



# The VHPA Newsletter

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ®

November/December 2000 Vol. 18, No. 6

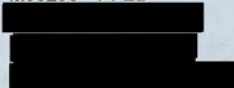


Norm Schrader photo

A Navy Huey is slingloaded from the field by a Chinook in this photograph taken in South Vietnam in 1968. The procedure allowed aircraft to be put back in service during the Vietnam War.

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## From the President

This is the newsletter you've been waiting for!

Planning for the Denver 2001 National VHPA Reunion is in place and the Registration Form is contained herein.

As has been indicated in previous newsletters, registration for the reunion and the hotel are coupled together.

You'll find a "Hotel room: Y or N" item by each name listed on the registration form.

Use this item to indicate your requirements for hotel room(s).

Also, if you'll be needing a room for a unit TOC, list the unit name and check the "Y" for the hotel room. When VHPA HQ sends back your registration receipt, it also will include your hotel registration form.

This latter form must be completed — giving the specifics of your requirements — and mailed to the Adam's Mark Hotel (fax and telephone reservations will not be accepted — only the original form you receive back from VHPA HQ).

The procedure is a bit more cumbersome than in previous years, but hopefully will eliminate some of the hotel confusion and liability the organization has experienced in the past.

Our venerable webmaster, Gary Roush, will have the Registration Form online at <http://www.vhpa.org> after everyone has had a chance to receive this copy of the Newsletter.

The Reunion 2001 website is brought to you courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Chapter and webmaster Angelique Herran. The URL is <http://www.vhpa2001.org>

### Joyce resigns from EC

In other news, the Executive Council regrettably accepted the resignation of member at large Don Joyce.

Don gave outstanding service to the organization during his time on the EC and will continue to be active in membership activities.

In accordance with the bylaws, Dan Ferguson became acting midterm member at large and an acting junior member at large was selected from previous EC members.

Former president Mike Hurley was appointed to that vacant position.

Mike is well known to the organization, having served it very well during his prior tenure on the EC.

Also, in accordance with the bylaws this is a temporary appointment that will be filled by election at the next business meeting.

Thus, in Denver, we will be electing a vice president, a midterm member at large, and a junior member at large.

If you want to throw your "hat in the ring" for any of these positions, please contact Mike Hurley, who is the EC coordinator of elections.

Mike also has an article on this topic elsewhere in the Newsletter.

### EC forms Legal Committee

As you know from previous Newsletters, the EC has been searching for a legal counselor to take over the position vacated by former president Charles Rayl.

We had several applications from well-qualified members.

In the end, the EC asked Charles to perform the selection duties and come back to us with a recommendation.

Based on Charles' subsequent recommendation, the EC formed a VHPA Legal Committee, comprised of members James Gunderson and Tom Elliston, with the chairman "dual-hatted" as legal counselor.

James Gunderson was appointed as the chairman, and thereby will also be our legal counselor.

Congratulations to both James and Tom!

### Las Vegas reunion planning

Vice president Dave Rittman recently met with Reunion Committee chairman Lad Vaughan and his folks for preliminary discussions regarding the National VHPA Reunion in Las Vegas in 2002.

Dave reported back enthusiastically on all aspects of the meeting, particularly on the people he had the opportunity to interact with and the hotel property.

As our national reunions have grown in size, one thing that has become apparent is the complexity can be overwhelming to a local reunion committee.

Thus, the EC is currently looking at better ways for National to provide support to the local committees.

Expect more on this in the months to come as ideas and proposals get narrowed down, with a goal of having that assistance in place to aid the local Las Vegas folks.

**See FROM THE PRESIDENT, Page 3**

## 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] and follow the cues. Or visit [www.evicom.com](http://www.evicom.com) Use code word: paul

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Contributing writer	Mike Law

## VHPA SUPPORT

Legal adviser	James Gunderson
Investment adviser	Bob Potvin
VHPA Headquarters	(800) 505-VHPA
Fax	(916) 966-8743

## ELECTRONIC MAIL

VHPA Headquarters	HQ@vhpa.org
President	president@vhpa.org
Historical chairman	sloniker@vhpa.org
Newsletter editor	swickard@vhpa.org
Directory editor	law@vhpa.org
Records/Database chairman	roush@vhpa.org
Website	http://www.vhpa.org
Membership chairman	membership@vhpa.org
Secretary/treasurer	TomPayne@vhpa.org
Webmaster	webmaster@vhpa.org

## From the President

### Continued from Page 2 Have a happy holiday season

In order to get the registration form included, we experienced a slight delay in meeting the deadline for this edition of the newsletter.

Hopefully, you will receive it before the holidays are over, so here's wishing you and all your family a **HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON** — and to join us in Denver for a great party!

