



# THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

Winter 2006 Vol. 24, No. 5



After landing at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, Calif., following his resignation in August 1974, former President Richard M. Nixon waves to supporters while aboard Marine 1, commanded by Lt. Col. Dave Pirnie. Standing in front of Nixon are his daughter, Trisha, and her husband, Edward Cox. Pirnie and other presidential helicopter pilots from the Army and Marine Corps were combat helicopter pilots in Vietnam. In 1962, Pirnie flew with 1st Marine Helicopter Squadron at Soc Trang. See stories on Pages 26-30. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Dave Pirnie)



## From the President

As you can see, the September/October and the November/December issues of *The VHPA Aviator* are combined into this mega-issue. As volunteers, we try our best for VHPA, but sometimes, life interferes . . . and we apologize. So! We caught up by putting out this mega-issue of *The Aviator*. This will get us on track for the new year.



Angelo Spelios

We will have the January/February issue to our membership by the middle of January 2007.

Your Executive Council has voted to institute a refund fee that would cover the costs of ticketed events for any cancellations after the published cancellation date. We have a published refund policy that does not allow any refunds after the published cancellation date.

It was past practice that if a reunion was cash-positive and we got requests for refunds, we would refund the ticketed events on an individual basis, waiving the policy. This may not be possible for future reunions.

### Emergencies more likely

We are all getting older and last-minute medical emergencies are more likely to arise with each passing year. This year we granted about a dozen refund requests due to medical emergencies that prevented attendance at the Washington, D.C., reunion.

The refund fee will be 10 percent of the ticketed events. No one will be able to register for the reunion without acknowledging the refund policy, whether they register online or by sending in the paper registration form printed in *The Aviator*. Those who elect to pay the refund fee will do so as part of registration.

The EC believes the refund fee will be beneficial to the membership as the years go by.

The EC also is working on a National Reunion Policy that will serve as guidance for the National Reunion Committee in planning and executing all future reunions.

The approved policy will be posted on the VHPA membership website. This is important because our bylaws state: "There shall be an annual reunion of the VHPA."

### Reunions important to me

When I ran for vice president last year, I emphasized how important the reunions are to me. I want to see my buddies I flew with in Vietnam, and also the new friends I make at each reunion.

The first "reunion" was 66 guys getting together in Phoenix with a keg of beer. Our reunions may have gotten bigger, but the camaraderie remains the same. To me, the camaraderie that we experience at the reunions is the reason for VHPA.

The National Reunion Committee is finalizing the events for the 2007 Reunion in Phoenix, Ariz. The details will be presented in the January/February issue of *The Aviator*.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the 2007 Phoenix Reunion.

— Angelo Spelios, President

## VHPA accepting management bids

### NOTICE OF INTENT TO ACCEPT BIDS

The contract to provide management services for the VHPA is up for renewal.

A statement of requirements has been prepared and is available for consideration by those interested in bidding on the contract to provide HQ services and support for the VHPA.

I am requesting that VHPA members interested in bidding or know of someone who might be interested in bidding on the management contract notify me as soon as possible.

Dana M. Young  
Chairman, RFP Committee  
[dmyoung@vhpa.org](mailto:dmyoung@vhpa.org)

### VHPA statistics

- Between Aug. 8 and Dec. 14, the VHPA added 36 new members.
- During early August-mid December, members donated \$6,920 toward the VHPA Scholarship Fund.

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## Aviator privacy statement

The VHPA Aviator contains member privacy information the VHPA considers proprietary and confidential.

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

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

# Helicopter pilots enjoy celebration

Another Branson, Mo., Veterans Welcome Home Week celebration is over.

Each year it gets bigger and better. This year's events were special as they honored Vietnam helicopter pilots at the most elegant military affair that week: The POW Network Gala and Military Banquet.

This year 25 pilots and their loved ones were welcomed home and thanked for their sacrifices and service to our fellow soldiers in Vietnam and the nation.

The customary POW/MIA Candlelight Service consisted of a moving honor guard tribute and a deeply moving commentary given by Retired CW4 Larry Fann.

This year's special MIA honoree was CWO William E. Lemmons.

Lemmons' wife and daughter were seated with CWO John Simperts, another local resident and former flight school buddy of Lemmons.

Surrounded by their VHPA family for comfort, Lemmons' wife, Susan, said "... they had never felt this much love and caring. We had lost some hope that people still cared so much."

A very big thank you to Chuck and Mary Schantag and to the POW Network Advisory Board for honoring us and being such gracious hosts at the Gala.

This year was the first time for a new Veterans Week event. A free showing of the documentary "In The Shadow of the Blade" was held at the IMAX Theater complex in Branson, which graciously offered a 189-seat, flat-screen theater daily for six showings of the 2003 award-winning, two-hour documentary. It depicts the comradeship and healing power of one old, rebuilt combat Huey, the volunteers, and their mission to bring healing to all Vietnam veterans, their families, and all those touched by the war.

The former "Robin Hoods" slick went to 44 LZs in America, bringing with it the "Whop, Whop, Whop" that



Retired CWO John Simperts, Branson area resident and a retired photojournalist, rode in the parade.

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# 'Shadow of The Blade' shown

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Joe Galloway calls the "the sound track of our war."

Each day the crowd doubled in size from the previous day's showing as word got out. Many tears flowed, but many hearts were touched. The wives and children were especially grateful to learn more about the realities of and effect on their veterans.

World War II and Korean veterans, seeing this movie, were moved and said their heart-felt thanks to us as they came out after seeing the film.

Capping off a great week of fun and friendship was the Annual Downtown Branson Veterans Day Parade. The guys who could make it were stunned by the reception they received.

This year was the second year Vietnam helicopter pilots marched together with our Vietnam Helicopter Crew Member brothers.

Thanks to the continuing commitment and hard work of retired CW3 Mickey Parent, another local resident, we again had a customized and decorated 12-seat open trailer that some of the pilots and their wives could ride in together, sitting side by side. Together they could feel the love of the 2,000 or more parade watchers gathered to give honor due.

The ladies all were deeply touched and so proud of their men. Most moving for the pilots were the numerous hand salutes and audible "thank you" given by the Vietnam



One of the parade banners. Two other VHPA banners were used.



Though the "Louie" ran in pretrials for more than an hour, subsequent "Red Xs" kept it out of the parade.

ground service veterans we had supported who were standing on the sidewalk. Every salute was returned.

Please consider coming next year, especially if you live in the central United States and find that you cannot attend the VHPA 2007 reunion. We'd love to see you side-by-side with us here in the entertainment and recreational capital of the Ozarks.

Go to [www.pownetwork.org](http://www.pownetwork.org) and look for Gala 2006 and 2007 tabs for ongoing planning details and photos of this year's and next year's Gala, as well as links to lodging and event information. See you all next year — "aim high."

"Mik" Mikulan

269th Combat Aviation Battalion  
Cu Chi 1969.

## Writer accumulating humorous war stories

All of us experienced many things during our time in Vietnam and in aviation. Some were dull and mundane, some were sad and tragic and some were humorous to some extent.

In recognition of those funny occasions, I am accumulating a collection of humorous stories for publication. Undoubtedly, there is more than enough humor from the Vietnam era to fill a book; however, I am also soliciting any previously unpublished, humorous stories about aviation in any way, since so many of us stayed with aviation in one form or another well after we left Vietnam.

It doesn't matter whether your story involves helicopters or fixed wing, military (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, or Coast Guard) or civilian (NASA, Air America, or commercial) or where in the world (or out of it, for that matter!) it occurred. If it's funny, I'm looking for it for this book! Stories, cartoons, anecdotes, it doesn't matter what it is. As long as it's humorous and has to do with aviation, that's what counts!

Since this will come out of all of our experiences, I've proposed to the VHPA that a significant proportion of the proceeds (50 percent minimum) from the book be donated to the VHPA Scholarship Fund. So if you have anything that has to do with aviation that could bring a smile to someone's face, send it to me and let's help build our Scholarship Fund!

Send your contributions to my mailing address: Tom Putnam, [redacted] Gig Harbor, WA 98335-8390 or to my email address for this project,

[redacted] Electronic submissions can be made in just about any format: Word, WordPerfect, RTF, or pure ASCII for textual items and JPEG, GIF, etc. for graphic items.

I will not change names used in the stories/anecdotes submitted, so if you want to disguise the names of the people in your submission, please do so before you submit it.

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## Letters

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Unless otherwise requested, all submissions will be credited to the contributor along with his call sign, if submitted.

If you don't want your name/call sign listed, indicate this and the entry will show as "Anonymous."

Receipt of all contributions will be acknowledged by email or mail, so please include an email address, if possible, if you mail it to me. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at either of the above addresses and I'll do my best to answer your query.

Tom Putnam

Gig Harbor, Wash. 98335-8390

## Project would pair pilots with aircraft

My name is Pamela Reed. I am currently working on a photographic and oral history project here in Tucson. I am working directly with AMARC.

The project is actually composed of two parts.

The first is to photograph pilots and crew with their aircraft located here in the "boneyard." For this part of the project I would need anyone who is interested to contact me.

I can look up their tail numbers and forward them to Rob Raine or Terry Vander-Heuvel of Public Affairs. They will confirm the location of the aircraft in the boneyard. I would like to photograph and casually interview the pilots and crewmembers with their aircraft.

Rob and Terry are willing to give a special, unprecedented, personal tour of the boneyard to anyone who is willing to be a part of the project.

The second part of the project overlaps somewhat. I am looking specifically for pilots who flew during the Vietnam War. If their specific aircraft are not located in AMARC, we can photograph them with similar ones.

I am a fine art photographer. This particular project is scheduled to debut at the Tucson International Airport in March 2007. I plan to have the project tour all over the United States. I expect this project to be ongoing, with subjects being photographed and added to future exhibitions after the debut.

Why am I doing this? All of the pilots I have met from the Vietnam War era never received the recognition, respect or glory they each deserved. They have amazing stories of bravery, skill and brotherhood.

I believe the American people are now ready to hear some of these stories and give them their due respect and thanks. Although many recently have been published in books, I feel this project can take it one step further to educate and also enthrall the public.

## Goldie's family thanks friends, colleagues

The family of CW4 James "Goldie" Goldthorpe would like to thank all their friends, family and colleagues who have stood by their family during the last 10 months.

The helicopter that James piloted disappeared off the coast of Louisiana last October during flights between oilrigs. On May 13, a memorial was held at the Beulah Baptist Church in Many, La.

The Combat Helicopter Pilot's Association held a memorial July 2 in Washington, D.C., at the VHPA Reunion.

At a later date, a final memorial will be held at the Arlington National Cemetery. A website has been created in Mr. Goldthorpe's memory and you may sign the condolence book or share your memories with his family at [www.jimgoldthorpe.com](http://www.jimgoldthorpe.com)

The family extends their sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those who have provided support and condolences during this most difficult time.

— Family of James "Goldie" Goldthorpe

So much has been written and filmed about the ground troops, but so very little about the flyers. And so many of them are or were our pilots on commercial flights, which certainly makes me feel a whole lot safer.

Anyway, not to diverge, currently I am working with several subjects, including a general, a former vice commander of the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, and many more. I have shot 6 subjects to date, with several more scheduled.

Pamela L. Reed

Tucson, Ariz. 85716

## Wife seeking veterans who flew with husband

Hello, do you or anyone you know remember my husband, Roy Allen Rhoades? He served in Vietnam in 1966-67 at Cu Chi, and then in Pleiku in 1969-70 with the 189th and was often asked to fly as a door gunner.

He thinks he had a captain Manning at Pleiku. Roy was a staff sergeant at the time. He has been denied a claim for PTSD with the VA because he can't prove service connection. We need your help here if possible.

He was on an FOB mission to rescue some troops in Pleiku who had made contact with the enemy on the ground. He was a gunner at that time and was under heavy gunfire from the ground. He was trying to keep the enemy

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## Letters

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pinned down and pull our guys up on a rope to the chopper.

He received a Bronze Star for this but VA won't accept it as proof of combat. If anyone remembers this event with names, specific dates within 2 months, pilots and copilots, and location of where the mission was approximately. We would like your help. It would be greatly appreciated.

We have less than 45 days to furnish the information. Thank you so much and we look forward to hearing from you.

Roy and Brenda Rhoades  
[REDACTED]

P.S. If you know of any other stressful event where you were with my husband, that would be useful too. Buddy letters are often accepted. Just saying you were with him in a battle and can verify it. Thanks again.

## Veterans advocate flag honoring military service

I recently joined the local chapter of the American Legion here in Sonoma, Calif. Two members of the post have collaborated on an idea and design for a generic or branch- and campaign-neutral flag commemorating the service of all military veterans.

