



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



*Our cover photo shows SP4 Reggie Kenner sitting in what's left of Huey 67-17659 before she left Vietnam for rebuild in Corpus Christie, Texas. Reggie was the crew chief for Huey 67-17659 when she crashed on May 19, 1969 while flying with The Lancers of B/158th Avn, 101st Airborne Div (Airmobile). Highlights of the life of Huey 17659, from the Accident Report of that fateful day in Vietnam through today, can be found on pages 6 and 7 of this, our July/August 2013 edition of The VHPA Aviator.*

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Issue 31-04 ~ July/August 2013

# FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

We would like to say THANK YOU to members that have called and emailed HQ with their updated address, phone or email information! This is a HUGE help to us! HQ would like to keep our members information current, so please contact HQ if you have any changes to your information you would like to make.

By the time this issue is received, R2013 in San Francisco will be over and the start of a wonderful memory for VHPA Members. We sincerely hope that each and every member that attended enjoyed it to the fullest. We also hope that we, as your HQ Staff, exceeded your expectations in making things run as smoothly as possible.

We would just like to express how much we enjoy being your HQ and appreciate everything that the members of VHPA did for our country. Your HQ staff does understand the sacrifices that have to be made, my Dad was in the military and Ashley Bird's husband is in the Navy Reserve. I have honestly never had a job that I have enjoyed waking up each morning and performing as much as working with this group. You are truly an awesome group of guys and thank you for letting us serve you!

Our goal is to make VHPA the best it can be for you, the members! If there is anything that we can do to make that happen, PLEASE LET US KNOW!

Sherry Rodgers  
VHPA  
Office Manager

## AVIATOR PRIVACY STATEMENT

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**E-mail items to The Aviator at:**  
**Aviator@vhpa.org**

THE VHPA AVIATOR, THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION (ISSN 1930-5737) (USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly ~ January, March, May, July, September & November.

The VHPA is organized as a 501 (c) (19) fraternal military organization and one copy of each newsletter is included in each of our Member's Dues, yearly subscriptions to the Aviator are available to non-members for \$36.00.

Published by See David Adams, Enterprises, LLC,  
2900 Arbor Court, Round Rock, Texas, 78681  
for the VHPA, headquartered at 2100 N. Highway 360,  
Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050.

Periodicals Publications postage paid at Round Rock,  
Texas and additional mailing points.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
VHPA HQ, 2100 N. Highway 360, Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050

## An Invitation to Discussion

by Bob Hesselbein



One thing is true about helicopter pilots: keeping the status quo is almost unbearable after years of constantly changing pitch, pedal settings, headings and altitude. This is clear by the ideas discussed among our membership in chapter meetings, telephone conversations emails and internet forums such as the VHPA facebook page. A number of the subjects do deserve consideration by our wider membership, and perhaps action to incorporate the ideas into the Association's activities.

Our By-Laws state one requirement for full VHPA membership: you must have flown a helicopter in Southeast Asia during the time of the Vietnam War to become a member of the VHPA. This rule stands unchanged, and we continue to add new members from the finite pool of eligible candidates. At the moment the majority of our members are still young and capable enough to enjoy each other's company, but at the same time we also know other helicopter pilots from that time in our lives that would also enjoy our gatherings. Some discussion has pondered creating associate memberships for our flight school graduate friends who were somehow assigned to Korea or Europe and missed out on our RVN fun. What do you think about this idea?

Following on with that idea, would the Association wish to consider offering associate membership privileges to other Vietnam veterans, or to the widows of our members who have passed on? What do you think about these two ideas?

Another topic of conversation, perhaps driven by our growing obituary section, "TAPS," is the question of our VHPA legacy. What form of remembrance do we wish to leave as tribute to our fellow members and to our brother aviators who died with valor in service to this nation? The organization must begin to consider if we wish to simply dissolve upon death (the current "last man standing" plan) and leave the remaining funds for scholarships, or do we elect to work with a viable museum to create a foundation, or monument, or unique facility that holds our artifacts and memories. Or do we wish to do what the famous Red River Valley Association (RVN Fighter Vet's) did, allow other combat aircrew members join?

These ideas have floated around in the past, and perhaps it is time to start considering these ideas and other possible options in the present. Tasked by the Executive Council to gather your opinions and ideas, I seek your considered thoughts on any and all ideas such as these. Please give it some thought and become a part of the discussion, either on facebook where this all started, or by e-mailing me at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as a last resort, please call me directly at [REDACTED]

I look forward to hearing from you and reporting what you have to say in the next issue of the Aviator.

Respectfully,  
Bob Hesselbein

# VHPA OFFICERS

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Vice President	Not available at press time
Past President	John Sorensen
Members At Large	
Senior Member	Clyde Romero
Midterm Member	John Shafer
Junior Member	Not available at press time
Secretary/Treasurer	Tom Payne
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Investment	Bob Smith
Membership	Mike Sheuerman
National Reunion	Mike Law
Public Relations/Publications	Bob Hesselbein
Records/Database	Gary Roush
Sponsorship/Fundraising	Bill "Moon" Mullen
VHPA Calendar Project	Mike Law, Editor
VHPA Membership Directory	Gary Roush, Editor
VHPA Memory Map Project	Ron Bower
VHPA Scholarship Program	Tom Payne
VHPA Aviator Newsletter	David Adams, Editor

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Official Web Site of the VHPA

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

From...

**Bill "Moon" Mullen,  
President  
of the VHPA**



I would rather fly a H-37 into a hot LZ...than write a President's column! WAIT, just had a FLASHBACK, changed my mind....I would rather write a column...here goes:

My time on the EC has seen five people leave and five people join. That is how the leadership ladder works. We also are supported by a number of responsible chairmen. You might wonder what we did in the last five years. Here is a VHPA "State of the Union" report.

We did this as a group, no individual names. The order does not suggest importance of events, just the way my memory works.

1. The investment account has grown approximately 46% in the last five years. This is the result of prudent investing and the savings we were able to generate.

2. The last five reunions have all been cash flow positive. We have developed a reunion budget "roadmap" which helps to make each reunion a financial success. We now also do the planning, selection and contracts of future sites in house which reduces reunion costs by \$35,000 to \$50,000.

3. We stopped printing a paper membership directory for every member. It is still available for a small fee. Most members now receive the same information online. The printing and mailing savings amounts to a savings in excess of \$60,000 per year.

4. We started a reduced lifetime membership fee. In the last two years of the program we have added 1,400 new lifetime members. Membership is at a new all time high. Considering our average age is now almost 70, this is very encouraging.

5. We changed from using an outside company to run our membership and accounting business. We now do it in house at our headquarters' office in Grand Prairie, Texas. This resulted in substantial savings.

6. We increased the budget for our award winning Aviator magazine. We now have six issues a year, 48 pages each issue and all in color. We also gave the editor freedom to print a few additional pages when his inventory of your stories need to be printed. Keep those stories coming. We now mail 9,000 copies of the Aviator all over the world. We have been told that each copy is read by 2.7 people, so we have over 24,000 reading and enjoying each Aviator.

7. We finally developed a complete VHPA annual budget. This is our roadmap as we go thru the year. We review it each month and make the necessary in flight corrections as needed.

VHPA is in good financial health and in good hands as we enter the next 12 months.

Hope to see many of you in San Francisco for the traditional free beer that members buy the incoming President!

I am PROUD to be one of us, Welcome Home, God Bless You and God Bless the United States of America.

*Let me know how we are doing....*

Moon

# TO CAPTURE THE WIND

We once rode the crest of the wind  
We were wild and young, but we were men  
We claimed and tamed the turbulent skies  
We laughed and joked, fought and died

We endured the trials of innocence lost  
  
We witnessed bravery and it's dire cost  
We created bonds that will never end  
We climbed to new heights  
And captured the wind

We spoke to each other without uttering a sound  
We spoke of loneliness and it's common ground  
We spoke thru unshed tears of home and friends  
We flew above our fears  
And captured the wind

We knew fatigue that others cannot comprehend  
We knew honor and the pride it can extend  
We knew determination that would not bend  
We flew into the fire  
And captured the wind

We are old now with memories forged in steel  
We have shared a feeling most will never feel  
We revel in these memories over and over again  
We soar thru our private heavens  
Still capturing the wind

CW2 Shelby Mansfield  
Knight 3 Alpha  
Vinh Long, Vietnam  
August 1969 - August 1970  
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

## UPCOMING REUNIONS

REUNION OF WOC CLASS 66-23/67-1

CLASS BLAST 2013

September 5-8, 2013, Embassy Suites @KCI, Kansas City, Missouri  
POC is Tom Pearcy, E-mail: [REDACTED]

### OV-1 MOHAWK ASSOCIATION 24TH ANNUAL REUNION AND FLY IN.

5-7 September, Hilton hotel, Savanna, Georgia

POC is Paul Jacobsen [REDACTED]

See also: [WWW.OV-1MohawkAssociation.Org](http://WWW.OV-1MohawkAssociation.Org)

### BOXCAR-HERCULES ASSOCIATION REUNION 2013

11-14 September, Branson Towers hotel, Branson, Missouri

POC is Bill McRae, Herc 18 (70-71)

See also: [132ASHC.org](http://132ASHC.org)

### THE FIRST ANNUAL LAST REUNION OF THE 170TH AHC, VIETNAM 1965-71, "THE BIKINIS"

All 52nd Aviation Battalion veterans are invited.

September 26-29, 2013 in St Louis, MO

POC- Henry Winther, [REDACTED] or [170th.org](http://170th.org)

### BIRDDOG - 221ST AVIATION COMPANY (SHOTGUNS) AND THE 119TH RECON AIRPLANE CO (SWAMP FOX)

Sept 26-29, League City, TX.

POC: Don Smith, [REDACTED]

or Norm Wood, [REDACTED]

[www.221st.org](http://www.221st.org)

### ALL WHO SERVED WITH THE 187TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY BLACKHAWKS - CRUSADERS - RAT PACK

November 7 - 11, Orleans Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada

POC: John T. Wilson; Email : [REDACTED] or see

<http://www.187thahc.net>

Want to see your Reunion publicized here?  
Send details to: [Aviator@VHPA.org](mailto:Aviator@VHPA.org)

# Is CW5 John M. Harris the Last Vietnam Army Helicopter Pilot Flying in Uniform?

In this year's Jan/Feb edition of the Aviator I wrote about the retirement of VHPA Member CW4 Joseph Long from active flight duty and asked if VHPA members were aware of others still on flight duty. David Adams recently put me in touch with VHPA Member CW5 John Harris. It is very possible that CW5 Harris is the last Army Vietnam helicopter pilot on flight duty. If you know of any other VHPA Member on flight duty please let me know. This is his story:

In March 1969, as a 17 year old high school senior in southern California, now CW5 John M. Harris enlisted in the USAR. Some 44 years later, without a break in service, he continues to serve in the Army Reserve on active flight status at Fort Hunter Liggett in California.

After Basic Training at Fort Ord and truck driving AIT, he jumped at a chance to join an aviation detachment of three helicopters which had formed in Long Beach. The first helicopter pilot he met, CW2 Vern Comstock, had recently returned from Vietnam where he served with 334 AHC. Comstock convinced Harris he should become a crew chief and apply for WOFT.

Harris trained as a crew chief on an OH-13E and also got some "bootleg" stick time flying with the Vietnam pilots in the detachment. He was hooked, and received orders for Flight School; class 71-41 at Ft Wolters, TX in March 1971. As the only Army Reservist in his class, his TAC Officers were fond of telling the whole class that Harris would be "relaxing in Hollywood" while everyone else shipped out directly to RVN.

However, as graduation approached, the war situation changed and only volunteers were sent to Vietnam while the rest of the class went to Korea or state-side assignments. Harris requested Vietnam, but was denied due to his Reserve status. He submitted further requests, but was denied each time until the Easter Offensive.

He soon got orders to active duty as the last Army soldier voluntarily mobilized and deployed to Vietnam from a Reserve unit. He arrived in Vietnam in time to become a UH-1H Huey AC in the 18th CAC located at Can Tho. Unfortunately, his unit has the sad distinction of losing the last Army Helicopter Pilot KIA in Vietnam, WO1 Anthony Dal Pozzo, a member of Harris's platoon, just hours after the official cease-fire. The cease-fire required all U.S. forces to be out of Vietnam within 60 days, but Harris and a few other crews remained flying peace-keeping missions for the



John Harris RVN 1972

ICCS right up the last minute; finally departing Saigon on 28 March 1973.

Fast forward to 2009, when CW5 Harris was assigned to perform the duties of Senior Aviation Observer/Controller Trainer to the Army Reserve's 91st Division which hosted pre-deployment training for combat support units at Ft. Hunter Liggett (FHL), CA. Since FHL had no aircraft assigned at that time, a voluntary assignment at such a remote post was quite unattractive, so the position had never been filled before.

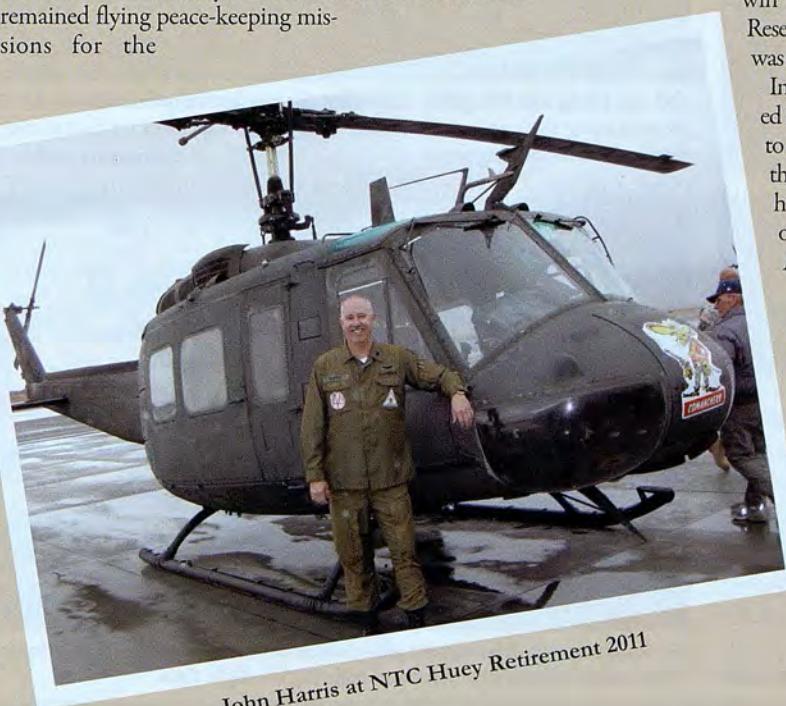
Coincidentally, Ft. Irwin National Training Center (NTC) was one of the last Army units using Hueys and was in desperate need of a Huey IP. A "win-win" agreement was reached between the Active Army and the Army Reserve whereby Harris was assigned to perform staff duties at FHL, but was attached for flying duties as an IP to the NTC.

In December 2011 the Army retired the NTC Hueys. Harris was selected to be the guest speaker at the retirement ceremony which he dedicated to the memory of WO1 Anthony Dal Pozzo. As a double honor, after all the speeches, and wearing a Vietnam two-piece Nomex flight suit with his original company and platoon patches, he led a flight of three Hueys on their last flight, in a final salute across the ramp at Barstow-Daggett Airport.

Although those last Army Hueys retired, CW5 Harris still maintains his Army flight status and flight pay, until his extended mandatory retirement comes at age 62 years 2 months, in October, 2013. He is still flying Hueys as a Fire Fighting/Search & Rescue Pilot for both the Kern and Santa Barbara County Fire Departments and hopes to keep flying those Hueys for at least another decade!

*John Harris has admitted that the two piece Nomex he is wearing in the photo from the December 2011 Huey retirement ceremony is not his original Vietnam flight suit which "shrank" – a problem with Nomex we know all too well!!*

*- John Penny*



John Harris at NTC Huey Retirement 2011

# Another Vietnam Veteran returns to combat, this time it's an old Army Huey and her new mission is to fight wild fires here in Central Texas

by David Adams

This all began when I was CC'ed into an e-mail from the PAO for Travis County (think Austin), Texas to Gary Roush, the webmaster of VHPA.org. It seems that a Huey that once flew in Vietnam with B/158th Avn. had just been given a new life as a fire fighting Huey and was assigned to our local STAR (Shock, Trauma and Aerial Rescue) Flight detachment. Their PAO had found out their Huey (Army tail number 67-17659) had originally flown in Vietnam with B Co, 158th Avn, 101 Airborne Division and she was hoping to have someone from that unit on-hand for the aircraft's Welcoming Ceremony. Unfortunately the suspense date for the ceremony was too short for the VHPA to be able to help her; but I, both living here in Austin and being familiar with STAR Flight, am still trying to help make that Reunion happen.

Our on-line Membership Directory list over a hundred men that flew with B/158 in Vietnam so I wanted to further reduce the list to those that might have flown the aircraft during the time it was assigned to B/158. To do that I contacted Gary Roush and asked if he could supply me with those dates. Turns out that 67-17659 only flew in Vietnam with B/158th Avn for two months, April and May of 1969. On May 19th, 1969 she crashed in a pinnacle PZ and was declared a total loss. The Accident Report itself is quite interesting and I've attached an excerpted copy to the end of this story. The report details the complete destruction of the airframe, fortunately without fatalities and I'm sure you will enjoy reading it.

But like many of her sister ships, 659 is still flying and doing exemplary service to governments and business's world-wide. We're just really lucky to have her assigned to the Austin area to fight the wild fires that spring up almost daily around here. I visited the STAR Flight detachment, and Huey 659, during the "Open House" they held in honor of National EMS week, several of the photos I took that day are shown here.

And the proud new owners of 659 still want to host that "Reunion Party" for any of our members, and for any of the 158th aircrew members interested seeing their old friend after all this time. If anyone is interested in this idea, please contact me at either: [Aviator@VHPA.org](mailto:Aviator@VHPA.org) or by calling me directly at 254-289-1947. I will then get with Travis County's PAO to set something up (depending on the response) and let everyone know what has been arranged and when it will occur. All the Travis County PAO asks is permission to publicize the Reunion through our local news outlets, all I want is a chance to cover the party!

*David Adams, Editor of the VHPA Aviator.*



325 gallons of water exit the system in 30 seconds.



659 can fill up her 325 gallon tank from almost any fresh water source in 40 seconds using their on-board snorkel. Willy assures me they try to stay away from private swimming pools.



Looking pretty in a new paint job - believe it or not, ole' 67-17659 is somewhere under all that new paint and enjoying the flight time.



Travis County STAR Flight Director of Operations, and one of the newest Members of the VHPA Willy Culberson answers questions during their recent Open House held at their flight operations facility in Austin, Texas.



659's cockpit today, complete with a glass-panel display and fully ready for NVG operations. STAR Flight flies their Huey single pilot on all non-training missions.



These last two photos are also courtesy of 569's crew chief in Vietnam, Reggie Kenner. They came from his Facebook page, where he says the left one is "a fire-base out in my A.O." The right photo is his view of a formation flight, Reggie goes on to say "I saw this scene virtually every day I was in Vietnam. I LOVED it!"

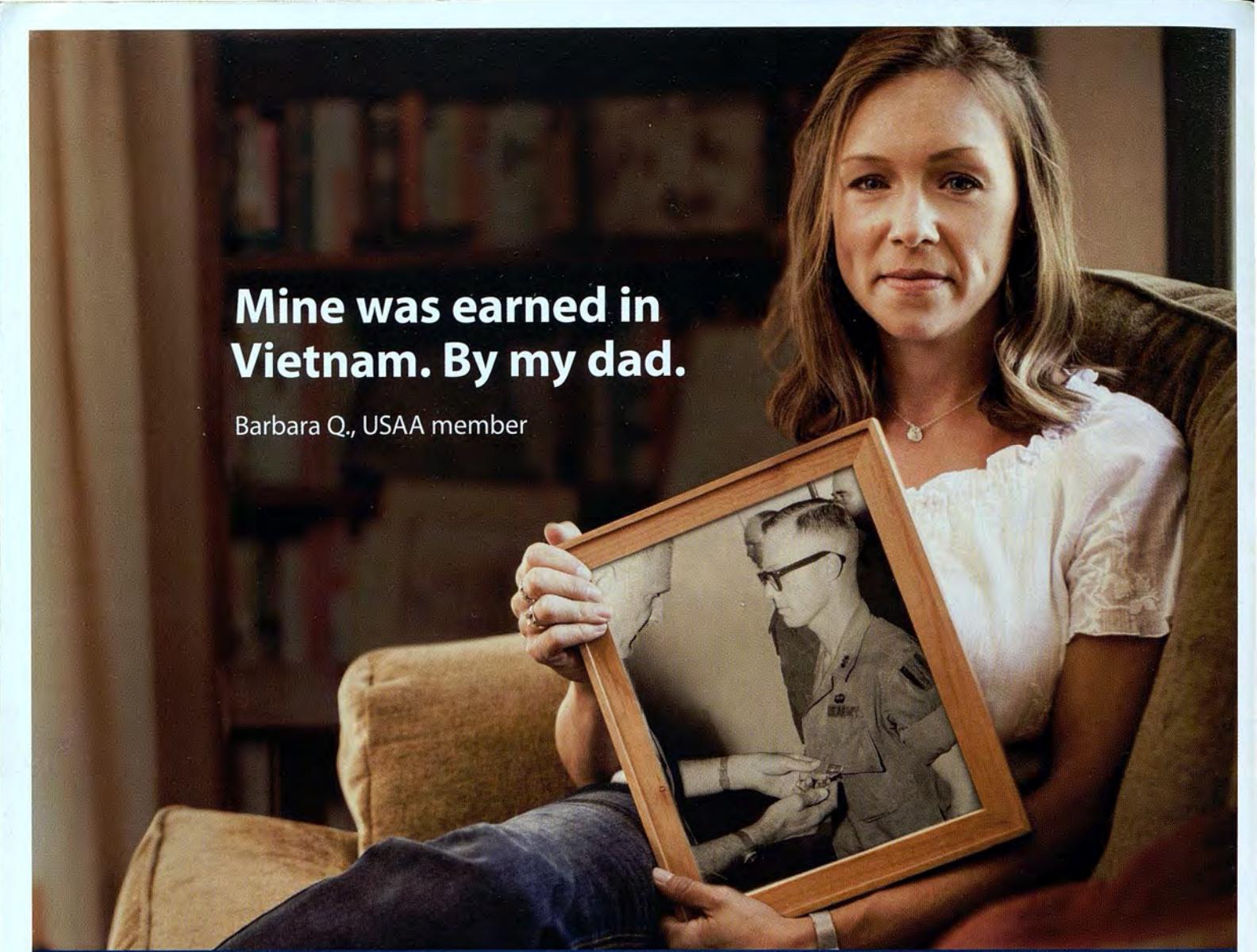
Official Safety Center Accident Report on the loss of UH-1H 67-17659  
Information on U.S. Army helicopter UH-1H tail number 67-17659  
Purchased on 0768, total flight hours until loss: 00000172  
Loss date: 05/19/1969, accident case number: 690519191, total loss of aircraft.  
Unit assigned to: B/158 Avn, stationed in Phu Bai, Vietnam  
Number killed in accident - 0, injured - 5, passengers - 8  
Accident cost: \$244,345.00. Total loss to inventory  
Crew Members: Pilot, W1EP Sakenes, C/P W1 DE Wilson, CE RO Kenner, G - JA Melcher. Passenger names mostly known but not listed here.

#### Accident summary:

The aircraft was on a combat assault. The aircraft went into the PZ and landed with no problem. The aircraft took on 5 PAX, pilot picked the aircraft up to a 3 foot hover and made a power check. All the instruments were in the green. The pilot then moved forward approximately 50 feet and simultaneously brought the aircraft to a 15 foot hover. Pilot then experienced power loss with engine tac dropping to 5,000. The pilot attempted to abort the take off and tried to make a right hand pedal turn back into PZ (a pinnacle confined area). The PAX seeing the rpm warning light come on, shifted around in back of the aircraft then four PAX jumped out of the left side of the ship when it came close to the ground causing a sudden change in CG of aircraft. The pilot then had a tail rotor strike while he was over the PZ at a 3 foot hover, still descending and losing RPM. As the tail rotor hit a tree the 42 deg and 90 deg gear boxes were ripped off the tail boom causing the aircraft to spin to the left 180 deg before hitting the ground. While spinning to the left, the aircraft had a main rotor strike, ripping the transmission and engine out of the mounts and severing the tail boom. Upon impacting the ground the aircraft had structural damage to the skids.



