the guys were there in spirit to pay their respects and say goodbye. Our final salutes were crisp and given with admiration and respect for a great individual. It was a great service with the full military honors Jim deserved. He was buried in his dress blues with all his ribbons. And a Panther Patch."

Gary Higgins could not attend Maj. Rodgers' services but asked me to pass on a message to his daughters. He said "tell those girls we would have followed Major Rodgers, your Dad, through the Gates of Hell if he had wanted us to for three reasons 1) he would be leading, not sending. 2) He would ask us to go, not order us to go and 3) we would know it must be important that we go with him because he cared so much about us and would not sacrifice us needlessly."

Then he cried. A lot of Panthers have cried over the last several days.

Mike Sheuerman

## Roger B. Nestor Sr.

The following is passed on to the Membership by Roger B. Nestor Jr., the son of Roger Nestor.

Please inform the Membership of the death of my father, Roger Nestor. He passed away on March 25th, 2009 at the age of 67. He is survived by myself, his son of York, Pennsylvania and his daughter, Danielle Fink of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Dad died in the Lebanon VA Hospital, in Lebanon, Pennsylvania from cancer, he graduated in the mid-60's with Flight Class 66-21.

Dad was a member of the "Stagecoaches" for one tour and was also a member of either the "Warhogs" and/ or "Robinhood Marauders". I know he served in a place called Bam Me Tout. Dad didn't like to talk about the war so I never had much information on that part of his life. Perhaps someone in the VHPA could help us on that part.

Thank you, Roger Nestor

## Roger Trickler

Rodger Trickler passed away on 4 Feb 09 in Daleville, Alabama of a suspected heart condition.

Roger graduated from flight class 65-2 and served a tour in Vietnam with the 1 Avn Bde of the 1st Inf Div in 1865 & 1966, then again with D Troop, 1st Cav, 1st Inf. Div in 1968 & 1968. While overseas he flew under the call sign Champaign 6 and Mustang 6.

In total, Roger was credited with over 37 years of Federal Service. He is survived by his wife Miriam B. Trickler of Daleville, Alabama.

## Sydney "Sid" Baker Adair

Sydney "Sid" Adair of Mendon, New York passed away suddenly, Friday, Feb. 27th, 2009, at age 63. Sid was born in Brownwood, TX, on March 30th, 1945. He spent his childhood in Odessa, Texas and is survived by his loving wife of 37 years Yvonne Baker, his sons Nicholas Adair and Patrick Wendell and countless friends.

An aviation professional his entire life, he retired in December, 2008, after having served for six



years as Director of Aviation for Eastman Kodak Company. Prior to Kodak he had a 20-year career as a corporate aviator with IBM. Upon receiving his bachelor's degree from TCU in 1967, he joined the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam as a Cobra Attack helicopter pilot, receiving The Silver Star and The Distinguished Flying Cross, among many other awards.

His love for travel was evidenced by him and his wife having lived in over a dozen locations throughout the United States and the world. An avid outdoorsman, Sid loved spending time at his farm in Alfred, NY, with his dogs, family and friends. He embraced the local community in countless ways, evidenced by his generous support at School #12.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial donations can be sent to:

James P. B. Duffy School #12  
c/o Michele Liquori-Alampi

NY 14620  
and/or the  
"Wounded Warrior Project"  
7020 A.C. Skinner Pkwy.  
Suite 100  
Jacksonville, FL 32256  
(www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

## Steven C. Enderle

Steven C. Enderle, 59 died suddenly at his home in Apopka, Florida, on March 18, 2009, apparently the victim of a heart attack. Steve was born in Iowa City, Florida and was a US Army Veteran. He graduated with flight class 70-45 and serving in Vietnam from February through December 1971 with the 93rd AHC at Dong Ba Thin where he flew under the Callsign Sidekick 7.

Steve belonged to the VFW, Knights of Columbus, Elk's Lodge, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and St. Patrick's Catholic Church of Mt. Dora, Florida. He is survived by his loving wife, Dianne, two daughters and a son, and four grandsons. Donations in Steve's memory may be made to Father Jack's mission in Peru, Los Amigos Del Padre Juan. Steve was buried at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida on March 24th, 2009.