Happy Holidays!

— Charles Holley, President

## VHPA chapters

### Arizona Chapter

(work)  
(fax)

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### California Chapter North

(work)  
(fax)

George Larson, President

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(home/work)

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(home)

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(home)

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(work)  
(fax)

Ellwood V. Sonderlind, President

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(home)  
(work)  
(fax)

Carl Cortez, President



# VHPA Products

You may order a past calendar with incredible color photos through VHPA Headquarters. The 2001 Calendar may only be ordered by calling Turner Publishing at (800) 788-3350.

Product	Each	P&H	No.	Total
Bumper sticker	\$1	Free		\$
Window decal	\$1	Free		\$
Newsletters — back issues	\$2	Free		\$
1999 Directory — 1972 Easter Offensive	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Directory — Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, N. Vietnam	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
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2000 Calendar	\$8	\$5 ea		\$
1999 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1998 Calendar	\$5	\$5 ea		\$
1996 Calendar	Free	\$5 ea		\$
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Historical Reference Directory — Vol. I. (Highlights 1961-65)	\$10	\$5 ea		\$
Historical Reference Directory — Vol. II. (Highlights 1966-67)	\$15	\$5 ea		\$
Vietnam Helicopter History CD-ROM (\$15 for VHPA members)	\$25	\$5 ea		\$
<b>Grand total</b>				<b>\$</b>

## To place your order

Complete this form, then mail or fax it to:

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*(Include credit card information or enclose check or money order)*

Name:		VHPA membership number:	
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Credit card (check one):	<input type="checkbox"/> VISA	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard	
Card number:	Expiration date:		
Signature:			



## Letters

### Flight school friend seeking information

I am seeking information about Col. (retired) David E. Baeb, a two-tour Vietnam veteran and a member of this association, who died in December 1996 of acute myeloid leukemia.

I am assisting his widow Pat in a claim for DIC compensation stemming from Dave's exposure to nuclear radiation while observing nuclear tests during Operation Dominic II/Plowshare at the Nevada Test Site in 1961 and 1962.

Dave experienced the same rare form of cancer that was seen in the Hiroshima survivors of World War II.

Dave was stationed at Fort Lewis, WA, from August 1961 to August 1963. He served a ground duty tour with both Company E, 1st Brigade, 22nd Infantry Division and the Brigade Headquarters; then was assigned to 4th Division Headquarters and completed his tour with the 4th Aviation Company, working at the airfield. He made several TDY trips to the test site during this time.

I would like to hear from anyone who knew Dave during the 1961-63 period at Fort Lewis, or might have attended the nuclear tests in 1961-62.

Dave was my college classmate, flight school buddy and lifelong friend. His life was cut short, I believe, because he obeyed orders and did his duty in the Nevada desert.

Anyone who can help, please contact me at (813) 685-4302 or write me.

Dick Antross  
North Flag 6

### Newsletter article stirs memories of recoveries

While going through my back issues of *VHPA Newsletters*, I came across an article pertaining to Air Force choppers used in reconnaissance.

The article was in the February 1995 issue. It made my day to find out that the Air Force had continued experimenting with aerial recovery, using helicopters.

In 1962, while stationed at Holloman Air Force Base, NM, we in Army Aviation set the stage, quietly but purposefully, for increased participation in the U.S. space effort.

This is the story of the U.S. Army's MARS (Mid-Air Recovery System) Program.

Cal Gatewood



**Old 997 flies a test course over White Sands Missile Range, NM, with aluminum poles stretched in a V-shape below her fuselage and hooks ready to catch a drogue chute.**

*ALAMOGORDO, N.M. — Old 997 lumbered across the airfield with the awkward caution of a lady wrestler at a tea party — a little old, a little slow, but her muscles bulging, tough in body and spirit.*

*This was 6:30 of a hot summer morning and it was 997's last chance. Twice before that week, she had waddled forth, risen with surprising grace toward the distant mountains north and east of Holloman AFB, glided slowly over the white sands that give the missile range its name and over the black outlines of the ancient lava flow near the base of the mountains — only to be frustrated, through no fault of her own, both times. This was another day.*

*"This is it," said Capt. Jorge Ortiz.*

*"This is it," echoed Chief Warrant Officers John Ulm and Cal Gatewood.*

*Old 997 is a U.S. Army CH-37 helicopter, and her climates of duty have ranged from extreme cold to extreme heat — with all the temperatures in between.*

*In August 1962, she had been outfitted with winch, cables, instruments and hooks. She had taken to the air time after time with this strange package, had ridden the air route north and south in front of the mountains and had maneuvered her bulk over parachuted packages which grew in weight and size.*

*The hooks she carried caught the parachutes. The line streaked from the winch, halted abruptly, then coiled again over the power-driven reel.*

*Instruments measured the effect on winch and cable. Pilots measured the effect on helicopter. Army men, caught by the challenge of their experiment, measured the effect on other men.*

*Pilots learned the art (and it is an art) of slowing,*

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# Letters

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descending on the parachute, maneuvering hooks into silk at the right place and at the right time, then absorbing the shock of contact to fly a level course as the weight is reeled inside.

