



# THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

July/Aug 2008 Vol. 26, No. 4

## The VHPA Celebrates Their 25th Anniversary in San Antonio

VHPA Golf Tournament - July 3rd



New Braunfels 4th Of July Parade



The Market Square Shopping Tour  
July 3rd & 4th



Our Closing Banquet - July 5th



VHPA Members & their guests enjoy  
a dinner cruise on the River Walk



The Sins & Saints Tour - July 2nd & 3rd



The Vince Vance Concert  
July 3rd

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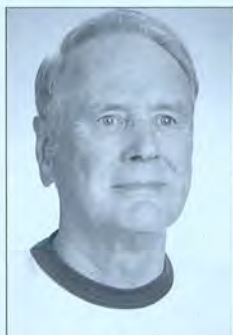
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# The VHPA Welcomes our New President

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Jack Salm

The Presidency of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association is a position not to be taken lightly. I am proud to be your president for the next twelve months and I vow to exert every effort to fulfill the responsibilities of the job. Goals that I have set are:

1. Continued increase of membership (our current membership is at an all time high with over 8,000 Aviators classified as dues paid and current).
2. Adding additional chapters (we presently have eleven active chapters and three in the process of activation - Richmond/Petersburg, VA, Boston, MA, and Houston, TX).
3. Signing a favorable hotel contract for the 2011-2013 time frame
4. Insuring that all runs smoothly for the next year.

As I stated in my acceptance speech at the reunion, my door is open. I want to know your feelings. If you have suggestions or complaints send me an e-mail or letter and it will be answered either by me or a member of the EC who will attempt to answer to your satisfaction.

Well, San Antonio is history. Our 25th Annual Reunion was a terrific gathering. 1747 persons attended (921 aviators, 787 guests over 21 and 39 under 21). Everything seemed to go off like clockwork, but that doesn't happen without a lot of hard work by many people. For those of you who attended

E-mail items to The Aviator at:  
[editor@vhpa.org](mailto:editor@vhpa.org)

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you all (at least those I talked with) seemed to have nothing but positive comments.

Congratulations to the Reunion Committee (Dana Young, Dave Rittman and Joe Bilitzke), The Reunion Brat Linda Irvin and, of course, the Headquarters staff (Marcia, Colleen, Tanith and Katy). I know there are others and I apologize if I have overlooked you.

The Marriott River Center was a wonderful hotel. Its location alone made it a great venue, right on the River Walk, and not far from the Alamo, the Tower of the Americas and restaurants too numerous to mention. I believe you could eat at a different restaurant for a year or perhaps longer, especially if you enjoy Tex-Mex!

We are already working on the Philadelphia 2009 Reunion. There are as many if not more activities available in Philly as there were in San Antonio. Hope to see you there!

*~ Jack Salm, President*

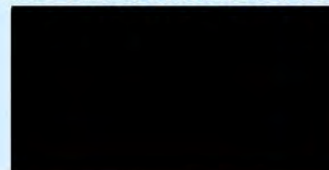


## Eye of the Tiger

Full Color, 20" x 28" limited edition print of OH-6A LOH, . \$80 standard, \$100 customized with unit markings, crew configuration of your choice.



Joe Kline Aviation Art





## VHPA OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND STAFF 2007-08

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PAST PRESIDENT	Mike Whitten
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Midterm Member	Mike Law
Junior Member	Jim Fulbrook
SECRETARY/TREASURER	Tom Payne
FOUNDER	Larry Clark

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Membership	Mike Law
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Public relations/publications	Ken Fritz
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The VHPA Aviator	David Adams, Editor
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Vendor Coordinator	Rich Buzen
Historical	Mike Sloniker
Technology steering	Charles Holley
Strategic planning	Robert Smith

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VHPA reunion website	www.vhpareunion.org
VHPA EC Forum	www.vhpa.info

## Aviator privacy statement

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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.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE WARNING ORDER #1

### THE 10TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION (VAGABONDS) PLANS REUNION FOR ALL VIETNAM ERA UNITS IN 2009

The Vagabonds, under the sponsorship of the 281st AHC, will hold its first battalion wide reunion in Saint Louis during the period 5-8 Aug 2009. Hotel arrangements have been made at a great hotel with very competitive rates and excellent accommodations to include free shuttle service to the airport, local eateries and the casino.

The plans call for individual mini-reunions and activities for individual units. In that regard we need unit level contact individuals to act as liaisons with the 281st.

All former members of the units assigned to the 10th BN in Vietnam are invited. We have a commitment from three of the former BN Commanders to attend and are looking for the CSMs. However, if you were a mail clerk, cook, door gunner, crew chief, mechanic, platoon leader, aviator or filled any other position in any of the 10th Battalion units, this is your reunion! Please post this info to your web sites/newsletters, reserve the dates, and contact your buddies.

*Please contact Gary or Jack to be put on the mailing list:*

GARY STAGMAN

JACK MAYHEW

## LETTERS

### ATTENTION CHICKENMEN

I am doing some research on behalf of my husband and his fellow skytrooper's who were in C Co, 1/12 Inf, First Cav Div in Vietnam.

I am looking for the pilot who was one of the Chickenman group who saved the day in Song Be 12/11/68 when Charlie Co discovered the Ho Chi Minh Trail near Song Be and were nearly wiped out by a Battalion of NVA. We believe he was flying a bird called "Thunder Chicken" that day- a UH-1. I have contacted A Co 227th AVN Gp and they say that they were flying Cobras at the time. We have photos from the approx. time and place. We also have the Staff Journal Reports from then as well, but they do not give a clue as to the pilot's identity. But all the survivors of that day (about 70) want to thank this man and give recognition to his heroic efforts at that time and will never forget his call sign moniker.

C Co was rescued again in March of 1969 by Chopper Pilot Paul Keil under similar circumstances, but near Bien Hoa at LZ Cindy. His heroics saved a platoon surrounded, out of ammo and under very heavy fire. He needs some substantial recognition and C Co would like to see that he is given credit for that "save" also.

LaVerna "Tweek" VanDan RN, MSN  
Wife of Alan VanDan, C Co, 1st Cav Division Grunt

### LOOKING FOR MEDEVAC PILOT/CREW

If anyone knows dustoff/medevac pilots or crew who flew near Lai Khe in III Corps in December 1969, please ask them to contact me.

My Cobra helicopter was shot down in a firefight near Lai Khe on Dec 17, 1969 and we went down hard. I had a broken back, legs paralyzed (until after surgery), and the broken bird had to be destroyed by rocket fire from the air to keep the weapons, ammo and radios out of enemy hands.

I would like to know who was flying medevac to pick me up. It is not an entirely rational desire, and I have passed on similar messages myself from grunts who want to find the medevac crew who saved their ass, while I knew the chance of finding them was small.

In my case, maybe a broken Cobra on the ground would stand out in memories among so many missions. Maybe someone even took a photo.

Please pass it on, and to all dustoff/medevac pilots and crew who see this message, you will never know how many guys think of you with gratitude for the rest of their life.

Terry L. Garlock



# Proclamation

## Naming July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 as Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Day in Comal County

**WHEREAS**, Independence Day has become a day of remembrance to honor the creative gifts of men and women in the pursuit of peace since July 4, 1776; and

**WHEREAS**, Americans, across the generations, have experienced freedom's power to overcome tyranny and inspire hope in times of trial to defend and advance liberty in lands far away from our shores; and

**WHEREAS**, today, as in the early days after the first reading of the Declaration of Independence, America continues to proclaim liberty throughout the world, and we remain a country full of hope and promise where opportunity thrives, where all stand equal before the law, and where our freedoms are celebrated; and

**WHEREAS**, members of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association gather together today to remember the courage, teamwork and sacrifice of their fellow soldiers, and with this sense of camaraderie, welcome them on this, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of their organization; and

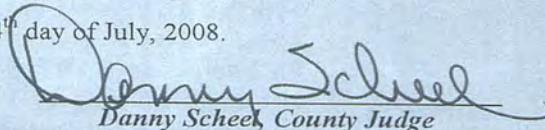
**WHEREAS**, the members of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association are dedicated to enhancing and preserving the cohesiveness and traditions of valor of the nearly 40,000 helicopter pilots that made up the rotary wing aircrews that flew in the Vietnam War; and

**WHEREAS**, Americans live in freedom because of the enduring legacy of these brave pilots and Comal County is proud and honored that more than 2,000 of these revered pilots, accompanied by nearly 3,000 of their family members, are reunited again today, as a new generation of Americans continues to defend our Nation and spread freedom throughout the Middle East; and

**WHEREAS**, it is with distinct pleasure that I officially proclaim today, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008, as Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Day in Comal County, and express my sincere gratitude to these brave Pilots and all other Military Veterans, for the courage they demonstrated and for the sacrifices they made, by their dedication to duty and love of country.

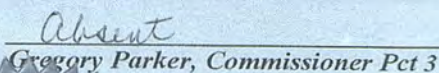
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that on behalf of the citizens of Comal County, I offer a warm "Welcome Home" to the members of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and their families, and extend my best wishes to all on this Independence Day. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United State of America.

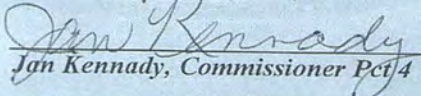
Delivered this 4<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2008.

  
Danny Scheel, County Judge

  
Jack Dawson, Commissioner Pct 1

  
Jay Millikin, Commissioner Pct 2

  
Absent  
Gregory Parker, Commissioner Pct 3

  
Jan Kennady, Commissioner Pct 4

Attest:

  
Joy Streater, County Clerk





# Stories from the San Antonio Reunion

## PANTHERS MEET DEAD GUY IN SAN ANTONIO

### WHAT A GREAT REUNION!

It was the perfect blend of events and free time. Kudos to Dana and his Reunion Committee for the planning and execution of the Reunion, and the EC for their strong financial control. Well done all.

The Panther STICKITT INN was outstanding this year. As usual we rented a Suite, stocked it with beer, wine and camaraderie. Thirty six of us attended this year bringing another 75-100 family members and guests along for the fun. The Suite was electric every night, especially Saturday evening.

We had invited John Plaster, a Vietnam veteran with three continuous tours in SOG; also a noted author, Vietnam lecturer, TV commentator, international traveler and bum; to attend as our guest and speak at the Historical Presentation. Forum. TWICE! We also invited all the SOG Recon guys living in Texas and the surrounding states to attend. Ten joined us at the Banquet. What a rush.

After the Banquet we went upstairs to the STICKITT INN. Must have been over 75 people there including two prisoners of war talking about their trip up the Ho Chi Minh Trail, SOG Team leaders discussing missions with the actual pilots that inserted and extracted them, Woody behind the bar discussing trips to Bangkok with Lash and John and Fearless recalling the battle of Tanh Canh I

just sat back and enjoyed the camaraderie that the VHPA Reunion provided for me. What a rush.

And we also met a DEAD GUY. Jim/Fred Morse (his name is Jim, but he was known as Fred in the Army so I call him Jim/Fred) was a SSGT One Zero (Team leader) for RT Alabama. He was on his last mission across the border before going home. His team was on a mission to locate and tap a commo wire. As he was applying the tap, his team was assaulted by a platoon size NVA unit firing AK's and B4 rockets. One exploded at Jim/Fred's feet putting numerous holes in his head, face, shoulders, arms and torso. He fell back. His team members, all also wounded and bleeding, took one look at his body, all bloody and mangled, knew he could not have survived the blast so close and, close to being overrun themselves by a much larger force, declared a PRAIRIE FIRE and started to evade. The NVA overran the position, looked at Jim/Fred, assumed he was dead from looking at his body all bloody and mangled, and took off after the fleeing recon team. There were enemy to kill and possibly capture. Anyway, they could pick up Jim/Fred's body on their way back.

