



# The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

December 1995 Vol. 13, No. 6



A UH-1D "Dolphin" slick from the 174th Assault Helicopter Company is readied to leave "Dolphin Park" at Duc Pho in I Corps for a mission in 1968. Leonard Kauffman photo

M00296 02/96

**OFFICIAL** 7407



## From the President

The 1995 Membership Directories are now in the hands of the membership and we all owe Mike Law and his committee a pat on the back and at least a "thank you" and a handshake whenever you get the chance. They did a really fine job and it came in on budget, too.

The Membership Committee is a hard-working group and they, too, are to be commended for their uphill efforts. Gary Roush and the gang of Database guys have been keeping us informed of the new members, the trends in paid memberships, etc., and they are without a doubt one of the keys to keeping us all accounted for and together.

As a representative of the VHPA, I get letters and calls from all over the U.S.A. In general, they want money from us (and they don't get it) or they want us to go to their city for a reunion (some places are too small or too costly, but others are great to go to, so the Reunion Site Selection Committee looks at them seriously). Other inquiries are from organizations and association managers/ reps who want to know how we do such a great job.

Jack Swickard and the guys who put together The VHPA Newsletter produce the finest newsletter done by any truly nonprofit organization I have ever seen. It is often the first thing anyone ever sees of the VHPA and it speaks volumes for our dedication to doing the job right.

One of the reasons the VHPA is such a good organization is because of the quality of volunteers we have — all pilots and all proud of it! The entire membership is of the same high quality, too, so the VHPA really does impress the reunion site staff, museum curators, the press and just about everyone who comes in personal contact with the VHPA.

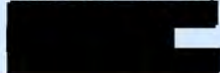
As a measure of our credibility, I can tell you that a man called me from London last month. He is doing a Discovery Channel special on helicopters so he came to us for accurate information and truthful portrayal of helicopters in Vietnam.

This is an association you can be proud of . . . Please tell your buddies and try to get them to join us if they haven't already and encourage them to remain members so the association and the camaraderie can continue. They aren't makin' any more of us!! Happy Holidays!!

— Ken Fritz, President

## VHPA chapters

### Ohio River LZ Chapter



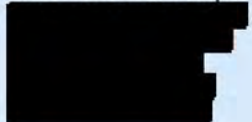
### Florida LZ Chapter



### Great Lakes Chapter (Northeastern Illinois)



### North Carolina Chapter



### New England Chapter



### Fort Wolters Chapter



VHPAFWC@aol.com

### Mardi Gras Chapter

Don Hunt, President  
Lee Overstreet, Vice President  
New Orleans, LA

## History book finished

I know it has been a long wait, and I sincerely thank all of you for your patience.

The VHPA History Book published by Turner went out to the about 900 people who pre-ordered it in mid-November. If you ordered this book, you should have received it by the first week of December.

I really believe you will enjoy the book for years to come.

To order this 192-page book with a full-color cover, call Turner Publishing at (800) 788-3350. It's a great gift for a friend or get it for yourself for \$52.50 plus S&H. They take credit cards and can probably get it to you by Christmas.

Turner Publishing tells me it is really proud of this book — it's one of the finest Turner has ever done and that is because of the untiring efforts of the VHPA guys who helped put it together and for the herculean feat performed by Charles Holley.

My personal thanks to Charles for his work on this book. Thanks, too, to Virginia B. Fields for her unique contribution. Thanks also go to Bob Martin at Turner Publishing for his patience with me during my quest "to get it RIGHT or not at all."

— Ken Fritz

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



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Newsletter	[REDACTED]

## Seeking

Looking for an old friend, CWO Thomas Daley. We have been out of touch since Fort Bliss Nike Herc Fire Control School in 1967-68. I believe he originally is from the Boston area.

Please call [REDACTED] write to Earl Earp at [REDACTED].

I'm looking for Barry "Chris" Mitchell, Class 69-49. Chris is from Tucson and was a "Gunslinger" with the 128th AHC at Phu Loi during 1970 and 1971.

If you have any information on Chris, please call me at [REDACTED] or drop me a note at [REDACTED]. Thanks, Bob Mimms.

Anyone who served in Vietnam with Charles D. Yingst of Fort Wayne, IN, please contact John Regan at [REDACTED].

He graduated from Army flight school class 69-11 and served in Vietnam in 1969-70, in the Pleiku area.

The Colorado National Guard is dedicating a UH-1 in his memory. He died in a helicopter crash in 1991.

## VHPA briefs

### 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 also is available. It 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 who served in helicopter units, helicopter and major combat units, major combat operations, plus significant events.

The Executive Council has instructed the various committees to continue to collect information for future volumes.

Information should be directed to Mike Law at [REDACTED].

### Unit Patch Project update

The collection of Vietnam Helicopter Unit Patches is progressing well. We have more than 150 in the VHPA archive now.

Jay Riseden requests the VHPA member who contributed the 117th AHC "Little Annie Fannie" and "Pink Panther" patch copies at the reunion in Kansas City please contact him.

Those of you who can contribute a high-quality color copy of any of the unit patches should send them to:

The Directory Committee, c/o VHPA, or to Jay Riseden at [REDACTED].

### 1996 VHPA Calendar

The calendar was printed in September. VHPA Headquarters is able to fill orders while supplies last.

For \$10 a copy, plus \$3 P&H, you can have the 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 by artist Joe Kline. All but one are color photos.

Use the form on Page 4 to order copies.

### Membership Directory

The 368-page 1995 Membership Directory was printed in September and bulk mailing from the Wichita, KS, post office began in October.

If your dues were current as of Sept. 20 and you joined the VHPA before Aug. 18, you should have received your copy.

If you have not received it, please contact VHPA Headquarters.

### 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.



# U.S.A., VHPA reunion move Vietnam refugee

For 20 years living in America (till this date I have not returned to Vietnam), I have been mesmerized to the serenity of the Thanksgiving Day, each time anew.

My 20th Thanksgiving is approaching while I am writing this note; my note of thanks, of deep gratitude and love for all who created a unique America, for all who are her safekeeping.

On the Fourth of July of this year, I was invited by a Vietnam vet to attend the 12th annual convention of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association in Kansas City, MO.

It was not another incident, but it is a story of my life, the life of a Vietnamese refugee "to be continued."

He was the pilot who flew the helicopter in countless battlefields in the Vietnam War.

Like millions of other Americans who left home for a small place afar to fight for the precious freedom — for others, pilot Capt. Paul S. Faidley was there.

He made me feel deeply moved, honored to be present among the 1,400 Vietnam vets and their loved ones on the 219th birthday of America.

Capt. Paul Faidley and his wife, Ann, met me in Washington, DC, on Veterans Day 1993 when we went on a pilgrimage to the Vietnam Memorial. It was the day for the dedication of the sculpture of the military nurses who were alongside the soldiers in the Vietnam War, saving the wounded and tending the dead.

That was my second trip to The Wall for the only purpose of pilgrimage.

The first trip I took to this forever moving place was on Thanksgiving Day 1987, allotting myself three hours to leave a plaque inscribed my poem, "Dear Daddy" beside the names of the dead.

I could only whisper: "Help me do good things for America as you have given your life for me, Dad . . ." I then flew home to California for the Thanksgiving dinner.

We met. We became friends.

I am a baby son of my long lost papa son, the Vietnam vet whose hair now turned much gray.

Two weeks before the convention, Paul and Ann called me excitedly, "Hi Linh, we wanted to see you at Kansas City." Both were on the phone. "We love you. The airplane tickets are on the way to you . . . and the room reserved next to ours."

I was overwhelmed. Speechless. Grateful.

We enjoyed so very much the memories of that emotional get-together. What a powerfully patriotic birthday for America. Those who died in the war were remembered and

Like millions of other Americans who left home for a small place afar to fight for the precious freedom — for others, pilot Capt. Paul S. Faidley was there.

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## 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	\$10/each _____ (\$3 P&H each)
1995-96 VHPA Calendar set	\$15/set _____ (\$5 P&H set)

### GRAND TOTAL

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*Continued from Page 4*

prayed for with love and devotion by the survivors.

We said goodbye to the sky of Kansas City the morning after, July 5, echoing the sounds the rotor blades of the dutiful choppers piercing above the treacherous jungles of war-ridden Vietnam.

Papa Paul took me to the airport in the Volvo he drove from Desoto, TX. We hugged. And, to my surprise, he took off his pilot cap embroidered with the logo of the VHPA and the helicopter insignia pinned on it. He put the hat on my head in an emotional silence. I felt heavy in my heart his warmth and fatherly love. There seemed to be tears in my eyes and his.

I came home only to relive the secret since I was a small boy. Flashbacks brought back the memory of the American pilot who befriended me and the trauma of learning the man I called papa son was killed when the Viet Cong shot down his chopper.

The papa son of mine is the very same Vietnam vet who stood up for the same freedom that our fathers and brothers had given their lives to liberate the people of France and Europe 50 years ago. What can I say except, "Thank you."

