

Section X - Songs of Helicopter Pilots in Vietnam

This is the fourth year the song section has appeared in the Directory. VHPA member Marty Heuer continues to make outstanding contributions to this aspect of our history. If you would like to contribute or comment on the Songs section, please contact Marty directly or via the VHPA.

Since this year's Directory focuses on those unique helicopters that somehow manage to fly - and fly quite well - without a tail rotor, we wondered if the pilots of these strange machines wrote and sang songs like their counter-parts flying more conventional helicopters. Even though there weren't many tandem rotor pilots compared to the total number of pilots in Vietnam, we managed to find a few who wrote and sang songs during their tour.

CH-21 SHAWNEE

The CH-21 was the first of the tandem rotor helicopters to see action in Vietnam. They were brought over by the U.S. Army's 57th and 8th Transportation Companies in November 1961. Anyone who flew those tired old birds would quickly confirm that a successful return to base from any mission was cause to celebrate with at least two of the time honored methods - wine and song.

Some of the songs CH-21 pilots wrote and sang were featured in last year's directory. Songs like FIVE HUNDRED BAGS and SHAWNEE PILOTS LAMENT expressed both pride and disgust with the "Flying Banana." Three additional songs about the woes of the CH-21 pilot include HAL-LELUJA, BLESS THEM ALL and I WANTED WINGS. Although the latter three tunes originated circa World War II, the Shawnee pilots changed the words to fit their aircraft and their experiences with it. Some of the terminology used in these songs may not be universally understood, like: "cruising at sixty five" or "my tanks ain't got no gas" or "lost manifold pressure" or "when they shoot your tail plane half-off" - but you can bet every Shawnee pilot knew!

CH-46 SEA KNIGHT

Marine pilots who flew the CH-46 were also known to sing but all of their performances were spontaneous and acappella according to Bernard A. "Capt. Mac" McGinley.

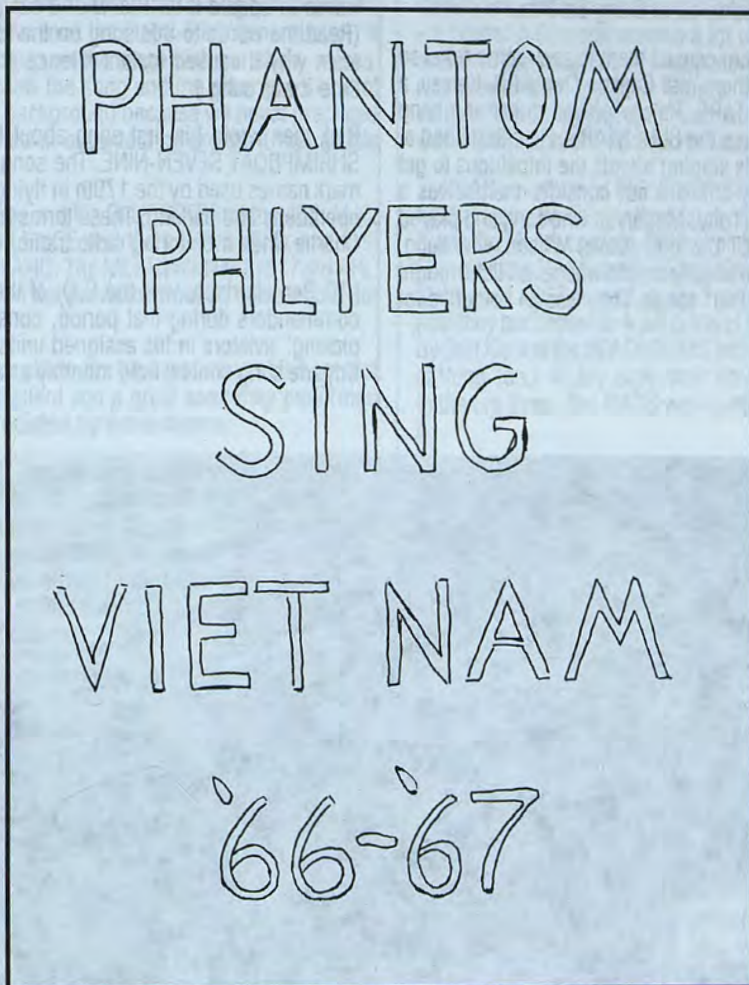
Bernie flew CH-46's with HMM-164 at Phu Bai. HMM stands for Helicopter Marine Medium. He joined the squadron in August 1967, about two years after the Marines began flying the Sea Knights in Vietnam.

HMM-164 was also located at Quang Tri. During that period they lived in tents, sang bawdy songs, tipped a few beers and flew their butts off. When they re-located to Phu Bai, they were called "The Barbarians from the North."

Some of his Vietnam flying experiences were related in a letter he wrote after the Philadelphia Reunion, published in the August 1994 VHPA Newsletter. The cover photo of this Newsletter shows two CH-46A's of HMM-164 in formation near Da Nang. Many of you probably missed the

.50 caliber machine guns mounted in the front doors. These guns were not used very often, according to Bernie, and were more for defense than offense as compared to the Army's employment of the .30 caliber MG's on it's helicopters.

Bernie mentioned that he had a copy of a "song book" entitled PHANTOM PHLYERS SING - VIETNAM 1966-67. The book has two sections. The first ten pages are titled SONGS YOU'D SING TO MOM. The last thirty-seven pages are titled CONFIDENTIAL SUPPLEMENT - NOT FOR VIRGIN EARS OR WEAK STOMACHS. The guy who wrote that title knew what he was doing.



Most of the songs in the supplement are about fighter aircraft due to the fact that most Navy and Marine pilots were fixed-wing qualified before going on to a specialty like rotary-wing. There are numerous songs that apply to flying in general, and other things, but most would have too many @*#@! words, rendering them unpublishable. Worse, the "Jargonauts" (pursuers of political correctness) would not approve.

Bernie perused the book and selected three songs to represent Marine Aviation in Vietnam. PHANTOM PHLYERS IN THE SKY, to the tune "Ballad of the Green Berets", mentions (a nice word) every service, but it's clearly a Marine song. THERE ARE NO CHOPPER PILOTS DOWN IN HELL makes the statement that all chopper pilots, regardless of service (we hope), are nearing sainthood. It is curious that the word "fighter" was left out as it almost always is used in the countless versions. AVIATOR'S HYMN to the tune "Battle Hymn of the Republic" is Bernie's favorite.

CH-47 CHINOOK

The end of the CH-21 era was hastened by the loss of many of these war-scarred aircraft to escalating combat action and the introduction of the CH-47 for the Army as it's medium lift helicopter. The Marines and Navy acquired the CH-46 Sea Knight, a smaller version of the Chinook, as their medium lift helicopter. These aircraft were all produced by Boeing.

The first Chinooks in Vietnam were brought over by the 228th ASHB, 1st Cavalry Division in 1965 and other CH-47 companies were being activated and formed in the States.

A young, dual rated 1LT aviator by the name of Patrick O. (Rick) Kelly reported to the 176th AHC in the Spring of 1966. He had just finished his UH-1 transition when he was transferred to the 179th ASHC, a Chinook

company forming at Ft. Benning, Ga. Rick joined this unit and found the usual situation -16 majors, 5 captains, 2 first LT's, with the rest of the aviator slots filled by CW4's and CW3's.

The 179th ASHC followed the SOP for newly formed units going to Vietnam. The personnel trained, drew equipment, then flew their new CH-47's to the west coast where they were prepared and shipped. The personnel were flown to Oakland where they boarded a ship that took almost a month to get to Cam Ranh Bay, arriving in June 1966.

Rick had taken his baritone ukulele with him on the ship and, to pass the endless hours, played and sang current songs like "Sincerely" and "In The Still Of The Night" while his shipmates, happy for the diversion, joined in humming, singing or just tapping out the beat.

The 179th disembarked at Cam Ranh Bay, crossed the pontoon bridge to Dong Ba Thin and set up what was to be a temporary tent camp. They did, however, take the time to sand bag the whole area. They were initially assigned to the 10th CAB, headquartered at Dong Ba Thin.

Again, the endless hours of boredom caused them to seek some relief so they found the officer's club and there met Captain Donald R. Kelsey, a member of the 48th AHC BLUESTARS. Kelsey played guitar and sang with a group who called themselves the BLUESTARS. He entertained at the club and that gave Rick and his singing friends the impetus to get together more regularly, but they still did not consider themselves a "singing group". CPT Anthony N. (Tony) Muller, Jr. who sang and played a tenor guitar on occasion and 1LT David E. (Dave) Wilson, who sang, but did not play an instrument, were usually around whenever Rick brought out the ukulele to sing "Kingston Trio" songs. Tony was an "older" pilot who had flown CH-21's in Korea.

During the month of July, while waiting for their Chinooks, the pilots of the 179th were flown to An Khe where the 1st Cavalry CH-47 pilots gave them their in-country check-out.

The aircraft finally arrived, were re-assembled and the unit departed their temporary camp at Dong Ba Thin for Camp Holloway at Pleiku in mid-August 1966 where they were assigned "rather nice" temporary billets. They began flying missions immediately in support of the 4th, 25th and 101st Infantry Divisions all along and near the Cambodian and Laotian borders. The 179th ASHC adopted the call sign SHRIMPBOATS.

It was at Camp Holloway that Rick, Tony and Dave began singing together as a group. They sang a number of current songs together until they felt confident enough to take their performance to the officer's club at Holloway.

Rick had composed a song with original words and music titled THE LETTER just prior to leaving the States. He added and changed a few words to update it for Pleiku and sang it at the club a couple of times. (Read the words to this song on the following pages and you will soon learn why it caused instant silence and universal contemplation every time it was sung.)

Rick then wrote his first song about flying in Vietnam and he titled it SHRIMPBOAT SEVEN-NINE. The song included all the "nautical" landmark names used by the 179th in flying the traffic pattern, during ground operations and parking. These terms must have confused the hell out of Charlie when monitoring radio traffic.

LTC Ben Harrison, was the C.O. of the 10th CAB. He, like all battalion commanders during that period, constantly searched for "singing and picking" aviators in his assigned units to enter them in the 1st Aviation Brigade song contest held monthly as a part of the Brigade Commanders



Unknown

Dave Wilson

Rick Kelly

Unknown

Unknown

Tuy Hoa, RVN

Conference. It didn't take him long to find Rick, Tony and Dave. It took him less time to convince them to enter the song contest at the Brigade Conference at Vung Tau, only a few days away.

Suddenly, their pastime had become a mission. Needing an official name for their trio, they became the "NADS", one of the more unique names selected by any of these groups. Why the NADS? Whenever the group sang, the cruder members of the audience could then yell "Go Nads, go Nads!"

The NADS flew to Dong Ba Thin on 24 September 1966 where they met LTC Harrison who piloted the Huey toward Vung Tau in "pretty much" zero-zero weather going over the mountains. Rick might have been the only instrument rated pilot on board, besides LTC Harrison, and that probably was a disadvantage.

The anxiety and tension created during the flight built as the contest loomed ever closer. The 170th AHC BUCCANEERS, also from Pleiku, were the first to sing. Then the NADS were introduced to sing SHRIMPBOAT SEVEN-NINE. Rick, Tony and Dave took the stage. Rick remembers: "It was basically fear for us. We got up on the stage with our shaky voices. I was the only one who really knew the song and the other guys kind of sang and hummed along in the background because we never practiced it. We had never really performed in a contest before so it was a little different, but interesting."

They were followed by CPT Kelsey and his BLUESTARS of the 48th AHC, an unidentified group, PINEAPPLE JOE and the LAKANUKIES, and THE HIGH PRICED HELP of the 174th AHC. The MERRYMEN of the 173rd AHC also sang, but since they had won the previous month's contest, did not compete as was the rule.

Although the NADS did not win or place, the tape recording of the contest makes it clear they had a lot of talent and a great song they performed very well, all of which was appreciated by the audience.

The group added a "gut bucket" bass after seeing one the MERRYMEN used at Vung Tau. They constructed theirs out of half of a 55 gallon drum with a heavy string attached to the center of the top and then attached to a broom handle which was notched to fit on the edge of the barrel. When the top of the broom handle was moved toward the edge, it put more tension on the string resulting in a higher bass note. Dave Wilson practiced playing this and became quite proficient.

The NADS entered the October contest held at the Red Bull Inn in Saigon. They sang THE LETTER to a full house and knew the song "had really hit home. All the other groups were singing songs that provoked lots of laughter and applause," Rick remembers. "From the time we began singing, the audience became very serious and silent and when we finished, you could have heard a pin drop. Nobody clapped. We just picked up our gut bucket and hauled ourselves off the stage." The NADS did not win or place but they had made an impression. (The tape recording of this conference has not yet been found but a portion of it, including THE LETTER as it was performed that day by the NADS, confirms Rick's impression of the event. However, the audience did applaud but there was a delay before it started.)

Rick was approached by individuals on two separate occasions, requesting use of his song THE LETTER. Someone from AFBN (Armed Forces Broadcast Network) was planning a documentary and wanted to use it as background music. The other was Wayne West, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans music director. Roy and Dale stopped at Pleiku on their Vietnam tour in 1966 to entertain the troops. There were no rotating entertainers going from club to club in those early years, so Roy and Dale's performance was a rare event. Mr. West had heard about Rick's song from someone and came to Rick's hootch to ask him to sing it for him. Duly impressed, he told Rick he wanted to get the song recorded in the States. He said he'd either do it himself or he'd get a major name to record it. To protect Rick's interests, Wayne explained the copyright procedures. Rick states "I never got around to it, he never got the song, so it never got recorded, one way or the other." Who knows - the song might have been a hit!

The 180th ASHC, newly formed at Ft. Benning, arrived at Dong Ba Thin on 10 November 1966. Their callsign was BIG WINDY. They were assigned

to the 10th CAB. A DEROS infusion from the 179th to the 180th took place immediately, but also served to provide the 180th with experienced in-country pilots. About one-half of the pilots were exchanged between the two units. Rick (now a Captain), Tony and Dave were all sent to the 180th. We believe LTC Harrison had something to do with that!

The 180th was abruptly moved from Dong Ba Thin to Tuy Hoa because there was a certain incompatibility between Chinooks, Bird Dogs and Hueys in a small parking area.

Having just arrived at Tuy Hoa at a small village named Phu Hiep La Ba, the personnel of the 180th were faced with the chore of building the camp. For those who had transferred from the 179th this was their second chance to get it right. They didn't want to be accused of "redumbant" - making the same mistake twice. Everyone pitched in to make themselves as comfortable as they could be - in a tent city.

In between the construction and flying missions, the NADS wrote a song about their commander. They titled it BIG WINDY SIX. The theme is clear - a hovering Chinook creates a lot of wind! The NADS insisted that the events in the song actually happened and it was the reason why the 180th was moved from Dong Ba Thin to Tuy Hoa. The C.O. was affectionately called "The Doughnut Dad" and was written into the lyrics. PHANTOM was the callsign of LTC Ben Harrison.

The NADS performed BIG WINDY SIX at either the February 1967 contest held at Dong Ba Thin or the March contest held at Vung Tau. (We believe it was the March contest. Neither of these contest tapes have been found. However, the NADS sang BIG WINDY SIX as an "after the contest" offering at the April 1967 contest at Soc Trang which is in the archives so we know how they performed it. A set of travel orders dated 2 March 1967 provided by Britt Knox of the BEACHBUMS includes the NADS for the March contest at Vung Tau.) In any case, their song didn't win but it may have placed in the top three. The NADS were getting better and the competition knew it.

The pilots of the 180th ASHC supported a Brigade of the 101st. They lived in tents with the Brigade a large part of the time, away from their base camp at Phu Hiep because of the type missions flown. The music provided a respite from the constant pressure of flying and gave Rick, Tony and Dave time to enjoy each other's company and have fun while performing for the troops in the field. Dave Wilson was promoted to Captain around this time.

The missions flown were primarily second lift combat assaults. The first Huey lift would go in with the gunships. This first lift would, theoretically, secure the LZ, then the Chinooks would bring in the troops, 32 at a time. Next they'd bring in the artillery and support the new base by hauling supplies.

Moving the artillery posed the greatest challenge to their flying skills. It seemed the artillery always wanted to plant themselves on top of hills where there were no flat spots and once the troops and guns were in place, there was nowhere for the aircraft to land. That forced them to land on the side of the hill, putting their back wheels on the hill, the front wheels hanging out over the valley with the pilots holding this semi-hover and with no point of reference. They'd have to stay in that position until the ramp was lowered and the cargo unloaded.

The 180th also supported the Koreans whenever they were in the area and moved ARVN troops frequently in their AO.

Tony, the pusher/driver of the group constantly reminded Rick and Dave time was getting short and they needed a new song to present at the rapidly approaching April contest. The idea for the song came from Rick. He suggested they write "about pilots like themselves, who liked to get out of the field occasionally, out of the tents, and go see where the big guys lived." Once the idea was accepted they collaborated in the writing, using mainly their own experiences. They called it SONG CONTEST.

On 15 April, the NADS represented the 180th ASHC at the contest held at Soc Trang. There were seven other contestant groups or individuals competing and once again, the NADS were the second group to perform. Tony sang the lead with Rick and Dave singing harmony. The words and

music were great but the NADS, now experienced, turned it into entertainment and the audience loved it. If measured by applause alone, SONG CONTEST had already beaten the competition - but there were still six groups waiting their turn.

The contest finally ended, the votes were tallied and the NADS had won. Rick, Tony and Dave were "feeling pretty good" but were immediately called upon to perform SONG CONTEST again, an established tradition, and then they sang SKY KING and BIG WINDY SIX.

The NADS were now getting "short." They wrote one more song COLONEL JOHNNY MARR and sang it at the 27 May 1967 contest at Long Binh. In fact, Rick doesn't remember this song or contest but the tape of the event confirms that a group introduced as the NADS was there. The inspiration for the song was, of course, COL John Marr, who had commanded the 17th CAG for over a year. He was well respected as both a commander and individual so the NADS honored him with the song. They had accomplished their mission and were anxious to go home.

Rick, Tony and Dave created some great songs that will endure as the story of Army Aviation in Vietnam is recorded.

Rick's fondest memories of that experience were the jam sessions after the contests when all the competitors got together to play, sing and have a good time. Anyone who ever had the opportunity to participate would heartily agree.

Another CH-47 unit, the 242nd ASHC, arrived in-country in August 1967. They were located at Cu Chi and MULESKINNER was their callsign.

