



The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

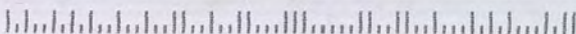
July/August 1997 Vol. 15, No. 4



Donald R. Joyce photo

Montagnard villagers are evacuated from a village near the Cambodian border west of Pleiku in a CH-47 from the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company. More than 100 Montagnards were the usual load.

ID# 100806** 12/99



From the President

Well, what can I say about Orlando? As our first reunion run by a chapter, I would have to say that this is the way to do our future ones. This is quite a good start for a new president.

Our thanks to Jim Basta and the men and women of the Florida LZ Chapter and to Charlie Rayl for his leadership. They have set a standard that will be the model for all our reunions to come.

As the new president, I will continue the policies set by my predecessors in maintaining fiscal control. I will not support actions that will jeopardize the present and the future financial stability of our Association.

We will continue to record our history for future generations and provide the same level of programs through sound management and control over our expenditures. We will look for new ways of accomplishing our goals without adding additional burdens upon our members.

A major goal of mine has been the increased role of our chapters in supporting our activities. If Orlando is any example, we are on the right track.

The future of our Association is at the grassroots and local members can find our brothers and encourage them to join us.

An example of this is the effort put forth by Florida LZ

member Don Joyce, who was a major supporter of the Orlando activities (he sold 150 raffle tickets) and has brought in dozens of new members. This type of enthusiastic effort is at the heart of our chapters.

The responsibilities of the Executive Council members for the coming year are as follows:

- **Charlie Rayl, past president:** Legal adviser, site selection.
- **Tom Payne, vice president:** Chapter support and development.
- **Bob Smith, senior member-at-large:** Complaint response, finance, fund raising, marketing, advertising, and lottery.
- **Bob Johnson, mid-term member-at-large:** Conference arraignment, membership promotion and development.
- **Dave Rittman, junior member-at-large:** Reunion oversight, vendors, strategic plan, EC/Committee roster.

In addition, Ken Fritz has volunteered to continue his duties of publications management.

Angelo Spelios and the Fort Worth Chapter are already at warp-speed preparing for Reunion '98.

This will be another fine chapter-run reunion and I hope to see as many of our members and potential members there as possible.

Every reunion is an opportunity to greet buddies whom we have not seen for 25 or 30 years, as I did at Orlando, two "new" old friends who haven't changed a bit.

— **Mike Hurley, President**

Tennessee volunteers sought for reunion

Dear Tennessee VHPA Member:

In case you haven't heard, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion is coming to Tennessee in 1999.

The event will be held at the Renaissance Hotel in the historic downtown district of Nashville during the Fourth of July week.

The association needs volunteers to help make Nashville '99 the most successful reunion ever held.

To carry out this mission, your help and assistance in the planning and execution of this event is needed.



tional meeting on Saturday, Aug. 16, at 1 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel, 611 Commerce St., in downtown Nashville.

In addition, I have spoken to

If you would like to volunteer some of your time to this effort, please attend an organiza-

some Tennessee members about forming a state or perhaps mid-South chapter of the VHPA. If you are interested in being a part of a regional chapter, please join us also on the 16th.

Mike Haley
"Outlaw 13"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Anyone who cannot attend the organizational meeting and would like to help with the Nashville reunion may contact Mike Haley at [REDACTED]

Classified ads

POSITION WANTED: Experienced helicopter pilot looking for a position in the areas of EMS, natural resources or public service. Experience: Regular Army, Indiana National Guard. Class 68-27. Call Bill Resor at [REDACTED].

CALORAD: All natural wellness product. Would you like to lose inches/weight while you sleep? Build lean muscle mass? No diet or exercise necessary. Too good to be true? An 86% long-term success rate speaks for itself. Available retail or wholesale in an excellent business opportunity. Call VHPA member Paul Uster (L200) at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

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VHPA OFFICERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND STAFF 1997-98

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PAST PRESIDENT	Charles Rayl
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Midterm Member	Bob Johnson
Junior Member	David Rittman
SECRETARY/TREASURER	Dan Ferguson
FOUNDER	Larry Clark

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Membership	Hayden "Pappy" Jones
Public Relations	Ken Fritz
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Gathering (HAI)	David Rittman
1998 Reunion	Angelo Spelios
Site Selection	Kenny Bunn
Chaplain	John Plummer
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR	Jack Swickard
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Contributing writers	Mike Law, Mel Canon

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Ohio River LZ Chapter	Jack W. Shrode Jr., President [REDACTED]
Great Lakes Chapter	John Becker, President [REDACTED] d [REDACTED] home
North Carolina Chapter	Vic Rose, President [REDACTED]
New England Chapter	Bob Whitford, Past President [REDACTED] Boston, MA 02101-2976 [REDACTED] home [REDACTED] work
Fort Wolters Chapter	Charles Holley, President [REDACTED] [REDACTED] fax [REDACTED]
Mardi Gras Chapter	Don Hunt, President Lee Overstreet, Vice President New Orleans, LA
Florida LZ Chapter	Judd Chapin, Executive Director [REDACTED] t. [REDACTED]
California Chapter North	Rich Buzen, President [REDACTED] www.hooked.net/~pandata/ccn.com.html

VHPA briefs

Membership Directory prepared

This year's Membership Directory cutoff date was close of business on Friday, Aug. 15. All additions, deletions, and updates made to the membership database by that time will appear in the 1997 Directory.

As per our traditional schedule, the Directory goes to the printer in early September and should be in members' hands on or before mid-October. It is mailed fourth class, which can take as long as three weeks to reach everyone in the U.S. postal system.

If you have not received your copy of the Directory by Oct. 20, please contact VHPA Headquarters at (800) 505-VHPA or by fax at (916) 648-1072.

Logo created as computer graphic

The "Back to the World" logo used on T-shirts and programs at the Orlando Reunion in July was conceived by Don Joyce of the Florida LZ Chapter.

Nancy King of Professional Advertising Services in Plant City, FL, created the logo as a color computer graphic.

Final reunion numbers

James Basta, Orlando Reunion chairman, reports 814 pilots were among the 1,514 people registered at this year's reunion.

Attending the various reunion events were:

Reception — 935; Sea World — 1,206; Ladies Social — 173; Banquet — 1,262; Golf — 91; Teen Dance — 40; 5K run — 44; and Parade — 367.

Orlando reunion incredible event

It has been a week now and my wife and I are already anxious to get to Fort Worth for the next national reunion. Orlando was our first.

It is incredible how many aviators were there and I could only recognize but a handful. I guess when you figure a 15-year war, multiplied by literally thousands of helicopters, we (VHPA) become a very large group.

I don't think I'm alone in admitting I've avoided these reunions in the past. For whatever reason, I've found something else to do or somewhere else to go on the 4th of July. I never knew what I was missing; these reunions are fun!

Aside from not seeing a lot of old faces, it is certainly easy to meet new faces. No wonder, we all have the same background. Nobody can have enough friends.

I don't think I'm alone in admitting I've avoided these reunions in the past . . . I never knew what I was missing; these reunions are fun!

Marching in the Brandon, FL 4th of July Parade was a rush. What a sight we were. A Huey, a LOH and a Cobra interspersed with between 400 and 500 VHPA members.

Some wore hats, and T-shirts emblazoned with our VHPA logo. Some wore shirts and vests covered with unit insignia proudly

stating where and with whom they served. Some are still able to wear their uniforms and flight suits (if only I could still get into mine!!).

As we passed, the onlookers stood, applauded and mouthed the words "thank you." WE ARE NOT FORGOTTEN! A parade should become an annual VHPA Reunion event.

The mini-reunions are a great idea. Sharing the events of the era, watching some slides and catching up on the years is something not to miss.

I was a little disappointed there was not a better turnout for the 119th AHC (81st Trans. Co.). After all, we were one of the oldest units in the country prior to standing down in 1971. Hey, 119th, let's make a statement in Fort Worth '98!

Hope to see you back where it all began.

Terry Muldoon
Gator 536, 119th AHC
Class 66-17

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VHPA Product Order Form

MAIL FORM TO: VHPA
University Ave., Suite 210
Sacramento, CA 95825
(800) 505-VHPA

(FAX CREDIT CARD ORDERS: (916) 648-1072)

New VHPA bumper stickers	\$1/each	_____
New round window stickers	\$1/each	_____
Back VHPA Newsletters (Complete sets only)	\$20/set (\$5 P&H each set)	_____
1994 VHPA Directory	\$10/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
1995 VHPA Directory	\$10/each (\$5 P&H each)	_____
1996 VHPA Directory	\$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	\$5/each (\$3 P&H each)	_____
1996 VHPA Calendar	\$5/each (\$3 P&H each)	_____
1995-96 VHPA Calendar set	\$10/set (\$5 P&H set)	_____

VHPA History Book, Vol. 1 \$50/each
Turner Publishing limited edition _____

GRAND TOTAL _____

TO ORDER

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Credit card No.: _____

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Signature: _____

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Family's inquiry receives response

I got my first e-mail response to my inquiry that you ran in The VHPA Newsletter. I thought you might be interested, so I'm sending it along to you. It's below.

Thanks again for your help and interest.

David Venditta

Perhaps I can shed a small amount of light on your cousin's death. I was in Nick's class at the Americal Division "Combat College." The day he died, one other warrant and I "cut" class to go the the PX and were not in the "Booby trap and hand grenade class. WO Steve Stone and myself got back to the tent around 1400 in the afternoon, and were hanging out hoping we were not caught.

Around 1500, a captain whose name I don't remember came into the tent. He was pale white and very upset almost on the verge of breakdown. He said there had been an accident in the classroom and explained what had happened.

The instructor, a veteran Infantry NCO, was explaining hand grenades. As part of his demo he had a box of grenades on a table in the classroom.

He took one of the round cardboard holders with a grenade in it, he pulled off the paper/cloth tape securing the two halves together, as you would with a "new out of the box grenade." He held the grenade up going through his spiel, "... this is a M28 antipersonnel grenade ..."

