



# The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

October 1995 Vol. 13, No. 5



Dave Rittman photo

A UH-1C Huey gunship from Company D, 229th Aviation, 1st Cavalry Division fires a rocket at a target marked with smoke north of An Khe in September 1967.

M00296 02/96



## From the President

The dust has settled in Kansas City and we are planning the final details for the '96 reunion in Santa Clara. Next to San Jose and just south of San Francisco, the hotel is providing FREE transportation to/from the San Jose airport. Draft beer is contracted for \$1.50! Plan ahead and get there early!

The 1996 Reunion Committee is forming up and is being led by Bob Norona.

In the last Newsletter, I asked for help from the membership with ways to sell some of the products the VHPA has put together. No one has contacted me, so I must assume that everyone is going to help. Or is this an unsafe assumption?

Seriously, guys, please put fear of volunteering aside and lend a hand with this project. You'll meet a lot more of the kind of guys you flew with and partied with and have a good time while doing it.

At our HQ in Cincinnati we have a new voice to answer the phone. Allison is really jumping in and getting things done in a friendly and efficient manner. I think you'll like her.

Some of the renewal letters got out of Cincinnati late

**The 1996  
Reunion Committee  
is forming up  
and is being led by  
Bob Norona.**

and steps have been taken to make sure no one missed their August Newsletter, but you know how things can get fouled up, so PLEASE call Allison and tell her if for some reason you didn't get an August

Newsletter — it's the one with the photo of us in the parade behind the Huey and Charlie Rayl's Cav sabre, Cav hat and LOH driver's official mustache!

Thanks for being a member of the VHPA — the second BEST thing you ever did!

Above the Finest always!

— Ken Fritz, President

## VHPA chapters

**Ohio River LZ Chapter**  
Paul Cotter, President

[REDACTED]

**Great Lakes Chapter  
(Northeastern Illinois)**  
John Becker, President

[REDACTED]

Bruce Rodewald, Vice President

[REDACTED]

**North Carolina Chapter**  
Gary Kimbrell, President

[REDACTED]

**New England Chapter**  
Bob Whitford, Past President

[REDACTED]

**Fort Wolters Chapter**  
Charles Holley, President

[REDACTED]

**Florida LZ Chapter**  
Judd Chapin, Executive Director  
825 Severn St.

[REDACTED]

**Mardi Gras Chapter**  
Don Hunt, President  
Lee Overstreet, Vice President  
New Orleans, LA

## Ohio River LZ Chapter plans March mini-reunion

The VHPA Ohio River LZ Chapter Mini-Reunion will be coming to Canton, OH, March 1-3, 1996.

The chapter's excursion to the eastern portion of the LZ provides an opportunity for potential new faces from the area no excuses in joining with a very ensconced, though accepting, corps of chapter members in a weekend of fun and reflection.

We know how resting in the easy chair of 25-plus years may affect an individual. Nevertheless, the rule is we require VHPA'ers and potential VHPA'ers, including their wives and families, to attend.

Where: The Belden Village Sheraton Inn (near the main highway) Canton, OH.

Contacts:

• Andy Archer (69-49, 70-3), [REDACTED]

or call [REDACTED]

• Rich Sebastian [REDACTED]

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VHPA Headquarters	(513) 721-VHPA

## ELECTRONIC MAIL

Newsletter: 74127.442@compuserve.com

# Seeking

I am trying to find out as much information as possible about my brother's tour of duty in Vietnam. I would also like to communicate with anyone who knew him and served with him.

My brother, WO Paul Robert Brass of St. Charles, Ill. died Dec. 14, 1970, in South Vietnam

Paul was attached to the 326th Medical Battalion, 101st Airborne, Eagle Dustoff. I believe he was flying out of Camp Evans. Below is a list of those who I believe were on board the helicopter when it was shot down and who also lost their lives.

WO Randall Gaylord Freeman, pilot; Spec. 4 John William Murphy, crew chief; S.Sgt. Steve Freddie Johnson, medic; and Jeffery David Kuersten, medic.

I believe the names are accurate but I'm not sure.

Richard Brass

# VHPA briefs

## The 1995 Membership Directory

The 368-page 1995 Directory was printed in September. Bulk mailing from the Wichita, KS, post office began in early October and can take as much as two or three weeks to get to everyone in the U.S. postal system.

If your dues are current as of Sept. 20 and you joined the VHPA before Aug. 18 (this year's Directory cutoff date), you should receive your copy on or before Oct. 21. If you have not received it by the end of October, please contact VHPA Headquarters.

## 1996 VHPA Calendar

The calendar was printed in September. VHPA Headquarters is taking orders for general distribution in October.

For \$10 a copy, plus \$3 P&H, you can have a "BEEN THERE, DONE THAT" calendar for your home or office or a gift for that friend who just won't join the VHPA because . . .

This edition has 16 photos, including two paintings from artist Joe Kline. All but one are color photos. Thirteen photos relate to Army, two to Marine and one to Navy helicopters. Use the form on Page 4 to order copies.

## 1995 VHPA Calendar

Copies of the 1995 VHPA Calendar are still available. The collection of 14 photos is well worth the \$7 per copy and \$3 P&H. Use the form on Page 4 to order copies.

## Historical Reference Directory

The 350-page Volume 1 is available for purchase. It includes nine unit histories, Army flight class rosters up through 1966, the VHPA radio call sign database, and the helicopter incident database through 1965. The 832-page Volume 2 is also available.

It also contains five unit histories, 12 short stories, the Army flight class rosters for 1967 and 1968, and the helicopter incident database for 1966 and 1967.

The VHPA helicopter incident database contains details on individual helicopters, individuals that served in helicopter units, helicopter and major combat units, major combat operations, plus significant events. Please use the form on Page 4 to order your copy.

The Executive Council has instructed the various committees to continue to collect information for future volumes. Unit histories, short stories, details of helicopter incident and missions as well as questions concerning the Historical Reference Directory should be directed to Mike Law at [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]).



# Wife profoundly moved at husband's reunion

I was my husband's guest at the Black Cats reunion in Nashville just weeks ago. I was profoundly moved by what I saw and sensed. The memory still lingers. There is new awareness in me.

During those Vietnam years I was doing "my thing" as a Junior Women's Club member-career woman in Litchfield, CT. Very little thought was given to what was going on in the "real world."

Now history has a new connection and a face.

I came to the reunion with an open mind and a comparative closed mouth. (I love to socialize, which includes talking.) I listened more.

From my observations, I wrote the poem enclosed. You have my permission to print it in The VHPA Newsletter.

Linda Byrd-Dennison

Wife of Capt. Calvin Dennison, U.S.A. Retired

## REUNION '95

<i>"I finally got up courage to be here,"</i>	<i>music.</i>
<i>someone told me. "...</i>	<i>A name was read.</i>
<i>their first time."</i>	<i>A candle lit</i>
<i>Others seemed to think of</i>	<i>as painful faces recorded</i>
<i>the memory</i>	
<i>it as</i>	<i>and unchecked tears ran</i>
<i>"party time" though</i>	<i>down their faces.</i>
<i>admitted</i>	
<i>drinking more than</i>	<i>The silence.</i>
<i>usual.</i>	<i>The tears shed for a com-</i>
	<i>rade lost.</i>
<i>Businessmen, truckers,</i>	<i>"He shouldn't have</i>
<i>professional types.</i>	<i>died,"</i>
<i>Technicians, pilots still,</i>	<i>I heard someone whisper.</i>
<i>landscapers ...</i>	
<i>All united by a war</i>	<i>Is there a message?</i>
<i>united by life still lived</i>	<i>Maybe the ones left</i>
<i>and death.</i>	<i>were spared for a reason</i>
	<i>...</i>
<i>The music</i>	<i>for a mission</i>
<i>cut into the silence.</i>	<i>yet to be experienced.</i>
<i>The silence cut into the</i>	

# Coverage of celebration brings lump to the throat

Just received the August issue of the newsletter.

As with all the preceding issues of the newsletter, I enjoyed the August issue very much. I got a bit of a throat lump when looking at the photos and reading about the

*Continued on Page 5*

## VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO:

VHPA  
7 W. Seventh St.  
Suite 1990  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
(513) 721-VHPA

FAX NUMBER FOR

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (513) 721-5315

VHPA bumper stickers	\$1/each _____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only)	\$20/set _____ (\$5 P&H each set)
1992 VHPA Directory (7/17 Cav history)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1994 VHPA Directory (Lam Son 719 history)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1995 VHPA Directory (Available in September)	\$10/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
Vol. 1 Historical Reference Directory	\$15/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
Vol. 2 Historical Reference Directory	\$20/each _____ (\$5 P&H each)
1995 VHPA Calendar	\$7/each _____ (\$3 P&H each)
1996 VHPA Calendar (Available in September)	\$10/each _____ (\$3 P&H each)

GRAND TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_



# War memorial garden in spectacular setting

On the way home from the 1995 VHPA Helicopter Pilots Reunion in Kansas City, my wife Janet and I stopped at The Living Memorial Sculpture Garden located just 13.2 miles north of Weed, CA, on Hwy. 97.

