

## SECTION II - Honorary Members

Terrie B. Clark

Julie B. Kink

Terrie, the former wife of VHPA Founder, Larry Clark, was a key person in the conception of the VHPA.

Julie, "little sister" of KIA WO1 David R. Kink, has supported the VHPA and the VHFCN by assisting family members of helicopter crewmen and pilots who were casualties of the Vietnam War.

## SECTION III – Additions to the History of non-U.S. Army Helicopter Activities in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era

In keeping with the traditions set by past VHPA Directories, the Directory Committee presents a few pages to support the theme of this edition – Additions to the history of non-U.S. Army helicopter activities in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War Era. The operative word is 'additions' because VHPA Directories have carried helicopter history material for other than the U.S. Army in many issues. Due to page limit considerations, only a small portion of this history material is printed in this issue. You must go to the VHPA website to see all of the material.

### The first SOG Mission into Laos by VHPA and Popasmoke Member Seppo I. Hurme

The white sand of Pensacola Beach reminded me of my stay at The Marble Mountain Air Facility at Da Nang. The weather wasn't that different either, thanks to hurricane Lili that had threatened the 2002 Popasmoke reunion from the start but had finally skirted Pensacola and hit land west of New Orleans. Both the temperature and the humidity were in the nineties, high even for Pensacola in early October. Only the sounds of war were missing. The reunion was drawing to close with Saturday evening's dinner and program and I was a man with mission. Through one of our Marine pilots, Orlando "Lanny" Ingvolstad, I had learned that all four pilots from a historic 1965 mission would be attending the reunion. So I had been shuttling between the hotels and the various squadron and unit tents on the beach in search of these individuals. As the sun was starting to set, I checked the hospitality tent for VMO-6 (one of the Marine observation squadrons that flew the UH-1E gun ships). As I walked to the tent with Lanny, we found Stanley Krueger and the squadron's former XO Robert Presson. A little while later Jim Perryman joined us.

VMO-6 had arrived at Da Nang on 1 September 1965 as part of MAG-36. By end of September MAG-36 had relocated to Ky Ha. The squadron immediately commenced supporting Marine operations within its assigned tactical area of operations and its call sign "Klondike" was becoming well known. The Army Special Forces were already operating in the area but were dependent on VNAF for air support. Soon VMO-6 received request to provide gunship support for the Army on a special, classified mission. The weather caused the mission to be scrubbed several times but finally on Monday, October 18<sup>th</sup> the weather was deemed to be good enough. Two UH-1E gun ships were launched from Ky Ha with Maj. Robert Presson, the squadron XO leading the flight and with Capt. Jim Perryman as his co-pilot. Capt. Stan Krueger, the squadron Maintenance Officer with 1/Lt. Orlando "Lanny" Ingvolstad as his co-pilot, piloted the second Huey. The names of the crewmen are not known.

For some time, MACV in Saigon had been quite concerned about the increasing infiltration of troops and materiel to south, most of it through Laos. Although Hanoi still denied that it had a single soldier in Laos, by

October 1965 its security, engineer and logistics troops there numbered at least 30,000, not to mention an additional 4,500 men passing through each month on their way to South Vietnam, according to Maj. John L. Plaster in his book SOG – The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam. After much deliberation, MACV-SOG was tasked to investigate the infiltration routes by sending a patrol across the border. Many in MACV and CINCPAC were very skeptical about the chances for success for this operation, according to (then) Maj. Charlie Norton who was with SOG in Saigon at the time. In addition, if exposed, U.S. presence in a neutral country would be highly embarrassing internationally.

The Army Special forces had a camp at Kham Duc, which is located south west of Da Nang, not far from the Laotian border. The first recon team, code named RT Iowa, would be lead by Master Sergeant Charles "Slats" Petry; Sergeant First Class Willie Card was his assistant, in addition to seven Nungs and one ARVN Lieutenant. Petry's team was "sterile", meaning they wore no rank insignia, even their gear was Asian made and untraceable, according to Maj. Plaster.