At the end of his spiel, he pulled the safety pin and held the spoon to show the final safety and talked about that. He then let the spoon pop off and threw the grenade toward the class. It landed on the floor and rolled under the bench, where some of the warrant officers were sitting. One of them kicked the grenade aside and it rolled under the bench where Nick and Bill were sitting, at this time the instructor stepped on a button on the floor and set a charge off outside the building. There was a loud popping sound and then the second explosion of the live grenade going off inside the classroom.

It is my understanding that at the time of the explosion a CH-47, probably from the Boxcars, was landing on the

He then let the spoon pop off and threw the grenade toward the class. It landed on the floor and rolled under the bench, where some of the warrant officers were sitting

resupply pad just outside, and he flew the majority of the wounded to the evac hospital.

This is the story relayed to us by the captain who was in the class at the time. While he was telling us the story, a Jeep came speeding up to the HQ across the street, and someone commented the "cover-up has begun."

As far as I know there were no interviews conducted by CID, that I am aware of, so it would seem to indicate some kind of cover-up.

The last I heard Nick and Bill were the only fatalities of the incident.

I wish I could offer you more, but that is all I remember.

Sincerely,

Larry S. Feasel

176th AHC — 1969-70

Warrant officer pilot saved lives of crew

I flew as crew chief on a UH-1C gunship (call sign "Taipan") with the 135th Assault Helicopter Co., Bearcat, RVN, during March 1969 through March 1970.

Ours was a "hog ship," meaning it had two rocket pods carrying thirty-eight 2.75-inch and two freehand M-60s.

For three months, I flew night "hunter-killer" missions in the Delta, this is a story from one of those nights.

Aerial flares were dropped from a high-altitude fixed wing, leaving a line of "light cones" that penetrated the dark like upside down ice cream cones. We flew outside the light cone in the dark with our navigation lights out, in hopes of catching "Charlie" bringing in supplies via sampans, water buffalo, elephant or whatever across the delta from Cambodia.

This particular night was pretty uneventful, until we received a distress call from an ARVN outpost south of Vung Tau.

Information was sketchy, but we heard this artillery outpost was being overrun by a estimated battalion of NVA regulars. As pilot in command, WO Jones nosed our ship over to beat it for the outpost.

Our first low-level pass just above the tree tops revealed little. We began to circle the outpost to draw fire from the ground. I remember thinking how dark it was as there was no moonlight and the AO was thick with trees.

Suddenly, mortar flashed on the ground as projectiles left the short tubes everywhere. As we flew directly over one of the flashes, I could see four or five human figures in a circle around the mortar tube, down on one knee with a mortar round in each hand.

Looked like automatic mortar fire, each NVA dropped one, then the other round into the tube and the soldier next to him would drop his two and so on, and then they would reach for more rounds as they fired.

We laid down some M-60 fire until both wing ships were in position and an attack plan was formulated. With

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targets identified, I heard Jones tell our peter pilot he was climbing to 2,000 feet and we would break out at 500.

This is where the story gets interesting, the FNG peter pilot had never flown a "hunter-killer" mission, and had no nighttime combat experience.

As Jones dived into the darkness from strike altitude, he told the peter pilot to "call out 500 and I'll break right." We opened up with the guns from both sides of the aircraft, our red tracers spewing out like a laser light show and the rockets, two at a time, white hot streams of sparks leading to the target as fast as Jones could fire.

Well, the peter pilot must have thought it was the Fourth of July and never thought to look at the altimeter — all the way to the trees.

On impact with the first tree there was just a loud explosion. I was half out of the aircraft firing forward, but I could not see anything beyond my muzzle flashes and, suddenly I was just hanging upside down by my loose seat belt like a rag doll.

As I tried to get back into the jump seat, we hit the tops of some more trees. The impacts were bone jarring and, in the darkness, all I could think of was we were rolling on the ground.

As I managed to hang on to my M-60 with one hand, which now was nearly under the right pod, my feet were above my head, getting back into the seat I could not believe what I saw. We were still flying, although just barely.

There were sounds I haven't heard from a Huey before, like loud whistling and the roar of wind directly on my face and the worst 1-1 vibration ever.

As I strained to see the damage, I could make out that a tree limb had come up through the floor panels, the windshield, the greenhouse over the peter pilot, both chin bubbles, the complete avionics section in the nose, and probably three feet of both rotor blades (the source of the loud whistling) were all gone.

The crew — Jones was flying — couldn't get a visual on the peter pilot. The left and right seat gunners were bruised and shaken.

I saw Jones' communications cord swinging in the breeze, so I reached over and grabbed his helmet and plugged him in. We were able to communicate.

I told him I thought I saw a place to put down and he

So, with one foot in front of the remaining rotor pedal and one behind, he was able to move fore and aft. But we still had no aft cyclic, which meant any landings were going to be at 90 or so knots.

Was Gary Roush an IP in LOH at Vung Tau?

Please allow me to introduce myself I'm Lee Journey, president of the U.S. Army Signal Officer Candidate School Association.

I'm a member of VHPA and may be able to help Mr. Gary Roush in his search for flight class info. I will check my records for any old orders.

If you would ask Mr. Roush if he was an instructor pilot in the OH-6 LOH in Vung Tau around August 1968?

Your newsletter is great, already helped me contact a former Emu 135th AHC member in Australia.

I'm going to try to push my Signal Corps chopper types to check out your organization.

Hope to hear from you and Gary Roush soon.

Lee W. Journey
Fireball 11 — Emu 3
1968-69, 1971-72

Hi, Lee,

No, I was not a LOH instructor. I flew Chinooks out of Cu Chi.

What flight class information do you have?

Gary Roush
242nd ASHC Muleskinners
May 1968-May 1969

promptly told me he had no aft cyclic (to slow and flare the aircraft) and only one rotor pedal left.

Exercising my authority as crew chief, I insisted he put the craft down in an open rice paddy. I think I just wanted out. But he insisted he could still fly.

So, with one foot in front of the remaining rotor pedal and one behind, he was able to move fore and aft. But we still had no aft cyclic, which meant any landings were going to be at 90 or so knots.

We headed for Vung Tau, unable to communicate with the tower there or our wingships. Jones was sure the wingships saw what happened and would call ahead for us. Looking back I was sure he was right as they were at our 4 and 8 o'clock positions escorting us.

As we came over the perimeter berm, I could see the crash vehicles on either side of the PSP runway. Jones lowered the collective and narrowed the distance between runway and skids, our speed remaining constant.

We touched down at 70 knots, Jones rolled off the throttle, sparks flew and I could feel the heat from the skids as they ground down. Then, after what seemed like the longest slide in history, we started to skid sideways, at 45 degrees to the runway.

When the ship halted, I jumped out, opened the door and

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slid the chicken plate back to let Jones out and went around to the peter pilot only to learn all he had to do was unbuckle and slide out straight ahead.

When the crash crew arrived, it was finally over.

Later that night back on the flight line, Jones and I were sitting in the door of a Delta model waiting for a lift back to Bearcat. It was dark and we talked about the incident. I ragged hard on the peter pilot and said things in the heat of the moment, not realizing he was in the chopper with us on a stretcher.

Which brings me to the point of this story.

WO Jones, thanks man! You truly saved our lives that night. I did not think it possible to fly that machine in that condition, especially after we landed. I want you to know, and anyone else who reads this, you are the best pilot! God bless you.

Michael D. Guard

CH-47 crash at Song Be resulted in many deaths

In the May/June 1997 Newsletter, an exchange of e-mail between Gary Roush and Geoffrey Webster mentioned a CH-47 crash at Song Be.

The aircraft was assigned to the 205th Aviation Company at Phu Loi and resulted in the largest loss of life of any accident I am aware of.

The aircraft experienced an engine failure very shortly after take-off and the crew was unable to return to the take-off point and also failed to make a forced landing in a stream bed below the takeoff point.

All of the aircrew made it out of the aircraft, which had been occupied by approximately 75 ARVN and 6 U.S. infantry personnel. Rescue attempts resulted in the death of Spec. 4 Wayne Allums of Enterprise, AL, who was the flight engineer.

Allums, a very highly regarded crewman, reentered the aircraft numerous times to drag injured personnel from the burning wreck. He received a posthumous Soldier's Medal for his bravery.

The aircraft commander was CW2 Helmut Fischer, and CW2 Duke Flannagan was the pilot. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the names of the crew chief and gunner.

I walked through the crash site the following day and was amazed at how thoroughly the aircraft had burned. I

All through the ashes were steel helmets and rifle barrels, grim evidence of the numbers of lives lost in the crash.

Jack Jordan says thanks for help with groups

I want to thank the membership for the opportunity you gave me when I was elected to the Executive Council. It has been an honor to serve you and to work with the dedicated council members.

I would also like to thank all those who have assisted with the HAI and the AAAA Convention in the past. Your continued support of these activities is needed. I will no longer be serving on the council or as committee chair for HAI and AAAA.

I will, however, be serving on the newly formed VHPA Scholarship Fund Committee. You just thought you were getting rid of me. I ask that each of you review the article on the scholarship fund and do what you can to help.

If you have not served on a committee or been involved in the work required to put a reunion together, please take the time to thank your council and committee members for their efforts. It truly is a labor of love, but thanks cost nothing and are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jack Jordan

P.O. Box 395

Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

recalled seeing the two rotor heads, turbine sections of the engines and the landing gear. All through the ashes were steel helmets and rifle barrels, grim evidence of the number of lives lost in the crash.

Also killed in the crash was the flight platoon mascot, Lucy D. Dog. Lucy came to us as a tiny puppy and spent most of her life in the aircraft or with her platoon mates.

She used to delight in laying in the chin bubble of the aircraft in flight. The looks we got from slingload hook up men when they saw Lucy was a giggle.

Ralph E. Chappell

Pilots attended high school together before military

I read your letter in the recent issue of The VHPA Newsletter. I went to high school with Bill Vachon.