The garden is about 4,000 feet above sea level, at the foot of Mt. Shasta, which towers over the garden at 14,162 feet, providing a spectacular view in the background.

Situated in junipers and newly planted pines on 138 acres, with wild flowers in bloom are several sculptures of rusted steel.

This memorial is the fulfillment of the dreams of Rick DeLugo, a Vietnam veteran;

Dennis Smith, the sculptor and also a Vietnam veteran; Ace Cozzalio, deceased VHPA member who paved the way through the local political maze; and Jim Leach, VHPA member and local concrete/building contractor.

Through the efforts of these men and several others, the land was acquired from the U.S. Forest Service and the sculptures and facilities were constructed.

The newest sculpture is a wall with a bust of Ace Cozzalio in the center and a short resume of Ace's life, including a list of his awards and decorations.

Surrounding this are the names of honorably dis-

charged veterans from any war involving United States troops.

Most of these names are of local men and women, including their rank and the conflict in which they served.

On top of this wall are two helicopters, a troop ship and a Cobra above.

The permanent glaciers of Mt. Shasta and the blue sky of Northern California provide quite an impressionable backdrop to this very special dedication. This, along with the 58,000 newly planted pine trees, truly make this a "living memorial."

You, too, can help support this memorial or have



**A helicopter sculpture tops marker at memorial garden near Weed, CA.**

your name inscribed in marble by writing to:

The Living Memorial Sculpture Garden, P.O. Box 301, Weed, CA 96094.

I would like to recommend that if you are traveling on Interstate 5, you take the time to stop and enjoy the serenity of this memorial. I believe you will think it is worth your time.

Steve Dillman  
Gunslinger 39  
1967-68

## *Continued from Page 4*

association's participation in the Parkville 4th of July celebration.

My wife, whose knowledge of the VN war is zilch, usually reads it from cover to cover.

I hope one day to attend a gathering, but my leave dates have not allowed me to do so thus far.

Ah well, I hope to retire next year and after that I most definitely will make time to attend. I am looking forward to expressing my appreciation for a "job well done" in person.

Sincerely,

Frederick F. Mentzer  
Aerogulf Services Co. LLC

[Redacted signature block]

## Flying through dark 'cloud' has brought years of laughs

I was flying team lead for the Rat Pack one early morn on an insertion southeast of Tay Ninh.

Back in pre-Cobra days, the team lead would "lead" the flight in and toss the smoke in the landing area for skid-kids.

Arty wasn't used that day, it was primarily a rice paddy with a small but heavily groved treeline at the end of the LZ.

After tossing the markers and breaking left to take up my position, the second gun started unloading our new 17 pounders (Yes, guys, there was a time when the rockets fit

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*Continued from Page 5*

all the way into the pods) into the treeline.

As he made his break, a thick, dark black cloud started rising from the treeline. The third gun had nosed up prior to starting the run and didn't see the "cloud" forming.

Asa Vest and Ronnie Hopkins rolled over and started pouring their load into the treeline . . . mini-guns blaring and rockets ablazing. When they realized what the "cloud" was, it was all they could do to suck pitch and break out. They didn't make it!

They flew through a cloud of 10 gazzillion fruit bats! Every windshield and chin bubble was completely burst and removed.

There were bat guts, bat wings, bat feet, bat blood, bat crap, bat eyes . . . well, you get the picture! But, thanks to the new, improved particle filters . . . they flew it back to Tay Ninh.

Rev: Can you spell STENCH?

No injuries, and 27 years worth of laughs. It wasn't a great war, but it was the best one we had.

Pat Dougan

Crusader 16, Rat Pack 5,

SMOKEY, 187th ASHC 1969-69

Varsity 3, B/159th One-OH-Worst 1970-71

## Could helicopter cut brother's taxi fare?

I read your advertisement about membership of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots, and started thinking that if anyone would know of where to buy a good used helicopter, it would have to be someone like your organization.

I have a brother who survived the Vietnam War, and now lives in a houseboat in the Florida Keys. He works for a laundry service and earns about \$200 per week.

At present he has to pay a taxi a minimum of \$7 per day just to get him from the houseboat to the shore, and I am looking for some cheap transportation to get him to and from work, and I'm thinking a small, cheap helicopter (preferably used) would be ideal transportation for him. Something that would be light enough to park on the roof of a houseboat, and be able to fly about 6 miles each day to get him to and from work.

We are working class people in need of some economical transportation.

If you have any helicopters for sale or could refer me to someone who would or could suggest anyone else I might be able to contact, I would sure appreciate it.

### Helicopters were always there

Choppers!

You were there when we needed you!

Airborne!

Bradley N. Jimerson

I know very little about the helicopter market. With cars, they call it the "blue book value" or whatever.

Any help or assistance you could give would be greatly appreciated.

Vicki Bellah

## Australian Navy pilot researching for book

I am researching material for a book I am writing about Australian Navy pilots in Vietnam.

First, a little background: I am, at present, an Australian Navy pilot. I have flown and instructed on a variety of helicopters, including the UH-1 B/H Huey, Sea King and Sea Hawk.

In my spare time, I research Australian naval aviation history and write articles for a magazine on naval aviation. I recently researched an article on Australian Navy pilots in Vietnam and realized there was a lot that had not been told and that needed to be.

I think the lack of recognition has to do with the then reluctance to acknowledge the serviceman's sacrifice to that conflict.

As you know, most of the Australian Navy pilots, observers, aircrewmembers and maintenance personnel were under U.S. Army command in the 135th Aviation Company, the Emus.

It was a most unusual situation, Australian Navy pilots who were more used to hunting subs, found themselves in battle as platoon commanders in the U.S. Army! I know of no similar situation before, during or since Vietnam.

Whilst I have good access to the Australian information and personnel, I'd like to balance the book with the American view of the Australians; personal and official information, as well as personal anecdotes from their subordinates, peers and commanders.

Allen "Tom" Tompkins, ex-U.S. Army warrant officer and a member of the VHPA, recommended that I contact you.

I'm hoping that you can help me with any contacts, information and agency (such as U.S. Army historical archives) information/addresses.

If I can be of any assistance in contacting personnel over here in Oz or publicizing your association, please let me know and I'll do my best.

I believe this project is important and the American input is vital in ensuring a balanced and accurate presentation.

Mark Ogden

*Continued on Page 7*



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## Military historian seeks help from chopper pilots

I wonder if you can help me? I am a military historian — and a former Marine Commando — and I have now been commissioned to write a “History of Special Forces.”

I am what is known as an oral historian, in that I write the story of D-Day or the Royal Marines Commando largely in the words of the men who were there, or who served in the units. That way, the story comes alive and people get the chance to go on the record with their own experiences.

This new book will cover all kinds of Special Forces and I particularly want to include those who took part in Vietnam.

Could I ask you therefore to insert the following appeal in the next issue of your Newsletter?

I think it is self-explanatory and if you could let your members know of this project, I will be sure of a good response:

### CALLING ALL VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS

Can you help an author? Robin Neillands, an ex-Royal

Marine Commando and a military historian, is writing a book, “THE HISTORY OF SPECIAL FORCES” and wants to include a large section on American Special Force operations, and would particularly like to hear from those who served in Vietnam.

He is looking for personal accounts, the more personal the better, about the unit and the training, our buddies and the missions we took part in, and about what it was really like to serve in Special Forces.

If you served with the Special Forces and have a tale to tell, contact Robin Neillands now, at 48 Beltran Road, London SW6 3AJ, England. All accounts will be acknowledged in the book.

Rob’s latest book, “THE CONQUEST OF THE REICH,” about the end of World War II in Europe, has just been published by The New York University Press.

Let’s get the story of the VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS into the next one.

I hope you can help and I look forward to hearing from you.

Robin Hunter Neillands

Telephone: 0171 371 7031

## Coast Guard chopper scores ‘kills’ at show

A group of us from the VHPA and VHCMA in the New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania area held a meeting on Saturday evening, Aug. 19, 1995, in conjunction with the Wings of Eagles Air Show in Batavia, NY.

At the air show, one Vietnam pilot talked with the crew of a U.S. Coast Guard Aerospatiale Dauphin helicopter and invited them to our dinner. The young Coast Guard crew felt right at home with the camaraderie and made several contributions to the new group’s charter, and — of course, the socializing after the business meeting.

