

SO YOU'RE GOING TO BE A REUNION CHAIRMAN!

Congratulations! You have been chosen for the hardest, and most rewarding, task of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. Seeing your fellow VHPAers having the time of their lives at a Reunion that YOU planned is a truly gratifying experience.

Each Reunion is different and has its own unique challenges to be overcome. Planning and imagination are the key. Be bold and audacious. Don't be afraid to ask for something for the members. Remember that you will be working for a President that has overall responsibility so clear everything through him. Don't be afraid to ask for help or ideas!

Good Luck! May you have the best Reunion ever!

## FIRST THING

You will be sent VHPA letterhead and various size envelopes by the management contractor. Please utilize this stationary when corresponding with all groups, organizations, businesses, and individual members. Plain, good quality paper may be used when writing to the council or your reunion committee. You will also be sent peel and stick address labels as well as the mail/phone list. Whenever you need additional labels or stationary, contact the management contractor.

The management contractor will send you the dialing procedure to use so that your long distance calls on behalf of the VHPA will be charged directly to the VHPA and not to your home. Please do not abuse this convenience.

## CHECKLIST

A checklist listing every item is essential. By utilizing a checklist, you decrease the chance of missing something. Take the time to think about what you want to do and keep some paper handy to jot down notes to yourself.

## SITE SELECTION

The site selection should have already been made by the Site Selection Committee and hopefully you were present during negotiations. If not, familiarize yourself with the hotel contract that has been signed and ratified by the Executive Council. If you are not completely sure of a particular point, have it clarified. Last minute surprises are the bane of a Reunion Chairman.

The three persons that you will have the most contact with at the hotel are, Sales Manager, Food & Beverage Manager, and the Convention Services Representative. Initially the Sales Manager will be your hotel contact, but approximately one year prior to the Reunion a Convention Services Representative will be assigned to you. The CSR will take care of everything that comes up. A good one will make your life easier. If the one assigned is not acceptable, ask for another. The Food & Beverage Manager will handle Banquet requirements, portable bars, and any food/beverage requirements outside rooms or suites. If you have to arrange a reception or hospitality in a room or suite, you must contact the Hospitality Manager.

Get familiar with the property itself. Obtain a copy of the hotel Meeting Planner's Guide which has a layout of the hotel. Walk through all the meeting space so that you will know exactly what you have to work with. Obtain a city map and be familiar with the surrounding area. Remember - you have to be able to tell the membership what there is to see and do, and know how to get them there.

Prepare a meeting space plan to present to the Executive Council. This plan should have a copy of the meeting space floor plan (from the Meeting Planner's Guide) with a detailed summary of where you plan to locate vendors, memorabilia, banquet, registration, mini reunions, and any other functions.

Be ready to promote your Reunion at the one prior to your's. Posters, stickers, and giveaway pins are good ideas. An eye catching phrase can set the tone for your reunion, such as: "New Orleans-The Arc Light of Reunions", "See You in Hotlanta", "There's Phun in Philly". The local Convention and Visitor's Bureau will often pay for these promotions and will sometimes attend the prior reunion to set up a booth. A local C & V Bureau representative is usually assigned to our group. Find out who they are and work closely with them. Do not be afraid to ask for suggestions on activities, entertainment, attractions. They are paid to know more about the city than anybody.

You must make a presentation at the business meeting of the prior reunion. Be prepared to give a few facts about the city, what some of your ideas are, and any information that you believe may be pertinent or welcome by the members.

#### BUDGET

Every activity must pay for itself. As a rule of thumb, registration fees must pay for computers and business machines, contract labor, registration materials, giveaways, entertainment (other than banquet), and all miscellaneous costs. The banquet price must pay for the meal, decorating, and banquet entertainment. Do not overlook the taxes and gratuities! If you have an outside the hotel function, you must figure transportation and entertainment costs in the ticket price for that function. Late registration (June 1 or later) is \$10-\$15 higher than early registration. This encourages people to register early and provides more efficient planning. Still, a great deal of registration will occur after June 1. Remember, many members bring their families and must look at the cost of multiple registrations and banquet tickets. The more reasonably priced everything is, the more people will attend. **BE COST CONSCIOUS!**

*They may  
not be in  
your price  
guide*

The following items are examples of what you may want to figure into your budget.

awards	DJ	decorations
audio/visual equip.	flags	registration booth
bartender fees	fireworks	registration material
banners	giveaways	registration workers
bands	golf fees	reunion committee hosp
beverages	guest comps	signs
buses	meals	shipping costs
computer rental	ladies function	wine (for missing man
children's party	printing	toast)
color guard	registration supplies	MISC RESERVE

You may also want to do a budget analysis. Figure your fixed costs such as computer rental, registration materials, contracted items, etc. Those items that would be required, or will be contracted for, even if nobody came. Then, you must compute the number of attendees necessary to cover those costs.