I am writing this letter to promote awareness of the flag, and of the effort to have it adopted nationally to fly with and under the stars and stripes. The POW/MIA flag authorized by Congress some years ago is the only other national flag so honored.

The flag concept and design was endorsed by the American Legion for all of California in 2005, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 2006, and earlier this year the California State Assembly voted unanimously for a resolution in support.

The two veterans who developed the idea also attended the annual, national meeting of the American Legion in Salt Lake City to petition further endorsement.

On advice of consultations with the offices of local U.S. representatives, work continues to advocate the idea and to gather as much support as possible.

### Backing by groups would help

In seeking a sponsor to write and submit a bill before Congress, the backing of large and well-known organizations with significant membership will greatly enhance the chances of success.

I hope the VHPA and the VHCMA could consider endorsement, and am ready to answer any questions that may arise, or to liaise with the two originators for more details.

## VFW commander seeks Huey for N.M. memorial

Please let me start with this short introduction. My name is Abe Saiz, Vietnam veteran of 1967-69.

I'm the commander of VFW Post 614 in Aztec, N.M. We have two memorials within 14 miles of each other and I need your help. I am trying to locate a Huey gunship with pods to display here in Aztec. The land has been given to us and I'm going through the Department of Defense, the State of New Mexico and searching other places, as well.

If you know of or can assist, please email or call me at [REDACTED] I received your magazine from one of your members, Bruce Beatty.

Abe Saiz  
[REDACTED]

I would also hope any veteran who receives this note would themselves pass the word to other groups and organizations.

Gary Thewlis  
[REDACTED]

## Aviator recalls late nights, light shows, run to bunker

Although I wore a \$12 Timex and issue sunglasses, never drank Crown Royal, and never partied in underwear and sunglasses, I do recall fondly anticipating and capitalizing on nickel drink night (Thursdays) at the club ("Gimme a dollar's worth of Jack Daniels over ice for me and a dollar's worth of bourbon and Coke for my friend!"), rousting out at 2 a.m. to drink flaming drinks with Bill, Woody and at least two others at the Stickitt Inn, and thanking Almighty God for creating Excedrin the next morning.

I remember making mini-mortars at Plei Djereng, (Jeez — DON'T EVER do that with a 20 round — You wanna get somebody killed?), and taking our own shrapnel at Wooly Bully.

### Huge secondary follows

I remember shooting up the Holloway perimeter and getting a huge secondary one night on airfield defense, a combination of: "I didn't shoot," "What was that?" and "Isn't that awfully close to the mogas dump?"

I recall watching the light show from on top of the bunker every time the flare bird was active, and waking up at a dead run toward the bunker and ending up on the roof watching the show the night the bad guys blew the Pleiku ammo dump.

I also recall waking up one night in the front seat of a Cobra over Camp Holloway, headed for Ben Het.

I remember the taste of home-baked hot dog buns from

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## Letters

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the FOB mess hall, lobster night at the Huckleberry Inn ("You guys sure you don't want a mission release?" "Wouldn't dream of it!") and hand-churned ice cream at Tanh Canh. ("Sure is good. What kind is it? "Don't ask.") I recall covering a Gladiator slick into a tight LZ after a deer fell victim to some door gunner practice, and how good the venison tasted when we got it home.

I remember Dragon Feasts and lobbing baked potatoes at the Cav after a barbecue and floor show.

I also recall most — err, some of the words to: "What the captain really said" and the Pabst Blue Ribbon ad as performed by Mike Sheuerman and John Rheinhardt between acts at a floor show

I remember making paper airplanes for and giving C-ration peanut butter to the Montagnard kids at Plei Djereng and looking at the valley west of Polie Kleng as a real good place to start a cattle ranch or dairy farm. Today, I'd probably add golf and hunting resort to the mix.

## Thinking About Retiring or Changing Jobs?

If so, we invite you to take advantage of our free retirement analysis.

Considering that it's likely a person who is 65 years old today will live past age 85, it is important to plan appropriately for retirement. Regardless of your current age, you should ask yourself:

- Can I afford to retire when and how I would like?
- What should I do with my 401(k) and pension plans?
- Is my asset allocation suitable for my risk tolerance?

A personalized retirement analysis can help you identify your goals, review your assets and understand such influences as market risk and time horizon. Your Financial Advisor can assist you in developing an appropriate retirement savings and investment strategy. After all—your retirement may need to last more than 20 years.

Call us for a complimentary analysis. And start preparing for your financial future today.

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I learned from Scotty that a Frisbee thrown out of a UH-1 at 10,000 feet has been documented to go 19.2 nautical miles and it is possible to launch a kitchen sink from a Cobra.

Times may have been bad, but life was definitely good!

Fearless Forrest Snyder

## Pilot wanted to fly Cobra from first time he saw one

After reading Dick Chapman's article, I thought it was time to tell "the rest of the story."

I saw my first Cobra in late 1966 or early 1967 when I was at Fort Wolters. They, whoever "they" are, landed one on the parade grounds. I knew at that moment I wanted to fly that thing.

I graduated flight class 67-11 and went to Vietnam in September of that year. I was assigned to the 114th Assault Helicopter Company and put in the lift platoon. After a week of that duty I felt I would rather be able to shoot back

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## Have Guns. Will Travel

Full Color, 20" x 28" limited edition print of UH-1Huey Gunship (specify B or C) . \$80 standard, \$100 customized with unit markings of your choice.

**Joe Kline Aviation Art**



**Attend Reunion 2007  
in Phoenix**



## Letters

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and transferred to guns.

At this time a TWX came down wanting anyone willing to extend for six months the opportunity to go for Cobra transition at Bien Hoa. Knowing I didn't stand the preverbal snowball's chance, I applied anyway, even though I was an FNG.

Well, the Gods were with me. Another guy named Smith was in the same unit and they pulled his records instead of mine. He got the job, but when they went to tell him, he said: "Hell no, I never applied and I will never extend my tour."

Well, a Smith had been selected and a Smith was going to go, so they came to me, as unqualified as I was, I was a Smith. So I became a Cobra pilot and years later, on Dec. 31, 1999, I retired along with all the Army Cobras. I enjoyed flying that bird for all those years.

Now all I see is that, as Dick wrote, "the P-51 of our era, sitting on poles in front of National Guard armories."

CW5 Greg Smith (Ret.)

Dallas, Texas

## Photo taken during rare day unit was not flying

Enclosed is a photo taken sometime in June 1968 at the Plantation heliport in Long Binh, South Vietnam. I cannot recall why we were not flying that day because we were usually flying support for somebody every day!

Originally, our home base was at Dong Ba Thin, next to Cam Ran Bay but in December 1967 we went into the Central Highlands supporting the 101st and never returned to our home base.



This June 1968 photo shows pilots of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company "Sidewinders" at the Plantation in Long Binh, South Vietnam.

Instead, the 117th Assault Helicopter Company was moved south to the Saigon area. First to the Bien Hoa Airbase through the Tet Offensive where we flew support to just about every unit in the area including helping reinforce the American Embassy in Saigon.

After Tet, we were located in Long Binh at the Plantation heliport. Part of the 145th Aviation Battalion, we flew support for the 9th Division in the Delta, Big Red 1 out of Cu Chi, 25th around Tay Ninh and thereabouts, the Australians, assorted other South Vietnamese units and numerous Green Beret units.

The majority of my flight time the last six months was with a light fire team (Charley models) plus two slicks working with a Green Beret unit in Tay Ninh in War Zone D along the Cambodian border near the Parrot's Beak.

Needless to say, we saw a lot of action in many places. In early 1968, after Tet, we had lost so many aircraft, personnel and equipment that we were placed in the stand down status for a month.

However, we got hand-me-down aircraft, personnel and equipment from other units and went out and per-

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## WANTED

Looking for memorabilia from Air Cavalry, Assault Helicopter, NETT, UTT, ICCS, Support, Medical, Transportation and Special units. Patches, Uniforms, Headgear, unit "Business" cards, Propaganda, Printed matter, Plaques, Souvenirs, Party Suits & Novelty items are all of interest. This material is wanted for use in historical exhibits and information for a book. I have numerous references. What can I do for you?



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# Taps

## Craig S. Albee

Retired Major Craig S. Albee, 60, lost his long battle with Parkinson's disease on Sept. 5, surrounded by his family.

Albee, a retired Army helicopter pilot, was a decorated veteran. He served on active duty for nine years and continued full-time in the Army National Guard for another 21 years.

He was a member of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company in South Vietnam and later was assigned to the 48th Aviation Company at Katterbach Army Air Field in Ansbach, West Germany.

Albee later became facility commander of the Reno-Stead Army Aviation Support Facility, Nevada Army National Guard, for several years before transferring to Alaska. He was honorably discharged from the Alaska Army National Guard in 1997 as maintenance test pilot evaluator and UH-60 standardization instructor pilot.

After leaving the military, he flew Lear jets for Kalitta Air and Raytheon Travel Air, and then finished his working career selling sporting goods at Cabela's.

On Aug. 29, Major Albee took his last flight aboard a CH-47D "Chinook" helicopter courtesy of the Reno/Stead Army Aviation Support Facility.

Albee's interests were hunting, fishing and flying, along with any excuse to gather with friends and family. He touched the lives of many and will be truly missed.

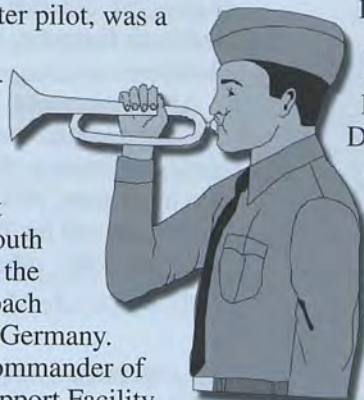
His father, George, and his mother, Elizabeth, preceded him in death.

His son, Geoffrey of Sparks, Nev.; and his brother, Richard of Oxford Miss, survive Albee.

## Edward L. Behne

Edward L. Behne died after suffering a massive heart attack on Sept. 9.

He was a Life Member of VHPA and was a regular at reunions. Behne will be remembered for his wonderful



laugh. His friends in and out of the military knew him as "A Man Of Pure Integrity."

Behne was born on Jan. 2, 1941, Abilene, Texas.

He joined the Army on Nov. 10, 1959. His Army assignments were at Fort Hood, Texas; Bamberg/Aschaffenburg, West Germany; Fort Wolters, Texas; Fort Rucker, Ala. (Flight Class 67-11).

Behne served three consecutive tours in Vietnam, 1967-1970 with A Company, 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division. His most memorable experiences were during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

His awards include two Silver Star Medals, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Legion of Merit, six Bronze Star Medals, 80 Air Medals, two Army Commendation Medals and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

He retired from the Army on Dec. 31, 1979, as a major.

Behne was the founder of Tex-Air Helicopters Inc. in Houston. He served as president until the company recently was sold.

## Terry Wayne Jacobs

Terry Wayne Jacobs, 58, of Thomasville, N.C., died Aug. 4 in a helicopter crash while fighting fires in California.

Jacobs graduated from flight school with Class 69-41.

He served in Vietnam with the 191st Assault Helicopter Company at Can Tho.

## William Hayden "Pappy" Jones

William Hayden "Pappy" Jones of Midland, Texas, died Sept. 12 after a hard-fought battle with cancer.

Jones was born Jan 29, 1938, in Russellville, Ark. He went to high school in Dardanelle, Ark., but quit in his 12th year to join the U.S. Air Force in 1956.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1960 and spent 18 months on a MAAG assignment in Iran.

In 1967, Spec. 6 Jones went to South Vietnam from West Germany. He was assigned to Headquarters, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.

He attended flight school and was appointed a warrant



Jones

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# Letters

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formed at the highest level. Most of the pilots in the Sidewinders and the 117th slicks — the Annie Fannies and the Pink Panthers — were recipients of the DFC, multiple Air Medals and numerous other decorations.

Names left to right in the picture: Lt. Barry Lewis, WO Ron Thrash, WO Lesley Bruce, WO Jim Watkins, WO Rich King, Capt. John Mortenson, WO David Sullivan, Lt. Herb Korte, WO Mike Harms and WO Rich Threlkild.

Herbert W. Korte Jr.

Mendham, N.J. 07945



# Taps

officer in 1969. He then was assigned to MCSOG, Vietnam.

Jones returned to West Germany and flew support for the 56th Artillery Brigade until 1970, when he was sent to Vietnam with AMOC and AH-IG "Cobra" IP course en route.

CW2 Jones served in Vietnam with F Troop, 4th Cavalry until the end of the war in January 1972. He returned to West Germany and retired in 1977.

Jones was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross with OLC, the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal with 2 "V" devices and Numeral 21, the Purple Heart Medal with OLC, the Army Commendation Medal with OLC, the Good Conduct Medal with 3 knots, and the Army Aviation Broken Wing Award. He was nominated for the Medal of Honor.

