

SECTION IX - Inventory of Historical Information

This section highlights to the membership the various historical documents acquired by the VHPA Historical Committee. If you are aware of historical documents pertaining to your unit or other Vietnam Era helicopter units, please obtain a copy and send it to VHPA Headquarters or directly to Bill Greenhalgh.

Material Relative to US Army Units

Unit	Description	Comments Contributed by
1st AVN BDE	31 JAN 69 - 31 APR 69	Unit history Phil Chinnery
10th CAB	65 - 66	Unit history J. Montoya
45th MED CO	First quarter, 1970	
48th AVN CO	General history	
52nd CAB		Unit History
"	15 JAN 65 - 31 DEC 65	Unit history Adam Runk
"	12 FEB 67	Attack narrative Adam Runk
57th AVN CO	1970	General history
57th TC CO	General history	John Beckner
61st AVN CO	1 JAN 67 - 31 DEC 67	Unit history
"	1 JAN 68 - 31 DEC 68	"
"	1 JAN 71 - 20 FEB 72	"
68th AWC		General history
68th AWC	1964-1965	Year book
93rd TC CO	Early history	John Beckner
114th AHC	1966	General history
116th AVN CO	5 JUL 65 - 31 DEC 65	
"	1 OCT 66 - 31 DEC 66	
"	1 JAN 67 - 31 MAY 67	
"	1 JAN 67 - 31 DEC 67	
"	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69	
118th AVN CO	Tactics and gunship training information	
"	25 JUN 63 - 31 DEC 63	Unit history Robert Brandt
"	JUN 63 - DEC 64	"
119th AVN CO	1 JAN 65 - 31 DEC 65	Unit history Bob Heisterman
"	1 JAN 66 - 31 DEC 66	"
121st AVN CO	Early history	John Beckner
134th AHC	1 Jan 71 - 31 Dec 71	Unit History Supplement
155th AVN CO	1 JAN 66 - 31 DEC 66	
162nd AVN CO	1 APR 67 - 30 JUN 67	Jim Christiansen
"	1 JUL 67 - 30 SEP 67	Jim Christiansen
"	1 OCT 67 - 31 DEC 67	Jim Christiansen
164th CAG	20 DEC 67 - 13 MAR 73	Unit history Adam Runk
"	2 Apr 70 - 19 May 70	Cambodian Operations
170th AHC	1970	General history Jim Johnson
173rd AVN CO	1971	Gary Slaughter
176th AVN CO	General history	John Longstreet
180th AVN CO	17 MAR 65 - 31 DEC 67,	
227th AVN BN	1 JUL 65 - 31 DEC 65	Unit history
"	1 JAN 66 - 31 DEC 66	"

"	1 JAN 67 - 31 DEC 67	"
242nd ASHC	1 JAN 70 - 31 DEC 70	Unit history E.T. Lutenberger
273rd AVN CO	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69,	
334th AWC		General history
335th AHC	1 JAN 66 - 31 DEC 66	Unit history
339th TC CO	1 JAN 64 - 31 DEC 64	
361st AVN CO	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69,	
571st TC DET	1964-1965	Year book
DELTA CAG	20 DEC 67 - 13 MAR 73	Unit history Adam Runk
C BAT 4/77 ARA	1969	History Loren Gee
F BAT 79th ART	1 FEB 72 - 31 JUL 72	Unit history Barry McIntyre
1/1st CAV	1967-1968 Year Book,	
1/9th CAV	1 APR 70 - 31 JUL 70	Unit history Phil Chinnery
B TRP 1/9 CAV	AUG 69	Operations report Phil Chinnery
C TRP 1/9 CAV	AUG 69	Operations report Phil Chinnery
H TRP 10th CAV	1972 Year Book	Jack Jordan
7/17th CAV	1 FEB 68 - 30 APR 68	
"	1 AUG 68 - 31 OCT 68	
"	1 NOV 68 - 31 JAN 69	
"	1 FEB 69 - 30 APR 69	
"	1 MAY 69 - 31 JUL 69	
"	1 AUG 69 - 31 OCT 69	
"	1 NOV 69 - 31 JAN 70	
"	1 FEB 70 - 30 APR 70	
"	1 MAY 70 - 31 JUL 70	
"	1 AUG 70 - 31 OCT 70	
"	20 APR 71 - 14 MAY 71	MANG HO 16
HHT 7/17 CAV	1 APR 67 - 31 DEC 68	Mike Law
"	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69	
A TRP 7/17 CAV	4 FEB 67 - 31 DEC 68	
"	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69	
"	1 JAN 70 - 31 DEC 70	Charlie Smith
"	1 JAN 71 - 16 FEB 72	
B TRP 7/17 CAV	4 FEB 67 - 1 JAN 69	
"	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69	
C TRP 7/17 CAV	1 JAN 67 - 31 DEC 67	
"	5 OCT 67 - 31 DEC 68	Mike Law
"	1 JAN 69 - 31 DEC 69	
D TRP 7/17 CAV	4 FEB 67 - 31 DEC 68	
"	1 JAN 69 - FEB 70	
HAWK Magazine	1969 : SEP	George Murry
TYPHOON Magazine	1970: JUL-AUG	Rudy De France
ACTIV	CH-54A Employment	Report Warren Silva

Material Relative to US Marine Corps Units

Unit	Description	Comments Contributed by
HMM-364	1970 Yearbook	General History
Marines & Helicopter	1962 - 1973	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1954 - 1964	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1965	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1966	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1969	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1970 - 1971	USMC History Division
U.S. Marines in Vietnam	1973 - 1975	USMC History Division
Marines and Military Law in Vietnam		USMC History Division
Marines in Vietnam	1954 - 1973 Anthology	USMC History Division

Material Relative to US Air Force Units

Unit	Description	Comments Contributed by
ARRS	1946 - 1981	History John Konek
33rd ARRG	General Information	USAF Archives
37th ARRS	1 APR 72 - 30 JUN 72	Unit history John Konek

Material Relative to US Navy Units

Unit	Description	Comments Contributed by
H(A)L-3	1970	John Konek
"	1971	John Konek

Material Relative to Non-US Units

Unit	Description	Comments Contributed by
RAAF, No 9 Sqdn	Overall history, 1964 - 1972	RAAF Archives

General Vietnam Era Material

AAAA magazines	1965 : Dec	
"	1966 : Jan, Feb, May, Jun, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec	
"	1967 : Jan-Dec	
"	1968 : Jan, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec	
"	1969 : Jan, Mar, Apr, Jul, Sep/Oct, Dec	
"	1970 : Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Aug	
"	1973 : May	
PACIFIC Stars & Stripes	1969 :	Marty Martines



Lane Army Heliport, 10 miles west of Qui Nhon, late 1966.

Section X - Songs Of Helicopter Pilots In Vietnam

The 1992 Directory contained one page of "Songs of Helicopter Pilots in Vietnam". Not only did it generate a lot of interest, it also demonstrated that Vietnam helicopter pilots have a broad and deep history. As part of the pursuit of our history, it seemed appropriate to elaborate on this interesting portion of life in Vietnam, so "Songs" has its own section. Thanks to Marty Heuer and *The High Priced Help* (THPH) here is another piece of our history. We have published a couple of songs with this history and will publish many more in the Reference Directory that will be available early next year. If you would like to contribute anything to the "Songs" section, please contact Gary Roush or Marty Heuer.



The High Priced Help - Now...

When THPH got together at the VHPA Reunion in Phoenix, it had been just over 26 years since they sang together at Lane AHP, 12 miles west of Qui Nhon. They are the only singing group representing Army Aviation from the Vietnam era who have reunited to sing the old favorites. These songs, recorded in Vietnam and reproduced over and over have touched the lives of thousands of Army helicopter pilots and crew members since 1966 and 1967. It was during those years when song contests conducted by the 1st Aviation Brigade caused a proliferation of Army Aviation songs sung by pilots and crew members, either individually or in groups.

THPH remains one of the best known Vietnam singing groups. The group began as a trio when their unit, the 174th Assault Helicopter Company, the DOLPHINS and SHARKS, formed and trained at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Major Marty Heuer and Captain Jack Westlake played guitar and sang and were joined by Major Scat McNatt. They entertained on the ship as the unit deployed to South Vietnam in March of 1966.

The 174th AHC was assigned to Lane AHP, a fairly new facility, with only the 161st AHC occupying a part of the camp. Singing became a low priority for the trio because the unit area and facilities had to be constructed for the arrival of the aircraft, vehicles and equipment. Scat commanded the 409th TC Detachment and Jack was his assistant. Marty, an engineer officer commanding the service platoon, was put in charge of the 174th's construction project. Building the camp was a high priority and it was accomplished by around the clock volunteer laborers made up of officers and enlisted men, in between flying daily missions. This must sound familiar to anyone who went to Vietnam with a unit.

The 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, with LTC Sam ("Black Sam")

Kalagian in command, relocated to Lane on 12 May 1966. The 14th CAB was the largest Aviation Battalion in Vietnam at the time. The Battalion was comprised of the 161st, 174th and 282nd AHC's plus four fixed wing companies, the 92nd (Caribou), 18th (Otter), 220th (Bird Dog) and the 131st (Mohawk).

The arrival of the Battalion headquarters increased the daily mission schedule and the building continued, leaving little leisure time. However, once a routine set in the guitars came out and the trio passed the time entertaining themselves and their hootchmates.

Captain Chinch Wollerton joined the 174th as an individual replacement in June 1966 and was assigned to the Shark's as Assistant Platoon Commander, Shark 5. Jack had served earlier with Chinch in the 101st and they renewed their friendship. Jack remembered that Chinch was an accomplished pianist and "one helluva entertainer".

The 1st Aviation Brigade, under the command of General Seneff, began to hold monthly Commanders Conferences. The conferences were held at various locations in the southern half of Vietnam and were attended by Battalion and Group Commanders and some command staff members. General Seneff had heard about all the singing talent and decided to include a singing contest at the end of the full day of meetings. There was only one stipulation for entry. The individual or group entering the contest had to sing an original song. The tune could be an old standard or a current hit, but the words had to be original. The contestants were then judged by the commanders and staff, who voted for their favorite, and third, second and first place winners were announced. The first place winner was presented a plaque at the following month's conference.

LTC Kalagian was aware of the trio because, by this time, they were establishing quite a reputation at Lane. He approached Marty, Jack and Scat, informed them of the requirements for the Brigade song contest and gave them the mission to represent the 174th and the 14th in future contests.

Jack immediately suggested Chinch be invited to join the group. When Jack was promoted to Major the quartet decided to change the name from THPH to "*The Three Majors And A Minor*".



...and then (Live at the EM Club February 1967)

However, shortly after the name change, Chinch was also promoted to Major and they reverted back to THPH. Unfortunately, the two names caused considerable confusion over the years.

THPH was the only Army Aviation singing group north of Nha Trang and Pleiku at the time. They performed frequently at the officers, NCO and enlisted clubs at Lane. They entered the Brigade song contest four times and won twice with the songs "Black Sam" and "General Seneff". They sang at unit organization days, the field hospital in Qui Nhon and for General Lew, CG, Republic of Korea Capitol Infantry Division and his headquarters staff located adjacent to Lane AHP.

Units of the 1st CAV frequently RON'd at Lane and each time they did, THPH provided the late night entertainment. It was a wonder those guys could break ground at daybreak.

There were also many performances for the subordinate units of the 14th CAB in Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Da Nang and other exotic night spots.

Due to mission requirements, R&R's, etc. the group had to decline many requests to perform but wherever they went, they received a warm welcome from the troops who appreciated their songs and humor.

On the 27th of February 1967, THPH, using the officers club at Lane as their "recording studio", taped 29 songs on a reel-to-reel. They presented copies of this tape to most of the commanders throughout the Brigade at the March Commanders Conference. THPH won that contest held at the Red Bull Inn in Saigon with their song "General Seneff". That was the last time they sang together in Vietnam.

Jack, Scat and Marty departed Vietnam on the 8th of March. Chinch remained for about three more months and during that time loaned out a copy of the tape to anyone who wanted to record it. From then on, those copies were recopied and passed from person to person in Vietnam and the States. Some of these copies eventually found their way back to members of THPH years later. Some had been recopied so many times, the music on them was barely recognizable. The sound on one Marty received in 1992 was "a group of chipmunks singing at top speed from the bottom of a well".

After returning from Vietnam, the group members were separated. Then, one by one, they each returned to Vietnam for a second tour but, surprisingly, none of their tours overlapped and they did not see each other again. As the years went by all had retired from military service and they communicated infrequently.

Jack and Scat finally met in Killeen, Texas where they both had settled, working for government contractors. Chinch settled in Washington, D.C. and Marty was now in Tampa, Florida.

In 1992, Marty became involved in the Vietnam Veterans Oral History and Folklore Project, headed up by Lydia Fish of the Anthropology Department of Buffalo State College. In his first telephone conversation with Lydia, Marty was very surprised when Lydia said "Marty, we've been looking for you and THPH for years". Lydia explained the network of singers and collection of songs from the Vietnam era she had established and Marty was hooked.

Lydia asked Marty to attend the video taping session for the Austin City Limits production of a special program, "In Country: Folk Songs Of Americans In The Vietnam War", hosted by Kris Kristofferson. Except for Kristofferson, who was an Army helicopter pilot, but never served in Vietnam, not a single Army Aviator was represented. The In Country production was great, but it left out a very important segment of song writers and performers of the Vietnam experience. Lydia agreed, but explained that none of the Army Aviation groups or individuals could be reached, except for Marty and Mike Staggs of the Merryman. At that time Lydia had collected some tapes and photos of both of these groups but very little else.

In June of 1992, VHPA member Fred Thompson sent a postcard to Marty asking how he could contact "The Majors" that recorded a tape of songs in '66-67. Fred, if you don't already know, is an avid VHPA member and collector of historical data on the 174th AHC. He flew slicks and guns (Shark &) in 1970-71. They exchanged information, including many tapes and documents.

Lydia Fish and Fred Thompson both urged Marty to bring THPH together again. The perfect opportunity would be the 10th VHPA reunion in Phoenix. Marty contacted Jack, Scat and Chinch and the rest, as they say, "is history".

Just prior to the reunion, THPH had their original tape reproduced in a studio using the latest digital recording equipment and it was released on a cassette in Phoenix. The tape contains all 29 songs and the introduction as it was originally recorded in Vietnam. If you listen closely, you'll hear the familiar sounds of Vietnam in the background.

The reunion was an emotional event for THPH. They were pleasantly surprised at the warm welcome they received and the large number of pilots and crew members who told them they had been in their audience in Vietnam. Many of them told the group about the old tapes they had of THPH.

THPH is making plans for future reunions to arrange and record some of the other songs that were written and sung in Vietnam by Army Aviation personnel.

VIETNAM

Words by: Martin Heuer, Orville W. McNatt, Earle J. Westlake & Charles V. Wollerton 1966 Lane AHP, RVN,
Tune: "Banai"

CHORUS:

Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam, Oh No
Vietnam, Vietnam I didn't want to go.

Our ship ran aground at Qui Nhon, We had to swim ashore.
The first person there to meet us was Qui Nhon's number one Hootch-maid.

They sent us out to Phu Tai, they said it was first class.
The minute that we got there the mud was up to our Navel. (Still is!)

CHORUS:

We flew up to the golf course, to play a round or two.
We couldn't find a caddy, and we didn't know what to do. (Shucks!)

CHORUS:

We headed out for Bong Song, that was taking quite a chance.
Charlie started shootin' and me I my pants. (Oh!)

CHORUS:

I woke up late one evening 'cause nature gave a call.
Just as I got comfortable, the mortars slated to fall. (Ooowl)

CHORUS:

And now we're back home in the States, we're starting to unpack.
We get a set of orders, a'sending me right back. (Oh No!)

CHORUS: (Final)

Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam, Oh no
Vietnam, Vietnam, I didn't want to go.
I sure as hell didn't want to gooo.

SAIGON GIRLS (CHU YEN)

Words by Jerry Thomas & The Merry-men 1966 Lai Khe, RVN
Tune "New York Girls"

Well, we're gunna' tell you a little story about an older type Army Pilot and this guy thought he knew all the ropes. He was down in Saigon on his three day R&R and he met this little Saigon lovely. And this Saigon lovely's name was "Chu Yen"

Chu Yen? Sure, that's mother nature spelled backwards.

Well anyway, Chu Yen got him into a lot of trouble because this guy was out to satisfy that constant urge.

Constant urge? Yeah
That's right to dance the polka!
Yeah to dance the polka. To what? To dance the polka?

Now listen pilots unto me, I'll tell you of my song,
I left the shores of old Qui Nhon and landed at Saigon, oh well now,

CHORUS

Hello Chu Yen, my fair Chu Yen.
Oh you Saigon girls can't you dance the polka.

As I walked down old Flower street, a fair maid I did meet,
She asked me please to see her home, she lived on Tu Do street.
Now if you're willing to come with me and you would like a treat,
You can have a glass of Saigon tea or Bau Muoi Ba Thirtythree,
Oh well now,

CHORUS:

We walked for about a mile or two and finally found her hut,
Papasan was VC, Mamasan chewed betel nut, oh well now,

When I awoke next morning, I had an aching head,
My pocketbook was empty and my lady friend had fled.
Now lookin' around this little room, I couldn't see a thing,
But a poster sayin' Yankee go home an' a picture of Ho Chi Minh.
Oh well now,

CHORUS

Where's Chu Yen, my fair Chu Yen.
She can do a lot of things, but she can't dance the polka.

I've come to this conclusion, all pilots need a rest,
But if you go to Saigon, your morals it will test.
The moral of this story, is don't be a sinner,
Stop goin' down to Saigon, try the Red Cross Recreation Center.
Oh well now,

CHORUS

Goodbye Chu Yen, farewell Nuoc Mam.
I'm trading in my achin' head, I'll try a Doughnut Dolly.
Please pass the cookies, I wanna glass of KoolAid.
I'm a Red Cross Girl and I can dance the polka.
Oh you Red Cross Girls can't you dance the polka?

PETER PILOT

(Author unknown helicopter pilot in Vietnam circa 1966
Tune unknown
"Traditional" adapted and sung by The High Priced Help, Lane AHP, RVN)

Peter was a pilot trim and neat,
The ladies all called him Pilot Pete,
Peter got orders for Vietnam,
He said goodbye ladies and goodbye Mom.

Peter hopped aboard a big jet plane,
Told the First Pilot all about his fame,
The Pilot told Peter to go sit down,
I'm sixty years old son and I've been around.

CHORUS

Peter, Peter Pilot watch where you go.
You're flying over Charlie low and slow,
Peter, Peter Pilot you'd better learn,
That Charlie's tracers have an awful burn.

Peter arrived at ol Pleiku,
There was nobody there that Peter knew,
He was assigned to the Bikini flight,
He was alookin' for the beach the live long night.

The Operations Officer found ol Pete,
A sittin' in a Huey in the AC's seat,
He said what are you doin' there,
That's a pilots seat and not a rockin' chair.

CHORUS:

Standardization Pilot told ol Pete,
Fly at fifteen hundred feet,
If you fly low don't fly slow,
Pull out some pitch anna go man go.

Early next morning Peter got a flight,
A CA in the Chu Pong with Bikini Flight,
It was a very hot CA,
They flew into a Regiment of NVA.

CHORUS:

Peter didn't do what he'd been told.
He flew a hundred feet with his guns on cold,
Charlie saw Peter flying low and slow,
Shot him in the oil tank stopped it's flow.

Peter said Fellas, well I'm agoin in,
The leader said Peter done goofed again,
As we flew over old Peter's ship,
We saw him giving Charlie lots of lip.

CHORUS:

A few days later back at ol Pleiku,
We were a havin a drink and feelin mighty blue,
Peter walked in and ordered a drink,
He said "Boy old Charlie's women stink".

We asked him how he got away,
He said he told Charlie how he flew CA's,
Charlie looked at him and said "Boy you numba ten",
In fact you do more harm to them.

CHORUS:

CHEO REO TOWER

(Words by Martin Heuer, Orville W. McNatt, Earle J. Westlake &
Charles V. Wollerton m1966 Lane AHP, RVN tune "Wabash Cannon Ball")

Now Cheo Reo Tower this is Huey twooone.
I'm turning on my downwind, my rotors on the bum.
My engines overheated, the gauge reads onetwoone.
You'd better call the crash crew out and getem on the run.

Du Du Du (etc.)
Now listen Huey twooone this is Che Reo Tower.
We'd like to call the crash crew out but it is their coffee hour.
So hang on to your airplane, don't let it get away.
We'll have somebody out there before we end this day.

Du Du Du (etc.)

Now Cheo Reo Tower this is Huey twooone.
I'm turnin' on my final, I'm arunnin' on one lung.
My wife and kids will miss me if you don't help me soon.
I'm sinking fast on final, I'm goin' to my doom.

Du Du Du (etc.)

Now listen Huey twooone this is Cheo Reo Tower.
We'd like to call the crash crew out but we haven't got the power.
We'll send a note through channels, it shouldn't take too long.
The last one only took three days so keep on hangin' on.

Du Du Du (etc.)

Now Cheo Reo Tower this is Huey twooone.
I'm comin' down too fast to stop, my flyin' days are done.
I see the runway comin' up, it's agunna' hit me fast.
So kiss my wife and kids and fly the windsock at half mast.

Du Du Du (etc.) Crash!

FARE THEE WELL

(Words music by Major Martin Heuer 1966 USNS Upshur)

Early one morning, in drizzling rain.
Deep in my heart, I felt an aching pain.

CHORUS

Fare thee well, oh my honey.
Fare thee well.

We boarded an aircraft, no looking back.
Our guns were holstered, our gear was in our pack.

CHORUS:

Westward we flew, to meet our ship.
With tears in our eyes, and with trembling lips.

CHORUS:

If I had wings, like Noah's dove.
I'd fly cross the ocean, to the one I love.

CHORUS: (Final)

Fare thee well, oh my honey,
Fare thee well.
Fare thee well.

BLACK SAM

(Words by: Martin Heuer, Orville W. McNatt, Earle J. Westlake &
Charles V. Wollerton 1966 Lane AHP, RVN tune "The MTA")

Oh, he took off from Phu Tai early one morning,
He was headed for Cam Rhan Bay.
He flew into a typhoon with his after burner going,
He got his special ticket that way.

CHORUS

Well did he ever return, no he'll never return.
And his fate is still unlearned.
He may fly forever, neath the skys of Asia,
He's the man who never returned.

Well, we're gonna' tell you a story about the Commander of the 14th
Aviation Battalion known as COL Black Sam Kalagian. He is known
throughout the Brigade as the Armenian Rug Salesman and his tactical
call sign is ARAB 6. At Phu Tai where he has his headquarters, he
has the 174th Aviation Company divided up into the Dolphins, which
are slick ships and the Sharks, which are the gunships and the song
we have for you now is about a CA, a combat assault, exactly the way
it happened, led by COL Black Sam, the Armenian Rug Salesman,
ARAB 6
and it went just like this:

The Sharks and the Dolphins were called to a briefing,
It lasted well into the night.
Arab 6 said listen it's really quite simple,
Even you can do it right.

CHORUS:

The Sharks and the Dolphins took off next morning,
Headed for Phu Cat Bay.
Arab 6 took up his normal position,
Fortyfive hundred yards away.

CHORUS:

The jets made their strikes, The A1's were shooting,
There was lots of artillery.
When the smoke had cleared, Black Sam lost his temper,
The Dolphins were headed out to sea.

CHORUS:

Arab 6 decided to mark the LZ,
He was doin' about oneonethree,
He said always remember the Infantry motto,
Fellows follow me!

CHORUS:

Shark 5 with all his fortyeight rockets,
Started his firing pass.
Arab 6 saw all those little explosions,
And he started haulin' he wanted to get outa there!

CHORUS:

Arab 6 was so happy at the end of the fighting,
He gave Dolphin 6 a hug.
You did just fine, now one other question,
Would you like to buy a rug!

CHORUS:

ALWAYS GIVE A TRY

(Words & music by Major Charles V. Wollerton 1966 Lane AHP, RVN)

Hear those blades a'poppin', hear those engines start to roar.
They're headin' out to fight and try to win this dirty war.
Yes they're Army Aviators, they'll always give a try.
They'll come back home a smiling but sometimes they must die.

