



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

October 1994 Vol. 12, No. 5



U.S. Army Aviation Museum photo

An instructor teaches a primary helicopter student the intricacies of flight in a TH-55 at Fort Wolters.

M07662 10/95

From the President

As we all know, it's been an election year and most of you have been solicited by politicians wanting your vote and money.

It appears that some of your names have been gleaned from our directory.

Guys, please remember that the membership has reaffirmed time after time that the Membership Directory is for VHPA members ONLY and it is a violation of VHPA policy to use your directory, or allow it to be used, for solicitation.

I am glad to announce that our management contractor, Performance Associates Inc., has agreed to give us a contract extension for one year at the current price. This will

allow us a little more time to accept proposals for a long-term contract.

Our thanks to Alan Fry, Shiela, Anne, and all the others for their support.

On a personal note, I have become Shelby County, Alabama's oldest college student, so if you call and get an answering machine, I'll call back just as soon as possible. I'm taking one class with Elaine, so I know I'll at least have a date for the prom!

Meanwhile, here's something ya'll have suspected for years:

"A Hill Billie is a free and untrammelled . . . citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he gets it, and fires off his revolver as the fancy takes him." — *New York Journal, April 23, 1900*

— **Kenny Bunn, President**

VHPA chapters

Arizona Chapter

Update requested.

Ohio River LZ Chapter

Paul Cotter, President

Great Lakes Chapter (Northeastern Illinois)

John Becker, President

Bruce Rodewald, Vice President

North Carolina Chapter

Gary Kimbrell, President

New England Chapter

Bob Whitford, Past President

Mardi Gras Chapter

Don Hunt, President

Florida LZ Chapter

Barry Speare, President

Seeking

I am seeking any members of the 4/77th ARA, 101st Airborne Division who might have been in country in April 1968 and knew James A. Brown II.

He was called Jimmie or "Brownie" by his friends, and was killed after only 33 days in Vietnam. He was based at Camp Eagle near Phu Bai.

He graduated from flight school in WORWAC Class 68-513 and may have transferred from another class.

Greg Hemmings

I'm trying to locate a former Vietnam buddy of mine named Maj. John H. Stanford, who served with the 56th Transportation Company, 756th Transportation Battalion, as company commander.

We were at Long Than together from January 1970 through July 1970. Our battalion headquarters was in Vung Tau.

Garrett "Gary" O. Lewis

THE VHPA NEWSLETTER (ISSN 0896-3037)(USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly — February, April, June, August, October, and December. Annual dues are \$30 or Life membership for \$450. Yearly subscription for nonmembers is \$16. Published by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 7 West Seventh Street, Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Second-class postage paid at Cincinnati, OH, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE VHPA NEWSLETTER, 7 West Seventh Street, Suite 1990, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

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VHPA Headquarters(513) 721-VHPA

Capt. Kenneth H. Brown's family wants information

In 1992, I was contacted by the relatives of Kenneth Herbert Brown whom they had not seen in many years.

Kenneth Brown was an Army helicopter pilot from Indiana, PA. He served two tours in Vietnam and, I believe, flew CH-47s, possibly with the 174th, on his second tour.

When Kenneth DEROSed, he withdrew all his savings and disappeared into California. He told his family he was living in the hills in an Asian community and indicated he was attempting to get a Vietnamese girl out of Vietnam. His family moved to Dothan, Ala., in the hopes he would return to Fort Rucker.

To follow up, Kenneth Brown emerged in Southern California in July 1993, dying of liver disease. His brother brought him home at that time and he died in October of 1993.

Kenneth Brown's family would like to learn about him after he joined the Army. They have virtually no details of his adult life.

If you can help this family learn about their son and brother, please contact Kenneth's brother: Douglas Hugh Brown, [REDACTED]

—Kenny Bunn, President

VHPA briefs

Members bring 'objects' to life

Several research institutions have been in touch with the VHPA to determine how a few of our members made seemingly inert, inanimate matter come to life and develop advanced mobility.

I'm speaking of the Coors banners that were hanging in the lobby of the hotel in Philadelphia. It seems that a couple of our new, expensive, recently donated banners freed themselves and followed someone home.

Now I know they make good pets because they eat hardly anything, but Coors, and your fellow members, really wanted them to STAY!

So pat them affectionately and send them home to VHPA Headquarters in Cincinnati that all may share in their beauty.

Otherwise, we face the possibility of not having any banners to put up at future reunion sites.

Membership Directory at printer

The 1994 Directory is at the printer and is scheduled to be delivered to the Wichita, KS, post office near Oct. 1.

Since it is mailed via a bulk mail permit, it can take as much as two or even three weeks to get to everyone in the U.S. postal system.

If your dues were current as of early September and you joined the VHPA before Aug. 19 (this year's Directory cutoff date), you should receive your copy of the Directory on or before Oct. 20. If you have not, please contact the VHPA.

Unit histories requested

The Directory Committee is actively seeking unit histories to be printed in Volume 2 of the Historical Reference Directory in early 1995.

Volume 1, printed earlier this year, included 10 unit histories.

Many unit associations and VHPAers have prepared histories and have asked the Directory Committee: "When are you going to publish my unit's history?" The answer is: NOW!

If you have a unit history, please contact Mike Law, the Directory editor, at [REDACTED] (home) or [REDACTED] to learn how you can pass your information to the VHPA.

Attorney's help needed

The VHPA has some legal questions concerning the use of e-mail and computer bulletin boards.

If you are an attorney member of the VHPA with expertise in this area, please contact Charles R. Rayl at [REDACTED]

Was hooch visitor a long-tailed VC?

I spent my first tour in Vietnam with the 189th Avengers out of Camp Holloway at Pleiku. I flew slicks and did all the things a slick pilot does. Typical missions in the 189th were much like anywhere else . . . combat assaults, medevac, hauling bullets and beans (with a little mail thrown in sometimes), and any number of other things that could ruin your day in a heartbeat.

Our nights in the 189th were as typical as the flying. We'd fly home to a revetment, help the crew chief secure the ship for the night, check in ops to see what our job was the next day, then hit the hooch for a beer and a night of trying to forget the day. Every now and then Charlie would send in a few mortars in that unique way Charlie had of saying "hello" in the middle of the night. We were somewhat suspect of something else Charlie might have been sending in also.

The Avenger Hooch was adorned, as were many pilot hooches in Vietnam, with a small bar at one end. Ghoulishly, each Avenger pilot had his call sign painted on a miniature headstone that adorned the back of the bar.

As we gathered for our evening rituals of libations and tall tales, we often had a small furry visitor. He would sneak into the hooch through a small hole in the screen door. Inside, he would brazenly reconnoiter the hooch, then scurry to my area, climb up over my mosquito net and into a hole in the wall behind my bunk. This routine happened with some regularity.

It was late one night and Chuck Michaels, Tom Stempky, Peter Greenlaw and I were hanging out having a few cool ones. Someone mentioned that our furry little visitor hadn't shown up all night. When we hit the sack later the Avenger hooch mascot was still AWOL. Ironically, we were mortared that night.

Next night the rat showed up at about the right time, checked us out, then scrambled to his cubby hole as usual. We slept peacefully that night with no unwanted interruptions from Charlie.

We started noticing that on most nights when the rat failed to make bed check, we were mortared. This routine continued throughout most of my tour. We could pretty well predict the mortar schedule based on whether the furry little VC FO was in his quarters or holed up in some safe little jungle burrow, clear of the incoming rounds.

We normally, after considerable planning at the bar, instigated midnight raids on the rat population of the Avenger hooch armed with machetes and bayonets. We decided to leave the FO alive. We figured he was acting as a double agent by letting us know, by his absence, of probable mortar attacks.