Money and time, however, were running out; her flight on this July morning — nearly a year after her parachute hunts began — was ostensibly 997's last as the leading lady in this particular MARS spectacle.

At the controls were Ulm and Gatewood. Watching the instruments inside were G. Robert Veazey, engineer from All American Engineering Co., Wilmington, Del., and Spec. 5 James E. "Sandy" Sanderson and Spec. 5 Charles W. Allen Jr., crewmen.

In the wake of the CH-37 skipped an L-20 — both cabin doors removed — piloted by Capt. Ortiz, commanding officer of the aviation branch.

Wind whistled through the L-20 cabin, and the higher the plane climbed, the colder it got. A soft, yellow sun filtered through wandering clouds, and the CH-37 (white body, red snout and tail) stood out in bold relief against the burnt umber of the desert and the purple grayness of the mountains.

Out of the jumbled twitter that filled the earphones, voices emerged. King I — the radar station at Holloman monitoring the recovery attempt — guided the Air Force C-123 carrying the chuted weight so it would drop the target three or four miles ahead of 997, now established on its north-south route. Canyon Kilo 97 (old 997) answered King I in clipped monosyllables.

"Package dropped," the C-123 announced suddenly. Old 997, now committed, hunted the sky ahead for signs of the parachute. Twice earlier that week, target weights had been dropped, but the chutes failed both times.

"There it is," Ulm said. "It's a little farther out than it should be."

"Maybe only time for one pass," Gatewood said.

The helicopter started its stalk, figurative cross-hairs fixed on the place where the drogue chute would be in another 90 seconds, Ulm at the controls hoping the drogue wouldn't whip sideways in the air at the last minute (as drogues had done in the past).

The hooks caught.

"Beautiful. Beautiful," Ortiz murmured. He pulled the L-20 around in a wide circle, his speed — attuned to that of the helicopter — just ahead of a stall. Old 997, her mission accomplished, headed for Holloman behind the L-20.

The CH-37 crew was happy. Gatewood said the pickup had been made at 6,700 feet, lower than the usual target zone of 9,000 feet. 997 had effected the catch with only a slight jar marking the sudden addition of 2,500 pounds at the end of a swinging, 130-foot cable.

Veazey, with the program from the beginning, illustrated the trial and error involved.

"We started with nylon line on the winch last fall. Now we use 250 feet of three-eighths inch cable. We started with a lighter winch. We began with parachutes some 40 feet in diameter. Now we use one that's 82 feet across. Our target chute has been redesigned a dozen times. Now we use one that's square, a 14-foot square, and heavily laced to avoid tearing.

"First we tried to haul the main parachute aboard with the weight; then we let the main chute drop when our hooks caught the drogue, with a direct line from the drogue to the weight.

"Our equipment can be removed — or installed — quickly so the aircraft isn't tied to the recovery job. Aluminum booms, 25 feet long, hold the hooks beneath the helicopter in a V-shaped pattern. The booms can be fixed to the underside of the helicopter in landings and takeoffs."

MARS has been special.

"We are real proud of the people here," MARS project officers said.

Gatewood and Ulm, old 997's day-to-day pilots, took MARS in stride.

"It's a job," said Gatewood.

"Why do I fly helicopters? More money," Ulm said.

Both took part in final MARS preparations with almost proprietary interest. After the 2,500-pound catch, Ulm already was looking ahead.

"With the CH-3C (Air Force rear loader), you can't expect the cable and weight to come in through the back. That's beyond the center balance point. Now, if . . ."

Mid-air recovery by helicopter is not quite as new as 997's noble achievement. The first helicopter recovery of a parachute package took place at Georgetown, Del., in 1960.

## Razorback football game cause of great emotion

I watched the Auburn vs. Arkansas football game with great emotion! Most of it wasn't because of the football aspect of the game, though.

You see, I knew a Razorback. However, he never took a snap under center that I know of. As a matter of fact, I knew several Razorbacks.

You see, the attack helicopter "gunship" platoon of my aviation unit — the 120th Aviation Company — in the Vietnam War was called the "Razorbacks." They were given that name shortly after I was wounded in 1964 and left Vietnam.

