

Zollers, David "Z" W. # CLASS 67-17 68-147 ASHC 68-69 A/159 AVN 101 ABN Farmer/Truck Driver	Zorn, Burl A. # Zschirnt, J. Walter CLASS 68-503/68-1 68-69 1 AVN 1 INF 69-70 VSPHS Retired	Zucca, Anthony Joseph CLASS 67-7 67-68 134 AHC Retired Zuch, Harold A. # SERVICE USMC Zuck, Walter S. DAT Zuchke, Dennis W. # CLASS 70-32 Zuchke, Lawrence D. # CLASS 69-26 Zuehlendorf, John William KIA Zuenschwert, John "John Z" F Middieburg, VA 20118 CLASS 60-60/58-17 67-269 CAB Farmer	Zuk, Anthony L. # CLASS 71-43 Zuk, Thomas D. # CLASS 67-12 Zuberti, Alan J. # CLASS 69-9 69-70 205 ASHC Real Estate Zumar, Anthony P. # CLASS 69-49 Zumbro, Harold D. DAT Zumwalt, James W. # Zuniga, German # SERVICE USMC Zupan, Terry M. DAT Zurancic, David P. # CLASS 70-10	Zunke, Thomas S. # SERVICE USMC Zurawik, Richard L. # CLASS 68-510 Zurl, John J. # CLASS 70-39 Zutter, Walter E. # CLASS 68-509/68-11 Zuvela, George M. DAT Zwaagsstra, Berl J. DAT Zwar, Donald R. # CLASS 69-29/69-27 Zwarycz, Gregory DAT Zweg, Ralph F. DAT	Zwink, Robert R. CLASS 68-21/68-35 69-70 118 AHC 73 AIR AMERICA VIETNAM 73 ICCS Pilot Zygowicz, Alan J. "Zygo" SERVICE USMC Trained (USA) 70-42 72 HMM-165 Div Chief Fed Law Enl Trn Ctr Zylka, John F. CLASS 70-2 70-121 AHC 70-71 335 AHC Zynda, Gerald I. # Zysk, Edmund C. # CLASS 70-10
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SECTION II – VHPA 2010 update of the 1999 directory account of the Battle of the Easter Offensive 1972: An Loc by Mike Sloniker

In keeping with the traditions set by past VHPA Directories, the Directory Committee presents a few pages to support the theme of this edition – The VHPA update of the 1999 directory account of the Battle of the Easter Offensive 1972: An Loc. Due to page limits, only a portion of this material is printed in this edition while the full version is on the membership directory web site at <http://www.vhpaservices.com>.

Introduction by Mike Sloniker

In 1999, when the late Ron Timberlake and I started the compilation of the history from April to June 1972 at An Loc, we used personal experience, the Draft for the Presidential Unit Citation the 229th received for the action around An Loc and anybody we could contact at the time who had been there. Since then many participants have stepped up and wrote their own accounts. In doing so, we the aviators have been shown some unique perspectives of what they saw. One of the most dramatic rescues was on 8 April 1972 by Scout Platoon leader, CPT John Whitehead who flew out with 9 people on or in his OH-6. I met one of those rescued in 2005, Marv Zumwalt who wrote this account:

Rescue from Cat Lo Bridge by Marv Zumwalt

From the 3rd Brigade log of 8 April 1972:

0830 hours – "...DCO-A, D/229, 75th Rangers will rescue Cornish 67 from Cat Lo Bridge..."

This order set in motion a complex combined arms mission involving USAF, USN and USA fixed and rotary wing aircraft to extract three surrounded US advisors from the battlefield.

1110 hours – "DCO-A: 3 advisors at Cat Lo Bridge rescued by D/229 and 75th Rangers."

The operation was one of the first "successes" experienced by US forces during the early days the Spring Offensive. The extraction of

the three advisors and four ARVNs by the pilot and gunner of an OH-6 was no cakewalk evidenced by the fact that the six US personnel involved were awarded three DSCs, three Silver Stars, and three Purple Hearts.