I left the 189th in January 1969, returning to the States

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VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO:

VHPA
7 W. Seventh St.
Suite 1990
Cincinnati, OH 45202

FAX NUMBER FOR

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (513) 721-5315

VHPA bumper stickers	\$1/each	_____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only.)	\$20/set	_____
1992 VHPA Directory. (7/17 Cav history)	\$10/each	_____
1993 VHPA Directory (Dustoff history)	\$10/each	_____
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory	\$15/each (\$5 P&H per order)	_____
Vol. 2 Historical Reference Directory*	\$15/each (\$5 P&H per order)	_____
Researcher's Edition 1994 Directory**	\$14/each	_____
1995 VHPA Calendar***	\$7/each (\$3 P&H per order)	_____

GRAND TOTAL

*Available in April 1995

**Available in October 1994

***Available in December 1994

TO ORDER

Send check/money order or charge to your VISA, MasterCard or Discover card.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

ZIP _____

Credit card No. _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____

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and, as far as I know, that VC rat was still making his peridodic recons to the Avenger hooch.

Mike Berry
189th AHC, 1968-69

Marine helo pilot writing book on war

I would appreciate you printing this in the Letters section of the next issue of the VHPA Newsletter:

Former Marine helo pilot is writing a book on the effects of Jane Fonda's trip to North Vietnam on the war, morale, etc. Interviewing POWs, flag officers, pilots, wives, GIs, politicians, etc. I would like to interview you. I have a short questionnaire. Can you help me with articles, info, and your feelings on the subject?

John App


Mother seeking crew of medevac chopper

My name is Nathalie Arens. Twenty-five years ago my son, Timothy Arens, was KIA near the village of Huong Lam, approximately 17 miles southwest of Tam Ky City, in the Quang Tin Province of South Vietnam.

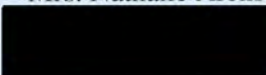
After all of this time, I still find myself wondering what happened to my son. A friend of mine, Mr. Rick School, has agreed to help me in my quest for information concerning Timothy. Please send any information to Mr. School at 200 Welhouse Drive, Kimberly, WI 54136-1246. Or call (414) 730-8212.

The Army told me Timothy was being medevaced out when the helicopter came under fire and went down, killing my son and the other eight wounded men on board. Up until now, I thought the crew of the helicopter also was killed, but some new information suggests differently.

I am writing to you in hopes that by some chance, the crew members from Timothy's helicopter belong to your association. I would like to find these men if possible so I could talk with them about what happened.

The only information I have are the tail numbers of the two helicopters that crashed that day trying to get Timothy and his comrades out. Tail numbers are 66-17029 and 67-17429.

Any help you can give me would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your help in this request.

Mrs. Nathalie Arens


Philadelphia reunion was a fantastic event

To all the members of this great organization who found a way to attend the fantastic Philadelphia Extravaganza, I must say thank you.

I was amazed that everyone, especially the original "Blue Ghost" contingent, remembered that this organization MUST remain politically neutral, and did not therefore literally drop the mayor on his head from the second floor balcony after his inane, ignorant remarks of "no valor," "no heroes," "impossible war," etc.

I would further like to publicly thank Rev. Mike Smith (Class 67-1) for verbally chainsawing the mayor off at the knees for his remarks. True reality was best expressed by Jack "Mother" Shanahan, who quietly stated, "He's not one of us, he's one of them, and they still don't &*&@ get it."

Bill "Willy T." Owen

Class 67-1

C, 7/17th (1967)

F/8th Cav, 123rd CAB (1968)

Gilmore City, IA 50541

Pilot planning book on Vietnam-Alabama

I am preparing to write a book about my experiences in 'Vietnam 1963-64, particularly the days of April 10, 1964 through April 17, 1964. If available, the name of the book will be "Rice and Cotton: South Vietnam and South Alabama." I want to follow the format used by General Moore in his excellent book "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young."

As many of you know, I was wounded on April 12, 1964, in the afternoon while piloting an H-21 helicopter near Kien Long, which is near Camau deep in the Mekong Delta. I was hit in the right leg while at altitude. My beloved co-pilot, then-Lt. Robert A. "Bo" Thompson, also received wounds but was able to land the H-21, a magnificent feat. (Bo was killed in Vietnam in August 1967, while flying a Huey with the 1/9th Cav.)

Some of you were on this mission. We were far from our base, the 120th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light), at Tan Son Nhut, Saigon. I have no idea what hit me.

Neil Sheehan, in his work "A Bright Shining Lie," states that in the spring of 1964 the Viet Cong moved 12.7mm anti-aircraft weapons deep into the delta. Was this what hit me?

When I returned home my mother had an Associated Press clipping dated April 17, 1964, she cut out of the Montgomery Advertiser stating that there was a massacre at Kien Long on Sunday, which would have been April 12,

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1964. I know nothing of the details, but I want to find out. I want to uncover every fact known concerning "circumstances of my being wounded and the Kien Long battle."

Neil Sheehan makes Ap Bac Jan. 2, 1963, the focus of his book. Ironically, when I arrived in Vietnam and became a member of the 120th Aviation Company, I immediately was told about Ap Bac over many beers in the "Shawnee Teepee." Bob Elliott, Mel Pollock and others recited poems about the horror — the screw-up — at Ap Bac. Well, Kien Long was my Ap Bac or was it? I have read that the Viet Cong operated at regimental strength for the first time at Kien Long on Sunday, April 12, 1964. Neil Sheehan states this in his book.

I would like to determine who commanded the operation on behalf of the VC and interview him, just as Gen. Moore interviewed his counterpart.

I want your help. If you have knowledge of the events leading up to, during or after Kien Long on April 12, 1964, please write them down in detail and send them to me. If you have contacts, wherever they are, whatever file they are in, whatever history book they are written in, please get them and send them to me.

It occurs to me in retrospect that something very significant happened on or about April 12, 1964, at or near Kien Long. During all these years, very little has been written about that operation. Who commanded it for the U.S., the ARVN?

Bobby Hovis, in her excellent work "Station Hospital Saigon," said that two dead-on-arrival and 13 casualties were treated at Station Hospital Saigon on 10-12 April 1964. (See Pages 130 and 131 of her book.) She got the feeling that there was a major battle in the delta. Why hasn't something been written about this battle or, if it has, have I missed it?

I solicit your help and assistance. Until I write this book, I cannot sleep . . . very well.

John B. Givhan
First Lieutenant, U.S. Army (retired)

Rocket warhead, fuze end up in pilot's lap

I arrived in Vietnam with the advance party of the 9th Infantry Division. Shortly after, I was sent to Phu Loi for in-country indoctrination with the quarter cav (D 1/4, 1st, 1D).

After flying a few relatively uneventful missions, my crew and I were assigned a security mission to the southern tip of the Iron Triangle. This was the kickoff of Operation Junction City/Manhattan in early 1967.

I was flying in the left seat of an old "B" model gunship. It was equipped with an M-16 gun kit and seven-shot rocket pods. The seat armor consisted of slabs of armor plate



Artist wants Huey photos for Vietnam War painting

It was by accident during an air fair near Vacaville, CA, that I saw your bumper sticker on a van owned by the airport manager, John Swizer.

I introduced myself as an aviation artist and explained my situation. He was kind enough to provide your newsletter and he suggested I write your organization. He feels "hundreds" of members will have the materials I need.

I am currently working on a Vietnam painting depicting a formation of Hueys. I changed my design idea and now I don't have the right reference photos.

What I need are photos showing this formation headed toward the viewer. I have enclosed a photo of the background. The title of the painting is "One Day Closer to DEROS." It will be published as open edition prints.

My sincere appreciation for whatever materials your members provide. All materials will be returned. Anyone who does provide material used in my painting will be given credit on the prints.

Rhu A. Bigay

stuffed between the seat bucket and cushions. I hung an M-16 rifle over the left seat stanchion and was as ready to go to war as any other FNG.

My aircraft commander, Capt. Walt Karpinia, answered a call from an ARVN platoon pinned down in (of all places) a graveyard. We located the graveyard and asked the ARVNs to mark their position. About that time, Charlie realized we were in the area and sent some welcoming remarks our way.