One of the Coast Guard pilots mentioned an encounter they had en route to the air show. After the Coast Guardsmen left the party, the Vietnam pilots remaining decided that, in keeping with honored traditions of military aviation, the four kills must be properly recognized as replicas on the side of the aircraft.

Saturday night, the majority vote was to use a stencil and spray paint. On Sunday morning, with lower blood-alcohol levels, that plan changed to avoid charges of “willful destruction of government property.”

Two VN vets with pocket knives made four duct-tape figures, each about four inches tall. Our complex plans made to create a diversion were not needed; the whole crew was on one side of the aircraft, answering questions while children mangled the controls.

The four replicas of the kills were easily applied to the unguarded side, right above the star-and-bars logo. Then



Standing beside the Coast Guard helicopter are (from left) VHPAer Dutch Magill, AE2 Nathan White, Lt. (jg) Karl Dornburg, and VHPAer Jim Schueckler.

the Coast Guard crew was asked to stand next to the aircraft with some of us for pictures. The first pilot to see the figures doubled up with laughter, and the rest of the crew also enjoyed the humor. They planned to leave them on the aircraft to show their friends back at their home base.

For us old-timers, it was great to see and feel the camaraderie. It is also nice to know that their mission will probably never require them to score additional “kills.”

The duct tape figures, each with a half-moon on the door, were miniature replicas of the four portable out-houses their rotorwash blew over when they arrived at the air show.

Jim Schueckler

192 AHC, Phan Thiet, 1969



## Taps

### Chris M. Conroe

Chris M. Conroe of Mesa, AZ, died June 20 in a mid-air collision while flying a DeHavilland Beaver for a fishing lodge in Port Alsworth, AK.

Conroe was a member of Class 69-43.

He served with the 334th Aerial Weapons Company in Vietnam 1970-71.

Conroe's wife Babette wrote, "Chris enjoyed VHPA very much."

### Dennis H. Laffick

CWO Dennis H. Laffick, 49, of the Oklahoma Army National Guard died in the crash of an OH-58 while conducting surveillance in a drug case.

The crash occurred in August.

### Harold Sidney Lanier

Harold Sidney Lanier, 62, of Enterprise, died Aug. 17 at his home.

A native of Amarillo, Texas, Lanier had lived in Enterprise since 1973.

He served two military tours in Vietnam and retired from the Army as a CW4 Master Aviator.

He was a civilian flight instructor at Fort Rucker until his retirement in 1989.

Survivors include his wife, Heidi Lanier of Enterprise; two daughters, Cindy Gorzelnick of New Jersey and Holly Perry of Enterprise; three sons, Harold Lanier II of Dothan, David Lanier of Ozark and Stephen Lanier of Houston; his mother, Goldie Lanier of Amarillo; and five grandchildren.

### Norman E. Moyse Jr.

Norman "Ed" E. Moyse Jr. died on Aug. 5 of a stroke, two days after retiring from the Army.

Moyse served with D Troop, 1/10 Cavalry in Vietnam in 1971. He was a member of Classes 70-43/70-45.

### Marvin Odom

VHPA member Marvin Odom died of a heart attack in May.

### Lawrence E. Potts Jr.

Lawrence E. Potts Jr. of Atlanta died Aug. 3 in Atlanta's Piedmont Hospital. He was 46.

Born and raised in Kentucky, Potts attended Emory University from 1967-69 before serving in South Vietnam as an Army helicopter pilot. He earned the Bronze Star Medal.

He was shot down three times during the war, according to a brother, Charlie Potts of Atlanta.

After returning from Vietnam, he attended the University of Kentucky, graduating in 1975.

He formed Potts Investments Inc. and Central Georgia Cable Systems Inc. He sold the cable operation in 1988.

In 1989, Potts founded Sun States Beverage Co. in Doraville, manufacturer of Sun Clear sparkling water and distributor of Double Cola products.

He also was a general partner of Georgian Hotel Associates, which owns and manages the Georgian Hotel Condominiums in Athens, GA.

Also surviving is a daughter, Emily Potts of Atlanta; and another brother, John Potts of Atlanta.

### James Anthony Welling

James Anthony Welling, 48, of Enterprise died Sept. 16 at his home.

A graduate of St. Francis Prep and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Welling served in Vietnam as a U.S. Army Aviator and as an instructor pilot at Fort Rucker.

He was a member of the 191st Maintenance Company, U.S. Army Reserve, in Elba and was finishing his master's degree at Troy State University.

Survivors include his wife, Diane Welling, Enterprise; two daughters, Jessica Welling and Kathrine Welling, both of Enterprise; his parents, Evelyn and Herbert Welling, Annapolis, MD.; two sisters, Karen Welling, Boston, Diane Cipollone, Severna Park, MD.; his brother, Thomas Welling, Bronxville, NY.

## Colin Powell was major during Huey crash

In the Sept. 18, 1995, issue of Time magazine, on Page 63, is a picture of Gen. Colin Powell standing next to a crashed Huey in Vietnam.

The following is a summary of that accident report from the Army Aviation Safety Center at Fort Rucker:

At about 1415 hours, 16 November 1968, UH-1H 67-17786 departed the Americal Combat Center, Chu Lai for a recently constructed LZ in the

vicinity of coordinates BS431532.

The aircraft commander WO1 James D. Hannan, pilot WO1 Michael W. Jacobs, crew chief E4 L.V. Wipple and gunner E3 R.G. Pyle from A/123 CAB, and five passengers, the commanding general of the Americal Division, Maj. Gen. C.M. Gettys, Col. J.L. Treadwell, Maj. Colin L. Powell, Capt. R.A. Tumelson and 1st Lt. T.D. Carroll constituted the personnel on board.

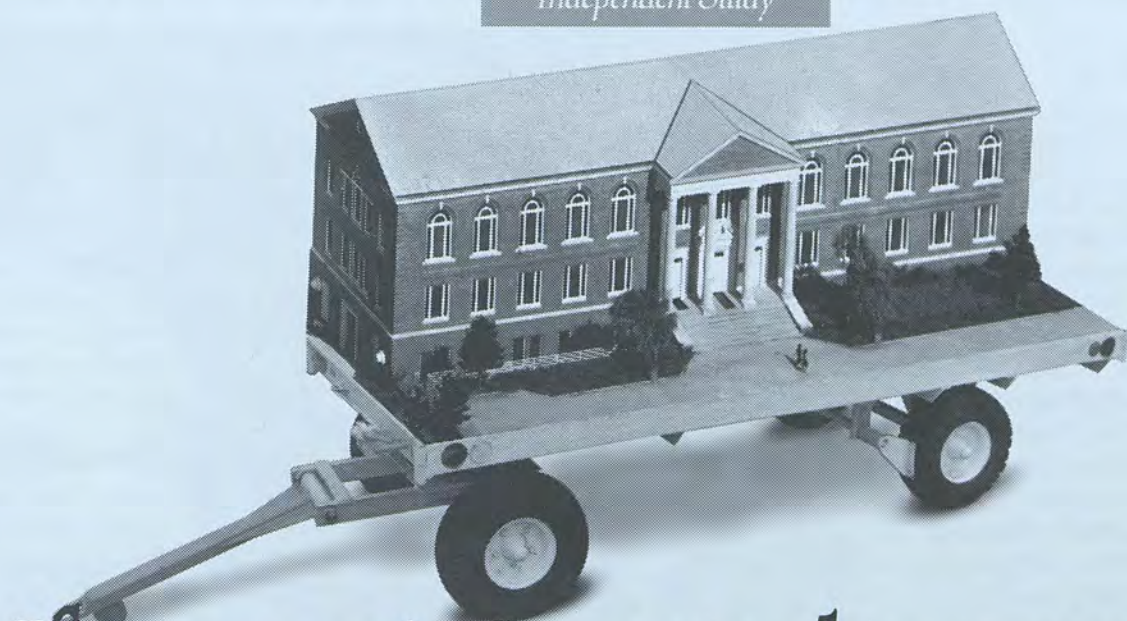
The flight time from Chu Lai to the LZ was about 30 minutes. The aircraft commander experienced difficulty finding the LZ and, after locating it, continued to orbit and conduct high recons waiting for smoke to indicate the wind direction.

Approximately 45 minutes after takeoff, the first low approach was made to the LZ.

The aircraft commander had con-

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Tom Pettit, Director		
Department of Independent Studies		
600 S. Clyde Morris Blvd.		
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-3900	PHONE ( _____ ) _____	VHPA2 10/95



# Vietnam buddies attend welcoming

MIKE SLONIKER  
VHPA MEMBER

This summer, Brig. Gen. Tom Garrett was welcomed to Fort Campbell, KY, as assistant division commander of the 101st Airborne Division.