Remember - Your budget must be approved by your President and ratified by the Executive Council prior to any verbal commitments.

If entertainment is contracted through a booking agent, make sure the agency guarantees appearance. An appearance bond may be necessary, especially if dealing directly with a band or DJ.

## STATIC DISPLAY?

Keep accurate records. Good bookkeeping will help at reconciliation time. Submit expense receipts on the appropriate forms to the management contractor. Expense checks must be signed by two persons who are usually in different parts of the country. It may take time for reimbursement so don't let the amount build to astronomical proportions.

*Negotiate the minimum deposit.*

Contractors will usually want a deposit to show good faith. Submit a check request for the amount of deposit to the management contractor. Be sure the correct name and address is shown because the check will be sent to him unless you request otherwise. Balance amounts should be billed after the reunion, if possible. If a balance must be paid at the reunion, you will have to give the management contractor a list of checks, and the amounts, to bring ~~prior to their departure for the reunion.~~

*to the*

## ACTIVITIES

Activities are usually limited by climate, budget, and imagination. If you plan an outdoor activity, have a rain plan. The south in July is hot and muggy - think about some shade. If an activity is prohibitively expensive it will not usually be well attended. Some imaginative things have included; a buffet lunch in Houston that was decorated like a Vietnam base camp, complete with authentic AFVN broadcasts, an indoor Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans, and a trip to Fort Wolters when we went to Fort Worth.

If an activity requires bus transportation, get proof of insurance. Bands and DJ's sometimes need special electrical connections. Make sure they are available. Take into consideration dressing areas and refreshments for entertainers. If the costs are not covered elsewhere, you will need tickets printed for all functions/activities. For food functions, plan plenty of serving lines. People will get tired (and angry) standing in the heat to get served. One line for every 250-300 people is good.

## REUNION COMMITTEE

A Reunion Chairman will need all the help that he can get. You may already have a group of people organized before you were selected. If so, you are ahead of the game. If not, you should advertise in the Newsletter or ask the Management Contractor for a list of persons in your area (they can send a list by zip code) so that you may contact them directly. An Assistant Reunion Chairman is a must. You may not utilize him very much in the planning stages but he should be prepared to take over in case something were to happen to you or if you could not go to the reunion. When you get to the Reunion he will be that extra pair of hands, and legs, that is necessary. Give him a radio and stay in touch. Other jobs that you may need people for include, but may not be limited to:

Pre-Registration	ticket collection	VIP escort
secure signs	balloting @ bus. meeting	photo editor
ladies function	packing & shipping	golf tourney
honor guard	secure equipment	decoration
bus captains	outside function coordinator	static display

Remember - If the VHPA is sponsoring an activity, have a person there.

## NEWSLETTERS

There are six newsletters per year. You should prepare a Reunion update for each one and include an itinerary as soon as you have one prepared. If changes are made, point them out. The third newsletter, that usually goes out in December, should contain your reunion registration form. Each newsletter thereafter should also contain a registration form. The newsletter prior to the your Reunion should contain information on how to get to the hotel. Which highways, exits, and streets if driving, and the available modes and prices of transport from the airport.

## CONFERENCE CALLS

Periodically you may be asked to participate in a conference call with the Executive Council to keep them updated on your Reunion. Remember - Any changes of plans or budget must be approved by the Executive Council.

## STORAGE SPACE

You must plan for storage space for all the items that will be sent to you. These will include registration packet materials, city maps, sightseeing information, brochures, and any giveaways. After HAI/The Gathering, you will receive the missing man box, flags & stands, banners, and signs. If you cannot store all of these items, the management contractor may be able to help. It will be advantageous to have the registration materials at your home to be able to assemble the Pre-Registration Packets as they come in. Inventory what you have and order what you need. You will need a sign at the entrance to every activity.