We set up our runs and rolled in. Walt had me hold fire until he marked the targets with rockets. When I identified the target, I cut loose with the machine guns. Walt called

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the break and we ceased fire. He told me, "On this pass, let 'em have it."

We rolled in and just as soon as I pressed the trigger, the ship began a violent lateral vibration. I felt my seat jar and something bump my shoulder. The fuze and part of the warhead from a 2.75 HE rocket were laying in my lap. Man, was I surprised!

My first and totally stupid reaction was to think, "It didn't happen like this in flight school!" My next reaction was to look at the fuze and think, "This thing can still go off and it's awfully close to something near and dear."

I quickly tossed the fuze out the window. (Today, I wish I'd kept it — what a conversation piece!)

The lateral vibration was caused by a piece of the warhead stuck in one of the rotor blades. Fortunately, it soon shook loose. My commo cord was cut and my M-16's receiver was flattened. The bulkhead between the crew and cargo door was destroyed from the floor up to the crew door lock.

We finally figured out that ground fire had caught the rocket before it had cleared the pod. The fins were still in the pod. The only injuries were some minor facial burns on the crew chief and some small nicks and scratches on Walt and me.

We made it back to Phu Loi. Maintenance took the bird and trashed it.

If this tale has a moral, it has to be: "If it isn't your time, close doesn't count." There's no doubt in my mind who was riding in our jump seat.

Jack Shields
Crusader 67
Shamrock 46
Saber 6



Meeting at Fort Devons are (from left) Jack Shanahan, Mike Hurley, Bill Baker and Greg Ross.

Original 7/17th Cav members hold reunion

Four of the original members of the 7/17th Cav got together at the Officers Club at Fort Devons, MA.

Jack Shanahan, C Troop gun platoon; Mike Hurley, co-pilot for the squadron commanding officer; Bill Baker, 2nd Platoon leader, D Troop and C Troop Blues Platoon leader;

and Greg Ross, C Troop gun platoon, all managed to coordinate their schedules and rendezvoused for a few hours of reminiscing at Fort Devons.

Though Jack and Greg had stayed in touch with each other over the years, and Greg relocated Mike several years ago, Bill was thought to be lost forever. Forever, that is, until the day Bill was making a sales call somewhere in New England and spotted the Ruthless Rider patch on the cover of the 1992 VHPA Membership Directory lying on the desk of his client.

Bill mentioned that he was an original member of and deployed with the 7/17th, and asked if he could look through the directory. He immediately turned to the "H's" to see if there was a "Hurley, Mike" listed and, sure enough, there was. He called Mike that evening, after which Mike called Greg and told him Bill Baker was no longer missing.

All of this took place last February, about two weeks before Greg was to visit Fort Devons on business. After several phone calls, it was determined that since Bill, Jack and Mike all lived within an hour and a half of Fort Devons, the perfect opportunity to toast the good deeds of the 7/17th was the present itself.

It did, they did, and the grins on the faces of Jack, Mike, Bill and Greg shows that even a mini-reunion of guys who have been through so much together can and will be a tremendously good time.

All four were some of the earliest arrivals when the 7/17th began forming in the spring of 1967 at Fort Knox. One member of this group is missing, and if any of you readers knows his whereabouts, please contact Greg Ross at (616) 375-3628 or Mike Hurley at (518) 477-6882.

His name is Jack Daniels. He was 3rd Platoon leader for D Troop, 7/17th and, like Bill Baker, was not an aviator. Bill believes there is a very good chance that Jack made a career of the service and went on to retire out of the Army as a lieutenant colonel or a colonel.

Greg Ross

Veteran wants information on friend from high school

I may have a somewhat unusual request. Not the usual request of looking for a fellow serviceman from Vietnam.

My best friend from Lee High School, Wyoming, MI, was killed in Vietnam on Feb. 19, 1969. His name appears on the Memorial as Larry A. Bodell at location 32W57.

Now my request. Is it possible to locate other pilots who served with Larry who could share about his service and the circumstances of his death? Since I don't have access to his military records, I only know he served in the U.S. Army as a warrant officer and flew helicopters.

Glenn Jeffers

Taps

Terry Adkins

Terry Adkins was killed in the crash of a helicopter on the northern Oregon coast in mid-July.

Adkins moved to Hillsboro, OR, to work as a management analyst after retiring from the Army.

He formerly worked at the Army Personnel Command.

Roy D. Jackson

Roy D. Jackson, a former member of the 117th Aviation Company, died June 18 of cancer.

Jackson resided in Fort Worth, TX.

Gary E. McCall

Gary E. McCall of Fairplay, CO, died July 9 after the main rotor of his Flight for Life helicopter struck rocks on a steep mountainside during a rescue near Buena Vista, CO.

McCall, 49, was attempting to land in a small clearing to pick up an injured hiker at the 11,800-foot level of Mount Huron when the accident occurred.

Witnesses said that after striking the rocks, the B2 A-Star helicopter lurched out of control and disintegrated as it tumbled down the mountain for 1,000 feet, exploding on the way.

Also killed in the accident was nurse Sandy Sigman, 42, of Denver.

The helicopter was operated for St. Anthony Hospital Central in Denver.

McCall flew gunships with the 71st Assault Helicopter Company at Chu Lai in 1967-68.

David Walton

David Walton of North Fork, ID, died after the engine quit on the helicopter he was flying.

The accident occurred April 3, on Walton's 46th birthday.

He was a member of Class 70-25 and served with the 128th Assault Helicopter Company in 1970-71.

Walton, who was a commercial pilot, enjoyed the VHPA and "read the Directory cover to cover searching for past friends," his wife Linda wrote.

"He died doing what he loved most. Keep up your good work for all the wonderful pilots out there," she added.

VHPA finds 13,000 pilots; 13,000 missing

JACK GLENNON

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

In 11 years, the VHPA has grown from 66 guys who responded to Larry Clark's invitation to gather in Phoenix into an association with more than 7,500 members.

Along the way we have reunited an awful lot of old friends, attempted to account for our missing and have documented a considerable amount of history.

We now know who almost 13,000 of the young, brave aviators who accepted the challenge of flying helicopters over Southeast Asian rice paddies, mountains, jungle and hostile forces are. These past 11 years have seen a resurgence of pride camaraderie and sense of accomplishment within our ranks, which is demonstrated so vividly at our annual reunions.

While I cannot say locating the first 13,000 was a piece of cake, the next 13,000 is going to be considerably more difficult. This number represents our best estimate of the

The good news is we have access to a resource that not only can identify who we are looking for, but also can aid greatly in locating them.

remaining Vietnam-era helicopter pilots who are out there somewhere.

What makes the task even more staggering is the fact that the segment of the population who we are looking for is less than 0.01 percent.

There is no cost-effective way to identify who we are looking for or to let them know the VHPA exists. We have, in the past and will continue in the future, to advertise the VHPA and the annual reunion in low-cost/no-cost trade publications, community service announcements and participation in various trade and air shows.

While these outlets provide maximum exposure for minimum cost,

they hardly put a dent in the task at hand. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we have access to a resource that not only can identify who we are looking for, but also can aid greatly in locating them.

That resource is you — the VHPA member. Collectively, we know all 13,000, and we are the only people in the world who do.

You can't remember all the guys in your flight school class or combat unit, and neither can I. The VHPA Membership Directory now includes a cross-reference of members by flight school class and combat unit. Take a look. See who is listed and who is not.

Make a list of guys you remember who are not there. If you get together for a mini-reunion, fill in the gaps. Perhaps you will remember old Darling Dan was from Beaver Falls, PA. Call long distance information, maybe he's still there.

Maybe you have some old addresses or orders with SSANs. There are services available that, for as little as \$2, will run the SSAN and provide

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Members hold key to finding missing pilots

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you with a current address.