Jim/Fred heard buzzing as he came to. He couldn't see. He rose up on his knees and wiped his eyes. They were

covered in blood. He tied a bandana across his forehead to partially stop the bleeding. He heard AK fire in one direction so he decided to go the opposite direction. Weak from loss of blood and his wounds he decided to follow a trail about 100 meters where he collapsed from exhaustion in a small clearing with a small break in the overhead foliage. He hoped a passing aircraft might spot him. He knew he couldn't make it out on his own. Again he heard the buzzing and looked up as Covey, the Air Force 0-2 C&C aircraft, passed overhead. This gave him the adrenaline rush to pull out a pin flare gun an old SOG friend, Allyn Waggle, had given him right before the mission due to premonition Allyn had that Jim/Fred would need it. He fired a pin flare up through the small hole in hopes Covey would see it.

Up above, John Plaster, the Covey Rider asked his pilot if he also saw a red pin flare. Just to be sure he asked the pilot to wiggle his wings. He called White Lead, a 170th Bikini ship, and asked if he had seen the pin flare. About that time Jim/Fred fired a second pin flare. "Wait one" called White Lead. He came down and hovered over the spot where the pin flare had come through the hole in the trees. "Roger Plasticman, we got him." The Huey couldn't land so the crew dropped an extraction harness down.

Using the last of his strength Jim/Fred snapped in and the Huey slowly pulled him up as the NVA opened fire. Covey flew passed Jim/Fred as he dangled 100 feet below the Huey.

As he neared Dak To guys could see the blood on his uniform, his eyes rolled back in his head, his teeth chattered and his ashen look from loss of blood. There was no pulse, no way would he survive. Loaded into another Huey he was rushed to the 71st Evac Hospital where he went into a coma. He was near death for several days. When he finally awoke he saw the prettiest butt he said he had ever seen bending over another patient. He thought if he had died at least he had gone to Heaven.

Well, he survived, although it has taken several years of surgery and therapy and he now owns a ranch near Ft Hood. Listening to his tale and knowing the Panthers were involved in saving him, I was really proud. What a rush.

I love the VHPA Reunions, the guys from the 361st, the Panther Stickitt Inn, and the camaraderie I experience. I look forward to it every year. WHAT A RUSH!

**Mike Sheuerman**  
**Panther 15 5/71-4/72 ~**  
**Stickitt Inn Officer**

## OUR NEXT STOP.... PHILADELPHIA

San Antonio was a huge success and it's time to start planing for Philadelphia in 2009!

The reunion committee has set the dates of June 30th through July 4th as the official dates of the 2009 Reunion. Mark your calender's now!



# Stories from the San Antonio Reunion

## Six guys that have made all 25 VHPA Reunions



(From L to R) Greg Ross, VHPA Founder Larry Clark, Mike Wilson, Russ Janis, Bob Smith



Top Row - L to R - Mike Wilson, VHPA Founder Larry Clark, Dick McCaig, Russ Janus, Bob Smith.

Bottom Row - L to R - Rick Freeman, Greg Ross

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Larry Clark for getting the VHPA started. These six guys just went along for a 25 year party!!

## Wow - What a Great Reunion!

Wow - What a great Reunion! I joined 1750 of my closest friends to celebrate a few days in the cool Texas sun to renew old friendships and to make new ones.

We started off the Reunion with the welcome reception that was well received and enjoyed by all. Being an avid golfer myself, 94 of us got together the next morning and went out to challenge the beautiful Canyon Springs golf course. After a terrific Bar-B-Que lunch we returned to the hotel in time for a nap, and then my wife and I had a wonderful dinner aboard one of the riverboat barges with some dear old friends and some very interesting new ones. We closed July the 3rd by enjoying the Vince Vance show. He is old in the tooth like a lot of us, but he put on a good show and a good time was had by all. I even understand that his whole group ended up at the Stickitt Inn for fun and frolic almost until dawn. You Panthers party pretty hard for your age.

That is what makes the reunions so special for us, we get to meet new people every year and cultivate that friendship in the following years.

Some of you had such a good time that you didn't want to wake up for the buses to take you to the Independence Day Parade the next morning.

Well,



again you missed a great time hosted by a charming city who truly welcomed us with open arms. When we got back to San Antonio the afternoon and evening were free and my wife and I used that time to enjoy some beautiful fireworks and another great visit with several old friends.

The Annual Business Meeting on

the 5th went just fine. Dana Young asked for opinions from the members about the future reunions and got as many different answers as members answered. Bottom line, the reunion committee and the EC will do the right thing on future reunions.

The final banquet on the 5th of July was a wonderful evening. We honored our brothers we left behind, and the brothers we have lost since we all came back, in a very moving missing man tribute. After a fine dinner we had an enjoyable band who kept it going until long after I left for bed. This year we were especially honored by the presence of one of our most distinguished members Bill Holloman, a man who originally joined this country's armed forces to become one of the famous Tuskegee Airmen.

Bottom line, if you missed San Antonio you missed a great reunion so please join us next year in Philadelphia. You also will have a wonderful time both renewing old friendships and making new ones...

**Mike Whitten**  
**VHPA Past President**



# Herdin' Cats

A Testimonial by George Van Riper

When I graduated from rotary wing flight school in July 1968, my orders said I was entitled to "30 days leave enroute to the Republic of Vietnam." But after only one week of leave, my orders were changed. I was to report ASAP to Fort Hood, Texas. Three days and 1,700 miles later, I arrived at Fort Hood for my new assignment with the 2nd Armored Division— "Hell On Wheels." "Hell" was a good description of the daytime temperatures in July in central Texas.

I learned that I was among 30 or so Lieutenants from my class who had been diverted to Fort Hood. It seems there were too many "daring young men in their flying machines" in Vietnam at the time, so the Army sent us to Hood to await our turn. That is where I met Major Jimmie C. Parker. A dual-rated Senior Army Aviator, he was the Commander of the 2nd Armored Division's flight detachment and my first boss in Army Aviation. Major Parker's job was to supervise Army Aviators who were either just coming back

from Vietnam or were on their way over. You've got to understand that trying to control 30 young Commissioned and Warrant officers was a lot like "herdin' cats." Most of us hotshot helicopter pilots didn't give a rip about much of anything, other than flying, women, fast cars, motorcycles and booze—not necessarily in that order.

I'm sure Major Parker's greatest concern every weekend was: "What are these crazy bastards going to do next to ruin my career?" He had to deal with things like semi-naked pool parties at the local apartment complex, displays of drunken bravado at the Officers' Club, and the trials and tribulations of new marriages gone awry. Bill Cosby once said, "I have seen the boss' job,



George Van Riper (center) in the right seat of a Bell UH-1H "Huey" helicopter at Fort Hood, Texas, ca. 1973. Airbase, Saigon, Vietnam, in 1968.

and I don't want it." Looking back on the "challenge" that we presented to Major Parker, I now understand Cosby's wisdom.

At first, I was not sure how Major Parker and I were going to get along. He was an old guy—"way over 30"—and in 1968 everyone knew that "you can't trust anyone over 30." His slow Texas drawl and quiet manner were a far cry from my New Jersey-style staccato speech and turnpike-

speed "life in the fast lane." Besides, at 25 years old and with 200 hours of flight time, I was convinced that I knew everything there was to know about flying—and everything else, for that matter. But he and I found common ground in our love of flying. Sharing a cockpit with him was a magical experience. A patient and thorough teacher, he made the hard things look easy. He taught me more than I can say—things like cockpit organization, how to improve my cross-check, how to navigate better, and how to use terminal procedures at busy airports. All of us "hotshots" quickly realized that Major Parker was the Professional Aviator, and that we still had a lot to learn. The things I learned from him served me well for 18 years of Army Aviation service, and they continue to serve me today.

The things I learned working and flying with him made me a better aviator, a better leader and a better human being. After 37 years, he is still my friend and mentor.

There is no way to know how many aviators who served with him before going to Vietnam credit his teaching for saving their lives during the "Helicopter War." I certainly credit him with saving mine. He will always be one of my heroes.

I hope he remembers fondly his time at Fort Hood in 1968 "herdin' cats."



Major Jimmie C. Parker, 33, with Bell UH-1D "Huey" at Hotel 1 heliport, Ton Son Nhut Airbase, Saigon, Vietnam, in 1968.

## Editor's Note:

George Van Riper, a retired Master Army Aviator, works at the U.S. Army Test Command's Aviation Test Directorate at Fort Hood, Texas. For the past 12 years he has been involved with operational testing of upgrades to Apache AH-64D Longbow and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters. He earned a Masters Degree from Texas State University and is a Life Member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. Since 1986, all his "flying" has been done on a motorcycle.

When George found out that Jimmie C. Parker is a contributor to this newsletter, he immediately e-mailed us this story about his flying experiences with a man who clearly made a big impression on him—as he has on many others. We thank George very much for taking the time to offer this tale to our newsletter readers.

## John Hirsch writes....

**I was a member of the 60th Assault Helicopter Company in 1972 and stationed in Ninh Hoa, Vietnam.**

This past Memorial Day four of us Ghost Rider aviators met in Emporia, Kansas where UH-1H #68-15652 is on display in their All Veterans Park. It just so happens that this actual helicopter was flown in by each of the four aviators who were in attendance that day, and I thought this might be of interest to the members of The VHPA. The close up picture is of pilots Ed Venable and John Hirsch and crewmembers Gary Hennessy on the far right and Jim Williams who is seated in the foreground.



Honestly, our intent is to draw attention for what we hope to develop into a yearly get together in Emporia., Kansas on Memorial Day. The town is getting the old bird painted so some of us may actually get to go down there in the future to rededicate it.



I'm also asking that anyone interested in joining us in Emporia on Memorial Day contact me at:

Sincerely,  
John Hirsch



# TWENTY-NINE YEAR ARMY VETERAN GETS HELICOPTER RIDE FROM SON

**My Dad,** CSM Henry L. Sheuerman II, passed away May 20th of this year. He always said he wanted to live to be 90 and he died on his 90th birthday.

Coincidentally, it's my birthday as well. He liked to say I was the most expensive birthday present he ever received and would continue to be till the day he died. He was quite a guy.

Dad was drafted in early 1941. A fan of having extra spending money in his pocket, he heard about a new course at Ft. Benning with extra pay, volunteered for, and was the first Draftee to complete Parachute School. He received his Jump Wings on June 28, 1941. He was an original member of the 501st Parachute Battalion, the first airborne unit in the US Army. Some movie studio made a movie titled "PARACHUTE BATTALION" about the unit. My Dad actually jumped in the movie several times. He liked to say he was one of the "cast of extras."

When WWII broke out he was "on maneuvers" in Aruba. Actually, his unit was guarding the oil refineries on that island against

German saboteurs. Later his unit became part of the 503rd Regimental Combat Team, Parachute and was sent to the South Pacific where he made two combat jumps in New Guinea before being wounded in early 1944 and sent home. Surprisingly, that was the last combat he would see in a 29 year military career. After recuperating from his wounds he was assigned as a Parachute Instructor at the Army Airborne School at Ft. Benning. That's how he was lucky enough to meet my Mom in Atlanta during a weekend pass in November 1944. They married in February 1945. I WAS BORN IN 1947 SO NO FUNNY IDEAS ABOUT THEM HAVING TO GET MARRIED. My Dad retired in June 1968.

My Dad inspired me to become a soldier. OK, John Wayne had some influence on me, too. I attended North Georgia College, a primary military school, and received a degree and a commission as a 2LT in 1969. I attended the Infantry Basic Course, Jump School and Ranger School before going to Flight School. While in Jump

School all the old grizzled NCO's would ask if I was related to a SSGT Hank Sheuerman. When I told them he was my father they



CSM Henry L. Sheuerman II

asked how he was, where he lived and what his phone number was. They also took a special interest in this young 2LT. I may not hold the record for disciplinary push ups but I bet I'm close. My Dad came down to pin my wings on then left me to go hang out with his old buddies just like we do when we get together at Reunions.