## PRE-REGISTRATION PACKETS

To assemble the Pre-Registration packets you will need to either purchase locally or obtain through the management contractor the following items:

manila envelopes - large enough to hold all registration items  
name tag cards - have some printed if you do not have enough  
card sleeves - plastic, should have fastener in the back  
office ribbons - President, V.P., Past President, Member @ Large, etc.

Life Member Ribbons

orange dots - stick on name tag card to denote first reunion  
permanent marking pen

boxes - to hold the finished packets

You will also have to have banquet and any additional function tickets printed.

The following items should go into the Pre-Registration packets:

registration form	name tags	banquet/function tickets
city maps	brochures	giveaway items

Beginning in late March or early April before your reunion, the management contractor will send you copies of the registration forms that have come in. Additionally, there will be name tag labels to stick on a name tag card. The name tag label should be affixed to the card. If the member is attending his first reunion, an orange dot should be placed on the card. This is so the other members can help him along and let him know what to expect. Insert the card into the sleeve and attach the appropriate ribbon(s), if any. Place the name tag(s) and all other items into the manila envelope, clasp (do not seal), mark the last name then first name, and file in boxes alphabetically.

Registration forms and name tag labels should come to you on a regular basis so that you may keep the packets up to date. If you do not live within commuting distance of the reunion site, set a date for the last forms and labels to be sent to you. Any registrations coming in after that date should be brought (or shipped) to the reunion site after you arrive. Make sure that you have received the last forms and labels mailed.

#### PROBLEM REGISTRATIONS

Check the registration form carefully for errors. Every attendee 18 years of age or older must pay for registration! Everyone, regardless of age, who occupies a seat at the banquet must pay for a banquet ticket! For example; if a member shows a wife or a guest but has only paid for one registration, a note must be made of that. Keep a list of problem registrations and notify the management contractor. Keep those packets in a separate box. The problem will have to be clarified at the reunion or prior to the reunion if possible. If the error is a large one, have the management contractor make every effort to resolve it before the reunion. The member will not be happy making the trip to find out he owes a couple of hundred extra dollars in registrations. Do not move a problem registration to the regular box file until you are sure the problem has been eliminated.

#### ROOM LIST

The usual complimentary accommodations include the Executive Council, Reunion Chairman, and 1 room/night for every 50 room/nights paid for by the membership. These are the minimum comps that will be negotiated for, although there may be additional rooms or perks such as upgrades from a regular room to a hospitality level of the hotel. This may be referred to as a "club" level or "concierge" level but it will indicate a nicer room and usually free continental breakfast and free hors d'oeuvre buffet in the evening. This level may be restricted by room key. A distribution list of complimentary rooms must be submitted to the Executive Council for approval not less than 90 days prior to the Reunion.

Traditionally, the President will receive the best suite in the hotel. You, the Reunion Chairman should receive the next best, and the other Executive Council will have had their rooms/suites negotiated. 1 or 2 of the 1/50 comps will have to be reserved for the management contractor workers. The additional rooms and upgrades should be used for guest VIPs, heads of committees, assistant Reunion Chairman, members of committees, or any other person whose work merits, in your opinion, some compensation. You may also use them as prizes to be raffled as a fund raiser. You may give a person either 1 free night or the whole reunion (usually 3 free nights). If you intend for comp rooms to be used as a prize, you should notify the Executive Council immediately after the prior reunion.

It is the responsibility of the Reunion Chairman to assure that the Executive Council accommodations are arranged prior to their arrival. You must check for any special requirements that they may have. Their check in should be expedited as much as possible. The Reunion Chairman should give the Convention Services Rep. a list of those persons receiving comp rooms, and the number of nights each should receive. Each morning, at the reunion, the CSR will give you the number of paid rooms you had the previous night. This way you may keep an accurate tally. ~~These~~ room nights will be deducted from the recipients bill at check out.

*Comp.*

#### LIMO LIST

Usually transportation from and to the airport is negotiated for the Executive Council and any other VIPs. The Reunion Chairman must find out these persons arrival and departure times and coordinate this transportation. An escort for arrival is usually advisable. This list should be mailed to Executive Council no less than 30 days prior to your Reunion.