# HOVERING LOACH

by Bruce E Carlson

*My friend John wrote - Might not make sense to you, but I know of one loach driver (it WAS you, wasn't it Trooper Brucie) who has the DFC to show for it, along with myself (hey, even a snake driver gets adventurous sometimes) and a slicky.*

August 28th, 1969. We were working the upper An Lao, and somebody thought it would be a good idea to drop one of those 15,000lb LZ cutters out the back of a C130. Only problem was, it left a lot of nasty tree stumps and the slicks couldn't land, so they repelled in a bunch of engineers to clear the LZ. So far, so good. Finally around the end of the day, they had it cleared enough for a slick to land, so they started extracting, as it was getting close to sunset. You could probably guess what happened next. Last ship is on approach when all hell breaks loose. To make matters worse, it's my first day as Fire Team Lead. Guy on the radio is panicked and is screaming "TAKING FIRE". I'm trying to reassure him with a clam voice and ask him to pop smoke and tell me where the NVA are. He pops smoke and screams back "THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!!"

I'm already low on fuel and ammo, but roll in hot and nothing happens. No rockets or turret. Don't think I took much fire though, as the bad guys were probably keeping their heads down. Pulled out of the gun run and checked all circuit breakers and switches. Let's try this shit one more time as the shit is hitting the fan for the guys on the ground. This time I take some fire, but still not too bad (I did have a wing man covering me). Third pass. HOLY SHIT!! Looks like the 4th of July.

Meanwhile C&C has called the back-up gun team and the blues.

Now comes Trooper Brucie with his wing man. Don't remember which one of them it was, but one of em hovered in the LZ doing pedal turns and throw in out everything they could muster till the rest of the CAV could get there to save the day.

Long story short - we got em out about an hour after dark. That's another story in itself. How about it Bruce. Do you want to tell the rest of the story? How about that prick slicky (no offense to you good slick drivers) who was orbiting with the rest of the slicks who wouldn't turn on his position light. Remember how everyone wanted to kick his ass. Who was that no-balled SOB anyway?

*Side note: These were the first DFC's given out since I arrived in country in Mar of 69. Don't think we (C TRP) even had an A&D officer. We got the DFC's from the engineers we saved that day.*



*Due to the high turnover in Scout aircraft, many were pressed into service before the Unit's markings could be applied so a "straight from the factory" photo isn't very rare. On the other hand, it also wasn't unusual to have a bird shot up and lost before its first annual.*

## TINS HOVERING LOACH PART II

*A couple of words of explanation for my readers...*

First, ole friend John has a steel trap memory and probably remembers the color skivvies that the guys on the ground were wearing. My feeling is that he could give more factual information about the bigger picture than I can. However, ole John needs a wee touch of work as a story teller. Truth is that it was a heck of a day that turned into a first class Rat Copulation.

Second, though Sky Trooper John is height and size challenged, he was a heck of a big man that day. As he was many other days when he saved ole Trooper Brucie's little tooshie. One little secret that I have never told you guys is that we had to send back to the states for a restaurant's child's booster seat. In an act of self preservation, the Scouts did this so he could see over the instrument panel and his sandbag. We also had to use three rolls of 100 mph tape to tape enough blocks on the pedals so his little feet could reach them. However, that day, the empty space under his booster seat made a perfect place for him to tuck his gonads so that they didn't block his view.

John starts the story well enough. Though, I might add a correction or two. As most of you slick drivers know the concept of an Instant LZ is fraught with hazards. First of all, a REALLY BIG BOMB makes lots of noise and attracts the attention of the local residents. Secondly, it was a Pioneer team that was sent in to remove the helicopter killers. That is those lovely hardwoods that break off at about the twenty-five foot level and can do truly nasty things to a slick trying to hover down!