Why should you do this? Because underneath that crusty facade you are soft-hearted and nostalgic. You remember that as a helicopter pilot, if you went down, someone was on his way to pick you up — and that is probably the last time you were that certain about anything. You realize there really are a couple of guys out there you would like to see again.

The VHPA owns a CD-ROM set with all the telephone listings in the United States. Phil Marshall has volunteered to run as many names as time allows.

If you have the name of someone you would like to locate, send it to Phil. The CD set is divided by geographical region, so if you have a probable location, it will help.

You will receive a printout of all people listed with the name you supply, as well as a telephone number for each. The rest is up to you. Please supply a stamped, self-addressed envelope when making the request to Phil.

Phil Marshall's address is: 4465 Cedar Cove, Troy, OH 45373.

The initiation for VHPA was conducted long ago in a faraway place. The ceremonies were closed in 1975

Playing detective can be rewarding and, while no one expects you to make a full-time job of it, a little effort on everyone's part would go a long way toward finding those final 13,000.

The initiation for VHPA was conducted long ago in a faraway place. The ceremonies were closed in 1975.

Life's paths have taken us in all directions and our membership is representative of the full spectrum of success levels, no matter what yardstick we use to measure.

In all the encounters I have had at VHPA functions, whether with a corporate executive or a short-order cook, a doctor or a dock worker, very few fail to acknowledge the pride instilled in them by performing a tough task very few others wanted to do.

They all deserve to be found, remembered and recognized, and no one is going to do it but us.

Thanks, guys. I appreciate your efforts — and anyone you happen to locate likely will too.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last year, questionnaires were sent to a number of former members who had not renewed their membership. Although 60 percent of the questionnaires returned included a renewal, the balance cited a variety of reasons for not doing so.

A slack economy, kids in college, recent divorce, etc., were all listed.

While the VHPA has worked hard to address all areas of concern by members, it is distressing to lose contact with a member who would like to maintain that contact.

The bimonthly newsletter is the main conduit of information to the membership. The newsletter is included in the \$30 annual dues or a subscription alone is available for \$16 a year. However, if these expenses would present a financial hardship, please contact me in care of VHPA headquarters in Cincinnati.

Unit's yearbook was assembled with care

While looking at the 1993 Directory, I came across the Inventory of Historical Information Section. That section lists a mixed bag of several historical documents from books to magazines to unit histories.

I have a 16th CAG yearbook which was prepared during the last few months of 1970 in Chu Lai. Besides all the pictures and cute comments, the yearbook contains a one-page history of each unit within the 16th CAG.

Someone went to a lot of trouble to make certain these one-page histories followed a similar format and as a result they are very valuable. Each starts when the unit was formed or activated (usually in the States), how it got ready to deploy, and some details about its first base in Vietnam.

It includes highlights of base camp relocations and the major units they supported from that time up to the end of 1970. I hope the VHPA Directory and Historical committees can use this information.

Each starts when the unit was formed or activated

In 1970 the 16th CAG supported the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) and consisted of the 335th TC Company, plus the 14th CAB and the 123rd CAB. The 14th CAB had its HHC, plus the 71st, 174th and 176th AHCs and the 132nd and 178th ASHCs. The 123rd CAB had its HHC, A and B companies, D Troop 1st Sqdn 1st Cav (detached from its parent Squadron), F Troop 8th Cav, and E Company 723rd MNT Bn (detached from its parent battalion).

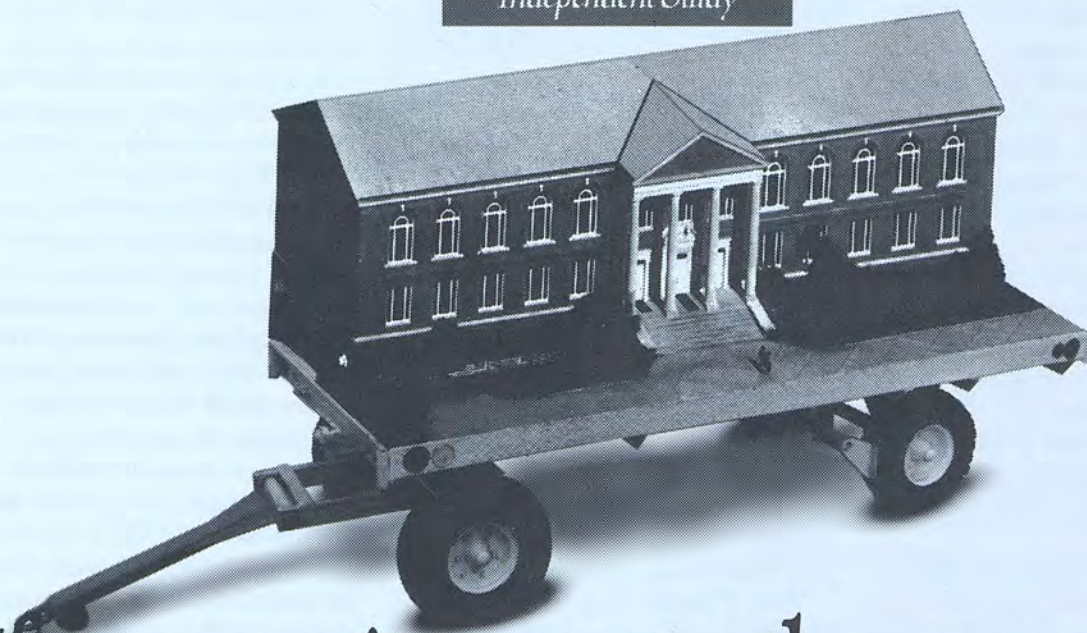
I will be sending copies from the 1st Infantry Division yearbooks in a few weeks. Hope these are useful.

George Sibert
1966-67, A Company, 1 Avn Bn 1 Inf
1970, 123 Avn Bn 23 Inf
1970-71, F/8 Cav 23 Inf.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Directory and Historical committees were delighted to have the information George supplied and will gladly receive copies of the history pages from any yearbook.

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VHPA2 10/94

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Reunion travels to Heartland in '95

DAVID H. RITTMAN
ASSISTANT REUNION CHAIRMAN

It's true!! Philadelphia will be hard to beat, but out in the "Heartland" plans already are under way for what could be the largest get-together yet.

Plan early . . . for this one is going to be great! Not only is Kansas City centrally located for the many who drive in, airline fares from most cities are very inexpensive due to the price of discount carriers like Southwest, Continental Lite and TWA. That drives down the prices on most of the other major carriers as well.

Check for "two for one," "Peanut fares" (companion flies for one cent more) or "friends fly free" fares.

We've also negotiated use of one of the best hotels in town — the Westin Crown Center. The room rates will be under \$70 per night . . . which is less than one-half the normal rate.

While details still are being firmed up, activities are planned to kick off on Saturday, July 1, with an early evening (6 p.m.) Hawaiian luau poolside, complete with show and dancers. Shades of R&R from years gone past!

Bring your old flight suits and fatigues (and get some for your spouse or guest), because Sunday, July 2, we're going to relive the memories of one of the greatest "in-country" parties you ever attended (that you want to talk about, of course) — complete with MASH theme, tents, cookout and lots of FUN surprises. Dancing later in the evening if you're up to it . . . and who wouldn't be!

Committee would like comments

The 1995 VHPA Reunion Committee is well under way with plans for next July's reunion in Kansas City. We're still developing and finalizing our agenda and activities, and we would welcome your ideas, input, thoughts and recommendations.

One terrific open discussion point involves any suggestions regarding guest speakers. Please feel free to contact any of the planning group:

- Bob Smith, reunion chairman.....
- Dave Rittman, reunion "XO"/entertainment chairman
- Dan Brooks, static display chairman.....
- Steve Kilbourne, transportation chairman
- Bill Medsker, mini-reunions chairman
- Gary Aus, registration chairman.....
- John Shearer, golf tournament chairman.....