We haven't been able to find any MULESKINNER pilots who wrote and sang songs but Gary B. Roush, a 1LT at the time he served with the 242nd, related a story that resulted in a poem - AN ODE TO MULESKINNER - CHRISTMAS 1968.

The story, including the poem, was published as a chapter titled "AN ODE TO MULESKINNER" in Philip D. Chinnery's book, "Life On The Line: Stories Of Vietnam Air Combat." The chapter is Gary's narrative of his experience as a MULESKINNER flying supplies to the top of Nui Ba Den mountain, 3,235 feet high, where the Army had an observation and radio relay base.

Nui Ba Den was known to the Vietnamese as the Black Virgin Mountain. The personnel at the relay base were dependent on the daily resupply flown in by the MULESKINNERS as the camp was virtually inaccessible from the ground. Everyone knew Charlie controlled the ground around the base and on all sides up the mountain to the camp at the top. Between the weather that frequently obscured the top half with clouds and Charlie's knowledge that the Chinooks had to fly resupply missions to maintain the camp, the pilots of the 242nd never lacked excitement.

Major Dutcher was the C.O. of the team on Nui Ba Den. Each day he observed the heroics displayed by the pilots of the 242nd, so in mid-December 1968, he wrote the poem and sent it to the MULESKINNERS. After receiving the poem, Gary and his hootchmate, Mike Ryan attempted to pull a palm "Christmas" tree out of the ground at Mole City, south of Tay Ninh, but the Chinook failed to separate the tree from the ground. They went back with C-4 but by then Charlie had attacked Mole City and their palm tree had been destroyed.

You might ask why AN ODE TO MULESKINNER - CHRISTMAS 1968 is in the songs section. Well, the lyrics to songs are nothing more than poems without music. There are at least three well known songs to which the ODE can be sung. The first, to keep the Christmas theme, is "Up On The House-top," a song most of you remember from grade school days. The missing chorus could be:

Ho, Ho, Ho, who will go,
Ho, Ho, Ho, who will go,
Up Nui Ba Den Mountain, whop, whop, whop,
Through clouds and tracers, for a resupply drop.

The second is the tune "Strawberry Roan" and the third is "On Top Of Old Smokey" (perhaps the most appropriate since the "ODE" is about a

mountain top.) All of you singers can pick the one you like, or come up with your own tune, but now it qualifies for the songs section. Thanks to Major Dutcher, the MULESKINNERS have a poem, and a song, which they got the old fashioned way - they earned it!

HH-43 HUSKIE

The Air Force brought over the HH-43 twin rotor HUSKIE for use in search/rescue and an airbase firefighting/rescue role. We searched but could find nary a reference to this unique aircraft in any of the songs received thus far. Air Force pilots were prolific songwriters and singers, but it seems few, if any, flew the HH-43.

HALLELUIA

From a "song book" procured by CPT William E. (Bill) McGee (117th AHC) in Vietnam 1963-64. The songs were those of the 57th and 8th Transportation Companies or from the Utility Tactical Transportation Company (UTT). Composers unknown at this time.

Tune: "Throw A Nickel On The Drum"

CHORUS: (Repeat after each verse)

Oh Halleluia, Oh Halleluia,
Throw a nickel on the grass, save a chopper pilots ass.
Oh Halleluia, Oh Halleluia,
Throw a nickel on the grass and you'll be saved.

I was cruising down the Mekong doing sixty, and five per,
When a call came from the Major, O won't you save me Sir.
Got three holes in my rotor blades, my tanks ain't got no gas,
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, I got V.C. on my ass!!

I put the pitch stick on the floor, to me it looked all right,
The airspeed read one hundred, I really racked it tight.
The airframe gave a shudder, the engine gave a wheeze,
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Crash instructions please!!

I just fell through on final and the pilot gave a shout,
He was yelling at the Crew Chief, Oh get those bastards out!
I pulled in pitch and power, the RPM did fall,
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, they did hear me call!!

They sent me down to Tan Hiep, they said will be a breeze,
But by the time I got there, there were V.C. in the trees.
My engine coughed and sputtered, it was too shot up to fly,
Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, I'm too young to die!!

I climbed out from the Shawnee, loaded down with guns,
Struggling through the water, I thought my time had come.
The other chopper landed, it was a pretty sight,
Baby, Baby, Baby, We'll see Saigon tonight!!

BLESS THEM ALL

From a "song book" procured by CPT William E. (Bill) McGee (117th AHC) in Vietnam 1963-64. The songs were those of the 57th and 8th Transportation Companies or from the Utility Tactical Transportation Company (UTT). Composers unknown at this time.

Tune: "Bless Them All"

Bless them all, Bless them all,
The long and the short and the tall.
Bless old man Piasecki for building this plane,
But I know a guy who is cursing in vain.
He took off with his balls to the wall,
Lost manifold pressure and all.
The Son of a Bitch, it ran out of pitch,
Cheer up my lads, bless them all.

Bless them all, Bless them all,
The needle, the airspeed, the ball.
Bless all those instructors who taught us to fly,
Sent us to solo and left us to die.
If ever your blade tip should stall,
Well you're in for one hell of a fall.
Buy lilies or violets for dead chopper pilots,

Cheer up my lads, Bless them all.
 Bless them all, Bless them all,
 The long and the short and the tall.
 Bless all the Majors and their bloody sons,
 Bless all the Colonels, the fat headed ones.
 I'm saying good-bye to them all,
 The long and the short and the tall.
 Here's to you and lots others,
 You can shove it up brothers.
 I'm going home in the fall.

I WANTED WINGS

From a "song book" procured by CPT William E. (Bill) McGee (117th AHC) in Vietnam 1963-64. The songs were those of the 57th and 8th Transportation Companies or from the Utility Tactical Transportation Company (UTT). Composers unknown at this time.

Tune: "I Wanted Wings"

I wanted wings til I got the goddamned things,
 Now I don't want them anymore.
 They taught me how to fly then they sent me off to die,
 Well, I've had a belly full of war.
 You can keep the Special Forces, I'll go back to raising horses,
 Distinguished Flying Crosses do not compensate for losses, Buster -

CHORUS (Repeat after each verse)

I wanted wings til I got the goddamned things,
 Now I don't want them anymore.
 Yes, I'll take the dames let the rest go down in flames,
 I have no desire to be burned.
 Combat spells romance til they shoot holes in my pants,
 I'm not a fighter I have learned.
 Observe the OV-1 and I'll go back and have some fun,
 I'd rather make a woman than be shot down in a Grumman, Buster -
 I'm too young to die in the 21 I fly,
 That's for the eager not for me.
 If the rotor blades would stop, I would surely drop,
 Laying in the Delta I would be.
 No the commies aren't for me so save them for the young H.P.
 With my hand around a bottle you can keep your goddamned throttle,
 Buster -

I don't care to tour over Ben Cat and Bo Mour,
 Ground fire always makes me lose my lunch.
 I got an urge to pray when they holler, "troops away",
 I'd rather be at home and with the bunch.
 For there's one thing you can't laugh off,
 When they shoot your tail plane half-off,
 I'd rather be home buster with my tail than with a cluster, Buster -

They feed us lousy chow but we stay alive somehow,
 On dehydrated eggs and milk and stew.
 The rumor has it next they'll be dehydrating sex,
 And that's the day I'll tell the coach I'm through.
 For I've managed all the dangers, the shooting back of strangers,
 But when I get home late, I want my woman laid out straight, O Buster -

SHRIMPBOAT SEVEN-NINE

Original words and music by: 1LT Patrick O. ("Rick") Kelly - 179th ASHC, Pleiku, RVN circa August 1966. Rick was a member of the "NADS".
 (This song was sung at the Commanders Conference at Dong Ba Thin on 24 September 1966 by the "NADS". Members were 1LT Patrick O. Kelly, CPT Anthony N. Muller & 1LT David E. Wilson.)

Tune: Original by Rick Kelly

We came to Vietnam, stayed at old Dong Ba Thin.
 That's really a fine place to be from.
 Those Shrimboats arrive, we headed for Pleiku,
 Camp Holloway was to be our new home.

CHORUS

Hello Holloway tower, this is Shrimboat seven-nine.
 We're beyond the reef for a landin'.
 We'd like to have the base leg into Pier two-three,
 And go into the wharf for the evenin'.

The man in the tower turned to his friend,
 And said in a singular note.
 I've heard of Bikinis and Alligators too,
 But what the hell is a Shrimboat.

CHORUS

Hello Holloway Tower, this is Chinook seven-nine.
 We're at Con Tur mountain for landin'.
 We'd like to have a base leg into runway two three,
 And put into the wharf for the evenin'.

We moved into the camp, the weather it was damp,
 But we thought we were in tall clover.
 Til the C.O. of the Bird Dogs, which parked across the ramp,
 Complained we were blowing his planes over.

CHORUS

Hello Holloway Tower, this is Shrimboat seven-nine.
 We're beyond the reef for a landin'.
 We'll land short, and taxi to the wharf,
 And try to leave a few Bird Dogs standin'.

We went out last month, on our first dangerous mission,
 We even logged CA.
 We had to haul several cases of beer,
 From new Pleiku to Camp Holloway.

CHORUS

Hello Holloway Tower, this is Shrimboat seven-nine.
 We're at new Pleiku for a landin'.
 We'd like to have a right base into pier twenty-five,
 And put into the wharf for the evenin'.

We generally support, artillery in the field,
 With gun moves and ammo resupply.
 But everytime we go in, to a landing zone,
 We blow their tents and lift their ponchos high.

CHORUS

Hello Holloway Tower, this is Shrimboat seven-nine.
 We'd like a straight-in to the Pier.
 We've got two ponchos wrapped around our blades,
 And this Shrimboat is acting mighty queer.

We went out this morning on our usual re-supply,
 But Charlie caught old seven-nine today.
 The crew felt the bullets slam into the ship,
 And this is what we heard the pilot say.

Spoken: Fire back, pull pitch, drop the load! Where the hell are those gunships!

CHORUS

Hello Holloway Tower, this is Shrimboat seven-nine.
 We're way, way beyond the reef for landin'.
 We're coming home to stay, won't fly no more today,
 We'll put into the wharf for the evenin'.
 We'll put into the wharf for the evenin'.

THE LETTER

Original words and music by: 1LT Patrick O. ("Rick") Kelly - 179th ASHC, Pleiku, RVN circa July 1966. Rick was a member of the "NADS".
 (This song was sung at the Commanders Conference at the Red Bull Inn in Saigon in October 1966 by the "NADS". Members were 1LT Patrick O. Kelly, CPT Anthony N. Muller & 1LT David E. Wilson.)

Tune: Original by Rick Kelly

Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam.
 It's been a year and a day, since I went away,
 And left, left you alone, to settle a home,
 There in the States.

It's been hard for me here, with nothing, nothing but beer,
To quench the desire, that burns, burns like a fire,
For you.

Tales from the grapevine, have made, made me so blue,
They whisper behind my back that you, you've been untrue,
While I've been here, while I've been here.

CHORUS

Vietnam is a hell hole, for all men and wives.
We think that it's worth it, and we'll give our lives,
For freedom.

It's not like you at all, to deny, something like this.
If there is one small chance, for our, wedded bliss,
To survive.

What I'm trying to say, is that I still love you.
I'm willing to forget, that you, you've been untrue,
Untrue to me.

There now I've said it, it makes me feel high.
I'll finish this later, there's one more mission to fly.
Love always, Rick - love always, Rick.

CHORUS:

Hello Jill, this is Jim, I'll finish for him.
I was with him today, when God took him away,
At Pleiku.

And the last words he said, as he lay dying in bed were,
I, I, I forgive Jill, and then he lay still.
He is gone, he is gone.

CHORUS: (With two lines below added at end)

For freedom,
He is gone, He is gone.

BIG WINDY SIX

Words by: The "NADS", a trio of Army Aviators assigned to the 180th ASHC,
Tuy Hoa, RVN circa February 1967.

(This song was sung at the Commanders Conference at either the February (Dong Ba Thin) or March (Vung Tau) 1967 by the "NADS". Members were CPT Patrick O. Kelly, CPT Anthony N. Muller & 1LT David E. Wilson.)

Tune: "Saro Jane"

Big Windy Six is a man of fame,
Everywhere he flies he makes a hurricane.
Blow windy, blow,
He woke up one morning feeling mighty mean,
Thought he'd make some trouble with his wind machine.
Blow windy, blow, blow windy blow.

CHORUS: (Repeat after each verse)

Come on and blow big Windy, blow,
Blow Big Windy blow,
Oh, they all run for cover, when he comes to a hover,
So blow Big Windy, blow.

Strapped into the cockpit, he was fighting mad,
Gonna blow the hell out of a chopper pad,
Blow Windy, blow.

Tower man said, taxi on the ground,
Instead he pulled some pitch, blew the tower down.
Blow Windy, blow.

Hovered down the ramp with a smile on his face,
Blowing Huey's all over the place.
Blow Windy, blow, blow Windy, blow.

Heading straight for the Battalion pad,
Look out Phantom, it's the doughnuts dad.
Blow Windy blow.

Phantom saw Windy and he tried to run,
But Big Windy Six was gonna have some fun.
Blow Windy, blow.

He flared that chopper, looking kind of sly,
And blew some dust into the Phantom's eye.
Blow Windy, blow, blow Windy, blow.

Phantom came crawling out of the ditch,
Calling Big Windy a son-of-a-(Hummm).
Blow Big Windy, blow.

Phantom sent Windy out in the sticks,
To show old Charlie, some of his tricks.
Blow Windy, blow.

So if you've seen Charlie, with sand in his face,
You know Big Windy's been blowing his place.
Blow Windy blow, blow Windy, blow.

SONG CONTEST

Words by: The "NADS", a trio of Army Aviators assigned to the 180th ASHC,
Tuy Hoa, RVN circa March 1967.

(This song was sung at the Commanders Conference at Soc Trang on April 1967
by the "NADS". Members were CPT Patrick O. Kelly, CPT Anthony N. Muller &
1LT David E. Wilson.)

Tune: "Everglades"

He was born and raised around Malibu,
A chopper pilot like me and you.
Then a set of orders hit him like a bomb,
Sent him a-chuggin around Vietnam.
Chuggin after Cong in Vietnam.

He reported in and was sent right out,
A real hot pilot now there ain't no doubt.
But a very high DA and some elephant grass,
Showed him how easy he could bust his ass.
He won't last long in the elephant grass.

For many a month he flew that way,
Sweatin' the Cong and the high DA.
Flyin' and shootin' didn't make much sense,
And then he heard tell about the big contest.

The word was out, if a man could sing,
He got invited to this high brow thing.
Since singing was safer than fighting the Cong,
So he bought himself a guitar and he wrote a song.
Bought himself a guitar and he wrote a song.

He entered his song in the big contest,
Thinking that it was above the best.
When he finished singing he was number 10,
They told him not to come back there again.
Told him never to come back there again.

Where a man can go and give out with a song,
And not have to worry about the Viet Cong.
But the pressure on a guy is an awful thing,
When he stands before the brass, with a song to sing.

As the story goes, the very next day,
He was out in the boonies, a-flyin' CA.
He and his C.O. and all of the rest,
Had all been banned from the song contest.
Can't go back to the song contest.

So maybe a tune he could not carry,
He'll leave all of that up to Sgt. Barry.
Now he's cryin' each and every day,
Waitin' on his orders from DA.
Waitin' on his orders from DA.

COLONEL JOHNNY MARR

(We are not sure who wrote the words to this song. It was performed by a group
introduced as the "NADS" at the Commanders Conference on 27 May 1967 in
Long Binh, RVN)

Tune: "Gonna Miss You Honey"

Colonel Johnny Marr, was known as Eagle Six,
He'd been in Vietnam a year, and made them all look sick,
Like night CA's, against the NVA.

He spent his tour a-flyin, he's a man we know so well,
Directing operations, and givin Charlie hell,

But now he's short, gunna leave this port.

CHORUS

Oh, I'm going away, and I'm going to stay, never coming back,
Gonna miss me General, in the days to come,
When the mind begins to getting slow, when the grass is coming up,
When you think of the way, you're gunna wish me back, to lend a hand,
You're gunna miss me General, in the days they say, to come.

General Seneff was the big Commander, of the 1st Aviation Brigade,
Whenever he gave an order, he expected it to be obeyed,
But he was wrong, because we wrote this song.

Now George he needed a reason, why Johnny he should stay,
But Johnny stood there shaking his head, he said I'm agoing away,
And George he sighed, and Johnny cried.

CHORUS:

Now George and Johnny were buddies, but they had a quarrel that day,
Johnny said he was leavin', George wanted him to stay,
He was going home, no more to roam.

Now the General made the statement, that Johnny should extend,
But Johnny said that he'd be damned, his tour was at an end,
Made George say hell, and Johnny yell.

CHORUS: (Repeat last line)

AN ODE TO MULESKINNER-CHRISTMAS 1968

(This is a poem written by Major Dutcher, C.O. of a relay station and observation team on top of Nui Ba Den Mountain. He presented it to the pilots of the 242nd ASHC in mid-December 1968.)

Tune: (See story) Can be sung to "Up On The House-top", "Strawberry Roan" or "On Top Of Old Smokey". (Take your pick or select your own - all you MULESKINNERS)

Atop Nui Ba Den Mountain at thirty-two hundred feet,
The weather is wild and winds are real neat.
But daily we wait for your ship to arrive,
For without you Muleskinner we could not survive.

From Cu Chi each morning you take to the sky,
Vowing "Curses on Dutcher" when you start to fly.
At Tay Ninh's "Viking" you hook up the stuff,
Then on to the mountain - that's when it gets rough.

The radios chatter and the voice that you hear,
Is Nui Ba Den Control bidding you cheer -
"Winds southwest no northeast, at ten no it's forty",
Then One-Six Delta asks, "Hey, what's on this sortie?"

Is it Class One, or ammo, or diesel you bring?
So to avoid confusion we do our thing.
Pop smoke in three places - red, green and "grape" -
Then watch you hover while our ground crew goes ape.

When the dust finally settles and we show you the place.
It's next to antennas in the smallest space.
But at these times we are sure you ask yourself why,
A "slick" or a Cobra you weren't destined to fly.

Now this holiday season is a time to insure,
That we speak of good will and request you endure.
The daily harassment we know we provoke,
Merry Christmas Muleskinner - this wish ain't a joke!