The gunner's face is tightened, the crew chief soaked with sweat.
They've had a couple close ones but no one's got 'em yet.
Yes they're Army Aviators, they'll always give a try.
They'll come back home a smiling but sometimes they must die.

The Captain bites his cigar, the Pilot holds his breath.
They're headin' down on final to face a hidden death.
But they're Army Aviators, they'll always give a try.
They'll come back home a smiling but sometimes they must die.

The troopers that they carried are anxious to get out.
And as they leave the aircraft the crew can hear them shout.
You doggone Aviators, you'll always give a try.
You'll go back home a smiling but sometimes you must die.

They're headin' back for home now, their guns are all burned black.
They'll drink a toast to all those men who wouldn't make it back.
Yes they're Army Aviators, they'll always give a try.
They'll come back home a smiling but sometimes they must die.
They must die, They must die, They must die, They must die.

ARMY PILOTS

(Words by Martin Heuer, Orville W. McNatt, Earle J. Westlak &
Charles V. Wollerton 1966 Lane AHP, RVN tune "SGT Flynn")

Oh, there are no Army Pilots at Phu Tai,
There are no Army Pilots at Phu Tai,
They are causing quite a flap,
Cause they've all come down with measles,
Oh there are no Army Pilots at Phu Tai.

Oh, there are no Army Pilots down at Group,
There are no Army Pilots down at Group,
The place is full of brass,
Chicken Colonels out the window,
Oh there are no Army Pilots down at Group.

Oh, there are no Army Pilots at Brigade,
There are no Army Pilots at Brigade,
There is no one at Brigade,
Cause they've all out getting haircuts,
Oh there are no Army Pilots at Brigade.

Oh, there are no Army Pilots in the States,
There are no Army Pilots in the States,
They are all on foreign shores,
Making mothers out of friends,
Oh there are no Army Pilots in the States.

Oh, there are no Army Pilots down in hell,
There are no Army Pilots down in hell,
The place is full of queers,
Fighter Pilots and Bombadiers,

Oh there are no Army Pilots down in hell.

Oh, every Army Pilot's at Ft. Rucker,
Every Army Pilot's at Ft. Rucker,
They have all become Instructors,
Making Pilots out of practically nothing,
Oh every Army Pilot's at Ft. Rucker.

GENERAL SENEFF

(Words by Martin Heuer, Orville W. McNatt, Earle J. Westlake &
Charles V. Wollerton 1967 Lane AHP, RVN tune "Freight Train")

Down in Saigon, they have made,
An Aviation monster called the 1st Brigade.
A glamorous unit they hoped to forge,
And they gave it to a guy named George.

He flies around in and out of the fog,
Followed by his Aide and that little black dog.
He's always looking for a victory,
And his dog is lookin' for a tree.

CHORUS

General Seneff, don't bite me.

I couldn't help it don't you see.

This little flap is bound to pass,

So please don't chew my (foot, elbow, knee, armpit, I
don't know)

He's got a Group Commander by the name of Marr,
It doesn't look as though he's going very far.
Cause General George put him up a tree,
When he saddled him with IFFV.

Colonel Campbell is big and burly,
Throughout his Group he's known as Curly.
He's not as mean as some folks think,
But he's driving Black Sam to drink.

CHORUS:

Up at Lane there's an Aviation wonder,
Known as Colonel "Wild Bill" Ponder.
His choppers look sharp on any day,
Cause they're always on static display.

We wrote this song cause we like to sing,
We had no idea what trouble it would bring.
Now we see some folks glaring at us,
So where the hell's that damn bus.

FINAL CHORUS

Scat Well I know

Group No Scat no whew wow

Scat A!

Section XI - A History of Air Ambulance Units in Vietnam



On the previous page is a photo of aircraft # 66- 17626 flown by MAJ Donald Hull, CO of the 237th MED DET, near the DMZ in early 1969. The crew chief was SP4 John D. Tyler. The medic (on the ground to the left) and co-pilot are unknown. Immediately after the photo was taken, the aircraft started taking fire from the treeline in the background. This area is marked by the bomb exploding on the left side of the hill. This same aircraft would be used to evacuate VHPA Member Phil Marshall who provided this photo. The Huey now lies at the bottom of Da Nang harbor as detailed on page 261 of the 1992 Directory.

A Chronology of Medical Helicopter Activities

1962

Apr - 57th Med Det arrives at Nha Trang.

1963

Jan - 57th Med Det relocates to Saigon.

Mar - 57th Med Det re-equipped with UH-1Bs.

Mar - 57th Med Det sends a two ship detachment to Pleiku.

1964

Mar - 57th Med Det sends a two ship detachment to Soc Trang.

Jul - MAJ Kelly becomes the first DUSTOFF KIA in Vietnam.

Nov - 82nd Med Det arrives at Soc Trang.

Dec - 57th Med Det returns a two ship detachment to Pleiku.

1965

Apr - SP5 Simmons becomes the first DUSTOFF EM KIA in Vietnam.

Jul - 15th Med Bn, 1st CAV, arrives at An Khe.

Aug - 283rd Med Det arrives at Saigon.

Sep - 43th Med Group becomes operational for II Corps.

Sep - 498th Med Co arrives at Nha Trang and sends platoons to Qui Nhon and Pleiku.

Nov - 254th Med Det arrives in Nha Trang.

Dec - 436th Med Co (Provisional) organized from assets already in Vietnam.

1966

Feb - 254th Med Det becomes operational at Nha Trang.

Mar - 44th Med Bde arrives in Vietnam

Mar - 68th Med Group becomes operational for III and IV Corps.

Jun - 55th Med Group becomes operational for Northern II Corps.

Sep - Provisional Company renamed 436th Med Det (Company Headquarters)(Air Ambulance)

1967

May - 436th renamed 658th Med Co

Jul - 45th Med Co arrives in Vietnam

Jul - 658th deactivated, assets (57th Med Det and 82nd Med Det) assigned to the 45th Company.

Jul - 283rd Med Det moves to Pleiku.

Jul - 254th Med Det moves to Nha Trang.

Sep - 67th Med Group becomes operational for I Corps.

Sep - 54th Med Det arrives at Chu Lai.

Oct - 326th Med Bn, 101st ABN, arrives at in Vietnam

Oct - 159th Med Det arrives at Cu Chi.

Oct - 236th Med Det arrives at Da Nang.

Nov - 571st Med Det arrives at Nha Trang.

Dec - 50th Med Det arrives at Phu Hiep.

1968

Jan - 571st Med Det becomes operational at Nha Trang.

Jul - 50th Med Det renamed Air Ambulance Platoon of 326th Med Bn and becomes the nucleus of "Eagle Dustoff" for the 101st ABN.

Nov - 237th Med Det arrives at Da Nang.

Nov - 68th Med Det arrives at Chu Lai.

Dec - 247th Med Det arrives at Dong Tam.

1969

1970

Feb - 44th Med Bde departs Vietnam; replaced by US Army Med Command, Vietnam.

Feb - 43th Med Group departs Vietnam.

Jun - 55th Med Group departs Vietnam.

Jun - 237th Med Det was reorganized, assigned to the 67th Evacuation Hospital.

1971

Apr - 15th Med Bn, 1st CAV, departs Vietnam.

Apr - 45th Med Co departs Vietnam.

Apr - Long Binh Dustoff organized from assets of 159th Med Det and 283rd Med Det.

Aug - 498th Med Co departs Vietnam.

Nov - 54th Med Det departs Vietnam.

Nov - 82nd Med Det departs Vietnam.

SECTION XI History of Air Ambulance Units 218

1972

Jan - 326th Med Bn, 101st ABN, departs Vietnam.
 Jan - 68th Med Det departs Vietnam.
 Jan - 67th Med Group departs Vietnam.
 Apr - 68th Med Group departs Vietnam.
 Apr - Long Binh Dustoff ceases operations & 283rd Med Det departs Vietnam.
 Jun - 237th Med Det reorganized and assigned to the 24th Evacuation Hospital.
 Nov - 159th Med Det departs Vietnam.

1973

Feb - 571st Med Det departs Vietnam.
 Mar - 237th Med Det departs Vietnam.
 Apr - 57th Med Det departs Vietnam.

Major Awards and Citations For Air Ambulance Units

Dates	Unit	Award	Streamer
26 Jul 65 - 15 Apr 71	15th Med Bn	unknown	
1 May 66 - 14 Dec 70	44th Med Bde	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968-1969
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal	Vietnam 1969-1970
19 Jul 67 - 30 Apr 71	45th Med Co	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
23 Aug 67 - 29 Nov 71	54th Med Det	No Unit Awards	
Apr 62 - Mar 73	57th Med Det	Presidential Unit Citation	Dong Xoai
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1964
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1972-1973
		Vietnam Cross of Gallantry W/Palm	Vietnam 1964
28 Nov 68 - 30 Jan 72	68th Med Det	No Unit Awards	
16 Oct 64 - 28 Nov 71	82nd Med Det	Presidential Unit Citation	Vietnam 5 Dec 1964
		Presidential Unit Citation	Chuong Thien Province
		Valorous Unit Award	Chuong Thien Province
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1965-1966
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
Oct 67 - Nov 72	159th Med Det	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
		Vietnam Cross of Gallantry W/Palm	Vietnam 1967-1968
		Vietnam Cross of Gallantry W/Palm	Vietnam 1968-1970
		Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal	Vietnam 1967-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
28 Nov 68 - 1 Apr 72	236th Med Det	No Unit Awards	
28 Nov 68 - 19 Mar 73	237th Med Det	No Unit Awards	
Dec 68 - Mar 73	247th Med Det	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
4 Nov 65 - 10 Dec 70	254th Med Det	Valorous Unit Award	Vietnam 1966
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1966
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1969-1970
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
27 Aug 65 - 23 Apr 72	283rd Med Det	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1965-1966
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1966-1968
		Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1970-1971
22 Oct 67 - 23 Dec 71	326th Med Bn 101 Abn	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1968-1969
		Vietnam Cross of Gallantry W/Palm	Vietnam 1968-1969
		Vietnam Cross of Gallantry W/Palm	Vietnam 1971
		Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal	Vietnam 1968-1970
16 Aug 65 - 30 Aug 71	498th Med Co	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1965-1967
Nov 67 - Feb 73	571st Med Det	Meritorious Unit Commendation	Vietnam 1967-1968

Introduction to the History of Air Ambulance Units

It is the Directory's custom to present at least one unit history each year. There are several reasons for having histories in the Directory. The most obvious are that the Directory is a very cost effective vehicle to present several pages of pictures, narrative, rosters, and statistics for the general knowledge and enjoyment of the membership. This year both the History and Directory Committees were disappointed in the quality and quantity of input from the membership. Despite several requests for input in several different ways, the response was very little indeed. However, the Committees learned from this experience and have already set off with new conviction for 1994.

It is important to remember that all histories published in a Directory are **living histories**. This means two things: First, anyone can add (or correct) the material. So if you have a related story to tell, please know it will be enthusiastically received by any member of the Directory Committee. Second, all VHPA histories will be periodically republished in the Reference editions.

For 1993, we need to thank: Bill Greenhalgh, the Dustoff Association, and John Cook's book for the material in this section, Phil Marshall for the GREAT photo on page 217, and, of course, Tom Lewis for the photos of his pocket patch collection of air ambulance units. Please see the Credits and References page at the end of this Directory for a complete list of all contributors. All comments concerning this section should be directed to VHPA Headquarters: ATTN: Directory Committee.

The History of DUSTOFF and MEDEVAC in Vietnam

Since Dec 1961 U.S. Army and, after 15 Apr 1962, U.S. Marine Corps helicopters had been conducting medical evacuation missions in Vietnam, but on 26 Apr 1962 the 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) arrived. It was the first helicopter unit deployed whose primary mission was medical evacuation. Months of hard work, bureaucratic wrangling, disappointment, true "aviation pioneering", death, and success would pass before the legend of "DUSTOFF" would become a household word. The following account is taken liberally from: "The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War, Dust Off" by John L. Cook.

Background Information

During the early days of Vietnam, medical air evacuation of wounded troops in the combat zone were routinely carried out by assault aircraft returning from missions. For much of the time, aircraft were carrying out medical evacuation of Vietnamese troops and civilians. This method worked well because the number of U.S. troops committed to the war were relatively few; however as the conflict escalated, troop strength increased, and combat operations became more intense, the system grew less satisfactory. Early in the 60's, probably in response to the Vietnam conflict, a special training course was established for aviators. The 2CF7 course, called Essential Medical Training for Army Aviators was conducted at Ft. Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX. The course was designed for those commissioned and Warrant officers slated for DUSTOFF/Medevac assignments. Three weeks long for commissioned officers and four weeks for Warrant officers, the course was almost completely medically oriented. It focused on emergency-type care, trauma management, etc. Or in the words of one former DUSTOFF pilot, it was a "How-to-Do-A- Tracheotomy-With-One-Hand-and-Fly-With-The-Other" kind of course. Most aviators in medical evacuation units attended the course which gave them the advantage of recognizing the situation and being able to make time/speed distance decisions based on patient condition. Because of this training and knowledge, many wounded soldiers woke up the next morning after a speedy trip through the unfriendly Vietnam sky. Medical air ambulances saw more drastic use and the red-lines were pushed to the limit of many occasions. Most commissioned officers/aviators in DUSTOFF/Medevac units were in the Medical Service Corps (MSC) although a few of the aviators flying DUSTOFF or Medevac were in other branches of the Army.

As part of the medical support build-up in late 1961 in Vietnam, the 8th Field Hospital was deployed to Nha Trang with primary responsibility for the hospitalization of all U.S. military, dependents, and civilians (about 8,000 total U.S. citizens) living in Vietnam and secondary mission to supply all medical units in country. The 57th Medical Detachment, "The Originals", as they became known, (hence forth referred to as the 57th Med or 57th but should not be confused with the 57th Transportation CO which was also serving in Vietnam) would be the "wheels" for the 8th. Both MACV, which had just become operational, and MAAG were undergoing changes in roles, commanders, and staff. The Vietnamese were very much in "control" of anything that needed changing. Aviation in general was still the "new kid on the block" and the "chain of bureaucratic" for requesting even medical evacuations was ill- defined as its very best.

1962

Deployment Preparations-The 57th Med was given a two month alert prior to leaving America. Being a rather small unit (seven officers, 22 enlisted men, five UH-1As) and being one of the first to go to Vietnam, few could tell them where they were going or what conditions would be like when they arrived. Their biggest unanswered questions centered around support, so they prepared for the worst. The supply officer converted a 2 1/2-ton truck into a mobile kitchen for a unit that had no cooks and in the end brought a six months' supply of C-rations because of the uncertainties about support. There were not many Vietnam Vets around in early 62, so the men made up kits of things they thought they might need - a machete, canned water, extra ammunition, compass, a signaling mirror!

Apr - Actual Deployment - On the 26th, the 57th Med arrived via a DC6 at Nha Trang, a sleepy coastal town in the middle of South Vietnam which at that time was the Headquarters of the U.S. Special Forces and the only just operational 8th Field Hospital. No one in Nha Trang was aware that the 57th was coming but the CO of the 8th was kind enough to point out an area where the 57th could pitch their tents.

May - Early this month, CPTs Temperelli and Bill Ballander went to Saigon to pick up two of their five UH-1As that had finally arrived. Nha Trang at 320 KM northeast of Saigon was far beyond the range of a UH-1A and there were no refueling points along the way. Indeed the only place JP-4 was available other than Saigon was at Nha Trang. Temperelli asked if the useless cockpit heaters could be removed to accommodate additional fuel cells - no. Enter "field expediency" - put 55-gal drums in the cargo bays, fill them with JP-4, load a manual pump, and head up Route 1. With the help of a "temporary ground crew" at the Song Mao Special Forces camp,

they accomplished the first manual refueling of a Huey in Vietnam! They encountered a strong headwind proceeding north and with both fuel gauges reading zero requested an immediate clearance to land from the Vietnamese tower operator. On shut-down they had seven gallons "too much" fuel but were now ready to go to work in Nha Trang. A few days later the other UH-1As arrived and Temperelli sent two to Qui Nhon, 160 KMs to the north. No one in Saigon seemed concerned about the lack of JP-4 in Qui Nhon and all fuel allocation and storage points had to be approved by orders of President Diem, so Temperelli moved one of his two 1200-gallon storage tanks to Qui Nhon and filled it with fuel flown from Nha Trang in 55-gal drums.

The first casualty evaced by the 57th was a wounded Vietnamese soldier flown from an LZ near Cam Ranh Bay to the Vietnamese hospital in Nha Trang. The irony of this act was the MAAG prohibition placed on the 57th against evacuating Vietnamese. Temperelli found this policy unrealistic since he was dependent on the Vietnamese for radio communication channels because MACV had neglected to assign him radio frequencies. Anyway, the 57th was "in business".

Jun - By the end of the month, the 57th had evaced only 12 Americans and 14 Vietnamese and it became clear that the coastal area of central Vietnam was not the best location of a med evac helicopter unit. Saigon reasoned that the 57th had to be co-located with the 8th despite Temperelli's arguments that being located on the coast wasted half of the operational radius since they weren't picking anyone up from the South China Sea! His recommendations that the 57th Med relocate to Saigon were denied. Logistical support was an even more serious problem because the 57th owned the only Hueys in Vietnam at the time. Being a small unit, in a remote location, with unique requirements, they were forced to send requisitions for spare parts to the U.S. Army, Okinawa. When other aviation units began receiving Hueys, they thought their supply problems would be solved; but nothing could be further from the truth. To their horror, they learned that the combat aviation units were demanding what few remaining spares the 57th had!! Stories of the low helicopter utilization had spread and the other Huey units were in Saigon (and hence closer to the commanders). Finally in November when the ARVN planned a major operation into the "Iron Triangle" and several of the new Hueys in the lift companies had faulty starter generators, the 57th were ordered to deliver their five to Saigon. Temperelli took the five starters to see BG Joseph W. Stilwell, CO of the Army Support Group, in Saigon. During this meeting the full range of problems were reviewed: cannibalizing the 57th until it was now grounded, proper logistical support, relocating the unit to Saigon, that helicopter medical evacuation was still in the "test phase" (much like the UTT for armed helicopters at that time). Stilwell presented an old argument that air ambulance helicopters ought to be transferred from the Medical Corps to the Army Transportation Corps, which controlled all other Army helicopters in Vietnam. In the end Temperelli won the rights to continue medical evacuation operations in Nha Trang with the Medical Corps with only one flyable Huey. So the end of 1962 were dark days indeed for a concept that would ultimately become the much respected and very famous DUSTOFF.

1963

Jan - There are many accounts of the 2 Jan Battle of Ap Bac, but the bottomline is that the VC "stood and fought" with these results: all but one the ten H-21s and five UH-1B gunships received hits, two H-21s and one Huey were shot-down and destroyed, two more H-21 could not fly after making emergency landings, three Americans were killed (an Advisor and one of the H-21 crew members that died likely could have been saved by earlier evacuation), eight Americans were wounded, about 80 ARVN were killed and 100 wounded. One of the lift ships and the Huey were attempting to rescue the crew of the first H-21 downed when they were shot-down and one of the emergency landing H-21 was also damaged in a rescue attempt. On 16 Jan the 57th was ordered to move to Tan Son Nhut.

Feb - MAJ Lloyd Spencer assumed command of the 57th and Temperelli returned to the States. As fighting increased around Saigon and in the Delta, the aircraft were shifted from place to place in response. The goal of the DUSTOFF aircraft was to be within fifteen minutes of any ground casualty and be able to speed them to the nearest hospital. With a limited number of aircraft and aviators, this was a nearly impossible task, however they nevertheless attempted to perform the mission. The constant moving of detachments from place to place is evidence of the desire to render immediate transport to those soldiers (and civilians) wounded in battle or from other causes.

Mar - On the 11th, the 57th turned in their A models and on 23 Mar was declared operations with brand new B models.

Apr - A detachment of two ship was reassigned to Pleiku and would fly two ship missions in support of the Special Forces camps for the next three months. John Cook's book outlines several reasons why the VNAF were, in general, "reluctant to respond quickly and effectively" to the increasing numbers of Vietnamese med evac requests. Several VNAF pilots started flying with the 57th but these training missions had "little long-term effect". As a result, the MACV prohibition on U.S. medical evacuation helicopters supporting Vietnamese forces was routinely ignored and when the VNAF refused to fly, the 57th picked up the slack.

The Origins of the DUSTOFF Call Sign - John Cook's book provides the following summary. "As 1963 wore on, the number of U.S. advisors grew. The 57th was flying many more missions than the year before, but had not yet firmly established itself in the minds of the high command. It still had no tactical call sign, nor a dedicated communications frequency. Most requests for evacuation continued to be passed through Vietnamese channels and the helicopters used any vacant frequency they could find. Since the unit had no way of knowing what frequency they would be using, it was impossible for the advisors on the ground to contact evacuation helicopters directly. The time lost in passing communications through Vietnamese channels was both precious and costly. People were dying because there was no frequency or call sign dedicated to the 57th." Spencer visited the Navy Support Activity (the unit responsible for assigning radio call signs and frequencies), looked through the SOI for an unused call sign and decided to try the name DUSTOFF. It must have worked fine; because just a few months later when the National Security Agency (NSA) decided to change all the call signs of all units in Vietnam, DUSTOFF was assigned to the 118th. However, the 118th refused to use it and the 57th refused to give up their newfound identity!

Sep - The three Delta based 57th ships stayed busy. In Sep in one day they evaced 197 Vietnamese from 3 locations near Ca Mau during a VC assault on several hamlets in the area. The last fight out was after dark and under enemy fire, but they didn't take any hits.

Dec - The 57th once again sent a two ship detachment to Pleiku. It seems logical to assume that when the 57th had a detachment at Pleiku, they would have to recall the detachment from Soc Trang.

Year End Summary - By the end of the year the 57th had flown 1,485 missions and had evaced 1,825 Vietnamese and 157 Americans.

Jan - On the 11th, MAJ Charles L. Kelly became the 57th's third CO and the DUSTOFF legend would advance another giant step. In Feb the Pleiku detachment (headed by CPT Patrick H. Brady) returned to Saigon and on 1 Mar, a detachment (headed by Kelly) moved to Soc Trang. John Cook's account continues: "Just as predicted, the move to Soc Trang dramatically increased business for the 57th. The number of patients evacuated climbed from 193 in February to 416 in March. Very soon, Kelly and his crews in Soc Trang were burning up the Delta. Some of the pilots were flying over 100 hours a month. They quit logging at 140 hours for fear the flight surgeon would ground them. It was during this period that Kelly began pioneering a new concept in medical evacuations - night missions. Recognizing the need to fly the wounded out of combat as soon as possible, it was apparent to Kelly that night flights would save lives. Almost a quarter of all evacuations flown during March were flown at night. The Delta, which was flat and level for the most part, was ideal for night operations."

Still, the issue of dedicating aircraft for the sole purpose of evacuating wounded was not settled. Members of General Stilwell's staff were attempting to take away Kelly's helicopters and place portable red crosses on other helicopters. In short, make any available helicopter a DUSTOFF. The fact that Kelly was achieving tremendous success apparently wasn't enough. Returning from one such meeting with Stilwell, Kelly called his pilots together and said, referring to Stilwell, "That man is not our friend." He told them that the 57th was in for the fight of its life - the unit had to prove its value beyond a shadow of a doubt. Up to this point, the 57th had quickly responded to any and all calls for assistance. Now, under the threat of being disbanded, Kelly went looking for business.

Night missions became routine. Kelly flew almost every night. He was determined to prove that he could cover the Delta - all 12,00 square miles. At dusk, he and his crew would leave Soc Trang and head southwest for the marches of Bac Lieu, home of two signal units and a team from the 173rd AVN. Then they would head south to Ca Mau, one of the original strongholds of the Viet Cong. From the forested swamps of Ca Mau, Kelly would fly south to Nam Cam, almost to the tip of South Vietnam. From Nam Cam, Kelly would turn and head north to an area called 'Seven Canals'. After a check for casualties at Vi Thanh, Kelly would turn northwest and fly to Rach Gia on the Gulf of Siam. Then on to the Seven Mountains region on the Cambodian border. From there, he would head southeast to Can Tho, where 14 small American units were stationed, then northeast to Vinh Long on the Mekong River. From there, the course was due east to Ben Tre, south to Tra Vinh with a handful of U.S. advisors, and, finally, home to Soc Trang.