I graduated in 1965 and I believe Bill would have graduated in the class of either 1966 or 1967. We both went to South Portland (Maine) High School.

I later met up with Bill when I returned to Fort Wolters from Vietnam. He was attending flight school and I was serving as a TAC officer in a neighboring WOC company. Although we didn't "hang out" together in school, we both knew one another and had mutual friends.

Bill's graduation photo from school is hanging on the

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wall of the South Portland VFW Post 832, along with the others from South Portland who lost their lives in Vietnam.

On my occasional trips to Maine, I visit the VFW post, and many of his high school friends are members. I was still at Wolters (a newly commissioned officer by this time) when I learned of Bill's death.

The details were sketchy, but I had heard that it was some type of ground accident shortly after he arrived in-country. Bill was a popular student in school, and his untimely death was a shock to all of us who knew him.

Kevin Bagley
P.O. Box 55
West Point, NY 10996
[REDACTED]

Sister thanks Pink Panthers for kindness, generosity

I would like to thank the members of the 361st Aviation Company "The Pink Panthers."

I began a search about a month ago to find men who served in Vietnam with my brother. The results have far exceeded my expectations. These men have opened their hearts, shared their past and invited me into their future.

They tell me they are glad to have found me! When it really is the other way around.

I am thankful to have found these men to help me understand a part of Mark's life that I would have no way of ever knowing without them.

Private collector seek Vietnam memorabilia

While carrying out lengthy research into the Vietnam War, I came across your address through VVMF, who were kind enough to supply me with some photos of "Memorial Days" and some VVMF stickers.

I am trying to compile a private collection of Vietnam War memorabilia in order that the memory of those who fought in the war and everything that was done after the war is not forgotten.

Could you possibly put in touch with any war veterans? This is one of my dearest wishes.

Please find enclosed some photos from my collection. As you can see, it is quite restricted.

Would you possibly be able to add to it? For example, a jacket which served during the war, a helmet, badges, pins, medals, photos, etc.

They would all help my collection.

I will pay you, of course, if necessary.

Franco Vuotto
Rue de la Treille 26
1950 Sion
Switzerland

If there is a way to post to these men, and they know who they are, how very, very much I appreciate their help and support and kindness. Thank you,

Susan Clotfelter Blaker

[REDACTED]
Sister of Mark Clotfelter
KIA 6/16/69

Pilot's second sister meets Pink Panthers at Orlando

I have just returned from the reunion in Orlando and my feet still don't touch the ground. I met the most wonderful group of men that served with my brother, the 361st Pink Panthers.

I now know the details of how he died and how he lived and grew to be a man they respected and trusted with their lives.

The courage these men have shown, touched my heart. Their thoughtfulness means more than words can tell. God bless all of you.

Linda Clotfelter Waldron

Retired general completes story about bombings

I read CWO James R. Oden's interesting and most informative article "Bombs Dropped From Helicopter" in your publication. Since the article ended with an indication of uncertainty about what followed, I am one of those who can assure him his efforts were not wasted.

Along with others, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), better known at the time as the 1st Air Cav, used many times the 834th Air Division's "instant LZ" service. In fact, I still have the engraved nose cone from the 100th BLU-82/B dropped in RVN on Project "Commando Vault." It was presented to me by BG (later MG) John Herring, commander of the 834th.

The bomb used weighed 15,000 pounds, with an explosive weight of 12,000 pounds. It was 4½ feet in diameter and 11½ feet long, increased to 14½ feet by a 3-foot fuze extender to provide an above-the-ground burst. It was dropped from a C-130 at 8,000 feet with the same uncanny accuracy of previous drops. This accuracy came from precision radar control at the U.S.A.F. radar site in Bien Hoa. This drop, in support of our 1st Brigade, was exactly on target and created a three-ship LZ. The LZ was on a hilltop in rugged jungle terrain about 2,500 meters east-northeast of Rang Rang and about the same distance north-northwest of Dinh Quan in the III Corps area.

To paraphrase from a longtime Midwestern news commentator — "And that's the rest of the story."

George W. Putnam Jr.
Maj. Gen. U.S. Army (Retired)
Arlington, VA

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VHPA bumper stickers draw a lot of attention

I have VHPA bumper stickers prominently displayed on both my car and my pickup. In my opinion, this is the best way we can publicize our organization. My wife and I are always being asked about it.

In May, I was at my son's college graduation. A young man came up and asked if I had flown helicopters in Vietnam. I answered yes and he said, "I have a lot of respect for what you guys did."

In the May/June newsletter there was the story of Don

Werner being recognized by a soldier he had rescued. Something similar happened to me.

I was on the Orlando Reunion Committee. There were a lot of round trip drives from Jacksonville to Orlando, but on this particular trip someone made it memorable.

After he passed, I noticed a Purple Heart license plate. I assumed some helicopter pilot had once pulled him out of a bad situation.

While riding on I-4, a pickup passed me. I had noticed his front license plate was a Vietnam service ribbon. When he got beside me, I waved. He returned my wave with a nice crisp salute. After he passed, I noticed a Purple Heart license plate. I assumed some helicopter pilot had once pulled him out of a bad situation.

I don't know which of my brother pilots helped this guy, but I got your salute.

Bill Kelbaugh

48 AHC Blue Stars, 1967-68

Norwegian woman pilot has soft spot for helicopters

I just wanted to send some comments.

I am a Norwegian lady, a fixed-wing pilot. I had my chance of flying a Bell 204 helicopter together with an instructor when visiting the 720 Squadron south of Oslo some years ago.

I have always had a soft heart for helicopters, but since taking that licence is extremely expensive here in Norway I had to go for a fixed-wing licence.

But I visited Vietnam during this Christmas, going from Hanoi in north via Danang and down to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). When in Saigon, I visited the war museum where they had all kinds of planes on exhibit, among them a Huey.

I went out to see the Cu Chi tunnels and even went down

Former colleague seeks two ex-Vietnam pilots

I am not a Vietnam veteran, however, in the late 1970s I worked as a helicopter engineer and pilot in Africa with several vets.

Two fellows in particular I would like to locate. One gentleman's name is Ken Korb, I believe he was from Wisconsin.

The other is Tom Johnson. I can't remember where he was from.

Mr. Korb flew Cobras and Mr. Johnson flew Loaches in the war. We were all good friends for the short period of time we spent together in Africa, and it would be an honor to know how they are, or even get in touch with them again.

At the time we were working for Viking Helicopters, a Hughes 500 operator out of Ottawa, Canada, on a World Health Organization project in West Africa.

If you can be of any help, or could assist me in how I might locate them I would appreciate it.

Bruce Purdy

in them. The first level have been widened so tourist can go forward bent. I went further down to the last level where you must crawl through (at 36 feet below).

In Norway I am in the army in the communication platoon.

I just wanted to say hello and say I have the utmost respect for you helicopter guys, either pilot or crew member.

Sincerely

Unni Gran

Norway

Single emergency results in two perfect 'landings'

It was Oct. 21, 1971, and I was flying slicks for A Company 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, in the Bien Hoa area of III Corps.

I had been in country almost six months. I was now the most senior aircraft commander in my company. It was our company policy to always put the most experienced AC with the newest pilot. This was a good policy and I know it had saved many lives.

On this day, we were flying combat assaults with various units of the 1st Cav. My new guy, pilot, had a whole three days in country. It made for a very exhausting day. We flew for eight hours straight only landing to insert or pick up troops. We refueled hot and ate C rations.

Since we were in and out of tight LZs and No. 3 in a

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

flight of five, I had to do most of the flying so the new guy would not kill us. Of course, we were all new guys once and we all understood that we needed to teach and train these guys so we all could survive and go home.

Well, around 4 p.m. the rains were coming in and all of our missions were completed. We headed back to Bien Hoa Air Base. I gave the controls to my new guy.

We were in a staggered left formation at about 500 AGL. I told my new guy not to get too close to Yellow 2 and don't get under his rotor wash. I was ready to take a much-needed smoke break.

Well, it was not very long before we were below Yellow 2 and catching his rotor wash. At first, I thought my new guy was not going to give me a break.

I started to take the controls and jump on him when I noticed the engine RPM decaying. I immediately bottomed the collective and turned away from the flight to figure things out. All my great Army flight training was about to pay off.

I thought, at first, this must be a low-side governor failure. The engine was running, but I lacked power.

I was about to order the peter pilot to put us on manual fuel control which is supposed to give the engine a surge of fuel in case a recovery is needed.

Then I suddenly got the red fire warning light. I knew now that what I was about to do would only make a bad situation worse. I ordered the main fuel to be shut off, which probably saved our lives since we later discovered the fire was being fed by a

leaking fuel line.

I had us into the wind, in autorotation and headed toward a good size rice paddy. I put out a "May Day" as

the other four aircraft were discovering we were going down in a blaze. I was praying for the ground to come up as fast as possible.

My crew and the other aircraft were letting me know this fire wasn't getting any better.

As we were headed down I noticed the crew chief was between the pilots' seats. I guess he was trying to avoid the flames.

As we were getting closer to the ground, I noticed the rotor RPM was higher than normal, which was fine with me.

Then this old rice paddy I was in a hurry to get to suddenly did not look so inviting. As I flared at about 75 feet, I noticed this rice paddy was overgrown with tall weeds and there were tree stumps throughout the area.

Again my Army flight training kicked in. My last flight instructor, at Fort Rucker, insisted we learn zero ground run autorotations. He said there are very few areas in Vietnam that will permit a

ground run autorotation without flipping.

As the ground came up, I picked a spot and brought us to a complete stop right at weed level. The collective was in my armpit as I leveled off and dropped down into the old rice paddy, which also had a foot of water in it.

But it wasn't over. I started turning off the main battery when I saw my peter pilot start to jump out. I tried to grab him, but it was too late. The bird was burning and he was going.

