



# THE VHPA AVIATOR

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

Sept/Oct 2008 Vol. 26, No. 5



## ***SUPER C HOOK***

A CH-47 "Super C" Chinook from the 213th Aviation (Assault Support Helicopter) Company. This photo belongs to VHCMA member Donovan Earhart, a crewchief for the Black Cats at Phu Loi from 1970 to 1972, the photo was taken during his tour.

From 1970 to 1972, Donovan was a Crewchief for the Black Cats at Phu Loi and was asked by the company leadership to take this picture of a nearly new "Super C" Chinook they had just received. SGT Gerido, of the maintenance section, is clearly visible wearing a head set at the front window. All C models had the distinctive square shape to the aft part of the rear pylon plus bigger and longer blades than the earlier models. The 'Super C' had more powerful engines than the 'Small C'. Naturally, the pilots preferred the more powerful model because they could really get the work done but had to be careful not to overstress the drive train with these engines. For awhile the #2 engine had a harmonic problem that caused the turbine blades to come apart which severed hydraulic lines and caused a fire. That must have been great peace of mind for these crews – knowing that not only were the bad guys against you but you could actually catch fire and die all by yourself!! Still, most everyone enjoyed flying the 'Super C' because they were low time machines. This was the August photo for the 1994 VHPA Calendar.

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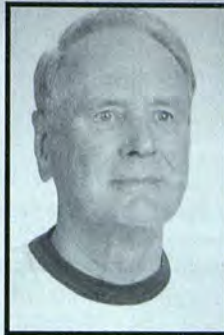
# FROM THE PRESIDENT

With San Antonio behind us and Philadelphia now on the horizon there are several subjects to be addressed.

Rich Buzen, our previous Secretary/ Treasurer and Vendor Coordinator stepped down during the Reunion in San Antonio and probably wasn't properly thanked for his great service to our organization. Rich has been an important cog in the VHPA wheel and I want to send best wishes to both him and his wife Evita. Most of you have noticed that Jack Swickard, the former editor of The Aviator, also stepped down from his post in San Antonio. Jack was recognized for his service to VHPA in the last issue of this magazine and he truly will be sorely missed. Luckily, both Jack and Rich will continue to be a part of our VHPA activities and plan to attend all of our future reunions. If you see them there, please give them both a personal "Thanks" for all that they have done for us.

Next I would like to welcome Tom Payne to the EC as our incoming Secretary/Treasurer. Many of you know Tom; he is a former President of VHPA and has been a member for over 20 years. Another change in the EC is the appointment of Woody Mc Farlin as our new Vendor Coordinator. Woody is also our Senior Member at Large and he will be wearing two hats for the next year. I would also like to welcome David Adams as our new (Aviator) newsletter editor. David had been assisting Jack for some time and luckily for us, he was willing to step in and take over this very visible job.

And while I am recognizing excellent performance, I would like to mention two other gentlemen who are often overlooked and/or taken for granted. You see both of them at the annual business meeting when



Jack Salm

the investment program is being covered; hopefully many of you pay a lot of attention to the status of our investments. I know we show the current status of our funds on a large screen, but large as it is, some of us still can't see the figures or don't particularly care – whatever. If you do pay attention you'll see that Bob Potvin and Bob Smith have done an outstanding job steering us through a very erratic market. We have never had a negative year on our returns

under their stewardship, and we often out perform some of the best minds in that business; all for absolutely no fees or commissions on their part. Good job guys!! If you're looking for a money manager for your personal use, you might want to give these guys a call.

I would also like to congratulate this years three VHPA Heritage Scholarship recipients Amanda K. Speare, Lela M. Ruck and Brittany T. Gendreau. We feature Amanda's story on page 7 of this issue and hope to feature our other two recipients in the following newsletters. Good luck to all of you in your collegiate careers and "Kudos" to our Scholarship Committee, Mike Sheuerman, Tom Payne and Reed Kimzey.

Next, the Reunion Committee and the full Executive Committee are working hard to finalize our hotel contract for the years 2011 thru 2013. We can now announce that our 2011 Reunion will be held in Orlando, Florida; our 2012 reunion will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, and our 2013 Reunion will be held in San Francisco, California. More details about our selection criteria and the actual dates of each Reunion are available in a separate story on page 13 of this Issue.

Last, some of you commented on the size of the print on the ID cards we used at the Reunion. This is an ongoing problem that we thought had been fixed but again, we will try to have larger print on the cards for next year. Hopefully all of us old geezers can read the name of the person standing opposite us without having to stare at his, or heaven forbid her chest (Note to self – rethink this idea...)

*Regards,*

*Jack Salm, President*

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

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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.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor...

First I want to say thanks for my May/June 2008 copy of the VHPA Aviator. Upon receipt I was like a kid in a candy store, had to have it all right now. I was ecstatic.

I was really delighted to read John W. Bradford's account of A Shau. If it is alright with you I want to go back there also.....

### A SHAU REVISITED

In late 65 I completed FWQC, spent several months at Lawson Army Airfield, Ft. Benning, GA, and thought I was the gift to aviation. I called DA to ask for Caribou transition and they said, "there you are!, we are going to send you to Vietnam."



I was assigned to the 220th Avn Co., at Phu Bai, and further deployed to their platoon at Hue/Citadel. After several months of learning to fly the Bird Dog in high humidity, I felt as though the bird and I were one. In Mar 66, Captain "Woodie" Woodhurst (sp), Ass't Platoon Leader called a meeting to tell us that A Shau was being overrun, and they needed our help. Naturally we wondered what we as Bird Dog pilots could do to help. Our instructions were; remove the white phosphorus from your wings and replace it with HE rockets. (these were 2.75in Folding Fin rockets), two birds on station at all times, relief after one hour. The weather was very bad. Very low clouds and fair visibility. We were to fire our rockets at any muzzle flashes in an effort to help. Myself and another pilot took off and attempted to get to A Shau. The camp was behind a small mountain range and in a valley, hence the name. We flew up and down the mountain range outside of the valley trying to get in. Finally some clouds lifted at the saddle of the mountains and we dove in the opening, only to see it close down behind us. Never-the-less, we were in and we were going to help. I saw the C-47 and an A1E Skyraider on the ground, but don't recall seeing the H34. This was my first taste of being fired upon. The tracers were big as basket balls and the pucker factor came in to play big time. I did fire my rockets on what I thought were muzzle flashes. Then my time was up as the crackle of the radio indicated that relief was on the way. This time we flew up and down the inside of the mountain range looking for an opening and hoping "charlie" wasn't sitting in the saddle waiting for us. The heavens smiled on us, the clouds barely lifted at a saddle and we dove for home. Coming in to relieve us was Mike Misenheimer and another bird who's pilot's name escapes me.

After being back at Hue for a bit, we got a call from DaNang tower asking us if we had aircraft in support of A Shau. The reason for the call was that we had one that was VFR on top having gone thru 5,000 feet of soup. and had a wounded pax on board. Now you ex-instrument ticket holders know what the soup is like and also probably learned that the Bird Dog has no instruments. Let's see if I can recall; manifold gauge, attitude indicator, oil pressure gauge, heat indicator and rpm gauge - large cojones is correct. DaNang said they would do their best to work him down. They did and from what I recall the pax got medical attention. Mike Misenheimer was the pilot and was awarded the DFC. According to Mike, the camp called him and had asked for his help in evacuating a seriously wounded soldier. He couldn't say no.....and you know the rest of the story. Last I heard, he married a gal from Germany and made his home there.

W.E "Chico" Fernandez, LTC (ret)  
Callsign (F/W) Catkiller November (R/W) Warlord Six



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## HOMEcoming FRIENDS:

Art Chaney was a classmate and friend of mine from flight school in 1967. We were both assigned to the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam. Art was with A Troop, 1/9th Cavalry. I was with Hq Company, 15th Medical Battalion (Medevac). We were both subsequently sent to LZ Sharon, a forward landing zone near Quang Tri, just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) very close to the borders of both North Vietnam and Laos.

I sat with Art in his tent on May 1, 1968, having a warm beer and talking about the good times we had in the advanced phase of flight school in Alabama - driving down to Panama City, Florida on weekends and enjoying the beach. Whenever the both of us would visit each other's tent, we would always burst in and say, "Where's that SOB Chaney? Or, where's that SOB Jacobs?" One time we said that after all this chaos and all this blood, that we would track down all our other buddies from the class and go back to that beach and have a "cold" beer.

I learned of his death on May 5, 1968, when I strolled into his tent and unwittingly made our traditional inquiry in a loud voice... One of Art's tent-mates was leaning over Art's cot and footlocker, packing up his personal effects to be shipped back to his parents. I stared at the floor, the tent pole, the little open flap at the top of the tent for ventilation - anything except the eyes of that boy-pilot staring back at me. Some moments in your life are indelibly seared-in forever - that's one of them for me.

Every year at our Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion, which are always held over the 4th of July, we drink several formal toasts at the banquet on our last evening together. One of the toasts is always for "The Missing Man"; for our former comrades who did not come home. The toast is in silence for a full minute. I'm not sure what everyone else does in that moment, but ever since we have had reunions, I repeat the names of my closest friends who were killed in that war a lifetime ago. When I say the name "Art Chaney" I see his face and remember how young we were.

It won't exactly be the beach at

Panama City, but on September 16th, a few of us will gather in Washington, DC - first at the Chapel at Fort Meyer, and then go across the river to the Arlington National Cemetery.

Art's family now has some closure, and some small peace of mind - me too.

Memorial Day, the 4th of July, Veterans Day - just don't let those dates be a day off from work, or a cookout.

Best regards,

Art Jacobs

1968 - "Medevac 21", 1971

"Gunrunner 16"

## DEAR EDITOR,

I read with great interest in The VHPA Aviator July/Aug 2008 edition, about the Gambler Guns visit to Fort Hood, March 29th, 2008. When I arrived in country April 1968 I was assigned to 4 ID, D Troop 1st 10th Cav as already Cobra qualified. Originally, I flew with D Troop, until B Company was scheduled to pick up AH-1G's in the October time frame 1968. I was infused with B Company, 4th AVN BN in Oct 1968, as I was already an Aircraft Commander and Fire Team Leader with the AH-1G. I believe D Troop was the first unit in II Corp to fly AH-1G's so we had to develop our own tactics. I took those tactics we had used in D Troop and expanded then with the help of others to use with B Company. I am glad to see the tradition of Gambler Guns lives on.

Donald J. Smith CW5 (Ret.)

Gambler One (Ace High)

## NEWS FROM OUR BROTHERS IN THE CHPA

*Helicopter Crews Descend on Nashville* ~ The Combat Helicopter Pilots Association will hold its fourth Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN this year from October 23 through 27. CHPA is a C(19) Veterans organization founded in 2005 with headquarters in Washington, DC. The schedule of events includes a Meet and Greet Happy Hour followed by a private dinner at Merchant's Restaurant on October 24; a brunch, guest speaker and the annual meeting on October 25; and a motorcycle ride through the Tennessee countryside on October

26. The guest speaker this year will be CW5 (Ret) Randy Jones, an original member of the Army's elite Task Force 160, headquartered at Fort Campbell, KY. Mr Jones presents a unique perspective on the growth of Army Aviation over the last third of a century. The remainder of the schedule is held open so those in attendance can make their own itinerary for sampling the entertainment the Music City has to offer.

Membership in CHPA is open to any air crewmember of any US Military Service who mans, or manned US military helicopters in combat. There are other membership categories for those who support the men, women and mission of US Military Rotary Wing combatants. With a growing membership of over 400 this year's gathering promises to provide enough entertainment to go around.

CHPA is also currently involved in its annual Christmas Boxes for the Troops project. Supporters who want to participate can sponsor one or more Christmas boxes for \$30 per box. CHPA will take care of the rest, packaging items we know from experience what deployed troopers want and need in the operational areas of Afghanistan and Iraq and sending the boxes to specific addressees in time for the holidays. If you want to sponsor a box you can send your check to:

**CHPA,**

**Christmas Boxes for the Troops**

**PO Box 15852**

**Washington, DC 20003**

Or you can sponsor a box by going to the website listed below and following the links. If you have a family member or friend who will be deployed with an aviation unit over the holidays this year please pass along their address to [REDACTED] I'll

add their names to our growing list and we'll do what we can to make their separation from friends and family a bit easier to bear.

More information on CHPA, the Christmas Boxes for the Troops project, the Annual Meeting, as well as other projects can be found at <http://www.chpa-us.org>. We invite all helicopter crewmembers, present and former, to join us in Nashville for what promises to be the best party yet.

Jay Brown, President

Combat Helicopter Pilots Association



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**THE VHPA RECEIVED A LETTER FROM TERRY WOOD**, who is looking for his father-in-law. The same letter has been posted on your web site for quite some time, but Terry requested that we print the letter in *The Aviator* in the hopes that it will receive greater attention. He writes:

A Vietnamese woman name Mai, from the village of Nui Que or near-by met in the fall of 1967, his nickname is "Mr. Gene" or "Mr. G." He was between 5'8" and 5' 11", blue eyes, dark brown hair with a "distinguishing mole on his face" and "chewed a tooth pick all the time."

Mr. G. flew an OH-6? Or other "small" helicopter. He came back to RVN in 1970-1971 flying Chinooks. He was at LZ Baldy and Ross. He was also at Nui Que, Huong An, Bong Son, Pleiku, Kon Tum, Tuy Hoa or Bien Hoa and Da Nang. Mr. Gene was at or near Bong Son in the summer of 1967, when he was shot down, suffered a wound to the right knee, tied a tourniquet around his leg and he escaped the VC/NVA. He had another helicopter shot down, taking a hit to the "rotor tail", in the spring or early summer of 1968. This helicopter was taken to Quin Nhon. There were three people on this aircraft when it went down.

Mr. Gene rotated back to the states in the late summer of 1968, but returned to RVN in late 1970, he looked up Mai and told her he wanted to take her and a two year old daughter, named Lisa, back to the US. Mai was only 20 years old at this time. Lisa is now married to a school teacher and they have three children, ages 13 (Amy), 12 (Jackie) and 4 (Zane Huy).