I imagine by now you are ask-

ing "WHAT IS THE POINT OF THIS STORY?" Well, here it comes. My Dad spent 29 years on active duty but it wasn't until 1978, ten years after he retired, that he ever flew in a helicopter. And that was as a passenger in the back of a Huey I was piloting in the Reserves in Dallas. I assumed Dad was always flying around in helicopters at ROTC summer camps, training exercises, C&C aircraft, overseas assignments, etc. We never discussed it. I remember the guy I was flying with telling me my Dad looked scared to death. I remember the way he gripped the seat, his white knuckles and the fear in his eyes. Maybe the only time I ever saw him scared. And it wasn't my flying. It was just his first time. But he never complained. He was proud I could fly a helicopter and of my service in Vietnam.

In Dad's memory and for scaring the heck out of him I am proud to donate \$1,000 to the VHPA Scholarship fund. Dad was quite a guy.

*Mike Sheuerman  
Proud Son*

## 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?



I WANT YOU

**John Conway**

K.C., Ks. 66104

Eve. [redacted] • Toll Free Weekdays 888-870-5408

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*A few years ago I wrote a poem entitled "A Typical Day". The poem recalls one day in the life of a helicopter pilot who served 20 months in Vietnam. My daughter discovered the poem and had a local paper publish it. A few of my veteran friends saw it and suggested that maybe other pilot veterans of Vietnam would like to read it.*

*Thank You,  
Dan Rudy*

## A TYPICAL DAY

I was thinking as I landed my ship on the pad,  
That the soldiers on board sure must be glad;  
Although we're not "Dust Off", a rescue we made,  
Picking up the wounded in the field where they laid.

Don't be afraid," I explained to my crew,  
For "we have been trained on just what to do;  
Let's pick up these men and help them on board,  
We're receiving enemy fire, please help us O Lord."

Our take off was quick, our get - away clean,  
I silently thanked Bell for this wonderful machine;  
Our ship groaned and strained as it sped through the sky,  
Got to get to the hospital before these men die.

I radioed ahead and alerted the MASH,  
As we landed our bird and tried not to crash;  
Doctors and nurses made up the parade,  
Rushing to the wounded to give them some aid.

We washed down our ship before the blood had dried,  
Wondering if we were fast enough and no one had died;  
We did our best, that's all we could do,  
But you know, in time, you will lose a few.

My ship and my crew, what a fine bunch,  
As all of this happened before we had lunch;  
We ate quietly, with nothing to say,  
What's ahead of us for the rest of the day?

*By Dan Rudy, CWO,  
U.S. Army  
Vietnam 1/67 - 8/68*

**JULY 30TH, 2008 -**

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

My name is Myles Henry. I was a pilot and served with A Troop, 1/9 CAV from October '67 - October '68. I am writing about WO-1 Arthur Chaney and CW-2 Bobby McKain who were flying an AH-1G Cobra on May 3, 1968 west of Khe Sanh.

On that day Art & Bobby's Cobra came under heavy ground fire, their aircraft broke up at 1,500 ft AGL and crashed, they were immediately listed as KIA and their bodies were not recovered. From memory, the aircraft came down in Laos with the smoke being seen for miles. The enemy fire was so intense in that area, and the wreckage was so scattered that no immediate recovery could be made - I do recall that one of

the brigade commanders in the area did want to send his entire brigade across the Laotian border to retrieve the bodies, but in 1968, this idea was rarely approved.

Today I received a call from Art's high school classmate Steve Edwards. He said Art's dad, Retired Colonel Hugh Chaney told him that Art's remains have been recovered; I know this is also true of Bobby McKain's remains. Bobby McKain is to be buried on August 11, 2008 and Art Chaney is to be buried on September 16, 2008, I'm sure the full details of his arrangements are available by now, feel free to either call me [redacted] or e-mail me: [redacted] if I can be of further service.

*Sincerely,  
Myles D. Henry*

## VHPA Member Announces Release of a New Book based upon the 135th AHC!

**VHPA MEMBER DON AGREN** is pleased to announce the release a self-published book, "IN THE SANCTITY OF THE SNAKE PIT". Written by Michael D. Guard, the novel is based on factual places and events, it discloses the tribulations of the Vietnam helicopter war, and provides deeply moving insight into the lives of those crewmen who routinely flew combat assault missions. The book reveals the rarely told account of air to ground combat, and the surreal events of adolescent soldiers, many exposed for the first time to their mortality. They stood and fought hard believing they were doing the right thing irrespective of politics, and public opinion!

Setting the backdrop of the book is the 135th Assault Helicopter Unit, the only multi-national military unit in Vietnam. With a year long adventure before him, the protagonist, MITCHELL COLLINS reflects on his desire to fly the unit's helicopter gunships. Their mission is to protect the troop transport choppers carrying ground forces into the fight and once the troops are in the landing zone, they provide gun support and reconnaissance. Mitchell soon begins to contemplate his heartfelt emotion of the carnage and of losing comrades, and his

dwindling chances for survival.

This is the author's first novel inspired by his desire to make aware of how all front line soldiers develop Post Trauma Stress Disorder [PTSD] and other afflictions caused by repeated combat actions. Michael Guard, the author, closes with these words: Some of you may ask why it took so long for someone to write this. I will tell you that I spent eight years writing, re-writing and re-writing again to produce a product that would be accepted by all members of the 135th AHC, and still have a story that the general public could read and comprehend. At this point I have done all that I can do, now it is up to you to let me know if I have accomplished my mission.

Should you desire a copy, the easiest way to purchase this 398-page book is by utilizing the publishers (Authorhouse) Book Order Hotline, at [redacted]. Also, orders can be accepted via email at [bko-rders@authorhouse.com](mailto:bko-rders@authorhouse.com). The book (ISBN # 9781434367921) is also available through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and Borders; or you can visit the store itself and place an order. This book contains offensive language, graphic scenes of violence and sexual situations, and is intended for mature readers.



# AFTER ACTION REPORT

## The Gambler Guns visit to Fort Hood, March 29th, 2008

**Wow!** What a trip! As you probably already know, the Commanding Officer of the 4th Aviation Battalion, 4th Infantry Division found some of our e-mail addresses and invited the "original" Gambler Gun pilots to join his men and women for a pre-deployment, military ball at Fort Hood, Texas, the 4-4 ARB Monte Carlo Night on Saturday, March 29th 2008.



Top: Bruce Loughridge (standing on service platform) gets a briefing on the Apache while Jim Adams sits in the rear seat.

The unit adopted the Gambler Gun name in honor of B Company, 4th Avn. Bn. from the Vietnam period. The 4-4 Attack Reconnaissance Battalion is made up of 5 companies. A, B and C Company's fly the Apache Longbow, AH-64D. Delta Company is the maintenance company and Echo Company is the administrative arm. The Battalion will return to Iraq in June, 2008 for a 15 month deployment.

The C.O. of 4-4 is Ltc. Kevin Vizzarri. He and many of his staff are trying to pull together a history of the Battalion and compile documents and photos from our past. As part of this effort, they wanted to meet and honor veterans who flew the first gunship helicopters and developed the tactics and weapons that continue to this day. They invited about 8 Gambler veterans; however, only two of us were able to make the trip.

Jim Adams and I both arrived on Thursday, March 27, 2008. We met for breakfast on Friday morning and had a warm reunion. Jim came with his friend, Mary Portman. My wife, Leslie, accompanied me on the trip.

At 9:00 a.m., Friday morning, MSG Thomas and Mrs. Kerrie Fredrick picked us up at the hotel and drove us onto the base and out to the flight line. We were greeted in the maintenance hanger by many pilots and enlisted men, all of whom were crowding around wanting to take our photos and shake out hands. Ltc. Vizzarri was one of the first to meet and greet us. Neither Adams nor I realized how much interest the new men have in the life and times of the Vietnam gun pilots. We were invited to sit in the cockpits of the Apache and given as much time as we wished to ask questions and feel and touch the aircraft. While at the flight line we met CW5 McElhaney, age 61. He flew Cobras in Vietnam in 1971 and is still flying gunships today. His perspective on Army life and Army aviation today was very interesting and enlightening.

We were then escorted to the "LCT", Longbow Crew Training experience. This is the Apache simulator where we were able to fly the aircraft and fire the weapon systems. The cockpits are real, the instruments and flight controls are real and provide feed-

back to the hands and feet. The windshield is very "unreal" but good enough to fly VFR and see enemy targets. We hovered and did a take off from the airfield. Both Jim and I were surprised at the feel we still had for the controls. At altitude, the simulator controller would announce where the enemy was and we would attack. We both tried to fly the AH-64 like we use to fly the Cobra. We would line up the target in the windshield and nose over and began punching off rockets. The pilots who were flying our front seats would comment on how different our tactics were to those used today. The Longbow is designed to stand off, way off, and engage the target with precision laser and electronic sights and guidance systems. When used properly, almost every shot hits its intended target. The gunship today seldom flies in close and goes "head-to-head" as we did. No Need. Sights and guidance systems allow the pilots to simply look at the target and fire. After a few practice gun runs, we were told to try out the "aerobatic" capabilities of the Apache. I did a couple of barrel rolls and some hammer head, wing over's. What a thrill. This aircraft is capable of all of these maneuvers; however, the pilots told us that they were not permitted to do them with the real aircraft. Yea, like we were not permitted to do the things we did with our birds. We both wished for a ride in the real McCoy after tasting the simulator.

From the flight line we drove to Battalion HQ for a BBQ, Prayer lunch with many of the current Gambler Guns. Light rain began as we arrived for the lunch and the temperature began to fall. It did not diminish the spirits of the unit and the food tasted even better in the damp Texas spring weather.



Jim Adams and Mary, Bruce Loughridge and Leslie stand with Gambler 6, LTC Vizzarri (center) and some of his gun pilots. VHPA member, CW5 Lance McElhiney, stands behind LTC Vizzarri.

The pork ribs and sausage, as well as all of the side, complementary dishes, were prepared and cooked by soldiers in the unit. I can't remember ever having had such good BBQ.

After lunch, the officers and senior NCO's were about to attend a briefing on conditions in the area of operations where they are to be deployed. Jim Adams and I would liked to have attended that briefing, however, we lost our "Secret Clearance" back in the early 1970's, did not have a "need to know" and so were not invited. The Battalion did, however, have a planned event scheduled for us. MSG Thomas drove us to the "EST", Engagement Skills Trainer for some fun, shooting various weapons and small arms. The EST is a complex of 6 or 8 enclosed trailers. Each trailer houses a very large video screen to the front (maybe 24 feet wide by 8 feet high). At the rear of the room is a firing line with about 15 stations. At each station there is a weapon attached to a pneumatic hose which supplies air for operation and an electronic connection which sends data back to a central computer. The weapons are a variety of M-16's, M-60's, M-4 Carbines, Anti Tank Rocket Launchers, and many others. All of these guns have been modified to shoot "laser" rounds to the targets which are shown on the screen to the front.



*(The Gambler Guns, cont...)* The firing of each weapon is very real. They kick, report a realistic gunfire sound and only fire the same number of rounds as the magazine normally permits. When empty, you must eject the magazine, re-insert it and lock and load before continuing to fire. The bad guys appear on the big screen and run toward you. They may hide behind objects or fall prone on the ground. When you hit one, he falls dead on the ground. Each session lasts as long as there are enemy combatants alive on the field. At the end of each session, all shooters relax and the combat is replayed on the big screen. During the replay, each round fired by each firing position is shown on the screen. If you had been shooting at station number 2, the number 2 shows up on each of your rounds. You can see where each of your rounds hit in relation to the target. Mine were mostly low and to the right. When you hit your target, a red dot indicated a kill. The computer records all of this and can provide an instant analysis of your skill. We had a ball. The girls had the opportunity to fire several of the weapons as well as the rocket launcher. They became "gung ho" and wanted to stay and shoot all afternoon.