PHANTOM PHYRLERS IN THE SKY

(From a "song book" procured by Bernie "Capt. Mac" McGinley, Marine Squadron HMM-164 at Phu Bai, RVN 1967-68.)

Tune: "Ballad Of The Green Berets"

CHORUS: (Repeat after each verse or whenever you want!)

Phantom Phylers in the sky,
Charlie Cong prepare to die.
For we're out to get your ass,
And leave you dead in the elephant grass.

Hey there fella in the green beret,
You would probably be dead today.
If from the sky we did not blast,
And save your silly Green Bare-ay ass.

Cockpit check, run up and roll,
Charlie Cong, pray for your soul.
Down the chute and zero in,
Take bombs and nape - - -ol' Ho Chi Minh

T.P.Q. and F.A.C.,
M.A.F. and ol' MAC-V.
MAG one three, 542,
Flying Marines up in the blue.

Wings of gold upon their chest,
Naval aviation's best.
Tiger's paw prepared to strike,
Give the Cong a gift, they will not like.

Paratrooper with your boots,
Fancy clothes and parachutes.
The Army's pride, so young and fair,
At Pleiku they called Marine Air.

1st Air Mobile tried and true,
The 25th is helping you.
But when your ass gets in a bind,
Marine Air's not far behind.

Straight leg soldier on the ground,
Watching Phantoms fly 'round and 'round.
Keep your head turned toward the sky,
That's why today you did not die.

Hey there Sailor on the sea,
Phantom jets keep the sky free.
So that you can drink your coke,
Charlie Cong we're gonna smoke.

We've got a skipper, he's OK,
He loves to fly both night and day.
He's cool and suave and debonair,
A terror 'mongst the ladies fair.

Escalators of the war,
Hear our afterburners roar.
Hey there Charlie check you six,
Have a napalm cocktail - and here's the mix.

A-4D's have just one seat,
So their pilot's can beat their meat.
In the privacy up in the blue,
It's the only thing that they do.

Their torso harness sits too high,
They can hardly see to fly.
F-8's never get the call,
Their pilot's have no balls at all.

Air Force planes make lots of noise,
Their pilots are just little boys.
So when their bombs go toxon long,
They're comic relief for the Viet Cong.

I'm an A-4 driver, can't you see,
Not two people - only me.
Single seated flying is a lark,
My own "Standby" - I forgot to "Mark"!

Gyrene choppers slice through the air,
Off to "Hastings" they carry their fare.
One thousand Marines they hauled today,
Not one Marine wore a green beret.

Phantom II's o'er the D.M.Z.,
Doing our part to make a people free.
Bombs and rockets streak through the sky,
In the Corps' tradition - Semper Fi!

Oh when this tour is o'er and done,
It's back to CONUS for sex and fun.
We'll remember this horrible year,
You can take Vietnam and stick it in your ear.

THERE ARE NO CHOPPERS PILOTS DOWN IN HELL

(From a "song book" procured by Bernie "Capt. Mac" McGinley, Marine Squadron HMM-164 at Phu Bai, RVN 1967-68.)

Tune: Traditional Ditty

Oh there are no chopper pilots down in hell.
There are no chopper pilots down in hell.
The place is full of queers, grunts and bombardiers, but,
There are no chopper pilots down in hell.
Oh there are no Air Force pilots in the fray.
There are no Air Force pilots in the fray.
They're all in USO's, wearing ribbons, fancy clothes, so,
There are no Air Force pilots in the fray.
Oh there are no Navy pilots in the scrap.
There are no Navy pilots in the scrap.
They're all in BOQ's, reading Naval Aviation News, so,
There are no Navy pilots in the scrap.
Oh there are no stiff wing pilots in the fight.
There are no stiff wing pilots in the fight.
They're all in gay bars, or driving beatup cars, so,
There are no stiff wing pilots in the fight.
Oh there are no chopper pilots down below.
There are no chopper pilots down below.
They're all way up above, drinking scotch, making love, so,
There are no chopper pilots down below.
Oh there are no chopper pilots down in hell.
There are no chopper pilots down in hell.
There are grunts by the score, singing "Glory to the Corps", but,
There are no chopper pilots down in hell.

AVIATOR'S HYMN

(From a "song book" procured by Bernie "Capt. Mac" McGinley, Marine Squadron HMM-164 at Phu Bai, RVN 1967-68.)

Tune: "Battle Hymn Of The Republic"

Here's a toast to all Marines who wear the Navy wings of gold.
They are fearless fighter pilots, they are brave and they are bold.
They carouse a bit and drink a lot in quantities untold.
And they'll never fly home again.

CHORUS: (Repeat after each verse)

Gory, Gory, what a helluva way to die.
(Stall! Spin! Crash! Burn! Die!)
Gory, Gory, what a helluva way to die.
(Stall! Spin! Crash! Burn! Die!)
Gory, Gory, what a helluva way to die.
(Stall! Spin! Crash! Burn! Die!)
And they'll never fly home again.



242nd ASHC

Oh, it wasn't lack of throttle and it wasn't faulty trim.
He wasn't turning in the groove, he didn't stall and spin.
He just forgot to switch his tanks, too bad he couldn't swim.
And they'll never fly home again.

He was comin through the 90 when he got a little slow.
He ignored the waving paddles of the frantic L.S.O.
When he finally added power he was just too low.
And he'll never fly home again.

There were little bits of wreckage scattered o'er the Naval base.
And a little pool of blood to mark his final resting place.
Now he wears a Mark 8 gunsight where he used to wear his face.
And he'll never fly home again.

I saw a burning body fall from 40,000 feet.
He squirmed, he kicked, he clawed the air, my God but it was neat.
With the chute wrapped 'round his body and the shrouds around his feet.
And he'll never fly home again.

The outlook wasn't brilliant for 314 that day.
The targets that were spotted were too many miles away.
But Joe Gyrene and his R.I.O. decided they would stay.
And they'll never fly home again.

The target was a village in a valley steep and wide.
The R.I.O. said, "It looks to be a one-way ride".
But the pilot said, "Don't worry man, we'll take this one in stride".
And they'll never fly home again.

The napalm was delivered but the pilot was in doubt.
His speed was great, his pull-out late, when he began to shout.
In less time than it takes to tell, the pair of them punched out.
And they'll never fly home again.

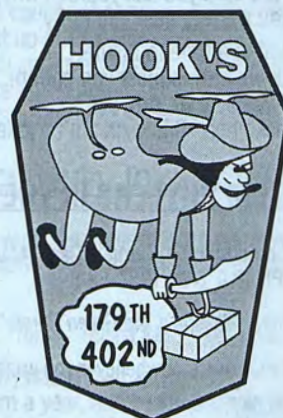
The Phantom hit the trees, burst into flames and was a wreck.
An Air Force chopper spared them both a long survival trek.
They never fly together now, if you would care to check.
And they'll never fly home again.

They climbed into their cockpits on that sultry August day.
As they readied for their cat shot, both their hearts were young and gay.
But shortly they were both to learn the devil was to pay.
And they'll never fly home again.

He tried to cut the burners in, but 'twas to no avail.
The chute was shot, the brakes were hot, the nose became the tail.
The R.I.O. screamed, "let's get out!" but Joe was like a snail.
And they'll never fly home again.

The aircraft came to rest in such a state you'd not believe.
It never got like that performing high-time fighter weave.
And four days later, the pilot did his Major's leaves receive.
And they'll never fly home again.

Ten thousand dollars going home to his wife.
Ten thousand dollars in exchange for his life.
Chanted: Oh, won't they be excited.
Oh, won't they be delighted.
Think of all the things that they can buy!
More Goddamn money and no more family strife.
And he'll never fly home again.



179th ASHC

SECTION XI - Inventory of Unit Patches

The following roster is the VHPA Directory Committee's catalog of unit patches. The Unit Patch Project was initiated to collect and catalog color copies of all helicopter unit patches used in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era (1961 to 1975). More than 800 different helicopter unit patches were created during this period. They are an important part of the Vietnam helicopter pilot's history.

Anyone can contribute to this project by taking a unit patch to your local copy store and making a high-quality, color copy. Then jot down such things as the unit's name, date(s) when the patch was used, any history of how the patch was designed, the significance of any emblems in the patch, etc. Send the copy and the information to VHPA Headquarters or to Jay Riseden, 4267 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

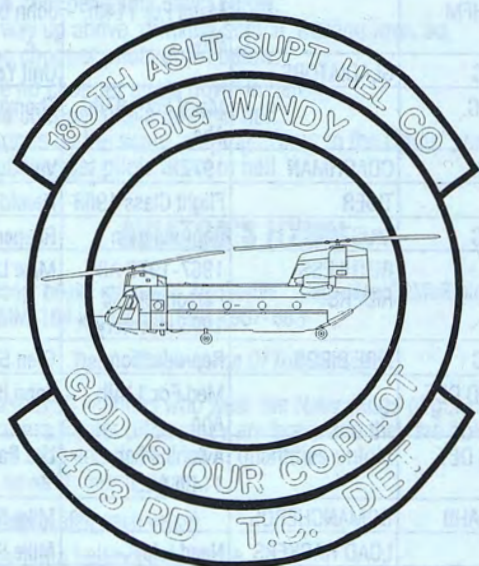
| Unit | Call Sign | Remarks | Source |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 114TH AHC | KNIGHT | | Doug Wilson |
| 114TH AHC | COBRA | Gun Platoon | Doug Wilson |
| 117TH AHC | BEACHBUM | Also Warlord | Mike O'leary |
| 117TH AHC | SIDEWINDER | | Mike O'leary |
| 118TH AHC | THUNDERBIRDS | Reproduction | Jim Bodkin |
| 118TH AVN CO | THUNDERBIRDS | Reproduction | Jim Bodkin |
| 119TH AHC | GATORS | Reproduction | Alligator |
| 120TH AHC | DEANS | | Claude Berry |
| 120TH AHC | RAZORBACKS | | Claude Berry |
| 123RD AVN BN | GRIFFINS | | Gary Wineteer |
| 128TH AHC | TOMAHAWK | | Jay Riseden |
| 128TH AHC | GUNSLINGER | 1st Design | Jay Riseden |
| 128TH AHC | GUNSLINGER | 2nd Design | Jay Riseden |
| 128TH AHC | GUNSLINGER | 3rd Design | Craig Mossman |
| 128TH AHC | WITCH DOCTOR | Maint For 128th | Craig Mossman |
| 135TH AHC | EMU | 1st Design | Wally Williamson |
| 135TH AHC | EMU | 2nd Design | Ammon Webster |
| 135TH AHC | TAIPAN | | Ammon Webster |
| 145TH AVN BN | | | Harold Stanford |
| 174TH AHC | DOLPHINS | | Mike Sloniker |
| 174TH AHC | SHARKS | | Mike Sloniker |
| 178TH ASHC | BOXCARS | Original Version | Dick Janousek |
| 17TH AHC | KINGSMAN | Decal | Mike Pate |
| 187TH AHC | BLACKHAWKS | 1967 | Thomas Connelly |
| 192ND AHC | POLECAT | 1971-1972 | Carl Kimmich |
| 192ND AHC | POLECAT | 1971-1972 | Carl Kimmich |
| 199TH LIB | FIREBALL | 1968-1969 | Chris Kilgore |
| 1ST BDE 1ST | SCOUTS? | Reproduction | Bob Potvin |
| 2/20 ARA | BLUE MAX | Aerial Rocket Arty | Mike Sloniker |
| 205TH ASHC | GERONIMO | Headress Version? | Harold Stanford |
| 229TH AVN BN | STACKED DECK | | Mike Sloniker |
| 229TH AVN BN | SMILING TIGERS | Decal | Glenn Salger |
| 242ND ASHC | MULESKINNER | Early Version | Harold Stanford |
| 271ST AVN | INNKEEPER | Med Hel | Dave Fesmire |
| 281ST AHC | INTRUDER | | Joe Bilitzke |
| 281ST AHC | RAT PACK | | Joe Bilitzke |
| 281ST AHC | BANDIT | | Joe Bilitzke |
| 281ST AHC | WOLF PACK | | Joe Bilitzke |
| 282ND AHC | ALLEY CATS | Reproduction | David Gray |
| 355TH AVN | WORKHORSE | | Charlie Eliason |
| 3RD AHC | CHICKEN MAN | 1971-1972 | Carl Kimmich |
| 4/77 ARA | DRAGON/GRIFFIN | Need Info | Mike Sloniker |
| 409TH T.C. | | Maint For 174th AHC | Mike Sloniker |

| Unit | Call Sign | Remarks | Source |
|--------------|-----------------|--|------------------|
| 478TH AVN CO | HURRICANES | Hvy Hel Early Version | Jay Riseden |
| 48TH AHC | STARS | | Lance Dickenson |
| 48TH AHC | JOKER | | Lance Dickenson |
| 503RD CHEM | SNIFFERS | Attchd To 199th Lib | Chris Kilgore |
| 52ND CAB | FLYING DRAGONS | Reproduction | Jim Bodkin |
| 544TH CHFM | | Maint For 114th AHC | John Brennan |
| 57TH AHC | GLADIATORS | | Unit Yearbook |
| 602ND T.C. | | Maint For 187th AHC | Thomas Connelly |
| 62ND AVN | COACHMAN | 1972 | Van Cunningham |
| 63-1T | TIGER | Flight Class 1963 | Harold Stanford |
| 68TH AHC | MUSTANGS | Reproduction | Reaper |
| 7/17 | RUTHLESS RIDERS | 1967-1972 All Personnel End 1995 Inventory | Mike Law |
| 71ST AHC | FIRE BIRDS | Reproduction | Glen Salger |
| 83RD MED DET | | Med For 114th AHC | John Brennan |
| 96TH SIG DET | | Avionics For 114th AHC | Lee Page |
| A/101ST AHB | COMANCHEROS | | Mike Sloniker |
| A/229 | LOAD HACKERS | Need Info | Mike Sloniker |
| A/229 CAV | BLACK BANDITS | Round Patch 1970 | Ron Gayler |
| A/229TH AHB | BLACK BANDITS | Rectangular Patch | Mike Sloniker |
| A/501 AVN BN | RATTLERS | | Harold Stanford |
| B/123RD AVN | WARLORDS | 1968-1969 | Tom Okerlund |
| B/229TH AVN | GAMBLER GUNS | | Jay Riseden |
| C/158TH AVN | PHOENIX | | Bb At Kc Reunion |
| C/16 CAV | FOUR HORSEMAN | | Dave Fesmire |
| C/16 CAV | OUTCASTS | low Level Hell | Dave Fesmire |
| C/16 CAV | MUSTANGS | 1970-1973 2nd Design | Dave Fesmire |
| C/16 CAV | DARKHORSE | All Personnel | Dave Fesmire |
| C/229 | NORTH FLAG | Need Info | Mike Sloniker |
| C/3/17 | LONG KNIVES | Post 1971 | Rex Gooch |
| C/3/17 | | 1968-1971 | Tom Okerlund |
| C/3/17 CAV | LIGHT HORSE | Post 1971 | Tom Okerlund |
| C/3/5 | LIGHTHORSE | Pre 1971 | Rex Gooch |
| D/158 AHB | REDSKINS | 1969-1971 | Mike Sloniker |
| D/3/5 CAV | CHARLIE HORSE | Post 1971 | Van Cunningham |

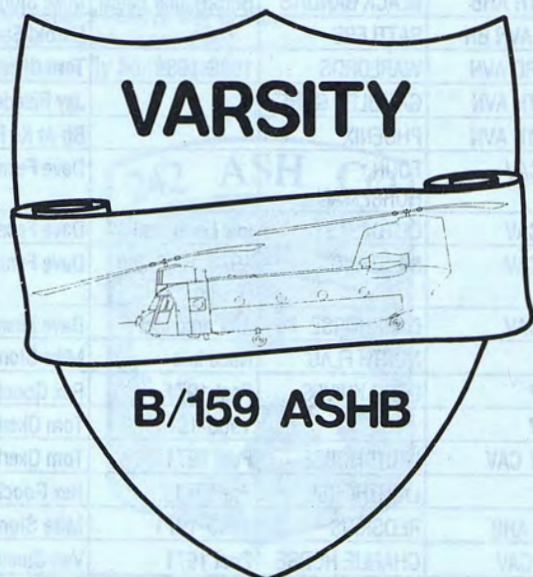
| Unit | Call Sign | Remarks | Source |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| D/3/5 CAV | KAMAKAZI | May Be C/3/17 Also? | Van Cunningham |
| F/79 ARA | BLUE MAX | Aerial Rocket Arty | Mike Sloniker |
| F/8/CAV | BLUE GHOST | 2nd Design | John Boyer |
| F/9 CAV | KILL | | Mike Sloniker |
| H/10 CAV | WHITE | Riders On The Storm | Tom Butz |
| H/10 CAV | WHITE | White 7 Cav Flag | Tom Butz |
| H/10 CAV | WHITE | Shoulder Patch | Tom Butz |
| H/16 CAV | SABRE | 2nd Design? | Mike Sloniker |
| HAL-3 | SEAWOLF | | Roger Ek |
| HC-3 DET 104 | | | Edward Hintz |
| HC-3 DET 104 | | Alfa Omega | Edward Hintz |
| TIGER | TIGER | 1963 Tiger Program | Harold Stanford |
| UTT | | Reproduction | Jim Bodkin |



Monogram of the Whitehat Airlines



180th ASHC



B Company 159th ASHB



A Company 159th ASHB



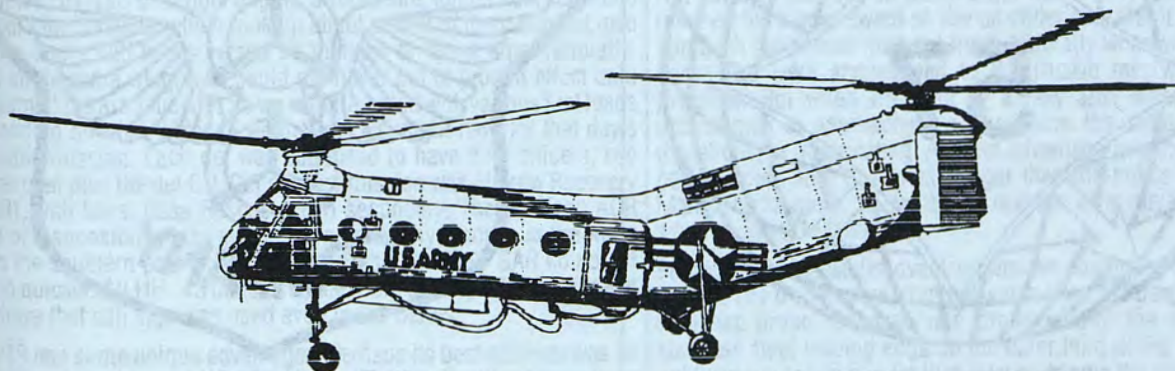
C Company 159th ASHB

SECTION XII - The History of Tandem Rotor Helicopters

It is a custom for the VHPA Directory to present at least one major history and for the cover photos and other graphics to relate to this history. The presentation of the history of Operation DEWEY CANYON II/LAM SON 719 in the 1994 Directory was a solid success. Due to page constraints, this year's history section is much smaller than was planned. Four tandem rotor helicopters (the Army CH-21C Shawnee, the Air Force HH-43 Huskie, the Marine Corps and Navy CH-46 Sea Knight, and the Army CH-47 Chinook) served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era (1961 thru 1975). This Directory is dedicated to those who crewed and maintained these unique machines.