*Editor's Note - 67-67159 was repaired and returned to service by September of 1970 when she was assigned to the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg. The Army's Gold Book tracks her through December 1975 when she completed service as a National Guard asset. Northwest Services turned her into today's configuration as a fire fighter helicopter, she was purchased by Travis County for 2.2 million dollars.*



## Mine was earned in Vietnam. By my dad.

Barbara Q., USAA member

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<sup>1</sup>Based on 2011 Member Communications Trend Survey.

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# USAACE reinstates solo flight incentives after 15 years

RUCKER, Ala. (April 4, 2013) -- A few Aviators at Fort Rucker had the opportunity to experience for the first time something that hasn't taken place in almost 15 years. Solo flying in flight school was just re-instituted by Col. Kevin J. Christensen, 110th Aviation Brigade commander as an incentive that limits the potential to solo only to students who score 85 percent or above on all written and flight evaluations, including their final basic warfighter skills check ride.

Two flight students at Shell Field were among the first to pass all the requirements and take part in the new solo-flight incentives.

"It was foreign to us, but we were told that we were going to get the chance to go out and do what we've been training to do without the instructor pilot," said 1st Lt. Glenn Dorth, 2-228th General Support Aviation Battalion, Indiana National Guard. "All the responsibility was on us and we didn't have a safety net. At first it was kind of scary and I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it, but I figured I was in a good position for it and I've been working so hard, so I told myself that I might as well take the shot."

"It was only by chance that we got to be among the first," said 2nd Lt. Jennifer MacGibbon, recent West Point graduate. "It's definitely a cool opportunity to be able to conduct a solo flight."

The flight students trained with the OH-58 Kiowa for about four weeks, and although the incentive is in place to help drive Aviators to excel, Dorth said that wasn't what motivated him, it was a desire to do well for himself. "I just wanted to do well regardless of whether there was a solo flight, incentive or not -- that's just the type of person I am," he said. "I'm sure that everyone that is [going through flight school] is going to try their hardest anyway because everyone had to try their hardest to get here to begin with."

Even with sufficient training, MacGibbon said that it was tough to not rely on the instructor pilot when going out for the solo flight with just her stick buddy, Dorth. "Even when an instructor pilot tells you that he or she is going to be activated copilot -- they're going to rely on you to tell them everything -- you still rely on them to make sure everything is safe," she said. "When it's just you and your stick buddy in there, all of those things that [the instructor pilot] queued you to do throughout the course is now on you and you have to remember to do it yourself."

*The students weren't left completely alone, however. The instructor pilot follows the students in a chase aircraft to make sure that everything is going smoothly.*

"It's still definitely a little scarier," said MacGibbon. "As I saw our IP walk off, I just looked at Glenn and said, 'We're by ourselves,' and that was scary -- it was that epiphany moment."

"When you're sitting there, you're just thinking about what you need to do," added Dorth. "We were sitting there for a while [during our solo flight] to try and figure out

*what it was we had to do, and then it just clicked and we said, 'OK, we've got to go and this is what we need to do to go.'*

MacGibbon said that the incentive is not only a great motivator, but great training, too, and a good way to make sure that Aviators are ready to take the next step



in their training. "It's a great confidence builder and it's a great time to be able to put everything together and show that you do know how to operate the aircraft -- the procedures while you're flying and what you need to do," she said. "This is something we do right before we select our main airframes, so we go in feeling prepared that we have the basic piloting skills -- it's a good situation to be in."

MacGibbon said she doesn't know what airframe she will be going to, but Dorth said he will be training to fly UH-60 Black Hawks. "They're the workhorse," he said. "I come from a transportation unit and we've had lots of experience with flooding pulling people off of rooftops, and that's [the kind of thing] I want to do with the Black Hawk."

*Editor's Note: If we ran a recurring column entitled "What the Hell is Happening With Our Army" this story would definitely be the lead item. It was taken from website: Army.mil.com and dated 4 April 2013. It was written by Nathan Pfau, a staff writer for Fort Rucker's Army flyer and is used with the permission of the PAO at Fort Rucker. The italics and bold strike to the words concerning how today's "solo" pilots are still being tailed by their instructors was added by me to bring greater attention to that part of the story. David Adams, Editor of the VHPA Aviator.*

# The Life Story of B-Model serial number 62-04567



4567's long time Crew Chief, SP5 Daryl Hong of Hawaii. This "propaganda photo" was taken in 1971 in Nha Be for his Mom & Pop back home. Courtesy of Daryl Hong.



4567 clothed in the Seawolves colors and on display at the Cavanaugh Flight Museum, present day. Courtesy of the Cavanaugh Flight Museum.



4567's present day cockpit displaying the fancy red seat covers and early seat buckets common to a trainer set-up in Fort Rucker. Courtesy of the Cavanaugh Flight Museum



4567 setting in a revetment at Nha Be Naval base in 1971. Courtesy of Daryl Hong



567's data plate is still on the old girl, they are normally removed when an aircraft is deactivated. Courtesy of John Kessler.

By Steve Bookout

62-04567, s/n 627, started life as an Army UH-1 B model Huey that was actually built in 1963. Some of us feel that this particular helicopter is one of the most significant Vietnam helicopter gunships remaining, and she's probably the only ex-military helicopter to still have her original data plate! Upon arrival in Viet Nam she was initially assigned to the 611th Transportation Company and life was good. But becoming bored by early 1968, she put in a 1049 transfer and was soon flying with the Razorbacks, the armed helicopter platoon of the 120th AHC.

You couldn't exactly call her beautiful. Her skin was wrinkled in several places and a few cosmetic patches had been applied here and there. Each had a red star painted on it indicating a bullet strike. Color coordination wasn't in her vocabulary. The OD paint job was faded and splotchy. From the pilot's doors forward, she dressed in flat black, but a bright red Arkansas razorback hog painted on both doors did give her a little class.

567 needed upgrading over the years and an L-13 engine was installed. She inherited a Charlie model tail boom from the 101st and became a hybrid. If you look very closely even today, you can still make out the Screaming Eagle patch under the paint on the vertical fin. Even with all of that, she still couldn't always come to a righteous hover. Crew chief Daryl Hong would allow her to pig out on rockets and extra ammo, so it wasn't unusual for folks to grin as they watched her sometimes waddling and bouncing down the PSP strip to get airborne. [I'm not admitting to her being overloaded to the point that her skids had spread a tad or anything like that mind you, because when the stuff was hitting the fan out in 'injun country and others broke contact to rearm, ol' 567 would still be hammering away]. But once she got her not-so-svelte form airborne, SHAZAM! She became one of the most stable gun platforms I ever flew.

Thinking about flying 567 brings up some fond memories, but not all of those memories were fond. You know the old rule that if you broke the green house, you were the one to replace it? Did you know that there's 109 screws in one of those puppies? By the time the task was completed, I was on a first name basis with each one.

She was transferred to the Seawolves in 1971 and continued to fly against Charlie, finally amassing about 2500 combat hours. A year later and her tour of duty completed, 567 DEROSED back home, but not into obscurity like most of us. ARADMAC saw to her immediate needs, and then sent her

to Mother Rucker where she worked out of Hancheay AAF. After about three and a half years of student training, she traveled North to St. Paul, Minnesota and signed in at the 695th Transportation Company. When the 695th was disbanded in 1980, she had been retired from the service with around 3500 hours on her airframe. Over time, 567 was substantially cannibalized and the empty but repainted hull was later sold to a VFW post in northern Wisconsin. They were unable to care for or properly display her, so the 397th Engr. Bn. of the Wisconsin National Guard stepped in and stored her in various places until Mr. John Kessler heard about her in late 1997. He arranged to have her shipped to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida for restoration and mobile display.

#4567 was a sad sight on arrival in Ft. Lauderdale! Not a single removable component remained in the cabin. About half of the electronics had been removed in the side compartments and most wire harnesses had been cut. She did have a transmission, but rain had been coming through the open-topped mast for many years. Marauding neighborhood kids had broken all plexiglass except for the front windshields. The only part on the tail boom was the 90-deg. gearbox. John started spending a lot of time and beau coup money on the old girl. He envisioned painting and outfitting the helicopter to recognize the three periods of its very active career. The right side was to be redressed in the Army's Razorbacks Armed Helicopters platoon paint scheme. The left side and nose was to represent the Navy Seawolves (HAL-3), and the interior was slated to honor her duties at Ft. Rucker and sport those snazzy red seat covers.

But you know what they say about the best laid plans of mice and men...employment issues began eating into John's spare time and money was ear marked for other things. Restoration ground to a halt. Then 567 was picked up by the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Addison, Texas. The museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization devoted to promoting aviation studies and to perpetuating America's aviation heritage. Proudly the museum fulfills its mission by restoring, operating, maintaining and displaying historically-significant, vintage aircraft, and by collecting materials related to the history of aviation. To make a long story short, 567 is now a permanent resident and is on static display at the museum. She's been refurbished as when she flew for the Seawolves and looks a little scruffy, but what the hey. That's just how she looked in the Nam.

Steve Bookout

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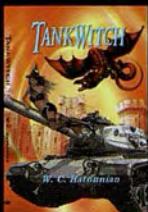
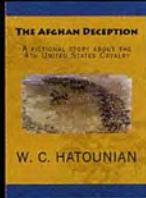
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VHPA Member Bill Hatounian is a 24-year military veteran and a retired Army Aviator. He served with the 1st Squadron, 4th United States Cavalry in Vietnam and after active duty, he flew with the 997th AHC of the Arizona Army National Guard. He has recently retired from being both a pilot and a Lieutenant with the Phoenix Police Department and is enjoying retired life by writing books, being active and traveling with his wife.

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# The Best Deal of a Lifetime

Clyde Romero and Bob Farris with a little help from Bob Hesselbein

When you hear "two for one," it usually suggests a good deal--you know, like happy hour at your favorite bar. And "three for one" is generally considered a super-good deal, often suggesting something too good to be true. Frequently good deals turn out bad, but sometimes a good deal can exceed your best expectation and last a lifetime.

My good deal began at Fort Wolters, Texas while nervously standing at attention with the Warrant Officer Candidates (WOCs) of Class 70-01. Dressed in starched fatigue uniforms, shaking in our boots and staring out from beneath the grey hats that confirmed our assignment to the 8th WOC Company, we shuddered as TAC Officer Edward O Daley intensely criticized us both individually and as a group.

On this particular morning one candidate seems to be the primary target of Mr. Daley's sharp voice, a young black guy by the name of Bob Farris. He calmly absorbs this verbal scorching, leaving me impressed by his bearing under the fiery "counseling." I am very happy to have him in my section. We eventually talk and discover we are both from the Northeast, Bob from Philadelphia, and I from the Bronx area of New York City.

Our friendship develops as we learn the basics of flying the OH-13 helicopter (the last class to do so at Fort Wolters), and upon completion we are given a choice of where to attend advance pilot training, either Alabama or Georgia. Now let me mention one small detail: Bob and I are African-Americans, minorities from the North, and remember this is 1969, a time of intense racial strife throughout the nation and particularly in the Deep South.

Where is Ft. Rucker? Alabama. Where is Hunter Army Airfield? Georgia. Considering our options, we conclude neither choice seemed optimal for two men wishing to avoid trouble, but Savannah is more attractive than Enterprise or Ozark. We decide on Hunter Army Airfield for rest of the training process, and graduate on time, intact, and ready to go to war in Vietnam.

Now this is where the story gets interesting.

Bob and I arrived in Vietnam on April 17, 1970 and shook hands in the dusty compound of the 90th Replacement Battalion at Long Binh. Within a day we receive our assignment to A Company (Little Bears), 25th Aviation Battalion, based northwest of Saigon at Cu Chi, III Corps.

Now, freeze frame for a moment: We are all being told the war is winding down and that Vietnamization, the transfer of combat duties to the Army, Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN), is taking place. In IV Corp (Mekong Delta) combat operations are now completely in the hands of the Vietnamese Army; the 9th Infantry Division is gone, and the 1st Infantry Division is going home.

Thirteen days later, May 1970, U.S. and S. Vietnamese ground troops begin a sixty-day incursion into Cambodia to destroy enemy troops, supplies and COSVN, the enemy headquarter directing the fight in S. Vietnam. Here we are in Vietnam less than a month and already flying into another country to get shot at! Bonus! In a short time Bob and I become oriented and comfortable in the sometimes-crowded Vietnamese/Cambodian airspace by flying our asses off for 60 straight days. We fly over 130 hours month for 2 solid months supporting the 25th Infantry Division in Cambodia.

To say the least we flew hard, learned quick, and grew up fast.

At the end of the Cambodian incursion, The 25th Aviation Battalion shifted pilots to balance the experience levels of each unit, and Bob and I are reassigned from A Company to B Company. We both transition to different weapon systems: Bob transitions to the AH-1G Cobra gunship, and I accomplish a quick transition into the OH-6 "Loach." I am flying scouts!

We begin flying missions in our new weapons systems, no longer newbie's, but battle tested aviators comfortable flying throughout the 25th Division's Area of Operations in MR III. Sometime later we get word that the 25th Infantry Division is returning to the states; that's great news for some, but not Bob and I. No, we will be reassigned in-country.

I recall it was October of 1970 when we were informed of our gracious reassignment to the 101st Airborne Division, based in I Corp. Incidentally, did we know I Corp has steep mountains and hardcore North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops and nasty weather, too? This is not the happiest news, but there it is.

Remember, III Corp was basically flat terrain containing enemy forces quietly laying low and recovering from the severe beating they suffered during the Cambodia operation. Intense contact with the enemy is infrequent. Bob and I will discover this was not the case I Corp.

Reporting to the 101st, Bob was assigned to the A Company, 4th/77th Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) as a Cobra pilot, and I went to C Troop, 2nd/17th Cavalry as a Loach pilot. We find the challenges of daily operations in I Corp are always tested by the terrain, weather and the enemy. The haunted Ashau Valley speaks for itself, along with the CCN and Buffalo Hunter missions. To put it mildly, there are no easy days in I Corp.



So the "good deal" continues. Up until now we have survived two theaters of operation within six months: Vietnam and Cambodia. We thought we've seen it all, survived it all, and suspect that whatever could go wrong has gone wrong already. But the saying, "...Never challenge worse..." always holds true.

Sometime in mid-January, 1971 as Bob and I reflect upon our upcoming short-timer status (hey, we have only 90 days



CLASS 70-01      B-1      8TH WOC COMPANY  
U. S. ARMY PRIMARY HELICOPTER CENTER--FT. WOLTERS, TEXAS

remaining until DEROs; we are almost out of this alive; we leave on 17 April; and isn't it true that no one is forced to fly within 30 days of going home?), we get the word of a major push being planned.

Operation Dewey Canyon II commences at the end of January to open Route 9 and restore the abandoned Khe Sanh Combat Base. It seems every helicopter in Asia is arriving at Hue - Phu Bai in preparation for Operation LAM SON 719, the ARVN invasion of Laos. During the build-up phase C Troop loses two cobra gunships, and Bob Farris is assigned to the unit. Just in time for LAM SON 719, Bob and I are now back together again flying hunter-killer missions throughout the AO.

In the short days prior to the combat assault on February 8, 1971, Khe Sanh becomes a crowded aerial port harboring hundreds of helicopters and transiting cargo planes. Just before the assault, all crewmembers flying in Operation LAM SON 719 are required to sign a Rules of Engagement document outlining mission limitations that prohibit debarking in LAOS, our tactical destination!

Much has been written on the misadventure and heroism and of Operation LAM SON 719. Flawed objectives and tactical errors led to tremendous casualties on the ground for both South and North Vietnamese. Helicopter support of the campaign also cost the lives of 89 U.S. helicopter crewmembers, and 178 others wounded.

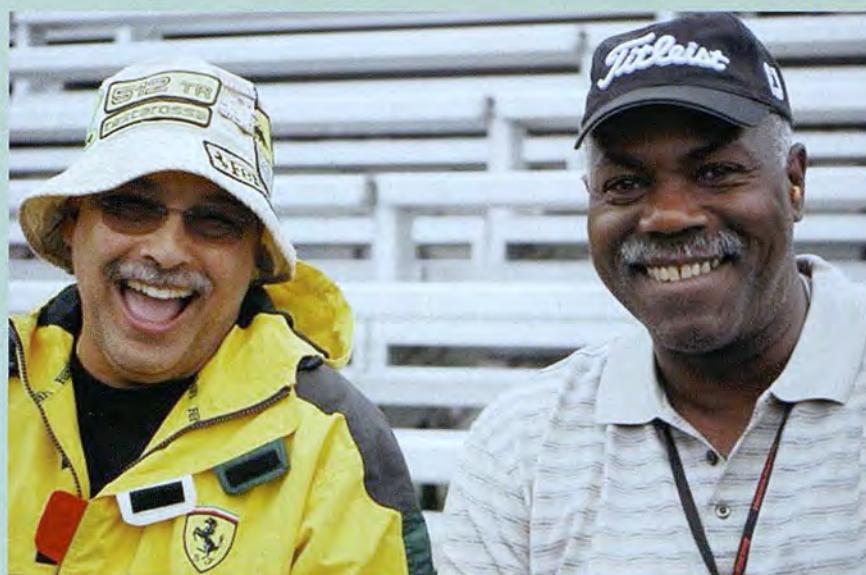
It was a difficult time,

and throughout the campaign Bob and I were there, slugging it out for all it was worth and surviving. My one outstanding recollection of LAM SON 719 is the fact that every helicopter that flew took notable battle damage, every single one! Nothing returned from Laos undamaged, not aircraft, not equipment, and certainly not those who participated and survived.

On March 25, 1971, the surviving ARVN forces completed their withdrawal from Laos, and on April 6th Khe Sanh was once again abandoned. After the hellish struggle in Laos, the remaining time of our one-year tour felt remarkably uneventful.

Bob and I survived. We left the Army and returned home to begin the remainder of our lives. Taking advantage of opportunities led us to our present work as airline pilots for the same air carrier, and we were fortunate to complete our military careers flying for the USAF/ANG. We survived, and more.

It is true that good deals are hard to find, but they are wonderful when they happen. This story is a prime example. My experience turned out to be a great "three in one" deal—I survived a tough training program; I survived a tougher war; and most important, I met and still enjoy the company of Bob Farris, a fellow aviator and my ongoing best friend for well over 40 years.



Clyde Romero (left) and Bob Farris share a lighter moment 45 years after their Flight Class 70-01 photo was taken.

# GROUNDBREAKING OF THE TEXAS CAPITOL VIETNAM VETERANS MONUMENT



Groundbreaking of the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument

Austin, Texas – 25 March 2013

A groundbreaking ceremony was conducted on Monday, 25 March 2013 on the grounds of the Texas State Capitol in Austin for a monument to honor all Texas veterans of the Vietnam War. It is named the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument, and completion is anticipated in the fall of 2013, the result of many years of work and contributions. Hundreds of individuals, the Texas Historical Commission, and many corporations, foundations, and veterans' organizations have been involved. Bell Helicopter has been a major contributor. The city of Beaumont, Texas raised \$140,000 for the monument. Chairman of the committee responsible for all aspects of the project is Robert Floyd, a Vietnam veteran. The monument will stand on the east side and literally in the shadow of the Texas Capitol Building.

The monument will be 14 feet tall and will consist of a group of soldiers in Vietnam battle dress, depicted by artist Duke Sundt. Because of its location, acts of the Texas legislature were required and these were sponsored by several legislative members who are Vietnam Veterans. Texas Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst was not in Vietnam, but he did perform military service, and gave his whole-hearted support to this project. He spoke to the audience and said, as did others, that recognition of our service is long overdue. Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson, also one of us, and several other Texas politicians briefly addressed the

crowd. Commissioner Patterson reported that over 500,000 Texans served in our war. Texan Joe Galloway delivered the keynote address, and Karoni Forrester, Texas State Coordinator of the

National League of Families, spoke on behalf of 3,417 Texas families of the war dead. Ms. Forrester's father is one of 105 Texans who remain missing in action in Vietnam.

A foundry in nearby Bastrop, Texas is constructing the monument. Additionally, a Marine Vietnam veteran, Don "Tex" Dorsey, has hand-stamped two sets of military ID tags for each of the 3,417 Texas KIAs. (105 were initially MIA.) One set of tags will be permanently entombed inside the monument in a metal ammunition can, and these tags were dedicated for entombment at the groundbreaking. The other set of tags will be on permanent display, initially in Austin and later in San Antonio.

Members of the Patriot Guard and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Riders were on hand to safeguard the groundbreaking. Afterward, these groups escorted the ID tags to be entombed as they were driven to Bastrop. The ammo can was carried inside a vintage military three-quarter ton truck from our era. Citizens of Bastrop conducted another ceremony at the foundry, upon arrival of the tags.

On the Sunday before the groundbreaking, more than 110 volunteers participated in a Reading of the Names of 3,417 Texans who died in Vietnam. The event was held at the LBJ Presidential Library and Museum. Among the volunteer readers were President Johnson's daughters Luci Baines Johnson and Lynda Johnson Robb, several Texas lawmakers, Joe Galloway, many veterans including John Deer of the Alamo Chapter of the VHPA, family members of the war dead, relatives and friends of the Texas KIAs.

Scholtz's Bier Garden, a famous Austin restaurant and bar for over 150 years, was the site of a reception and barbecue for all Vietnam veterans and all the VIPs on the Sunday evening before the groundbreaking. Quite a few war stories were exchanged and, possibly, some beer was consumed. Several members of the Alamo Chapter of the



Model of the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument, scheduled for completion in the fall of this year.



Noted Journalist and Texan Joe Galloway delivered the keynote address at the Monument's Groundbreaking Ceremony.



Two ID tags were made for each of the 3,417 Texas KIAs. One of those tags make up this memorial that's currently on display at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, before it moves on to a permanent display in San Antonio. The other tag from each set will be permanently entombed in a metal ammunition can inside the Monument itself. That set of tags was dedicated for entombment as a part of the Monument's groundbreaking ceremony.



Luci Johnson, daughter of President L.B. Johnson, reads from the list of 3,417 Texans killed in Vietnam.

VHPA from nearby San Antonio attended the reception and the groundbreaking the next day. A surprise visitor to the reception was Jan Scruggs, who heads the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund which built The Wall in D.C. Also present was Cheryl Fries, producer of the "In the Shadow of the Blade" documentary. She helped the committee chairman immensely in organizing all of the monument events.

To learn more about the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument or to contribute, visit [Buildthemonument.org](http://Buildthemonument.org).

*Editor's note: The text for this story was built from submissions received from both Chuck Oualline of our Alamo Chapter of the VHPA and Cheryl Fries, Media Consultant to Arrowhead Films. Photos for the story appear courtesy of both Cheryl Fries and Alamo Chapter of the VHPA Member John Deer.*



Two lovely and forever young Donut Dollies from Texas attend the dedication



Chuck Oualline of the Alamo Chapter of the VHPA takes a few minutes to speak with Joe Galloway on Sunday evening before the groundbreaking. Joe lived with Chuck at Camp Holloway whenever he was in the Pleiku area, he even left his gear stashed in Chuck's hooch while he was in the Ia Drang valley. The two men had a lot of catching up to do.

# A “Charger” Pilot Returns

The story of an Army helicopter pilot’s return trip to Vietnam 41 years after the War.