Upon prying the weapons out of the girls "cold dead hands" we drove over to the 1ST Cav's, static aircraft display at the Vietnam Memorial on post. Many of the helicopters from our history



Bruce and Jim cutting the ceremonial going away cake for the Regiment at the Gambler Guns, Monte Carlo Night ball.

are on parade here and we walked around and patted their bottoms for luck. Ft Hood has several unit museums; however, we did not take the time to visit them. It was, after all, getting very close to happy hour and we had a very busy day.

We had Saturday off until party time so

we did some shopping in Salado, Texas and returned to Killeen, Texas in time to get ready for the Ball.

The Battalion Commanding Officer and the Battalion Command Sergeant Major hosted a small reception in a private room beginning at 4:30 PM. We had the pleasure of meeting most of the staff and many of the pilots prior to the receiving line and opening ceremonies for the Ball.

The receiving line formed at 1745 hours. It was a treat to meet and shake hands with all of the staff and their spouses. Jim, Mary, Leslie and I were each introduced and warmly greeted by all.

The ballroom was large and well decorated with unit insignia and Ace High Gambler Gun symbols. Reserved tables included mementos and keep sake items as well as an evening program. The table reserved for the veteran Gamblers was "front and center". Soldiers wearing their dress blues reminded Jim and I of our flight school graduation ball and made us proud to be in attendance.

On two occasions during the evening's ceremonies, Adams and I were honored for our service and asked to either stand and be recognized or come forward and perform the Cake Cutting Tribute. Throughout the evening, soldiers would come up and introduce themselves to us and many would relate that their fathers and uncles had been in Vietnam. Some of the pilots were sons of former Vietnam pilots. We lasted until about 2300 hours. The party was just getting rolling but not for us old timers. We said thanks and good night to the C.O. and returned to our hotel.

I wish that all of my old comrades from Vietnam could have attended this weekend with the fighting men and women of the 4 TH. It was a fine "Welcome Home" for Jim and me.

*Bruce Loughridge, April 2nd, 2008  
Gambler 46, 4 ID, 4 AVN BN,  
Company B - 1969*



Jim Adams and Bruce Loughridge stand with an AH-1G at the 1ST Cav's Static display on the base.



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## VHPA Member Inducted into Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame

On Saturday, April 5, 2008, Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association member Laurence (Larry) Gesell was introduced into the Arizona Aviation Hall Of Fame at their nineteenth annual induction ceremony and dinner at the Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson. The purpose of the AAHF is to Honor these Arizonians who have made outstanding contributions in the field of aviation and who, by their achievements, have brought special recognition to the State of Arizona. Gesell joins other Arizona notables in the hall of fame. Including Senator John McCain, Senator Berry Goldwater, Colonel Frank Borman, Dr. Sally Ride who became the first woman in space, and Lieutenant Frank Luke, Jr., for whom Luke Air Force Base was named.

Gesell began his career in the Army as a Warrant Office Candidate in the class 66-9. While at Fort Wolters his wife gave birth to their second child, whereupon he elected to stay behind for thirty days casual leave. He was assigned to class 66-11 with whom he graduated in August of 1966. He served his first tour of duty in Vietnam with the First Squadron of the Fourth Cavalry in the First Infantry Division at Phu Loi. For three month he was assigned to the "slicks" and went by the call sign of "Clown 8." For

the remaining nine months he volunteered to fly with the aero scout platoon, going under the call sign of "Outcast 8."

Following his initial tour of duty in Vietnam, Gesell spent eighteen months as a flight instructor in the Primary Helicopter School at Fort Wolters. In preparation for

his return to Vietnam he went through fixed-wing transition at Fort Stewart and multi-engine training at Fort Rucker. During his second tour in Vietnam he flew both fixed and rotary-wing aircraft with the 34th Engineer Group of the First Engineer Brigade at Binh Thuy in the Delta. While with the 34th Engineer Group, Gesell was offered a direct commission to First Lieutenant of Infantry. Upon his return to the states he was sent to Fort Benning for Infantry Officer Basic Training (IOBC), following which he was assigned to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. There, he served in a variety of positions: in airfield operations, as air traffic and airspace officer, and as the petroleum logistics officer for

Hunter AAF, Fort Stewart, and the outlying stage fields.

In 1973 he left active duty but remained variously in Army National Guard and Reserve units, attended Infantry Officer



Advanced Course, Command and General Staff College, and completed a sundry list of other schools including the aviation safety (or accident prevention) officer course and a return to Fort Rucker for rehab as a pilot. He retired in 1999 as a Lieutenant Colonel (in the Aviation Branch) and Master Army Aviator. His military awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross, 39 awards of the Air Medal (including one for valor), the Bronze Star (with oak leaf clusters), the Army Commendation Medal, and six Vietnam Campaign Ribbons.

The Distinguished Flying Cross was for finding two soldiers who had been separated from their unit and were stranded in the jungle over night and

likely under artillery fire for the duration. As Gesell reports, "by luck, skill or providence, we found them, huddled together in jungle so thick you could barely catch an occasional glimpse of the ground down through the triple canopy of foliage." He said he gets emotional whenever he thinks about those two soldiers, even though he never got to meet them. "being lost in the jungle, subjected to an artillery bombardment, not knowing whether you are going to live or die, but probably fearing the latter, seeing those two helicopters overhead must have been a glorious sight!" As for Gesell, he says he just doesn't feel like a hero—that he was "just doing his job." For him "it was just another day of being shot at, another day of being scared and another day closer to being home."

*After leaving active duty Gesell became an Airport Planning manager and his book, The Administration of Public Airports is now in its 4th edition. In 1984 Gesell became a full-time Professor at Arizona State University and for more than 20 years he has taught numerous courses in airport and air transportation systems management and has written twenty-two more books on those subjects that are in worldwide circulation. As for retirement, he says "I think about it a lot but as of yet I have not found a reason to make it a reality."*

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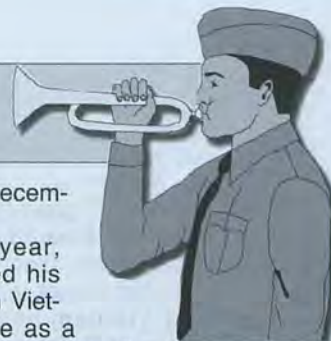
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# TAPS



## **Theophilus B. "Brady" Burch**

Theophilus B. "Brady" Burch, 65, of 18 Cobblestone Cove, Sharpsburg, Ga., died August 14, 2007, at his home from the effects of congestive heart disease.

Brady Burch was born in Columbia, S.C., on Sept. 3, 1942. He was an air traffic controller in the U.S. Navy from 1959-65 and served on the USS Oriskany (CV-34). While serving in the Navy he married Suzanne Moore on April 26, 1964.

After leaving the Navy he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1966 and graduated with WORWAC Class 66-23 on Feb. 14, 1967. He served in Vietnam with the 119th Assault Helicopter Company in 1967-68, flying slicks and guns, and accepted a direct commission as a first lieutenant in Field Artillery.

He returned to Fort Stewart, where he served as an instructor pilot in rotary wing aircraft. After qualifying as a fixed-wing aviator in 1970, Brady returned to Vietnam, flying RU-8Ds and RU-21Ds with the 138th Aviation Company and the 224th Aviation Battalion (RR).

Upon return to CONUS, he attended the Field Artillery Advance Course and remained on assignment at Fort Sill, after which he served with the XVIII Airborne Corps Artillery at Fort Bragg. Following active duty Brady worked for the Federal Aviation Administration as a flight service specialist and accident investigator, retiring as a GS 14. He also served in aviation and ground assignments with the Tennessee and Georgia Army National Guard and retired as a major and Master Army Aviator.

His wife Suzanne, one daughter, one grandson and one sister survive Brady. He was interred at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville, GA.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **James L. Broderick.**

Retired CW4 James L. Broderick, "SIDE-KICK IV" died May 15 at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis after a two-year battle with cancer. He was 69.

Broderick was born Nov. 2, 1938, in Waukon, Iowa. He joined the Army

Reserve in 1956 while in high school and served 10 years as an enlisted combat engineer before graduating from flight school with WORWAC 66-9.

He served in Vietnam as a gunship pilot with the 92nd AHC "SIDEKICKS" from October 1967-October 1968, and in the Gulf War from January 1991 until his retirement in July 1991 as a brigade safety officer in the 1st Infantry Division.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with OLCs, Bronze Star Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, the Meritorious Service Medal and Master Army Aviator badge. However, he was proudest of his recognition for 24 years of accident-free flying, excellence in competition awards for rifle shooting and having flown with the Vice Presidential Flight Detachment, stationed at Fort Snelling, Minn.

Broderick served tours in Greenland, Thailand, Vietnam, Korea, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. He also counted seven rotations at Fort Irwin, Calif. He was a Shriner and Knights Templar, a member of Enterprise Lodge 437, Enterprise, Kan.

Two sons; one daughter; four grandchildren; two sisters and four brothers survive him.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Richard B. Crawford**

Richard B Crawford, 58, died in Brevard County, Fla., on April 18 after suffering from esophageal cancer.

He attended flight classes 69-35 and 69-37. He flew with the 118th AHC in 1970 and the 120th AHC in 1970-71.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Jerry Thomas Dennis**

Former Alaska resident Jerry Thomas Dennis, 65, died March 9 in Ventura, Calif., of a heart attack.

Dennis was born April 30, 1942, in El Centro, Calif., to Loren and Thelma Dennis. In 1960, he graduated from South High School and later that year enlisted in the Air Force to pursue his dream of flying jets. In 1961, Dennis was accepted into the Air Force Academy, graduating in 1965 but, due to a serious knee injury, he had to leave the Air Force.

However, that did not deter his passion for aviation and in 1965, he enlisted in the Army to become a helicopter pilot. In May 1966, Dennis married Hannelore "Lory" Padilla.

In September 1965, he was sent to Vietnam for his first combat tour. After he returned to the States in 1967, he was selected for rotary wing flight school, from which he graduated with honors and first in

his class in December 1967.

The next year, Dennis served his second tour in Vietnam, this time as a helicopter pilot and aircraft commander. He later was stationed at Fort Rucker as an aircraft accident investigator, which launched his career in aviation safety. In 1974, as a major, he left the U.S. Army, and from 1975 to 1985, he remained in the Army Reserve's 1898th Aviation Company at Fort Richardson. Dennis served his country for more than 25 years.

In 1974, the National Transportation Safety Board hired Dennis to investigate aviation accidents in Alaska due to his knowledge and experience with safety in aviation. In the 1990s, he continued his work in aviation for insurance companies in New York and Washington, D.C.

In 2001, Dennis wrote the basic business plan for the Medallion Foundation, launching a unique aviation safety program in Alaska. His expertise and foresight brought change to the culture of aviation and helped save lives. This program has been viewed nationally and internationally as one of the best worldwide.

His adventures were just beginning on his recent move to California to be a consultant to the aviation industry.

His family wrote: "Jerry should be remembered for serving his country and for his significant contribution to aviation safety through awareness, education, and training. We know he is up in the heavens directing angels on how to fly safely."

Dennis is survived by one daughter, one grandson, two great-grandchildren, one brother and his former wife.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Gary A. Goldsmith**

Gary A. Goldsmith, 60, died of heart failure in Olongapo City, Philippines in November 2007. He had been residing and working in the Philippines for the past decade.