The Chronology of Tandem Rotor Helicopters in the Vietnam War

| Date | A/C | Event |
|------------|---------|--|
| 7 Mar 45 | XHRP | First flight of Piasecki Dogship |
| 11 Apr 52 | YH-21 | First flight of YH-21 for US Air Force |
| Aug 54 | CH-21 | The Army received its first CH-21 |
| 22 Jul 57 | M107 | Vertol made formal presentation to MG Howze to develop the Model 107 |
| 22 Apr 58 | M107 | First flight of M107 |
| 25 Jun 58 | | The Army issued an invitation for proposals for a Medium Transport Helicopter |
| 19 Sep 58 | H-43A | First flight of Air Force version of Kaman 600. 18 aircraft would be delivered and flown until 1961. |
| 1 Nov 58 | H-43B | First flight of 58-1841 |
| Dec 58 | CH-21 | Peak Army inventory of 308 aircraft |
| 4 Mar 59 | | The Joint Army/AF Source Selection Board recommends Vertol for Army Medium Transport Helicopter |
| Mar 59 | CH-21C | Production ends |
| Jun 59 | H-43B | Delivery begins to Air Force |
| 27 Aug 59 | YHC-1A | First flight of turbine engine, tandem prototype - only three are built |
| 16 Nov 59 | | Vertol and Boeing announce the acquisition which is completed in Mar 1960 |
| 20 Feb 61 | HRX | The Navy and Marines select Boeing for their Medium Transport Helicopter |
| 21 Sep 61 | YHC-1B | First flight of Chinook 59-4983 prototype |
| 11 Dec 61 | CH-21C | The 57th and 8th Transportation Companies arrive in Vietnam |
| 26 Jan 62 | CH-21C | The 93rd Transportation Company arrives in Vietnam |
| 30 Apr 62 | HRB-1 | Navy accepted first HRB-1 for testing |
| Jul 62 | | DoD redesignated YHC-1B as YHC-47A, HRB-1 as CH-46, and H-43 as HH-43 |
| 16 Aug 62 | CH-47A | 60-3450 first Chinook accepted by Army Aviation Board at Ft. Rucker |
| 17 Sep 62 | CH-21C | The 33rd and 81st Transportation Companies arrive in Vietnam |
| 16 Oct 62 | CH-46A | First flight of Sea Knight |
| May 63 | CH-47A | First Chinook delivered to Co A, 228th ASHB, 11th Air Assault Division |
| 25 Jun 63 | CH-21C | The five CH-21C Transportation Companies in Vietnam are redesignated Aviation Companies and start to receive UH-1s |
| 30 Jun 63 | CH-46A | First three CH-46s were delivered to HMM-265 at New River |
| 1 Jul 63 | CH-46A | Second CH-46 Squadron, HMM-164, activated at Santa Ana |
| 27 Jun 64 | CH-21C | Last flight ceremony in Vietnam |
| 7 Jul 65 | ACH-47A | 64-13145 first of four ACH-47As accepted by the Army |
| 10 Sep 65 | CH-47A | USS Boxer arrives off Qui Nhon with the 228th ASHB with 57 aircraft |
| 15 Nov 65 | CH-47A | 64-13110 first Chinook loss in Vietnam |
| 8 Mar 66 | CH-46A | HMM-164 arrived off Marble Mountain in USS Valley Forge with 27 aircraft |
| Apr 66 | CH-47A | Accumulated 50,000 flight hours world wide, 14,000 in Vietnam |
| 13 May 66 | ACH-47A | 53rd AD arrived at Vung Tau with three ACH-47As |
| Jun 66 | CH-46A | HMM-265 arrived at Marble Mountain. The second CH-46 Squadron in Vietnam |
| 9 Sep 66 | CH-47B | First flight of YCH-47A 59-4984 as first CH-47B testbed |
| 31 Oct 66 | CH-47 | 179th ASHC: First night combat assault involving Chinooks |
| 19 Dec 66 | CH-46D | First delivery to operational unit, HMM-161 |
| 10 May 67 | CH-47B | First delivery. 354 CH-47As had been built |
| 14 Oct 67 | CH-47C | 67-18494 first flight of CH-47C. 108 CH-47Bs had been built |
| 1967 | | CH-47 and CH-46 production reached peak - one aircraft every 24 hours |
| 29 Nov 67 | CH-46D | First 32 "D" models arrive at Phu Bai for HMM- 364 |
| 20 Dec 67 | CH-46 | Structural modification program complete |
| 22 Jan 68 | ACH-47A | 64-13149 Easy Money lost near Hue. ACH-47A program in Vietnam ends |
| 24 Jul 68 | CH-46F | First deliver |
| 28 Feb 70 | | 147th ASHC: Completed second accident-free year in Vietnam |
| | | 242nd ASHC: Sets record of 29 accident-free months in Vietnam |
| 1970 | CH-47A | 237th Squadron |
| 2 Feb 1971 | CH-46 | Final production model accepted. 624 A, D, and F models had delivered to the Marine Corps. |



The History of The US Army CH-21C Shawnee

Deployment - On 11 Dec 1961, the first American military helicopter units arrived in Vietnam when the ship carrying 57th and 8th Transportation Companies docked in Saigon.

Development - Boeing Vertol Company sponsored the preparation of *A Scrapbook* for the June 1987 reunion of the 57th TC Co at Ft. Rucker, AL. VHPA member Emmett Knight donated a copy to the VHPA. It included a wonderful, brief genealogy of the CH-21C. The world's first successful tandem rotor helicopter, the Piasecki *dogship* flew on 7 Mar 1945. The HRP, the HUP, the H-25, the HRP-2 were all produced in the late 1940s. The H-21 used the same basic configuration as the HRP-2. It had a 44 foot rotor, a 1,435 horsepower engine, and a gross weight of 14,700 lbs. The design won the Air Force competition for a high altitude arctic rescue helicopter for 14 troops or 12 stretchers. The first H-21A flight was on 11 Apr 1952. 707 H-21s were produced for U.S. services. This included 150 for use in West Germany, Canada, France, Sweden, Japan and other countries.

France's 108 H-21s became the French Army's workhorse throughout the Algerian War (1956 - 1960) in North Africa where they pioneered troop air assault tactics and forward air supply and maintenance techniques.

The US Army started receiving H-21s (more affectionately known as the Hog-21) in Aug 1954. Its inventory peaked at 308 in Dec 1958. Besides the five CH-21 Companies (the 8th, 33d, 57th, 81st, and 93d Transportation Companies) that served in Vietnam there were two more in Korean, one in Alaska, and at least one more at Ft. Belvoir. Additionally they served in many two or three aircraft detachments scattered across America at the anti-aircraft missile sites.

VHPA members Dick Orrell and Emmett Knight often describe how well staffed and well trained these units were in the period leading up to the Vietnam War. At AAAA, 145th CAB(V)A reunions, and of course the annual W4 reunion (picnic) at Ft. Rucker, many veterans for these early days gather again as "family" because they served together for so many years. VHCMA member Charles Burns had five year's experience crewing a 21 when he went to Vietnam as one of the first replacements in the 8th TC Co.

Battles - Surprisingly little has been written about the combat service of the CH-21s. The Battle of Ap Bac, one of the most famous, is mentioned in Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*. Later this year VHPA member John Givhan hopes to finish *Rice & Cotton: South Vietnam and South Alabama*, a book that will cover the Battle at Kien Long (north of Ca Mau) that was fought on 12 Apr 64. This battle is historically

significant because it was the first time the VC fought as a Regimental sized force. There is certainly a great deal of history that needs to be recorded about the 21s in Vietnam.

Photos - Clear, detailed, high quality photos of 21s in Vietnam are rare. One of the best photos appeared on pages 44B and 44C in the 12 June 1964 issue of LIFE in an article names The Ugly War In Asia. VHPA member Ken Gehler is the pilot clearly visible in the left seat of the closest aircraft. He loaned the VHPA a copy of this issue and the restored photo appears in the 1996 VHPA Calendar.

Characteristics - The 44 foot wooden rotor blades presented some interesting times for the crews especially the first start of the morning. The blades picked up lots of moisture during the cooler hours and would throw it off as the rpms increased. Most everyone remembers the strong lateral vibrations until all the blades became uniform again. The blades were tracked and balanced as a set of three and, whenever possible, were installed as a set. The CEs maintain that adjusting the push/pull control tubes was an art form because they had to be adjusted together and they turned in different directions. The 21 had a very low rate of climb; even under ideal conditions it was about 300 feet per minute. The landing gear wheels were both a blessing and a curse when landing heavy in an LZ. Most everyone has "rolling down slopes and into rice paddy dike" stories that cause Huey drivers to ponder how they would have survived at all! There are cartoons that depict the 21 as "the Army's security weapon" and show the VC being killed by parts falling off the 21s. They were surprisingly resistant to battle damage - lots of bullets just passed through and still the helicopter kept flying. The pilots describe two characteristics that Huey drivers never enjoyed. The aft rotor could contribute more lift with clean air so sideways take offs were used in difficult situations. Second, if the Hog would hover at say two feet, it was not settle any lower during the take off run. Finally there are real "love / hate" memories about flying this aircraft; some really loved flying it and viewed flying it well as a professional challenge while others hated it and were glad to transition into Hueys or Chinooks.

Standing Down - On 25 Jun 63, the five Transportation companies in Vietnam were redesignated Aviation companies. It was about this time that they started receiving Huey replacements. Maintenance and crew training were the big factors that influenced each unit's rate of replacement. The 120th was the last unit to fly CH-21s in Vietnam. On 27 Jun 64 there was a "last flight in Vietnam" ceremony in which LTC Robert Dillard, who was the CO of the 57th TC Company when it arrived in Vietnam, flew #56-2049. VHPA member Earl McConaha, the CO of the 120th at the time, has an interesting photo showing a row of 21s without rotor blades lined up at Tan Son Nhut ready to be moved to a



57th Transportation Company



8th Transportation Company



33rd Transportation Company

boat for shipment back to the States. Somehow one 21 was forgotten on the maintenance ramp and a few days later VHPA member Chuck Holbrook flew it to Vung Tau for shipment.

Statistics - VHCMA Peter Harlem has carefully compiled a roster of 21s that served in Vietnam from various sources. His roster shows that 148 different serial numbers served in Vietnam and that 39 were lost there.

The US Air Force HH-43B and HH-43F Huskie

Deployment - The Pacific Air Rescue Center was established at Tan Son Nhut on 4 Jan 62 but it wasn't until early 1964 that HH-43 detachments arrived at the major bases of Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, and Da Nang in Vietnam and Udorn, Nakhon Phanom, Korat, and Takhli in Thailand as the first American local base rescue helicopter units.

Development - The Kaman H-43, acquired by the Air Force for an airborne fire-fighting and crash rescue role, was a modified version of the HOK-1 being built for the Navy. Eighteen A models (with piston engines) were used until 1961. To improve performance, especially the load-carrying ability, the B model used a Lycoming turbine engine. In all the Air Force purchased 203. They were assigned to bases of all flying Commands for crash and fire rescue missions. The F model used an uprated T53-L-11A engine for improved performance in high temperature and high altitude conditions. Many B models were brought up to the F model standard and 42 were built.

Operations - VHPA member Nathan Greene provides the following: The first HH-43B Kaman Huskies came to Southeast Asia in 64 as two dets (detachments) from 37th ARS (Air Rescue Service) - one to Saigon, the other to Da Nang. The 37th had been renamed the 38th ARRS (Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service) by the time I arrived at Da Nang in the summer of 65. I had served with Capt. Floyd R. Lockhart in Alabama and he was one of the original 43 pilots I replaced in country. I enjoyed flying and visiting with an old friend when I got to Vietnam! Each det had four HH-43F's by the time I arrived. They were modified HH-43B's - bigger engine, armor plate, longer hoist cable and an extra fuel bladder which took up about a third of the cabin but gave us two and a half hours versus 90 minutes of flying time. Naturally, with all the extra weight we could not hover out of ground effect until we burned the extra fuel off. So we experimented with various fuel loads depending on what distance we thought we might have for that day's possible mission. Each det was supposed to have nine officers, two per aircraft plus the det CO. Our primary mission was Aircrew Recovery (ACR), with Local Base Rescue (LBR) secondary. The Da Nang ACR area of responsibility was all of I Corps plus any rescues in the water or in the southern part of North Vietnam that the Navy SAR could not get to quicker. All HH-43 units used the radio call sign PEDRO. Indeed I believe that call sign was used even in the States.

The 43 had some unique advantages. Perhaps its best attribute was its very short launch time. We would leave it "cocked" with warning flags across the pilot doors so all we had to do was reach in and hit the start



81st Transportation Company

button on the cyclic. By the time we had donned our flak, survival, and mae-west combo vest and strapped in, we merely had to add throttle and lift off - usually within the 30 to 40 seconds! We always flew with two pilots and two crew in back (or guys in back - GIB's). For ACR we took a mechanic and a pararescueman and always flew with two aircraft. For LBR, the GIB's were some combination of fireman, mechanic, and pararescue qualified people. LBR missions were usually flown with one 43 unless a second 43 and crew was available or if the expected crash would possibly be "spectacular". For example, once we were alerted that a C-130 would land in a couple hours with some damaged landing gear. A C-130 crash is spectacular by most anyone's definition! We always had a light fuel load for LBR so we could carry the 1,000 lb. Fire Suppression Kit (FSK) on the sling. LBR operations also utilized a second advantage of the 43's - the pilot could control the direction of the relatively low velocity but high volume rotor wash which compacted under the helicopter and knock down the flames to support the firemen. The pilot would place the FSK upwind of the crash or fire. The firemen would foam their way into the crash using the FSK. The pilot would hover tail into the wind and direct the rotor wash off the nose. This was usually very effective in knocking down the flames for both the fireman and the people to be rescued. In the states, we practiced with the base fire department hulk at least quarterly. I can still remember feeling the heat during those missions. The firemen really had the dangerous jobs and always worked in pairs. One grabbed the hose off the FSK while the other charged the FSK. The one with the hose would foam a path into the crash while the other would make sure the fire did not close in on them from behind. They had great difficulty seeing out of their fire suits and helmets. When the path was clear enough, the second guy would do the rescue. The hose man concentrated on keeping the fire off all of them and remained alert to anything that would be dangerous to them.

The 43F's had VHF, UHF, and FM radios in addition to intercom. This was an advantage - we could talk to most anyone during a mission. Not having a tail rotor to worry about was clearly another advantage, however the blades swept so low on either side that it was only safe to approach the aircraft from the front. Naturally when we operated from bases that were accustomed to the Huskie this wasn't too big a problem. But when we went to a new area where people were accustomed to approaching a Huey from the sides; that could be disastrous, or decapitating! Another advantage was the 200 foot cable on our hoist. This was much longer than the hoists on the Army or Marine helicopters; so we saw a number of recon team extractions when I was in Da Nang.

Perhaps our biggest disadvantage was the coating on the 43's wooden blades. The blades were wrapped with a layer of fiberglass, then coated with neo-prene. Because rain drops eroded the coating and the stainless steel leading edge on the outer third of the blade, we could not fly in any precip heavier than mist or drizzle. We almost stood down during the monsoon season.

Another disadvantage was our lack of defensive or fire suppression weapons as in door guns. Since the GIBs wore special clothing, since there were no weapons mounting points on the helicopter, and since the arc of the blades was so low on each side, we really could not fire a weapon from the 43. Sometimes the co-pilot would have a rifle in his lap but this was hardly effective. So if we went out into the bush to pick up someone, we always wanted gunship support. And if we took fire or knew we'd take fire if we approached from a certain direction - well, we just had to live with that.

The Air Force always stressed "mission first" and "rescue the man." As a result there lots of really scary rescues and lots of medals awarded for these missions.

This is the way we operated. Operations would post the aircraft and crews for an alert period. The primary crews stayed in a trailer less than 200 feet from where the aircraft were parked and this area was always near the active runways. When a crew launched, the next would move to the primary position.

Because of all the flying out of and around Da Nang, there were plenty of scrambles to cover battle damage or aircraft with mechanical problems. We launched frequently when we drew LBR duty, at least once a day. I think I recall one day we had six launches! We would orbit with the FSK near the touchdown area and time our pattern so would could follow the distressed aircraft down the runway and come to a hover just upwind of where it stopped. Naturally, if the crew ejected or bailed out before reaching the runway, we would go after them.

Statistics - The VHPA HELICOPT.DBF database has 27 HH-43 records which report on 15 unique tail numbers and indicate 5 were destroyed.

The US Marine Corps CH-46 Sea Knight

Deployment - On 8 Mar 1966, HMM-164 arrived at Marble Mountain as the first CH-46 squadron to deploy to Vietnam.

Development - The Boeing Vertol CH-46, acquired as the replacement for the Sikorsky UH-34, began an interesting procurement process by the Navy and the Marine Corps starting in 1960. Marines and Helicopters 1962-1973 by LTC William R. Fails published by the History & Museums Division, HQ USMC provides an excellent account of the development of the CH-46. Briefly it started when six Marine pilots flew a YHC-1A, a forerunner of the Vertol Model 107. They were especially impressed with the tandem configuration that allowed for a 60-inch center of gravity movement - much higher than for conventional single main rotor helicopters.