This story has been told from the 1st Cav perspective in the Third Regional Assistance Command (TRAC) paper written by Ron Timberlake and Mike Sloniker. It has also been summarized in the book "The Battle of An Loc" by James Willbanks. However, little is written from perspective of those who were on the ground.

I am Marvin Zumwalt, former Captain, USA Infantry, and sole living member of the three advisors. What follows my version of what it was like for those of us on the ground and in the back of that overloaded OH-6. My story is based on the After Action Report (Appendix 4 [Task Force 52] to Annex D [5th ARVN Division]) written by my boss, LTC Ginger; D/229 witness statements; my memory; and discussions with SFC Winland (the other advisor), LTC(ret) John Whitehead (the pilot); former SGT Ray Waite (the gunner), former Captain Dave Ripley (the pilot of the other loach involved), and 159th Med Det personnel (Steve Lane, Richard Parmeter, and Tom Pierce) who were involved in the action on 7 April.

Ginger, Winland and I were advisors to the 52d Regt, 18th ARVN Div based out of Xuan Loc. In March 1972, LTC Tinh, the regimental commander, was ordered to form a task force (TF52) consisting of one battalion each from the 52d and 48th ARVN regiments with a battery of 105mm howitzers and a platoon of 155mm guns along

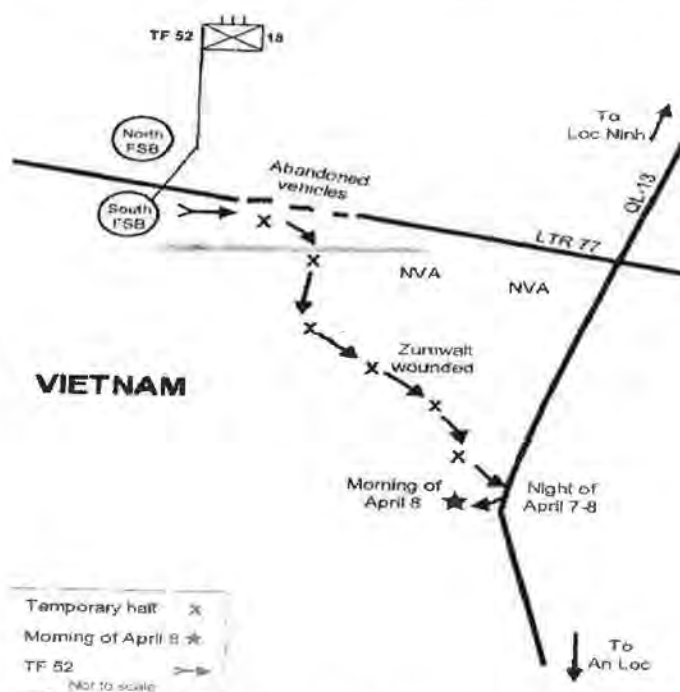
with engineers and other support units. TF52 comprised 1000+ ARVNs and us three advisors. We were placed under command of the 5th ARVN Div and ordered to move to two old fire bases halfway between An Loc and Loc Ninh about 500 yards to the west of Highway 13. We occupied that location on 21 March. Our mission was to be part of the "anvil" in support of a planned ARVN offensive out of Tay Ninh City. It was a good plan except that the NVA struck first.

continuously. Our last resupply was on 2 April and we were running out of artillery ammunition and other supplies. Repeated requests to 5th Div went unanswered. Nor were we getting any intelligence or any other information about the overall situation.