Transportation to the insertion site was provided by three UH-34's from the VNAF 83. Special Operations unit located at Da Nang, where it had two to four aircraft ready. Initially, this unit did not have permanent aircraft or crews, which were provided on as-needed basis by the 211<sup>th</sup>, 213<sup>th</sup>, 215<sup>th</sup> and 217<sup>th</sup> squadrons. In 1965, this unit received more permanent aircraft and, in 1967, the 219<sup>th</sup> squadron was formed from the assets of the 83. Special Operations unit, according to Maj. Nguyen Que An, who has assisted me with the information from VNAF operations. SOG provided the units with their radio calls in order of the squadron numbers as follows: Peacock, Bluebird, Wild Rooster, Humming Bird, and King Bee. The squadron aircraft consisted mostly of UH-34D's of USMC heritage although there were also Army "C" models, of which I saw a few myself during my tour in 1967-68.

Capt. Ho Bao Dinh, nicknamed "Spider" piloted the lead aircraft. The legendary "Cowboy," Capt. Tran Van Luan piloted the second '34, and his co-pilot was Lt. Nghia. Lt. Phan Long and 2/Lt. Tung Nguyen piloted the third '34. Of these pilots, only Capt. Dinh (who made Col. before 1975) is still alive, living in the U.S., according to Maj. An who knew these pilots from VNAF 219<sup>th</sup> Squadron. "Cowboy" passed away in 2001 in Oregon. Lt. Col. Nghia died in a communist re-education camp in North Vietnam.

21st TASS O-1 from Da Nang flown by USAF Maj. Harley Pyles with USMC Capt. Winfield Sisson from USMAC/Vietnam (Saigon) as his aerial observer supported the mission. They departed Da Nang at 1745 to scout the designated LZ. The purpose for the late departure, according to Maj. Plaster was to insert the recon team at dusk so the enemy would have no daylight left to dispatch a reaction force or trackers. According to Maj. Norton, there was another O-1 from the 21<sup>st</sup> TASS aloft, carrying Capt. Ray Call who was the SOG C&C commander responsible for the

mission. The helicopters lifted off at 1800 after Capt. Sisson had scouted the LZ. The weather was marginal but Maj. Pyles thought low-flying helicopters could weave around the worst of it.

1<sup>st</sup>/Lt. Lanny Ingvolstad took several pictures with his half frame 35mm camera while en route to Kham Duc, as well as, on the way to the LZ. Among the odd things that he and Stan Krueger remember during their trip was hearing "strange music" in their radios before they arrived at Kham Duc. After waiting most of the afternoon for the mission, they received a briefing from one of the Special Forces men who were all dressed in civilian clothes. Lanny remembers that this individual had a foreign accent. In fact, this was the legendary Finnish American Capt. Larry Thorne (Sven Kornie in Robin Moore's book *The Green Berets*) who was on his second tour in Vietnam. He was Ray Call's operations officer and would be going along the mission in the third helicopter.

The three VNAF UH-34's and VMO-6 UH-1E's were skirting the tops of mountains and bottoms of clouds en route to the LZ. The O-1s were not visible to the helicopter crews but were still in the area. As the recon teams were dropped off and everything seemed to be going according to the plan, the weather was rapidly closing in. The clouds were lower and the sun was going down. It appeared that there were no VFR routes out of the valley. The UH-34 pilots went "native", i.e. started talking Vietnamese and the VMO-6 crews saw them exit the valley by flying low over a ridgeline. Capt. Dinh and Capt. Tran probably knew the area fairly well. However, while the third UH-34 with Capt. Thorne and its crew did follow the first two over the ridgeline, it soon reappeared, apparently having lost contact with lead aircraft. At this time, Stan Krueger recalls hearing Bob Presson say, "...we are going to climb out on a heading of 180. If you don't hear from us again, pick another heading." Stan's UHF transmitter was out but he could receive. After what felt like an eternity, Stan and Lanny heard Bob report VFR on top at about 10,000 feet.