"...my wife would like to just know her father...there are three other really good reasons his three grandchildren:... They will never know a grandfather but this Mr. Gene. My father died summer of 1976. My mother, their grandmother died this May 15, 2008. We do not want anything from him but to know who he is and put the face with a name."

*Terry and Lisa Wood*

*Marshall, MO 65706  
417-468-2102*

## **THE VHPA IS LOOKING FOR HELP...**

The Membership Committee is interested in adding more Committee Members. We are especially interested in guys willing to call others from their flight class and/or Vietnam units. Additionally the Committee has some

other 'reach out' plans that we need to staff. New Committee Members will receive training (sounds very familiar, huh?) and will be given extra "tools" (such as rosters and follow-up lists) to help them. If you are interested or have questions, please contact the:

*Membership Chairman,  
Mike Law, [REDACTED]  
or by phone: [REDACTED]*

## **DEAR EDITOR,**

I just ordered an "Eye of the Tiger" print from Joe Kline. He advises that the customized print is now priced at \$125, not the \$100.00 shown in your July/August issue.

*Regards,  
Lane Liston. NGC '69*

## **JOE KLINE RESPONDS**

The prices for my standard version prints has remained unchanged for 14 years at only \$80.00 each, however I did raise the price for my customized prints to \$125.00 several years ago. Unfortunately, some of the ads that have ran in the *Aviator* in the past were outdated and did not reflect the new price structure. The new pricing has been reflected on my website ([www.joekline.com](http://www.joekline.com)) for quite some time and we will be extra careful to change any future advertising placed in *The Aviator*.

*Joe Kline. Gilroy, CA*

## **DEAR EDITOR,**

This summer, I ran across a former Viet Nam ground-pounder that is looking for the helicopter crew that saved his butt....maybe you will recognize yourself as one of the pilots that rescued this guy. Here's what George Dean remembers...

The date was 18 April 1969, in the Delta near Vinh Long Base Camp. While the details of their being wounded are sketchy in his mind, he vaguely remembers a mine field and tall, waist high grass, George was the RTO and called in the medevac, even though severely wounded himself. His Captain was KIA, the medic lost a piece of his ear and the Interpreter was probably wounded also.

George was assigned to the 7th of the First Air Cav (he remembers something about 164th Aviation) and is pretty sure that it was the C & C ship of that day that picked him up. They were taken to the "129th Hospital" according to George.

Does this ring a bell with anyone?? I told him I would put out the call to see if anyone responded. If you can help, please contact me at [REDACTED] or on our web site [www.dmzdustoff.org](http://www.dmzdustoff.org)

*Phil Marshall  
DMZ Dustoff 711*

*237th Medical Detachment, 1969*

## **THE THEME FOR THE NEXT VHPA AVIATOR WILL BE CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM**

**Have an interesting story  
or any photos you would like to share?**

*Please e-mail them to:  
Editor@VHPA.org*

*or mail them to HQ at:*

*[REDACTED]  
Citrus Heights, CA 95610*

**Don't hesitate to share your memories with our other members, any and all of your submissions will be carefully handled and quickly returned. And please don't delay, we need to get started on this special issue as soon as possible.**

**Thank you – David Adams, Editor**



## SCHOOL LOSES HIGH PERCENTAGE OF HELICOPTER PILOTS KIA IN VIETNAM

Sometime in the last few months I received a quarterly magazine from North Georgia College and University, the school I attended and graduated from in the late 60's. Then it was a Primary Military College turning out 90 to 125 regular and reserve officers each year. Most of those guys went on to see service in Vietnam. In this particular issue was an article about two of the 1966 graduates, Ralph Colley and Chuck Williams, who were seniors my freshman year. *Very interesting story.*

Included in the article was a picture of a monument with the engraved names of the 25 alumnae who were killed while serving in Vietnam.



Based on the number of guys from the school who served in country 25 is an extremely low number. Reading the names, several who were upperclassmen when I was there, I wondered if any were Helicopter Pilots. I pulled up the KIA list on the VHPA website and researched the names. I found 6 of the 25 were serving as Army Rotary Wing Aviators when they died. That's 24% of the guys from our school who were killed in action. I was surprised. I doubt any other school has that high of a percentage.

This year, during the Final Banquet in San Antonio, the Missing Man Toast took on even more meaning for me, if that is possible.

*Mike Sheuerman*

## Amanda Kay Speare Awarded VHPA Scholarship

The VHPA awarded 3 scholarships this year through the AAAA Scholarship Foundation, we will try to feature one recipient in each of the next three issues of The Aviator.

Our featured scholarship recipient for this issue is Amanda Kay Speare of Grand Forks, North Dakota. Amanda graduated #2 in her 2007 graduating class at Red River High School where she was a member of the National Honor Society. At Red River High School she received the Outstanding Senior Student Award, was elected 2006 Red River High School Prom Princess and was the speaker for her



high school at the Grand Forks Public Schools Honors Banquet. At her church, she served as a Kindergarten Sunday school teacher, sang in the choir and made numerous mission trips.

Amanda is now a sophomore at the University of Minnesota Duluth pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Musical Theater Performance with a Dance minor. Amanda expects to graduate in 2011, with a possibility of continuing towards a graduate degree. She is the daughter of CPT Gary Speare of Lakeland, FL.



**MILITARY HISTORICAL TOURS (MHT)** is proud to offer another in our series of historic tours to Vietnam. Come back with brother VHPA Aviators to visit places that have deep meaning for all helicopter pilots with names like Saigon, Cu Chi, Dong Tam, Phouc Vinh, Bien Hoa, An Loc, Long Bien, Da Nang, An Hoa, Quang Tri, An Khe, Pleiku, Tay Ninh, Tan Bien, Song Be, China Beach, Khe Sanh, Hanoi, Hoi An, Hue City, Quy Nhon, and many more. Only \$3395, includes round trip air from LA.

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& Julie Kink (L'il Sis)

Tour Leader: John Powell, 1/9 Cav

Note: If you enjoyed John Mackel's AA Report  
"Return to Vietnam" this is the tour for you!





*The Ghostriders send us this update on work being done at the Vietnam War Museum in Mineral Wells...*

## THE GHOSTRIDER NEWS

189th Assault Helicopter Company

(Vietnam) Association

August 2008

CAMP HOLLOWAY MEMORIAL WALL: Work is almost finished on the wall. A photo is located on the 52d CAB web page <http://52dcab.org/>. We will start placing the name plaques on the wall about September 7th, 2008. Donations are still needed to pay our bills and the 189th has been a majority contributor in donations.

Unfortunately we have had very few turn out to work. James Wood (189th) has worked his heart and butt off, working many days just after having surgery on his legs. Steve Schmidt has got his hands dirty more than once and, I am sure he will be back out to help with the finish. Johnny Lynch (179th)

came out for two weekends and laid rock. It has been rewarding and frustrating at times, but we do it for our brothers who did not come back as we did.

The dedication ceremony is scheduled for November 8,

2008 at 11:00 AM, rain or shine. A

new Holiday Inn Express is opening up in September at the entrance to old Ft. Wolters for those who would like a place to stay for the weekend. Watch the 52d

CAB web site for a phone number and a link for reservations. So make your plans now to attend. Full details will be available at the 52d CAB web page <http://52dcab.org/>



### 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

## STATUS OF THE 2009 VHPA CALENDAR PROGRAM

by Mike Law, Calendar Editor

I am pleased to announce that Turner Publishing now has our 2009 VHPA Calendar available for sale. This is our sixteenth year of publishing our own calendar for all the members to enjoy, you can order one by calling Turner Publishing directly at 1-800-788-3350, or through their web site at: [www.turnerpublishing.com](http://www.turnerpublishing.com). The 2009 issue is available for only \$14.95 each. There are a few copies of the 2008 Calendars available at a discounted price.

Just what is the VHPA's Calendar Project all about? The 'official goal' of the VHPA is to refresh the memories of all those who flew in or worked on helicopters in Southeast Asia, and to record, preserve and display the events and activities that were important to those who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The 'working goal' is to simply record our history and put smiles on people's faces. For the last few years about half the photo contributions to the calendar came from guys who were not pilots and even family members in behalf of deceased Vietnam Vets. I attend several Vietnam reunions each year and always make new friends who are happy to add their photos to the VHPA's collection. Trust me – when the VHPA prints someone's photo and tells their story; there is a smile on that face for sure! The photos are printed without borders in an 11 x 17 inch format. This guarantees a very powerful presentation. Sometimes you'd think you could even smell the JP-4 again!!

What does the Calendar Project cost the VHPA? Turner pays the VHPA a royalty fee based on sales but they bear all the production, advertising, and distribution costs. This reduces the VHPA's financial risks greatly. Year after year the VHPA adds high quality digital images to its photo collection and simultaneously develops the next calendar at no cost to the membership.

Are you interested in seeing part of the VHPA's Digital Photo Collection? Go to [WWW.VHPAPHOTO.ORG](http://WWW.VHPAPHOTO.ORG). Under the CALENDARS tab, you will see a short pull-down list. Click on 2000s and a second pull-down list appears. You will notice when there is nothing under a tab, trying to click on it does nothing. Click on the 2007 or 2008 tabs. You will see some header information that appeared in the publication, then a thumbnail version of each photo plus the narrative description that appeared with the photo. The photos appear in the sequential order printed in the publication. You can also see the owner of each photo.

Are you interested in loaning the VHPA some of your photos? We have already started gathering material for the 2010 issue. If you have photos that you believe deserve a wider audience or have friends that have good photos for our consideration, please contact me soon. Thanks for all those who have already shared their priceless photos, and priceless stories with the VHPA.

Mike Law, VHPA Calendar Editor

Unit 72, Denver, CO 80227,

[CALENDAR@VHPA.ORG](mailto:CALENDAR@VHPA.ORG)



# DAMN HELICOPTER PILOTS

"This true story is from a pilot who was in VMFA 314 with me at Chu Lai in '69. Just another day at the office! You Vietnam F4 guys will appreciate this amazing story!"

*Here's another "bad day" from Chu Lai:*

I was one of a half-dozen replacements who checked-in with MAG-13 in August. We were not all assigned to VMFA-314 though. There were two other combat squadrons in the Air Group: VMFA-115, the Able Eagles, and VMFA-323, the Death Rattlers. All three squadrons flew the McDonnell Douglas F4B Phantom II and shared common living areas. Although we may have been in different squadrons, eventually we all got to know each other very well.

The first thing we six rookies did was attend an Air Group briefing in an underground bunker protected by a thick layer of sandbags. This bunker served as our group intelligence center. Suddenly, an urgent radio call interrupted our briefing. We listened as one of VMFA-115's aircraft radioed-in to report a problem. The aircraft had been hit by enemy ground fire and could not lower its landing gear. The pilot was going to attempt a belly landing on the runway. At that news, we all raced outside near the runway to grab a good spot from which to watch the crash landing.

Crash crews raced to cover the runway with a layer of fire retardant foam while the damaged F4 circled overhead, burning down its load of fuel. Two arresting cables were strung across the middle of the runway. The cables were anchored on each end by a chain made with heavy, 40-pound links.

The plan was for the F4 to lower his tail hook, to belly-land in the foam, to catch one of the arresting wires, and to come to a screeching halt. It did not quite happen that way.

After burning off most of his fuel, the pilot gingerly lowered the airplane onto the foamed runway. A spark set off the fumes in the jet's empty wing tanks and they erupted into flames. All one could see racing down the runway were two wingtips protruding from an orange and black ball of fire heading toward the arresting cables. The F4 hit the first arresting cable. We watched the cable snap and hurl its 40-pound chain links skyward. Then the plane hit the second arresting cable. It also parted and flung its chain links. The aircraft was now just a ball of fire heading toward the end of the runway.

Then we heard, "Boom! Boom!" The pilot had lit his afterburners. He was attempting to take-off without wheels! As the aircraft roared toward the end of the runway, it slowly struggled skyward. It got airborne and began to climb nearly vertically. Then, both the pilot and his backseater, the radar intercept officer (RIO), ejected.

We stared in wonder as the aircraft crashed into the nearby ocean. The two crewmen slowly floated down in their parachutes. The wind carried them over the

ocean and they too soon splashed down.

A rescue helicopter was on the scene immediately. Both of the F4 crewmen, treading water, raised their right hand. This was a signal to the chopper that they were unharmed. The helicopter slowly lowered itself and plucked the pilot out of the water and into the safety of the helicopter. The helicopter then turned its attention to the RIO. As the helicopter slowly lowered itself over the

RIO, the helicopter pilot suddenly lost control of his chopper, and he crashed into the water atop the RIO. As soon as the chopper hit the water, its pilot regained

control, got airborne again, and yanked the RIO from the water. Although the RIO was rescued safely, his leg was broken when the helicopter crashed atop him.

That night at the Officers Club, the RIO sat with his leg elevated and encased in a full-leg cast. As he imbibed a few, he related his story: "First, we got the day-lights shot out of us. But, hey, that's okay. We weren't hurt. Then, we survived a belly landing. But, that was okay too. We weren't hurt. Then the pilot decided he'd take off without wheels, but that worked out well too. Then we survived an ejection and a water landing, but that was also okay. We weren't hurt. Then, the damn rescue helicopter crashed on me and broke my leg."



**Richard Yood, MAS**

**Gladiator 21**



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# OLD EDDIE By LaRue (Lash) D. Wisener

***It happened every Friday*** evening, almost without fail, when the sun resembled a giant orange and was starting to dip into the blue ocean. Old Ed came strolling along the beach to his favorite pier. Clutched in his bony hand was a bucket of shrimp. Ed walks out to the end of the pier, where it seems he almost has the world to himself. The glow of the sun is a golden bronze now.

Everybody's gone, except for a few joggers on the beach. Standing out on the end of the pier, Ed is alone with his thoughts . . . and his bucket of shrimp. Before long, however, he is no longer alone. Up in the sky a thousand white dots come screeching and squawking, winging their way toward that lanky frame standing there on the end of the pier. Before long, dozens of seagulls have enveloped him, their wings fluttering and flapping wildly. Ed stands there tossing shrimp to the hungry birds. As he does, if you listen closely, you can hear him say with a smile, "Thank you. Thank you."