Dr. Dick Elgin, St. James, Missouri

## Trepidation

I felt some trepidation as the airliner began its descent and the pilot announced (in English, but with a thick Vietnamese accent) we would soon be landing in Hanoi. Trepidation because I was a little unsure of what my reaction might be to the people, sights, sounds and scents of Vietnam, the country I had left 41 years ago. I patted my Army-issued dog tags which had lain in my dresser drawer for those 41 years, but were now strung around my neck (with my well-used P38 can opener attached). From a bright blue sky we let down through scattered clouds, passed over rolling green hills, then over the familiar sights of rice paddies, to touch down gently at Noi Bai Airport, Hanoi. (Not Gia Lam Airport, also near Hanoi where, on February 12, 1973, the first Air Force C-141 of “Operation Homecoming” departed with 116 former POW’s on board.)

My wife Becky and I were taking a bicycle tour of parts of Vietnam. The itinerary: A couple of days in Hanoi with a short trip to Halong Bay with an overnight on a junk (boat), then return to Hanoi. A flight to Hue (the old Hue-Phu Bai airfield south of Hue) to tour the Citadel and the city and cycle its countryside. Then south on Highway 1 over Hai Van Pass and down into DaNang by Freedom Hill, along Red Beach, out to China Beach, then south down the beach past Marble Mountain to Hoi An. After a few days in Hoi An, a flight from DaNang to Saigon. A few days touring in Saigon and bicycling the Mekong delta, then a side trip to Cu Chi. Then back to the states.

To me, the only Vietnam Veteran in the group of 16, places like the Citadel, Hue-Phu Bai, DaNang, Marble Mountain and Hoi An were much more than names on an itinerary. We had selected this bicycle tour mostly because it spent time in the DaNang/Hoi An area and because it had a free day while in Hoi An which my wife and I were going to use to drive to LZ Baldy, the Que Son Valley, Highway 1 to Tam Ky and on to Chu Lai. This was the area I had flown from May, 1969 until May, 1970 as a “Charger” helicopter pilot for the America’s Division’s 196th Light Infantry Brigade, living on and flying off of LZ Baldy (and later Hawk Hill). Then, as an A Company, 123rd Aviation Battalion “Pelican” flying off of Ky Ha, at the very northern tip of the America’s huge Chu Lai base. That had been quite a year for this then-20-year-old Warrant Officer from St. James, Missouri.

## The Tour

Hanoi. In Hanoi we toured, visiting the city’s highlights such as Uncle Ho’s Tomb, Presidential Palace, Ba Dinh Square, Hoan Kiem Lake, the Old Quarter and drinks at the Metropole Hotel. We visited the “Hanoi Hilton,” or, Hoa Lo Prison. Only a fraction of the prison exists today, but it is still a very sobering place. Halong Bay. We took the 2.5-hour bus ride to Halong Bay and overnighted on a junk (boat). While geologically interesting, the Bay is just about overrun with western tourists. Hue. We flew to Hue, landing at the U.S.-built Hue-Phu Bai airfield. Bicycling the area around Hue, we boated on the Perfume River, visited the Citadel (now partially-restored by UNESCO) and Hue City. Hue to DaNang to Hoi An. From Hue it was south down Highway 1 over Hai Van Pass, into northwestern DaNang, along Red Beach (hello Freedom Hill PX area), across the Song Han River, out to China Beach (hello Monkey Mountain). China Beach is now nearly full of world-class hotel resorts. The beach is still white and the South China Sea is still blue, but all else has changed. We continued south on a new, modern highway past more hotels, Marble Mountain on the right, on to Hoi An. Hoi An is an ancient, beautiful town highly visited by western tourists. LZ Baldy, Que Son Valley, Tam Ky, Chu Lai. In Hoi An we arranged for a van, driver and interpreter and took a day to visit part of my old 196th LIB AO. We visited LZ Baldy which is hardly recognizable. While there my wife and I spoke to a group of men and women cutting trees on the LZ. The older gentleman in the group was a former VC who lived in the small village just outside the LZ’s perimeter during the summer of 1969 while I lived at Baldy. Through the interpreter the old VC and I had quite a conversation about the war. While saying our goodbyes he said, “We are the lucky men.” It was an emotional moment. From Baldy we drove out to Que Son Valley and turned around near Hiep Duc.



The Reunification Palace, Saigon



Former foes meet on LZ Baldy



Ethnic minorities at Uncle Ho’s Tomb



On LZ Baldy, summer, 1969



What's left of Ky Ha Heliport, Chu Lai.

Then back to Highway 1, right turn to Tam Ky and on to Chu Lai. We found the remnants of Ky Ha heliport, Chu Lai Main is now a cargo airport. Sorry Rattlers, Minutemen, Box Cars, Sabers (and others), but the huge Chu Lai base is all gone. Not a trace. The place is very quiet. Saigon. We flew from DaNang to Saigon. From there we shuttled to and cycled in the My Tho and Tan An area. We had two days in Saigon. It has been said we may have lost the war but won the economy. Louis Vuitton, KFC, Armani, McDonald's and ATM's are all available. We spent a great evening in the Rex Hotel's rooftop bar and restaurant. Looking out on the brightly lit Saigon, you could have been looking at any modern city in the world. (You didn't get the same feel in Hanoi). In Saigon we also visited the old Presidential Palace (now renamed the Reunification Palace). Having read online accounts of veterans touring the War Remnants Museum and the tunnels at Cu Chi, we passed on them and instead spent a delightful day shopping its central market and enjoying the city's food.

#### *Why?*

Any Vietnam Veteran contemplating a return trip to Vietnam needs to answer the one-word question: Why? Assuredly when you tell others, particularly other veterans, you will be asked the question, usually with amazement. To some it may be a cathartic journey to bring "closure" to their war experience (to use the contemporary, much over-used cliché). To others it may be to remember and honor a friend who died there in some long-forgotten place. To some, just to return to the area where one participated in or witnessed incredible acts of heroism, hardly known to anyone and acknowledged by no one (such as myself flying the Hiep Duc area in the summer of 1969), will perhaps bring a certain comfort. There is a nostalgic curiosity to some of us who are semiretired and have had time to reflect on that incredible year (or more) when, as relative youngsters and helicopter pilots, we were given sometimes unbelievable responsibilities in unpredictable circumstances literally making life and death decisions. On some reflection about that duty and how we met the challenges, most of we pilots get nostalgic about our tour (or tours) in Vietnam, reflect on those injured or killed, and have a natural curiosity about the country and, in particular, the area where we flew.

However, when telling some Vietnam Veterans I was going back, I got quite an earful about the Vietnamese, the country, and supporting the Communists by my trip. One told me how unpatriotic I was for going back. We all can easily imagine experiences suffered by Vietnam Veterans during the war which would make the thought of returning abhorrent. Even those who would like to return might wonder how he might react to some sight or scent experienced during a return trip there (and hence my trepidation on landing in Hanoi).

For some, returning with family members will probably lead to a much better understanding of the war and what the veteran experienced. Some veterans who haven't spoken much about the war will probably be more open to do so during a trip back to Vietnam. In my case, my wife and I were not married while I served in Vietnam; still, Becky now has a much better understanding of my year in Vietnam and my renewed interest in the country and the war. Some veterans who travel back to Vietnam find the trip life-changing and many want to go

back. Several American groups (some organized by Vietnam Veterans) have established various missions and mission trips for humanitarian assistance in Vietnam.

My decision to go back was for a combination of reasons. It was part nostalgic curiosity brought on by my recent interest in 19th and 20th century history of southeast Asia and particularly the area during World War II, the French and Indochina War and the Vietnam War (called the American War by the Vietnamese). I would visit my old AO from Chu Lai to DaNang and the South China Sea to Kam Duc (the Laoian border), where I had been a part of so many wonderful and terrible experiences, known just about only to the participants. Also, to my wife and me it was another bicycle trip and adventure to an exotic international location. All my expectations were met, and some exceeded.

#### *A Few Observations*

The people are very friendly, helpful, approachable and curious about westerners and smile continuously. The young people are particularly curious and will approach you to practice their English (which is now taught in school). This is true for the service employees in western-style hotels and resorts and also true for the Vietnamese we encountered while bicycling rural areas and even in a small market in the western part of the Que Son Valley. When we asked a waitress at a resort if she'd been to America, she said no, but it was her dream. My wife and I have travelled in China where it seems not many people smile. In Vietnam everyone is smiling.

As we Vietnam Veterans know, the Vietnamese people are very industrious. They can make anything from anything and something from nothing. Everything is recycled and used. In the small villages we cycled through there typically was one long street along which there was every sort of shop and small manufacturing business. In shop after shop every scrap and piece is saved and made into something else. Absolutely nothing is wasted. It is amazing. This is not out of a sense of being "green" it is from having so few resources. On the downside, in these small villages sanitation was nearly non-existent. Ditches are sewers. One's garbage is hauled to the edge of town on push-carts and quite literally dumped at the side of the road, or top of an already huge, sometimes smoldering pile of trash and garbage.

#### *Some Do's and Don'ts for Veterans Returning to Vietnam*

Based on our really great trip experience to Vietnam and getting to see some of the AO in which I flew, I can make a few recommendations and mention some options to other veterans contemplating returning. Everyone's purpose will be different as will be their preferred touring method, but the first choice should be whether to join a tour or travel independently. If one has never done any international or "adventure" travel (as a trip to Vietnam might be classified), you might want to join a tour where all the planning and arrangements have been done for you. If one is an experienced traveler, Vietnam can be toured independently and "on your own." It is likely a tour will be more efficient, seeing more in a shorter period of time. However, with an organized tour the itinerary will be

*continued on page 28*

# Brain Cramp ~ Part Deux

By Steve Bookout



Huey doors - before



Huey doors - after

The Aviator recently published a short article about my search for old Huey parts and what I was doing with them. In response to the myriad emails and phone calls from other VHPA'ers who are seeking parts as well, our amiable editor and Mohawk driver, David Adams, and I thought it would perhaps be of interest to tell how I went about searching and locating those parts.

Not an easy task as our military normally updates their aircraft and disposes of the old on a regular basis. Even our beloved Hueys which once numbered in the thousands are all but disappeared. So the sooner you start searching, the better off you'll be. But beware! The search will usually be a long and often frustrating road, but perseverance can pay dividends.

Since I live in central Iowa, far, far away from most things military aviation, it took several days before deciding the best way to start and conduct my search. A plan of action was formulated considering the following:

1. Which ex-crewmembers can assist with the projects.
2. Where have we observed unused/derelict helicopters or hulks in the past.
3. Where have we observed or know of the same at the present, to include components.
4. Where static helicopter displays are and who controls them.
5. Where are Reserve/National Guard aviation units relatively close to us.
6. Who can we contact for assistance.
7. What is our budget and can we travel.
8. Who sells parts: Parts houses, airports, eBay.
9. Will my wife let me back in the house after dragging stuff back home.

Even though you read plural people in the above list, fully expect that you're the one who's going to get most of the work load put on your shoulders.

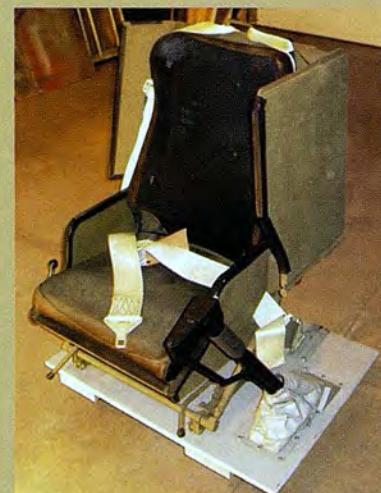
While mulling the above list, an actual worthy brain cramp presented itself. Hmmmm....perhaps another ex-Vietnam helicopter pilot, who's also a member of the VHPA, could be of assistance? My home state of Iowa

is unique in many ways, but one of the more unique things is having a Congressman who was a decorated two tour jock and aviation company commander. So, nothing ventured, nothing gained. Having nothing to lose, I contacted his office. Quickly a reply was received which contained a few phone numbers & addresses that might help out. Allow me to interject here that a U.S. Congressman is a most busy fellow and definitely not in the parts business so please don't inundate Leonard with emails, because I will happily give out what information was provided to me. Government agencies don't mind assisting bona fide groups if they can, but if you're an individual representing only yourself, rotsa ruck, bucko.

I started emailing the addresses provided and at the same time telephoned facilities or airport managers where I had seen old Hueys setting while still flying for Uncle Sam. (Naively, I didn't expect to spend so many hours on the phone trying to track down a few scarce as hen's teeth parts.) Always being polite, a phone call or email usually led to another person who might be of assistance, which usually led to yet another person or place. Once the person at the other end of the phone realized I was sincere, they often became interested as well and this could lead to doors usually not opened. Emails were often exchanged to further the cause. Also, please



Huey seat - before



Huey Seat - today

realize that 99% of the people/places contacted are NOT going to or be able to help you.

Spending my service years in the Army, I tend to think along lines related to the Army. But that doesn't mean I overlooked the Air Force, Navy, or Marines. I contacted aviation facilities, National Guard camps, and Forts. Perhaps there might be a hulk working as a target on a firing/bombing range? Occasionally they weren't stripped of parts before being hauled off! Small components might be intact. I've even spoke with folks at Depot level.

Museums will sometimes have helicopter displays as I found out when a full blown Mike model gunship stared me in the face one day during a visit. Maybe they have a few extra parts in the basement. Colleges sometimes have helicopters that were once donated for classwork and are no longer being utilized. I found a few 58s here in Iowa literally setting in the weeds and have been for years. Some local level Veteran's organizations have been donated choppers for display and come up for sale because they didn't have the funds to get them fixed up and mounted.

One issue asked quite often was: Did I have a tax exemption number? I believe had we obtained one, my searching could have borne fruit much sooner. Representing a group is more profitable than just representing yourself.

I don't advocate writing General officers commanding aviation assets or bases who are aviators themselves, as their staff will probably not respond to you. The boneyard out West is probably not a good option, either. National Guard/Reserve aviation company commanders are best approached in person. Photos of your project are a valuable asset because they provide credence to your request as does letters of introduction from government officials, such as State Senators. Pilots may have current info about possible parts locations. They may have seen a tail boom placed in a gully somewhere to stop erosion, or something similar.

Perhaps the people who can help out best are maintenance Sergeants. Talk to these guys. They've been around for years and know where parts might be or where they might be obtained. Normally, there is little any of these guys can do to help, unless it's to provide information. If there's nothing they can help you with, they'll let you know pretty quick.

But sometimes, just sometimes mind you, there may be a spare gizmo stashed away yet, or a non-serviceable part might be lying about in an old hanger or a long-forgotten out building.

Civilian controlled components have been located from Maine to Arizona. Most have a shockingly high cost. I opted to rebuild my own Huey pilot door sliding window for \$38 instead of paying \$760 for a USED one that had been removed from a wreck! The quote is still in my desk. Some parts are sold cheap, but buyers beware. Parts often deteriorate quickly to the point of being unusable such as a collective dust boot. Check with crop dusting outfits that fly helicopters. It's been known for these guys to go through aircraft like water through a sieve on occasion.

Internet auction services often have components up for bid. They're usually not cheap either. Some of the "Army-Navy" surplus houses on the internet do have inexpensive parts, such as my old, but new in the bag, shoulder harness for \$20. Viet Nam era, too! Inspected and stenciled back in 1967.

One thing not to overlook is the VHPA membership. Many of us have a common interest and have banded together for a project such as creating a travelling display. Many of us still fly and thus meet other aviation related folks. Again, someone has seen something or knows someone. Some of us even have spare parts on hand—BUT! Ya just gotta open your mouth and ask. I recently gave away a complete pilot's collective control stick to someone who just happened to ask.

It's been my brief experience that when one part is located, others can follow suit rather quickly. A couple of times, it was the entire bird. Often, while obtaining a UH-1 component, parts for a Cobra, several Kiowas, a Raven, a Sioux or two, a 0-1 Birddog, and once even a Mojave were uncovered!

That's it in a nutshell. It's a lot of work, but I'm very gratified with the results. Here's luck to you and hope your efforts pay off like mine. Enjoy the photos!

*Cheers,*

*Steve "Bookie" Bookout*

*E-Mail:* [REDACTED]



Steve in Vietnam



Steve with doors today

# The only constant thing is change.....By Stephen Willett

After arriving in Vietnam in April 1970 and during my first three months there I was a copilot in the 189th Assault Helicopter Company at Camp Holloway near Pleiku. I was learning my unit's area of operation and the methods and tactics employed. In each of those months we lost an aircraft and crew.

That really got my attention and made me realize that surviving my tour was not a foregone conclusion.

It wasn't that I was pessimistic but it certainly was my reality. Every morning I awoke around 6:00; by 6:30 I was busy performing a preflight inspection of the aircraft while the aircraft commander (A/C) went to Operations for a mission briefing. As we made final preparations for our day and strapped into our seats I distinctly recall taking one last look at my surroundings while wondering if I would make it back there at the end of the day.

The main thing that made the Vietnam War different from all previous wars was the helicopter.

Never in history did combatants have the mobility helicopters provided. We were able to deploy troops, reinforce and resupply them and evacuate the wounded with unprecedented speed. Helicopter gunships provided close air support unlike anything previously available. Key to the success of the helicopters was our absolute air superiority above the battlefield. The only threat to helicopters came from below; it would have been a completely different ballgame if we had faced a legitimate air-to-air threat.

Another unique feature of the war was that there were no front lines, our enemy could pop up anywhere at any time. After ferocious combat they would disappear into the jungle, caves, tunnels and/or cross the border into Cambodia or Laos. They enjoyed safe harbor there, as we were not to cross the borders, even in hot pursuit. They had a resupply network along and across the borders known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. That kept them well armed; fed and reinforcing troops were usually, to some extent, nearby and available.

In May 1970 President Nixon ordered American forces to cross the border into Cambodia. The world was shocked and there were riots in the United States that led to the tragic shooting deaths of 4 students who were protesting at Kent State University. I was incredulous as for weeks we flew missions into Cambodia and brought back weapons and munitions that were intended for use against Americans. To this day I cannot understand Americans protesting that.

During that time we often flew missions in support of US Army Rangers. On one not especially memorable afternoon we inserted a long range patrol (LRP team) on top of a ridgeline west of Pleiku about 5 miles into Cambodia. Their mission was to provide radio relay for another LRP team that was doing reconnaissance much deeper in Cambodia. They had neither the intention nor desire to engage enemy troops; there are only 6 men on a LRP team. After dropping them off in 6-foot tall elephant grass near the top of the ridge we returned to our base. The LRP team hoped that their arrival was undetected and they intended to remain in the drop area for up to a week.

A few hours later began an evening never to be forgotten. I was sitting at the bar in the Officers Club with other pilots when our Operations Officer entered wanting to know who inserted the LRP team that afternoon. The LRP team arrival had been observed and since nightfall had been engaged in a running fire-fight with elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).



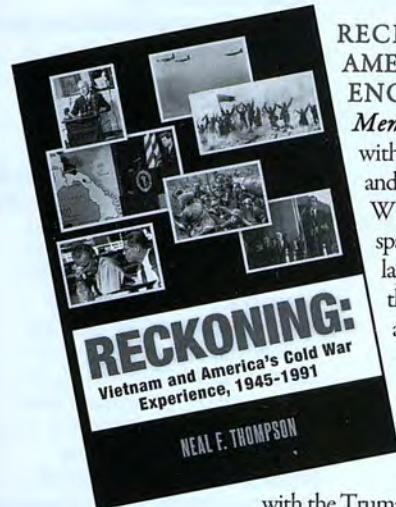
There was no way they could survive the night on the ridge and their command declared a tactical emergency or "Tac-E". The Ops Officer ordered us to our aircraft; we were to extract the LRP team immediately. Within minutes we were cranking our UH-1H, Huey as a light rain fell. I had been enjoying a slight buzz from the scotch I consumed at the club but suddenly I was scared sober. We took off accompanied by a heavy fire team (3 UH-1C Huey gunships) and headed to a Command Post (CP) just on the Vietnam side of the border.

After a situation briefing from the LRP team's command we again took off for the ridge, a few miles west, where we had made the insertion earlier that day. As we arrived we observed a heavy fire team of 3 AH-1G Cobra gunships firing on the ridge in support of the LRP team who were still in a gun battle while on the run in the dark. Another Huey was dispensing flares for illumination although, due to the low ceiling, the flare's parachutes had barely opened when they disappeared into the jungle. We were in radio contact with the LRP team and they were working toward the insertion site, as it was the only place suitable for the extraction. The ridgeline was covered with triple canopy jungle with trees 150 feet tall; the insertion/extraction point was a depression in the jungle that was large enough for a single helicopter to descend to a high hover above tall elephant grass. We circled below the overcast in light rain about a mile from the action and I observed that the Cobras were taking heavy fire during their gun/rocket runs as evidenced runs by the muzzle flashes on the ridge. Ordinarily when gunships made their run firing rockets and mini guns the enemy hunkered down and did not return fire until the helicopters made their break at the end of the run. The fact that NVA returned fire during the gun run indicated their large numbers and their determination as well. As I witnessed the unfolding event it became apparent that the 6 LRPs on the ground were in deep crap and the NVA wanted to make the kill without regard to its cost.

After about 15 minutes of orbiting nearby the LRP team radioed that they were near the extraction point and requested that we begin our approach for the pickup. As we terminated the approach at a 6-foot hover above the elephant grass my heart was pounding. We hovered in the darkness for what seemed an eternity and after about a minute one of our door gunners reported that 3 troops were approaching the aircraft from the left. Soon the aircraft was rocking left and right as the 3 LRPs grasped the skids and pulled themselves aboard with the assistance of the door gunners. As the first 3 LRPs crawled onto the cargo deck behind me they implored us to not leave their teammates, who had been providing covering fire, behind. No way in hell were we leaving anyone behind and we continued hovering in the dark with only our landing light, pointed straight down, and the flares above providing illumination. After another minute that felt like another eternity a door gunner reported that 3 more troops were approaching from our left and I thought, "I sure hope these are our LRPs." Soon we were rocking violently as the rest of the LRP team pulled themselves up and onto the aircraft while screaming that the bad guys were in pursuit and we should "get the hell out of here." As we began our vertical ascent I observed tracer rounds whistling past us and thought to myself; "Crap! I'm going to die in the next few seconds." Miraculously, we climbed over the treetops without

MEMBERS - HAVE A BOOK FOR JOHN TO REVIEW?  
CONTACT HIM AT: [BOOKREVIEWS@VHPA.ORG](mailto:BOOKREVIEWS@VHPA.ORG)

By *VHPA Life member:*  
**JOHN PENNY**  
E-MAIL: [BOOKREVIEWS@VHPA.ORG](mailto:BOOKREVIEWS@VHPA.ORG)



RECKONING: VIETNAM AND AMERICA'S COLD WAR EXPERIENCE, 1945-1991, by *VHPA Life Member* **Neal Thompson**, who served with F/8 CAV in 72-73, is a penetrating and critical study of Vietnam and the Cold War in terms of history and ideology, spanning the post WWII era to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Comparing that history and long held popular views about America's long struggle with communism reveals many of what Thompson calls "elephants in the room" that he carefully dissects.

His research explores the ideologies that drove U.S. policies beginning

with the Truman Doctrine and its subsequent permutations of containment, the Domino Theory, counterinsurgency, nation building, and today's "progressive internationalists." One by one he explores these political ideologies and finds they hold "no basis in fact, reason, or common sense," owing their existence, rather, to a political system focused primarily on domestic politics. He provides extensive documentation on all of the major "players" who were the proponents of these concepts.

Thompson delves into the way the Vietnam War has been "creatively" relabeled to align with the popular view that America "won" the Cold War. He finds this new version of history absurd, particularly because it lacks any examination of the policies that justified that war. Thompson also deconstructs what he calls the "war crimes industry" that demonized Vietnam Veterans for political purposes and expresses a deep concern about today's electorate and political leadership that lack any personal connection to the military. Thompson worries that dependence on a "so called volunteer military" that pays the price of war, makes it too easy to go along with interventionism in places where good results are problematical at best.

This book has been 15 years in the making and Thompson's extensive research and writing skills make it a compelling reading experience. Thompson knows some readers may not like a lot of what they read in his book but feels readers with an open mind will enjoy the discussion and will come away with a deeper appreciation and understanding about this period of history. I am sure you will.