Goldsmith was a VHPA Life Member. His U.S. Army flight school class was 66-18/68-30. He served with the 128th Assault Helicopter Company (Toma-hawks) at Phu Loi, RVN in 1968 and 1969. In 1969 he also served as Red Dog 3C with Headquarters/Headquarters Company of the 11th Combat Aviation Battalion, also at Phu Loi.

His father, and one sister preceded Goldsmith in death; two sons, his mother and one brother survive him.

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# TAPS



## Richard L. Hatter

VHPA member Robert Hankins reported the death on June 16, of Richard L. Hatter, 81 of Salado, Texas.

Richard Hatter was a World War II, Korea and Vietnam veteran, having served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. Richard served two tours in RVN as a gunship pilot before retiring in 1968; he then worked for BHI in Iran.

Richard is survived by his wife, Barbara of Salado, three sons, three daughters and 12 grandchildren.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Russell E. Johnson

On December 7, 2007, I lost my best friend, my husband of 34-plus years, Russell Johnson. Russell died suddenly of a massive heart attack at our home.

I met Russell a year after his return from Vietnam, so the only information I have of his military career comes from stories he told me and what his friends have told me.

He graduated from flight school in classes 70-49/70-45 and was sent to Vietnam in the early part of 1971. He was a scout pilot who flew an OH-6 with the words "the Pacifier" on the side. He was in the Americal Division, D Troop, 1st (Squadron) of the 1st (Regiment of Dragons) Cavalry and was stationed in Da Nang.

On May 22, 1971, he was shot down, resulting in the loss of his left leg. He was very proud to be "one of the crazy ones" and said many times he wouldn't have done anything else. He also was a member of the VHPA and was looking forward to the 2008 reunion.

The second career for Johnson was with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission. For the first 11 years with FWC a few of his responsibilities included working with alligators, driving an airboat, and helping in the management of various wildlife populations in the Florida Everglades.

In 1985, he transferred to the Blackwater Forest Region and began working with bears, fires and management of its wildlife population and habitat. From the

alligators in South Florida to the bears in the Florida Panhandle, Russell was a true adventuresome man. He was scheduled to retire in January 2009.

His favorite pastime was his love of boating. He purchased a boat a few years ago that allowed us to "camp out" many weekends. He spent a great deal of time "playing" on the boat when we couldn't go out to sea. His love of the sea had caused him to put this boat up for sale because he had found a bigger one to use after his retirement and had already decided places we could visit at that time.

Very few people in this world will ever experience a portion of the adventures Russell did in his lifetime. It is due to the stories he told me, and the experiences he shared with me, that have made my life an adventure as well. I will miss him more than anyone can imagine. For Russell: The adventures you experienced and shared; in the air, on land and at sea will never be forgotten.

Pat Johnson

\*\*\*\*\*

## Charles Wayne Kirby

Charles Wayne Kirby was killed in the crash of a private air ambulance helicopter on the Gene Campbell Ranch in the Sam Houston National Forest, near Huntsville, Texas, on June 8.

The accident also took the life of a flight nurse, a flight paramedic and the patient who was being transported. PHI Air Medical, the company that owns the private air ambulance, said the aircraft crashed at about 2:45 a.m., just after takeoff from Huntsville Memorial Hospital and was headed to Memorial Hermann Hospital in Houston.

"PHI Air Medical is devastated by the loss of the patient and our friends and colleagues," the company said in a statement. "We mourn with the patient's family for their loss and we are with the families of our colleagues at this time." An air safety investigator from the National Transportation Safety Board arrived on scene at 4:15 p.m. to start their investigation of the mishap.

Kirby was a member of Flight Class 68-524/68-44 and flew with A/229 AHB 1 CAV in 1969-70 and the 20 ENG BDE in 1970.

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## George M. "Korky" Korycinski

Retired Maj. George M. "Korky" Korycinski, 66, of Solvay and Sackets Harbor, N.Y., died June 16 at home with his family at his bedside. He bravely battled lung cancer for more than two years.

He was a U.S. Army veteran of 20 years and he served two tours as a highly decorated helicopter pilot in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bronze Star Medal.

He was an avid reader, military history buff, outdoorsman, target shooter and car enthusiast. His memberships included the VFW, American Legion and the NRA. Korycinski enjoyed summers at his cottage on the lake at Sackets Harbor. He loved animals and leaves behind his three dachshunds.

He was predeceased by his parents, surviving are his devoted wife of 46 years, the former Sheila Kinahan; two daughters and two sons-in-law, four grandchildren, two brothers, several nieces and nephews. A private funeral services with full military honors was held in Arlington National Cemetery, in Arlington, Virginia.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Howard Marquardt

Marquardt, Howard Marquardt, 79, died June 21 at Angel's Grace Hospice in Oconomowoc, Wis.

Marquardt was born on Jan. 4, 1929, in Palmyra, Wis., the son of Otto and Lena (Papcke) Marquardt.

He was retired from the U.S. Army and served in World War II, Korean War, and the Vietnam War, where he was a helicopter pilot and an instructor; he retired from the military in 1969. He married Mary Ann Fleischmann in 1978 and lived in Eagle.

Marquardt was preceded in death by his parents and is survived by his wife, two children, 7 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren, 1 great-great-grandchild, 3 stepchildren, and several nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Gary A. Maus

Gary A. Maus, 64, a longtime resident of Albuquerque, N.M., died March 14 after a valiant fight against cancer.

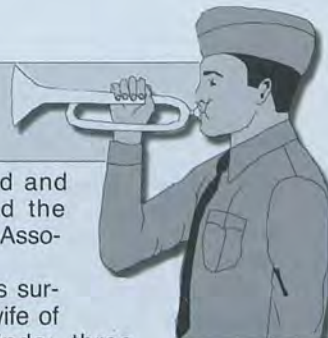
Maus was born in Dubuque, Iowa, on April 23, 1943, and married his wife, Christa Bauer on July 17, 1971, in Hamburg, Germany.

Maus joined the Army during the Vietnam War, becoming a helicopter pilot. He flew more than 1,400 combat hours. Maus was awarded the Air Medal with a V for "valor" for "exposing his aircraft to intense enemy fire while evacuating the critically wounded during the battle of Dak To." He also received two Purple Heart Medals and was nominated for a Silver Star Medal.





# TAPS



After retiring from the Army in 1986, he continued to serve his country as a U.S. Customs inspector for 20 more years. Maus loved his family and friends. He was a master at the barbecue and enjoyed entertaining others. He always had a soft-spot for animals (he had a reputation in Vietnam for flying with his dog), the uglier the animal the more passionate Maus was for it.

He is survived by his wife, Christa; one son; two daughters and his first granddaughter. Maus also is survived by one sister and two brothers.

★★★★★★★★

## **Robert John Mengden Sr.**

Robert John Mengden Sr., a lifelong resident of San Antonio, Texas, died on Dec. 23 at the age of 59.

He was a member of flight classes 68-507 and 68-7. He flew Huey and Cobra gunships in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm. Mengden suffered head and back injuries when he was shot down while continuing to dive on advancing Viet Cong to draw their fire, even after he had expended all his munitions.

In his later years, Mengden was known to many of his friends by his radio call sign, "Smoke." After leaving the Army in 1970, he married his now-deceased wife, Patricia, and they had three children.

Mengden made his career as a master carpenter in the San Antonio area. His memorial service was held in St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Catholic Church and he is interned in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Anyone who knows Robert's exact Vietnam tour information (years and units) is encouraged to contact VHPA HQ so we can add that data to his record.

*Submitted to the VHPA  
by Kirk 'Chip' Brown.*

★★★★★★★★

## **Robert L. Riney**

Robert L. Riney, Major (USAF, Ret.), 67, passed into the light June 6 in Tucson, Arizona.

He was born in Liberal, Kansas, in 1940;



married in 1961; and joined the Air Force in 1963. After OCS he became a B-52 navigator then attended pilot training and flew C-141's to SEA. He transitioned to "Super Jolly Greens" and was in the 21st Special Operations Squadron at NKP, Thailand 1970-71. During this service he was awarded 2 DFC's, 3 Air Medals, 4 Meritorious Service Medals, and an AF Commendation Medal.

From 1976-80 while on active duty he provided unstinting support and encouragement to his wife while she attended medical school. After retiring in 1983 he joined the Pima County Arizona Sheriffs Auxiliary Volunteers and won "Volunteer of the Year" award four times. Health problems forced him to give up the work but not his loyalty to this group of dedicated people.

He is survived by wife Elizabeth Jane, M.D., son Rob, daughter Laurie, three grandsons, a large extended family and many friends. He is loved, missed, and admired for his service to family, community, and country. His was a life well-lived.

*Elizabeth Jane Riney*

★★★★★★★★

## **Peter Salamone**

Peter Salamone, 68, on Mobile, Ala., died August 16, 2006, after a bout with cancer.

Salamone served from 1965-67 with the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company, in Long Binh, Vietnam. In 1966, Salamone was awarded an Air Medal for heroism.

He attained the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4 and, upon retiring from the U.S. Army, he became a registered nurse in Mobile.

Salamone is survived by his wife, Patricia, two brothers and two nephews.

★★★★★★★★

## **Paul Richard Smith**

Paul Richard Smith, 64, or Richard to most of his friends, passed away in his home at Cuba, New York on February 25, 2008.

Richard was a member of the VHPA having graduated with flight class 69-24 and having flown with the 170th AHC in Vietnam in 1969 through 1970, his call sign at the time was Bikini 24. Richard ended his Army career in 1971 when he entered Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University eventually graduating and staying on as a facility flight instructor before flying large jets for both Trans World and Eastern Airlines. In 1990 he began his much-loved career with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission where he served until his retirement in 2007. Mr. Smith was an avid hunter and fisherman; he truly loved both the outdoors and flying. He was also a wonderful storyteller and always had a lot of stories to share with others; he was also an active member of both

the Cuba Rod and Gun club and the National Rifle Association.

Mr. Smith is survived by his wife of 14 years, Linda; three daughters, one step-son, one grandson and four granddaughters. He was predeceased by his first wife of 26 years, his parents and his sister.

★★★★★★★★

## **Billy Gene Williams**

A memorial service honoring retired Lt. Col. Billy Gene Williams was held on June 28, in Arkadelphia, Ark. Williams died peacefully after a lengthy illness, in the presence of his wife and son at the Northwest War Veterans Home, on June 12.

Born March 24, 1933 near Truman, Ark., he played football, basketball and tennis while attending Ouachita Baptist University and after graduation in 1955, began a distinguished career in the U.S. Army.

During his 23 years of active duty, he served one tour in Korea and two tours in Vietnam, where he flew with the 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cav, the 116th Assault Helicopter Company and the 1st Aviation Brigade.

Williams received the Purple Heart Medal for injuries he received in a search and rescue mission on June 13, 1968. He was recipient of the Silver Star Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf cluster during his Vietnam tours of duty.

He was a proud member of the Blue Ghost and the Headhunters Association. After retirement from the Army, Williams taught part-time at Ouachita Baptist and Henderson State University. In addition to spending time with his family, he enjoyed tennis, bridge, reading, officiating high school football and travel.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Norma Williams, one son, one daughter, four grandchildren, five sisters and three brothers.

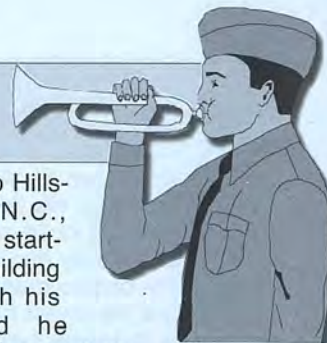
In a note accompanying this obituary, Larry Cain of Arkadelphia added: "I have known LTC Williams for many years and competed against him many times in racquetball and tennis. Although he was told by Army surgeons after being shot down in Vietnam, he would never walk again, or especially compete in any sport, I can attest that he indeed managed to compete, and to a ferocious level. He was a gentleman in every aspect of life, from classroom to the playing courts, and even though I never served with or under him, I feel well assured he conducted himself in the same way during his Army career.