In a few short minutes the bucket is empty. But Ed doesn't leave. He stands there lost in thought, as though transported to another time and place. Invariably, one of the gulls lands on his sea-bleached, weather-beaten hat — an old military hat he's been wearing for years. When he finally turns around and begins to walk back toward the beach, a few of the birds hop along the pier with him until he gets to the stairs, and then they, too, fly away. And old Ed quietly makes his way down to the end of the beach and on home.

If you were sitting there on the pier with your fishing line in the water, Ed might seem like "a funny old duck," as my dad used to say. Or, "a guy that's a sandwich shy of a picnic," as my kids might say. To onlookers, he's just another old codger, lost in his own weird world, feeding the seagulls with a bucket full of shrimp. To the onlooker, rituals can look either very strange or very empty. They can seem altogether unimportant . . . maybe even a lot of nonsense. Old folks often do strange things, at least in the eyes of Boomers and Busters. Most of them would probably write Old Ed off, down there in Florida. That's too bad. They'd do well to know him better.

His full name: Eddie Rickenbacker. He was a famous hero back in World War II. On one of his flying missions across the Pacific, he and his seven-member crew

went down. Miraculously, all of the men survived, crawled out of their plane, and climbed into a life raft.

Capt. Rickenbacker and his crew floated for days on the rough waters of the Pacific. They fought the sun. They fought sharks. Most of all, they fought hunger. By the eighth day their rations ran out. No food. No water. They were hundreds of miles from land and no one knew where they were. They needed a miracle.

That afternoon they had a simple devotional service and prayed for a miracle. They tried to nap. Eddie leaned back and pulled his military cap over his nose. Time dragged. All he could hear was the slap of the waves against the raft. Suddenly, Eddie felt something land on the top of his cap. It was a seagull!

Old Ed would later describe how he sat perfectly still, planning his next move. With a flash of his hand and a squawk from the gull, he managed to grab it and wring its neck. He tore the feathers off, and he and his starving crew made a meal — a very slight meal for eight men — of it. Then they used the intestines for bait. With it, they caught fish, which gave them food and more bait . . . and the cycle continued. With that simple survival technique, they were able to endure the rigors of the sea until they were found and rescued after 24 days at sea.

Eddie Rickenbacker lived many years beyond that ordeal, but he never forgot the sacrifice of that first lifesaving seagull. And he never stopped saying, "Thank you." That's why almost every Friday night he would walk to the end of the pier with a bucket full of shrimp and a heart full of gratitude.

***PS: Eddie (Rickenbacker) was also an Ace in WW I and the founder of Eastern Airlines.***

***P.S. from Lash, the author of the story.*** That's where I met him (Eddie Rickenbacker); at the Birmingham Alabama Airport in 1956, my Dad was a Ticket Agent with Eastern at that time. Eddie flew through and made a meet and greet stop for the Eastern Employees and my Dad took me so I could see him as my 8th birthday present. I had told my Dad that I wanted to be a Pilot when I grew up the year before after riding in the cockpit of an Eastern Convair 440. Sure enough Eddie picked me up when he came into the office in the back of the ticket counter. He asked me what I

wanted to be when I grew up, I said I have always wanted to be a Pilot! He broke up laughing that a 6 or 7 year old kid had "always wanted to be a pilot", and said to give him a call if I wanted to fly for Eastern. A little later in life, around 1978, I went to Swabish Hall Germany for a AH-1Q Cobra SIP Check Ride, and the SIP Check Pilot's name was 'Ernie Rickenbacker' a grand nephew of Eddie's. I had to tell Ernie about meeting Eddie. Ernie was also a fine aviator, he later became the Army Aviator of the Year. Eddie would have been very proud.

## ***A follow-on note from the Editor of the VHPA Aviator***

On September 17th, 2008 the VHPA was notified through our web site of the death of a retired "Fast Eddie" Ernie Rickenbacker (Blue Max 22). I immediately contacted the person who submitted the DAT notification and asked him to confirm that we had indeed just lost the man mentioned in the above story. Scott, Ernie's son, answered with the below note:

*David,*

*That is a beautiful story regarding the influence of "Eddie" Rickenbacker and how he nourished another love of aviation, especially at such a young and tender age. Yes, Ernest "Ernie" Rickenbacker was the SIP that was mentioned in the story. I was but a child while we were stationed in Germany and remember dad's military service while growing up. I too was influenced by my lineage and roots of aviation. Dad pinned my Warrant Officer Rank and Army Aviator Wings on me once I completed flight school at Fort Rucker, which was also the place he chose to retire. I am no longer in the service but continue to fly as an EMS pilot for Med-Trans Corporation in South Carolina. My sister is a Chief Master Sergeant and dad was honored to pin on her stripes as she attained the highest non-commissioned rank in the Air Force. Dad was proud of us, but we were more proud to have him as a mentor and a father.*

***He will be laid to rest at Arlington Cemetery on 2 Dec 2008 with full military honors. The world of aviation is at a loss, both military and civilian.***

***Thank you very much for the kind words. God Speed.***

***Scott A. Rickenbacker***



# Don Purser Recovers From Motorcycle Accident

**Don Purser's daughter** called me Monday morning, July 21st with some bad news. Don was involved in a motorcycle crash Sunday afternoon, July 20th, in Emerson, GA, near Cartersville. A drunk driver collided with Don's motorcycle in Don's lane.

While meeting a Honda Accord on a curve, the driver of the Honda crossed into Don's lane. Don swerved right in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid colliding. The impact resulted in him losing control of the bike. From what he told me, this initial impact is what caused the severe damage to his left leg. A witness stopped to render aid to Don likely saving his life.

As a result of the accident, his left leg was amputated below the knee, and his right arm was broken in several places requiring surgical reassembly with screws and steel. He was admitted to ICU at the Atlanta Medical Center for a several days prior to surgery on his leg and arm. Transfer to a regular room followed. Physical therapy began almost immediately after surgery, and, later Don moved to the Acute Care Unit there. Currently he is healing nicely, and he is scheduled to be dismissed tomorrow, Tuesday, August 5, after sixteen days in the hospital.

Don's resolute faith in God, combined with his positive attitude and cheerful nature through these trying times, provide inspiration to all who know and support him. He emphasizes that his injuries could have been much worse, and they do not compare with combat wounds many of his fellow servicemen suffered in Vietnam and other helicopter related accidents/incidents.

Don served as a LOH pilot with C Troop, 7/17 Cavalry from January to December 1971, and he was directly involved in the Lam San 719 operation.

Please keep Don in your thoughts and prayers during his recovery.

**Tom Nesbitt**

*Please note the attached email he sent to friends on August 4th. This was his first post since the accident, and his words reveal much about his character...*

**Today is my last day of rehab** at the hospital and I'll go home tomorrow. I can't begin to tell you how much your thoughts, prayers, cards, flowers, calls, visits, and gifts have meant to me. You have really lifted my spirits and helped my recovery. I thank God for each of you.

I have to say, I am blessed! My injuries could have been so much worse. I'm alive and the prognosis for my recovery is very good. I actually feel embarrassed discussing my injury and recovery when I think of what many of you have endured due to combat injuries, mine is nothing.

I'll go home tomorrow, with a wheelchair and a walker. It will be a couple months of recovery and healing before I can be fitted with a prostheses. At that point, I expect to be able to resume pretty much any activity I want to. I won't be resuming motorcycle riding. :-). As much as I love it, I've learned the pitiful lack of protection you have on a bike.

While I know nothing is risk free, I will not place myself in a position to have to go through this pain and process again. Once in a lifetime is enough! I've also seen all the sacrifice my family has made for me. God bless them, I so appreciate all they have done to accommodate and care for me. For all the bike riders, have fun and be careful. I'm not telling anyone not to ride but my riding days are done.

God's grace and healing has been so real to me through all this. All your prayers have given me strength and quickened my healing. I thank God for you all.

I probably won't be posting much at first. I feel better but the cast on my right arm and my lack of all day endurance will limit me for a while. But before long I hope to be back here as though nothing ever happened.

**Your friend, Don**



## HELP NEEDED FOR THE PHILADELPHIA REUNION

Greetings, your name here! Maybe you've heard that line before when you were asked or told to participate in the fun and games of the Vietnam War. Well, we have a few reunion events we are considering where we need some volunteer assistance. First, Jim Fulbrook is organizing the production of a film on the UH-1 preflight and starting procedures, which needs to be made before there are no longer any UH-1s in the Army inventory. For this production, we'd like to use a pocket checklist from the 1967-1972 timeframe. If you have one of these we can borrow, please contact Jim Fulbrook at 703.385.2999 or [REDACTED]

Next, the VHPA Executive Committee is thinking of organizing a morning Memorial Service to recognize our fallen comrades from Vietnam, as well as more recent losses among us. We need someone with a clergy back-

ground to preside over this event. We already have some good program ideas and Jim Fulbrook will assist in organizing this with whoever is willing to volunteer to perform this valuable service. In the past, we had a memorial service, but somehow we got away from it. We think it's time to bring it back for those who wish to attend. Don't worry; we will still have our "Missing Man" table tribute at the banquet. So, please contact Jim if you are interested and willing to consider helping put this important event on.

Finally, in San Antonio, we had a very successful Poker Event that raised a lot of money for the Scholarship Fund and was lots of fun for those who played. Jack Salm, our current President ran this event the last two years, but this year he will have his hands full with the whole reunion. So, we need someone to come forward to run this event. We already know how to pull it off and will have the chips and decks, but we need someone, to oversee it as a non-player. Please contact Jim Fulbrook



# SAN ANTONIO REUNION FOLLOWUP

## NEW BRAUNFELS 4TH OF JULY PARADE

To those of us who made it through the Vince Vance Show on Thursday night and where able to get up and get on the buses to New Braunfels Texas, we had a great morning. The citizens of Comal County proclaimed 4 July 2008 as Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association Day and had us as their guest for their annual parade through the town of New Braunfels.

We got there a little early for the parade, but that was OK, the town provided a beautiful building where we could walk around and stay cool until it was time to assemble for the parade. We formed and walked the four blocks

to the parade and waited for our place in line.

The town folks were great. They brought us water and keep us in a shady area where we could watch the other parade participants and enjoy the day. When it was our time to enter the parade we marched about 500 strong and proud. The town's people were gracious and caring. I can't tell you how many people stood up as we came by and saluted. Kids were offering high fives and it felt wonderful to be a part of their day.

We went around the town center and assembled under a beautiful large Oak tree, thank goodness for the shade and listened to the band, singers and speakers. I was asked to address the town at that spot and I thanked

them for their hospitality and was pleased to come to New Braunfels and celebrate with them, and bring along 500 of my closest friends.

After the parade we returned to the convention hall and had a great Bar-B-Q as only Texans can put on. Thank you Buck and Ozzy's Last Chance for the great spread. The food was tremendous. We also had the city donate all the beer and soft drinks we could consume.

I can not say enough to Roy Knippa and his helpers for setting this up and getting us there. We missed a lot back in the 70's, but with great folks like the county of Comal, they sure help heal old wounds.

**Mike Whitten**

## GENTLEMEN,

I wasn't sure who to send these pictures to, so I opted to fire for effect and targeted all of you. Obviously, as I was driving, I couldn't take pictures but we did manage to talk the City of New Braunfels photographer out of two pictures.



In the back of my 1929 Model A Ford Roadster pickup truck is active duty CW-4 Jim Bauer (Jim served with B Co. 159th ASHB, 101st Airborne Division, Varsity at Phu Bai, in '70-'71, I believe, and later with the 160th), and in the right passenger seat is Green Beret Sgt. Dallas Longstreath who, among other things was a Special Forces HALO jumper and did three or four tours in Vietnam including '69-'70 in I Corps working with aviation units who were supporting the Special Forces. And finally, that is me driving my Model A Ford with the Beetle Bailey cartoon that I cut out of the Dothan, Alabama newspaper on 11 January 1968 while I was in flight school. Mort Walker and King Features Syndicate, Inc., were kind enough to give us permission to use the cartoon in this and all future VHPA func-

tions. I was glad to hear from the feedback I got from Mike Nord and friends at the M.O.C., and people in the hotel bar, that everyone enjoyed the cartoon.

I'm sure some other members took some pictures during the parade and if anyone took and more photos of my truck, I would sure like to have them for my scrapbook. You may either send them as an attachment to a message to my e-mail account, or if they are of the hard-copy variety, then call or e-mail me for a mailing address.

*Sincerely,*

**Mike Maloy**

VHPA Life Member  
C Co. 159th ASHB, 101st Air-  
borne Division (Playtex)  
Phu Bai, Vietnam, '68-'69 and  
'69-'70

Retired Law Enforcement,

e-mail: [REDACTED]

## Historic Presentations and War Story Events Big Success at San Antonio

We had an exceptional slate of speakers present at the San Antonio reunion in our Historic Presentation Forum (HPF) and renowned War Story Contest (WSC). The WSC had 16 members come forward to tell there tales of heroics and antics that was well attended and "that ain't no sh\_t!" Jug Burkett (author of *Stolen Valor*) presented a luncheon presentation on The HPF included two presentations from Jug Burkett (author of *Stolen Valor*) at a bag luncheon and as our first speaker on 4 July. Jug talked about frauds and how the media distorted the war coverage.

John Plaster, a renowned Special Operations Group (SOG) hero during the Vietnam War, also gave two excellent presentations on SOG Air and grounds operations. Our own Joe Kline presented an illuminating talk on his profession as an artist and how he preserves our legacy. Finally, we were very fortunate to have Cheryl and Pat Fries come to our reunion for a second time to present video productions on "Donut Dollies" and a "Marine Coming Home." Cheryl and Pat own Arrowhead productions and they produced

"In the Shadow of the Blade" a few years ago that featured Vietnam helicopter pilots.

Well, all of the talks were well received and very well attended, as this was our third year organizing these events for you. It was also the first year we included them in our registration process and we appreciate that more of you have been coming to these events each year. Special thanks go out to all the speakers, to Mike Sheuerman for bringing John Plaster in, to Gary Roush and Doug Womack for helping organize the events, and to BJ Robinette for compiling the reunion DVD of the presentations. Yes, you can order the DVD of the WSC and HPFs from the VHPA reunion website. It should be available by the time this Aviator issue is published.