*Reckoning: Vietnam and America's Cold War Experience, 1945-1991*  
(\$20.66, 588 pages) by Neal F. Thompson ISBN: 978-0615622729

is available in paperback from your local book store, Amazon, or other book suppliers. Also available in Kindle by mid-June.

(continued from page 20)

taking a single hit and dove down the hillside just above the treetops; we escaped with our lives and the LRP team. The LRP team was ecstatic, their time had just about run out and now, they had a new clock. My crewmates were likewise elated; we had just escaped from what seemed a deathtrap. In a few minutes we dropped the LRP team at the CP across the border and then headed back to Camp Holloway.

This story is remarkable mostly because it was so common or typical; the overwhelming majority of helicopter crews were willing to risk their lives in support of the grunts on the ground and routinely did just that. In fact, the only time a greater risk was accepted was when the objective was to recover a downed helicopter crew.

The A/C on the previously described adventure was WO-1 Dale "Stretch" Griefe; he was 19 years old and if he was in any way frightened during this harrowing event it certainly didn't show. He was one cool customer but, tragically, he died in a crash a few weeks later.

After 3 months I became an A/C but must admit that nothing I experienced after that compared with what I had gone through during the first 3 months of my 1-year tour. Gradually, I realized that my chances of survival, although not guaranteed, were pretty good and my days began with the expectation that I would return at the end of the day after completing my mission.

Technology has changed significantly since the Vietnam War. Late in that war the first guided bombs were dropped on targets in North Vietnam. Video from TV cameras on the nose of the bomb was trans-

mitted back to the pilot who "flew" the falling bomb to the target. In 1972 the NVA launched an armor attack on Kontum that failed, in part, because of the introduction of wire guided anti-tank TOW missiles.

Since the Vietnam War night vision goggles and GPS navigation have significantly upgraded capabilities but nothing has had the impact of precision munitions or "smart bombs." In Vietnam and all previous wars only a tiny fraction of munitions found their target. Today, there is nothing special about putting a bomb down a chimney or through a window from tens of thousands of feet above and miles away. An AH-64 Apache gunship can kill a tank with a Hellfire missile launched from behind a hill 3 clicks away in pitch-black darkness. Drones piloted from a desktop on the opposite side of the planet can literally rain hell down on an unsuspecting enemy below.

*It makes me wonder what's next; the only constant is change.*

Stephen Willett  
Ghost Rider 32

# WELCOME TO THE VHPA!

Look the list over and if you recognize anyone, give them a call, drop them a line or send them an e-mail welcoming them into our Association. Full contact information is available either on-line in the Member Services section of our website, or through our staff at HQ by calling 1-800-505-VHPA.

Line 1, Last, first, MI and/or nickname of new member; double asterisks (\*\*) ID new life members

Line 2, his current city and state, branch of service

Line 3 -5 , his (Flight) Class and Vietnam (VN) Unit(s) served with, if that info is available

**We welcome these 65 new Members to our Association! All have joined the VHPA during the period from 3 April through 31 May 2013**

Apel, Albert L. \*\*  
Enterprise, Alabama, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-16 68-26  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
114 AVN in 63-64; C/3/17 CAV in 69;  
334 AWC in 69-70

Babiasz, Francis 'Frank'  
Saint Petersburg, Florida, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-50  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
57 AHC in 60-71

Barrett, Steven K.  
Manteca, California, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 70-3  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
195 AHC in 70-71; 173 AHC in 70-71

Bergin, Donald S.  
Reno, Nevada, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-18  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 173 ABN  
BDE in 66-67; 61 AHC in 69-70

Boyea, Ira J. 'Jim'  
Uniontown, Ohio, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-47  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): A/25 AVN  
25 INF in 70; 2 BDE 25 INF in 70-71

Brandt, John R. 'John'  
Birmingham, Alabama, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-42  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
2 SIG GP in 70-71

Branyon, John S.  
Elkin, North Carolina, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-42  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
334 AHC in 70-71

Brosnan, Lawrence P. 'Larry'  
Cochrane, Wisconsin, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-35  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
173 AHC in 70-71

Cardwell, Kenneth E 'Ken' \*\*  
Rufus, Oregon, US Army  
Flight Class information  
not provided  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
478 HHC in 67-68

Chaffee, Frank D.  
Waterford Township, Michigan,  
US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-2  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
227 AHB 1 CAV in 68-69

Cornell, William D 'Bill'  
Arvada, Colorado, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-42  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
A/227 AVN in 70-71

Cox, Harold L.  
Ozark, Alabama, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 70-37  
Vietnam Combat Unit information  
not provided

Curry, Alexander E. 'Al' \*\*  
Enterprise, Alabama, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 64-4W  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
178 ASHC in 66

Day, Roger W. \*\*  
Colorado Springs, Colorado,  
US Army  
Flight Class(s): 70-35  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
175 AHC in 70-71

Donnelly, John L.  
Ballard, West Virginia, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 70-44  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): A/1/9 CAV  
1 CAV in 71; 187 AHC in 71-72

Edwards, Ronald A.  
El Paso, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-23  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
B/2/17 CAV 101 ABN in 69-70

Eyman, Stephen P. 'Steve'  
Raleigh, North Carolina, US Marine  
Corps  
Flight Class(s): 70-4  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
HMM-165 in 71-72

Fitzsimmons, Dennis T. 'Fitz'  
Fleming Island, Florida, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 71-15  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
B/229 AHB 1 CAV in 71-72; C/229  
AHB 1 CAV in 71-72

Fort, Kenneth W. 'Friar'  
Thief River Falls, Minnesota,  
US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-507 68-9  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): B/158 AHB  
101 ABN in 69-70; 129 AHC in 73

Gimbert, Richard D.  
Roswell, Georgia, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-512 68-20  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
101 AVN 101 ABN in 69-70;  
2/17 CAV 101 ABN in 71-72

Greenway, John R 'John' \*\*  
Bainbridge Island, Washington,  
Air America  
Flight Class information  
not provided  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
AIR AMERICA in 65-79

Hale, William C. 'Bill'  
The Villages, Florida, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-29  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
128 AHC in 70-71

Harvey, Paul E 'Paul' \*\*  
Carthage, Missouri, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-34  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
57 AHC in 69-70

Hempel, Robert P. \*\*  
Milton, Florida, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-514 68-14  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): C/227 AHB  
1 CAV in 68-69; 134 AHC in 69-70

Holbrook, Bruce F.  
Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-16 68-26  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): HHB DIV  
ART 23 INF in 68; 25 INF DIV in 69

Hollanshead, Robert J.  
Upper Sandusky, Ohio, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-43  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
A/25 AVN 25 INF in 70; B/25 AVN 25  
INF in 70-71; 188 AHC in 71-72

Holleman, Samuel D.  
San Ramon, California, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-518 68-32  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
196 ASHC in 69-70

Hoster, Albert S. 'Al'  
Prescott, Arizona, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 67-22  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
498 MED CO in 68-69

Hudyma, David M.  
Taftville, Connecticut, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-12 68-18  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): A/159  
ASHB 101 ABN in 69-70

Husted, Harold T 'Hud'  
Louisville, Colorado, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 70-6  
Vietnam Combat Unit information  
not provided

Jacobs, Irard E. 'Jake'  
El Paso, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-30 69-26  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s): A/229 AHB  
1 CAV in 70; HHC 229 AHB 1 CAV in  
70; HHC 1 BDE 1 CAV in 70-71

Johnson, John O. 'Johnny'  
Kingwood, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 71-19 71-17  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
187 AHC in 71-72

Johnson, Johnny D.  
Burleson, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 68-511 68-19  
Vietnam Combat Unit information  
not provided

Johnson, Junior R. \*\*  
Peoria, Arizona, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-11  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
282 AHC in 69-70

Keller, William E. 'Bill' \*\*  
Panama City, Florida, US Army  
Flight Class information  
not provided  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
162 AHC in 66; 71 AHC in 66-67;  
138 ASA in 70-71

Kirwan, Stephen E.  
Morehead City, North Carolina, US  
Marine Corps  
Flight Class(s): 68-30  
Vietnam Combat Unit information  
not provided

Kluender, James L. 'Jim'  
Lansing, Kansas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-26  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
D/1/10 CAV in 69-70

Kokenes, Gerald P. \*\*  
Arlington, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class information  
not provided  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
282 AHC in 70-71

Koenssen, Stanley J.  
Holland, Texas, US Army  
Flight Class(s): 69-22  
Vietnam Combat Unit(s):  
2/20 ARA 1 CAV in 69-70

Ladd, Bobby T. 'Hard Nose' ** Franklin, Tennessee, US Marine Corps Flight Class information not provided Vietnam Combat Unit(s): HMM-262 in 67-68	Mckenna, William J. Saint Petersburg, Florida, US Army Flight Class(s): 66-19 66-17 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 189 AHC in 67-68	Vietnam Combat Unit(s): B7/17 CAV in 68; 223 CAB in 71-72	Toone, James Joseph Virginia Beach, Virginia, US Navy Flight Class information not provided Vietnam Combat Unit(s): HA(L)-3 in 69-70
Larish, Paul G. 'Skeeter' ** Honolulu, Hawaii, US Army Flight Class(s): 64-1 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 187 AHC in 67-68; 116 AHC in 67-68; 11 ACR in 67-68	Moore, James H Jacksonville, Florida, US Army Flight Class(s): 68-507 67-23 Vietnam Combat Unit information not provided	Schefers, James E. 'Jim' Bellingham, Washington, US Army Flight Class(s): 69-43 69-39 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 3 ART GRP in 70-71	VanSchoick, Robert E 'Bob' Ypsilanti, Michigan, US Army Flight Class(s): 70-29 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): B7/17 CAV in 70-71
Lockhart, Roosevelt ** Austell, Georgia, US Army Flight Class(s): 69-2 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 281 AHC in 69-70	Morrissey, Curtis M. 'Mike' Lewisville, Texas, US Army Flight Class(s): 68-14 68-22 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): C/3/17 CAV in 69	Scott, Clyde E 'White Knight' ** Fort Valley, Georgia, US Army Flight Class(s): 63-7WT Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 114 AHC in 65-66; 242 ASHC in 68-69	Villegas, Maurice G. ** Sacramento, California, US Army Flight Class(s): 70-27 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): D1/10 CAV in 70-71
Mays, Audie Lee Killen, Alabama, US Army, Flight Class(s): 68-514 68-24 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 118 AHC in 68-69	Olson, Thomas A. ** Georgetown, Texas, US Army Flight Class(s): 70-5 70-3 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 62 CAC in 70-71	Siqueiros, Bruce W. Idaho Falls, Idaho, US Army Flight Class(s): 71-43 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): F/1/9 CAV 1 CAV in 72-73; ICCS in 73-74	Watson, Harry L. 'Skip' ** Sandston, Virginia, US Army Flight Class(s): 64-8 64-8W Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 114 AHC in 65-66
McBride, Ronald J. Roseburg, Oregon, US Army Flight Class(s): 67-24 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 1 AVN CO in 69-70	Pariury, John E. Sunrise, Florida, US Army Flight Class(s): 71-21 71-17 Vietnam Combat Unit information not provided	Smith, Jerrold H. 'Jerry' ** Dahlonega, Georgia, US Army Flight Class(s): 67-5 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 59 AVN in 67-68	Weir, Wayne E. ** Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, US Army Flight Class(s): 71-23 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): D/17 CAV in 72-73
McCarthy, Francis J. 'Jim' ** Walla Walla, Washington, US Army Flight Class(s): 69-8 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 180 ASHC in 69-70	Ponds, Joseph R. 'Joe' ** Beverly Hills, Florida, US Army Flight Class(s): 69-6 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 162 AHC in 69; HHC 13 CAB in 69-70; 121 AHC in 70	Sullens, James D. 'Jim' Prairie City, Oregon, US Army Flight Class(s): 71-3 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): B/3/17 CAV in 71-72	White, Glenn D. Gulf Shores, Alabama, US Army Flight Class(s): 70-21 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 11 ACR in 70-71
Rother, Glenn G ** Williamsburg, Virginia, US Army Flight Class(s): 67-26	Rother, Glenn G ** Williamsburg, Virginia, US Army Flight Class(s): 67-26	Thompson, Robert J. 'Bob' Fayetteville, North Carolina, US Army Flight Class(s): 67-16 Vietnam Combat Unit(s): 229 AHB 1 CAV in 67-68	

## NEW BLOKE (GUY) FROM DOWN UNDER JOINS VHPA

Meet Peter Crook, VHPA's newest bloke (member) from Australia. Peter and his wife stopped by the VHPA booth at HAI and joined our Association. He served in Vietnam in 67-68, flying OH-13's with the 161 "Recce" as he called it in IV Corps. He had some really great stories to tell; one of which I'll share with you in a minute. As your Membership Chairman I was thrilled. Peter has been and still is involved in helicopter flight. He has recently started a HAI type association in Australia.

Now, the story - Seems the Unit "Club" at the 161 Recce was made of corrugated tin, sides and top, with little shade and no cooling system. One day one of his fellow Aussie Pilots, no name was mentioned, was assigned the mission of taking an O-6 to a meeting at the docks near Saigon. The meeting was to last about an hour so the young Pilot decided to stroll along the wharf. After a "bit of time" he spied a small crate marked "Air Conditioner/Major XXXXX/ Charley Horse/YYYYY. "The Yanks get all the conveniences" the intrepid Aviator thought as he walked back to meet his passenger. Minutes later he was in the air flying his passenger back to the spot where the mission

had begun. After he had dropped off his O-6 and completed his assignment he realized he wasn't due back a base for a little while. So he flew back to the dock area, landed and began walking down the pier.

After a while he came upon a Navy guy with a clipboard. "Hey Mate, could you give a bloke a bit of help? I been sent down here to pick up a parcel for a Major XXXXX in Charley Horse and I have no idea what it is or where to find it." The Navy guy looks at his clip board, walks up and down the pier and finally finds the package. "Here it is, Sir, you got a truck or something to haul it in?" "I got my Whirly, will it fit in it?" "Not a problem, let me get some guys to help move it to the Chopper and load it for you."

Once it was loaded, the Aussie thanked the Navy guy and offered a small "thank you" for his efforts. "No thank you, Sir, just your signature on this form will be enough." "No worries, Mate" he said as he gladly signed the slip. Did I mention the Australian Pilots didn't wear name tags on their flight suits? That night, after some minor electrical work, the 161 "Recce Club" had a cooling system and Major XXXXX/ Charley Horse was wondering what the hell happened to his lost air conditioner.

**Peter, welcome to VHPA, you blokes will fit right in.**

Mike Sheuerman, Membership Committee

## Interested in Advertising in The VHPA Aviator?

*The Official Newsletter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association*

Prices range from \$135.00 for a quarter-page to \$475.00 for a full-page, color advertisement. Our staff Graphic Designer will help design your Aviator ad at no cost, other price discounts are available.

Full Details available at: [Aviator@VHPA.org](mailto:Aviator@VHPA.org) or

# Scenes of Vietnam - Courtesy of VHPA



**COMBAT ASSAULT:** A Huey slinging a pole into the Log (logistics) Pad at FB Brick; the pole was used in bunkers building. A 2nd BDE Huey (A/C was RC McKinney) cations, note the shirtless soldier in the photo acting as a ground guide unaware of the human effects of Agent Orange. Next an in-flight photo of a ten-ship Black Widow's lift start of a full 101st Division Lift out of the 1st ARVN Infantry (Tiger) Division's "pentaprime" airstrip east of FB Sally. The last photo shows a soldier on LZ Brick pointing th



**INFANTRY:** Gen Tarpley, and the Commander of the 3rd of the 506th Infantry Bn. speak with the Platoon Leader of a LRRP patrol, they're on F/B Fuller overlooking the to Terry Ray; Terry crashed one month after this photo was taken and he carries shrapnel in his body from that shoot-down to this day. Two infantry soldiers check their loads b zinc that saved his life after a NVA soldier shot him with a captured US M-203 grenade launcher; luckily the NVA soldier was so close the round didn't have time to arm. The

BILL WISHES TO DEDICATE THIS STORY TO THE MEMORY OF THESE MEN:

1LT FRANK BENGSTON, KIA ON 5-7-71

while flying as a Scout pilot in an OH-6 with A/1/9 Cav in Cambodia.

WO1 JAMES (JIM) LOW, SCOUT PILOT KIA ON 4-3-71

while flying as in the front seat of a C/7/17th Cav Cobra.

WO1 DONALD DELAPLAINE, KIA ON 6-28-71

while flying as a Scout Pilot in an OH-6 just north of FSB Mary Ann for the Americal Division.

WO1 WILLIAM (BILL) BRADFORD, KIA ON 8-1-71

while flying as a Scout pilot in an OH-6 for the 2nd BDE of the 101st.

SGT ANTHONY BORDES, KIA ON 8-1-70

while flying just west of Bae Ma as a gunner in Bradford's aircraft after they took a RPG hit.

WO1 JAY ASTON, KIA, BNR 7-18-71

while flying in an UH-1 with C/101 (the Blackwidows)



**COMBAT SUPPORT...**CH-47 from the Heavy Li signs and here we see them doing their thing resupplying flight was taken while they were over an established AR



**ARTILLERY:** The first two pictures shows the 101st Division Artillery unloading their tubes and then delivering fire support from one of the new FB's somewhere on the ac the intersection of QL547 (which ran east/west from Hue to the A Shau valley), and QL548 (which ran north/south through the A Shau valley). The fourth and the fifth ph



**SIGHTS AND SOUNDS:** The first photo in this row was taken south of F/B Anzio, WO Dan Renfroe, a Loach pilot for Div Arty flies scout for a company of ARVN Inf Air Force wings (flying KC-135 tankers). In the second photo Bob Izzo, the IP for Bill's unit uses a rappelling training mission to conduct a local orientation flight. The third ing 40MM grenades into a Cobra ammunition drum. The last photo shows a Cobra in flight, she hails from the Redskins, Company D of the 158th.

# Member Bill Bengtson



landing to a LZ overlooking the "Emperor Valley"; the bare trees are the result of "Agent Orange" application, they supplied the lift ships; escorted by Cobras from the Hawks of D/101. The 4th photo shows the way for a puzzled Huey pilot to the LZ's new FARP location.



Bill Bengtson in Vietnam



own of My Loc. Infantry offloading from a 2nd Bde Huey being flown by CWO Buddy Dietz and WO1 before leaving on an ambush mission. A soldier from the 506 Inf Bn showing off a dented ammo magazine. The last picture shows a ground convoy somewhere southwest of FN Anzio.



Lift Battalion (the 159th) of the 101. These Chinooks flew under both the Pachyderms and Playtex call and building LZ's and FB's throughout the Division's AO. Bill believes the one photo of a Chinook in RVN fire base close to Camp Eagle.



Bill's road to Laos. The third picture shows mortar being delivered from Fire Base Bastogne that overlooked photo were taken on Camp Eagle itself.



Before his military career was over, Dan went on to also earn Naval Aviator wings (flying A-7s) and photo shows an USO Show at Camp Eagle in December 1970. The next photo shows two men load-

In late 1970 and early 1971, the 101st Airborne Division, Air Mobile was involved in a deception plan to avert the NVA's attention away from the build up to Operation Lam Son 719. The 101 actively conducted Aerial Assaults throughout northern I Corps, establishing new Fire Bases and reinforcing old ones on the aerial highway into the A Shau valley and even Laos itself. All these missions greatly depended upon the pilots, the aircrews and the helicopters of the 158th Aviation Battalion; they truly added "Air Mobile" tag to the 101st Airborne Division.

Flying with C Company, 101st Avn Bn, the Black Widows at that time was our Member Bill Bengtson. Just out of flight school and only 19 when he arrived in Vietnam, Bill was introduced to combat on his first mission. What was supposed to be just flying CP with his now lifetime best friend (CW2 Buddy Beach) as the "high bird" on a CA into a cold LZ, Bill's world was ordered into the right seat of the lead lift ship after the LZ turned out to be "hotter than hell". There he had to listen to his new AC (a C Company Platoon Leader) start screaming when he found out this was Bill's first mission, plus Bill also had to live through flying four assaults into that hot LZ. Bill has never forgotten two things from that day. One was watching the fuel leaking out of his shot up Huey almost as fast as it was going in, and then listening to the AC and the CE agree that it was just fine to take back out - after all both had seen much worse leaks seal themselves. The other was his AC turning to him when the day was over and asking "Bill, are you OK?" (well) "I hope so because you did pretty good out there and if you will learn what we all have to teach you, then I'm sure you'll live through this next year just fine". Bill lived through that day, and then 364 more, of which many were a lot like that first one.

Bill left the Army within 30 days of returning to CONUS. He wanted to stay in the Army but WO Branch offered him a 3-year tour in Germany or 30 days off and a return to Vietnam, neither of which sounded very attractive. Bill went on to a 28-year career of first flying for, and eventually owning an agriculture crop dusting service. He has enjoyed a long marriage with his wife Regina, they have been blessed with both children and then grandchildren. Bill and Regina live in Robertsdale, Alabama and Bill is now in the peanut farming business. You may contact him at: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]

*Editor's Note: One thing Bill brought home from his tour was a box full of 8 1/2 "x11", black and white photographs; and select ones from that collection are shown on these two pages. All the pictures were taken by a (now unknown) US Army Combat Photographer who flew with the 101st Avn Bn on missions in the weeks before Lam Son 719 kicked off. The pictures were given to Bill for helping provide him transportation throughout the 101st AOs. I have tried to provide an explanation of an individual photo in the space below each group.*

David Adams, Editor of the VHPA Aviator

# Letters to the Editor...

## To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator

The story "A Pilot's Daughter" found on page 17 of this last issue was absolutely fantastic. A beautiful story that brought back many memories of my daughter and the wonderful times we had while she was growing up.

However, I would suggest that the story would have been much easier to read had the print been even a little larger and the background not been so shaded with the black/white photo you ran in the background. Some of us, me included, are getting older as time passes and our eyes are certainly not what they used to be, something you might want to keep in mind in the future.

*Thanks for the work you do and the Aviator, I look forward to each and every issue.*

David M White

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

## David,

Glad you enjoyed the story and thanks for the kind words about the Aviator. Of course most of the thanks really should go to our writers for their efforts and to my Graphic Designer for her outstanding layouts - but I'll gladly take even a little of it for myself.

Now to the "However (comma)" part of your letter. And boy does that make me flashback to my old OER's, seems they were always full of the dreaded "However comma's". For instance they would often say: David is one hell of a pilot (insert however comma here) he refuses to (insert any of a number of bad things to complete this line...).

But I digress, and I will let you know that I agree with you on both points. As to the background, all of us here at the Aviator were disappointed on the final print of the story. Somehow what we sent off to the printer just didn't transpose to what we got back, but now I believe it was because we were trying to print a B/white photo onto a color page. As to the type size, believe it or not, we are also constantly working on that problem. We honestly don't print any text in smaller than 10-point size, but to get that entire story, and that one great photo, onto that one page, we "squeezed together" that 10-point type, and that is what hurt us. One of the "layout tricks" we probably

could have gotten away with (either the background screen or the type squeeze) but putting both of them on the same page certainly didn't work out to anyone's satisfaction.

The good news in all this explanation is that our EC has just approved my request to expand the Aviator to 48-pages, at least until I can get my "in-box" of unpublished stories cleaned out. Hopefully for at least the remainder of the year you will see nothing but 48-page Aviators where we can print all the stories inside them in a more legible manner.

David Adams

## To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator

I recently came across a web site maintained by the South Korean Veterans who fought in Vietnam. It may be found at: <http://www.vietvet.co.kr/us/us.htm>

The men there are requesting copies of any pictures taken by US soldiers while they were operating with any of their units in Vietnam. I was with the 48th in 1968 and I also have a considerable number of pictures of the ROK 9th Div at Ninh Hoa which I will be sending them.