A giant of a man, a former helicopter copilot, the late Max Hall, was the reason for that name. Max was a native of Springdale, AR. He attended the University of Arkansas, and he loved his "Hogs!"

When the 120th Aviation Company got UH-1B "Huey" gunships in the summer of 1964, the gunship platoon had

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# Letters

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to have a name. Max Hall said: "Let's call them the Razor-backs." The name stuck. An exact replica of a "Hog" was placed on the door of each Huey helicopter.

I last saw Max Hall in June 2000 at our 120th Aviation Company reunion held at his massive aircraft hangar in Springdale. Max was in a wheel-chair — his body ravished with cancer. However, he was a fighter to the very end. He loved his fellow man.

Even though he owned a very lucrative business in Springdale — he was an engineer — he volunteered and served as a medical evacuation helicopter pilot in Desert Storm. Reportedly, he was the oldest helicopter pilot to serve in that war.

Max visited me in Safford, AL, several times during the 1990's en route to Fort Rucker, AL. He had a project and what a project it was. He wanted to have and to fly his very own tandem rotor CH-21C "Shawnee" helicopter, the huge tandem-rotor helicopter that he and I flew together in the Vietnam War in 1964 prior to our unit getting the UH-1B "Huey."

The "Shawnee" had been put out to pasture for good in the late 1960s. Max found several of them in an aircraft cemetery in Alaska. He built a special trailer and made three trips to Alaska, hauling three "Shawnees" back to Arkansas.

They were in a remote area of Alaska in the middle of nowhere with trees growing up through them. Several years and a "few" dollars later, Max Hall had the only flyable CH-21C "Shawnee" in the world. Most of the aviation community said it couldn't be done. Max Hall did it!

Her aircraft serial number was 116. Several summers ago Max flew (116) to Fort Rucker for all the world to see.

During the day, she was parked on the parade ground. She spent the night at nearby Cairns Army Airfield. On one of her flights from the parade ground to Cairns, I was a passenger. Max was the pilot. What memories!



## Writer seeking list, photos of Fort Wolters instructors

Is there a list and/or photos of instructors who served at Fort Wolters? Are there photos of the officer graduating classes?

Any help you could give would be much appreciated.

Chad Berry  
Hesse, Jones & Davis, LLP

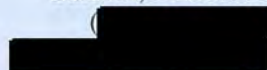


Max passed away in late summer 2000, and he loved his "Hogs" to the very end.

When I see Max in heaven, I expect the first words out of his mouth to be: "Pig — Sooeey."

By the way Max, Auburn won barely last Saturday. But, you are one "Hog" who always was and who will always be a WINNER!

John B. Givhan  
Rt 1 Box 21  
Safford, AL 36773



CW4 Douglas V. Graves with son, WO1 Brendon D. Graves, after the father pinned his aviator wings on the son at Fort Rucker.

## Father pins aviator wings on son at Fort Rucker

Thought the picture of my son and me, and the situation, would be of some interest for publication in the monthly newsletter.

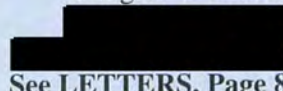
The old veteran on the left is me, Douglas V. Graves, a VHPA member, graduate in WORWAC Class 67-5, now a CW4 and retired. The new Army aviator on the right is my son, WO1 Brendon D. Graves.

I had just pinned on the same silver wings that my wife, Marlene, pinned on me at Fort Rucker back in May 1967.

The date of the photo is Brendon's graduation (Class 00-7) in the Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker on May 17, 2000.

Needless to say, it was a very proud and emotional experience for me and the family and we look forward to many visits with Brendon and his wife at different posts throughout his Army career.

Douglas V. Graves



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## Letters

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### Ex-sergeant takes interest in 176th AHC chopper

I received a couple phone calls from Don Smith, an ex-sergeant from the 198th Bde, 1/52nd Infantry, who is active with this group.

He has found out that a VVA or VFW chapter is preparing a 176th Assault Helicopter Company helicopter for display in Texas.

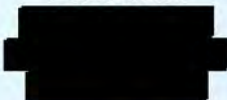
The 176th AHC provided his battalion's helicopter direct support in Vietnam and he is taking a personal interest in the helicopter displaying 176th AHC history and markings.

The helicopter has tail number 67-17456 and, from the gold book information you provided, it appears to have served 3,056 hours with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company from June 1968-January 1971.

Don would like to locate pilots who flew on this helicopter and perhaps obtain photos of the original unit markings. He would like to see as much of the original unit markings restored on the static display as possible.