I remembered from flight school the instructors telling us that many pilots were killed by rotor blades when exiting a downed aircraft. I knew the crew chief was still next to me, so I put the cyclic full left to give my new guy a better chance of not losing his head and it worked, but it was very close. The blades were flexing a lot from our landing.

I told my crew chief to follow the peter pilot because Yellow 5 had the job of picking up anyone who went down and I knew it would be nearby.

I started to grab the small CO2 extinguisher when I realized it was empty. It would not have made any difference since the magnesium was glowing white hot in the engine area.

I decided it was time for me to get out of there. It seemed like it took forever to reach Yellow 5 which had landed a short distance from my location. When I reached Yellow 5, I found my crew waiting for me, but the



Bob Kurabieski stands beside UH-1H during his tour with the 1st Cavalry Division in 1971-72. Kurabieski, then a WO1, received the Broken Wing Award for a successful emergency autorotation.

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

doorgunner was unconscious, wet and covered in weeds.

I learned as we flew him to a nearby hospital that he jumped out, spread eagle, as I began my flare at 75 feet. The incident was observed by the crews of the other four aircraft. My doorgunner had landed flat on his back.

The weeds and water in the old rice paddy had broken his fall and saved him from any serious injury.

This incident earned him the nickname "Superman" and I received a Broken Wing Award.

Weeks later I told this doorgunner that things could easi-

ly have resulted differently and he could have been the only survivor. When flames are licking at your butt, you do what you have to do.

I thank God we both had perfect landings and this did not happen during any other part of day when we were over dense jungle and loaded with troops.

Bob Kurabieski, CW2
Vietnam 1971-72

fax

Taps

Thomas Blanchard

Thomas Blanchard of El Paso, TX, died in April of cancer.

Blanchard graduated from flight school with Class 66-5W and served in Vietnam with the 361st Aerial Weapons Company in 1969-1970.

He was a member of the VHPA.

Bradford Wayne Green

CW3 Bradford Wayne Green, 49, was killed in a helicopter crash the night of May 20 at Camp Shelby, MS.

At the time of his death, he was serving in the Mississippi Army National Guard.

Green, of Amory, Miss., was killed when his OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter crashed during a night reconnaissance exercise with nine other helicopters. The other aircraft were not involved in the accident.

During his tour in Vietnam, Green was a member Company B, 101st Assault Helicopter Battalion.

He graduated with flight school Class ORWAC 69-38.

David R. Kyle

David R. Kyle, 51, died on June 19 while flying an OV-10 for the California Forestry Service.

If my memory serves me correctly, Dave graduated with WORWAC Class 70-3 at Fort Rucker.

He is survived by two children by his first marriage.

I had known Dave since 1974, when we both served in the U.S. Army Reserve and we shared many memorable moments together.

Dave left Pennsylvania in the late 1980s to work as an instructor pilot at Fort Rucker, and then as a National Guard/Reserve CW4 at Columbia, SC.

— Edward W. Wolfe Jr.

Thomas Warren Liliker

Retired Army Lt. Col. Thomas Warren Liliker, 65, died July 19 in Sugar Land, Texas.

As a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Burial was July 21 in Enterprise, AL.

Ben Trent Jr.

Ben Trent Jr. died May 19 at the DePaul Health Care Center in Bridgeton, MO.

Trent joined the Army in 1967. He was in flight school Classes 66-21 and 66-23.

He served in Vietnam with A/71st Cav in 1967-69 and the 330th TC Company in 1971-72.

He also had assignments in Germany, Alaska and Fort Huachuca, AZ. He retired from the Army on Feb. 9, 1984.

He is survived by his wife, Thelma; two daughters, Wendolyn and Katheryn; and one granddaughter.

Burial was held May 28 at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA.

Mike Williams

It is with great sadness I pass on the news of the accidental death of our brother and my friend, Mike "Weird Willie" Williams.

Williams served with A Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division from January-December 1970, with A Troop, 1/9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division from January-May 1971, and with the 214th Assault Helicopter Company from May-July 1971.

Among numerous other awards Williams received the Distinguished Flying Cross on two occasions during his time as a scout gunner.

Williams was with his son on Father's Day when struck by a round when the gun he was carrying accidentally discharged. He died before help could reach him.

He was a sixth grade teacher in Pine, a small Arizona town where he lived and was a member of the local search and rescue team.

He was a well-liked, greatly respected member of his community who did much to advance the positive image of the Vietnam veteran.

I understand the town flew their flags at half mast in his honor following his death.

Williams was a life member of VHCMA and a friend to all who had the pleasure to meet him.

He is survived by his wife Hazel, and his two sons.

Cards and memorial donations may be sent to Hazel Williams, P.O. Box 1145, Pine, AZ 85544.

— Terry Rolinger

EDITOR'S NOTE: Obituaries can be sent by e-mail to the newsletter editor at: swickard@vhpa.org

Chaplain gets a jolt from pastor

I recently returned from Toronto after spending a couple of days with my friend Kim Phuc and her family.

The visit was all I'd hoped it would be and more. She, her husband Toan, and son Thomas made me feel like a part of their family.

We prayed together, worshipped together, and had two wonderful days of sharing and enjoying the special relationship God has given us.

On Thursday night, Kim and Toan took me to a Vietnamese Protestant church where I had been asked to speak. Before the service, we were all enjoying refreshments in the fellowship hall when a gentleman came and sat down across from me at the table.

He introduced himself as the pastor of the church and we struck up a conversation.

He asked me where I served while stationed in Vietnam. I replied that during my first tour, I had worked in the vicinity of Pleiku and out to the west along the area where the Ho Chi Minh trail entered South Vietnam.

He said he'd been stationed in the Pleiku area, too. Then he asked if I'd ever been up around Kontum. I said, "yes." Dak Pek? Again I said, "yes." He said, "I served in those areas, too."

I said, "Wow, maybe we served together."

He looked right in the eye, and answered, "I don't think so, John. I was in the NORTH Vietnamese Army."

I was stunned. Incredulous is a better word, I guess. I looked this good Christian man in the eyes and somehow our hands met across the table. Neither of us could speak. We held onto each other's hands as, silently, tears flowed down our faces — each of us too overcome for words as we both realized how we who had once sought to kill each

other were now united in the love of our God and his Son.

What a moment for both of us as our hearts became one in the Lord!

Later, during my talk, which was on love and reconciliation, I called him up to stand with me.

I told the congregation that Jesus told us to love God and that was easy. Then he told us to love our neighbors and most of us had no trouble with the premise even though it was not always easy to do.

Then I said Jesus told us to love our enemies and that was a pretty tough commandment.

Now, though, I realized what he meant and how he expected us to carry out this most difficult of all commandments.

If we truly love God and our neighbors, we'll no longer have enemies, for one cannot love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength while at the same time hating one of His children.

I then turned to the pastor and said, "Pastor Tham, I love you and I forgive you. Will you forgive me?"

He wasn't prepared for this tremendously emotional question (and quite frankly, neither was I). He fell into my arms sobbing and I sobbed right along with him, as did everybody else in the room.

He finally responded, "Yes, Pastor John, I forgive you and I love you as my brother in Christ."

What a moment!!!

Oh, how God has blessed me after so many years of torment and self-condemnation. I share this with you because He can give all of you the strength to do just what I did.

May you, too, trust in him enough to receive the liberating peace he's given me. Only then can you relieve yourselves of the dark spots in your own lives.

Grace and Peace,

— John Plummer "Rev. Thunderhorse"

The Chaplain's Office

VHPA scholarship fund off ground

JACK JORDAN

The VHPA Executive Council approved the formation of a Scholarship Committee and the funding of a VHPA Scholarship Fund.

I will serve as chairman of the committee. Tom Percy and A.J. Welsh have offered to serve, as well. The committee will focus on the following areas:

- Fund-raising
- Administration of assets
- Eligibility criteria

- Types of scholarships
- Scholarship selection committee

Individuals having experience in any of these areas who are willing to offer assistance, as well as those willing to serve on the scholarship committee, are encouraged to contact me.

The committee will take input from the membership during the coming year and will submit proposed guidelines at the VHPA business meeting during the Fort Worth Reunion in 1998.

At the VHPA annual business meeting held during the Orlando Reunion, the VHPA membership was asked to support the funding of a \$1 million scholarship fund.

Before anyone strokes out, let me put this in perspective.

If we have 10 good men who will give \$100,000 each, we have our funding. If we have 100 good men who will give \$10,000 each, we have the funding. If we have 1,000 good men who will give \$1,000 each, we

See WHY, Page 13

Why should I contribute to scholarships?

Continued from Page 12

have our funding.

Or, if each of us good men gives a mere \$25 per year for the next 10 years, we will have our funding.

The question then becomes: Why should I?

I would submit that we all have a history of rising above the norm and offering ourselves to a cause greater than ourselves.

There is not a person who flew in RVN who did not offer to sacrifice his life to save the life of a total stranger.

We will not be making this sacrifice to total strangers. We will be doing this to help our own and in

memory of all of us. This is for those who did not come back and for those who have lived full lives and will see our children and our grandchildren grow.

There have been numerous suggestions for obtaining funds. Some include term life policies, corporate sponsors and encouraging members to leave bequests in their wills. All of these and many other suggestions will be investigated.

This much I know, we can begin with each of us contributing whatever we can right now.

When your membership renewal comes in, add an extra amount for the scholarship fund.

If you have just renewed or are a life member, send in a contribution when you can.

On the day of the business meeting, we received \$2,250 for the scholarship fund, so we are only \$997,750 from our goal. Not a problem for a Vietnam helicopter pilot.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jack Jordan is a recent member of the VHPA Executive Council and past chairman of the VHPA's HAI/The Gathering and AAAA committees. He can be contacted at:

7. His telephone numbers are: (home) and (fax).

Chapter runs first VHPA reunion

The 14th annual VHPA Reunion at the Renaissance Orlando Resort was highly successful, from all the favorable comments I received.