*Would anyone out there like to join me in this effort?*

*If so, please contact me at the following address:*

Ron Strickland

E-mail: [REDACTED]

## To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator

I am a published author that seeks the opportunity for a casual interview with individuals familiar with the operation of military helicopters and fixed wing aircraft involved in search and rescue and combat support roles during the Vietnam War.

I am seeking detailed information that will help make as factual as possible parts of my upcoming fictional book about combat rescue operations in Southeast Asia.

*Thank you for your time and your consideration,*

David Clark.

E-mail: [REDACTED]

*Or you can call or text me at: [REDACTED]*

## "INTERESTING LINKS ON THE INTERNET"

Take a trip down memory lane – airfields and heliports of the Fort Wolters area:

[http://www.airfields-freeman.com/TX/Airfields\\_TX\\_Abilene\\_E.htm#ftwolters2](http://www.airfields-freeman.com/TX/Airfields_TX_Abilene_E.htm#ftwolters2)

The year was 1945 and all the warbirds, both Allied and captured German were assembled at Freeman Field for an air show – here's a great collection of movies from those days:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=1723870789084>

Here's a link to a U-Tube video about the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgRylAbNq-0>

This link takes you exactly where it says it will... Don't worry – this course is designed by Greg Norman.

<http://www.DaNangGolfClub.com/>

YouTube Video of Tan Son Nhut Airport in Vietnam back in 1968. Great memories complete with the almost obligatory "Good Morning Vietnam" sound track.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=103kHGjdy9w>



# "Looking For"

## *Looking for....someone who might remember Michael Albert*

I went into the Air Force and served for 34 years, including a tour in Vietnam in 1968, and my best friend, Michael Albert, went to the US Army WO aviation program about the same time. After graduation, I believe he flew Dust Off missions in Vietnam both picking up and returning wounded soldiers to safety. All I know for sure about that time was that he flew under the Hornet 18 callsign.

Unfortunately, Mike got "sideways" in Vietnam due to both lead poisoning and Agent Orange and while they medically retired him after only about 2 years of service, the damage was done and most of his body organs have been deteriorating ever since. Now, he has been told he has 4th stage lung cancer because of it and has been given about 18 months to live.

I don't know how to handle it, mainly because he's my best friend dating back to our high school days (we were military brats in the Canal Zone at that time). He now has many people that encourage him in his fight on Facebook, but it is my thought that perhaps I could also help lift him up if I could find at least one guy that he either flew with, or had pulled out of the bush. I can't help thinking that it might make Michael know that he accomplished something really important while he was here on this Earth. Thanks you for your service,

James W. White, Lt Col (Ret), USAF  
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

## *Looking For.... "Mister French"*

My husband (S.R. House and know as "Casa" while in Vietnam), served with the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company at Lai Khe, in Vietnam from 1966-1967. His favorite pilot was a WO that they all called "Mr. French" which also easily could be just a nick name. About the only other thing we know for sure about the man was that he was from Missouri.

My husband is dying of several diseases that trace back to Agent Orange, his body is pretty well gone right now but when he is "in his right mind", he says he would like to find "Mr. French" before he dies. Earlier in his life, my husband kept in touch with several of his Nam brothers, but dropped all those connection when their little group seemed to deteriorate because of too much booze and infighting amongst themselves. "Mr. French" is the only man from Vietnam that my husband has really tried to find.

I am hoping someone out there can help me in my quest by either pointing me at the right person, or even letting us know the man we are looking for has already passed on.

Thank you,  
Mary Wisdom-House  
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

**Remember men, looking for a long lost friend?** Contact me at HQ and I'll see what I can come up with. I've had pretty good results these last few months, must have brought at least 20 members back in touch with their lost friends.

Mike Scheurman, Membership Committee,  
or 1-800-505-VHPA

## *Looking for Wounded Co-pilot*

In 1966 I was crew chief door gunner with 117th AHC. Around the beginning of October while on a mission in support of Korea soldiers, we took fire that both brought our helicopter to the ground and wounded our copilot when he was shot in leg. We landed in a rice paddy, another ship came in, we carried our wounded copilot to that ship and returned to our downed helicopter to wait for evacuation. Major Ketzler was the pilot that day and I am now trying to find out the date of the incident, the name of the copilot and how he came out of the accident. I believe he was a new-in-country warrant officer.

Thank you,  
Dave Dunbar

## *Looking For... anyone who might have known Gary A. Goldsmith*

My name is Kim Gary Goldsmith and I was born on March 10, 1967. I am the only son (by blood) of my father Gary A. (Allen) Goldsmith and if I could get any information about my father from a member of your organization, I would be extremely grateful.

Here is what I have been able to piece together so far: CPT Gary A. Goldsmith was a VHPA life member who died on 1 October 2007 from heart failure at the age of 60 while living in the Philippines. Your records go on to say: flight class: 68-18/68-30, 1968 to 69 in the 128th AHC at Phu Loi (callsign Tomahawk); 1969 to 70 the 11th CAB in Phu Loi, (callsign Red Dog)

Thank you for your help,

Kim Gary Goldsmith

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

## *Looking For... the pilot who extracted my cousin Dan Lindsey*

My name is Jake Strickland and I'm trying to contact the pilot who extracted my Cousin, Dan Lindsey, from F Company, 51st LRRP from Bien Hoa province December 5, 1967.

Dan ended up as a KIA that day, but I feel compelled to at least attempt to contact the pilot who risked his life for my cousin. I hope it may benefit this brave pilot to know that the family members of one of the many soldiers he extracted were thankful enough to make this effort. I know this is a needle in a haystack type endeavor and I appreciate any help you can give me.

I also know that we are but one family out of literally thousands who wish to thank all of you for what you did in Vietnam.

Jake Strickland.

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

## *Looking for.... the Huey pilots who safely got my butt out of Bien Hoa during the Tet Offensive*

My name is Sheridan K. Hawk. I am a retired USAF Lt Colonel, and a former HH-43 Air Force Rescue Helicopter Pilot and I flew rescue missions with Det. 6, 38 ARRS at Bien Hoa, Vietnam from Dec 1966- Jan 1968.

Just as I was about to rotate back to the U.S., around late December of 67 or early January of 68, Bien Hoa AB was hit by the NVA's Tet Offensive. Their rockets and mortars cratered our runway to the point that it was impossible for any fixed-wing aircraft to either takeoff or land. The only thing that saved the base that day, and consequently my butt, was the help we received from both Army UH-1 Huey's and AH-1 Cobras of the 101st Airborne Division.

I have only recently joined the VHPA and my wife Marilyn and I will be attending my first reunion this year in San Francisco. But ever since I safely made it home from that tour, it has been my wife's dream to meet any of the Army guys involved in saving this rescuer's life.

Now I know this letter won't be printed before we meet in San Francisco, and hopefully we will be able to use the Reunion Bulletin Boards to meet as many of you as possible while we are there. But if you are one of the men we are talking about here, please still try and contact me so one day, I can properly Thank You.

LTC Sheridan K. Hawk, USAF Ret, Fair Oaks, CA  
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

*Editor's note, LTC Hawk also gave me a phone number to use so if E-mail just isn't your thing, call me at [REDACTED] and I will be glad to pass the number on to you.*

fixed. Unless the tour happens to stop in your old AO, and you can take a "day off" from the tour (as ours did), you won't be able to accomplish what is probably the main objective of the trip - to revisit your AO. Some tours specialize and customize trips to Vietnam, so through one of them you might have the best of both worlds...an organized tour to areas you wish to visit. An independent tour of Vietnam is possible. The services and amenities in the larger cities are similar to any other and local day-trips can be booked through the concierge desk, which all high-end, Western-style hotels or resorts will have.

**Some Do's:**

- Do visit Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An and Saigon and experience all the usual tourist spots.
- Do visit your AO and experience the countryside and its people.
- Do experience the local food but don't expect it to be western-style.
- Do read and study about the Vietnam War and post-war Vietnam before you go.
- Do expect a range of emotions while on the trip, especially in the countryside.

**Some Don'ts:**

- I would not recommend a Halong Bay excursion.
- Don't expect to find anything left at your old fire base or even the remains of the huge, sprawling former America base from which you flew.
- Except for the made-for-westerners hotels and resorts, don't expect luxurious accommodations.

**Summary**

Each Vietnam Veteran will have their own reason(s) to return (or not to). I wanted to go and it was a wonderful trip. All my expectations were met or exceeded. (I never thought I would talk to a VC who probably had chucked mortar shells into my LZ.) The trip was all positive. For the locations we visited there were no awkward or stressful or uncomfortable moments. The Vietnamese people were all welcoming. I sensed no animosity. I came home more respectful of the Vietnamese people, and more a student of their culture and country, something which regrettably I was not 41 years ago. During the war it was the mission which counted, not the people or their country. (Except for the hooch-maid, I never met another Vietnamese person.) During the trip I realized that while in Vietnam during the war I hadn't even learned how to say "thank you" in Vietnamese. Given a pilot's mission and living circumstances we would not have had much of an occasion to use it, but I'm sure our hooch-maid would have appreciated my saying "cam on."

Would I recommend a return trip to a Vietnam Veteran? Definitely! The purpose and effect of such a trip will be different for each person, depending on one's Vietnam experience (the memories of which may be horrific) and what one wishes to get out of the trip.

All of us who return will be reminded of the extreme courage and sacrifices of a bunch of 20-something kids whom the Army trained admirably as helicopter pilots, then thrust into untenable combat situations to make, quite literally, life and death decisions, sometimes against very long odds. To this we responded with courage and valor, without, in most cases, any recognition and very little thanks. Go and honor those of us who did not return. Go and remember with pride our service to our country. Go and say "never again" to another Vietnam War.

*Dick Elgin*

# A tribute to F.M.F. CORPSMAN by Tom Eagles



For those of us who heard and used the term "Corpsman Up," it is a term that remains everlasting in both our hearts and our minds. The truth is that we ask and expect far too much from these young men and women who are called Corpsmen, and who like most young Marines were first exposed to the horrors of war in ways most will never forget. Those assigned to the Fleet Marine Forces Marines (FMF) lived the way we did and that of the units to which assigned, and they endured and participated in every hardship and disappointment, as well as the praise and glory awarded their units.

The truth is many in Vietnam were 18 years old and upwards, and were just as fearful of being hurt or killed as the rest were and like the rest failed to receive mail for extended periods of time. Like every other Marine in the ground combat units, Corpsmen dug their foxholes with other Marines, ate the same C-rations as the rest, felt the stings of ants, leeches, bees, and scorpions, and they also dug their own toilets like the rest of us and they also buried their cans, papers, etc., after cooking and eating their meals. They were just as tired as the rest and at times just as afraid of the unknown as was anyone else. However, Corpsmen still had to check on the sanitation of our locations, as well as tending to the minor and major injuries and ailments suffered sooner or later by all. And those ailments and injuries ran the gamut from diarrhea to coughs and colds, and from Elephant grass cuts which usually festered into very large and ugly sores, to the usual heat related issues such as heatstroke, and on to more serious mental and physical issues to include VD and other issues of that nature.

Our Navy Corpsmen did all that while still carrying the gear needed to care for a platoon or company sized unit as well as carrying their own gear and weapons. And often times they were told to help out the locals with their illnesses, injuries, or wounds, and that in turn meant using up precious bandages and medications, which the Corpsman had carried in his pack and medical bags for his fellow Marines. That then caused the Corpsman to pray or ask help from somewhere that he would not run short of needed medications and supplies, and just in case and when the next firefight, or mine explosion, or enemy mortars or artillery might happen upon his unit.

To ask the above of a young 18-22 year old FMF Corpsman, is asking much more than many in the field ever realized until much later and after the fact. After all, that Corpsman is thought by many to be an "expert" on wounds, or how to handle other major injuries, in addition to which medication might be needed and requested to be used for everything from fleas or hair lice to trench foot or crotch rot or pink eye. While every Corpsman that our units had in Vietnam might not have been quite as astute, courageous, gifted, and the logically-minded individuals we make them all out to be, I would love to have just one more time to shake their hands and hug them all, and to thank them all for that which they did for so many over the years, and especially for those units I was honored to be a part of.

*So this song is for you Doc,  
THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE, BRAVERY AND CARING*

Go To:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=ZH3PsWBZsaU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZH3PsWBZsaU)  
for the full TRIBUTE TO THE F.M.F. CORPSMAN ~  
sung by former Marine Sgt Carl Jones and the Homeland singing group.

Tom Eagles

E-mail: [REDACTED]

# TAPS

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Collecting TAPS listing submissions for the Aviator and the VHPA is a collective effort involving several people within the Association. The entries are submitted by our members, through our website, from the general public and now, more and more often through the outstanding work of Sammie Williams, the wife of one of our members. Sammie uses several Internet search engines tweaked to look for fallen Aviators. But no matter how the death notice comes into HQ, we run them all through our Association's records and then either print them in the Aviator and/or post the information to our on-line, member's only, Directory at VHPA.org.

Well it turns out that in this last Aviator, I somehow listed a member as deceased when in fact he is alive and well. So, if I scared you by listing our member Bruce A. Holmberg as deceased, then I need to apologize to you just as hard as I did to him. Our Bruce A. Holmberg is indeed doing just fine. In fact, in his response to my e-mail about the mistake, he was nice enough to write "Thanks for the e-mail and don't worry about the mistake. It's better to be alive and presumed dead than vice versa." He went on to say "I enjoy reading each magazine and will be looking forward to seeing the current edition when I am prematurely listed in TAPS". "If I happen to be afflicted by some sort of terminal illness one day where I have enough time to do a little planning

before that last flight; I may even take out a half page ad, to be ran upon my demise, with the caption, This time he really is dead!!!!!"

The poor man we confused with our member Bruce A. Holmberg was named Bruce P. Holmberg. Bruce P. was a West Point Graduate and a distinguished career Commissioned Officer who passed away in 2009; and all of his available information combined to make the entry an ALMOST understandable, but certainly not unforgiveable mistake. Fortunately, Sherry Rogers who runs our HQ office in Grand Prairie caught the mistake when she was working on updating the on-line Membership Directory. She figured out that someone who died in 2009, yet still kept his yearly membership current, probably wasn't the Bruce Holmberg we were talking about in our TAPS column. A little more research by Gary Roush confirmed that our Bruce A. was indeed alive and well, and that I had messed up big time.

Unfortunately Bruce A. Holmberg wasn't able to join us in San Francisco this year, but he knows that if he joins us next year in Louisville, Kentucky the beer will be on me. And if you were also upset by the mistake, then I'll buy one for you as well, all in a feeble attempt to make up for the mistake.

David Adams, Editor of the VHPA Aviator.

**AHALT III, Roy M. "Mick"** attended flight training with Flight Class 68-21/68-37. He flew Cobras in Vietnam with D Company, 158 Aviation Battalion, 101st ABN (1969-1970) under the Redskin call sign.

During Mick's Vietnam tour, he was given a Field Commission from Warrant Officer to 2nd Lt. Following Vietnam, he was assigned as a flight instructor at the Cobra school in Savannah, Georgia.

Mickey was killed in a car accident near his home in Bonita Springs, Florida on January 23, 2013. He graduated from high school in 1961 after growing up globally as child of a military family, and received his college degree from the Regis University in Colorado Springs, CO. After his military service he pursued a career in the field of banking. Mickey is the third generation of military pilots, his father was a bomber pilot in WWII and retired as Lt. Col in 1971, and his maternal grandfather was a fighter pilot for the French Air Force in WWI. All three men received distinguishing awards for their bravery and exceptional service.

His second wife, Carol, passed away only 8 months earlier from a sudden heart attack. He is survived by his Mother, two children from his first marriage and five step-children. A website has been set up in Memorial to Mickey; <http://ahaltahalt.wix.com/Roy-M-Ahalt-Tribute.com>. Please visit the site to leave stories, comments and pictures. In short Mickey will be missed by all who loved him dearly.

The above was sent to us by VHPA Member Robert Andrews of Vancouver, Wash-

ton. In his mail Robert said that "I was shocked to learn of Mickey's death in an auto accident, he was my close friend in Vietnam and we have corresponded frequently during the years since then. I will always picture him as that young pilot in Vietnam".

*Robert T. Andrews, Redskin 31  
Retired Army Helicopter Pilot  
Member of VHPA*

*E-Mail:* [REDACTED]

**ALBRECHT, Richard D. "Dick"** Attended flight training with Flight Class 60. He flew in Vietnam with the US Army Mobile (training?) Team (1963), the 335th Avn (1966-67) and the 2/17th Cav, 101 Abn Div (1971) under the Falcon 87 and the Banshee 67 callsigns.

Richard D. "Dick" Albrecht, a retired major, took his last flight Thursday, May 2, 2013, after a long illness. Richard was born in Columbus, Ohio, he then attended Ohio State and remained in faithful contact with his school buddies and the Ohio State football team. Dick and his wife, Betty, visited friends in Columbus for school reunions for many years.

After joining the Army, he served three tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and was shot down by enemy forces multiple times. Dick was a true American hero, and was awarded several medals for his heroism and meritorious achievements, including the Distinguished Flying Cross. Betty, the love of his life of 32 years, was by his side during his final takeoff. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather

and friend, he was always there when someone or something needed his attention. Dick was a man's man, a true leader with a heart of gold. He enjoyed making people laugh, entertaining children, playing his guitar and singing to the ladies in a local nursing home. Dick was an avid sports fan and a capable armchair quarterback. He played racquetball and golf with his buddy, Jerry Kennedy, until illness forced him to rest.

However, Dick's proudest accomplishment was his family and the service he gave to his country. He was preceded in death by one daughter; survivors include his wife, Betty Ervin Albrecht, two sons, three daughters, five grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren; and many friends. The family requests that donations be made to the Wounded Warriors Project, Box 758517, Topeka, Kan. 66675.

**ALPHONSUS, "Al" Joseph, Donahue III** Graduated flight training with the USMC.

"Al" Joseph Donahue Alphohsus III, 71, of Fort Lauderdale, FL passed away Friday, May 10, 2013. Al served his country proudly as a highly decorated helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War with the U.S. Marine Corps. He is survived by his loving wife of 33 years, Margaret Donahue; four children, seven grandchildren and eleven siblings. The family suggests expressions of sympathy be made to the Georgetown Chimes Alumni, c/o Jeff Carlson [REDACTED] Lancaster, PA 17603. An online guest book may be signed at [KalisMcIntee.com](http://KalisMcIntee.com).

# TAPS

## BUNTON, Joe Ed Attended flight training with Flight Class 71-8

Joe Ed Bunton, 65, passed away on April 26th, 2013 at his home in Palestine, Texas. Joe Ed was born on April, 17, 1948 in Palestine, Texas where he grew up and graduated from Palestine High School in 1966. After high school he enlisted in the Army in 1970 and served for 14-plus years. He fought in the Vietnam War and was the recipient of several medals and service awards including the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with Numerals 12 and the Vietnam Service Medal with 3 Bronze Service Stars. He resigned in 1984, after achieving the rank of Major and earning a Bachelor of Professional Aeronautics.

After the Army he began work for Allstate Insurance as an Insurance Agent. He then went into the oil field business working for Grey Wolf for 15 years and then Tesco for five years. He started working for Lone Star College in 2011 until present as the Director of Oil & Gas. Joe Ed married Phyllis Ann Harden on Aug. 24, 1968 in Palestine, Texas. They were happily married for 44 years. Joe was a member of Trinity Valley Community Church. He was passionate about his family, his country and being able to help others through his work.

He is survived by his wife, one brother, four daughters, 12 grandchildren and one great grandchild. The family requests that you honor Joe's commitment to educating tomorrow's workforce by making a donation to the Joe Ed Bunton Memorial Scholarship fund, the Lone Star College Foundation, 5000 Research Forest Dr., The Woodlands, Texas

**BURGESS, Leland "Lee" Heywood Jr.** Attended flight training with Flight Class 67-4 and 67-8. Flew in Vietnam with D Troop, 3/4 Cav in 1967-1968.



Leland "Lee" Haywood Burgess, COL, USA, Ret., age 71, of Birmingham, Ala, died March 16, 2013, in Birmingham. Burgess was born in Demopolis, Ala. and grew up in Demopolis and Evergreen. He was a great storyteller, and took joy in reminiscing about his childhood experiences in Alabama during the 1940s and 50s.

In 1960, he graduated from Evergreen High School where he was active in many organizations. Col. Burgess graduated from the University of Alabama in 1965 with a bachelor's degree in Industrial Management. He was a proud member of Delta Tau Delta where he

established many life-long friendships with his fraternity brothers. While at the Capstone, through ROTC, he was commissioned in the Army as a 2nd Lieutenant of Artillery. After college, Col. Burgess entered flight school at Ft. Wolters, Texas. In 1967, he received his wings as an army aviator at Ft. Rucker, Ala.

Later that year, he was deployed to Vietnam where he was assigned to D Troop (air) 3rd Squadron 4th Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi. Burgess served as a Scout Platoon Leader until his helicopter was shot down by enemy forces during the Tet Offensive in February 1968. Severely wounded, he was able to lead his flight crew members to safety where they were later rescued. Upon returning from Vietnam, Burgess obtained a master's degree in Business Administration from Auburn University. He later moved to Chattanooga, Tenn. where he continued his military service in the Tennessee National Guard and Army Reserve. After serving his country for over 30 years, he retired from military duty in 1995. During his military service, he received many service decorations including the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Air Medal.

In civilian life, Col. Burgess was in senior bank management for over 35 years in Chattanooga. He was the Executive Vice President and Cashier for Pioneer Bank and later served as the Director of Commercial Lending and Senior Vice President at First Tennessee Bank. Col. Burgess served the Chattanooga community in both professional and civic capacities. He was President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chattanooga Chapter of the American Banker's Association, a member of Chattanooga's Better Business Bureau, and a long-time member of the Mountain City Club where he served as President and held a position on the Club's Board of Directors. He was an Executive Board Member for the Cherokee Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, a member and past President of the Brainerd Lions Club, a member of the local Kiwanis Club, and a Tennessee Squire. Col. Burgess attended Brainerd United Methodist Church. He enjoyed the outdoors and was always ready for a fishing trip or a round of golf. He spent many Saturdays at Council Fire Golf Club where he was a member.

After retirement, Col. Burgess relocated to Birmingham, Al, there he attended Canterbury United Methodist Church and was a member of the Crawford Owen Class. He also devoted much of his time to his grandson, Charles, telling him war stories and building model airplanes. In recognition of

his patriotism and love of Alabama football, the University of Alabama honored Col. Burgess by naming him a Distinguished Veteran during a 2006 home game. Col. Burgess was an advocate of the Veteran's History project, established by the Library of Congress. His personal war experiences are recorded and can be viewed at:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/23304>  
and at:

[www.centaursvietnam.org/Roster/MyPage/mypageBurgess.html](http://www.centaursvietnam.org/Roster/MyPage/mypageBurgess.html)

Col. Burgess will be remembered for his faith, his loyalty and dedication to family and friends, his professionalism and character, his quick wit, his story telling, and his love of Alabama football. Col. Burgess is survived by his wife, Pamela Langham Burgess of Birmingham; two daughters and two grandchildren. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., the family requests that memorial donations be made to: Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, the International Myeloma Society or the Wounded Warrior Project.

**LEVERING, John W. "Walt" Attended flight training with Flight Class 67-5. Flew in Vietnam with B/229th Avn, 1st Cav Div (1967-68), the 145th CAB (1970-71) and the 334th AHC (1971) under the Silent Preacher and Killer Spade callsigns.**



In the early hours of Tuesday, April 23, 2013, Walt Levering ended his brave and long fought battle with leukemia. His devoted children and wife were by his side. Walt was born at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, in 1945, where his parents were stationed during World War II. Later, Walt grew up in Haddonfield, New Jersey, where he attended school, met his high school sweetheart, Karen Funston, and married her in 1966, after attending the University of Virginia. History repeated itself when Walt, then a United States Army Warrant Officer attended Officer's Candidacy School, also at Ft. Sill, and there learned he and his wife were expecting twins. The girls were born at Hunter Army Air Field in 1970, weeks before then Captain Levering returned to Viet Nam for his second tour as a helicopter pilot. He was proud to wear the same silver shoulder bars that both his father and grandfather had worn. Although he never spoke of the medals he was awarded for his service; among those was The Silver Star for exceptional bravery.