Don does not have e-mail. I can forward him information if you want or you can contact him directly at:

**Don Smith**



Leslie Hines

### Son documenting father's tour in South Vietnam

My father Raymond Judycki was a Hamilton Standard tech rep assigned to the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company at Camp Holloway, Pleiku, RVN, from December 1966 to November 1967.

On Oct. 6, 1967, he was a passenger in Chinook CH-47A (s/n 65-7967) piloted by Lt. Jesse Hamilton, maintenance officer of the 179th. The mission was to bring this aircraft to Saigon (for major overhaul) and exchange it for Chinook CH-47B (s/n 66-19075).

They had to fly low level from Ban Me Thout to Nha Trang and Phan Rang because of weather. South of Phan Rang, in an area referred to as the "salt flats," they were hit by ground fire.

Lt. Hamilton was wounded and the SAS (stabilization augmentation system) was damaged, making control of the

aircraft very difficult. The copilot safely made an emergency landing and Lt. Hamilton was medevaced to Phan Rang within a few minutes, accompanied by passenger and Bell Helicopter tech rep Coalby Brown.

About 45 minutes later, my father and an Army lieutenant passenger were evacuated to Phan Rang. The copilot and crew repaired the aircraft and flew it out before dark, saving it from a certain mortar attack that evening.

Three weeks later the copilot was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions.

I am trying to document my father's RVN tour as accurately as I can, and I was hoping you would ask the VHPA membership, through your newsletter, for help with a few missing details:

- 1.) What was the copilot's name and rank? I believe he was called "Jake."
- 2.) What were the crew names and ranks?
- 3.) What happened between the time Lt. Hamilton and passengers were evacuated and 65-7967 arrived in Saigon?

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Judycki  
Wilbraham, MA

### Flight school roommate puzzled about KIA pilot

I was a classmate (64-7W) and roommate of Zoltan A. Kovacs.

We first roomed while at Fort Rucker in the fall of 1964 and later while with the 82nd Airborne in Vung Tau, Vietnam. It was while we were roommates in Vung Tau that Zoltan was killed.

I was able to find a few details in The Wall section . . . and perhaps there was more information there.

**02E**

**Date range on this panel 6/6/65-10/27/65**

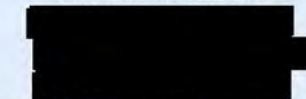
**006 WO1 Zoltan Alajos Kovacs AC A/82 AVN 173  
ABN UH-1D 64-13607**

The years have passed and my memories with them, however, as I recall his story he was a student in Hungary during the revolution (with Russia). I don't know more than that. Somehow he came to the United States and joined the U.S. Army.

Zoltan was quiet and very intense, focused on what he was doing. Even though we were roommates, I never really talked to him or got to know him.

As the years have passed, I have often thought of Zoltan and wondered who he really was . . . what possessed him to come to the United States and fight yet another battle? Did he have a family? A wife? Were they in the United States or still in Hungary?

Richard F. Landrum



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## Letters

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### Author tells how book helps war survivors deal with grief

In doing research on the Internet, I came across your site and wondered if you have heard about my book.

I would appreciate it if you could list my book as a resource for veterans and their families. I'm received very positive reviews and feedback about how the book is helping survivors of the war deal with their unresolved grief over losing someone in the war.

I'm enclosing some comments from readers. *Amazon.com* also has many customer reviews listed.

For further information, please visit my site as listed below or contact me at the e-mail address also listed below.



#### Comments from readers

"Pauline Laurent's book, 'Grief Denied, A Vietnam Widow's Story' deeply touched my shattered heart. For the past 31 years, I experienced the same dreams; the same unspoken grief, the same inability to love fully again; the same inability to let go of my grief.

"I sobbed for hours while reading her book and for many hours afterwards. She opened my eyes to the immense pain that my 32-year old son is living with due to my inability to discuss or deal with our total grief over his Dad's death in Vietnam in 1969.

"Pauline, thank you for having the courage and fortitude to write and publish this extremely necessary book."

— **Brenda Cavanaugh (Genest)**  
Vietnam War widow

"Reading your book has helped me painfully yet better understand the denied grief that is within me — grief and fear that colors my values and lends a dark skepticism to my personality in ways that my own psychiatric training has failed to enlighten.

"It hurts to have our darkness exposed to the light of truth. I don't like hurt. Your text has inspired me to 'flow on,' not to worry about the tears! After all, tears like rivers

were meant to flow. It is the stuff of life. When we try to stop the flow . . . stagnation! I still want to work with patients, but in a different way, a way that is more spiritual, more meaningful for both of us."

— **B. Jason MacLurg, M.D.**

"Pauline's book 'Grief Denied, A Vietnam Widow's Story' is absolutely beautiful. I usually clean my apartment on Saturday, but I have not been able to put it down. I am so moved by the courage of this book. It's not just for people involved with the Vietnam War, but for people who cannot grieve."