This was the first time a VHPA chapter was responsible for conducting the reunion. The Florida Chapter deserves all the credit. Putting the reunion together were:

- Chairman — Jim Basta
- Registration — Ross McCoy, Barry Speare and Bill Kelbaugh.
- Vendor room — Ken Mulholland and Jack Jordan.
- Reception — Bob Buchanan.
- Golf tournament — Bob Gallardo.
- Mini-reunions — Ken Mulholland.
- Brandon Parade — Dick Antross.
- Sea World — Roy Swatts.
- The 5K run — Bob Gallardo.
- Transportation — Don Long.
- Helicopter rides — Bob Buchanan.
- Banquet signup — Bob Lee.
- Banquet and dance — Bob Buchanan.
- Public relations — Don Joyce.
- Memorabilia — Howard Smith.
- Ladies social — Shirley Watson.
- Decorations — Soup and Nancy Goeltzenleucher.
- Publications/printing — Ray Kingsbury.

The parade on the Fourth of July at Brandon was a wonderful, patriotic and award-winning experience for all

Sea World, in the rain, was a good time for war stories and camaraderie. Sea World is the best model for buffet-style service we have experienced.

of us. Sea World, in the rain, was a good time for war stories and camaraderie. Sea World is the best model for buffet-style service we have experienced.

Welcome to Tom Payne, our new vice president, and Dave Rittman, junior member at-large on the Executive

Council. Both were elected at our business meeting.

The Lyman High School Junior ROTC Color Guard was outstanding and exceptionally sharp in the posting of the colors at the banquet.

The missing man minute of silence was a reverently reflective tribute followed by the blessing of God's chosen people.

We have a separate missing man toast immediately preceding the retirement of the colors as a tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice to ensure that we can enjoy the freedoms we all hold evident and which our flag symbolizes.

I handed the Cobra and the additional 30-plus pounds of trappings of office to your new president, Mike Hurley, 15 minutes ahead of schedule, announced "let the good times roll" and the band began to play.

The Rev. John Plummer, VHPA chaplain, gave a particularly moving message Sunday morning and then we all drove or flew home richer for the experience.

See all of you at the Worthington hotel in Fort Worth in July 1998.

— Charles R. Rayl, past president

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association History Book Volume II

Dear VHPA Member,

There is now a **second chance** for members who missed out on our *Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association History Book* to record their biographies, photographs, and stories of their Vietnam experience in Volume II.

Volume I included full color prints by Joe Kline, "Riders of the Storm" on the cover and "Chariots of Fire" on the endsheets, along with more than 800 veterans' biographies with pictures.

Volume II will include additional color prints, **new** biographies, **new** "after action" reports, **new** in-country photos, and an entire section dedicated to the reunions of the VHPA, the fastest growing Vietnam Veteran association in the U.S.A.

Send in a biography and photos of a deceased Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Veteran. What better way to honor the memory of a friend or loved one? Don't miss your **second chance**! Scheduled for delivery in 1998.

Sincerely yours,

Ken Fritz

Ken Fritz

Past President VHPA



Pilot Steve Gatewood, A Co., 158th AVN Bn., 101st Abn.

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- ★ Send action photos, especially crew photos
- ★ You do not have to order a book to be included

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Delta medevac pilot writes novel

"The Jesus Nut" A novel by David Freeman. Softback, 308 pages. 1996 Publisher — Nissi Publishing Co., Grapevine, TX (www.nissipub.com)

The term "Jesus nut" is an icon word that conveys to Vietnam helicopter pilots such things as "health and well-being," "necessary to flight" and "God."

And, there is probably no such term which we are familiar with, as helicopter pilots, that brings back so many memories during those early days of flight school training.

If your memory is like mine, you can remember your primary flight instructor explaining the procedures of preflight and his God-like voice explaining how the "Jesus nut" is the most important item to check, besides the fuel, "because if you don't check it and it comes off, Oh! Jesus . . . !

Chances are you never failed to check it and its associated safety wired retainer as faithfully as shaving or brushing your teeth, everyday.

"The Jesus Nut," by David Freeman, is a great one-of-a-kind novel which takes a fictional, but based-on-fact, story-line from the actual experiences of the author when he flew medevac during 1971-72 in the Delta.

He dedicates the book to "the dustoff pilots and crew members, and

the Navy pilots of HAL-3 (the Sea-wolves) and VAL-4 (the Black Ponies) who flew out of Navy Binh Thuy in support of the Brown Water Navy."

Freeman very skillfully weaves a story about the Christian walk of a young medevac pilot and his relentless pursuit of fulfillment while daily placing his life on the line. To make the story even more interesting and

Book review

compelling, Freeman includes a dramatic quest to save one of

his own family members from the clutches of the Viet Cong.

No doubt many of us who went to Vietnam were Christians or went to church occasionally. And, no doubt we believed we were under the protection of God or some other "higher power." No doubt too, it is a sure bet that none of us were atheists as we sat in the cockpit facing unseen Viet Cong or NVA who were trying to shoot down our bird and kill us.

David Freeman tells his story through his key character Eric Mohr, a committed Christian. WO Mohr lives each day with Christ in combat situations and people he lives and works with as a medevac pilot.

From "Donut Dollies" to CIA operatives and even local indigenous "hooch maids," all Christians, he weaves an interesting story. God is said to work in mysterious ways and David Freeman masterfully shows how His work is even more exciting than real experiences.

Now, so many years later, we all are probably more reflective and realize that we are not invincible when it comes to facing danger and surviving.

Had David Freeman written his book during the war or very closely thereafter, it no doubt would have been limited in popularity. Now, there is no excuse for shying away. In fact, after reading the book, you'll think, "Gosh, I wish I had been a more committed Christian like Eric Mohr was." Then, no doubt . . . the "Jesus Nut" would have been even more important.

Buy and read "The Jesus Nut." You will enjoy a great book with "plenty of flying, plenty of action, and a fresh look at God's work in the lives of men and women during the Vietnam War."

Thomas Payne

118th AHC
1966-67

Flying West dedicated to pilots who die

CAPT. E. HAMILTON LEE

I hope there's a place, way up in the sky,
Where pilots can go, when they have to die —
A place where a guy can buy a cold beer
For a friend and comrade, whose memory is dear;
A place where no doctor or lawyer can tread,
Nor a management type would ere be caught dead;
Just a quaint little place; kind of dark and full of smoke,
Where they like to sing loud, and love a good joke;
The kind of a place where a lady could go
And feel safe and protected, by the men she would know.

There must be a place where old pilots go,
When their painning is finished, and their airspeed gets low,
Where whiskey is old, and women are young,
And the songs about flying and dying are sung,
Where you'd see all the fellows who'd flown west before,
And they'd call out your name, as you came through the door;
Who would buy you a drink, if your thirst should be bad,

And relate to the others, "He was quite a good lad!"

And then through the mist, you'd spot an old guy
You had not seen for years, though he'd taught you to fly.
He'd nod his old head, and grin ear to ear,
And say, "Welcome, my son, I'm pleased that you're here.
"For this is the place where true flyers come,
"When the journey is over, and the war has been won.
"They've come here at last to be safe and alone
"From the government clerk and the management clone,
"Politicians and lawyers, the Feds and the noise;
"Where all hours are happy, and these good ol' boys
"Can relax with a cool one, and a well-deserved rest:
"This is Heaven, my son — you've passed your last test!"

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Riseden

Gunslinger 35

WORWAC 67-5

Green Hats 30-Year Reunion

'Big Mother' had 23 detachments

MIKE LAW

For several years, I have wondered about the U.S. Navy helicopter units that supported the Seventh Fleet: How were they organized? Did they have a written history?

A recent visit to the Naval Historical Center in the Washington Navy Yard helped a lot.

Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 7 (HC-7) was established and headquartered at NAS Atsugi, Japan, on Sept. 1, 1967, with the mission to service the fleet.

In time the squadron deployed about 23 detachments with helicopters covering an area from California to Japan to the Philippines, but mostly with the Seventh Fleet, which maintained a constant presence off North Vietnam.

The major flight tasks were shipboard search and rescue (SAR), fleet helicopter logistics, VIP personnel transfer, and helicopter vertical replenishment (VIRTREP).

I believe the squadron, as a whole, used the call sign "Big Mother."

In 1968, HC-7 had 85 pilots. Each detachment had specific equipment and was dedicated to a specific mission. Some of the detachments were:

- Detachment 101 had one Kaman SH-2A/B Sea Sprite and was deployed with the COMSEVENTH-FLT Flagship at all times.

Even though it was a VIP transport unit, the detachment recorded a number of emergency rescues. "Black-beard" was its call sign.

- Detachment 102 had two Boeing-Vertol HH-46A/D Sea Knights and was deployed on the big supply ships (e.g. USS Mars) until the ship was replaced on station.

Personnel rotated 40 days with the fleet and 20 days in Japan. They flew with the "Big Mother" call sign.

- Detachment 103 was permanently shorebased at NAS Cubi Point, Philippines, and provided maintenance for the SAR detachments.

Personnel rotation was 180 days at Cubi and/or one of the SAR detach-

On June 19, 1968, Lt. Clyde Lassen and crew made a daring rescue of two Navy pilots at night inside North Vietnam and earned the Medal of Honor.

ments. In September 1968, it was renamed Detachment Cubi and established as a PCS organization.

- Detachments 104, 105, 106, 107, 108 and 109 all flew Kaman SH-2Bs on rotating Combat SAR (CSAR) mostly from frigates (DLCs) positioned at the North SAR and South SAR areas in the Tonkin Gulf.

"Clementine" was their call sign. Generally, a detachment would rotate on duty for 15-30 days and then would be training for 30-45 days.

- Detachments 110 and 111 were permanently present with the fleet and may have been co-located most of the time aboard the various aircraft carriers (CVAs and CVSSs).

- Detachment 110 flew four Sikorsky SH-3A Sea Kings on Yankee Station SAR continuously from Feb. 19, 1968, until Sept. 25, 1973, for 2,217 consecutive days at sea. It used the "Big Mother" call sign.

