



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

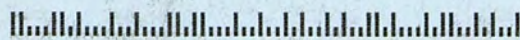
May/June 2003 Vol. 21, No. 3



20th ANNUAL REUNION

Orlando - 2003

MEMBER # M07662



From the President

Welcome to our 20th Anniversary Reunion in Orlando.

It's hard to believe, but our association started with only 66 founding helicopter pilots some 20 years ago. Over the years we have grown to more than 11,600 members, and have located well over 10,000 additional pilots who flew helicopters in the Vietnam War.

I am pleased to advise you that more than 2,000 members and their guests will be at our reunion this year. Thank you for coming, and we look forward to a great time together over the next few days.

Our association is about renewing the friendships, camaraderie, and memories fostered long ago in a distant land.

Similar to last year, we have set our event schedules to provide the maximum amount of time and opportunity to meet new and former friends . . . and to keep alive the spirit we gained while serving our country so long ago.

Within this *Newsletter* you will find a summary page of key activities and events. We also have included in your packet two additional agenda cards you can fold and take with you. They contain the same information.

You also will find on our bulletin boards near the registration area a schedule of mini-reunions and other smaller unit and chapter get-togethers that will be held throughout the reunion. It's going to be a great time!

On the following pages are details on many of the key events and activities.



Joe Bilitzke

Please take a few minutes to scan the individual articles to ensure you are aware of some very special plans and arrangements that have been made this year that will be of significant interest to you . . . and plan to attend if you have not already done so.

As in the recent past, all of our events this year require an admittance ticket . . . even for our Annual Business Meeting.

Within your packet you will find tickets for activities you requested when you preregistered with us, plus one admittance pass for the Business Meeting.

Only dues-current members may attend the Annual Business Meeting, but we have arranged for a great comedy theater show, which includes breakfast, to perform in the Rosen Centre Ballroom "D" at the same time for spouses and guests.

If you have not signed up for any of our activities or evening events, you may do at our registration desk while tickets are still available.

In your packet you also will find an identification name badge for each registered member or guest you provided us. These badges are required to enter all VHPA functions and activities within the hotel.

In addition to being able to identify quickly the name of that long-lost friend of so many years ago, there are a number of VHPA-discounted services negotiated with the hotel on your behalf throughout your stay, including the deeply discounted VHPA-sponsored bars and beverage stands around the hotel.

This year, the discounts also apply at the main hotel lobby lounge, where we have arranged late evening entertainment for some of the night owls in our group. However this is public space and without the ID badge, the hotel will charge its normal, much higher, retail rates.

Again, welcome to Orlando. We look forward to a great reunion together.

— Joe Bilitzke, President

VHPA uses professional planner for Orlando reunion

As we did last year, the VHPA is using the services of a professional military reunion planner to assist with the organization and administration of various events, and to coordinate with the various hotel staffs.

Linda Irvine of the Seattle area and her assistant, Ann Stiles, who lives in southern Florida, have worked on behalf of our association to help make the Orlando reunion a quality event.

Linda owns "Reunion Brat" and travels around the country assisting military-orientated associations such as ours. She and Ann have pitched in to contribute to the success of our 20th anniversary reunion.

Classified ads

SEEKING REVOLVER: I am looking for a Smith & Wesson .38 special that most Army helicopter pilots carried in Vietnam. If anyone knows of a source please contact Mike at [redacted] or email [redacted]. Also, does anyone know the actual model number and barrel length?

E-mail items to Newsletter at:
swickard@vhpa.org

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This newsletter contains member privacy information the VHPA considers proprietary and confidential.

This information, including but not limited to the VHPA Chapter list, shall not be used for commercial solicitation purposes or for any correspondence related thereto without prior written authorization from the VHPA president.

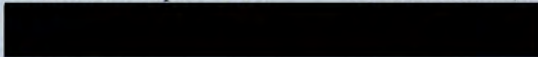
Correspondence relating to commercial purposes or solicitations shall only be sent to those officers, committee chairmen, and staff listed above.

VHPA chapters

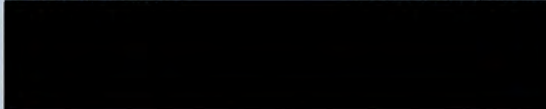
Arizona Chapter Albert Rodriguez, President



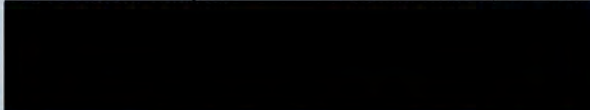
California Chapter North Michael Whitten, President



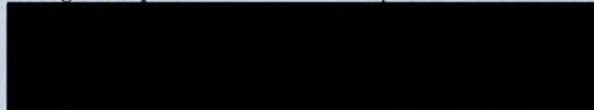
VHPA of Florida Dick Antross, President



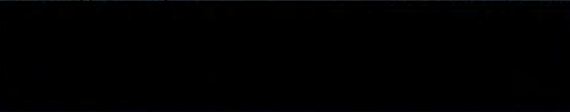
Fort Wolters Chapter Gerald Brazell, President



Georgia Chapter Stephen Crimm, President

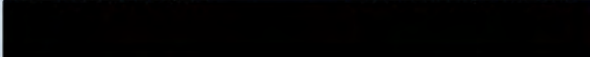


Las Vegas Chapter John S. Winlow, President

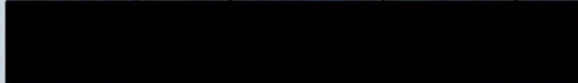


Mid America Chapter
Elections pending

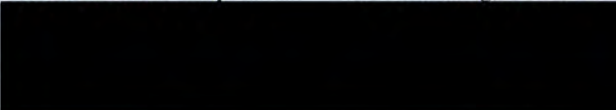
Mid-South Chapter Ken Culwell, President



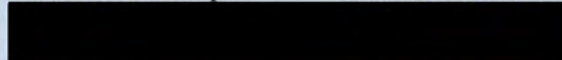
National Capital Chapter Stephen M. Reilly, President



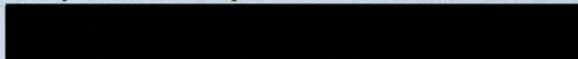
North Carolina Chapter Joe Armstrong, President



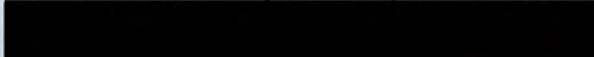
Ohio River LZ Chapter Robert Hamilton, President



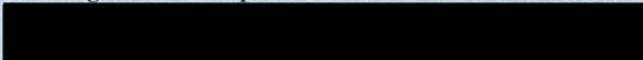
Rocky Mountain Chapter Ed Fickes, President



Southern California Chapter Larry Kolar, President



Washington State Chapter Jack Salm Jr., Interim President



Reunion Edition Newsletter new this year

For those attending our 20th reunion, in Orlando — welcome!

You are receiving this special edition of *The VHPA Newsletter* in your registration packet in lieu of some of the traditional stuffers that have been provided in years past. This provides one place for reviewing all reunion activities and events, as well as becoming a lasting memento of your experiences in Orlando.

We also are mailing this edition to the entire membership, not only for the information it contains, but to promote the great times and events that occur at these reunions, as well as the camaraderie and renewed friendships from long ago.

Next year's reunion is in Dallas, TX, and we encour-

age you all to attend. More details on Dallas are provided in a separate article.

Newsletter editor Jack Swickard came up with this idea and we collectively jumped on it to make it happen in time for Orlando.

This is our 20th anniversary, and we felt the need to do something special. Recognizing that most of us have never seen some of the early newsletter articles, we are reprinting some of them in this edition. This is a part of our history we are sure you will appreciate.

Also contained with this edition are some of the other regular sections and features of our newsletters: Letters, membership information status updates, and much more. Enjoy!

Final banquet

Ceremony, entertainment featured at dinner

Our 20th Anniversary Banquet is designed to be a memorable experience.

The evening will be packed with ceremony, entertainment and, of course, this will be one last, great opportunity to meet your comrades from long ago!

Everything starts with light entertainment.

Refreshments will be available in the pre-function area outside the Grand Ballroom starting at 5 p.m. The doors

open for our final banquet at 5:45 p.m.

When you enter the room, you may notice that the candles on the table are not lit.

Please do not light them until we do so in unison during remembrance of our comrades who did not return with us from Vietnam.

Advance table seating reservations are available throughout the reunion in the registration area. This is a great opportunity for a group of you to arrange to sit together . . . but please do not wait until the last minute.

Seating reservations are made on a first-come, first-serve basis at the designation reservation counter in the Main Ball-

room area.



If you have not gotten your tickets yet, please do so as soon as possible at the VHPA registration desk. Capacity is limited and we are required to guarantee the menu headcount 48 hours ahead of time.

Great entertainment has been booked, including the fabulous headliner Susan McDonald from Las Vegas, along with her patriotic show, complete with special effects and lasers.

The 17-member group "Dance Express" will perform after dinner and at our closing dance — with no breaks!

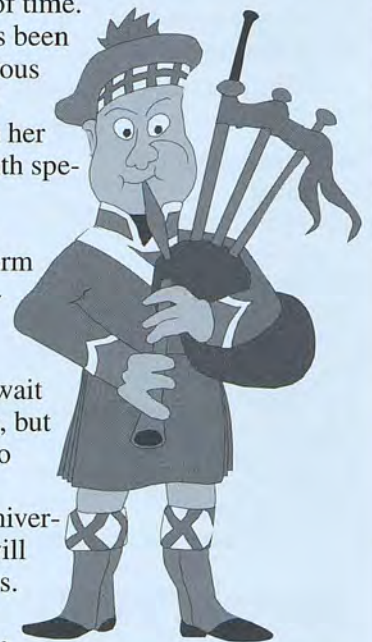
Many more surprises await you throughout the evening, but we promise, there will be no long-winded speeches.