Linh Duy Vo  
Downey, CA  
October 1995

## Gun platoon supported Special Forces team B-36

In September of 1968, the Second Platoon — and gun platoon — of the 117th AHC started flying in support of Special Forces Team B-36 (also known as the Third Mobile Strike Force Command).

B-36 was organized with three battalions of Civilian Irregular Defence Group (CIDG) soldiers (mostly Cambodians), a recon company and a security company.

The 117th provided three H-model slicks and a light fire team of "C" model guns. Our primary mission was to support the recon company, but we also flew missions in support of the battalions.

In October of 1968, B-36 had two of its battalions moving on line south to north along the Cambodian border west-northwest of Tay Ninh.

Early in the morning of Oct. 3, a large enemy force initiated contact with the CIDG force. The contact expanded into a major battle that quickly depleted the friendly forces supply of ammunition.

Our air mission commander, 1st Lt. Tom Frame, was directed to put together an emergency resupply mission for first light. Tom elected to fly the mission himself, so he woke up his crew, the crews of the light fire team and headed for the flight line.

Flying with Tom that day was WO1 Martin "Bix" Bixler, Spec. 4 Roger "Smitty" Smith (crew chief) and Spec. 5 Michael "Mac" McCaggerty (doorunner).

Due to the fact there was no LZ available to land in, the ammunition was stacked up along the edge of the cargo door frames and two Special Forces sergeants went along to act as "pushers." The plan was for Tom to hover at tree-top level, while the cargo was pushed out the doors.

The friendlies popped smoke to mark the drop position, but apparently the smoke drifted laterally before coming

through the canopy. So, instead of hovering over friendly positions, Tom ended up hovering over the no-man's land between the two forces, in range of enemy ground fire.

The aircraft was shot down and, in falling through the trees, it rotated sideways 90 degrees, crashing on its left side.

**The remaining slicks spend the rest of the day resupplying the battalions and pulling out the wounded and dead.**

Smitty and the Special Forces sergeants were killed in the crash. Tom had a severe concussion and a lot of scrapes and bruises. Bix and Mac apparently

survived the crash in pretty good shape.

Tom later told us he has some vague recollections of being pulled from the aircraft and moving off into the rain forest. At that point, he somehow became separated from the other two. He was later found wandering aimlessly by some CIDG soldiers, who pulled him into safety.

Mac and Bix were found later in the day. They both had their hands and feet tied with commo wire and had been shot in the back. The enemy had also placed explosives in their mouths and had literally blown the top of their heads off.

The remaining slicks spend the rest of the day resupplying the battalions and pulling out the wounded and dead. I was peter pilot in the craft that carried Mac and Bix. It was probably the most unpleasant mission I flew my entire tour.

A few days later, we took a grave registration team out to the crash site. We had to put them and a security element in an LZ a couple of clicks away. They came back with a couple of small rubber bags of remains (the aircraft had been set on fire after the initial action), there wasn't much.

I hope I haven't messed up too many of the details (1968 was a long time ago). Bix was a close friend and Mac and Smitty were just about the best crew in the platoon. Their loss hit us all pretty hard.

Keith E. Alleger

## Photos needed of Huey for Vietnam War display

The National Air and Space Museum in Washington has obtained a UH-1 for the planned Vietnam display at the museum in the near future.

While we have the names of two of the pilots and one crew chief who flew this Huey, the museum has no photos of this aircraft in-country and places an extremely high value in configuring the aircraft as it appeared in combat.

Any photos showing unit markings, etc., of this particular aircraft or any sister ships while with that unit are needed to properly display the aircraft.

Here is the Vietnam History of UH-1D 65-10126:

• November 1966 to September 1967 — A Company, 229th Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

*Continued on Page 6*



*Continued from Page 5*

- October 1967 to June 1968 — HHD, 11th Aviation Battalion.
- July 1968 to April 1969 — 128th Assault Helicopter Company.
- October 1969 to April 1970 — 118th Assault Helicopter Company.
- On Feb. 5, 1967, this aircraft was involved in a minor accident on the ground when its main rotor blades connected with the main rotor blades of A/C 64-13555.
- On May 19, 1970, it was involved in an accident involving a tail rotor strike while repositioning to park. We have the names of these two pilots, at least one of whom is a VHPA member.

Here is our opportunity to contribute something of real value to the Air and Space Museum.

Please contact me with any information, stories or photos regarding this aircraft. The museum also places great value on any pilots who flew aircraft in their inventory, so let us know if you can document having flown this helicopter in Vietnam at any time.

Phil Marshall

## Roasting turkey a tipoff it was Christmas in Vietnam

The SEALORD (Southeast Asia Lake Ocean River Delta) operation was a Navy support service with the Seawolves (HAL-3) for SEAL teams in the Delta.

There were a few L-models and K-models, which were our "heavy lift" capability. Those few aircraft were always busy and sometimes one aircraft would rack up over 300 hours per month.

I was flying round robins to the various detachments

## October newsletter cover surprise to pilot in photo

I just received my October newsletter and was I ever surprised!! The picture you have on the cover was me!!!

I flew that photo mission back at An Khe during one of the few times we made it back to the home base area.

I lost almost all my Vietnam pictures and souvenirs in a house fire back in 1977. The effort it took me to get copies of all my flight records from Department of the Army was nothing less than monumental. They seemed to have had more fires than a Greek restaurant chain after a bad season.

I would like to make contact with the individual who had the cover picture to see if he still has any of the other pictures they took that day. I remember that many pictures were taken and possibly one of a handsome 21-year-old killer gunship pilot. Ha, ha.

Any help you give would be greatly appreciated.

Greg Gebhardt

around the delta. We staged SEAL inserts and extracts from our detachments or SEAL bases.

We would eat when we got a chance and sleep sometimes. I had been out with my copilot and gunner for a few days and was bone weary.

We landed at Binh Thuy after sunset. I filled out the aircraft yellow sheet and walked toward my hooch. On the way, I smelled roast turkey and headed for the chow hall hoping there was some left. I figured we must have been visited by some VIP.

As I entered the chow hall, I asked, "What's the celebration?"

A surprised cook replied, "It's Christmas."

Merry Christmas to everyone in the VHPA. To quote a memorable line from a movie, "Here's to us and those like us; damn few left."

Lt. Roger W. Ek USN

Seawolf 25

Gentleman Flyer of the Delta

## October newsletter articles relate to events in book

I read with great interest the October VHPA Newsletter. The newsletter included three different articles that related to events in a book I have just finished writing concerning my tour flying helicopters in Vietnam.

I might note that all of the author's royalties go to the 71st AHC reunion association. (Rattlers and Firebirds)

### Story No. 1:

Jim McDaniel in his story about the dogs at LZ Baldy apparently forgot or never saw our "paratrooper" dog.

The story about his dog was initially edited out of our book because it was not politically correct (insensitive to animal rights). I made them put it back.

Someone made a harness for the dog and hooked a flare parachute to it. This dog, blessed with a naughty name, would jump on a slick and go up around 500 feet and then it was "airborne all the way."

The interesting thing was the jump would scare the dog so badly he would urinate all the way down. Naturally no one attempted to catch him.

The dog would then run around dragging his parachute, waiting on the next slick. Jim's story referred to one dog disappearing. Surely a Shark pilot didn't take our dog named - - - head up without his parachute!

### Story No. 2

"Army aviators enjoy victory at sea"

I have a picture in the book of (Kenneth) Weigand standing in front of the burned ship. An important item was not in the VHPA story.

When I think about the attack on the ship, I always contemplate the keen intellectual skills of my friends Weigand and Ellingsworth as they took their gunship and dove on the quad-50 mounted on the fantail of the ship that was throwing scrap iron at them. That didn't happen every day.

Weigand participated in the editing of our book. He took me into my first rice paddy in Nam and scared me so badly

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*Continued from Page 6*

I tensed and pulled a chest muscle.

In a C model gunship, we did an emergency medevac for the 1st Cav (Task Force Oregon). The book now says when I looked at him as he jettisoned the rocket pods he had a big grin on his face as he told me, "I'm fixing to leave Vietnam and need a DFC. I will certainly get one for this."

Before Weigand's edit, instead of a "big grin" it said when I looked at him "he looked like the guy on the front of Mad magazine."

I wouldn't want to embarrass the guy who still laughs at me for being so scared that day.

## Story No. 3

"Kham Duc evacuated under fire"

The story made reference to the evacuation of the forward base at Ngok Tavak and of a Marine pilot being shot from the skids of an Army slick.

Roger Kucera from Scappoose, OR, received a DFC for the action that night. The day after the action, he told me he had people hanging from the skids on the flights back to Kham Duc Special Forces Camp.

Kucera said, as he sat on the pad at Ngok Tavak as tracers were going every direction (friendlies became enemies inside the base), he saw movement in front of his chopper.

He flipped on his landing light and in front of his chopper were NVA soldiers standing, holding wire cutters.

I asked Roger: "What did you do?"

Answer: "I turned the light off!"