The specifications for the CH-46 required three major modifications to the 107 design. The first was a rotor blade folding mechanism so that the helicopter could operate from amphibious assault ships. Vertol came up with an electronically operated system in which the blades from both the forward and the aft rotor heads folded inward and were stored above the center of the aircraft. This mechanism had a significant effect on the fully articulated rotor design and resulted in vibration problems that would haunt both Vertol and the Marines for a long time. The second was to increase the size of the rear ramp and doors to permit entry of a jeep. The third involved the aft pylon area to support the GE T-58-8B engines and main transmission. What finally emerged on 30 Apr 1962 when the Navy accepted the first aircraft for testing, superficially resembled the YHC-1A and the 107 but was basically an entirely new helicopter.

The CH-46 has two 50-foot rotors that overlap each other for a distance of 16 feet. With blades folded the aircraft measures slightly less than 45 feet by 15 feet. The cargo compartment had no obstructions throughout its 24-foot length and was almost perfectly six feet square. The clean cabin was possible by using small stub wings or sponsons attached to the outside of the fuselage for fuel tanks and mounting points for the landing gear. The sponsons also added stability for water landings.

On 30 Jun 1964 the first three CH-46As were delivered to HMM-265 at New River. On 1 July 1964, HMM-164 was commissioned as a CH-46 squadron but they flew UH-34s until mid-1965 when they were

finally equipped with 23 CH-46s. The delays centered around the vibration caused by the blade-fold mechanism and the high-speed shafts.

Going to Vietnam - The VHPA members that deployed with HMM-164 in 1996 describe all the "new unit, new aircraft" problems mentioned by the Army tandem rotor guys in 1965. The door guns arrived just as the ship was ready to sail so gunnery training began on the open ocean. Engine air filters were needed to protect against sand erosion. Adding engine and pilot seat armor reduced the lift capability 967 pounds, from 4,850 to 3,874. The .50 door guns and their ammo certainly reduced payload, its internal mounting restricted fields of fire, and it was too heavy to be removed from a downed aircraft for ground crew defense. The excessive vibration problems continued to trouble both Boeing and the Marines. The Marine planners had hoped the CH-46 could transport 25 combat troops and more 105mm howitzers, but in hot, high I Corps 15 or 14 troops were the normal load.

Crisis - During the summer of 67, the Marines had ten CH-46 squadrons - half equipped with 'D' and the rest with 'A' models. Three squadrons were in Vietnam and one was on SLF assault ships. These aircraft represented 107 of the 211 possessed by the Marines. The five remaining HMMs were 34 units, three were in Vietnam and one more with another SLF. Prior to 1 May 67 the Naval Aviation Safety Center's statistics showed "that the 46 had an accident trend comparable with other fleet helicopters at a similar point in their development cycle." The problem began on 3 May when the main transmission mounting brackets failed on a 46D at Santa Ana and the crew of four died in the crash. The accident investigation required a detailed inspection and all 46s were temporarily ground. In Vietnam "immediate corrective action of a temporary nature enabled the aircraft to fly combat missions while the detailed inspection" was being done. Forty Six of the 115 transmissions in the Western Pacific required repair. On 13 May, just as the release to fly message was being sent to the 46 fleet, an 'A' model crashed off the coast of Vietnam when the aft pylon broke off in flight; the crew of four died. The Marines and Vertol initiated an extensive investigation. On 20 June another 46 crashed over water, killing two of the crew and a failure of the aft pylon was suspected. On 30 June, a Santa Ana 46D crashed after experiencing a blade separation, all the crew survived. All 'D' models were grounded, so the 'A' models in Vietnam continued to fly. On 3 July, a 46A crashed in Vietnam killing the crew of four and the cause was traced to a main transmission failure. The Marines convened a CH-46 Reliability Review Conference but already crew training and unit deployment (HMM-364 was scheduled to go to Vietnam in Oct) were being impacted. Everything was relatively quiet until 31 Aug when an HMM-262 46A on duty with the SLF "Yawed at 3000 feet and lost the tail pylon." All five crew members died. The next day in Vietnam an aircraft was landing when the tail pylon separated. The crew escaped with minor injuries. The 1 MAF "restricted CH-46s to emergency combat missions that could not be met with other aircraft." The investigations continued and finally indicated that "although the specific causes were varied, the ultimate structural failure occurred in the area of the aft pylon." With seven major accidents and 19 killed, the recommendation for a major modification program was approved and on 11 Oct, MCAF Futema, Okinawa began repairs on the first 40 aircraft. Over 1,000 man hours were required on each aircraft. A total of 325 aircraft were overhauled world wide. The temporary loss of CH-46s in Vietnam resulted in 23 UH-34s being sent back to the war (many to be flown by 46 crews), 10 extra CH-53 sent in, and 31 Army UH-1s were assigned to 1 MAF in late September. The 190th AHC was part of this TDY effort as mentioned in the Apr 1995 VHPA Newsletter.

Battles - Details of the naming of Helicopter Valley and operation SAMURAI IV presented in the Feb 1995 and Feb 1994 VHPA Newsletters only document a fraction of the battles take involved the 46s.

Missions - Like the CH-47, the 46 was a good IFR platform. The Apr 1994 VHPA Newsletter carried a neat story from VHPA member Fred Pratt about working with a special Marine radar team to resupply an ARVN unit in the soup in the mountains.

Books - 1500 feet over Vietnam by VHPA member Bruce Lake is an OUTSTANDING CH-46 book. Marion Sturkey may have printed his manuscript on the history of HMM-265.

Withdrawal - Because of their unit rotation and support for the SLF, the HMMs moved in and out of Vietnam to a much higher degree than Army units. Even after the general withdrawals in 70 and 71, HMMs returned to support the ARVN during the Easter Offensive in 72 and the evacuation of Saigon in 75.

Statistics - The VHPA HELICOPT.DBF database has 2,304 CH-46 records which report on 378 unique bureau numbers and indicate 194 were destroyed.

The US Navy CH-46 Sea Knight

Deployment - On 7 Jun 1970, HC-3 Det (Detachment) 104 arrived at Cam Ranh Bay to augment NAF (Naval Air Facility) Cam Ranh Bay Det TSN (Tan Son Nhut) as the first and only Navy CH-46 unit to be stationed in country.

Development - VHPA member Ed Hintz recalls: NAF CRB Det TSN had been in Vietnam since June 1966. The Det had 3 C-117s and 5 UH-34s, provided logistical support for Navy personnel in Vietnam, and were known as the "White Hat Airlines" after the famous dixie cup cap the Navy EM wore. While HA(L)-3 provided some of their own support, we hauled people and everything from mail to toilet paper to food and even pay teams for all Navy personnel in Vietnam. Ships and aircraft would bring the supplies into Cam Ranh or Saigon and we would take it from there. The majority of our customers were assigned to the Brown Water Navy, the Riverine Forces who operated the famous Swift boats and PRB's, but we had personnel in the major cities all along the coast of III and IV Corps.

In early 70, this unit had a maintenance accident when an 34 came apart in flight and nine people died. The accident investigation board made two strong recommendations. First, that the detachment be associated with a NAF for better maintenance and administration support. Second, that they should get some newer equipment.

At that time I was stationed with HC-3, the Navy's helicopter squadron on the West Coast responsible for Navy H-46 helicopter crew training and vert rep (vertical replenishment) for ships in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. To the best of my knowledge, HC-3 had about 12 helicopters and never deployed as a unit to Southeast Asia. However they always had several two plane dets on supply ships on "Yankee Station" (off North Vietnam) and supporting destroyers and other Navy's ships off South Vietnam. HC-3 Det 104 was the first and only det to be stationed

in country. It consisted of five pilots (LTJD John Mann the Det CO, LT Mike Rist, LT Frank Jenks, LT Frank Vazquez, and LTJD me) plus 20 EM. We joined the Det at Tan Son Nhut to provide CH-46 expertise.

In May, 1970 we flew to Futema, Okinawa with orders to pick up three CH-46s from the Marines. After some discussion and threats to call Adminal Zumwalt, they gave us one recently rebuilt and two well used CH-46As. We collected some other equipment and boarded USS Duluth (LPD-6) for the Philippines for two days of R&R and then on to Vietnam on USN Juneau. On 7 June, 1970 as they steamed by Cam Ranh Bay we were told to launch so we took everything we had and landed at the NAF. Our maintenance people had a long list of high time items that had to be replaced, so the three birds stayed there for several weeks. Three of the pilots went to Tan Son Nhut and became co-pilots on the 34s so we could learn the area. My first flight in-country to learn the area last two days because our H-34 broke down at Thuong Thou (one mile from the Cambodian board). We spent the night in an Army Special Forces camp.

On 15 June 1970 LT Mike Rist and LCDR G.M. Cleveland made history by flying the first log mission in a Sea Knight. Since the 46 could carry twice the load of a 34 and about 2/3 of what a C-117 carried, we were an instant success. Naturally whenever you substitute aircraft lots of other things have to change. Maintenance is a given but the one I remember most involving landing on the LSTs used by HA(L)-3. The LST's landing pad accommodated only two Hueys. Since the 34 required about as much space as their Huey, if one HA(L)-3 ship was gone or launched, we could land. With the 46, we needed both spaces. Naturally, this was a subject of many of joke or a comment on the radio - however, everyone likes to be resupplied, so there was never a real problem.

By the time my six months IAD (TDY in the Army) was up, we had two more CH-46s and had turned in our 34s. I'd guess the last flight for the 34 was in Jan 71. I have some pictures of those 34s - they were tired, well worn ships for sure. We didn't have it too bad because we didn't get shot at all that often. We toured the country, mostly in the IV Corps areas. Even HA(L)-3 liked us because we could haul heavy things like engines for them.

One thing I thought the Army guys had was neat radio call signs. I remember hearing Satellite 69 often. We had to use NAVY plus the last three digits of the aircraft bureau number. Not nearly as much fun!

My second tour in Southeast Asia was with Det 102 of HC-3 in the first half of 71. This time I flew off the USS Kilauea and did vert rep for the fleet on Yankee Station. I am certain everyone has seen pictures of supplies being hauled between ships on heavy lines. Well, mainly fuel is delivered that way because it is so much faster with a helicopter and prepared sling loads. Even after the ships had separated and are steaming away we can still be hauling supplies to them.

The US Army CH-47A Chinook

Deployment - On 10 Sep 1965, the first 57 Chinooks arrived in Vietnam with 228th ASHB as part of the 1st Cavalry Division.

Development - Anyone who loves Chinooks and wants to know "how it all began" must spend some time with VHPA member Ben Silver's *Ride At A Gallop*. It is a priceless summary of the 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, the Chinook unit formed with the 11th Aviation Group, 11th Air Assault Division and later the 1st Air Cavalry Division. It is also the story of all the hard work the first operational unit for a new aircraft had to experience. What follows is a series of summaries and extracts from *Ride At A Gallop*.

On 22 Jan 1963 the Army's change 1 to the "Plan for Initial Organization, Training and Testing of Air Mobile Units (U)" stated that Co A 228th ASHB (Test) would form from the 202d Helicopter Company (with 16 CH-47s on paper only) and the 47th Transportation Company, Ft. Riley (with 14 CH-37s) and three depot rebuilds for a total of 33 aircraft. Effective 11 Feb 1963, Hq Third Army activated Co A 228th ASHB (Test). 15 Feb 1963 was activation day for the 11th Air Assault at Harmony Church, Ft. Benning.

The first CH-47A was delivered to Company A, 228th during May 1963. The forecast given them to have one platoon (eight) Chinooks in Aug



Det 104 HC-3



A Company, 228th ASHB

and a second platoon in the Oct-Nov period proved accurate. There were only two CH-47s available for Phase I tests in September since five were TDY to Forts Rucker and Eustis. Ben Silver served as the XO of the 11th Aviation Group until 15 Oct 1963 when he assumed the duties of activating and commanding the 228th ASHB which formally activated on 17 Jan 1964. By Dec 1963 five of their 19 CH-47As were still TDY and seven were deadlined for parts; so only seven were flyable.

The Army was working against itself. Page 153 - Oct 1963. The high number / percentage of aircraft of all types deadlined for parts was very disturbing. It appeared that the lack of parts for the CH-47A and an anticipated reduction of the Army Flying Hour Program to approximately 15 hours per CH-47 per month would preclude having two operational CH-47 companies available for the Phase II tests.

Page 156 - Oct 1963. COL Seneff's (the CO of the 11th Avn Grp) guidance was "fly, fly and maintain" included formation flying. Insofar as the Chinook was concerned, at this stage of its development, this was a physical impossibility. The Stability Augmentation System (SAS) had not been perfected, and when turned on in several instances place the helicopter immediately in some very unusual attitude which could cause immediate mid-air collisions. It was some time before we attempted formation flying. At this point in time we considered ourselves lucky just to get the "beast" off the ground. Both COL Seneff and General Kinnard (CG of the 11th Air Assault) were concerned with the insufficient availability of CH-47s for pilot and crew transition training and the unreliability of the aircraft itself.

Page 164 - Jan 1964. The case of the CH-47A parts became so critical and the time to fill requisitions so inordinately long that I sent the S-4, CPT Robert Parker, TDY to USAVSCOM in St. Louis, to monitor the action taken on every CH-47 parts requisition submitted, and to report status daily!

First Huey Recovery Page 165 - Jan 1964. On the 4th at 1710 hours a call was received from LTC McQueary, CO of the 611th AM&SB asking for a CH-47 to pick up a UH-1D of the 227th which had experienced a power failure four miles from the end of runway 33 at Lawson AAF. By 1805 hours, the crew consisting of CWO Denver Kidd (the best Instructor Pilot I have ever known), CWO Carlton Lindsey, and SP5 Lawrence Campbell were at the scene. The main rotor blades of the UH-1D were removed using flashlight illumination and at 2135 the "hook-up" and lift-off were made. At 2150, the CH-47 deposited the UH-1D on the grass in front of the Butler Hangar at Lawson.

Page 166 - Mar 1964. On the 9th, CPT Joseph Rutkowski, CO of Company B, on his way to Ft. Benning from Philadelphia with a new aircraft, "threw a blade pocket". This problem was also experienced on three CH-47s participating in their first field exercise at Ft. Stewart. On

the 12th all Battalion CH-47s were grounded because of the chronic, unresolved, rotor blade problems. On the 17th, 1LT Leonard Cummings was ferrying a brand new aircraft (under special permission) from the factory to Ft. Benning and lost a blade "pocket." The non-availability of the CH-47 helicopter during the period 12 Mar through mid-May adversely affected all Division tactical training operations and logistical resupply, to say nothing of the impact on all members of the 228th.

Page 171 - Mar 1964. In an effort to explain why the 228th was unable to support the Division, a briefing for representatives of all supported units was given which included, but was not limited to: Unreliable rotor blades, scan switches, the aft gear box, poor quality control of all systems and components, sheared APP motor pump shafts, faulty transducers and sensors, lack of responsiveness on the part of the Army Supply Agencies and Boeing-Vertol, empty promises on Boeing-Vertol's part, lack of positive program and supply control by the AMC, lack of trouble shooting equipment and published procedures for the use of same, acceptance of substandard work by Bureau of Weapons, US Navy (BUWEPS), contractual lags, and lack of a sense of urgency by all supporters. LTC Bob Tully stopped me after the briefing and said he was glad it was my career and not his.

Page 173 - May 1964. Now it is time to discuss the FAST (Field Army Service Team) and Hard Core Quick Cycle programs. After production and distribution of CH-47 helicopter to units in the field, deficiencies in the aircraft and components emerged. In order to correct these, Engineering Change Proposals (ECP) were initiated by any element in the user/support chain capable of identifying the problem. These culminated in the manufacture of Modification Work Order (MWO) kits in each case, and these, when applied to the aircraft, corrected the basic reported problem. Aircraft not yet through the production line had the MWO kit installed before delivery. The CH-47 was being forced by the pressure of events to proceed through the development, test, evaluation and production system faster than originally anticipated. During 1964 and 1965 new modification kits were divided into two categories - those essential for flight safety and those considered to be necessary to make the aircraft operate better. The "Hard Core Quick Cycle" team installed the safety of flight kits and the FAST installed the remainder. The "Hard Core" team installed some 14 different kits, FAST I 41, FAST II 14, and FAST III approximately 90.

Page 177 - May 1964. During the first few days of May a few CH-47s were rendered flyable. On the 6th, LTC McQueary, CO of the 611st AM&SB requested a CH-47 be airlifted to the Atlanta Depot. All blades, engines and transmissions were removed and the aircraft was stripped of excess weight. CW3 William Ralston was the pilot of the "lift" aircraft. He hovered very carefully over the load, and the hookup was made. He then raised the load very slowly and took off from Lawson AAF. The load did not "streamline" into the wind and parallel the direction of flight, as was anticipated. As CW3 Ralston gradually turned and passed over the center of the aircraft, vibrations caused by the non-streamlining of the load caused the lift ship to vibrate so violently that CW3 Ralston released the load at about 800-900 feet. The load landed very near the wind tee, right side up, with such a force that a man of medium height could easily look over the top of the crashed aircraft. CW3 Ralston landed the lift ship and inspected it thoroughly to determine if the vibrations had caused any damage. That day we all learned that a "drag chute" was required when participating in this type of operation. The tower operator was so excited when he called LTC Nix, the XO of the 11th Aviation Group, to inform him of the drop, that he could hardly speak. He stuttered and stammered for the longest time to get the message across.

Page 177 - 7 May 1964. LTG Rich, CG of Third Army and Test Director for the Air Assault tests, took a personal interest in the CH-47 problems and chaired a CH-47 helicopter meeting attended by appropriate USA representatives and Mr. Robert Tharrington, President of the Boeing-Vertol Company in his conference room at Ft. Benning. He did a magnificent job of laying the cards on the table in a very polite but firm fashion. He made it explicitly clear that the Air Assault tests relied very heavily on the CH-47 to perform the missions envisioned for it as the prime mover for the Division Artillery and all logistical operations within the Divisional area, and stressed that the Army could not fail in

these tests. This was the first "Chinook Progress and Coordination Meeting" and LTG Rich decided they would be held bi-weekly and that the 228th Battalion Commander would be the permanent chairman. The purpose, of course, was to present problems, assign them to the proper agency for resolution, place a deadline for task accomplishment and thus obtain positive corrective results. When General Kinnard informed me that I was to chair each meeting I said, "Sir, do you mean I am going to command the Battalion and be Project Manager at the same time?" He smiled! The next meeting was on the 25th with General Kinnard attending. After a couple of bi-weekly meetings were held, it was realized that bi-monthly were better because the greater interval of time allowed individuals and agencies to accomplish their various tasks.