Part of his Vietnam service, as a young captain in 1972, was as an AH-1G "Cobra" section leader in F Battery, "Blue Max," 79th Aerial Rocket Artillery, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, during the Easter Offensive at Loc Ninh and An Loc.

Former "Blue Max" pilots Ron McCullough of Napa, CA; Jim Jackson of Gallatin, TN; and Bill Leach of St. Louis attended the ceremony during which Garrett was installed as assistant division commander.

McCullough and Jackson had not seen Garrett in 23 years, since August 1972.

After the official ceremony, Garrett was in a receiving line where he was welcomed individually by the ceremony attendees. This somewhat formal function got rowdy when he shook hands with his former "An Loc for Lunch Bunch," friends.

The picture, taken at the reception, shows Jackson, McCullough, Garrett and Leach visiting.

In the past five years, I have



Mike Sloniker photo

**Former "Blue Max" pilots Jim Jackson, Ron McCullough, Brig. Gen. Tom Garrett and Bill Leach visit shortly after Garrett was welcomed as assistant commander of the 101st Airborne Division.**

attended many aviation battalion and brigade changes of command, and Brig. Gen. Dan Petrosky's same ceremony in June 1994.

Some of the honorees' biographies gloss over their service in Vietnam and colorfully list all assignments afterward.

Garrett's proudly displays his unit, Blue Max. Petrosky's honored his service in C Battery "Griffins," 4th Battalion, 77th Aerial Rocket

Artillery, similarly.

First impressions are lasting impressions, and when it was in a highly professional unit, in combat, it stays forever. Each of the generals publicly give great credit to their earliest mentors, the backseat aircraft commanders, who led by example.

When Garrett said to his AC, "Jet" Jackson, "Remember the day we almost got killed?" I was reminded these bonds remain for life.

## Approach made 45 minutes after takeoff

*Continued from Page 8*  
trol of the helicopter.

The first approach was aborted because the approach speed was too fast and the angle of approach was too low.

A second approach was begun with a higher angle and at a slower speed.

As the aircraft came into the LZ, initial contact of the treetops was made by the main rotor blade. The approach was continued.

The crew chief informed the aircraft commander that the tail of the aircraft was too low.

The aircraft commander pulled more power and rotated the aircraft forward and moved slightly to the left.

At this time, the main rotor blade struck two trees which were 4-6 inches in diameter.

The aircraft tipped to the right, then fell from a height of about 30 feet to the ground.

During the fall, the main rotor blade struck the trees four or five times.

The aircraft commander pulled maximum power for cushioning and managed to keep the aircraft from

overturning.

The helicopter was written off as a total loss at \$232,838.

Gary Roush  
Chairman, Database Committee

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Colin Powell's new best-selling book mentions him being dusted off near Quang Ngai on Nov. 16, 1968. He identifies WO1 James D. Hannan as the pilot. The VHPA Newsletter is looking for anyone who knows the whereabouts of Hannan.



# Project has 138 helicopter patches

JAY RISEDEN  
UNIT PATCH PROJECT

The Unit Patch Project now has 138 patches in the archive. Thanks to those that have responded.

The VHPA Directory Committee initiated the project this summer to collect and catalog color copies of all the Vietnam helicopter unit patches that were created.

The collection includes patches of related helicopter support detachments, and sections. Some helicopter unit maintenance, medical, mess and operations sections had unique patches. All of these are being sought.

Please mention this project to fellow veterans at unit reunions who may be able to provide copies of patches that are suitable for the archive.

The inventory of unit patches that appears in the 1995 Membership Directory records 90 patches.

Don't hesitate sending a copy of your patch even if you see it already listed. Some unit patches of the same basic design differ considerably.

Most patches were handmade, and each is unique.

The collection includes patches of related helicopter support detachments, and sections. Some helicopter . . . sections had unique patches. All of these are being sought.

The archive contains a copy of a 48th AHC "Blue Star" patch contributed by William Kennington and one also sent by Lance Dickenson. The basic design is the same but the colors are different.

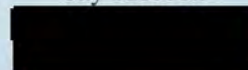
Dickenson also opened the door to a new part of the archive by sending color copies of the calling cards that the 48th AHC pilots used at the time.

Send copies of these if you have them as they also are part of our history and help tell the story. It is also helpful to send any information you have on the patches or cards such as when they were used, who designed them etc.

When forwarding the copies, try to avoid folding the paper across the face of the patch as sometimes the creases deface the copy with a white line across the color image in transit.

Flat mail in a large envelope works best. Please send color copies of patches and calling cards to VHPA Headquarters or direct to:

Jay Riseden



## A word of thanks to a VHPA supporter!

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association would like to thank the Coors Brewing Co. for its strong support at the 1995 reunion in Kansas City.



Many of those who attended the reunion commented on the Coors/VHPA banners in Kansas City stores and restaurants, and in the Westin Crown Center, headquarters hotel for the reunion. These were provided by Coors.

The job done by Coors' local sales manager, Brian Cole, was truly outstanding. Many VHPA members are spreading good words about Coors beer and about the Coors Brewery Co.'s dedication to the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

Thank you, Coors!



# Mortars dropped from helicopter

DREW BOUDRIEAU  
VHPA MEMBER

We never could figure out whether it was because we were really good or really foolish, or a combination of both, but we got to do a lot of specialized missions.

We did LRRP inserts and emergency extractions, CS gas drops, recon team inserts and sniffer missions.

One of the most enjoyable was the time we were part of an experiment that involved the dropping of mortar rounds from helicopters as an airborne artillery.

The concept was to see how accurate we could be for use as close support of ground troops.

We were given a supply of 60 mm mortar rounds that had been modified for our use.

A normal mortar round is stabilized by the tail fins and the contact fuse in the nose is armed during flight.

Because the ones we used did not have the velocity necessary for the

fins to work, a tail (similar to a kite) made up of several yards of narrow cloth tape was added.

Also, the normal contact fuses would not arm properly when the round was dropped instead of fired. The fuse was replaced with a small propeller fuse.

After about 20 revolutions of the propeller as the round was falling, the fuse would arm and detonate the round on contact.

We would fly along at 1,500 feet and the crew chief would sit by the door holding a round.

When I spotted the target between my feet, I would holler over the intercom and he would drop the round.

We got so we could hit the target almost every time, but the rounds were not always exploding. By experimenting, we found that the fuse was not always arming.

To overcome this, the crew chief would hold it out in the slipstream and allow the propeller to rotate several times, then pull it back inside until I gave the signal. By using this method, we got an explosion every

time.

After a couple of days, an observer from headquarters came with us to complete the study.

He was sitting on the side opposite the crew chief, observing our accuracy.

After being suitably impressed with our skill in hitting the target, he put on a headset so he could talk with us on intercom and went over to watch the crew chief do his part.

The conversation at this point got very interesting.

I said to the crew chief, "Coming up on target. Get Ready."

He said, "OK. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 16, 18. Ready."

The observer asked, "Why did you count like that?"

"The fuse doesn't always arm when you just drop the round, so we found that we had to give it a head start."

"The propeller has to rotate 20 times and then just hitting the nose sets off the round."

"Right. That's why I count 18

*Continued on Page 13*

## Manfred the dog had ability to predict rockets, mortars

The Dolphins and Sharks of the 174th AHC actually had two mascots.

The company, in general, had Manfred, a big, yellow long-haired mutt, who was really watched over by everyone in the company. He wasn't watched over out of love and affection. He was actually pretty lazy and smelled bad (we did, too, I suppose).

Manfred was watched over because he had the uncanny ability to predict rocket and mortar attacks, not unusual occurrences in Duc Pho.

We lost a CO and a platoon leader in one attack.

Manfred always slept outside and pretty much entertained himself. On

many nights, he would get up and amble over to the TOC and curl up in a corner and go back to sleep.

Invariably, we would get hit on the nights Manfred slept in the highly bunkered TOC. He was either a very smart dog or a VC with a really great disguise.

Our other four-legged mascot belonged to the Shark gun platoon. He showed up as a puppy and we adopted him.

As a young gun, someone — I don't remember who — decided the puppy needed a Shark check-ride and took him out on a mission. The puppy was put in a baseball cap and the cap and pup placed up by the

*Continued on Page 13*

Looking for a:

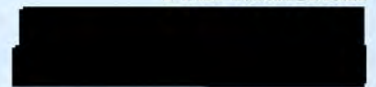
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Phil Marshall





# Puppy takes check ride in gunship

*Continued from Page 12*

windshield on the glare screen so he could see the country fly by.