NOTE: Mail should be sent directly to Bob Smith, [REDACTED]

Monday, July 3, the tempo and tone changes sharply as we head out to one of the newest and finest riverboats in the country. Besides lots of food and beverage, you'll be able to challenge lady luck on a full floating casino. Entertainment . . . but of course!

The business meeting is Tuesday morning, and they're planning the biggest blowout ever for our banquet the evening of July 4 . . . a top-ranked band that you'll swear is the original Beatles — and sound even better!

The committee is working on a possible fireworks display, and other major surprises that will make this evening truly special.

If you typically like to sit next to a special friend or want to reserve a table at the final banquet, you'll be able to arrange it in advance this year . . . but you need to do the legwork ahead of time. Contact your friends

and unit buddies, and make plans to set aside seats for your small group, a table of 10, or even your entire unit! Details will follow in future Newsletters regarding the amount needed per person and where to send your check to confirm your reservation.

Departure day is Wednesday, July 5, but before you pull pitch, you will have had the opportunity for side events during the weekend, including Major League baseball, a golf tournament, amusement theme and water parks, a world-class museum, mini-reunions, aircraft displays, and much, much more! Circle your calendar now and start planning.

Sound like a great reunion? You can count on it! Whether you've been to many, or this will be the first time . . . say YES, YES, YES now . . . and set aside the July 1-5 time period to attend.

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New approach taken on KIA issue

JACK CLARK
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
AND VHPA

In July, I returned to Vietnam as part of a delegation.

While there, I noted significant progress concerning the KIA (killed in action) and BNR (body not recovered) issue.

The steady stream of VHPA members at Gary Roush's KIA/MIA table at the past few reunions proves to me many VHPAers are interested in what progress is being made.

For many years, progress on accounting for American KIAs/MIAs was frustratingly slow. The Vietnamese were obviously more interested in normalization of diplomatic and economic relations, and turned over a few American remains each year in the political "poker game" being played by the two governments.

In my opinion, one of the major reasons for recent progress is The Veterans Initiative, a new program started by VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America Inc.).

In May of this year, a team of VVA leaders visited Vietnam and turned over to the Vietnamese veterans association information gathered from American veterans regarding approximately 1,900 Vietnamese MIAs. This information included personal memorabilia taken from NVA and VC soldiers (diaries, photos, letters to their families, etc.), as well as topographic and hand-drawn maps of mass burial sites.

We believe this information was so well received by the Vietnamese, whose MIAs are estimated to number more than 300,000, because honoring one's deceased loved ones and ancestors is a basic tenet of their more than 2,000-year-old culture.

The July and August issues of The VVA Veteran contain photos and stories about the May visit and the impact turning over this information has had on the Vietnamese and our fellow American veterans.

For those of you who haven't read

The Veterans Initiative: A special report on breaking the deadlock in the search for KIAs/BNRs in Vietnam

these stories, let me summarize one especially heartwarming one:

Tim Brown is a survivor of the Battle of Kham Duc, fought in May 1968 near the Laotian border in I Corps between U.S. Army, Air Force and Marines and their indigenous strike force and the 2nd NVA Division.

Tim was a member of the Marine detachment at an FOB named Ngok Tavak. The Americans suffered 32 KIAs/BNRs or MIAs in this battle, many of whom were left on the battlefield as the NVA drove the survivors into the jungle after shooting down the last two evacuation choppers.

Tim knew the 11 Marine KIAs/MIAs left on the battlefield, and swore to locate their remains.

In May, Tim and two other American vets drove the 5½ hours from Danang to Kham Duc with two Associated Press reporters. There, they met with a People's Committee representative and requested to visit Ngok

Tavak. Their request was denied several times until Tim turned over a map and pictures of a gravesite that held 16 Vietnamese KIAs.

The Vietnamese knew the general location of the gravesite, but were so deeply moved by the Americans' concern for Vietnamese MIAs they finally granted permission.

Tim and the other Americans visited the gravesite with the People's Committee representative, who was a former officer with the NVA 2nd Division and who often visits this and other burial sites near Kham Duc to burn incense to honor those who died there.

This time, Tim and his fellow Americans joined with Vietnamese in burning incense for those killed and missing from both sides of the battle.

The heart of the matter is that by turning over information about Vietnamese MIAs, Tim was able to let go of painful memories and gained a sense of peace that eluded him for 26 years.

Moreover, Tim's information and that gathered from other American veterans as part of The Veterans Initiative have convinced the Vietnamese the KIA/MIA issue is indeed a humanitarian, not a political, issue and has begun to bear fruit in greater Vietnamese cooperation in the search for answers to the fate of American KIA/MIAs.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jack Clark, VVA's national vice president, is a member of VHPA and has supported the Membership and Historical committees for several years.

If you have personal memorabilia taken from NVA or VC, or have information about mass burial sites and are interested in helping The Veterans Initiative, contact VVA at 1224 M St. NW, Washington, DC 20005. Phone: (202) 628-2700.

Any VHPAer who flew in support of the Battle of Kham Duc or who has information about those who supported the battle is encouraged to contact the VHPA Directory Committee.

Communicating by computer grows

MEL CANON
ONLINE COORDINATOR

Welcome to VHPA Online.

Several months ago, I set out to make contact with other VHPA members who operated computers online. Today, that has become a reality and there are now more than 30 of us communicating via e-mail over the global computer system known as the Internet. Some connect directly and others access the net via commercial services such as CompuServe or America On Line.

It has been very interesting getting this network rolling. I've personally made some new acquaintances on the network and it has been responsible for pulling in some new members for the Association.

I was especially surprised to find a couple of guys online who had no idea the VHPA even existed. That would seem hard to believe, but they are out there.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the birth of the VHPA network and voiced their ideas or given me pointers. Your help has been invaluable. We're still struggling to get it all put together, but the objective is near.

This column will be about the online activities and will include information that comes in from members around the globe. I hope you enjoy it.

If you're not online, but want to join the fun, let me hear from you and I'll give you some tips. Drop me a

If you are online and have some questions about computer operations, send me an e-mail and I'll try to help. If I don't know the answers to your questions, someone on the net surely does. If not, it probably wasn't a problem after all.

Well, let's pull pitch and get this dog and pony show in the air:

HONDURAS, Central America —

MIKE WISE

Now, how does an old 101st scout pilot wind up in Honduras? He gets a Ph.D. in agricultural economics and goes to work for the U.S. government again, that's how.

Mike is with USAID in Honduras, after serving 11 years with the agency in El Salvador. In fact, he advises anyone wanting to do business with Central America to look to El Salvador.

Mike would like to hear from anyone from 2/17/101st ABN and get some info on how the mini reunion in Philly went.

Mike generously invites anyone needing info on Central America to contact him. He says he doesn't do visas, and can't get you out of jail, but will visit you in jail.

Contact Mike at AmEmbassy-AID,

Thanks for jumping onto the net, Mike. Look forward to hearing a lot from you. Hang on to your mailbox, this will probably get you a lot of mail.

Leave it to an old scout pilot to find the action and jump right in the middle of it.

FREEPORT, Indonesia — Hello, RON BLACK (74543.1631@compuserve.com). Now here's another interesting guy.

Ron is chief pilot for the helicopter operation of Freeport, Indonesia, and is involved in supporting mining operations there.

Ron says all his pilots must take altitude training in the States and get some work in an altitude chamber. Altitude chamber? Can you imagine an old scout pilot for the 9th Cavalry flying higher than treetop level (and that gave those guys nosebleeds)?

Well, here's one who climbs up to 20,000 feet (isn't that the service ceiling on most helicopters) just to take

pictures of the jungle (or whatever it is you find at 20,000 feet in Indonesia). Do you wear a parachute with that oxygen mask, Ron?

Thank you, but I'll just stay here on the beach in sunny California, sipping margaritas and punchin' this keyboard.

Ron is an avid computer addict. I know, cause we go back a day or two. He used to keep me out of trouble years ago as my director of operations when I tried my hand at the commercial helicopter business. It was a great surprise to run into him on the network.