Stan then tells that they started up on the same heading but at about 6,000 ft. the aircraft started running out of power. Bob and Jim had neglected to tell them that they had pickled their rocket pods. While Stan was flying the aircraft IFR, Lanny released the pods electrically with the result that one pod dropped off while the other hung, resulting in an exciting lateral CG condition for a spell. Lanny was able to pickle the second pod manually reversing the lateral CG situation and they then soon broke out on top. After jabbering for a while, they located each other and Stan then took the lead because his aircraft had an operating TACAN. Bob and Jim formed up in trail navigating on the beacon as Stan and Lanny headed east at cloud top level at about 10,000 feet, as the night arrived.

After they steadied down, Stan's right gunner called to say that a set of running lights was passing the aircraft on the right side. He thought initially that it was Bob Presson's UH-1E but apparently it was the O-1 with USAF/USMC crew (Pyles/Sisson). It is possible that this could have also been the second 21<sup>st</sup> TASS O-1 if it, in fact, was also in the air.

Pyles/Sisson O-1 was lost that night and its wreckage was excavated and positively identified in 2000. It had hit a low mountain just west of An Hoa, the last obstacle before the coastal plain.

As Stan's aircraft nears Ky Ha, they notice that his UHF radio is out, but that they could talk to Jim/Bob and the squadron station on their FM radio. As a result, Bob/Jim shot a UHF/GCA approach into Chu Lai, and Stan/Lanny would improvise a TACAN approach out to sea to about 1000 ft. They would then turn around and head back to Ky Ha and descend until they saw or hit something. They broke out at about 200 ft. over the water and more or less air taxied back to the pad. Bob/Jim made it to

Chu Lai and spent the night there.

The squadron had been monitoring the crews' progress on the FM radio. As a result, a welcoming committee included a bottle of bourbon from MSgt. Bob Waite to help get Stan's legs working so that he could get out of the aircraft. It was a surreal chain of events that he won't likely forget for a while, said Stan.

Not so fortunate was the crew of the third UH-34. It ran into a "granite cloud" and the wreckage was not excavated until 1999, ending speculation as to what had happened to the crew and Capt. Thorne, in particular. There were rumors that he was still alive having been captured by the NVA. No doubt the NVA would have liked to get their hands on him because of his work with Nungs and other mercenaries that the U.S. Special Forces employed. Larry Thorne had been a war hero in his native Finland for his exploits in WWII against the Soviets earning, among other decorations, the Mannerheim Cross, the highest military decoration the Finns can bestow a fighter. After the war he had emigrated to the U.S. eventually joining the U.S. Army.

The wreckage of the third UH-34 was located at YB 9455 8960 according to the official investigation report and is located 20km due south of their last reported position of YC 895 105, which in itself, was about 12km due west of Kham Duc. Apparently, Lt. Phan was attempting to navigate between the mountains trying to find his way back to Kham Duc, if not Da Nang. However, if this is what he was attempting, he missed a turn that could have led him east and instead he continued south along Dak Sé river and the valley that it was in for about 10km. The bottoms of the clouds were getting lower while the river basin was rising. Soon he was boxed in and apparently tried to either cross the mountain ridgeline, which at that point was over 1,300meters (4000 ft.) or perhaps he thought he saw an opening. The aircraft impacted the 45-degree hillside at about 800-meter elevation.

This mission could not have been easy for Lt. Phan and his crew. According to Maj. An, VNAF had removed the stabilization equipment from their UH-34's. The control box weighed about 200 lbs. and thus allowed them to carry one or two more men. From my own experience I know that these units were somewhat maintenance intensive and required well-trained technicians to repair and maintain them. VNAF probably did not have the resources for this. In addition, it is highly unlikely that they would have maintained the radar altimeters that Marine UH-34's had or the TACAN navigation radios, if they had them. Thus it is more than likely that the only navigation gear Lt. Phan had available, in addition to compass and altimeter, would have been the ADF receiver. In the end, he and co-pilot Nguyen were probably relying what little they could see out the cockpit windows.

The mission of the first team into Laos was considered success despite the loss of aircrews and one Nung from the recon team. The team pinpointed several weapons caches that, when struck by air strikes, resulted in numerous secondary explosions. Other teams were sent in later, but their insertion and work became more difficult once the NVA wised up to the presence of the recon teams and the damage that they were causing. VMO-6 as well as other Marine squadrons continued providing assistance to the Army Special Forces on these, and other similar missions.