#### MASTER ACCOUNT

This is the hotel account that everything should be charged to and should have already been set up by the management contractor with two authorizing signatures. The Reunion Chairman and the President. You will need to tell the CSR who may charge to the Master Account. Usually, to expedite check in and in lieu of a credit card, the Reunion Chairman and Executive Council may charge incidentals to the master account, but these incidentals (personal phone, laundry, parking, etc.), and all personal food and beverage are the responsibility of each individual - not the VHPA. If personal charges are not settled at check out, have the management contractor bill the individuals directly and follow up to see that the bill is paid.

In the past we have allowed the management contractor workers to bill their meals to the master account. Since we have agreed to pay their expenses, this method is easier than a direct billing later.

The management contractor should deposit all cash receipts daily with the hotel to be applied to the master account.

## ARE YOU READY TO GO TO THE HOTEL?

Sure your are! It just seems like there was something you had to do but forgot! Don't worry. This happens to every Reunion Chairman. By following your checklist and covering every item, you are not likely to overlook anything.

Make sure the management contractor has a list of checks to bring with them.

You will need to arrange shipping for all the material and registration packets that you have stored. Get to the hotel early, at least 2 days prior to the first anticipated arrival, and ask your reunion committee to do the same, if they can.

## AT THE HOTEL

The first order of business is to make sure that all of your Reunion Committee is in attendance, or at least the key people. If you have assigned a task to an individual, and he decided that he could not make it, you have to reassign that particular task. Get your radios and issue them. Keep a radio in registration. Radios should be recharged every evening. If you don't recharge them, you will be without them.

## REGISTRATION

Get the registration area up and functioning. That will be the hub for all other activities and it must be ready for the workers to arrive. You will need to secure this area and probably some additional lockable storage. A coat room or small office/breakout should suffice. Get the hotel to set up your tables.

If you need booths, get them set up ASAP. Computers and printers should be installed. At present they would need to be IBM 386, or compatible, capable of handling DBIII soft ware. There should be two standard printers and one long carriage printer for the morning report.

The hotel should set up two phone lines not accessible to the public or general membership. One line should be dedicated to credit card confirmation. Make sure that if someone calls the hotel and asks for VHPA, the switchboard will ring the registration phone. Test to make sure by going to a pay phone, call the hotel, and ask for VHPA.

*Hotel should provide*  
You will need two peg boards for the morning report and a peg board for messages and notices. Put a copy of the itinerary on the message board and, each morning, a brief narrative of the days events. If an event is changed or canceled, announce it ASAP in/on as many places as possible.

#### VENDOR AREA

A Member at Large is responsible for getting vendor agreements signed and determining how many tables each will need. He will also tell you which ones will require electricity. You must assign tables and have them set up and draped. The ones with electrical requirements must be closest to the wall outlets.

#### SIGNS & BANNERS

Have the CSR set up the easels for your signs and get your banners hung. Vendors and contractors will need to know what rooms they need to go to. You will need a sign outside each activity room. Remember - Someone has to be responsible for securing the signs at night, and putting them up the next morning. The hotel will usually require that their maintenance people hang the banners.

#### MEMORABILIA

Mr. George Reese of Enterprise, Alabama has one of the largest collections of Vietnam memorabilia in the country. In the past we have provided him space and tables to present this collection. He doesn't need help but he will need a room to himself that can be secured. He will assume the security risk. In the past others have brought and left memorabilia on display without any security. Unfortunately, some of this memorabilia sprouted wings and flew away. Let those who want to do this know that the VHPA cannot be responsible for lost or "wandering" items. They may display at their own risk.

#### PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION

The President may hold a reception in his suite, a meeting room, or at some other location. This reception is by invitation and usually includes the Executive Council, Committee Chairmen, and other persons, with spouses, that have rendered service to the VHPA during the year. This should be included in the budget and it can be charged to the master account if held in the host hotel. Contact the Hospitality Manager to make the arrangements if held in the host hotel. Some President's take care of this task themselves. Nevertheless, they will need to advise you so that you may budget this event.