Nice to hear from you Ron and keep that email flowing and the oxygen tank full. 20,000 feet in a helicopter... Mercy!

DALLAS — Hey there, ED FAUGHT,

Remember the Supercollider? The one that collided with Congress and got smashed. Well, Ed helped build that pony, but didn't get a chance to ride. He says they did about 14 of the planned 53 miles of tunnel before the congressional toilet flushed and eliminated the \$2 billion in work already done.

Ed put in almost 20 years on the project before its demise. Bummer! He has remained in the Dallas area and is solid into computers and online operations. Thanks for jumping in, Ed.

ATLANTA — Hello DOUG RUSSELL. Doug isn't pickin' peaches in Atlanta... peanuts either. In fact, he says he's just passing through on his way to Margaritaville.

He has taken time, however, to help me develop this electronic forum and serves as the assistant online coordinator.

Doug and I put together a little chat forum for the members who subscribe to America On Line. It meets each Wednesday night at 2100 hours, Eastern.

Continued on Page 14

Marines meet VC in first big battle

WALTER WISE

Almost every major combat unit that went to Vietnam had it's "first big battle."

For the Army's 1st Air Cav Division, the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley was certainly a "big battle."

I just finished reading a book on that battle and I thought maybe the Newsletter readers might enjoy a quick review of the Marine Corps' first big battle — Operation Starlite, Aug. 18-19, 1965.

A short history lesson will help everyone understand how fast things were happening in those days.

The **Operation Starlite** Marine Corps' first combat unit,

the 9th MEB (Marine Expeditionary Brigade) came ashore on March 8 near Danang with the mission to defend the airbase. The MEB's helicopter support was MAG-16 (Marine Air Group), which was equivalent to an Army aviation battalion with two HMM (Helicopter Marine Medium) Squadrons, each equivalent to an Army aviation company.

Gen. William Westmoreland's MACV staff continued to work with the Pacific Command and the Viet-

In early August, the 1st VC Regiment overran the Vietnamese garrison at Ba Gia, 20 miles south of Chu Lai and MACV believed they would test the Americans at Chu Lai next.

namese to expand the number of bases the Marines defended and to bring Marine Corps fixed-wing Phantom squadrons to Vietnam. Danang was already crowded.

In April, Washington approved sending 42,000 additional U.S. servicemen to Vietnam and a new base for more jet squadrons at Chu Lai, 57 miles southeast of Danang.

The 9th MEB became the III MAF (Marine Amphibious Force). On May 31, the new Chu Lai base received its first jet aircraft.

On July 30, Gen. Westmoreland told the III MAF to prepare for larger offensive operations.

In early August, the 1st VC Regi-

ment overran the Vietnamese garrison at Ba Gia, 20 miles south of Chu Lai and MACV believed they would test the Americans at Chu Lai next.

On Aug. 15, a 1st VC deserter confirmed to the ARVN's the 60th and the 80th VC battalions, plus a few of their friends, were based around the village of Van Tuong just 12 miles from Chu Lai.

Even though III MAF had only been planning for this type of operation for two weeks, it was able to launch a coordinated overland, amphibious and helicopter assault at 6:30 a.m., Aug. 18.

The Navy ships involved were not told until the evening of the 16th, which says a lot for their quick reactions.

At H-Hour, UH-34s from HMM-261 and HMM-361 inserted a Marine Corps battalion into three LZs named Red, White and Blue to the rear and inland from the objective.

Another unit moved overland to block a northern escape route. Two Marine battalions landed on Green Beach.

The entire operation had naval gun support from two destroyers and a cruiser.

The LZs were prepped with 155 mm from Chu Lai and Marine A-4s

Continued on Page 15

Chat forum meets on Wednesday nights

Continued from Page 13

Doug is my computer guru and bails me out when I get behind the electronic power curve. He's active in veterans affairs in Atlanta and belongs to the Vietnam Veterans of America's Atlanta Chapter. He also participates in the Atlanta Computer Users Special Interest Group (SIG) where he serves as their newsletter editor.

Doug works in the computer field and tends his flower garden while waiting for someone to assign him to fly a C&C mission to Costa Rica or some other tropical paradise.

He also has a lovely house for sale in Atlanta if anyone wants to cash in on the forthcoming Olympics. Thanks for the help Doug . . . hang in there and keep the margaritas fresh, I'll be thirsty by the time I make it to Atlanta.

These are just a few of the guys who have checked in with me . . . there are many more. I will try to add a blurb or two about each as we go on.

I'll be keeping you up to date on what has transpired with the online group between issues.

JACK CARPENTER, where are you?

I have tried to send email to you via East Tennessee State and it says you don't exist. You are MIA and need to check back in with me for a current address. I'll wear a bracelet with your name on it till I hear from you.

See you all next issue when I'll tell you about Listservers, an easy way to communicate via email and maintain privacy and security. That seems to be the way our net is headed.

Until then . . . keep your head on a swivel and the rotor in the green . . .

Destroyers, cruiser provide support

Continued from Page 14

and F-4s. The Marines had a 107 mm "howtar" (a mortar tube mounted on a howitzer chassis) the UH-34s lifted in to support the maneuver units. The units also employed several M-48 tanks and 106 mm armed Ontos to patrol the beaches.

The VC were on several hilltops and caused some initial problems for the amphibious and helicopter landed forces.

But, with the excellent firepower support, the maneuvering infantry companies cleared these up by mid-day. The 107 mm "howtars" fired on an estimated 100-man enemy unit, killing 90.

The major action was near LZ Blue where the 60th VC Battalion occupied two small hills and four villages.

The HMM-361 UH-34s were supported by three Army UH-1Bs from the 7th Airlift Platoon.

The fight in this area got nasty. Even with all the firepower and tanks, the VC were still able to engage the Marines at close range with machine guns and mortars.

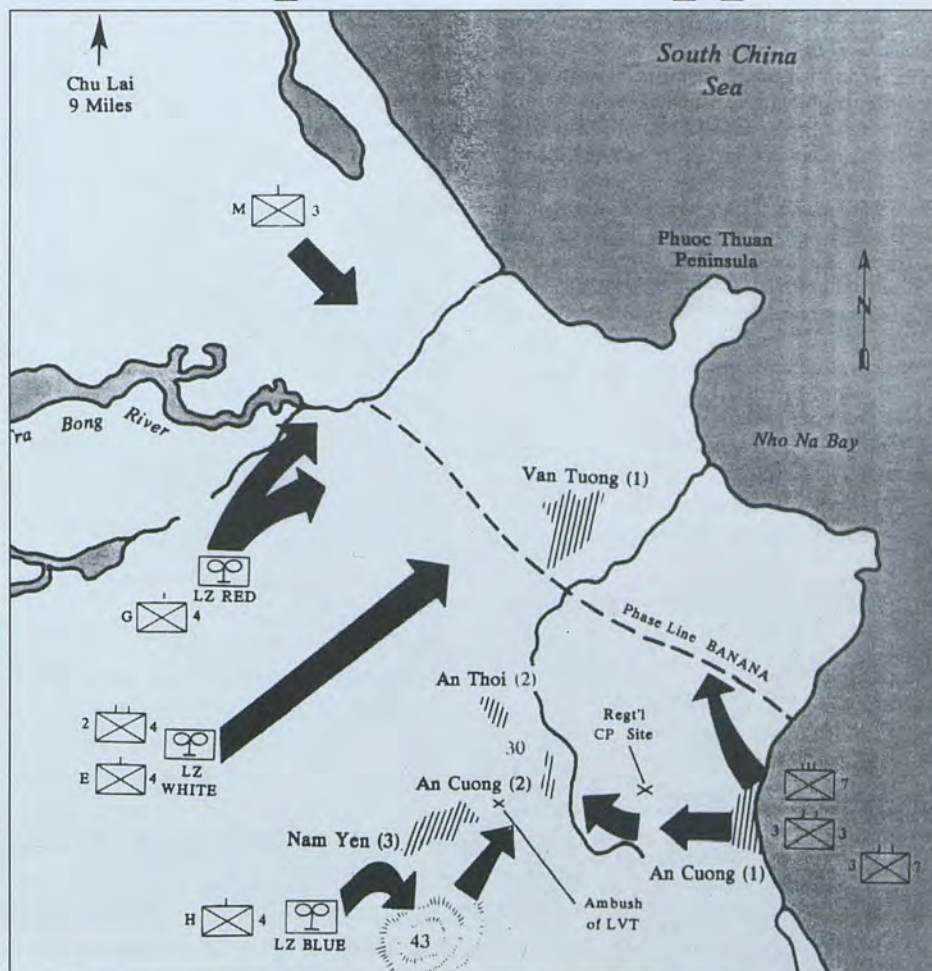
A UH-1E gunship from VMO-2 was shot down and a small force moved to its location until it could be repaired and flown out.