Finally, here we are again seeking new speakers for next year's reunion in Philly. Sign up now for next year's war story event and we are also seeking professional speakers for our HPF lineup as well. Please contact Jim Fulbrook at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] to sign up or make recommendations for future speakers and don't delay and order your San Antonio DVD today (go to [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org))!



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## 2011 THROUGH 2012 REUNION UPDATE.....

After very intense consultation the E.C. has selected Orlando, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; and San Francisco, California for our reunions in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

A most extensive, time consuming investigation was conducted where we looked at cities, prices, dates, available hotels, etc. It was determined early on that we would not consider hotels over \$150 per night, thus numerous hotels and cities were eliminated. The further we got away from the 4th of July the higher the cost climbed and it didn't matter whether it was pre-4th or post-4th of July, for all the period from May through October the prices were all in the \$200 a day + category.

Then, taking our recent membership survey into consideration, we selected the above mentioned cities based on popularity with the VHPA membership. Granted, the top three (Orlando, Washington, DC and Atlanta) were not the

three cities selected; only Orlando made the list, but we did come up with three cities that were high on the original list. So, after taking costs and popularity into consideration, we then moved onto scheduling dates that again reflected a part of the Membership's desire to shift the Reunion away from the 4th of July Holiday. We finally settled on setting the dates of 6-10 July, 2011 for our Orlando Reunion; 18-22 July, 2012 for our New Orleans Reunion; and 3-7 July, 2013 for our San Francisco Reunion. This way we have the first two reunions on other than the 4th of July holiday, and the third reunion will be back on the 4th.

After this trial period we should be able to determine if off the 4th makes any appreciable difference in attendance and when it comes time to negotiate the next Reunion contract we should have a pretty good idea of when to schedule the reunions for 2014 and beyond. We realize that everyone will not be happy with the time or cities selected, but hopefully the majority of our members will understand the selection process system better.

*Jack Salm, President*

## "Military Truisms"

"If the wings are traveling faster than the fuselage, it's probably a helicopter -- and therefore, unsafe."

"If shot down, it is generally inadvisable to autorotate into the area you just prep'ed for the Huey's CA"



# VIETNAM VETERAN UH-1D TAKES FINAL "FLIGHT"



On August 16, 2008, aided by an Army surplus mobile crane, a Bell Helicopter Model UH-1D took its final "flight" to the top of a post 16 feet above the North Texas prairie. The aircraft, serial number 65-10068, served 3 tours in Vietnam during the war, and is now the property of The National Vietnam War Museum. Because the "Huey" is arguably the most recognizable symbol of the Vietnam War, the museum felt it was important to have it visibly displayed on the

Corvette Club of North Texas, and a special contingent from the 71st Aviation Company.

During its first tour in Vietnam, 65-10068 served with the "Rattlers," the lift platoon of the 71st Aviation Company. On December 8, 1966, during an 8-ship lift of troops from the 5th Mechanized Division, the aircraft began taking fire from a small schoolhouse near their landing area located in the notorious HoBo Woods region northwest of Saigon, a known hotbed of enemy activity. The escorting "Firebird" gunships did not return fire because they could see a number of small children in and around the schoolhouse. On the third trip from the pickup zone, while flying low level,

Carlock, the Firebird pilot who provided the details of the incident. Accompanying them was former Crew Chief Ron Seabolt.

Another Crew Chief from Vietnam was Jerry Staggs, the project manager for the "Hoist the Huey" project. Jerry was assigned to the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company, "Blackcats", in Vietnam and restored 65-10068 in his unit's markings. While the aircraft never served with this unit, it was the project manager's prerogative to select the restoration scheme, and the aircraft will serve as a representative of all the Huey's and units that served in Vietnam, honoring all the men and women who served in that war.

The entire "Hoist the Huey" project was completed with volunteer labor and in-kind donations. In addition to Jerry Staggs, the project donors were Ace Hardware of Mineral Wells; American Concrete; Bell Helicopter; Crosstex Energy; Eggleston, Flowers, & King law firm; Smith Steel Fabrication; Tejas Coach Works; and Friends of the Museum who supplied the labor.

While the other current museum projects move forward, this aircraft will sit silently overlooking U.S. Highway 180 as a symbol of the museum to come to all who pass by. With the Huey now raised, the museum is planning for our next event, the dedication of the Camp Holloway wall replica on November 8. Members of the 52nd Aviation Battalion have already begun booking hotel space

in Mineral Wells for this event, and are expecting another large turnout. The wall itself is complete, and in September, volunteers will begin affixing



71st AHC Crewmembers

property, both to mark our location, and to honor all the men and women who served. The aircraft will serve to represent the over three million veterans to whom this aircraft meant so much.

This particular aircraft served in Vietnam with the 71st Aviation Company; Company C, 101st Aviation Battalion; and the 1st Transportation Battalion (Seaborne). The Huey also served with units in Thailand, Germany, the United States, and was even on loan to NASA for six months.

The "Hoist the Huey" party, as it was labeled by the museum, drew a crowd of over 1,000 people to the museum property on an unusually mild August morning. An honor guard of twenty-two riders from the Patriot Riders motorcycle club attended and stood tall, holding American flags at the back of the crowd during the entire ceremony. Other groups in attendance included the

the flight took heavy automatic weapons fire from the same area. This time the gunships opened fire and silenced the enemy automatic weapons. However, 65-10068 had taken two hits, and both struck SP4 Ernest Palmieri, the aircraft Crew Chief. Captain Doug Hopkins, Aircraft Commander, and Major George Jackson, Pilot, immediately notified the other aircraft in the flight that they were breaking out of the formation and proceeding directly to the field hospital at nearby Cu Chi base. They radioed ahead and had an ambulance waiting, but Specialist Palmieri had died instantly. To honor him, his name and the date of the incident are stenciled on the left hand cargo door of the aircraft. Representing the 71st Aviation Company at the days festivities were former pilots Paul Beverung, Doug Hopkins, the aircraft commander on that fateful day, and Chuck



the plaques honoring members of the battalion lost in Vietnam, in preparation for the formal dedication. In addition, the museum is working to try to complete and install our replica of the Vietnam Memorial prior to year's end. Both the Camp Holloway Wall, in the Contemplation Garden, and the Memorial replica, in the Vietnam Memorial Garden, will be finished off with plantings to complement the currently open Meditation Garden.

*The National Vietnam War Museum is a 501 (c) (3) organization incorporated in the State of Texas. For information about the museum, and donation opportunities, visit our website at [www.nationalvnmuseum.org](http://www.nationalvnmuseum.org), or contact us at P.O. Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068-0146.*



# OUR NEXT REUNION IN PHILADELPHIA ~

## ...A CITY VASTLY REVITALIZED AND ENHANCED!

Your reunion committee just completed (in late September) the initial planning visit to Philadelphia, and over the next few weeks we will be locking down and contracting all the events and activities associated with our upcoming reunion in July 2009. However one initial observation was highly visible and jumped out at us ... the Center City – downtown area of Philadelphia we saw now is dramatically revitalized, enhanced, and vibrant relative to years past.

Two of our reunion committee members were at our last Philadelphia reunion way back in 1994. Their comment ... “we are absolutely in a totally different City ... trendy, active, modernized, plenty of night life, and more restaurants and things to do that you could imagine”. Trolleys run up and down the streets .. and for a small amount you can ride them all day ... stopping at over 20 locations as you wish. Horse carriages run up and down the streets, the people are friendly, and gone are some of the distractions of years past.

Our host hotel is the newly refurbished downtown Marriott located a block from City Hall, right in the middle of things. All you have to do is walk out the door ... and it's all there. We saw many people ... visitors and locals ... all walking from place to place at all hours of the day and night. This now is a City with a very significant night life with more to do that most can imagine.

To the West is the Museum District, with the beautiful tree lined “Parkway”, with all the museums, parks, galleries, and much more. To the east is the old Cultural District, Chinatown, and Independence National Historical



Park, where the Liberty Bell now resides adjacent to the newly built National Constitution Center. Along the way on and adjacent to the streets, and in many of the museums and historic areas themselves are numerous restaurants of all types and price ranges ... some boutique, some trendy, some nationally known, some very upscale, some cost efficient. Take your pick - the choice is yours.

The river area has been cleaned up, rebuilt, and now is a shining complement to the new City ambiance and spirit. Called the Historic Waterfront District, it is home to a bevy of restored ships from every era from a 4 mast sailing ship (converted into a great restaurant) to Admiral Dewey's flag ship Olympia, to the Battleship New Jersey, which served in Vietnam during our era there. The New Jersey is moored just across the channel on the Jersey side near a beautiful aquarium. A short ferry ride links both sides of the river at this point. Nearby is a Vietnam Memorial park complete with a wall honoring those lost from this part of the Country.

In summary, there is at least as much to do, see, and experience here in today's Philadelphia as you experienced in

Washington DC three years ago ... and most of it is more accessible distance wise, at less cost. That's the good news. However, the bad news is that VHPA is not the only one's who have figured this out. Major groups from overseas have booked thousands of hotel rooms – some over the 4th of July weekend next year. The City is not only going to be vibrant, it is going to be full.

If you drove to our reunion in Washington DC a few years ago, you can drive to Philadelphia almost as easy. Philadelphia is just a 90 minute ride north from DC up Interstate 95, or about 2 hours south of New York, using mostly the NJ Turnpike. Also gone are the super expensive airfares that plagued Philadelphia years ago. Southwest has a major hub in PHL, and thus the fares these days are very competitive. There are trains that connect the airport to downtown thru 30th street station, or just take a cab with a fixed price of \$27 from the airport to hotel. High speed trains run from Boston, New York, DC, and Baltimore to Philadelphia. You can't say you can't get there. Make it happen!

Booking your hotel room early this year is going to be important. Our room block at the Marriott is for VHPA members and their guests only ... but as this article is written it does not appear we can obtain more during our reunion period. Another international group has absorbed almost all the remaining rooms beyond our block, as well as many other hotels in the city. Thus our strongest recommendation ... book early this year. It is very likely we will exhaust our room block prior to 30 days before the reunion, when our room block reservation expires.

Our next newsletter will have much more information regarding our reunion activities once we can lock down specifics and pricing ... but we anticipate a number of very unique and special “all membership” events as well as smaller day tours will be available to you ... many that you could not do on your own. Our plan is also to have a “free day” where you can take advantage of the City and all its activities without conflicting with a major VHPA activity.

For now, what you need to do is to “red circle” your calendar and make plans to attend the VHPA reunion during the first week of July. Precise dates and more details will be forthcoming shortly. We anticipate registration to open in early January ... and as noted above, certain events and very likely our overnight room block WILL sell out early. See you there!

*Your reunion committee:*

*Dana Young  
Dave Rittman  
Joe Bilitzke*

## Interested in advertising in The VHPA Aviator?

1/4 page black and white ad - \$125.00, 1/2 page black & white ad - \$250.00

Full page black & white ad - \$500.00, full color ad's are available

on the Back Cover, rates by request.

*Contact Mike Sheuerman at: [Membeship@VHPA.org](mailto:Membeship@VHPA.org) for details*



# CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH

Our chapter had a fun time hosting a lot of old friends at the VHPA reunion in San Antonio. Thanks to everyone who donated at the Mobile Officers Club (MOC) and helped us all have fun together. That's what reunions are all about - visiting with old friends and making new ones. Now VHPACCN is looking forward to attending the VHPA reunion in Philly with the MOC again carrying all of the VHPA's HQ admin support equipment and records to the reunion site.

While we had to cancel some of our Chapter fun this summer - a golf game and a BBQ - we'll be taking our Huey and the MOC to the Elk Grove Veterans Day Parade and we are looking forward to the Christmas party. We will also be attending the 20th Anniversary celebration of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in downtown Sacramento December 10-14, 2008. For info about this really big event see CAVietnamMemorial.com.

*Ken Fritz, President*

## FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

The chapter will meet at Logan's Roadhouse in Hurst, TX on Saturday, September 6th at 11 AM. Food and drink will be consumed in the finest aviator tradition.

*Adam Stezcko, President.*

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

Our breakfast meetings for this period are scheduled for J. Christopher's Restaurant in Marietta, GA on 4 October and 6 December, 2008, we start at 0900.

Jim Torbert is again hosting his annual "To Die For Chili and Beer Extravaganza" on 8 November, 1100, at his home. The Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association (AVVBA) is hosting its AVVBA Golf Tournament on 19 September to benefit "Vets Help Vets, Inc" an organization dedicated to lending a hand to disabled veterans. They provide home renovations to assist permanently injured vets by improving living conditions in their daily surroundings. The Georgia VHPA chapter is donating \$300 to sponsor a hole and ...in keeping with our well deserved reputation as "aviators" we are donating \$500 for "drinks" on the course.

*Bill Stanley, President*

## MID SOUTH CHAPTER

There will be a cookout at Pete's house the first weekend in October. We now hope to have the TH-55 flying by Christmas. We have also obtained two trailers,

one will be used for the TH-55 helicopter and one is planned for the LOH we are hoping to soon obtain.

On 15-26 August we had a booth at the Wilson County Fair where over 500,000 people attended. While there we got 15-20 applications for membership. We are converting an old building on the fair grounds, left over from WWII, to be used as a military museum and we had it open for the first time this year. We also sold soda and popcorn at the fair and all the proceeds raised went to Feed Vets program, a program for needy vets and families.

*"Pete" Norman IV, President*

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

We will be participating in the air show in Albemarle, NC on November 1 and 2. You are invited to join us there..

*J.D. Lawson, President.*

## OHIO RIVER CHAPTER

Mark your calendars now for our annual meeting to be held at the Louisville Downtown Holiday Inn on Friday, 7 March 2009. Our banquet speaker and distinguished guest is going to be Joe Galloway of "We Were Soldiers Once and Young" fame. All VHPA'ers and guests (flight crew members, etc.) are welcome.