As part of our 20th Anniversary Celebration, we also will be honoring our 66 founders.

A 15-member Scottish bagpiper group will perform as part of our opening ceremony, and the Vietnamese Military Association Honor Guard will post and retire the colors.

Similar to last year, when you made your reservation, we asked you to select one of three meals: Filet mignon, Florida grouper or a vegetarian meal.

In your packet are meal cards based on your selection. Please have them on the table when dinner service starts to assist the staff in ensuring you get your desired meal.



Missing Man toast and ceremony

Addressing the audience:

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is time for the Rite of the Missing Man Toast.

In the center of each banquet table you will see a ring of small votive candles. Beside each is a lighter. In a minute or so, we will ask each of you to light a candle, but not yet.

Near the candle is a card for each of you. Please pick up your card now. We all know why. Read the name on the card quietly to yourself. Familiarize yourself with him. Everyone knows that it might just as easily be your name there.

The name on each card is the name of your personal guest of honor at tonight's banquet. Now, please say his name. Now, say it again.

Addressing the Missing Man:

You are not forgotten; you are here with us tonight. This table near the stage in the center of the hall is set just for you. Had things been different, you might have been sitting with us, toasting, laughing, telling us just how close you came that time, and how lucky you were.

God, how we miss you.

Addressing the audience:

The TABLE . . . set for one . . . is small — symbolizing the loneliness we feel without you.

The TABLECLOTH is white — symbolizing the purity of their intentions and willingness to respond to their country's call to arms . . . REMEMBER!

The single ROSE in the vase reminds us of the families and loved ones of our comrades-in-arms who kept the

faith awaiting their return and forever left behind . . . REMEMBER!

The RED RIBBON tied so prominently on the vase is reminiscent of the red ribbon worn by many who bear witness to their unyielding determination to account for every one of our missing . . . REMEMBER!

A SLICE OF LEMON is on the bread plate to remind us of their bitter fate . . . REMEMBER!!

There is SALT upon the bread plate, too, symbolic of the river of tears shed by families and loved ones . . . REMEMBER!

The GLASS is inverted; they cannot toast with us this night . . . REMEMBER!!

The CHAIR is empty; they are not here . . . REMEMBER!! Our lives are incomplete because they are not here to sit with us tonight. They were there for us . . . we are still here for them.

Addressing the Missing Man:

In honoring you . . . each of you . . . all of you . . . we stand silently and face your table . . . the table where you should be sitting tonight.

We stand silently in your absence, silently except for the saying of your name.

Now each of us will light a candle in the ring of friendship on your table.

Addressing the audience:

REMEMBER . . . all of you who served with them and called them comrades, who depended upon their might and aid, and relied upon them, for surely, we have not forsaken them!

Susan McDonald

Las Vegas entertainer really cares about the VHPA

Show business is just that: A business of people entertaining other people.

However, sometimes a performer really starts to adopt an organization. This is what is beginning to happen this year.

Susan McDonald grew up and started her singing career in the Pittsburgh area, but she is better known these days for her almost daily performances in Las Vegas.

A premium-quality entertainer, she has performed at many of the well-known hotels in Vegas for years.

Those who attended our reunion last year in Las Vegas may remember Susan as performing at the Top of the Riviera on July 4.

However, that room had a maximum capacity of only 600 people, so only one-quarter of the reunion attendees had a chance to see her, and then only as a dinner-dance

type of group vs. the true cabaret style performer she is.

Last fall, she let it be known that because of her personal background, she felt a deep attachment to our association and its members. She also let us know she was willing to take time off from her Vegas show schedule to come to Orlando. She will perform at our Final Banquet July 5.

Susan and her traveling band, as well as a lot of their technical support, leave Las Vegas on the "red eye" after a performance to fly across the country to be with us Saturday night. Attendees will see a special, patriotic show.

As a sidelight, she will be staying over one additional night and donating 100 percent of her time and talents to a charity performance for the Knights of Columbus in the Orlando area before returning to Las Vegas the following Monday.

Reunion schedule

Tuesday, July 1

8 a.m.-5 p.m. — Vendor set up in Junior Ballroom F&G.
1-6 p.m. — Registration for preregistered guests only in Desk area No. 3.

Wednesday, July 2

9 a.m.-7 p.m. — Registration: Desk area No. 2; preregistration: Desk area No. 3.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Vendor area in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display in Florida Chapter, Signature 1.
Noon-7 p.m. — Shuttle buses run from Orlando airport to hotel every 20 minutes.
5:30-7 p.m. — First time reunion attendee special welcome reception (no cost) in Grand Ballroom B.
7-10 p.m. — Welcome reception and party for all members and guests in Grand Ballroom C, D&E. Music by "Volcano Joe." Your first two beers are on us.

Thursday, July 3

8 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration: Desk area No. 2; preregistration: Desk area No. 3.
9 a.m.-noon — Annual Business Meeting (dues-current members only) in Grand Ballroom A&B.
9:15 a.m.-noon — Breakfast for spouses and guests at hotel; including the comedy show "Kim and Scott Tie the Knot," a hilarious Italian wedding celebration in Grand Ballroom D.
1-2:30 p.m. — "Shadow of the Blade" helicopter flight presentation, discussions, and videos in Ballroom A&B.
Noon-6 p.m. — Vendor area in Junior Ballroom F&G.
Noon-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display by Florida Chapter in Signature 1.
Noon-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display in Junior Ballroom F&G.
1-5 p.m. — Mini reunions.
6-10 p.m. — Pirates Adventure reception and dinner show. Leave hotel 6 p.m. promptly or attend:
6:30-10:30 p.m. — Arabian Nights reception and dinner show, a private VHPA show extravaganza. Buses depart 6:30- 6:45 p.m.
10:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. — Informal get-together with light "lounge/cabaret"-type entertainment in Front Lobby Area.

Friday, July 4

6:30-8:30 a.m. — 5k run (or walk). Buses depart hotel at 6:30 a.m. promptly. Runners also will be able to go on Kennedy Space Center Tour or Sun Cruz gaming ship listed below; one bus will be held 30 minutes from time runners arrive back at hotel to ensure connection.
8 a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
8 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration in Desk Area No. 2.
8:30 a.m. -5:30 p.m. — Kennedy Space Center Tour.
9 a.m. -5:30 p.m. — Offshore gaming ship Sun Cruz (docks at Port Canaveral)
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Vendor area in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Helicopter Static Display in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Memorabilia Display by Florida Chapter in Signature 1.
1-5 p.m. — Mini-Reunions.
7-11 p.m. — Major theme pool party. Live entertainment starts at 7 p.m.; the "Tremors" (an eight-member party band) begin at 8

p.m.; our own huge fireworks and laser show about 9:30 p.m.; WOC Chorus about 8:45 p.m., pool food available from hotel on cash basis; bring swimwear. Rain contingency: Grand Ballroom.

10:30 p.m.-1 a.m. — Party continues with great two-piece combo inside the hotel lounge area.

Saturday, July 5

6:30 a.m.-2 p.m. — Golf Tournament at Mystic Dunes; includes lunch and mementos; bus leaves promptly from hotel at 6:45 a.m.; T time 8 a.m.
8 a.m.-noon — Mini-reunions.
9 a.m.-6 p.m. — Registration at Desk Area 2.
9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. — Vendor Area in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. — Helicopter Display in Junior Ballroom F&G.
9 a.m.-3 p.m. — Memorabilia Display by Florida Chapter in Signature 1.
4:30 -7 p.m. — Vendor area closed; break down booths and move out of Junior Ballroom.
5-6:15 p.m. — Pre-function area open for informal get-together. Beverages available, light background entertainment.
5:45 p.m. — Doors open for Final Banquet in Grand Ballroom. (Typically this is a coat-and-tie event. Some members wear military dress uniform. Ladies wear cocktail dresses).
6:30-6:40 p.m. — Presentation of Colors by Vietnamese Military Association Honor Guard; performance by 15-member Scottish bagpipe group.
6:40-6:50 p.m. — Missing Man Presentation, including continued performance by Scottish bagpipe group.
6:50-7 p.m. — Welcoming remarks by Joe Bilitzke.
7-8:30 p.m. — Dinner with background-type live music.
8:30-9 p.m. — Headliner Entertainment: Susan McDonald.
9-9:20 p.m. — Recognition of VHPA founders on our 20th anniversary.
9:20-9:30 p.m. — Patriotic musical reprise and the retiring of the colors.
9:30 p.m.-midnight — Final Banquet Dance with 17-member "Dance Express."

Sunday July 6

(Checkout for most reunion attendees)

6 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Shuttle buses depart hotel to Orlando airport every 20 minutes.
8-11 a.m. — Vendor area closed. Continue final teardown of booths and vacating Junior Ballroom.
9:30-11 a.m. — For members and guests going on the cruise only: Complete buffet breakfast, champagne mimosas, and pre-cruise meeting with Royal Caribbean in Signature 1 Banquet Room on first floor near VHPA registration area. Bring all luggage with you and place in room marked with luggage tags provided by ship. You will be boarding the buses directly from this room. Cruise documents required in order to access room.
11 a.m. — Buses depart Rosen Centre Hotel promptly en route to the Royal Caribbean ship Sovereign of the Seas for five-day/four-night cruise on VHPA-chartered buses.
Noon-12:30 p.m. — Cruise participants arrive at Port Canaveral for Royal Caribbean cruise; go through security.
1-1:30 p.m. — Cruise participants board ship Sovereign of the Seas.