After living outside of Boston for 13 years, the love of The University and Virginia led to a new life in Charlottesville in 1989. The girls were then students at Mary Washington

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College and son, Ben, was in second grade. As was his way, he contributed his time and talents to local business and his fraternity, Theta Delta Chi. He helped found The Central Virginia Technology Council. His activities included the Charlottesville Aviation Luncheon Group, the Military Officers Association of America, TAS and others. He was most proud of his 12 year tenure on the Board of Piedmont Virginia Community College and served as President his final year. Humble, brave, ethical, patriotic, positive, adventurous and always smiling, describe Walt well. He had a thirst for knowledge. Always thinking of others first, Walt's "last mission" was to leave things in good order for his family. Never liking long good-bye's he slipped away quickly.

He is survived by his three children, one brother, one sister and three grand children. Interment was held at Arlington National Cemetery, memorial contributions may be made to the Walt Levering Scholarship Fund in the PVCC Educational Foundation, checks should be made payable to the PVCC Educational Foundation and mailed to PVCC Office of Development, 501 College Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22902. Friends may send condolences to the family at [www.hillandwood.com/](http://www.hillandwood.com/).

**MITCHELL, Michael W.** Attended flight training with Flight Class 69-47, flew in Vietnam with both the 195th AHC (1970) and B Troop, 1/9 Cav, 1st Cav (1971) under the Skychief callsign.

VHPA Life Member Michael W Mitchell, 65, passed away February 3, 2013 from lung problems related to exposure to Agent Orange. He was born and educated in Arlington, MA. Michael graduated in Flight Class 69-47 and served in Vietnam with the 195 AHC in '70 and B/9/1CAV in '71. Upon his release from active duty he joined and flew with the Massachusetts ANG. The skills he learned in Vietnam came in to play during resupply missions to hospitals cut off during Tropical Storm Larry.

Michael was interred at the Massachusetts Veteran's Memorial Cemetery in Agawam, MA with full military honors on February 12. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Cheryl and his brother, Peter

**MULLEN, Max H.** Attended flight training with USMC Flight Class 55-V, flew in Vietnam with the 20th SOS in 1967-68 under the Pony Express callsign

**VHPA Member MAX H MULLEN** passed away January 15, 2012 and was buried with full military honors at the Dallas-Ft Worth National Cemetery on January 22. He was born in

**Burr Oak, Kansas,** attended Lebanon High School and Kansas State University where he was a member of AFROTC, receiving a commission in the USAF upon graduation.

Max attended AF 55-V, receiving his fixed wing rating. One of the highlights of his 31 year military career was flying through the sound barrier in 1955. Max received a rotor wing transition in the early '60s and flew CH-3 with the 20 SOS out of Nha Trang, Vietnam and Udorn, Thailand (67-68.) He later transferred to the Army and flew in the reserves with the 300 AHC in Dallas-Ft Worth.

Survivors include his son, Keith and wife Barbara, daughter Barbara and husband Randy, granddaughters Anne, Martha and Melissa, grandson Ryan, great grandson Wyatt, sister Ardis and many nieces and nephews.

To all of us that flew with Max in the "Old 300" Max was one of a kind. He lived a fully life and had some great stories to tell.

**SMITH, Clarence "Clancy" William** Attended flight training with Flight Class 69-3, flew in Vietnam with the 48th AHC in 1969-70 under the Blue Star 206 callsign and again in 1972-73 with the 146th RR under the Vanguard 5098 callsign.

Clarence William "Clancy" Smith, II, age 65, of Covington, Alabama died Friday, January 18, 2013, at his residence. He is survived by his wife and the love of his life, Patricia Bradley.

Mr. Smith was born in Greenville, SC, he served his country a member of the United States Army where he did four back to back tours in Vietnam; two of them as a helicopter pilot and two as a pilot with Air America.

Mr. Smith is survived by one son, one brother, one sister, two aunts, and one sister-in-law. Sign the guestbook at [www.dothaneagle.com](http://www.dothaneagle.com).

**STUART, Roger "Tony"** Attended flight training with Flight Class 69-4, flew in Vietnam with the 108th Art Group (1969) and the 61st AHC in 1969-70

Roger "Tony" Stuart, born April 28, 1948 at Parks Victory Hospital in Napa, passed away at home in Napa on April 17, 2013, after a long, courageous battle with cancer.

Tony graduated from Napa High School in 1966. As a child, he was involved in 4-H raising steers, and over the years he continued to be involved as an avid supporter. Tony worked with his father on his family's prune orchard here in the valley as a youth, the beginning of his uncanny ability to figure anything out using his analytical nature and skills.

Tony served his country by joining the U.S. Army on Jan. 4, 1967. After basic training at Fort Ord, Calif., he went to OCS Artillery Prep followed by OCS at Fort Sill, Okla. On Nov. 21, 1967, he was commissioned to 2nd Lieutenant. He went on to Basic Flight School training at Fort Wolters, Texas, and Advanced Flight School in Savannah, Ga., obtaining his Rotorcraft ratings. On his 21st birthday, he was en route to Vietnam. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on Nov. 21, 1969, while serving with the 268th Combat Aviation Battalion Headquarters Company in Vietnam. At that time, he was one of the youngest commissioned captains in the U.S. Army. On Feb. 26, 1970, among his other commendations, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. After he returned to the United States, he taught at the flight school in Fort Rucker, Ala. Tony maintained his military ties through life memberships in both the CHPA and the VHPA.

After the military, he worked in Louisiana, flying helicopters offshore in the Gulf of Mexico. He spent the next three years working in Ecuador, flying in the jungles supporting oil exploration. He then flew from the tuna boats in the San Diego area and next taught at a flight school in Albany, Ore., teaching pilots to long line with the helicopter. This is where he met the love of his life and future wife, Toni. The next move for them was to the Salinas area, where Tony flew helicopters supporting oil exploration in the Western states. He also flew seasonally for the Mammoth Heli-Ski operation for several years, taking skiers to untouched ski areas.

In 1984, Tony started a helicopter business with a partner and began his career in the power line construction business, in 1992, he branched off and started his own business. He flew on jobs all over the United States, supporting new construction, line repair, fiber optic work and upgrades. In 1996, he went to work with Winco Helicopters as a minority owner and continued working with them until his passing. At one time, he was the company chief pilot, FAA check airman, held his 133, 135 ratings and his CFI license, and was an exceptionally skilled and talented helicopter pilot. Tony was also involved with Helicopters Association International, Utilities Patrol and Construction Committee based in Alexandria, Va., where he held the chairman position for six years.

Tony met and made many, many close, life-long friends over the years and in his travels, all of whom are heartbroken to lose him. Their outpouring of love and support has been beyond measure. It was hard not to love him. Tony is survived by his wife, Toni, of 33

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years; two sisters-in-law, three brothers-in-law, four nieces, two nephews and one sister.

Tony was always an optimist — a cheerful, fun-loving man with the most beautiful voice and laugh. He was determined, pragmatic, generous, loyal and a man of his word. To say he will be missed is such an understatement. There are no words.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to the family at [www.tolcaycemetary.com](http://www.tolcaycemetary.com)

**WRIGHT, John Joseph** Graduated flight training with Flight Class 63-2T, flew in Vietnam with the 335th TC Co (1965-66), the 242 ASHC (1968-69) and the 21st ASHC (1969) under the Innkeeper 6 callsign.



John Joseph Wright finished his earthly journey on Saturday, Feb. 9, 2013. He was born in Pennsylvania and lived a generous life with gusto and commitment that was tempered with just the right amount of compassion for everything he pursued. John proudly served his country as a major in the U.S. Army with two tours in Vietnam and Korea and over 25 years with Bell Helicopter. He was a loving and compassionate husband to his wife as they traveled the world for business and pleasure. Classic Meadow Farm was created by John's passion for animals and Donna's love of horses. His presence will be remembered and missed by many who are blessed to have known him.

Survivors include his wife Donna; one daughter, many brothers, sisters and their spouses and children. The family requests that you please consider gifts to the Alzheimer's Association, 2630 West Fwy., Fort Worth, Texas 76102.

**GRAEBER, Charles Robert** graduated flight training with Flight Class 56-8, flew in Vietnam with both the A/228 ASHB, 1 CAV (1965-66) and A/228 ASHB, 1 CAV (1968-69)

CW4 Charles Robert "Bob" Graeber U.S. Army (RET.), beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather, entered rest on Wednesday, April 24, 2013 at the age of 87.

Bob served his country honorably in the United States Army for 30 years. He served during World War II and completed two tours in Vietnam. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal and Meritorious Service Medal. Bob was a devoted husband and father and will be dearly missed.

He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 49 years, Dorothy D. Graeber and his daughter, Sherry Ellen Emerys. Bob is survived by one son, one daughter and many grand and great-children.

The VHPA was notified on Bob's passing in this letter from his daughter: To my Dad's many friends in the VHPA,

My father was killed in an automobile accident while visiting his home state of Texas on April 24, 2013. Daddy had just visited San Antonio when the crash happened, on a trip that let him visit all the places he once lived, and also many old friends along the way. Daddy had a life of adventure and except for

Notice of the passing of the following 30 Aviators were received by the VHPA during the production period for this issue. None of these men were ever members of the association nor were the notices of their death reported to the Association by a member of the man's family, or by a member of the VHPA. They were all obtained through an internet search. Therefore, we have posted the TAPS information we received on these men on their individual listings of the on-line membership directory maintained at VHPA.org. If you would like more information or if you are not able to retrieve the information on-line, call HQ for help (1-800-505-VHPA).

**AHARONIAN, Ajaron**, Colonel, USAF

**ANDREUS, Frank C.**, Colonel USAF

**BELINA, John L. ("Jack")**, Colonel, USAF

**BRANDER, Merle**, USMC

**CARROLL, Anthony**, Colonel, US Army

**CARSON, James T.**, Flew with HA(L)-3, Det-1 (1969-70) under the Seawolf callsign

**CEARNAL, Lee**, USMC

**DREW, Robert J.**, Colonel, US Army. Graduated with Flight Class 67-10, flew in Vietnam with D/1/10 Cav, 4th INF DIV (1967), A/4 Any, 4th INF DIV (1978-68) and 3rd BDE, 4th INF DIV (1968) under the Hawk callsign

**FENSTERMACHER David Lee**, US Army.

Graduated flight school with Flight Class 67-14

**FOCHT, Robert "Bob" Michael**, USMC

**HOUSE, Philip R.**, US Army Graduated flight school with Flight Class 69-46

**KELLEY, Edward Lamont** US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 69-38

**KUTCHMAREK Jene Roger**, USMC

**MARTIN, Joseph Eugene Sr.**, USMC

**McANDREW, Thomas "Tom"**, LTC US Army

**McDANIEL, Ted L.**, CWO US Army

**McINTYRE, William V.**, CWO US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 67-9

**MOORE, Leon Marion, Jr.** USMC

**NIELSEN, Kenneth G.**, LTC, US Army

**PEDERSEN Lloyd "Bud"**, LTC US Army

**PITTMAN, John Martin "Marty"** CWO US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 70-1 and 70-5

**PRICE, William G.**, Colonel, USMC

**SEVIN, Richard P.**, CWO US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 65-11

**SHORT, Robert E. "Bob" Elliott**, USMC

**SPENCER, Charles William**, US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 70-28

**WILEY, NOBLE J.**, LTC US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 62-8

**WINGO, Ronald Darwin**, CWO US Army, Graduated flight school with Flight Class 69-47

**WUTKIEWICZ, Sigmund "Siggy" John**, USMC

**ZABEL, John Henry III**, CWO US Army. Attended flight training with Flight Class 68-9 and 68-11, flew in Vietnam with the 334th AHC (1968-69) under the Raider 20 callsign.

his (pre-deceased) wife Dorothy, and his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren; he would tell you there was nothing he loved more than serving the USA as an Army Pilot.

Daddy was also an avid boater, fisherman and hunter. Since 1995 after my mother died, he moved aboard and lived on various boats traveling between Texas and the Bahamas. Daddy last lived in Bradenton, Florida on a little canal behind my home that emptied into Tampa Bay from 2003 until his death. At 87 Daddy could still tell you all the remarkable stories of his time in the military. Yet, after the service at Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery, one of his lifelong friends came up to me and said; I never knew your father had (medals). Daddy did not keep his accomplishments on his wall or in his conversations. One time Daddy told me that what he did during his service was just part of his job.

Soon I too leave aboard our Tayana 52' to sail around the world with my husband, Larry Green. This has been a lifelong dream and we leave the end of June. And it is with great sadness I share with you this news. Daddy was looking forward to attending several reunions this year.

Respectfully  
Charlene Graeber Green

# Flying In A Huey Time Warp.....By Art Jacobs

Can you imagine being able to again fly the same Huey you once flew in Vietnam? Even more incredibly, what would it be like if your son (who has heard all the stories and seen all the pictures) could ride in the back and see his Dad once more at the controls? Amazingly, I got to live that dream of a lifetime this past August!

From 1965 to 1967, a D Model Huey, tail number 63-08803, was assigned to the 15th Medical Battalion (Medevac), 1st Air Cavalry Division. It came to Vietnam on a ship when the 1st Cav left Fort Benning, GA for Southeast Asia. When the 15th Med got the first brand new H Models in 1967, 803 went to the 336th AHC and became "Warrior 11". After a crash landing, the aircraft went back to Corpus Christi, TX for repairs and then to Fort Benning, GA. In 1976 it went to the Massachusetts ANG where it flew for the next 18 years before being retired and becoming a static display at a NY museum. Amazingly, that aircraft is still flying today. After its circuitous journey back from Vietnam, it was lovingly rescued by the American Huey Organization in 2007. After painstakingly countless hours of work by some incredible volunteers scrounging parts and somehow finding donors and money to continue, 803 finally flew again in July, 2009 and is in better shape today



that it ever was! Its home is the old Grissom AFB in Peru, Indiana (an hour north of Indianapolis).

The American Huey Organization was founded by John Walker, a former USMC Vietnam helicopter pilot (Hueys and the CH-53) who not only fell in love with the Huey as the iconic symbol of the Vietnam War, but realized that the Huey will go down in history as the greatest helicopter ever built (it's the DC-3 or C-130 of helicopters)! John Walker is the impassioned and dedicated man who through sheer will power and an amazing

vision, is now planning to build The American Huey Museum at Grissom.

Between my two tours I was the Aviation Detachment Commander and flew with the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Devens, MA and Bad Tolz, Germany as part of a test group to have pilots organic to SOCOM. My last flight in Vietnam was in a Cobra on my second tour in December, 1971. The last time I flew a Huey was in 1978 as a member of the Indiana National Guard. So, when I was finally settled in the left seat, strapped in, yelling "Clear", and hearing the turbine wind up, I was at once trembling with joy and at the same time being sucked back in time to my first day as an AC in March 1968 at the tail end of the Tet Offensive outside of Hue.

My IP for the flight this past August was a young active duty Coast Guard helicopter pilot, Wade Hedinger. I asked him for a very special favor, I said that I was real curious as to how much I remembered and how well I could still fly. Would he mind if I tried picking up to a hover and flying the aircraft from the get-go. He knowingly smiled and told me I had the controls. The collective came up slowly with a bit of aft cyclic and my left foot ready on the pedals. I was absolutely amazed at how smooth the three-foot ascent was and that I was actually stationary over one spot. Wow. Okay, a pedal turn, a short hover forward, dip the nose, a little more collective, and we were flying! I could not believe how quickly old instincts and subtle control movements came back. Admittedly, I don't think I had ever concentrated so much since my final check ride at Fort Rucker. And, if the truth be known, my grip was so intense I think my fingerprints went right through those nomex gloves onto the cyclic. After a series of banks and even a little low level over the trees, my grip relaxed a bit and I did a cyclic climb and set up for an approach. Wade told me to shoot it all the way to the ground and I somehow did it smoothly. Man, three more days of this and I'd be ready for Afghanistan! (And, how many among us would have no trouble volunteering either?)

Words are simply inadequate to describe what it was like walking off that tarmac together with my son, and the way he looked at me. I promise you, that moment was one of the best ones in my entire life. One day long after we're all gone, my son will tell his grandchildren what he got to do, and what all of us did almost half a century ago. Priceless.



**The Cub Inn** is a 5,000-square-foot log cabin that offers unique charm that blends our love of aviation with the great outdoors. Located in California's Sierra Nevada mountains just 25 miles from Yosemite National Park, our five guest rooms sleep either two or four people, and they all feature a private bath.

Our guests start each day with a hearty country breakfast and are also invited to join us in the living room each evening to enjoy a glass of wine and a light snack. The Cub Inn is the life-long dream of husband and wife team, Piper Cub owner and pilot Charleen Beam and VHPA Life Member Joe Riley.

**Full details and booking information are available on our website:**

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*Art Jacobs*

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## IN DIRE NEED OF ASSISTANCE

We have closed three of our Chapters – Hawaii, Fort Rucker and New England.

All three closed from lack of interest, participation and/or leadership. I really would like to see some of you out there step forward and restart these Chapters and/or even start a new Chapter close to your home.

I know we're all getting older but we're not dead yet! How about it men – a little help would really be appreciated.

Jack Salm - National Chapter Laison - E-Mail:

*The VHPA and Chapters share information and guidance with one another for the mutual benefit of each other. All of our Chapters are separate and independently managed organizations not under control of the VHPA. The VHPA is not authorized to act as an agent or a representative for any of the Chapters nor are any of the Chapters authorized to act as agent or representative for any of the other Chapters or the VHPA as a whole.*

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## ALAMO CHAPTER

By the time you read this, we have enjoyed another delightful dinner meeting at the Barn Door Restaurant on 13 June. If you members missed it, you missed another good time with your buddies.

So, do NOT miss our next fun outing in Fredericksburg, Texas. We have a room block with special rates at the Hangar Hotel at the Gillespie County Airport on 13 and 14 September. This very interesting hotel was built from the ground up to resemble a 1941 WWII hangar, inside and out, except they added the luxury. The theme is reflected inside, with airplane memorabilia, model planes, USO history, and the romance of the 40s. Best of all is the Officers Club Bar inside. You must see (and hear) performance of the blind piano player and his dog, who are O. Club regulars.

Besides planning to carouse in the hotel Club, we also have a block of tickets for a fun live play, downtown in the Rock Box Theater. If you are an Alamo Chapter member, you have been receiving e-mails with details of this event. So you should know that you must contact an Alamo Chapter officer to reserve rooms or play tickets from the limited numbers in our blocks. If you have not done so, please do it right away. See our website: [www.vhpala.org](http://www.vhpala.org) for more details.

On 13 December, Al Flory will host a gala Christmas party. Details will be published in future Aviators, but put this on your calendar now.

*Jim Martinson, President*

## MONTANA CHAPTER

We have had four Montana VHPA reunions. One of the meetings was in Helena and three of them have been in Missoula. The most recent meeting was May 11th and while we don't have an "official chapter" here in Montana, we still have 20 or so VHPA members at our meetings (we're a pretty independent bunch up here). Anyone wishing to attend a meeting can contact me for full details, one of these days we'll get around to electing a true board of officers. Todd Brandoff, [REDACTED] e-mail: [REDACTED]

or by snail mail at Box 790, Lolo, MT

*Todd Brandoff*

## LOUISIANA GULF COAST CHAPTER

The Louisiana Gulf Coast Chapter met at Smilie's Restaurant in Harahan (New Orleans area), on April 25th. Our meetings are held at 6:PM in conjunction with the quarterly meetings of the Louisiana Army National Guard aviation alumni gatherings. Since the two groups have many of the same members the GCC found it advantageous to combine the meetings. Besides the usual libations and lies, and the real good food (no lie there), the only order of business for our group was to announce that 2013 GCC President Palmer Sullins had been overloaded at work due to a promotion (who still works?), and had also been tapped to take over another needy volunteer group, the Black Pilots of America, New Orleans Golden Eagles Chapter.

So Palmer and the GCC asked yours truly if I would resume the position of Chapter President until the end of 2013. Done. As much as I would like to be positive about the Chapter, it is a hard, cold fact that with the retirement of many of our local Guardsmen and the retirement of most of the offshore oil field civilian pilots who flew in Nam, we are a shrinking group. A lot of the retirees who previously worked the oil patch have left to spend their retirement years closer to their kids who may have moved away or to the original places from which they and/or their spouses came. But just like we did after Hurricane Katrina, we are a resilient bunch. We will continue to look under every log and bar stool for our comrades.

We will continue to gather to greet our fellow VHPA'ers and to toast our departed. We are the Gulf Coast Chapter. [vhpala-neworleans@earthlink.net](mailto:vhpala-neworleans@earthlink.net)

*Vic Lent, President*

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

The Georgia Chapter continues to hold a Saturday morning breakfast meeting every other month. We furnish speakers to high schools and colleges, Boy Scout Troops, other youth organizations, and civic groups who

want to learn more about the Vietnam War, from those who participated in it. Newnan High School teaches a course on the Vietnam War, and the Georgia Chapter provides our assistance to them whenever possible, like their Student-Vet Connect activities planned for this coming October.

Our May meeting featured the viewing of a video entitled "Fallen, But Not Forgotten". It's the story of Medal of Honor recipient Mike Sprayberry and a small team of knowledgeable volunteers who make a trip into the A Shau Valley, to search for the remains of three soldiers left behind in 1968. At the time the bodies were left behind, the plan was to go back into the area and recover them, but that never happened. The video shows the impact of that decision on Sprayberry and other members of the unit.

In addition to our meetings and educational efforts, the Georgia Chapter continues to assist other groups of Vietnam Veterans in the Atlanta area with their projects by providing Chapter personnel and other resources.

The bi-monthly breakfast meetings continue to be our principal activity. The membership who participate really enjoy the opportunity to get together with other combat helicopter pilots, swap war stories, discuss VA-related information, and maintain those bonds that were forged so long ago.

To those former Vietnam Helicopter Pilots in the Atlanta area, who would like to check us out and/or join our group, please see our web site at [www.ga-vhpala.org](http://www.ga-vhpala.org), for the next meeting date or contact me at [REDACTED] or via telephone at [REDACTED]

*Bill McRae, President*

## OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

Richmond, Virginia - Our Spring Fling was a bust due to the ceiling being in the tops of the trees.

Our Chapter is taking the summer off and our next meeting is scheduled for 13:00 hours on September 7th, 2013 at Legends Brewing in Richmond, Virginia. We also have planned a luncheon meeting and tour at Ingleside Plantation Winery in Oak Grove VA for Saturday, October 5th. We are planning to rent a bus for this one as there will be a few wine tasting opportunities along the way.

Here is a brief description of very good cause that originated here in Virginia by the son of one of our members, Mercy Chefs.

Mercy Chefs" is the creation and ministry of my eldest son (Gary). He was recently a senior executive chef in the Hilton Hotels complex, but now devotes his full time to feeding the souls and bodies of the victims and first responders at disaster locations.

Mercy Chefs currently has three self-contained mobile kitchens. Each as its own generator, water purifier, food freezers, and food prep kitchen. See the below link for their online site: <http://www.mercychefs.com/>

All donations are used for food and operation of their three mobile kitchens. All participants are unpaid volunteers supervised by unpaid volunteer professional Chefs from all over America. No salaries or compensation are paid to anyone. A large portion of their food and kitchen supplies are furnished and delivered on-site by Smithfield Foods, Sysco Food distributors and others. They seek no publicity and quietly go about their mission of feeding those in need at disaster sites.



They are currently on-site and feeding tornado victims in Oklahoma.

*Raoul LeBlanc, Lt. Colonel (Ret), U.S. Army Aviator*

To the left is a picture of Raoul and his two sons. I hope to see you all at the San Francisco Reunion this July.

*Don Agren, President*

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Ohio River LZ Chapter's 26th Reunion After Action Report.