We will also hold a business meeting and election of officers. (Yea!!!) We are noted for many great door prizes, great fellowship, friendly atmosphere and fun even though we only meet annually (we all believe that "if you do it right, once is enough".) That said, our members are involved in a variety of veterans outreach programs that serve service members and their families. I have been associated with the USA Cares program since its inception, we provide direct assistance through grants (not loans) to members of all the services and their families. Please go to [www.USACares.org](http://www.USACares.org) and consider sharing a minute with our troops. Other members work with other programs; one member volunteers to drive a limo during Kentucky Derby Week and donates the fees to a local charity. As you can see, though we only meet annually, we are busy throughout the year.

*John Flanagan, President*

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

The Rocky Mountain Chapter took our Helicopter War Museum to Thornton Col-

orado for the July 4th Weekend and we were part of the action including The Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall. The 101st Army Band, and were honored guests at a dinner. Rick Beaver knew that Artie Guererro was the guest speaker. Artie was a LLRP team member with the Cav in 1967. His team was surrounded by a large enemy force and a B/229th Pilot, Jim Bracewell, did an unescorted emergency extraction to pull the entire team out under fire. Rick flew with Jim in B/229th and invited him out to Colorado to attend the ceremonies. The weekend was very moving experience with the wall, Arie, Jim Bracewell, and Jim and Char Branaugh, who coordinated the event. Jim Branaugh's brother, Larry, also flew with Bracewell and Beaver and was killed 4/19/68 in a gun battle on the ground after his slick was shot down during an assault. Arti Guerrero and his wife will be guests at our September Chapter meeting and spouse tour at Golden, Colorado.

On August 15th we took the Helicopter War Museum to the Armed Forces Appreciation Weekend in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Cripple Creek is a small town in the mountains that features gambling and other tourist attractions. The temperature might have gotten up to 45 degrees and it rained most of the time until Sunday afternoon in time for a WWII C45, (that is an old Beach 18 fixed wing), to make several low passes. Col McPherson, Cripple Creek's City Manager, coordinated the event and also owns two Mike-Model Huey's. One is almost fully restored, armed with rocket tubes and M60 kits it was on static display. About all this aircraft needs is hydraulic fluid, oil and fuel and it could be made flyable with just minor work. The town also ran several WWII battles with half tracks over a mock town between the US and some German outfit, the German forces were 0 for 12 in holding the town.

All in all a good time was had by the RMC pilots and brave wives that supported the effort.

*Rick Beaver*

*President, Rocky Mountain Chapter*

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Our annual meeting will be held on Saturday, October 4th at 10 AM and the primary goal will be increasing membership. The meeting will be held at the Newport Beach American Legion.

*Ed Holguin, President*



# CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## VHPA of FLORIDA

We have four helicopters that we display at the Veterans Memorial Park and Museum here in Tampa. The OH-6 is mounted on a trailer and is small enough to take to various events and schools in the area where we display it and present information on the Vietnam War.

*In the next few months here is the schedule:*  
8 and 9 November the OH-6 and VHPAF will be at Clearwater Military Appreciation Day events in Clearwater, FL. The organizers will have the Travelling Vietnam Memorial Wall

there along with many other activities. We will have our displays including applications for joining the VHPA

15 and 16 November the VHPAF and our OH-6 will set up at Rib Fest in St. Petersburg. We did this for the first time last year and had thousands attend. The organizers have top name bands and BBQ ribs from all over the country; these events are great exposure for our chapter and gives us the opportunity to get new members for both us and the VHPA. We also go to at least 2 schools a month to talk to the students about Vietnam. Most

high schools here have classes for the seniors about Vietnam.

Last, our annual reunion will be 3-5 October in Panama City, FL.

*Don Welch, President*

## WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

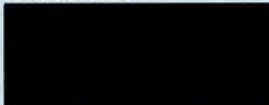
Our chapter is meeting on the 13th of September in the Veterans Museum in Chahalis, WA at 10AM. After the meeting there will be guided tours of the displays, all members are encouraged to bring items to donate to the museum.

*Paul Fleming, President*

## VHPA CHAPTERS

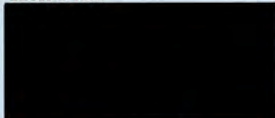
### Arizona Chapter

Bill Sorenson



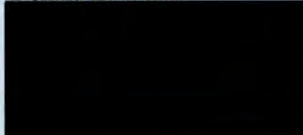
### California Chapter North

Ken Fritz



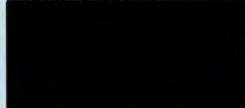
### VHPA of Florida

Donald L. Welch



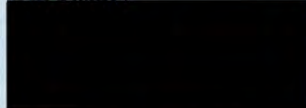
### Fort Wolters Chapter

Adam Steczko



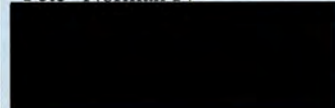
### Georgia Chapter

Bill Stanley



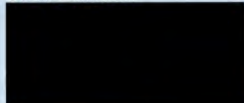
### Mid South Chapter

"Pete" Norman IV



### North Carolina Chapter

J.D. Lawson



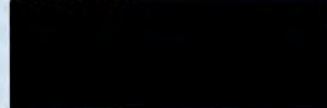
### Ohio River LZ Chapter

John Flanagan



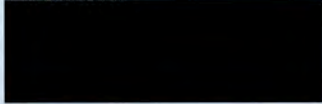
### Rocky Mountain Chapter

Rick Beaver



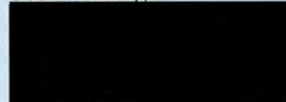
### Southern California Chapter

Ed Holguin



### Washington State Chapter

Paul Fleming



[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.

**The VHPA is proud to announce that VHPA Life member JOHN PENNY has agreed to be our organization's official Book Reviewer.**

John has a degree in English (and maybe history) and has worked as a school teacher for many years. In the true VHPA spirit, John "volunteered" to be our official Book Reviewer after having a long "chat" with Mike Law as they all waited in the San Antonio airport for their ride home after our last Reunion. For those of you who don't know Mike Law, beware, he can be very "persuasive" at times.

Mike and his wife Janet have just relocated from Oregon to Ellensburg, Washington. We hope that John will become a regular contributor to the VHPA Aviator as more and more Vietnam aviation novels are being released each month.



Please see other available limited edition, full-color prints on my website: [www.joekline.com](http://www.joekline.com)

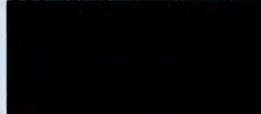
Prints are available in standard versions, or customized with your unit markings.

Satisfaction is guaranteed.

A new Huey Gunship print is Coming Soon!



Joe Kline Aviation Art





# After Action Report - Return to Vietnam

Part 3 of a 3 Part Series ~ By John Mackel

## Chapter Six – the Second Half of Our Trip, North to Da Nang

Early the next morning we headed north to Da Nang. This ended the first half of our trip and now we were headed to an area of VN that I had heard a lot about but had never seen. So far we had been in country six days. Before I describe the next phase of this trip I have to say I need another trip to the old AO and next time I want to travel further north of Song Be. I said this earlier but I didn't get enough time to see all I wanted to see. I spent a year in VN in and around Phouc Vinh and came back for a week. It wasn't enough but it was something I would recommend to all VN vets. I can think of a lot of reasons to go back and re-experience VN. You don't need to go back to cleanse your soul or shake out the ghosts, not that some shouldn't go for that reason but in my opinion most of us missed the cultural experience. We never got to know the people. They are good, hard working, dedicated family people that experienced very difficult times in the 60's and 70's. I know we corrupted a bunch of them and some took advantage of us but what can you expect. I never knew the people or the country and the first time I didn't really care to see it up close and personal. I wanted to fly helicopters, do what was expected of me, not die, and come home. Those were valid expectations but now I had a chance to see it from another angle and it was worth it in my opinion.

Going to Da Nang required another trip to Tan Son Nhut airport. I checked out the 90th Replacement Depot again and all the revetments and then we took off in a Boeing 767 Air Vietnam passenger jet. At least the Vietnamese buy American cause it's the best. Makes me a little guilty about thinking of buying a Toyota product. Tang almost got left because Jeanie had a little too much weight in her baggage and Tang had to deal with the baggage guys. Tang was the man.

As some of you know Danang is located in a beautiful spot on the coast surrounded by

mountains. We stayed at the Green Bamboo Hotel, a medium size three and a half star place somewhere in the middle of the chaos of the city. Now we were in Marine Country and the marine vets were starting to stir. This was Tang's hometown and Garr's turf and it seemed they knew everybody in town. We arrived in Da Nang early and after checking into the Hotel we drove west of the city and visited the location where Dick Walker had set up an artillery position in 1965. Dick was part of the first detachment of Marines to land at Da Nang in 65 and was given the mission of sealing off the Dai La Pass into the city. The geography was the same but "development creep" had set in. Now the rice paddies were gone and houses and industrial warehouses had started to move out to where he had been. It took Dick a little time to wander over the terrain and remember where his HQ was situated and where the artillery pieces had been set up. He



Road sign on the way to Khe Sahn. Believe me you get a very different perspective of Viet Nam from the ground Vs. from a helicopter at 1,500'.

From the Dai La Pass we head to the South China Beach area. The old US revetments that housed F-4 Phantoms are still there but now the area has been taken over by the Vietnamese military. We can see Marble Mountain in the distance.

We stop and take pictures and then we take off for Hong Hai, an old port city where Garr, Powell and the Government Tourist Agency wanted us to visit for the silk clothes stores and history. We watched silk worms in action and I purchased a silk robe (fantastic and cheap), and scarves, pajamas and ties for



The Citadel at Hue, scene of vicious fighting by both US Marine and US Army soldiers during the battle of the Tet Holiday in 1968.

sons, daughter in laws and grandchild. Also went to really nice restaurant out in this area with little ponds. It was extremely Oriental and serenely beautiful.

The next day we resumed our tour of the area around Da Nang. We visited Marble Mountain and hiked up thru it's hollow middle. It was a tough hike up through the mountain but the hike down on the outside after we reached the top was no stroll in the park for a bunch of older middle-aged folks. The view however was worth the effort. Once down there is some beautiful marble merchandise at the shops at the bottom. After this we drive around the area and visited some sites that have some real meaning to the marines that were with us. TT Woods, Hill 55, and Dodge City were some of the areas that Garr pointed out where the marines had done some heavy fighting. Just west of Hill 55 Tony had been wounded and come very close to dying. He pointed out where he was just west of Hill 55 while we told his story of how he was wounded during a firefight with the NVA. He was a very very lucky guy. Really some beautiful country and the people treated us very well. That night we all piled into rickshaws for a short ride to dinner and sightseeing. Nights in VN cities are active. I think everyone eats out and everyone moves around on scooters.

Early the next day we packed up and headed for Hue. It was at this point that Mike Sprayberry separated from our group. He headed west with Tony, his GPS and Tang for a little side trip to the A Shua Valley. He wanted to revisit the site where he and his unit, D 5/7 Cav, 1st Cav Division, had had a major run in with the bad guys. The plan was



# After Action Report - Return to Vietnam

to pick him up on the return leg of our circuitous trip over the HaiVan pass to the DMZ west to Khe Sanh, Camp Carroll, Camp Eagle and other historical locations. On the way Garr and Bob Weekly gave us all a little running commentary of how important the HaiVan was in the defense of Da Nang. Bob was stationed out west with his artillery unit in 72 and brought his unit back thru the pass in

the closing days of the war when the Americans were allowing the ARVN to fight their own war. The scenery up and over the Hai Van pass is spectacular. There are places along the coast that would be fabulous sites for ocean resorts with golf courses and other amenities. I would suspect that in

another 10 years that area will be full of resorts.

We made a few stops along the way but once in Hue Garr took us on a walk along the route the Marines took during the battle for Hue during Tet 68. Most of us have seen the documentaries of the battle so as Garr explains how the marines fought street-by-street, and building-by-building I could visualize the action. After that we checked into our Hotel, which used to be the Quarters for the ARVN generals during the war. It was a very elegant place right on the Perfume River. Our afternoon was free so Luke and I walked around the city and stopped in bars for a beer with names like Khe Sanh or DMZ where you could get M-16 or AK-47 shots and the Why Not on Phi Knong Par Street.

The next day we toured the Citadel and Garr continued with the battle stories of TET 68. The Citadel is a huge tourist attraction for Vietnamese and foreigners alike. It was a neat place to visit. Luke made an acquaintance with a young Vietnamese girl that was studying engineering and she invited him out to dinner on her scooter. She took him by her house where he met her mom, dad and siblings and then they went to an outdoor restaurant. He got real "Immersed in the Culture". The rest of us went to dinner on a floating restaurant on the Perfume River. Very enjoyable.

Next day we were up early and headed

north. On the way we stopped at Camp Evans. It was devoid of any trace of any presence of human habitation just like the spots in the southern part of the country. However the area had large electrical towers and looked like it was about to become a large construction site. Keel had called this place home the first half of his tour and Powell had been here a short time before heading south soon after he arrived in country.

Leaving Camp Evans we headed up to the old DMZ. Our target was the Vin Loc tunnel just north of the DMZ. These tunnels were used by the NVA to cache supplies that came down by boat. Interesting

place and very similar to the Chu Chi tunnels. From here we drove back south and stopped at Cau Tung beach for some swimming and refreshments, then to Dong Ha. This was the site of the heroic exploits of Marine Major Rippley who blew up the Dong Ha Bridge to stop the NVA tanks and troops from crossing. However from a tourist perspective Dong Ha is no Hue. We stayed in a 1 star hotel very similar to the hotel we stayed at in Tay Ninh.

That night we went to a restaurant across the street and ate dinner on the roof of a four-story building. Food was good, there was plenty of beer and the company was great. We were nearing the end of the trip and everyone had become good friends and enjoyed each other's company.

Next day we were up early and headed west. Our trip agenda was Camp Carroll, Khe Sanh, Camp Eagle and points between, plus we were going to pick up Mike and Tony. Overall my impression of this part of

Viet Nam was the rugged terrain and the short distance from the coast to the border of Laos. With North Vietnam so close and the west side of the country so open and with no "pursuit policy" across the border it's surprising we held onto this territory as well as we did. There is no doubt in my mind we fought this war with one hand tied behind our back. Could you imagine Ike telling his Generals not to pursue the Germans into Belgium or Germany but they could come onto your turf to have raise havoc. They wouldn't have been the so-called "Greatest Generation" allowing that crap now would they? But our leaders who were part of that greatest generation imposed those restrictions on the war we were fighting. What the Hey?