- Detachment 111 flew two Sikorsky SH-3A Sea Kings in a logistics configuration and were designated "Protectors." This detachment joined the fleet on Jan. 23, 1968, but after March 5 was co-located with Detachment 110.

- Detachment 112 also flew CH-46s on VIRTREP missions, but the history suggests it was only used when the fleet size got larger than Detachment 102 could handle.

- Detachment 113 flew RH-3As in a mine countermeasure role.

- Detachment 115 flew the venerable UH-34s in an oceanographic

research role.

- Detachment 116 flew SH-3Gs on CSAR.

- Detachment 117 flew SH-2Bs on CSAR.

The other detachments provided local support for specific Navy Task Forces and usually were on an aircraft carrier.

After forming on Sept. 1, 1967, they assumed custody of the former HC-1 detachments on Oct. 1, 1967, and recorded their first rescue on Oct. 3, 1967.

Any reader of the Pacific Stars & Stripes will notice hardly a week goes by without some account of a SAR rescue. So, even though these units were on standby, they flew!

On June 19, 1968, Lt. Clyde Lassen and crew made a daring rescue of two Navy pilots at night inside North Vietnam and earned the Medal of Honor.

At least three other pilots were awarded the Navy Cross.

In 1970, HC-7 started disestablishing detachments. In 1971, it started phasing out the SH-2 aircraft; this was finished in early 1972. HC-7 received a PUC in July 1971.

The NVA offensive in March and April 1972 saw a lot of business for "Big Mother."

Gerry Carroll's book "North S*A*R" documents the life and times of a SAR crew in late 1972 and is a very good read.

On Jan. 14, 1973, HC-7 recorded its last combat rescue and on Sept. 25, 1973, Detachment 110 left Yankee Station.

On June 17, 1975, the last aircraft and men were transferred to HC-1.

On June 30, 1975, the history states "HC-7 is disestablished. 'Big Mother' is dead." This seems to be a cruel statement, even for a history document.

As best the VHPA Helicopter and KIA databases currently can tell us, HC-7 (and its predecessors) had 8 pilots and 13 crew member KIAs. It also experienced the loss of 2 CH-46s, 12 SH-3s and 12 SH-2s.

Independent Study

As far as Dr. Tacker is concerned, his independent study students are in his classroom today.

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VHPA2 7/97

'Cold' area suddenly becomes hot

W. HAYDEN "PAPPY" JONES

General Orders Number 191, dated 17 Jan 1973, read:

"The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to CW2 William H. Jones, for heroism while participating in aerial flight, evidenced by voluntary actions above and beyond the call of duty.

"Chief Warrant Officer Jones distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions while serving as aircraft commander of a utility helicopter on a search-and-rescue mission in Military Region I.

"Chief Warrant Officer Jones began a search pattern with the other utility helicopter, flying low level at low air speeds around enemy positions and taking enemy ground-to-air fire.

"Chief Warrant Officer Jones saw the pilot hiding in a tree line and hovered over a rice paddy as close as possible to him. He held the aircraft at a low hover allowing one of the infantryman aboard to leap into the

She was brand-new, factory-fresh and vibration-free. She flew like a dream.

waist deep water and help the pilot aboard."

Enemy activity was reported by the Vietnamese Marines.

On June 30, 1972, a mission came down from higher to do visual recon where the suspected NVA activity was to have taken place.

Our standard team of LOHs, two Cobras and one Huey were dispatched to check it out. This was the nap of the earth tactic we developed and were using since the introduction of SA-7 heat-seeking missiles by the NVA.

I flew with the team that morning in one of the snakes. The VR block was cold, the only NVA activity was in the minds of the very jittery South Vietnamese forces.

We returned to our base camp on Tan My island. (Old 101st recreation area, Eagle Beach, at the mouth of the Perfume River east of Hue.)

My position in F Troop was Cobra and Huey SIP, admin officer and the commander's pilot. The troop commander at that time was Maj. Ed Larson. He was on R&R in Hawaii. The executive officer, Capt. Jim Elder, was in command until the major returned.

Capt. Elder found me in the mess hall and told me we had to go to Da Nang for a staff meeting. I finished my lunch and went to preflight the bird, our "slick." She was brand-new, factory-fresh and vibration-free. She flew like a dream.

Whoever was behind the bar set two cold Buds in front of us and we were about to take our first sip when the ops sergeant ran in, yelling: "SAR!"

We changed the armament a little, adding a .50-cal. mounted on the left that would make your nose bleed when Spec. 5 Evans, the crew chief, turned it on and tripled the M-60s on the right. (We'd had a minigun on the right before, but always had electrical problems so we were trying this more reliable setup.)

The mission to Da Nang went without incident and, on the way back to Tan My, I got a little hood time with a simulated GCA approach.

Capt. Elder and I headed to the O'Club, our day's work complete. Whoever was behind the bar set two cold Buds in front of us and we were about to take our first sip when the ops sergeant ran in, yelling: "SAR!"

Elder looked at me and then at the other troops at the bar. They all had a beer in their hands. He turned to me

See FAC, Page 21

Advertising rates

Display advertising rates for the VHPA Newsletter are:

- Full page, \$500.
- One-half page, \$250.
- One-quarter page, \$125.
- Business card size, \$45.

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FAC hit by an NVA heat-seeking missile

Continued from Page 20

and said, "let's me and you take it, Pappy."

The gunner and crew chief were still at the aircraft doing their post-flight when they saw us running back toward them. They untied the rotor blades and pulled them out to the 9 and 3 o'clock positions.

I jumped into the right seat — Elder liked to fly in the left seat, while Maj. Larson liked the right. It didn't matter to me because I gave check rides from both positions — and began an abbreviated check list crank.

Actually, I hit the master switch, set the throttle and pulled the trigger. By the time I was ready to back out of the revetment, I had a full load: The first sergeant; the field first sergeant; Lt. Hogue, the Blue Team leader; and a couple of his team.

Elder set the radios and called "King 26," the C-130 on station to coordinate the SAR, on Guard for a situation report.

Covey 10, an OV-10 Fast FAC, also was on station. He told us that Covey 11 had caught a heat-seeker while directing fire at an NVA troop concentration.

He said a good chute was seen and that he talked to Covey 11 on his emergency radio. The enemy was close and was looking for him. Covey 10 told us he was circling overhead and he had a "tally" on us.

I told Capt. Elder it sounded like the place where I was with the team earlier that morning and it should be a cake walk because the area was cold.

Covey 10 gave me vectors to his location and then on to where he

When I rolled wings level, a single rain-drop the size of a basketball hit the windshield right in front of my face. I almost swallowed my tongue.

believed Covey 11 was hiding. One turn led to another and the next thing I knew, I was 17-20 clicks behind enemy lines.

It should be said at this point that in 1972, a FEBA was established at the Quang Tri Province boarder, well south of the DMZ, by the NVA.

At one point Covey 10 vectored me around some bad guys with a left turn to the west into the setting sun. My gunner startled me when he started returning fire. I fussed at him because of the friendlies in the area.

When I rolled wings level, a single raindrop the size of a basketball hit the windshield right in front of my face. I almost swallowed my tongue.

I was flying low and slow, trying to find Covey 11 when I thought I heard a whisper on Guard.

NVA were everywhere. They were all in fresh uniforms — no black pajamas on these boys — and they hadn't bothered with all the camouflaging.

The ones I saw had that deer-in-the-headlights look; they were surprised to see us so close to them. Most didn't have time to shoot at us, but there were seven launches of SA-7s. Each was called by Covey 10.

I just closed my eyes, anticipating the impact. Luckily, none of them were able to lock on. I remember thinking, "Maybe these commode seats really do work."

I was flying low and slow, trying to find Covey 11 when I thought I heard a whisper on Guard. There was so much chatter on all radios I had to yell, "Everybody, shut up! I think I heard him."

The radios went quiet and I heard a whispered, "Turn right!"

I turned hard right and then heard another, "Turn right!"

I turned hard right again and there he was, in my chin bubble. Hard on the right peddle and hard right-aft cyclic, I stood the helicopter on its tail, then on its nose, and came to a hover just over a low treeline in a rice paddy-type depression.

Covey 11 appeared out of the brush, but he was having a hard time with his right leg. He had obviously been hurt, either in the bailout or the landing.

The field first sergeant, who was a big man, jumped out, grabbed the lieutenant and literally threw him on board. I did a left peddle turn (I don't know why — it was the wrong way),

See FIRST, Page 22

Calendar

Sept. 5-7

A Troop, 7/17th Air Cavalry will hold a reunion at the Galt House Hotel (West), Fourth Street at River, in Louisville, KY. Room cost is \$115 per night.

Contact: Leonard Litscher, WO 383 CTH. P, Fountain

City, WI 54629. Or call (808) 687-8175.

June 4-7, 1998

There will be a reunion for all who served aboard the USS Epping Forest LSD-4/MCS-7 from 1943-68.

Reunion site is the Sheraton Metrodome Hotel in Minneapolis.

Contact: Charles Y. Avent, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. Or call [REDACTED]

First sergeant takes hit in abdomen

Continued from Page 21

pulled 50 pounds torque and came out in a right turn to the southeast.

All hell broke loose.

Evans turned on the .50 and the gunner had the M-60s clattering when I heard the first sergeant scream.

He was sitting in the jump seat behind Elder and me, and he had taken a round through the abdomen. As far as I knew, it was the first and only hit we took.

Suddenly in front of me, I saw a Jolly Green and two Sandies. A small rush of pride went through me when I realized we had beaten them.

The lead Sandy said, "Centaur 6, you're taking heavy fire from this treeline, I'll get it," and he lit it up with napalm.

At 12 o'clock, I could see a lot of tracers, but they were going the wrong way, they were firing away from us. Then I saw what they were shooting at: One of our teams!

