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The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ~ Issue 28-06 ~ Nov/December 2010



VHPA Member and our current secretary/Treasurer Tom Payne shares with us a picture he took of Bob Hope demonstrating his famous golf swing after he arrived at the Hui/Phu Bai airport in Vietnam in December of 1970. Bob and his troop of entertainers were enroute that day to perform their famous Christmas Show to the men of the 101st Airborne. More photos of that day may be found on page 7 of this, our Christmas In Vietnam issue of the VHPA Aviator!

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Season's Greetings from the President of the VHPA

As David began putting this issue of The Aviator "Christmas in Vietnam" together, I thought back on the two Christmas I celebrated in sunny south Vietnam.

Christmas of 1968 was spent just outside Phan Thiet along side the South China Sea. As I recall, we received the traditional Army Christmas dinner served out of a mess tent on paper plates. The meal did help get over the hangover from Christmas Eve. Fruit cakes; I received five including one from my mother who knew I don't eat them. I don't recall exactly what we did with the cakes, the best suggestion was to use them as doorstops, only problem was we lived in tents at the time.

Bob Hope show; not even close. I did have the opportunity to see Bob's 1968 flight arriving at Saigon escorted by the Air Force. This opportunity came about as we were sent to Saigon to pickup a small band; instructions were to pick them up at the 25th Division pad. Not knowing where that was, we landed at Hotel



Woody McFarlin, VHPA President

3. A nice well informed fellow aviator gave us very specific directions to proceed to and land on the pad in front of 25th Division HQ. We did so landing on a very nicely painted Division crest. It seems the 25th didn't land helicopters on that pad and had no appreciation of our efforts. Their sense of humor was also somewhat lacking. After a sever a--- chewing by an O6, we flew back to our unit without the band. I had the opportunity many years later to shake Bob's hand and thank him for his efforts.

Christmas of 1972 was spent on the west side of Bien Hoa. This time we had a real mess hall and I believe we even ate off plates. Again there was the Christmas Eve hangover but this time no fruitcake and alas, no Bob Hope either.

I hope you enjoy this issue and may you and yours enjoy a blessed Christmas season.



A National Call for Photos is being launched to collect pictures of each of the more than 58,000 service members whose names inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. Family members, friends, neighbors and fellow service members are all invited to send in photos, there are several ways to contribute a photo:

For full details on photo submission program, go to: www.buildthecenter.org/get-involved/call-for-photos/83.html

For full details on the group that's organizing the program, go to: www.buildthecenter.org/

This info is taken from an article in the October 2010 issue of the VFW magazine concerning the Vietnam Education Center at The Wall in Washington, D.C. Maybe you have a photo to contribute of someone whose name is on the VVM.

Jay Riseden

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(284)
Bob Hope and Lola Falana entertaining at the Last Bob Hope show in Vietnam. December 1972 and the MACV annex in Saigon, Bob brought champagne with him on this tour because he believed we would be toasting the end of the war before they would be through. He was 3 months early.



23 Dec 1968, Long Binh, South Vietnam — Ann-Margret and Bob Hope — Image by © Bettmann/CORBIS



Joey Heatherton signing autographs after a Bob Hope Christmas Show in 1966

The very first Bob Hope Christmas Show

Christmas Day of 1964, in Vinh Long, Vietnam

Photos and Story By Colonel (Ret) Thomas E. Anderson

Bob Hope entertained US troops in Vietnam every Christmas season from 1964 through 1972. Some shows were extremely small, with only a few hundred troops being treated to his unique style of humor and his sincere feelings for the American fighting man. Other shows brought in over 10,000 troops at such places as Long Binh, but with the same casual format and rapport with the American and other nation's fighting forces.

However, his very first scheduled Christmas show in Vietnam took place at the tiny, rice-paddy-surrounded Army airfield at Vinh Long in the hot, humid Mekong Delta on Christmas day, 1964. And I was there...

On 11 December 1964, MACV J1 (BG Ben Sternberg) had alerted the IV Corps Senior US Advisor, Colonel George Barton, by letter order, of the scheduled visit of the Bob Hope Christmas Show to the Mekong Delta. Initially the show was slated to be held in Can Tho, headquarters of the 13th Aviation Bn. However, the 13th Battalion Commander, LTC Jack V. Mackmull, recommended that the show be held in Vinh Long which had a larger number of US troops and, because it was isolated in the rice paddies of the Delta, could be better secured. Colonel Barton approved the change.

On 17 December, 13th Battalion headquarters notified Major Tom Anderson, Commanding Officer of the 62d Aviation Company "Outlaws" as well as Vinh Long Installation Commander, that Hope would make his very first scheduled Vietnam show at Vinh Long at noon on Christmas Day. The notification was classified as "Close Hold" because of Hope's celebrity and the visibility his visit would have when it became known.

Elaborate, SECRET, security plans and logistical arrangements were developed between the 13th Battalion and the units at Vinh Long. Only the two US Army air mobile company commanders at Vinh



(L-R) Major Tom Anderson, 62nd Avn Co "Outlaws", Major George Derrick, CO 114th Avn Co "Knights" present a "thank you" plaque to Bob Hope. For Bob Hope's first show in Vietnam on Christmas day, December 25, 1964. Vinh Long Army Airfield ~ Mekong Delta

Long, (Major George Derrick and Major Tom Anderson) and a few other "need-to-know" personnel, participated in drawing up plans for arrival security, perimeter security, airborne gunship protection and other such measures to ensure the safety of the troupe while it was on the ground in Vinh Long.

Detailed guidelines, covering every facet of the support necessary to bring the Hope troupe into Vinh Long, were published by MACV. Troops were informed only that a USO show would be at Vinh Long on Christmas and maximum attendance was encouraged. No other details, regarding just whom the USO show would feature, were released.

At Vinh Long, Captain Al Iller, XO of the "Outlaws" made arrangements for a low-boy stage for the show. The stage was decorated with a camouflage parachute backdrop; various unit insignias and other local-color items were hung on the stage. Nearby American personnel stationed in the Delta, which included Navy Riverine force personnel, Air Force weather station people, a few Special Forces teams, etc. were notified of an upcoming USO show. Extra MP's were detailed from Saigon to assist in security checks. All was ready.

Right on schedule, Bob Hope's troupe landed in Vietnam on Christmas Eve, 1964. As the performers deplaned at Tan Son Nhut airbase near Saigon, Hope put on a short, impromptu show on the tarmac for the welcoming group, then headed for the Caravelle Hotel in downtown Saigon for the night. His welcome to Saigon unexpectedly featured a VC sapper attack on the Brinks hotel, a US military-occupied hotel in downtown Saigon.

Hope heard the explosions as he was arriving in downtown Saigon. Hope later quipped to the press that, as he was heading for his hotel in Saigon, his hotel passed him heading the other way!

However, back at Vinh Long, about 1700 hours on Christmas Eve, all flight crews from the 62d Aviation Company "Outlaws" and the 114th Aviation Company "Knights", had been placed on alert in preparation for a maximum-support airlift and gunship effort for the 145th Aviation Battalion, before first-light, in the Saigon area on Christmas morning. By 1830, all available slicks and gun ships from both the Outlaws and Knights, as well as the Tigers from the 121st Aviation Company in Soc Trang, were enroute to Ton Son Nhut airfield in Saigon, arriving after dark.

The operation would prove to be one of the largest Army Aviation helicopter airlifts that had ever been conducted up to that time. Approximately 165 helicopters, from seven Air Mobile companies, were involved in the (at that time) highly-classified mission. Detailed, multi-level mission briefings were held during the next several hours and aircraft commanders were finally able to brief their crews about 2300 hours.

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CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR MISSIONARY KIDS

By LTC (Ret.) Bo Atkinson

In December 1966, I was commander of the 155th Assault Helicopter Company Viet Nam. The 155th had its own base camp located outside Ban Me Thout, we actually were living and working about eight miles from our Battalion HQ which was located at Pleiku.

Also located close to our base camp was a Missionary organization that had been working in Viet Nam for 57 years. I became aware, and was introduced to them while I was in the Advisory group also located in Ban Me Thout. My friend and his family had been in Vietnam for 7 years with one year off to visit the States. Members of his organization were given PX privileges by the Advisory Group and most of their purchases were canned foods and perhaps hair spray. They also performed Church services for the advisory Group and the 155th almost every week. Their homes were typical "American Style", two stories with large yards, located on the south west approach to the city and easily recognizable from the air.

In August, 1966, I was invited to a dinner at one of their homes, given in Major Joe Parlas's honor upon his departure from his assignment as Commander of 155th Company. My notes say on that day there were four men with wives, several nurses (all missionaries) and a total of fifteen children at the gathering. There were a couple more men of the missionary group who were on trips somewhere. I don't remember any of the names, but the Missionaries names were mentioned in the book on Special Operations in Viet Nam, "SOG", written by John L. Plaster, must have been in the group that day.

Earlier in the year, we had installed a swimming pool in the 155th compound and the Missionaries were given a blanket invitation to come by for a swim. They took us up on the offer during the Christmas holidays when their college age children returned home from school. The group included several young ladies and were always chaperoned by one of the mothers. In one of my conversations with the mothers, they expressed their gratitude and complemented me on the behavior of our men who acted like gentlemen on every occasion. But what would you expect from 155th Team. I was invited to their homes often and was also given a farewell dinner in late February, 1967.

On the Thursday night before Christmas, 1966, the Missionaries presented a pageant with the Montagnard children depicting the Christmas theme and the birth of Christ. All the words were in RADE, the Montagnard

language to include the carols and hymns. The age of the children was 7 to 12 years and everything was done from memory. Each child received a bag of candy plus cokes and donuts.

SATURDAY, CHRISTMAS EVE. I gave a Troop Information class at 0745, officers call at 0830 and at 0900 the Province Chief and his party arrived. In addition to the Chief, there were 25 men and 25 young college age girls. The Province Chief presented the company a beautiful plaque and the young ladies handed out souvenir handkerchiefs to everyone present. There were speeches which we heard explained by an interpreter and I made a short acceptance speech. We adjourned to the Mess Hall for cake and coffee. This group left at 10:15 and a group from the orphanage arrived at 1100. Santa Claus arrived by helicopter and we moved to the theater where the children performed a dance. The children received their gifts and the children were taken on a tour of the Corral(our Helicopter parking area) where they were allowed into the helicopters. Each child had one of our men with them. At 12:30 we gave the visitors, Nuns and children, some lunch, and this group left the compound at 13:30. I had a short one hour break and at 14:30 the Bn. CO Ltc. Smithy arrived for the official opening of the EMNCO Club. The ribbon was cut at 1500 hours while standing in a rain shower. A short time later a Montagnard group presented the Club with an enormous crossbow as a symbol of the Central Highlands. Hence the new name for the EMNCO Club was the Cross Bow Inn. After more speeches, we had free drinks and food. The Senior Army Advisor arrived and spoke a few words to the crowd. The Montagnards gave me a gift which was a cloth used by the women as a skirt, just like the one I had received at the initiation. The dignitaries and guests left while the band played on at the Cross Bow Inn.

The men danced with some local women that had been invited. The ladies left at 18:00 and my comment was that I was pleased with the way our troops behaved. They had let their "hair down", treated the female guests like gentlemen and only had a few arguments. The joint EM/NCO Club seemed to be working fine.

The officers had a party after the Cross Bow Inn ceremony and cooked steak over charcoal accompanied by punch, shrimp and sauce. Our friend from USAID was invited along with two American ladies who were from a voluntary organization teaching the Montagnards. There was much singing and music until the curfew hour of

Continued on Pg 22



Vietnamese Christmas card.



Christmas Dinner with missionary family.



Christmas dinner 1966.



Missionary Homes outside Ban Me Thout.



Photos by James Walters

To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

On May 5th 1999, Ron Timberlake, a retired Army Major and member of the VHPA was killed while on his way to fly his plane at a small airport near Houston, Texas. A woman, who apparently didn't see him, pulled her car out in his path and Ron crashed into the side of her vehicle. He lived for only a few hours and then the great warrior died. I was honored to be at his burial service almost two weeks later at Arlington National Cemetery which was attended by over 200 citizens and fellow freedom fighters.

I have enclosed some photos of Gary Timberlake (Ron's Brother) and his wife, Vada (my sister) and two of their friends who were at Arlington National Cemetery on December 12, 1999 as volunteers to lay wreaths for the Wreaths Across America (www.wreathsacrossamerica.com) program. One was taken of them decorating Ron's grave, the other is a photo of one of the sections in the cemetery we also helped decorate.

Thank you and the VHPA for what you do to remember our veterans.

James Walters

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COVER PHOTO



More pictures that were sent to us by our member Tom Payne. Just like our cover photo, these were also taken in 1970 at the Hue/Phu Bai airport in Vietnam just prior to Bob's Christmas Show for the 101st Airborne Division. Tom says the man in the dark slacks is Les Brown, leader of the Les Brown and his Band of Renown show band. Tom also wants us to take note of the picture showing just one of the many pallets of Cue Cards that were unloaded from the C-130 that day.



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These covers and coasters are offered by VHPA Member Charles Lee, Playtex 26 / Liftmaster 26, in 1969.

Editor's note: We ran the below photo in last year's Christmas in Vietnam issue of the Aviator. In March of this year I received this note from our member John Lawler.

David,

In your Nov/Dec 2009 issue of "The VHPA Aviator" magazine I saw a photo that brought back some great old memories from the Christmas I spent in Vietnam in 1969.

I asked my roommate, WO1 Dale Dilts to paint the special nose cover just for our Christmas Holidays. I wanted it mainly to pass out holiday cheer and to let all the troops on the ground that we supported just how much we appreciated them. The troops on the ground loved it and it brought much joy and celebration where ever we landed.

I was flying for the 335th AHC based out of Dong Tam at the time. Of course this wasn't an "approved mod" by any means so we had to sneak the nose cover on before every flight and change it back after we landed before "command" had a chance to notice it.

I left active duty in 1971 and joined the National Guard; I have just retired a few years ago after 41



years of military service. Dale Dilts stayed on Active duty and retired after 22 years of military service, he then flew for DHL and finally retired a few years ago. We still stay in touch after all these years, but I'm sure that's not uncommon among our members.

Best Regards,
John Lawyer, Pasadena, California.

Maybe the Warrant Officer Aviator in Vietnam had a little bit more "flight suit attitude" than his fellow Aviators of the RLO variety.



It also seemed like the CW2's of the 1/9 Cav's Cobra Platoon always had a handlebar "stash" and longer sideburns than that of the LT's and Captain's in our company. But other than those usual differences, we always ate together whether it was from a can, a box or while we were in the mess hall. One day, at the 2/20 ARA's mess hall, our Battalion Commander decided that Commissioned and Warrant Officers would not sit together in the mess hall any longer, he now wanted them to sit at separate tables. Of course no one was bothered about the fact that everyone had been sitting together, and of course no one thought it was a good idea to make us sit apart, but it was so ordered and so it was to be.

Now, get a group of grumbling Warrants together, give them a good supply of beer then step aside! Brain Storming is going to be at its best and this story shows it.

A few days later, and a couple of hours before noon chow, a magnificent table was prepared in the Warrant Officer section of the mess hall. Since he never chose to visit our mess hall, the place settings of the 1st Cav Division Commander and his staff was commandeered and placed on one of his linen table cloths. A nice flower arrangement was set as a centerpiece which was surround-

ed with fine wine and liquors. Hand engraved place cards, done in Old English lettering directed the WO's to their assigned chair. Each chair was complete with covers bearing the formal "Blue Max" emblem on the back. A fan in the window blew a nice cool breeze through with the smell of burning incense providing a South East Asia ambiance. Music was in the air from our Sony which played dinner time rock and roll music (1970's) in the background. Last, a rearing stuffed cobra sat on the table facing the other side of the mess hall, the RLO's half, which all of a sudden was terribly sparse and bland looking.

The "piece DE resist-anons" was the "Matre Dee" who welcomed his WO guests to the grand table. CW2 Charlie Gossett was in charge that fateful day, he was dressed out in his finest dirt colored flight suit, his greased hair was parted down the middle and checkered linen hung from his arm. He greeted each guest and then seated him; he even carried each officer's full tray back to the table.

That is until the BN Commander came in and saw what was going on. Well "It" really pissed him off; there is no other way to say it. "Get that S__t out of here!" rang through the compound! And then, it was gone very quickly!

Gone really isn't a good word for what happened next, actually "It" was just moved to a briefing room inside the TOC. We moved the whole setup to include our trays of chow and added just one more little "touch". A big sign was drawn up and hung over this beautiful table, it proclaimed that today marked the "First Annual WOPA Dinner" of the 2/20th ARA. Also to our surprise and delight in came the BN XO with his tray and asked if he could join us! He was a good man and we truly enjoyed dining with him. The next day, once again all the pilots ate together, whether it was from a can, a box or while in the mess hall.