If any of these locations had patients, they were loaded aboard and the flight continued, unless the wounds required immediate attention. In that event, the wounded would be flown immediately to the nearest medical facility and the circuit would resume. This nightly route covered over 700 KMs and took over three hours to fly. On many nights, Kelly would carry 10-15 patients. Many would have died without a night evacuation." The 57th installed AN/APX-44 transponders to work with the 'Paddy Control', the Air Force's radar at Can Tho. In Apr, the 57th flew 113 night hours and evaced 99 patients.

Kelly became a legend and an inspiration not only for the pilots in the 57th but all over the Delta. His "rules" - you do NOT refuse to fly a mission - you don't leave UNTIL you have the wounded on-board. He was deeply embroiled in a political fight with the Surgeon General's office who did not think that flying med evac was a proper mission for Medical Service Corps (MSC) officers and wanted them to fly in "regular" aviation units. Kelly was firmly convinced that DUSTOFF needed to extra skills of MSC officers and that they were gaining much more combat and critical flying experience than in a "regular" unit. John Cook's book contains many fine stories and accounts of Kelly and the 57th during the first half of 1964 including when they hauled "preventative medicine" (ammo) to a unit and their "farewell presentation" to Stilwell.

Jul - A Tradition Is Born - On the 1st Kelly was killed trying to evac a wounded American sergeant from a hot area despite repeated suggestions from the American advisors to leave the area. CPT Pat Brady assumed command of the 57th and maintained Kelly's style of operation and risk taking. The news of Kelly's death quickly swept the country and had a profound effect. He was awarded the DSC posthumously plus two Vietnamese awards. Senior Vietnamese and American officials all sent their condolences and he was eulogized throughout Vietnam and in the USA. The newspapers picked up the story of the "Mad Man" that "put his ass on the block" for others that had been wounded. John Cook writes: "With such an outpouring of praise and honors for this man of mercy, things could never be the same for medical evacuation in the war zone. With his life, Kelly had made the final payment on the insurance policy that would guarantee the continued existence of DUSTOFF. His death resolved, once and for all, the issue of portable red crosses. As the war grew in intensity, no one would ever again question the wisdom of dedicating helicopters for the sole mission of evacuating the wounded. The political battles that Kelly had engaged in while living were easily won now that he was gone. DUSTOFF had finally arrived, the hard way, but it had arrived to stay."

"Each new pilot entering the DUSTOFF business would learn of Kelly and the standards he had set. They were expected, in no uncertain terms, to maintain those standards. The tradition and mystique would deepen over the years as the reputation of DUSTOFF grew. There would be other pilots and crew members that would make invaluable contributions to the legacy, but there could be only one Kelly. And others would die in the jungles and rice paddies and mountains. They, too, would add to the legacy. However, Kelly had brought the right attitude at the right time to the high risk business of flying evacuation missions. No compromise. No rationalization. No hesitation. Fly the mission. Now. And so, he became the embodiment of the perfect DUSTOFF pilot, the one you would want to come and get you if your guts were hanging out, at night, in the rain, surrounded by Viet Cong. This was the legacy that Kelly left and this was his most valuable contribution."

Oct - In late summer the Surgeon General's office was ordered to name five more detachments that could be sent to Vietnam. On 26 Oct MAJ Henry Capozzi's 82d Med Det, with five more Hueys, deployed to Soc Trang to cover the IV Corps. The 57th and the 82nd exchanged three pilots and the 57th help train the new unit. MAJ Capozzi decided the 82nd would not fly the night missions to shop for business as Kelly had done. When it came to a radio call sign, no matter what the 82nd called themselves, the units they supported insisted on calling them DUSTOFF. MAJ Howard Huntsman, the CO of the 57th, allowed the 82nd to use the DUSTOFF call sign.

Nov - The entire 57th was reunited for the first time since they had arrived in Vietnam when their Det A returned from Soc Trang. The 57th now concentrated on the III Corps area.

Dec - Late in the month, the newly created 9th VC Division fought a several day battle with their new AK-47s at Binh Gia about 65 KMs southeast of Saigon on Route 2. The RVN losses were high and nine American helicopters were downed. Both the 57th and 82nd worked together for several days to support the operations connected with this battle.

SECTION XI History of Air Ambulance Units 222

1965 showed a marked increase in the need for helicopter ambulances as the VC and NVA continued their large unit operations and attention getting terrorist attacks. In Feb, the American base in Pleiku was attacked and the four-store hotel housing enlisted men in Qui Nhon. In Mar a powerful bomb exploded outside the U.S. embassy near the Saigon River.

Mar - On the 25th, MAJ Huntsman, CPT Doug Moore, and SSG Charles Allen of the 57th flew to the hamlet of Phuoc Khanh in the Rung Sat Special Zone when an American advisor made an urgent request for a pregnant Vietnamese woman with complications. SSG Allen performed the first mid-air delivery in Vietnam on the way to the Cong Hoa Hospital.

Apr - 1st enlisted man dies flying DUSTOFF. On the 1st, an American sergeant was seriously wounded while advising a Vietnamese Ranger Bn fighting a large, dug-in VC force near Duc Hoa, 15 miles west of Saigon. A 57th ship arrived with SP5 Wayne C. Simmons as medic. As four ARVN carried the American to the DUSTOFF, the VC fire killed the American and two ARVN; so Simmons leaped from the Huey and began loading wounded. He helped load seven casualties before heavy fire forced the DUSTOFF out, leaving Simmons on the ground. Another 57th ship flown by Doug Moore made repeated attempts to get in and get Simmons but the VC fire made that impossible. The next morning Paul Bloomquist from the 57th did get in and recovered the bodies of both Americans. Simmons had flown over 200 missions before he died.

May - The 173rd ABN BDE became the first U.S. Army combat infantry unit in Vietnam. The 57th would support many of their operations. The need for the medical evacuation helicopters was such that other aviation units took on the task while the areas they served awaited for their specific medical evacuation units to arrive.

A VHPA Member recalls: From sometime in May, 1965 to April 1966, I was assigned to the 52nd Airlift Platoon at Camp Holloway, Pleiku. The unit had the medical evacuation commitment for the entire central highlands with a "B" model, complete with red cross on the nose. Crews took the duty on a rotating basis and most of the medevacs were done in support of ARVN and Special Forces in the central highlands. Of course, 99% of the missions were single ship and unescorted. Late that year the first DUSTOFF unit was assigned to Camp Holloway and the 52nd flew with them in their aircraft, breaking them into country. Although relieved from the medical evacuation duty, the 52nd continued to be called upon to perform the mission. The battle of the Ia Drang Valley proved that the 52nd could perform valiantly in the evacuation of wounded while supporting the newly arrived DUSTOFF detachment.

Jul - The 2 July issue of TIME carried a very prominent story entitled "The Gamest Bastards of All" about "Big Bear Bloomquist" of the 57th. John Cook's book contains a great story about how Doug Moore, Jim Troscott, and Ed Taylor had some fun with the TIME reporter by telling him all sorts of stories about Paul Bloomquist. The reporter bought all of it, so Paul became a national hero!!

Aug - The 1st Cavalry Div arrived at An Khe. The Air Ambulance Platoon of the 15th Med BN had 12 UH-1Ds that could carry six litter or nine ambulatory patients. Unlike the Med Detachments, the Air Ambulance Platoon used the MEDEVAC call sign. This platoon also had the first Warrant officer pilots flying in a medical evacuation unit in Vietnam. Late in the year, air ambulance platoons took shape and were organized under divisional leadership and command. These platoons were not only different in the way they were organized, they were also directly responsible to a particular division for the evacuation of wounded. The division provided command and supply for these platoons. Perhaps the most highly visible of these platoons was the 1st Cav's air ambulance platoon. Although a concept the Cav liked, having its own medical evacuation capability, the helicopters found themselves in different roles depending on the circumstances. The medical evacuation helicopters were usually armed with externally mounted M-60 machine guns and the crew sometimes heavily armed. The aircraft could be used for medical evacuation one minute and resupply for ground troops or in a command and control (C&C) capacity the next.

Sep - Everyone had lots to learn in the 1st Cav. John Cook's book contains a story about a battle being fought on the 19th and supported by four 15th Med ships. The LZ was under heavy fire and, due to poor coordination and the stress of combat, the wounded were loaded on the troop helicopters while the dead were placed on the MEDEVAC ships.

On the 15th, the 283rd Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) became operational at Tan Son Nhut. In late Aug the 283rd had arrived at Qui Nhon aboard the USNS BLATCHFORD. Well into the 24 day Pacific crossing, the BLATCHFORD's engine had quit and they drifted helplessly for a few days while the crew repaired the engine. While en-route the 283rd had been reassigned to join the 57th at Saigon, so the 283rd got to "enjoy" the ship for another day or so for the trip down the coast.

On the 20th, the 498th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) commanded by LTC Joseph P. Madrano became operational. This was yet another type of medical evacuation unit. It had 25 UH-1Ds and was headquartered in Nha Trang with the mission to cover all of II Corps from bases of their own choosing. They would support all tactical units except the 1st Cav. Madrano put one and a half platoons in Qui Nhon to cover the coastal plains, one and a half platoons at Pleiku for the Central Highlands, and the remainder, with the maintenance, stayed in Nha Trang to cover the southern section of II Corps. The 498th used the DUSTOFF call sign.

Oct - The 10th was a bad day for the 15th Med. While loading patients on CPT Guy Kimsey's MEDEVAC, a VC round slammed into the engine and immediately shut down the aircraft. The patients and crew flew out in another helicopter but before their downed aircraft could be recovered, an artillery round scored a direct hit and destroyed the bird. That same day CPT Charles F. Kane was flying a MEDEVAC near An Khe when he ship came under enemy fire. Kane was hit in the head and was dead by the time the copilot flew to the 85th Evac at Qui Nhon.

The famous Ia Drang Valley battle was the first "major test" for the MEDEVAC pilots because the number of wounded for an average day was in the 70-80 range but on the very busy days reached 200!

Nov - The 11th was a bad day for the 498th elements based in Qui Nhon. One of the third platoon's aircraft crashed and burned while on a night mission near Qui Nhon. The pilots, MAJ Richard Scott and CPT Edward Haswell, were burned seriously as Scott pulled Haswell from the burning wreckage. SP5 Gilvado Martinez, PFC William Esposito, and PFC Orin Allread were killed. That same night, MAJ Burroughs, the platoon commander, and 1LT Roger Hula flew a mission for a South Korean unit operating east of An Khe. The mission was uneventful until the DUSTOFF prepared to leave the LZ. Suddenly, enemy soldiers began firing on the aircraft a close range and Burroughs was hit in the neck. Hula grabbed the controls but by now the VC were standing in front of the ship firing at

point-blank range. Hula made an immediate forward, low-level take-off with the VC directly in his path. The crew chief leaned out the cargo door and clubbed two VC with his M-14 as they went past. They made it back to Qui Nhon in time to save Burroughs. Still operating in Qui Nhon, another aircraft from the 498th crashed and was destroyed.

Dec - On the 18th, WO George W. Rice was flying a 15th Med MEDEVAC with CPT Walter Berry, Jr. They had just settled on the ground when an enemy soldier popped up from a "spider hole" to the left of the ship and opened fire. The Huey took several hits and Rice was hit in the head. Berry raced to the nearest hospital, but Rice died within the hour.

Year End Summary - There were six air ambulance units in-country: the 15th Med supporting the 1st Cav with twelve ships, the four Med Detachments (57th, 82nd, 254th, and 283rd) had been reorganization with a new TO&E with six ships each, and the 498th Med Company with 25 ships. There were 184,000 Americans assigned to Vietnam. A total of 8,896 medical evacuations were flown, carrying a total of 12,456 patients - 7,364 were Americans. For the first time, the majority of the patients carried were Americans.

1966

Feb - The logistics problem that had plagued the 254th Med Detachment were solved and they became operational at Long Binh, adjacent to the 93rd Evac.

Mar - New Organization and Structure For DUSTOFF - On 18 March, an advance party for the 44th Medical Brigade arrived in Vietnam to establish the Medical Brigade (Provisional). In April the main body of the unit arrived and the Provisional unit was discontinued. As of March, the 44th assumed control of all non-divisional Army air ambulance units in Vietnam. This responsibility was further delegated to what would become four Medical Groups primarily on a geographic basis. The 43th Med Group, located in Nha Trang, had become operational in Sep 1965 and for many years was responsible for the southern half of II Corps. The 68th Med Group, located at Long Binh, became operational about the same time as the 44th and controlled air ambulance operations in III and IV Corps. The 55th Med Group, located at Qui Nhon, also became operational in 1966 and was responsible for the northern half of II Corps. Finally, the 67th Med Group would come to Vietnam in Sep 1967 but in Feb 1968 relocated to Da Nang and was responsible for I Corps. In general, the Med Groups provided operational planning, coordination, and prioritization for the air ambulance units.

May - The Hoist - The problem of rescuing soldiers from densely forested areas had become more pronounced now that many American Infantry Divisions had arrived. The U.S. Marine Corps CH-34s had been using hoists since 1962 but the U.S. Army did not. After testing several different techniques, the hoist was adapted for the Huey. On the 17th, CPT Donald Retzlaff from the 1st Platoon, 498th Med answered an urgent request from the 1st BDE 101 ABN some 12 miles north of Song Be. Since the hoist was new, the medic rode the cable down while Retzlaff maintained a hover over the PZ. Once on the ground, the medic showed the ground troops how to place the wounded in the jacket and the first casualty to be lifted from the jungle floor was a LT who had been killed an hour before. Before the day was over, 17 wounded had been hauled up using this latest innovation. As the hoist went into general service throughout Vietnam, several improvements were made. A rigid litter was soon added to extract patients who were too seriously wounded to be placed in the jacket.

Oct - The Jungle Penetrator - As good as the hoist and its various attachment were, none of these systems worked very well in dense jungle. It was often impossible to lower these through thick, triple-canopy jungle. The Jungle Penetrator solved these problems. It was attached to the end of the hoist cable, weight 20 pounds and had three paddle-like seats that could be folded up against the sides of the 3 foot-long, bullet-shaped body. On the ground, the seats were pulled down and the wounded strapped on with chest belts. The first penetrators arrived in Vietnam in mid-June and by October were in general use. By the end of the year, the penetrator was so popular that the old jacket concept was discontinued.

The success of hoist and penetrator operations required unusual skill, good communications and team-work on the part of the DUSTOFF crew. The slightest movement 200 feet in the air is greatly magnified to those on the end of the cable!! The mental strain of monitoring the aircraft, radios, intercom, tactical situation while hovering out of ground effect for long periods of time when the weather might not be helping much is easy to comprehend! Not all that, but the enemy could certainly hear the Huey and fire on it.

Nov - On the 1st, CPT James Lombard and LT Melvin Ruiz from the 283d Med had the "honor" of being the first DUSTOFF shot down performing a hoist mission. They left Tan Son Nhut to support a unit with casualties 15 Ks north of Saigon. Unable to see through the dense jungle, Lombard asked for a mark and hovered over the smoke drifting up through the trees. As the crew chief lowered the penetrator, enemy fire suddenly opened upon from the right side and the Huey took several hits. All the warning lights lit up, the hydraulics were gone, and the crew could hear the sickening sound of crunching and grumbling from the transmission. Lombard broke off the rescue and headed toward Di An, the 1st Inf Division's base camp some four minutes away. But the engine quit almost immediately after leaving the PZ. They made a running landing in an almost open area and everyone got up before the Huey burst into flames. Later in the day, the unit they had gone to support linked up with the downed crew and the 254th Med evacuated them.

1967

Jan - Supporting Operation Cedar Falls was a major test of the planning and organization of air ambulance support for a major operation. This was only the beginning of the mega-operations that required support.

John Cook's book describes several of the "miracles" performed by DUSTOFF and MEDEVAC crews. But one that happened to CPT Walter Mueller in a 498th Med DUSTOFF is well worth repeating. Mueller responded to an urgent request to evacuate a wounded 1st Cav soldier from a rice paddy, 30 Ks northwest of Nha Trang. The soldier was said to be suffering from a sucking chest wound. It was getting dark when the DUSTOFF reached the PZ. The troops on the ground told him that the man had died after they had radioed the request but they had two other wounded. Mueller landed and saw the man they had come for lying face down wrapped in a poncho. He agreed to evacuate the body with the other wounded. SGT Sullivan, the medic, was helping load the body when he heard a very faint moan. Sullivan quickly stripped the poncho from the supposedly dead man. Though seriously wounded, with a large bullet hole in his chest, the man was alive. As Sullivan administered to him, Mueller made a mad dash for the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang. This miracle hinged on a number of coincidences happening in the right order. When the man had stopped breathing, his buddies had wrapped him in a poncho and placed him face down on the damp ground. The poncho and the man's weight, combining with the wet ground, had sealed the chest wound, allowing him to start breathing again. Had they placed him on his back, he would have died.

Had there been a full load of wounded, he would have laid there until the normal "back haul" the next morning. Had Sullivan not been so quick and skilled and Mueller not agreeing to haul a dead body, this man would have died. At Nha Trang, the soldier underwent surgery and later recovered completely. Some days are better than others - this was a good day for this soldier!!

May - The 436th Med Company were redesignated the 658th Med Company.

Jul - The 45th Med Company arrived at Long Binh and the 658th Med Company was deactivated. The 45th may have been the first air ambulance unit to be equipped with UH-1Hs. The 283d Med Det relocated to Pleiku and the 254th Med Det relocated to Nha Trang.

Sep - On the 25th, the 54th Med Det became operational at Chu Lai with the mission to support the Americal Division.

Oct - The 159th Med Det became operational at Cu Chi with the primary mission to support the 25th Infantry Division.

Nov - The 571st Med Det became operational at Nha Trang.

Dec - The 50th Med Det became operational at Phu Hiep to support the 173d ABN Bde and a Korean Rgmt.

Year End Summary - The air ambulance units in Vietnam included: one divisional Med Bn (the 15th for the 1st Cav), two Med Cos (the 45th and 498th), and eight Med Dets (the 50th, 54th, 57th, 82d, 159th, 254th, 283d, and 571st). Just like the combat units, these air ambulance units were constantly shifted to provide the most effective area coverage, depending on combat operations and as new hospitals became operational. 56,387 missions were flown and 98,737 patients were evacuated. The hoist was responsible for 1,372 of these evacuations. The price paid: 40 crewmen killed, 58 wounded, and 24 helicopters lost.

1968

Jan - On the 5th, MAJ Patrick Brady was in his second tour in Vietnam, this time with the 54th Med Det based at Chu Lai. The following story should bring back the memories for many VHPAers who flew in I Corps in some rotten weather.

The 54th Med Det responded to a DUSTOFF request from the Special Forces camp at Hau Duc which was 25 miles west of Chu Lai in a heavily forested valley surrounded by steep mountains. As darkness approached, a DUSTOFF arrived and searched for an opening in the fog. Several attempts were made to get to the camp but finally the fog and darkness won. At dawn another crew tried to reach the camp but were also defeated. DUSTOFF 55, Brady volunteered to give it a try. He and his crew flew low level just under the cloud base until reaching the mountains, then they picked up a trail that wound westward through the mountains to Hau Duc. The fog was so thick that the crew could not see the tips of the rotor blades. In an attempt to improve visibility, Brady lowered his window and hovered sideways. The rotor wash blew enough of the fog away so they could barely make out the trail directly under the Huey. The pilots watched for the trail and the medic and crew chief watched for trees and mountains. They crawled along the trail not much faster than someone could walk it but they finally made it to the camp and landed between the inner and outer defensive wire. Naturally, the enemy took advantage of the weather to get in very close so their mortar and sniper attacks added to everyone's efforts as the six wounded were loaded. Back into the soup went DUSTOFF 55 for the flight to the hospital in Chu Lai.

DUSTOFF 55 had just returned to their base when a call came in from an Americal company in deep trouble on the floor of the Hiep Duc Valley, west of Chu Lai. For nine hours, the NVA had battered the company with mortars and covered the only flight paths into the area with 12.7mm guns which had already downed two gunships that day. Brady flew high this time and went through a hole in the fog to tree top level. He again used the sideways hovering technique to follow a road into the battlefield. The combination of surprise at seeing a Huey moving up the road and the poor visibility threw off the NVA gunners' aim but they did take fire. Once they reached the valley floor, Brady had the Americal soldiers guide him to their location by the sound of the Huey. After loading the wounded, Brady made an instrument flight out of the valley and flew directly to FSB West where the wounded were taken to an aid station. Brady wanted to get back to the battlefield as soon as possible and briefed three other DUSTOFF crews on how he would make the next attempt. All three ships followed him but the thick fog and enemy fire forced each of them back. DUSTOFF 55, however, made a total of four successful missions into the valley. Each time they slowly hovered down the narrow road and each time they drew more enemy fire; but they evacuated 39 wounded!

After refueling, DUSTOFF 55 responded to an urgent request to evacuate two GIs near Phy Nhieu, 14 miles southwest of Chu Lai. Enemy machine gun fire was sweeping the LZ when they arrived. They took heavy fire going in and when they got on the ground the fire was too heavy for the unit to bring their wounded to the Huey, so Brady left. The ship sustained battle damage but Brady was determined. After talking the situation over with the ground unit, they went in again. This time the troops were able to load their wounded and they were soon at the hospital.

Changing aircraft and some crew members, Brady was back in the air to support a 198th LIB platoon that had been ambushed 11 miles south of Chu Lai. Six members of the platoon were dead and the rest were wounded. Even though the battlefield was not secure and was a known mine field, the DUSTOFF moved from man to man where they had fallen. The crew chief and medic loaded the wounded. As they brought one soldier toward the ship, a mine exploded over five years from the Huey which hurling the three men into the air and ripped holes in the aircraft. Shaken, but otherwise unhurt, the two crewmen got up and continued loading. When they were full, they left for Chu Lai. Training ships again, Brady went back twice more to help the ambushed platoon.

For this day, Major Brady was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor - the first awarded to a DUSTOFF pilot.

On 21 January the last UH-1D helicopter, assigned to the 57th Med Det, was replaced by a UH-1H, making all medical evacuation helicopters "H" model Hueys.

Tet of '68 - Nothing up to this point in the war provided more of a test to the DUSTOFF system than did Tet. Over 8,000 wounded were evacuated during this 12-day period. Out of a total of 64 operational DUSTOFF Hueys, 40 were hit by enemy fire. Evacuation helicopters near the heaviest fighting were soon full, forcing the DUSTOFFs to fly longer evacuation routes. During the first night of fighting in the Delta, the 82d at Soc Trang lost three aircraft and were forced to borrow replacements from other units. They put them to good use by evacuating 1,400 wounded during the month of February!

The need for addition medical evacuation helicopters was obvious. It was routine practice for almost anyone to perform medical evacuations as related by a "slick" pilot:

We had been conducting our normal business of combat assaults in the morning followed by a few hours of working 'ash and trash'

for different ground units in the area before rejoining as a unit to complete combat extractions in the afternoon. My mission called me southwest of Saigon but I was lucky in that I often drew this same unit for the 'ash and trash' or 'pigs n' rice' missions we received and I got to know them and how they wanted things done. It was while I was returning from dropping off a load of supplies to a platoon out in the field that I received a call asking that I divert to another location where they had been in heavy contact and had wounded to be extracted. Empty and low on fuel, I discussed the situation with my crew and we decided that since all available medical evacuation helicopters were busy, we would take the mission. With a good idea of where they were and armed with coordinates of the unit, we took off in that direction. As a single ship I wanted to let someone know who I was and what I was doing, I called on "GUARD" (the emergency radio frequency) giving my situation - where I was and what I was doing. As I approached the pickup area I told them that the wounded soldier had to be on the aircraft immediately, that I was not waiting while people shot at me! The ground troops were ready, the medic had prepared the man for transport and they were waiting to 'throw him on the aircraft'. On short final approach I received a radio call to be careful and not make any abrupt turns. A Playboy fire team (two Cobras) picked me up on final and were covering me going in and coming out. As I slowed to a hover to pick up the wounded American, the lead Cobra hovered past and slightly in front of me, obviously looking for a fight, but giving me protection by placing himself between my aircraft and the enemy fire. When people talk about a team effort, I always think about what those guys did for me, my crew, the wounded American and the ground force. I never knew who that Playboy was but I owed him!