I have a subchapter in the book called "Kucera." It covers some other adventures he and I had that were more exciting than this Ngok Tavak stuff.

I would like to share what Col. David Hackworth, Newsweek magazine, author of "About Face" and the most decorated American soldier alive, says about our association's book, called "Firebirds" —

"A dynamite read. The best helicopter war stories I've read coming out of the Vietnam War, where over 10,000 'choppers' bit the dust in one hell of a blaze of glory. The reader's in the front seat, pumping adrenaline, putting iron on the target."

I would also like to mention a picture in the book that is guaranteed to put a chill up the back of a Musket pilot. Naturally, the yuppies at the publisher didn't want to use it because it isn't clear enough.

It is a Musket gunship, just shot down, tailboom bent into the mud, with a crewmember waving at the pilot to unass the armored seat. R.P. Taylor snapped the picture as he came to the rescue. That night in the same location, a Firebird gunship was shot down.

Frank Anton and two crewmembers were captured, 66 Americans were killed, Frank Carson E&E'd out and at daylight a medevac pilot, Brady, got a Congressional Medal of Honor. I thought the pictures needed to be in the book.

I would also like to mention a picture in the book that is guaranteed to put a chill up the back of a Musket pilot.

We had 12 pilots in the Firebirds in November 1967. From Nov. 3, 1967, to May 5, 1968, we had 11 wounded and one captured.

The books will be in bookstores in March and the publisher will run ads in The VHPA Newsletter.

Chester W. Carlock

## Sister attempts to locate veteran who knew pilot

My brother, Warrant Officer Mickey Allen Wilson, is missing in action in Vietnam. He was a helicopter pilot.

The purpose of my letter is to try to locate anyone who might have known Mickey.

Mickey graduated in Class 71-29, Third WOC Company, U.S. Army Helicopter Center, Fort Wolters, Texas.

Mickey was stationed in Da Nang from February 1972-Jan. 8, 1973, when his helicopter was shot down in Quang Tri.

Mickey married a Vietnamese woman, he called her "Mary" and she worked in the Officers Club in Da Nang. She was in Saigon getting her visa to come home with Mickey when he was shot down. Mickey was on his last mission before he was to return to the United States.

We have never known Mary's Vietnamese name. We have never been able to locate her.

I am going to Vietnam in April of 1996 to find the crash site and possibly find Mary.

If you or anyone you know can be of any help, please call, write or fax.

I would love to talk to anyone who might have known Mickey either here or in Vietnam.

If you could circulate this letter I would be forever grateful.

Linda Moreau

## What did U.S. government tell us about Vietnam War?

Over the years I have sometimes wondered exactly what did the U.S. government tell us was the reason we were fighting in Vietnam?

I was, and still am, a notorious pack rat and in rummaging through the trunk of Army stuff, I found several government pamphlets that I was given either in Vietnam orientation classes at Fort Rucker or in new guy incoming orientation in Vietnam.

These documents are the "Pocket Guide to Vietnam" (DoD PG -21A, DA Pam 360-411, NAVPERS 93135A, AFP 190-4.3, NAVMC 293A), and, "The U.S. Fighting Man's Code" (DoD GEN-28, DA Pam 360-522, NavPers 92638A, AFP 34-10-1, NAVMC 2512 (Rev-67)).

Each of these pamphlets/handbooks is a little bigger than four inches by five inches and one quarter of an inch thick and about 90 pages.

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# Taps

## George Causey

George Causey, a former Vietnam helicopter pilot, died the morning of Sept. 23 when the helicopter he was flying crashed into Oregon's Crater Lake.

A passenger aboard the aircraft also died, the National Park Service said.

Causey, 51, who was from Enumclaw, Wash., was flying to Las Vegas for the NBAA Convention when the crash occurred.

The Associated Press reported tourists along the rim of Crater Lake watched as the Aerospatiale AS 350 helicopter skimmed over the smooth surface of the lake and then plunged into the water. The aircraft cartwheeled before sinking.

Crater Lake, the nation's deepest lake, is almost 2,000 feet deep in places. The lake covers 21 square miles in the caldera of an extinct volcano.

The aircraft was owned by American Eurocopter of Grand Prairie, TX.

Causey was a marketing manager for American Eurocopter. He had accumulated more than 10,000 hours of flight since learning to fly in the Army.

He was a member of Class 69-2, and served in the 196th and 271st Assault Support Helicopter Companies.

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## "Pocket Guide to Vietnam," Page 1:

### OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE

*"If you are bound for Vietnam, it is for the deeply serious business of helping a brave nation repel Communist aggression. This is your official job and it is a vital one, not only for the preservation of freedom in this one country but for the survival of freedom everywhere.*

*"Vietnam is a major testing ground for the Communists' theories of 'wars of national liberation,' and upon our success there depends peace in many other free countries of the world."*

## "The U.S. Fighting Man's Code," Page 3:

*"The war in Vietnam is often compared with the Korean war, which in some respects was similar. Americans in Vietnam are fighting an undeclared war in a distant land over some of the most difficult terrain in the world to help stop Communist aggression in Asia. This was also true in Korea.*

*"The Communist goal in Vietnam is to expand Communist control, just as in Korea. The current Communist strategy for gratifying expansionist ambitions is to 'support wars of national liberation.' Vietnam is a prime example. But 'liberation' in the language of communism actually means Communist enslavement.*

*"Our national commitment to freedom and self-determination, and our responsibilities as the leader of the free world, have impelled the United States to respond to the Republic of Vietnam's appeal for aid in its struggle to survive."*

John S. Donaldson, Lancer 14  
B/158 AHB, 101st Ambl  
AKA: "Pig"

## Lawrence M. Snyder

Retired CWO Lawrence M. Snyder of St. Louis died May 6 of cancer.

Before receiving his warrant, Snyder served in the Korean War.

After attending Army helicopter flight training, he served with the Presidential Flight Crew during the Eisenhower administration. He was a member of Class 57-12.

In 1966, Snyder served with the 15th TCBN, 1st Cavalry Division, in South Vietnam.

After retiring from the Army, Snyder worked 15 years at AVSCOM in St. Louis. He then became a flight instructor for Metropolitan Helicopters of St. Louis.

Snyder is survived by his wife Frances and son Robert.

## Robert V. Sulcer

CW4 Robert V. Sulcer of Quinton, VA, died May 4 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

He served with the 135th Aviation Company and the 68th Assault Helicopter Company in South Vietnam from May 1967 to October 1968.

After leaving active duty in 1970, Sulcer joined the Virginia National Guard, in which he served as a UH-1 instructor pilot and instrument flight examiner before assuming command of Detachment 26 Operational Support Airlift Command, flying a C-12.

He is survived by his wife Acrecia, son Jason and daughter Whitney.

# Bavarian aviation group researching airfield history

Recently I've heard about the "Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association." I am a member of "Bayerische-Flugzeug-Historiker," an association dealing with the aviation history in Bavaria.

We are currently researching the history of USAAF and U.S. Army at Schleissheim airfield near Munich.

First, we would like to prepare a chronology of units based at the airfield, so we are looking for any bit of information.

As far as I know, the 24th Aviation Battalion who trained Vietnam helicopter crews on UH-1Bs was based at Schleissheim from April 1, 1966, till June 1967.

Now I would like to ask for your help. We would be very interested to contact any Army personnel who were serving at Schleissheim to get more information and especially photos. Maybe you could put an advertisement in your newsletter please?

Do you possibly know any other associations of Army personnel who could help us or any other useful addresses to contact?

Unfortunately, I don't know many publications on the history of the U.S. Army's aviation units. Could you give me some information on possible reference works or other sources, please?

Thank you very much for your kind help.

Martin Bach  
Theodor-Storm-Str 16



# Card recalls Vietnam at Christmas

*Pilot flew holiday missions so others could have day off*

In past years, I usually purchased a few catalogue Christmas cards and simply had my business name imprinted.

I am a former Cessna Aircraft Co. marketing type and now live in Carrollton (Dallas area), TX. I am a professional aircraft broker specializing in Cessna twins.

With 1995 having so many well-deserved World War II memorials, salutes and tributes, I thought that since so many of my customers are Vietnam veterans, many would enjoy seeing photos from a long-ago Christmas.

I joined the 1st Cavalry Division directly from flight school in early December 1966. I graduated in class 66-17 in mid-November 1966. After a leave, I joined the Cav. As a new guy, flying on Christmas 1966 seemed fair, plus as the only Jewish pilot I was aware of, giving someone else a day off made sense.

In cleaning out my late mother's items, I found a 1st Cav Christmas card that I'd sent. I believe I recall hearing that someone's parent in the U.S.A. was a printer and had made the cards for the Cav. The cards were distributed in late 1966.

I have also mailed a card to the present CO of the 1st Cav at Fort Hood, TX, and a card to Gen. Hal Moore. His book, "We Were Soldiers Once, And Young," has had a profound effect on my life.