Air Assault II (also known as Phase II) Test Page 191 - Sep 1964. The schedule for Pre-Air Assault II maneuvers and exercises required that Divisional Troops depart Ft. Benning early in Sep. This move by air and ground vehicles occurred between 1 and 7 Sep. Divisional exercises with no enemy occurred between Sep 8 and 15; this was the "shake down". It was followed by a two weeks "war" from Sep 16 to 30, with the 82nd Airborne Division acting as aggressors. The war was followed by a "stand down" from 30 Sep to 13 Oct, with R&R for as many of the troops as possible at Ft. Benning. Air Assault II was conducted between 14 Oct and 12 Nov in two phases. It was fortunate that the 228th had several days to practice with the Division before Air Assault II. The Battalion never had the opportunity to participate as a Battalion in any of the field exercises up to this critical time.

Page 190 - 13 Sep 1964. Several more aircraft completed the FAST II Program. On the 13th, 62-2126, 62-2129, 61-2425, 63-7901, and 61-2416 (this aircraft hadn't flown for months) departed Ft. Benning. Each time a CH-47 departed it was as though a new baby had been born with all the problems associated with labor pains and birthing. On the 14th, 63-7912 (a new aircraft) piloted by CPT Arthur Williams, departed Boeing-Vertol for the field location. By the end of the day only four aircraft remained at Ft. Benning. LT Leonard Cummings, the AMO for B Company, and the most outstanding aircraft maintenance lieutenant I have ever known anywhere, led a flight which departed Boeing-Vertol with three new aircraft, 63-7914, 63-7915, and 63-7913 on the 15th. He would have departed sooner, but one aircraft had 35 discrepancies which needed to be corrected before acceptance and ferry flight. Three aircraft, 62-2130, 62-2137, and 61-2417, had finished the modification program in Atlanta on the 16th and were picked up by 228th crews and flown to the maneuver area. By the 18th every aircraft except 60-3452 had departed Ft. Benning. This aircraft was known throughout the Battalion as a "dog." It was in terrible shape! Mr. Robert Heady and Mr. Arden Bedle from Boeing-Vertol and Mr. Frank Flood of Vickers, all outstanding tec reps, remained at Ft. Benning to help get 60-3452 flyable. The hydraulic fluid looked like strawberry soda and rust was in the hydraulic pumps. On the 19th it was rendered flyable and Chuck Oram and I flew that "dog" to the maneuver area. Despite the fact that the aircraft had not flown in such a long time, it operated beautifully. By the 25th all CH-47s were finally out of maintenance and had departed the Atlanta Depot for the maneuver area. On the 25th, CPT Oram and I departed for the maneuver area flying 62-2118, the 'red and white monster' which had come to use from Alaska where it had participated in cold weather testing. I reported to COL Seneff that all 42 CH-47s assigned at that time to the 228th were in the maneuver area! Four aircraft had come directly from the factory as five more would by 11 Nov.

Page 212 - 14 Nov 1964. The best day in our lives lately - 46 CH-47s took off from Winnsboro, SC and flew all the way to Ft. Benning without a hitch. At a predesignated time, after refueling, we departed and rendezvoused with the UH-1 Battalions northeast of Columbus, GA. There we were: the 227th, the 229th, and the 228th all in formation, with the 226th flying cover overhead. It was the most beautiful sight I'll ever expect to see, two UH-1 Battalions in formation, Chinook Battalion in formation and the OV-1 Battalion flying cover, in formation, overhead. The Battalion flew 4,519 hours between 8 Sep and 14 Nov without one accident. What a record!

Page 242 - 21 Jan 1965. After having commanded the 228th for 14 months, I finally managed to take and pass my flight qualification

"check ride" in the CH-47. It was given by LT Campbell at Ft. Rucker. My IP was CW3 Denver Kidd, the best in the United States Army. I only wish I had been half as competent as Denver.

Page 253 - May 1965. During the months of Jan through May 1965, the CH-47 fleet was grounded for one thing or another for most of the time. First it was an incipient spalling in the thrust bearing of the aft vertical rotor shaft then it was cracked rain shields.

Page 257 - 16 Jun 1965. Air Assault Phase III came to a screeching halt at 1330 hours with the announcement by the Secretary of Defense that he had approved the activation of an airmobile division and had issued instructions to get it combat ready as expeditiously as possible. When queried by reporters as to how long it would required to get the division ready, he stated that he "thought it possible in eight weeks."

Page 263 - 14 July 1965. CPT Chuck Oram and I proceeded to the Boeing-Vertol plant where we picked up a new aircraft and then flew to the Atlanta Depot. We made systematic and thorough searches of the entire depot for CH-47 parts, accessories and hardware. We found several CH-47 "loads" of Chinook parts and had them hauled to Ft. Benning, where they were packed and then shipped to Vietnam with the Battalion. That was one of the wiser things we ever did! During the period 28 July - 5 Aug, all 57 CH-47s (48 TOE plus nine float) were flown to Mayport Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, FL for "cocooning" with protective covers and loading on the USNS Boxer.

Continuing on this maintenance theme, VHPA member Gary Lozier provides the following: When the 1st Cav departed Ft. Benning, they tried to anticipate future problems and carry sufficient parts and supplies to operate until normal resupply channels were up and running. Much of this was because most of the Chinooks were new aircraft, just delivered from the factory and had not flown enough hours for the various Army elements to learn about the weaknesses or problem areas. One incident that happened not long after we were in Vietnam illustrates what I'm talking about. A CH-47 flown by Lee Ramage of C/228 landed at An Khe after a test flight and during shutdown, one of the forward rotor blades while still turning slowly simply rolled 90 degrees and the end fell on the ground. One can imagine the look on Ramage's face was priceless! A quick inspection revealed that the pitch change link attachment to the pitch change horn had worn so much that the link came off the horn. All battalion aircraft were grounded for inspection. We even called outlying areas to warn the crews there. That night the battalion had only three flyables out of 48 aircraft. Emergency calls went to the Boeing factory and new components were air shipped immediately. It was 4-5 days before we began to get well. Analysis indicated that this situation was the result of incorrect density altitude/airspeed calculator that we had been using. We had been flying the CH-47A too fast at too high of a gross weight for the high density altitude conditions in II Corps. The new airspeed restrictions generally held the CH-47 down to 100 kts empty and 80 kts loaded. The upper head components were significantly strengthened when Boeing came out with the B and C models.

First CH-47 Crash - VHPA member Gary Lozier provided the following: I had the misfortune of flying the first Chinook to be lost in an accident in Vietnam. It happened during the first 24 hour period of the Ia Drang battle after the 1/7th Cav was inserted into LZ X-Ray. The 1/7th ran into a hornets nest that Sunday morning, 14 Nov 65, and the Chinooks moved 105 artillery to LZ Columbus, a few miles west of X-Ray. After completing this move by mid afternoon, we were tasked to move 3,000 rounds of ammo so the artillery could fire protective fires for the 1/7th that night and the next day. At this stage we did not have nets or slings, so we would load 150 rounds (in their round fiber containers) in a pile down down the middle of the a/c. The load was strapped down and when we got to the LZ, we would hover, nose high and let the rounds roll out the rear of the a/c. This ammo resupply operation went on through most of Sunday night. A low layer of stratus moved in after dark so we had to fly on top at 4,000 from Pleiku to LZ Columbus (210 degrees for about 25 minutes). When we got to the LZ, we would find a hole, let down, locate flashlights in the LZ and land. CPT William H. McGlockton and I were flying 64-13110 with SP6 Daniel L. Wilson and Sp5 Victor S. Lafrancoeur and were on our last sortie at about 0300 Monday morning, 15 Nov. About 10 minutes south of Pleiku, the

aircraft suddenly developed a very severe lateral vibration. It shook so bad that we only had partial control and could not read any of the instruments. It was throwing us around against our lap and shoulder restraints and actually threw my helmet off! The second ship in our flight, flown by CWOs Hooks and Anzilotta, saw us suddenly descend into the clouds and disappear. We broke out of the clouds about 500 AGL, still with only partial control. We could not communicate because I had lost my helmet. We turned on the landing lights after we broke out and saw nothing but trees. Some appeared much taller than others so we steered toward the shorter trees. As it turned out, the trees that appeared shorter were actually down in a ravine. We ended up crashing on the side of the ravine, on about a 60 degree slope. Hitting the slope is what I think actually saved us. Had we hit on flat ground, I think the impact would have been too severe. The impact forces were reduced by rolling down the slope. I tried to shut both engines down at impact, but only got one shut down. When the dust settled and we regained our senses, hanging upside down, we realized that #2 was still running and losing its oil. With 7,000 lbs. of ammo on board and expecting a fire to start any second, we quickly exited and moved about 200 yards away. Hooks and Anzilotta had found a hole in the undercast a few miles north and came looking for us. By the time they got back to our area, the engine on 110 had caught fire and they were able to locate the site, but they did not know our status. I had a cigarette lighter and our Crew Chief, SP5 LaFrancoeur, had a letter from his wife in his pocket. The flaming letter generated enough light for Hooks and Anzilotta to see us and they landed on the ridge top above us. We quickly climbed out of the ravine and got into their ship. We were only on the ground about 20 minutes; thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our sister ship! Earlier in this set of missions we thought we had experienced a blade strike while unloading ammo at LZ Columbus. During the shut down at Pleiku to load, we had inspected the aircraft as best we could with flashlights and we thought it was OK. Obviously the vibration was due to the lost part of a blade. After the accident board looked over the wreck, a crane came in to lift it out. They had a difficult time because of all that ammo still inside.

Another Crash - On 29 Jan 66, 63-7913 from B/228 was lost about five miles north of the Phu Cat Rifle Range. It was flown by CPT Hardin and CW2 Roop and was the lead ship in a flight of four Chinooks that were moving fuel from Phu Cat to Bong Son. I was chalk 2. At about 1500 feet, I observed 913 drop its sling load of JP-4 and begin a descent. After descending only 100-200 feet, both rotor heads came off and the a/c fell inverted into a rice paddy. We received no radio transmissions from 913. The forward head flew about a quarter mile to the right and the aft head left before they hit. The impact was so severe that it broke the frame on CPT Hardin's 38 pistol that he had in a shoulder holster. The highest part of the Chinook was about three feet above the ground. Post crash examination revealed that the forward transmission froze in flight, a result of paper blocking internal oil passages in the transmission. We assumed that the paper must have been accidentally left in the transmission during assembly.

Operations - VHPA member Gary Lozier provides the following: In Oct 65 when the NVA attacked Plei Me, the 1st Cav decided to move a Brigade forward to protect Pleiku. Highway 19 and the Mang Yang Pass were not yet open so the 228th was tasked to move major elements of the Brigade forward. The number of sorties was so great that we went to 24 hours operations. Flight crews were divided with half flying from 0600-1800 and the other half flying nights, from 1800-0600. This went on for 7-10 days because we also had to move all the fuel, ammo and supplies to support the Brigade. I was initially assigned to the night shift for A/228th. Elements of the Brigade to be moved were strung along Highway 19, about 10 miles east of An Khe, toward Qui Nhon. The weather was poor with low stratus clouds covering An Khe at about 500 feet. We would fly single ship and time space ourselves by 5-10 minutes. On those initial nights with bad weather a typical mission profile would go as follows: Depart the refuel point at An Khe, when directly over the center of An Khe, turn to heading 090 and climb to 4,000. Fly east for 10 minutes, led down on heading 090 until breakout, spot the lights, land and load the Brigade elements. When loaded, we would take off on heading 090 and climb to 4,000, reverse course to 270 and continue to climb to 6,000 since the highest mountain was 5,100. We usually broke out at 5,000 and would fly on top. Once west

of the Mang Yang, the weather was usually clear and we would proceed VMC to Pleiku and unload. After unloading, we would depart east for An Khe, flying at 5,500 and get a GCA approach to get down at An Khe to refuel. After refueling, we would take off and repeat the mission two more times that night. We got through the move forward with no major problems or accidents. It says a lot about the professionalism and "can do" attitude in the Cav. No matter how tough the mission, the Cav would figure out a way to accomplish it in a timely manner.

Troop Ladders - VHPA member Gary Lozier provides the following: In the early fall of 65, the 228th received a few sets of ladders. They were the 110 feet version and were normally installed two per aircraft, one down through the center cargo hook access and the other off the rear ramp. I know the 1st Cav history says that the first training was conducted about Christmas time; but the first ladder operation happened in late October or early November, well before any training had been conducted. The mission was a very risky, night extraction out of Cambodia. A/228th ASHB was bivouaced at the Turkey Farm on the north side of Pleiku. About 2000, a request came in to extract a Hurricane Team that had two POWs across the border in Cambodia. The team consisted of two Special Forces, three Vietnamese and their two NVA prisoners. The team was being chased by the NVA, was in danger of being captured, and did not know their exact location as they were running along jungle trails.

As I recall the mission was given to CW3 Ken Dickey and MAJ Ralph Jackson. They departed the Turkey Farm, single ship, at about 2130 hours and flew west toward where the team was thought to be. Fortunately they were able to establish radio contact with the Hurricane Team and, using FM homing, were able to over fly their location. Once overhead, the SF gave instructions until the CH-47 could hover above them and drop the ladders. They had to hover 15-20 minutes while the team and its two prisoners climbed the ladders. After the successful extraction, the crew returned to the Turkey Farm at about 2300. We never did learn what the Hurricane Team told or threatened the prisoners with to get them to climb the ladders into a hovering helicopter at night, but it must have been convincing!!

After this mission, several of the infantry battalion conducted actual ladder training about Christmas time as mentioned in the histories.

My first ladder mission was on 10 Jan 66 when CPT Allan Matthews and I flew two CH-47's to insert about 60 infantry along the Cambodian border, west of Plei Djerieng. The mission was to insert at 0730 in one area. Then the infantry would recon that area and move to another location for a ladder extraction at about 1630. The insertion went as planned without a problem. As we started out for the extraction, the ground elements advised us that they were over 800 meters from the planned P/U area and were still hacking and cutting their way. Their progress was so slow that we decided to hover over them and drop the ladders through the trees. I went in first, we dropped the ladders and the infantry started climbing. It takes 20-30 minutes for 30 men to climb into the aircraft, so you are at a tree top hover in a high risk environment for a very long time! Initially all went well, however the infantry lost count and got too many men on the ladders. Slowly they began to pull the Chinook down into the trees. I was pulling max power without bleeding rpm and screaming on the radio to get off the ladders. Naturally the RTOs immediately under the Chinook could not hear a thing. More guys were getting on the ladder and we couldn't stop it. Finally, we called back to the infantry higher and they were able to contact another RTO who got things stopped. We even got several men off the ladders which then gave us enough power reserve to lift out of the hole. The crew was so exhausted when the last man was in the aircraft that they could not pull up the ladders. We flew a few miles to Plei Djerieng at 30-40 knots then landed and retracted the ladders. That was one scary mission!

My next and last ladder operation was during the Bong Son Campaign. On 4 Mar 66 we were tasked to do seven ladder insertions about four miles SE of Bong Son near the mountain tops. The plan called for the Air Force to drop some 750 pounders at designated locations to blow a small hole in the canopy. We would then hover over the holes and insert the infantry by ladder. The first insertion went fine, but when I started putting men down into the second hole, a VC machine gun

opened up on the men on the ladder. This caused the men to freeze on the ladders and they wouldn't go up or down, even after their friends on the ground had silenced the enemy gun. Finally, we had to fly four miles back to the strip with men hanging on the ladders. There we let the men down on the ground. I'd say the ladder operations were not that popular with either the aviation or the infantry elements.

Artillery Hauler - Without any doubt, the Chinooks ability to work well with artillery units changed the way warfare would be conducted forever. VHPA member Mike Sloniker's short story illustrates this point.

Under the Hurricane by Mike Sloniker

From 1 Dec 1967 to 3 Mar 1968, I was a third string replacement forward observer with the infantry in the 3d Brigade. 101st Airborne Division, visiting scenic Phouc Vinh, Song Be, the Phu Tho race track in Saigon when it had low grazing automatic weapons fire, instead of horses on it, the Ho Bo and Bo Loi woods, and lots of trees and bamboo on a line from Ben Cat, west to Dau Tieng. I was able to start the Tet Offensive of 1968 with A Troop 2/17 Cav at Song Be. A and B Troops were then ground cav units; A Trp had M-60 machine gun jeeps, and 106mm jeeps, and B Trp had M-113's. During my time with them, they were dismounted infantry knocking around in the bush. That entire period I viewed the Chinook from afar.

In March 1968, I got to see this leaking, windy, noisy trash hauler up close, in fact, I couldn't get away from it until November when I left. As the fire direction officer (FDO) of C Battery 2d Bn/319th FA, my remaining eight months in country would consist of moving 45 times, averaging a move about every seven days, all by the CH-47.

I was moved by Geronimos, Black Cats, Muleskinners, in III Corps, Shrimboats in II Corps, and Varsity and Playtex in I Corps. All I knew, as an artilleryman, was call signs, and which unit dropped one of guns from altitude (Shrimboats in May 1968 enroute Dak To from Dak Pek).

Either the Geronimos or Black Cats blew over the battery latrine at Phouc Vinh in April 1968 with our artillery battalion commander in it. The 47's had to fly into our gun positions in the northwest corner of Phouc Vinh and lift the 105mm (M-102) howitzer directly out of the pit. The flight path put the aircraft over the battery latrine, which started moving around after the first sortie out. The Bn Cdr was in the area watching the move, when his last meal kicked in and he headed for the crapper. The chief of firing battery, SFC Arthur A. Radiconi, mentioned the "Old Man is in for a surprise." A CH-47 blew the latrine over on its door, so he had to climb out the little flap doors in the back where Papa San slid the cut off 55 gal drums in and out. He was covered in diesel fuel and excrement. The troops loved it!

We made at night assault under the Muleskinners from Cu Chi in April 1968 somewhere east of Dau Tieng. The LZ was illuminated by 155mm and the 47's flew under it. The sight of the Muleskinners' mule on the Chinook's forward pylon, illuminated by the flares was ghost like. A few months later, I got night "tactical emergency" (Tac-E) resupply from the Muleskinners in early September 1968, firing support for FSB Buell II, north of Tay Ninh. Gary Roush was flying the aircraft that night, and absolutely put the load on the light. I was under that light!