Aug - In 1968 four additional detachments were sent to Vietnam, completing the build up of aeromedical evacuation units. On the 14th, the 50th Med Det was assigned to the 101st ABN, 326th Med Bn, and became the nucleus of the division's air ambulance platoon. The unit was called "Eagle Dustoff" and was unique among DUSTOFF units because they carried weapons mounted on the outside of the aircraft. MAJ Robert R. Clark commanded the unit during this period. On the 25th, in action near Hue, a new Air Ambulance Platoon DUSTOFF aircraft came under heavy enemy fire which resulted in the wounding of aircraft personnel. Successfully evacuated to Phu Bai for treatment, these personnel were among the first to experience the hardship they would endure as members of "Eagle Dustoff". From the 4th to the 19th, the unit supported Operation SOMERSET PLAIN in the Ashau Valley. During that time, with limited crews and aircraft, they evacuated 362 patients and one injured tracker dog. To date, as either the 50th Med Det or Air Ambulance Platoon, 326th Med Bn, this was the largest operation supported.

Medical evacuations were certainly not the private domain of the Huey. Anyone that flew in an air cavalry troop would not have to think very long before remembering seeing an OH-6A LOH going into a small hole in the trees to take in some critical supplies and to remove one or two wounded. However, when you want to do medical evacuation on a large scale, use a large helicopter - say a CH-47! VHPA Member Gary Roush recalls:

Always a hotly contested area and the site of the enemy "in-country" R and R center, the Mountain of Nui Ba Den offered unusual flying conditions. The mountain was honey combed with tunnels and caves could be seen along the sides, offering excellent protection for the enemy. On the evening of 14 Aug, the mountain top where the U.S. troops had a semi-secure base was overrun by the enemy leaving 22 Americans wounded, desperate for evacuation. Medical evacuation helicopters could not find a hole through the clouds to attempt a landing. I decided to go on instruments and attempt a landing to the mountain top through the cloud layer that blanketed the area.

After the second try in the clouds and feeling relieved we did not find 'the rocks in those clouds,' someone came up with the idea of hovering up the side of the mountain. The Chinook had plenty of power, fortunately we had not picked up our first sortie from Tay Ninh. Also, after all the many past sorties to the mountain, I knew the terrain like the back of my hand. The only problem was, where was Charlie?

The Viet Cong had just recently broken contact after overrunning the outnumbered Americans. We rationalized that if our troops could not see us, neither could Charlie. Even though I had been shot at from this side of the mountain recently, the terrain was very steep and offered little concealment. After all, what self-respecting VC would expect a big lumbering helicopter to fly right over his head after a major attack! The element of surprise was on our side. So with all this rationale, to the base of the cloud layer we went, to hover IFR up the side of the mountain, hopefully aligned on the resupply pad and not their bank of antennas. After what seemed like hours with the pilot calling out obstacles, and the left door gunner watching for Charlie, the welcomed sight of the perimeter barbed wire, bunkers and finally the landing pad appeared. Needless to say, I was glad to have all four wheels safely on the ground. Fortunately we could take all 22 of the wounded on board at once, because I certainly did not want to go through this again. The wounded troops were taken directly to the Tay Ninh Field Hospital.

Sep - September marked a transition time for the 50th Med Det/326th Med Bn - the original members of the 50th who came to Vietnam on the troop ship USNS "William Wiegal" were rotating back to the United States. It was also the first full month of operation for the Air Ambulance Platoon, 326th Med Battalion - with many new faces and the loss of old ones. The transition had been building but in this month reorganization took place and definite growing pains occurred. The unit suffered through the tropical storm that ravaged Vietnam during the month but lost little more than anything dry. The increased activity in the area showed significant increases in the support they gave the 101st - they evacuated 478 individuals and 2 tracker dogs from combat areas.

Oct - The 1st CAV moved south and EAGLE DUSTOFF took up the slack in coverage around Camp Evans with the 3rd Bde. EAGLE DUSTOFF aircraft could be found throughout the area from Phone Dien (North of Camp Evans) to the Hoi Van Pass into Da Nang Harbor.

Nov - The 237th Med Det moved from its location at Camp Evans to Quang Tri. As the build up of EAGLE DUSTOFF continued, they received new aircraft ("H" models) to accommodate the growth.

Year End Summary - Over 200,000 wounded were flown to medical facilities in 56,378 missions. By now every air ambulance unit was equipped with UH-1Hs. Many units had second (and even third tour) pilots which added to the maturity and stability of these operations.

1969

By 1969 there were 116 field-army-level helicopter ambulances in Vietnam. These were assigned to two companies and 11 detachments. The 326th Battalion EAGLE DUSTOFF was selected as the subject for the filming of a documentary and training film on the use of the hoist/jungle penetrator. In February they were also the test subject for an approved harness the Army developed to help keep crew members attached to the helicopter during rugged missions - in part because of the extensive use of the hoist in the northern

SECTION XI History of Air Ambulance Units 226

part of the country. EAGLE DUSTOFF was promised an OH-6 Cayuse for use in small hover holes to help eliminate the need for extended exposure during hoist missions pulled by the large UH-1H. It was during May that EAGLE DUSTOFF suffered the loss of an aircraft on a night mission. After receiving heavy enemy ground fire while extracting a wounded soldier by hoist, the aircraft crashed. The AC, who was wounded and eventually medically evacuated to the states, was the only person successfully evacuated from the area. The other crew members have all been listed as missing in action. Although tragic, the crash helped heighten the need for a small helicopter that could have been of use in just such a situation.

Feb - John Cook's book contains another DUSTOFF war story about CPT Don Retzlaff, on his second tour, this time with the 498th.

On a bright, sunny day Retzlaff and his crew joined a search for a DUSTOFF that had crashed near An Khe the night before. They soon found the burned-out hulk on the side of a densely forested mountain. Unable to land, Retzlaff hovered over the wreck while the medic descended on the hoist to inspect the crash site. After hauling him up, the medic reported that the destruction was so complete that it was impossible to determine if there were survivors. But they were not ready to give up - the bond between DUSTOFF folk was strong! They continued to search the area, hovering over the triple-canopy jungle, desperately looking for any sign of the downed crew. About half a mile from the crash site, Retzlaff saw the top of one of the trees moving. Thinking that it might be from the rotor wash, he moved off some distance. When it moved again, he came back and positioned the Huey directly over the tree. Everyone peered down through what gaps there was in the foliage. There they saw the two pilots vigorously shaking the tree trunk. The penetrator was lowered and the two grateful friends were hoisted up. A great day for some ingenuity by two doomed guys on the ground and for some determination and experience by guys who could help!!

Although not a part of the network of designated medical evacuation helicopters, many combat aircraft participated in evacuating the wounded from the battlefield as the need arose. Being asked to perform such a mission depended on the situation and availability of medical evacuation helicopters. Frequently, particularly during Tet of 1968, helicopters were asked to drop in and pick up a wounded soldier or two. It was during these impromptu missions that pilots who normally carried out other duties learned the desperate need for the medevacs and the situations to which they were often subjected. In turn, pilots from medevac units often flew with combat assault units so as to better understand the other pilots situation. Many medevac pilots expressed their enjoyment of flying alone, even if it did mean they would not have the company of other aircraft to assist them if anything went wrong. Many reinforced this opinion after experiencing the close formation flying necessary for, and used by the combat assault aircraft. As one pilot asked "...it's nice to have all these aircraft around, but WHY do you guys have to fly so close together!?". It was not uncommon, especially in the Delta region, for aircraft to tighten up a formation to allow the ground troops to form on the ground faster, and in the highlands, overlapping rotor blades was not out of the ordinary in order to fit an adequate number of aircraft into a small landing zone. There were trade-offs and differences. Once a pilot got used to a certain kind of flying, he enjoyed that and drastic changes were sometimes difficult to accept.

Oct - On the 2nd, VHPA member Michael J. Novosel, DUSTOFF 88, with a crew from the 82d Med Det at Soc Trang received a request from a Vietnamese unit on the Cambodian border in Kien Tuong Province. Early that morning, three ARVN companies had stumbled into a VC training camp, complete with well-fortified bunkers. Most of the uninjured soldiers had managed to escape to the South, but others could not get through the swamps and rice paddies that surrounded the training camp. They were trapped and the VC were subjecting them to intense, deadly fire.

DUSTOFF 88 made two approaches over the battle area but none of the wounded were visible as the enemy fire kept them low in the tall elephant grass. He had no radio contact with the ARVN, so he circles at a wider range to let them see him. Finally, one soldier stoop up and waved his shirt. They dropped in and pulled him aboard then went back up to orbit. By ones and twos they picked them up in this way, all in front of the VC gunners. When he had a full load, Novosel flew to the Special Forces camp at Moc Hoa, refueled and returned.

VHPA Member WO Ty Chamberlain was the copilot, SP4 Joe Horvath the crew chief and SP4 Herbert Heinold the medic. Where the grass was too tall to land, Horvath and Heinold hung onto litter straps and reached down for the wounded soldiers. By the time they were full the second time, the VC had shot out the radios and some of the instruments. With nine wounded on board during their third trip, Horvath spotted a wounded soldier near a bunker. In an effort to protect themselves, Novosel hovered backwards toward the man. As Horvath grabbed his hand and started pulling him inside, a VC stood up directly in front of the Huey and opened fire. AK-47 slugs riddled the windshield wounding Novosel with shrapnel and Plexiglas in the right calf, thigh, and hand. "Ah, hell, I'm hit," he shouted to Chamberlain as the Huey leaped 60 feet into the air. In the back, Horvath had somehow managed to hang onto the wounded Vietnamese who was dangling out of the open cargo door and pulled him in. Chamberlain and Novosel regained control of the aircraft and left the area. DUSTOFF 88 put in 11 hard hours of flying this day to rescue 29 ARVN. Mike Novosel became the second DUSTOFF pilot to win the Medal of Honor.

Year End Summary - Air ambulance units flew 120,841 missions and evacuated 241,151 patients. 37 crewmen were killed, 138 wounded, and 61 aircraft lost.

1970

Jan - The 82d Med Det had an occurrence that may be a one of a kind. Fresh from flight school, WO1 Mike Novosel Jr. was joined by his father, CW3 Mike Novosel, Sr. flying together in the detachment.

May - The incursion into the Cambodian sanctuaries officially lasted 63 days from 29 Apr to 30 Jun. On the 24th, the 1st Cav's Air Ambulance Platoon responded to a request from an ARVN unit 5 miles across the boarder from Tay Ninh Province. Eight wounded were in desperate need of rescue. MEDEVAC 2, piloted the LTs Stephen Modica (a VHPA member) and Leroy Canberreaux, flew the mission and by change SSG Louis R. Rocco, a medic advisor to an ARVN battalion, was on board. As MEDEVAC 2 approached the LZ, NVA gunners opened fire with automatic weapons. Two slugs tore into Modica's flak jacket and a third ripped through his left knee. The Huey slammed down hard. Canberreaux grabbed the controls and tried to pull the aircraft out of the LZ. About 50 feet in the air, the enemy fire knocked out the engine and shot away the tail boom. The crash rolled the ship over on one side and ruptured the fuel tanks. The ship burst into flames. The impact threw Rocco from the aircraft, broke his hip and wrist, and severely bruised his back. Momentarily stunned by the impact and seriously injured, Rocco still realized that the crew was trapped in the burning helicopter. Disregarding the enemy fire and his own injuries, Rocco pulled Modica through the shattered windshield and half carried, half dragged him across 20 meters of exposed terrain to the ARVN perimeter. Then he went back for Canberreaux, who had a broken collar bone

and fractured ribs. As Rocco dragged the injured copilot toward the perimeter, two bullets hit Canberreaux's flak jacket. Next Rocco found the medic, SP5 Terry Burdette who had suffered a broken shoulder and leg. Rocco also dragged him to safety and went back for the door gunner, SP4 Gary Taylor. Rocco didn't know that Taylor had been crushed by the helicopter and was dead. He burned both hands trying to find Taylor before giving up and returning to the perimeter. Having saved all the survivors, Rocco then proceeded to treat them as well as those of some ARVN soldiers. Finally, during the night, his fractured hip stiffened and the excruciating pain caused him to collapse. During the long night, the enemy launched three attacks on the tiny perimeter. Each time, the attack was thwarted by gunships and artillery fire. Finally, the next morning, an artillery barrage of smoke rounds provided a screen for the gunships and DUSTOFFs to make the rescue. SSG Rocco's extraordinary actions earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Nov - On the 6th, the 159th Med Det moved from Cu Chi to Long Binh to begin operations. The 247th Med Det found new adventures in hoist missions in the mountainous terrain between Phan Thiet and Bao Loc. The 45th Med Co put together impressive numbers for the first quarter of 1970: 25,271 patients evacuated and 12,734 hours flown (9527 day and 3207 night). At this time the 45th Med Co consisted of the following Med Dets: 57th, 82nd, 159th, 247th and 254th with the 571st TC Det providing maintenance. The 45th still utilized 3 flight platoons acting as medical "sub-elements".

1971

Feb - The 283rd Med Det arrived in Long Binh from Tuy Hoa to begin operations. The 159th and 283rd combined assets to form *LONG BINH DUSTOFF*. And although they maintained separate morning reports, they shared resources including pilots and aircraft.

LAM SON 719 - Many will say that this 67 day battle was DUSTOFF's greatest challenge in the Vietnam War. 6,632 wounded were evacuated during this battle. Six crewmen were killed, 14 wounded, and ten aircraft destroyed.

On 18 Feb, a DUSTOFF from the 237th Med Det was shot down as it attempted to leave a FSB nine kilometers inside Laos, wounding the crew. Under heavy fire, another DUSTOFF landed and evacuated all except the crew chief, SP4 Dennis M. Fujii. Suffering from shrapnel wounds in the back and shoulder, Fujii was pinned down near a bunker by a heavy mortar barrage. As the DUSTOFF made repeated attempts to get closer, Fujii waved them off. Finally they had to leave him, the only American on the ground in Laos. Despite his wounds, Fujii did what he could to patch up the wounded ARVN. He finally salvaged one of the ARVN radios and started broadcasting, using the call sign "Papa Whiskey". He told the pilots overhead that he wanted no more rescue attempts - the base was too hot. That night, the NVA launched an attack on Fujii's FSB. For the next 17 hours, he was the nerve center of the Allied outpost, using his radio to call in fire from gunships and jet fighters. Twice during the night, the enemy breached the perimeter and Fujii stopped transmitting long enough to join his comrades in repulsing the attack. Several times, Fujii brought the supporting fires to within a few meters of the perimeter. Late the next day, an all-out effort was made to rescue Fujii. Under heavy fire, Fujii managed to get aboard a helicopter. Before the ship could depart, it took several hits. Seriously damaged, the ship made it out of this FSB and crash-landed at a more secure ARVN base 4Ks to the southwest. Everyone managed to jump from the burning ship before it exploded. However, Fujii's new position came under attack shortly after they arrived. It would be two days later before he was finally evacuated from Laos.

In Laos, at FSB Delta, Vietnamese Marines of the 147th Brigade were evacuated by UH-1H helicopters of the 71st AVN Co. The "high ship" or recovery/spare aircraft went into the FSB to extract wounded after resupply aircraft departed. On the first approach the aircraft encountered small arms fire and as wounded were taken aboard, the LZ received mortar fire. No damage was received from any of the mortars. Two more landings were made despite heavy ground fire from small arms and 12.7mm heavy automatic machine guns positioned at equal intervals surrounding the FSB. On each landing the LZ was the target for enemy mortar fire. In all, approximately 30 Vietnamese Marines were extracted from FSB Delta.

The high rate of loss over the past six years brought into question the use of the olive drab color used by most helicopter in Vietnam. Believing that making the aircraft more distinctive may be the answer, the Army Medical Command in Vietnam received approval in August to paint some of the medical evacuation helicopters white. The Command sought and received approval for a campaign to persuade the enemy that the white helicopters were for medical use only and should not be fired on. Posters were distributed and millions of leaflets were dropped over enemy-held territory. Many of the leaflets contained a lengthy explanation of the use of the white helicopters while others carried a simple explanation that read: MEDICAL HELICOPTERS ARE USED FOR RESCUE MISSIONS AND THEY ARE NOT ENGAGED IN COMBAT. YOU SHOULD NOT FIRE AT THEM.

Probably to the delight of many enemy soldiers intent on bringing down any U.S. helicopter, the white aircraft provided excellent targets framed against a background of forests, hills or mountains. All armament was now removed from any medical evacuation helicopter and gunship escorts could no longer furnish close support. The first white medical helicopter made an appearance on 1 October and by November the Command received permission to paint the remaining 50 medical evacuation helicopters white. Most aviators, who were the real test victims of the white paint scheme complained that it did little good except to provide the NVA and VC with a much better target. As soon as the white helicopters appeared, they began to take fire but the plan was in the works and despite the danger to the crews and patients on board these medical evacuation helicopters, no changes were planned nor made while they were in Vietnam.

1972

In April, the enemy introduced the Russian SA-7 heat-seeking missile into the war and promptly turned this 33-pound antiaircraft device against the white DUSTOFFs. The only protection against the SA-7 was a new paint that reflected some of the engine's heat and dried to a dull charcoal gray.

By August, the last of the U.S. combat units was ready to depart Vietnam. The withdrawal of air ambulance units paralleled that of other units.

1973

On 11 Mar, the 57th flew the last DUSTOFF mission in Vietnam - an appendicitis case. After they turned in their helicopters on the 14th, they had nothing to do but wait. They left Vietnam on 29 Mar, the same day that MACV lowered its flag and ceased to function in Vietnam.

TWO WEEKS LEFT IN COUNTRY

... a heroic evacuation pilot continues the DUSTOFF tradition
by Bruce Nelson (DUSTOFF 153)



After 21 years, this article gives me an opportunity to pay long-overdue tribute to CW2 Robert L. Horst, the last medical evacuation aviator to lose his life due to combat action in Vietnam. As Flt Opns Officer for the 159th Med Det (HA) and one of the Long Binh Dustoff IPs, I gave Bob his local area orientation and first checkride when he got to Long Binh in spring '71. We also flew several missions together during his first few months with the unit. He was an intensely dedicated, mission-oriented pilot with the true aviator's love of flight and was respected by his fellow pilots and co-workers for his knowledge, maturity and flying skills. Bob gave his life so that others could live, and his name will always be remembered on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington and on the Dustoff Crew Member Memorial at the Army Medical Department Museum at Fort Sam Houston, TX.

On the afternoon of April 7, 1972, Highway 13, near An Loc in the III Corps Tactical Zone, was the scene of intense fire fights, guerrilla attacks, and NVA rocket and mortar barrages. An ARVN convoy was making its way up the highway when it came under enemy ambush - three American advisors were among those trapped by the attack. All of the convoy's vehicles were either destroyed or captured; the American advisors and one ARVN officer were wounded, but managed to escape and radio for help. About 1400 hours, a medical evacuation aircraft from another unit answered their call, but ran into intense ground fire and had to withdraw from the area. An aircraft from Long Binh Dustoff made a second rescue attempt, accompanied by Cobra gunships. Once more, heavy fire from the ground prevented a successful rescue, and the approach had to be abandoned; the Dustoff medic was wounded in the leg. Although hit by numerous rounds, the aircraft managed to land at a nearby fire base and subsequently fly back to Long Binh.

At Long Binh, CW2 Bob Horst (DUSTOFF 107) talked with the returned pilots and determined that a successful rescue of the three advisors could still be accomplished. After convincing his detachment commander to grant him mission clearance, CW2 Horst got his crew together, explained the situation

and got a "thumbs up" from all of them. Cobra gunships, a C130 Spectre gunship, and VNAF Skyraiders "prepped" the area prior to DUSTOFF 107's arrival. After making a high-altitude reconnaissance, CW2 Horst began his approach while the gunships concentrated on suspected enemy positions. He maintained constant radio communication with the wounded advisors who used a green pen flare to try and identify their position. During the approach, the Skyraiders flanked DUSTOFF 107 and worked over the tree lines on either side of the highway. As CW2 Horst leveled out just above the highway and hovered toward the advisors' presumed location, he continued to try and pinpoint their position by radio. Crew chief SP4 Tom Pierce remembers looking out the right side of the aircraft directly into the face of an NVA machine gunner in the tree line. The enemy gunner's surprise was apparently enough to spoil his aim...his rounds all fell short of the helicopter. The aircraft continued hovering down the highway - the wounded advisors were nowhere in sight. It was beginning to get dark, and the NVA decided to take advantage of the reduced visibility to intensify their attack. SP4 Pierce and medic SP4 Robert Nicholas called out that extremely heavy enemy fire was directed toward both sides of the aircraft. As the helicopter completed a 180-degree turn, it came under even heavier small arms fire and rocket attack. CW2 Horst and co-pilot, WO1 Stephen Purchase, knew that they had used all of their resources in attempting the rescue, but they continued to try and reach the advisors. As the enemy attack on 107 grew even more intense, WO1 Purchase saw that CW2 Horst had been hit, and he took control of the aircraft. As he started a left break and climb out over the surrounding trees, Purchase and Pierce discovered that Horst's feet were interfering with the tail rotor pedals. Pierce began immediate mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and with the help of SP4 Nicholas, removed Horst from the AC's seat and placed him on the main cabin floor. Nicholas continued efforts to revive him, but CW2 Horst had died instantly from a bullet wound to the chest. WO1 Purchase flew the aircraft to nearby Lai Khe where he attempted to land, but attracted heavy enemy machine gun fire. The Cobras had stayed on-station with 107 and accompanied him back to Lai Khe. Although their ammunition was already expended, they made dry runs over the airfield to inhibit ground fire to allow Purchase to land. The aircraft was inspected and was found to have taken hits in the mast, main rotor blade, tail rotor and fuel cell. Another Long Binh Dustoff aircraft was dispatched to Lai Khe to take the crew to the 24th Evacuation Hospital, where CW2 Horst was pronounced dead on arrival. After DUSTOFF 107's departure from the area, the American advisors called in air strikes all around their position. They were subsequently rescued by an OH-6A from the 1st Cav, whose pilot later indicated that the air strikes were what kept the advisors alive and allowed their extraction.

The tragic irony of the attempted evacuation by DUSTOFF 107 is that Bob Horst had only two weeks left in-country prior to DEROS...and April 7 was the last day he was scheduled to fly. For his heroism and gallantry during this rescue attempt, CW2 Horst was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He was also awarded the Silver Star for his actions in the successful evacuation of an American helicopter crew and ten ARVN soldiers from a burning aircraft under intense enemy fire, in December, 1971. He was buried in the Springfield, Missouri, National Battlefield Cemetery, and is the last Vietnam veteran to be interred there.

Bob Horst was an outstanding example of the 1400 commissioned and warrant officer aviators who were assigned as medical evacuation pilots in Vietnam and who shared a common ideal: unswerving dedication to saving lives during combat, under adverse conditions and at great risk to their own personal safety. As one of the 88 pilots who lost their lives during evacuation missions, his courage and sacrifice are a tribute to everyone who served in Southeast Asia, regardless of Service, rank, or duty position.

Final Summary

From 1962 to 1973, a total of 496,573 missions were flown. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted; nearly half of those were American. The average time-lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded, who survived the first 24 hours, died. The price paid was high. During this 11-year period, 207 crewmen were killed and 199 helicopters were lost. At the peak of the war, only 140 helicopters out of a total fleet of more than 5,000 flew air ambulance missions. Flying DUSTOFF was three times more dangerous than all other forms of helicopter missions.