The 66th Reunion of the Ohio River Chapter was held in Cincinnati on March 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. To say it was a resounding success would be an understatement! The Reunion was held at the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport where the management and staff of the facility went above and beyond to accommodate all our needs. The Hotel was festooned with flags and banners welcoming all. On the night of the banquet they presented a wonderful cake decorated with the chapter logo, a complete and unexpected surprise.

Registration opened mid-morning on Friday in the hospitality room, and quickly filled with people renewing old ties and making new friends, while we old bold pilots relived our younger years the wives plotted new missions for us all, some even included our attendance. The majority of the group formed up into a staggered trail formation, and with sometimes less than stellar navigation moved out to the river for a dinner cruise aboard a wonderful old paddle wheel river boat. A total of 91 people attended this event, taking over the entire lower deck for cocktails and a very nice dinner, while we cruised along the river enjoying the night lights of the city and each other's company. All returned safely to base camp in the hospitality room to close out a great start to this reunion.

Saturday began with a recon mission via a bus tour of the city of Cincinnati with stops at the museum and a great lunch at a German beer and brat house. It is rumored several steins of ale were consumed. The annual business meeting was called to order at 15:30 (3:30pm for those that can't remember) the meeting was well attended as the chapter will be hosting the 2014 national reunion in Louisville. It was determined and approved by the membership that the incoming slate of officers will hold office for two years to insure continuity through this important time. The following officers will serve through March 2015: President, Bob Hamilton. Vice President, Dennis Gartland. Secretary-Treasurer, Jim Miller. The incoming officers committed to more communication to the membership as we near the national reunion and solicited volunteers to make the effort a success.

The meeting was adjourned at 17:00. The crowning event of the reunion as always was the Banquet. It began with a cocktail hour and yet another opportunity to engage in conversation, and camaraderie. Once seated for dinner the colors were presented by the Boone County Sheriff's department, Kara Hamilton performed our National Anthem. Outgoing President Jack Mecham welcomed all to the banquet and introduced our special guests, including T.C. Freeman Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, and Major General (ret.) E.J. Mechenbier. After an unusually somber and moving tribute to the Missing Man and a thoughtful invocation by Rev. Steve Smith a very nice dinner was enjoyed by all. Major General Edward J. Mechenbier gave a highly motivational presentation to those gathered. He related his experience as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton and how it formed his life afterward. He is a wonderful speaker, a true hero and was able to hold the audience completely. Everyone there took away some insights. After Dinner Dennis Gartland's special ability to accumulate wonderful prizes was once again on display, as the door prize drawings, an annual highlight was completed bringing yet another sterling banquet to a close.

Sunday saw the 26th reunion brought to a close with breakfast and the departures of brothers in arms, dear friends, and their wives to their homes. Always an emotional time as we all want it to continue, vows are made to be back next year.

## ALASKA CHAPTER

The VHPA-Alaska Chapter held our second meeting and had a great turnout with two new members joining. We are finally getting things scheduled and plan a picnic June 29th and our next meeting, a steak night at the VFW on 15 August! We are also working out details with the Veterans Museum of Alaska putting together a Viet Nam Helicopter wall and volunteering to help staffing. We are even looking at a possible Halibut fishing trip this summer, stay tuned for big fish pictures! We have a great new logo and patches are being made. At least one member will be attending this year's National Convention, with many of us talking about next year.

We are also working to get members history recorded and are looking for a place to present and store the history. And the best news yet, we have VHPA members

in Fairbanks that are interested in joining our chapter which will make our Alaskan chapter members span over 360 miles! We are working out details and the initial meeting with the Fairbanks crew sometime the middle of June.

Last great news we have added two new board member, Highlander David Buirge, and a Chapter Chaplin, welcome Ken Cowles, Dust Off 59, a big job keeping this chapter straight with GOD.

Until next time .....

*Lynn Kile, President*

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER (NCVHPA)

The NCVHPA continues its work with the Committee for the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War and also with the Vietnam Corridor Committee in Washington, DC. We have set up many static displays over the spring. On March 30, we had the "H" model Huey at South Point Mall in Durham, NC in support of fund raising for the Wounded Warrior Project. April 15-17, found us in Pigeon Forge, TN, for their Military Appreciation Week with a static display of a Charlie model Huey and OH-58 at Dixie Stampede on Monday and a Vietnam veterans parade on Tuesday. Wednesday, we were set up in front of Wonder Works in Pigeon Forge for their patronage to view the helicopters. At the same time, the "H" model Huey, OH-6, Cobra, and a Mike model Huey were being displayed at Wayne Community College in Goldsboro, NC, for the display of The Vietnam Memorial Wall.

April 18-20, we helped Pickens, SC, with their military display at the Pickens Azalea Festival with a Charlie model Huey and OH-58. Saturday, April 27, we participated in the Panthers Signing Party in Charlotte, NC, following the draft during the previous week. A Charlie model Huey and an OH-6 were set up for fans to sit in and talk to our pilots.

Friday and Saturday, May 3-4 was Cape Fear Harley in Fayetteville, NC, with a Huey and OH-58 for Military Appreciation Day. Friday and Saturday, May 10-11, the "H"-model Huey adorned the front lawn of the Wilkes Heritage Museum in Wilkesboro, NC, where according to the Chairperson of the museum, they had the best turnout for any event they have ever had! Thursday, May 23, the "H" model was set up at Lenovo in the Research Triangle Park. Each year, Lenovo packs care packages for shipment to Afghanistan and Iraq. May 24 found us in Myrtle Beach, SC, for the Military Appreciation going on there, where we displayed a Charlie model Huey and an OH-58. After a rewarding Saturday, the two helicopters boogied to Washington, DC, for the National Memorial Day Parade where the wives of NCVHPA towed the Charlie Model, an OH-58, and an OH-6 down Constitution Avenue with our pilots in the cockpits.

All in all, an eventful spring and much to look forward to! July 4-8, we'll be in Pikeville, KY, with the Charlie model and OH-58 for a display in conjunction with the Vietnam Memorial Wall. In all the above events, we continue to dispense information about the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War and the dedication of the Vietnam Corridor at the Pentagon. Want to get in touch with us? Look us up at NCVHPA.org. You can link to our Face Book page from there.

*Brock Nicholson, President Submitted by B. Seago.*

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

There really isn't any real big new about our chapter, we are meeting every other month and everyone seems to enjoy each meeting very much. Our membership has grown by a factor of three since we started! Plus, HQ sends us the names of men perfect for our Chapter every month, so avoid the crowd, join now!

We are planning on having a family day at the Ft. Snelling Officer's Club this June; it will be a great way for our family members to get to know some other pilots that flew in Vietnam! If for nothing else they will have a chance to see if we have been telling real whoppers all this time!

We'll update everyone on this meeting and the election of new officers in the next Aviator.

*Ray Wilson, President*

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## FT WOLTERS CHAPTER

The next meeting will be September 7 at Logan's Road House, 948 N Loop 820, Hurst, TX. The Chapter EC will meet at 1130AM with the regular meeting beginning at 12PM. There will be a change of President Ceremony and Adam Steczko will take over. Lunch will take place during this time.

The Chapter is starting a new membership drive and plans to increase the number of Chapter Newsletters to obtain a lower postage rate. Our newsletter will now be sent to every member and potential member in a 100 mile radius of Ft Wolters.

The June 1 meeting was held at the site of the proposed National Vietnam War Museum at Ft Wolters. Over 35 members attended. Eleven new names were added to the Vietnam Replica Wall on the grounds of the museum. VHPA Member and NVWM Board Member was Master of Ceremonies. More about this in another article in this issue.

A great BBQ lunch was served following the end of the official business. We then met for a picture in front of the Main Gate at Ft Wolters. We had really bad hail over the last few days and unfortunately the (almost new) chin bubbles on both aircraft sustained severe "battle damage." Please plan to join us at our September 7 meeting.

*Mike Sheuerman, President (soon to be Past President)*

## SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER (Celebrate Freedom)

Late in April, the SC VHPA Chapter assisted the Celebrate Freedom

Foundation in conducting its last visit for the school year.

The SOaR team visited the Battery Creek High School in Beaufort, South Carolina, home of the Marine Corps

Air Station. Several middle and elementary schools also bused students to the activities. Representatives from Boeing, Pittsburg Institute of Aeronautics, Embry Riddle, Marine Credit Union and Colonial Life Insurance helped us in the day long presentation. In addition to 520 "Annie", shown in the all-adult picture, with some of our members and support staff, "Maggie" also made a grand entrance by circling the school and settling down inside the schools soccer field. We've named 520 "Annie" in honor of Ann Margaret. The large group photo was taken at the Claude A Erwin High School, located in Asheville, NC, I love the picture because it shows their huge JROTC class. Our visit to the battery Creek High School marked the last of 25 school visits we've made this year and we hope to make many more during the next school year.

We're getting ready for this year's Aviation Aerospace Science Summer Camp, in partnership with Clemson University. As you see we're a very active chapter and in order to continue at VNE speeds we need more help. Please email me [REDACTED] if you'd like to tag along and help us help the future leaders of tomorrow.

*Larry Russell, President*



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

**THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER AND THE HELICOPTER WAR MUSEUM (HWM):** The Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association established the HWM by retrofitting a forty-eight foot freight trailer into a mobile museum to tell the story of the role of helicopters and their aircrews in the Vietnam



We estimate that over 15,000 people have visited the Helicopter War Museum, shared the experiences of the helicopter aircrews, and learned of the Vietnam War from the veteran pilot Chapter members who serve as docents. This Memorial Day it was displayed with the Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall along with Bill McPherson's UH-1 "Charlie" Model Huey, and other veterans organizations at Veterans Park in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Over the five day event, the Memorial Day Extravaganza had over 20,000 visitors, complete with the Combat Veterans Association providing escort of the Traveling Wall and the "Ride the Wall" event, was lauded as a resounding success.

Chapter Members also co-hosted a welcome back reception for Colorado participants of "Honor Flight", an event honoring World War II and Korean War Veterans who traveled to Washington, D.C. where they attended a memorial service. Upcoming Chapter activities include: another Veterans event, "Rollin' With the Troops" in the city of Lakewood, CO. at the Lakewood Heritage Center on June 8, 2013. The Museum will be part of the Golden, Colorado 4th of July celebration and we plan to participate at the Rocky Mountain Regional Airport Air Show (the largest in Colorado) scheduled for August 16-18, 2013.

Chapter Officer elections were held at our monthly meeting at the American Legion Post #1 in Denver on June 15. The Chapter is also engaged in gathering oral histories from its membership and Chapter members are supporting the Gold Star Convention to be held here in Colorado later this year.

We continue to look for artifacts for the Museum such as a web belt with .45 cal. or .38 holster, a chicken plate with the cloth holder and velcro, an AK-47 (in most any condition because it will be rendered inoperative). Please contact our Chapter President Hal Bergdahl at:

[REDACTED] or Dale House, Museum Curator at: [REDACTED] with anything that you'd like to donate or loan to the museum. We are also looking for an OH-6 or Huey that we can display outside the museum. Any and all contributions or ideas are welcome. We may also be contacted through our mailbox at: [REDACTED]

*Hal Bergdahl, President Submitted by Dale E House*

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## VHPA OF FLORIDA

April and May have been very active and busy months for our Florida Chapter. In April we were a part of the local "Sun-N-Fun" fly-in at Lakeland, Florida. After erecting our GP Medium tent on March 30th we showed up in strength on April 9th through April 14th to man our OH-6, Memorabilia Tent, Sales Tent, and our coin operated "Little LOH" for the kids. We had beautiful Florida weather during the entire week and had hundreds if not thousands of visitors and got two new members.

Then on April 22nd we moved the OH-6, Sales Tent, and the "Little LOH" to Wickham Park in Melbourne, FL for the Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion along with the Moving Wall. Then on Thursday the 25th through the 28th we manned everything. Again we enjoyed beautiful Florida weather and again gained another new member.

On May 18 we participated in the Armed Forces Day Parade in Tavares, FL. We had two floats and were led by the Army Jr. ROTC cadets from the local High School which we followed with a golf cart pulling a trailer with the "Little LOH" and then followed by a truck pulling the OH-6. Everyone watching the parade sure cheered as we passed by and I probably heard



Taken at the Tavares Florida Armed Forces Day parade - (left to right) Tom Rinehart, Tom Rountree, Fred Breuche, Tom Frankenstein, Paul Steinke.

more "Welcome Home" calls than I have in the many years I have been home from my second tour.

On May 25th we were at the American Legion Post 152 in Tampa, FL to support their annual car show. Hundreds of people showed up and all came by the OH-6 and most had questions about its use in Vietnam.

Upcoming events include a June 1st meeting at the Hillsborough County Veterans Park to replace the pilot's windscreen on the OH-6 and to secure the tail rotor on the UH-1 on display in the Vietnam Memorial. June 20th we will have a Board of Directors meeting at the park.

Next we will be participating in the Brandon's 4th of July Parade in Brandon, FL starting at 10:00 am. Then on July 27th we will support the dedication of the Korean War Memorial at the Hillsborough County Veterans Park.

Our 21st Annual VHPAF Reunion will be held at the Sheraton Tampa East Hotel from September 26th – 29th. All VHPA members are invited to attend just visit our webpage at [www.vhpaf.org](http://www.vhpaf.org) and make your hotel reservations and register for the reunion.

*Tom Rountree, President*



Taken in late May at the Classic Car Show of American Legion Post 152 in Tampa, Florida. left to right) Tom Rountree, Bryan O'Reilly, Dick Fernandez, Steven "Smitty" Smith.

## WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

As we went to press on this update, our quarterly meeting was being rescheduled from July 13th to June 8th. The change was due to the delay of the annual Olympic Air show at the Olympia Airport to August. We will try to synchronize our summer meeting next year to coincide with the Air show.

We recently received news that chapter member Steve Vermilion has been inducted into the Dustoff Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony took place this past April at the Dustoff Association Headquarters located at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Congratulations Steve, you make us all proud to have you as a member of our Chapter! The complete induction citation can be read by going to our chapter web site at: [http://vhpa.org/dustoff\\_hall\\_of\\_fame.htm](http://vhpa.org/dustoff_hall_of_fame.htm)

We still plan on holding a membership meeting in Eastern Washington later this year. Details will be posted on our website. The chapter "challenge coin" approved by the membership during our last meeting, has been ordered. We anticipate that they will be available for purchase at our next meeting. The cost will be \$10.00 per coin.

Finally, several of the chapter members were expected to attend the VHPA National Reunion in San Francisco. Although too late to post to this edition, we are confident that a good time was had by all and



look forward to the "sit reps" from those in attendance.

*Don LeMaster,  
President*



Front



Back

## SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER

The South Missouri Chapter of the VHPA's second quarter meeting is in St. Louis area scheduled for 8 June, we will carry the information about the meeting in the next issue of the Aviator. There we will unveil our new Chapter Logo for everyone to see.

Our third quarterly meeting (planned for August 2013) will feature election of new officers. If you are interested in a chapter leadership position, email me, (Russ Emory) at: [REDACTED] Full details of the third quarterly meeting will be posted on our website: [www.vhpasmo.org](http://www.vhpasmo.org) as they are finalized. As I've mentioned previously, we have members living in adjoining states and, if you don't have a chapter in your area, the South Missouri Chapter will welcome you.

This past week has been difficult with the tornadoes and the devastation that has taken place in Moore, Oklahoma our hearts go out to people in the storm area. The South Missouri Chapter also wishes to express our sincere thanks to those serving our great country today, and to all veterans who have kept our country free.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our Annual Reunion in San Francisco.

*Russ Emory, President*



Photo taken at their 8 June 2013 meeting at the Holiday Inn in St. Louis, Missouri  
Back Row, Left to Right: John Sorensen, Paul Harvey, Terry Wilund, Wayne Watson, Harold Clark, Jeff Pepper  
Middle Row: Bill Marcander, Lew Phillips, Ed Sloan, Susan DeWitt, Jane Emory, Glenna Harvey, Tony DeBello, Roger Caffery, Joe Finder, John Wilkinson, Duane Sink  
Front Row: Russ Emory, Kim Phillips, Karen Wilkinson, Linda Finder, Bill Thompson, Carl Muckle and Tom Connolly not pictured.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER



Members of the NAVHPA salute the fallen.

This has been a busy spring for the North Alabama Chapter. In December we voted for new officers. Les Haas was elected President. The other Chapter officers elected are Ralph Weber, Director at Large, Marshall Eubanks, Director at Large, Sam Maki, Secretary and Sandy Weand, Treasurer. The NAVHPA is approaching 50 members! If you know any VHPA-eligible gents in the north Alabama area, please invite them to contact Les Haas at the number on the Chapters page.

The Events Committee presented a Board approved plan to get more members involved with the Chapter activities. We are going to have a quarterly function spearheaded by a volunteer team leader. He will come up with a function and hopefully be assisted by other volunteer members to make the function happen. Sam Maki is going to handle the 1st quarter. Don Bisson will take the 2nd quarter. The 3rd and 4th are too far off for the moment.

The NAVHPA participated in the second annual Vietnam Vets Welcome home on 29 March, 2013. Over 15 chapter members took the day to remember and say Welcome home to fellow Vietnam Vets. There was about a 1,000 folks in attendance and plenty of them crawled up into the Huey to get that picture taken in our newly restored UH-1C, affectionately known by one of its Viet Nam call signs as Buccaneer 3, or simply Buc 3.

It appears that we will go to a once a month restoration work day for awhile. Sheet metal work has to be accomplished before some items can be put back on the helicopter. Les Haas has the back wall troop seats finished. We are down to just working the interior of the helicopter. There is a full time sheet metal man completing the finishing touches around the windshield area. The seat railings and seats are installed. There is a slight problem. One of the windshields got cracked. It will be taken care of at some point.

The Chapter plans to display Buc 3 at two schools in May, Endeavor Elementary and Buckhorn Middle Schools. We will have volunteers to get the aircraft to the schools and stay with the aircraft to assist the children and teachers in and out. Marshall Eubanks is going to have cards made up with facts explaining the Huey and Vietnam, so we will have that information on hand to explain to the visitors. Les Haas, Chapter President, mentioned having a map of Vietnam showing where all the members spent their tours.

*Les Haas/President*

## CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH (CCN)



The 11th Annual Armed Forces Day Mud Run in Rancho Cordova was a new event for us and we enjoyed watching all the people running and climbing hurdles on a beautiful day. It was inspiring to see the young group of more than 50 future Marines and all the others who paid to get muddy and beat up in this 2-5 mile run (runner's choice) to raise funds for the Wounded Warrior Project. Our Huey was looking good on display front and center for all to see and learn about. On that beautiful day, five proud CCN members were kept busy explaining about the Huey and what we did with it in Vietnam.

We then attended the 'Vettes for Vets fund raiser/all Corvette car show on 26 May at the California Auto Museum in Sacramento. Proceeds from this nice car show go to veterans' organizations, and for the third year, we were invited to put our Huey on display. There were about 60 custom and stock Corvettes from 1953-2013; representatives from USMC, USA, CA ARNG, USCG, VFW and the VA were there too. Our Huey and the show's 50+ Corvettes dating from 1953 to 2013, drew a crowd of at least 400. Everyone got a chance to sit in the Chapter's Huey and have their photos taken. The CCN members in attendance had a good time sharing stories and selling chapter T-shirts, golf shirts, hats, jackets and cozies.

The California weather is improving and we have just received more parts, so we can begin working on the Huey again, plus we will be prepping the MOC for the reunion in San Francisco (not 'Frisco). The MOC is undergoing a leak repair to her axle seal and the pickup underwent a Ford brake recall checkup at no cost. Now we are prepping the MOC and our inventory for the reunion in San Francisco (not 'Frisco), you're invited to help us on 29 MAY, 11 JUN and 25 JUN, 0900-1500 hrs.

CCN members are also asked to sign up to help with the MOC clean up and inventory prep, as well as to volunteer for the reunion Vendor Room and MOC duty. More guys helping with both areas will mean less time for each of us. Contact Ken Fritz [REDACTED] or 916 768 1675.

CCN will have its annual business meeting and vote on new officers in San Francisco (not 'Frisco), date, time, and location will soon be announced. VHPA-CCN Members: Please be there. Your input is critical for some very important decisions affecting the direction of the chapter. More details will be sent to you before the reunion.

*Ken Fritz, President*

## From VHPA Member Doug Moore.

The March-April edition of our VHPA magazine (*A Look at the Lighter Side of Vietnam*) was a great one. I enjoyed some of the funny sayings about pilots and aviation and it made me think of something I've had on my desk for years and have seen in many different forms. To me it seems that as our group is getting a little more senior, we should all enjoy it.

## MUSINGS OF AN OLD HELICOPTER PILOT

You'll often see them walking through a PX or through a military medical facility. You'll see them at the Officer's Club bar or walking through the terminal at a busy airport. All have tell-tale signs of what they've been; a brisk, young-old look of efficiency, regardless of age. They stand tall, look confident, and smile a lot.

Their heads are on an eternal swivel and nothing passes their close scrutiny, whether it's a pretty woman or a passing aircraft. If you look closely when they've seen an aircraft flying by, you'll see a longing in their eyes because they're remembering the old days and wishing they could be sitting in the front seat again. And when you see them standing alone, there's often a faraway look in their eyes; the expression of men who've seen the faces of war far too many times.

When a group of them get together, they usually become quite loud and boisterous and they often speak a coded language that others don't understand. They talk about VORs, ADF, engine EGT, and the difficulty of getting into a tiny LZ when the weather was hanging in the trees and the clouds were filled with mountains.

They remember the old Huey helicopters, the "B" models that were their work horses for such a long time. Then the "D" and "H" models with more power and the lift needed to get out of tight LZs without having to pray all of the time.

They have experienced the loneliness of the sky and felt the rush of danger far more times than they can remember. They have great respect for something called turbulence and understand what it can do to a flying machine. They know what it's like to fight for self-control and what it takes to discipline one's own senses when the sky around them is filled with enemy tracers.

They understand why someone once quipped, "Flying is hour after hour of monotony and boredom, punctuated by a few seconds of stark

terror." While they might chuckle when someone makes that comment now, it doesn't amuse them because it reminds them of buddies who didn't make it.

These men are rugged individuals and masters of their own destiny, but they easily bond with others who have shared common experiences. On occasion, others have accused them of being overpaid and oversexed, but they have an air of confidence about them knowing their country once entrusted them with flying equipment costing millions of dollars and countless numbers of lives.

At times, some might even appear to be reverent because they've watched the Asian sky turn purple at dusk and seen the snow crawling slowly down the mountainsides in Germany. They've seen the mighty Mekong meandering its way through a vast rice paddy called "The Delta" in Vietnam and have seen up close the incredible beauty of mystical mountains with names like Ranier and Fuji.

They've watched stars and satellites streaking across the night sky when most everyone else was asleep; they've seen the deep blue of outer space; and felt the palpable force of the heavens. They've marveled at sun-streaked evenings, pitch black nights, and towering cumulus clouds.

They've seen the Northern Lights, the Southern Cross, the vast wilderness of star filled nights, and horizontal rain. They've learned to accept the challenges of everyday life; realized a complete removal from earthly attachments; and reveled in a sense of being totally suspended in space.

Only pilots get to experience mind-boggling moments of grandeur like that and that's why they stand tall and smile a lot, even when no one else is watching.