— **Margarita Suarez, Vietnam veteran nurse**

"Pauline's personal journey goes way beyond the specifics of personal growth or the Vietnam War. It speaks of the progress of our whole society. It's a very spiritual book."

— **Therese Champagne, computer consultant**  
Pauline Laurent

Author, *Grief Denied: A Vietnam Widow's Story*  
[www.griefdenied.com](http://www.griefdenied.com)

### Retired pilot-lawyer plans book about combat flying

I am a retired O5 with more than 5,000 hours of rotary- and fixed-wing time.

I had one tour in Vietnam in 1967.

I was an instrument flight examiner for about 20 years before retiring. I was at Fort Rucker teaching meteorology and, later, teaching instruments when the Howze Board met and launched the helicopter into its combat role.

I had one tour in Germany and flew Chinooks in Vietnam.

I spent a lot of after-duty hours taking night classes and gained a master's, doctorate, and a law degree. I am now a trial lawyer. I do research on mundane, as well as exciting, cases.

Over the years, as a trial and appellate lawyer, I was required to write briefs, which are concise stories of the case and cite authority for which I would write.

There can be no greater authority on a subject than the person who lived to tell the story or the story told by one who saw the story unfold and the person involved did not live.

I have learned that many of the things we learned while flying are not documented very well or, at least, they are known to only a very few people.

We who flew and heard the "war stories" of those who "hangar-flew" with us learned as much about flying from those stories as we learned on our own missions.

In my twilight years, I hope to publish those pilot tales so we can relive fond memories associated with "war stories" that we love to hear and tell when anyone will listen.

I believe a book that tells in short story form what we

See **LETTERS**, Page 10

### Membership Directory terrific

As always the 2000 Membership Directory is terrific. I noticed however that my e-mail address is incorrect. Please update your data base to reflect my e-mail address as: [jlynn1@airmail.net](mailto:jlynn1@airmail.net)

Thanks,  
John D. Lynn



# Letters

## Continued from Page 9

experienced will be worthwhile to let the public know how it was when we grew up with the helicopter and Army Aviation, in general.

I invite anyone with a good story to send it to me at the below. It will be easier to be accurate if where, when and who was involved is shown.

Robert B. Machen



A CH-37 Mojave slingloads two Jeeps and attached trailers. The Mojave was flown in South Vietnam during the early and mid-1960s.

## Mojave should be shown on VHPA Newsletter cover

I have been a member of the VHPA for a couple of years and really enjoy reading *The VHPA Newsletter*.

I believe it is time to have an aircraft on the front cover that many people do not know about: The CH-37 Mojave.

It was first flown Dec. 18, 1953, as the S-56. A total of 154 were built through May of 1960. I believe 90 or so were for the Army and 50 or so for the Marines, which early on were designated HR2S-1 and later CH-37C.

I have enclosed a copy of a photograph of a CH-37 with two Jeeps and two trailers.

Now, for the Vietnam-era, CH-37, I believe the first ones, 3 or 4, came down from the 39th Transportation Company in Korea in 1962. I flew them in the 339th Transportation Company at Nha Trang in 1964 and 1965, at which time we had four CH-37B's.

For approximately three years, 1962, 1963 and 1964, the CH-37 was the only aircraft in the country that could sling out a downed UH-1 until the spring of 1965 when the CH-47's and CH-54's arrived with the 1st Cavalry Division.

To my knowledge, only one CH-37 was shot down. Lt. Ronnie Woodmansee and three crew members were killed

and E-4 Elbro survived, reported recoilless rifle round in cockpit. This occurred on Dec. 12, 1963, as per 1999 Membership Directory, Page 200.

I believe the CH-37's were retired in Vietnam in 1966. I had the pleasure of flying them again in Korea in 1967 and 1968. CW4 Roger Eichelberger (retired) tells me he flew the last one out of Korea to Japan in 1969.

I passed the boneyard at Tucson, AZ, in 1996. It looked as if the CH-37's were next in line for the chopping machine. If you would like to see a great, old warrior in very nice and shiny olive drab paint, you must go to Fort Rucker. It did its job to the best of its ability with two R-2800s humming. It was all we had in 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1965.

Gerald "Budda" Meador

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** VHPA members with photographs of Mojaves taken in Vietnam may send them to Newsletter editor Jack Swickard at 2607 Sherrill Lane, Roswell, NM 88201.

## Amerasian tries to find helicopter pilot father

I located you on the Vietnam helicopter pilot website. My wife and I are teachers in Missouri public schools. We are trying to help a Amerasian lady (Lisa Vo) locate her father who was a Vietnam helicopter pilot in 1967-1968. We are just friends of hers and not professionals who search for people.