Jerry A. Temple  
Rattlesnake 39 (1966)



*Christmas Day, 1966 was a pretty typical day for twenty-one year old First Air Cavalry UH-1D pilot Jerry Temple (Rattlesnake 39) based 350 miles North of Saigon in Vietnam's Central Highlands.*

*Being a fairly new guy and the Division's only Jewish pilot, Temple volunteered for a long day of flying combat assaults, cargo missions, carrying the wounded, and delivering anything needed including hot Christmas meals and cards, and offering a lot of Holiday Greetings to some guys in tight places.*



*Temple's 12/25/66 logbook entry shows 14 hours flight time with one C-ration break at a Special Forces Camp near Cambodia.*

*Seventy-Eight days later on March 13, 1967, Temple was seriously wounded while piloting a UH-1C "Huey Gunship" supporting the extraction of a Long Range Reconnaissance patrol.*

*Today twenty-nine years later, with much more gray hair and much less required bravery, Temple proudly markets and sells Cessna Aircraft with specialization in Cessna twins.*

*And just as on December 25, 1966, Jerry Temple transmits "Happy Holidays To All and Best Wishes For a Healthy and Safe 1996".*



**This is the back of Jerry A. Temple's Christmas card, showing how he celebrated the holiday in 1966 as a 21-year-old helicopter pilot with the 1st Cavalry Division. Temple logged 14 hours of flight time on Christmas Day 1966. He recalled for lunch he took a C-ration break. Three months later he was seriously wounded while flying a UH-1C gunship during the extraction of a Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol.**

## Classified ad

LOH PILOTS! Need -10 and -20 for the OH-6A. If you brought more than one home or want to copy yours, I'll pay \$50 for an operator's manual (-10), \$90 for an Org. Maint. Manual (-20), \$70 III. Parts Book. Please call first so if there's more than one, we won't have a problem. Thanks, guys! John (Black Cat 28) at [redacted] or fax [redacted].

## Management contract coming due

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association management contract held by Performance Associates Inc., Cincinnati, OH, will expire in early 1996.

The VHPA Executive Council is soliciting bids for this contract.

Please submit a short resume of experience and qualifications if you

are interested in receiving an outline of the duties and responsibilities (an RFP).

RFPs will be sent out by Jan. 8, 1996, to those who show qualifications and request the RFP by Jan. 2, 1996. Our goal is to have the new contract awarded no later than Feb. 1, 1996.



# Pilot commutes to work by plane

Here are a couple of pictures of the airplane I use to go to work.

I live in the central part of California and work in the Los Angeles Basin, a distance of 200 miles.

It took me three years and about 2,000 man hours to build this airplane. It is equipped for IFR, night and aerobatic flight. Initial climb rate on cool mornings is 2,300-2,400 feet per minute and a cruise at 165 knots.

It takes me about an hour and five minutes to fly to work.

I flew with the 61st Assault Helicopter Company, call sign "Lucky Star," out of Lane Heliport at An Son. Notice the logo and call sign on the vertical stabilizer, as the Vietnamese would say, "same, same."

While in-country, I chose "10" on purpose. "You numba ten!" That's right, mama-san, I'm number ten."

Rod Dykehouse

Founding member/Life member



## E-mail can be sent to Newsletter

VHPA members can write to the Newsletter editor using electronic mail. Articles, notices and letters for publication can be sent to the Newsletter 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 Internet address is: "[redacted]"

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# Beware of 'vets' asking for money

Last year at about this time, Kenny Bunn got a sob story call from a guy who claimed to be a VHPA member who was down on his luck.

I got a similar call today from a guy calling himself a vet and a "VHPA brother." He claimed to be in Florida assisting his dad, a vet from World War II, who was in the hospital.

Because he couldn't afford a flight from California to Florida to be with his dad, he drove out and was now almost out of money. He said he was calling from a truck stop pay phone that wouldn't receive incoming calls.

He asked me if the "VHPA

brethren" would send him some money via Western Union and I told him to call someone who knew him — the VHPA doesn't give out money.

I also asked him why he chose to call me collect, identifying himself as a VHPA member.

He said he thought his "brothers" would help him out. When I could not find his name in the VHPA Membership Directory (while he was on the phone telling me his tale, I had looked for him in the directories for 1991, '92, '93, '94 and '95).

Then he said he was a flight nurse/medic in Hueys in a medevac outfit out of Chu Lai and, "since we

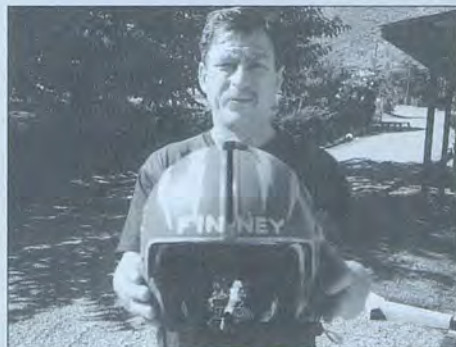
are all brothers," could I help him out with \$50 until he gets paid on the 15th?

He did not get \$50 from me, but after relating this cock-and-bull story to Kenny Bunn, Bunn and I recalled how he had gotten a similar call last year. This guy's story sounded pretty cool, but he is obviously a con artist. All VHPA members need to be aware of this crook.

The FBI won't investigate because they are interested in "big money crooks," so BEWARE of guys passing themselves as vets, VHPAers, etc., asking for money.

— Kenneth H. Fritz

## Former Marine seeks pilot missing helmet



**Dave Barr (left) holds the recovered helmet so the name "Finney" appears on the front. In center photo, a closeup of the 334th Attack Helicopter Company insignia. Photo on right shows "Jerry" on back of helmet.**

Dave Barr of Bodfish, CA, has returned to the United States with the helmet of a helicopter pilot wounded in South Vietnam in 1970.

Barr, who served as a Marine helicopter crew chief and doorunner at Marble Mountain, Da Nang, from April 1970-April 1971, was given the helmet in Australia.

The person who gave him the hel-

met — a former Australian army tank driver — has since died.

Barr said the tank driver kept the helmet after the pilot and co-pilot of a Cobra gunship shot down near the tank in the III Corps in May-June 1970 were medevaced.

Though one of the Cobra's pilots has been identified, Barr is seeking the name of the helmet's owner.

If the owner is found, Barr would like to present the helmet to him at a VHPA reunion.

Anyone who knows the pilot's identity can contact Barr at [REDACTED] or by calling him at [REDACTED].

Barr and VHPA database chairman Gary Roush also can be contacted through VHPA headquarters.

## HAI 1996 will be held in Dallas in February

For those who still get a rush from the smell of JP-4 and viewing very expensive hunks of aluminum, heaven on earth is approaching.

I am referring, of course, to three days when you can OD on all the new equipment the rotary wing aviation industry has to offer during the annual Helicopter Association International Convention to be held at the Dallas Convention Center Feb. 22-24.

The VHPA will have a booth at exhibit space No. 2648 during the convention.

We are in need of volunteers to help staff the booth. If you are interested in attending the convention and would be

able to help out, please give me a call.

There will be no VHPA Gathering during the HAI convention. We will select a watering hole where everyone can gather to visit. Check with us at the VHPA booth for the date and location.

Jack Jordan  
HAI chairman  
P.O. Box 395

(fax)



# Where in the heck is Santa Clara?

**BOB NORONA**  
REUNION CHAIRMAN

So, we're having a reunion July 3-7, 1996, in Santa Clara, CA. Gee . . . that's terrific. Only one problem . . . **WHERE IN THE HECK IS SANTA CLARA?**

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara sits on the northern border of San Jose. It also is a convenient, 45-minute drive to San Francisco.

As you can imagine, the Bay Area has much to offer the traveler. There is something for everyone.

We will be staying adjacent to a major, family theme park . . . Paramount's Great America. The Bay Area is the home of the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland A's, the San Jose Sharks, the Forty-Niners and the Raiders.

Some of the world's finest museums and restaurants are located here.

The renowned California wine country, famous for its spirits, ambiance and mineral baths is less than two hours from our hotel.

Monterey and Mendocino . . . Santa Cruz and Carmel . . . majestic mountains and serene valleys . . . it is all here. There is only one drawback, Santa Clara is a dry county . . . whoops . . . just kidding!

We are going to occupy two, magnificent, resort hotels, the Santa Clara Marriott and the Westin. With spectacular facilities in both locations, your stay is certain to be a pleasurable one.

We are now in the process of arranging a number of tours and activities . . . banquets and bands . . . barbecues

and bars. It is all going to be here . . . at the "Bash by the Bay!!"

By the way, we are trying to come up with a great name for this gathering. If you can think of anything really clever, call the VHPA office to submit your idea.