A Christmas Story for our Association

In early December of 1969, I was an AC on a slick with Troop A 7/17th Cavalry in the Central Highlands. Several of us pilots received letters from a grammar school class members from somewhere in the Midwest U.S.

My letter came from a little girl, who introduced herself, and asked me what my job was in Viet Nam relative to flying helicopters. But even a hardened Cav pilot could not bring himself to describe in morbid detail what we did and saw while flying combat missions 100% of the time.

So, taking some license from decorum, albeit a white lie; my letter back to her described that as it was hot in Viet Nam, and therefore it did not snow so my job was to fly Santa Clause from hootch to hootch delivering Christmas presents to Vietnamese children.

The teacher sent me a letter sometime after Christmas thanking me for my letter, and thoughtful "Description" of my "Job."



Perhaps many others did likewise...hopefully.

Dan Rackoff
Rook 33

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

For us, perhaps it was a little glimpse of Heaven...

by Steve Bookout

On the 26th of August, 2010, a special mini-reunion was held by an OH-58A crew who hadn't seen each other for 40 years. They last flew together in October, 1970 for the 120th Assault Helicopter Company, the "Deans". Nothing really special about that, but the interesting part was that besides the pilot and crewchief, the third member in attendance was their original chopper. Even that isn't really, really special, unless that original LOH just happens to be, incredible as it is, still on duty and flying on a daily basis in the Iowa National Guard.

In mid-July I received a telephone call from an excited John "Rusty" Lockwood, one of my former crewchiefs, who now resides in Illinois. He told me he had been searching the internet trying to locate the six 58s that made up the Fourth Platoon, a.k.a. "Packrats". One was found to have crashed while flying for the Georgia Highway Patrol. Another had been exported to Mexico with no further information given. Details on three of helicopters have not been discovered yet.

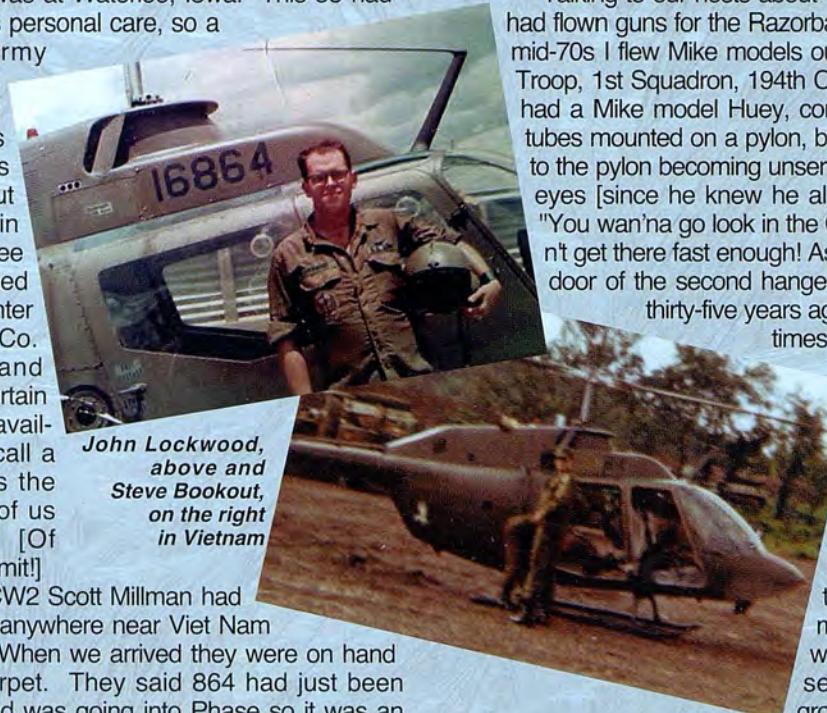
Then a third bird was discovered, specifically 68-16864, was found on a website. Four photos were displayed and the caption stated that this helicopter was at Waterloo, Iowa. This 58 had been assigned into Rusty's personal care, so a fast call to the Iowa Army National Guard was made to verify that 864 was still there. He explained his interest in their helicopter as having crewed it, flying out of Sanford Army Airport in Long Binh and could we see it? They politely explained that the ship flew daily counter drug flights for Det 1, A Co. 1/376th A V BN S&S, and couldn't say exactly for certain when the ship would be available. Rusty's follow-up call a few weeks later gave us the green light, so the both of us headed for Waterloo. [Of course, I drove the speed limit!]

CW3 Eric Schuler and CW2 Scott Millman had no idea the bird had been anywhere near Viet Nam and were a bit surprised. When we arrived they were on hand and rolled out the red carpet. They said 864 had just been brought into the hanger and was going into Phase so it was an excellent time to get reacquainted. Seeing our old ship setting there was a little emotional for the two of us. I ran my hands over it's nose and pitot tube and was instantly transported back in time. Setting at the controls which were a little worn and grimy, but still original, I became 22 again! Man, this can't be happening! Are we lucky or what?

Rusty crawled into the back telling them to give him a 60 and "let's go fly". Laughingly, they told us that they no longer had sixties, but



John Lockwood and Steve Bookout



John Lockwood,
above and
Steve Bookout,
on the right
in Vietnam

that couldn't bring him down from Cloud Nine. We crawled all over, around, and under that bird searching for patched bullet holes while Eric gave me the skinny on all of it's updates and status. She's still an A model, but has the improved tail rotor, covered driveshaft, bigger engine, and with a whole lotta surveillance stuff bolted on. The serial number on the cowling has been re-stenciled to say 0-16864. The zero indicating it had been rebuilt.

Mr. Schuler explained that he had flown 864 out of Taji Air Base Iraq, approx. 15 nautical miles north of Baghdad, along the Tigris river last year and that she is still an Alpha model. Several years ago, when

the engine was replaced/upgraded there were still Charlie models in the system and the Alpha's with the new engine were called A+ or Alpha plus's. That designation has been dropped in the past couple years and the Charlie models have been removed from the system. The official designation for 864 is still OH-58A. The additional equipment added originally for the Counterdrug RAID aircraft is now called MEP or Mission Essential Package. Sadly, 864 is to be replaced in about a year.

Talking to our hosts about Viet Nam, it was mentioned I had flown guns for the Razorbacks in Vietnam. Then in the mid-70s I flew Mike models out of that same facility with D Troop, 1st Squadron, 194th Cav. Eric then explained they had a Mike model Huey, complete with guns and rocket tubes mounted on a pylon, but had been taken down due to the pylon becoming unserviceable. With a gleam in his eyes [since he knew he already had me hooked] said "You wan'na go look in the OTHER hanger?" We couldn't get there fast enough! As we walked through the man door of the second hanger, there sat a gun ship I flew thirty-five years ago. Well, knock me out! Two times in one day!

After making out the serial number, 66-15185, yet another memory surfaced. I had just brought 185 up to a three foot hover, when a hydraulic line burst and I had to shoot a hovering auto after hearing the pressure line blow. What made the incident memorable was that the controls had seized up before we hit the ground. So much for the accumulator theory, eh?

What a day! It just don't get much better than this. Our one hour visit had turned into four. Departing was difficult because for just a few hours, Rusty and I were able to roll back time and revisit our youth. For us, perhaps it was a little glimpse of Heaven.

Steve Bookout

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

In the fall of 1967, I was stationed in Japan when Bob Hope and his entourage stopped off on their way to Vietnam...



A Navy CH-46 delivered them to Rankin Army Airfield at Camp Zama and we flew them to visit the five US hospitals we had in-country at that time. In addition to Bob Hope, there was Ann Margaret, Nancy Sinatra (with her walking boots on), and Rosie Grier, the football player (humongous fellow).

I went back to Vietnam from Japan to command the 159th DUSTOFF at Cu Chi and learned most of the same group would perform there on Christmas Eve of 1968. When I learned they were coming, I got my pilots together and told them I planned to pull first-up duty that night and wanted someone to volunteer to fly with me because I wanted everyone else to see their show.

After getting a volunteer, WO1 Doug MacNeil spoke up and said in his slow drawl, "Sir, I dated Ann Margaret a couple of times while we were freshmen at Northwestern University several years ago. Do you think I could try to see her while they are here?"

The other pilots immediately began accusing him of suffering from combat fatigue, but I could tell he was serious. Doug was an unusual fellow who had almost completed a Masters degree in philosophy at Northwestern when he got fed up with the anti-war sentiment sweeping the campus and joined the Army. Doug was 30 years old at the time and the oldest pilot in the unit except for me.



Ann Margaret deplanes at Camp Zama in Japan in 1967

25th Division's area of operation. In addition, Doug conned me out of my jeep and brought Ann to our unit for a short visit. Later that evening, everyone was treated to a memorable show at Cu Chi.

In the spring of 1969, newly promoted CW2 McNeil told me he wanted to extend in Vietnam in order to complete his obligation early and get back to Northwestern to finish his Masters program. I told him "no" because he had been shot up far too many times and had been wounded. After I left, Doug apparently talked my replacement into letting him extend and then he accepted one of those "post card" appointments to first lieutenant.

In early April of 1970, Doug was called to a "Hot LZ" located a few miles north of Cu Chi to pick-up a badly wounded American. The mechanized infantry unit on the ground acknowledged they were still receiving sniper fire, but thought they could suppress it long enough for Doug to get in and out. While Doug was landing, a well hidden .51 caliber machine gun opened up and a bullet struck him in the chest. Doug died there in the LZ.

In the spring of 2004, my wife and I were planning a trip to Branson, MO to attend a high school reunion when one of my friends reminded me that Andy Williams owns a theater there and that Ann Margaret was a regular star. I checked the show billings on the internet and found she would be there during our stay, so I sent copies of the attached pictures and told Ann we would be in the audience on a certain night. I also told her about Doug MacNeil being killed, because she had gotten married not long after they were freshmen together and might not have known it.



Bob Hope, 3rd from left and wearing that snappy hat with the black hat band, is escorted to Base Ops at Camp Zama, Japan in 1967

View of the flight line at Rankin Army Airfield at Camp Zama, Japan circa. 1968

Barbara and I had just settled into our seats for the show, when someone tapped me on the back. When I turned, it was the theater manager who told me Ann Margaret would like for us to visit her back-stage when the show ended and, if we could, he would send an escort as soon as she changed out of her show costume.

After the performance, we were led to the "green room" along with several of Ann's friends and other show people that she worked with from place to place. When Ann came into the room, one of her handlers took her around to introduce her to the group and Barbara and I were last in line.

When introduced, Ann threw her arms around my neck and hugged me tight. I thought she would never turn loose as she began telling me how much she had appreciated my letter and the pictures. She also told me she was not aware that Doug had been killed and asked what happened. Tears began welling up in her eyes while I described the circumstances. "That's the Doug I remember," she said, "He was such a kind and gentle person."

From that moment on, Ann hung onto my arm as she walked us around and introduced Barbara and me to a much larger group that had assembled by that time. She kept telling everyone how much she enjoyed visiting the troops and that it was the highlight of her life. She kept introducing me as "one of my good men."

After about 10 minutes, Barbara and I felt we were intruding and ought to go, but Ann insisted that we stay longer. Although she had another performance scheduled that evening, we probably spent 30 minutes or more with her before we could gracefully get away.

As an aside, Ann was as beautiful as she was 35 years earlier and in tremendous physical shape. She was as solid as a rock and told me she exercised every day.

There are a few special people in this world and I think all of us Vietnam Veterans would agree that Ann Margaret is particularly special.

Doug Moore
Col, US Army Retired

The Mexican Bandit Gang & Christmas Eve of 1969.....

By Gary E. Earls

Strange things happen in combat zones and Christmas Eve in Northern I Corps wasn't any different. I was assigned to Company "C", 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division and I was doing my duty as the 158th Aviation Battalion perimeter defense officer during the month of December, 1969. It got to be routine with watching the night duty officer inspect the guards from the different aviation companies.

About two weeks before Christmas, several of the warrant officers came to me and asked if they could perform guard duty on the night of December 24th. These warrants were part of the original members of the unit and had seen the company become an effective combat aviation unit. Their plan was to have the enlisted personnel take the night off and give the troops a party on that night. We all appreciated the long hours that our crews worked and thought they should be rewarded in some way. My response was that I didn't care who was standing guard as long as we had guards to man the bunkers on the perimeter. I gave them twenty dollars toward the party. It didn't dawn on me to get permission to have the officers' substitute for the enlisted men. It just seemed to be a good idea and no one would be the wiser if they were the guards for the night. Also we thought that there would be a Christmas cease fire and it would be a good time for a little relaxation time for all.

As the time drew near to the 24th, a "maintenance" flight was arranged to go to DaNang to the larger Class 6 store to procure the proper amount of adult beverages for the troop party. We decided that if we went into the PX at Camp Evans and bought a large amount of liquor then questions would be asked and the possibility that the party would be cancelled. We had purchased large quantities for our company before when our resupply train had been attacked by the North Vietnamese Army during the summer but that's another story.

I had forgotten about the arrangement for the night of the 24th. I was watching the night duty officer assemble the guards and I realized that the guards from my company were missing. They had been delayed by a First Sergeant who wanted to know what they were doing. When they replied that they were taking over guard duties that night, the First Sergeant also known as "The Bear" was speechless. I was getting worried about my "no shows" when I heard a commotion behind me. The "guards" from Charlie Company were coming down the road. They weren't marching in a formation just a mob moving down the road to the guards' location. They looked like a "Mexican" bandit gang from the movie "The Magnificent Seven". Each man was wearing crossed bandoliers of ammunition and at least two or three weapons per man. They all looked like they hadn't shaved in two or three days and it looked like they had slept in their jungle fatigues as well. It wasn't the imitation of the "Old Guard" that I was expecting. The other guards were watching this spectacle in total amazement.

They got into "formation" just in time for the battalion commander, LTC Joseph Kastner to walk out the door on his way to the evening meal. I was hoping that he wouldn't notice the

Charlie Company substitutes. I didn't want to explain why there were officers in the guard formation. He looked at the Charlie company "mob" which stood out from the other guards and then looked at me and then back at the mob. He just shook his head. I thought that I had just guaranteed myself a spot in the Long Binh jail for conduct unbecoming an officer and any other offense that he could find. I was sure that he would counsel our company commander who would transfer me to the worst spot in Viet Nam, but, we never heard any negative comments from the headquarters staff.

The Charlie Company guards who were unfamiliar with proper procedures on a bunker line used all of the flares that night with occasional burst of M-16 and M-60 weapons. They were also teasing the enemy to come out and fight. They kept calling "Uncle Ho" all sorts of dirty names. As I understand it from John Eaton who was one of the guards, there were heavy casualties among the frog population that night. They had used up so much ammunition that it was almost to the point that they had to call for an ammunition resupply. The residents of the local village probably didn't get any sleep that night either. The sector that night earned the reputation of having a "Mad Evening" rather than a "Mad Minute" that we all have experienced during our tour. At least there wasn't anyone asleep in the Charlie Company sector that night.

One of the benefits was that the pilots experienced what the crew chiefs and door gunners went though on guard duty. The enlisted guys had a good time at the party and a welcome night off. They could sleep in the next morning and many needed the extra sleep to recover from the party. It was an excellent morale booster for our guys. The 101st had a policy that enlisted couldn't have hard liquor. That didn't make any sense to us since our crew members were taking the same risks as us pilots. That's why we made sure they had hard liquor as well as a proper amount of beer and soda.

The word got around Camp Evans about the Charlie Company "guards". We heard from the pilots in the other aviation companies that their enlisted personnel wanted a night off too. They were irritated at us for starting a new tradition. We were glad that we gave the guys a night off with a party.

The next Christmas the pilots of Charlie Company continued the tradition but this time the company executive officer inspected the officers before they joined the rest of guards. No "Mexican" bandit gang looks were allowed and they had to know their general orders before they assembled for the guard formation. I understand that the night was much quieter also.

At least the local residents got a better night's sleep and the frogs didn't have much to worry about either.

Gary E. Earls
Phoenix 30/36 and Roadrunner 5
E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Christmas at the O'Club for the 178th Assault Support Helicopter Company back in 1967 in Chu Lai, Vietnam.



VHPA Member Bill Jeczalik sent us this photo of the Christmas Decorations done to the bar at the O'Club for the 178th Assault Support Helicopter Company during the Christmas Season back in 1967. The 178th ASHC was located in Chu Lai, Vietnam; the photo also appears on their website: www.theboxcar.org

2010 Membership Directory

If you had ordered a paper or CD membership directory before the September 1st deadline, you should have received it by now. If not, please call HQ at 800-505-VHPA to find out where it is.