Khe Sanh is one place that the government of VN maintained some history of the American War and to display the spoils of war. Khe Sanh is on a plateau surrounded by mountainous terrain. It's a beautiful site that really doesn't look like it did 40 years ago. Now there is small museum with some static displays of helicopters, old cannons and fake bunkers. It's on about a 10-acre area. Surrounding the area is a coffee farm.

We also visited Camp Carroll and this location has a lot of history. It was a fire support base that contained long-range 175mm howitzers that supported the surrounding bases to the west and north. One of many interesting points of history related to Camp Carroll is that it was surrendered by its ARVN commander Colonel Dinh to the NVA in 1975.

Colonel Dinh earned the sobriquet "Young Lion" during TET 68 when he personally placed the South Vietnam colors atop the citadel in Hue. The loss of Camp Carroll was a major blow to South Viet Nam as the NVA marched

toward Hue and Da Nang.

Camp Eagle was a highway intersection with a little village surrounding it. Nothing remained of its existence.



A "US Air Force"?? Huey on display at the military museum at Khe Sahn. The area today is a very large coffee plantation.



What is left of an old French fortification that guards the apex of the Hai Van pass, a beautiful area located just north west of DaNang.



# After Action Report - Return to Vietnam

By mid-day we were south of Khe Sanh and heading east into the A Shau. By 1 PM we linked back up with Mike, Tony & Tang and had lunch in one of small villages. That night we were back in Da Nang and the next morning we were up and flying to Hanoi.

Our trip was coming to an end but Luke and I had one more thing to accomplish. I had asked Garr before we left if we could play golf in Viet Nam and he had set us up a tee time in a course about 30 kilometers west of Hanoi. We skipped the tour of Hanoi but I figured we could do that next time because I wanted to say I played golf in VN. This turned out to be a better experience than I had anticipated.

A driver picked up Luke and I at the airport and gave us a hair-raising ride out to Kings Island Golf Resort. The city of Hanoi is kind of sterile looking to me and the countryside until you get close to the golf course is flat. The mountains start to rise just as we near our destination and the driver pulls into a large parking lot where a bunch of fancy cars are parked with drivers hanging around in groups talking. The parking lot is bordered by the Dong Mo Lake. This lake surrounds the golf course. We are the only Westerners within 50 miles. Our driver motioned us to a small dock at the edge of the parking lot. Everybody looked at us like we were aliens from outer space.

The parking lot is nice with huge shade trees and an ornamental stone fence surrounding it. We get on a small motorboat with four Vietnamese and it takes us across to the course. It was really classy. I took pictures and movies on the boat and narrated the scenes not knowing the Vietnamese could understand English. I wasn't saying anything bad, just commenting on the fancy situation in a communist country. One of the Vietnamese asks Luke who we were and he tells them we are on a Military Tour and I had fought in Viet Nam back in 69. That seemed to interest him and he then told us about the course and translated for us. At the dock on the course side of the lake we had a same fancy ornamental stone fence but a line of women that served as caddies. There must have been 30 or more all dressed out in peasant clothes with the

cone shaped hat. With two assigned to us and following our new friend we walked up to the clubhouse. The guy that befriended us was a high Communist official and a member of the Club. He told the girl at the clubhouse that Luke and I were his guests and we got a reduced rate. It wasn't cheap but it was less than I had planned for. We got there about 12:30 and it was hot and humid, probably about 98 or 100 degrees with 85% humidity. It was like playing golf in Houston in August. But it was really pretty and every six holes or so there were these small fancy refreshment centers built into the side of a hill under shade trees. Luke and I took advantage of those and recouped our fluid loss with COLD Tiger

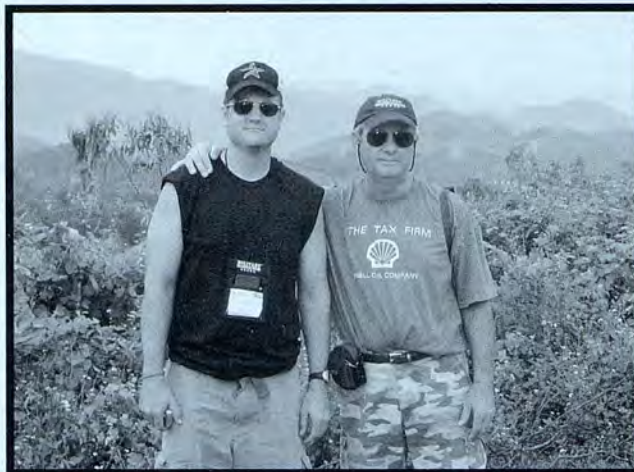
Tiger Beers. Here we ran into Bob Bicknell, an American and the managing director of the golf resort. He was a really a nice guy and sat down and talked to us and wanted to know all about what we had been doing. He was about 42, married to a Vietnamese woman and had worked here for about 15 years. Before this job he worked in Thailand. He had been in Asia for most of his life. Meanwhile our Communist friends came in and we had a few beers with them. We had a great time.

Time was getting late so we shook hands with our new comrades and took the motorboat ride back across the lake. Our driver was waiting and he dropped us off at the Hotel where the rest of our tour buddies were hanging out. We freshened ourselves up, had a quick dinner with them and then we all took off for the airport for our long ride home.

I can't say enough of how much I enjoyed this trip. One big reason was because everybody really got along together well. Another reason is that Viet Nam is a beautiful country. The people are industrious hard working souls that have strong family ties. If there are any fat people in Viet Nam I didn't see any. They are a homogeneous group of people that basically all look alike. I started to miss the differences we have back in America after about ten days. But this is a trip not to be

undertaken lightly. As I say in the beginning of this report, this trip is an adventure. For example, you stay in real nice accommodations but when you travel the hinterlands you stay in some nice, clean places but not necessarily as bug free as hotels in the States, but the lizards help out in that category.

Our guides, Powell, Garr and Tang of Military Tours were fantastic. They knew the geography, the people, the restaurants, the shops, the history, the war stories and whatever else you need to know. And thanks to our traveling companions JP, Captain Garr, David & Renee, Mike, Julie, Jeanie, Bob, Dick, Terry and Tony. You were great traveling buddies and made our trip more enjoyable. .



*John Mackel (the author) and his son Luke taken in the highlands of Viet Nam.*

Beers. These Vietnamese were living large. Our little female caddies were terrific. They cleaned our golf balls after every shot and gave us putting tips. The caddies were women from the surrounding villages and they just caddied on the weekends. They were both married and both spoke some English. Luke's caddy spoke better English than mine and as we walked the course they told us about their families and how they liked being caddies. They didn't act aware of any conflict America had with VN and we didn't discuss it. They were just two nice women that accepted their lot in life and were working for a few extra easy bucks. They made all their money on tips so naturally we tipped them as generously as any ugly American could be expected. After 18 holes we were bushed so we stopped in the clubhouse for a couple more

**John & Luke Mackel**



# FAREWELL TO AN AMERICAN HERO - ED FREEMAN

## From the Aviator Editor...

As news of Ed Freeman's death traveled the country, the VHPA's inbox was filled with testimonials of his courage and reflections on his life. I selected only two of all of these messages to show here as while we could probably devote this entire issue to Ed's life and career, space is limited and I think these two articles stand as fine testament to his memory as any that were submitted; I'm truly sorry if your message wasn't selected to run here.

David Adams, October 2008.

### This poem was sent to us from

J. Michael Murphy

#### Ed Freeman – "We Were Soldiers"

*You're an 18 or 19 year old kid. You're critically wounded, and dying in the jungle in the Ia Drang Valley, 11-14-1965.*

LZ X-ray, Vietnam.

Your Infantry Unit is outnumbered 8 - 1, and the enemy fire is so intense, from 100 or 200 yards away, that your own Infantry Commander has ordered the Medi-Vac helicopters to stop coming in.

You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns, and you know you're not getting out. Your family is 1/2 way around the world, 12,000 miles away, and you'll never see them again. As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day you are going to die.

Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear that sound of a helicopter, and you look up to see a Huey, but it doesn't seem real, because no Medi-Vac markings are on it.

Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not Medi-Vac, so it's not his job, but he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire, after the Medi-Vacs were ordered not to come.

He's coming anyway.....

And he drops it in, and sits there in the machine gun fire, as they load 2 or 3 of you on board.

Then he flies you up and out through the gunfire, to the Doctors and Nurses.

And, he kept coming back..... 13 more times..... and took about 30 of you and your buddies out, who would never have gotten out.

Medal of Honor Winner Ed Freeman died Aug 30 at 80, in Boise, ID.

None of that is Hollywood fiction!

May God Bless Ed Freeman.

## And we received this e-mail from David Prewitt...

Mike: Thanks for passing on the info on Ed Freeman, a great and very brave helo pilot. I am forwarding it to some of my "stick" buddies from flight school and from Vietnam. Our classmate, Chip Serrell, & I were in the 11th Air Assault Div at Ft Benning, which was re-designated the 1st Cav in July '65 and immediately deployed to Vietnam. Since we were both under a 3 year contract with the Army and had already been there, we were released from active duty just prior to that deployment. Many of our fellow helo pilots from the 11th Air Assault were involved in the Ia Drang battle. Years later when I was in the Reserves, our active duty advisor was COL Joe Marm, who also was awarded a Congressional Medal as a 1LT grunt in the Ia Drang battle. You probably also know that 1LT Rick Rescola, a grunt who received a Silver Star for the Ia Drang battle and later who became a COL in the Reserves, was in charge of security for a large brokerage firm in one of the NYC Twin Towers on 9/11 - he got all of his employees out alive and then went back in to look for any stragglers. His remains were never found. **The Dads**

## FAREWELL TO AN AMERICAN HERO

by Joseph L. Galloway, Jack Heslin and Jim Stein

**For the better part of 60 years**, two old Army pilots who loved each other argued over many a meal and drink as to which of them was the second best pilot in the world.

The two shared the cockpits of old Beaver prop planes and Huey helicopters; they shared rooms in military hooches all over the world; they shared a love of practical and impractical jokes and they shared an undying love of flying and soldiers and the Army.

They also shared membership in a very small and revered fraternity of fewer than 105 men who are entitled to wear around their necks the light blue ribbon and gold pointed star that is the Medal of Honor, America's highest decoration for heroism above and beyond the call of duty.

Their story was told in a book my buddy Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and I wrote 15 years ago titled "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young" and in the Mel Gibson movie, "We Were Soldiers," released in the spring of 2002. Too Tall and Old Snake were ably portrayed in the movie.

Their argument over which of them is the Best Pilot in the World sadly came to an end this week when our friend and comrade-in-arms Maj. Ed (Too Tall to Fly) Freeman slipped the surly bonds of earth and headed off to Fiddlers Green, where the souls of departed cavalymen gather by dispensation of God Himself.

Too Tall Ed was 80 years old when he died in a hospital in Boise, Idaho, after long being ill

with Parkinsons disease. He turned down a full dress heroes funeral in Arlington National Cemetery in favor of a hometown service and burial in the National Cemetery in Boise, close to the rivers he loved to fish and the mountains he flew through in his second career flying for the U.S. Forest Service. A few days before the end, his old buddy Lt. Col. Bruce (Ancient Serpent 6) Crandall came to the hospital to say his goodbyes to Too Tall Ed, and to enjoy one last round of arguing with Ed over that question of which of them was the best pilot in the world.

In a fine display of the sort of gallows humor that's always helped men who know the horrors of war keep some of their sanity, Bruce told Ed that he intended to settle the question once and for all by borrowing a helicopter, sling-loading Ed's coffin below it and then lowering it into the grave where Too Tall will rest - something that only the Best Pilot in the World could do. Something that only the best friend in the world could tell a dying man.

These two men received their Medals of Honor long after the deeds that earned them in the furious battles of the Ia Drang Valley in November of 1965 at the dawn of our long, bitter war in Vietnam. President George W. Bush presented Too Tall Ed with his medal in 2001 and hung the medal around Old Snake Crandall's neck in 2007.

When their friends in the 1st Battalion, 7th U.S. Cavalry were surrounded and fighting for their lives near the Cambodian bor-

der and needed ammunition and water and helicopters to carry out the gravely wounded, Bruce and Ed flew their Huey helicopters, again and again, into a small clearing swept by North Vietnamese machine gun and rifle fire.

I rode into Landing Zone X-Ray sitting atop a case of hand grenades on one of Bruce Crandall's missions after dark on November 14, 1965, wondering if one of those bullets might turn us all into a puff of greasy smoke. I rode out of X-Ray after the battle ended on November 16, again on Bruce's helicopter.

In later years, he and Ed and I would joke about the love-hate relationship that I and the infantymen had with the chopper pilots: Hated them for flying us into Hell and dumping us off; loved them for coming back to get us when it was time to leave.

Mostly we laughed ourselves silly as first Ed, then Bruce recounted tales of one escapade after another; of moonlight requisition raids against the U.S. Air Force for needed or merely desired goodies unavailable from the Army supply chain; of the time Bruce was caught trying to sling-load a 10 kilowatt generator off its pad on an air base.

Now Too Tall Ed Freeman, a much larger than life-size hero at 6 feet 7 inches tall and a much better friend than we deserved, is gone, and we are left with too large a hole in our hearts and in our dwindling ranks.

**Cleared for Takeoff, Ed!**



# ANNOUNCEMENT - EMAIL NOTIFICATION THAT THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE AVIATOR IS AVAILABLE

The VHPA is pleased to announce that effective for the Nov/Dec 2008 issue, VHPA members can elect to receive an email notification that the next issue of The Aviator is now available for online viewing at

**[WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM](http://WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM)**

## **THIS MEANS YOU NOW HAVE FOUR OPTIONS FOR HOW YOU RECEIVE THE AVIATOR:**

- Paper – HQ mails your copy to you via US Postal Service (USPS). Note: this is the default option.
- Email Notification Only – HQ sends you an email that notifies you when the next issue is now available for online viewing.
- Both – You want both the paper copy and the email notification.
- None – You do not want to receive the paper copy or the email notification.