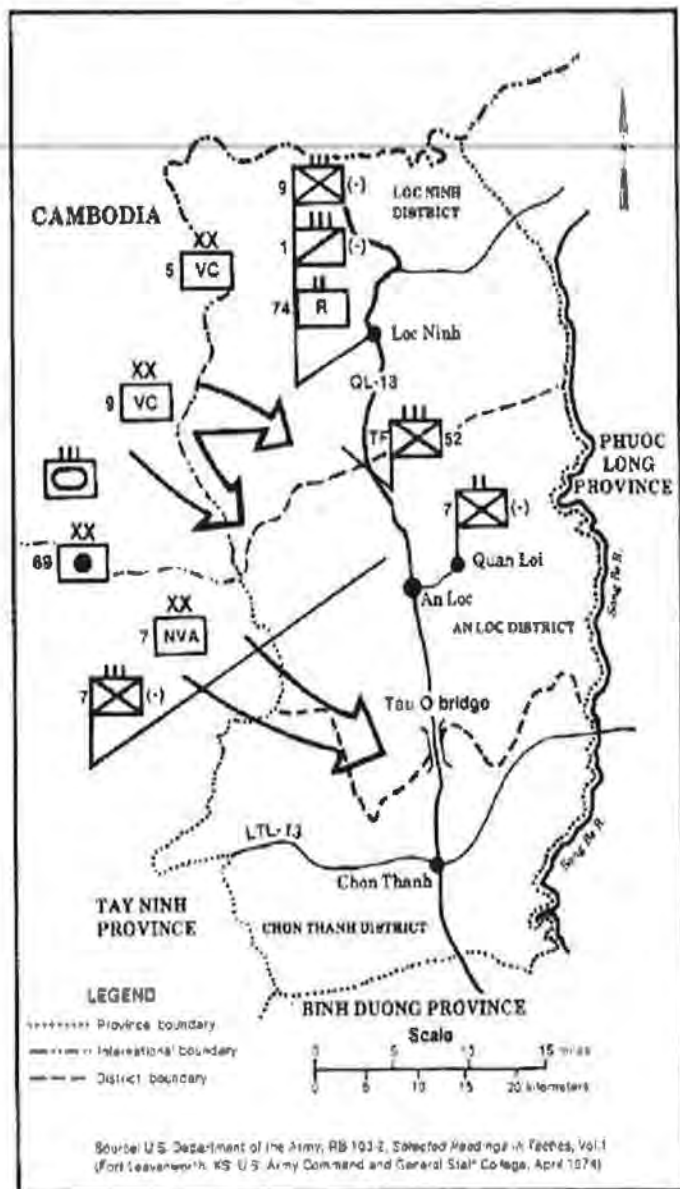


About the only support we could get were U.S. DUSTOFFs to lift out our wounded.

On Friday morning, the 7th, all hell broke loose. Not only were we still getting shelled, but the fire bases now came under small arms and automatic weapons fire. During the shelling, Winland ran out into the road to rescue a wounded ARVN that was stumbling around in the open. The situation was even worse at Loc Ninh where they were fighting for their lives. Finally, we got the order to move south to An Loc, but it was almost too late. The NVA had us surrounded. We had to abandon the artillery (out of ammunition anyway), transport, and anything else that we could not carry. My first rounds fired in combat were to shoot our jeep.



As we moved east out of the fire bases toward Highway 13, I noticed the ARVNs were discarding equipment and ammunition.



Things were quiet until early morning of 5 April when our folks killed fifteen NVA in an ambush. Later we started taking mortar fire around the fire bases. About 100 rounds came in that day.

At this point LTC Ginger put us into a tactical mode where he stayed with the command group, I monitored the US radio net from the team area, and SFC Winland shuttled between us. Ginger's idea was to avoid a catastrophic hit on the advisory team. The next morning TF52 was ordered to try reinforcing the advisors and ARVNs at Loc Ninh which were under heavy attack; however, the NVA had blocking forces in place and the attempt failed. We continued to receive mortar fire during the day, along with 105mm howitzer and 122mm rockets. TF52 mortars and howitzers were now firing almost

After shooting several radios I stopped thinking that I may need the rounds later. I next turned my attention to disabling abandoned 2 ½ ton trucks by puncturing the radiators with my knife. Soon SFC Winland came over and told me that the lead battalion had run into heavy contact trying to advance across Highway 13 to the southeast and was falling back. With our trailing battalion closing from the west, the TF was starting to bunch up. LTC Thinb saw the need to do something to inspire the troops and requested that we three accompany his command group out into the Rome plow area. Which we did, slowly walking in a group with radio antennas announcing to any NVA watching who we were. I really thought this is when I would get hit, but we made it to some fallen trees and took cover. The gesture worked and the lead battalion advanced past us against very heavy fire. I reverted to the tactical plan and was located several yards from the command group.