We ordered some extras in both formats so if you procrastinated past the 1 September cut-off (that's never happened has it?), call HQ to check for availability and to order your copy, they're \$20 each.

Otherwise, log on and enjoy the VHPA Membership Directory, Aviator magazines and the Directory's history sections online at: www.vhpaservices.com

Gary Roush
Directory Editor, E-mail:
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VHPA'ers In The News

I thought the membership might be interested in seeing this picture of a project that I'm involved with.

The project is an UH-1 Display Helicopter mounted on a trailer and fully restored to display condition. The aircraft's tail number is 68-16425 and during 1968-1971 it flew 1,900 hours in Vietnam with the Warlords of B Company, 123rd Aviation Battalion while based out of the heliport that was just north of the east runway at Ky Hà, in Quang Nam province, Vietnam.

We bring our Huey to many different events; parades, car shows, 4th of July picnics or just about anywhere we think it can so some good. One of our "crew member's" is Chris Noel a Hollywood actress who also did an AFN radio show in Vietnam called "A Date With Chris". Now she runs a shelter for homeless Vietnam Vets here in Boynton Beach, Florida.

The photo shows us setting up our display this year just before the dedication of a Korean War memorial in our home-town of Boynton Beach, Florida. If anyone would like to join us, or would be interested in hosting our UH-1 at their event, they're welcome to contact me at the below e-mail address.

Regards,
Bill Jeczalik
E-Mail: [REDACTED]



Korean War Memorial Boynton Beach June 25, 2010



August 17, 2010

Ron Miller of the National Veteran Adviser, National League of Families of America reports these updated numbers of the missing and unaccounted servicemen in Southeast Asia.

AMERICANS IDENTIFIED: There are now 1,711 Americans listed by DOD as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. The number of Americans returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now at 872, though another 63 US personnel, recovered post-incident and identified before the end of the war, bring the total to 935.

Of the 1,711 unreturned veterans, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control. The numbers are further broken down as follows: Vietnam - 1,310 (NVN-478, SVN-832), Laos-335, Cambodia-59, Peoples Republic of China's territorial waters-7. Over 450 of these 1,711 servicemen were lost over water.



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I just received the VHPA's 2009 Christmas in Vietnam Issue and found the Christmas Stories quite interesting. Well, here's another one to share with the membership...

I was with B Company, 227th Aviation Battalion at Phoc Vihn in 1969-1970. There was a pilot in the unit who had been a grunt in the First Cav in his first tour in Vietnam and while he started his tour as a grunt, he later became a door gunner as his tour wound down. He liked flying so much he applied to flight school, earned his wings and went right back to Nam where he flew for, you guessed it, the First Cav.

A few months before Christmas in 1970, he wrote and asked his mother to send him some small food items that he could pass out to his old infantry unit to help spice up their C-rations and/or LRRP meals. His mother was touched by his generosity and she told several folks around their town what he was doing and that got the ball started rolling. Soon our buddy began receiving packages of food from just about everyone in town (did I mention that his parents lived in Palo Alto, California? Even at that time, it was no small town). Somehow a local grocery store picked up on the project and one day he received a whole C-130 load of food stuffs. Then, someone in the Midwest sent him a hundred tins of popped popcorn. All that stuff took up almost all of the hootch we were living in!

On Christmas Eve the whole Company (well almost everyone...) help break down all the food and put it in boxes, we figured one box for each 10-15 men. We had been given Christmas Day as a down day just to deliver all the boxes to his old Infantry Battalion. It took most of the day to get all the boxes passed out, his old Battalion was scattered throughout several locations and we even had to lower some of the boxes down by rope as we couldn't land the aircraft. What a day that was and we were all tired by the time we were finished,

I can remember that a Stars and Stripes reporter stopped by that day to interview a bunch of us on what we were doing but I can not

remember if the story ever appeared in print. But it should have, it was a great human interest story.

My memory of the day might be a bit fuzzy on some of the details but this is a true story. The man in question was Chief Warrant Officer Troy L. Wise and the boxes were passed out to his old infantry unit, the 2nd of the 8th Cav.

Every Christmas I remember this story and think that more people should hear about this one man's kindness, and the support that he received from not only his home town, but throughout the country. And while it may seem that all that remains of this country's memory of the Vietnam War is just about protesting and anti-war activities, I was there to witness something truly great.

I just want to share this story with my fellow pilots. There is not a week that goes by that I don't think of about Troy and all of the rest of the men whom I lived and flew with for that fateful year, and sometimes I wish I could do it all over again.



Garry Mallernee

Potato Masher 45

Aka Victor India

(but that is a story for another day)

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

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35 Years On, Vietnam Heroes Reunited, Decorated

by Joseph Shapiro and Sandra Bartlett
September 1, 2010

As Saigon was falling to Communist North Vietnamese forces in April 1975, U.S. sailor Kent Chipman and Ba Nguyen, a helicopter pilot in the South Vietnamese army, crossed paths for one brief moment. Chipman was aboard the USS Kirk, a small Navy ship that rescued Nguyen and his family as they flew in a Chinook transport chopper, desperate to get away from Saigon.

Chipman then waited 35 years to be reunited with Nguyen and his family.

The two men met again this summer at a reunion of the crew of the Kirk, held in a conference center in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. At the door of the ballroom, Chipman stood, his beard graying, in a white sailor's hat and -- even though it's summer --

the heavy wool, dark blue winter uniform of the U.S. Navy. He snapped to attention with a crisp salute when he spotted Nguyen, in a wheelchair, being pushed down the hall by his wife and children. As a Navy band played, Chipman greeted Nguyen.

"Hello sir, my name's Kent Chipman. You're the pilot of the big Chinook. Nice to meet you, sir. Thank you for coming. Thank you, sir," he said as he grabbed Nguyen's hand. 'I Remember The Baby Coming Out'

In 1975, the Kirk, a destroyer escort, took part in Operation Frequent Wind, the helicopter evacuation of South Vietnam. As Saigon began to fall on April 29, the ship's crew saw helicopters on the horizon headed for the Kirk and other U.S. ships. The choppers were piloted by South Vietnamese officers and their families fleeing their homeland. And then, after the South Vietnamese government surrendered and the country was in control of the North -- and as other U.S. Navy ships steamed away -- the Kirk went back to rescue the remnants of the South Vietnamese navy, which were hiding near an island off the coast.

Mina Nguyen-Driver, the pilot's daughter, was 10 months old in 1975. "I obviously don't remember anything just because I was still a baby in diapers, but what my mom tells me, my parents tell me, is that they dropped me off," she says. That's not the same as drop off the baby at day care or drop off the baby at Grandma's house. What Nguyen-Driver means is that her mother literally dropped her -- from a moving helicopter. She's heard her parents tell the story. "And she just was like, '1-2-3, hallelujah: Drop her,'" Nguyen-Driver says. "And just going for Hail Mary and not really quite being sure as to if the folks below were going to catch me or not." The folks about 10 feet below were that sailor, Chipman, and his crew mates on the USS Kirk.

"I remember the baby coming out," says Chipman, who was a 21-year-old Texan normally not on deck, but usually working deep in the ship tending to the engine. "But you know, there was no way we



USS Kirk



Mrs Ba Nguyen and daughter 1974

were going to let 'em hit the deck or drop 'em. We caught 'em."

That's how desperate things were for families such as the Nguyens. As Saigon fell, the Vietnamese pilot gathered his family in his helicopter and flew away from the city. The only direction to go was out to sea. He was running out of fuel when he spotted a solitary ship below. It was the Kirk. But the ship was too small and the CH-47 Chinook helicopter too large to land. So Nguyen hovered above the deck while his passengers -- including his wife and three small children -- jumped.

Untold History From An 'Unhappy War'

The 260 officers and men on the Kirk did even grander things than that. When they returned to Vietnam to rescue the South Vietnamese navy, they found 30 ships, dozens of fishing boats and a few cargo ships with them. The ships were crowded with refugees, some 20,000 to 30,000 in all. But it has been an untold history. It just wasn't something people wanted to talk about 35 years ago. Jan Herman, a historian with the U.S. Navy Medical Department, says people wanted to forget the Vietnam War. "It was a time to forget a very unhappy war and to move on. And so the story of the Kirk, as good as it was, was kind of left in the dust. No one really looked at it," he says. Herman, for one, is trying to change that. He is working on a film and a book about the Kirk. He first showed the film documentary at the recent reunion.

Of the 20,000 to 30,000 refugees the Kirk led to safety, about half were women, children and babies. The crew fed them, gave them fresh water and cared for the sick. In the war, the ship never saw combat. The Kirk was a submarine hunter; its crew trained for warfare. So the sailors found it hard to think of their humanitarian work as heroic. "It's certainly not something you go bragging about to your fellow warriors," says the Navy historian. "I diapered a baby today" -- I'm not sure that's going to go over well, you know, at a bar when you're having a brew with a bunch of friends or colleagues."

Rescuing The Story Of The Kirk

It's not just the rest of the world that didn't know about the Kirk. The Navy didn't know either. Several years ago, men from the Kirk applied for a new service medal that was being given to sailors who had taken part in the helicopter evacuation of Saigon. The

Navy couldn't find a record that the Kirk was even there. That bureaucratic mess was cleared up only recently. So at this summer's reunion -- and at the last one in 2007 -- Vice Adm. Adam Robinson, the Navy surgeon general, showed up to present those service ribbons and to recognize the Kirk's humanitarian mission. One way the crew of the Kirk is making its story known is by holding reunions. In part, bitterness over Vietnam has eased with time. And as troops fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq have made a happier return to the U.S., the men of the Kirk have begun to feel they can more safely tell their story.

And they simply want to know what happened to each other and to those they helped save. Paul Jacobs was captain of the Kirk. "They want to find out what happened to the Vietnamese that they rescued and the Vietnamese want to pay their respects to the people who



Ba Nguyen about to ditch

Continued on Pg 28

Page 17 The VHPA Aviator

Editor's note. It is evident in this story that Don Wann touched the lives of many people, so it really didn't surprise me when I was sent literally blitzed by dozens of e-mails detailing the arrangements that were made for the return and the "homecoming celebration" of CWO Wann's body. Many different stories of the event were carried by various printed and electronic media and they ran literally nationwide. I chose the article from the Muskogee Phoenix newspaper because I felt it offered the best coverage of all the aspects of the search, identification of the remains and the escort honors of both members of the aircrew. But there are many, many more stories on the Web that detail the story of not only CWO Wann's services, but also of the equally moving services for his co-pilot that day, 1st Lt. Magers. A Google search for either Wann or Magers yields literally hundreds of links to stories on both men. It's good to have them both back home.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Don Wann

HOME AT LAST, A VIET

By Kirk Kramer, Muskogee Phoenix Newspaper staff writer, used by

Dateline Fort Gibson, Oklahoma — On a hot, sunny day with a slight breeze to stir the flags, Chief Warrant Officer Donald Wann was finally laid to rest. Wann's burial in Fort Gibson National Cemetery came 39 years after he lost his life when the Cobra attack helicopter he was flying was shot down by enemy fire in Vietnam.

As Wann's funeral procession made its way to the cemetery from a Muskogee church, crowds of Fort Gibson school children and residents lined Wiley Street. Many carried flags. Girls softball coach James Parnell organized the demonstration to honor the fallen soldier. Around 500 motorcycles from various veterans' organizations accompanied the hearse and family cars from the church to the cemetery. Wann's burial was conducted with full military honors by soldiers from the Oklahoma Army National Guard. The ceremony was rich with the sound of bagpipes and drums playing "Amazing Grace," the crack of rifles fired in salute, and the solemn tolling of bells. Clydesdale horses drew the caisson that bore Wann's casket from the cemetery gate to his burial place. The drone of a flyover by three Black Hawk helicopters was a poignant reminder of Wann's service in the "Redskins," a combat helicopter unit. Wann, 34, and his co-pilot, Lt. Paul Magers of Montana, crashed June 1, 1971, and were declared missing in action.

Their remains were found 37 years later with the help of a member of the North Vietnamese gun crew who had shot down Wann and Magers. He told searchers that he had placed a burned body in a shallow mortar crater near the wreckage the day after the crash. In 2008, Wann's former enemy led searchers to the spot where his remains were found.

Retired U.S. Navy Commander Forrest Kirk, chaplain at Muskogee's VA Hospital, spoke at the burial. Wearing a brilliant white dress uniform and a gleaming ceremonial sword, he said that Wann would say "thank you" if he were present. "Thank you, for all who came out today," Kirk said. "I never knew I would return to such a great response. "Thank you to the enemy for not desecrating my body — for leading the searchers to the spot where I went down, so I could come home and share this moment."

The burial and the 10 a.m. funeral that preceded it at Muskogee's Southeast Baptist Church brought together about 50 men who served with Wann during his two tours of duty in Vietnam. "Redskins," "Gunslingers," "Cavaliers," and other old soldiers came together from all over the country. They all paid tribute to the efforts of Wann's daughter Shannon Wann Plaster, of Yukon, to bring her father home. "Shannon should get all the credit in the world," said Wayne Tweehouse of Springfield, Mo., who flew with Wann. "She's a hero in every sense that her dad is. She's amazing. Her work to bring her dad home has been unbelievable." Wann's fellow

soldiers are enjoying fellowship and sharing memories at an area hotel this weekend. It has all been part of what Plaster calls her father's "homecoming." "Shannon is the one that who brought everyone back together this weekend," said Wayne Tweehouse's wife Karen.

On Aug. 18, Plaster brought her father's remains home to Oklahoma on a flight from Honolulu to Tulsa. Chief Warrant Officer Jonathan Shaul was on the same flight. Shaul said it was a privilege to escort Plaster and her father. "It's an amazing story," Shaul said. "Shannon's worked 20 years to reach this end. To be here and listen to these guys describe her father - I can't describe how that feels."

Jeff Bulmer came from New Jersey for the funeral. "I was a Huey (helicopter) pilot, flying



1st Lieutenant Paul Magers

Vietnam Veteran is Laid to Rest

permission



family members of Army CW2 Donald Lynn Wann listen during funeral services Saturday at Southeast Baptist Church in Muskogee. Pictured (from left) are his daughter Michelle Wann, widow Diana Ziegler, daughter Shannon Wann Plaster, Ziegler's husband Bernie "Zig" Ziegler, and granddaughter Jennifer Parker.

men and materiel into and out of landing zones," Bulmer said. "Don was a Cobra pilot. He provided cover for me on many missions. He was always there for me. The least I could do is be here for him today." Gerry Cutts came from Atlanta. "Let me tell you how things have changed," he said. "When I got off the plane in San Francisco in 1972, when I came home from Vietnam, war protesters were standing at the gate yelling 'baby killer!' "On the Fourth of July last month, I was in San Diego, visiting my best friend from Vietnam for the first time in 39 years. People were coming up to me saying, 'Thank you for your service. Thank you for what you did.'" The patch on one motorcyclist's vest summed up the spirit of the week-end: "Vietnam vet and proud of it."

After the funeral, American Legion Post 15 served a meal to the family and close family friends. Among those in attendance Saturday was Nathan Magers of the state of Washington, whose uncle Paul Magers was killed in the same crash as Wann. Magers will be buried in Billings, Montana. Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry issued a statement on Wann's homecoming. "Kim and I are thankful that, after many years of waiting, the family of Chief Warrant Officer Donald Wann has brought him home to rest in Oklahoma. He made the ultimate sacrifice for his country and defended the freedoms we each enjoy. Now, all Oklahomans can know the story of his heroism on our behalf. Kim and I join many other Oklahomans in prayers for the family of CWO Wann and deep appreciation for his service."

Kirk Kramer may be contacted at: [REDACTED]



Assistant Adjutant General for the Army, Stan Putnam gives 1LT Paul G. Magers' flag to Magers' mother Mrs. Cecilia Magers at Paul's funeral in Billings, Montana



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Don Wann stands in front of an injured Huey helicopter during his first tour of duty in Vietnam around 1968.



A caisson carries the casket of Army CW2 Donald Lynn Wann to his gravesite in the Fort Gibson National Cemetery, Fort Gibson, Oklahoma

DALE ALLEN SORBELLO

Dale Alan Sorbello passed away peacefully on Sunday evening, August 29, 2010, after a sudden rupture of a cerebral arteriovenous malformation (AVM) he had unknowingly had since birth. Indeed, Dale has finished his race -- and he ran it well.



Dale's was born on January 16, 1950 in Pullman, Washington, the family soon moved to Southern California, where Dale grew up. After high school graduation, Dale became a Chief Warrant Officer in the United States Army. Dale graduated flight school in Flight Class 69-45 and flew in Vietnam with the 61st Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-71 under the callsign Lucky 31. It was while in Vietnam that Dale trusted in Jesus as his Lord and Savior and was dramatically transformed. After Vietnam, Dale earned his B.S. in Psychology at San Jose State University and when working on his M.S. in Counseling, he met the love of his life, Kimberly Brady, and married her on Valentine's Day of 1975; their marriage has been blessed with six sons and daughters.