Thursday July 10

7:30 a.m. — Cruise ship Sovereign of the Seas docks at Port Canaveral.
9 a.m. — Special VHPA-chartered bus departs Royal Caribbean dock for Orlando airport and then will continue back to Rosen Centre Hotel to drop off any members and guests who have left their car at the hotel during the cruise. Bus arrives at airport at 10 a.m.; Rosen Centre about 10:30 a.m.

Founders

VHPA to honor Original 66 at Orlando reunion

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the formation and founding of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

To commemorate this, the VHPA is planning to honor the 66 helicopter pilots who attended the first Reunion in Phoenix on June 15-17, 1984. This will take place at our Final Banquet Saturday night, July 5.

Little did the Original 66 know, as they met that weekend in 1984, where their efforts would lead. Their simple premise of finding the guys they flew with, renewing old friendships and getting together to enjoy the camaraderie is still the principle tenet of VHPA 20 years later.

Since the beginning of their efforts, 12,107 aviators who flew rotary-wing aircraft in Southeast Asia have been active members of our organization at one time or another.

We regret to report that 468 of these members are now

deceased. We have accounted for an additional 17,529 pilots who flew during the Vietnam era. Of these, we have obtained addresses for 13,708. Another 2,201 were killed in action and an additional 1,620 died after their tour in Vietnam without joining our association.

Overall, 29,636 of our fellow pilots have been accounted for to date by the VHPA. This leaves about 21,000 to find, which our dedicated Membership Committee is working diligently to do.

More than 20 of the Original 66 are registered to attend the reunion as of mid May. Please make plans to attend the banquet and honor our founders.

A list of the 66 helicopter pilots who helped form VHPA can be found below this article.

Unfortunately, three of our founders are no longer with us, although they will be long remembered by our association and our membership.

Original founders of the VHPA

"Randy" Aleshire	Phoenix, AZ	Thomas Murphy	Las Alamos, CA
David Bartram	Sandia Park, NM	Erv Nelson	Mesa, AZ
"Butch" Borszich	Phoenix, AZ	Don Norgard	Tucson, AZ
Vince Cedola	New River, AZ	Brian Novak	Murrieta, CA
Mark Christian	Conchas Dam, NM	John Palmer	Moraga, CA
Larry Clark	Sugarland, TX	Lane Patrick	Arizona City, AZ
Brian Clark		Robert Payne	Kennesaw, GA
Joseph Conley	Fayetteville, GA	Christian Peterson	Bellingham, WA
Rick Crabbs	Phoenix, AZ	Ron Pettis	San Diego, CA
Rod Dykhouse	Templeton, CA	Wilmer Preston	Tucson, AZ
Jim Ellis	Fredericksburg, TX	Ira A. Putnam Jr.	Ormond Beach, FL
"Tony" Ennis	Bakersfield, CA	Bill Rheams	Prospekti Baku, Azerbaijan
Richard Freeman	Sanger, TX	Bert Rhine	Mesa, AZ
James Fulcher	Covington, KY	Jon Richards	St. Cloud, FL
Roger Gould	Fountain Hills, AZ	Bill Ringer	Santa Barbara, CA
David Grieger	Salem, AL	Gary Robertson	Glendale, AZ
Mark Hansen	Auburn, WA	Karl Ronningen	
Don Hildebrand		Gregory Ross	Kalamazoo, MI
Thomas Hofer	Carefree, AZ	Tony Ruh	Tucson, AZ
Howie Horton	Lufkin, TX	Roger Searcy	Galveston, TX
Daniel Hutchison	Boise, ID	Robert Smith	Lee's Summit, MO
Russell Janus	Manhattan Beach, CA	Duane Striet	Lakeview, MN
Alex Kelley	Tucson, AZ	John Sutcliff	Boyetown, PA
Flemming Kendall	Dunnellon, FL	James Thompson	Mesa, AZ
Mike Law	Denver, CO	Dolph Todd	Pensacola, FL
James Lee	Crestview, FL	Charles Topalian	Monument, CO
John Leonard	Sierra Vista, AZ	Paul Uster	Mesa, AZ
John Logan	Cape Coral, FL	Ronald Wallace	Orange Park, FL
Donald Lynam	Chandler, AZ	Robert Waltz	Phoenix, AZ
Richard McCaig	Santee, CA	Michael Wilson	Houston, TX
Michael McDonald	Kula, HI	Bill Wood	Shawnee Mission, KS
Michael Miller	Dixon, CA	Ronald Wright	Casa Grande, AZ
John Morgan	St. Louis, MO	Wayne Wright	Simi Valley, CA

Thanks!

Volunteers make reunion possible

DAVE RITTMAN
ORLANDO ACTING REUNION CHAIRMAN

One only has to look at the agenda within this *Newsletter* to see that the organization and management of our reunions are complex affairs.

With more than 2,000 people attending the reunion — each person having many different interests, desires, and preferences — these events are designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of members and guests, while ensuring the primary purpose of camaraderie, renewing old friendships and, in many cases, making new friends with common interests.

The military events in Iraq, combined with the call-up of a number of our members to active duty, made reunion planning complex and often tricky this year.

We are very appreciative of the Rosen Hotel management team, including Mr. Rosen himself, who took a personal interest and assisted the association. These folks really went the extra mile for the VHPA.

Many member volunteers over the years have made our reunions possible and this year is no exception.

The risk of what is to follow is there are so many it is impossible to recognize everyone. However, there are a few key volunteers you should be aware of:

- **Ken Fritz** and **Rich Buzen** for their assistance in setting up, administering, and operating the vendor areas.

- **Don Joyce**, **Dick Antross** and the **Florida Chapter** for providing display helicopters in our vendor area, bringing the chapter's extensive memorabilia collection for us all to view, providing some mementoes on the tables at the final banquet, and much more.

Don Joyce also put us in touch with and is coordinating several participants of the final banquet, including the Vietnamese Military Color Guard and the Scottish Bagpipe Band.

He also was instrumental in doing the early homework and putting us in touch with several other key reunion service providers, including the 5k run, Pirates Adventure Dinner Theatre, and several of the outside tour providers.

- **Jack Swickard** for all his assistance with the reunion *Newsletter* you are reading.

- President **Joe Bilitzke**, who started the reunion planning process, assisted "hands on" in its early conceptual stages before, on very short notice, he was called back to active military service in early January.

- **Darlene Bilitzke**, who agreed to handle the final night banquet seating reservation system — no small task.

- **Mike Sheuerman**, who located, contacted and followed up with the 66 original founders of our association, and has put together the recognition of their efforts at our final banquet.

- **Marcia Fritz**, and her staff at VHPA Headquarters, particularly **Shari Cobb**, **Colleen Mitchell** and **Tina Vilalovas**, who have done so much for our association and administration of registration.

- **Charlie Holley**, who wrote the software package and volunteers the computer space to run the Internet registration system used this year.

- **Mike Whitten**, who has organized the golf tournament and put together the donations and sponsors.

- **Kenny Bunn**, who volunteered to assist in customizing the Arabian Nights Dinner Show. His wit and his willingness to provide the creative people at Arabian Nights with the history, terminology, lingo, and humor associated with the military in general and our association will make for a great, memorable show.

- **Bob Smith**, who helped with our special insurance needs and coverage at key times, in addition to his other volunteer duties with our association.

- **Wally Magathan**, who worked diligently with the State of Florida to obtain the special tax exemption for the Orlando reunion that saved substantial funds — well over \$12,000 on hotel events alone — which then was plowed back into the reunion as added enhancements to the membership.

- **Dana Young**, who assisted in the association leadership and oversaw the committee that put together the newly found helicopter pilot names, who then were contacted and invited to the reunion.

- **Gary Roush** and **Mike Law** for their collective efforts in working database management, and assisting Dana in developing, researching and tracking down viable addresses for so many of our fellow pilots who have been lost for years — but recently were found through these efforts.

- **Tom Payne**, our secretary/treasurer, who pays the bills and coordinates so much for this association beyond his volunteerism for reunion-related needs.

- **Dan Ferguson** and **Angelo Spelios** for their leadership, willingness to assist, and counsel regarding reunion planning and administration.

Spouses singled out for thanks

The spouses of the volunteers mentioned above, who have put up with us while we were involved in reunion planning and implementing the events and schedules.

Mini-reunion schedule

Thursday, July 3

1-5 p.m.

48th AHC Blue Stars

Salon 9/10

CONTACT: Carl Cortez

Number expected: 200

Tandem Rotor

Salon 3

CONTACT: Brian Foote

Number expected: 80

61st AHC Luckystar, Starblazers

Salon 4

CONTACT: James Beach

Number expected: 50-75

Southern California VHPA

Salon 1

CONTACT: Dale Berry

Number expected: 40

119 Aviation Company

81st Transportation Company

Salon 11

CONTACT: Bob Heisterman

Number expected: 40

175th AHC

Salon 12

CONTACT: John R. Taylor

Number expected: 35

195th AHC

Salon 5

CONTACT: Al Harinck

Number expected: 30

B/227 AHB, 1st Cavalry

Salon 6

CONTACT: Herb Nagel

Number expected: 30

F Troop 1/9Cavalry

Salon 7

CONTACT: George Hewlett

Number expected: 25-30

ORWAC 66-16

Salon 8

CONTACT: Rick Roll

Number

expected: 20

Dustoff

Salon 15

CONTACT: Jon Dienlin

Number expected: 10

117th AHC/8th TRANS

Salon 16

CONTACT: Robert Elliott

Number expected: 10-15

Friday, July 4

8 a.m.-12 p.m.

