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Sirs:

I just received, read and enjoyed the 1989 Directory. Until last fall, I had not heard of VHPA. When I did, I signed up immediately - it is what I have been looking for. Belonging has helped recapture the overwhelming pride I had, and lost, since getting my wings. Like many of us Vietnam types, I have been in hiding too long and am just starting the road back.

Before my recent bout with the veritable Non-Hodskin's Lymphoma (Agent Orange), my work experience heavily involved research for marketing and feasibility for various business purposes, and I am aware of the time required to assemble complete and accurate data. I want to commend you on the quality of your work so far, and have a driving desire to help in any way I can to make the directory and records as complete and accurate as possible. Just let me know or put a notice in the newsletter, I'll be glad to volunteer.

In keeping with this line of thought, I offer the following memories, thoughts and suggestions. I trust you will copy or cut and paste this letter and direct the different parts to where they will do the most good for the various sections involved.

1. In looking thru the roster, I could not find most of the pilots I remembered being "tight" with. I guess they haven't gotten the word about you yet or been dragged out of the bunkers. Would it be possible to assemble a "missing" list of those not in the directory? Maybe starting with getting the flight school graduation rosters, flight pay records, or Aviation Branch records, culling out the members and friends, and then trying to fill in the blanks. At least this would give a long term goal and might jog some memories. Somewhere, I still have my class picture and various copies of orders with the names of many others in the group (somehow, these didn't get shitcanned with the rest of my Vietnam stuff). Maybe some other members have the same. I'd like to see this database assembled and available even if it isn't regularly published. At least it would be available and would account for ALL of us.

2. I think it would be interesting to have a list of the number of aircraft used by type or model included in the directory. Not particularly to individual units, but maybe by Corps area or Division level with a total assigned to RVN. Losses by type/model would also be interesting.

3. With a dual goal of primarily increasing the public awareness of the existence of the VHPA and possibly providing funds for continuing research to locate all of us, how about assembling/publishing a photo book? Nothing real elaborate, maybe just B & W to start but aviation oriented. I would definitely

donate some of my pictures, I would expect others would also, especially if the profits were earmarked for this specific purpose. I haven't seen anything like this around, although I have seen the somewhat dubious ads in the magazines for vets to pay to have their photos published. Nothing strictly aviation though. Even when I was "hiding" this past 20 years, my soul still belonged to the helicopter and I at least glanced at any I saw. Gave me a good feeling. This might snag some of our missing.

4. ITEMS ON SECTION VI - CALL SIGNS

I was with 11 ACR 4/69 - 5/70 with 25th Avn Co 5/70 - 12/70

The following are vivid/clear recollections from these times, unless noted; and I have been doing some serious research this past year or so. I have many articles dating back to the old "Hurricane Magazine" published by II Field Force, Vietnam in the late 60's - early 70's in addition to recent stuff like VIETNAM Magazine - they do accurate and decent articles.

BLACKHORSE - Aviation Maint Platoon was at REDCATCHER from 9/69 on.

THUNDER firebases were forward base camps for our tank squadrons (THUNDER I, II, III, IIII - on Highway 13 (Thunder Road) between Bien Hoa and An Loc)

BLACKHORSE was the Regiment call sign. Air Cav Troop used THUNDERHORSE followed by Platoon and individual ID, such as mine - "Thunderhorse Red 25" for my Cobra; White for scouts, etc.

GARY OWEN - I remember seeing a huge yellow banner with this at Quan Loi in the 1st Cav Area (Southeast Corner of the base) thru about Aug. 69.

RED - (ACT 11ACR Guns) Quan Loi spelled wrong. Rear Base was Blackhorse and "Alpha Pad" on the North side of Bien Hoa AFB in the 1st Cav area. RED was the Platoon identifier for ACT 2nd Platoon(Guns). White was 1st Platoon(Scouts). Blue was 3rd Platoon(Lift). Also had an Aerial Rifle Platoon - infantry used for securing downed helos and ready reaction, and had an Aviation Maintenance Platoon.