*Come to Santa Clara in '96 and try to win a new car.*

*The reunion committee is working on a raffle and hopes to be able to offer very good odds on a new Ford Explorer.*

*Don't need it? How about cash value instead?*

*The 1996 Reunion fireworks display will be so big an eight-lane California freeway will be closed down temporarily for the show to prevent rubberneckers from rear-ending one another.*

*Try about two hours of first class pyrotechnics being set off across from our outdoor barbecue party on the 4th of July!*

*The 1996 reunion T-shirt will have a pocket!*

*No, you won't be required to keep your SOI on a chain around your neck in the pocket, but you should show up at the reunion to get one of these neat shirts!*

*A wine-tasting is planned for Friday evening at the 1996 Reunion in Santa Clara, CA, and you won't want to miss it!*

## Reunion bus tours

### Don't tell me what to do tour

Hop aboard a guided tour bus after breakfast on July 5 and ride up to San Francisco via Interstate 880.

This will take you through what's known as the East Bay and will take you across Oakland's Bay Bridge.

A stop at Treasure Island for pictures of the San Francisco skyline and then on to Pier 39. Here you are on your own until 3 p.m.

Choose from a ferry ride around Alcatraz, a cable car ride up to Nob Hill/Union Square or a pedicab ride around the busy Embarcadero, Fisherman's Wharf and Ghiradelli Square are right next door.

There's plenty of fast food and sit-down restaurants available. Return to the hotel by 5 p.m.

Cost: \$20 prepaid.

### Beautiful Bay tour

Highlights of this special July 5 tour include the historic Presidio, Fort Point, Treasure Island and other military sites in the Bay Area.

Also see the infamous Barbary Coast, classy Nob Hill, spectacular Golden Gate Park and Twin Peaks.

Lunch is included at a waterfront bistro with a 180-

degree view of the Bay.

Cost: \$40 prepaid. (Limited to 200 people.)

### Lights! Camera! Action! Tour

"Dirty Harry," "Mrs. Doubtfire," "Towering Inferno," "Pal Joey," "Bullit" and "Presidio" are a few of the more than 300 films, TV series and specials that have San Francisco and the Bay Area as their soundstage.

You'll visit many of the actual location sites on July 5 and hear anecdotal stories of what went on behind the scenes. Lunch is atop the city's tallest building, for a Cinemascope view!

Cost: \$40 prepaid.

### Shop till you drop tour

Discount to designer-wear stores are on the agenda of this ladies tour during the VHPA business meeting on the morning of July 6.

Stopping at the outlets south of Market Street, posh Union Square and various fun shops in between, you'll be treated to the sights and sounds of the city's best!

You'll stop for high tea to get your second wind before ending up at everyone's favorite souvenir stand, Fisherman's Wharf.

Cost: \$40 prepaid. (Limited to 88 people.)

*NOTE: Alcoholic beverages not included on tours. On some tours there is a limit.*



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# Swapping seats disturbs passengers

One day, late in the afternoon, we were asked by radio to make one more ash-and-trash run; to pick up a couple of soldiers at the Phan Thiet supply helipad to take them and some equipment out to a firebase.

We were to wait there about a half hour for them, then return.

They got into the aircraft while it was running, and never actually saw the faces of the crew because we had our green visors down. We shut down the Huey at the firebase and sat there waiting for them to come out.

The crew chief had noticed the highest-ranking man among them was a Spec 5. The devil found time for our idle minds, as we developed the plans for a practical joke.

The two enlisted men swapped shirts with the two warrants. Then the crewmen, wearing pilot shirts, took the pilot seats. The pilots, wearing EM shirts, took the crew chief's and gunner's seats. We sat there waiting for our prey.

The Huey wasn't running when the soldiers came out, so they could hear our conversations.

Just as they were getting in, I, wearing a Spec. 5 shirt and sitting in the back, yelled toward the cockpit:

One of the crewmen, sitting in front, shouted back, "I'm SICK of you guys complaining about our flying!"

"The way you guys are flying today, we'll be lucky to get back alive."

One of the crewmen, sitting in front, shouted back, "I'm SICK of you guys complaining about our flying!"

The other crewman, also sitting in the front, added: "Yeah! If you guys think you're so good, let's see if YOU can fly this thing."

Both of the EM sitting in front got out, then each pilot got into the front seats, all done with appropriate cussing and hand gestures.

The crew belted into our normal positions, although we were wearing the wrong shirts. The other pilot and I, up front, acted confused as we handed the starting checklist back and forth and pointed to various instru-

ments and controls.

One of the passengers looked at the crew chief (wearing WO1 bars) and pleaded, "Aren't you going to DO anything?"

He replied: "They won't even get it started!"

That was my signal to press the starter button.

"Sir: their eyes just about popped out!" The crew chief reported on the intercom.

For added effect, I overcontrolled like crazy while hovering (I had lots of practice doing that at Fort Wolters).

We had agreed the actual flying would be smooth so the passengers would not jump out while we were high.

I don't think I ever saw grunts get out of a Huey as fast as those guys did when we touched down back at Phan Thiet.

We quickly swapped our shirts back while we refueled. Never heard anything about it again; nobody believed those guys anyway.

Jim Schueckler  
Polecat 356

## Marines' rescue occurred on pilot's second day flying

SEPPO I. HURME

The "Marine Crew Rescued by 190th AHC" article in the June Newsletter certainly got my attention, because I participated in those events on my second day flying in Vietnam.

I am glad the VHPA published that article. The events associated with this dramatic rescue are one of the defining moments in my life.

After my first two days, I was quite certain there was no way I would survive my tour in Vietnam!

I arrived in Da Nang on Oct. 23 and was assigned to HMM-361 at Marble Mountain. HMM-361 had been at Dong Ha since mid-July. On Sept. 3, the NVA blasted Dong Ha with rockets and long-range artillery.

The ammo dump cooked off and, later that day, the squadron was evacu-

ated to Marble with many damaged aircraft and 46 wounded personnel.

I did not know a single soul when I joined HMM-361, but started flying almost immediately with the most experienced pilots.

Capt. Bill Brown was the HAC on my first flight, Oct. 25. It was mostly routine resupply in the Da Nang area; however, we took some KIAs to Graves Registration.

We had been told a Marine unit working north of Da Nang had taken five KIAs. I watched the grunts bring a single body bag to our aircraft.

Bill radioed we thought there were going to be five. The radioman responded they were all in that one bag — they had taken a direct mortar hit.

My stomach did a couple of flips

*See Five remains, Page 15*

Looking for a:  
• Long-lost stick buddy?

• A classmate from flight school? Look the easy way. Use VHPA's "Find-A-Friend"

Simply send a No. 10, self-addressed, stamped envelope — and the name of the person you're seeking to:

Phil Marshall



# Five remains fit in a single body bag

*Continued from Page 14*

and, as we lifted off, I mused that this war looks real after all!

So much for my first day flying in Vietnam!

Little did I know this would probably be the longest day of my life.

The VIP was Marine Maj. Gen. Hochmuth, the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division. He flew in a 190th AHC Huey and we flew chase in the event he needed another helicopter.

We followed the Huey from Phu Bai, to Dong Ha, and then to Camp Carroll. Whenever we landed, both crews stayed with their helicopters until the general decided we would leave.

While we were talking to each other at Camp Carroll, Jerry noticed a single smoke rising to the north. He climbed into our aircraft, flipped on the radio and learned HMM-363 had lost a UH-34 (Capt. Bennett).

Jerry became real concerned since he had transferred from HMM-363 and knew Bennett well. He advised

the Army pilots we were going up north to help and to tell the general what we had done.

Arriving over the downed UH-34, Jerry talked to Capt. Grassi, who was en route to Delta Med (the medical facility at Dong Ha) with medevacs and a UH-1E gunship escort. So Grassi had managed to evac some of the wounded Marines.

Next, Jerry established communications with Capt. Murphy, the air liaison officer with infantry.

What the June Newsletter failed to mention was Murphy also was a pilot. I am not certain if he was a helicopter pilot or a jet jock, but he was a pilot.

It was common in those days to fly for six months and be an ALO for six months. Maybe this explains why Murphy had left the relative safety of the infantry's position and crawled out to Bennett's helicopter.

When Jerry started talking to Murphy, he had managed to get to the downed crew. He reported that Second Lt. Sharpless and Cpl. Cones were still alive.

The UH-34D was totally consumed by fire — you can certainly see a burning Dog from miles away!

Jerry tried to get in with our UH-34D, but we got shot out of the LZ, taking numerous hits. Realizing we were going to need more help, Jerry called "Plutocrat" — the control agency for requesting air support.

Grassi returned before the jets arrived. We told him we had been shot out of the LZ. He said that since he had a gunship with him, he'd try to get it.

We watched as Grassi and the UH-1E took hits trying to rescue the three Marines. Grassi made it to C-2. The UH-1E's engine quit on approach to C-2 and the pilot barely cleared the minefield during his autorotation.

I believe Grassi and the gunship pilots (probably from VMO-3 or VMO-6) were wounded and we carried them all to Delta Med.

The jets and an O-1C (FAC) arrived about the same time we got back on station. There was a flight a A-4s and

*See Jets, Page 16*

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Rick Brooks photo

Members of the VHPA Florida LZ Chapter and guests gather near a Huey and a Loach for the chapter's annual display at Sun 'n Fun. The chapter reports success in signing up new VHPA members at the event.

## Jets and a FAC arrived on station

*Continued from Page 15*

a flight of F-4s.