MEDICAL EVACUATION BY OTHER THAN U. S. ARMY UNITS

Common among medical evacuation at the time were the Marine Corps CH-46 helicopters. Although no formal medical evacuation units were formed, in time of need, any available helicopter was called upon to conduct the mission of extracting wounded. During these "lifts of opportunity" usually two helicopters would participate in such an operation - one being the primary extracting helicopter and the other being used as a chase ship or cover aircraft. But such was not always the case, as told by Lt. Col. Gregory Johnson, USMC:

On a dreary day in December 1969, a young Marine serving at a mountain outpost - Hill 845 - in South Vietnam, tripped an enemy bobby trap. He was in danger of dying, unless he could obtain immediate medical treatment. At LZ Baldy, 1st Lt. David Cummings, HML-367 helicopter pilot, and his aircraft commander, Capt. Roger Henry, were standing by their AH-1G Cobra gunship on routine alert. A call came in to escort emergency medevac helicopters. They launched two CH-46 Sea Knights and headed 40 miles southwest of Da Nang into the Que Son Mountains of Quang Nam Province. Foul weather had developed in the medevac pickup area, making it virtually impossible for the Sea Knights to make the pickup. Despite persistent but unsuccessful maneuvering, the CH-46's terminated their approach, retiring to the edge of the weather mass, hoping for a break which would allow a quick dash in for extraction. After consultation with the medevac commander, permission was granted for the AH-1G to scout the LZ to facilitate a more expeditious pickup. During ingress, however, the weather worsened, prompting Capt. Henry, in the front seat of the Cobra, to assume the controls. The visibility was zero. Exercising superb airmanship and excellent crew coordination, the two Marine pilots flew into the weather and worked their Cobra up the mountainside in severe turbulence generated from the gnarled mountain slopes. Scraping tree tops and sporting airspeeds that often dipped below 30 knots, the flyers anxiously waited for a call from the outpost, giving their position above the ill-defined landing zone. Henry and Lt. Cummings finally found their mark. The ingress had taken three hours and five separate attempts. Sporadic radio reports confirmed their suspicion that the wounded Marine's condition was worsening. Guiding the Cobra down through tall trees, Henry landed on the edge of a bomb crater. While the Cobra remained in its precarious teeter-totter position, Cummings climbed out of the aircraft to investigate. Determining that no further time should be wasted, he directed placement of the wounded man into the rear seat of the Cobra. After strapping the semi-conscious Marine into the seat, Cummings closed and secured the canopy. As ground personnel looked on, Cummings climbed onto the inboard starboard (right) stub-wing rocket pod. Straddling the pod and facing aft, he banged a fist on the wing to get Henry's attention, and then gave him a "thumbs up." Henry nodded and took off.

As the Cobra departed the LZ, radios came alive as their operators broadcast descriptions of the incredible scene they were witnessing. From his perch on the rocket pod, Cummings flashed a "V" for victory to those remaining in the landing zone as the Cobra vanished into the clouds.

Although known mostly for their work in rescuing downed pilots, the U.S. Air Force Search and Rescue units in Southeast Asia performed many medical evacuations either in combination with rescue attempts or independent of such missions. They were often sent on medical evacuation missions exclusively.

The Australian and New Zealand helicopters in Vietnam had the capability of performing medical evacuation although support was sought from U.S. medical air ambulance units whenever possible, freeing their small number of helicopters for the missions in which they were engaged.

South Vietnamese helicopter air ambulance units were formed as the necessity for medical evacuations became overwhelming and they attempted to evacuate their own troops whenever possible.

SOUTH VIETNAM AIR FORCE MEDEVAC UNITS

In *Flying Dragons*, Robert C. Mikesh provides some detail about the entire South Vietnamese Air Force. From this source we learn that some time prior to 1974, the 259th Squadron was established. It was equipped with UH-1s and had detachments based at Pleiku, Nha Trang, Phan Rang, Bien Hoa, Can Tho, and Binh Thuy. This was the only medical evacuation helicopter squadron for Vietnam.

Roster of All Known DUSTOFF or Medevac Pilots

The following roster is the VHQA's first attempt to list every pilot that flew for an Air Ambulance unit in Vietnam. Several credible sources indicate that this roster should contain approximately 1,400 individuals. Please report any additions or corrections to this roster to VHQA Headquarters, ATTN: Bill Greenhalgh.

Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status	Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Adams,	WO	82 MED DET	69-70		Baenziger, Wayne A.		254 MED DET		
Adams, Thomas E.	WO	498 MED CO	67-	K 12/31/67	Baird, Robert		283 MED DET	67-68	
Alvarado, Antonio J.	CPT	45 MED CO	70-		Baker,	WO	82 MED DET	70-	
Anderson, Dick	CPT	57 MED DET	64		Baker, Michael		147 MED DET	67-68	
Andrew, William J.		498 MED CO	70-		Baldwin, Orval A.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	K 10/05/69
Armstead, Rocky D.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	K 10/05/69	Ball, Loren C.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Arnold, Rodney K.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	70-	K 04/25/70	Ballinger, Bill	CPT	57 MED DET	62-63	
Arnt, Steve	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN			Ballinger, William J.	MAJ	45 MED CO	68-	K 05/27/68
Arvai, John J.		571 MED DET	69-70		Barefoot, Van T.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	
Avina, Alfonso J.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71		Bash, Robert R.		498 MED DET	70-71	

SECTION XI History of Air Ambulance Units 230

Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Bayfor, Earnie	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	69-	
Beam, Rick		44 MED	69-70	
Becker, Frederick W.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Becker, Frederick W.		54 MED DET	69	
Beeler, Douglas	WO	45 MED		
Beene, Jerry D.		68 MED DET	70-71	
Behr, John R.		54 MED DET	69-70	
Behrens, Frederick A.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Bell, Louie R.		45 MED DET	67-68	
Bell, Louie R.		54 MED DET	68	
Bennett, Dave A.		283 MED DET	69-70	
Bennetts, Kent W.		82 MED DET	65-66	
Berry, Walter	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	65	
Beson, James L.		159 MED DET	69-70	
Birmingham, Dempsey		498 MED CO	70-71	
Bixby, Robert A.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Bizer, James E.		57 MED DET	63-	
Bizer, James E.		55 MED GRP	69-	
Black, Robert	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Blee, John C.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Blessing, John	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Blessing, John	WO	247 MED DET	69-70	
Blessing, John E.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Bloomquist, Paul	MAJ	498 MED		
Bloomquist, Paul	CPT	57 MED DET	65	
Bobbit, Grant	WO	254 MED DET	67-68	
Bolling, John B.	LT	254 MED DET	69-70	
Bonner, Edward T.		54 MED DET	69-70	
Borders, Buddy	LT	237 MED DET	70-71	
Bowen, Gail O'Neal		55 MED DET	68-	
Boyd, Daniel L.		15 MED 1 CAV	68-69	
Boylan, Carl F.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Boyle, Kevin P.	LT		71-	
Bracken, Glenn	MAJ	498 MED CO	66-67	
Bradley, Michael L.	WO	237 MED DET	70-	K 09/27/70
Bradley, Robert N.	CPT	498 MED CO	67-	K 03/21/67
Brady, Patrick H.	CPT	57 MED DET	63-64	
Brady, Patrick H.	MAJ	54 MED DET	67-68	
Brady, Robert C.		236 MED DET	70-71	
Brannon, Jerome W.	WO	247 MED DET	70-	
Brass, Paul R.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 12/14/70
Bregler, John R.	WO	254 MED DET	70-	K 10/17/70
Brooks, Larry A.		571 MED DET	71-72	
Brown, Barry L.		15 MED 1 CAV	70-71	
Brown, Joseph G.		237 MED DET	71-	K 02/18/71
Brown, Rick	LT	326 MED 101 ABN		
Brown, William A.	WO	254 MED DET	68-69	
Bruce, Michael D.		326 MED 101 ABN	69-70	
Bull, John M.	LT	247 MED DET	70-	
Burchett, Floyd Ray		236 MED DET	71-72	
Burlingham, Robert G.	LT	45 MED CO	67-	K 10/06/67
Burroughs,	MAJ	498 MED CO	65	
Bush, Edward L.	WO	57 MED DET	67-	K 03/20/67
Cain, James D.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Caldwell, Donald G.		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68	
Calhoun, Gary L.	CPT	45 MED CO 1 PLT	70-	
Campbell, Edward J.		498 MED CO	69-70	
Canberreaux, Leroy	LT	15 MED 1 CAV	70	
Capozzi, Henry P.	MAJ	82 MED DET	64-65	
Carroll, William	COL			
Carson, Keith E.		498 MED CO	65-66	
Carter, Bobby		237 MED DET	69-70	
Castle, Jon D.		15 MED 1 CAV	71-	
Caton, Gerald L.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	K 08/17/69
Cedola, Vincent J.		82 MED DET	64-65	
Cedola, Vincent J.		571 MED DET	67-68	
Chamberlain, Tyrone	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	70	
Chamberlain, Tyrone	WO	82 MED DET	69-70	
Champion, Charles H.	CPT	45 MED 3 PLT	70-	
Chaney, Steven D.		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68	
Cheatham, Joe L.	LTC	137 MED DET	68-	
Cheney, William C.	WO	498 MED CO	67-	K 12/31/67
Chiminello, Thomas J.	LT	57 MED DET	67-	K 10/29/67
Chrin, John S.	WO	57 MED DET	71-	K 10/13/71
Christie, Thomas C.		57 MED DET	64-65	
Clark, Charles	CPT	82 MED DET	64	
Clark, Ronald	WO	247 MED DET	68-69	
Clark, Ronald	WO	45 MED	69	
Cloke, Robert R.	MAJ	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Clune, Tom				
Coffey, Dan				
Colby, Kenneth	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Cole, David A.		571 MED DET	70-71	
Cole, Timothy Jr.	WO	54 MED DET	68-	K 10/18/68

Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Coleman, David A.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Colgrove, Tyrone J.		254 MED DET	70-71	
Colgrove, Tyrone J.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Colgrove, Tyrone J.		247 MED DET	71	
Colley, Charles T.		82 MED DET	67-68	
Colvin, John D.				
Constantine, Leonard		237 MED DET	69-	
Cook, Donald R.	WO	498 MED CO	70-	K 10/26/70
Cooley, Bill	LT			
Cooper,	WO	82 MED DET	70-	
Cooper, John R.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Costello, Joseph A.	LT	247 MED DET	70-	
Cottman, Robert L.	CPT	82 MED DET	68-	K 10/19/68
Covington, William R.	LT	498 MED CO	66-	
Current, Ronald W.	WO	247 MED DET	70-	
Dailey, James E.		159 MED DET	68-69	
Dalton, John W.		57 MED DET	67-68	
Danby, James	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Darr, Robert	WO	254 MED DET	66-7	
Davis, Dennis		82 MED DET	67-	
Davis, Dennis		57 MED DET	69-70	
Davis, Dennis		45 MED	70	
Davis, Sylvester	WO	283 MED DET	69-	K 01/23/69
Davison, James S.	WO	247 MED DET	70-	
Dawson, Joe K.	WO	45 MED CO	69-70	
De Geest, Gordon		254 MED DET	65-66	
De Loach, Frederick		326 MED 101 ABN	71-	
Deaderick, Robert D.	LT	247 MED DET	70-	
Deck, Howard	MAJ	159 MED DET		
Desveaux, Angus B.		254 MED DET	66-	
Dexter, Stephen W.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Dick, Charles W.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Dill, Charles	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Dillard, William T.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Dingley, Robert T.		498 MED CO	69-	
Dingley, Robert T.		254 MED DET	69	
Dipboye, Richard L.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Doolittle, Gary W.	WO	571 MED DET	68-	K 10/18/68
Doran, James D.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	68-	K 11/26/68
Douglas, Jackie O.		54 MED DET	70-71	
Dozier, Joel C.		237 MED DET	70-71	
Dunn, Joseph M.		15 MED 1 CAV		
Dunn, William F.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	
Dvorak, William T.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Easley, Dennis B.	LT	15 MED 1 CAV	66-	K 07/20/66
Eaton, Robert E.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Edgette, Pete		82 MED DET	68-69	
Edgette, Pete		247 MED DET	72-73	
Edgette, Pete		54 MED DET	69	
Eitler, Vincent M.	CPT	45 MED CO 2 PLT	70-	
Elliot, William	WO	571 MED DET	67-68	
Ellsworth, James L.		45 MED DET	67-	
Ellsworth, James L.		159 MED DET	69-	
Eneboe, Edward M.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Englehardt, Gary W.	WO	254 MED DET	70-	K 10/17/70
Ephland, Guy B.	LT	45 MED CO	68-	K 05/27/68
Evans, Otis D.	1LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Evans, Otis D.	1LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Ewen, Jerry S.		498 MED DET	68-69	
Ewen, Jerry S.		54 MED DET	69	
Fairchild, Charles H.		498 MED CO	66-67	
Farrance, John S.		283 MED DET	70-71	
Fisher, Gene	WO	571 MED DET	67-68	
Fitte, Hanson E.		82 MED DET	70-71	
Fitzgerald, Ed J.		498 MED CO		
Fonnesbeck, Douglas	LT	57 MED DET	70-	
Found, Richard R.		68 MED DET ???	68-69	
Fox, Reinis	WO	54 MED DET	68-	K 07/10/68
Francis, John W.		247 MED DET	71-72	
Frank, Paul W.		498 MED CO	67-68	
Frank, Paul W.		50 MED DET	68	
Frank, Paul W.		159 MED DET	68	
Freeman, David B.		57 MED DET	71-72	
Freeman, Randall G.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 12/14/70
Friedman, Jacob A.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Fulghum, Joe R.	CPT	283 MED DET	67-	K 02/02/67
Fulton, Robert B.		498 MED DET	70-71	
Fulton, Robert B.		159 MED DET	71	
Fulton, Thomas	LT	326 MED 101 ABN		
Gaidis, Alfred J.	WO	237 MED DET	70-	K 05/10/70
Gallego, Lawrence	LT	254 MED DET	67-	K 10/04/67
Gandy, Kent E.	MAJ	254 MED DET	66-	K 08/13/66
Garner, David	WO		71-72	
Gaurkee, Richard L.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	

Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status	Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Gilbert, Thomas		498 MED CO	68-		Johnson, Wayne F.		283 MED DET	69-70	
Gilpin, Richard E.		498 MED CO	68-69		Jurl, Dennis C.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Gilson, Mark D.	LT	45 MED CO	69-		Kahn, Jerry	MAJ	254 MED DET	67-68	
Gipson, T. C.		283 MED DET	65-		Kane, Charles F.	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	65-	K 10/12/65
Goldenzweig, Bernie S.		82 MED DET	71-		Katz, Jim	LT	45 MED		
Gomez, David A.		237 MED DET	69-70		Keller, Lewis W.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Gomez, David A.		57 MED DET	72-73		Kelliher, "turk"	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Goodman, Dorris	MAJ	45 MED			Kelly, Charles L.	MAJ	57 MED DET	64	K 07/01/64
Goodman, James W.	WO	45 MED CO	70-		Kilker, Gary L.		50 MED DET	67-68	
Goodwin, John D.	WO	45 MED CO	70-		Kilker, Gary L.		57 MED DET	70-71	
Goold, John R.	WO	45 MED CO	69-		Kimzey, Guy S.	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	65-66	
Grady, Taylor W.		159 MED DET	69-		Kimzey, Guy S.	MAJ	283 MED DET	69-70	
Graff, Conrad J.		159 MED DET	70-		Kinhard, Ray	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	66-67	
Graham, Bruce E.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 05/26/70	Kinsey, Guy	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	65	
Grant, Charles R.		498 MED CO	65-66		Kinsey, Jerry W.	LT	45 MED CO	69-70	
Grass, Jack M.		57 MED DET	70-71		Kirby, Douglas R.	WO	247 MED DET	70-	
Grass, Jack M.		82 MED	71		Kirkland, Joseph L.		571 MED DET	69-70	
Gray, Otis B.		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68		Klina, James M.		498 MED CO	71-	
Green, Henry D.	WO	45 MED CO	70-		Kraby, David A.		45 MED	68-69	
Greene, William S.		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68		Kuhns, Kurt L.	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	67-	K 09/08/67
Greer, Thurman C.	LT	45 MED CO	70-		Kuranz, Joseph H.		498 MED CO	67-68	
Gregory, Eugene J.	WO	57 MED DET	70-		Kuranz, Joseph H.		50 MED DET	68	
Greiner, Raymond C.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70		Lacey,	LT	45 MED		
Groth, Dennis A.	WO	82 MED DET	68-	K 10/19/68	Laird, Richard H.		82 MED DET	70-71	
Grove, Tom		15 MED 1 CAV	68-69		Land, Henry W.		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68	
Grubb, Thomas A.		159 MED DET	70-		Landis, Thomas E.		159 MED DET	69-70	
Gunn, Harry W.	WO	50 MED DET	68-	K 02/12/68	Lang, Huey P.	MAJ	45 MED CO	70	
Haadem, Elroy E.		82 MED DET	66-67		Langlorne,	CPT			
Haggert,	CPT	15 MED 1 CAV	70-		Lawson, Jon D.	LT	45 MED		
Hailes, Sherman W.		247 MED DET	69-70		Layman, Robert E.	WO	54 MED DET	69-	K 05/22/69
Hall, Thomas A.	WO	57 MED DET	70-		Leatherberry, Roy J.	1LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-70	
Hammond, Marvin E.	WO	57 MED DET	69-		Ledford,	LT	82 MED DET	70-	
Handley, Terence A.	WO	68 MED DET	70-	K 10/20/70	Lee, Jerald A.		236 MED DET	70-71	
Hansen, Christopher H.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-		Lee, Jerry T.	LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	K 05/13/69
Hansen, Dave	WO	237 MED DET	71-72		Lefebvre, Pierre R.		498 MED CO	67-68	
Hanson, Donald L.		254 MED DET	65-66		Leininger, John A.		44 MED BDE	67-68	
Harris, Jim L.		571 MED DET	68-69		Levy, Richard M.	WO	82 MED DET	67-68	
Harris, Jim L.		237 MED DET	69		Levy, Richard M.	WO	247 MED	68	
Harris, Sam	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN			Lewis,	WO	82 MED DET	69-70	
Hasselblad, Carl D.	WO	45 MED CO	70-		Lewis, Charles H.	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Haswell, Edward	CPT	498 MED CO	65		Lewis, William R.	LT	54 MED DET	71-	K 10/22/71
Hayes, Thomas	WO	82 MED DET	69-70		Lichte, Jack R.	LT	57 MED DET	67-	K 03/20/67
Heffernan, Frank M.		498 MED CO	67-68		Lindkens, Richard A.		254 MED DET	68-69	
Hefter, Gene H.		57 MED DET	65-66		Little, Kerry L.	1LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Henley, Robert L.	WO	45 MED CO	69-		Livingston, Del		82 MED DET	68-69	
Hertle, David A.		498 MED CO	68-69		Lombard, James	CPT	283 MED DET	66	
Hichens, Francis H.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-		Luc, Chester A.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	71-	K 10/10/71
Hicks, Donald E.	LT	45 MED CO	70-		Lucci, Christopher D.	WO	498 MED CO	68-	K 09/18/68
Hill, John R.	CPT	237 MED DET	70-	K 04/27/70	Lund, Keith	WO	326 MED 101 ABN		
Hill, John W.		57 MED DET	67-68		Mac Donald, Richard		571 MED DET	66-67	
Hill, Robert D.	WO	247 MED DET	69-		Mac Neil, Douglas	LT	159 MED DET	70-	
Hill, Robert O.	WO	237 MED DET	70-	K 09/27/70	Madore, Robert E.	WO	498 MED CO	69-	
Hilliard, Michael G.		82 MED DET	68-69		Madrano, Joseph P.	LTC	498 MED CO	65-66	
Hiu, Patrick S.	CPT	159 MED DET	70-		Manning, Eugene E.		498 MED CO	69-70	
Hix, William C.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	K 02/05/69	Marcieski, Stanley C.	LT	45 MED CO	70-71	
Hodges, Fernan B.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	69-	K 10/28/69	Marcieski, Stanley C.		326 MED 101 ABN	71-	
Hodin, David L.		68 MED DET	70-71		Marotte, Frederick K.		571 MED DET	70-71	
Holmes, Tom		283 MED DET	69-70		Marshall, Phil	WO	237 MED DET	69-	
Honoman, J. Craig		57 MED DET	67-68		Matassarini,	LT	326 MED 101 ABN		
Hoopchuk, Ross G.	WO	82 MED DET	69-		Maykuth, Paul B.	LT	82 MED DET	65-	
Hoover, Robert P.	WO	82 MED DET	70-		Mc Bride, Dan		82 MED DET	67-68	
Horde, M. G.	WO	254 MED DET	67-68		Mc Clenahan, Barry		45 MED CO	70-71	
Horrell, Tim		159 MED DET	70-71		Mc Clure, Hugh		15 MED 1 CAV	68-69	
Horst, Robert L.	WO	159 MED DET	72-	K 04/07/72	Mc Collum, James	WO	498 MED CO	69-	
Horvath, John C.		237 MED DET	73-		Mc Crary, Thomas	1LT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
House, Philip R.		498 MED DET	70-		Mc Gowan, John		57 MED DET	64-65	
Hula, Roger	1LT	498 MED CO	65-66		Mc Kee, Dallas	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-70	
Hull, Donald R.		498 MED	66-69		Mc Keegan, Robert		237 MED DET	69-70	
Hull, Donald R.		237 MED DET	69		Mc Kenna, Michael	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Hunter, David	WO		67-68		McKinley, Lawrence		57 MED DET	71-72	
Huntsman, Howard	MAJ	57 MED DET	64-65		McKinley, Lawrence		82 MED	72	
Ihli, Jim	LT	254 MED DET	67-68		Mell, Marshall A.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Jackson, William N.		15 MED 1 CAV	68-69		Melton, Glen A.		498 MED CO	70-71	
Jacobs, Art		15 MED 1 CAV	67-68		Melton, Glen A.		237 MED DET	72-73	
Jacobs, James R.	LT	45 MED CO	70-		Mensen, Anthony J.	WO	54 MED DET	71-	K 10/22/71
Jacoby, Theodore C.	WO	159 MED DET	69-		Mercer, Gary E.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Jacoby, Thomas G.		498 MED CO	66-67		Mercer, Obery L.	WO	498 MED	67-68	
Jacoby, Thomas G.	CPT	57 MED DET	70-		Merriman, Moris	WO	254 MED DET	66-67	
Jahn, William R.		498 MED	70-71		Michales, Albert C.		45 MED CO	68-69	
Johnson, Charles W.		15 MED 1 CAV	65-66		Miles, Otha G.	COL			
Johnson, David L.		159 MED DET	71-72		Miller, Richard L.		54 MED DET	71-	
Johnson, Guy F.	WO	254 MED DET	69-	K 03/26/69	Miner, George L.	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	K 08/17/69
Johnson, Jerry L.	WO	57 MED DET	69-		Mock, Gary L.	WO	159 MED DET	68-69	
Johnson, Nick	CPT				Modica, Stephen F.	LT	15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	