Everything was great for crew and mutt until the crew cut loose with the mini-gun. It scared the pup so bad he proceeded to make a mess all over the hat, the cockpit and the instrument panel.

He failed the check-ride but earned his new name along with a monogrammed Shark patch which he wore on his OD collar.

J.C. Pennington  
174th AHC, 1968-69

## Chopper loved flying

We had a big old dog named Chopper who loved to ride in helicopters.

A C-130 went down and one of our ships landed to rescue the crew. As luck would have it, Chopper had got aboard for a ride. When they

landed at the crash site, Chopper jumped out. Not wanting to linger, the crew left Chopper after getting the C-130 crew.

A few days later, they went back to the crash site. The area was secured and they began hauling the C-130 out a section at a time.

After landing, Chopper ran out of the tree line and jumped on board, just like nothing had happened.

Paul Jenkins  
Hornet 28  
Cu Chi, 1967-68

## Curly tailed dogs

We had some dogs in early 1968 that would jump in our Sharks when we pulled standbys up at LZ Baldy and would go flying with us.

They'd also fly with the Muskets and Firebirds. They more or less belonged to Baldy and flew with all the gun standbys. We didn't consider

them as "our" dogs.

They loved the wind and the noise. Don't ever remember losing one in flight, although one did just disappear once (probably those surly Firebirds!)

Seems like when we lost one, there'd be another along before too long to take its place. Probably the C-Rats!

Does anyone remember ANY DOG in Vietnam that did NOT have those curled-up tails. Must have been an Oriental dog thing, but every one I ever saw and every one I've seen a picture of has its tail curled up on its back.

Check all your pictures and see if it isn't true.

Jim McDaniel  
174th AHC  
116th AHC

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Stories on dogs in Vietnam were compiled by Jay Riseden.**

## "MARINE HELO"

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## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this book to all the Armed Service personnel who served in Vietnam, especially to the US Marine Corps, of which I am proud to have been a part.

The book may seem critical of Marine leadership at times. But I ask the reader to look at the historical context. This book is one person's recounting of the daily mental atmosphere in that time and place, warts and all. This includes the rumors, frustrations, pressures and anguish that are present in a combat environment.

In retrospect, most everyone who went to Vietnam did what their country asked them to do, right or wrong, to the best of his or her ability. Nothing in this book is meant to detract from the sacrifices made by these thousands of brave and effective leaders who in many cases were willing to lay down their lives.

David M. Petteys

## Observer questions crew chief counting

*Continued from Page 12*

times and pull the round back."

"Next time, let me see just what you are doing."

After dropping that round, we got ready for another one.

I said, "Coming up on target. Get ready."

The crew chief held the round out the door with the propeller spinning and said, "OK. 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 13, 15, 18. Ready."

The observer screamed, "The propeller went so fast you couldn't possibly have counted it and made sure you stopped at 18! That round is probably armed! Don't hit the nose!"

"I counted to 18, didn't you hear me?"

"You people are all crazy! You are going to kill us all! Throw that round out and take me back! This adventure is over!"

That was the end of our days as airborne artillery. It was just our luck to get a stuffed-shirt observer with no sense of humor.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Drew Boudrieau served with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company at Chu Lai in 1968-69. His call sign was "Minuteman 14."**

Yes, send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of "Marine Helo" - \$ 20.00 plus \$ 2.74 postage.

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# Pilot flew for 'White Hat Airlines'

At AAAA in Atlanta I bumped into the VHPA booth and got to swapping tour stories. They were surprised to learn that I flew CH-46s in Vietnam for the Navy.

Anyway, here is the story — maybe others will find it interesting.

NAF (Naval Air Facility) Cam Ranh Bay Det (detachment) Tan Son Nhut had been in Vietnam since June 1966. The detachment had 3 C-117s and 5 UH-34s, provided logistical support for Navy personnel in Vietnam, and were known as the "White Hat Airlines" after the famous Dixie Cup cap the Navy enlisted men wore.

While HA(L)-3 provided some of their own support, we hauled people and everything from mail to toilet paper to food and even pay teams for all Navy personnel in Vietnam.

Ships and aircraft would bring the supplies into Cam Ranh or Saigon and we would take it from there.

The majority of our customers were assigned to the Brown Water Navy, the Riverine Forces who operated the famous Swift boats and PRBs, but we had personnel in the major cities all along the coast of III and IV Corps.

In early 1970, this unit had a maintenance accident when the tail boom on a UH-34D fell off in flight and nine people died.

The accident investigation board made two strong recommendations:

First, that the detachment be associated with a NAF for better maintenance and administration support.

Second, they should get some newer equipment.

At that time I was stationed with HC-3, the Navy's helicopter squadron on the West Coast was responsible for Navy H-46 helicopter crew training and vert rep (vertical replenishment) for ships in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

To the best of my knowledge, HC-



**This drawing shows the special wings that identified the "White Hat Airlines" — named after the Navy's Dixie Cup cap.**

Jay Riseden graphics

3 had about 12 helicopters and never deployed as a unit to Southeast Asia.

However, they always had several two plane detachments on supply ships on "Yankee Station" — off North Vietnam — and supporting destroyers and other Navy's ships off South Vietnam.

HC-3 Det 104 was the first and only HC-3 detachment to be stationed in-country. It consisted of five pilots — Lt. JD John Mann the Det CO, Lt. Mike Rist, Lt. Frank Jenks, Lt. Frank Vazquez and Lt. JD me — plus 20 enlisted men.

We joined the detachment at Tan Son Nhut to provide CH-46 expertise.

In May 1970, we flew to Futema, Okinawa, with orders to pick up three CH-46s from the Marines. After some discussion and threats to call Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, they gave us one recently rebuilt and two well-used CH-46As.

We collected some other equipment and boarded USS Duluth (LPD-6) for the Philippines for two days of R&R and then on to Vietnam on USN



Juneau.

On June 7, 1970, as they steamed by Cam Ranh Bay, we were told to launch, so we took everything we had and landed at the NAF.

Our maintenance people had a long list of high-time items that had to be replaced, so

the three birds stayed there for several weeks. Three of the pilots went to Tan Son Nhut and became co-pilots on the 34s so we could learn the area.

My first flight in-country lasted two days because our H-34 broke down at Thuong Thou, one mile from the Cambodian border. We spent the night in an Army Special Forces camp.

On June 15, 1970, Lt. Mike Rist and Lt. Cmdr. G.M. Cleveland made history by flying the first log mission in a Sea Knight. Since the 46 could carry twice the load of a 34 and about two-thirds of what a C-117 carried, we were an instant success.

Naturally, whenever you substitute aircraft, lots of other things have to change. Maintenance is a given, but the one I remember most involving landing on the LSTs used by HA(L)-3.

The LST's landing pad accommodated only two Hueys. Since the 34 required about as much space as their Huey, if one HA(L)-3 ship was gone or launched, we could land. With the 46, we needed both spaces.

Naturally, this was a subject of many a joke or a comment on the radio. However, everyone likes to be resupplied, so there was never a real problem.

By the time my six months IAD (TDY in the Army) was up, we had two more CH-46s and had turned in our 34s. I'd guess the last flight for the 34 was in January 1971.

I have some pictures of those 34s — they were tired, well-worn ships, for sure.

*Continued on Page 15*



# Army aviators enjoy Victory at Sea

MEL CANON  
VHPA MEMBER

It was July 1967 and a small storm was brewing. It would bring together an assortment of forces, all focused on the same unlikely objective.

For some, it would be routine, while others would consider it bizarre. To some, it would seem small, yet others would find it the largest, most unusual objective of their Vietnam experience.

On the evening of July 15, a fire team from the 71st Assault Helicopter Company was on standby at Chu Lai airbase, a mission the unit drew routinely. Two gunships and a C&C slick were set up near the high-speed taxiway and standing by in support of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

The C&C ship was loaded with a full complement of flares and piloted by WO1 Conrad Howard and aircraft commander Maj. George Jackson.

This promised to be something other than a normal night of standby duty for the three crews.

The lead Firebird was piloted by WO1 Kenneth Weigand, the aircraft commander was WO1 David Ellingsworth. Ellingsworth's wingman was Capt. Joseph Daugherty and pilot, WO1 Ager Davis.

The C&C ship was loaded with a full complement of flares and piloted by WO1 Conrad Howard and aircraft commander Maj. George Jackson.

There was a tinge of excitement and anticipation in the air that night.

There were rumors the Navy was tracking a North Vietnamese trawler that had departed Hai Phong Harbor and was moving southerly down the coast. It was suspected of carrying a cargo of arms and materials to NVA/VC elements at an unknown location in South Vietnam.