Doug Moore

Dust Off 77 (64-65), Dust Off 156 (68-69)  
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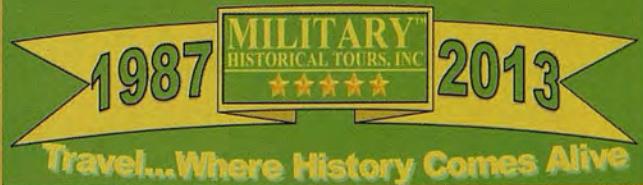
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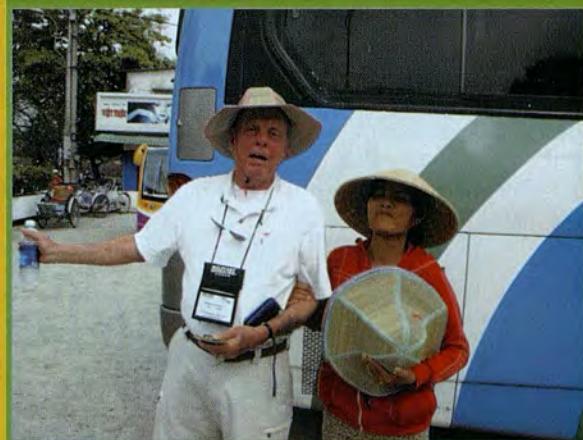
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*Above: In the Chu Chi Tunnels during a Rotorheads Return. Right: Some guys look better in hats than others, this Marine Heli pilot spent the one dol-lah!*



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# SHIPPING WARS



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## An offer from the Producers of the TV Show Shipping Wars

by the Editor of the VHPA Aviator

Last summer a city in Minnesota was preparing an AH-1 Cobra that was originally assigned to my Vietnam Cav Troop for permanent display, but they were still missing the stub wings and the weapon pods. Quickly a call went out through my Troop's "Alert Roster" to see if any of us could help them out. So naturally I called a couple of "Expert Scrounger's" that I knew through the VHPA and before you know it, I had located the parts they needed. Man, how I love you guys!

Of course, once the owner agreed to release the parts, I now needed those Cobra wings, rocket pods and TOW missile launchers shipped to their new home. Now I'm a big fan of the A&E TV show Shipping Wars and I knew the company featured in the show, UShip.com was based right here in Austin. A quick call to UShip led me to the e-mail address of the producers of the show (Megalmedia Productions), not

surprisingly, also based here in Austin. Thinking that the story of my shipment would make for a great episode of the show, I fired off a "To Whom It May Concern" e-mail to them outlining the story (Vietnam Cobra- really cool weapon systems – even cooler Vietnam Cobra Pilots – a Dedication Ceremony scheduled for Veterans Day in 2012 etc.) and asked if they would be interested in covering the story in an upcoming Shipping Wars segment.

Honestly when it I heard back from them it was like hitting the jackpot. Not only were they interested in running the story, but it even turned out the Associate Producer who took the project over is the daughter of one of our Members and is very familiar with both the VHPA and the work we do.

Unfortunately, things just didn't work out when it came to covering my shipment; shooting schedules, time constraints and parts accountability problems make filming the project just too unworkable. But I'll never forget the way she closed her last e-mail to me - "Please keep us in mind if you ever hear of another such shipment, honestly I would love to cover the shipment of an entire Vietnam Huey to her new owners". "You guys are such great men and I really want to honor you, and especially my father, by doing this for you". So why am I relating all this to you? Mainly because she has just asked me to tell the entire VHPA about her offer. Megalmedia will be shooting through the end of September of this year and she is hoping that one of you out there has a project in the works they can help with.

So how about it? Has your Vietnam Unit been contacted about sponsoring the display of one of your old aircraft? Is your VHPA Chapter trying to get a non-flyable Huey released to you? How about your VFW or American Legion post, do you have anything in the works that might fit this idea? If so let me know, either through e-mail: [Aviator@VHPA.org](mailto:Aviator@VHPA.org) or by calling me at [REDACTED]



You need to know that you might not get any break on your shipping rate and although UShip.com is pretty competitive when it comes to shipments like this, Megalmedia usually doesn't pay any of those costs. But you, your donors and your organization will all get some great publicity before this is all over. All I ask in return is that you mention the VHPA on the television show, and that you know that you owe me a story to run in the Aviator about your adventure!



### The Sky Behind Me

The Author, Byron Edgington flew at Camp Eagle with A Co. 101st AHB, under the Comanchero 23 callsign in 1970-'71 - The Sky Behind Me is memoir of his forty-year aviation career. Edgington logged 12,500 hours in 20 different aircraft. This is the story of his life from Vietnam to herding bears in Alaska, spotting tuna off Peru, counting power poles, crossing O'Hare

International at rush hour in a JetRanger, flying more than 3,000 medical patients in Iowa, 2,500 aerial tours of Kauai and serving in Guard units in three states - It's all in the book.



Byron in January of 1971, between missions on the runway at Khe Sahn. Most likely taken by his crewchief, Gil Alvarado.



**The Sky Behind Me: A Memoir of Flying & Life**  
(\$17.95 – 301 pages) By Byron Edgington,  
ISBN: 978-1622490370 is available at your local book  
store, Amazon or other on-line book suppliers.

David Adams, Editor of the VHPA Aviator  
and secret admirer of Scrounger's everywhere.

# Old Scout Pilots Fly Again

by Steve Pullen

After all these years many of you have probably wondered if you could still fly a helicopter given the opportunity. I'm not talking about in a simulator or a remote control job. I mean a real helicopter like you flew in Vietnam.

Recently, my close friend Don Bullard and I had that opportunity but let me give you some background first. I first met Don on 3 January 1971 when he joined B Troop 2/17 Cavalry 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). Don was on his second tour and I was on my first. As he was already OH-6A qualified he joined me in the Scout Platoon. We became great friends and it hurt to say good bye on 30 May when I completed my tour and returned to the states. We lost contact when I departed.

Shortly after I departed, Don was wounded. After hospitalization he was medically retired from the Army. Since leaving the Army Don has been a very successful insurance broker.

I returned to Vietnam for my second tour and flew scouts with F Troop 4th Cavalry, 1st Aviation Brigade. I was wounded and as a result of my wounds I was medically removed from flight status. I stayed in the Army retiring after 31 years of service.

After a 21 year hiatus, Don and I renewed our friendship when we happened to meet by chance at the VHPA Reunion in Philadelphia.



Don Bullard (L) and Steve Pullen pose in front of their new best friend, OH-6 N369V

While at the recent Orlando VHPA Reunion, Don and I talked to a VHPA member who had a friend who had just flown an OH-6A somewhere in Alabama. Don did some checking on line and located the company and the owner. The owner uses the OH-6As to inspect power lines. I got in contact with the owner, a long time VHPA member and we agreed on a date for Don and me to come down and fly one of his OH-6As.

On the day we arrived we were greeted by the owner and introduced to the pilot that would be flying right seat with us. He was a very nice young man who had flown UH-60 combat missions in Iraq. The pilot told us that the OH-6A we would be flying today was also a Vietnam veteran. During our pre-flight inspection we noticed many patched bullet holes in both the tail boom and engine compartment.

We both got 30 minutes of left seat time. Don having been an instructor pilot in the LOH went first. He wanted to hover around and shoot approaches. I think he surprised himself at how easily flying came back to him. I rode in the back while Don flew and I flashed back to Vietnam several times during the flight. At the end of his 30 minutes we switched seats. I wanted to fly fast and low just above the trees.

My time flying rushed by and soon I heard the pilot's voice in my earphones say "would you like to hover over to the parking spot and set us down"? During primary flight school hovering was initially difficult for me. On this day, I found the hover button very easily and sat the LOH down near and somewhat aligned with the parking spot. I think we surprised the pilot on how well we both flew.

After shut down, Don and I congratulated each other on successfully doing something we had both wanted to do for a very long time. It is very hard to believe that after 40+ years we could still start, take-off, fly, hover, land and shut down a LOH. I guess you never forget some things.

My advice is, if you have the opportunity to fly a helicopter...Do it. I cannot express in words what this experience meant to me. I had always wondered that if I ever got to be on the controls of a helicopter again, could I still fly and hover? I'm sure Don had the same questions. Those two questions have now been answered for both of us and we are now looking for new challenges.



DPMO recently posted the name of Specialist 5 John L. Burgess, USA, from MI, listed as KIA/BNR on June 30, 1970, in South Vietnam. His remains were recovered April 10, 2012, and identified September 26, 2012. Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Michael B. Judd, USN, from OH, is also now accounted-for. He was listed KIA/BNR on June 30, 1967, in South Vietnam; his remains were recovered June 25, 2012, and identified February 27, 2013. Major Howard V. Andre, Jr., USAF, from TN, and Major James E. Sizemore, USAF, from CA, were both listed as KIA/BNR in Laos on July 8, 1969, while flying an A-26A on a night armed-reconnaissance mission over Xieng Khoang Province. Their remains were recovered June 1, 2010, and identified on March 25, 2013.

The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 936. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of remains repatriated from the Vietnam War to 999. Of the 1,647 missing and unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam—1,276 (VN-469, VS-807); Laos—311; Cambodia—53; PRC territorial waters—7; 450+ over-water losses are among 630 DPMO lists as No Further Pursuit.

**OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM:** JPAC launched an Advance Team on May 10th to make preparations for the main body that arrived to conduct operations on May 20th. The plan is to conduct recovery operations at five sites, plus one underwater recovery, concluding on June 22nd, meaning three RTs and two Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs) working at five different locations in southern provinces.

**OPERATIONS IN LAOS:** Another Joint Field Activity (JFA) in Laos that began on April 26th are due to conclude in June 15th. Four Recovery Teams (RTs) are conducting excavation operations at four separate sites.

Steve Pullen

Once known as Banshee 11 and later as Centaur 11  
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

# So Others May Live

a story about Ron Current

by Terry Garlock

Some of our men and women in the armed forces do things in a war that would steal your breath, if you only knew. As the years pass, how can you tell who they are when you rub shoulders as neighbors or co-workers? Well, you can't. One example is Ron Current, Challenger 604 Chief Pilot for Printpac.

Ron and I met in the Army a lifetime ago in 1968 when he was fresh off an Iowa farm. We became buddies enduring the rigors of US Army helicopter flight school. Vietnam was a helicopter war and during that conflict our military would need about 40,000 rotary wing pilots. Even so, flight school was tough and about 60% washed out for one reason or another. Ron and I were two who survived to graduate from our class.

He wanted to fly the sleek new helicopter gunship, the Cobra, so naturally the Army sent me to Cobra school and sent Ron to become a Dustoff - air ambulance - pilot. I speak to high school students every semester on The Myths and Truths of the Vietnam War. One question I ask them to think about is this: Why was the seriously wounded rate three times higher in the Vietnam War compared to WWII where the death rate was nearly the same? Sometimes they get the answer – because Dustoff saved so many who would have died in WWII.

For grunts on the ground in the filth of a remote jungle, it was a great comfort to know if they were hit Dustoff would pull out all the stops to pick them up and deliver them within an hour to doctors and sterile operating rooms.

One of my missions as a Cobra pilot was gun cover for Dustoff, and I saw their work personally. Sometimes they would approach the LZ low-level at about 100 knots, zip across the treetops into the open, blow past the landing spot, kick the tail to the right and lay the aircraft over on its side while pulling lots of pitch to stop it quick on a max cushion of air, then settle into a hover and set the skids down with the tail toward the enemy if known so they'd have to shoot through more of the aircraft to hit the crew. Ron calls that maneuver a button-hook, partly to make it harder for the enemy to hit them as they flew by, partly for fun. They had other maneuvers to show off and to keep their flying skills razor sharp. In a region of Vietnam far away from Ron, I would be picked up in a clearing myself by Dustoff after being shot down and badly hurt in the crash. I am one of the thousands who wish they could find the Dustoff crew that picked them up, just to say thanks.

Dustoff didn't always have an LZ to land in. The jungle was thick, often requiring Dustoff to hover and drop a jungle penetrator on a hoist down to ground troops as much as 250 feet below. When the hoist cable showed up red as they dropped it to nearly max extension, sometimes Ron had to nestle the aircraft down into the trees to get the penetrator low enough to pick up a patient, rotors whacking small tree limbs while the crew hung out the sides with a hot mike calling clearance on the very sensitive tail rotor. Hoist missions were tense because hovering takes complete concentration; keeping the aircraft stationary is not easy, especially long enough to drop the hoist, load the patient then bring them up slowly to avoid further injury. They might have to stay in a hover to lower the penetrator and bring up another patient again and again. The tension of hoist missions was high, Ron poised to make a snap decision if enemy rounds whacked through the aircraft or the windshield exploded, ready to cut the cable and skedaddle if a patient was not yet on the hoist, ready to grit teeth until the patient was on board if they couldn't cut the cable. Add to the mix a hoist at night, wind that

played havoc with a high hover or weather that screwed around with visibility and you have a memorable event.

Dustoff pilots by policy were not permitted to make a pickup without gunship cover if enemy contact was very recent; Ron and others did it anyway. Their motto was "So Others May Live" and they took it seriously. They were based a few days at a time in forward areas

to be closer to the allied ground units, so their missions were by design short ones. They staged crews in first-up, second-up and third-up so the freshest crew got the call first and the others rested until they moved to first-up when a crew was gone on a mission. But the gunships came from a different area, sometimes not close enough to hook up quickly, sometimes socked in by weather while Dustoff decided to fly anyway, and Ron involved his crew in the decision to make a pickup in a hot area without gun cover because their butt was on the line, too. Whenever they picked up wounded, the trained crew in the back worked feverishly to stabilize traumatized young men while bodily fluids covered the floor and dripped into the aircraft guts under the floorplates where it would fester in the heat no matter how many times the floor was washed. The crew would advise Ron in-flight on head wounds or other specialties which might determine which hospital location was best. You can imagine the tension that must build doing this day after day with wounded screaming just behind your seat as you fly as fast as it would go to the hospital pad, sometimes quietly absorbing the deep disappointment of the crew when one of their patients died in-flight.

Taking enemy fire was an occasional surprise but maybe the tension of waiting for it every day was even worse. How do young men deal with the pressure? Well, they certainly didn't hold hands in a circle and talk about their feelings, but they did drink too much, and they scarfed each other. Scarfing was hearing a Dustoff call on the radio when you were closer to the pickup than the assigned pilot, diverting flight and arriving first to scoop up the wounded. If scarfing sounds like the sordid competition you might see between ambulance companies racing one another to the scene of a car wreck, well, it isn't because . . . you see . . . well, OK, it's the same thing! But it was competing to get the patient to the hospital as quick as possible, and it was fun! Ron tells a story about when he set himself up to be scarfed. At lunchtime one day when he was first-up, he asked his second-up buddy Jay Brannon, to yell at him if a call came in while he grabbed a quick sandwich; Ron was expecting a follow-up call from a morning mission. A call did come in but instead of yelling for Ron, Jay found a co-pilot, took Ron's crew and flew the mission himself. Frustrated that he had been scarfed, Ron monitored the radio and learned Jay had been shot down on approach to the LZ. It was a bad one, Jay



Ron Current standing at his unit's RTO Shack in Phan Thiet.

went in upside down, the main rotor cartwheeled off to parts unknown and the rotor mast buried several feet into the ground. Ron wanted to fly out to help but Major Rose had taken the last aircraft to the scene. It did not sound good for a while, then the radio chatter said all the crew got out of the wreckage and away from the aircraft, but were still on the ground. One had a broken leg and the rest were just cut and bruised. There was no fire, amazing luck.

Gunships were pounding the area and the crew were keeping their heads down. Major Rose circled over their position thirty minutes when he finally decided not to wait any longer for a break in enemy fire; he went in to make the pickup under heavy fire and with lots of gunship activity. They did find an LZ to land in and made not only the pickup of the crew, but the patients that the original mission was called in for. They were back in the unit area about an hour later after taking the wounded, now including Ron's crew chief, to the Cam Ranh Bay hospital. Ron met them at the flight line. Jay's close call was overwhelmed by his pure joy at scarfing Ron as evidenced by his big grin. He lorded it over Ron for days when they gathered for evening cocktails.

When Ron Current arrived in Vietnam, he knew just enough to stay alive if he learned fast. By the end of his one year tour, he could confidently make that helicopter do things new pilots only dreamed of. On his flight home Ron sat behind a pretty girl on the flight from Seattle to Denver where he would catch a connecting flight to Des Moines. She asked him where he was going and he told her he was on his way home from Vietnam. She suddenly didn't want to talk any more.

The war was not popular, and some people believed the anti-war left when they said our troops were baby-killers. Maybe Ron could have taken the time to tell her that he flew Dustoff in Vietnam, and that he had mastered flying the aircraft in difficult conditions. He could

have tried to tell her he was proud of being part of an operation that saved a whole bunch of lives. Maybe if he had been able to find the right words she might have understood what an important part of his life the last year had been.

But I doubt it.

*Terry Garlock lives in Peachtree City, Georgia.*

*His e-mail address is:* [REDACTED]



*Terry posing on an elephant skull in Vietnam, 1969*

*Ron Current lives in Mableton, Georgia. His email is:* [REDACTED]

*Editor's Note: The above story was written by Terry for a corporate newsletter that his old friend Ron Current now flies for. It is also a large part of Ron's more complete story in Terry's new book, *Strength & Honor: America's Best in Vietnam*. This book is designed to help families of Vietnam vets who never talked about the war, understand what they went through, and for those with an open mind show them that, contrary to the negative stereotype of that war and its vets, they served their country well.*

*Strength and Honor can be found at bookstores or at [www.garlock1.com](http://www.garlock1.com).*

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# Vietnam War hero to be buried.... 45 years after being killed in action

By Colleen O'Connor  
of the Denver Post

Navy Lt. Dennis Peterson, the pilot for rescue helicopter Spooky21, will finally be buried at Arlington National Cemetery, 45 years after his helicopter was shot down in North Vietnam. It took that long to recover and identify his remains.

His daughter Dennise Wilson of Monument, Colorado will be there with her sister, her husband and her two young sons for a final salute to the father she never met. "His helicopter exploded on impact," Wilson said. "Two weeks later, I was born." She was named after her father: Dennis with an "E" at the end but pronounced "Denise."

Her name was all she had left of her father. There were no pictures of him in her home, and the topic was shrouded by silence during her childhood. "It just wasn't really talked about," said Wilson, "It was not something to be proud of, that your father was killed in Vietnam. My mother remarried and swept it under the rug."

The family endured decades of an emotional turmoil as repeated reports that his remains had been found turned out to be false. "It was really traumatic," she said. Lt. Peterson was killed July 19, 1967, while trying to rescue Lt. Cmdr. Richard



The remains of six airmen shot down over Laos are interred in a single casket.



Hartman, whose plane had been shot down the day before as he attempted an airstrike on a railroad bridge. Hartman parachuted into a thickly forested area 33 miles south of Hanoi and radioed that he was OK. Rescue attempts that day failed because of intense enemy fire. That night, Americans heavily bombed the area to keep the North Vietnamese away from Hartman's location. Early the next day, Peterson prepared to pilot a SH-3A Sea King rescue helicopter to pick up Hartman.

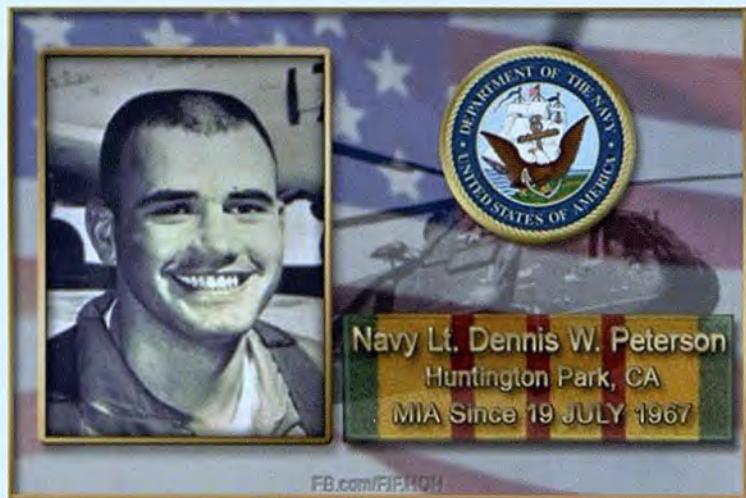
Lt. Peterson was a 28-year-old married man with a 2-year-old daughter, and a second child soon to be born. He had been an athletic kid who loved to surf and made his own surfboards — a popular guy who served as class president in high school in Huntington Beach, Calif. To afford studying at the University of Southern California, he had landed a scholarship from the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps — and was then called to serve.

Two months before he was launched on the Hartman rescue, he had met up with his wife during a leave in Hawaii. He told her he didn't think he was coming home, Wilson said. "He'd had a premonition. He said, 'You need to be able to take care of the kids by yourself'.

Early July 19, Peterson took off with Donald Frye as co-pilot, and William Jackson and Donald McGrane as door gunners. LTC Hartman gave them his exact location, then lit a signal flare. Just as Peterson maneuvered the helicopter directly over Hartman, enemy gunners opened fire. The helicopter was hit repeatedly, then crashed and exploded. Nearby air crews conducted visual searches of the wreckage and saw no signs of life. The four men were declared Killed In Action/Body Not Recovered.

Hartman, left behind after a decision not to risk more lives, was captured and later died in a POW camp.

Wilson and her sister heard nothing more about their father until 1982, when the Vietnamese returned four boxes they said contained the remains of Peterson and his crew. Three servicemen were identified from that set of remains but Lt. Peterson's body was not among them.



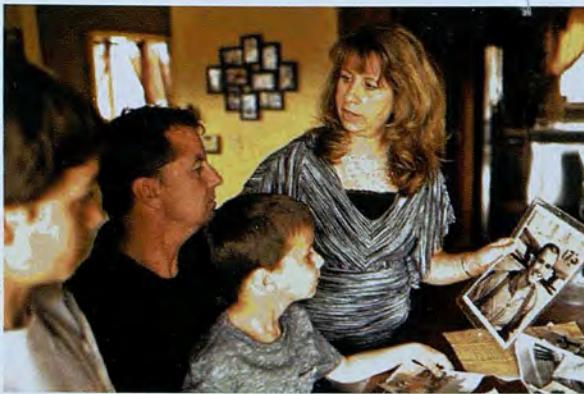
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In 1993, the Joint Task Force for Full Accounting sent American/Vietnamese teams to investigate his case. Two possible sites were located, and 253 bone fragments were found along with pieces of a flight suit similar to those used by the Navy. But after the remains were sent to the U.S., it was determined they were not his.

"Our emotions were always going up and down," Wilson said. "We'd get hope, then hope was taken away." In 2000, two more sites were excavated. The remains were sent to the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, which works to recover and identify remains of unaccounted Americans of past military conflicts. Then another decade passed. Still no word. "I thought: What happened? Why isn't this being identified? What's wrong? I didn't know if they couldn't get 100 percent accuracy in the DNA testing or what," Wilson said. "My mom was like, 'Let's get on with this. Let's have some closure!'" Dennis' mother died of cancer in 2010.

Dennise Wilson made sure to teach her sons — Luke, now 13, and Jonny, 7 — about their grandfather.

Once, Luke made him the focus of an ancestor project for school. "It was really meaningful to him to learn that his



Dennise Wilson shares stories and photos of her father, Navy Lt. Dennis Peterson, with sons Luke, 13, left, and Jonny, 7, and husband Kris, 51, at their Monument, Colorado home. Dennise Wilson was born just weeks after Peterson was killed during a rescue attempt of a comrade in North Vietnam. (photo by Hyoung Chang, The Denver Post)

ow with two kids to raise by themselves.

Close to a half-century after the four men died in a rugged forest in North Vietnam, their families will gather at Arlington National Cemetery on May 2nd for the full military honors: flag-draped coffin, sailors carrying the casket, a 21-gun salute, and the haunting notes of a lonely bugle.

For Wilson, that means peace. *"It's like, 'OK, he's home now,"* she said. *"They didn't just leave him over there. He's back in the United States."*

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grandfather was a hero, and that he gave his life for someone else," Wilson said. "When he shared it with the class, he really emphasized this."

Finally, four weeks ago, Wilson got the news she had wanted all her life. Navy officials said her father had been identified in March 2012 and would be buried with the three crew members shot down with him. "I know it's going to be very emotional," said Wilson, who looks forward to sharing memories with other family members. One woman is bringing a letter she had received from Wilson's mother, back when they were both young widows with two kids to raise by themselves.

Close to a half-century after the four men died in a rugged forest in North Vietnam, their families will gather at Arlington National Cemetery on May 2nd for the full military honors: flag-draped coffin, sailors carrying the casket, a 21-gun salute, and the haunting notes of a lonely bugle.

For Wilson, that means peace. *"It's like, 'OK, he's home now,"* she said. *"They didn't just leave him over there. He's back in the United States."*

# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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