We exceeded the rate of fire for our guns that night and had tubes glowing red in the dark. At first light, the firebase, which I think was called "Sheridan" looked like it had been the target of the ground attack. Empty boxes, fibers, and shell casings, caused us to spend about 3 hours getting the mess cleaned up for backhaul when the Chinooks came in the morning with a full water trailer (water buffalo). The routine with the Chinook was never ending and we took for granted that it was our lifeline.

In May 68, we were told to cover up our division patch, and all vehicle bumper markings with green tape. We moved quickly from Phouc Vinh, III Corps, to Dak To, II Corps, by C-130. Upon off loading the 130's we were trucked over to a helicopter pad, near the airstrip and slung loaded out by the Shrimboats to Dak Pek.

Something caused a delay, and I was sent to Dak Pek in a Huey. For some reason, we were put on the ground at the airstrip next to the SF camp at Dak Pek. While we sat there and waited, a Caribou, flown by a

USAF crew, tore a wing off on landing and crashed. All 38 souls on board got out. The crash closed down the fixed wing traffic into that camp. After the excitement of the crash, the afternoon rain fell, turned everything to mud, then the Chinooks arrived.

The Fire Direction Center (FDC) equipment was transloaded from the back of the 3/4 to a jeep trailer at Dak Pek airstrip. Then we were told the trailer had to go internally to our mountain top firebase, so we began the "great push the trailer into the Chinook adventure."

The ramp was too steep and the mud on the ground and on the ramp eliminated traction. So we were then told they would winch in the load. As the trailer cleared the ramp, the cable broke, and whipped up to the front of the aircraft. It missed the crew members, but scared the hell out of the pilots, who immediately took off after they insured the trailer was clear. I have a memory of the center post on that Chinook's window being knocked out, but cannot find anyone to verify. A Huey came along, and took the trailer up to the mountain externally on slings. Should have done that in the first place.

The razorback mountain top we were on was exciting. This was our first exposure to mountain tops that were shaped as sharp as the back on a razorback. In 1990, I read in, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army*, by Shelby Stanton that we were near the Laotian border and south of Kham Duc, which was overrun at the same time. We were required to fire most of our missions high angle with the tubes pointing near vertical during the fire missions. When the guns traversed, they could not do so, simultaneously, because of the narrowness of the mountain top.

I couldn't get off that mountain and out of II Corps soon enough. We were only up there two weeks, but it was an eternity. At night, the top of the mountain would be in a cloud, and would be cold. Naturally, all we had to keep warm was poncho liners.

The red and green lights shining on the aiming posts at night was the only illumination up there. The cannoners always were quiet at night, except for the tedious harassment and interdiction (H&I) fires that were shot intermittently all night long. They seemed to be whispering the commands at night in the clouds, as they received their instructions from the fire direction center.

The days we weren't moving were very tedious, long, and boring. In the morning, base piece, gun number 3, would get registered. This was usually done by an air observer, who would observe the gun fire at a known point, i.e., the intersection of a trail and a creek. Once the corrections had been applied in the FDC, we would shoot a battery one round (one round per all six guns) and ask the AO to check the sheaf (the impact pattern of the battery in the target area). This was our way of seeing if anyone was firing short or long and make appropriate adjustments. Then the Chinook would come with a full water trailer and an externally slung food resupply. He would backhaul expended 105 brass. Sometimes you got a fire mission - a lot of times we would just sit around. Everything came in spurts. The next time we would see the Chinook, would be around 4PM with ammunition resupply, and the orange mail bags.

On the days we would move, it would take 8 sorties to move 6 howitzers, one 3/4 ton truck and the battery commander's (BC) jeep (which would be moved internally). Sequence of movement was for the advance party (me, two chart operators, the FDC chief, and 2 or 3 cannoners) to go to the next position in a Huey, followed by the externally slung, CH-47 transported, FDC 3/4 ton truck, then the guns, followed by the BC's jeep. The CH-47 would land, the gun crew would run in and sit on the floor-no seat belts ever!, then the Chinook would hover over the load. We would usually give the finger, from inside the Chinook through the hole in the floor, to a battery mate who was under the Chinook hooking up the load. The last gun out would be hooked by the Chinook guy hanging out of the hole using a "shepard's hook," to grab the doughnut and put it on the hook.

The slings were always treated with great care in my battery. SFC Radiconi would smoke a gun chief (an E-6) if he found the sling gear laying out in the rain. The M-102 howitzer was the foundation for the load. It had three sling points on it; one on the barrel, and two opposite each other on the trails. Each point would secure one sling, which

would be joined at an iron horse-shaped cleaves, which also had the doughnut (concentric circle, lift device, if you ever had to re-order one). Also attached to the cleaves was the sling attached to the A-22 bag, which carried a basic load of HE, Illum, beehive, WP, and Improved Conventional Munition (ICM) called "firecracker." We traveled light, so our howitzers did not have duffel bags hanging off them, making the unit look like a bunch of ragbag gypsies. Sometimes we would be on firebases with 1st Div or 25th 105mm batteries that had the split trail M101's. THEY carried the world draped over their tubes.

I could never tell if the 101st did it better, or the 101st delighted in hassling the troops. We were always "soldiering," so we didn't know better. We would have loaded like gypsies if we could have gotten away with it.

I can only remember fat guys being on the Chinook crews. We always thought they made the fattest guy the one who had to lay on the floor for the whole flight looking through the hole at our gun. On one flight, I was on the last flight out when our aircraft took fire. I was so tired that I can remember being fascinated at how the floor looked after bullets went through an area between my legs. I was not fascinated with the descent, which I would learn later was an autorotation.

In October we moved from Phouc Vinh to Camp Evans and then to the mountains out West. We left Phouc Vinh and the "we were winning when I left" 1st Cav came in and pacified III Corps. In my second tour, first tour as an aviator in 71-72, I would benefit from the 1st Cav's efforts until the roof fell in during the Easter Offensive.

I went up to I Corps by myself, because we had a supply sergeant killed, I had to identify the body, inventory his gear, ship it home, and write a draft letter to the parents for the battery commander. He was killed near Cu Chi, so all the admin work was done there. Some how, during that period, I got invited to go over to the Muleskinner's club in Cu Chi. I remember looking at polaroid pictures of the pilots on a wall and one guy having magnet ass under his name. What I remember most was the nurses that showed up. Don't remember what they looked like, all I remember was that they were round eyes, they were around aviators, the aviators were in an air conditioned building, and they didn't sleep on the ground.

When I got up to Phu Bai, I went initially to Camp Eagle. My battery was traveling to Phu Bai via a Korean Navy operated LST, which would provide endless stories about who threw up and was sick, once they got to the firebase. There I ran into Roy Lowery and Gary Jones, who were retread warrants, and now captains flying for the Varsity. They lived in very nice hooches, that had a Seabee built and supplied water heater heated hot water shower. I had probably 5 or 6 hot showers in 67-68, in fact, probably only had 5-6 showers in 67-68. I met Jones and Lowery (VHPA members) at Ft Sill, OK in Aug 67 in the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course. On Saturday's they would fly Chinooks, finishing up a Chinook transition at Ft Sill. Sometimes, I would fly in the jump seat. Afterwards, when I would drive home, I would notice how my 65 Mustang would have less rattles after a Chinook ride. After a couple hours, my hearing would come back, and so would the rattles in that ragged Mustang.

Once we got the battery into Eagle, the Varsity took us to FB Bastogne. The ONLY purpose we could have been sent there for was to acclimate us to deep mud, high angle fire, sniper fire in the firebase, and overcast. Fortunately, that did not last too long, and we were "rescued" by the Pacyderms and taken up to Camp Evans externally. My RTO told me that a Chinook called "Pack of Worms" was inbound, which I thought was an original thought, coming from him.

After a few days at Evans, we went to an old 1st Cav firebase named LZ Miquel. It was in the wrong place for the 101st, so we built FSB Rakkasan further up the mountain. Probably did it just to keep us busy. I would DEROS off that mountain, not knowing C Battery would be destroyed at 0310 May 13, 1969 at FB Airborne, while supporting the 3/187 Inf at Dong Ap Bia (Hamburger Hill). I almost extended six months to stay in the battery back in June 68, but the something happened to the paperwork it did not happen, and I did not ask why. I

will not forget them and I leave a memorial on Panel 25W, every Memorial day and Veteran's day at the Viet Nam Memorial in Washington DC.

On my second tour, which was a flying one from 71-72, I was again deeply affected by the Chinook. On May 10, 1972, at a distance of about 2 miles, same altitude, I saw a CH-47A go down near Long Thanh North. It was CH-47A, 64-13157, from the 362d ASHC, 229th AHB, 3d Bde 1st Cav (SEP) and went down at YT 168 032. The aircraft commander was CPT Tomlin and the copilot was 1LT Harrell.

"United 157" was a flight of four Chinooks that picked up infantry troops at the Sandy Pad at Bien Hoa Army Base. The troops were being taken to Vung Tau. As 157 neared Long Thanh North airfield, other Chinooks in the flight described 157 as exploding like a lightbulb flash. Since there had been an increase in NVA activity at An Loc, the aircraft was thought to have been shot down. The remaining CH-47's sped from the area. It was learned later that the Chinook had a material failure of a blade retaining pin. Five crewmen and 27 soldiers were lost. I also leave a memorial in their memory at the Vietnam Memorial.

The Chinook was our link to the world in those firebases. We found out how important they were when we got weathered in and got no resupply for days on end. Without the Chinook, the field artillery would not have been able to function. Odd as it may sound, sometimes the best sound of the day was the sound of a CH-47, and the voice of a pilot who sounded like he was talking out of a bucket.

Armed Chinooks - Much has been printed about the four ACH-47's. VHPA member John Konek prepared articles for the VHPA Newsletter and Wayne Mutza's book provides considerable detail.



53rd Aviation Detachment

Aircraft Recovery - If you were in an Assault Helicopter Company or an Air Cav Troop and you had a Huey or a gunship go down, after making certain the crew was taken care of your next call was for a Chinook. The 14th CAB unit history provides some aircraft evacuation statistics for the 178th ASHC for a six month period: 56 UH-1D's, 3 UH-1B, 2 UH-1Cs, 3 OH-13's, 5 OH-23's and 2 O-1's.

Rigging Loads - Again the 14th CAB history provides the following. "Unserviceable rigging equipment and improperly rigged loads. This item continues to be a problem area within many of the units supported by the 178th ASHC. During the reporting period five (5) external loads were lost as a result of faulty rigging equipment and one (1) because it was improperly rigged."

Crashes - The CH-47 is a big helicopter and when things go wrong for a big helicopter some rather spectacular events can happen. VHPA member Gary Roush's short story is one such spectacular event.

CHINOOK CRASH by Gary B. Roush

On 21 November 1968, the 242 ASHC was resupplying Fire Support Base Keene south of Cu Chi near the Plain of Reeds in support of the 2nd Battalion 14th Infantry 25th Infantry Division. I was the aircraft commander of Chinook CH-47A serial number 66-19019 and Captain Roger P. Olney was the pilot. SP5 Alfred T. Calderon was the crew chief in the flight engineer's position for this flight, SP5 Robert W. JeWell was the flight engineer in the right door gunner position, and SP4 Bruce A. Knief was the left door gunner. CPT. Olney was new in country. At that time, which was about 6 months into my tour in Vietnam, I had accumulated over 700 flight hours in Chinooks with over 400 as an aircraft commander. Being one of the few commissioned officers in the company, I was generally assigned to fly with the new higher ranking officers for in country orientation.

We had an internal load of 16 grunts and several bags of mail plus an external load from Cu Chi. CPT. Olney was flying at the time and I was working the radios. We first set down the external load then hovered over to the resupply pad to set down to unload the internal men and supplies. To hold down dust during the dry season, this FSB had placed a heavy Neo-prene pad on the landing area and held it in place with sand bags. I noticed as we approached that the pad had split down the middle exposing the dirt underneath. CPT. Olney hovered to the pad and set the back wheels on the ground. I lifted my feet to engage the brakes (the Pilot not flying worked the brakes since the Chinook would roll forward as the front wheels were lowered). Just as the front wheels were touching the ground, I noticed out of the corner of my left eye that the left half of the pad was flying up toward the aft rotor. The Chinook's 110 knot rotor wash was always kicking up poncho liners, empty sandbags, and small tents, so we routinely looked for loose objects. This pad, however, was so big that it never occurred to me that it would blow up in the blades. I grabbed for the collective to pull pitch but it was too late. The pad hit the aft rotor on the left side. There was an instant severe vibration so I knew we had a serious blade strike which automatically meant a shut down. At the same time the caution panel lit up so an emergency shut down was in order so I immediately pulled both flight levers to stop.

CPT. Olney being new was turning the switches the wrong way so I hit him to keep his hands away from the controls. I was most concerned about the fuel valves, fuel pumps, and generator switches which are on the overhead panel.

The vibration quickly stopped and the front rotor was coasting down normally so I assumed there was no major problem. CPT. Olney, however, immediately got out of his seat and quickly left without saying a word, his "chicken plate" (ceramic armor chest protector) crashing to the floor. This was very unusual since both pilots normally stayed in their seats until the rotors stopped. The pilot who flew in the right seat had a rear view mirror so he could see back through the companion way into the cargo compartment. After I completed the shut-down procedure, I looked to see why he left in such a hurry and was shocked to see the Chinook was on fire and it was up to the companion way. I was trapped!

As I experienced several times in Vietnam, during periods of pure terror, training takes over and everything fortunately happens in slow motion. I remembered being told in flight school about the emergency escape door each pilot had which was operated by a black and yellow striped handle located just above my head on the left. I knew exactly where it was because that is where I always hung my Kodak instant camera. I grabbed for the handle and jerked down. To my horror and surprise the handle broke off in my hand and the door did not pop out like my training said it would. "Now," I said to myself, "it is time to panic!" "No - wait," the voice in my head started again. "If the emergency handle fails then the door can be kicked out." Leave it up to the Army to think of everything. No sweat, just kick out the door. Well I kicked and kicked but nothing happened. This was not surprising, now that I think about it, because there was not much room to kick. "Well this is it, I am trapped," I thought, "I am going to die. My training has run out. Not only have I crashed but now I am going to be burned alive!" This gave me a new meaning to the phrase "crash and burn." "Well, I will take one last look at my fate" - Surprise! the fire had backed off just enough for me to get through the companion way and over the right

door gun. "Let's go!" the little voice said, "Let's get the hell out of here!" That is what I did. At the time it seemed like this all took about an hour but in reality it probably lasted about 20 seconds.

Now to take inventory. Everyone got out. Thank God! One grunt had scratched his face and the flight engineer had sprained his wrist. He also was soaked in hydraulic fluid and was very lucky not to have caught on fire since he was standing under the aft pylon when it separated and caught on fire. In fact, it all happened so fast that his intercom cord was burned in two before he could say anything on the intercom. What a relief and what a fire! The aft rotor and aft pylon had separated from the fuselage with the result of exposing gallons of oil and jet fuel to the hot turbine engine exhaust causing the instant fire. One aft rotor blade was thrown 110 yards. Fortunately, the pad flew into the left side of the aft rotor which pulled the hub and transmission away from the front rotor and fuselage instead of into them, which a blade strike on the right would have caused. Also, fortunately, because I got the fuel valves off so quickly the fire did not get into the fuel tanks which still had about 2000 pounds of JP-4 in them and could have caused an explosion or much bigger fire.

As I was trying to figure out what to do next, from out of nowhere a young Lieutenant General appeared with a photographer in tow. Apparently he was flying in the area in his Huey and heard about the accident on the radio. He asked who was in charge of the Chinook and was directed to me. By this time I was in a nearby bunker because ammunition carried on the Chinook was cooking off and I was afraid the fuel tanks would explode. After I convinced the General that I was in charge even though I was a Lieutenant and the pilot was a Captain, he said, "Let's go put that fire out, Lieutenant." I said, "Sir, this thing might explode any minute and, besides, those are M-79 and M-60 rounds cooking off in the fire that you hear." He said to me, as we backed toward a bunker, "don't you have fire extinguishers on that thing?" I said, "Yes sir, but they are little tiny things that last about two seconds and that's a big fire!" All this time the General's photographer was getting some great pictures of the General with this burning Chinook in the background. I guess I finally convinced him that the Chinook was a lost cause because he began directing his energy toward the fire support base commander. He started asking questions about why he did not get resupplied by road instead of by air and other embarrassing questions. This gave me an opportunity to slip away.

I went looking for a radio to call Cu Chi and inform my Company Commander of my predicament and see if we could get something to put out the fire. Shortly a Huey and a Chinook showed up from Cu Chi. The Chinook brought a large airport-type fire extinguisher from the Muleskinner ramp which was successfully used to put out the fire just as it reached the fuel tanks.

CPT. Olney and I climbed into the Huey for the embarrassing ride back to Cu Chi. To my surprise I had the emergency handle and my camera with me which confirmed to me that in an emergency you took with you only what was in your hands or attached to your body. My chicken plate was missing but I had my pistol. As a result, I continued to wear a .45 caliber pistol instead of switching to an M-16 rifle like some of the other pilots did. As the Huey climbed out of the LZ, I tried to take a picture of the wreckage but my camera would not work. It did not matter, however, since the battalion safety officer confiscated all the film from all of the cameras at the fire support base which yielded a full sequence of the action except for the exact instant of the blade strike. I was surprised at the number of pictures. A battalion clerk later gave me 8 x 10 size blow-ups of several of the pictures to add to my emergency handle souvenir.

As I recall, the accident investigation found me partially at fault for not exercising proper care in a hazardous situation and found the ground commander partially at fault for improper maintenance of a landing pad. My guess is that the ground commander got more grief than I did because of that General showing up. I was flying the next day and never heard anymore about the accident except for a review with the accident investigation officer and a routine check by the flight surgeon. The damage came to \$1,290,504.40. I was glad the Army did not make me pay for it.

The good thing was that all 16 passengers and the crew of 5 did not

get seriously hurt. The bad thing was that 5 or 6 bags of mail from home were lost in the fire. What was left of the Chinook was hauled to the 539th General support Maintenance company located at Phu Loi and cannibalized for parts.