The problem with sending a Pioneer team into a neighborhood that has been

rudely awakened by a loud explosive device is that the neighbors get curious. Well, the pioneers are armed with chainsaws, axes, and maybe a log splitter or two to make firewood for the Generals barbecue. What they are not equipped for was a running gun battle with NVA regulars. While they have their M-16s and a few magazines of ammo, that's about it. I thought putting them on the ground with less than a full company of hard core grunts to protect them was a less than brilliant idea. But, what did I know. I was only a stupid wobbly One.

As John said, the last slick was coming in to pick up the five or six remaining Pioneers and the dusk turned bright with muzzle flashes. Ole White Two-One talking on the Fox Mike rolls in hot. However, something is not right. (He probably had ole Sober Charley in his front seat and Sober managed to turn off the Master Arm Switch.) His wing man follows and covers him. The Pioneers are in dire straights. Five or six M-16's and a few clips of ammo are not going to save them. I also know that the Snakes have already expended a bunch of bullets and other assorted things that go bang.

Oh that I could say that being the cool calm and totally in control Scout guy I knew exactly what to do. Such was not the case. My actions were not carefully reasoned out. However, I knew one thing and it was the only thing which mattered. The guys on the ground were dead unless someone changed the odds. I keyed up the intercom. Scotty, Al, how about we go down that hole and lay down some M-60? Their response was automatic. Sounds good to us, Boss. Let's Rock and Roll!

Scotty and Al were old hands with lots of experience. We had also been flying as a team for a while so we usually didn't need to



debate anything. However, this was not a call that I could make alone. We were under no illusions about what would happen when we went down into the hole and they had a right to be in on the decision!

Going up uniform, I told Major Joe Tobin and my wingman I was going down into the hole. He responded. Its you call, One-Four. During this conversation we had countless C&C ships stacked up to the stratosphere. As big Sixs are prone to do, all were yelling orders and generally getting in each others way. Ole Joe Tobin came on the Uniform, Fox Mike, and Victor. Everyone shut up! I'm sending my Red Birds in. One of the Big Sixs got indignant and started babbling about being command. Joe responded, "This is Yellow Scarf Six and we'll talk about it later. Clear this frequency NOW!" Joe was a Major who, obviously, had no plans for becoming a LTC. Gawd, it was wonderful working for Joe.

And, a great miracle happened. It got quiet. All those Big 6's kept their thoughts to themselves. Flaring above the hole, I began to hover down, while Scotty and Al put down heavy M-60 fire. As I descended, I began doing pedal turns. Getting as low as I could, I pulled in a little pitch, started climbing, and allowed the bird to slowly spin about her axis by not adding pedal. That became my new Loach maneuver. Yo Yo up and down while spinning in circles. It was working. The NVA folk decided that we were a much better target than a handful of Pioneers who weren't going anywhere.

At one point I saw a green trace pass just over my head and under the rotor system and another pass between my butt and the skids. Upon occasion, I still examine my old body looking for the four ball rounds that

were supposed to be between the green tracers!

As I entered the hole, I radioed the pioneers and told them to dig deep because we were going to be raining hot brass down on them and have the Snakes bring it in very close. I will never forget their excitement when we began slugging it out on all three hundred and sixty degrees. When the NVA shifted their fire to the better target and bigger threat and with Scotty, standing on the skids, and Al, leaning out the door matching them punch for punch, they were cheering like Saturday night at the fights. Punching through their cheering, I confirmed that they were all directly below me



and that I had a good eyeball on them.

Here is where a Cav Troop running full teams was at her very best. Using my little spinning bird as a reference point, John and his wing man began repeated gun runs firing maybe a pair of rockets and a short burst of mini on each pass. I called it in close very close really close. I trusted them. John would dive down trying to draw fire and return a little. His wing man would cover him doing the same thing, and my wing man would cover his break. What I saw was a tremendous demonstration of courage and skill. (Mind you, had he been only covering me, I would have chewed him and his wing man out for putting leaves in

their rocket pods. I had a rule that my Snakes broke at no lower than five hundred feet or they heard from me.) While the Snakes clawed for altitude to make another run, my wing would make very slow, walking speed, passes firing at two-thousand. I swear that he put it between my skids, through my rotor, and under my tail! (Again, where he only covering me, I would have chewed his butt bloody for flying the wing slot so slowly.)