162nd AHC

Salon 14

CONTACT: Stan Gause

Number expected: 40

COMMENTS: The 162nd has a hospitality suite Thursday-Saturday.

Friday, July 4

1-5 p.m.

7/17th Cavalry

Salon 11

CONTACT: Jose Martinez

7910. Number expected: 40

162nd AHC

Salon 14

CONTACT: Stan Gause

Number expected: 40

170th Aviation Company

Salon 12

CONTACT: George Crawford

Number expected: 35

187th AHC

Salon 5

CONTACT: Asa Vest

Number expected: 35

188th/C/101st

Salon 6

CONTACT: Jack Johnson

Number expected: 30

Class 68-3

Salon 7

CONTACT: Roger Patterson

Number

expected: 20

176th AHC

Salon 10

CONTACT: Ken Bigelow

Number expected: 50

F Troop 4th CAV

Salon 8

CONTACT: Hayden "Pappy" Jones

Number expected: 15

Saturday, July 5

8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Florida Chapter VHPA

Salon 1

CONTACT: Don Joyce

Number expected: 100

Hornets —116th AHC

Salon 14

CONTACT: Joe Duvall

Number expected: 26 plus

D / 158th Avn Bn — Redskins

Salon 15

CONTACT: Joel Glenn

Number expected: 10

Saturday, July 5

1-5 p.m.

33rd Trans/118th AHC

Salon 10

CONTACT: Tom Payne

Number expected: 50

Soc Trang units

Salon 11

CONTACT: Jerry Esmay

Number expected: 35

Hornets — 116th AHC

Salon 14

CONTACT: Joe Duvall

Number expected: 26 plus

189th AHC /GhostRiders

Avengers/Caretakers

Salon 12

CONTACT: Steve Schmidt

Number expected: 25

Fireworks show

July 4th Pool Party spectacular, high tech

The July 4th Pool Party on Friday comes complete with its own 15-minute, high-powered laser and fireworks show.

It all starts at 7 p.m., with live entertainment. Beginning at 8 p.m., the fabulous party band "Tremors" performs.

The WOC Chorus sings about 8:45 p.m., and then there is the fireworks show, starting about 9:30 p.m.

How can they shoot fireworks so close to the tall buildings in a downtown area?

The answer is "precision" pyro products manufactured to a much higher standard than the typical aerial shell shot off at a local community display.

Computers control the firing

sequence and synchronize it to music.

Close off a few streets, obtain the assistance of the Orlando civic officials and Rosen Centre hotel management, hire a well-known, high-tech laser-pyro production firm to pull it all off, and there you are!

The laser show takes so much power a special generator truck has to be brought in to power it all.

There is not nearly enough electricity available in the hotel to fire up all the technology.

A number of the lasers run so hot they need to be water-cooled. The equipment being used runs very quietly and is typically used on remote movie sets.

Some 200 amps of power are

required just to run the lasers and associated technology.

Various pool foods are available on a cash basis throughout the evening. The food and the bars are deeply discounted.

When was the last time you saw a \$1 beer at a major hotel?

The party moves inside at 11 p.m., and we have continuing live entertainment in the hotel lobby until 1 a.m.

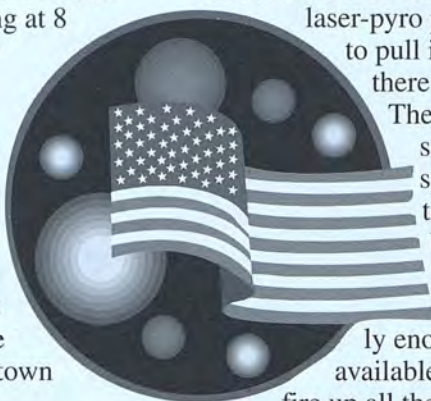
There is a rain contingency if needed: The party would move into the Grand Ballroom.

Don't have a ticket yet?

See the VHPA registration desk in the first floor banquet area.

Due to the configuration of the buildings, the show will not be visible from most areas of the hotel or adjoining areas.

A \$25 fee covers the cost of the evening.



Parties kick off Orlando reunion

Members attending their first VHPA reunion and their guests are invited to a special cocktail party at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 2, in Grand Ballroom B.

No tickets are required, as name badges contain a special identification for admittance to this pre-reception, hosted by the VHPA.

In addition to meeting fellow pilots and comrades, we would like to welcome you to our association.

While this is a social event, we would like to offer a brief overview of the association and various reunion activities.

We also will have elected officers and Headquarters staff on hand to answer any questions and welcome you to our association.

Welcome reception and party

A great welcome reception for all attendees is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 2, in Grand



Ballroom C, D & E.

A quality entertainment party band — "Volcano Joe" — has been booked for our first night back together.

However, we have made certain there also are quieter areas in which to meet and visit.

Similar to last year, the first two beers are on us! If you need tickets, please see our registration desk, which is open until 7 p.m.

Tickets also will be available at the door from our Headquarters staff.



Private show

Arabian Nights Dinner Theatre plans special tribute

**Special VHPA Private Show
Thursday, July 3, at 6:30 p.m.**

The story line is truly unique in these times. In fact, the TV news media have picked up on this already.

The folks at Arabian Nights Dinner Theatre have structured a private show to provide special tribute and to say "thank you" for all your service and dedication to our country. It all happens Thursday evening, July 3.

The performance has been custom-tailored to our association, with a performing cast and support group of more than 100 very talented people. More than 60 of the world's most graceful horses will be combined with the grandeur of a full Broadway-type production.

Look closely and you may see a number of VHPA members in the show itself, and some of the content of the performance has been adjusted to match our jargon, experiences, and Vietnam history.

You will not believe the 10-minute finale, performed with ceremony, pageantry, and including a very patriotic ending.

Those who attend will remember this night for a long time.

Cameras are welcome for this special performance. There is plenty of light in the arena for digital and video cameras. If you have an adjustable lens film camera, using 400 or 800 ASA high-speed film will work great, even without flash.

Included are a one-hour reception and a full prime rib dinner, with all the beer, wine, and Coca-Cola products you can consume. There also is a unique gift shop.

Motor coaches will leave the Rosen Center starting at 6:30 p.m. and, when we return to the hotel about 10:30, the party continues with VHPA-provided live entertainment in the hotel lounge area.

Due to capacity restraints, attendance is limited to the first 1,200 members and guests who register for this event. If you do not have a ticket, check with our Headquarters registration desk ASAP and see if we can get you a reservation. But please don't wait, it will be a show you will never forget.

Pirates Adventure alternate show choice

For members and guests who prefer a different theme — or after the Arabian Nights private VHPA show sells out — we have arranged for you an alternative dinner show on the evening of July 3, Pirates Dinner Adventure.

This is a interactive show featuring a 46-foot-long Spanish galleon pirate ship anchored in a 300,000-gallon lagoon with night sky light-

ing, cannon blasts, an indoor fire and fireworks effects.

A one-hour reception is included, along with all the wine and beer you wish.

More than 40 performers participate in the show, in addition to about 50 children of guests who attend. Children who are selected get to race in dinghies around the lagoon as part of the show, and brave the sea-crusty

captain.

While this show will not be exclusively for VHPA members and guests, it will be a great experience.

After attendees from Arabian Nights or the Pirates Adventure dinner show return to the hotel, starting about 10:30 p.m., we have arranged an informal get-together with light lounge/cabaret-type entertainment in the front lobby area of the hotel.

AAHF to fly Huey during reunion

The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) is bringing its fully restored and flyable UH-1 "Huey" to our reunion and will have it available at a heliport near the Rosen Centre.

The AAHF is dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of Army Aviation.

The foundation will offer rides to VHPA members and their guests for several days during the reunion.

The AAHF will ask for a \$40 donation per person for about a 10-minute ride.

The donation will help cover the costs of operation.

As the AAHF is a federally recognized nonprofit organization, the donation can be deducted from individual tax returns.

The AAHF has a schedule of hours available for flights during the reunion.

This is included as a separate handout within your packet.

The AAHF also is hosting an information booth in our vendor area.

The VHPA is donating the use of several shuttle buses, which will depart the front lobby area to the heliport for those interested in seeing or riding in this fully restored Huey.

Our thanks to president Mike Brady and Cathy Johnson of the AAHF for making this possible.

Tours planned for space center, ship

VHPA members and guests attending the reunion will have an opportunity to take one of two special tours outside the hotel:

A visit to the Kennedy Space Center or a trip to Port Canaveral to board the Sun Cruz offshore casino ship on Friday, July 4.

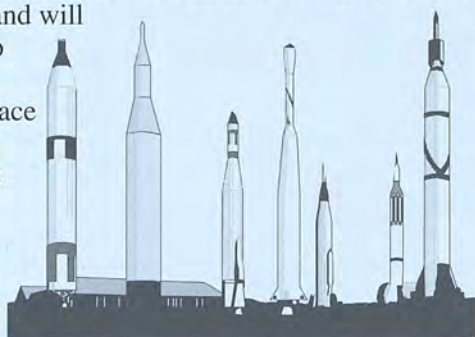
It will be possible for those wishing to participate in the 5k run also to go on either tour.