In the meanwhile, Capt. Murphy was doing OK with his radio and his "45."

His actions were definitely "above and beyond the call of duty," and if someone deserved a Medal of Honor, he certainly did!

He directed three or four runs of MK 82s (500 pounds) and then one smoke. This is the only time I ever saw smoke employed in this fashion. Talk about close air support — really a magnificent job!

With the smoke cover in place, we were ready to start our approach when a really fortunate thing happened.

Gen. Hochmuth had released a 190th AHC helicopter and told the pilot to see if he could help us.

When the Army pilot called from down south, Jerry quickly put together a plan.

Jerry described to the Army pilot where the downed crew was located and said that if he would stay low and come in from the south, we would act as a decoy since the NVA had already seen us. He agreed.

We started a spiraling approach — drawing fire — while the 190th guy made his approach low level. He did a

great job — overshot a bit, but turned his tail toward the majority of the NVA and landed near Capt. Murphy.

They picked up the crew and departed to the south. They also took hits and had to put it down at Cam Lo. We picked up the wounded Marines and possibly the Army crew and flew them to Delta Med (memory has faded on this point).

As we picked up the wounded crew, I recognized Lt. Sharpless since he had been a couple of months ahead of me in flight school. He was not a pretty sight, but I am glad to report that despite severe injuries to his legs, he made a near complete recovery and flew again.

Jerry and I ended up flying the rest of the day and night in and out of that same area as a single aircraft. Once we tried to get a flight of three 190th aircraft to just stay on the frequency with us, but we lost them.

We did have comfort in the knowledge a former HMM-363 pilot, First Lt. Dick Erickson, was the FAC at C-2; but we continued to fly support as a single aircraft until relief arrived later that night.

Then we flew back to Da Nang — as a single aircraft and at night. This was the only time Jerry or I had to do that.

Upon shutdown to inspect the aircraft at the end of a very long day, we found the damage included: A round taken through a tail boom hinge (which allows it to fold for ship-board operations), the cowl behind the transmission completely gone and other holes throughout the aircraft (bureau number 150573).

My second day flying in Vietnam — we had logged 10.1 hours, of which 5.3 were at night, we had been shot up and I had witnessed more combat than I ever imagined!

Scared? Yes I was scared many times! I also was concerned whether this "green weenie" practically just out of flight school could handle the situation if something happened to Jerry.

I remember asking Jerry if my first two days were "normal flying days in Vietnam" and was relieved when he told me they were anything but "normal."

Later, I also came to appreciate the fine work everyone did that day.

Like the June Newsletter article said, I'd like to know who were those 190th AHC pilots? But I'd also like to know: Who were those UH-1E pilots? Who were the jet jocks who provided the magnificent air cover? A fine job by all!



# Actions of pilot affect other people

DICK ELLIS

Remember when Clarence the angel showed George Bailey just how different things would be if he never existed in "It's A Wonderful Life?" It's a classic theme showing us how deeply the actions of one man can influence so many; for better or worse.

With a twist, I met my own Clarence this weekend, shared a damp duck blind with him and listened to him burn away the midnight hours in a northern Wisconsin cabin with quiet talk of long ago. His name is Lou Rochat, of Texas, and he has my deepest gratitude.

If Lou Rochat didn't make a decision of uncommon valor in 1970 a half world away from my seventh grade classroom, my own world today would be much different. I don't know if it would have been bad. In fact, I doubt it. But I know it would have been different than it is today, and I know what I have today is very good. So, I'm grateful.

Last week, I stood on the shores of Island Lake and for the first time laid eyes on a man who for 24 years has been no more than a vision of imagination in my mind. A vision built on repeated stories, often around the fire of this same cabin, from one of only a handful of men who were there when Lou Rochat put his life on the line for someone else.

Before I begin, know that if you so choose, you can read in detail the story I'm about to tell of Lou Rochat in "Hunter Killer Squadron," a Pocket Book of Military nonfiction by Matthew Brennan. Specifically, read chapter 27, "Welcome to War."

Hunter-Killer Squadron derives its name from the Vietnam combat role of two helicopters, the Cobra gunship and the light observation helicopter (LOH). In the hunter-killer teams, the LOH (scout) was the hunter, with a responsibility to fly tree-top level and draw enemy fire. The Cobra was the killer, hovering high above the LOH, providing cover and waiting to strike.

When contact was made, the LOH in its retreat would drop smoke grenades to mark the spot as doorgunners blazed away with .30-caliber machine guns. The Cobra would



**Lou Rochat (left), Steve Ellis (center) and Danny "Rags" Rager pose for a photo last February, 25 years after Ellis was shot down and rescued by Rochat and Rager.**

already be rolling in, with rockets and nose gun fire moving on the smoke.

On Oct. 17, 1970, my brother, Steve Ellis, was a scout pilot in the 1st Cavalry Division flying in a place called the Iron Triangle. Lou "Rocket" Rochat piloted the Cobra 3,000 feet above, with one eye always on Steve.

It was the first sweep of an area in which they had experienced heavy contact when nightfall forced a break the previous evening. Steve estimates that he had personally seen 200 NVA (North Vietnamese Army) during that battle. The fully uniformed, fully trained, fully equipped tough guys; not Viet Cong.

On Steve's first pass, he took the same flight pattern as the previous evening, and discovered the NVA had adjusted by moving a .30-caliber machine gun to cover the pass. The helicopter took 17 hits, with Steve hit in the arm, leg and creased across his freshly painted flight helmet.

Neither doorgunner was touched, which tells you the NVA knew exact-

ly where the pilot sits.

Steve managed to land the LOH in a rice paddy, without much hope. Rochat had no responsibility to land the Cobra in that mess. That helicopter has only two seats and it was already at full capacity. But all he saw was Steve being pulled from the LOH drenched in blood by his gunners and "30-40 NVA 90 meters away and coming hard."

Lou and his co-pilot, Danny "Rags" Rager, brought the Cobra down and, with the helicopter still 10 feet from the ground, Rochat dropped from the skid. They hadn't been able to provide cover because, like a bad nightmare getting worse, every gun had jammed.

With the doorgunners now concentrating fire on the fast-approaching NVA, Rochat pushed Steve up into his now-vacant Cobra seat and was sprayed in the face with blood every time my brother's heart beat.

Rochat did all this despite thinking the LOH was badly damaged and

*See Rochat pushed, Page 18*



# Rochat pushed Steve into his Cobra

*Continued from Page 17*

inoperable. In reality, Steve couldn't fly it because he couldn't grab the stick and he was losing consciousness from lack of blood.

"I remember, as the Cobra got higher and higher, how oily and dirty it looked on the bottom," Rochat said. "And I was thinking, 'what am I doing down here?' I turned around and Steve had left the LOH running. I don't know why, but he did, and it was meant to be."

John Wayne had nothing on Lou Rochat. He limped the LOH and two doorgunners home under intense fire. Steve nearly bled to death, but didn't because he had Lou's seat.

Lou Rochat earned a Silver Star for his actions that day, the first of two of our nation's third-highest military medals he would earn in Vietnam.

Three months later, he himself was shot down in an LOH in an unbelievably terrible battle in which three helicopters were shot down, losing a finger and leg to .50-caliber machine gun rounds. As Rochat saved my brother, so another pilot saved Rochat from near-certain death.

Steve found Lou almost 20 years after leaving Vietnam to say thank you. In part, the plaque he sent was engraved from a Dire Straights song, reading: "You did not desert me, my

**"I remember, as the Cobra got higher and higher, how oily and dirty it looked on the bottom," Rochat said.**

brother in arms . . ."

Lou is still searching for the man who saved him, with only a name to guide him, just to say, "I know what you did . . ."

Today, Steve is a pilot on 767s for United Airlines. He's been married to Sandy for 23 years, a high school sweetheart who waited for his return, with two sons and daughter. He introduced his three brothers and his sons to hunting and fishing, and he's a frequent visitor to this column.

I doubt if I would ever have been introduced to the world of the outdoors if Lou Rochat didn't decide to take things into his own hands in 1970, and it's in a field or stream that I'm most comfortable.

My brother John probably would have flown with or without Steve, his love is so great. But with Steve as his instructor, he soloed at age 16, always had expert advice a phone call away, and today is an American Eagle captain.

My nephews, Mike and Joe, are 19- and 17-year-old pilots with the same teacher.

Examples of how things are that might not have been go on and on. And it translates to a courageous act by a man more than two decades ago. I personally feel now as if I'm reaping the benefits of seeds sown on a Vietnam rice paddy.

Lou Rochat, I'm grateful. I really felt like you and Ann fit with my family and friends last week. You were pushing it to the limit, every day, probably 42 hours in duck blinds, and we would have never even known you're missing one leg the way you move. And when the ducks came in, and you shot, and you shot again, I knew, without doubt, you were one of us.