It was now late morning and my efforts to get air support, ARVN or U.S., were not very successful. The situation was so confused that our division deputy senior advisor came up on the net notifying us that he was in route for a visit and to deliver our mail. Before I could tell him that we did not own the fire bases anymore, MG Hollingsworth chewed him out and threw him off the net. We had been under fire for three days and our own command did not know! We were also bothered by some one called Dynamite 6 who kept asking for SITREPs. After about the third time, Winland told me to tell that SOB that we were in close infantry contact and needed help! If Dynamite 6 couldn't get us support, then stay off the freq! As a good O-3, I did what my E-7 told me to do and added some additional profanity as benefiting the fact that I was a college graduate. (I later found out that Dynamite 6 was BG McGiffert, the Deputy Commander of MACV III Corps.)

Finally about 1200, we got some COBRAs and I was directing them at the tree line to the east when a B40 round hit about 20 feet away. At least one ARVN was killed and several in the command group including Ginger and Winland were slightly wounded. I was hit by shrapnel on the lower right side of my face which shattered my lower jaw and cut the blood vessels to include the artery. My initial reaction was anger. How could this happen? I had done everything right! I was behind a fallen tree, with my helmet and flak jacket on, a radio handset covering the left side of my face and I was wearing my aviator sunglasses. I was fully "protected". Next, I started to think that I was probably a dead man. How do you stop arterial bleeding in your face? Where do you employ the tourniquet? For the next 24 hours that was always on my mind. Winland came over and put my field dressing on the wound. What did save me was the pressure generated by my face swelling into the bandage from the effects of the impact and an immediate infection. Eventually the bleeding slowed, but it never stopped. (The very infection and swelling that were helping to stop the bleeding would have eventually killed me by cutting off my breathing. At Saigon I was told that I would have been dead within hours if not evacuated.)

Ginger decided that I could not continue and called for MEDEVAC. BG McGiffert ordered that all three of us were to leave on the MEDEVAC which did not please LTC Thinb. We were his connection to US support, particularly air assets. However MACV was losing advisors all over III Corps and probably wanted to get as many out of the field as possible so they could fight again. It was interesting, that once I was hit, we started getting all sorts of air support. LTC Thinb

said he had to move TF52 south or risk losing the entire unit. Both Winland and I argued to go with them. Our position was known. Time to leave. Ginger said we've been ordered to stay here and that's what we did. MACV was concerned that once we left the Rome plow area and got into the trees they wouldn't be able to find and/or extract us. TF52 shot their way south and we were left with 15-20 wounded and healthy ARVNS.

A MEDEVAC tried to come in at 1430 but left after taking heavy fire. DUSTOFF 111 tried to land about 1600 but also took heavy fire and broke off the attempt when the medic, Richard Parmeter, was wounded in the legs. Richard says being hit was the luckiest thing to happen because he did not think the aircraft would have survived much longer under that fire. Air support continued to work over the area, but the high intensity of the NVA AA fire (51mm, 7.62mm) did not seem to be affected. At 1730, DUSTOFF 107 came in and got to within 50 yards but could not see us in the twilight (we really stood out in our dirty, green jungle fatigues). The pilot, CW2 Robert Horst, was hit by ground fire and died almost immediately and the medic was wounded. After regaining control of the aircraft, the crew aborted the mission. (CW2 Horst had two weeks left in country and volunteered for this mission. He was posthumously awarded the DSC.)