Here is where my memory gets a little fuzzy. Joe had scrambled the second team, John and his wing had started making dry runs or runs with just short burst of turret and I was getting ready to draw my forty-five and hand it back to Scotty cause we were getting short of bullets. I remember talking to four Charley birds that Joe had drafted from the people who were suppose to make the insertion into the LZ. When, our slick driver was on about quarter mile final, against all reason and odds, I pulled out without receiving a hit. As I pulled out, the Charley Birds salvoed everything they owned all about the compass. Though, I might have had them do it before I pulled out. (Thirty Years makes some things fuzzy.)

As our Blue bird made its approach my wing man and I maxed out, to the lift ships which were supposed to make the insertion. We were going to steal some of their M-60 ammo. I don't remember if they were 61st ships or 129th ships. Whatever the case, the crew chiefs and gunners were passing ammo before we touched down on the sandbar. Joe, being a great guy with the details that made the difference between life and death had them ready for us. After all, there was no guarantee that we wouldn't be need if the slick got into trouble. John flew off to rearm. I think he had to go to L.Z. Uplift.

As we red lined it back to the fight, Joe gave us a call and told us to refuel at English and meet him at home base. Those were the sweetest words that I ever heard because I knew that six Pioneers would live another day and maybe go home to Jody. I was vital and alive because I was doing what I had been born to do. I was taking care of the troops. I don't know if we killed any of the NVA. I don't care. We didn't care. Six guys who ere dead were alive due to great leadership and the skill of Americas greatest Aviators.

Of all my adventures with the best Cav troop in the world, this was the greatest. A man has never been so proud to be associated with a group of warriors as I was that day. Twas also a heck of a night at the club what I remember of it. :-))

Yes, John. I know who that Chicken, lowlife, useless S.O.B. who wouldn't turn on his position lights was. We threw him out of the Scouts when he was training because he stupidly got himself into a tail rotor stall panicked, let go of the controls, and yelled. You got it, to me who was on his first flight in a Loach. But, that is another story.

*I tell the story better in my novel.  
However, I don't want Papa yelling  
at me about band width.*

*NO, I don't have pictures.  
However, I do have documentation  
as does John. TINS!*

**Richard Yood, MAS**

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## The Diary of a Scout Pilot

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Gunship pilots call him "Bro Clyde" or just plumb crazy. At 20, Clyde J. Romero Jr., a warrant officer, has the most dangerous job in the air war over Laos. He pilots a tiny light observation helicopter or LOH at treetop level waiting to get shot at. When the North Vietnamese gunners open up, he returns fire with grenades and a machine gun, then skips out of the way for better-armed Cobra gunships to move in for the kill. Recently he allowed Associated Press correspondent Holger Jensen to see his personal account of his private war, his fears, his courage.

**This then is "The diary of a Scout Pilot."**  
By CLYDE J. ROMERO

**KHE SANH, Vietnam (AP)**  
**Feb. 12 (1971):**

Well, this isn't the stuff I usually write on but it will do for now. Even the atmosphere has changed a lot. Today was one of the worst days I have ever spent in 'Nam. We lost two Cobras today. One went in with the crew aboard. The area was real bad.

Heavy stuff all over. So far I have been lucky. I haven't taken a hit. Whether it will hold out or not only time will tell. This is two times, maybe three times worse than Cambodia. Laos is in a class all by itself. We haven't lost any LOH (light observation helicopter) crews yet.

This (the Laos action) is something I wanted the U.S. to do, but they're doing it with ARVN troops. Another thing. I don't want to leave in the middle of this operation but then again I do. I feel when I leave I won't be finishing my job, but it is only a matter of time before I get killed.

It's funny but out here I don't have the worry I had at Phu Bai.

I am very dirty and tired beyond belief. Yet I still perform and survive so that I might go home in April. I have decided to take a well-earned R&R in Hong Kong.