Lou, I don't think you hit one duck. And it's still a wonderful life.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Dick Ellis writes an outdoor column for some 50 newspapers and hunting sport publications across the United States. Lou Rochat and Steve Ellis were pilots in E Troop, 1/9th Cav. Rochat corrected that he was the front seat co-pilot and Danny "Rags" Rager was the aircraft commander of the Cobra that picked up Steve Ellis, and Rager also received the Silver Star. Also, Rochat added, "I got one duck out of two boxes of shells."**

## Project 404 had AF, Army aircraft

JOHN QUESENBERRY

During the Kansas City reunion, Archie Ahl and I got to talking over the list of helicopter units in the last VHPA Directory.

We notice our unit, Project 404, was not listed. So here is our story — hopefully, it will be included in the 1995 Directory.

Project 404 was the name for the classified aviation support of American interests in Laos.

Project 404 had an Air Force component that consisted of the Raven FACs and an Army component that consisted of a small aviation detachment. The detachment had three UH-

**We flew missions that were very similar to those flown by Air America or Continental Air Service.**

1H helicopters and one U-10 helicopter.

We lived at Udorn, Thailand, and flew in Laos. We received all our missions from the embassy.

We flew missions that were very

similar to those flown by Air America or Continental Air Service — moved people and supplies where ever they wanted, but generally support the Special Forces boys deep in Laos.

We also did some reconnaissance — for example, try to find out if the good guys or the bad guys were on a certain hill top without getting shot down.

I am not certain when Project 404 started but I'd guess about 1967. When I left in May 1974, Project 404 consisted of a single UH-1H and one pilot CW2 Phil Lee who had basically been there forever.

The previous detachment CO was

*See Project 404, Page 19*



# Project 404 also did reconnaissance

*Continued from Page 18*

Maj. Nicholis (who had Greek ancestors) and I know a Maj. Bob Moberg commanded it at one time.

Not long after I took over the unit, Bob, who had retired from the Army and was living in Thailand, purchased the U-10 and flew it all around the area.

Others who served in the unit besides those already mentioned are: CW3 Archie Ahl, 1973-74; CW2 Jim McCollum, 1973-74; CW2 William Duncan, 1973-74; CW4 Chuck Honecutt, forever-1973; and CW3 Tom Moore, 1972-73.

We usually had two or four EM. I can only remember one, a Sgt. First Class Will Lock.

We had red passports and embassy ID cards. This gave us official U.S. government business status, but meant we were not accredited.

If we went down and were captured — we were to say we were on a training flight and should be returned to the U.S. embassy. If this didn't

**We carried individual weapons. The embassy people got excited about this and we told them: "Hey, there are places in Laos where, if you go down, the NVA are the least of our worries — tigers and snakes ARE THE WORRY!"**

work — well, tough luck, GI.

Naturally everyone in Southeast Asia knew we were there, but it was not known in the United States or Europe.

Air America provided maintenance

support. If we needed anything, we got it very quickly.

Our Hueys were painted green and had "U.S. Army" on the tailboom. Naturally, we had no doorguns.

Because we routinely refueled from 55-gallon drums and fuel bladders, the right aft cargo compartment had a DC-3 fuel pump and a small hose.

Other than that, we flew standard H models.

We carried individual weapons. The embassy people got excited about this and we told them: "Hey, there are places in Laos where, if you go down, the NVA are the least of our worries — tigers and snakes ARE THE WORRY!"

We wore Nomex when we flew, but civilian clothes whenever we were on the ground.

Anyway, my wife and I had a lot of fun at the Reunion. The VHPA does put together a good time for everyone.

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# This dog tale has a happy ending

JAMES "SNEAKY" WHITE  
VHPA MEMBER

Okay, you win! Just one more DOG story to follow the October Newsletter's rush of animal stories.

But this one, I assure you, is different and it has a happy ending.

When I left the "Sneaky Whites" (108th Arty Group) at Dong Ha in 1970 to join the "Griffins" (C Btry, 4th/77th ARA, 101st Airborne) at Camp Evans, I brought along my puppy, Fred.

Fred was a pitiful runt of a dog I had bought in downtown Quang Tri.

Fred quickly found our new home with the Griffins to his liking, probably because there were few Vietnamese nationals, therefore his longevity had just been extended.

Fred's stay during 1970 and 1971 was one I'm sure all dogs pray for. He was able to have the run of the Griffin area; no longer required to be kept out of sight in a hooch as at Dong Ha.

Sometimes our CO, Maj. Dick, would threaten to have Fred sent packing, but these were isolated threats that followed a visit by some of the battalion staff.

All the Griffins made sure Fred had plenty to eat, got his stomach rubbed, and when the night life died off — he made sure he was snuggled up between my legs for the night.

Even though we talked about giving Fred to a hooch-maid, the worry of ending up in a Vietnamese stew was never a problem in his life.

After my year with the Griffins, in March 1971, I extended and joined the "Condors" (C Troop, 2/17th Cav, 101st Airborne).

Because of the Cav's living conditions — always on the move, no permanent buildings — I begrudgingly left Fred with the Griffins. My faithful friend for the past 16 months was going to have to sleep with someone else for a while.

CW2 John "Crusty" Garrison, a VHPA Life member, took Fred, and I headed for Quang Tri knowing I might never see Fred again.

In December 1971, the Griffins were closing up shop and heading for Fort Campbell, KY, and Crusty was one of the last Griffin officers to



**Fred, official mascot of the "Griffins," is weighed in a cage before being shipped to the United States from South Vietnam.**

leave.

Crusty's last weeks in Vietnam must have been hell — his job included being the embarkation officer, the maintenance office, and during the last week, he was the commanding officer.

One of Crusty's command decisions was that Fred was a Griffin and needed to DEROS. The Griffins came up with \$1,000 so their old friend wouldn't be eaten.

Crusty went through days of pleading, trying to bribe, threatening and, I'm sure, using all of his old Special Forces NCO training and skills to convince the U.S. military that Fred was a Griffin and due to DEROS.

Finally, someone agreed, but said that Fred could not go home by military transport. So Fred was vaccinated, tagged, given a physical, put in a cage, weighed, and put onto a Pan Am "freedom bird" leaving Tan Son Nhut for Oakland, CA.

Crusty, dressed in Class A's, boarded the military flight back to Travis Air Force Base, CA. There, Crusty grabbed a cab and headed for

the quarantine unit at Oakland Airport to rescue Fred. Though it took more than 24 hours to accomplish, Crusty completed his mission.

Fred and Crusty flew on to Fayetteville, NC, for duty with the 18th Airborne Corps.

Fred's life was full of adventures. That December, Fred spent hours chasing snowflakes for the first time.

In February 1972, I was in Womack Army Hospital and got to see Fred and Crusty again. That was great. Soon after that I returned to Southeast Asia to fly for Air America.

Crusty arranged for Fred to return to the Griffins. When the new CO of the Stateside Griffins heard the story, he welcomed Fred back to the unit.

In April, Crusty drove Fred to Fort Campbell and, in an official presentation, Fred returned to his old unit.

Fred accepted the PCS like all old soldiers and immediately went back to his primary MOS — mascot of the Griffins with the rank of PFC (Prince Frederick Canine).

The rest of the Griffins and I, feel good Fred made it out of Vietnam and was able to retire with his friends.

We Griffins, both from Camp Evans and Fort Campbell, owe John "Crusty" Garrison a debt of thanks for a job well done. The money to bring Fred to the world was well spent.

**I headed for Quang Tri knowing I might never see Fred again.**



# Blue Max covers U.S., ARVN troops

RUSS WARRINER

*I can't thank the VHPA's Directory Committee and member Mike O'Connor enough. Because of their good work, I now have the complete story of how a good friend of mine died.*

*What follows is a modified version of material that appeared in the 2/20th ARA column I wrote for the March/April issue of SABER, the 1st Cavalry Division Association's Newsletter. I trust VHPA members will find this interesting.*

Most of the 1st Cav had moved up north just before Tet of 1968 and were receiving supplies and ammo from a logistic point near Hue.

During Tet, the NVA captured most of Hue and the adjacent areas. This made things difficult for the 1st Cav's supply lines.

Several units were working to correct this situation. These were hardly normal times even for combat units!

About mid-day on Feb. 4, a mixed American and ARVN unit near Hue reported being attacked by a large

They both made some comment to the effect that in all their days of flying combat, they had never seen anything that even came close to that volume of fire.

NVA force and requested gunship support. The Blue Max answered the call.

Capt. Dave Whitling (Blue Max 68), the 2nd Platoon leader, led the mission with Ron "RC" Fields as the aircraft commander and Mike O'Connor as the pilot in the wingship.

The flight of two flew down Route 1 from LZ Evans and took a lot of fire along the way.

Because of very low ceilings, they could not fly at a normal en route altitude.

They continued taking fire as they made a few orbits and contacted the friendlies. They told the ground troops they could not stick around very long because they were taking too much fire.

Prior to their attack, Capt. Whitling told RC they should both break off their runs short of the target and not overfly it in accordance with ARA SOP.

During 68's rocket run, they received fire and took several hits. Mike recalls he could see pieces coming off their ship from the NVA hits.