SECTION XI History of Air Ambulance Units 232

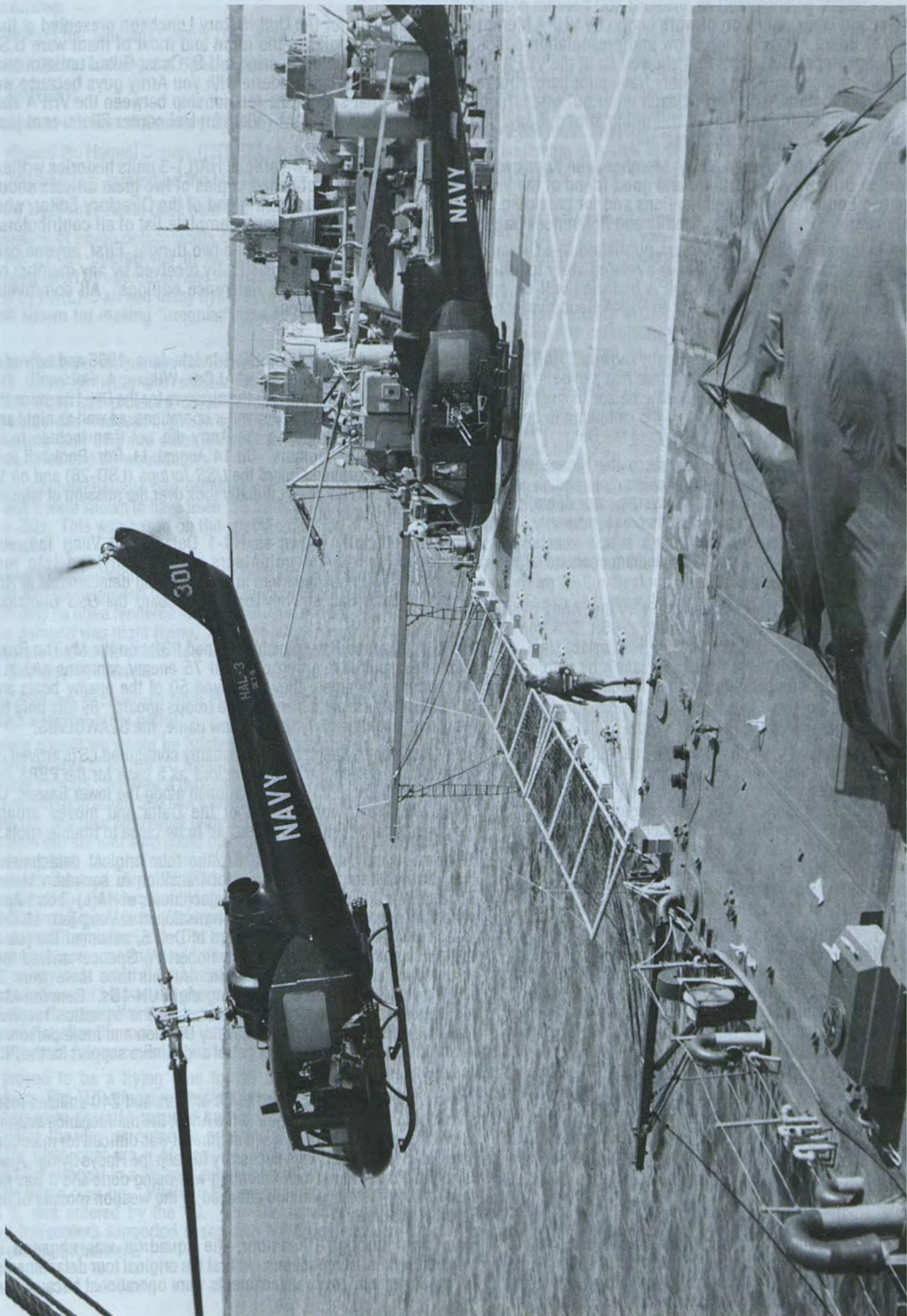
Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Modjeski, Howard F.		498 MED CO	70-71	
Moore, Douglas E.	CPT	57 MED DET	64-65	
Morasch, James L.	LT	498 MED	68-69	
Mote, Edgar F.	CPT	82 MED DET	70-	
Mueller, E. James		326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Mueller, Edmond	W	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Mueller, Walter	CPT	498 MED CO	66-67	
Mulvenna, Alex T.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Murphy, Terry D.	WO	45 MED CO	68-69	
Myers, Jeffrey A.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Navone, Timothy	LT	45 MED CO	70-	
Nelson, Bruce R.		159 MED DET	70-71	
Nesovanovic, John L.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 10/02/70
Nester, Marvin E.		15 MED 1 CAV	66-67	
Nice, Michael	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Norris, "spike"	MAJ	326 MED 101 ABN		
Novosel, Michael J. Jr.	WO	82 MED DET	70-71	
Novosel, Michael J. Sr.	WO	283 MED DET	66-67	
Novosel, Michael J. Sr.		82 MED DET	69-70	
O'Brien, Edward T.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 05/26/70
O'Connell, John		283 MED DET	67-70	
O'Connor, Stephen R.		498 MED CO	70-71	
Obrecht, Richard W.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Ogle, William C.		498 MED CO	67-68	
Oppedarl, Roger L.	WO	498 MED CO	68-69	
Outz, Jim	LT	326 MED 101 ABN		
Paden, Stanley R.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Pagan, Joe		615 MED DET ??		
Paillias, Robert	CPT	254 MED DET	66-67	
Palmer, Richard A.	LT	254 MED DET	69-70	
Palombo, Louis D.		254 MED DET	66-	
Parish, David C.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Parker, William A.	WO	498 MED CO	70-	K 07/26/70
Pascoe, Robert W.		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Payne, William H.		236 MED DET	70-71	
Pearsall, David A.		45 MED CO	67-68	
Pedings, Billy D.	WO	237 MED DET	71-	K 06/15/71
Peneguy, Robert	LT	571 MED DET	67-68	
Perales, Frank		247 MED DET	71-72	
Perine, James L.		15 MED 1 CAV	68-69	
Peters, Charles M.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Peterson, Craig L.		54 MED DET	70-	
Peterson, Dean	WO	44 MED	67-68	
Peterson, Dean	WO	571 MED DET	68	
Peterson, Larry R.		283 MED DET	69-70	
Peth, Stephen B.	WO	159 MED DET	69-	
Pettit, Hugh M.	WO	68 MED DET	71-	K 04/10/71
Phillips, Harry V.	MAJ	254 MED DET	66-	K 08/13/66
Phillips, Lewis K.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Pickett, Roger A.		498 MED CO	68-69	
Pickett, Roger A.		68 MED DET	69	
Piper, James E.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Pleasant, James S.		254 MED DET	67-	
Pletcher,	WO	82 MED DET	70-	
Ploetz, Frederick W.		247 MED DET	72-73	
Plume, Gary L.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	
Poe, Gerald D.		498 MED CO	66-67	
Poe, Gerald D.		236 MED DET	68-69	
Poole, Otha L.	CPT	45 MED CO	69-	K 02/05/69
Porea, Robert G.	WO	45 MED CO	67-	K 10/06/67
Porter, Phillip B.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Potter, Gary	WO	44 MED	67-68	
Powel, Larry G.	MAJ	45 MED CO	67-	K 11/22/67
Prahl, Brian	WO	45 MED		
Preston, Edward J.	MAJ	45 MED CO	70-	
Proctor, Michael	CPT		71-	
Purchase, Stephen	WO			
Pursell, Thomas R.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	68-	K 05/19/68
Radigan, Randall G.		45 MED CO	67-69	
Rains, Forrest D.	WO	57 MED DET	67-	K 10/29/67
Rakowski, Edward	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Rash, Joel W.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Rasmussen, Lynn W.	CPT	45 MED CO	69-	
Raun, John V.	WO	498 MED CO	71-	K 02/20/71
Read, John T.		15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Reeves, Edward O.		54 MED DET	68-69	
Reeves, Edward O.		236 MED DET	69	
Reid, Irvin	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Retzelaff, Don	CPT	498 MED CO	66	
Retzlaff, Don	CPT	498 MED CO	68-69	
Reynolds, James H.		15 MED 1 CAV	66-67	
Rhodes, Jerry L.		15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Rice, George W.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	65-	K 12/18/65
Richards, Jon S.		15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	

Name	Rank	Unit	Dates	Status
Riendeau, Ted J.		283 MED DET	67-68	
Rifkin, Howard	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	66-67	
Ritchie, James L.	LT	45 MED CO	69-70	
Robberson,	WO	45 MED CO	70-	
Robbins, Charles T.		57 MED DET	67-68	
Robbins, Charles T.		45 MED	68	
Roberts, Carrol	WO		71-	
Roberts, Craig T.		498 MED CO	69-70	
Robinson,	LT	82 MED DET	69-70	
Robinson, Charles W.		15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Robinson, Tom L.		236 MED DET	71-72	
Robinson, Tom L.		237 MED DET	72	
Rock, Don L.	WO	57 MED DET	69-	K 11/19/69
Rodebaugh,	CPT	82 MED DET	70-	
Roe, Jerry L.	LT	50 MED DET	68-	K 02/12/68
Rolfe, William F.	WO	254 MED DET	69-70	
Rollins, Donald L.		498 MED CO	70-71	
Romines, Robert B.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	
Rominger, Michael D.	WO	159 MED DET	68-69	
Rose, Robert D.	MAJ	45 MED CO	70-	
Rose, Roger C.	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	67-	K 09/08/67
Ruiz, Melvin	1LT	283 MED DET	66	
Russo, Dennis R.		45 MED CO	69-70	
Salenger, Bill	WO	15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Salmon, Ray W.		82 MED DET	64-65	
Salmon, Ray W.		45 MED CO	67-68	
Salmon, Ronald	LT	45 MED	69-70	
Salmon, Ronald	LT	254 MED DET	70	
Sanchez, Jim M.		47 MED DET	66-67	
Sawyer, Robert D.	CPT	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Schexnayder, G. Chuck		57 MED DET	63-64	
Schlie, Kenneth M.	LT	54 MED DET	70-	K 10/20/70
Schmidt, Dennis R.		15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Schmitz, Phillip N.	LT	237 MED DET	70-	K 05/10/70
Schnabolk, Howard J.	LT	498 MED CO	67-	K 09/03/67
Schofield, Gary L.		498 MED CO	67-	
Schrimsher, Robert H.	LT	57 MED DET	70-	
Schuck, Steve	LT	15 MED 1 CAV		
Schultz, Ronald K.	WO	57 MED DET	71-	K 10/13/71
Schwartz, Allen		326 MED 101 ABN	70-71	
Schwartz, Greg		54 MED DET	67-68	
Schwartz, Greg			70-71	
Scott, Richard	MAJ	498 MED DET	65	
Seagroves, Ed O.		498 MED CO	67-68	
Seals, Dennis A.		247 MED DET	72-73	
Seals, Stephen C.	LT	15 MED 1 CAV	68-	K 11/26/68
Sharkey, Daniel		498 MED CO	70-71	
Sharkey, Daniel		236 MED	71	
Sharkey, Daniel		571 MED DET	71	
Shelby, David M.		68 MED DET	71-72	
Shelly, David M.		571 MED DET	72	
Shirah, Jordan W.	WO	57 MED DET	70-	
Shirley, John	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Silverberg, Arvid O.	WO	283 MED DET	69-	K 01/23/69
Simko, Edward W.		571 MED DET	70-71	
Simmons, Armand	1LT	57 MED DET	64	
Simmons, Armand	1LT	82 MED DET	64	
Sittingdown, Quincy	LTC			
Skarie, Loren P.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	68-69	
Slade, Richard L.		57 MED DET	70-71	
Slagle, Thomas D.		54 MED DET	68-69	
Slagle, Thomas D.		236 MED DET	69	
Smith,	WO	82 MED DET	69-70	
Smith, Basil	MAJ	45 MED	68-69	
Smith, Charles F.	WO	498 MED CO	70-	K 10/26/70
Smith, Clyde G.		283 MED DET	67-68	
Smith, John R.	WO	45 MED CO	70-	K 04/30/70
Smith, Leslie G.		236 MED DET	68-69	
Smith, Leslie G.		54 MED DET	69	
Snyder, Merle J.	WO	45 MED CO	69-	
Souther, John M.	WO	498 MED CO	71-	K 02/26/71
Sparks, Daril J.		45 MED CO	70-71	
Specht, Edwin J.		498 MED CO	71-	
Spencer, Lloyd	MAJ	57 MED DET	63	
Spitzer, Robert J.	WO	45 MED CO	69-70	
St. Hilaire, Thomas		45 MED CO	70-71	
Stahlhuth, Gary W.		57 MED DET	68-69	
Stanush, Thomas J.	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	71-	K 10/10/71
Stapp, George	WO	326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Stillwell, Roy M.	WO	57 MED DET	69-	K 11/23/69
Stine, David L.		82 MED DET	69-70	
Stinson, Jay	WO	159 MED DET	68-69	
Stivers, James E.		498 MED CO	69-70	
Stone, Samuel E.		498 MED CO	69-	

Name	Rank Unit	Dates	Status	Name	Rank Unit	Dates	Status
Stone, Samuel E.	283 MED DET	69		Waelchli, James	82 MED DET	69-70	
Stovall, William G.	15 MED 1 CAV	71-72		Wainwright, David B.	LT 254 MED DET	67-	K 10/04/67
Stover, Douglas E.	WO 254 MED DET	69-	K 03/26/69	Waldron, Daniel J.	WO 247 MED DET	70-	
Strande, Michael R.	54 MED DET	69-70		Walsh, Alan H.	45 MED CO	70-71	
Stuart, Ronald W.	WO 247 MED DET	70-		Walters, Frederick S.	WO 54 MED DET	69-	K 05/22/69
Stube, Richard R.	236 MED DET	70-71		Warner, Kenneth D.	571 MED DET	71-72	
Stube, Richard R.	237 MED DET	71		Watkins, William W.	CPT 254 MED DET	69-70	
Supple, John P.	WO 498 MED CO	68-	K 04/05/68	Weaver, Daniel	LT 45 MED CO	68-	
Swatzell, Billy B.	15 MED 1 CAV	63-64		Weaver, Tom L.	247 MED DET	72-73	
Sylvester, Ernie	1LT 57 MED DET	64-65		Webb, Charlie			
Talbot, David	45 MED CO	67-68		Weed, Roger M.	498 MED CO	67-	
Talbot, David	326 MED 101 ABN	70-71		Wenrich, Quentin L.	WO 82 MED DET	68-69	
Tanner, Richard J.	15 MED 1 CAV	69-70		Wenzel, Carl L.	WO	71-	
Taylor, Edward J.	57 MED DET	65-		Westbrook, Lee	57 MED DET	71-72	
Taylor, Edward J.	82 MED DET	68-69		Whitaker, John W.	WO 326 MED 101 ABN	69-	
Taylor, Edward J.	45 MED	69		White, Julius C.	CPT 247 MED DET	70-	
Temperelli, John	CPT 57 MED DET	62		White, William W.	CPT 254 MED DET	66-67	
Terry, Bruce A.	571 MED DET	67-68		Whitten, Arthur R.	WO 45 MED	68-69	
Terry, Bruce A.	82 MED DET	68		Whitten, Arthur R.	WO 247 MED DET	69	
Thatcher, Gary D.	WO 326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 02/06/70	Williams, Harry D.	498 MED DET	68-69	
Thomas, Robert E.	LT 57 MED DET	70-		Williams, Ray	82 MED DET	66-67	
Thomas, Thomas C.	57 MED DET	66-67		Williams, Robert E.	247 MED DET	71-72	
Thorn, CPT	82 MED DET	70-		Willis, CPT	57 MED DET		
Thornton, P. Lee	254 MED DET	67-68		Wisdom, Harry	15 MED 1 CAV	69-70	
Thornton, P. Lee	82 MED DET	68		Wisdom, Jesse A.	CPT 326 MED 101 ABN	70-	K 02/06/70
Tiffany, William A.	WO 498 MED CO	66-67		Wise, George	CPT 45 MED		
Tiffany, William A.	WO 326 MED 101 ABN	69-70		Wollinger, William W.	498 MED CO	69-70	
Toothman, Daniel L.	15 MED 1 CAV	69-		Wood, Rusling	45 MED DET	67-68	
Torba, Gerald	1LT 326 MED 101 ABN	69-		Wood, Rusling	50 MED DET	69	
Tousignant, David P.	CPT 237 MED DET	68-69		Woodruff, Donald C.	CPT 15 MED 1 CAV	66-	K 07/22/66
Travers, John M.	82 MED DET	70-71		Woodyard, Billy W.	237 MED DET	68-69	
Troscott, Jim	57 MED DET	65		Worsham, Scott C.	498 MED CO	70-71	
Truscott, James J.	57 MED DET	65-66		Wright, Harold J.	498 MED CO	66-67	
Tuck, Joseph A.	WO 45 MED CO	70-		Wright, Robert L.	WO 57 MED DET	70-	
Tucker, Max E.	WO 326 MED 101 ABN	68-69		Wynne, O. Boyd	45 MED CO	67-68	
Tuell, Henry O.	CPT 15 MED 1 CAV	69-70		Yeager, Charles F.	498 MED CO	67-69	
Tuohey, Jim P.	159 MED DET	71-		Yeck, Gary R.	237 MED DET	68-69	
Turkoski, William S.	15 MED 1 CAV	71-72		Yeck, Gary R.	571 MED DET	69	
Turner, John E.	WO	71-		Yike, Arthur E.	237 MED DET	68-69	
Tuttle, Gary	498 MED CO			Yost, George	283 MED DET	68-69	
Tymeson, John A.	247 MED DET	68-69		Yost, Tim J.	236 MED DET	70-	
Underwood, Donald L.	WO 283 MED DET	68-69		Young, Lloyd	237 MED DET	68-69	
Valdez, Robert	CPT 254 MED DET	66-67		Zachmann, Stephen G.	WO 45 MED CO	70-	
Van Hue, Dinh	237 MED DET	71-75		Zeimet, James G.	WO 283 MED DET	68-	K 09/04/68
Vancy, William	CW4			Zepp, Ray	WO 15 MED 1 CAV	70-	
Vandever, John H.	44 MED	67-68		Ziemba, Richard M.	WO 45 MED CO	70-	
Vars, Jonathan R.	WO 15 MED 1 CAV	69-	K 07/17/69	Zimmerman, Alan H.	LT 283 MED DET	67-	K 02/02/67
Vermillion, Steven D.	WO 45 MED CO	69-		Zinger, Terry M.	WO 498 MED CO	69-	
Villarta, Jose R.	WO 326 MED 101 ABN	69-		Zolezzi, Michael	LT		
Voss, Daniel R.	498 MED CO	68-69		Zuvela, George	237 MED DET	68-69	
Voss, Daniel R.	45 MED CO	69					



SECTION XII - History of the U.S. Navy HA(L)-3



Introduction to the History of the Navy HA(L)-3

This History Section is an extension of work begun by VHPA Member Noel Campbell for the Unit History Luncheon presented at the VHPA Chicago Reunion. Noel's slide show and presentation delighted the 300 plus folks in the room and most of them were U.S. Army trained helicopter pilots. Noel first showed up at the VHPA Washington D.C. Reunion wearing a U.S. Coast Guard uniform and a big smile, say: "I am certain I'll be the only Navy pilot here - but I really feel a strong camaraderie with you Army guys because we flew B Model Hueys together and helped each other out when things got bad!" That started the relationship between the VHPA and the Navy trained helicopter pilots that is still going strong today. Indeed the VHPA is just that - Vietnam Helicopter Pilots - not just Army guys, but Marines and Navy and, and, and.

Special recognition must be given to VHPA Member John Konek who obtained copies of the two official HA(L)-3 units histories written during the War, to British aviation author and good friend of the VHPA, Phil Chinnery who obtained copies of two great articles about HA(L)-3 from two English aviation publications and for providing the photos, and to Bill Brown, a friend of the Directory Editor, who prepared this material. Please see the Credits and References page at the end of this Directory for a complete list of all contributors.

It is important to remember that all histories published in a Directory are living histories. This means two things: First, anyone can add (or correct) the material. So if you have a related story to tell, please know it will be enthusiastically received by any member of the Directory Committee. Second, all VHPA histories will be periodically republished in the Reference editions. All comments concerning this section should be directed to VHPA Headquarters, ATTN: Directory Committee.

Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE, usually known as, HA(L)-3 was the only US Navy helicopter attack squadron that served in the Vietnam War. HA(L)-3 arose from the peculiar nature of guerrilla warfare in Vietnam and played a major role in the campaign to deny the Viet Cong use of the all important waterways of the Delta.

Although experiments had been conducted since the Korean War (1950-53) with helicopters equipped with machine guns and air-to-ground rockets, there had been no definitive systems nor operation techniques created, and the helicopter had become primarily, in military circles, a form of troop transport and a supply vehicle to inaccessible areas. American involvement in Vietnam changed all of that.

The reason for the creation of HA(L)-3 was the Navy and Army river operations that started in the Mekong Delta during 1966. Task Force 116, perhaps better known as *GAME WARDEN* was established in December, 1965 to keep open those rivers and canals by patrolling and carrying out river assault operations against the enemy.

TF-116 employed a variety of small boats to carry out this mission, most notably the PBR (Fast River Patrol Boat). The PBR was a 31-foot fiberglass, shallow draft boat built on a pleasure craft hull and armed with three .50 calibre machine guns, at least one M-60 machine gun and a range of other light weapons including grenade launchers. The first boats arrived during March, 1966. They began patrols on 10 April, 1966. The need for aerial support became quickly apparent when PBR's operating from Can Tho engaged in their first fire-fight with the enemy on 16 May. Even with .50 calibre machine guns, the boats were no match with the 57mm recoilless rifles that were concealed on shore.

Captain John T. Shepherd, then Assistant Chief-of-Staff for operations, US Naval Forces HQ Saigon, is credited with promoting the idea of armed Navy gunship helicopters to support River Force operations and the idea was soon passed on to Washington. However, the Navy lacked both the aircrews and the aircraft to carry out such a mission as well as an organization which could be used for such a task.

The obvious answer was the Army, which had been operating armed helicopters in Vietnam since 1962 and the obvious unit was the 197th Aviation Company, which had pioneered armed helicopters in Vietnam. The 197th lineage was from the 68th Aviation Company and the 68th from the UTT Escort Company.

Initially, the 197th was to provide eight UH-1Bs to the Navy on a loan basis. Crews, however, would come from Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One (HC-1), based at NAS Ream Field, Imperial Beach, California. HC-1 was essentially a support rather than a combat unit. The formation of four detachments, each consisting of eight pilots, eight aircrewmembers and two UH-1Bs (already in-country) marked the first time that Naval aviators would fly attack helicopters in combat.

The first element, Det. 29, left HC-1 in late June, 1966 and arrived at Vung Tau under the command of Lt.Cdr. William A. Rockwell. The Army asked the Navy to provide the aircrews for the UH-1Bs since the Navy trained its aviators in over-water operations, as well as night and instrument flying, something the Army did not then include in its helicopter training programs. On 14 August, Lt. Cdr. Rockwell took his pilots and crewmen aboard the *USS Tortuga* (LSD-26) and on 19 September the Navy crews officially took over the mission of support for the River Patrol Forces.

The unit, officially known as HC-1 Detachment Vung Tau, was composed entirely of volunteers and was divided into four detachments with headquarters in Vung Tau and detachments at Nha Be in the Rung Sat, at Vinh Long and aboard the *USS Comstock* (LSD-19).

On 31 October the Navy gunships joined PBRs on the My Tho River, which had spotted a group of about 75 enemy sampans and in a three-hour engagement they destroyed 50 of the enemy boats and inflicted heavy casualties among the troops aboard. By this time the Army had given the Navy flyers a new name, the SEAWOLVES.

On 11 November, the first of the specially configured LSTs arrived off Vung Tau to replace the *USS Comstock* as a base for the PBRs and two UH-1Bs. These LSTs were stationed along the lower Bassac, Co Chien and Ham Luong Rivers of the Delta and moved around periodically for security purposes and to be close to trouble spots.

Between January and April, 1967, the four original detachments changed numbers in preparation for transition to squadron status. Detachments 1, 2, 3 and 4 became detachments of HA(L)-3 on 1 April when the squadron was officially commissioned at Vung Tau. Lt. Cdr. Joseph B. Howard, Officer-in-Charge of Det. 3, assumed the job of acting boss until 7 May when Cdr. Robert W. Spencer arrived and assumed command of the squadron. At this time there were 32 officers and 32 enlisted men utilizing eight UH-1Bs. Between May and August, unit strength was increased as the squadron received additional UH-1Bs from the 1st Cavalry Division and more personnel to perform their mission of river patrol and gunfire support for the PBR operations.

Unit strength quickly increased to 94 officers and 240 enlisted men. Since the aircraft still belonged to the Army, the maintenance support came through Army networks and at times it was difficult for members of HA(L)-3 to get the things necessary to keep the Hueys flying. Also, during this time, much experimenting was being done and it was not unusual to see strange things attached to the weapon mounts of the Seawolf gunships.

From April through December, the squadron was engaged in continuous combat operations. At first the original four detachments, but by December, seven detachments were operational because two

more LSTs had arrived and aircraft allocation had risen to 22 helicopters. Detachment locations at the end of December, 1967 were as follows:

Det 1 - Aboard the Jennings County (LST-846)

Det 2 - Nha Be in the Rung Sat Special Zone

Det 3 - Vinh Long

Det 4 - Aboard the Garrett County (LST-786) on the Co Chien River

Det 5 - Aboard the Harnett County (LST-821) on the Ham Luong River

Det 6 - At Dong Tam located on the My Tho River

Det 7 - At Ninh Thuy Naval Base near Can Tho City.