A supply column of LVTs was ambushed by the VC with mortars, machine guns and recoilless rifles. Two relief forces also were ambushed.

The LPH (Landing Platform Helicopter) Iwo Jima with HMM-163 and two infantry companies joined the battle about mid-morning and inserted these reinforcements.

That and a heavy compliment of fire support from the jets, artillery, naval gun, and helicopter gunships convinced the 60th VC Battalion to break contact as night fell.

Company I had 14 dead, including a company commander, plus another



This map shows Operation Starlite, which ran Aug. 18-19, 1965.

The major action was near LZ Blue where the 60th VC Battalion occupied two small hills and four villages. The HMM-361 UH-34s were supported by three Army UH-1Bs.

53 wounded, but it could claim 125 dead VC. Company H accounted for 156 dead VC vs. its own 15 dead and 30 wounded.

The next day the supply column was "rescued." Of the 23 Marines

assigned to the convoy, five were killed and all but nine wounded; but the VC left 60 bodies in their attack positions.

The Marines completed their cordon phase and searched the area in detail for the next five days.

VC pockets in bunkers, caves and tunnel systems were cleared.

At one point, several VC tried to board sampans to escape but the destroyer Orleck put an stop to the sampans and most of the VC.

The final score was 614 VC dead, 9 prisoners and 42 suspects detained, plus 109 weapons at a cost of 45 Marines dead and 203 wounded.

They had indeed attacked the 1st VC Regiment and hurt two of its battalions.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Walter Wise served as a Marine Corps helicopter pilot with HMM-364 in 1969-70.

Chris Noel: Veterans' entertainer

CHUCK HOWARD
VHPA MEMBER

Thanks to such organizations as the USO, Armed Forces Radio & Television Service, and Special Services, many of us enjoyed a brief respite from war on at least one occasion during our tour in Vietnam.

The entertainers and musicians who came offered a standard fare of reasons for packing up and heading west: "Love of country — money — excitement — money — It might help launch our career — money — (the ever popular) — We wanted to do something for the guys — and, of course . . . money."

In 1991, I ran across one of those who "did it for the guys." As I came to know her better, I realized she was indeed . . . the genuine article.

Chris "Miss Christmas" Noel has, in the truest sense of the word, earned the right to call herself a "veteran."

On her way to Hollywood stardom, she would become one of the first (and last) cheerleaders for the N.Y. Giants, a model and a cover girl.

At 5-foot-5½, this blue-eyed blonde with that girl-next-door look, was lit-



Chris Noel reads letters she received from servicemen while doing her popular Armed Forces Radio program "A Date With Chris."

erally made for Hollywood. She starred with, dated or befriended such baby boomer-era favorites as Elvis Presley, Hugh O'Brian, Shelley Fabares ("Coach"), Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, Bobby Rydell, Burt Reynolds, Bruce Springsteen, Don Johnson and Bob Hope.

Among her film credits are: "Soldier in the Rain" with Steve McQueen, "Honeymoon Hotel" with Robert Goulet and "Girl Happy" with Elvis Presley.

Noel, however, discovered her true calling soon after she was offered her own show with Armed Forces Radio. "A Date With Chris" was broadcast to GIs throughout the world.

It was an immediate hit.

The show came about when she was dating singer Jack Jones, who was putting in reserve time at Armed Forces Radio in Hollywood.

"They were interviewing girls for the purpose of putting one on the air. So, I made an appointment for an interview, answered their questions and did a kind of mock radio show and . . . a few weeks later I was on the air.

She also co-hosted a show called "Small World."

"Once the show hit Vietnam, it

became so popular they decided they wanted me to have my own show."

She recalled her boyfriend was in Vietnam with Bob Hope at the time.

"I talked to him when he was in Vietnam. I wanted to go. Desperately, I wanted to go with Bob Hope. The minute I got this radio show, I volunteered to go, and I was told I couldn't. I was turned down. I just wasn't a big enough star.

"But then, weeks later, I received a telegram from Washington. It said: 'Chris Noel, we would like you to go to Vietnam to help build up the morale of the troops.'"

Noel is sometimes credited with taking the then-fashionable mini-skirt to the Far East.

"The reason I took mini-skirts to Vietnam was because I was only allowed to take one bag and I wanted to have some nice clothes and mini-skirts didn't take up much room," she said.

"I had no idea what to take. I didn't know that I was going to be jumping on helicopters. I never was in a helicopter. I soon found out that I was going to go virtually everywhere by helicopter. There was this one

Continued on Page 17



Chris Noel performs on stage for GIs in South Vietnam.

Entertainer traveled by helicopter

Continued from Page 16

small problem though — I have this incredible fear of heights.”

However, “when I was in the helicopters, I never had this fear. I loved it. And they always flew with the doors open, everywhere I went. I always sat by the edge, by the doorgunner. I just loved it! I loved the noise. You couldn’t hear anything.”

Noel said she was given the opportunity to handle the controls of a helicopter.

“They showed me how to do things. They showed me how to push some things around, and how the thing comes up and down and stuff like that. I don’t know what it’s called. But I liked it. The only time I didn’t like it was at night.

“I remember one time when we were on top of a mountain and there was incoming and I was flat up against the bunker as they brought in a helicopter to get me out. I was really scared. As it landed, I didn’t get in that helicopter, I was literally thrown into it, and I heard the bullets hitting it as we took off,” she said.

On one of Noel’s trips, the helicopter she was aboard went down. “I know you’re gonna think this is crazy, but when the helicopter went down, I wasn’t really scared, I just felt this incredible rush. I felt this incredible rush . . . and I was laughing.

“That’s pretty bizarre, isn’t it? I knew there was something wrong. I



A crew chief prepares to help entertainer Chris Noel off a Huey during a stop in South Vietnam.

saw all these red lights going on and then it got real quiet . . . real quiet. What a rush! Afterwards, it was scary, though . . . once we were down because we were in a rice paddy next to a suspected VC village.”

After her tours in Vietnam, Noel found it sometimes tough getting work in films.

“I did one in 1968 and one in 1969, but after that I didn’t get any work for a long time. Hollywood was so hostile. People like John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart held their own, of

course, because they were established superstars.

“If you were struggling, like I was, it was the kiss of death” to have served in Vietnam.

“Not too many years ago, Jay Bernstein, who was Farrah Fawcett’s manager saw me in Hollywood and said: ‘Whatever happened to you? You were the original Farrah Fawcett; everyone had bets on you being one of the next major stars. What happened to you?’

“I said, ‘I went to Vietnam.’ But, you see, in my heart, that’s what I felt I had to do. That’s probably why I’m so driven in my work today with veterans — because of the fact that I was there, and I saw what happened.

Chris’ book “A Matter of Survival” recounts her dedication to the GIs, and her struggle to recover from post traumatic stress disorder.

Today, she relies on her ability to develop the same “high energy” she needed for her shows.

In February 1993, she founded Vetsville Cease Fire House Inc. to help deal with the homeless veteran problem.