NOMAD - was call sign for 398th Trans Det attached to 11 ACR. The Air Cav Trp Maint Platoon was loosely assigned under the 398th Trans and located on the same company area, but each was technically distinct. Based at BLACKHORSE thru 9/69 then relocated to REDCATCHER. Was not at Quan Loi during my tour and never stated to have been there as Quan Loi was a forward base and the 398th was one level below depot maint - was always at a rear base. 11ACR maint pilots used the NOMAD sign as a matter of convenience only, as I did as 11ACR test pilot/maint off.

5. ITEMS ON SECTION VII - SEA HELD UNITS

See NOMAD above. The 398th Trans Det was a Company sized unit attached to the 11 ACR. As I recall (vaguely) it had 1 Huey and 1 OH-6 organic to it.

Also, as I recall, the 11ACR was operationally attached to 1st Cav during my assignment there.

6. ITEMS ON SECTION VIII - SEA MAP

An Loc	Provincial Capital Binh Long. On QL 13, South of Loc Ninh at intersection QL 14. 5K W of Quan Loi.
Alpha Pad	ACT, 11ACR - BC Area NE edge of Bien Hoa AFB
Bear Cat	11 ACR not there 70 & prior. Base was mostly ROK & Civilian Contractor with minimal US army presence. About 10 miles due South of Long Binh complex.
Bien Hoa	AB also. was about 30 miles NE Saigon
Blackhorse	BC, 11ACR. 5 miles S Xuan Loc. Transferred to ARVN 9/69 (found buried C model Huey in revetment area! - the George Patton III parts method)
Lai Khe	BC, 1st Inf Div. On QL 13 midway between Bien Hoa and An Loc.
Long Binh	On QL1 across river S of Bien Hoa, 30 miles NE Saigon.. Largest military complex in SE Asia. HQ USARV & MACV.
Loc Ninh	Near Cambodian Border on QL 13 N of An Loc. Was not the province capital.
Nui Ba Den	"Black Virgin Mountain" Just N of Tay Ninh City. Single Mtn Elev 3235.
Nui Ba Ra	Also single Mtn Just East of Xuan Loc. Elev 2746. Had small camp & radio relay station on Summit.
Phu Loi	Possibly a duplicate name - in III Corps was a fairly large BC roughly between Saigon and Cu Chi. Went there several times for specialized maint & saw flt school roommate with 3/17th Cav.
Plantation	Part of the Long Binh complex. Was on East end of contiguous built up area. Included Red Carpet VIP Helipad on W end and small runway on E end.
Quan Loi	BC 1st Cav & 11 ACR. 5K due E of An Loc. Was in rubber plantation.

Red Catcher BC 199th Lt Inf Bde. Adjacent E of Plantation.
Last camp before the boonies to the East.

Red Carpet VIP Helipad (W/Tower) on W end of Plantation.

Thunder I, Thunder II, Thunder III, Thunder IV - these were
4 FSB (arty and 11 ACR tanks) on QL 13 roughly
from Lai Khe to An Loc. They straddled the Hwy
and gave this part of QL 13 the common
nickname "Thunder Road".

Parrots Beak, Fish Hook, Dog's face, Angel's Wing - all well
known landmarks along Cambodian Border. See map on
folder enclosed.

Keyhole LM Reporting Point on E side of Saigon entering
the TCA. Made by the shape of the river.

Hotel 3 - Helipad in Saigon - S edge of Tan San Nhut AFB.
Drop off point for R & R !

Soccer Field - Helipad in Saigon ??? (maybe Bien Hoa???)

Spookhouse - Helipad on roof of CIA HQ, Saigon

Parade Ground - Helipad in Saigon adjacent to Presidential
Palace

Really didn't mean to write another book, I just am really
getting into remembering all this. The reason for a lot of my
research is for a book I'm writing on my time in SEA. And I have
researched and written a collector folder for some NVA money I
brought back from the Cambodian Invasion. I had to do this to
live this past year since I haven't gotten any decision (or
money) from the VA and Soc Sec. claims I filed a year ago. They
both still duck this Agent Orange thing.

A copy of my NVA folder is enclosed with a write up that
gives a little more description. I hope you'll pass it around.

Let me know if there is anything I can do to help.

Sincerely,

Walter J. Richello
#4272