The operation of seven detachments of two helicopters required that 14 of the 22 be operational at all times which necessitated a coordinated effort by operations and maintenance people. The Hueys received by HA(L)-3 all had many flying hours on them and the Army was well known for making "irregular" fixes in order to get the craft flying.

1967 was coming to an end and the Seawolves had proven their worth in 9,744 hours of flying and successfully completing over 7,300 missions. They had provided cover for downed aircraft as well as making numerous medevac flights in addition to their primary mission of supporting the PBRs and other Riverine Forces. Seven members had been killed and 50 wounded.

The different detachments had different preferences for armament. Dets 3 and 7 were known to have used .50 calibre and Det 3 employed the twin .30s. This was based on the specific mission of the various detachments.

The Seawolves reputation grew quickly from its modest beginnings. They came to be respected by the ARVN outposts and American units to whom they so often rendered assistance. One special skill that was much in demand was night flying. Seawolf pilots regularly mounted night patrols and some pilots flew 200- 300 night hours in addition to 600-plus daylight hours.

John Andres, an aircrewman from HA(L)-3, Det 3, from Vinh Long describes a typical night patrol.

At early sunset we would be briefed on our patrol area. This was usually an area of known VC activity and we were out to draw fire; to make contact. We flew a two-ship element, lead and trail. Our lead would fly at about 500 feet with rotating beacon and navigation lights on. We flew somewhat higher, blacked out. If the lead ship was fired on, the trail ship could drop down and engage the source of enemy fire. On one mission to the south of Vinh Long, I was gunner in the lead ship. We had been at this for some time and were breaking in a new pilot flying in the trail ship for this mission. We received green tracer (Chi-com weapons), we broke our flight pattern and began to circle. Our trail spotted the fire and asked us to place "close covering fire" under him as he made his run. He was on my side and I fired ahead as he made his turn. My fire detonated one of his rockets about 25 feet ahead of his aircraft and that gave the new pilot quite a scare. We didn't receive any more ground fire after the rocket run, but that particular Lt JG didn't ask for any more "close covering fire" from me.

1968 proved to be a trying time for all US forces, including the Seawolves. The TET offensive shocked forces in many areas, but the Navy men were quick to respond and in many cases were credited with saving the day at outposts or small bases that would have otherwise been over-run. At Ben Tre, PBRs and the Seawolves provided fire support in a 36 hour running battle which prevented the city from being over-run. While in the mean- time Vinh Long, home of Det 3, was entered by the VC. The *Garrett County*, PBRs and Seawolf helicopters supported evacuation efforts and actions which forced enemy withdrawal.

Four detachments continued to operate from shore bases and three operated from the constantly moving LSTs. In May, Captain Arthur H. Munson relieved Cdr. Spencer. as Commanding Officer.

Toward the end of 1968 the need for a concentration of detachments in the lower Delta began to lessen, because of the increased pacification of much of the area. In early fall, Det 5 moved to Rach Gia on the Gulf of Thailand and in November the detachment moved aboard the YRBN-16 stationed near Chau Doc on the upper Bassac only a few miles from the Cambodian border. Det 5's move signaled the beginning of a new phase in River Patrol Force operations; the interdiction of enemy troop and supply units into the Delta from the North.

After over two years of service changes were in store for HA(L)-3 as 1969 began. The unit was to grow and move, new types of aircraft would be introduced and a new mission would be added to the list of activities. To assist the command in the primary area of operation, namely the Delta, plans had been made for a new helicopter maintenance facility to be constructed at Binh Thuy. By early 1969 this facility was completed and headquarters and maintenance crews made the move from Vung Tau to the new base. On 25 April Captain Reynolds Beckwith assumed command of the squadron. By this time, many Army gunship unit were exchanging their UH-1B for UH-1Cs, so the Army raised the number of helicopters that would be deliverable to the Seawolves from 22 to 33. Also during this period passenger transport, mail communications and other liaison duties were carried out by a small short flight detachment stationed at Tan Son Nhut air base and known as AIRCOFAT. It was decided that, with the increase in strength of HA(L)-3 and limited duties of AIRCOFAT, which operated two H-34s and several C-4Ts in support of all Navy activities inside the Delta, that HA(L)-3 should assume this mission. The Army introduced four UH-1Ls and qualified 'slick drivers' to fly them down to the Sealord Detachment at Binh Thuy in November 1969. The UH-1L was a limited production variant for the Navy, being built as a utility and a training version and powered by the up-rated Lycoming T-53-13 engine. It was an improved version of Bell's earlier UH-1C model and had its Army equal in the UH-1M. The squadron was also assigned its first two UH-1Cs by the Army in November.

By the end of 1969, the *Game Warden* program had reached full strength with about 22 squadrons of PBRs ranging the Delta and Rung Sat. Floating support bases, shore installations, repair ships, LSTs and large numbers of barges were based around the Delta to ensure coverage of all areas. But one major problem remained, because enemy supplies continued to flow across the border from Cambodia. Earlier efforts and attempts to stage PBRs in areas of infiltration had little effect on the flow of supplies for it seemed that the VC simply moved to areas that were not patrolled.

The following year would see the mounting of new operations in the area and greater demands would be placed on HA(L)-3. Sealord strength would grow and areas of operations would change. In mid-January, four additional UH-1Ls arrived giving them eight aircraft. Although the allocations from the Army had jumped to 33 helicopters in early 1969, HA(L)-3 was still short of this number and most commanders of TF-116 felt that even this number was insufficient.

In May, the war took a new turn with the controversial invasion of Cambodia by US and ARVN forces. For *Game Warden* forces, this operation was code named *Tran Hung Dao XI* and several of the squadron's aircraft made history by being the first American helicopters to reach Phnom Penh.

The night before, 8 May, a secret priority message arrived aboard YRBM-20. Lt. Rick French would be flying his UH-1B off the landing deck early in the morning to make room for two other gunships coming up from Binh Thuy to refuel. The squadron operations officer, Cdr. Wesley Wetzel would be flying the lead ship. The lead ship landed, refueled and went off again but the trail ship experienced problems and stayed down. Since French was airborne with a "Full Bag" (fully fueled and armed), they would fly chase. They proceeded up the

Mekong and as they crossed the border, they listened in on FM radio as the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service announced the "incursion" into Cambodia. The lead ship went low and French's crew went high, both helicopters continuing to Phnom Penh where they turned around and flew back. Their mission was to clear the Mekong River for PBR and 'Mike' boats scheduled to move up later in the day, but there was no firing involving the Seawolves or the enemy.

Det 8, stationed aboard the *Hunterdon County* (LST-838) on the Mekong, one mile south of the border, assumed primary air support for *Game Warden* forces inside Cambodia while Det 9 acted as a secondary unit and Det 5 as a reserve force. Before the operation was completed, Dets 3 & 4 would also fly strike mission inside Cambodia. These three Dets (5, 8, and 9) logged 748 combat hours. The seven Sealords UH-1Ls (one crashed on 26 April at Long Phu) also performed various support missions, including medevac and body searches during *Tran Hung Dao XI* and in doing so established a new Navy Flight time record for the unit logging 961 hours.

Near the end of the year two new types of helicopter joined the HA(L)-3 inventory. The first TOW Army UH-1C gunships arrived and were checked into the squadron at Binh Thuy. This happened early in November and at the same time some Navy HH-1Ks came on board. The Charlie models were standard Army helicopters with the 540 rotor system and -11 engines while the 'K' models arrived in November. One was ditched at sea and was lost off Song Ong Doc on the 26th.

Despite difficult operating conditions and a new mission and the loss of five aircraft, the Sealords performed admirably. Along with the logistics missions in support of virtually every Navy unit in the Mekong Delta, Sealords inserted and extracted Army units and SEAL teams and flew as Command and Control aircraft on numerous combined ground/air/water missions. They moved 7,287 passengers and 245,791 pounds of cargo while flying 6,100 missions. By the end of the year, HA(L)-3 had 35 Bell Iroquois helicopters comprising 27 UH-1Bs, two UH-1Cs, two HH-1Ks and four UH-1Ls. The following year the number of aircraft would remain about the same, but a new model would be brought on line and this was to aid greatly in the Seawolf mission.

In July 1971, under the coordination of Cdr Don Nichols, a Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) Indoctrination and Familiarization program started. The purpose of the program was to teach the Vietnamese Seawolf tactics, including night and instrument flying, and problems involved in quick reaction gunship support of the Vietnamese units while operating from outlying bases and airfields. The first VNAF class, consisting of ten pilots and ten gunners, underwent the squadron's pilot and aircrewman's ground school syllabus the first two weeks in July. Then a pilot/gunner team was sent to each detachment except for DET 2 which received two sets. This first group finished its Seawolf tour on 30 September 1971 with each participant logging approximately 75 flight hours. The qualifications attained by these Vietnamese aviators were seven Attach Helicopter Aircraft Commanders, two Attack Helicopter pilots and nine aircrew gunners with four of these gunners additionally qualified as plane captains. A second group started the ground school on 20 September.

The Seawolves utilized many different armament packages during this

time, including the General Electric GAU-2B "Mini Gun". These took the form of the XM-21 systems mounted the same as the XM-16 but carrying the "mini gun" rather than twin M-60's. The "mini gun" greatly increase the fire power, particularly suppressive fire on attack runs, but was a less reliable weapon than the M-60 in the dusty environment of the Delta. The ammunition tended to "torque up" (jam) when the guns were fired in short bursts. Extra care was required in the operation of this weapon but when it worked properly it delivered an incredible volume of fire.

The .50 calibre remained in use and at one time was employed by nearly all detachments on the lead aircraft. One of the most unusual fits involved not the Seawolf UH-1B, C or M, but the Sealord L & K models. This involved the fitting of a mount to take 500-pound bombs or 500-pound Fuel Air Explosives (FAEs), the latter being a napalm-type weapon. These mounts could also be fitted with the XM-159 rocket pods making the Sealords helicopter available for rocket fire support. Squadron records indicate that the Ls & Ks were converted and that testing was done, there is no record of whether these weapons were used operationally. Other attempts at arming the Sealords helicopters were also unsuccessful. For much of the war, the US Air Force resisted the idea of the other services' aircraft carrying certain weapons which the Air Force considered its domain. At one point, the Army attempted to arm its Grumman OV-1 Mohawk surveillance aircraft, only to meet stiff Air Force opposition. The Seawolves met similar resistance and were unable to do much with these better weapons.

Throughout HA(L)-3's history the problems of getting parts and equipment for the crews was a persistent one. For example, the first mini-gun was obtained from the Army units at Vinh Long in 1968. When the Army discovered the loss of an XM-21 kit and questioned Det 3 personnel, the system was clandestinely returned. To order parts for an Army UH-1B, the request went from HA(L)-3 maintenance to FASU to the 611th Transportation Co. at Vinh Long and then to the Aviation Materials Management Center in Saigon. The system was complex and HA(L)-3 supply personnel had to be trained in the Army procedures, which changed all the time. If things were in Vietnam they could be obtained within days; but if they were not, the delay could be measured in weeks. This is why even with 30 or so aircraft on hand, it was not unusual for some detachments to not be operational because of a shortage of parts for the aircraft.

The first aircraft used by the HC-1 Detachments were from the 197th Aviation Company, was finished in matte olive drab with black serials and other markings in black. When the "Rats" obtained them, they sprayed over the ARMY of the UNITED STATES ARMY on the tail boom and replaced it with NAVY titles in the same size. The only other addition was the "Rowell's Rats" skull emblem on the nose. Later, when the Army gave the detachments the nickname, Seawolves, a stylized sea monster shaped in an "S" was painted on the nose in white.

HA(L)-3 received orders to stand down and unit personnel and equipment were to be sent home. HA(L)-3 passed into limbo on 26 January 1972 at Binh Thuy, Vietnam when the unit conducted ceremonies that marked the end of its operational activities.

SECTION XIII - AFTER ACTION REPORTS

These "After Action Reports" are a continuation of the last two year's compilations of eye witness accounts, accident reports, official documentation, and special interest groups. Sources of the information range from the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, the State Department, the POW Network (Task Force of Illinois, Inc.), to direct inputs from VHPA members. It is an attempt to accurately document specific events that involved loss of life and/or destruction of helicopters during the Vietnam war. It is not an attempt to incite or promote political issues. Some of the information used for this section contains opinions that may not accurately describe the events as they occurred. We have tried to remove these when they are obvious. Like everything in this Directory, this information is only as accurate as the members of the VHPA can make it, so please send in your additions and corrections to the VHPA Headquarters. This information is in order by date of the event and contains all new material which has never appeared in a VHPA directory. Gary Roush has put this section together and would appreciate your help and feedback.

After Action Report for: 18 January 1964

METOYER, BRYFORD GLENN

REFNO: R0028

Name: Bryford Glenn Metoyer
Rank/Branch: O2/US Army
Unit: US Army Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company US Army Support Group, Vietnam

Date of Birth: 19 December 1938
Home City of Record: Oakdale, LA
Date of Loss: 18 January 1964
Country of Loss: South Vietnam/Over Water
Loss Coordinates: 095652N 1064925E
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1B

Other Personnel In Incident: John L. Straley (missing)

SYNOPSIS: 1Lt. Bryford Metoyer was the pilot and PFC John L. Straley was a crew member of a UH-1B helicopter flying a tactical operation over South Vietnam. The helicopter made a pass into some enemy positions, then experienced a tail rotor failure and crashed over water. The operation was being conducted along the shoreline of the South China Sea in the Kien Hoa Province region.

Three of the crew were rescued or recovered, and a search for Metoyer and Straley was conducted for about 10 days with no result.

After Action Report for: 2 December 1966

SULANDER, DANIEL ARTHUR

REFNO: R0537

Name: Daniel Arthur Sulander
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: 281st Aviation Company, 10th Aviation Battalion,
17th Aviation Group
Date of Birth: 18 September 1943
Home City of Record: Minneapolis, MN
Date of Loss: 02 December 1966
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 165049N 1063159E (XD633631)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1D

HARRISON, DONALD

Name: Donald Harrison
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: 281st Aviation Company, 10th Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group
Date of Birth: 9 June 1945
Home City of Record: New York, NY
Date of Loss: 02 December 1966
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 165049N 1063159E (XD633631)
Status (in 1973): Killed in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1D

Other Personnel In Incident: Russell P. Bott; Willie E. Stark (both missing); Irby Dyer III; (missing from UH-1D exfiltration aircraft)

SYNOPSIS: In late November 1966, Russell Bott and Willie Stark were inserted about 1 1/2 miles into Laos west of the DMZ along with a number of Vietnamese Special Forces (LLDB) "strikers". The team, a long-range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP), was soon discovered by a superior North Vietnamese force, members of the 325B NVA Division. A two day running battle ensued.

Near the end, Bott radioed that he was down to one grenade and one magazine of ammunition. He also stated that several of the Vietnamese members of his team were dead or wounded. Willie Stark was wounded in the chest and leg, but was alive. Bott requested exfiltration at that time. He refused to leave his wounded teammate to seek safety, and in his last radio message, Bott indicated that he was going to destroy his radio, that he felt capture was imminent.

Searches for Bott and Stark were unsuccessful. Vietnamese team members who evaded capture reported that they had heard North Vietnamese soldiers say, "Here you are! We've been looking for you! Tie his hands, we'll take him this way."

Sgt. First Class Norman Doney, who was Operations Sergeant at that time at B-52 headquarters at Khe Sanh, overheard the Intelligence Sergeant on the "52 Desk" reviewing intelligence about Bott. Doney states that it was reported that Bott was seen with his arms tied behind his back going through a village, and that he was alive 3 days after he became missing.

Two gunships working the area were hit by enemy fire. Also, the exfiltration helicopter from 281st Assault Helicopter Company was hit, and crashed and burned, killing the crew of four and Irby Dyer, a medic from Det. B-52 Delta who had gone in to help treat the wounded. The wreckage of the plane and all five remains were found in searches conducted December 10-13. The remains, which had been horribly mutilated by the enemy, were left at the site. When a team returned to recover the remains, U.S. bombing and strafing activities had destroyed them further. The identifiable remains of three of the crew were recovered, but those of Daniel Sulander and Irby Dyer were not.

After Action Report for: 1 August 1968**RUSSELL, PETER JOHN**

REFNO: R1244
 Name: Peter John Russell
 Rank/Branch: 02/US Army
 Unit: 240th Assault Helicopter Co.
 214th Aviation Btn., 12th Aviation Group
 Date of Birth: 02 October 1946
 Home City of Record: New York, NY
 Date of Loss: 01 August 1968
 Country of Loss: South Vietnam
 Loss Coordinates: 114856N 1071107E
 Status (in 1973): Missing In Action
 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1C

FERNAN, WILLIAM

Name: William Fernan
 Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
 Unit: 240th Assault Helicopter Co.
 214th Aviation Btn., 12th Aviation Group
 Date of Birth: 4 March 1942
 Home City of Record: Seattle, WA
 Date of Loss: 01 August 1968
 Country of Loss: South Vietnam
 Loss Coordinates: 114856N 1071107E
 Status (in 1973): Killed In Action
 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1C

Other Personnel In Incident: Steven M. Hastings; Donald R. Fowler (both missing)

SYNOPSIS: SP4 Donald Fowler, gunner; Sgt. Steven Hastings, crewchief; WO Fernan, aircraft commander and 1Lt. Peter J. Russell, pilot, comprised the crew of one UH-1C helicopter in a flight of two on a combat mission.

Due to inclement weather and poor visibility, the mission was aborted. During the return flight, the two aircraft became separated while attempting to return to the Song Be airstrip. One aircraft crashed into the trees and crewmembers were extracted the following morning. Radio contact was lost with 1Lt. Russell's aircraft after the last contact at 2025 hours on August 1. At that time, the aircraft commander indicated that he was diverting to Binh Hoa airbase rather than returning to Song Be.

When the aircraft failed to arrive at either Binh Hoa or Song Be, search efforts were begun at daylight, and continued for 3 days. On August 6, wreckage of the helicopter was discovered. On August 21, a recovery effort was conducted in the area of the aircraft and it was determined that the helicopter had crashed but not burned. During the recovery effort, portions of remains were found that were associated with WO Fernan, along with some personal effects that belonged to him. Only flight helmets were found for the other 3 individuals. No trace was found of the other 3 in subsequent searches.

In 1985, a private citizen obtained a previously classified document through the Freedom of Information Act which described in great detail a prisoner of war camp in South Vietnam. Together with the drawings and maps of the compound were lists of guards and their backgrounds, and a list of Americans the source had positively identified from photographs. On the list of positive id's was the name of Steven Hastings. Returned POWs have verified the accuracy of the drawings and much of the information. (Some on the positive list were POWs who returned in 1973.) The Defense Department has stated that the source was a liar.

After Action Report for: 13 April 1969**PIERSON, WILLIAM COOPER III**

REFNO: R1425
 Name: William Cooper Pierson III
 Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
 Unit: Troop B, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry,
 101st Airborne Division
 Date of Birth: 23 December 1947 (San Antonio TX)
 Home City of Record: Madison, WI
 Date of Loss: 13 April 1969
 Country of Loss: South Vietnam
 Loss Coordinates: 155701N 1063806E
 Status (in 1973): Missing in Action
 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

LEDFORD, ALVIE J. JR.

Name: Alvie J. Ledford, Jr.
 Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
 Unit: Troop B, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry,
 101st Airborne Division
 Date of Birth: 7 August 1945
 Home City of Record: Afton, OK
 Date of Loss: 13 April 1969
 Country of Loss: South Vietnam
 Loss Coordinates: 155701N 1063806E
 Status (in 1973): Killed in Action
 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: On April 13, 1969, WO William C. Pierson III was the co-pilot of an AH-1G aircraft flying visual reconnaissance with Capt. Alvie J. Ledford, Jr, pilot. On request from an accompanying LOH light observation helicopter, the AH-1G started a gun run on a suspected target.

As Ledford and Pierson's aircraft was about 500 feet into the dive, the observation aircraft saw flames spurting from one side of the aircraft, which appeared to come from below and behind the pilot's compartment. The LOH pilots was the pilot compartment separate from the aircraft and disintegrate in the air as it fell to the ground.

At 1400 hours on the same day, while searching the area, the LOH pilot saw what he believed to be human remains located in a stream southeast of the wreckage. At 1530 hours, a recovery team entered the area. The LOH pilot returned to the area on the following day and observed a 6-man Ranger team searching the area. The team inspected the wreckage and surrounding area, and noted no signs of blood, flesh or personal belongings.

On April 20, the LOH pilot returned and relocated the remains which he had seen on April 13. The remains were recovered and identified as those of Capt. Ledford. No trace was found of WO Pierson.

After Action Report for: 1 November 1969

PARTINGTON, ROGER DALE

REFNO: R1508
Name: Roger Dale Partington
Rank/Branch: 03/US Marine Corps
Unit: HMH 361, MAG 16,
1st Marine Aircraft Wing
Date of Birth: 12 December 1940
Home City of Record: Sparta IL
Date of Loss: 01 November 1969
Country of Loss: South Vietnam/Over Water
Loss Coordinates: 160117N 1082011E (BT144755)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: CH53A

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: On November 1, 1969, Capt. Robert D. Partington was a crewmember aboard a CH-53A helicopter which went down at sea just southeast of the military installation near Marble Mountain at Da Nang, South Vietnam. The helicopter was not hit by enemy fire, but suffered some other problem which caused it to explode and burn. Capt. Partington is the only man not recovered from the aircraft.

Following searches for Capt. Partington, a review board determined that he was dead, and it was unlikely that his remains would ever be recovered.

After Action Report for: 2 May 1970

VARNADO, MICHAEL BANARD

REFNO: R1610
Name: Michael Banard "Vito" Varnado
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Company B, 229th Aviation Battalion,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 10 September 1948 (Natchez MS)
Home City of Record: Ferriday, LA
Date of Loss: 02 May 1970
Country of Loss: Cambodia
Loss Coordinates: 114512N 1060827E (XU243013)
Status (in 1973): Prisoner of War
Acf/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

Other Personnel In Incident: Robert M. Young; Bunyon D. Price; Rodney L. Griffin; Dale W. Richardson (all missing); Frederick H. Crowson; Daniel F. Maslowski (returned POWs); - Kurecky (evaded and escaped)

SYNOPSIS: On May 2, 1970 a UH-1H helicopter from Company B, 229th Aviation Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division flown by WO1 Michael B. Varnado was hit by ground fire and forced to land just over the border of South Vietnam near the city of Memot, Cambodia. The aircraft was transporting members of HHC, 34th Armor, 25th Infantry Division, SP4 Rodney L. Griffin; SP4 Bunyan D. Price, Jr.; WO1 Daniel F. Maslowski, other pilot; Capt. Dale W. Richardson; and Capt. Robert M. Young. Also aboard were the door gunner, Kurecky, and SP4 Frederick H. Crowson, position/unit unknown.

The crew all survived the crash, and had only 30-40 seconds on the ground to decide what to do. They all attempted to evade, each in different directions. Only 18 year old Kurecky managed to make it back to U.S. lines in 2 or 3 days. Crowson, Maslowski, Varnado and Young went in one direction and were all captured by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces. Price, according to Defense Department records, was also captured. Griffin and Richardson took off in another direction and were never seen again.

Crowson and Maslowski were released in 1973 and in their debriefings stated that WO1 Varnado and Capt. Young had died in captivity, while detained in Cambodia. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG) officially acknowledged their deaths, listing Varnado's death as 21 September 1970, and Young's death as 17 November 1972.

According to Dan Maslowski, Bob Young died of illness in Dan's arms in the fall of 1972. Maslowski saw Varnado about two months after capture. "Vito" had been shot in the leg and in the side when he was captured, and according to Dan, "looked like hell". His side wound had healed, but the wound in his leg, in the kneecap, was badly infected. He could not walk, and told Dan that the Viet Cong had been transporting him in a hammock. The Viet Cong had told Mike he was to be taken to a hospital to have his leg taken care of. The Vietnamese state that he died two months after Dan saw him in camp (about 4 months after capture).

The fate of Price is uncertain. Maslowski always believed Price had been captured, but never saw him in camps he was held in. One report from escaped ARVN POWs stated that he was captured by the Khmer and because the ethnic groups normally did not cooperate, the Khmer would not likely have given Price over to the Vietnamese, who had captured the other four.