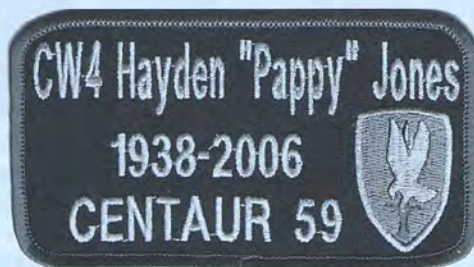
After returning to the United States, Jones worked in several safety jobs, owned a trucking company, and worked numerous jobs while following his wife Susan on her Army career.

After settling in Midland, Texas, Jones taught truck driving for Midland College and worked with the Permian Basin Vietnam Memorial Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Susan; two sisters, Linda Floyd and Judy Milholland; children, Hayden Jones Jr., Kathi Hubbard, Patti Hollis, Teri Sisk, and David Jones; nine grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. Jones was preceded in death by a brother, David Jones.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests gifts to the VHPA Scholarship Fund.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Pappy Jones was longtime secretary/treasurer of the VHPA. A special patch has been created in his honor, with proceeds going to help the Southern Run for the Wall with its education mission. The patch sells for \$10 and is available from Janice Wentworth at American Pride Embroidery of East Texas. Please call [REDACTED] for details.



## Michael John Keating

Michael John Keating died Sept. 10 at his home in Ponca City, Okla. He was 64.

Keating was born on St. Patrick's Day in 1942 to Jack and Helen Keating. He grew up in Ponca City.

He joined the Army at the age of 20 and attended flight school in 1968-69, graduating with Class 69-9.

Keating served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1969-71.

He and his wife, Kay, had three children, Mick, Thomas and daughter Cindy.

During his 27 years of service, Keating and his family traveled from Germany to Hawaii and many points in between.

After retirement, he took a job in Honduras, where he met and married Maria. After adopting her two children, Oscar and Deybi, Keating and Maria had two more sons, Mikie and Shawn.

Keating and his family then moved home to Ponca City in 1997, when he took a job at the Post Office. He was a Life Member of the VHPA.

## Lawrence Lester

Lawrence Lester died of cancer in Baltimore, Md., on Aug. 13.

The former Army aviator is survived by his wife, two daughters and two sons.

## Jimmy Don Lowry

Jimmy Don Lowry of Conroe, Texas, died Nov. 23 from a lung aneurysm.

He was diagnosed in May 2006 with ALS, as are many military personnel.

We were privileged to attend the VHPA reunion in Dallas and he re-met several men he had served with in Vietnam.

Lowry recently retired from Petroleum Helicopters Inc. after 35 years of flying in the Gulf of Mexico.

He is survived by his wife, Virginia; a daughter Kendra Lowry, who recently returned to Houston to help take care of her dad; a son, Greg of Cedar City, Utah; a sister, Glenda of Huntington, W. Va.; and first wife, Lynda of Cedar City, Utah

In loving memory of a wonderful husband.

—Virginia Lowry

## William J. Mittelstadt

William J. Mittelstadt, 57, of Montgomery, Vt., died Oct. 5 in an automobile accident.

He graduated from the Army flight school with Class 69-39, and served with distinction in Vietnam with the 240th Assault Helicopter Company during 1970.

Among other citations, Bill earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary heroism in aerial combat.

While in Vietnam, he formed many deep friendships with his fellow crewmembers, which he maintained and treasured throughout his life.

After his return from Vietnam, Bill served for many years in the Vermont Army National Guard and obtained

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# Taps

*Continued from Page 10*

his Commercial, Instrument, and Multi-Engine licenses at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

He flew commercially as a crop duster in Idaho and later flew surveying parties on the Alaskan Pipeline project. Bill also flew as a pilot for Hub Express Airlines in Boston and transported celebrity entertainers to festival sites.

Bill is survived by a son, Jesse W. Mittelstadt of New York, N.Y., and a brother, Marty W. Mittelstadt of Atlanta, Ga.

**Gary Krehbiel**  
Harker Heights, Texas

## Paul C. Petersen

Paul C. Petersen of Clarksville, Tenn., died of after suffering a massive heart attack playing golf on Oct. 19. He was 60.

Petersen was a member of flight school Class 69-42 and served with the 361st ACE/AWC "Pink Panthers" in Vietnam as a Cobra pilot. His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross with OLC, the Air Medal for Valor, numerous awards of the Air Medal for combat flight, the Bronze Star Medal and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.

He spent 33 years on active duty and in the Tennessee National Guard, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

Petersen and his wife, Jan, surprised his fellow Panthers by registering at the last minute and attending the VHPA Reunion in Washington, D.C., this past July. He and Jan had a great time and he was planning to attend the upcoming Phoenix Reunion.

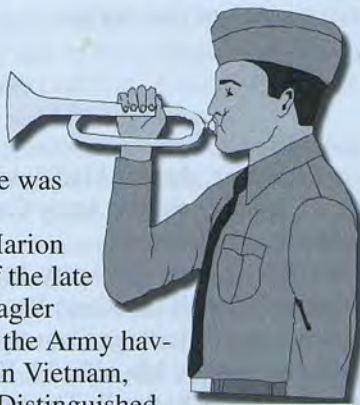
He is survived by his wife, Jan; two sons, Craig and Meils; brother, Karl; and sisters, Alice and Nancy.

— Mike Sheuerman

## Joseph L. Pike

Retired Maj. Joseph L. Pike of Warner Robins, Ga., died Sept. 14, 2005. He was 65.

Pike, a native of Marion County, was the son of the late David and Kathleen Hagler Pike. He retired from the Army having served three tours in Vietnam, where he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 39 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Bronze Star Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.



He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association.

Survivors include his wife, Carolyn S. Pike of Warner Robins; sons, Chris Pike of Roswell, Ga., Ken Pike of Warner Robins; brothers and sisters, C.E. Pike of Warm Springs, Ga., Dr. Ben Pike of Columbus, Carol Walters of Duluth, Sue Rodgers of Warner Robins, and Julie Scott of Centerville.

## Timothy Ralph Templin

Timothy Ralph Templin, 57, died May 28 in Battle Creek, Mich.

He was born on June 9, 1948 in Detroit, Mich., and had been a resident of Los Angeles, Calif., and Knoxville, Tenn., for the past 20 years.

Templin was a member of flight school Class 68-12. He served with the 116th Assault Helicopter Company and the 269th Aviation Battalion in Cu Chi, South Vietnam, from February 1969 to February 1970.

From March 1970 to March 1971, he was stationed in Fort Wolters as a Primary II flight instructor.

Upon leaving the service, Templin received his degree in Aeronautical Engineering and his FAA Power Plant License from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, where he also completed his fixed-wing ratings.

He continued flight instruction and charter work in Allegan, Mich., until accepting a position as a field tech representative with the Jet Engine Division of General Electric.

Templin was an engineer on the GE CFM-56 engine program from development through flight testing and field service on the Boeing-757/767 aircraft with Lufthansa and Air France.

His wife of 25 years, Nancy, of Grand Rapids and a daughter, Patricia, of Johnson City, Tenn., survive him.

## James B. "Jim" Thompson

Retired Col. James B. "Jim" Thompson, 70, of Burnet, Texas, died Oct. 6.

Thompson retired from the Army at Fort Hood, Texas, in July 1986 with more than 33 years of service as an Aviation Branch officer and Master Aviator with more than 3,400 hours in fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft.

He enlisted in the Army in November 1953 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Transportation Corps at Fort Eustis, Va., in January 1960.

Thompson served as branch chief at the Army Primary Helicopter Training School, Fort Wolters, Texas.

He was service platoon commander of the 131st Avia-



Thompson

*Continued on Page 12*



# Directory offered on CD this year

By the time you receive this magazine, you should have received your 2006 VHPA *Membership Directory* either in paper form or the new CD-ROM.

If you have not received your directory, please call HQ on (800) 505-VHPA (8472).

One of the complaints we have received over the past year is that some of the "early" pilots have felt under-recognized by the VHPA for their pioneering efforts in the early years of the Vietnam War.

Without their early efforts to "learn" how to fight that war, some of us would not be here to read this.

## Directory dedicated to early pilots

In appreciation for their pioneering efforts, the 2006 *Directory* is dedicated to them. The cover, expertly compiled by Mike Law, shows their trusty steeds, wooden blades and all and the history section, U.S. Army Aviation in Vietnam 1961-1964: A turbulent transition by Bernie Quedens tells their story.

Although it had to be shortened in the paper directory because of space restrictions, the full text is on the CD directory and on our website.

New this year is the CD version of the directory. The CD has several advantages over the paper directory.

First, it only weighs about an ounce instead of pounds like the paper directory and does not kill any trees, but more importantly it allows searching by first name — impossible in the paper directory.

## CD uses special search technique

The CD also uses a technique called soundex search to help you find names even when you do not know the exact spelling. This comes in really handy when looking for guys from our past.

You also can search by unit, flight class, non-Army services, call signs and city/state. The CD provides a list from these searches that can be printed, but without addresses to make it difficult to make mailing lists.

Address information is only provided one person at a time. If you need address lists for unit or flight class mini reunions, you can get those from HQ.

Since we have plenty of space on the CD, phone numbers and e-mail addresses are included as well as more information on KIAs and those who have died since Vietnam than is in the paper directory.

An extra bonus is a PDF file of the complete directory as printed in paper form. This means you can print your own 580-page directory if you want from the CD or just browse the directory on your computer like you would with the paper directory or print a few pages that are of interest to you.

Bonus information on the CD are *VHPA Newsletters* and *Aviators* back to 1993 and the full text history section U.S. Army Aviation in Vietnam 1961-1964: A turbulent transition by Bernie Quedens. Also included are a membership application and a product order form.

The CD search feature can only be used on IBM compatible computers; however, the *Newsletters*, magazines, history and the full text directory PDF files can be read using a Macintosh.

## CD Directory costs \$20

The CD Directory is now available for sale for \$20 by calling HQ on (800) 505-VHPA. If you want the CD Directory next year instead of the paper directory, please notify HQ at [HQ@vhpa.org](mailto:HQ@vhpa.org)

If you selected the CD this year, you will automatically receive the CD next year unless you tell HQ otherwise.

In 2008, the CD directory will be the standard and the paper directory will be an option. In 2009 or 2010, to receive the paper directory instead of the CD directory, there will be an additional charge.

The paper directory continues to go up in costs and the Executive Council wants to avoid increasing your dues, so switching to the CD directory is a good way to avoid a dues increase. For Macintosh users, we are working on a website. More on that as we make progress.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to improve our directories.

Gary Roush  
Directory Editor  
[roush@vhpa.org](mailto:roush@vhpa.org)

## Taps

*Continued from Page 11*

tion Company at Hue Phu Bai, South Vietnam; staff maintenance officer, 222nd Combat Aviation Battalion; and commander, 56th Transportation Co., Long Thong North, Vietnam.

Thompson was recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with 3

Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal with "V" Device and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Army Commendation Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters.

After retiring from the Army, he served as Westlake office manager for JB Goodwin Real Estate, 1986-1995. Thompson formed Heritage Country Realty in 1995.

He is survived by his wife, M. Koleta Thompson of Burnet; a brother, Charles B. Thompson of Gloucester, Va.; children, James B. Thompson Jr. of Elizabethtown, Ky.; Suzan K. Thompson of Virginia Beach, Va.; Kate Morris of Acworth, Ga.; Jon B. Thompson of Round Rock, Texas; and six grandchildren.



# Reunion 2007

## *Committee completing final planning for event*

While it may seem that we just left Washington, D.C., the reunion committee currently is completing the final stages of planning for the 2007 Reunion in Phoenix, Ariz.

More details will be in the next *Aviator*, but this is a general overview of what to expect in Phoenix.

First, take a look at the reunion site on Marriott's website:

<http://marriott.com/property/propertypage/PHXDR>

Once there, you and your family may never want to leave.

Keeping with the VHPA tradition of holding the annual reunion over the Fourth of July weekend, the first event, the early bird reception, will be on the evening of July 3. Then the fun begins.

Fireworks on the Fourth, time to mingle with old friends and to meet new ones, on-site events and tours/activities that range from river rafting and hot air ballooning, to cart racing at the Bondurant School of High Performance Driving.

This, Phoenix, is where it all started back in 1984 with the first reunion. This will be our third time in the Phoenix area and we are working to make it our most memorable one.

Most of the activities are in the final stages, but if you have any special requests for places to go and things to do, send me an email ASAP and we will do our best to make it happen.