## **WHY IS THE VHPA DOING THIS?**

These steps were taken in response to recent requests from several active and dues-current VHPA members for the option of NOT receiving their copy of The Aviator through the mail because they were already reading it online. These VHPAers cited several reasons in their requests such as: wanting to be “green,” wanting to have one less thing piling up on their desk, etc. Remember that an issue is available online about 2 or 3 weeks before it arrives in your mail box.

The staff at HQ and the VHPA IT Committee are working with a bulk email contractor to provide this notification to members in a secure and safe way that will not add to the “spam factor” but does address the “green factor” as well as the costs of providing one of the important products to VHPAers.

## **HERE IS HOW YOU CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FEATURE:**

1. You must be a dues-current member. Since magazine subscribers can not access [WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM](http://WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM) this feature does not apply to them.
2. Your USPS mail address on record with the VHPA must be good or valid. The reason for this is simple. If HQ gets an email delivery failure notification for your email address, we are going to USPS mail your copy of The Aviator.
3. You need to contact HQ (phone, email, fax – your choice) and tell them that you want the email notification option for The Aviator. Your option selection will be recorded in your membership record and will remain in effect until either you elect another option or HQ gets an email delivery failure notification for your email address.

It is important to remember that your selection for how you receive The Aviator is completely separate from your options for receiving the Membership Directory.

## **WHY CAN'T YOU RECEIVE AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE AVIATOR?**

Good question! The Executive Council asked the IT Committee this same question. The answer is not today because a PDF file for our recent issues of The Aviator is over 2 megabytes and emailing such a large file is too resource intensive.

## **HOW CAN YOU READ THE AVIATOR ON [WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM](http://WWW.VHPASERVICES.COM)?**

This is easy but remember you must be a dues-current member to login to the VHPASERVICES website. Once you have a successful login, click the

### **Read Magazines/Directory**

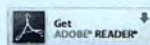
button at the bottom of the screen and you will see the following screen:

Use the slider on the right to make the document you want visible and then click on it. The PDF document appears in a separate browser window.

**Mike Law, IT Committee Member**

### **Read Magazines or Directory**

The magazines are in Adobe PDF Format. You will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader to read them. Click the icon below to download a free reader.



#### **Name**

2008 Membership Directory full text (big file)
2008 Directory History - 162 AHC Diary (big file)
2007 Membership Directory full text (big file)
2007 Directory History - Lam Son 719 (big file)
2006 Membership Directory full text (big file)
2006 Directory History Section - Pioneers
VHPA Product Order Form
VHPA Membership Form
1984 - First newsletter
1984 - First reunion newsletter
1990 - Line newsletter

## **SURFING THE WEB WITH THE EDITOR OF THE VHPA AVIATOR....**

A photo search for artwork to support a story in the Aviator led me to a very interesting Web Site that I would like to pass on to the Members. <http://www.vlbanting.com/vietnam.htm> is a web site built & maintained by Vaughan Banting, who in 1970-71 was a “grunt” in an Army aviation battalion at Tuy Hou and later was a member of third platoon of Charlie Company 2nd Battalion 12th Infantry Div where he performed mostly search and destroy missions (later renamed search and clear missions) in an area approximately 40 miles northeast of what is now known as Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Vaughn’s website is full of photos and recollections of his tour in Vietnam and I think it is a truly fascinating view into the life of an infantry soldier in Vietnam, especially one that was closely intertwined with his aviation support.

When I e-mailed Vaughn to ask for his permission to publicize his web site, he sent this reply in return:

David, I would be honored, you guys saved our asses in combat so many times and when I finally called for a medivac to take myself and other wounded out one of you were still there for me.

***All my best and welcome home!  
Vaughn Banting, hehios***



# TAPS



## PAUL MICHAEL BRENNAN

Paul Michael Brennan died suddenly on July 29th 2008, he was 63 years old. He was born in Montclair, New Jersey and flew in Vietnam from Sept. 1968 to Sept. 1969. Paul received an honorable discharge in Sept. 1970 with the rank of Captain. He was with the 134th AHC and received many service medals including Vietnam Campaign Medal, The Air medal with 21 Oak leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Aviator Badge and the National Defense Service Medal. On discharge from the Army, Paul went to New York City to pursue a career in Theatre.

Over the years Paul appeared in many plays eventually moving to Los Angeles. He became an award winning director in Los Angeles Theatre and also appeared in one feature film, "The Star Chamber" starring Michael Douglas, one movie of the week, "Money on the Side" and numerous Television shows including Remington Steele, Guns of Paradise, General Hospital, Baghdad Cafe among others. In 1993 he became a teacher with the L.A. Unified School District and taught Special Education, finding great satisfaction in working with these students. He was much loved by the students and staff. He was a member of SAG (Screen Actors Guild), AFTRA (Am. Federation of Television and Radio Artists), Actors Equity as well as a member of the United Teachers of Los Angeles. After having quintuple by-pass surgery on 9/11/01, 18 months later Paul ran in the L.A. Marathon with his students, "Students Run L.A.". He ran one more marathon as well as many half marathons on the Southern CA. area. He died while on his daily morning run, doing what he loved, wearing his 'students run L.A.' t-shirt.

He was an extraordinary man who impacted many lives. He was very proud of his service in Vietnam and loved flying 'Hueys'. He leaves behind his beloved wife, Peggy Walker, who is devastated by his sudden loss as well as his sister, Christine McKay, step-daughter Maria Walker, niece Heather, nephews Robert and Steve and the love of his life, his granddaughter Manuela, who lives in Kauai. No words can describe the grief we feel at his sudden death.

★★★★★★★★



## ED (TOO TALL TO FLY) FREEMAN

Idaho Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Ed Freeman has passed away at 80 years old. Freeman, who lived in Boise, died at about 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, August 20, 2008 from complications from Parkinson's disease, a family member said. Freeman was a Vietnam veteran who was honored for his heroic services. He piloted a helicopter and saved more than 30 men during the war. His heroics grew nation wide attention when his character was featured in Mel Gibson's war movie, "We Were Soldiers." Actor Mark McCracken played the character of Ed "Too Tall" Freeman in the popular film.

The family released a statement Wednesday afternoon: "Our family is grateful for all the wonderful wishes we've received these past few weeks, from our friends and from those we don't even know. The support of the people of Idaho has been overwhelming, and my father really appreciated those kind words and wishes. He had visits from Governor Otter, Secretary of the Interior Kempthorne and Major General Lafrenz of the Idaho National Guard. Many others either came to see him or passed on their kind words to us.

My father touched a lot of people over the years during his career in the U.S. Army and as a civilian pilot with the federal government at the National Interagency Fire Center. People could relate to him, and those who knew him have told me they thought of him as a wonderful, friendly, humorous person with a lot of integrity. He made an impression on people. I knew him not only as my father, but as my best friend. We spent many hours' together, fishing and just hanging out with each other. My family and I will miss him more than words can express." Freeman's funeral was held in Meridian. Burial was at Idaho State Veterans Cemetery. Ed served with A/229th AHB 1st Cav in 65-66.

Submitted by VHPA Member Ron Huber.

★★★★★★★★

## PHILLIP H. FISHER

Phillip H. Fisher, 57 passed away on September 16, 2008 in Atlanta, Georgia from complications following a stroke.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Fisher graduated from flight school with class 70-11 and in Vietnam was based at Camp Evans flying with A Co. of the 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion, the Ghost Rider's from August 1970 till August 1971.

Phillip leaves no wife or children.

★★★★★★★★

## GERALD (JERRY) E. FROMAN

Gerald (Jerry) E. Froman, 58, passed away July 14th, 2008 in Pace, Florida. Jerry graduated with WORWAC Class 70-35, he flew with the 282 Assault Helicopter Company (Black Cats) in 1970-71 and earned the Purple Heart, the National Defense Service Medal, the Viet-

nam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal w/60 device. Jerry was a member of the Pace Florida Immanuel Baptist Church, the VHPA, the Order of the Purple Hearts and the DAV.

Jerry enjoyed tennis, snow skiing, camping, fishing and playing with his grandchildren; he owned and operated Gulf Coast Pest Control. Jerry was preceded in death by his parents and is survived by his wife Cynthia Froman, his daughter Stephanie and his son Jeremy, two brothers and four granddaughters. Friends may send condolences and share memories of Jerry at [www.LewisFuneralHomes.net](http://www.LewisFuneralHomes.net). The following is a copy of the message sent by his wife Cindy Froman notifying the VHPA of his passing:

*"I am sad to report the passing of another member, Gerald (Jerry) Froman, after a courageous battle with cancer. He was a slick driver with the 282nd AHC Blackcats, and was shot down two months into his tour. After many surgeries, he recovered enough to live a full life with his wife Cindy and two children. He was a good friend to many people, and assisted countless veterans dealing with the VA in the Pensacola area. We have lost a good man and a true patriot."*

★★★★★★★★

## ROBERT L. HARTMAN SR.

Robert L. Hartman Sr., 64, passed away on September 22, 2008 in Ponte Veda, Florida.

Robert served in Vietnam with F Troop, 8th Air Cavalry, the Ghost Doctor's, from 1971 till 1972. He went on to become a Cpt. President of Merrill Lynch Capital Markets. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Kathleen and five children.

Submitted by his son Michael C. Hartman

★★★★★★★★

## MICHAEL B. HOWE

Col. (Ret.) Michael Bruce Howe 1940 - 2008 Our devoted husband, father, and grandfather, Col. (Ret.) Michael Bruce Howe, age 68, resident of Austin, was called to our Heavenly Father on Sunday, August 24, 2008. He passed away at home after a long illness.

Col. Howe is survived by his loving wife, Diane; daughters, Meredith Fulton and Melinda Hickey; sons-in-law, David Fulton and John Hickey; two grandsons and one granddaughter. He was preceded in death by his parents and one sister.

Col. Howe proudly served his country in the United States Army for 25 years. He graduated from Flight Class 63-7/66QO and he served with the 189th Assault Helicopter Company in 67-68 and HHC, 1st Aviation Brigade in 70-71. He was awarded a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star, an Air Medal with Valor, a Meritorious Service Medal, a Defense Meritorious Service Medal, an Army Commenda-



# TAPS



tion Medal, and a Legion of Merit Award. His last assignment while on active duty was Program Manager for the CH-47 D (Chinook) and V-22 (Osprey) helicopters. The family wishes to extend a special thanks to all of the doctors and nurses at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio for their heartfelt care over the past five years, and to the many friends and family for their unending support.

To view and add to his on-line memorial, visit [www.missionmemorials.com](http://www.missionmemorials.com)

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## JUNIUS (JAY) LINWOOD JONES JR

Junius (Jay) Linwood Jones Jr., 74, passed away on Aug. 25, 2008 in Williamsburg, VA following a heroic battle with cancer. He died peacefully at home, surrounded by his loved ones.

Jay was a career Army officer, serving his country with distinction, first as an aviator and later as a logistics director and instructor. His tours of duty included Europe and the Far East, with a tour in the Vietnam conflict. He was the recipient of multiple military awards and commendations, including the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal. He retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel. Jay attended Wake Forest University and received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Nebraska (Omaha). He also earned a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University. He was an active member of Williamsburg Baptist Church, serving on and chairing several committees.

Jay also was a member of Masonic Lodge #6, Williamsburg, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1115, Hillsville, and TCAA. He was preceded in death by his parents and a sister. Jay is survived by his loving wife of 53 years, Alice; daughters, Debbie Jones, Pam Nicholson; son, Jay and several grandchildren. Jay's influence was far-reaching - from his loving devotion to his family, to his deep faith, wise counsel, and steadfast friendship. He will be greatly missed in so many circles.

Anyone with details about his Vietnam service or his flight class numbers is encouraged to contact the VHPA. Submitted by Don Joyce.

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## ROGER MONTGOMERY

Roger Montgomery - 2/23/49 - 7/17/08. Roger passed away peacefully at 10:55 am on Thursday, 7/17/08, after a one-year battle with cancer. Our time together was too short

and I will miss him dearly.

Following his 22 years (20 years in the army with 2 years in the Navy Reserve in the earlier years) in the military, Robert worked as a nurse at a children's psych hospital for 14 years. He retired in 2003 when we were married and moved from Belton, Texas to Houston, Texas where he spent his free time gathering together former 242nd ASH members. He promoted an annual gathering in conjunction with the VHCMA reunions each year in June until he was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2006 just after the reunion.

*"I believe he made a difference in this world to many people. He loved his Muleskinners and wanted the best for everyone."*

*Thank you for your prayers and support.*  
Sandy Montgomery

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## ELTON G. PRINE

Elton G. Prine, 60, passed away Monday, September 8, 2008 in Fort Worth, Texas. Internment will be at 2:00 P.M. Thursday, September 11th, 2008 at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

Elton was born August 14, 1948 in Fort Worth, Texas to A.B. and Elsie Prine. He was a lifetime resident of Tarrant County and graduated from TCU. Elton graduated from flight schools with class 69-17 and served in Vietnam with the 117th Assault Helicopter Company in 1969-1970. After retiring from the military he served in the Fort Worth Police Department for 26 years. Elton was very proud of his grandchildren.

Survivors include his wife, Kay Prine of Azle, Texas; one daughter and one son, one sister, two grandchildren, one aunt and numerous nieces and nephews.

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## TIMOTHY P. ROBBINS

Timothy P. Robbins, 70, died on August 9, 2008 from complications of cancer while in Pensacola's West Florida Hospital. Timothy was a member of flight class: 66-17/19 and is survived by his son Chris.

A close personal friend of Tim, John Glidewell [redacted] writes the VHPA: On 9 August 2008, Tim Robbins, CW4, USA Retired, passed away in West Florida Hospital, Pensacola, Florida. For those who knew Tim, they know that he was a kind person to all he met. Tim flew gun ships and had two tours in Vietnam. He was awarded the Purple Heart for a leg wound received while flying a mission. I do not know the details as the story was related to me many years ago.