Someone had decided to launch regardless of the beer. Whoever it was probably saved my life because the NVA were paying more attention to them than they were to me. They were laying down a heavy stream of fire at the team.

In a second, all they would have to do is look up because they were looking at the bottom of my helicopter. I sat a little deeper in the seat behind the armor plating and a little lower behind the instrument panel.

I broke clear and was still flying, much to my surprise! Someone came up on Guard and said, "Centaur 6, this is Gallant Man, I have a medical team standing by if you need assistance."

I thought it was one of the Jolly Greens. I knew they carried medics.

I said, "Roger, I have two wounded, meet me at Twin Steeples," the remains of an old church close to the beach.

"Negative, Negative. I am feet wet. I stay feet wet," Gallant Man responded.

"What are you a . . . boat?" I

The lead Sandy said, "Centaur 6, you're taking heavy fire from this treeline, I'll get it," and he lit it up with napalm.

yelled.

"Affirmative, I'm DME . . ."

I cut him off and said, "Don't give me that, I'm a Army helicopter. I ain't got nothin' but a mag compass."

The Jolly Green said, "Centaur 6, he's 11 out, do you have fuel?"

I told him that I did and he flew over the top of me and said, "tag on and I'll lead you out."

Gallant Man was the helicopter carrier USS Okinawa. The air traffic controller gave me winds relative, which didn't mean much to me and I told him so. Finally, he gave up on this dumb Army helicopter pilot and said, "Come around the back of the boat and land forward. You have a green deck."

The damn deck wasn't green, it was black, but I figured he meant I was clear to land. I saw a ground guide in the chin bubble and I followed his direction to skids down.

A crew came out with a gurney for the first sergeant, but he couldn't lay down because of the pain. They pulled the pins on the jump seat and carried him in on that sitting up.

They turned out to be just two of the 84 bullet holes in the "Old Man's" Huey. The bird had to be scrapped later.

I began to shut down the aircraft while everybody else unstrapped and got out. The ground handling people chained the bird to the deck.

Elder and I were taken to a room where the OV-10 pilot was being tended to. He shook our hands and said, "Thanks."

I told him, "Don't worry about it. Just buy me a drink sometime."

"What do you drink?" he asked.

"Scotch," I said.

While we were talking with the Air Force lieutenant, a man came in wearing surgical scrubs. He held up an object and asked, "Do you know what this is?"

I told him it was the jump door handle from a Huey.

He said he had taken it from the abdomen of our man in the operating room and he was going to be all right.

A .51-cal. HE round had gone through the left hand jump door, taken the handle and deposited it in the first sergeant and exited before exploding and tearing a hole in the right hand jump door.

They turned out to be just two of the 84 bullet holes in the "Old Man's" Huey. The bird had to be scrapped later.

Tom Kennedy, our maintenance warrant (and a member of the VHPA) has never, to this day, let me live it down. It was, after all, a new bird with less than 200 hours. It still had that new helicopter smell.

We spent the night on the Okinawa. The next morning before taking off, the captain of the ship held a small formation and awarded both Capt. Elder and me with a Night Carrier Qualification. It was a set of gold Navy wings turned upside down on black leather with "Night Carrier Qual" and our names under them.

He also gave me an audiotape of the entire mission from the first May Day call to skids down on the carrier deck. He also made note of the ". . . boat" comment, saying something about the Navy only having "ships." I accepted the tape with a red face.

See PILOTS, Page 23

Enemy 'sapper' causes commotion

It was already cold as darkness overtook the compound.

I had just finished pulling maintenance on "607" and then met up with the other two lucky members of First Flight for guard duty.

Except for the nights when my ship was the standby flareship, guard duty was pretty much every other night.

What with flying, maintenance and

guard duty, it seemed we could just never get enough sleep.

But I got lucky this night, and won the first shift. After midnight, I would be able to sleep uninterrupted until dawn.

Our bunker sat near the Corral, just down the line from the mini-tower behind the officers' club.

The compound lights showed the little dirt road just outside the wire,

and behind that lots of trees.

As I sat on top, my companions slept on cots inside the bunker. The OD had already been around once; the lukewarm coffee he brought didn't help much. Time dragged.

The ringing of the commo phone broke my reverie; the mini-tower had spotted someone in the wire. They had only seen one, and were holding

See WITHOUT, Page 24

Pilots did some dumb things on the mission

Continued from Page 22

The first sergeant survived and was reassigned to Fort Carson the last I heard.

Somewhere in this thing, I can't for the life of me remember where, Pete Barber, a VHPA life member, tagged on behind me and followed me in and out and all the way out to the ship.

He couldn't get clearance to land because I had the deck. He returned to Tan My.

Jack "Beetle" Bailey, another VHPA life member, tried to get behind Pete and me for additional support, but was driven away by the

heavy fire.

I guess his spacing was off. He was far enough behind to be in the danger zone.

I did a couple of really dumb things on this mission that have haunted me these many years later.

One was pulling in the 50 pounds of torque and rolling over to VNE.

Up to that point, the enemy had been doing exactly what they were taught, using the flip oversight and leading me, but I was flying too slow and all the fire was going in front of me.

When I rolled over to get air speed, I flew right into it. Dumb!

Dumber was Pete Barber for following me.

I saw Pete at the reunion in Orlando for the first time since 1972. I got to talk to him about the Covey 11 rescue mission.

He told me he could see a lot of tracers going through my aircraft and he had tried to cover me, at one point he had even put himself between me and the gunner, but he never took a hit. Dumber!

Pete and Beetle obviously have a memory of this mission from their vantage point.

Hopefully, reading this will cause them to write their version.

Seeking

Pink Panthers

The sister of WO Mark Clotfelter, KIA on June 16, 1969, while serving as aircraft commander in a 361st AWC Cobra on a road recon from Dak To to Ben Het with WO Mike Mahowald, is interested in contacting anyone who knew Mark.

Mark graduated in flight school Class 68-9 and had served with the 361st since September 1968.

Anyone who can help should contact Susan Blaker, P.O. Box 2132, Poulsbo, WA 98370 or e-mail:

J.P. Landall

I'm looking for VHPA member J.P. Landall, a buddy of David E. Miller who died from injuries suffered in the 1964 crash of a UH-1B while with the 114th Assault Heli-

copter Company in Vietnam.

Miller's mother, Louise Miller of Crystal Lake, IL, is terminally ill and has months to live.

She said Landall became like a son to her after David was killed. She has lost contact with Landall.

Landall's last-known address was in Centreville, VA. It is of great importance to her to find him.

Jim Ratcliff

Flying Circus members

I am trying to contact anyone who served in the "Flying Circus," 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry in RVN.

We are planning a 30-year reunion. Our homepage is at www.fbvfw.org/public/fc.htm

Ed Maycen

Without notice, the tower opened fire

Continued from Page 23

their fire to see if there would be others, but wanted all bunkers alerted.

I woke the others, and we readied our M-60s. Without notice, the tower opened up — and so did we. Rock and roll!!

The sapper was hit and fell on the road. When the firing slackened, I noticed all the lights were out and heard the wail of the warning siren. B-40s shot over our bunker, and we all dove inside and moved to firing ports.

With all of us inside, it was very cramped, so I moved back out and took up a position in the rocket trench.

But the B-40s seemed to signal the end of the attack. The "All Clear" soon sounded, and the three of us

were sitting atop the bunker when Maj. Steele and the OD drove up to check our perimeter.

We all talked, and showed them an unexploded mortar round in the middle of a taxiway.

Maj. Steele was especially concerned the lights were out, and told us to keep a sharp watch the rest of the night.

Stagecoach 6 and the OD were just readying to leave when, from the corner of my eye, I spotted movement in the wire.

He was already three-fourths of the way through! I shouted to get down, and fired off a burst that found its mark. Smoke curled up from my trusty M-60 as I watched the now stilled enemy.

WOW — right in front of the CO!

While the others regained their composure, I saw various medals being pinned to my chest.

Maj. Steele led us out to the wire to see the dead sapper. When we reached the body, the OD shined his flashlight — on the biggest rabbit I have ever seen. Didn't I feel like a jerk!

Thankfully, the major didn't say a word. The rest of the night was uneventful, but the story doesn't end there.

At the next company formation, Maj. Steele explained in precise detail the facts of our defense of the compound that night — including one enemy rabbit KIA.

Bob Alberts
Purple Gang CE
Stagecoach 607

VHPA briefs

Make Fort Worth reservations

Are you ready to make hotel reservations at 1998 VHPA Reunion headquarters in Fort Worth?

The toll-free telephone number for reserving a room at The Worthington Hotel is (800) 433-5677.

Room rates at The Worthington are \$80 for a single and \$90 for a double, with a \$10 charge for each additional adult staying in the room. Children ages 16 and under stay free in their parent's room.

To receive this special VHPA rate, the hotel asks that you make reservations by the June 7, 1998, cutoff date.

Airport wants military aircraft

Isabelle Blanchard, airport manager at Pecos, TX, is trying to locate military aircraft to place on display at the county airport.

She is interested in helicopters. The Pecos city manager can arrange for trucking at city expense.

Blanchard can be reached at (915) 447-2488.

Newsletter deadlines listed

The following are deadlines for submitting items to *The VHPA Newsletter*:

September/October — Sept. 8; November/December — Nov. 3; January/February — Jan. 5; March/April — March 2; and May/June — May 4.