Winland now argued vigorously that it was time to get out of the area. I also put in my vote to move; however, Ginger again said we would obey the order to stay. As it got dark, we did get a SPECTRE gunship for support. Ginger had to stand up in the dark and hold a brilliant white strobe light over his head so that the crew could verify our location. That was like a big sign saying to one and all that we're over here! Come shoot us! We hunkered down in the ditch on the west side of highway 13. That was probably the longest night of my life. Sporadic small arms and automatic weapons fire continued most of the night. Ginger kept calling in SPECTRE on targets. At times, we had to dodge WP landing around us. All of us were starting to run out of gas. The last food we had was that morning and the last water, at least for me, was just before I was hit. I do know that there was no water to be had anywhere. We were also short on weaponry. When I was expecting to be evacuated I gave away my M16 and bandolier along with my spare canteen. I only had a 45 with 2 ½ clips of ammunition. Ginger also had a 45. Winland had an M16, but no more than one bandolier if that. Some of the ARVNs were armed and they did search the field that night for more arms, rations and water with little success.

Ginger was in a constant struggle all night to get and keep support and to find out what was planned. There was talk of a night extraction with a USAF Jolly Green helo until someone realized that those birds did not fly at night. The first SPECTRE told us about 2300 that he was out of gas and was going home. When asked about a relief, he could not answer. He did stay overhead until another one showed up. Once again Ginger had to stand up and hold the strobe over his head. Then the 5th Div tried to steal the bird to fly support over An Loc! Some very testy radio traffic then ensued and we kept the bird. Ginger kept pushing for information on an extraction. All sorts of options were discussed to include an airborne gas that would put everyone in the area to sleep so the good guys could land. We did not have gas masks and Ginger was worried that it would cause me to hemorrhage. (Supposedly a USAF aircraft did spray something over the area just before the extraction, but, outside of minor tearing,

there was no effect on us.) Winland and I were both irritated that people seemed more concerned about saving the secure radio than us. I remember that Winland continued to raise the issue of walking out, but Ginger kept turning him down. About 0500, after hours of talking over the radio about rescue options, the 5th division asked why we hadn't E&E'd yet! At that point I do not think any of us had any confidence that there would be a rescue or that we would live much longer. Winland was adamant that he would not surrender. He also told me that the NVA would probably shoot me upon capture because of my wound. That really narrowed my options. As for Ginger's thoughts, he did not voice them to me. I do remember Ginger asking that water, food, and ammunition be dropped if the extraction did not occur or failed.

At dawn we moved off the road about 25 yards and took cover in the Rome plow area by two fallen trees. We still had several ARVNs even with Ginger and Winland frequently telling them on Friday and throughout the night that they could not expect to get out with us. On both days, Ginger continually reminded everyone on the radio that we had ARVNs with us and to expect them to try and board any aircraft that landed. Amazingly, none of the aircrews involved were told of this!

About 0530, 50-60 NVA started moving south on the road. Ginger called in the SPECTRE who killed several and drove the survivors off the road. Several broke toward us and Winland jumped in front of me to engage them. His M16 did not fire. As a good NCO, he never took his "good" weapon to the field. This one was old, beat up, and missing the dust cover. I crawled to my left to get a clear shot. (Despite having spare clips, I only had about 3-4 rounds in my .45 because the magazine had jammed and neither Winland nor I could work it free.) Before I could fire, he managed to clear his weapon and killed seven to ten of the NVA at close range. A couple of the ARVNs also fired. The rest of the NVA retreated to the east side the road.

Now the air show really got under way. For the next four hours we had all sorts of aircraft dropping 500lb bombs, CBU's, napalm, 2.75" rockets and lots of cannon and machine gun fire. Some strikes were so close that we had ordnance fragments going over our heads, but none of us complained. Regardless, the NVA fire did not appear to slacken as the OH-6 crews found out later. Amazingly about 0800, in the middle of all this action, two draft age Vietnamese men in civilian clothes came down the road on a Vespa! The ARVNs stopped them and we had a vigorous debate about whether or not to shoot them as we could not take them prisoner. Ginger won the discussion and they were allowed to continue south.