Larry Thorne and the Vietnamese crew were laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in June 2003 with full military honors. Larry's remains were finally identified by one tooth! Charlie Norton had a reception at his house attended by many of the Special Forces men, as well as, some of the relatives of the VNAF crew.

## USAF Helicopter Crew Losses in Southeast Asian 1962-1975 Compiled by Jim Henthorn, Former Sgt., 21<sup>st</sup> SOS

What follows is a one page 'taste' of the OUTSTANDING work done by Jim Henthorn. The VHPA Directory Committee enthusiastically supports his efforts. Please refer to [www.nexus.net/~911gtx](http://www.nexus.net/~911gtx), go to the Vietnam page (red map of Vietnam), then the all USAF Helicopter Crewmember Losses or contact Jim at [REDACTED]

Tail No.: 62-4510 Model: HH-43 Date of Loss: 20 Sep 65 Unit: Det 1, 38<sup>th</sup> ARRS, NKP Country of Loss: NVN Call Sign: Dutchy 41. Co-Pilot: Duane W. Martin, KIA. Notes: The helicopter was participating in the SAR for ESSEX 04, an F-105D piloted by Capt. Willis E. Forby, who was captured by the NVN, when it was hit by ground fire and crashed. Three of the crew were captured; however, Lt. Martin evaded and made his way to Laos and was captured by the Pathet Lao; at the end of June 1966, Lt. Martin, along with USN LTJG Dieter Dengler, Air America civilian Eugene DeBruin, a Chinese National, and three Thais, escaped from the Houay Het Prison camp in Central Laos. Martin and Dengler evaded together for 17 days before Lt. Martin was killed by a machete wielding villager. Dengler was rescued five days later.

Tail No: unk Model: HH-43 Date of Loss: 11 Apr 66 Unit: 38<sup>th</sup> ARRS, Bien Hoa SVN Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: unk, PJ: William H. Pitsenbarger, KIA. Notes: On April 11th, 1966, while defending some of his wounded comrades. For his bravery and sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded the nation's second highest military decoration, the Air Force Cross. "Pits", as he was known to his friends, was nearing his 300th combat mission on that fateful day when some men of the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Division were ambushed and pinned down in an area about 45 miles east of Saigon.

Two HH-43 "Huskie" helicopters of the USAF's 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron were rushed to the scene to lift out the wounded. Pits was a pararescueman (PJ) on one of them. Upon reaching the site of the ambush, Pits was lowered through the trees to the ground where he attended to the wounded before having them lifted to the helicopter by cable. After six wounded men had been flown to an aid station, the two USAF helicopters returned for their second loads. When its engine began to lose power, the pilot realized he had to get the Huskie away from the area as soon as possible. Instead of climbing into the litter basket so he could leave with the helicopter, Pits elected to remain with the Army troops under enemy attack and he gave a "wave-off" to the helicopter which flew away to safety. one of them lowered its litter basket to Pitsenbarger, who had remained on the ground with the 20 infantrymen still alive, it was hit by a burst of enemy small-arms fire. Pits continued to treat the wounded and, when the others began running low on ammunition, he gathered ammo clips from the dead and distributed them to those still alive. Then, he joined the others with a rifle to hold off the Viet Cong. About 7:30 PM that evening, Pitsenbarger was killed by Viet Cong snipers. When his body was recovered the next day, one hand still held a rifle and the other a medical kit.

Tail No.: 62-4511 Model: HH-43 Date of Loss: 28 Oct 66 Unit: 38<sup>th</sup> ARRS, Pleiku Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: Pedro 42 Co-Pilot: George H. (Spike) Bonnell, KIA; Position Unk: Francis D. Rice, KIA. Notes: Aircraft crashed while attempting to take off from base on a medical evacuation mission.

Tail No: 65-12779 Model: HH-3E Date of Loss: 6 Feb 67 Unit: 38th ARRS Country of Loss: NVN Call Sign: Jolly Green 05 Pilot: Patrick H.