*- Larry Cain*

★★★★★★★★



# TAPS



## **Jeff Stewart Williams-Heritage**

Jeffery Stewart Williams-Heritage, 60, of Vero Beach, Fla., died unexpectedly on July 3 of natural causes in his hotel room while on a business trip in Bahrain.

Williams-Heritage was born April 6, 1948 in Wahiawa, HI., and moved to Vero Beach in 2001 from the United Arab Emirates. He was an investment consultant in the energy field in the Persian Gulf.

He attended flight classes 68-39 and 68-521. He served with C/7/17th Cav from February 1969 until February 1970. He flew the front seat of a Cobra for the first six months before switching to Hueys in the lift platoon. After he made AC, he was known as "Blue 38."

He left Vietnam as a CW2, but soon took a direct commission to captain. He was a life member of the VHPA and a life member of the 7/17th (Ruthless Riders) Air Cavalry Association. There are plenty of C Troopers and Ruthless Riders Association members who remember him for his calm professionalism, even in the heat of battles involving bullets or emotions. At least one LOH driver maintains he is still breathing today because of Jeff's actions near An Son and LZ English.

Survivors include his wife, Judy; sons Michael Heritage of Seattle, Wash., Nathan Heritage of Orlando, Fla., and Matthew Heritage of Houston, Texas; daughter Alicia Shannis of Delray, Fla. The funeral service was held on July 19 in Vero Beach.

*Submitted by Gary Spooner, Barry Speare, Bruce Carlson, and Mike Law*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **John A. Williamson**

John A. Williamson, 58, of Arlington, Texas, was killed in the crash of his private plane on May 25 near Jordan Valley, Ore.

Born Aug. 1, 1949, in Lewiston, Idaho, Williamson enlisted in the U.S. Army for

Warrant Officer flight training after graduating from high school in 1968.

After flight training with flight class 69-19, Williamson served two combat tours in Vietnam, the first with A Troop, 7th Squadron, 1st ACR, 1st Avn Brigade from September 1969-September 1970 in Vinh Long, where he was known as "Apache 33 & 38."

His second tour was from April 1972-February 1973 with the F Troop, 8th Cavalry, 1st Aviation Brigade at Da Nang and Bien Hoa. His call sign there was "Blue Ghost 22." He retired from the Army in 1989 with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4.

After retirement from the Army, Williamson hired on with American Airlines in 1989, flying several aircraft and crew positions until he retired early in 2002. His two greatest loves were his family and flying.

Williamson is survived by his wife of 30 years, three sons, one grandson, his mother, four sisters, one brother and numerous nieces and nephews from all around the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **John Michael Woods**

John Michael Woods was killed in a Jet Ski and boat collision on June 28.

He was born Sept. 15, 1944, in Goldsboro, N.C., where his father, a U.S. Army Air Corps pilot, was stationed. His family moved to Hillsborough, N.C., while his father flew in Europe.

Woods attended Louisburg College and then North Carolina State College. The Vietnam War was raging so he applied first to the Navy to fly jets, and then was accepted by the Army for helicopter flight training.

Once in Vietnam, he flew slicks for the first six months. Then he and 24 other pilots were selected to be the first 25 pilots in Vietnam to be in-country transitioned into the Army's new attack helicopter, the AH-1G Cobra. Woods finished up his tour flying snakes and was awarded a decoration for saving a village, along with a Bronze Star Medal with oak leaf clusters. Having served in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968, he later told his family and friends about the considerable combat he witnessed during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

Woods met his first wife, Sheri Wilson, while stationed in Nuremburg, Germany, as he served with the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment where he flew patrols along the Czech border. He and Sheri were married on July 25, 1970. In 1973

they moved to Hillsborough, N.C., where Woods started a home building business with his brother and he remained in house construction until he died.

The couple had two children and, in 1989, they moved to Wray, Colo., but in 1990 Woods returned alone, to Hillsborough to manage his real estate investments. This time he also dedicated quite a bit of time to playing golf.

In 1995, Woods married a High School friend, Harriett Brewer, who remained his wife until he died.

He is survived by his wife, four children, two granddaughters, his mother, two brothers, one sister and numerous in-laws and nieces and nephews. Mike had a military funeral, followed by internment at New Sharon Church at Hillsborough, North Carolina.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Bobby E. Wofford**

It is with deep regret that I inform the membership of the death of Bobby E. Wofford who passed away on 8 January, 2000.

By the time of Bobby's retirement from the U.S. Army in 1979, he had accomplished a stellar aviation career which included a couple of tours in Vietnam and culminated with duties as the Commander of the Fort Campbell Army Airfield. In 1980 Bobby entered Army Civil Service with me at the Fort Campbell Directorate of Contracting. Bobby had far more flying experience than I had and I always enjoyed his stories of flying the aircraft I was never lucky enough to fly, like the H-21 and H-34. Bobby retired from Army Civil Service in about 1999 and moved away from the Fort Campbell area. His passing saddened all who knew him; he was a true friend and a solid family man.

*Regards, Fredrick M. Lewis*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Richard A. Burner**

Richard A. Burner, 75, of Falmouth, Maine lost his life after a battle with cancer on July 2nd, 2008.

Richard flew with the 114th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam in the 1963-1964 time frame, he is survived by his wife Joan Burner of Falmouth, Maine.

\*\*\*\*\*





## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

### No report for the Arizona, Georgia or Ohio River Chapters.

#### VHPA OF FLORIDA

Our next activity will be the Chapter Reunion 2-5 October in Panama City Beach. Please request registration information on our web page [www.vhpaf.org](http://www.vhpaf.org).

**Don Welch, President**

#### FT. WOLTERS CHAPTER

Chapter members will be participating at 10:30 AM in the Aug 16th "Huey Hoist" at the National Vietnam War Museum site on highway 180, just east of Mineral Wells, TX. Hot dogs, chips, water and ice will be provided while supplies last. BYOB is okay, plus bring your own lawn chairs- seating is limited.

**Adam Steczko, President**

#### MID SOUTH CHAPTER

"Flying Thunder to the Wall" ( a Bell Jet Ranger and two Hueys) stopped over in Lebanon, TN. We gave \$1000 for the operation and fed the ground and chopper crews at Uncle Pete's Truck Stop. The wall in the truck stop dining room

is dedicated to veterans of Viet Nam..

We are still working on restoring the TH-55. The Aviation Maintenance School in Clarksville is giving us a lot of help on this project.

**Pete Norman IV, President**

#### NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

We will be participating in the July 4 parade in Fayetteville with 3 choppers (2 gunships and a "Loach" maybe) and also have a static display of a UH 1-H medevac at the state capitol grounds on the same day. On 26 July in Abbingdon, VA we are having a fellowship/reunion party.

**J.D. Lawson, President.**

#### ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

Our Helicopter War Museum will be displayed 1 thru 6 July at the Thornton CO Veterans War Memorial.

**Rick Beaver, President**

#### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

The Cinco de Mayo Bar-b-Que was enjoyed by all members and their wives who attended. I hope to do this again next year. There was plenty of Mexican food (carne asada, carnitas, chicken, rice, beans, salsa, tortillas and guacamole/chips) and drinks (beer, sodas,

beer, water, beer, wine coolers, beer) and Dave Rodes provided the desert (apple pie/peach pie). This was just a Saturday get-together with everyone relaxing by the pool, listening to music.

Several members even got to see the big race on my outside TV. We did not discuss any chapter business, because everyone was having too much fun.

**Ed Holguin, President**

#### WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

Our Quarterly Membership Meeting was held on June 14 at the Olympia Airport. About 30 members attended for a short business meeting and then most went to the Airshow. Our next meeting is tentatively scheduled for 13 September at a location TBD.

**Paul Fleming, President**

#### CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH

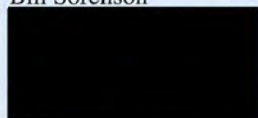
Our summer activities are the Burgers n' Beer n' Chicken get-together on August 9 at Oxbow Marina, Isleton, CA.

On Sept 13 the Golf Tourney/Challenge with the Southern California is scheduled.

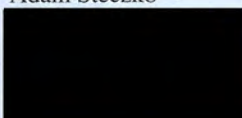
**Ken Fritz, President**

## VHPA CHAPTERS

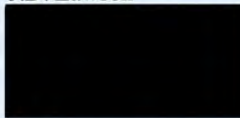
#### Arizona Chapter Bill Sorenson



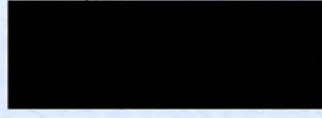
#### Fort Wolters Chapter Adam Steczko



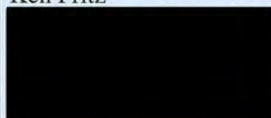
#### North Carolina Chapter J.D. Lawson



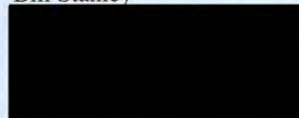
#### Southern California Chapter Ed Holguin



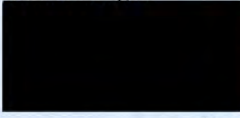
#### California Chapter North Ken Fritz



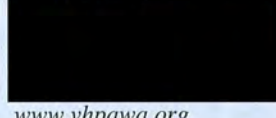
#### Georgia Chapter Bill Stanley



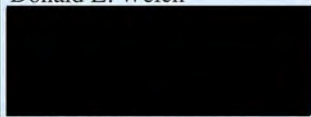
#### Ohio River LZ Chapter John Flanagan



#### Washington State Chapter Paul Fleming

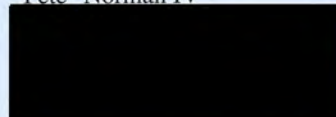


#### VHPA of Florida Donald L. Welch

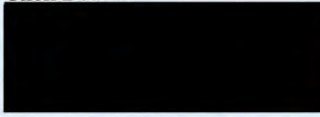


[www.vhpaf.org](http://www.vhpaf.org)

#### Mid South Chapter "Pete" Norman IV



#### Rocky Mountain Chapter Rick Beaver



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

The VHPA and Chapters share information and guidance with one another for the mutual benefit of their members. Chapters are separate and independently managed organizations not under control of the VHPA. Neither the VHPA nor any Chapter is authorized to act as agent or representative of the VHPA or any other Chapter.



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## VHPA ADDS THIRD SCHOLARSHIP

Your Scholarship Committee is proud to announce the funding of VHPA's third annual scholarship. It will be awarded this year along with the other two already in place. AAAA will hold the meeting of the selection board in late July.

We currently need around \$30,000 in the AAAA corpus to generate a \$1,000 scholarship each year. In other words, \$90,000 in their bank gives us three each, \$1,000 scholarships to award every year, \$120,000 would give us four, etc. This year at the San Antonio Reunion, attendees added over \$6000 to our fund. A special thanks to Brenda and Skip Skipper for their generous donation of \$1,000 and to Mike Sheuerman for his generous donation of \$1,000 in honor of his Dad who passed away this year. Mike's Dad was a veteran of WWII and D-Day and was one of the very first Airborne troopers trained at the US Army Airborne School.

We agree that six thousand dollars is a good start on our fourth scholarship

but we need more. As Gary Roush and Tom Payne, our Committee Chairman, said at the business meeting, our only legacies in the VHPA will be the historical records, our recorded histories and the VHPA Scholarship Program we leave behind. Please write a check for whatever amount you want to, make it out to the VHPA Scholarship Fund and send it to HQ, Tom Payne or me. Our address's are in the Directory.

**Your continuing contributions and support has allowed us to add two scholarships since 2006.**

Thanks in advance.