Kennedy Space Center

This VHPA-chartered tour will leave the Rosen Centre at 8:30 a.m. and will

include access to restricted areas, including the Space Shuttle Viewing Platform and the Apollo Center.

Participants will experience the past, present and future of space travel.



We estimate the tour will return to the hotel about

5:30 p.m. The cost is \$35 a person.

Please note that due to heightened security at the Kennedy Space Center, the following items are not permitted: Coolers, food, firearms, pepper spray, knives and other sharp objects. Detailed searches will be conducted on all bags and purses.

Sun Cruz gaming boat

This is a unique trip to board and sail on a spectacular four-deck, offshore gaming ship based in Port Canaveral.

Motor coach transportation is provided by Sun Cruz from the Rosen Centre to the ship, departing at 9 a.m. The return trip will be about 5:30 p.m.

Including in the package is an onboard buffet, a 3- to 4-hour cruise, live entertainment, match play coupons and complimentary beverages while gaming.

This tour costs \$15 per person.

Tickets required

Tickets for both tours are required and both events are capacity-limited.

If you have not obtained tickets when you pre-registered for the reunion and would still like to go, contact our registration desk as soon as possible.

Golf tournament at Mystic Dunes

On Saturday, July 5, we have arranged our own private golf tournament at the premium Mystic Dunes.

Included are prizes, mementos, lunch and, of course, recognition for top scores.

The championship course is just southwest of the Disney World Properties, some 30 minutes from the Rosen Centre, and is described as being reminiscent of Carolina and British style courses, making it a golf course unlike any other.

PGA Tour player and NBC Sports

analyst Gary Koch planned the course.

The dramatic front nine offers the feel of a British Isles course, with sweeping elevation changes and native sand dunes.

The back nine is reminiscent of a low country-style Carolina course, with "four of the best finishing holes you'll find anywhere," according to Golf and Leisure Magazine.

It is definitely a challenging course.

VHPA buses leave the hotel at 6:30 a.m. on July 5, and will return

after a lunch at the club about 2:30 p.m.

We have several open spaces available, and it is possible to rent clubs at Mystic Dunes for modest amounts.

If you are interested in playing, please contact the VHPA registration desk as soon as possible so we can confirm transportation and slot within the tournament. Cost for all this is \$95 per person, which includes green fees, cart, transportation, lunch, and everything else mentioned above.

Dallas to be host of VHPA reunion in 2004

We are pleased to announce that our next reunion will be held in Dallas, TX, over the July 4th weekend in 2004.

The hotel is one of the finest in the area — the Adams Mark. The spectacular facility is located in the downtown area at 400 N. Olive St.

Similar to this year, we have negotiated greatly reduced rooms rates for a first-class facility you truly will enjoy.

Additional details will be provided to you in early January of next year, but for preliminary planning purposes, the Fourth of July in 2004 falls on a Sunday night, and for many, July 5 is an official holiday. Thus, the reunion currently is planned to start with arrivals on Thursday, July 1, with the final banquet scheduled for Sunday, July 4, with most members checking out the next day.

Mark the dates on your calendar . . . and be there!

Anchors aweigh

Reunion continues with Caribbean cruise

One of the reunion event options this year is a great 5-day, 4-night cruise extension booked on Royal Caribbean starting Sunday, July 6.

For those booked on the cruise in advance, we meet for a VHPA-provided buffet breakfast which includes champagne mimosas, starting at 9:30 p.m. in the Signature 1 banquet room on the first floor of the hotel, near the VHPA registration desk area.

Your cruise documents will be required to gain entrance to this room.

Be sure to bring your luggage with you, with the cruise line ID baggage tags attached, as you will not be returning to your hotel room.

From the Signature 1 banquet room area, your luggage will be loaded on the buses for by the Rosen Centre bell staff. Please be sure you do not pack your cruise tickets, ID or passports in your luggage.

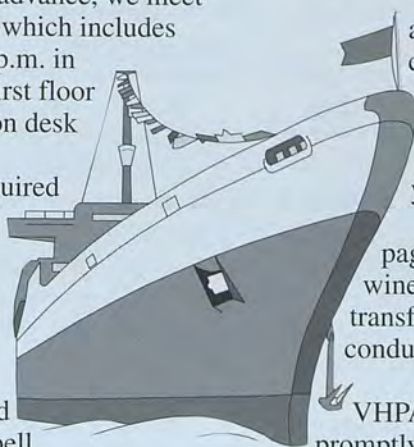
VHPA-chartered motor coaches will leave directly

from the breakfast area at the Rosen at promptly 11 a.m. en route to the ship, which docks at Port Canaveral, about 50 minutes away.

As of this printing, security arrangements at the dock require that your luggage be checked in with the cruise line individually (similar to how airlines operate). To our knowledge, all luggage is X-rayed, so we do not recommend you pack camera film in your bags.

The cost of the VHPA-provided champagne breakfast, the bottle of champagne or wine in your room on the ship, and motor coach transfers to and from the ship was offset by a tour conductor fee we received from the cruise line.

The cruise returns Thursday, July 10, with VHPA-arranged transportation departing the dock promptly at 9 a.m. for the Orlando airport and then back to the Rosen Centre Hotel. We estimate the bus will be at the airport about 10 a.m., and at the Rosen Centre about 10:30 a.m.



Run/walk scheduled for Saturday

On Saturday morning, July 5, we have arranged for a 5k run or walk in beautiful Turkey Lake Park, which is about 15 minutes from the Rosen Centre.

This year we have arranged for a local running club to help with the arrangements, so we will have a true "run" for those so inclined, complete with timers, race bib numbers, goodie packets, course layout, finish chutes, etc.

For those who would just like to walk or enjoy the scenery, you're welcome too!

The park is very well-maintained,

with many areas to explore, or you can "walk" the same route as the runners.



Go as far as you wish and, in the morning hours, the park is delightfully cool compared to the summer heat later in the day.

Everyone who participates will have access to post race or walk refreshments, fruits, pastry and, of course, the "goodie bags" the local club is putting together.

Cost is \$10 per person and tickets are required.

A bus will pick you up at the Rosen and transport you back after the run or walk. Please visit the registration desk as soon as possible so we can ensure we have sufficient transportation to accommodate you.

Going on the Kennedy Space Center Tour or the Sun Cruz boat? You can still do the run/walk in the park, and we will hold the last bus to Space Center or boat for 30 minutes from the time the bus from the park returns to the hotel.

Here's a chance to get out of the hotel and enjoy the beauty Orlando has to offer.

Shuttle bus available from hotel to airport

To assist you in getting back to the Orlando airport from the Rosen Centre, the VHPA is running its own 49-passenger bus shuttle service using Atlas Motor Coach.

The hotel is about 20 minutes from the airport and is a somewhat expensive cab ride — about \$32 each way.

On Sunday, July 6, the buses will leave the Rosen Centre for the Orlando airport every 20 minutes, starting at 6

a.m. The last bus departs at 12:30 p.m.

The cost is \$5 per person, collected when you get on the bus. The shuttle will not run at times other than those listed.

Look for a large white bus outside the front lobby with the VHPA sign in the window. "Atlas Motor Coach" is written in large, red letters on the side of each bus.

Membership grows, but help needed

DANA M. YOUNG
VICE PRESIDENT/MEMBERSHIP

More than 19 years ago a small group of ex-Vietnam helicopter pilots met to share some thoughts about the time they spent in Southeast Asia.

What started in a local garage with a handful of pilots has grown beyond any one of the Original 66's expectations.

We currently have more than 7,300 active, dues-paying members, and the numbers keep increasing. During this reunion, we will recognize the 12,000th pilot to become a member of the VHPA.

Membership in our organization is limited. There is a "fixed" number of people eligible to join.

The challenge is to find everyone who is eligible and let them know about the VHPA.

There are two parts to this challenge.

The first is to make sure we have accounted for everyone who flew helicopters in Southeast Asia during 1961-75. We do this through our annual Membership Directory.

The second, the more exciting, is to encourage membership and participation in our annual reunions.

During the past 19 years we, as an organization, have held reunions throughout the United States. The first was in Phoenix, AZ, the last in Las Vegas, NV, and now, here in Orlando.

Attendance at these reunions has continued to grow. Part of the growth can be attributed to the growth in membership; each year we see an increasing number of new faces at our New Member Reception.

Another reason for the growth is the number of repeat attendees. Members who have experienced the thrill of seeing a face they had not seen for more than 20 years want to try and repeat that experience at another reunion.

This growth, membership and attendance at reunions can only continue if you help.

Each year, Gary Roush mans a table in the vendor area. He has card files, databases, copies of orders and much, much more. He waits for members to provide him updated information on pilots they know or knew.

Stop by; check to see if your stick buddies are listed and if their contact information is current.

Check the Membership Directory. Look to see if the names on orders you received while in Vietnam are listed. If not, let us know. Check out your flight school pictures. Are all of those in the pictures accounted for in the Directory? If not, let us know.

We have run more than 11,000 names through a search firm to find current addresses. We have another 6,000 plus names to go.

The first ones were easy, we had Social Security Account Numbers. These last batches require someone to do a physical search of records to find those who got out of the service before we transitioned from RA, US, O and NG numbers to Social Security Account Numbers.

The bottom line? The easier parts are done. Now we need you to help us complete the challenge.