Eight days before this accident I was so close to an air strike in an LZ that my Chinook got hit with the debris from the bomb blast. Three days before this accident I called a Mayday because of a complete electrical failure. Two days after this accident I nearly drowned in a swimming pool after my crew threw me in because we got shot up that day. Seven days later I got shot at by an American GI because my Chinook blew dirt in his first hot meal in weeks (turkey dinner for Thanksgiving). Eight days later my Chinook was completely surrounded by enemy tracers at tree top level at a Vietnamese village on the Cambodian border nicknamed Diamond City without taking a single hit. After these events I decided that I was not going to get killed in Vietnam. After living through all of this, I could live through anything!

Flying has been described as hours and hours of boredom interrupted by moments of terror. In Vietnam flying helicopters in combat was hours and hours of excitement interrupted by intense periods of extreme terror.

Unit Histories - VHCMA member Dick Janousek and his wife labored long and hard to collect and prepare one of the finest Chinook unit histories the VHPA has seen to date. It covers the 178th Assault Support Helicopter Company and includes the 400th Transportation Corps Detachment from 1 Sep 1965 to 5 Mar 1972 and was printed in Vol. 2 of the Historical Reference Directory. Other Chinook units should seriously consider using Dick's work as a model. What follows are interesting extracts from this history.

The Loss of A/C 64-13156 by Steve Niedbala - Date: 05-30-66. Crew: Pilot - Maj. Lewis J. McConnell - Operations Officer, co-Pilot - Jack Keaton, Gunner - SP/5 Joe Boylan, F/E - SP/5 Roy Brown, Crew chief - SP/4 Anderson, Assigned crew chief was SP/4 Kilpatrick, but for whatever reason, he was not on board this day. Load: 30 barrels MOGAS Internal. Weather: Marginal at LZ which was atop Nui Ba Den a mountain near Tay Ninh Mountain. The LZ was a radio/relay site manned by ARVN's with a special forces advisor. The ARVN's had a small village for their families just below the helipad. The rest of the mountain belonged to Charlie. The helipad was built for a Huey but with care a CH-47A could land on the mountain top. Apparently an approach, through clouds, to the pad was tried and missed slightly causing the A/C to roll down the side of the mountain through the village. The MOGAS drums rolled into rocks and burst causing fuel to flow down hill catching fire and killing over 70 villagers and destroying the village. SP/5 Ross Brown and two passengers from the Big Red One were killed in the aircraft. Ross Brown's body was never recovered. They found his watch and part of his 45. The last anyone saw of him



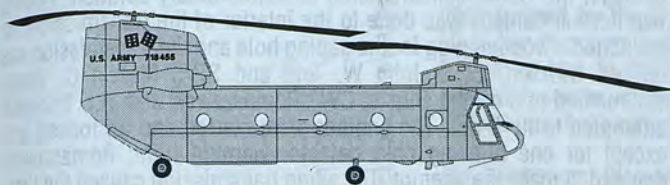
he was trying to get forward, climbing over MOGAS barrels, since the aft end was already on fire. The A/C was totally destroyed. You could recognize the two engines and the leading edge of one rotor blade. There was no trace of the village.

A/C 67-18457 The downing of 457 by Andy Killian - As a member of the 400 TC, in TEC Supply, we always tried to do our part to keep the aircraft in the air, and the best they could be. As the unit was always known to give the extra effort, I did also. I would go up flying on my days off to help the crews and to know the aircraft better, and to know the parts and how they worked. July 1, 1968 was one of those days. It turned into the only day I ever think of even today. The mission was for me routine, a day away from my desk up flying, taking pictures, helping load the aircraft. The aircraft's mission was to remove a ground unit that had been in the field about two weeks as I remember. We had three aircraft working the LZ and a gun ship supporting us and giving cover to a 50 meter free fire zone. None of us had received any fire for the gunship was a major threat to those who might on the ground. The first few loads were as you tend to expect, tired GI looking for a safe ride out of the field to a bath, food, and much needed sleep. As I helped those guys with their gear into the aircraft my desk always looked better, but we all had a job to do, and ours was to get those guys back home. The mission went like this: We would fly up the river until we saw the LZ then after talking to the gunship he would come in under us in case we drew any fire. When we were just short of the LZ he (the gunship) would pull off to cover and bring in the next ship. The troops would run in and we would pick and get because a ship was right behind us. Then it happened, as I remember I was standing between the pilots watching the ship below us being taken in by the gunship, and listing on my flight helmet. As I then turned to set my self for our turn in, THE CAPT. SAID OH MY GOD. I turned backed to see what he was looking at, and to hear him telling us what had just happened. As I was watching the smoke just coming out of the trees, he was saying the two had just hit each other. What had happened was that the gunship had pulled up into the blades and had its tail-rotor cut off. The CH-47 had rolled over and had gone in across the river upside down and was on fire. The gunship had landed in the LZ and never hit anybody on the ground some how, but had hit real hard and the skids were bent and the tail-rotor was gone. As we watched the fire knowing there was nothing we could do for our brothers we landed in the LZ to take our next pick. As I looked at the faces of the GI's loading I felt they did not want to be there, but with their fingers crossed and running in it was still a ride out of the field. We all felt there was little hope for our friends and the loss was ever worse as each minutes went by, were their tears? I can't say now. But as I write and remember today their are. We took one more load that day, and it was that gunship out of the LZ, as we came in for the pick hovering above the gunship I still see the bags being carried across the river FIVE, all were lost. When we arrived back to the flight line we were greeted like lost pups just returned home.

A/C 67-18455 by Dick Janousek - In the late afternoon hours of June 19, 1968, Aircraft 67-18455 returned to the POL area just north of the Boxcar flight line. The mission for the day was complete, so all that was left to do was top off the Chinook's fuel tanks and park it in the revetment. After refueling, A/C 455 hovered to the south end of the 178th ASHC flight line and set down on the crossover between the



178th ASHC



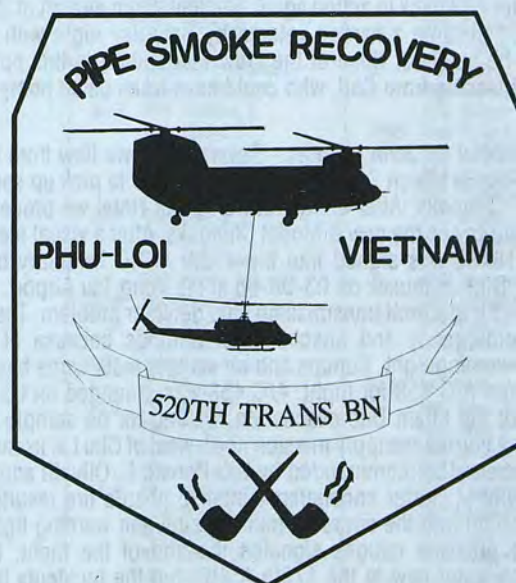
runway and the taxiway. A/C 455 proceeded to taxi east on the crossover and started to turn north onto the taxiway. The flight engineer SP/6 Phillips, had lowered the right door and moved under the machine gun mount. He is now sitting on the right door step waiting for the word from the pilot to guide the Chinook to its parking place. As A/C 455 taxied north, its rotor blades clashed with the blades of A/C 450. SP/6 Phillips was hit with a chunk of rotor blade and was killed. The pilot of A/C 455 tried to lift off, but with part of the rotor blade missing he was not successful. The aircraft ended up on its right side in between the runway and the taxiway. The other five crew members, Pilots CWO Schultz and CWO Moore the crew chief SP Oliver and two gunners SPs Hensley and Jackson, were able to exit the aircraft before it became engulfed in flames. The aircraft, 620 gallons of fuel and the ammunition burned for about a half hour. A/C 455, a B model, had 310 hours on it at the time of the accident. Refueling at the POL area, hovering to the south end of the taxiway, and taxiing north on the taxiway was standard procedure. So what was different this afternoon? The difference was the way aircraft 450 had been parked in the furthest south parking place, on the west side of the 178th ASHC flight line, along side the taxiway. Aircraft 450 had been parked in that end parking place facing the 178th flight line. This left the tail of the Chinook, and the taller set of blades, toward the taxiway. The standard procedure for parking in this parking place was to face the taxiway with the rear of the aircraft toward the flight line. A couple of parked aircraft to the north of the colliding

blades were hit with flying chunks of blades. This damage was repairable and luckily no one other than SP/6 Phillips was hurt by this accident.

A/C 67-18470 by Earl Evans - February 23, 1969, was the first day of Tet for 1969. As we flew sorties all morning up and down Highway 1. We could see that almost every bridge had been blown up or destroyed one way or an other. Basically the morning went pretty much as normal! Around 1:30 p.m., we were headed up Highway 1 again, heading north. Just passing the providence of Tam Ky at 3700 feet. We were hit by some kind of anti-aircraft rounds. Which took out #2 engine plus knocked a hole in the bottom of the combining transmission. As the hot oil blew out of the casing, number two engine caught fire up on the top side. As I looked up at the combining transmission, I could look right into the turning gears which were cherry red. All of the above happened in a matter of seconds. I keyed my mic and shouted, "get us down fast - we're on fire!" The fire kept increasing with every second. As WO1 Charles Preaus was calling out our "May Day - May Day - Boxcar 470 going down on fire!" At that point in time I looked into the cockpit at the altimeter gauge which was still reading over 2,000 feet. I looked back at the glowing red transmission knowing that it couldn't take too much more. I said to myself, "Well, Earl, this is it! You're going to die in the next few seconds." I took down one of the fire extinguisher and started trying to hold the fire at bay. Ed Henry, one of our avionics men, brought back two more extinguishers from the front of the aircraft. Ed was just flying along that day to build up his flying time for flight pay. Little did he know what that day would hold in store for us all. As we got closer to the ground. CWO Lindsley asked me to dump off the 105 howitzer cannon and (class 5) ammunition which was being slung from the bottom of the aircraft. I released it at approx. 100 feet off the ground. As I stood up and grabbed the troop seats to brace for our landing. I looked out the window and the blades had already stopped turning. We were still approx. 20 feet off of touch down. As we were still rolling at a pretty good speed, I could see both pilots unbuckling their seat belts. When the aircraft finally stopped. I looked up and I was the only one still on board. "Hay, boys, wait for me!" Being in the back, I could hardly move until the aircraft stopped. When I cleared the side door, I could see our "sister ship", that was working with us that day, waiting on me to jump aboard. It was hard to watch the aircraft burn as we all lifted off to safety in the other aircraft. For you see, when Jim Kilgo and I first took over Boxcar 470 she could hardly fly 15 minutes



243rd ASHC



520th Transportation Battalion

without breaking down for one reason or another. Sometimes we would only make it to the end of the runway before breaking down. Jim and I know that most of the pilots felt we were putting her down on purpose. After about a month or so we were finally getting up to about 4 hours a day. Just about the time Jim Kilgo left for the states Boxcar 470 went full circle and started becoming one of the most reliable aircraft we had at that time. So, as I watched her burning, I couldn't help but say what I did. "I've spent six months building this bird - and now I must stand and watch her burn."

A/C 67-18483 by Earl Evans - Boxcar 470 was destroyed on Sunday afternoon, February 23, 1969. Tuesday of that same week my crew was assigned a new aircraft (67-18483) fresh from the states. She was all shiny and new without any armor plating and most of all no sheet metal bullet hole patches on her skin. Armor plating in place and passing our final test flight, Boxcar 468 was released for combat Friday night. Our very first load Saturday morning, (March 1, 1969) was a 500 gal. water trailer and class 5 headed for LZ Maxwell. LZ Maxwell was located out west of Da Nang several miles. The area didn't even look good as we started our final approach to the Marine out post. We were approx. 150 feet off the ground on final when we were hit with an RPG round. The water trailer took a direct hit from the RPG round blowing super large pieces of shrapnel into the bottom of our aircraft. The VC usually use a 50 cal. round as a tracer to tell them where they are shooting the RPG. That 50 cal. went threw our left fuel cell blowing about a 6" hole in that cell. All 300 gal. of fuel dumped out on the inside of the aircraft covering the floor with about 2" of fuel. Our troop seats had caught fire from the 50 cal. tracer. Why we didn't blow up - I'll never know. Jerry Grey, my crew chief, was in the back on this load and when he stood up, light was shining down on him from all of the shrapnel from the water trailer. We had to set down on LZ Maxwell to see how badly we had been hit. After the fire was extinguished we pulled all of the drain plugs in the bottom of the aircraft to drain out all the excess fuel still trapped in the belly. Jerry Grey went up top side to duct tape all the holes in the blades. All six blades were peppered pretty bad. I was afraid Jerry would get shot by the VC while up on top and in the open. But the Marines kept trying to protect us. They wanted us off their LZ, because we were drawing so much attention for VC in the area. They wanted to finish us off. We pulled to a hover and prayed that the damaged blades would hold. The aircraft was a little shaky but we headed for home. When we set down at the end of the runway every one came running to us. Several were saying that they had heard we were all killed in action at LZ Maxwell. It took 3 weeks of sheet metal work to put 483 back in action again. So, that virgin aircraft of Saturday morning - became a harden veteran by Saturday night with several holes to be patched. None of the crew was injured in this operation. Another blessing from God, who could have taken us all home on that one.

A/C 67-18458 by John LeCates - Several aircrews flew from Chu Lai to Vung Tau on March 7, 1968 in A/C 67-18455 to pick up some new B Model Chinooks. After a night at the Grand Hotel we proceeded to the air field to see the new B Model Chinooks. After a visual inspection A/C 67-18458 was signed into the 178th ASHC inventory by flight engineer Dick Janousek on 03-08-68 at the Vung Tau Airport. Aircraft 458 always had a front transmission chip detector problem. There were several emergency and unscheduled landings because of a chip detector warning light. Runups and oil sample tests came back clean and cleared A/C 458 for flight. A/C 458 was grounded on 05-12-68, the day of the Kham Duc evacuation, waiting for oil sample results. While on a normal resupply mission north west of Chu Lai in early April 1969, Boxcar 458, commanded by WO Ronald E. Olivotti and piloted by WO Nile L. Harter encountered intense hostile fire resulting in a round ripping into the aircraft's transmission and warning lights, and dropping pressure gauges signaled the end of the flight. Downed aircraft were not new to the 178th ASHC, but the incidents that took place in this situation were. The immediate report forwarded back to the 178th maintenance team was that the aircraft definitely would have to be recovered by a Skycrane, because of its weight and flying condition. Maintenance men, CWO Alfred J. Romaszowski, and 1st Lieutenant William R Thibeault realized that the aircraft could not be recovered by a CH54 until the following day, decided to go to the disabled Chinook. They realized that the aircraft was in a very

conspicuous location and its chances of lasting the night in the barrage of mortars that was sure to come were very slight despite the hasty security that was established around to aircraft. After evaluating the damage, Mr. Romaszowski offered an extraordinary solution. Hoping that no real damage was done to the interior of the transmission, he fashioned a wooden plug for the gaping hole and the transmission was refilled with oil. SP/6 John W. Teid and SP/5 Melvin C. Young volunteered to crew the ship as CW3 Romaszewski and 1Lt. Thibeault attempted to fly it out. The engines were started and all looked well except for one blinking chip detector warning light; Romaszewski decided to make the attempt. The ailing transmission caused the flight to be made at a low level while emerging from the enemy infested area without the benefit of door gunners. Mr. Romaszewski had selected to take minimum crew, and both Specialists Reid and Young were occupied at holding the wooden plug to keep it from being shaken loose by the vibration of the massive transmission. Specialists Reid and Young both suffered burns on their hands from holding that all important homemade plug in the transmission of ailing "Boxcar 458." On May 15, 1969 Boxcar 458 was lost while in a 50 ft. hover over LZ Professional. It took six hits, three in the aft transmission and three in the control closet. The Chinook was destroyed by fire, but there were no casualties. See related story by Earl Evans on aircraft A/C 458 and A/C 483.

A/C 67-18458 and A/C 67-18483 by Earl Evans - 05-15-69: LZ Professional had been under fire for quite some time and was getting dangerously low on ammunition and water. 178th ASHC had received the call to send two ships to said location. Two trips each of water and ammo. Cobra gunships and jet support was also called to help make sure all supplies would arrive safe and sound. Boxcar 483 and 458 were the two aircraft picked for the mission. When we arrived at the LZ, the gunships and jets were still pounding the southwest corner, where the VC were reported to have two 50 cal. machine guns located. Boxcar 483 was the first aircraft to head for the drop-off zone. All eyes were on the southwest corner, waiting for the VC to try to shoot us down. All quiet... Banking around the northeast corner, on the final approach, only about 100 feet off the ground, everyone is thinking, "PIECE OF CAKE". Then all hell broke loose. Two twin 50 cal. machine guns opened up on us, plus several small arms fire. Boxcar 483's top side rocked over as one 50 cal. round hit the upper part of the aircraft. Never before had I ever seen as much gunfire going off and knowing they were all trying to hit me. Tracers and small arms fire bounced off the ground and flew past our windows without another hit. Our load was released on the run. We were never lower than 50 feet from the ground as the load fell to the landing pad. We pulled power and climbed out of there. We could feel the vibration in the upper pylon area where the 50 cal. round had hit. At that time we also were not sure if we had taken any hits from all the small arms fire. The gunships and jets really started pounding the area from where the shooting had come. It was like a mini war zone. Gun fire going both ways. Boxcar 458 started her descent to the landing pad. Through the smoke and haze we could tell that she had taken some major hits. They were unable to pull power and disembark the area. As she settled to the ground, small arms bullets were hitting the aircraft all over. A major fire had erupted as the crew ran for safety in the LZ. That was the end of Boxcar 458. As we circled from above, watching 458 burn, we hoped the crew were safe and no one hurt. As it turned out, all of the crew of 458 were safe and sound - but very much shaken from the ordeal at LZ Professional.

As for Boxcar 483, we were very lucky as well. The anti-aircraft 50 cal. round that had hit her, hit the forward transmission mount pad, which is about a 6" square. The anti-aircraft shell cut a 5" groove deep into that mount pad. A couple inches one way or the other and Boxcar 483 would have finalized at LZ Professional as well.

Books - In addition to Ben Silver's outstanding *Ride At A Gallop*, Signal Publications and Wayne Mutza has a neat book *CH-47 Chinook in action*.

Statistics - In all 29 different American and South Vietnamese units had CH-47s and at least 15 different TC dets provided maintenance support. The VHPA HELICOPT.DBF database has 1,881 CH-47 records which report on 566 unique tail numbers and indicate 157 were destroyed.