## BUSINESS MEETING

This meeting usually takes place at 1:00 PM on the last formal day of the Reunion and is held simultaneously with the Ladies Function and the Children's/Teen Party, though the latter two functions are optional. Make sure that the hotel has set up the designated room accordingly. Test the PA system to be sure that its working. Beverages should be available such as ice tea and water. Coffee if you believe it will be used at that time of day. An overhead projector will be required along with pencils and paper for balloting.

We have had a bar both inside the business meeting and outside. The business meeting tends to be more focused and is less rowdy with the bar outside.

## BANQUET

This is the largest function of the Reunion. Each person occupying a seat at the banquet should purchase a banquet ticket. Exceptions, such as for children under six, may be made by the Executive Council. The ticket price should cover the meal, decorations, entertainment, security, audio/visual equipment, and any other costs incurred for the banquet.

Of all the problems presented by the banquet, the biggest appears to be getting everyone in and seated in time for the program to start. At this writing a plan is being developed that would reserve seating for everyone purchasing a banquet ticket and should be implemented at the 1995 Reunion.

Other problems have included a ballroom that is too small to accommodate a dinner/dance. In the past we have separated the dinner and the dance into two separate ballrooms. This is usually feasible only if the ballrooms are on the same floor separated by a foyer. ~~Otherwise, you will~~ have to cut off banquet ticket sales at a specific point. *In any event, you may*

Another problem is people who do not buy a ticket but ease in and occupy a seat after the ticket collectors have departed the doorway. This causes the head count versus ticket count to go awry and some hotels are notorious for inflating their head counts anyway. In the past we have hired security and collected half the ticket leaving a stub to show to the security guard to gain admittance after tickets had been collected. The reserve seating plan would help us here.

The President will establish his program for the banquet. Hopefully it will not be long because attention spans can be somewhat short here. Remind him to bring the cobra to give to the new President. Make sure the new President doesn't forget to take it with him.

You may choose to have a decorating committee (least expensive) or have the ballroom professionally decorated (most expensive). In any case, check with the Food & Beverage Manager and get your decorating plan approved by him. You don't want to have to pay for the removal of helium balloons from the innards of an expensive chandelier.

You will need an honor guard to post the colors and a pennant with the city name and date for the President to attach to the VHPA flag. The missing man table will need to be set up. Each table should have a beverage for the missing man toast. Consider a bottle of wine (or two) for each table with the cork already loosened. Make sure the water glasses are full so that the non-drinkers will have a toast beverage.

The front tables should be reserved for Executive Council and their families and the next tier of tables for Committee Chairmen and their families. Any VIP guests should be placed up front also.

#### AFTER THE REUNION

Immediately after the banquet secure all the signs and banners. Hopefully the souvenir hunters have not already got them for their dens.

Next day box all VHPA equipment and leftover registration materials and arrange for shipping. Separate the items that will be used for HAI/The Gathering and ship them to that Chairman. The rest of the material should be shipped to the management contractor or to the next Reunion Chairman. Supervise pickup of all contracted equipment. Make sure that Executive Council and VIP transportation has been arranged or accomplished without incident.

Within 30 days you should send thank you letters or cards to your reunion committee, the hotel, and the various staff that have helped you. If they have done exceptionally good work, a letter to the hotel General Manager, and the Regional Manager, if applicable, on their behalf would be appreciated. If possible, a certificate of appreciation would be nice.

Within 90 days you should make sure all charges have been verified and paid. You will need to assist the management contractor in final reconciliation of accounts. At times, only you will know if a charge to us is legitimate. Don't let us be overcharged after your Reunion. Stay on the job until the paperwork is done.

## I. Timetable

### A. 2 yrs out-

1. Get together with new Vice President (your Reunion President)
2. Contact host hotel and convention and visitors bureau representative to introduce yourself
3. Start assembling reunion committee

### B. 1 1/2 yrs out

1. Be ready to present ideas to Executive Council

### C. 1 yr out

1. Make presentation at prior reunion
2. Start the first newsletter article
  - a. A reunion update should be written for each newsletter
  - b. An itinerary should be included asap
  - c. 3rd newsletter should also have Reunion registration form
3. Check hotel for Convention Services Representative
4. Plan storage space for all items that will be sent to you
  - a. Missing man box
  - b. Flags & stands
  - c. Banners
  - d. Left over registration materials
    - (1) inventory & determine what you will need to buy
  - e. When reunion committee in place, begin to assign tasks