Despite excellent health, Dale was acutely aware of his mortality and frequently discussed his "launch", as he liked to call it. Just as he had hoped, he left this world suddenly and without suffering, until that time with health and strength unabated. His family considers the way he so quickly and painlessly passed on to be one of God's great mercies to a great, great man. Avoiding laud and attention, Dale's strength and time were spent in service to God and to those around him. Those who knew Dale describe him as humble, wise, gentle, kind, steady, patient, faithful, disciplined, loyal, hardworking, playful, encouraging, generous, and full of forgiveness, integrity, and genuine concern for others.

His later career was devoted to improving the lives of the developmentally disabled and he found great satisfaction in making a tangible difference in the lives of the people he served. This work took him from Orange County, where he worked as a young consultant; to Valley Mountain Regional Center in Stockton, where he worked for eight years; and then to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) in Sacramento. Upon retirement, he continued to serve the DDS and the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) as Sorbello Consulting.

Dale was intensely dedicated to his family; he took sweet care of his wife of 35 1/2 years, Kimberly. Dale's children literally thought he was perfect, firm but gentle, he held high standards but never raised his voice, they all respected him immensely. On his last morning at home, Dale laughed with delight at the round bellies of his daughters who were carrying his fourth and fifth grandchildren. Dale was actively involved in First Baptist Church of Davis, serving for several years on the elder board, and was a member of The

Gideon's International for 32 years.

He will be greatly missed by his devoted wife, Kimberly; his adoring children and grandchildren, he is also survived by his father, two brothers as well as numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, co-workers, and friends. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to The Voice of the Martyrs or to The Gideon's International.

DAVID ELMER HELTON

Retired Chief Warrant Officer Five David Elmer Helton, 69, passed away on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 at his home in Lexington, SC after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. He was born July 16, 1941 in Asheville, NC.



David was an extraordinary US Army Officer and an inspiration to all who knew him. Moreover, he was devoted to his bride Betty Reed Helton. David is survived one son, two daughters and four grandchildren.

David graduated in Warrant Officer Rotary Wing Aviator Course Class 65-11 and served two combat tours flying helicopters in Vietnam first with the 155th Aviation Company (AML) and then with the 196th Aviation Company. He also served as a military advisor to Thailand's armed forces and was the Career Manager in the Warrant Officer Career Management Division responsible for the management of all US Army Aviation Warrant Officers. David also served a tour in Korea and along with his family was assigned to many posts throughout the United States. Mr. Helton's last assignment in his 36 years of active duty was that as Commandant of the Warrant Officer Career Center at Fort Rucker, Alabama. His awards and decorations include the coveted Gold Order of Saint Michael for contributing significantly to the promotion of Army Aviation through a lifetime of service to the United States Army Aviation Branch, The Distinguished Flying Cross, The Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. CW5 Helton was the second Warrant Officer in the United States Army promoted to that grade in 1992.

Chief Warrant Officer Helton was interred at the Fort Jackson National Cemetery with full military honors.

*Submitted by VHPA Member
Lawrence (Larry) Morgan.*

DERRYL JAMES JONES

Derryl James Jones, 61, of Thompsonville, died Sept 23, 2010, at his home. He was born in Cadillac, Michigan on Nov 14, 1948, the son of James and Ardith Jones.

After graduating from Cadillac High School in 1966, Derryl entered the U.S. Army and after fin-

ishing basic training he completed flight school graduating with Flight Class 69-19. He went on to serve three combat tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot in the 1/9th Air Cavalry Division, B Troop. While serving in Vietnam he received numerous commendations, including three DFCs, 3 Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts and a Silver Star. Prior to his third combat tour, he married his beloved wife of 39 years, Christine Trojanek.

In 1977, he fulfilled his lifelong dream of becoming a Michigan Conservation Officer, serving in Monroe, Roscommon and Benzie County. In 2003, Derryl retired from the DNR after 26 years of service. During his career, he distinguished himself in many ways by serving as law division pilot for 10 years, playing a key role in the Mesabi Fur Company sting operation and spearheading the C.W. Bowman gill netting case. After retiring, Derryl was able to rededicate himself to his hobbies, which included fishing, duck hunting, Red Wings hockey, monthly poker game, babysitting his trout pond and gardening. He and Christine greatly enjoyed traveling the country to visit family, friends and interesting places. Derryl was a giving man who was very dedicated to his family and friends.

He was greatly loved and respected by those who knew him, and he will be sorely missed. He is survived by his wife, Christine; two sons, two grandsons, his mother one brother and two sisters. He was preceded in death by his father and one grandson. Burial will take place in the Arlington National Cemetery, in Washington D.C. Contributions may be directed to Ducks Unlimited or the National Wild Turkey Federation.

*Obit sent to the VHPA by Edward Canright
of Traverse City, MI*

GREGG GAMMACK

It is my sad duty to inform the Membership of the passing of another great aviator and gentleman.

Gregg Gammack died in a motorcycle accident September 9, 2010 in Eastern Pennsylvania. Greg served his country in Vietnam as a Marine Helicopter pilot where he was awarded the Silver Star. When Gregg returned to civilian life he flew for the Gelco Corporation based in Minneapolis, MN. Later he was employed by National Medical Enterprises based in Van Nuys. That is where I met Gregg. He later worked for Seagate Corporation in hard drive sales. From there he went to work for Flight Safety International as the Regional Salesman for the Pacific Northwest based at Boeing Field, Seattle, WA.

Four years ago Gregg retired and moved to Arizona with his wife Patsy and later split their time between Arizona and their farm in Kentucky. Gregg had many friends both in aviation and out. He will be sorely missed. Our prayers and thoughts are with his wife Patsy and family.

David Bleasdell, ST Aviation, LLC, Naples, FL

TAPS

JAMES ROWE COX

Retired Maj. James Rowe Cox, 72, passed away on February 20, 2010 at his home in Copperas Cove, Texas. He was born Feb. 16, 1938, in Marshall to the union of James Henry Cox and Velma Rowe. He graduated from Marshall High School in 1956 and married Jane Ruth Flowers on Aug. 27, 1960.

Mr. Cox retired from the United States Army after 20 years of service as an Army Aviator. James graduated flight school with Flight Class 63-6 and flew two tours in Vietnam serving with the 120th Avn in 1964-65 and with the 213th ASHC in 1968-69 under the callsign's Snoopy 6, Dean and Black Cat 3. During his time in his Army Career, he received the following medals: Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Army Aviator Badge, Senior Army Aviator Badge, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star and Palm, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal Numeral 17 with "V" Device, Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Commendation (Army), National Defense Service Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal with Silver Star and two Bronze Service Stars.

Mr. Cox attended Texas A&M University and completed his college career at Sul Ross State University. He was a lifelong member of DAV Post 29, American Legion Post 582, VFW Post 03393, 12th Man Foundation, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Mortgage Bankers Association and Fort Hood Area Board of Realtors.

He was a devoted and loving father, granddaddy and great-granddaddy, not only to his family, but to everyone around him as well. He loved to fish and could oftentimes be found at his fishing shack by the pond. He was happiest when he was surrounded by his family, joking and having fun.

Survivors include his wife, Jane Ruth Cox of Copperas Cove; two sons, one daughter, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Internment, with full military honors was held at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen.

LLOYD ALLEN BILLS

L. Alan "A.B." Bills, 62, passed away September 16, 2010 surrounded by his family after a three-year battle with prostate cancer. He was born June 5, 1948 in Springfield, MO and graduated from Glendale High School in 1966.

Alan was a veteran of the United States Army and graduated flight school with Flight Class 67-13. He served one tour in Vietnam in 1967-1968 as a decorated helicopter pilot in the Big Red One (1st Infantry) Division. After completing his tour, he was assigned to Fort Stewart, GA and remained in Savannah, GA for 25

years. He was a successful restaurateur and affiliated with Spanky's for many years in both Savannah and Athens, GA. Alan's greatest joys in life were his family, baseball, the Georgia Bulldogs, golf and storytelling. He had many friends around the state and will be greatly missed by all that knew this humorous, fun-loving, and kind man.

Alan was preceded in death by his parents, survivors include his devoted wife of 18 years, Michelle Russell Bills, two sons, one sister, his mother and father-in-law, one brother and sister-in-law, two nieces and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and dear friends.

Military Honors were rendered at the Greenwich Cemetery in Georgia, in lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to your local American Cancer Society Chapter in memory of Alan Bills. Condolences may be sent or viewed at www.wagesfuneralhome.com or www.foxandweeks.com

RICHARD K. "DICK" JAMASON

Richard K. "Dick" Jamason of Fernandina Beach Florida, 69, passed away September 23, 2010.

Jamason dedicated his life's career to the United States Military Forces. He first served in the U.S. Air Force as a Boom operator and after joining the United States Army, he graduated from flight school with Flight Classes 67-68 and 68-517. He went on to serve in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and later rose to the grade of Master Army Aviator and the rank of Chief Warrant Officer.

He is survived by his brother, Dennis Jamason of Fernandina Beach, FL, and sister, Debbie Koza of Lakewood, CA, and also by a number of nieces and nephews.

Notice published in the Savannah Morning News on October 1, 2010, please sign our Obituary Guest Book at savannahnow.com/obituaries.

RICHARD "DICK" KEARLEY

Today we honor the memory of a proud US Naval Aviator, loving husband, brother, uncle, father, grandfather and good friend. We honor the memory of Richard C. "Dick" Kearley, Captain, USN, Retired, who passed away in the comfort of his home with his loving family at his side on Wednesday, September 8, 2010.

Dick was born in Pensacola, Florida, on August 7, 1941, graduated from Escambia High School in 1959, graduated from Troy University, and received a Master's Degree in

Business Administration. Dick earned his wings in Pensacola, FL in May 1966 and completed a stellar 25 year military career as a US Navy helicopter pilot.

In service, he proudly defended his country's freedom including tours in the Tonkin Gulf during the Vietnam War, and Commanding Officer of the HAL 4 Squadron in Norfolk, VA after the War. He received numerous commendations including the Medal of Meritorious Service.

Dick enjoyed the coastal living he grew up with and retired to Tierra Verde, Florida, with his family to enjoy his love for sailing, tennis, guitar and MG cars. After retiring from the Navy, Dick worked as a real estate agent in St. Petersburg. He was a member of the St. Petersburg Downtown Rotary Club and is survived by his wife of 47 years, Gwendolyn Sue (Floyd) Kearley. Internment was held on September 24th at the Barrancas National Cemetery, NAS Pensacola.

STEVEN D. MERINO

VHPA member Steven D. Merino, retired LTC, US Army of Tucson, AZ recently passed away after a long fight against cancer.

Steve started flight school in class 67-3 and graduated as a WO-1 in class 67-5. Steve received a direct commission in the spring of 1969 while he was stationed at Fort Wolters after his return from his first tour overseas. He then attended Office Basic Course and later transitioned into AH-1G Cobras and returned to Viet Nam and flew for B/2-17th CAV 101 ABN in 1969-1970 under the callsign's Banshee 21 and 26.

He is survived by two sons, one daughter, and many, many friends who will miss him dearly.

Editor's Note – you might notice that this issue's TAPS column contains just nine entries, the lowest count I've seen since taking over the job as Editor of the VHPA Aviator over two years ago. But before we start congratulating ourselves, you might want to think about this sobering fact from our Webmaster, Gary Roush. He reports that "I just finished running our database against the Social Security Deceased Index and found 250 new names of members or potential members who have passed away since the last time I did this type of search, in January of this year (2010)." So, perhaps we aren't doing as well beating the grim reaper as this issue would lead us to believe, perhaps we're just not doing a very good job of watching out for our brother's backs.

Two More Christmas Bob Hope Stories...

BOB HOPE IN CHU CHI

When Bob Hope's troupe was scheduled to perform at Cu Chi in Vietnam in 1967, they got a little help from Robert D'Agostino, a 33-year-old warrant officer with the U.S. Army.

It was Christmas 1967. I was sitting in the Thunderbird Lounge, our little club at Cong Ly Villa, having a couple of beers with Charlie Prather. The Commanding Officer came in, and he was kind of upset, and we asked him "What's up?"

He said, "Oh, I've gotta get up at 4 o'clock and transport Miss America from this forward firebase to Cu Chi in time for the Bob Hope show."

So I spoke up and told him, "Well, you just need a couple of good warrant officers to take care of that. We can do it better than a commissioned officer." So he said, Ok, you've got the mission.

We were flying a UH-1. We left about 4 a.m. out of Bien Hoa to fly up to the firebase. It was pre-dawn when we got there. Miss America, Jane Jayroe, had stayed overnight with some of her people—you know, the entourage that goes along with her: the runner-up, a couple of other beauty queens, publicity people, and a cameraman. We waited until sun-up to take her from the forward firebase to Cu Chi. We

had to be at Cu Chi at a certain time because the show was starting. She and her crew got on, and we took off and gave them a brief discussion of what kind of area we'd be flying over, and don't get upset if you see some flashes or something, we're high enough that small arms [fire] will not get us.

We landed at Cu Chi, dropped them off, and left. We didn't get to stay there and chitchat or anything, we had to report back.

You know, I was there for two years in Vietnam, and Bob Hope visited both years I was there, and I didn't get to see either of his shows.

BOB HOPE IN VIGN LONG

Al Iller was a 34-year-old captain with the 62nd Aviation Company when Hope visited Vinh Long in 1964. Iller returned to Vietnam for a second tour of duty in 1967, and retired from the Army in 1978.

I was the executive officer of the 62nd Aviation Company. There were two aviation companies and attachments stationed at Vinh Long. We were told that Bob Hope and his troupe would arrive there on Christmas Day [1964], so naturally there was a lot of planning, security, and so forth.

The day was very bright and warm, and there were big billowy clouds in the sky. It was a perfect setting. Part of the security was to

have some gunships aloft during the performance and through the departure of Bob Hope's troupe. Those gunship crews weren't able to see the show except from way up above.

These were armed UH-1 aircraft. They carried eight-shot rocket pods on each side, plus flexible machine guns, two of which were mounted on each side; the guns could be moved up and down, and right and left.

There were at least two aircraft airborne at all times. It was classified as top secret at the time for security reasons; it was very hush-hush.

Bob Hope worked a joke into the show

referring to [Major] Tom Anderson. During Bob Hope's general banter with Janis Paige, Janis commented, "These guys are so lonely for girls that the MPs searched our aircraft for stowaways. They found two Marines and Major Anderson!" Naturally there were hoots and hollers from the crowd. Bob Hope replied, "Major Anderson is so due for a leave his oak leaves rustle!" (Major insignias are gold oak leaves.) Hope then turned to the crowd and said, "For colonels I say their eagles flap their wings."

At the conclusion of the show, Anita Bryant sang "Silent Night," and I don't think there was a dry eye in the crowd.

Continued from Pg 5 CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR MISSIONARY KIDS

22:30 when all the guests had to leave. The singing continued all over the compound and a few brave souls crashed the pool. They swam around in the dark and I decided to let them have light. After the lights came on they apparently sobered up, or they didn't want to be identified, and they left the pool. It was a cold night and the wind was up a bit when they decided on a swim. We had no problems except probably headaches and sore throats; however, the Advisory Group had one man go berserk and they called upon the good old 155 for help. They wanted us to keep him in our "hospital" so he could sleep it off under the security of an MP who they provided. This was done and at 03:00 hours all was quiet and I went to bed. Later I found out that Camp Holloway had to use tear gas to break up the Christmas party at the Enlisted Club which made me even more pleased about our behavior.

Christmas Day 1966. Christmas day schedule was light compared to the day before Christmas. We had a few flight missions and after they departed, we had lunch by the pool with a big dinner at 16:30. Colonel Marr, the Advisory Commander, came by to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and joined us for lunch by the pool. Lt. Colonel Smithy joined us for our great Christmas dinner. We had a number of guests for dinner. In addition to the Missionaries, we had four ladies from the Red Cross at Camp Holloway. The Red Cross ladies joined in the fun by the pool, volleyball and helped in the serving line for dinner. Since the events of the day lasted longer than the ladies had planned, the Medic's "Hotel" was offered to them for the night. They agreed and the evening passed with no problems, except their clothing. They were not prepared for the cool evening but several of us offered clean flight suits and jackets to keep them warm. As usual when I was in camp, I decided to tour the guard posts and walk the grounds. The lady that had my clothes asked if she

could accompany me and I agreed. I knew this would cause some stir and once the first guard post was "inspected by a lady", all would be alerted immediately, so we chose the bunker nearest the Officers area. The guards did their thing, "HALT WHO GOES THERE" when they heard footsteps approaching. I had coached the lady on how to respond and she did with a truly feminine voice, "IT'S ME." There was a definite pause in the response as if the guards were totally caught "off guard." Then the response in a strong voice, "Advance and be recognized." I am sure they got ribbed by their friends afterwards when they went off duty. We toured all the guard posts and the guard towers which took some time because each post wanted to talk with an American lady. I wonder if this story is repeated over and over to children and grandchildren, the "RED CROSS INSPECTION OF THE GUARD".