We were told that help was on the way and that there would be three birds coming in...a big one (Huey?) and two smaller ones. (I think the big one must have been a C&C ship because only the loaches landed.) As the morning wore on and fatigue, dehydration, and nerves played on us all. I still did not believe anyone was coming or, if they did, would actually get to us. I had made my peace the night before and was prepared.

Despite our doubts, a rescue force was coming in the form of two loaches from D/229. One, piloted by John Whitehead with Ray Waite as gunner, was to pick us up. Dave Ripley flew a second loach to back up the first bird in the event it went down and to make sure that all advisors were evacuated. They came in from the east, escorted by

four AH-1 Cobras with four more Cobras from the F/ 79th ARA orbiting over the area. The ground fire was intense despite earlier air strikes and the suppressive fire from the rescue force. Ray Waite was firing continuously on the way in and burned out the barrel of his M-60. The weapon began to "cook off" and he had to break the ammo belt to get it to stop firing.

I can remember just sitting in the dirt and generally looking east but not really focusing on anything. All of a sudden there was a helo on the road! Things started to move fast. Winland and I headed for the bird with possibly seven of the ARVNs while Ginger stayed back to shift the radio off freq. Other ARVNs ran towards Ripley's loach. Ray Waite stepped off the bird in full flight gear, wearing a gas mask with his visor down, and trained his M-60 on us. I realized that it was going to be a mess on the right side and, in a rare moment of lucidity, headed around the nose and sat in the left rear of the compartment. An ARVN came up and I motioned that he should move south to where Ripley was hovering his loach. Fire was coming from everywhere and I kept my 45 out in case one of the bad guys showed up close. Waite was struggling to keep the ARVNs off the helo until we three could get on board. Winland managed to force his way to the loach and throw the classified radio in the helo. Next he grabbed Waite's M60 and jammed it between the floor and the rear bulkhead to hold Waite in the bird. He then flopped across the floor behind the pilots' seats with his hands crossed over his M16 next to me. Ginger then "boarded" the helo which meant standing on the right skid. The ARVNs continued to try and board the loach on the right side. Until we lifted off, Ray worked to position the ARVNs so as to minimize their aerodynamic and weight impacts.

Whitehead started trying to lift off. We got about 6" off the ground and I started to relax until I realized we were not going any higher and were rotating in place. We did a 360 and I can remember thinking that I really did not want a last look at this place. As John got the nose pointed south and somehow "bounced" the bird into the air, an NVA soldier in front of the nose fired several rounds and one impacted under his seat. I don't know how many ARVNs were on the bird when we took off, but we landed with four. Some have said that we started with seven, but I could not see as they were all hanging on to Whitehead, Ginger, Waite and the skid on the right side. Ginger was standing on the skid with at least one ARVN clinging to his legs. Several times he lost his footing and only stayed on the aircraft because Ray was holding on to his web belt. In the process, Ray's gas mask canister was crushed between him and Ginger. It took both hands to keep Ginger in the bird so Ray could not remove his mask. With his air supply severely constricted, he fought to maintain consciousness during the rest of the flight to the airstrip at Chon Tanh.

Hovering in front of us, Dave Ripley fought his battle alone. ARVNs tried to board his loach. One created control problems because he grabbed the cyclic. NVA fire eventually solved that issue. Dave followed us out of the area through the same fire with several ARVNs hanging on his skids. No one really knows how many ARVNs he actually brought out due to the confusion of battle and everyone's complete focus on rescuing us three. The count has been reported as high as four. However, his primary mission was not to rescue anyone, but to back up Whitehead. And that he accomplished.



Above — how the rescue may have looked.