Wood, KIA; Co-Pilot: Richard A. Kibbey, KIA; Flight Engineer: Donald J. Hall, KIA. Notes: Helicopter was hit by ground fire while flying SAR for NAIL 65; crash site located atop 900 meter karst.

Additional Notes: Shot down 6 Feb 67 on his first mission flying an HH3E Jolly Green Giant rescue chopper. They just picked up a downed pilot and were leaving the area when they were hit with AA. The pararescueman, Duane Hackney was rescued shortly after winning the AF Cross for his efforts and eventually became a Chief Master Sergeant in the Security Police. He retired from a squadron that I commanded. Three others and my dad were MIA from that flight. Lucius Heiskell, Donald Hall, and the other pilot were listed as missing in action and still are. He left behind my mom, me 45, brothers David 37 and John 32 and sister 44. Mom died eleven years later of a broken heart. She never remarried and only found contentment the last year of her life when the AF had a final determination board to settle life insurance and give finality that she really needed. She didn't want to let go, but had given up all hope. We miss them both and remember them with fondness and much love. They were perfect parents like June and Ward Cleaver. Thanks Lt. Col. Richard A. Kibbey Jr., USAF Tuesday, January 26, 1999

Tail No.: unk Model: HH-3E Date of Loss: 16Feb 67 Unit: 37<sup>th</sup> ARRS, Quang Tri Country of Loss: Laos Call Sign: Jolly Green 56. Pilot: Angelo Pullara, KIA. Notes: Low Jolly Green was Jolly Green 56. High Jolly was Jolly Green 07. Attempted rescue of F-100 pilot Dusty 71. Dusty 82 was orbiting overhead 'till JG arrived. Location given as 045/19 off channel 72. Also given as XC8752 and later as coordinates 1555-10645. Covey 54 (FAC) was overhead. Jolly Greens were out of Quang Tri. Info given (first) that ground fire came from left side, then right side. Last report from crew was "from 12 o'clock." Pullara died almost instantly after being hit. Co-pilot wounded in arm and somewhat confused as to where fire came from. Dusty 71 was on the side of a hill and ground fire was coming from valley floor and also from ridge line above pilot. Both Jolly Greens departed for Saravane without picking up the pilot. Sandy 5, Hobo 35 and others sanitized the area. Jolly Green 36 & 37 from NKP arrived. JG 36 (low bird) hit in aft end and reported a fuel cell hit also. More sanitation including napalm when Sandy 7 & 8 arrived. JG 37 made successful pickup of the pilot and RTB NKP. The above provided by Tom Garcia.

Tail No.: 65-07932 Model: UH-1F Date of Loss: 31Mar 67 Unit: 20<sup>th</sup> Helicopter Sq. Country of Loss: Laos Call Sign: Green Hornet. Pilot: Robert L. Baldwin, KIA. Notes: Unarmed aircraft were performing a number of outstanding missions. Maj. Baldwin was the commander of "E" flight. Shot while in flight.

Tail No: 62-4525 Model: HH-43 Date of Loss: 7 Feb 68 Unit: Det 9, 38<sup>th</sup> ARRS, Pleiku Country of Loss: Kontum, SVN Call Sign: Pedro 56. Flight Engineer: Jose G. Abara. Notes: Assisting in the recovery of the crew of a downed Army helicopter, helicopter hit by ground fire near Kontum, caught fire, crashed ten seconds later; three of the four crewmembers survived the crash.

Tail No.: 66-13295 Model: CH-3E Date of Loss: 23 May 68 Unit: 21st Helicopter Sq., 56th ACW Country of Loss: SVN Call Sign: Dusty 51. Pilot: James P. McCollum, Co-Pilot: William H. Taylor, Flight Engineer: John L. Coon, Flight Engineer: John E. Albanese, Crew Chief: Robert A. Fink. Notes: Helicopter was lost to unknown causes while flying a sensor delivery mission, crash site could not be reached due to heavy enemy activity. This was the first combat loss for the 21<sup>st</sup> SOS.