Dana M. Young  
National Reunion chairman  
[dmyoung@vhpa.org](mailto:dmyoung@vhpa.org)

## **Poker anyone?**

### *VHPA considers 7-card stud games during 2007 reunion in Phoenix*

The VHPA is considering organizing a friendly Texas Hold'em (7-card stud) poker get-together for Phoenix Reunion registrants if there is sufficient interest and a couple of volunteers to help coordinate it at the reunion.

A room, day(s) and times are not set yet and the VHPA will not be an official sponsor of the event.

However, if the interest is there and a simple set of rules is established, the VHPA may organize a formal tournament at next year's reunion in San Antonio and thereafter.

We currently envision there will be a signup at the registration desk with a small donation requested for prizes.

Only chips will be used during games. Check the reunion website where we may put up a survey to gauge member interest.

Please send an email to John "Jack" Salm at [REDACTED] or call [REDACTED] to indicate your interest.

We believe a friendly poker tournament would be a great way to meet other VHPA members outside your regular circle of friends.

If you're interested, let us know or it won't happen.

## **Make certain email address is up to date**

On occasion we need to send email messages to our membership, primarily due to time-sensitive information that can't wait for the next edition of the *Aviator* or it would be expensive to send by regular mail.

For example, we recently sent an email regarding getting the 2006 *Membership Directory* on CD-ROM; it was time-sensitive because of a publishing deadline.

A few years ago we encountered a problem with VHPA scholarship information due to the application deadline being prior to the next edition of the (then) *VHPA Newsletter*; we were compelled to use email notification and we had several successful applicants who received scholarships.

On our last emailing, approximately 50 percent of the messages "bounced". There are generally two reasons for this:

- Members do not keep their email addresses current.

You can easily and conveniently correct this by going to the following website:

[www.vhpamembership.org/emailupdate/login.php](http://www.vhpamembership.org/emailupdate/login.php)

After logging in, the email address we currently have on file also will be displayed.

• Many of our members are now using spam blockers/spam filters. You can correct this problem by adding the following domains to your approved/white/friends list: (1) [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org) (2) [vhpamembership.org](http://vhpamembership.org) (3) [vhparegistration.org](http://vhparegistration.org) and (4) [vhpareunion.org](http://vhpareunion.org)

We appreciate your cooperation as it not only allows us to get information to you quickly, but also saves the organization money.

Remember, the email messages are infrequent and are always authorized by the Executive Council. We also are considering an email reminder for dues renewals.

— Gary Roush and Charles Holley, Webmasters



# Reunion 2007

## *Two new seminars planned for Phoenix Reunion*

**RICH BUZEN**  
VENDOR COORDINATOR

As many of you know, we have had a Vet Center booth in the Vendor area for several years.

It has become one of the busiest booths ever, and the Vet Center counselors report indicates that 80 percent of the questions relate to trying to determine *if* the member qualifies for VA benefits, *how* to apply for benefits, *what* they need to do to prepare, and *where* they apply for benefits.

In order to help answer these questions, I am putting together a seminar, to be held at the Phoenix Reunion, with a panel of experts in all aspects of determining *if* you are qualified, *how* to apply (and what the VA needs to see and hear that will help you get your benefits), exactly *what* you need to prove that you have a service-connected disability, and *where* you need to go to apply for these benefits.

### **Other organizations to be represented**

I expect that we will have representatives from the VA, The Purple Heart Society, The Vet Centers, and many others who are directly involved in the process of determining everything from eligibility to what forms you need to where you send them.

I would appreciate an email or a phone call from any of you who would be interested in having this type of seminar and some specific questions you have that would

help me add qualified panel experts. My email is [REDACTED] and my phone is [REDACTED]. I would appreciate it if you could use email as the primary contact. You all can guess why.

### **Women's Seminar would help wives**

The second seminar is a Women's Seminar, designed to help the wives, girlfriends and/or significant others of Vietnam helicopter pilots who have lived with them and just may want some additional information about what other women have experienced living with what I have no problem identifying as a group of nuts.

In conversation with Jeff Jewell, a counselor at the Concord Vet Center in Concord, Calif., (and a great friend of the VHPA) he tells me that in most cases it is the helicopter pilots partner who is the first to see the signs, whether it be loss of hearing, PTSD or the aches and pains and some of the diseases (like diabetes, certain cancers, etc) that are a direct result of our job in Vietnam.

This would be a chance for the women to discuss some of the issues they all face that are common to the group.

Both these ideas were suggestions made by members at the D.C. reunion, and I am very excited at the potential for participation in both seminars.

Guys, if you are reading this, show the article to your partner and find out if they would be interested in a women's only seminar to discuss these issues. I bet you will be surprised.

## VN Center, Archives do great job

When I was president of the VHPA in 1998-99, the EC selected and approved The Vietnam Center and Archives at Texas Tech University in Lubbock to be the official depository for the VHPA historical materials.

It was a wise choice and one that will serve the VHPA well in safeguarding our legacy of the helicopter in the Vietnam War.

If you have never been to Lubbock and seen the first class storage and cataloguing of the vast amount of donated materials, you would be amazed and proud to be a part of this huge project.

Or you can simply sit at your computer and check out their web site at [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu)

The project has amassed an impressive collection of material primarily from donations received from individual Vietnam veterans and organization such as ours.

The archives include more than 11,000 linear feet of

documents, eight million pages of manuscript materials, 12 million pages of microfilm, some 72,000 photographs and slides, about 80,000 books, 15,000 periodicals and newsletters (including our *VHPA Newsletters*) and more than 3,000 audiotapes, videotapes and CDs. Some 2.6 million pages have been digitized for online viewing.

The collections also include a Huey and a Cobra, but more intimately, letters home from a soldier to his mother and family while he was in Vietnam.

The project's oral history effort has recruited 2,207 participants from all 50 states and 10 countries, including Vietnam.

Many recordings are being made at Vietnam veteran reunions across the United States. Thus far, more than 90 percent of the audio records have been digitized.

Internationally, Texas Tech has signed seven coopera-

*Continued on Page 15*



# Presentations now available on DVD

**GARY ROUSH**

**MIDTERM MEMBER AT LARGE**

At many previous reunions, we have offered occasional presentations from invited speakers on topics relevant to VHPA interests

More members now are voicing an interest in our formally organizing a schedule of historic presentations to be given during our annual VHPA reunions.

The following is what was presented at the 2006 Reunion in Washington, D.C. All of these are available on a six-hour DVD.

## **War Stories:**

- Rescue and Bolivians Plateau by Ben Van Etten
- Base Jump from Helicopter by John Shafer
- My Flight into the Twilight Zone by Jim Eskildsen (presented by Claudia Gary-Annis, senior editor of *Vietnam Magazine*)
- Dog Rescue by Chris Warren
- Khe Sanh to Vandy by David Green

- Night Hunter Killer by Richard Waldo
- Lam Son 719 by Doug Womack
- Career-Ending Party by William (Bill) Luther
- Ho Chi Minh's Birthday by John Deperro

## **Historic Presentations:**

- The POW Network by Chuck and Mary Schantag
- The Battle of Kontum by Jack Heslin
- Joint POW/MEA Accounting Command Update by Dickie Hites
- Vietnam War documentaries by Pat and Cheryl Fries
- Flashing Sabers by Bert Chole

The DVD contains pictures and video clips as well as the full presentations. DVDs are \$25 each, plus \$5 shipping and handling. DVDs for resale will be available to veteran organizations and museums for \$15 each, plus handling and shipping.

Order yours now by calling VHPA HQ on (800) 505-8472 or by using the form at:

[www.vhpa.org/products\\_form.html](http://www.vhpa.org/products_form.html)

## Scholarship Fund — good news/bad news

**MIKE SHEUERMAN**

**SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE**

First, the good news: VHPA will award two \$1,000 scholarships in July of 2007.

Due to the generosity and farsightedness of approximately 200 of our members, over \$20,000 in matching funds, an average of \$100 each, was raised to go with the \$10,000 donation by an anonymous member who feels strongly in the legacy our scholarship program offers the

Vietnam helicopter pilot and his descendants.

I am extremely proud to say that over \$20,000 of the final total came from members of my unit in Vietnam, the 361st ACE/AWC Pink Panthers. And based on the number of kids and grand kids from our Unit alone attending the DC Reunion, we need a lot more scholarships available.

Remember, our scholarships are for all our descendants, not just our sons and daughters. In fact, the recipi-

*Continued on Page 16*

## Texas Tech signs seven agreements

*Continued from Page 14*

tion agreements with universities in Vietnam so that education and research efforts will be far-reaching and comprehensive.

And, annually numerous trips, both ways, of students, faculty and interested veterans take place between universities on both sides of the Pacific.

Looking to the future, Texas Tech has made a serious commitment to the Vietnam Center/Archives.

Tech regents have allocated 12 acres for a new facility, and plans call for \$70 million, 191,000 square foot headquarters building, including a world-class museum that would look at Vietnam from all points of view, similar to the World War II museum in New Orleans.

Plans also include provision for Vietnam veteran reunion in the new facility, as well as hosting of national and international conferences.

In conclusion, if you are a VHPA member or know a Vietnam veteran who has items from his Vietnam experience and doesn't know what to do with them, please consider a donation to The Vietnam Center/Archives in Lubbock.

Anything from letters, slides, papers, uniforms, or flight gear is welcome and is treated with importance and dignity at the archives.

Tom Payne, Past President



# Gifts

## *War Story DVD a good way to teach about war*

**GARY ROUSH**

**MID-TERM MEMBER AT LARGE**

The War Story DVD makes a great present. Buy them for your kids and grandkids. It is a good way to teach them about your war.

The video documentary clips by Pat and Cheryl Fries alone are worth the 30 bucks.

We captured an important part of the 2006 Reunion in Washington, D.C. on DVD. Here is what is on the six-hour-long DVD.

### **War Stories:**

Rescue and Bolivians Plateau by Ben Van Etten

Base Jump from Helicopter by John Shafer

My Flight into the Twilight Zone by Jim Eskildsen  
(presented by Claudia Gary-Annis, Sr. Ed. Vietnam Magazine)

Dog Rescue by Chris Warren

Khe Sanh to Vandy by David Green

Night Hunter Killer by Richard Waldo

Lam Son 719 by Doug Womack

Career-Ending Party by William (Bill) Luther

Ho Chi Minh's Birthday by John Deperro

### **Historic Presentations:**

Exposing fakes and wannabees by Chuck and Mary Schantag

The Battle of Kontum by Jack Heslin

Joint POW/MEA Accounting Command Update by Dickie Hites

Vietnam War documentary video clips by Pat and Cheryl Fries

### **Book Review:**

Flashing Sabers by Bert Chole

DVDs are \$25, plus \$5 shipping and handling.

Order yours now with a credit card by calling VHPA HQ on 800-505-VHPA (8472). Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. California time Monday through Friday.

If you want to pay by check, send it to:

VHPA

5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105  
Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

Hope you enjoy the DVD.

## VHPA scholarships for all descendants

### **Continued from Page 15**

ent of the 2006 VHPA Scholarship is the grandson of a member in Arkansas.

And now the bad news.

VHPA currently enjoys over 7,600 active members and only around 200 of that number donated to the VHPA Scholarship Fund. Now that's really, really sad. Less than .025 % of our active membership chose to contribute. Personally, that is very disappointing to me. Less than .025 percent. It's not too late however. Do it now while you are thinking about it.

Write a check for whatever you can — \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1,000 — whatever you can, make it out to the VHPA Scholarship Fund and mail it to:

VHPA

5530 Birdcage St., Suite 105  
Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

Remember, it's tax deductible.

This may well turn out to be the legacy of VHPA and the Vietnam helicopter pilot. Do it now. Don't put it off. The boy or girl getting the scholarship may be your descendant.

One final note: I passed the hat during the annual business meeting in D.C. (there is a use for Cav hats) and raised a little over \$3400 and 100,000 Dong. Does anyone know the exchange rate on Dong? If so, please let me know.

# Attend Phoenix Reunion 2007



# Rest of story

## *LOH pilot tracks down veterans who saved him*

GARY HOLMES

After completing Flight School, I was assigned to the Black Hawks of C-Troop, 7th Squadron, 1st Air Calvary, then being formed at Fort Knox for future deployment to Vietnam in January 1968.

I was assigned to fly OH-6s for the scout platoon and my call sign was "Sandpiper 19."

Upon our arrival in Vietnam, we began operating out of Bien Hoa in III Corps, and approximately two months later the unit moved to and began operating out of Vinh Long.

On the pre-dawn morning of May 16, 1968, I was flying trail in a gaggle of 12 aircraft, slicks, Cobras and OH-6s, in route to Moc Hoa. The lead aircraft had its Grimes light on. Other than that, we were in complete blackout.