*And so ends this 1966 Christmas episode of the 155th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam.
Bo Atkinson*

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Editor's Note: When asked to review his story prior to print, Col. Anderson provided us with some follow on details on the Missionaries that are so much a part of his story. He said "David, every time I review my notes on those days I can't help but think about the next year when the NVA attacked Ban Me Thout and killed several of the missionaries. The young USAID man in my story was captured and forced to walk to the "Hanoi Hilton" and one of the Missionary ladies with him died on their walk to captivity. I believe there's a book written by him out there with their story; I'll be glad to dig up the details on it if anyone is interested. Thanks again for printing the story of the men of the 155th at Christmas of 1966."

Bo Atkinson



Bob Hope's first USO show in Vietnam at Vinh Long Army Airfield, Mekong Delta on Christmas day, December, 1964. (L-R) Major Tom Anderson CO 62d Avn Co "Outlaws", Bob Hope, Jerry Colona ~Bob Hope's side-kick.



Janis Paige and Bob Hope do a soft-shoe routine on make-shift, low-boy stage in the Vinh Long compound, Mekong Delta on December 25, 1964.

At 0430, with no more than 2-3 hours sleep at the most, crews boarded their aircraft and lifted off from Ton Son Nhut airfield and headed for a forward staging area airfield about 20 minutes away. At 0500, still in pitch darkness, with no moon, several battalions of ARVN troops were loaded at the small assembly area airfield.

After all aircraft were airborne, they formed a miles-long column of air-mobile company formations through the darkened skies. At first-light, after an approximately 50 minute flight, still in formation column, the aircraft made their initial assault landings in two pre-designated LZs in the Golden Triangle area. More ARVN troops were then picked up at nearby staging areas and several more lifts were subsequently made before all aircraft were required to land at pre-selected refueling points north of the Michelin rubber plantations near the Cambodian border.

Because the operation was being conducted at a remote forward area, fuel trucks were not able to be used for refueling. Instead, JP-4 fuel had to be trucked through hostile territory to the refuel areas in 2 1/2 Ton trucks and pumped from 55 gallon drums. This necessitated the refueling to be accomplished by hand-crank pumps, from the back of the trucks, into each helicopter, a slow and lengthy process.

Knowing that the Bob Hope show was due to begin at 1300 at Vinh Long, still approximately 130 miles away, Outlaw and Knight aircraft were ordered to depart in two-ship formations as soon as each pair of helicopters was refueled, rather than waiting until all company aircraft had been refueled. The two-ship requirement formation minimized the risk of an engine failure by a single ship flying over the formidable rubber tree forests of the Michelin plantations during the 1 hour 20 minute flight back to Vinh Long.

The last two Vinh Long-based aircraft were

finally refueled and airborne by 1100. While enroute back to Vinh Long, the UH-1 crews monitored the two C-123 VIP aircraft carrying Bob Hope and troupe as they contacted Tan Son Nhut tower for departure for Vinh Long. The helicopters accelerated to max allowable speed.

Hope's aircraft landed at Vinh Long 10 minutes ahead of the last two Outlaw aircraft. These aircraft had pre-rigged red and green smoke grenades on the skids. Just as Hope and his troupe were deplaning, the two-ship helicopter formation made low-pass, welcoming circles over the parking ramp, trailing the appropriately-colored smoke.

Major Tom Anderson recalls that Bob Hope visited with him in his quarters at Vinh Long prior to the show. Hope remarked to Anderson that he had forgotten to bring his trademark golf club with him and asked Anderson if there might be a golf club available at Vinh Long! Unfortunately, the Vinh Long Airfield Country Club was closed and no golf club could be found.

Hope's show began at 1300. A reduced-size traveling troupe for the Vinh Long show consisted of Hope's side-kick comedian Jerry Colona, guitarist Bob Jones, comedian John Bubbles, England's Miss World Ann Sidney, singer/actresses Anita Bryant, Jill St. John, Janis Paige and Annamaria Alberghetti. At the time the show began, temperatures under the blue-skied Delta sun were approximately 100 degrees.

The performance, of course, included Bob Hope's inimitable form of humor, music, singing and dancing, acting, and lots of interplay with the approximately 400 assembled troops. The show was memorable by any standards. Some tape recordings were made of the show but most in attendance could not remember the contents of the show.

Majors Tom Anderson and George Derrick presented Bob Hope with a plaque, the first of thousands of pieces of military memorabilia he would receive over the next 7-8 years as he made his annual Christmas tours back to Viet Nam.

Toward the close of the show, Anita Bryant sang "Silent Night" solo, then asked the audience to join with her and the other performers in singing a repeat chorus. It was an extremely emotional moment! Very few dry eyes were seen either in the troops or in the faces of the performers on stage as well. Plus, every woman in the show troupe was in tears and had heavy mascara running down both cheeks.

Although the flight crew members had had very little sleep during the previous 24 hours, the show was a memory that everyone who was in Vinh Long, Vietnam on that Christmas day, 1964 will always remember.

Bob Hope made eight more trips to Vietnam in later years, often playing to as many as 12,000 troops in one outdoor amphitheater. However, no performance would ever be more memorable than his very first Vietnam show, on Christmas Day, in a tiny little Delta airfield with about 400 US troops assembled on the Company street in the Vinh Long compound.

Bob Hope was a true friend of the American serviceman. His memory will be forever treasured by over 70 years of servicemen and women who, while serving their country under the most trying circumstances, were entertained by this great American.

Thank you Bob Hope, for bringing a little bit of "home" to the Mekong Delta! The men of Vinh Long, 1964, salute you!

*(Then) Major Thomas E. Anderson
Colonel – Retired – U.S. Army
E-mail: [REDACTED]*

We are actively looking for someone to start up Chapters in both Hawaii and in Alaska.
Contact Jack Salm for full details on potential members in your area tips on how to
get a new Chapter started! E-mail him at:

VHPA CHAPTERS

-----New Chapter-----

Louisiana Gulf Coast Chapter
Andrew Hover, Pres.

Arizona Chapter
Bill Sorenson

California Chapter North
Ken Fritz

Fort Rucker Chapter
Roscoe V. Souders

Fort Wolters Chapter
Pat Richardson, President

Georgia Chapter
Carl "Skip" Bell

Mid South Chapter
"Pete" Norman IV

Montana Chapter
Todd Brandoff, President

North Alabama Chapter
Jim White, President

New England Chapter
Bill Williams, President

North Carolina Chapter
J.D. Lawson

Ohio River LZ Chapter
Dave Garner

South Missouri Chapter
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Rocky Mountain Chapter
Walt Wise

The Alamo Chapter
San Antonio, Texas
Jim Bauer, Pres.

South Carolina Chapter
(Celebrate Freedom) Chapter
Larry Russell, Pres.

Southern California Chapter
Carl Cortez, Pres.

VHPA of Florida Chapter
Gary Harrell, President

Virginia Chapter
Ben Gay, President

Washington State Chapter
Bob Brown, President

www.vhpawa.org

The VHPA and Chapters share information and guidance with one another for the mutual benefit of each other. All of our Chapters are separate and independently managed organizations not under control of the VHPA. The VHPA is not authorized to act as an agent or a representative for any of the Chapters nor are any of the Chapters authorized to act as agent or representative for any of the other Chapters or the VHPA as a whole.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

The Fort Wolters Chapter met on September 11 for its quarterly gathering. Teresa Whitley, Operations Administrator (i.e., the head honcho) of the Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic, VA North Texas Healthcare System, was our guest speaker. She briefed the members on the new clinic in Fort Worth. It will be four times larger than the existing facility and will be the largest outpatient clinic anywhere in the VA system. A grand opening is scheduled for November 10, the day before Veterans Day.

Chapter officers for 2011 will take office at the December 4 meeting. Lee Westbrook moves up to President and Mike Sheuerman was railroad...er, elected Vice President. Similarly, Virgil Laughlin will be the new Junior Member at Large,. Moving up will be Richard Gaurkee, Senior Member at Large, and Charles Moffitt, Middle Member. Jerry Barnes stays on as Secretary and Jim Messinger remains Treasurer. Edd Luttenberger rotates off the Executive Council from his 2010 stint as Senior Member at Large.

The most succinct report on the San Diego Reunion was, "If you weren't there, you missed it. The Chapter continues to operate in the black. It was noted that our Chapter is now closest to the flagpole" with the VHPA HQ relocation to Grapevine, TX. An office spokesperson will be invited to speak at the December meeting.

Pat Richardson, President or Immediate Past President, depending on when you read this.

GEORGIA CHAPTER

The Georgia Chapter continues to bask in the reflected glory of one of our own, Woody Mc Farlin, being elevated to the position of President of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. With everything that is going on in his personal life these days, we truly appreciate his willingness to serve and his dedication to our Association.

The Georgia Chapter continues to hold the bi-monthly Saturday morning breakfast meetings and continues to assist with efforts to educate local people and groups about the Vietnam War by furnishing speakers to high schools and colleges, Boy Scout Troops, other youth organizations and civic groups who want to learn about the war and the people who fought there. In addition, we continue to assist other Vietnam veterans groups in the local area with their projects by providing personnel and other resources.

Our primary Chapter activity continues to be the bi-monthly breakfast meeting - the men who participate really enjoy the opportunity to get together with other combat veterans, swap war stories, discuss VA-related information, and maintain those bonds that were forged so long ago.

Skip Bell, President

GULF COAST CHAPTER

Gulf Coast Chapter VHPA met at Smilie's Restaurant in Harahan, LA on September 16. We will shortly be posting pictures of the event on our website. Officer nominations were also made at that next meeting and elections will be held at our next meeting on November 11, 2010. We will start at 6:00 P.M. and will again meet at Smilie's. Please try to be there.

For full details on the elections or on the chapter, please contact Andrew Hover at: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Andrew Hover, President

MID SOUTH CHAPTER

The Mid South Chapter sends us this missive - Seems like it was only yesterday when we were all in sunny San Diego. At my home the blade time flies as we all climb higher in altitude. There was a time when we were all young, dumb and bullet proof. Now

we are older, wiser and full of tales to tell and the only shots we see are at are at our annual medical check ups.

The work on my TH-55 is going steadily. The main components have been assembled and the rebuilt engine will be ready to test fire soon. It seems like since I retired the days are shorter, the weeks have fewer days and the months run out quickly. Time flies when you are having fun, as the old saying goes. Hopefully this time next year I will be actually flying in the TH-55. Other than that, things have been uneventful in here in the South. For any of my brothers who travel on Interstate-40 through Tennessee, please stop by Uncle Pete's Truck Stop at Exit 239 Lebanon/Watertown and the coffee is on me.

Pete Norman, President

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

On Saturday, September 12th, the New England Chapter met at Peter "Pinky" Adams lodge on the coast at Scituate, MA. While enjoying the view of the Boston skyline in the distance, 30 hardy souls braved the overcast sky and cool temperature and dined on hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken and spicy Italian sausage. The group came mostly from the Boston area with New Hampshire and Florida (a native of Boston) represented. This was the third time the group has met at Pinky's for our annual cookout. Next year we have been invited back and will celebrate the occasion on 9/11/2011.

A mid-winter business meeting is being planned, so standby for that announcement. We will continue our first Monday of each month lunch get together at Joe's American Bar and Grill in Dedham, Maine. If you can make it, come on down. Please call or e-mail me so you can be added to our growing list.

Bill Williams, President

NORTH ALBAMA CHAPTER

The Chapter got together on 23 September 2010, here are some notes from that meeting.

The Chapter's By-Laws were approved by all in attendance, same for our Articles of Incorporation, they were discussed and approved. We also discussed how to organize as a Not-For-Profit Veterans organization but approval of that action awaits further discussion.

The Chapter professed interest in marching in our local Veterans Day Parade and approval was made to a plan for obtaining a Chapter Banner to support that effort. Member Bob Monette stated that his company, Training with Technology, would pay for the banner. The Chapter also voted to support the Wreaths for Veterans program; the organizing group honors veterans by placing wreaths on their graves in Valhalla and Maple Hill cemeteries on 17/18 Nov and picks them up in early Jan.

Short discussions on two more programs were held, they were the Toys for Tots program and the Semper Fi Community Task Force who sponsor a Wounded Warrior Weekend. Interest in supporting both programs was expressed but commitments were deferred until the next meeting at which times more details would be available.

Communications. In order to keep members informed and get more to attend the meetings, a mailing will go out in early Oct announcing the Oct meeting and the two near-term projects which will be reported on and participation plans discussed. This mailing will go out to all known north Alabama NAVHPA members/prospective members.

Next meeting will be held on Oct 21 at 1830 hrs at the Schnitzel Ranch on University Dr. Come early and enjoy German food – bring your spouse/date/friend.

Submitted by James White, Chapter Secretary

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

On August 27th we took the OH-6 to a school for a display, in October we will have two aircraft at the moving VIETNAM WALL. Also, on Veterans Day we will have aircraft at several events. Please take the time to call me for full details and join us if at all possible for our upcoming outings.

J.D. Lawson, President

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

The Rocky Mountain Chapter displayed it's Helicopter War Museum at a presentation of the AVTT Vietnam Memorial 'Wall' on the Campus of CSU Pueblo Sept. 30 – Oct. 3rd, 2101.

CSU/Pueblo proved to be excellent hosts and put on a very well attended event. We had 800 – 900 folks view the Museum and 250-300 kids (and some adults) enjoyed sitting in the newly installed Huey cockpit pilot's seat; to get some idea of what it was like in our daily job so many years ago. There were two middle school classes who toured the museum as well.

The Museum was then packed up and transported to Fort Carson for display at a special Veteran Retirees Event in mid October. The next scheduled exhibit for the museum is an all day event at Prairie View High School in Brighton Colorado in April 2011. The High School is putting together a two day program to study the Vietnam War and honor all of those who served. All classes of the school will tour the Museum during the daylong event to learn about the history of the war.

The CSU/Pueblo staff is still trying to get a handle on the number of attendees who viewed the 'Wall' – preliminary number is 10,000.

**Ed Fickes, Operations Officer,
Rocky Mtn. VHPA Helicopter War Museum**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

The chapter participated in the Annual Surfest 2010 Chili Cookoff sponsored by American Legion Post 291 in Newport Beach in July. The event attracted a huge crowd that was entertained throughout the day by various "beach bands". The event was topped off with a performance by Jan and Dean featuring Dean Torrence. The SoCal Chapter prepared a crowd favorite chili, but when it came to judging, we apparently couldn't compete with the teams that used BEANS in their chili. Whoever heard of a real chili contest with BEANS anyway. Everyone had a great time and we are looking forward to participating again next year.

The SoCal Chapter will hold their annual business meeting on October 16th. We anticipate holding the meeting at American Legion Post 291 in Newport Beach. A confirmation of the meeting place and time will be sent to members. Elections for a Chapter Vice-President and Junior Member will be held. Carl Cortez will be the incoming Chapter President for the 2010/11 term.

The SoCal Chapter is planning to once again beat the bushes to locate any potential new VHPA members and Chapter members by participating in the Wings, Wheels & Rotors Expo to be held at the Los Alamito Army Airfield on October 24, 2010. Los Alamito AAF is located at 11200 Lexington Drive, Los Alamitos. The event will begin at 0900 and run through 1600. More information is available online at: www.WWRExpo.net

**Stop by and see us if you're in the area.
Carl Cortez, President**

Former member of the VHPA has six 1992 ETRL, Force One collectible UH-1 Huey's (similar to photo but without markings) available for sale. NEW in Factory Sealed Blister Pack with very little or no signs of shelf wear. The Helicopters are die cast, and the fuselage's measure approx 5.5 inches long. Included in the packages are guns/ammunition that can be attached if desired.

Great keepsake or display item for helicopter

lovers and for those from the Vietnam era that relied on the Huey for their protection and lifeline. They're priced at \$20 each plus shipping cost to your location, and you can take one or all six. Shipped via USPS Priority Mail after your payment (via PayPal or certified bank check) has cleared.