If each of you updated just one name, found just one missing person, we would be able to provide our heirs with a complete accounting of those who participated as helicopter pilots in Vietnam.

Two-piece band entertained VHPA before

Throughout the Orlando reunion you will see a small, two-piece band called "Double Play" at some of our events and functions.

The band is playing in the main hotel lobby area late in the evening after dinner theater attendees arrive back at the Rosen Centre on July 3 and the Pool Party on July 4.

It also is performing at the final night pre-function event, the New

Members Reception, and at a few of our other activities.

Who are these two band members?

Kaycee and Roger Cowan are their names, and yes, they have performed for one of our earlier reunions — back in 1995 at Kansas City.

Remember the small band everyone loved that played in-between the primary entertainment band at the

Final Banquet? The one that volunteered to stay to play when the members wanted the party to go on! That's Kaycee and Roger!

However, someone with a very good memory may remember Roger from somewhere else more meaningful for us. He played the "circuit" of volunteers who traveled around, performing for our military during the Vietnam era.

Comedy theater company to perform during meeting

While the guys attend the Annual Business Meeting, we have arranged for a professional comedy theater company to perform the hotel during breakfast.

Starting at 9:15 a.m., the "Kim and Scott Tie the Knot" show will perform in Grand Ballroom D. The show is a hilarious "Italian wedding" and you are invited.

Needless to say, Kim and Scott are getting married.

However, serious questions arise. Did Kim murder her first husband? Has Scott been trading computer gaming secrets for precious gems? Is he just an opportunist? Relatives try to protect Kim and Scott from each other.

All this drifts into serious audience participation and interaction. A full breakfast is provided. After the second act, you can have all the champagne mimosas you want.

Pucker Factor 10

(Memoir of a U.S. Army Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam)

From the preface . . .

In the summer of 2001, relatives and friends from across the country gathered at our home for a family reunion. One evening during that weekend my nephews from California, men in their 30s, joined me on the porch and began asking me questions about Vietnam . . .

. . . as my words slowed down I saw, in my mind's eye, those faces again and remembered how, when I returned to the battlefield to take them out, they had changed from bright and eager to ashen and, sometimes, lifeless — their spirits gone, their bodies broken. My eyes welled up and my throat constricted; had I attempted to utter another word, I would have begun sobbing. Instead I stood up, walked into the house, and poured myself a double.

PUCKER FACTOR 10



Memoir of a U.S. Army
Helicopter Pilot in Vietnam

JAMES JOYCE

For many days after the reunion I remained puzzled and surprised at my strong emotional reaction to the story I couldn't finish. This had never happened before. On the front porch that evening in North Carolina, my nephews had unleashed an emotion that instantly dissolved 35 years and took me back to South Vietnam. That moment was the catalyst for this book. A few weeks later I began to write.

Most of the book is set in Vietnam, but there are also stories of us brand new second lieutenants learning to fly airplanes and helicopters before going to the war. It was a time of glory for us. As the aircraft we flew defied gravity, we defied fear. We had wings on our chests and a swagger in our gaits. We were aviators, pilots, fly boys. We were hot stuff and we knew it; we were invincible — at least at the beginning — and we loved life (boy did we love life), yet we chal-

lenged it each time we pushed the throttles forward. We were beautiful paradoxes, and to this day, "I was a pilot" is a statement I am proud to make.

Published by McFarland & Co: Jefferson, North Carolina and London

Available at mcfarlandpub.com, amazon.com, booksamillions.com, militaryink.com, etc.
212 pp, photos, index \$29.95

James Joyce has written numerous articles for newspapers such as The Durango Herald and The Chicago Tribune. He is the president and founder of Green Mountain International Inc., a manufacturer of polyurethane products for the construction industry.

Library of Congress to videotape at reunion

Our 20th anniversary will have one additional special feature — the Library of Congress is sending four volunteers to talk to members and videotape our memories of the Vietnam era.

Barbara Fegan and Sandi Shaw, representing the Library of Congress, are working together on the project. Assisting them are Carol Martin from the Truman Library in Independence, MO, and Nicki Cardwell, aide to U.S. Rep. Karen McCarthy.

In addition to 1-on-1 interviews, the volunteers will tape portions of the reunion to document how veterans' groups get together in later years to foster memories and rekindle the camaraderie formed years before in hostile military environments.

All the videotapes and material go into the Library, where they will be preserved for future generations to review.

Current plans also call for the editing of the event videos into an approximate 60- to 90-minute tape, which would be available for viewing at or through the Library of Congress.

We know of one investment that always does well.

We believe one of the most profitable investments is an investment in relationships. At times like these, when the market can be volatile, that investment really pays off.

- Now is the time you need someone who understands your goals and risk tolerance.
- Someone who can help you adjust your portfolio in a changing investment environment.
- Someone who takes the time to ask the right questions, so together you can come up with the right answers.

If you want to talk to a Financial Advisor that truly understands the importance of a long-term relationship, call us at UBS PaineWebber.

Robert F. Potvin

Account Vice President, UBS PaineWebber
"Stingray White 25"



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Attend this year's reunion in Orlando

Letters

March/April cover shows OH-23's

Any Army warrant officer should know the difference between OH-13's and OH-23 Ravens!

In *The VHPA Newsletter* for March/April 2003, the cover picture describes the helicopters on the main heliport of Fort Wolters as TH-55's and OH-13's. I can't find a single OH-13 in the picture! Plenty of OH-23's, though!!

I flew OH-23G's in RVN in late 1969 and early 1970 before we transitioned to the OH-58 in the 23rd Artillery Group.

Keep up the good work!

Danny E. Goss
WORWAC 69-27

23rd Artillery Group — RVN
300th Aviation USAR — DNAS

G Co. 149th Aviation Battalion TXARNG — DNAS

See **LETTERS**, Page 17



Walnut Medal Display Case

Brass hinges/hasps, foam liner inside velvet liner.

Cost of \$100 includes

Shipping in the USA. If you served in Vietnam, you were awarded the Viet Cross of Gallantry and the Campaign Medal. Cost \$15 each plus shipping.

Visit www.flyarmymair.com to see

- Photo gallery by unit
- Nam memorabilia collection
- Display case and medals

George G. Reese Jr.

Enterprise, AL 36330

Phone: [redacted] Evenings
E-Mail: [redacted]

Letters

Continued from Page 16

Cover caption incorrect on March/April issue

I believe the caption under the picture on the front of the newsletter is incorrect. The picture looks to be of the Mineral Wells Airport when it was expanded in 1965 to accommodate the TH-55's when they were added as trainers at Fort Wolters.

Mail likely forthcoming about designation mixup

Before I say anything else, I want to thank you for putting out a great publication and one that I anxiously look forward to arriving every other month. I know that it is not fair to simply point out glitches when accolades are in order for the most part.

What I point out is not a criticism as much as a point of fact. You'll probably get a bunch of mail regarding the caption for the cover picture. It says "TH-55's and OH-13's are scattered about the main heliport at Fort Wolters, TX."

There is nary a single OH-13 in view, of course, as they are OH-23D Ravens made by Hiller, not Bell Aircraft Corp. Not a huge error; however, for those of us who flew the Raven, there is a soft spot in our hearts for her.

Thanks for taking the time to correct the oversight. Keep up the good work!

Tom Taylor

The main heliport at Fort Wolters was against a hillside and the tower was located on the hillside. It is still there (or at least it was last year) except it is in the "leaning rest" position.

It also had a lot of hangars and classrooms along the road, which are missing in the picture.

In 1965 and 1966, the TH-55's staged out of the Mineral Wells Airport and the OH-23's (not OH-13's) staged out of Fort Wolters. They didn't want to co-mingle the toy aircraft (TH-55's) with the real aircraft (OH-23).

I'm sure you'll get other flak from those who at least recognize the difference between the OH-13's and the OH-23's, but I have to admit, it is a lot easier to look at the Newsletter after it is published than it is to put it together. You guys do a great job. Thanks for all of your hard work!

Bob Thompson

Petaluma, CA

Formerly Cougar 23
57th AHC

Kontum, RVN

EDITOR'S NOTE: The aircraft were OH-23's and not OH-13's, as stated in the cover caption. The error was made when Newsletter editor Jack Swickard typed a "1" instead of a "2" while writing the caption. Swickard flew OH-23's at Fort Wolters in 1966.

Frictioning controls standard at Wolters

I disagree with member Jack Knotts about an IP having a tizzy at seeing a TH-55 running unattended.

That was the way it was done at Fort Wolters — the student frictioned down the controls, and got out of the running TH-55, OH-23, OH-13 to do his analysis of the confined area/pinnacle.

Tom Hirschler

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The first reunion — 1984

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ALL VHPA MEMBERS:

The past several months have been very busy for my wife Terrie and I with the first reunion and business meeting consuming most of our time. The VHPA is making a major step forward with the transition from being run only by my wife and I from our home, to a national organization with elected officers and committee chairmen throughout the country. Please be patient with us as we all get our act together. The first major change you will notice is the format of this newsletter. A big step forward from the single page, copied sheets we sent out last year.

Since the reunion we have been busy with the more than 300 orders for T-shirts and member directories we received from you, the 1984 membership. If you sent an order in for a shirt and directory you should have received the merchandise by now, if not please contact us so we can check our files. New VHPA shirts, caps, patches, cups and other items will be advertised in the newsletters. Your annual dues will entitle you to a copy of the annually updated directory which will be mailed out during April each year.