### **Lead aircraft takes fire**

Lead started to receive fire and I proceeded to return fire with my mini-gun on the area where the tracers were emanating. Charlie ceased firing and the flight continued on to Moc Hoa, where I refueled and rearmed. Since the mini-gun had worked perfectly during the brief engagement, I did not bother to check it for functionality.

Our mission on this morning was to fly cover for a five-slick insertion of Cambodians into the Plain of Reeds, literally on the border of Vietnam and Cambodia. The insertion of the Cambodians and three Special Forces advisors took place without incident and they immediately moved west toward a creek that was the border between Vietnam and Cambodia. Once they were on the ground, one of our Cobras and I began flying perimeter cover.

Within 15-20 minutes, the Cambodians were heavily engaged with Viet Cong. The VC were pushed back, where they took up a position along an earthen berm on the Vietnam side of the creek.

Our gunships were laying down fire toward the creek into a tree line, thinking that was where the enemy was located. In reality, they were not more than 50 feet from the friendlies on the west side of the berm.

### **One advisor dead, another wounded**

Of the three Special Forces advisors, one was dead, one was wounded, and the third was trying desperately to regroup his soldiers into a defensive line. The only unscathed advisor requested a Medevac for his wounded sergeant.

Since the Hueys had departed the area, my scout platoon leader, Capt. Serletic, who was experiencing his first day as a scout pilot in Vietnam, went in, landed, and the sergeant was loaded in the back of the LOH.

It was about this time I had an RPG fly past me in my first encounter with them.

As Capt. Serletic went in, I began hovering about 50 feet in the air to engage the enemy with my mini-gun and to draw fire. Much to my dismay, my mini-gun was inoperative. A round must have jammed the gun at the end of the first firefight that morning. I was, however, doing a fantastic job of drawing fire.

With the sergeant on board, lead pulled pitch and barely got into the air when a push/pull tube was severed and the OH-6 rolled up on its nose and flipped over on its back — on the enemy side of the berm.

With the downed aircraft on the bad guys' side of the berm, the fire that had been directed at me was now being directed toward the occupants of the downed bird. I elected to land next to the crash site to see if I could help.

As I landed, the wounded Special Forces sergeant crawled out of the back of lead's crashed LOH and straight into the tail rotor, which threw him into the air. Lead got out of his door and crawled over to the friendly side of the berm and began earning a Combat Infantry Badge.

The observer started to crawl over the berm — and nearly into what's left of the still-turning main rotor — when he saw me and started crawling in my direction.

My observer could see the sergeant was in bad shape and left our LOH to help him. He was killed instantly.

At the same time, I took two hits that came through the armor plate on the right side of the pilot's seat and began screaming, "I'm hit! I'm hit!"

### **I couldn't move right hand**

I couldn't get my right hand to move, so I reached over with my left hand and pried it off the cyclic. When I let go, my hand and arm just fell down, hanging outside the LOH.

One of the rounds came through the center of the upper part of my right arm, shattering the bone. This same round then ricocheted up and shattered the ball joint in my right shoulder, then continued down through my lungs, finally lodging in my lower back. The second round came across the lower abdomen, messing up my large and small intestines. Though hurt bad, I somehow remained conscious.

The observer who had been in the downed LOH, PFC Thomas Thorne, decided crawling is no longer a fast enough mode of travel, so he got up, ran over and got into the left seat of my LOH. He screamed: "We're taking off!"

*Continued on Page 18*



# Rest of story

## *LOH pilot tracks down veterans who saved him*

**Continued from Page 17**

The last thing I remember doing was leaning forward and jabbing the "E" on the compass, trying to get him to head east when we got airborne. With that, I passed out and he proceeded to pull pitch. From what I could glean later from talking to one of the snake pilots who had been on station that day, the OH-6 went about 100 feet in the air, spinning like a top.

### **Loach heads to Cambodia**

The observer then put his feet on the pedals, leveled out, and off we went — straight into Cambodia.

One of our Cobras took off after him and, after three passes, he finally got the young and extremely scared PFC to turn back into the direction of Vietnam. When the Cobra saw the Loach was heading generally in the direction of Moc Hoa and not knowing it was being flown by an observer with little or no flight control time, he turned back to assist with the battle that was still raging.

Whether the PFC did something or it happened as a result of battle damage, the engine suddenly kicked down

into flight idle and the PFC found himself doing his first semi-controlled autorotation. (When the helicopter was destroyed the following day, the air speed indicator had been pegged at 140 knots).

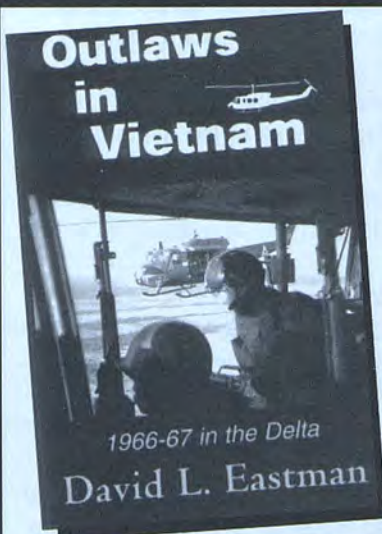
The OH-6 impacted in a rice paddy and rolled into a ball. When I regained consciousness, I was upside down, covered in smoke, with the engine still at flight idle and what was left of the blades churning up the ground.

I reached over with my left hand and pulled the fuel shutoff and things got real quiet. It suddenly dawned on me what I was seeing was smoke from a red smoke grenade and not smoke because the aircraft was on fire. This was a very good revelation.

From my up-side-down position looking up through what was left of my windshield, I spotted a pair of Cobras. One of them kicked over in a hard pedal turn and began rolling in. At that instant I realized that, maybe, because of the red smoke, he might think I am a target of opportunity.

When the pilot realized the smoke was marking a

*Continued on Page 19*



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## **Attend Reunion 2007 in Phoenix**



# Rest of story

## *LOH pilot tracks down veterans who saved him*

**Continued from Page 18**

downed aircraft, the Cobra, approaching the bottom of its dive, pulled up so hard the blades coned way up. The pilot did a high-speed Chandelle and landed next to me.

The second cobra began to fly cover for those of us on the ground.

The two pilots from the Cobra that had landed jumped out wearing their bright, red helmets and were met by the PFC, who had suffered a severe back injury in the crash. All three begin trying to extricate me from the wreckage.

### **Pilot impaled on cyclic**

This process was made more difficult because, when the LOH hit the ground, I was impaled on the cyclic. It seemed to take forever for them to work the cyclic out of my gut, but they finally succeeded.

Once I was clear of the wreckage, they dragged me back to their Cobra. One of the pilots laid down the ammo tray door and they placed me on it. They strapped me onto the door using one of the pilot's belts, which was passed around my arm and the steel cable that held up the ammo tray door.

My observer ran around the other side of the Cobra and got on the rocket pod, riding it bareback style.

The pilots then got back into the Cobra, took off, and began a record-breaking flight to Moc Hoa.

I found out later one of the pilots was startled when PFC Thorne began pounding on the canopy. When the pilot looked out, he saw two very large eyes over rapidly flapping cheeks and lips attempting to mouth the words: "SLOW DOWN!"

The pilot looked at the airspeed and saw the Cobra was flying through 120 knots and climbing. He remembered that at a briefing a memo had been circulated stating a Cobra should never exceed 90 knots with outside passengers.

### **Jeep commandeered as ambulance**

Upon arrival at Moc Hoa, someone commandeered a Jeep that was driving by, threw me on it, and all of us headed for the aid station, where medical personnel, concerned I was going into shock, began asking me all kinds of stupid questions while I was being prepped for surgery. I can't say I remember what the questions were, only that they were stupid!

When the "keep-me-alive" operation was complete and we were waiting for a medevac to fly me to a MASH unit, the doctor who had performed the surgery looked at me and said: "Chief, you don't smoke cigarettes do you?"

When I said, "no," he told me that was the only reason

I was still alive. My lungs were in pretty bad shape and had I been a smoker, the tissue would have been damaged to the point the doctor could not have put them back together.

He also said he was glad I happened to get shot on this day instead of the day before because on this morning they had just received a fresh supply of blood, of which I took 11 pints.

When I began adding up all the "what ifs" that could have happened, the number of lives a cat has is nothing compared to the lives I went through on just that one morning.

To make matters worse, the notice of me being wounded was sent to the wife of Benny Holmes, another pilot in my unit. She went nuts trying to find out how bad her husband had been injured and, when the mistake was discovered, she sent the notice she had received to my wife, who also went crazy because she could not figure out why she was receiving the notice of my injuries from another "Mrs. Holmes."

I returned to the States, where I underwent several more surgeries, and months and months of hospital time.

Several doctors told me that because of the severity of my wounds, I would never fly again. It took me 14 months of rehabilitation and three years of physical therapy, but I proved them wrong.

### **Pilot returns to Vietnam**

After I regained my flight status, I returned to Vietnam for a second tour in 1972-73, as a scout pilot and a maintenance officer. I retired from the Army in 1977.

When I was well enough to do so, I contacted the parents of PFC Huttla and explained to them how he died and how proud I was of him for the action he took trying to help the wounded sergeant. They were very grateful I called because they had not been able to get any definitive information from the Army about exactly how their son was killed.

I wanted very badly to find out the identity of the two pilots who helped pull me from the wreckage, but as time moved on and the war ended, I began to lose all hope of finding them.

Then I learned about the VHPA through a good friend of mine, past president Greg Ross. Greg ran an article in *The VHPA Newsletter* requesting information on a Cobra unit in Vietnam that operated in IV Corps and whose pilots wore red helmets. Almost as soon as the *Newsletter* came out, Greg received a call from Greg Smith.

Smith flew Cobras for the 235th Assault Helicopter Company and remembered vividly he and Lt. Joe Bryant

*Continued on Page 20*



# Rest of story

## *LOH pilot tracks down veterans who saved him*

**Continued from Page 19**

landing next to a crashed Loach and getting out a pilot who had been badly wounded and impaled on the cyclic, placing him on the ammo bay doors with web belts, and flying them to a Special Forces aid station.

Bryant was killed in action in 1968.

I contacted Greg Smith and told him he had a case of Scotch coming for what he had done for me so many years ago.

In January 2000, my wife Rusty and I visited Greg and his wife, Kate, and made good on my promise.

I believe we finished the first bottle that evening while recounting what took place that day. When we left, he asked for his belt back. Smart ass Cobra pilots!

Greg Smith subsequently wrote an article for *The VHPA Newsletter* that I believe appeared in one of the year 2000 issues about the experience and how he always

wondered if I had lived because I was so badly wounded. For his actions in saving my observer and me, he was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

I was able to locate the observer who took me on the wild ride into Cambodia and then back into Vietnam. He is still having major back problems as a result of the injuries he sustained during the crash.

As our conversation came to an end, he also asked if I still had the pilot's belt I had been strapped to the Cobra with? Smart ass observer scout pilot wannabe!

It has taken me quite a while to put what happened to me that day on paper and I'm glad others can now read it. And, as the old saying goes, this is my story and I'm sticking to it.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Gary Holmes, who graduated from Army flight school in Class 67-7, thanks Greg Ross for his help writing this article.

## Scotch saved for VHPA survivors

During the D.C. Reunion, Brian Novak, one of the original 66 members of VHPA, presented the last two surviving members of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association with something to toast all those who will have gone before them.

It is an unopened bottle of Chivas Brothers Ltd. ROYAL SALUTE blended Scotch whisky he purchased in Guam in 1971 while on his way back from R&R.

The bottle was 21 years old when he bought it. That's right, a now 56-year-old unopened bottle of premium Scotch.

He also points out this fine bottle of liquor is a seven-month veteran of Vietnam, having served out the remainder of Brian's tour with him.

With this exquisite Spode England Liquor Bottle of libation are two crystal glasses in which to savor the contents. The case holding this treasure was made by Steve Christensen, a friend of Brian, a Los Angeles County firefighter/paramedic, artisan and woodcraftsman extraordinaire, to honor those who flew helicopters in Vietnam.

The wood case is an unbelievably beautiful, hand-crafted piece of workmanship. The front and back panels are blood wood, the side panels are lace wood, the inlaid replica of our logo is a combination of beautiful woods — yellow heart, paduak, ebony and mother of pearl. The handle looks like an old footlocker handle with leather strap and brass connectors. The hinges also are replicas of those found on a footlocker.