Her name is Lisa Vo and Vietnamese name is "Tuyet," meaning snow. She was born December 1968 at Kon Tum, Vietnam. The father was having papers prepared to bring her and the mom to United States, but they were all separated and have not seen each other or made any contact since about 1968.

Dad was half-Filipino and had dark hair and mole on face. He was known by his men as Mr. Gene or Mr. G. He would have been about 23-24 years old and today around mid-50s. It is believed his dad had also been a U.S. Army or Navy guy.

Mr. Gene or Mr. G had rotor shot off his chopper near Nui Que. He was shot in leg, but escaped capture. He came back to United States sometime in August of 1968, then returned to Vietnam again. He was probably at Bong Song, Pleiku, Kon Tum, Thuy Hoa or Bien Hoa.

Lisa has not seen dad since 1968. Today, she is 32, married and a U.S. citizen. Her and her husband operate a successful Chinese-American restaurant at Marshfield, MO. They have two children. An adorable girl named Amie Vo, who starts Kindergarten this fall and a son, Jack Vo, age 4 in August.

See LETTERS, Page 11



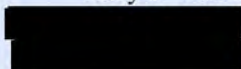
## Letters

Continued from Page 10

Lisa wants to get to know her father. I am sure he'd be very proud and happy to meet her and these two lovely children.

Thank you for any help!

Terry J. Wood



## Army aviator recalls flying Navy missions

I often think of the guys who I sometimes flew with on Navy EC-121s in 1969 and wonder how they made out.

I got enough hours in that bird that I should be an honorary member of the "Willie Victors." If you get a chance to talk to any of the folks who flew out of Chu Lai, would you ask them if they remember flying with a young Army WO1 in the cockpit?



One of the guys was from McAlister, OK, but I can't remember the names of the others. I think they were based out of Guam or the Philippine Islands.

I know I had a standing offer to go to the Philippines with them when they got their engines washed, but I could never get away for that long.

Following is a message I sent out to the U.S.A.F. C7-A Caribou Association today. Maybe someone will remember me by it:

As a young, 21-year-old "Wobbly 1" Army aviator who refused to salute anyone below the rank of major, I was stationed at Ke Ha AAF, Chu Lai near the Navy Officers Club in 1968. I still have a picture of myself standing on the ladder on one of the Marine Corps F-4s down by the main field.

I flew UH-1s for a while and then transitioned to the OH-6A (LOH). We got grounded for hours if we flew more than 130 hours in a 30-day period, so I usually spent my down time flying copilot on a Navy EC-121 up around Haiphong Harbor on 12-hour missions.

We never seemed to come back to Chu Lai on all four engines, but the food was great — all the steak and lobster served on the flight deck that I could eat.

The AC and copilot often left me on the flight deck by myself during missions, with the flight engineer behind me to keep me out of trouble. They were in the back, checking on the crew (read: sleeping).

The radar guys in back would tell me when to turn outbound from Haiphong or Hainan Island as we approached missile in-range (about 20 miles).

Those were the days. I'm probably the only U.S. Army aviator who saw both Hainan and Haiphong without being a POW in the '60s.

The LDOs treated me great and sort of adopted me. They flew one time with me on a night flare mission in a UH-1, but I think the altitude was a little too low for them.

I still have the Navy Nomex flight suit they gave me, but it must have shrunk over the years!

### Navy EC-121 at Chu Lai I

I never did really understand "Ship, Captain, Crew" or "Liars Dice," but always seemed to come out with a free drink at the "O" Club.

It was devastating to the crew when the EC-121 in Korea was shot down. There was no way out of that bird in an emergency, so no one even bothered to wear a parachute.

When I flew UH-1s, I sometimes took passengers to carriers in the gulf. It was a real hoot!

Army radios don't talk to Navy Radios, so I always came in low level, popped up in a high overhead, and slammed onto the deck amidst screaming mad squids.

If there was a standard procedure for landing on carriers they never said it to me. I guess someone from division must have at least called the boats to let them know I was coming.

One other thing that was "kind of cute." During my "white phosphorus" period (often in the Tra Bong Valley), I learned to make air bursts close to the ground by

See LETTERS, Page 12

## Former Lurp thanks Centaurs for support

I would like to finally thank you all for the moral and "physical" support that you all provided for the entire armed services in RVN.

But most especially I wish the best for those great "Centaur" personnel who kept us alive and brought us back to Cu Chi after each and every mission we completed, either from normal or "hot" LZ situations.

Without your professionalism and personal pride and integrity, none of us would be here now.