Pulling perimeter duty that night at Chu Lai were aircraft of the 161st Assault Helicopter Company, also based at Chu Lai. The team leader of that unit was Capt. Rod Bither, and his pilot WO1 Don Sutton. Their wing was being flown by pilot WO1

*Continued on Page 16*

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## CH-46 took up same space as two Hueys

*Continued from Page 14*

We didn't have it too bad because we didn't get shot at all that often. We toured the country, mostly in the IV Corps areas.

Even HA(L)-3 liked us because we could haul heavy things like engines for them.

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

My second tour in Southeast Asia was with Det 102 of HC-3 in the first half of 1971. This time I flew off the USS Kilauea and did vert rep for the fleet on Yankee Station.

I am certain everyone has seen pictures of supplies being hauled between ships on heavy lines.

Well, mainly fuel is delivered that way because it is so much faster with a helicopter and prepared sling loads.

Even after the ships had separated and are steaming away, we can still be hauling supplies to them.

Edward Hintz  
Commander, USN Retired  
NAF Cam Ranh Bay in 1970  
and HC-3 Det 102 in 1971



# On perimeter duty was 161st AHC

*Continued from Page 15*

Ty Carr and his aircraft commander, WO1 Jim Fitzgerald.

The evening started out relatively normal. The 71st AHC's fireteam had heard the rumors about the trawler earlier. Their interests were stimulated somewhat, but they settled in for what they hoped would be a quite night.

There had been talk of the possibility of a night combat assault if the trawler attempted to seek port in their area. Night combat assaults were not the missions of choice in the 71st.

The trawler remained far enough offshore to be in international waters, precluding interdiction from the U.S. Navy. At near midnight, however, it made a turn toward the coast and headed toward the mouth of the Quang Nhai river south of Chu Lai.

Navy Swift boats moved in to keep track of the trawler's activities and when it became apparent the ship was going to enter the mouth of the river, it was engaged by the Swift boats. At the same time, a call went out to Chu Lai for assistance from the Army.

The fireteam from the 71st AHC was scrambled and given information to proceed toward the mouth of the Quang Nhai river and given radio frequencies to contact the Navy. Talk of a night combat assault escalated.

As WO1 Ellingsworth and his team reached their objective, they were surprised to see the trawler. It appeared ominous and sinister in the eerie illumination of flares fired from a naval destroyer that lay somewhere offshore.

Jackson, aircraft commander of the C&C ship, was on station above the gun team and ready to take over the flare duties from the Navy.

Jackson recalls, "It's a wonder we weren't all blown out of the sky."

An ROK Marine unit ashore had been given a fire mission by someone and it was putting 105 ordinance in the area of the trawler. No one told us about the artillery and I had to get it turned off quickly. The gunships were in real danger from that artillery for

There had been talk of the possibility of a night combat assault if the trawler attempted to seek port in their area. Night combat assaults were not the missions of choice in the 71st.

those first few minutes."

Tracers were coming from the trawler as it appeared to be in a fire-fight with the Swift boats. Naval gunfire from the destroyer had failed to hit the target and the Swift boats had taken over.

Ellingsworth made contact with the Navy and asked for instructions. He was instructed to engage the vessel.

"I was nervous," Ellingsworth recalls. "I was really shaking in anticipation of engaging that ship. I'd never had a ship for a target before and I was so engrossed in the target that I don't think I said anything to my wingman before rolling in to punch off the first pair of rockets. My nervousness came through pretty clear as my feet were jumping up and down on the pedals in anticipation of the contact."

Ellingsworth's first pair of rockets

"My pilot, Kenny Weigand, was so excited. He hit me on the left leg while yelling, 'You got it, Dave . . . you got the S.O.B.!'"

hit the vessel broadside.

"My pilot, Kenny Weigand, was so excited. He hit me on the left leg while yelling, 'You got it, Dave . . . you got the S.O.B.!'"

"In fact, he hit my left leg so hard, I had bruises on it for days afterwards," says Ellingsworth.

Tracers from a 12.7mm gun left the ship, trying desperately to knock out the aerial threat.

"It was easy to keep track of our helicopter," reflects Ellingsworth. "All you had to do was look at the end of that tracer stream. I have no idea why we weren't hit."

Ellingsworth and his wingmen Capt. Joe Daugherty and WO1 Ager Davis continued to engage the trawler.

Ellingsworth believes he scored a good hit when he got a secondary explosion. It was determined later he had hit an area that contained some mortar shells in the area of the wheelhouse.

Both aircraft expended their ordinance and returned to Chu Lai. They were replaced by a fire team from the 161st AHC led by Capt. Rod Bither.

Bither and his co-pilot, WO1 Don Sutton, were accompanied by wingmen WO1 Jim Fitzgerald and WO1 Ty Carr.

"The trawler appeared to be dead in the water when we arrived on station," remembers Bither. "It looked as though it might have run aground and was unable to move. We were taking some small arms fire from the shore near the mouth of the river but had a hard time pinpointing the exact area it was coming from."

Bither noted the Quang Nhai river ran almost due east-west at that point and he used that information to direct Marine artillery to the area along the riverbanks in an attempt to quell the small arms fire.

"We normally got a call that the shot was on the way — 'shot out' — but that didn't happen in the first volley. We were working the river bank to draw out the small arms fire and,

*Continued on Page 17*



# 'We were taking small arms fire. . .'

*Continued from Page 16*

all of a sudden, four or five artillery rounds impacted right underneath us. They must have gone right through our cargo doors," quips Bither.

Bither's team focused on the trawler after the artillery quieted the ground fire from the shore. It scored several devastating hits during the engagement and the trawler took on a considerable amount of water, settling to the river bottom.

Korean ground forces were inserted onto the shore area around the mouth of the river and the 161st fire team withdrew to Chu Lai for rearming and to take on more fuel. It returned to the contact area and remained on station until dawn in case it was needed further, but the situation was well in hand by then.

Bither recalls, "The trawler was fitted with air bags by the Navy. It was raised from the river bottom and floated to DaNang the next day."

**An NVA crewman was attempting to reach it when he was killed and wedged into the ladder leading to the engine room.**

After being boarded by ROK Marine forces, it was discovered the vessel had been rigged with enough C4 explosive to blow it to pieces. The detonator was located in the engine room. An NVA crewman was attempting to reach it when he was killed and wedged into the ladder leading to the engine room.

Had he been able to reach the detonator, the ship and cargo would have been destroyed and there surely would have been considerable Ameri-

can casualties.

It also was discovered later there was enough ammunition and explosives aboard the trawler to support two regiments for a year of fighting.

Other interesting discoveries aboard the vessel included more than 1,200 individual weapons and two large 12mm anti-aircraft guns. Arms and explosive containers bore the marking of the Soviet Union, Romania, Czechoslovakia and China.

The trawler was actually stopped in the ROK tactical area and Korean forces took possession of most of the weapons and explosives found on the vessel.

Naval officers said the long and carefully tracked voyage of the trawler was permitted because it stayed in international waters and couldn't be touched there.

Ironically, none of the helicopter crews were awarded citations for this action.

## Early era Vietnam helicopter pilot

This early era pilot is a companion figure to the two previous Vietnam aircrew sculptures I have offered. Like the others, this figure is almost 6½ inches high, is made of white metal and weighs almost 3 pounds.

The pilot is wearing jungle fatigues, jungle boots, and early style sunglasses and baseball cap. He is carrying an M-1 carbine in one hand and his helmet in the other. He also has a shoulder holster with a .38-caliber pistol. Like the other figures, this one is highly detailed. For example, there are pen flares on the holster, a dog tag in the laces of one boot, the magazines are combat-loaded and the pilot wings are distinguishable on the jungle fatigues.

The figure comes in two finishes: Bronze (as shown) and painted. The cost of the bronze figure is \$100 and the painted figure is \$125. I normally spend about 20 hours on each painted figure.

Figures are shipped first class mail and the shipping charge for each figure is \$8. Because I am still in the Army and about to deploy out of country for two months, orders placed now will be ready in late November or early December.

Payment can be made by money order or personal check. Make payable to Steve Pullen and send to: [REDACTED] 9. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at [REDACTED]

This figure will make a great gift and a welcome addition to an office or den. It will remind you of a long time ago when we made Army aviation history in the greatest helicopter war the world has ever seen.

Steve Pullen  
Banshee/Centaur 11



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# Kham Duc evacuated under fire

**BRUCE LAKE**  
VHPA MEMBER

My book "1,500 Feet Over Vietnam," is a chronology of the events that I saw or heard about during my tour as a Marine Corps helicopter pilot with HMM-265 in 1968 and 1969.