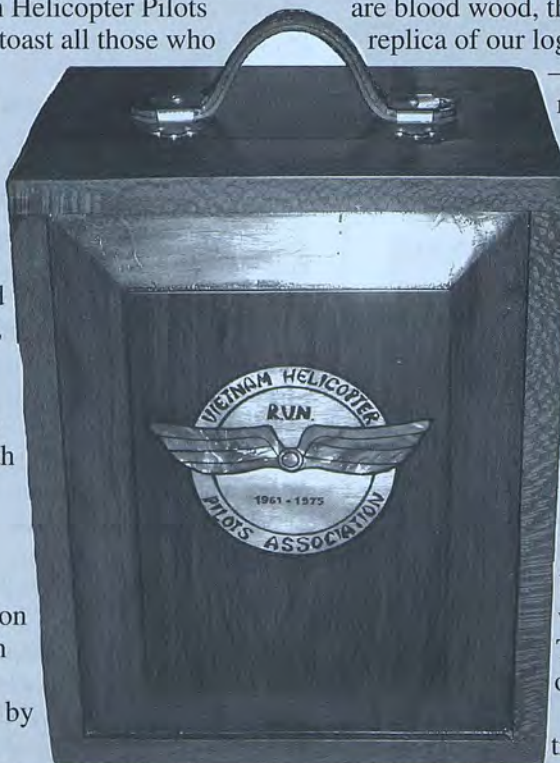
Steve worked on the piece for more than three months.

The case and its contents will travel to each VHPA reunion from now on. It will be kept by the immediate past president during the year and passed on to his successor at the following reunion.

Once emptied of its contents by the last two remaining members, the empty bottle, glasses and beautiful wood case will be sent to the VHPA archives at Texas Tech and added to our collection of artifacts and memorabilia.

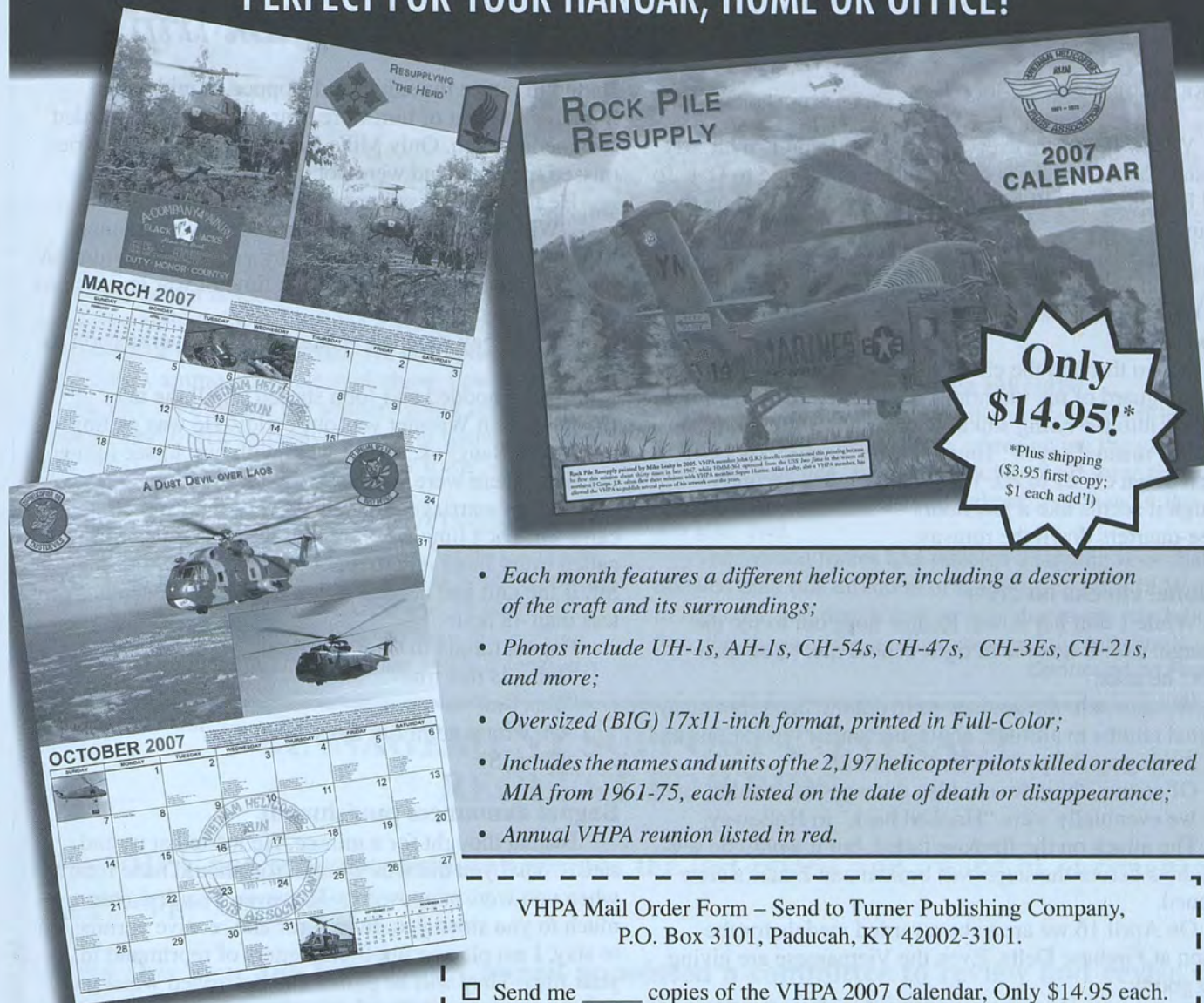
I look forward to sharing this rare treat with the one of you left to drink it with me.

Mike Sheurman  
Immediate past president





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# Pleiku 6

## *Pilots redeemed in combat after Bangkok trip*

MIKE SHEUERMAN

Yellow lights are everywhere. I tell Lynn I'm hit. My Master Caution Light is going nuts. I'm headed to Dak To and I'm going to kill him right after I get this bird on the ground.

He has Dan follow me for a few minutes. I've lost my No. 1 and No. 2 hydraulics. Somebody tells me to head for Kontom because Dak To is getting hit, also. Sounds good to me.

We go through the check list, notify all aircraft in the area on guard of my intentions and line up for a running landing into the rising sun as it comes over the mountains.

The manual says: "Touch down above 35 knots." I touch down closer to 80. We slide for a few seconds — though it seems like a few hours — and come to a stop three-quarters down the runway.

### **Colonel checks on crew**

While I shut her down, Ronnie hops out to see the damage. Col. Bagnal is in right behind me. "You men OK?" he asks.

We ascertain the damage as hydraulic lines shot away, Bagnal climbs to altitude, contacts Panther Operations and has it bring up the parts to fix the aircraft.

Of course, there was hidden damage we couldn't see and we eventually were "Hooked back" to Holloway.

The attack on the firebase failed, but it would be several days before the siege was broken and Zutter's crew rescued.

On April 16 we are to be awarded medals for the action at Firebase Delta. Even the Vietnamese are giving us a goody.

Turns out I get a Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star and Ronnie Lewis got one with a Gold Star because he was scheduled to be in the backseat. When the Vietnamese official called to get the crew names for the awards, Panther Operations gave him the original crew assignments. No biggie.

### **Group visits battalion commander**

On April 16, the Pleiku 6, along with our company commander, went to see the battalion commander. He wanted details about us being gone from the unit for so long without authority. After hearing the details, he would decide what course of action to take.

We reported to his office and were ushered in. Col. Bagnal was not there yet. He was saying goodbye to the generals who awarded the heroes of Firebase Delta their medals.

He came in, we snapped to attention and saluted. He

started to return the salute and stopped in mid-salute. Standing in front of him were four guys he just awarded two medals each. Only Mike Kieren and Ziggy Siegfried missed the party and were not involved in the action.

He finished the salute and told us to stand at ease.

"Will somebody please tell me what you six men were thinking? I want to know why you did not return on time. Gentlemen, being AWOL in time of war is a serious offense," the colonel said.

John Debay snapped to attention. "Sir, permission to speak."

Bagnal nodded and John started to tell the tale.

"Sir, Lash Wisener was our buddy. He was getting married in Bangkok. We all went with him to see him get married. There were some paperwork problems that delayed the marriage. We called every time something came up. Each time we were told we could stay. Sir, we called every other day to make sure we weren't needed. Sir, if the unit had needed us we would have been back in less than 48 hours."

Bagnal turned to Capt. Barfield.

"John, is this true?"

"Yes, Sir."

"On whose authority did you do this?"

"Mine, Sir."

### **Bagnal announces punishment**

Bagnal thought for a minute. He looked at us and said, "What you did was wrong. You should have returned when you were supposed to. However, I can't do too much to you since you did ask for and receive permission to stay. I am placing unofficial letters of reprimand in your files. They will be pulled and destroyed when you leave my command *if and only if* you don't get in any more trouble until you leave my command. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Sir!" we replied.

"Now, get out of my office . . . and congratulations on your awards," the colonel said.

I flew five more days and was notified I was leaving the unit on April 23. Mike Kieren followed me on the 24th. Ziggy was right behind him. Lynn Carlson went to II Corps as aviation officer in June. John Debay was with the unit until it stood down in August and then went home. He bitched to the new CO so much about maintenance he was made maintenance officer. Mike Pascoe, The Gofer, brought the unit colors home.

And me, I flew to Saigon on the 23rd, changed into civilian clothes and caught an Air Vietnam flight to Bangkok for a 10-day vacation on Uncle Sam. But that's a story for another issue of *The Aviator*.



# Shot down!

## *April Fool's Day reminder of terror-filled mission*

**BERNARDO S. PAEZ**

April 1, 1967. April Fool's Day.

It didn't occur to me that it was April Fool's Day until the day was almost over. When the day started, it was just another day in Vietnam. Little did I know that it was to become an unforgettable day.

It started out innocently enough. We were assigned to resupply a unit that was combing a village about eight miles west of the city of Pleiku. We resupplied them with food, water, ammo, mail, clean clothing, new replacement troops, etc. We took out the soldiers going home, going to R&R, going to sick call, anyone having business back at base camp. What we called an "ash & trash" mission. What we considered soft duty.

Our crew consisted of copilot WO1 Donald Rawlinson, crew chief Martinez, door gunner Kephart, and me.

We had just gotten new replacements in the company and Rawlinson was one of them. He was 19 years old.

Earlier that morning, the unit we were resupplying had entered a village it was searching and had secured a

landing zone just on the south outskirts. The landing zone the unit selected was in the middle of fairly tall trees that required a steep approach to enter and a confined-area takeoff to depart.

A confined-area takeoff consists of backing up the helicopter as far as possible and then executing a high-power, high-angle takeoff until clearing the trees. After clearing the trees, it was possible to nose over the aircraft and build airspeed.

### **We practiced confined-area takeoffs**

We had been taught the confined-area takeoff in flight school and it was just a matter of reviewing the procedures and practice. We landed and took off three times. I demonstrated the first landing/takeoff and then let Rawlinson take over.

The ground forces had selected a landing zone that allowed only one direction of landing and takeoff. We had to approach and depart east to west due to the wind direction, the shape of the landing zone and the taller trees

*Continued on Page 24*

## **MANAGEMENT SUPPORT CONTRACT REQUEST FOR BIDS**

**The VHPA has grown considerably since the last review and award of our management support contract.**

**Early this year the Executive Council appointed a committee to review and revise the contract requirements to more accurately reflect the needs of our organization**

**The updated requirements are now ready and will be provided to any prospective bidder on request. The review and award process is expected to be completed prior to the 2007 Reunion in Phoenix.**

**Any member that is interested in bidding or knows of anyone qualified and interested to bid should request a copy of the Request for Proposal.**

**Submit requests to:**

**Dana M. Young**  
**Chairman, RFP Committee**  
[dmyoung@vhpa.org](mailto:dmyoung@vhpa.org)



# Shot down!

## *April Fool's Day reminder of terror-filled mission*

**Continued from Page 23**

being to the south with the village to the north.

We were forced to violate the rule about never duplicating your approach and takeoff. We landed and took off those three times without incident and then were released. We went back to the unit's firebase to await further missions.

We sat around to the side of the firebase helipad for about an hour.

### **Pay officer wanted to go to field**

Presently, a first lieutenant and a staff sergeant came up to the aircraft. It turned out the lieutenant was the pay officer and the sergeant was the payroll guard.

They had a canvas sack full of military payment certificates, and they asked us to fly them into the village we had resupplied. They wanted to pay the troops in the field since it was the first of the month.

We flew them into the landing zone we had used all morning. They got off the aircraft and headed into the village. I let Rawlinson do all the flying, radio calls, etc. We took our time setting up for the steep takeoff.

We had barely cleared the trees and were nosing over to gain airspeed, when we got hit with about 15 rounds of small arms fire. The first three rounds tore into the aircraft about three inches from my right foot, between the seat and the center console. The helicopter bounced up and down like a toy.