After Action Report for: 5 February 1971

PAUL, JAMES LEE

REFNO: R1699
Name: James Lee Paul
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry,
1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division
Date of Birth: 13 October 1948 (Detroit MI)
Home City of Record: Riverview, MI
Date of Loss: 05 February 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 164031N 1064457E (XD865443)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

WOOD, CARL M.

Name: Carl M. Wood
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Troop D, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry,
1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division
Date of Birth: 27 April 1951
Home City of Record: Englewood, CO
Date of Loss: 05 February 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 164031N 1064457E (XD865443)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: WO1 James L. Paul, co-pilot, and WO1 Carl M. Wood, pilot, were flying a Cobra gunship (tail #66-15340) on an extraction mission on February 5, 1971, in the general vicinity of Khe Sanh, Military Region 1, South Vietnam.

Shortly after the start of the extraction, WO1 Paul's aircraft entered a heavy cloud cover which forced the pilot to go on instruments to climb out of the weather. It was during the climb that the Cobra impacted a mountainside and exploded. Aircraft accompanying the Cobra immediately began a visual reconnaissance of the area and sighted the crash.

Ground search teams were inserted and a 50 meter area surrounding the crash was searched. The search indicated there had been a violent explosion upon

impact. Weather delayed further search until February 10, 1971, during which a baseball cap containing Paul's name, a watch, part of a ring and map and a chinstrap were found 1 meter from the wreckage. The team also discovered an unidentifiable hand under the wreckage. Search was discontinued, and from all indications, it was determined that Paul was dead.

After Action Report for: 8 February 1971

STEWART, PAUL CLARK

REFNO: R1700
Name: Paul Clark Stewart
Rank/Branch: W2/US Army
Unit: Company C, 158th Aviation Battalion,
101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 05 January 1950 (Boulder CO)
Home City of Record: Buena Park, CA
Date of Loss: 08 February 1971
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 163634N 1062853E (XD582368)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

DOODY, THOMAS PATRICK

Name: Thomas Patrick Doody
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Company C, 158th Aviation Battalion,
101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 29 July 1948
Home City of Record: Grand Junction, CO
Date of Loss: 08 February 1971
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 163634N 1062853E (XD582368)
Status (in 1973): Killed in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

Other Personnel in Incident: PFC John E. Robertson; SP4 Charles G. Bobo; an ARVN soldier (remains returned)

SYNOPSIS: On February 8, 1971, WO Thomas P. Doody, pilot; CW2 Paul C. Stewart, aircraft commander; SP4 Charles G. Bobo, crew chief; and PFC John E. Robertson, door gunner, comprised the crew of a UH-1H helicopter operating about 10 miles from Lao Bao in Savannakhet Province, Laos on an insertion mission. During the mission, Stewart radioed the flight leader that his aircraft had sustained damage to the tail rotor by ground fire, and that he was returning to the pickup zone, which was about 5 miles inside the South Vietnam border.

While the aircraft was en route, Stewart radioed that he had inverted and was going in, and nothing further was heard. The flight leader then observed a column of smoke coming from the crash site of the helicopter. The Cobra team accompanying the operation was dispatched immediately, but detected no signs of survivors in the area of the wreckage.

Several burned remains were seen around the wreckage. It was determined that the aircraft had crashed, exploded on impact, and burned. The remains were identified as Doody, Bobo and Robertson. A fourth body was determined to be that of an ARVN on board the aircraft. No trace of Stewart was found. It could not be determined whether he burned in the crash or was thrown clear of the aircraft as it impacted.

After Action Report for: 10 February 1971

ROBERTSON, MARK JOHN

REFNO: R1701
Name: Mark John Robertson
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Troop B, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry,
101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 18 August 1949
Home City of Record: Detroit, MI
Date of Loss: 10 February 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 162025N 1070647E (YD257076)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: OH-6A

Other Personnel in Incident: Joseph R. Pietrzak (missing)

SYNOPSIS: WO Mark J. Robertson, pilot, and Sgt. Joseph R. Pietrzak, observer, were flying aboard an OH-6A helicopter on a visual reconnaissance mission in Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam on February 10, 1972. The helicopter was hit by heavy 51 caliber machine gun fire in the power compartment and fuel section. It burst into flames and fell vertically and exploded on impact.

Other helicopters in the area immediately attempted to land and search the area for survivors, but the crewmen reported that enemy fire and deteriorating weather conditions prevented them from doing so. None of the crews conducting visual searches saw survivors or bodies around the blazing helicopter. Radio frequencies were monitored for a period after that, with no result. Enemy activity in the area prevented further search in the loss area near the Laos border.

After Action Report for: 26 February 1971

SWANSON, JON EDWARD

REFNO: R1709
Name: Jon Edward Swanson
Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
Unit: Troop B, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 01 May 1942 (San Antonio TX)
Home City of Record: Denver, CO
Date of Loss: 26 February 1971
Country of Loss: Cambodia
Loss Coordinates: 115938N 1055053E (WU923259)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: OH-6A

Other Personnel in Incident: Larry G. Harrison (missing)

SYNOPSIS: Jon Swanson was the pilot of an OH-6A with Larry Harrison as observer on a visual reconnaissance mission, while providing close air support to an ambushed ARVN convoy in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia.

When the aircraft was flying at a low altitude marking enemy positions, it came under fire from two machine guns and was seen to burst into flames and crash. Another helicopter landed near the site, but was forced to take off when it came under heavy enemy fire. Repeated attempts by both ARVN ground troops and U.S. helicopters to reach the downed helicopter were thwarted by enemy fire.

On February 27, U.S. helicopters returned to the area and saw what they believed to be two remains near the crash site. As late as March 7, the remains were observed near the crash site, but could not be recovered due to enemy fire.

It was a common practice for communist troops to leave "bait" to lure other aircraft hoping to rescue downed aircrews into a hostile area. Because of the enemy presence in the area of the downed aircraft, it is possible that the bodies of Swanson and Harrison were used in this manner.

After Action Report for: 5 March 1971

MOREIRA, RALPH ANGELO JR.

REFNO: R1717

Name: Ralph Angelo Moreira, Jr.
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Company C,
158th Aviation Btn,
101st Airborne Brigade

Date of Birth: 19 June 1949
Home City of Record: Beaver Falls, PA
Date of Loss: 05 March 1971
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 163850N 1061544E
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

Other Personnel In Incident: Joel C. Hatley; Michael E. King (all missing)

SYNOPSIS: On March 5, 1971 Capt. David L. Nelson was aircraft commander of a UH-1H helicopter in a flight of ten aircraft on a combat assault mission in Savannakhet Province, Laos. His crew that day was WO Ralph Moreira, pilot; SP4 Joel Hatley, crewchief; SP4 Michael E. King, door gunner.

While on its final approach to Landing Zone Sophia, and at the time the pilot should have been making his final turn, Nelson radioed that the aircraft had been hit in the fuel cell and that the door gunner had been wounded in the head. He then said they would attempt to return to the fire support base on the same flight path as previously briefed.

After the other aircraft had disembarked their troops and were on their way back to the fire support base, some of the other crewmen said they saw a chopper believed to be that commanded by Nelson burst into flames, crash and explode. As soon as the ball of flame was observed, attempts to make radio contact were made with no success. No formal air to ground search was attempted because of enemy anti-aircraft fire and ground activity in the area.

In 1988 a former officer in the Royal Lao Army, Somdee Phommachanh, stated on national television that he was held captive along with two Americans at a prison camp in northern Laos. One day Somdee found one of the prisoners dead in his cell. Somdee identified the American very positively from a photo. His name, he said, was David Nelson. Nelson was a friend to Somdee and Somdee would not forget him. Somdee buried his friend with all the care he would a cherished loved one, given his limited ability as a prisoner of war. Although Somdee has been threatened, he has stuck to his story.

NELSON, DAVID LINDFORD

Name: David Lindford Nelson
Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
Unit: Company C, 158th Aviation Btn,
101st Airborne Brigade
Date of Birth: 10 November 1943
Home City of Record: Kirkland, WA
Date of Loss: 05 March 1971
Country of Loss: Laos
Loss Coordinates: 163850N 1061544E
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

After Action Report for: 17 May 1971

PEARCE, DALE ALLEN

REFNO: R1747

Name: Dale Allen Pearce
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Company A, 158th Aviation Battalion,
101st Airborne Division

Date of Birth: 26 November 1950 (Cleveland OH)
Home City of Record: Mentor OH
Date of Loss: 17 May 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 163425N 1065323E (YD048268)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

Other Personnel In Incident: SP5 Harold E. Parker, crew chief and SP4 Gary A. Alcorn, door gunner

SYNOPSIS: W1 Dale A. Pearce, pilot; W1 David P. Soyland, aircraft commander; SP5 Harold E. Parker, crew chief; and SP4 Gary A. Alcorn, door gunner, comprised the crew of a UH-1H helicopter on an assault/extraction mission on May 17, 1971.

The aircraft departed Camp Evans in South Vietnam as part of a helicopter team attempting to extract a reconnaissance team that was under heavy fire by an unknown size enemy force about 10 miles northeast of Khe Sanh in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

Upon approach to the target, WO1 Pearce's aircraft began taking heavy enemy fire. The aircraft began to bank to the right and was hit, causing the helicopter to start to turn over. An RPG hit and severed the tail boom, and the violence of the explosion threw Alcorn from the aircraft just before it crashed. After impact, the aircraft slid to the bottom of a slope.

On May 18, a recovery team was inserted in the area to recover the remains of the original reconnaissance team and to search the aircraft wreckage for survivors. At this time, both Parker and Alcorn were discovered alive, and remains which were assumed to be those of Pearce were found. Without tools, the recovery of the remains was impossible, as they were wedged beneath the aircraft debris. The left pilot seat was completely intact, and no sign of blood on it or in the immediate area was found. All harnesses in the aircraft had been unfastened.

Alcorn reported that he saw a man in a white t-shirt running across the ridge line. A search aircraft in the area reported hearing a loud beeper distress signal. It was concluded that the man had been W1 Soyland, who would have been the occupant of the left pilot seat. From the way the aircraft impacted, on its right side, Soyland, seated on the left side of the aircraft, would have had a high probability of surviving the crash.

SOYLAND, DAVID PECOR

Name: David Pecor Soyland
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Company A, 158th Aviation Battalion,
101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 29 April 1951 (Fullerton CA)
Home City of Record: Rapid City SD
Date of Loss: 17 May 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 163425N 1065323E (YD048268)
Status (in 1973): Missing in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH-1H

After Action Report for: 28 May 1971

URQUHART, PAUL DEAN

REFNO: R1750

Name: Paul Dean Urquhart
Rank/Branch: 03/US Army
Unit: Company B, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 30 September 1944 (Ishpeming MI)
Home City of Record: McMurray, PA
Date of Loss: 28 May 1971 ✓
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 162100N 1070818E (YD284087)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: OH-6A

Other Personnel in Incident: Stephen Chavira (missing)

SYNOPSIS: Capt. Paul D. Urquhart, pilot and SP4 Stephen Chavira, observer, were the crew of an OH-6A helicopter on a visual reconnaissance mission in the northern A Shau Valley in Thua Thin Province, South Vietnam. A UH-1H was a chase ship for two AH-1G gunships on this mission.

During an area recheck, while at an altitude of 30 feet above ground level, one of the gunship commanders saw a rocket propelled grenade round strike Capt. Urquhart's aircraft and explode, causing the tail boom to bend in half. The aircraft was seen to explode into flames, crash and burn on a small knoll.

An area about 25 meters around the crash site was burned off by the ensuing fire, thus permitting an accessible view by aerial reconnaissance over the area after the crash. None of the witnesses reported seeing anyone thrown clear of the helicopter during the mid-air explosion or during the crash. No remains or survivors were seen after the crash.

No ground search was conducted due to enemy activity in the area. On June 7, reconnaissance of the area was conducted during which the investigating officer saw no signs of survivors or remains.

After Action Report for: 15 July 1971

TAYLOR, TED JAMES

REFNO: R1760

Name: Ted James Taylor
Rank/Branch: 03/US Army
Unit: Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 09 November 1945
Home City of Record: Lancaster, SC
Date of Loss: 15 July 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 164030N 1065219E (XD996444)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: Capt. Ted J. Taylor was the pilot and 1Lt. Howard John Becker, Jr. was the front seat of an AH-1G Cobra gunship (serial #67-15674) that departed Quang Tri on July 15, 1971 on a combat assault mission. Their destination was Red Devil Road in South Vietnam.

As their helicopter started to descend, an explosion occurred. Noticing their instruments were still in normal operating range, they decided to head for Forward Base Sheppard. Capt. Taylor then reported that he had overshot Sheppard and was going to go on to Vandergrift, rather than circle around.

Taylor was proceeding down the Quang Tri River (or Da Krone River) when the aircraft engine failed. Taylor successfully autogyrated into the river, and he and Becker got safely out of the aircraft. They were standing at the tail section still wearing their body armor when the chase ship came to pick them up.

During the rescue attempt, Capt. Taylor was pulled out of the water by holding onto the helicopter skid. He stayed on the skid while Becker was being picked up. Both fell into the rain swollen river, a strong river undertow sucked them under water and they drowned. Taylor was not seen after that moment. Search efforts in and along the river were unsuccessful in locating either Taylor or his body. Becker's body was recovered.

After Action Report for: 26 October 1971

TRUDEAU, ALBERT RAYMOND

REFNO: R1775
Name: Albert Raymond Trudeau
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: 68th Aviation Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade, Camp Holloway, Pleiku RV
Date of Birth: 18 September 1949 (Teaneck NJ)
Home City of Record: Milwaukee, WI
Date of Loss: 26 October 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam/Over Water
Loss Coordinates: 121301N 1091847E (CP165510)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: CH-47B

Other Personnel In Incident: Michael Lautzenheiser; Mickey Eveland; Thomas Green; Sanford I. Finger; Robert A. Nickol (all missing); three other non-crew aboard-bodies recovered.

SYNOPSIS: Before dawn on the morning of October 26, 1971, Mickey Eveland was awakened by his assistant platoon leader, G.J. Curry and told that he was needed as crew chief for a resupply flight from Camp Holloway at Pleiku to Cha Rang Valley and An Son. SP4 Walia, the crew's usual crew chief had to be present at a promotion board that day, so Mickey Eveland was selected to fill in for him. Pvt. Green, gunner; WO Albert Trudeau, pilot; CWO Leonard Maquiling, aircraft commander; SP5 Michael Lautzenheiser, the flight engineer; were also awakened. The crew flew from the 52nd Aviation Battalion, "Flying Dragons". Mickey had a hard time waking up, and Curry had to return to reawaken him. Maquiling, the oldest of the crew, had just turned 23; Trudeau had just turned 22. Eveland and Green were barely 19. Mike was 20.

The CH-47B, serial #66-19143, call sign Warrior 143, departed Camp Holloway at 0750 that morning and arrived at An Son at 0900 hours after a stop at Cha Rang Valley. While at An Son, the aircraft received further orders to fly to Cam Ranh Bay with a stop at Tuy Hoa. The helicopter arrived at Tuy Hoa at 1115

SECTION XIII - After Action Reports 244

13-00000

BECKER, HOWARD JOHN, JR.

Name: Howard John Becker, Jr.
Rank/Branch: 02/US Army
Unit: Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth: 6 August 1947
Home City of Record: Des Plaines, IL
Date of Loss: 15 July 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 164030N 1065219E (XD996444)
Status (in 1973): Killed in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

MAQUILING, LEONARD GIDEON

Name: Leonard Gideon Maquiling
Rank/Branch: W2/US Army
Unit: 68th Aviation Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade, Camp Holloway, Pleiku RV
Date of Birth: 13 October 1948
Home City of Record: Honolulu, HI
Date of Loss: 26 October 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam/Over Water
Loss Coordinates: 121301N 1091847E (CP165510)
Status (in 1973): Killed in Action

hours and departed there at 1350 hours. Shortly after departure from Tuy Hoa, Trudeau radioed that he had 10 people aboard and expected to arrive at Cam Ranh Bay at 1420 hours. He had taken on 6 passengers for the flight, Finger, Nickol, and three others. The weather was expected to worsen south of Tuy Hoa, and the pilot was cautioned to contact Coastal Center for weather conditions.

The last time anyone saw Warrior 143, it was near Nha Trang, headed south into bad weather. Search and Rescue was initiated 1555 hours. Between October 27 and November 1, debris identified as being from 143 was found washed ashore on Hon Tre island, just offshore from Nha Trang. The condition of the debris recovered indicated that the aircraft had struck the water at high speed. In all, four crew members' remains were found during the search period. However, there was no sign of Eveland, Trudeau, Nickol, Green, Finger or Lautzenheiser. An extensive search continued through November 9, without success. In 1972, the missing crew members were declared Killed in Action, Body Not Recovered. An additional recovery attempt was made based on the possible sighting of the wreckage of the aircraft on October 9, 1974. Two South Vietnamese scuba divers spent 1 hour and 30 minutes each in an underwater search, but did not locate the wreckage.

After Action Report for: 14 December 1971

PERRY, OTHA LEE

REFNO:
Name: Otha Lee Perry
Rank/Branch: W2/US Army
Unit: Quartermaster School (QMC),
Training Advance Detachment, Training
Directorate, MACV
Date of Birth: 11 May 1941 (Memphis TN)
Home City of Record: Detroit, MI
Date of Loss: 14 December 1971
Country of Loss: South Vietnam/Over Water
Loss Coordinates: 151835N 1081635E (BU090050)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: U-21A

Other Personnel in Incident: Dwight A. Bremmer; Floyd D. Caldwell; Gregg N. Hollinger; Cecil C. Perkins Jr.; John G. Boyanowski (all missing)

SYNOPSIS: On December 14, 1971, CW2 Otha L. Perry, pilot; Capt. Cecil C. Perkins, co-pilot; LtCol. John Boyanowski, Capt. Gregg N. Hollinger, SP4 Dwight A. Bremmer and SSgt. Floyd D. Caldwell, passengers; were aboard a U-21A aircraft (tail #18041), call sign "Long Trip 041, which was lost while flying an administrative mission from Phu Bai to Da Nang, South Vietnam.

During the flight, about 15 miles northeast of Da Nang, the aircraft experienced an inflight emergency. The pilot reported that he had lost his number 2 engine, and had a fire. Within minutes after the emergency, both radio and radar contact was lost. The aircraft was never seen or heard from again.

Search aircraft proceeded to the last known location of Long Trip 041, but inclement weather and poor visibility curtailed the search. Extensive searches were conducted for the next three days, but no trace of the aircraft or personnel was ever found. The personnel aboard the aircraft were declared dead, bodies not recoverable.

CW2 Perry was a helicopter pilot on a previous tour in Vietnam.

After Action Report for: 19 December 1971

SKILES, THOMAS WILLIAM

REFNO: R1787
Name: Thomas William Skiles
Rank/Branch: W1/US Army
Unit: Air Cavalry Troop, 2nd Squadron,
11th Armored Cavalry
Date of Birth: 31 August 1949 (El Paso TX)
Home City of Record: Buffalo WY
Date of Loss: 19 December 1971
Country of Loss: Cambodia
Loss Coordinates: 115901N 1055633E (XU026248)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: OH-6A

FORAME, PETER CHARLES

Name: Peter Charles Forame
Rank/Branch: O2/US Army
Unit: Air Cavalry Troop, 2nd Squadron,
11th Armored Cavalry
Date of Birth: 21 May 1947
Home City of Record: McLean, VA
Date of Loss: 19 December 1971
Country of Loss: Cambodia
Loss Coordinates: 115901N 1055633E (XU026248)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: OH-6A

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: On December 19, 1971, W1 Thomas W. Skiles was the pilot and 1Lt. Peter C. Forame the co-pilot on board an OH-6A helicopter (tail #67-16347) on a bomb damage assessment mission southeast of Bante, Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia.

During the mission, the helicopter began receiving heavy 30 and 51 caliber automatic weapons fire and in attempting to climb, the helicopter turned and burst into flames. The aircraft passed over an open area and crashed into a tree line, exploded on impact, and was completely destroyed by fire in a very short time.

Two other helicopters immediately flew near the crash site to search for survivors, but these aircraft were driven away by RPG and automatic weapons fire. One of the helicopters suffered extensive damage.

A short time later, gunships were called in to suppress the enemy fire. A scout helicopter crew reported that the Forame/Skiles helicopter was destroyed by fire, and that they had spotted two burned bodies near the aircraft. The remainder of the day, air strikes were conducted, and the following day, another attempt to recover the remains was made. This helicopter was shot down and one of the recovery crewmen was critically wounded. On December 22 and 23, extensive air strikes were conducted in the general area to include B52 strikes.

In the same hot region of Cambodia, two had died, and one had been critically wounded by enemy fire trying to bring out the bodies of comrades. The combined military service branches did their best to see that another American life was not taken at this location.

After Action Report for: 5 April 1972

SPENGLER, HENRY MERSHON II

Remains Returned - Identification Announced 22 August 1989

REFNO:
Name: Henry Mershon Spengler II
Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
Unit: Troop F, 79th Artillery, 3rd Brigade,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 26 October 1946 (Ft. Leavenworth KS)
Home City of Record: Alexandria, VA
Date of Loss: 05 April 1972
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 114818N 1963610E (XU746054)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: On April 5, 1972, Capt. Henry M. Spengler, pilot, and WO Charles E. Windeler, aircraft commander, were flying as lead aircraft in an AH-1G helicopter (tail #67-15594) against an enemy force in the vicinity of Loc Ninh in Vinh Long Province, South Vietnam.

As the helicopter was pulling off its second gun run, it was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire. The helicopter began to descend with flames billowing from the exhaust area, and at about 300 feet above the ground, it appeared that the tail boom began to bend and wobble, causing the aircraft to spin to the left.

The gunship crashed, burst into flames, and exploded. Several members of the flight saw the helicopter during the descent and crash, but saw no one escape from the aircraft.

An aerial search was made by numerous aircraft, but no survivors were seen. No ground search was attempted due to hostile fire. An electronic search failed to locate any survivors.

WINDELER, CHARLES CARL JR.

Remains Returned - Identification Announced 22 August 1989

Name: Charles Carl Windeler, Jr.
Rank/Branch: W2/US Army
Unit: Troop F, 79th Artillery, 3rd Brigade,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 28 July 1944 (Newburgh NY)
Home City of Record: Savannah, GA
Date of Loss: 05 April 1972
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 114818N 1963610E (XU746054)
Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

After Action Report for: 11 May 1972

STROBRIDGE, RODNEY LYNN

REFNO: R1855
Name: Rodney Lynn Strobridge
Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
Unit: Battery F, 79th Artillery Battalion,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 22 May 1941 (Denver CO)
Home City of Record: Torrance, CA
Date of Loss: 11 May 1972
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 113825N 1063639E (XT766872)
Status (in 1973): Missing in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

SYNOPSIS: On May 11, 1972, Capt. Robert J. Williams, pilot, and Capt. Rodney L. Strobridge, co-pilot, were flying an AH-1G helicopter (tail #69-15009), as wingmen in a flight of three AH-1G helicopters launched to support allied forces at An Loc, in Binh Long Province, South Vietnam.

While pulling off the target, the aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire. Something had hit near the tail boom, and it was severed from the fuselage. The aircraft went into a flat spin and crashed. It was believed that a SAM (surface to air missile) had hit the aircraft because of the immediate separation of the tail boom.

Capt. Williams' last radio transmission was, "Oh, my God!"

No further radio contact was made with Williams and Strobridge. No one saw the helicopter hit the ground. Both men were thought to have died in the crash of their aircraft.

A refugee later reported that while serving in the 21st Division Engineers at An Loc, he discovered the skeletal remains of an American. The U.S. Army believes this could have been Williams or Strobridge, but the remains have never been recovered.

According to witnesses, Williams and Strobridge are almost certainly dead.

WILLIAMS, ROBERT JOHN

Name: John Robert Williams
Rank/Branch: O3/US Army
Unit: Battery F, 79th Artillery Battalion,
1st Cavalry Division
Date of Birth: 17 September 1943 (Gilroy CA)
Home City of Record: Daleville, AL
Date of Loss: 11 May 1972
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 113825N 1063639E (XT766872)
Status (in 1973): Missing in Action
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: AH-1G