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER (Celebrate Freedom)

It's amazing how many things can get in the way of a bunch of Vietnam vets while trying to get a beautiful AH-1F back into the air. Visit this link on Facebook and check out the paint job on our Cobra. www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=4726009&fbid=429002388983&id=94928508983. All that is left is the shark's mouth, decals and labels. We were hoping to be flying by this summer, but since today is the first day of fall I guess we missed again. Maybe I'll ask Santa for a surprise this Christmas.

Starting this month (Sept. 27th) we are going to gather in the back room of Carolina Wings and Rib House, 2347 Augusta Highway, West Columbia, SC for a good old TINS get together. We're planning to meet at 1830 hrs and will continue this on the last Monday of each month. So, if you are in the midlands of South Carolina and enjoy wings, ribs and cold brewski's, come on out and sit a spell. Make sure you have a story to tell.....

Larry Russell, President

VHPA of FLORIDA CHAPTER

On November 11 the OH-6 will be at the James Haley VA Hospital in Tampa. There will be a short parade and displays will be set up for the veterans.

13-14 November the Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a Veterans Tribute Weekend. We will have the OH-6 and displays set up.

Jim Basta, Reporting

WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

The Chapter Council met to discuss revitalization of our group. A name change to "Pacific Northwest Chapter" was proposed and is under discussion. We would hope to include Oregon, Idaho, and maybe Alaska as states which currently do not have active chapters of VHPA but do have significant numbers of pilots at this time.

We are also planning to conduct at least one general membership meeting each year east of the mountains so as to include out outlying members. We have assigned some new tasks to council members that we trust will spur new membership and expand programs. We are planning to participate in the largest Veterans Day Parade west of the Mississippi on November 6th in Auburn, WA. Our Huey float is ready! Come join us.

Bob Brown, President

Editor's Note – at the Publication Deadline for this issue, several Chapters were planning to have a Christmas Holiday get together's but had not had the time to finalize the details on their plans. If there is a Chapter in your area that you would like to join their Holiday Party, simply contact the President of that Chapter by using the info in their contact block. I can assure you they will be more than happy to have you join them - David Adams



William Booth

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

Just wanted to thank you for running the excellent series of stories about 'There wasn't a billboard saying Welcome to Laos! Ah Laos, or as we called it Disney Land West / LaLa Land.

I flew UH-1H's for 101st Div LRP's or FOB/SOG missions out of Phu Bai, Mai Loc or Quang Tri in 68-69. Our FAC's came out of Da Nang and used the call sign "Covey" and we were really thankful for any of the cover our FAC could get. We really loved the A1-E fixed wings, big and slow and great to have on your side during hot extractions. Can't tell you how many times I've had a Spad fly by and wave while I was picking up a team on McGuire Rigs.

Anyhow, good story and even better since I know the area.

Thanks,

Ed Ragan, Kingsman 24

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

REF: Story - Freedom Bird – pages 4 & 5 of the July/August 2010 issue of the VHPA Aviator

The next to last paragraph in the above referenced story started: As a postscript, Lima Site 85 was overrun by ground troops about a

month after the bombing attempt, and all US personnel were killed or captured. The comm guys who heard their last messages said it was a pitiful situation as the site team reported the attackers' progress at getting at them in their cave bunker.

I thought the Membership might be interested in learning that an Air Force helicopter crewman involved evacuating the wounded from Lima Site 85 just days before that final battle has just been awarded the Medal of Honor. Full details of the man and the incident may be found on the web site of the Air Force Times (www.airforcetimes.com), word search: Etchberger for the full details.

Regards, James Ward

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

To the President of the VHPA

Good Morning-

I am the commander of 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, an AH-64D Longbow attack BN at Ft. Hood, TX. We are currently deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan. Our battalion lineage formally goes directly back to Company A, 4th AVN BN, which as I understand it was the Assault Company for the BN in Vietnam.

I'd appreciate any points of contact you have among the A4th AVN veterans- our lineage and heritage are extremely important to me, and I'd like to see our younger aviators, especially my warrant officers, make this connection, so once we make contact I'll be assigning one of our pilots to this mission.

Thanks again, and we look forward to hearing from you.

LTC Charles R. Bowery Jr.,
Commander, 1-4 Aviation
CW4 Brian Umstead

Battalion Command Chief Warrant Officer

CW4 Rob Valdez

Battalion Senior Instructor Pilot

E-mail: [REDACTED]

AAAA/VHPA SCHOLARSHIPS UPDATE

Deadline for applying for the 4 AAAA Scholarships set aside for VHPA recipients is May 1, 2011.

**Full details available at
VHPA.org
GET STARTED TODAY!**

South Missouri Chapter

The third quarterly meeting of the South Missouri Chapter of VHPA was held on Patriots' Day, September 11, 2010, at the Rolla National Airport. The meeting was hosted by Associate Member, Ed Schmidt, who flew fixed wing (U-6A Beaver) aircraft in Vietnam during 1969. After welcoming remarks by COL Bill Jenks (USAR Ret.), an infantry company commander in Vietnam and current Mayor of Rolla, Missouri, a brief business meeting was held, followed by a BBQ lunch and viewing of several vintage aircraft.

The Chapter is pleased to announce that on-line shopping is now available on our website, vhpsamo.org. The Chapter has also begun a book collection effort where books will be collected from members and others, then donated to Veterans' Homes, V. A. and Military Hospitals throughout Missouri. Several members are also planning to greet returning WWII Honor Flights as they return to Springfield and Columbia later in the month.

The fourth quarterly meeting is scheduled to be held at The Keeter Center of the College of the Ozarks on November 6, 2010, at noon. Details can be obtained from our website, vhpsamo.org. We continue in our desires to grow, celebrate all veterans, and be of service to our communities. Come join us.

John Sorenson, President



(L to R), Russ Emory, John Sorenson, and Associate Member Ed Schmidt gather around Ed's fully restored, Vietnam War Veteran, U-6 Beaver



Members, Associate Members and others of the South Missouri Chapter at their third Quarterly Meeting on September 11, 2010

(Back row L-R)
John Sorenson,
Ed Schmidt, Carl Kirts,
Bill Thompson,
Jeff Pepper, Jim Adams,
Porter Elliott, Lew Phillips,
Syd Morrow,
Roger Caffrey, Dick Elgin,
Terry Wilund, Paul Harvey.
(Seated) Russ Emory,
Joe Finder, Linda Finder,

Bill Jenks, Mik Mukulan, John Wilkinson. (foreground) Andrew (Grandson of Porter Elliott) and Connor (grandson of Bill Thompson).

rescued them," he explains. Jacobs says the men of the Kirk better understand the importance of what they did when they hear the success stories of the Vietnamese refugees they saved.

In Search Of A Vietnamese Hero

There were many joyous reunions at the July reunion, including those with Nguyen, the Vietnamese pilot, and his wife, son and daughter, who was thrown from the helicopter. The Kirk crew had long forgotten the pilot's name. The Nguyen family landed on the ship and was quickly transferred to another ship. But the officers and men never forgot the pilot's stunning airmanship. So last year, Jacobs and Herman looked for him. They went on a Vietnamese television show based in Virginia and explained they wanted to find the pilot. Soon afterward, an e-mail arrived at the pilot's home. It said a U.S. naval person was looking for the gentleman who ditched a Chinook off the USS Kirk, recalls Miki Nguyen, one of the pilot's sons. "I asked my mom if there was anyone else in the U.S. Vietnamese community who would have performed such a thing and she didn't recall any. So I replied back," he says.

'An American Story'

Ba Nguyen and his wife, Nho, had often told their children the story of their dramatic escape from Vietnam, and how Nho had dropped 10-month-old daughter Mina and 3-year-old son Mika from the helicopter. Miki, the oldest, then 6, had jumped thinking it was an adventure. The Nguyen family resettled in the United States and moved to Seattle. Both the husband and wife worked for Boeing, the aerospace giant. Today, Miki is a project manager for AT&T Wireless in Seattle. Mina is a neuropsychologist in Oregon. The middle son



Mr and Mrs Ba Nguyen today

died a few years ago.

Thirty-five years ago, after Nguyen's family had jumped to safety, the pilot was left in his helicopter, low on fuel. So he flew off the side of the Kirk, hovered over the water, took off his flight suit, and jumped into the water just before the huge Chinook helicopter crashed into the sea. He was rescued, in his underwear. Nguyen's wife saved the shirt he wore that day and his colorful boxer shorts. In 2000, when he retired from Boeing, son Miki built a box of wood and glass and took the T-shirt and shorts, and Nguyen's flying medals, and put them in. "I gave that to him for his retirement party," says Miki. "The symbolism of how he started in the U.S. -- a T-shirt and boxer shorts and a dream. And it's an American story, it's our story."

When Miki Nguyen responded to the e-mail from Herman and Jacobs, the Navy historian sent back a picture that had been taken of the Chinook pilot. Is this your father? he wanted to know. It was a picture of a pilot, being rescued from the sea, in a T-shirt and those same, colorful boxer shorts.

Honoring Ba Nguyen

The family was excited to attend the reunion and to meet, once more, the men who had helped save them. Miki brought his two young children. But the family was surprised when they found out that the crew of the Kirk planned to honor Ba Nguyen. "What he did in 1975 to free those people was above and beyond," Jacobs, the Kirk's captain, said from the ballroom stage. "Great job. Let's give him a hand." As the crowd rose to its feet, Miki pushed his father in his wheelchair to the front of the ballroom. Rick Sautter, an officer from the Kirk, pinned an Air Medal on the man's sport coat. It's a version of the one the U.S. military gives for heroic feats while flying. It hadn't been clear how much Ba Nguyen understood, because he has Alzheimer's and doesn't speak anymore. But he frequently cried out during the ceremony.

Then, the old pilot struggled to get out of his wheelchair. His son hurried to his side and helped him up. Ba Nguyen lifted his shaking arm, and brought it to his head in a salute.

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STMP, Inc.

"Save The Montagnard People, Inc"

STMP is the oldest, largest and most active Montagnard Assistance Organization working to assist refugees in the U.S. and we also help preserve the Montagnard culture. We also strive to secure human rights for Montagnards in Southeast Asia.

STMP, Inc. is recognized by the Montagnard Dega Association, The American Legion, Special Forces Association, Special Operations Association, Air Commando Association and the Navy Seals.

STMP, Inc. is a 501-C3 non-profit organization. We are a 100% unpaid volunteer group of individuals from all walks of life who have joined together with the intent of preserving the culture of these persecuted people. We've been working together for 25 years. To celebrate, we have only 2,500 tickets to offer at \$20.00 each or 3 for \$50.00.

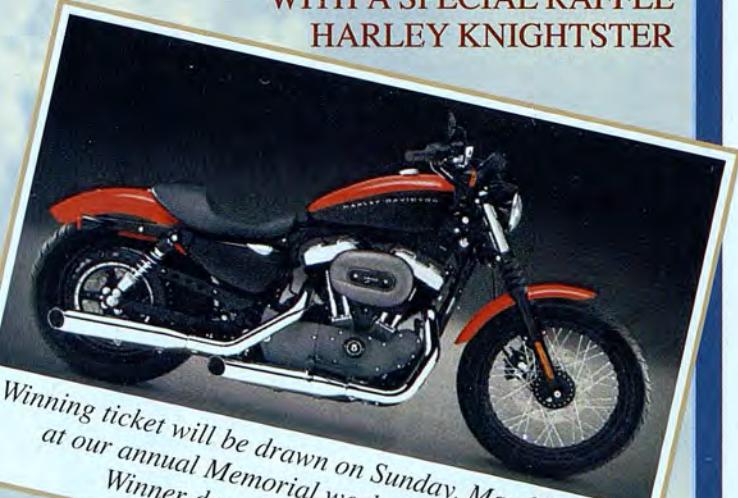
For questions and to purchase tickets, contact:

Secretary George Hadeler,

VA 22835.

(E-mail: [REDACTED])

HELP US CELEBRATE THE
25TH ANNIVERSARY OF STMP
WITH A SPECIAL RAFFLE
HARLEY KNIGHTSTER



Winning ticket will be drawn on Sunday, May 29, 2011
at our annual Memorial weekend celebration.
Winner does not be present to win.

Extras included: Harley Security System, Saddle Bags,
Forward Foot Controls, Wind Screen & Sissy Bar.
The bike has less than 300 miles on it!

LOOKING FOR

Looking For...VHPA Members who might have known Randy Madigan

I am the sister of Randall G. Radigan, a Medivac pilot who served four tours of duty in Vietnam from approximately 1967-71. Randy died in December of 1998, and his obituary, which I wrote, is still posted on your website.

I have been told that members of my family who have written to this website have been told that the site is intended ONLY for the use of Vietnam veterans who were pilots, but please know that I send this query in good faith, and with my family's affection for and respect for all Vietnam veterans, especially those who were pilots, as our brother was.

My question to you is whether there is any site--including yours or any other(s) that you know of--where I might seek responses from any veteran pilots who served with or knew Randy in Vietnam. I am a retired English professor, and one of my brothers is a writer; we are thinking of a book honoring Randy and all those veterans whom he represented.

Even more importantly, we would be grateful to feel our brother's presence, after losing him too soon, in any reminiscences of him which any other veteran would be kind enough to share by writing to us.

*With best wishes to your organization of heroes,
and respectfully,*

Suzanne Radigan

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Looking For...VHPA Members who might have had, or need, rotator cuff surgery

My name is William E. "Rob" Roberts and may be reached at: [REDACTED] or by phone at: [REDACTED]

I recently had rotator cuff surgery on my Right shoulder. After discussing this with several of my old helicopter pilot buddies I made an interesting discovery, many of them had the same procedure.

I then started to surf the web and found on the Mayo Clinic web site that occupations that have repetitive motion have a greater and increased Risk of Injury. However helicopter operations was not mentioned in the list of suspected occupations but we all know that Helicopter Pilots continually moved the Cyclic hundreds of thousands of times.... Coincidence? I think not, I think I needed the surgery because I flew, UH-1's, OH-6'S and AH-1's, and was rated for over 22 years.

Now for my question to each of you - Have you had Rotor Cuff Surgery, if so please E-mail me at [REDACTED] and give me only information you wish to share, like when it what was done and when. I will compile a report and submit results to the Aviator and to the VA for their edification.

*Wishing you all the very best,
Rob, Lancer 62-A and Road Runner 22*

Looking For pilots who fudged on their flight physicals...

I need the help of VHPA aviators. I am doing research on a book. The working title is "How I kept Flying". It is how military pilots kept their flying status, even with conditions that would cause them to fail their military flight physicals.

For instance, I cheated on my hearing test for about 18 years. I also cheated on an EKG (honest) and a few other things. I know of a guy that had his twin brother take his hearing test. So, if you have ever "fudged" on your flight physical, I want to know about it. If you are Ex-military, FAA physicals are ok. Memorized eye charts or color charts would be good, plus I am sure there are hundreds of "hearing test" stories. Also, I really don't want to hear about faked drug tests. No limit on length as yet, though I might

have to edit your story. I want stories to be as interesting as possible, but please, no stories that are even in part untrue.

Email your stories to me, Bill Seifert, at [REDACTED] I will need your name, address, email address, and phone number. If you feel uncomfortable giving all that information, just give me your email address and we will talk about the rest at a later time. At some point, if I use your story, I will have to have a "release" signed.

*If you do not want your real name used,
then give me a name or call sign I can use.
Thanks in advance,*

Bill Seifert

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Looking For information on downed Cobra Crew...

On 5 Oct 2010, Pat Dougan contacted Gary Roush in the hopes that Gary might be able to help him reestablish contact with a downed Cobra Crew that he picked up on March 8, 1969 after they were shot down in Cambodia. In his e-mail Pat went on to say that "I picked up a downed cobra crew on March 8, 1969 near Tay Ninh. I don't know the status of their aircraft, but I would assume it was blown in place since the pilots were about to be overrun. Do you have anything in your data base as to what unit the aircraft/pilots belonged to, or more importantly the names of the crew? I have since learned that the wingman for the downed aircraft was decorated for continuing to make "fake" gun runs although they had long ago expended their ammunition, first to protect the downed aircrew and then to cover our extraction. Perhaps these details would also help someone remember the mission.

Gary answered Pat and provided him with this excerpt from the Army's historical records that detailed the incident somewhat more completely:

Information on U.S. Army helicopter AH-1G tail number 67-15578
The Army purchased this helicopter 0468, Total flight hours at this point:

-00000610

-Date: 03/08/1969

-Unit: C/3/17 CAV

This was Combat Major Damage caused by being shot down by Ground Fire with the mission function of Armed Helicopter (having primary weapon subsystems installed and utilized to provide direct fire support).