Other helicopter pilots have used the chronology format in their books. One of the drawbacks to this format is that the author cannot develop a subject in as much detail as he might like to — he really needs to write a little for each day or week and keep the chronology moving.

The evacuation of Kham Duc is one subject that has always interested me.

Recently I was reading part of Dick Janousek's fine 178th ASHC history in Vol. 2 of the Historical Reference Directory.

On Pages 119 and 120, he and his

friends present a detailed account of how the two Army Chinooks were lost. I've also seen accounts of how the two Air Force C-130s were lost.

In Chapter 6: I briefly described HMM-265's participation in the evacuation, but I did not mention Kham Duc Special Forces camp or its forward operating base, Ngok Tavak, by name.

The enemy attacked Ngok Tavak in the early hours of May 10. It was manned by a Mobile Strike Force Company with eight Special Forces and three Australian advisers, plus 33 Marine artillerymen with two 105 mm howitzers.

The enemy, aided by VC infiltrators within the CIDG unit, killed and wounded many of the Americans and occupied parts of Ngok Tavak. Supported by USAF "Spooky" gunships, the Australian warrant officers led a successful CIDG counterattack at daylight. The NVA withdrew as the

Marines fired that last of the 105 rounds and spiked the tubes.

A liberal application of air support kept the NVA at bay long enough for medevac helicopters to extract the wounded.

Later that morning, HMM-265 sent two sections (four aircraft in all) with CIDG replacements to Ngok Tavak.

The first CH-46 took heavy automatic weapons fire and had a hydraulic line shot out. This CH-46A, 151907, was flown by 1st Lt. Horace H. Fleming, "Bud" to us. They were forced to remain on the landing pad.

The second CH-46A, 152505, was flown by Frank — I can't recall his full name. After dropping off the CIDG, Frank waited to rescue the downed crew, but their plane was hit by an RPG and exploded.

Frank later told us the gunner was burned and the crew chief had shrap-

*Continued on Page 19*

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# RPG explosion burns CH-46 gunner

*Continued from Page 18*

nel in his back, arm and legs. Even though he had all these injuries and two broken legs, Frank said the crew chief ran many yards to a foxhole.

Another HMM-265 chopper, and I wish I could recall the names of that crew, tried to extract all of them, but took so many hits they were driven off and made a forced landing at Kham Duc.

They hoped to make some repairs to their aircraft and go back to get the first two crews, but they started drawing mortar fire. Somehow this section managed to get their wounded birds back to Marble Mountain.

With two wrecked CH-46A blocking Ngok Tavak's helipad and with NVA pressure increasing, about noon the defenders decided further aerial reinforcement or evacuation was increasingly unlikely and that night

would bring certain destruction.

The Australians then organized the withdrawal. All equipment that couldn't be carried was placed in the command bunker and set on fire. Bud's CH-46A was destroyed with a LAW.

The column fought and moved for several hours and literally climbed up a hill over scorched earth where napalm had been dropped to clear a path for them. Around the hilltop, helicopters again extracted them.

Near the end of the day, one Huey was able to hover over them just long enough to pick up several from HMM-265, including Bud, and some ARVNs who grabbed on to the skids as the Huey flew away under heavy fire.

They pulled the others in but Bud never made it. We don't know to this day if he took a round and was forced

to let go or just couldn't hold on any longer.

Some from our squadron took part in the search for Bud the next day, but they never found a trace. The chances of his survival weren't very good because the Huey had only to go a short distance from the top of the hill where he had picked up the others and he would have been several hundred feet over the terrain.

Recently I had a telephone conversation with someone in Texas. As we discussed these events, he told me that he was quite certain one of the pilots in this Army Huey is a VHPAer living in Oregon. I would really enjoy a conversation with that pilot.

With Ngok Tavak neutralized, the NVA turned its full attention on Kham Duc. It was during its evacuation on the 12th that the two Chinooks and the two C-130s were lost.

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### THANKS!!

Charles Rayl thanks VHPA members for their vote and their support as vice president of the association.

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## Who was VHPAer on I-80?

On I-80 this afternoon, a Bronco passed me with a VHPA bumper sticker.

I then accelerated from my 68 mph to catch him at his 75 mph to wave my VHPA hat.

They rolled the window and we grinned and high-signed "Hello" into the wind a little, then I let him go on trolling for the CHP.

His was a brown Bronco with CA

plates and a broom of some kind on the roof rack.

Mine's a green Range Rover, rear CA license is RNG RVR, with a big black bash bar and RVN flag/gunship front license plate.

We met somewhere around Travis AFB to Davis on I-80 eastbound about 1300, 8/9/95. Lost commo, so come up \_\_\_\_\_ and say ID.

Ken Fritz



# Pilot recalls flying Pedro in Vietnam

A relative phoned me with the news that some of the Vietnam helicopter pilots were going to attend the Parkville Fourth of July Parade.

Fortunately, I decided to see if I could meet some of them there. I talked with several VHPA members during the Parkville parade and discovered you all were having a reunion at the Westin.

I walked into the VHPA registration area at the hotel and joined the VHPA.

When I learned that the aircraft I flew, the HH-43, was one of the tandem rotor helicopters to be featured in the next Directory — well, I had to send in some of my memories.

The first HH-43B Kaman Huskies came to Southeast Asia in 1964 as two dets (detachments) from 37th ARS (Air Rescue Service) — one to Saigon, the other to Da Nang. The 37th had been renamed the 38th ARRS (Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service) by the time I arrived at Da Nang in the summer of 1965.

I had served with Capt. Floyd R. Lockhart in Alabama and he was one of the original 43 pilots I replaced in country. I enjoyed flying and visiting with an old friend when I got to Vietnam!

Each det had four HH-43Fs by the time I arrived. They were modified HH-43Bs — bigger engine, armor plate, longer hoist cable and an extra fuel bladder, which took up about a third of the cabin but gave us 2½ hours vs. 90 minutes of flying time.

Naturally, with all the extra weight, we could not hover out of ground effect until we burned off the extra fuel. So we experimented with various fuel loads depending on what distance we thought we might have for that day's possible mission.

Each det was supposed to have nine officers, two per aircraft plus the det CO.

Our primary mission was Aircrew Recovery (ACR), with Local Base Rescue (LBR) secondary. The Da

Nang ACR area of responsibility was all of I Corps plus any rescues in the water or in the southern part of North Vietnam that the Navy SAR could not get to quicker.

During busy times, we often stationed two aircraft at Quang Tri and later, Khe Sanh.

All HH-43 units used the radio call sign "Pedro." Indeed, I believe that call sign was used even in the States. Perhaps a reader knows the origin of the call sign?

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

By the time we had donned our flak, survival, and Mae West combo vest and strapped in, we merely had to add throttle and lift off — usually within the 30-40 seconds!

*Continued on Page 21*

## 166th AMD should be added to list

I'd like to add another helicopter unit to VHPA's list printed in the Directory — the 166th Aviation Maintenance Detachment (Prov).

There is a difference between the 166th AVN and the 166th AMD.

The 166th AMD was part of the Retrograde Augmentation Group (RAG) which was formed in May 1969 for the purpose of returning all of our equipment to CONUS.

The RAG consisted of a quartermaster company, an ordnance maintenance company, a port assistance detachment and the 166th AMD.

The TO&E was resurrected from the days when the Ordnance Corps was responsible for aircraft maintenance (the 1950s) and consisted of two commissioned officers, two warrant officers and 77 enlisted men. As originally staffed, it had one officer and three warrants — two CW4s and one CW3.

All had at least one tour in Vietnam.

More than 50 percent of the enlisted men were E-5s or higher and all highly skilled.

We formed the 166th at Fort Eustis, VA, and began our training. Instructors from Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, came down to teach us aircraft and component preservation and shipment.

Personnel from Eustis gave us intensive maintenance training and taught us the fine art of loading Air Force aircraft and ships.

We were supposed to have 90 days of training there and then proceed to Okinawa for 30 days of hands-on work with the 2nd Logistical Command.

All was proceeding on schedule until the end of June when Operation Keystone Cardinal was announced, in which the 9th Infantry Division

returned.

Within a week, we were loaded up on three C-141s and arrived at Long Binh on July 7, 1969.

The RAG was assigned to the 1st Log Command and the 166th was further attached to the 34th General Support Group. We reported into Saigon and then moved to Vung Tau to be with the 765th Transportation Battalion.

We were given two hangars and office space at the airport, but were billeted at the Vung Tau Sub Area Command (VTSAC) a couple of miles away. This was inconvenient, but proved to be a blessing in some respects, as it kept us out from under the flagpole.