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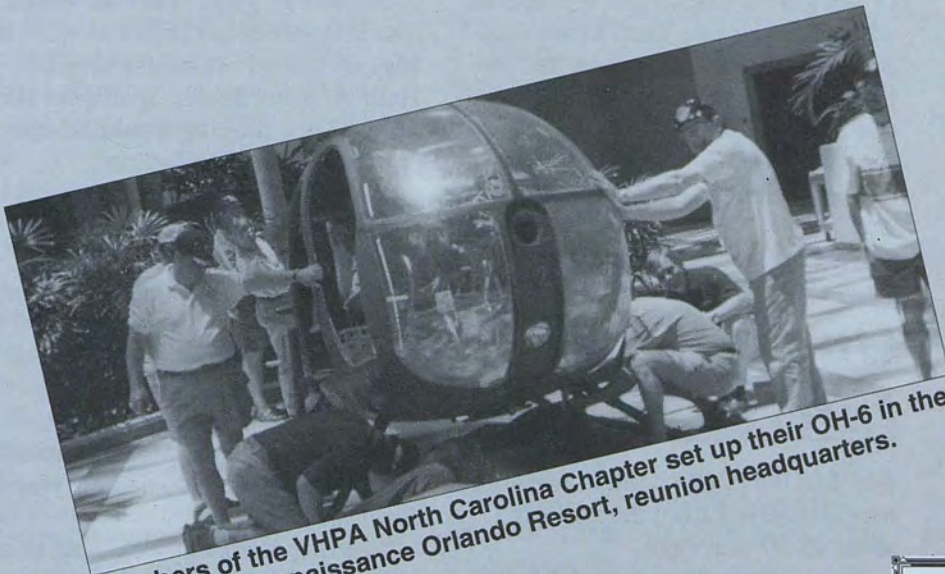
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Scenes from Reunion '97



Members of the VHPA North Carolina Chapter set up their OH-6 in the lobby of the Renaissance Orlando Resort, reunion headquarters.

Photographs by
Don Joyce



Retired CW4s Tom Cruz and Dave Brenner visit.



Registration tables stayed busy throughout Reunion '97, which attracted 1,514 people — including 814 pilots.



Reunion chairman Jim Basta takes a short breather during the final days of the reunion.

The Net grows to 400 members

MEL CANON
MELCAN@AOL.COM

VHFCN — "The Net," as it's come to be known — has gone through some significant changes since the last time I wrote a segment of this column.

First, we've really grown and are now at nearly 400 active members, all sending e-mail around the world to others who shared the Vietnam experience in a helicopter.

It's been a place to hook up with old friends, pilot and crew members alike, from Vietnam. It's been a place to hook up with old flight school classmates. And . . . it's been a place to make new friends.

While VHPA and VHCMA afford members an opportunity to share nostalgic memories from time long passed, The Net allows us to share things in our lives today. The common ground will always be our Vietnam experience, however.

I have had many people tell me they would not have known anyone at a VHPA reunion if it hadn't been for knowing someone they'd met on The Net.

One net member told me he went to his first reunion and didn't find anyone from his combat unit . . . or from his flight school class. He said he felt like a fish out of water.

But . . . after becoming a member of The Net, he went to the next reunion and knew more than 50 people he'd met across the Internet through VHFCN.

Probably the most significant change in The Net is its focus on helping families learn more about those who were lost in Vietnam. More often than not, the military simply told the families of the loss and expressed condolences.

The families had no idea of how the death occurred, only that it had. In many cases, there was no body to return, only personal effects.

What we've been able to do through VHFCN is to put families in touch with others who knew their lost

one in Vietnam, or in flight school.

They were able to talk to someone who actually knew them in the environment in which they died. We've been able to put together some definitive scenario of what happened, how their husband, son, brother, or fiancée, actually became a casualty of war.

To those that have sought that information and received it through VHFCN, it has offered some relief . . . something more definitive than the often vague information they'd received from the military some 25-30 years ago.

One of the strangest events in this area occurred just recently.

Henry Joseph "Joe" Vad was a graduate of WORWAC 68-31 and went to Vietnam right after flight school. He was assigned to D/1/4th Cav, 1st Infantry, given an OH-6 the call sign "Darkhorse 9."

On Nov. 6, 1969, Joe Vad became one of this country's 58,000-plus combat fatalities of the war.

He and his observer, Spec. 5 James L. Downing, were returning to base in their Loach and saw some suspicious movement on the ground. They went to investigate and were killed by enemy fire.

Personal effects were immediately shipped home and the war went on.

Besides a widow, and grieving parents, there was a two-year-old daughter who would never see her father again.

Lisa Vad would never know her father . . . only the memories that were handed down through the family over the years. She would know he was a casualty of the war . . . that his name appeared on The Wall, but she would never sit on his lap and play with his mustache . . . or pull on his earlobe and giggle hysterically at the funny faces that daddies can make.

She would, however, be given one memento of her father that she would keep and cherish — his class ring

from flight school.

Almost 29 years later, she would lose that part of her father as well. In May of 1997, Lisa would have her Halifax, Nova Scotia, apartment burglarized and the ring would be stolen . . . seemingly gone forever.

But a strange series of events would turn that around just two months later.

In July 1997, an unknown person stepped into the U.S. Consulate in Halifax and produced the ring, which according to the person, had been found in a parking lot in Halifax. Consulate personnel did not immediately know what to do about trying to find the owner.

The ring obviously belonged to a graduate of the U.S. Army Aviation School, Class 68-31, and even had the name "Joe Vad" inscribed inside. But . . . how to go about tracking this person was a mystery.

The consulate contacted the senior U.S. military officer in the area, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Tim Tocci, a P-3 driver assigned to Halifax as an exchange officer with the Canadians.

When Tocci got the call and was informed of the ring, he had no idea how to track its owner.

He was computer-oriented and did remember seeing several veterans' organizations on the Internet. So, he began to contact them to see if anyone had any idea how to find the ring's owner.

The webmaster from the Department of the Army website gave him the name of Gary Roush, webmaster for the VHPA and the VHPA Database Committee chairman.

Tocci contacted Roush and Gary was able to come up with a Social Security number for Joe Vad. But, after running the name through the historical data, it was discovered Vad was killed in action in Vietnam in 1969.

Roush got in touch with Tocci again, via e-mail, told him of this discovery and asked how he would like to proceed.

See MILLS, 'Page 27

Mills' book dedicated to Joe Vad

Continued from Page 26

While this news was being sorted out, Roush contacted The Net with the information in hopes our new Contact Committee could begin to try and locate family members of Joe Vad.

I put out information to The Net and the search was under way.

Now let me digress a few years . . .

Lisa Vad's cousin in Texas was reading the book, "Low Level Hell" authored by our own Hugh Mills (hmills16@aol.com). The book, ironically, was dedicated to none other than Joe Vad.

The cousin, of course, contacted Lisa to inform her of this and it wasn't long before she contacted Hugh by phone to inquire about her father.

Hugh invited Lisa to his home and then took her to visit the family of the observer, James Downing. Hugh and Lisa became friends and maintained contact with one another.

Now . . . three years later, the ring is stolen and found . . . but The Net had no idea of the connection between Hugh and Lisa.

I got a note from another Darkhorse member, Dave "Darkhorse Control" Fesmire ([REDACTED]).

Dave told me Hugh knew Joe's daughter and suggested she might be the owner of the ring. So I contacted Hugh via e-mail and asked him to step up to the plate. And step up he did.

Hugh contacted Tocci in Halifax and put him in touch with Lisa . . . who was just two days from departing on vacation.

Tocci got the ring from the consulate and, after all the verifications were taken care of, met Lisa and presented her with her father's ring.

Hugh has sent Tocci a great big thanks, along with an autographed copy of "Low Level Hell," and Lisa is one happy camper. End of story? I hope not. The Net has lots more to offer.

It would appear that more than circumstance came into play in this story. It is almost as if it were divinely guided . . . and could very well have been.

One thing is for certain, our old comrade Joe surely had a hand to play in this game. No way was some low-down, dirty burglar going to abscond with his daughter's memento of him . . . absolutely no way.

On the Intercom Did the ring get kicked

out of the culprit's vehicle in the parking lot in Halifax? Did the thief just toss it? We'll probably never know how that ring came to be left in the parking lot.

Or, why the finder was so generous and kind as to turn it in. We like to think people are all like that but, sadly enough, they aren't.

The U.S. Consulate even said it was a wonder that it was turned in. Thankfully, they had enough foresight to contact the senior U.S. military officer, Tocci . . . and, fortunately, he was insightful enough to follow the contact route he took.

But, we all know Joe Vad is one happy camper today also . . . smiling ear to ear that the ring is now back where it was supposed to remain.

VHFCN will continue to play a major role in helping family in this manner.

We will make a significant thrust toward letting families know we will assist them in finding people who served with lost loved ones . . . allowing them to get a better picture of what happened.

And through it all, the brotherhood and camaraderie will continue.

The Net has grown significantly in recent months.

We are now conducting annual gatherings in Washington, DC, over the Veteran's Day weekend.

Last year we did it as an unofficial gathering of friends who wanted to visit The Wall on Vet's Day and share some time with one another.

This year will be the first official gathering. It will take place in Washington on Nov. 8-11.

For more information on this gathering, tune in to the VHFCN homepage at: <http://www.vhfcn.org>.

As always, we encourage everyone to participate with us and those of you who do not have access to a computer or to the Internet can request more information about the gathering by writing:

VHFCN, P.O. Box 1482, Herndon, VA 20170, or by calling me at ([REDACTED])

There will be several events to attend during this gathering, but the main focus will always be the gathering at The Wall. There will be a Wall gathering on Friday night, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m. and then on Saturday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m.

Then, on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, there will be a public gathering that will feature TV coverage and several dedications by prominent people to the 58,000-plus residents of The Wall.

For those of you who have not been to The Wall — or if you've been but did not receive any detailed information about the monument — this might be a gathering you should attend.

Mike Sloniker ([REDACTED]) has become a virtual historian of The Wall. He will personally take you on a tour and point out the more significant aspects of The Wall, how it is laid out, and where some of our fellow comrades reside.

He has come to know this monument in intricate detail.

Also, net member Jim Shueckler, who serves as a volunteer each year, can assist you, as well.

Jim works for the Parks Service as a volunteer at The Wall each Veteran's Day and makes a significant contribution in that respect.

I hope to see some of you there in November.

So, keep those gauges in the green until next time when we tune in . . . "On The Intercom."

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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