This was a Combat incident. This helicopter was REPAIRED IN THEATER; this was a Recon mission for Armed Escort Aircraft. While in Target Area in Cambodia this helicopter was attacking at 1700 feet and 100 knots when it took at least 1 hit from: Small Arms/Automatic Weapons; Gun launched non-explosive ballistic projectiles less than 20 mm in size. (14.5MM)

Systems damaged were: TRANSMISSION, OIL SYS, search and rescue operations were Not Required (Editor's note - thanks to Pat Dugan)

The helicopter made an Emergency Landing. Aircraft was later recovered by any means other than its own power, aircraft suffered additional damage upon landing, both mission and flight capability was terminated at that point.

If any of this sounds familiar to you, feel free to contact Pat at:

Gary (Roush) also wants both Pat and our General membership to also know that this record, and many others just like it, is available from the VHPA so you can do your own research on the life cycle on other Army Aircraft. For full details see: www.vhpa.org/cdrom.htm

PLEASANTON'S MAN OF THE YEAR

VHPA Member Chris Miller, a crusader in supporting military families is still stepping up

by Elyssa Thome Reporter for the Pleasanton (CA) Weekly newspaper. Used by permission of both Ms. Thome and the Editor of the Pleasanton Weekly. Photos courtesy of Jay Flachsbarth (<http://jayfphotography.smugmug.com>).

Chris Miller was born on the fourth of July. As a retired lieutenant colonel and Vietnam veteran, father of two active soldiers, and founder and former president of Pleasanton Military Families Support Group, it seems like destiny that he shares his birthday with the U.S.A.

But Miller's activities are not limited to love for country and support of the military. The local Realtor is active in the Rotary Club of Pleasanton, a fixture at high school sports games and the Pleasanton Farmers' Market, active in several veterans groups, and has assumed a new role in PMF since stepping down as president this year. Miller's face is a familiar one in the Pleasanton Weekly newspaper and office, but this is the first time it has graced our cover. After years of dedicated service to Pleasanton, we have chosen Chris Miller as our 2009 Man of the Year. Miller has a very simple philosophy when it comes to all of his service to the community. He does not expect praise, but just wants to help out. "That's what life is all about: helping people," Miller said. "I think it's much better than not."

A PLEASANTON MILITARY FAMILY

Miller met his wife, Marty, in San Francisco. The two lived in the city before moving to Virginia, again to San Francisco, to Walnut Creek, and finally to Pleasanton in 1971. They have been an important part of the community ever since, and watched Pleasanton grow from a one-stop-light town to the place it is today.

"There was only one traffic light in Pleasanton at the time, and all of our friends thought we were moving to the sticks," Marty Miller said. "You never know when you move into a community what it will grow into. We have been very blessed."

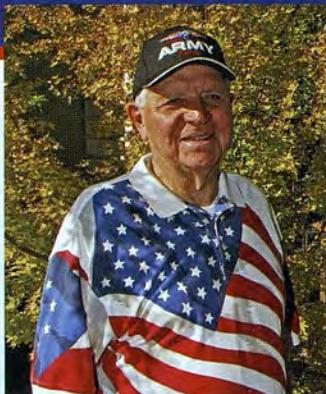
In 1990 the U.S. military was shipped out for the first Gulf War. Chris Miller and Alice Johnston created a support group for the families of soldiers in Pleasanton. When the war ended in 1991, the group disbanded. In 2003, with the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Miller again created a meeting place and support system for families in Pleasanton. Six years later, the group has developed into the Pleasanton Military Families Support Group.

In the beginning of the second Gulf War, the group met every Tuesday at different homes to share and find support with people who knew what the others were going through. Pat Frizzell, now chairwoman of PMF, joined the group in 2003 when her son David was deployed to Iraq.

"I remember that first night, a feeling of warmth and security being around people that know how I feel," Frizzell said of her first PMF meeting. "My first impression overall [of Miller] was just that he is a leader, but not with arrogance. He is easy to be around and easy to talk to."

The group now consists of about 180 families, 40 "active" depending on deployment of family members. It meets once a month and is also responsible for welcome home events – where soldiers return to their hometown amidst a motorcycle convoy, flag waving, and friends, family and neighbors – and pack outs, which send goods and cheer to local military currently deployed. PMF keeps an updated list of the addresses of the service men and women and sends the Pleasanton Weekly for hometown comfort.

Tracey Buescher got involved in 2003 when her husband, Col. Chris Buescher was deployed to Iraq. Tracey Buescher met Miller when they shared an office at ReMax, and became a co-chair early on. She said the group was an important source of emotional support for her and her two daughters while her husband was gone, and they stay involved after



he returned to give back to those that had been there when they needed it.

For Col. Buescher, knowing his family had somewhere to go provided comfort to him, too. "I got deployed right before the war started in Iraq," he said. "[PMF] was a way for them to meet with people who knew what they were going through in an area that doesn't have a lot of military. Just knowing that my family had an outlet to go to if they needed anything was really important."

In August, Miller stepped down as president, but he has assumed a role as "ambassador." Now he gets to spend more time doing the things that he really enjoys: one-on-one interaction with veterans and their families, making sure they are doing okay and providing important information on the V.A., G.I. bill and other available resources.

"This is the year he stepped down, but he left an organization that has meant a lot to a lot of military families," said Doug Miller, a friend of his (no relation). "He's left an organization that is going to go on and be very important to the community."

Miller and Miller met through church and became friends when they discovered they shared not just a last name, but also had both been helicopter pilots in Vietnam and have sons in the Air Force. As postmaster for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Doug Miller has appreciated Miller's support with his organization and visa versa.

"Chris always has a lot of good ideas, and he has a lot of connections in the community," Doug Miller said. "When he comes up with an idea he usually has the resources, too. It makes implementing things easier. He also picks good people to help him with the organization. People that were groomed to be able to step up when he stepped down."

STEPPING DOWN

Miller's decision to step down this year had a lot to do with challenges his own family faced. Early in the spring, doctors found a spot on his wife's kidney. After researching treatment options, the Millers chose to travel to Duarte, Calif. and have the kidney removed robotically at City of Hope Hospital.

"The discovery of cancer is a big deal for anyone who has this diagnosis," Marty Miller said. "That being said, it seems to be all around us and more so as we age. I feel very blessed to have had the cancer discovered before it had spread to other organs ... Of course I had my own personal caregiver, nurturer, encourager, travel arranger, supporter – Chris Miller who was there for me every step of the way."

After taking the time to be with his wife, Miller decided he wanted to have a lot more of it.

"You start reevaluating your life," Miller said. "It was time to step aside. I was overburdened. I was committed and I didn't want to miss anything. I just wanted to enjoy life a little more."

For Miller, enjoying life means spending more time as a husband, father and grandfather. Miller is the proud father of three sons. Christian, the oldest, lives in Sacramento with his wife, Adrienne, and two children, Lilyan and C.J. Christian is the lone civilian son. Jason and Mike, on the other hand, are both Tech Sergeant C-17 Loadmasters for the U.S. Air Force Reserve. The boys have 16 and 12 years respectively of service under their belts and are both stationed nearby at Travis Air Force Base. Jason and his wife Alison are expecting their first child, and Miller is glad to have more time to be a grandpa.

WELCOME HOME

When Miller returned to the United States after flying helicopters in Vietnam, he didn't exactly get a hero's welcome. Besides his own sub-par treatment, he also saw returning soldiers that had fought for their country

face disrespect and contempt from fellow Americans during his time as a commercial airline pilot. He vowed to welcome soldiers the way they deserved if the United States went to war again.

"I always remember living in San Francisco and seeing returning Vietnam veterans shunned and mistreated," Miller said. "I never wanted to see a combat veteran not respected or treated well. If I ever had a chance to be involved with a proper welcome home, I would do so." In 1990, Miller got the first opportunity to prove good on his word when the troops shipped out for the first Gulf War. The support group Miller set up, with the help of Johnston, welcomed each soldier as they returned. When the war ended in 1991 and the troops returned home, a parade was held on Hacienda in the business park, and Miller even arranged for a flyover by a C-5 and C-141.

When the support group came together again in 2003, the welcome homes restarted, too. They started primitively, with neighbors and friends gathering in courts to welcome the service men and women home. Over the years, however, Miller said the group developed a system to make things run more smoothly. Spike Shau of the Warriors' Watch Riders motorcycle brigade got involved, Bryan Welden and the Lafayette Flag Brigade got involved, and the production has become much more smooth and grand.

"It's been a great thing to be part of for me," Miller said. "I've done what I thought I could do at some point in my life when I thought about it way back then."

This summer, Miller got the welcome home he never had as a soldier. This time though, people gathered to say goodbye. While the surprise retirement party the families of PMF threw was not quite a surprise (Miller received invitation twice), the motorcycle escort provided by the Warriors' Watch Riders was. The treatment Miller received was the type he has arranged for returning soldiers for six years, and the type he never saw himself when he returned from combat.

Now that Miller has set the team in place, he'll get to just be a face in the crowd. He still steps in to help when necessary, and he still wants to show his support when he can, but stepping down from president will take off some of the pressure.

Miller says he's looking forward to being a face in the crowd, but it really isn't a new position for him. As a dedicated member of the Pleasanton community, Miller has faithfully supported local high school sports including football, volleyball, and basketball, even when his kids no longer attended any Pleasanton schools. He showed his combined passions as

he talked about the group he built.

"All this is not about me, it's about the group," Miller said. "Yeah, I'm the guy that created the team, but it's like [Amador varsity football coach] Rick Sira says, 'Big team. Little me.' I'll be able to go away and see it continue, so that's nice."

YELLOW BANNERS

In addition to the Pleasanton Military Families, Miller has shown support for the troops through the Yellow Banner Project on Main Street. Miller hopes the banners raise awareness and support for those serving in the community.

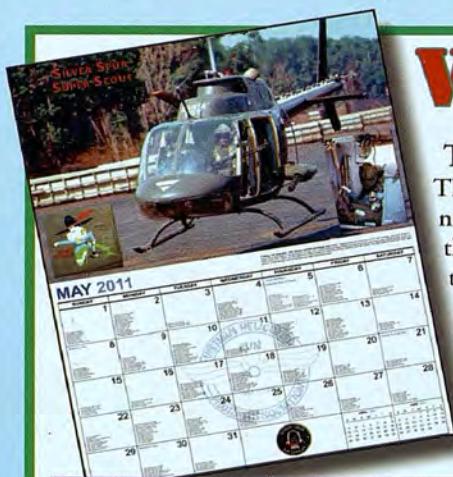
Even after stepping down as president, Miller followed through with updating the banners this year.



In addition to updating ranks and replacing weathered banners, Miller came up with a new system of hanging so they would twist less in wind and rain. Miller also clustered banners in family groups, with brothers, husbands, wives, and others grouped around the same pole. He placed banners where he knew family members would often see them, and personally delivered banners to the families of soldiers no longer in combat. The personal touch Miller brought to the project is the hallmark of his service.

"It was never too much for him to make that phone call or just go over," Frizzell said. "Those are the things that just come natural. He never looks for the praise. He just does it because it is the right thing to do. When you have a passion for things, which he certainly does, that's what you do." That personal touch has reached a lot of people in and around Pleasanton. Many sent messages of support to Miller when he announced his retirement through email and on the Pleasanton Weekly website. Miller said he is grateful to those who will continue the group – and they are grateful right back at him.

"I just think he is an incredibly fantastic person and this community is very, very, very blessed to have him," Tracey Buescher said. "He loves Pleasanton and the community. He supports and cares about everything in this community, not just the military and their families."



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WELCOME TO I CORPS NEW GUY...BY HOWARD HORTON

Disclaimer.... These stories happened a long time ago. Some of what I remembered may not be quite the way it happened, but close.

When I arrived in RVN I flew into Cam Rahn Bay. As the Captain on the chartered DC 8 commented, "it was the worlds largest sand trap". We arrived in the early morning hours and were quickly billeted. The NCOs' told us that breakfast would be at the mess in the morning and it would be a few days before we would get our assignments.

A day later we got a notice that the assignments were being posted. When I arrived in the Headquarters assignment hooch, I saw a SGT calling names out from behind a counter. Behind the counter, from floor to ceiling was a wall map of The Republic of South Viet Nam. My name was called out. With trepidation I approached the desk, the clerk said I was to report to 108th Artillery Group, Dong Ha. I said where is that? The SGT pulled a chair up and stood on it and reached to the top of the map and said THERE!! I almost passed out.

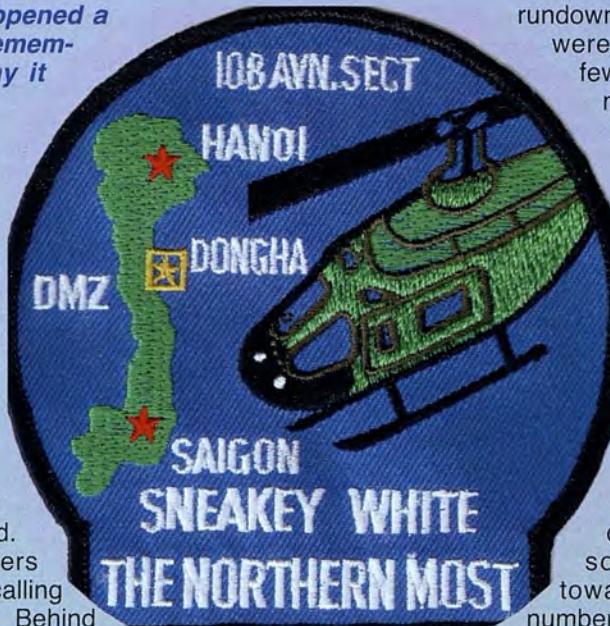
I made my way to the 108th Artillery Group by way of Chu Lai, Da Nang, Hue, Quang Tri, and finally Dong Ha. Ohhhh my gosh!! Weren't quite my words but you get the drift.

I hitched a ride over to my new unit and looked for the HQ. I finally made my to the HQ hooch and met Command SGT Major Smothers. This is the guy that the Hollywood used to model Lou Gossett after in "Officer and a Gentleman". He was tall, starched to a crease, and his spit polished Cochran jump boots glistened. He extended a hand and with warm ice breaking greeting, " Hi, I'm Command SGT Major Smothers, that's mother with an S".

He told me that I would be meeting the CO, Colonel Robert V. Lee. Later, I was called into meet Colonel Lee in his trailer. Yes, a house trailer six miles south of the DMZ. "How in the hell did they get a house trailer all the way up here?", ran through my mind. Couldn't believe it. Colonel Lee asked me to come in and we had a great conversation.

I was directed to newly constructed hooch. It was the typical OD green with a sheet metal roof. Two doors into and an "open" floor plan. I met my "Hooch mate", Captain Bob Magyar. I asked Bob where are the rest of the guys. He said "We" are it. A brand new unit 6 miles south of the DMZ. Ohhhh boy!! Bob had been there a few months doing to the paper work to set up this unit.

I settled my duffle up next to a cot and Bob gave me the



rundown on what had been going on. We were to get some aircraft in the next few weeks. A couple of the aircraft mechanics had showed up. No parts or tools were here yet.

Local area.... Well there is Khe Sanh just a quick trip down the road; Con Tien a place I read about in Life Magazine was just 5 miles up the road. The DMZ was less than 6 miles away. And the huge NVA flag over HWY 1 was maybe 8 miles away. All the Marines around here, that was the reason we were here. The 108th was supporting the Marines.

The day was finally winding down and Bob said it was time for some chow. We were heading toward the mess hall when I saw a number of guys from headquarters standing around outdoor grills. "Oh great, you got here just in time... Steak Night!!" Bob seemed pleased. T-Bone steaks, some veggies, and a cold Bud for the FNG. I was thinking this might not be all bad.

About the time I got my last swig of Bud down, I heard this funny whizzing, whistling sound coming from overhead. I thought it might be an F-4. I looked around, but by the time I turned to Bob to ask what it was, he was in full stride for a bunker and all of the headquarters company had disappeared. "Incoming!!!!"

I followed Bob to a bunker. Now I was hearing more explosions and more of those whiz bang sounds.

Dark, except where the flashlights were illuminating, made the view very eerie, like some kind of spook movie. Down in the bunker were about 10 of us. Mostly young and scared. One of the younger guys had a bottle of Mateuse wine and started passing it around. One older guy had a bottle of Jack Daniels and he was cradling it. His name was WO2 Fielder. He was nursing that Jack. He looked a little "bleary eyed and not of the moment". By the time the all clear had been sounded, the Jack was gone. Later I found out that WO2 Fielder was a German who enlisted in the U S Army after WWII. As a youngster he lived in Berlin when the Allies had bombarded it. I'm sure this shelling reminded him of past times, which he wished, would stay forgotten.