**Feb. 13:** No. 390 was shot down today but Pascoe made it back. Our first LOH shot up. I am surprised at myself, especially while in the field. I hope my extension comes through. Well, I am really out of words for now. If I live again to write in this book I hope to have more to write. Well, goodnight. Another night in Khe Sanh.

**Feb. 14:** Valentines Day. Two ships shot up bad but everyone OK.

**Feb. 16:** Still alive so far. It is pretty bad out there. Like something I have never seen

STARS AND STRIPES



An OH-6 in its natural element – the "boonies". These marvelous little aircraft are mostly known for their remarkable ability to protect their crews in the worse of crashes.

before. The weather is bad. Cold too. I am feeling well though. Dirty but all right. My morale is OK. The flying is bad most of the time.

Have been acting platoon leader for two days now.

In about 60 days I will be home.

**Feb. 17:** Nothing new today. No mail. Building bunkers like crazy out here. Must fly tomorrow. Thinking about my future, and 60 days to go.

**Feb. 18:** Bad day. Crandall killed. I was supposed to take his mission. Flew eight hours. I worked the area right behind Crandall when he went down. I couldn't find a thing. That ship was just obliterated off the face of the earth. A weird day.

It was Crandall's first solo as a scout. He was feeling bad 'cause he couldn't find anything on the ground like the rest of us, so he persuaded me to let him take my mission. He wanted to prove something.

If he'd had more experience he would have known we all have off days.

I told him to be fast not slow down to mark the targets. But he got slow. I feel real bad. We trained him good.

**Feb. 21:** Flew today into Laos. Took pictures. Nothing much going on. Got shot at bad by the way. Ran into a bunch of people on the (Ho Chi Minh) trail and they opened up with AKs. No hits. Lucky me.

**Feb. 23:** Flew into Laos today. Got two kills and saw a tremendous hootch – enemy hut. Had a lot of fun for a change.

**Feb. 24:** Nothing up. Farris and I together again. We will have some fun like in Cambodia. But Laos is different I guess. The good old days are over. (No one really likes to fly out there any more.

**Feb. 25:** Not much really to write about. Supposed to look for tanks today on Hill 31. Two LOHs shot down today. They were working the area where the Phantom pilots were downed. One crew made it OK, but the other guys were hurt bad enough to be sent back to the world. A pilot with a broken arm isn't worth nothing to nobody.



The Author, Clyde Romero poses with his USAF Special Assignment team in Bagdad in 2005. At least the uniforms have improved....

**Feb. 26:** Flew into Laos. Things are looking up. Feeling good. Had a dream I was flying over Hill 31, and they shot me down. I went sideways into this hill. Weird.



**Feb. 27:** Last night was a bummer. Flew to Quang Tri then waited around until dark and flew to Phu Bai in marginal weather. Man did that shake. I caught vertigo once en route.

Well anyway I woke up after sleeping all night in Phu Bai and flew to Khe Sanh low level. That's all I fly anyway.

When I got here, no one else was here as usual. I know I got the day off. They say they aren't going to use any more LOHs until the antiaircraft guns slow down. In a way I am glad and in a way I am not.

Yesterday I was first standby and my Oscar – observer- was some Special Forces guy. He knows his stuff but I told him it isn't peaches and cream out there. Well we never got a chance to fly.

Today I told Butch I wanted to fly two or three more missions in Laos so I can take some flicks (pictures), maybe even get some tanks. Who knows? Simpson got kind of concerned about it and said no, but I told him I wouldn't get zapped.

The last time over in Laos, Pascoe hit them with CS (tear gas) and frags and Petes – Willy Peter smoke rockets. I went in, and they gave me the 21-gun salute.

Just heard Nixon is going to send a few ground troops in to rescue us if we go down. It should have been done long ago with a lot more GIs. The flying will get a little better I think. If I get shot down, at least there will be Americans on the ground.