As we approach the 1000th member milestone of the VHPA and move forward as an organization we, Terrie and I, want to thank all of you for your support and words of encouragement that kept us going with our efforts to form the VHPA. Many times we almost gave up, but your letters and phone calls boosted our spirits and renewed our energy. The VHPA is no longer my dream, but has matured into your organization.

Sincerely,

Larry Clark,
Executive Director

The VHPA NEWSLETTER is published quarterly by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, P.O. Box 35699, Phoenix, AZ 85069

It is distributed free of charge to all members of the VHPA.

VHPA membership is open to all helicopter pilots who flew in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era (1961 to 1975). Annual dues are \$20.00 or Life Membership for \$300.00.

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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Larry Clark, Executive Director: Larry is a Senior Marketing Representative and test pilot for Sperry Corporation in Phoenix, Arizona.

Don Hildebrand, President: Don is the owner of Southwest Helicopters in Tucson, Arizona. Due to business commitments at the present time, his duties will be assumed by the vice President.

Bill Ringer, Vice President: Bill is the Marketing Manager for the Rocky Mountain Region of Hughes Helicopters. He will be performing the duties of both the President and the Vice President for the present time.

Mike Law, Three Year Member at Large: Mike is employed by United Airlines in their Computer Data Center. We are very fortunate to have Mike's expertise in the computer field. He has assumed the duties of recording all the information on the applications and maintaining the data base on his personal computer.

Mike McDonald, Two Year Member at Large: Mike is a corporate helicopter pilot in Houston, Texas. He is also serving on the arrangements committee for the 1985 reunion in Houston.

Roger Gould, One Year Member at Large: Roger is employed by Hughes Helicopters in Mesa, Arizona in the Flight Test Data Department. He will be assuming the duties in coming months of our newsletter editor.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Ron Wright, Arrangements: Ron is employed by Executive Air Link, a helicopter airline in Houston, Texas. He and his group are working hard on the reunion to be held in Houston next year.

Mark Hansen, Membership: Mark is the helicopter pilot for KING/TV in Seattle, Washington. Mark is taking care of all new inquiries for membership in our organization.

Brian Novak, Public Relations: Brian is a helicopter pilot for Landells Aviation in California. He is taking care of media coverage.

Bill Rheams, Nominating: Bill is employed by Air Logistics in EMS marketing. His committee is responsible for the nomination of individuals to fill vacancies for the office of Vice President and Member at Large, to be voted on at next years Business Meeting.

Editor of the Newsletter: This position was to have been held by Dolph Todd. Since the reunion, Dolph has accepted a job as Chief Pilot for EMS Helicopters in Louisiana. Due to business commitments and his recent relocation from Los Angeles, he will be unable to fulfill this position. Roger Gould, our One Year Member at Large, will be assuming these duties in the near future.

The first reunion — 1984

FIRST REUNION HELD IN PHOENIX

The first reunion and organizational meeting of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) was held in Phoenix, Arizona on June 15 - 17, 1984. One hundred and two people attended! Sixty-seven of these were members with the remaining thirty-five being wives or girlfriends.

Pre-registration was held on Friday evening poolside, however, there were already groups that had reacquainted themselves or had met that afternoon by the pool. For those that had pre-registered, packets had been made up with agendas, directories, T-shirts and name tags. There was a lot of activity at the registration desk for those that decided to come at the last minute but all were accommodated.

Friday evening was spent looking through the directory to find a particular name or names. There was a great mixture of feelings, for some to find an old friend that was on the MIA/KIA list or to find that an old friend was selling insurance, an engineer or a pilot. For some, it was the face that looked familiar across the table. After lengthy discussions, finally place that person as someone you served with in the same unit for a few days as one was returning home and the other was just starting his tour of duty. And the stories started!

Saturday morning business got under way. There was a coffee hour and registration for late arrivals. At 9:00 a.m., the business meeting was called to order by Larry Clark, the VHPA organizer. The first order of business was introductions of the attending members by name, unit in Vietnam and their present occupation. The remainder of the morning was spent in setting guidelines for membership and the adoption of the VHPA constitution.

Members, wives and families ate a buffet lunch. During lunch the members started breaking into areas of special interests in anticipation of the organizing of committees in the afternoon session.

The order of business for the afternoon was the formation of committees for the first reunion, the nomination and election of officers and the selection of committee members and chairmen for the standing committees for the next business year. The final order of business was the acceptance of the Executive Council and the Standing Committees by majority vote of the attending members. (Please refer to the list of the Executive Council and Committee Chairmen on page 2.

Media coverage during the first reunion was extensive and very favorable. The local paper, *The Phoenix Gazette*, did their interviews during the lunch break on Saturday. The article that appeared in the paper on Sunday generated interest in surrounding areas and quite a few new applications after the reunion. Late Saturday afternoon was dedicated to television interviews. Two of the local television stations gave excellent coverage of our reunion. One gave coverage on the evening news of the reunion, our goals and functions. The other is compiling the extensive interviews of some of the attending members into a documentary to be aired sometime in November.

Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. was the start of the cocktail hour. At 7:30 p.m. the festivities began. The introductions of the newly elected officers were made before dinner. At this time, Larry Clark was presented with the first life membership and Terrie Clark was bestowed the first honorary membership, for their efforts in getting the VHPA organized. Kathy Uster, representing the women of VHPA, presented Larry and Terrie with special gifts, a corsage for Terrie and a boutonniere for Larry.

After dinner, Jim Thompson, a test pilot for the AH-64 Apache program with Hughes Helicopters in Mesa, Arizona, presented a slide program and talk on the Apache helicopter. Jim, who now has over 1000 hours in the Apache, did a fine job and it was greatly appreciated.

Around midnight, we started breaking into smaller groups. There were those that had to travel home, a group that sat around and talked in the dining room until approximately 2:00 a.m. However, the most talked about group on Sunday morning were those that set a new record at the hotel for the most people in the hot tub at one time...thirty-two!

Sunday was spent with a leisurely breakfast around the pool and the exchanging of addresses and reluctant farewells. There was a sadness that the weekend had passed too quickly, but that feeling was soon replaced by the plans and the anticipation of the next reunion in Houston.

Hope to see YOU there!

The fifth anniversary — 1988

The Race

Bus driver, Jose Garcia Lopez Garcia, saw that his passengers' attitudes had changed during the time they'd been away. He'd been waiting in his bus for six hours while they'd been eating and drinking at an industrial park in Texas that had once been a helicopter flight school. His passengers had all gone through this flight school and the local town, Mineral Wells, was throwing them a party.

A local businessman had given out a couple hundred cases of Coors and the pilots and their wives were a lot more cheerful than when they had arrived. When a local man, Pete, got on board to be their tour-guide for the ride around the old base and downtown, the change in his passengers' attitude was evident.

As they got underway, Pete the tour-guide said that his wife was a native of the area — a much better guide than he — but she couldn't be with them. The passengers cheered at this.

When Pete said that the reason his wife couldn't be there was because she'd had two strokes and couldn't walk, the passengers cheered at that, too.

During the tour around downtown Mineral Wells, the pilots cheered at the old library building. And then they cheered at the new library building.

The pilots even cheered when Pete claimed that the road they were riding on at that moment was the exact route that Pete used everyday to avoid the traffic over on the main road on his way to work.

Many of these pilots were drunk, Jose decided.

Jose drove bus number eight. The passengers were reminded of this by their group leader so they'd stay with the same bus. "Eight, eight," one pilot yelled to clarify the notion. "You know, it's shaped like a little snowman!" When that convoy — twelve busloads of spirited pilots and their spouses — arrived at the Mineral Wells Holiday Inn and began to throw each other — fully clothed — into the pool, Jose worried about the future: The condition of his bus. His job.

Eventually, the passengers straggled back from their swim meet, grinning, laughing, dripping.

When the bus was loaded up for the trip back to Fort Worth, Jose sensed a new vitality among his passengers. When they got the convoy underway, and before they'd gone two miles down the highway, a bus flashed past Jose's. Jose's passengers went insane: "Catch them!" they yelled. Jose noticed also that the people in the other bus had signed obscene gestures at his passengers as they went by.

"Go! Go! Go!" The pilots and their wives chanted.

Jose, a shy man by nature, found himself caught up in the spirit of the race. Jose pressed pedal to metal on a downhill run.

"Go! Go! Go!" The bus drummed with the chant. As they passed number nine, Jose saw — could he believe his eyes? — Jose saw the *buttocks* of man leering from a window.

"Pressed ham!" yelled a pilot.

"I'm in love!" a woman yelled.

Eight cruised ahead and took the lead, but the victory was short-lived. The course took an uphill run and Jose's bus — a dog B-model someone

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

said — bogged down at the effort. Nine flashed past. This time Jose saw three moons, ass against glass, staring rudely at the slackers. Jose laughed harder than he had in a long time — so did his passengers.

"We gotta beat those guys," someone shouted.

"Money", yelled another. "Bribe the driver!"

What are they doing? thought Jose.

A pilot took up a collection from the gang: fifty dollars. He took this money up to Jose and showed it to him, bill by bill. "Fifty bucks if we get there first," said the man.

Why? thought Jose. Why would anyone care if they got back to the hotel first. What difference did it make? These were *not* normal people.

But fifty dollars is fifty dollars. However, Jose lamented, number eight was still a dog and even floored, the bus fell behind the pack. Eventually, even a flatbed truck — carrying a large boulder (they called it the WOC Rock?) layered with the paint each of a hundred flight school classes had plastered on it over the years — passed them. "A rock!" a pilot yelled. "We're being passed by a goddamn rock!"