RC and Mike rolled in and immediately started taking fire from many weapons.

Mike said they were shocked to see so many weapons firing at once.

He remembers looking at Ron and Ron looking back for a brief moment. They both made some comment to the effect that in all their days of flying combat, they had never seen anything that even came close to that volume of fire.

They started making pedal adjust-  
*See Volume, Page 22*

## Army logic shows at cav breakfast

JOHN HUFFMAN

Life at Camp Evans, I Corps, RVN, in the first half of 1968, had settled into a manageable routine of the alternate extremes of dust and mud, "outgoing" H&I artillery fire, contrasting "incoming" NVA 122mm rockets, and long days of flying "First Light, Last Light, Downed Bird, or Troops in Contact" missions.

Each day began with the "wheezing" sound of WO Hicks pumping life into his camp stove at the other end of our GP medium for his morning coffee.

Coffee already was out at the mess tent, but Hicks found it too far to walk and never found Army coffee to his liking.

We'd all wander out into the morning for a trip to the "tube," catch a cold shave from water drawn into our personal plastic bowl at the "buffalo," and then gather into the line forming up for morning chow.

The mess line was a wonderful

Coffee already was out at the mess tent, but Hicks found it too far to walk and never found Army coffee to his liking.

place to catch up on all the latest gossip and check the status on anything that went down on the perimeter during the previous evening.

The NVA didn't have the muscle to attack the place, following the pretty bad handling they got during Tet, but they liked to probe a bit just to keep us all honest.

Robert Duvall's quote about the smell of "napalm in the morning" was accurate, but the smell usually wasn't napalm but rather the smell of JP-4 consuming the troop's night soil

at the bottom of a 55-gallon drum, split in half, and set on fire right before breakfast.

You made your selection on the breakfast fare, depending on which way the wind blew.

A north, southwest, or strong west wind and the "B" ration powered eggs, potato flakes, or grits were tolerable.

Any other wind and you chose bacon, sausage, pancakes, or something that provided a darker contrast to the lightly falling ash that came from the burning drums.

You'd think that with the combined intellectual power of the two "1st Shirts" and six field grade officers, spread between the two 1/9th Air Cav troops occupying the southeast sector of that base camp, one (or more) of them would have suggested the detail do the "burning" at some time other than breakfast.

Not a chance!

For five months, over the objec-  
*See Waste burned, Page 23*



# Volume of NVA fire shocked pilots

*Continued from Page 20*

ments and firing rockets to cover the lead ship.

The weather prevented them from getting more than a couple hundred feet off the deck.

Soon the NVA shifted their fire to the second ship. It was hit and crashed near a graveyard. Mike blacked out.

When he came to, he was hanging upside down in his harness with JP-4 running over him. The helicopter had come apart on impact, but did not burn.

Mike was paralyzed on the left side and had several flesh wounds from the plexiglas.

He punched the release and grabbed the AK-47 they carried in the ship as an emergency weapon.

The rest of the crew was dead — WO Ronald Clark Fields, E7 Henry Adler (posthumously promoted to master sergeant), and Spec. 4 Harold Ray Reeves (posthumously promoted to sergeant). They died in UH-1C No. 65-9561 at YD691248.

Mike crawled out and through a

When he came to, he was hanging upside down in his harness with JP-4 running over him. The helicopter had come apart on impact, but did not burn.

rice paddy. He collected his thoughts and decided to try to get to Route 1.

During the rest of the day and the next, he watched several helicopters from the 1/9th Cav go by and waved to attract their attention.

He moved from hole to hole to keep some sort of cover because there was still a lot of shooting all around him.

He made it to Route 1 and knew he was still too far from a friendly unit. It was beginning to get dark when another

helicopter came by. He got to his feet and began to wave, but the helicopter gave no indication of seeing him.

Then the NVA in the treeline behind him opened up.

Mike believes the NVA had been following him, hoping to trap someone who would come to his rescue.

As it got dark, he could hear about five of them coming toward him. He rolled over to use the AK, but it was full of mud and would not fire.

Mike was captured and taken back to the treeline, where they gave him a crutch from a broken tree so he could walk farther back to their camp.

He had a bullet wound in his left leg, was covered with small wounds from the plexiglas and his left side was still paralyzed.

His wounds healed in a few days and about 2½ weeks later the paralysis left him.

He was moved up to Hanoi.

During his stay there, he roomed with Roy Ziegler and Jim Nowicki  
*See Mike's wounds, Page 23*



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# Mike's wounds healed in a few days, he later recovered from paralysis

*Continued from Page 22*

who also are VHPAers.

He remembers Frank Anton arriving with the rest of Dr. Christman's party. They had been held by the VC for some time and were close to starving to death.

Mike was on the second POW flight to leave Hanoi in 1973 and said that was one of the most painful experiences of his life.

The thought of leaving the other Americans behind caused him to feel that he was somehow doing something wrong.

Other POWs mention the same thing — they all wanted to come out together.

The good news is Mike is alive and well in sunny California with his wife and two sons.

Recently the Blue Max Association has helped others who flew with Mike talk with him on the phone.

Sgt. Henry Adler was the platoon sergeant and was flying that day as gunner because there was no one left in the platoon for the mission. He was a good man and a good platoon sergeant.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Russ was a CE with C Btry from November 1967 until July 1969. Though he was not a pilot, he is a strong VHPA supporter and is responsible for getting many to join the VHPA and VHCMA. Recently he helped start the Blue Max Association. Anyone interested in joining this association can contact Russ at P.O. Box [redacted] or by calling [redacted]**

# Waste burned in JP-4 as meal was served

*Continued from Page 21*

tions of the "Whining Warrants" and "Stoic Enlisted," the fires burned and chow continued to be served.

I often wondered if some obscure field manual (possibly FM-19-STUPID) required that "For the good order of discipline and welfare of the force, all s\*\*t shall be burned at exactly the moment breakfast is served."

To this day, I'm very suspicious of any "dark flakes" appearing on my eggs.

The long-term effects of our exposure were apparently benign, but I wonder if that often used expression "If You Ain't Cav, You Ain't S\*\*t!" shouldn't have been "If You Were Cav; You Ate S\*\*t!"

# War memorial dedicated to aircraft

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 274 of Cheboygan, MI, has come up with a new twist on Vietnam memorials.

Chapter member Glenn Chandler came up with the idea to rescue a Huey from those that the Army no longer wanted. His purpose was to build a local memorial.

With some able assistance from Cindy Langdon of Congressman Bart Stupak's office, red tape was set aside and the dream became a reality. Huey No. 68-15586 was picked up at Grand Ledge, MI.

The difference with this memorial is that it will be dedicated to the service of an aircraft, and which bird is more appropriate than the venerable Huey?

I know that there are those of you who are thinking, "Hooks, Snakes, Loachs, Choctaws, Bananas, Hillers or some other rotorcraft was the very most important piece of equipment to beat the air into submission over the jungles of Southeast Asia."

But let's face it. The most recognizable symbol of the "Helicopter War" is good, old Mr. Huey.

Ask a grunt and he'll tell you the most beautiful sound in the world is the drumming of Huey rotor blades. For him, that sound meant chow, mail, ammo, medical attention and, proba-

bly most importantly, escape.

Ask those who waited for us to come home and they'll tell you they never saw a newsreel that didn't have a Huey in it.

It has been 36 years since the Army YUH-1 flew and its offspring are still serving in the Army around the world. The Army has forecast that some recent graduates from flight school will fly that airframe for an entire 20-year career in the Army.

I personally have volunteered to come back and fly one to pick up the last Blackhawk crew from the boneyard after they drop off their machine.

A good number of Iroquois (that's the Huey's official name, for those of you who have forgotten) are being sold off overseas to continue serving in other armies.

I heard that the one I flew in RVN is now serving in Turkey.

I, for one, think that honoring the Huey is appropriate. Just remember before you got to be a gun or bus driver you did your time in slicks, if only in flight school.

A local ironworks company is donating its services to build a stand that will place No. 586 some 12 feet off the ground in a flight that will not end. (Much like some of the missions we flew back then.)

The aircraft is, in fact, a veteran of

the Vietnam War.

It served with the 155th Aviation Company (AHC). Information available currently indicates 586 flew out of Dong Ba Thin while the 155th was part of the 10th Aviation Battalion between 1968 and 1971. The historical records show it was overhauled in Amarillo, TX, in July of 1971 after crash damage.

Glenn Chandler and Chapter 274 would like to get as much information on the aircraft as possible. So all of you Stagecoach drivers need dust off your memory banks and drop him a note with anything you can give him on this aircraft or the unit during that period. Write to:

**Glenn Chandler  
P.O. Box 162  
Tower, MI 49792**

The dedication for the memorial should be some time in the spring of '96. You wouldn't want it to be in northern Michigan before spring, you might freeze your tail rotor off.

When I have more information on it, I will pass it along. Maybe you 155th guys would like to have a reunion in conjunction with the dedication.

**W.T. Grant  
Kingsman 18**



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