*As we climbed out of the bunker,
Bob said plain and simply
"Welcome to I Corps New Guy!!"*

Editor's Note, one of our regular contributors and author of this short story, Howard D. Horton graduated flight school in Class 68-9 and ended up flying with in the 108th Arty Group in Dong Ha, Vietnam from Oct. 69-Mar70. After his time in the Army, Howard flew corporate airplanes and helicopters for many years and now works for a major helicopter manufacturer in Fort Worth, Texas as a flight instructor. Howard may be reached at: [REDACTED]

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HELI-EXPO

HAI (Helicopter Association International) will be holding their annual HELI-EXPO for 2011 in Orlando, Florida on March 5th through the 8th, 2011

The VHPA always has a booth at these events and enjoys lots of our Association activity. Last year in Houston we signed up several new members, had guys renew, updated information on members and identified quite a few potential members. As the VHPA Membership Chairman, it falls on me (Mike Sheurman) to staff the booth.

If you would be interested in helping please email me at: membership@vhpa.org. I need 3-4 volunteers every day and I need a "Flight Lead" or "Air Mission Commander" to oversee the entire event. And, for volunteering to help the VHPA, I, Mike Sheurman, Membership Chairman of VHPA, will buy you a beer at the Reunion in Orlando in July of 2011.



DISTANT WAR: *Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia* by Marc Phillip Yablonka

Originally published in July 2009, this 258-page novel covers eighteen years of the author's reporting on American involvement in Indochina and the people affected by America's connection to that part of the world. This is a compilation of numerous articles that first appeared in the likes of the U.S. Military's Stars and Stripes, Army Times, American Veteran, Vietnam Magazine and others. Complete with 67 photos and illustrations.

This novel would make the perfect Christmas present for your Vietnam Veteran.

See what these reviewers had to say about the novel....

To say there are many untold stories of the Vietnam War is an understatement. The war was a many faceted conflict that involved soldiers serving their country, and a wide variety of American and Vietnamese civilians. Yablonka's articulate and sensitive reporting brings the personal stories of these men and women alive on the page, providing a very interesting retrospective of that distant war.

John Penny ~ VHPA Aviator Book Reviewer

Congratulations! Thank you for your love for Vietnam and its people and for being such a passionate journalist. From the moment I opened the book, I couldn't stop, page after page. The names, the faces, the places... Distant War brought back a lot of memories. And thank you for your friendship.

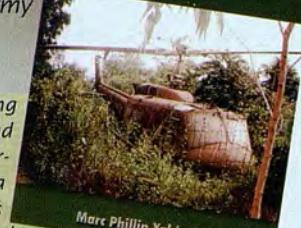
~ Kieu Chinh, Vietnamese American actress.

It is a prevalent truism that everything that can be said about Vietnam, Watergate, and that terrible era in our history has been said or written. Marc Yablonka proves this wrong, as he explores those days from odd and untouched angles ~ Jim Morris, author of War Story

Complete details on this novel are available at www.merriam-press.com, available in both paperback and hardback editions. You may order the novel from either Merriam-press.com and amazon.com

Distant War

Recollections of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia



Marc Phillip Yablonka

Kudos on your book. It's a very interesting read, well written and well researched. Glad you righted the wrong done to the Air America guys. Can't believe there was still a Huey lying in the weeds at Cu Chi as late as 1990 [cover photo]. Cu Chi was my first duty station flying with the 116th Assault.

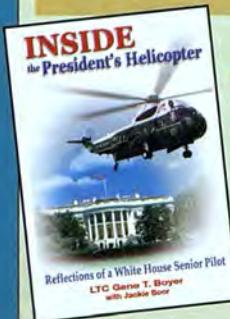
~ Richard Jellerson, Storyteller Films

Marc Philip Yablonka has written and assembled a darned good book about a long ago war that sometimes gets lost these days in the rumble of more contemporary cannons. In the 40-plus years since I left Vietnam as a Marine Combat Correspondent and an Associated Press war correspondent, I thought I had read everything that could be said about the place I first knew in 1962 as "a dirty little war." I was wrong. Thanks, Marc.

~ Steve Stibbens

BOOK REVIEWS

By VHPA Life member
JOHN PENNY



INSIDE THE PRESIDENT'S HELICOPTER by VHPA member LTC Gene Boyer with Jackie Boor

INSIDE THE PRESIDENT'S HELICOPTER by VHPA member LTC Gene Boyer with Jackie Boor is an interesting and well written account of the days when "Army One" was often the call sign of the presidential helicopter. The book presents a comprehensive history of the use of presidential helicopters, from Eisenhower's first flight in an Air Force UH-13J in 1957 to the present day. Intertwoven throughout the book are the details of Boyer's amazing career as an Army Aviator which spans much of the history of Army Aviation. Boyer's unique perspective from the cockpit of "Army One" provides us his personal observations of LBJ, Nixon, Ford and many national and international leaders which he shares with his readers.

Boyer states that he "was drafted in the nick of time" after college. Boot camp, OCS, and MSC training at Ft. Sam Houston was followed by helicopter flight school at Ft. Sill. At his flight school briefing the dangers of his new job was reinforced by a newly smashed "Killer Hiller" being trucked by and the words of an instructor: "If you don't pay attention, this is how you

will end up." He obviously followed that advice throughout his aviation career that included: a MASH unit in Korea, a flying tour in France with NATO and SHAPE, a tour in Vietnam with B/228 AVN, 1st Cav, and ten years with the US Army's Executive Flight Detachment. Boyer notes that being selected for the Executive Flight Detachment is a high honor, one that must be earned on every flight. The pressure to perform perfectly in the glare of the presidential "spotlight" is intense and every flight is planned in the smallest detail including alternatives.

Boyer's close proximity to LBJ, Nixon, and Ford gave him a close perspective of these men. He makes no bones about his distaste for LBJ who referred to the White House fleet as "my helicopters" and based the Army unit near his Texas ranch, where he and his cronies could use them as a personal taxi service. However, he notes that some of his best flying skills were not learned in Vietnam but "flying around the Texas Hill Country scrounging for cow pastures to land in." Though Nixon was viewed as a schemer by many, Boyer found him and his family to be considerate and respectful. When Nixon was forced to resign Boyer and CW4 Carl Burhanen, VHPA member, had the somber duty of flying the Nixons to Andrews AFB. As for Ford, Boyer felt he trust-

ed too much in his staff that was constantly fighting among themselves. Ford's Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld, and advisor Dick Cheney soon gave the Marine Corps' HMX-1 unit complete control of White House helicopters.

I highly recommend this very readable book that LTC Boyer wrote as a tribute to those who serve to protect this nation and to explain to his children where he was all those years when they hardly saw him. LTC Boyer is a living legacy of the history of Army Aviation. To put this in perspective, of the over 49,000 of us on the VHPA Class Index, LTC Boyer would be about #350. He is still very active and was instrumental in restoring the helicopter used to fly Nixon into forced retirement which is now at the Nixon Library. In 2009 he weighed in against the Lockheed-Martin contract to build a ridiculously costly replacement for the current White House Fleet. I recommend a visit to his web site at www.genetboyer.com to catch up on his current activities.

Inside the President's Helicopter: Reflections of a White House Senior Pilot (420 pages with photos, \$17.95 soft cover, \$24.95 hardback) by LTC Gene T. Boyer with Jackie Boor, ISBN: 9781934980910 is available from cablepublishing.com or other book suppliers.

KEEPING THE PROMISE by Donna E. Elliott is an account of her personal heartrending journey in search of her brother, MIA Jerry Elliott who disappeared on 21 January 1968 while serving as a door gunner with the 282nd AHC, call sign Black Cat, near Khe Sanh. Jerry jumped from his helicopter near "The Old French Fort" to help another member of his unit and disappeared. When Jerry Elliott was reported as MIA the family went through a period of hope and worry that deepened as time went by into despair and self destruction. Years of wondering, worrying, and dealing with the government POW/MIA bureaucracy shattered Donna's family. But Donna took it on herself to "keep the promise" of accounting for her brother with a dogged persistence that took her into the POW/MIA organizations, the halls of Congress, and ultimately to Vietnam itself.

The Vietnam POW/MIA issue still reverberates across this country; it is literally hanging above us from many flagpoles. It is inflamed by conspiracy theories proclaiming US POWs were kept behind as a bargaining chip by the North Vietnamese for US cooperation with post war rebuilding and that six subsequent US administrations kept it a secret. There were also unconfirmed reports of live POWs, Hollywood POW rescue movies, and the US government's lack of accurate figures for POWs. Hanoi, for its part, has not returned the remains of those who supposedly died in captivity or accounted for POWs who were in

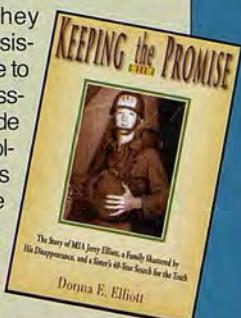
North Vietnamese custody in Laos. Compound this with the US government's lack of timely and consistent communication with the families, and the stress of wondering if your loved one was rotting in some jungle prison camp and it became too much for some to bear.

Donna Elliott is a person for whom the word "persistent" is an inadequate description. While dealing with her own personal struggles, she interviewed soldiers who were there when Jerry disappeared, read survivors reports, and sought permission to visit Vietnam and the area where Jerry vanished. She made several trips to Vietnam and along with Vietnam veterans she visited with the JTF team (later re-designated JPAC), interviewed Montagnards who lived in the area, and walked the ground. Her efforts did pay off with the recovery of an American body, but the DIA left her waiting for three years before she found out the remains were not Jerry's because DIA rules did not require them to tell her if there was no DNA match!

Families of those who served, but who never came home have not had the closure of a proper burial that fallen warriors deserve. They were left to wait and wonder and were largely ignored by

our government unless they maintained the level of persistence Donna had the courage to display. Donna keeps pressing for the truth and has made two more visits to Vietnam following completion of this book. As Donna notes there remain "So many questions, so few answers..." I highly recommend this very well written, up to date, thoroughly researched and detailed account of POW/MIA issues and their families.

Keeping the Promise: The Story of MIA Jerry Elliott, a Family Shattered by His Disappearance, and a Sister's 40-Year Search for the Truth (328 pages, with photos, \$19.95) by Donna E. Elliott, ISBN: 9781555716707 is available from hellgatepress.com or Amazon.



NOTED WITH INTEREST

SOLDIER'S HEART: Close-up Today with PTSD in Vietnam Veterans by William Schroder, VHPA member, and Ronald Dawe has been published recently. Look for my review in the next Aviator.

MATTERHORN: A Novel of the Vietnam War by Karl Marlantes, a Marine veteran of Vietnam, is a very well written fictional story of fear, courage, and social divisiveness at a Marine fire base on the edge of Laos and the DMZ.



BAKER HOTEL TO LIVE AGAIN

Dateline - the Austin American Statesman, August 17, 2010.
Mineral Wells' famous Baker Hotel to live again thanks to Austin's Jeff Trigger

By Helen Anders, AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

The man who restored Austin's Driskill and Dallas' Stoneleigh hotels to their former grandeur is now biting off a much tougher renovation assignment: the 79-year-old Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells, about 50 miles west of Fort Worth.

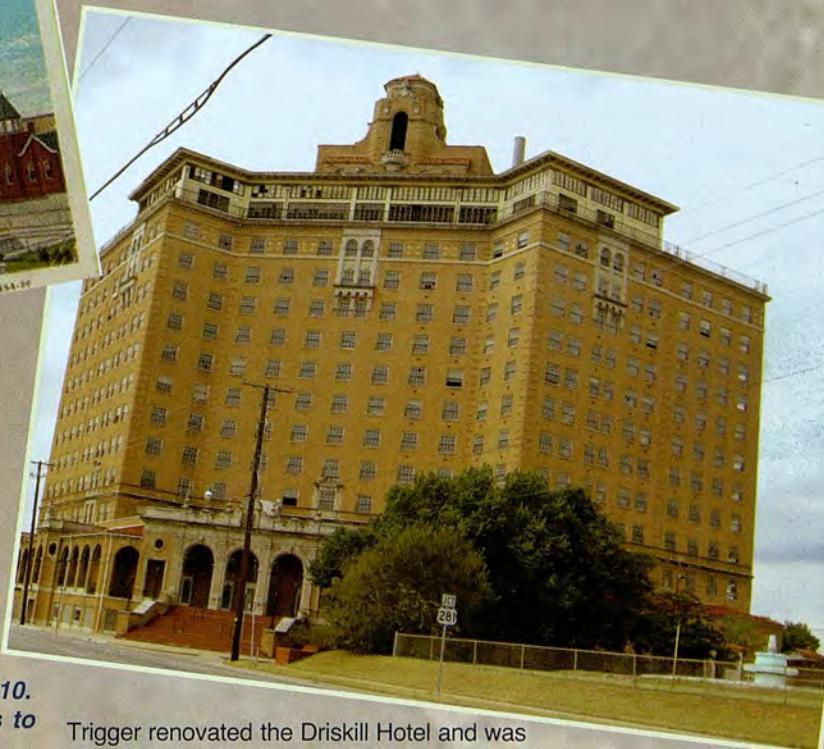
"We're anticipating having a destination resort and spa," said Jeff Trigger, president of Austin-based La Corsha Hospitality, who will oversee the renovation and operate the hotel. The City of Mineral Wells will buy the hotel for \$2.2 million from its Arizona owner and put about \$52 million more into its restoration.

The Baker, a 14-story behemoth with more than 400 rooms, has loomed large in Mineral Wells since hotelier W.T. Baker built it in 1929. Although it opened two weeks after the stock market crash, the lure of bathing in the area's lithium-rich "crazy water" drew celebrities such as Clark Gable, Judy Garland, Marlene Dietrich and the Three Stooges in the 1920s and 1930s. But in the 1940s, the stars stopped coming after the federal Food and Drug Administration ordered Mineral Wells to stop making medical claims about its waters.

Nobody has stayed there for 38 years, and the hotel has looked haunted for decades. Windows are broken, and cactus grows above the front entrance.

Southlake-based Hunter Chase Private Equity put together the team to bring the Baker back to life, including Trigger as operator, Austin-based HHCC as the contractor and Southlake-based Thiel and Thiel as architects and interior designers. Hunter Chase also is putting together the funding package, which is expected to include local tax incentives as well as federal tax credits. The group also is asking the Texas Department of Rural Affairs to qualify it for a \$20 million federal Housing and Urban Development loan. The hotel is expected to create more than 400 jobs.

Kevin Pruitt of Austin is making a documentary about the history of the Baker, and the Hunter Chase group has been using its eight-minute trailer as a selling point for financing with HHCC.



Trigger renovated the Driskill Hotel and was its general manager until he left in 2006 to form La Corsha. He still operates the Stoneleigh Hotel in Dallas. La Corsha, which is also involved in redevelopment of the Seaholm Power Plant site in Austin, will open two restaurants in the Austonian condominium building in November. It is also planning to restore the 1930 Settles Hotel in Big Spring.

Trigger said the Baker Hotel's rooms will be expanded and number pared down to 155. There will also be meeting rooms. But the biggest venture is bringing back the mineral-water spa.

"The spa is a big component of the redevelopment," Trigger said. "Mineral Wells is about mineral wells." The third floor of the hotel will be a spa, he said, and there might also be mineral baths outdoors. The hotel's pool will also be restored. Construction would take at least two years, Trigger said.

"We're extremely excited," Mineral Wells City Manager Lance Howerton said. "The Baker Hotel dwarfs the entire landscape. We feel that the Baker is the answer to rejuvenating not only our downtown but our community." The city has a population of about 17,000.

The Baker Hotel filed for bankruptcy in 1932 but stayed open until 1963. Then it was reopened briefly between 1965 and 1972. It's been empty ever since. Its current owner is a partnership managed by Greg Horne of Phoenix.





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CLASSIC ROTORS

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A Historic Aviation-Rotorcraft event took place at the Hiller Aviation Museum, Vertical Challenge, in San Carlos, CA on 22 June 2002. At 2:42PM, Joe Pike lifted the completely restored, only flying, ex-USN HUP-1 (US Army H-25A) to a hover. Then Classic Rotors (The Rare & Vintage Rotorcraft Museum) furnished the only flyable, ex-USAF CH-21B (US Army CH-21C) that thundered straight up. Next, a US Navy CH-46 Sea Knight, from NAS North Island, San Diego, climbed into the sky, followed by the ascent of a massive US Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook from Stockton, CA.

These giants, suspended in the air, capped-off a year-long effort to complete a first-time hover and flight of four generations of tandem-rotor helicopters (Piasecki, Vertol, Boeing-Vertol & Boeing Helicopters - 1940s to Present).

This historic event, was a special "Tribute to Frank Piasecki", the father of the tandem-rotor helicopter. The flight was captured on film by the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum.

*Frank Piasecki died of a stroke
at age 81 on 11 Feb 08.*