When all the buses and even the rock were out of sight, the pilots began trading intellectual nuggets that Jose had never considered.

"Did you people ever think," one man announced, "that you'd ever live to see the day when we'd all have more money than John Connally?" The passengers cheered and applauded. "And," the man continued, "have more religion than Jimmy Swaggart?" Applause and whistles echoed inside the bus. "Or to have had more heterosexual sex than Rock Hudson?" The crowd went wild.

"What's that?" asked a pilot up front. His wife punched him.

Jose despaired of ever winning the fifty dollars.

But when number eight crested a hill near Fort Worth, Jose's spirits soared. He saw that several of the lead buses had pulled off the highway — to buy more beer he presumed. Two others, Nine and Ten, were coming up a ramp to the main highway, but Number Eight flashed past in a blur and Jose was suddenly in the lead.

The bus shook with the mayhem caused by the stroke of luck.

Nine and Ten were gaining — being "D" or even "H" models, suggested the pilots.

Jose took the turns like a demon race driver on the final lap. He had taken the bit. He'd gotten the spirit. Dog it was, Number Eight, but as one passenger yelled, "A good pilot makes do with what he's got."

A hard left and Number Eight swooped downtown with Nine hot on his tail. A Volkswagen blocked Number Eight and Nine glided past at a light. But with a series of deft maneuvers on the congested streets, Jose caught Number Nine at Houston Street.

They raced neck and neck, hubcap to hubcap, for one block — and then both buses took a wrong turn and missed the hotel.

Jose finished third. Not bad considering he'd been dealt a dog ship. Not bad at all. The pilots all said, "Hell of a race, Jose!" and they voted to give him the prize money anyway. Jose had done better than his best.

"Nice try," said a pilot getting off the bus. "It takes a set of onions to go for it!"

Jose grinned, shook his head and watched the pilots and their wives walking toward the hotel laughing. He wondered: What kind of people are they?

The 10th anniversary — 1993

Reunion lineup includes sports

PAUL USTER

1993 REUNION CHAIRMAN

Sports will be a high point of VHPA Reunion 1993 in Phoenix July 1-5.

There will be a variety of organized tournaments, as well as more informal recreational activities.

Outdoor sports are being set up in the mornings, while it's cooler.

Racquetball tournaments also will be conducted in the morning, in air-conditioned, indoor courts. Walleyball could be played in the morning or afternoon, depending on scheduling.

There will be a small entry fee charged to cover the hourly cost of indoor court activities.

Russ Janus will have his hands full with the tennis tournament.

There are courts at The Registry and The Plaza, so tennis buffs should get all the play they want during the reunion.

I'm sure Russ would appreciate anyone volunteering assistance in setting up and running the tournament. Call him at [REDACTED]

Likewise, Dick McCaig will be more than willing to accept any help you may wish to offer for the racquetball tournament. He can be reached at [REDACTED]

Wonder how many of the ladies can wax some of the macho helicopter drivers? Wonder which unit can beat another?

The team concept can be put to the test even better in the volleyball and walleyball tournaments.

The Plaza has the grass volleyball court and should be the scene of some heated competition. I'm sure B Troop, 7/17 Air Cav can whip the Blue Ghosts!

For those of you who haven't heard of walleyball, it's played similar to volleyball — but on a racquetball court. That's right, inside in the air conditioning. That's where B 7/17 is really going to kill the Ghosts!

Rod Dykhouse will be looking for help here, too. He can be



Front view of The Plaza, one of the two primary reunion resorts.

reached at [REDACTED]

The golf tournament on Friday will be played at the McCormick Ranch Golf Course adjacent to The Registry.

The ladies are certainly welcome to play, also. "Green fees" include transportation to and from the golf course, cart, tax and two drinks on the course.

Tee off will be at 7 a.m., with a shotgun start. Scores will be kept for you, along with longest drive, longest putt, and so on.

Those interested in playing should immediately get their name and handicap to Don Klick.

His work number is [REDACTED] his fax is (602) 275-1745.

Larry Clark will honcho the 5K Run, which will be conducted near the resorts so it can be a spectator sport also. Again, the ladies are welcome. Kids, too, for that matter.

So, come out and cheer your favorite on.

Larry can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Last, but certainly not least, is the Kenny Bunn 10M Crawl.

We probably should conduct this about 1 a.m., when many people are crawling anyway. It involves crawling on your belly with a beer in each hand.

Contestants will crawl halfway down the course, chug a beer, and then head for the finish line. After crossing the line, contestants will have to chug the other beer.

Kenny is in charge of this

event. Call him at [REDACTED]

Registration strong

Early registration is running strong, with many more people currently registered than attended the first reunion in Phoenix 10 years ago.

All suites at both resorts are booked. If you haven't made reservations yet, you'd better hurry.

The percentage of those registered who are attending the Sunday night banquet and the Western cookout and dance Saturday night is very high. Keep in mind, the Western dance will have a live band.

Dress for all events is casual or Western, whatever you're comfortable wearing.

A fantastic Fourth of July fireworks display will be presented immediately after the banquet.

Food at the in-house eateries will be specially priced to encourage VHPA members and guests to spend time at the resorts. Please plan to use these services, as the resorts need the volume to make up for the reduction in prices.

Transportation

Ground transportation between the resorts and Sky Harbor International Airport will be provided by The Plaza.

The transportation will take you to either resort for the same price the Super Shuttle charges — \$7 per person, each way.

The 15th anniversary — 1998

Relive the Fort Wolters experience

CLEVE CLARK AND
GERALD BRAZELL

Do you remember the first time you saw the front gate of Fort Wolters?

I still get butterflies thinking about the experiences and memories of the "wild bunch" in my class.

It was an unusual mix of commissioned officers, to include Col. George Patton Jr., warrant officer candidates and Vietnamese student pilots.

What else could you throw into that mix to make it more interesting? The Vietnam experience itself, but that would come later. We were all invincible.

What amazed me the most being the youngest in age and rank among the commissioned officers, is the camaraderie we developed between such a diverse group.

Of course, we were all equal when we climbed into the "great equalizer" — the cockpit. Simply, they were a neat group of guys and we always felt welcomed by the folks of Mineral Wells anywhere we traveled.

Well, I could go on, but you have your own unique experiences to relive at the Fort Wolters Extravaganza. The Fort Wolters Chapter hopes to make this the best reunion for you and your family. Enjoy!!

Here is the schedule for our visit to Fort Wolters and Mineral Wells on July 3:

Golf tourney at Carswell

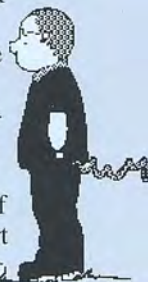
The golf tournament at the 1998 Reunion will be held at Carswell Golf Club on Thursday, July 2.

The buses will pick up participants at 7 a.m. starting with The Worthington Hotel.

This is the old Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth.

Included in the golf fee are green fees, cart fee and lunch (a burger bar) following the tournament. There will be awards for closest to the hole and longest drive. All awards must be exchanged for items in the pro shop, which sells exceptional quality products.

Should you have any ideas concerning any other types of competitions, you can contact Rick Couch at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or Tom Tolar at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for consideration.



• **8 a.m.** — Depart The Worthington Hotel by bus.

• **9 a.m.** — Arrive at the old Student Activities Building at Fort Wolters.

• **9-11 a.m.** — Welcoming cere-

monies and tour of the aircraft static display and barracks.

Speakers will include Mineral Wells Mayor Earl Medlin, and 1960s and '70s era Chamber of Commerce member and past president Benny Saylors. There may be several other speakers, but we will try to keep this short.

Note to ex-WOCs: There have been unconfirmed reports from Civil Air Patrol squadron personnel who use the old WOC barracks that a man dressed in TWs and polished helmet liner has been stalking the area, so watch out for demerits.

• **11 a.m.-1 p.m.** — Lunch at the old mess hall (now the Texas National Guard mess). Menu will be Mineral Wells-style barbecue with trimmings, soft drinks and plenty of cold beer.

• **Noon-3 p.m.** — As people finish lunch, buses will leave for a tour of Fort Wolters and the main heliport flight line, stopping at the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall, which will be located adjacent to the front gate.

There will be further individual bus trips from the Moving Wall to the Days Inn (formerly the Holiday Inn, where the rotor blades are still located by the swimming pool); downtown Mineral Wells, including the Baker Hotel; and Mineral Wells Municipal Airport (Downing Heliport).

• **3 p.m.** — Buses will begin departing for the return trip to Fort Worth.

Rooms available at Clarion

The Fort Worth Reunion Committee has negotiated 175 additional rooms at the Clarion Hotel, 600 Commerce St.

In addition the hotel will try to accommodate additional rooms if they have them over the 175 guarantee, at the same \$80 per night rate.

The hotel, which is four blocks from The Worthington Hotel, between The Worthington and the Radisson, has been remodeled.

The phone number is [REDACTED]

The main entrance is on Fifth Street, just off Commerce.

Advertising rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

- Full page, \$500.
- One-half page, \$250.
- One-quarter page, \$125.
- Business card size, \$45.

Classified advertising is \$1 per line or \$7 per inch, whichever is highest.

Advertising revenue is used to help produce the Newsletter and limit the publication's dependence on membership dues.

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☐ New application

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1st				
2nd				
3rd				
4th				

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

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

**NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$150 each.*