I met Tim at Ft. Eustis in 1968 and again in 1976 at Ft Carson Colorado, we did a lot of bass fishing at Ft Eustis together. Tim's calm demeanor was exemplary with his friends and the way he raised his son, Chris. Tim's wife, Diane, passed away five years ago also from

cancer. I only recently found out that Tim was living in Gulf Breeze, (thru the VHPA directory), only 45 minutes away from where I live. We renewed our old relationship with some fine food, a couple of margaritas and lots of old war stories and fishing lies. His brain cancer was sudden and when treated with the powerful drug (Nexavar), his organs began shutting down. He died within a week of the treatment. I am personally deeply saddened by his death and the fact that he lived so close to me, for the past 14 years without my knowing it. If you value your old friends, get in touch with them before it is too late to enjoy the relationship once again. I will miss Tim but am certainly glad that I knew him.

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## ERNEST RICKENBACKER

Ernest "Rick" "Fast Eddie" Rickenbacker (Blue Max 22), 63, of Greenbrier, son of the late Ernest W. and Thesee (Kantsos) Rickenbacker, passed away Saturday, Sept. 13, 2008.

He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and brother. He was a decorated Vietnam War hero and member of the Blue Max Air Combat Unit, 1st Cav, who earned the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts during combat in Vietnam. During his 23 years in the U.S. Army, he was an accomplished air traffic controller, paratrooper, master parachute rigger, combat pilot and flight instructor. Due to his great skill and knowledge in the field of aviation, the Army Aviation Association of America presented him with the Aviator of the Year Award in 1979. In addition to his distinguished military career, he was also a retired manager of the Apache Program, Boeing Aerospace Corporation.

In his private life, he was a 32nd Degree Mason and a member of the Scottish Rite, flew competitive aerobatics, champion archer, gifted artist, musician, professional angler, built and flew radio control aircraft, avid motorcyclist and participant in the Patriot Guard. He was a true patriot who supported his brothers and sisters in arms until his last breath. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his loving wife of 19 years, Jaqueline; son, Scott Rickenbacker; daughter, Suzette and Robert Cherry; stepdaughter, Cathie Salerno; two grandsons, Matthew Rickenbacker and Lucas Rickenbacker; granddaughter, Kyler Burch; step-granddaughters, Danielle Salerno, Amanda Salerno and Emily Salerno; two sisters, one brother and one uncle, Harry Rickenbacker.

An online guest book is available at:  
[www.rollerfuneralhomes.com](http://www.rollerfuneralhomes.com)

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# TAPS



## BILL SHADRICK

It is truly a sad day for the Marine Corps. One of our heroes has joined the ranks of our Brothers in Heaven. Colonel Ural Wescott "Bill" Shadrick, USMC (Retired), was one of the finest men I have ever known, a true leader, and a friend.

He is survived by his wife Mary, of Falls Church, VA. Colonel Shadrick died peacefully in a nursing home on April 11, 2008, he was 81 years old. He died of Alzheimer's and aspiration pneumonia. His funeral was July 16, 2008 with inurnment at Arlington Cemetery. He served as the commanding officer of HMM-262 in Vietnam.

*Submitted by Joseph "Jake" Jacobs of the HHM-262 Vietnam Veterans Association.*

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## FREDDIE A TEAFORD

Fred Teaford died Jan 3, 2008 in Yorktown VA after a long and valiant battle against cancer. He was only 57. He was West Virginia native who adopted Virginia as his temporary home. He graduated from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University with both an AB and Masters of Business degree.

After graduating from flight school with Class 70-27, he served in Viet Nam in 70-71 with the 3rd Bde, 1st (Air) Cav Div and the Division's Delta Troop 229th Aviation. Fred flew with the Blue Platoon lift helicopters of the troop where as an AC no mission was to dangerous for him. He was a recipient of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, MSM and Air Medal with number 39. Fred was a Master Army Aviator

Fred retired from the Army as a Major after 24 years of service as a Warrant Officer and Commissioned Officer. His service took him to numerous stateside and overseas assignments. He then served an addition 10 years as a civil servant at TRADOC HQ at Ft. Monroe VA retiring as a GS-14.

Freddie is survived by his wife of 30 years, Diana Teaford his two daughters, Tara and Kellie along with one brother and four sisters.

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## GENE ZACSEK

Gene Zacsek, 67, passed away from an illness on September 14th, 2008 in Glendale, Arizona.

Gene served in Vietnam with the 170th Assault Helicopter Company in Pleiku from January 1969 until January 1970, his call sign was Buc 02. Although he was a bit of a loner in Vietnam, Gene took his job very seriously and was an excellent Gun Pilot and IP. He received a direct commission to Captain after returning from south east Asia but didn't stay in the Army long enough to retire.

He stayed in aviation for some years by owning and flying his own airplanes, he was a world class automotive technician and retired from an automobile dealership chain 3 years ago. His hobbies included antique car building, house add-ons and spending time with his family and friends. He is survived by his wife Jeanne, three daughters and one son.

*Submitted on September 14th, 2008 by David D. Baker*

\*\*\*\*\*

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# PILOTS AND CREWMEMBERS CELEBRATE TOGETHER BRANSON, MO ~ HONORS ALL VETERANS

NOV 5th - NOV 11th, 2008

If you didn't make it to the VHPA Annual Reunion this year...

How about considering meeting with other Vietnam helicopter pilots and crew members in Branson, Missouri over the Veteran's Day holidays this year? This is not an official VHPA event but it is a great opportunity to meet and spend time together. There are free opening and closing day shows, over 60 events-many are free, and an awesome Veterans Day Parade.

From November 5-11th, each year,



Branson, Missouri honors all veterans with the largest homecoming celebration in the nation, The Branson Veterans Homecoming Week. Thousands of veterans, active duty military personnel and their families come to attend more than 60 special events, and to march with their units in the Veterans Day Parade, just like we did last year. Go to The Branson Veterans Task Force,

[www.bransonveterans.com](http://www.bransonveterans.com) for a schedule of most of the events for the week.

Meet with your buddies, relax and have fun. Your spouse will love to do the early Christmas shopping at 3, mega-outlet-malls. Experience the magic of the season during the Branson Area Festival of Lights 2008, as all of Branson is aglow for the holidays.

This year will be the 3rd ANNUAL FREE showing of the movie documentary "IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE." [www.intheshadowoftheblade.com](http://www.intheshadowoftheblade.com) at the IMAX Theater complex in Branson. The IMAX has again graciously offered a 189 seat flat screen theater daily, for 6 showings, of the 2003 Award winning documentary. Depicting the real stories of courage and comradeship that this one rebuilt combat HUEY brings to the hearts of all who experience it. Dedicated to all Vietnam veterans, their families, and to all those touched by the war 'the real' Vietnam soldier's story is told. If your wife, children and grandkids haven't seen this movie they need to.

Capping off a great week of fun and friendship will be the 74th Annual Downtown Branson Veterans Day Parade., on Tuesday, November 11th. The parade winds its way through the heart of the newly renovated downtown area and right along side Lake Taney-como.

Marching again "together then-together now" will be our Vietnam Helicopter Pilots and Crewmembers Unit (see photo). Several thousand parade watchers will gather to give honor due. Most moving for the "HeliVets" are the many hand salutes and audible 'Thank You's' given by the Vietnam ground service vets that stand at attention on the sidewalk. Every salute is returned. In this parade you can walk, ride in a float or ride your cycle, with your loved one at your side. Did I mention we march right by the new Bass Pro Shop in the all new Branson Landing District? Ozarks answer to the San Antonio 'Riverwalk' area.

The Branson/Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau can help make planning your trip easier and more convenient. They have redesigned their website to provide you with a wealth of information about what's available in Branson. Give them a call at 1-800-296-0463 to



talk with a friendly customer service representative, [www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com). Branson is the Entertainment and Recreational capitol of the Ozarks and offers much for everyone in your family during this special time of year. See fabulous shows, dazzling lights, and breathtaking scenery. (short Chamber plug), sorry.

*Here is where we Meet and Greet:*

When you first get to Branson, go to The POW Network COMMAND/ Welcome CENTER at the Lodge of the Ozarks (1-877-327-9894/417-336-4232, [www.LodgeofTheOzarks.com](http://www.LodgeofTheOzarks.com).)

When you get to the Command center you will find a place to register, see who else is in town for the festivities, and their unit in Vietnam; also how to contact them. We'll help you plan a great time, it's all informal and we get together several times during the week for dinners, happy hours etc. You'll also find Parade Info, refreshments, conversation, area maps, military vendors, where the free stuff is, etc.

The Welcome Center is open 9-3 daily, all week Nov 5-10. Go to [www.pownetwork.org](http://www.pownetwork.org); then click on the Branson, Missouri tab. Lots of info here about where to stay and links. Don't forget to also check out the POW Network 12th Annual Military GALA and Banquet to be held on 9 November at the Chateau Hotel Resort and SPA on Table Rock Lake. It's the classiest formal event of the week. The POW Network honored all Vietnam Helicopter Pilots at their 10th Annual GALA in 2006.

*I hope to see you there -  
"AIM HIGH".*

"MIK" Mikulan,  
Black Baron 3Z, Cu Chi '69.

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Soldiers of the 7th Cavalry deploy from UH-1 Hueys onto Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. **HAND SIGNED** by Gen. Hal Moore (left), Bruce Crandall (MOH) & others!

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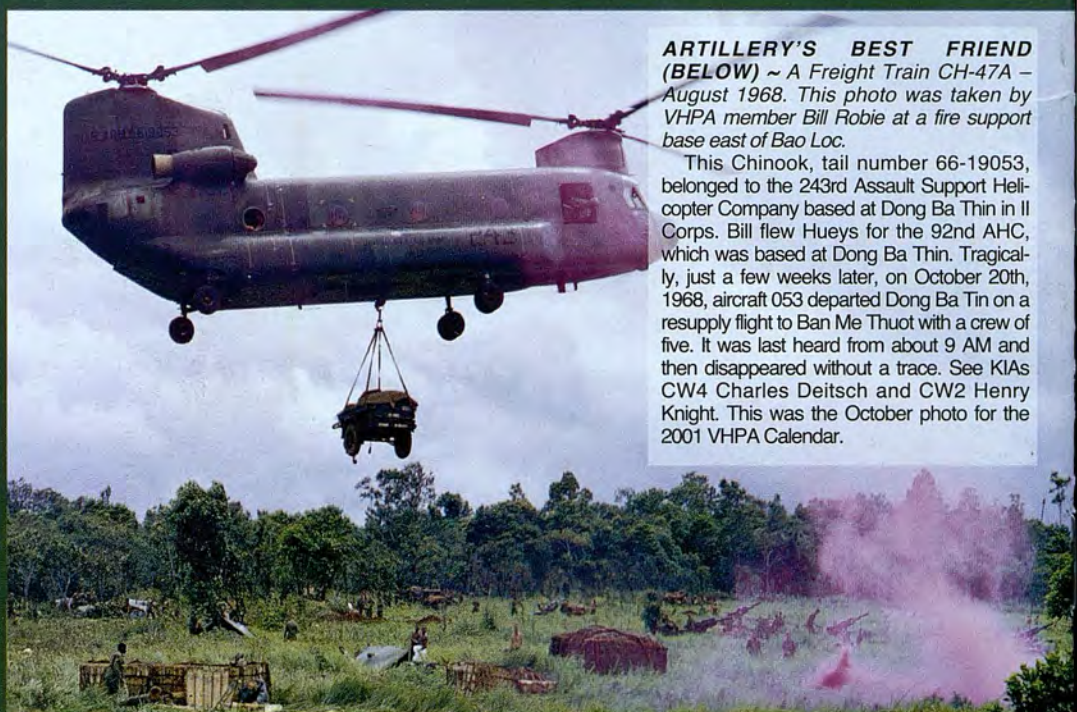


**PRECISION DELIVERY** ~ VHPA Member Curt Knapp took this picture in October 1968 of a CH-47 landing near Hue. Curt flew for the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. This was the September photo for the 1998 VHPA Calendar. This aircraft may be CH-47B #66-18436 that served with B/159th ASHB of the 101st Airborne Division.



**SHRIMPBOAT (LEFT)** ~ Shrimboat 76 from the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC) – March 1967. VHPA member Brian Foote took this photo at a Pickup Zone (PZ) named "3 Tango" west of Pleiku.

Brian wrote: 'We were supporting the 4th Infantry Division. Our procedure was to send out a number of Chinooks each day. We had the first Chinook take out a jeep with radio and an experienced pilot who we referred to as the Air Mission Commander (AMC). The AMC would be the person who coordinated with the units/people on the ground on the loads they had and their destinations. The AMC would then pass that info (unit coordinates, unit call signs, FM frequencies, etc.) to our aircraft flying the missions. I was the AMC this day. This Chinook (CH-47A #65-07976) picked up a 105 Howitzer as you can see. The strap under the Howitzer was connected to an additional load (in a tarp) that contained about 20 rounds of 105 ammo plus the 105 crew's sectional equipment (aiming stakes, etc.). The pick up procedure was to approach the load from behind, hover up to the Howitzer and hook it up. The Flight Engineer or Crew Chief (who was laying on his stomach looking down through a hatch just above the cargo hook) would then direct the pilot to move up (taking the slack out of the strap) and above the secondary load - hence the name "a Piggy Back" load. Our primary customer in those times was the Artillery. I would say 80-90% of our missions in those early years were devoted to Artillery Support.' The VHPA Helicopter database states that 976 crashed, burned and was destroyed on 7 May 1967 after taking a hit in an engine from an enemy round. This is the May photo for the 2008 VHPA Calendar.



**ARTILLERY'S BEST FRIEND (BELOW)** ~ A Freight Train CH-47A – August 1968. This photo was taken by VHPA member Bill Robie at a fire support base east of Bao Loc.

This Chinook, tail number 66-19053, belonged to the 243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company based at Dong Ba Thin in II Corps. Bill flew Hueys for the 92nd AHC, which was based at Dong Ba Thin. Tragically, just a few weeks later, on October 20th, 1968, aircraft 053 departed Dong Ba Tin on a resupply flight to Ban Me Thuot with a crew of five. It was last heard from about 9 AM and then disappeared without a trace. See KIAs CW4 Charles Deitsch and CW2 Henry Knight. This was the October photo for the 2001 VHPA Calendar.