For example, when VTSAC thought my people should pull guard duty, I just said: "We work at the airport and they have guard and CQ ros-

*Continued on Page 22*



# HH-43 had a very short launch time

*Continued from Page 20*

We always flew with two pilots and two crew in back (or guys in back — GIB's). For ACR, we took a mechanic and a para-rescueman and always flew with two aircraft. For LBR, the GIB's were some combination of fireman, mechanic, and para-rescue qualified people.

LBR missions were usually flown with one 43 unless a second 43 and crew was available or if the expected crash would possibly be "spectacular."

For example, once we were alerted that a C-130 would land in a couple hours with a main gear problem. A C-130 crash is spectacular by almost anyone's definition! We always had a light fuel load for LBR so we could carry the 1,000-pound Fire Suppression Kit (FSK) on the sling.

LBR operations also utilized a second advantage of the 43's — the pilot could control the direction of the relatively low velocity but high volume rotor wash which impacted under the helicopter and knocked down the

flames to support the firemen.

The pilot would place the FSK upwind of the crash or fire. The firemen would foam their way into the crash using the FSK. The pilot would hover tail into the wind and direct the rotor wash off the nose.

This was usually very effective in knocking down the flames for both the fireman and the people to be rescued. In the states, we practiced with the base fire department hulk at least quarterly. I can still remember feeling the heat during those missions.

The firemen really had the dangerous jobs and always worked in pairs.

One grabbed the hose off the FSK while the other charged the FSK. The one with the hose would foam a path into the crash while the other would make sure the fire did not close in on them from behind. They had great difficulty seeing out of their fire suits and helmets.

When the path was clear enough, the second guy would do the rescue.

The hose man concentrated on keeping the fire off all of them and remained alert to anything that would be dangerous to them.

Let me tell you — this was not for the faint of heart!!!

The 43Fs had VHF, UHF, and FM radios, in addition to intercom. This was an advantage — we could talk to most anyone during a mission.

Not having a tail rotor to worry about was clearly another advantage.

However, the blades swept so low on either side that it was only safe to approach the aircraft from the front. Naturally when we operated from bases that were accustomed to the Huskie, this wasn't too big a problem. But when we went to a new area where people were accustomed to approaching a Huey from the sides; that could be disastrous — or decapitating!

Another advantage was the 200-foot cable on our hoist. This was much

*Continued on Page 22*



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# Huskie's rotors could be decapitating

*Continued from Page 21*

longer than the hoists on the Army or Marine helicopters, so we saw a number of recon team extractions when I was in Da Nang.

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

Another disadvantage was our lack of defensive or fire suppression weapons, as in doorguns.

Since the GIBs wore special clothing, since there were no weapons mounting points on the helicopter, and since the arc of the blades was so low on each side, we really could not fire a weapon from the 43.

Sometimes the co-pilot would have a rifle in his lap, but this was hardly effective.

So if we went out into the bush to pick up someone, we always wanted

gunship support. And if we took fire or knew we'd take fire if we approached from a certain direction — well, we just had to live with that.

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

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

Because of all the flying out of and around Da Nang, there were plenty of scrambles to cover battle damage or aircraft with mechanical problems.

We launched frequently when we drew LBR duty, at least once a day. I think I recall one day we had six launches!

We would orbit with the FSK near the touchdown area and time our pattern so we could follow the distressed aircraft down the runway and

come to a hover just upwind of where it stopped.

Naturally, if the crew ejected or bailed out before reaching the runway, we would go after them.

The C-130 I mentioned earlier crash landed right at dusk with a broken forward right main gear strut. Sparks from the strut dragging on the runway, the right outboard prop flying off, then the aircraft sliding off the left side of the runway in a big cloud of dust as the reverse on the left props pulled them to a stop.

I clearly remember that one and many other crash landings at Da Nang.

But I learned a lot from those crashes — if you wind up in the dirt, the danger of sparks and resulting fire is almost nil!

Still, hovering a rescue helicopter into that dust, watching for the crew to get out, and hoping you don't see a fire or an explosion — whew! Those were the days!

R. Nathan Greene  
38 ARRS, DET 7, 1965-66  
TWA Capt. (Retired)

## Detachment given hangars, office

ters over there." The colonel said: "That's fair, don't worry about it." Of course, I used the same argument at the airport.

I managed to get by with no IG or CMMI inspections using the same logic.

The original plan was to ferry about two-thirds of our aircraft to the island of Sattahip, Thailand, and ship them out by sea. The remaining one-third would go out by sea from Vung Tau.

While we were waiting for the war to wind down, we did major aircraft maintenance and ran a school for aircraft and component preservation.

In October 1969, I talked the 34th Group commander, Col. Sam Cockerham, into letting me move the detach-

ment to Tan Son Nhut to replace the unit that was doing all of the aircraft processing for issue and retrograde. This unit was made up of assets from 34th Group units all over Vietnam.

Our taking over that mission allowed those personnel to return to their own units. In addition, I picked up 244 civilian contractor personnel.

One of the major problems all aviation units had was the difficulty in getting engines and other components from depot.

One of the reasons was that there were a lot of items sitting in units with no DA2410's or other paperwork to allow turn-in to the Direct Support units for repair.

Col. Cockerham and I came up with a plan to offer a two-week amnesty to any unit that brought in

components with no paperwork. No questions asked. When we received 358 engines, in addition to more than 1,000 other components, during those two weeks, we decided to continue the amnesty plan indefinitely.

Some of the engines were rotaries from CH-21s and CH-34s! By the time I left, in July 1970, it was estimated that we had saved the taxpayers in excess of \$500 million.

I was replaced by Capt. Jesse Hamilton as CO and he by Capt. Bob Simon.

It is interesting to note that all three of us were former warrant officers and all of us retired as majors. I would sure like to hear from those who served with the 166th.

John Grow  
Processor 6



# Pilot sees photo of his own close call

GEORGE G. REESE JR.  
VHPA MEMBER

Having displayed my Vietnam War memorabilia at previous VHPA reunions, I have become accustomed to seeing some VHPA members react strongly to something I have on display.

The Kansas City reunion was no exception.

VHPA member James "Larry" Conger saw some photos of an accident he was involved in and in which he had a very close call.

He was not aware photos of the wrecked aircraft existed and so, upon seeing them, he was immediately taken back in time to Sept. 22, 1969.

After the reunion, Larry sent me a letter detailing the events of that day, and I sent him copies of the photos. I would like to share with the members some of what he wrote:

*"I was assigned to the gunship platoon "Thunderbirds" of the 336th Assault Helicopter Company "Warriors," located at Soc Trang in the Delta.*

*"I was being trained by WO1 Gary Lamb to be the fire team leader. We had just returned from a mission and had hovered to the rearming point. I was flying in 'T-Bird 34.'*

*"We had already landed and our crew chief and gunner had departed our aircraft for the ammo bunker. From the left seat, I noticed over my right shoulder that our wingman ('T-Bird 32') was hovering beside, but not so close that I became alarmed.*

*"Immediately after turning back around, all hell broke loose!*

*"Gary had just released his lap belt and shoulder harness, and I was in the process of releasing mine. The next thing I knew was that I was hanging upside down, with my left hand still on the harness release.*

*"The aircraft had yawed 90 degrees and was inverted. A red smoke grenade went off inside the aircraft and I thought that we were on*



**T-Bird 34 "Crystal Blue Persuasion" after being righted following accident in which one of the pilots suffered fatal head injuries.**

*fire!*

*"The crew chief and gunner came running and helped pull WO1 Lamb from beneath the aircraft and then pulled me through where the windshield had been.*

*"Sadly, WO1 Lamb suffered fatal head injuries. My nose was broken and I had several abrasions and bruises. Luckily, I was back flying in two days.*

*"I personally didn't believe that we meshed rotor blades, but that there was some sort of a mechanical*

*failure in the rotor system of 'T-Bird 32' that caused the mishap."*

NOTE: The photos of T-Bird 34 and 32 were taken several hours after the mishap. The transmission and rotor head in the foreground were removed from T-Bird 32 by maintenance. T-Bird 34 has been righted.

My thanks to Richard W. Grafe, crew chief with the 336th Aviation Company, for allowing me to copy some of his slides, as seen here.

My thanks also to "Larry" Conger for providing the details of his experience.

Many other members have indicated they have similar slides, depicting "nose art" and other unit-related subjects. I encourage any who have such slides to allow me the opportunity to copy them for historical purposes before the slides deteriorate or otherwise disappear.

Please provide as much information with any slides sent. All items will be returned.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** George G. Reese Jr. lives at 309 Loyola Drive, Enterprise, AL 36330. His home phone number is (334) 347-7669.



**T-Bird 32 "Iron Butterfly" after the accident. Note transmission.**



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