***The whole spirit of the war will go up because of this. At least it did when I flew in Cambodia. Only 50 days left.***

**Feb 28:** Well today is another one of those days where it hits you in the face about what you're doing. Butch got killed today. Only yesterday he had been trying to take me off flight status because I was

getting short. It's really a drag. He was kind of messed up in some ways. But getting killed makes you realize how good he was.

It's the second scout lost since I've been out here. I just got back from looking at the ship. Blood and guts everywhere. But still Wilson flew it back.

I still want to go out there though, knowing I am short. I must be crazy? It's been real hot lately and pilots getting killed doesn't help personalities either. The



word's around about my new platoon leader (Butch was his old one). I will have to break him in. It's weird. Among the scouts, they say if you are new you will kill yourself within your first seven missions. So far, this has happened twice.

**March 1:** I just found out that I have been wounded. It's crazy. A piece of shrapnel came out of my shoulder and I didn't even know it was there. So I'm getting a Purple Heart.



**The Author, Clyde Romero poses in front of his Scout Aircraft in Vietnam in 1971**

*Editor's Note: Clyde Romero is a life member of the VHPA and is living in Marietta, GA. He was with C/2/17 CAV 101 ABN when this was written.*

*If you would like to talk with him, his e-mail address is:*

**[Redacted]**

## A TYPICAL DAY

I was thinking as I landed my ship on the pad,  
That the soldiers on board sure must be glad;  
Although we're not "Dust Off", a rescue we made,  
Picking up the wounded in the field where they laid.

Don't be afraid," I explained to my crew,  
For "we have been trained on just what to do;  
Let's pick up these men and help them on board,  
We're taking enemy fire, please help us O Lord."

Our take off was quick, our get - away clean,  
I silently thanked Bell for this wonderful machine;  
Our ship groaned and strained as it sped through the sky,  
Got to get to the hospital before these men die.

I radioed ahead and alerted the MASH,  
As we landed our bird and tried not to crash;  
Doctors and nurses made up the parade,  
Rushing to the wounded to give them some aid.

We washed down our ship before the blood had dried,  
Wondering if we were fast enough and no one had died;  
We did our best, that's all we could do,  
But you know, in time, you will lose a few.

My ship and my crew, what a fine bunch,  
As all of this happened before we had lunch;  
We ate quietly, with nothing to say,  
What's ahead of us for the rest of the day?

**By Dan Rudy, CWO, U.S. Army  
Vietnam 1/67 – 8/68**





# Photos from the Vietnam Scrapbook

## Avenger 23 - Gun Platoon, C Troop,



April 1967, LX Two Bits, a Chinook brings my "Chunker" Charlie model back to base after we were shot down in the Crescent Area.



October 1967, I pose with weapons captured by the Blues of Charlie Troop



Spring of 1967, an Air Force airstrike in the hills yields a nice secondary

May 1967, a 2-ship insertion into a rice paddy in the Ahn Lo Valley



"Safe At Home" - all dressed up and ready to hit the club



A Charlie Troop lift ship loaded with pilots on a repositioning recon at Bong Son, the area became LZ Two Bitts about a month later. 1LT Wayne Carter is sitting on the skid toe and WO Paul Davis is on the far right.



Slick belonging to our fantastic lift platoon, "The Bushmasters"





# of VHPA Member Rudy Ribbeck, 1/9 Air Cav, 1st Cav Division, 1966-67



The "business" part of a C-model



The 227th flies by as part of a division flyby for the change of command for MG John Tolson. The ceremony was at Division HQ at LZ English, just a few clicks east of our home, LZ Two Bitts.



Our "poor-boy" Cav wash rack - both the ship and the crew enjoy a cool dip on a hot summer day



APCs from our sister Ground Cav Squadron join us for a briefing at Battalion HQ

**David** - Regretfully I can't ID everyone in the 'All Dressed Up' photo on the left page, I can say it was taken the first week I was in the field with Charlie Troop at LZ Hammond in November of December of 1966. I was assigned to the gun platoon but spent my first weeks with the 1/9 Cav's lift platoon as they had just lost an entire crew when they flew into the ground on a GCA approach. I spent several weeks with them until replacements could be processed through An Khe and sent out to the unit. The guy kneeling on the left is WO Dick Rogers, a

classmate of mine from 66-67. The guy second from the left sitting on the sandbags is WO Joe Fulton, he was KIA a couple years later on his second tour. The guy on the right was the Platoon Leader, I think his name was 1LT Crawford but I'm not sure. The rest of the guys were all real short and DEROS'ed shortly after the picture was taken.