### D. 6 months out

1. HAI & The Gathering over - start looking for equipment from them
2. Start looking for ordered giveaway items
3. Assemble materials to prepare pre-registration packets
  - a. Large manila envelopes
  - b. Ribbons for life members and officers
  - c. Orange dots to denote first reunion
  - d. Have tickets printed for banquet and any other functions
4. Start looking for materials from management contractor to complete pre-registration packets
  - a. Name tag labels
  - b. Copies of completed registration forms
5. Be ready to assemble pre-registration packets as the information comes in.
6. Prepare room list to distribute comp rooms and suites
  - a. Must be approved by President & ratified by E.C.
7. Reunion Committee in place and assignments complete
8. Inventory signs - have signs made if necessary

E. 90 days out

1. All contracts and plans should be complete
2. Keep ahead of pre-registration packets
3. Begin to look at hotel reservations numbers
  - a. Check weekly
4. Talk to management contractor at least weekly to look at registration numbers
5. Review hotel contract with Convention Services Rep.
6. Finalize food & beverage requirements

F. 30 days out

1. Check if hotels (and overflows) are filling
  - a. Do you need more/less rooms?
2. Check Executive Council travel plans
  - a. Who needs picked up?
  - b. Prepare limo list for hotel to include depart time
3. Plan transport for pre-registration packets and other reunion equipment to hotel
4. Set up master account with hotel
  - a. Should have two authorizing signatures - President and Reunion Chairman
5. Give management contractor a list of checks and amounts to bring to the Reunion.

G. At Hotel

1. Arrive early
2. All equipment necessary has arrived
3. Assemble reunion committee & insure all are there and each function/task is covered.
  - a. Keep a list of all committee room numbers
  - b. Have regular meetings-early morning usually best
4. Registration area ready prior to first arrivals
  - a. Booths
  - b. Phones
  - c. Computers and printers
    - (1) 3 IBM 386 or compatible capable of DBIII
    - (2) 2 standard carriage printers & 1 long carriage printer
  - d. Secure storage area
  - e. Pre-registration packets complete & ready for handout
  - f. Flags, banners, "FNG" bell hung
  - g. Peg boards in place
  - h. Pencils, tape, or any other supplies needed
5. Radios to key personnel
  - a. Insure that a system/plan for recharging understood

6. Tables are in place and draped
  - a. Vendor area
  - b. Memorabilia
  - c. Historical & data base
  - d. Registration
  - e. Be ready for other areas and/or additional tables
7. Easels are up and signs are ready
  - a. One person should be in charge of setting up and securing signs each day
8. Banners hung
9. Copy of reunion itinerary posted on peg board
  - a. Helpful if a "days events" briefing is posted first thing every morning
  - b. Changes or clarifications should be posted asap in as many places as possible
10. Have a first aid plan
11. Establish who may charge to master account

#### H. Business Meeting

1. Check that Convention Services Rep has set up
  - a. dais, chairs, podium, PA system
  - b. beverages (tea, coffee, water)
2. Make sure PA is working
3. Pencils and paper are available for balloting
4. Overhead projector is in place and working
5. Portable bar outside room

#### I. Banquet

1. Decorations
2. Ticket collection
  - a. Confirm ticket collection agrees with hotel head count
3. Missing man display
4. Honor Guard
5. Program
  - a. Established by President
6. Security (if necessary)
7. Reserved seating for VIP
8. Beverage for missing man toast
9. Band/Entertainers
  - a. Dressing room
  - b. Refreshments (if any)
  - c. Necessary power connections available
10. Remind outgoing and incoming Presidents not to forget Cobra.

J. After Reunion - Immediately

1. Secure all banners & signs
  - a. To prevent loss to souvenir hunters do this immediately after Banquet if possible.
2. Box all VHPA owned equipment and arrange for shipping
3. Supervise pickup of all contracted equipment
4. Transportation of VIPs accomplished without incident

K. After Reunion - Within 30 days

1. Thank you letters
  - a. Reunion committee
  - b. Hotel and staff
  - c. Attaboy letters to the supervisors of those staff members who gave extra help

L. After Reunion - Within 90 days

1. Assure all charges verified
2. Assist management contractor in final reconciliation of accounts