**~Your Scholarship Committee**

*On a sad note, we didn't get a chance to pass the hat at the business meeting in San Antonio. Mike couldn't be there due to personal business. He promises to make it up in Philly by passing the hat twice!*

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[Membeship@VHPA.org](mailto:Membeship@VHPA.org)  
for details



# After Action Report - Return to Vietnam

Part 2 of a 3 Part Series ~ By John Mackel

## CHAPTER 4 - SONG BE & PHOUC VINH

The next day (our 5th in country) we packed up and headed for Song Be. This was something I was really anticipating. Back in mid-69 when I made my first visit to Song Be it was a small ex-special forces camp with a runway that was visited by re-supplying C-130's and of course helicopters of various types and owners. I still remember watching a C-130 land on the runway, turn around on a dime, taxi back, drop the cargo door, unload in no time while the props ran and then take off. It was a model of Air Force efficiency. From a small camp it transformed into a Brigade size base camp called LZ Buttons with underground bunkers, observation towers interspaced along a defensive wall of dirt with the normal assortment of concertina wire and claymores spread outward and a large refueling area south of the camp. Flying into Song Be from the south or southeast, it sat as I remember, on a tiny rise or plateau. The village was to the northwest and Nui Ba Ra Mountain was north northeast. The south of Song Be was thick with bamboo. I remembered when Kuyendall dropped his Light Observation Helicopter (LOH)



*The runway at Song Be today, all that is left of the Song Be base camp. Basically, unless the land was coated & paved, today it has been "reclaimed" either by the people of Viet Nam, or the jungle.*



*John Mackel standing next to his hooch shortly before his DEROS from Viet Nam in 1970. Note the unexploded 122MM rocket buried at his feet which almost ruined his whole day...*

right down in the bamboo when a smoke grenade went off inside the cabin and he disappeared from sight. I was flying front seat Cobra and one second he was there and the next he was gone. No one was hurt and pretty soon he was on his radio but we knew where he was because he had used his smoke filled LOH to mark his landing area. The point is you were getting

into some thick stuff up in this neck of the woods. Soon after we first started operating out of Song Be you couldn't land at the refueling pads from twilight to first light and you couldn't leave a helicopter parked there overnight. Mortar and rocket rounds were a regular visitor after dark. In spite of that it was a pretty little place.

This time driving up from the south it was pretty but you lost that perspective you get from 1500'. The village had expanded and now encircled the western part of the old base camp. We parked the bus on the old refueling area. It was very open because the asphalt had kept the vegetation from covering the area but now it's a trash dump. But even though the area was empty and the ground stripped of any visible signs of American Army occupation it was easier to imagine what and where things were than other military sites we had visited so far. Hiking around the old site brought back a bunch of memories. It was

now quiet and the area north of where we had parked the bus where the main camp had been was now overgrown with brush & trees. We used this picturesque place as a staging area to find, fix and kill NVA. I had spent a lot of time in Song Be both as a pilot and Aero Rifle Platoon Leader (Blue), and it felt strange being back in my old stomping ground. I remember being up here one night sleeping or trying to sleep on top of my aircraft outside the wire because we had come into Song Be after dark and the base camp was locked up. Operations advised us it was safer to stay outside and be quiet, then try and come in.

I walked around the area north of the old refueling area to what was now some sort of orchard with cows wandering around. When I was Blue 6 we would play football up here to pass the time between missions. Back during the war it was busy and crowded and noisy and now it was a trash dump and orchard. During my short recon I found small pieces of old mosquito netting and an empty M-16 cartridge. The ground was sunk in at a few spots where the old underground bunkers had been and some old timbers stuck out of the ground. As we all re-grouped around the bus a few villagers came over to eyeball us. I think they wondered who the hell we were, especially the little kids. These folks were not used to Americans. But I was glad I had the opportunity to come back to Song Be and next time I want to travel further north.

From the old base camp we drove to the top of Nui Ba Ra. The old concrete pad was still there but now there was a shrine and a couple of buildings. It was jumping off spot for hikers and tourist. As we departed the area I told the story of being ordered to take a few "volunteers" and retrieve a 51 caliber MG (12.7 mm to the NVA reading this) that was reported to be laying outside a bunker inside the tree line of large clearing about a mile north of an ARVN firebase. The area in question was about five miles NNE of Nui Ba Ra. One of our pink teams, (for the benefit of our non-Cav readers: one Cobra from the Red or Gun Platoon teamed with a LOH from the Scout or White Platoon equals a Pink Team) had spooked an NVA regiment early on the



morning of 12 December 1969 (maybe plus or minus a couple of days) that had moved down and dug in north of the firebase. The Cobra half of the pink team test fired its weapons unknowingly into the NVA staging area and the NVA's thinking they had been discovered had fired back. This of course started an exchange of fire that evolved into a pretty large battle that lasted days. During the morning of the first day air strikes and artillery pounded the area. The mission came down early in the afternoon of day one to go in fast and light with some volunteers to do the job. I volunteered Sgt. Slye, my RTO Eugene Vanasse and troopers Larry Pruitt and Patrick Cadenhead to accompany me to

retrieve the weapon. The plan was to fly in low level, jump out of the Huey, proceed to an area just inside the tree line that was to be marked by smoke from a Light Observation Helicopter (LOH), retrieve the weapon and haul ass back to the Huey that was nervously waiting for us and get the hell out of there. However as with any combat plan the execution was good but the target didn't cooperate. We moved a little further into the bush to the smoke than anticipated. Numerous brand new bunkers framed with green bamboo spread out all along the inside of the tree line but no 51 caliber MG. As we spread around the bunker closest to the smoke Trooper Cadenhead crawled halfway into the bunker. It was occupied and an NVA soldier grabbed his M-16. Cadenhead started yelling for help and opened up with his rifle. At the same time we started taking fire from the other bunkers. It was so noisy we had to yell to each other. Weapons were firing, the Huey was adding to the noise level and the bad guys were not cooperating. Pruitt pulled Cadenhead out and Slye tossed in a grenade. We ducked but when the grenade blew it set off a small secondary that really caused an explosion. Sgt Slye took some shrapnel to the forehead and starting bleeding profusely. Blood was all over his forehead and running down into his eyes. Meanwhile my RTO was yelling that the Huey piloted by 1st Lieutenant Rhett Lewis was coming under small arms fire and had to leave; so get back ASAP. As I took up the rear and covered the guys high tailing it back to the Huey I noticed a small backpack that had blown out of the bunker. I grabbed it and took off firing my weapon to cover our retrograde maneuver. The Huey was up to a hover, the door gunners were firing, I jumped in and we hauled ass. No 51 caliber; nothing to show for mingling with the enemy at close quarters except for the backpack. I was glad we were all alive but disappointed. Back at Song Be I briefed the Brigade S-3 and he took my backpack. Turns out that it contained some papers, a diary of sorts, that contained information about the NVA unit, what they were doing and why they were north of the ARVN firebase. The NVA plan was to overrun the firebase manned by elements of the 1st ARVN Airborne Brigade to demonstrate that Vietnamization was not working. So the mission wasn't a complete failure, we gained some valuable information.

The next day we were back on the ground about 200 yards south of where we had been the day before. Captain Hood piloting a LOH had been shot in the same clearing and we joined a group of ARVN that were moving up from the Firebase to engage the NVA. Captain Hood had taken a hit that in my opinion snuffed out his life in a microsecond. The LOH was still flyable and the observer with his foot almost shot off had taken the controls and landed the LOH. The crew chief pulled him out, and they escaped with their lives as the LOH took some hits, rolled over and burned. I apologize but I can't remember their names. We joined in a little action with the ARVN's and their American advisor, recovered Hood's body and then at the request of the ARVN flew three NVA prisoners back to their firebase. As you could imagine the NVA soldiers had never been in a helicopter before



*The Song Be base camp as it appeared in 1970*

because their eyes showed how frightened they were. Of course, we tried to make them feel at home since they had been so neighborly the day before.

ON 30 December 1969 some miles north of above mentioned area we were back in another large clearing where WO1 Edd

Hogeboom was shot down after being hit by 51 Caliber MG fire. We think he was hit by the retreating NVA regiment from the prior engagements. Edd was the only one that survived and was subjected to more terror on the ground as he listened to the sounds of the NVA coming for him. He is lucky to be alive. He was rescued by SSG W Williams who jumped out of a LOH to get to his position before the Blues were able to fight to him. We got into our own little firefight right after we were inserted on the opposite end of the clearing and provided covering fire for his LOH and subsequent medevac helicopter. Edd's fellow crewmembers, Thomas Soma and James Dean, were dead before the helicopter hit the ground in my opinion based on the wounds I observed they suffered from the weapons ground fire. I don't know how Edd survived. A lot of large metal foreign objects hit his LOH.

SSG W. Williams and WO1 James Whimore died days later on January 4, 1970 when their LOH went down in the same area.

I tell these stories to honor the memory of the men that performed heroically in the face of incredible danger. When we were on the ground my Blues fought bravely and I was very proud to be with them. Charlie Troop gave you the opportunity to participate in very risky dangerous jobs. I saw LOH pilots and Snake pilots fly into harms way with no fear. Lift Pilots as per Rhett's experience were also subjected to high levels of danger. They performed missions such as night extractions, nighthawk missions and ferrying Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) to a firefight to reinforce the Blues just to name a few and it makes you realize a normal C Troop Lift mission was dangerous one. Most American soldiers and this held true for our Charlie Troopers were kids, just barely out of high school, send thousands of miles away from home to fight for another country and very few Americans appreciated their sacrifice or even knew what they were doing. I guess that is why I went back to Viet Nam. I wanted to remember my first visit and dig up those memories. I didn't appreciate my comrades or C Troop 1/9 Air Cav back in 69-70 like I do now. Events like what I described above were what your job was all about. I hate to leave anyone out, but there were times I observed some supreme bravery. I watched Irling Smith fly his Cobra into 50-caliber fire trying to knock it out. I was flying with Ernie Burns in the B Model north of Xuan Loc on 2 June 1969 when Captain Don Porter (Cavalier White) was shot down. We watched his LOH pause and then fall thru the trees, crash and burn. Burns and I were circling his LOH at treetop level and Ernie was almost begging him to get out of the line of fire. Porter had his LOH in a hover above the trees so focused on providing covering fire for some troops on the ground in contact he wasn't listening. Beekman our crew chief ended up killing the NVA on the ground that shot Porter down. Porter was lost with PFC Warren Brown and Sgt Weber. A month later on 14 July 1969 I was headed to the TOC to fly with Troop Commander Major Felton after flying with him almost 12 hours to accompany him south of Phouc Vinh to support the



Blues. Ernie Burns had been out over the Blues but his Snake developed inverter problems and came back. Felton grabbed Burns when he landed and they took off. They perished after a mid air collision with a LOH. Gone in an instant were Ernie Burns, Maj. Felton, PFC Butler and Sgt Davis. Davis and Burns were short timers. Maybe

between them had about three weeks left in country. The very next day we lost 1st Lieutenant Hansen when he was shot and killed flying a LOH out in the AO. The Troop sustained a tragic loss of five out-

standing, extremely brave men in a two-day period.

I was also with Felton just east of the Michelin Plantation when Scout Ken Dies was shot down. His Cobra cover had to leave to refuel and Felton and I flew cover for him while he and his crew fought for their lives in a bomb crater. It was my first real conflict and Felton and Beekman's calm soothed my nerves. The bad guys that shot Dies down were trying to get to Ken and his crew to finish them off. We made sure that didn't happen and they were rescued a short time later.

There were times when I called in Cobra fire and I was always amazed at how accurate our Snake pilots could be. During Hogeboom's incident McDerby put rockets on a smoke grenade I had thrown into the enemy position. If any rockets had been short I would have had some serious casualties. We had some outstanding pilots in C Troop and I'm sure A & B Troops had the same expertise. The pride in being in the 1/9th Cav psychologically elevated a Trooper to a higher level.