I had a stack of maps and a *Playboy* magazine there and the bullets ripped the maps and magazine to shreds, filling the inside of the helicopter with dust, sand, and confetti. I immediately got on the controls.

"I've got it! I've got it!" I yelled at Rawlinson.

He released the controls, and I nosed the aircraft over and pulled all the power I could.

We kept receiving fire for about two seconds. We flew about 50 meters and were hit again with about 11 more rounds. I turned to the left and Martinez opened up with his M-60 machine gun, spraying the area behind us and to the left.

### **Aircraft hit by 26 rounds**

Later we counted the bullet holes. We were hit 26 times.

The instrument panel caution lights were lit. "*Engine Oil Pressure Low*" "*Hydraulic Oil Pressure Low*" "*Engine RPM Low*," along with audible warning warbles: "Peeyo! . . . Peeyo! . . . Peeyo!"

The FM radio was cycling between frequencies, also adding its: "Beyooooop! . . . Beyooooop!" to the sounds of the caution lights and the machine gun firing.

I was stunned and trying desperately to think. "Martinez! Stop firing! Turn off the caution lights! Pull the circuit breakers! Turn off the FM radio!" I was screaming. They did as I asked and it got deathly quiet.

I knew there was a firebase about three miles south of us so I turned the helicopter in that direction.

I got on the intercom and asked if everyone was all right. The right door gunner, Kephart, did not answer, I looked back and Kephart was hanging partly out of the aircraft by his harness. His machine gun was in pieces and hanging by the bungee cord.

I kept yelling at Kephart, asking if he was all right.

Kephart looked in my direction and I could see that his forehead and flight helmet were full of blood. I saw the firewall behind him also was coated with blood. I decided to head for the 95<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital just outside of Pleiku.

I turned back to the left, hoping we could make it to the hospital in time to save Kephart.

All this took less than two minutes, but it seemed like an eternity. As we headed for the hospital I happened to glance down at Rawlinson's left boot, which was flowered open on top and blood was spilling over the sides.

### **Copilot 'followed my look' to his foot**

Rawlinson saw my expression and followed my look. His eyes bulged open and he started screaming when he realized he had been shot through his left foot.

"Aaaah!" he yelled. He then got on the cyclic control and started transmitting on the VHF radio. "I've been hit! I've been hit! Mayday! Mayday! 895's been hit! 895's been hit!" he was screaming at the top of his lungs.

"Shut up! Shut Up!" I screamed back.

He let go of the cyclic, fell back into his seat, and gave me a look that said: "My life is in your hands." I tuned to the emergency frequency to make a Mayday call. The controls started jumping around and getting real stiff. I knew we were running out of hydraulic fluid. I knew we had to land right away while I still had some control of the aircraft. I had no time for the Mayday on the emergency frequency.

I saw a big rice paddy to our right and, as I turned toward it, the engine gave a loud "Ooouh!" Like when you are punched in the stomach. The engine quit on us.

I reacted as I had been instructed to do countless times an emergency autorotation. I bottomed the collective pitch to decrease the angle of attack of the main rotor blades.

I mentally reviewed the autorotation procedure: Head

*Continued on Page 25*



# Shot down!

## *April Fool's Day reminder of terror-filled mission*

**Continued from Page 24**

into the wind, maintain 60 knots airspeed, at about 10 feet off the ground, flare the aircraft by pulling back on the cyclic.

I was aiming to make an autorotative landing in a clear area at the edge of the rice paddy. The rice paddy itself was not in use and was overgrown with weeds and plants about four feet high.

### **Controls to stiff to hop dike**

As soon as I flared the aircraft, I spotted a raised dike with an irrigation canal cut into its middle. I pulled in a little collective to hop the helicopter over the dike, but the controls were stiff and I was too late.

The tail rotor hit the dike and, out of the corner of my eye, I saw it break off and sail away. With the loss of the tail rotor, the helicopter started turning to the left and the nose turned downward with the impact and the loss of weight at the tail.

I pulled up on the collective with all my strength to cushion the crash. We smashed into the ground with the left side of the nose of the aircraft. The main rotor blade dug itself into the ground about two feet and came to an abrupt halt.

I remember my upper body hurtling toward the instrument panel before the shoulder and lap harness locked into place and left me hanging in midair, inches from the instrument panel.

I yelled at the crewmembers to get their weapons and form a perimeter around the helicopter.

I was going to get on the radio to call for help. The crew did as I ordered. Poor Rawlinson, he grabbed his M-16 and hopped on one leg about 10 yards and flopped on the ground.

It turned out Kephart was wounded through his left wrist and a bullet had taken off the tip of his nose. That is why there was so much blood on his head and on the firewall. He also had gotten a lot of shrapnel from the bullets that destroyed his machine gun.

Kephart and Martinez unloaded Martinez' machine gun and ammunition, then joined Rawlinson in forming a defensive perimeter.

### **Martinez checked for fire**

I then called Martinez back to the helicopter and asked him to check for fire and to grab some smoke grenades.

I made sure I was on the emergency VHS frequency.

I tried to call for help, but the radio wasn't working on my side. I plugged into Rawlinson's radio cord and was

able to make contact with a helicopter from a unit based just south of Pleiku. I seem to remember it was the 127th Assault Helicopter Company based at Camp Holloway, though the only thing I know for sure is they were called the "Falcons."

They asked for my location and I had to tell them to "hold one" as I had to dig through the pieces of my maps to find the right one. I told them we were about five miles south of a high hill we called "Titty Mountain." I read the coordinates to them.

At about the same time, I saw a helicopter north of us. I asked the pilot to make a left turn, identified the aircraft and asked it to head in the direction the helicopter had turned to. I then told the pilot we were going to pop smoke.

I yelled at Martinez to pop a smoke grenade. The helicopter's crew identified the color purple and came right in.

We had not even been on the ground eight minutes. The helicopter landed and a crew member told us another helicopter was coming in right away.

The aircraft commander reminded me to remove all the radios, weapons, and ammunition — anything the enemy could use — and take it with us. The crew loaded Rawlinson and Kephart aboard the rescue helicopter and took them to the hospital.

### **Second chopper prepares to land**

By the time they were ready to take off, another helicopter was circling to come in. The second helicopter landed and its crew chief helped us strip our aircraft of usable items.

When Martinez and I climbed into the second helicopter, I was surprised to see my company commander, waiting for us in the passenger section.

He had been directing a combat assault and was on the way back to base camp when he heard Rawlinson's radio transmissions on our company frequency. He knew the area we had been assigned to and headed there right away.

I took a seat right across from him on their helicopter and he brought out his map and asked me to explain what had happened.

I pointed to the village we had been resupplying and was running my finger down the path we took.

He stopped me and pointed at the front of my flak jacket and asked, "What's that?"

I looked down and saw a bullet hole across the front of the jacket. I hurriedly unzipped the jacket and saw two holes more closely spaced through my fatigue jacket. I

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# Presidents' pilots

*Army, Marine choppers fly chief execs since Ike*

MARC YABLONKA

It was Aug. 9, 1974. Lt. Col. Gene Boyer was having a lot of trouble fighting back tears when his boss leaned into the cockpit door of the Sikorsky Sea King helicopter. Col. Boyer was commanding and told him, "Oh stop that."

His boss was President Richard M. Nixon, and the reason for the Boyer's tears was Nixon's resignation at the height of the infamous Watergate scandal.

Of the three presidents Boyer had flown, Nixon was the most personable, he feels, though he asserts that his job was never to socialize with his bosses.

"After you've flown the president 25 or 30 times, you'd better concentrate on flying, not who's flying with you," Boyer, 76, of Seal Beach, Calif., told the (River-side, Calif.) *Press-Enterprise* newspaper recently.

"You had to remember that you were there to fly the president, not to talk politics."

In the last few years, Col. Boyer worked hard to restore one of the presidential helicopters at March Air

Reserve Base, Calif., which, thanks to the National Marine Museum in Quantico, Va., is now on permanent display at the Nixon Presidential Library in nearby Yorba Linda.

Working with him on the project was Dave Pirnie (Lt. Col. USMC, retired). Col. Pirnie, 70, also a presidential pilot who flew President John F. Kennedy in the left seat as a young captain, but flew as a commander on flights for Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter.

Being a presidential pilot is not the only thing he and Col. Boyer have in common, though.

While Col. Boyer flew President Nixon off the White House Lawn, after his resignation, to Andrews Air Force Base, where he and the First Family boarded Air Force 1, Col. Pirnie was there to meet Air Force 1 at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, Calif., to fly the Nixons to the Western White House in San Clemente later that day.

By that time, the designation Marine 1 had been transferred to a UH-1H "Huey," though Pirnie had flown the



**President Gerald R. Ford greets Lt. Col. Gene Boyer as CW4 Carl Burhanan watches from the cockpit of Army 1. (Photo courtesy of Boyer and White House Photo Lab)**

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## Shot down!

*April Fool's Day reminder of terror-filled mission*

**Continued from Page 25**

unbuttoned my fatigue jacket and there were two closely spaced holes through my T-shirt. I pulled up my T-shirt and saw I did not have a mark on my body. The bullet must have missed me by less than a quarter of an inch.

Later on we concluded there must have been an enemy shooting at us from the top of a tree.

I couldn't continue pointing out what happened, as my hands were shaking too hard. The CO had to hold my hand steady in order for me to finish explaining.

Martinez and I were taken back to base and dropped off. The rescue crew went to arrange to sling load the wrecked helicopter out of the rice paddy.

I went to my "hooch" and was so full of adrenaline I chugged two beers.

That evening Martinez and I were assigned to fly the company commander, the executive officer and the operations officer to the hospital to visit Rawlinson and Kephart.

I tried to beg off the flight, but they ordered me to do so. Get back on the "horse that threw you" type of thing. We visited and wished Rawlinson and Kephart well and returned to base camp.

That night I realized it was April Fool's Day. I cringe when I think of it now; fate sure played a terror-filled trick on me.



# Presidents' pilots

## *Army, Marine choppers fly chief execs since Ike*

**Continued from Page 26**

UH-34B as part of the 1st Marine Helicopter Squadron in Vietnam in 1962 at Soc Trang.

Also by that time, the ebullient, "V" for victory waving now ex-President had become reflective and saddened, Pirnie recalled.

"It had to have been a very traumatic experience," he told the *Press-Enterprise*.

Like Boyer, he also remembers that flying the president was a no-nonsense type of job.

"Presidents are not approachable when they are creating world history," Pirnie said, from the Riverside, Calif. offices of the solar energy company he runs.

Col. Boyer's frequent copilot and, later a commander himself, was Carl Burhanan (CW4, U.S. Army, retired), who flew Presidents Johnson, whom Burhanan termed "a rough guy," Nixon and Ford.

Burhanan holds the distinction of being the only black commander to fly a U.S. president to this day in either

service that has flown the president, though two other black pilots did serve in the Army's Executive Flight Detachment unit in backup capacity.

Burhanan was in the left seat on the day of President Nixon's last official flight.

### **Watergate changed thinking**

"Watergate changed the whole way of thinking for everybody, but particularly (for those flying) helicopters," Burhanan, 71, said from the offices of Oasis Aviation, an aviation fuel distributor company he runs adjacent to Los Angeles International Airport.

"After Watergate, the government focused on the misuse of the helicopter. (It felt that) it didn't pay to use it for official government business. Based on those criteria,

President Ford did not use the helicopter much at all."

In fact, said Burhanan, presidential missions dropped dramatically from 1,000 to 100 per year under Ford.

But that did not diminish the absolute care that went — and still goes — into not only flying the president, but into maintaining all the aircraft, whether the actual Army-1 or Marine-1, their decoys, or the helicopters that made up the advance party that always had to be flown in on C-5As and in place upon arrival of the presidential party anywhere in the world.

"We never worried about anything going wrong with those helicopters because all the parts had half life," Burhanan explained.

That meant that every part used in the helos was replaced after half of its life, rather than chancing a mishap by using the part its full life.

"The parts were all 'gold-plated,'" the term for being specially handled, added Col. Boyer.

"We had the top mechanics. The helos went back to Sikorsky once a year for a complete



**President John F. Kennedy is greeted after alighting from Army 1. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy is preparing to descend down the ramp from the helicopter. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Gene Boyer and White House Photo Lab)**

overhaul," added Chief Burhanan.

Among the many who maintained the presidential choppers, was Lt. Gen. Dave Maloney (USMC, retired), commander of the maintenance unit and presidential copilot for Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, though he never flew the latter.

Maloney, 76, illuminated on the difference between the Marines' HMX-1 and the Army's Executive Flight Detachment:

While the Army flew the helos everywhere on C-5As, the Marines would put them on aircraft carriers two months in advance of the president's trip, the general, secretary of the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C., said.