She welcomes letters, particularly from those who may have special recollections of her.

EDITOR’S NOTE: You can write to Chris Noel in care of Vetsville Cease Fire House.

[Redacted address information]

Newsletter accepts letters electronically

VHPA members now can communicate with the Newsletter editor using electronic mail — or e-mail.

Articles, notices and letters for publication can be sent to the

Newsletter directly via CompuServe Mail or over the Internet through other on-line services.

To send e-mail to the Newsletter editor over CompuServe, address it

to: “Jack Swickard at 74127.442.”

If using another on-line service, the address is:

“INTERNET:74127.442@compuserve.com.”

The no problem medical evacuation

BERNARD E. GRADY

Staff Sgt. Will Fowling must have been very uneasy. The hillside was a bitch — occasionally steep, and slippery in the wet. Soaked from the rain that coated the brush, he was trying to carefully work his way through, back up the slope.

The battalion commander had decided to set up the listening post forward of the artillery battery. Visibility down that rotten hill wasn't very good. The perimeter definitely needed some early warning in the event the VC massed for an attack.

Sgt. Fowling knew his procedures pertaining to going through defensive positions — A Passage of Lines — one of the most dangerous military maneuvers. Accompanied by the men who would compose the LP, he had carefully checked out through one of the artillery positions, telling the two artillerymen he'd return shortly. But now, all light was gone and he no doubt wondered if he was lost. However, with a little luck, that same position was the one just coming into view through the gloom to his front.

Later, when he was coherent, the Artilleryman would say he had gone beyond ordinary fear, beyond the worst nightmare, beyond what we think of as terror, to a point where his body refused to accept the reality that his senses seemed to amplify, refused to accept the impulses responsible for the naked fear, refused to respond as he wished.

At that point, a great chill slowly coursed through his muscles, causing some of them to lock up, some of them to shake uncontrollably, and one of them to relax involuntarily, releasing the warm liquid that ran down his leg and soaked his pants and brought him back to reality.

The bout of terror wasn't supposed to happen, not to him. Artillery was his branch, not Infantry. His job was with the big guns just behind, not in a damn foxhole looking into the nearly complete, black void to his front,

Few mortals ever saw Bullock take "no" for an answer if he thought there was any conceivable way to get the job done.

straining for all he was worth to catch again the noise he was certain he'd heard out there.

Just minutes prior, he could see the scrub trees and man-high grasses that covered the flank of the hill on which his gun battery was located. Now, the misty rain and low clouds off the South China Sea had hastened the retreat of twilight, blotting out the detail of the landscape, enveloping his visual sense in a fuzzy, black void.

However, above the sounds of the rain, the Artilleryman's sharpened hearing seemed to compensate for his loss of vision, and in that ink to his front, he could discern the noise he'd noticed earlier, growing louder, coming nearer; and he was certain that something, or someone, was moving up the hill toward his position.

Infantrymen were accustomed to this, he reasoned. They were familiar with pulling guard, dealing with noises in the night, but the rifle company assigned the task couldn't cover the entire perimeter enclosing his battery and the Infantry battalion headquarters situated with it.

Artillerymen were filling in a 50-meter gap in front of the tubes. No question, gunners like himself shouldn't be here, but there was no help for him now. The thing was just to his front, at a spot where the hill started to level off, coming directly at him.

And so, the Artilleryman — his entire body trembling from the rush of adrenaline — snapped the safety off his rifle with a click that was too loud, and aimed at what appeared to

be a crouched black form now carefully stepping over some cut brush.

Will Fowling was almost there. He heard a faint metallic click, saw an indistinct flash of light and, with a ringing in his ears, was violently propelled backward down the hill by a sharp pressure in his midsection.

Capt. Duke Frey, our S-3/Air, was located at LZ Hammond near Phu Cat, at that time the hub of 1st Cav activities south of Bong Son.

Night had just fallen when the battalion net came to life with the voice of Maj. Bullock, the S-3, calling for a medevac. Duke was struck by the fact that his boss, himself, was making the call; additionally, there was a very detectable air of urgency in the major's normally controlled voice.

Duke called the medevac people. His effort produced the non result he expected. Conditions were far below flying minimums.

Duke returned to the net, giving Maj. Bullock a negative on the medevac.

Few mortals ever saw Tom Bullock take "no" for an answer if he thought there was any conceivable way to get the job done. Therefore, I was not surprised to hear the S-3, in his best "don't-give-me-that-bull" voice, demand that his subordinate get a medical evacuation chopper.

At the Bravo Company on another hill just north of the battalion HQ, I listened to the drama unfolding. I knew instinctively that someone must be in deep trouble.

That feeling was reinforced when, after Duke twice gave negative on medevacs, none other than the battalion commander transmitted in the clear, "Unless we get a medevac here soon, we're going to lose a damn fine November Charlie Oscar."

Duke Frey was regarded as an extremely competent officer, but competence and a quarter wouldn't get you a cup of coffee that night, or so I thought. Conditions were simply awful.

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NCO's life depended on medevac

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What was needed was a salesman and, after that, a hero; and if anyone could sell a pilot on being a hero, Duke was the guy. He performed that miracle and about 10 minutes later announced a dustoff was on its way from the evacuation hospital in Qui Nhon about 35 kilometers to the south.

I ducked out from under the makeshift, poncho tent which served as my company HQ and squinted into the night toward the battalion LZ, which was less than 500 meters away. There was nothing to be seen. A fine mist and thick clouds even made the horizon nearly indistinguishable.

I didn't pray much in Vietnam, but standing there, I put in a word with The Man for the injured NCO and for the medevac crew.

Straight line navigation from Qui

As the bird departed, we could hear Col. Swett thank the pilot with a sincerity I could almost feel.

Nhon to that LZ, a pinpoint in the blackness, was virtually impossible. The pilot activated the spotlight in the underbelly of the UH-1B, aimed the beam at National Highway 1, and flew the road at treetop level up the coastal plain.

Fortunately, the LZ was within sight of the highway.

When the chopper's engine was audible, the S-3 had him turn on all his lights and was able to talk him in

to the LZ, which the Old Man had ordered lighted with every flashlight they could muster.

From my vantage point, I could just make out the illuminated LZ, an indistinct mass of fuzzy light off in the mist, and finally I could hear and see the chopper arrive, a noisy spot of light descending out of the black.

As the bird departed, we could hear Col. Swett thank the pilot with a sincerity I could almost feel.

He nonchalantly responded, "No problem, any time."

Shortly, he was gone, the belly light fading rapidly amid the whop, whop, whop of the rotor blades.

"He said, 'No problem,'" I thought appreciatively as I returned to my duties. "Like hell."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a selection from "On The Tiger's Back," by Bernard E. Grady.



DEAR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS,

It is with great pride that I write to you of my affiliation with the finest safari company operating today in South Africa and Zimbabwe. **Hunters & Guides Africa**

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Travel arrangements, passport/visa, gun permits and even recommended taxidermists will be handled.

I will close by saying thank you for extending the courtesy of reading this letter. I hope I can be of service in the near future.

Cordially yours,

Michael P. Chase

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When ordering, allow four to five weeks for delivery. Payment can be by either money order, cashiers check or personal check. Make checks payable to Stephen R. Pullen and send them to 59 Ingalls Road, Ft. Monroe, VA 23651. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write or call me at (804) 722-9519.

Based on numerous requests, I will offer two new figures this year. The first is a crew chief (prototype displayed at Philly) and the second will be another pilot figure, but unlike the current figure that depicts a pilot from the latter years of the war, this new figure will be of a pilot from the early years.

I expect to offer the crew chief in September and the new pilot in October or November. Watch the Newsletters for pictures of both figures.

These figures will make excellent gifts (get your Christmas order in early to ensure it arrives on time) and a welcome addition to your office or den to remind you of a long time ago when we made aviation history. Thanks for your business.

— Steve Pullen/Banshee 11



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