I'm sorry, I hate to mention some guys and not mention others but I wanted these stories demonstrate the incredible danger that the men of Charlie Troop endured. Most of the guys I've mentioned are no longer with us and therefore can't tell their story so I'm doing it for them.

Getting back to our 2006 story after that trip back down Remembrance Road, after Song Be we headed to Phouc Vinh (PV). We drove south back through Dong Xoai and into PV. Phouc Vinh was Division Headquarters (HQ) and known also as Camp Gorvad. The actual site was really overgrown. It was easy to see where things had been but it was hard to visualize the exact spots of anyplace because it was stripped and reverting back to jungle. The village has expanded and now where Division HQ had been there was a Viet Nam Army base. The runway was intact but the rest to the surrounding area was trees, brush or occasional hooch. We parked the bus on the south side of the runway close to where Charlie Troop had lived. The same conditions of old thin asphalt existed here as we saw at LZ Caroline, Lai Kae, Quon Loi and Song Be. Dave Keel and I wandered around and walked on the sacred ground of the Charlie Troop site. It was so different that it was hard to imagine of what it was like 40 years ago. Now trees blocked the view. Forty years ago there was not a tree

around inside the compound. Across the runway where the tower stood was now a house. NE of the runway I remember the artillery area but now it was just empty. We didn't get to hang around because some Vietnamese soldiers, one with an AK-47 drove over to see what we were doing. It made Tang pretty uncomfortable so after some pictures we mounted up and took off. Kung

Powell say that as a result of my yelling "God Bless America" and the "greatest military outfit in the world had been here helping the people obtain freedom" during some filming Dick Walker had graciously taken of me on the end of the runway I had attracted the VN Army's attention and they sent some soldiers over to run us off. So after we admired the soldier's AK-47 we got on the bus and drove off. But we didn't let the People's Army of the Communist Republic of Viet Nam scare us off so easy. We drove around to the other end of the runway and roamed around a little more. Actually I felt a little like a part of my personal history had been erased because the commies had stripped every sign of American presence.

However with the runway intact and the

area open and empty there was more of PV left behind then any other base camp or firebase we visited in VN except for Song Be. It was a little bit disconcerting. I remember this place as another busy bustling base camp and now it is so quiet it is disarming. But I am very glad I returned and visited Phoch Vinh. Things are changing fast over there and in another 5 years PV might be unrecognizable. I spend a memorable year here. I remember more details from April of 69 to April of 70 then any other 365-day period in my life. I'm getting older and reflecting more on my past, because I didn't document past experiences as well as I should. In addition, after my VN and Army years, I married, raised kids, had a career, got involved in community affairs, built a house, and basically lived in the present and planned for the future. I didn't really spend much time thinking about the past. Now all my time is my time. I'm not locked into a fixed schedule and do what I want (or my wife wants me to do). My point is, now I have time and I wanted to see what I did in the past from a different perspective.

Leaving PV we headed south and headed back to Saigon. On the way we stopped at the river just south of VN along the bridge and took some pictures. The bridge we were on was new. The old bridge was down the river about a 100 yards and it had been bombed out in the mid-70's to stop one of the NVA intrusions. After that we stopped at a small "truck stop" for lunch. Don't envision something like an American truck stop cause it wasn't as large or covered with acres of concrete and lines of gas pumps. It was just a small site along the side of the road about the size of a four-car garage. Instead of massive "sems" there were mini-trucks like Mercedes and Hyundai. Garr and Tang figured if the truck drivers ate here it must be good and they were right. The food was all cooked right out in the open and in plain sight. Dogs roamed around with little kids and overall it was dirty, smelly and of course hot but that is better than being cold. The local drivers stared at you because they don't see Americans every day but everyone was friendly. The restroom was an outhouse, the food was good, the people courteous but curious, the beer was warm, the conversation was great, the air was hot, life was good. I enjoyed the experience and comradely.



*What's left of the Company Area of Charlie Troop 1/9 Air Cav Squadron, 1st Cavalry Division*



## Chapter Five – Back in Saigon

Once back in Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City we stayed at the Majestic Hotel. This place was beautiful. It exemplified the old charm of French Viet Nam. It was built early in the 1900's and reflected the architecture of an earlier colonial era. The elevators were very small but the rooms were large and opulent. Our room opened to a atrium and about 5 stories down there was a pool and courtyard. It was an elegant retreat after the hotels of Tay Ninh and Dong Xoai.

The highlight of this portion of our stay in Saigon was the shopping or more specifically "The Market". First let me say I am not a shopper. At home

I go to the mall or store knowing what I want; I buy or not buy and I'm gone. I hate it but there are times like Christmas or such that I am forced to shop. However the experience at the Market was more like a battle. The place was the size of two Wal-Marts; a huge warehouse type place. Clothes and other stuff were stacked to the ceiling. Around the periphery of the building were stalls set up for watches and jewelry. The middle of building was clothes and other merchandise. The rows between the merchandise was barely wide enough for a full sized American human. Women sellers attacked you. You had to fight them off. At first it was intimidating and uncomfortable, but Kung Powell taught me the basics. You had to play their game better than them or at least as well. Here are the rules as per John Powell: Rule #1, negotiate up from a low point. For example they will hold up a Polo Shirt and quote \$20. In the US that might be a good price, but you're not in the US. Counter with a low number like \$2. From a counter-counter of \$15 you go to \$3 and so on and so on. Rule #2, make a bigger offer for multiple stuff. For example they are down to \$7.50 for a shirt and you counter with \$25 for 5 shirts. Now it's high finance. Rule # 3, you tell them you can get it cheaper in Hanoi. That drives them crazy. It's like they think they can out do their sisters in Hanoi without even working at it.

Put everything together and it works like this: Your advance has been stopped and stuff is waved in your face with repetitions of , "20 dollar nice shirt, 20 dollar" . You reply, No that's too much, \$2. They say, "no, you crazy, 15 dollar". You say, "I'll pay you \$3". They say, "no way, good shirt, what you size, look see how good this look, try it on, here I help you take off your shirt, what color, 10 dollar". You say, "wait that's to much, I like that red, I'll pay \$4". They say "no way, 5 dollar, what size? Now you try it on and it fits good and looks just like a real polo and would be great for golf or as a gift so you hit them with the closer. "I can get this in Hanoi for \$3 but I will buy 5 for \$20." The big money hits home and you close the deal. So in addition to some Polo or La Costa golf shirts, I got a bunch of Beer T-Shirts for \$1 apiece and some Rolex knockoff watches for wife and other sons at home and stuff for my granddaughter and daughter in laws. I have to admit though even as I became proficient at the negotiation, Luke was the Master. He bargained them down to where sometimes I thought



Good News Guy's, Tiger Beer is now available in cans!!! The two ladies in the photo are Jeanie Anderson who traveled in memory of her father John, and Julie Kink who traveled in memory of her brother, David. Both men died together when their loach crashed on a combat mission in 1968. And no, these ladies weren't responsible for drinking all that beer, they had lots of help.

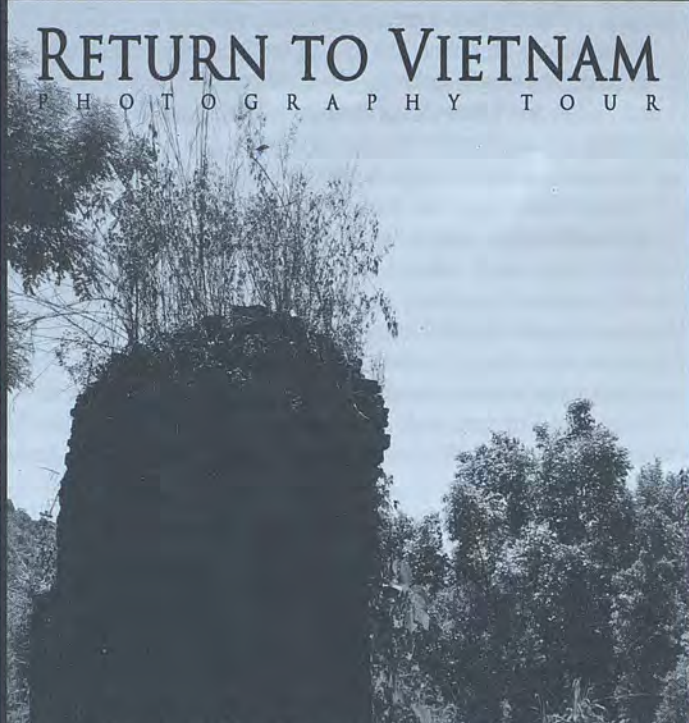
the salesperson was going to pay him money. He bought watches, luggage, shirts, a camera, suits and gifts for the girls. It sounds like a lot but the cost was nothing compared to what it would have been in the good old USA. Luke was the "Master Bargainer" but Terry Funk, one of our Marines and now an attorney in Tulsa, OK was the "Master Buyer". On one occasion we had vendors following our mini-bus on scooters to stay with Terry. Except for some cheap luggage he purchased, the quality of the products was good. Remember the clothes you are wearing right now was probably made somewhere in Asia. The backpack I took to VN that I purchased at Academy was made in Viet Nam.

That night we all got together and had a big dinner at the Majestic and some of us roamed around Saigon for one last time. The enjoyable thing about the Majestic was that it was more of an international hotel with a rich history and diverse clientele.

*In the next issue of The Aviator we finish the story of John's return to Viet Nam with the last part of his narrative about visits to the Danang area, Khe Sahn, Camp Eagle and Hanoi.*

# RETURN TO VIETNAM

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## Jack Swickard Signs Off from the VHPA Aviator....

The San Antonio Reunion marked both the 25th Anniversary of The VHPA, and the end of 18 years of hard work by our former Newsletter Editor, Jack Swickard.

In 1990, when Jack was asked to take over as editor of The VHPA Newsletter, then called the VHPA Newsletter, the publication had 16 pages, was printed on buff-colored paper with blue ink, and came out only four times a year. The only paid advertising in the newsletter consisted of one small ad.

Jack developed The VHPA Newsletter into a magazine that's now published six times a year and it averages 24-28 pages an issue. The printing stock — paper — was changed to a higher-grade white, permitting color photographs and more ads to be published and after Jack implemented an advertising policy in 1990, ad revenue increased dramatically. All the improvements, the increased pages, the two additional copies each year, and the color printing was accomplished at no additional cost to VHPA members. The name of the publication later was changed to The VHPA Aviator to reflect its growth from a newsletter to a full magazine.

In 2000, Swickard, a former newspaper editor and general manager, launched his own public relations and political consulting company, The Triton Group, headquartered in Roswell, N.M. The company's success has left him little time to be a full-time volunteer editing The Aviator.

"I am delighted David Adams has volunteered to be editor of The Aviator," Swickard said. "He has been doing a great job helping me disengage from my editor duties these last six months. The VHPA is lucky to now have him editing the magazine."



We've carried several stories about the "Rolling Thunder — Flight To The Wall" project in the VHPA Aviator, and now we're blessed with this photo that was taken by Tom Whoel on their return flight. Tom took the shot from an OH-58 on 4 June 2008, near Tucson, Arizona.

It's certainly the first time in many years that two 45+ year old UH-1B Huey's have flown together and back, from California to Washington D.C. In the DUSTOFF aircraft is pilot Larry Clark, in the 118th BANDIT bird are pilots Russ Janus and Pat Rodgers. The helicopters themselves are from the Wings and Rotors Air Museum, located at beautiful French Valley airport in Murietta, California.

See [www.flyingthunder.org](http://www.flyingthunder.org) for more details on the project. Also check out [www.flyingthunder2008.blogspot.com](http://www.flyingthunder2008.blogspot.com) for more photos and information.

Larry Clark

\*\*\*\*\*ALL FOR ADC 793