The two tracks in the bottom photo on the right page are actually 40MM Dusters that were in a stateside National Guard unit that was attached to Div Arty.

They spent most of their

tour with our 1/9 Cav squadron. They were an M48 tank chassis mounted with twin 40MM anti-aircraft guns and were used mainly for perimeter defense within the division. Whenever there was Intel of a pending attack, they would move them to the indicated wire for added fire power. They were really awesome in action, unfortunately we had them sitting on our wire a lot. This particular picture has them guarding one of the bridges on the Bong Son River right next to

LZ Two Bitts, the actual bridge is in the background of the picture you have of the lift bird getting a bath in the Bong Son river.

I hope everyone enjoys the photos - Thanks again for including them in The Aviator.

Rudy







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ID# L13041

February 22-24 Anaheim, CA

## SOCAL CHAPTER STAFFS VHPA BOOTH AT HELI-EXPO 2009

The VHPA Executive Council and Membership Committee wishes to publicly thank the Southern California Chapter of the VHPA for their support during Helicopter Association International's (HAI to most everyone) HELI-EXPO 2009 in Anaheim, California February 22-24. We also thank HAI for granting the VHPA Affiliate Organization status and providing a complimentary booth in the Anaheim Convention Center.

This photo shows, left to right, VHPA members Carl Cortez (SoCal), Carl Kimmich, Gerb Wolf, Ralph Butcher (SoCal), and Phil Moonjean (VHCMA member) at the VHPA's booth. Phil was Gerb's crew chief in Vietnam and is Chief Flight Nurse on a Medevac Flight Program in San Diego.

Membership Committee Chairman Mike Law says, "It is really Russ Janus' fault that we enjoyed considerable success with our booth at HAI. Besides having attended every VHPA Reunion (and only about six guys can say that), Russ has friends all over the place. He and Carl Cortez (former SoCal President) and Ed Holguin (current SoCal President) got the word out to their chapter. They got Sven Akesson, Ralph Butcher, and Dick McCaig to volunteer. The SoCal chapter even provided the folding tables, chairs, banners and the frames for the banners. Now, how good is that!! While HAI as an association has always been kind to the VHPA and other associations like the VHPA, have VHPA Member Matt Zuccaro as the cur-

rent HAI President is also a big plus! You have to laugh some times at just how small this world is – Matt and I flew in the same unit in Vietnam."

Over 50 VHPA members stopped by the booth during the three-day HELI-EXPO. In addition eight renewed their dues and four prospective members joined the VHPA.

Many Vietnam Era helicopter pilots are still in the helicopter business and HAI provides a wonderfully opportunity to talk with some the VHPA might not otherwise see. For example, there were three former US Navy Seawolf pilots there plus several former Air America and even some former Bell Helicopter and Lycoming Engine tech reps. Another example would be Terje Aanensen who lives in Norway and has a "difficult time" attending a VHPA Reunion. He last paid his dues in 1993 but he renewed at our booth. Finally it was a special treat to visit the former US Marine Corps guys include VHPA member Seppo Hurme at the Freedom's Flying Memorial booth. See the article and photos on the 34 Restoration in this issue.

There were 55 helicopters on display in the HELI-EXPO. Talk about some serious eye candy!! A British man with obviously seriously deep pockets even purchased a flyable Cobra there!! You got to love HAI's HELI-EXPO!!!

**HELI-EXPO 2010 is scheduled for February 21 – 23 in Houston, Texas. We already have two volunteers to help staff the VHPA's booth. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Mike Law at [REDACTED] or [membership@VHPA.org](mailto:membership@VHPA.org).**