Another difference between the two units was that,

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# Presidents' pilots

*Army, Marine choppers fly chief execs since Ike*

**Continued from Page 27**

once a pilot was promoted to the Executive Flight Detachment, the Army kept him doing "stick time" to enhance his piloting skills, Col. Boyer said.

Marine pilots tended to be replaced every three years, however.

"If you're logging 35 to 45 flight hours a month, what are you doing the rest of the month?" Lt. Gen. Maloney asked rhetorically. "All Marine aviators have a ground job, as well as a flying job."

Laguna Hills, Calif. resident Col. Paul Johnston (USMC, retired), who flew Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan, talked further about the extent to which presidential helicopters were cared for.

"In a helicopter fleet, it is very common to have between one to seven discrepancies on an aircraft: A loose rivet, static on a radio, fluctuation of cabin pressure. But with a White House aircraft, you don't have that," he emphasized.

"Every time the helicopter got pulled out of the hangar, it got polished and manicured. Maintenance was 24 hours a day," Col. Johnston said.

"Everything was done to make sure you had the best aircraft, people, maintenance and security," Chief Burhanan added.

After his service in Korea, Burhanan's military career next found him in Vietnam. From 1966-67, he flew the distinctive Sikorsky CH-54 "Flying Crane" equipment lifter at An Khe for the 478th Sky Crane Company.

In fact, Vietnam is a thread woven through virtually all the careers of the pilots who flew the presidents.

That was Lt. Gen. Maloney's case. He commanded a helicopter gunship squadron of UH-1E and UH-1H-N Hueys at Ky Ha, I Corps south of Danang, between 1966 and 1967.

Col. Johnston, in fact, did two tours in Vietnam: the first was in I Corps, during which he flew CH-46s. The second was divided between Bien Hoa and Marble Mountain just outside Danang.

During both tours he flew medevac and resupply missions, recon inserts, and troop lifts.

When Col. Johnston, 66, reflects on his time as a commander of presidential flights though, weather and altitude were always issues.

One flight in particular comes to mind.

He and his copilot picked up President Reagan in Century City (a business district adjacent to Beverly Hills) for a flight to Palm Springs.

"We never went over six or seven thousand feet (while flying President Reagan), but to get over to Palm Springs, we had to go to 10,000 feet."

Johnston was very concerned about possible ear blockage for Reagan since descent in a helicopter can only be 500-700 feet a minute.

To handle situations like that, presidential pilots needed to have the ultimate training.

Pilots had to be multi-engine rated,

not only VFR, but IFR, according to Capt. Jim Frye (U.S. Army, retired) of Bremerton, Wash.

"They looked for a variance of experience and liked to have people who flew in different climes to fly the president," Frye, who flew Presidents Nixon and Ford, said.

"When a pilot was selected, they would sit down with all the pilots and ask 'Does anybody know this guy?'" Of course, strict background checks were always performed, he said.

Vietnam was also on Frye's resume. He flew the CH-47 during two tours, the first with the 1st Cav at An Khe 1967-68, the second in support of the 101st Airborne out



**After landing at Key Biscayne, Fla., President Richard M. Nixon acknowledges a salute from an Army officer, with Army 1 commander, Lt. Col. Gene Boyer, in the cockpit. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Gene Boyer and White House Photo Lab)**

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# Quick trip

## *Aide books helicopter for trip back to White House*

MARC YABLONKA

In September 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, vacationing at his summer home in Newport, R.I., was summoned back to the White House.

Whatever the urgency, "Ike" feared the return trip from Rhode Island, which required a one-hour ferry ride across Narragansett Bay to get to Air Force One, followed by a 45-minute flight to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., and a 20-minute motorcade to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., would not get him back soon enough.

Eisenhower instructed his naval aide to find a quicker method of transportation, which the aide promptly did.

He informed the president that a helicopter was poised and ready (helicopters, such as 10-troop transport Piasecki H-21 "Flying Banana" had been in use during the Korean War and helicopter visibility in military aviation was increasing greatly).



President and Mrs. Ford arrive at Grand Junction, Colo., on Marine 1. Lt. Col. Dave Pirnie is in cockpit. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Dave Pirnie)

While it was Air Force pilots who flew the president on that initial journey (in a Sikorsky VH-34D Seahorse), Eisenhower's decision to rely on the increasingly prevalent flying machine led to the creation of the Army's Executive Flight Detachment (call sign: "Army 1") and the Marines' HMX (Helicopter Marine Experiment)-1, (call sign: "Marine 1"), parallel units coordinated by the

White House; though it befell his successor, President

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# Presidents' pilots

## *Army, Marine choppers fly chief execs since Ike*

*Continued from Page 28*

1967-68, the second in support of the 101st Airborne out of Hue and Phu Bai 1969-70.

In all his years of flying, one of his most vivid memories is getting airborne, turning and seeing the Washington Monument.

"It was pretty impressive, but I did my best not to think about it to do the best job I could to control the airplane."

His fellow presidential pilot, Enterprise, Ala., resident Bobby Bruce (CW4, U.S. Army, retired) landed in-country in 1962, at a time when Vietnam was "still very French," and was attached to the 57th Transportation

Company Light, for which he flew the H-21 "Flying Banana" out of Qui Nhon.

After his year in Vietnam was up, Chief Bruce went to work for the Executive Flight Detachment, and flew Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

Bruce, 72, who today ferries cars in the South, left the EFD for a second tour in Vietnam in 1972, when he flew UH-1H Hueys for the 1st Cav at Bien Hoa.

It is extremely symbolic that Bruce hasn't strayed far from Fort Rucker. While all of them may not live close to Rucker, it is safe to say that for all the pilots who flew the presidents, their "stick time" with the chiefs executive never leaves them.



# Jack Salm

## *Looking for peace and quiet can be risky business*

It was 1959. I was just back from a tour in Korea and was attending the Infantry Officers Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Ga.

I was looking for a quiet, out-of-the-way assignment. After two STRAC (the 82nd Airborne and 101st) assignments and the unaccompanied tour in Korea, I was ready for as close to a 9-5 job I could find.

I got out my map of military installations. It became dog-eared after constant folding and unfolding. Where could I go where I wouldn't be in a STRAC unit and on constant alert?

### **Fort Huachuca ideal destination**

Aha! Finally, I thought, I had found the ideal destination. Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

It was out in the middle of nowhere. The decision was made that after the Advanced Course, we would go to Fort Huachuca.

Circumstances changed. My wife had to have emergency surgery and, while she recuperated with friends in Tennessee, the dog and I would drive out to Huachuca. I would do the driving.

The first night we spent in Vicksburg. So far, so good.

The second night in Fort Worth. Again, uneventful.

After a long, hot drive across Texas, the third night was spent at Fort Bliss.

The fourth day on the road and by this time it was getting rather old. I was tired, irritable and couldn't wait to get to Huachuca.

That afternoon I arrived in Benson, Ariz., the first place anybody had heard of Fort Huachuca. The gas station attendant gave me directions to the post.

"Go back."

"BACK!" I shouted.

"Hold on," he said, "it's about a mile back, then turn right and take the road down to Tombstone. Just before you get to Tombstone, turn right again, go through Charleston to the north 'Y,' actually it was a 'T.' Then turn left and you will eventually get to Fort Huachuca."

I thanked him and hit the road. Driving into the sun, I was tired, the dog was more tired, so I asked him what he was complaining about? I was doing all the driving.

I made all the turns as I had been directed and finally, after miles of miles of nothing but nothing, I came upon a sentry box with a sentry in it.

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# Quick trip

## *Aide books helicopter for trip back to White House*

### **Continued from Page 29**

John F. Kennedy, to actually procure the helos from the Navy and put them into service.

The Army operated its program out of Davison Army Airfield, Fort Belvoir, Va. The program continued until 1977, when President Gerald Ford acted on a recommendation from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to disband the Executive Flight Detachment and maintain only HMX-1.

The Marines, meanwhile, operated, and continue to do so, out of the Marine Corps Air Station, Quantico, Va.

In reality, the Marines' HMX-1 program had begun 10 years prior to President Eisenhower's first presidential use of a "chopper," on Dec. 1, 1947, as a think tank on the future of what in aviation circles was called "vertical development," according to the website [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), the online encyclopedia.

"The squadron's first responsibilities were to study this new aircraft and develop doctrine, maintenance and

training requirements needed to put the helicopter into use," the website states.

Though HMX-1 began without any helos (they would arrive two months later) and with a team of nine Marines, they had the foresight to believe that the helicopter would make the Marines a more versatile fighting force by getting troops on and off the battlefield more quickly.

That was a fact not lost on the Army, which unfortunately incurred 85 percent of the casualties and 85 percent of the downed helicopters in the Vietnam War, according to Lt. Col. Gene Boyer (U.S. Army, retired).

After Col. Boyer's first tour flying President Johnson for the Executive Flight Detachment between 1964-66, he commanded maintenance and CH-47 helicopter companies at An Khe, South Vietnam, between 1966 and 1967. He then came home to fly for the Detachment until 1975, during which he again flew President Johnson (from the LBJ Ranch), then Nixon, the only president to fly in a combat zone (with Boyer commanding), and Ford.



# Jack Salm

## *Looking for peace and quiet can be risky business*

**Continued from Page 30**

"How do I get to Fort Huachuca?" I asked.

"This is it," he cheerfully responded.

Oh, my God! There was nothing here. My wife is going to hate this place and me for getting assigned here. I couldn't imagine what this young man could be guarding. There was absolutely nothing here.

"Actually, sir, you have to turn around, go back to the main road and down to the main gate."

### **Town short on amenities**

When I arrived there, it was not much better than the other place. The main gate is in Sierra Vista. The town had just been renamed from Fry, Ariz., and all it had was a bank, a gas station, a market and about 100 trailer homes.

As I signed in, I thought: "And I asked for this. What an \*\*\*hole!"

I went up the main road of the post and still didn't see anything. Finally, as I approached the Huachuca Mountains, I spotted the main post area.

After I was processed in, I got a room in the BOQ, both the dog and I.

The next day I drew quarters and in the next several days had our furniture moved into the quarters. I still thought my wife is going to HATE this place.

A week later I drove up to Tucson to meet my wife, who was flying in from Tennessee. To say I was apprehensive would be an understatement.

The plan was to pick her up at the airport and drive down to the base in the dark. She nixed that idea by telling me she was tired and would prefer to spend the night in Tucson and drive down the next day.

### **Wife loved fort from first day**

Surprise, SURPRISE! She loved it from the very first day. Imagine my dismay when I found the unit I was assigned to was a STRAC unit. Oh, No!

At least our mission was not as critical as the 82nd or 101st. and we weren't on alert all the time. Our mission was to support the XVIII Corps signal officer.

Shortly after my arrival, we were alerted to move to Galveston to load onto a helicopter carrier. None of our aircraft made it to Galveston.

I was flying an old H-19 "Chickasaw" and made an autorotation to the post golf course because of mechanical trouble. Almost immediately our mission was changed to one of search and rescue.

We were responsible for a tremendous piece of real estate — all of southeastern Arizona. It was 80-90 percent

search and rescue and 10-20 percent training.

At last my unit was not STRAC. No 2 a.m. alerts. Peace and quiet.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Reflections on being an old-as-dirt aviator**

I am an old aviator.

How old, you ask? As my cohorts say, Jack is as old as dirt. Or, Jack is a classmate of Igor Sikorsky.

He remembers wearing buckled combat boots.

When you reach my age, where you have lived more of your life than you have left, you can usually say, "been there, done that." You reflect more on the past than look to the future.

The other day I got to thinking: What would it be like to be in the Army today?

I remember when it was a much less structured environment. You could sign out an aircraft and go "bore holes in the sky." It was all very relaxed.

All of this took place at a time when aircraft weren't computerized and didn't cost over a million dollars a copy.

### **It used to be fun to cast the surly bonds**

Back in the days of needle, ball and airspeed, it was fun on a hot summer day to "cast the surly bonds of earth," check out an L-19 (OV-1 Birddog), take off and, with the windows open and natural air conditioning, enjoy the freedom of the skies.

This all changed with Vietnam. A combination of sophistication and cost changed the equation.

After Vietnam, flight time became harder to get, as were aircraft. It was difficult to maintain proficiency.

Guys coming back from Iraq tell me of only operations at night, below 300 feet in pitch darkness. Where is the fun in that?

On a trip to Luke Air Force Base, when I was a JROTC instructor, the kids ate up the glamour of the "Top Gun" environment.

I wondered, the F-16 is a fantastic aircraft, but it is fully computerized and, if the main computer fails, the pilot has to eject.

It just seems that today's pilot is under constant stress. Is it fun to fly anymore? Give me the old needle, ball and airspeed environment. It's tough getting old.

— Jack Salm



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