The NVA fire was continuous and from all directions. We took at least one 51mm hit. The internal comms were gone and we had holes in several places to include the fuel cells, main rotor blades and tail boom. Several times during the flight, the loach seemed to lurch upward either from the impact of fire and/or the loss of an ARVN off the skid. As we cleared the Rome plow area and were flying between the tree tops, AK rounds impacted the left side. One must have hit the receiver housing group of Winland's M16 spraying shrapnel through his right hand and forearm, his face, and left hand. There was already a mist in the bird from stuff leaking and now his blood joined the mix. He rose up and asked me for something to stop the bleeding and I gave him the only thing that I had left...my boony hat. I then motioned to Ginger and Waite as to the extent of Winland's wounds. The rest of the flight was a blur. I kept touching Winland to see if he was conscious. I remember little else until we landed at Chon Tanh. There the medics took over and the three of us were flown first to the Mash outfit at Bien Hoa and then to 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon.

Postscript



I saw SFC Winland two more times. Once on the 9th of April after his operation and later at my apartment in Fairfax, VA in August 1972. Floyd Winland was on his third tour in Vietnam. A survivor of the Tet offensive, he told my wife that he was in the most danger on the 7th and 8th of April. Contrary to some accounts, he did not lose his right hand. Winland was awarded the DSC and Purple Heart and retired as an E-8. Floyd lived to be 73 and died of natural causes in

2002. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery.

LTC Ginger and I only spoke briefly once or twice over the phone after we left Vietnam. His last order to me was to find the 5th Division After Action Report and rescue it from oblivion.

I was able to locate it in a warehouse in PA and eventually sent it to the Infantry School at Fort Benning. He was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart and retired in 1977. He died in 1997 at the age of 65 and his ashes are interred in Arlington Cemetery.



John Whitehead was nominated for the CMH but was awarded the DSC. He retired as a LTC and is currently living and working in Columbus, GA.

Built in 1969, the "243" bird had to be rebuilt after the mission and returned to service in the F/9 Cav. After the war, it was first used by an Alabama National Guard unit to run drug interdiction missions and then served in a gun outfit located in Rhode Island. Later it was sold to the Long Beach Police Department and finally to a private individual in Alaska who had it restored and used it for fishing in remote locations. On August 6, 2004, "243" was destroyed in a crash landing. The pilot survived.



Dave Ripley was awarded the Silver Star and lives and works in Oklahoma.



Ray Waite was awarded the DSC, left the army, graduated from college, and is currently an independent lobster fisherman in Yarmouth, ME.



As for me, I was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart, but they paled in comparison to being able to come home to my wife and live a second life.

The Battle for An Loc from the Perspective of A/229th Aircraft Commander Dan Fox

Background: The North Vietnamese Easter Offensive in the spring of 1972 consisted of a massive, coordinated three-pronged attack designed to strike a knockout blow against the South Vietnamese government and its armed forces. In this offensive, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) used conventional tactics and introduced weaponry far exceeding anything that had been employed during any previous guerrilla campaign in the war.

This was a radical departure from NVA war strategy up to this point because they believed that the Americans, with only 65,000 troops left in Vietnam, could not influence the current "Vietnamization" strategic policy because the political climate in the United States would not permit President Nixon to commit any new troops or combat support to assist the South Vietnamese forces. Additionally, they believed that a resounding NVA military victory would humiliate the South Vietnamese president, destroy his war politics, and perhaps foil his bid for reelection.



The Vietnam Easter Offensive saw a total of 14 NVA infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments including 120,000 troops and approximately 1,200 Russian tanks and other armored vehicles (virtually the entire North Vietnam Army) maneuvered into battle positions along the Laos and Cambodian border. On March 30, 1972 three NVA divisions (5th VC, 7th NVA and 9th VC) estimated at over 36,000 troops began the Easter Offensive in Binh Long Province to capture the city of An Loc.

At the time An Loc was a thriving and prosperous city surrounded by vast rubber plantations operated by the Michelin Tire Company totaling 75,000 acres and sat astride QL-13....

This story and much more about An Loc is continued on our web site at <http://www.vhpaservices.com>