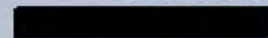
You flew the lowest, you looked for us the hardest and you never quit on us when the s— was in the air.

I served with the F Company, LRPS, 50th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division out of Cu Chi, 68-69 and then with Company E, CRIP, 2/12 Infantry, 25th Infantry Division out of Gao Da Hau.

Regardless of our position or predicament, you made us LRPS feel we were something special to your unit, and you always brought us "home."

Thank you all. You are a special breed. I'd love to hear more from you guys.

Daniel Nate





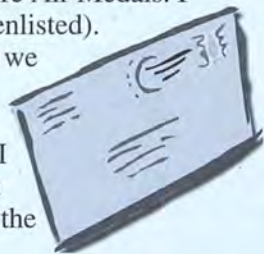
## Letters

### Continued from Page 11

dropping the grenades from about 750 feet.

One day early on, I was flying the deputy commanding general in a UH-1 and was supposed to go to a formation on return to the field to get some more Air Medals. I did not like formations (I was prior enlisted).

After we dropped the general off, we went out about 20 miles to the old Japanese air base at Cu Lao Re Island so I could practice air bursts. I planned to explain to operations that we missed the formation because of the general.



Anyway, while I was dropping grenades and doing low airspeed pedal turns to see them on the way down, the general's flight helmet and the aide's helmet blew out the back.

I went down to recover the helmets and had the CE and gunner try to fish them out. You know what it's like to hover low over the ocean? There was water everywhere and the helmets kept blowing up into the air.

Eventually, we got the general's helmet, but it was kind of broke, so I told the CE to throw it back in and I would just say it blew out on the way back to the field.

When we got back, the formation was over. No one asked me where I had been and, for some unknown reason, I didn't get court-martialed. The deputy commanding general was Brig. Gen. Colin Powell.

I kept a copy of the picture of the church at Son Tra Bong. I often flew in there in UH-1s and later in OH-6s, and vividly remember the "BOOs" making "almost" touch

and goes on the active while dropping pallets.

I took a walk in the jungle behind the church one time and a Vietnamese came out of nowhere and gave me a bunch of bananas. It scared the hell out of me. I was only carrying a survival knife as a weapon.

Another time, I rolled the throttle off at 5,000 feet in a LOH to start a auto-rotational descent into Tra Bong, and the engine died. I got it relighted at about 1,500 feet. That was the highest I ever flew in Vietnam. Usually I liked 25 feet just fine. It made me harder to acquire.

My dad was a C-47 crew chief from before the time the AAF took possession of the civilian DC-3s in the U.S. to February 1945 in Burma and over the Hump to China. His missions were very much like ours, flying OSS spooks into desolate airstrips, dropping supplies and, unlike us, towing gliders. He loved it as much as I did.

I retired from the Army as a AUS major (Air Defense, HAWK Missile System) in 1987.

Michael McCormick  
VHPA/VHFCN  
WORWAC 68-31 B4/ 68-517  
West Bend, WI

### Writer seeking gunner/pilot

Please put in your newsletter: Looking to contact the best gunner/pilot to ever look through sights, WO1 Charles M. Haynes.

He was in flight classes 66-9 and 66-11. He served in the 68th Assault Helicopter Company in 1966-67.

King and I would sure like to hear from Uncle Chuck. Thanks again and keep your rotors out of the trees.

John E. Frasso

## Taps

### Charles H. "Ace" Drummond Jr.

Retired Lt. Col. Charles H. "Ace" Drummond Jr., a member of the Tuskegee Airmen black pilot corps that served during World War II, died in Monterey, CA, of a stroke shortly after surgery. He was 78.

Drummond, who was trained as a B-25 bomber pilot, was preparing for action in Southeast Asia when the war ended.

He was recalled into the Army in 1951 for the Korean War. He retired from the Army in 1970 after 30 years of military service.

Drummond, a Master Army Aviator, was commanding officer of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company in 1965-66, and served with HHC, 223rd Combat Aviation Battalion in 1966.

He was a member of the VHPA.

Eight years ago, Drummond founded the Summer



Flight Academy, a program in the San Francisco Bay area that trains underprivileged young people to fly airplanes.

"Ace" was an old friend of mine, who I spoke to recently on the phone from California.

Following tradition, he attended the ceremony at Fort Ord, CA, with several other Master Army Aviators on April 30, 1970, when Maj. Gen. Ernest Easterbrook pinned Master Army Aviator wings on my uniform.

Safe and peaceful flight, Ace.

— Don Joyce

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Obituaries published in the "Taps" section may be sent to the newsletter editor by e-mail. Please include as much information as possible about the person. It is important this information include the date and place of death, age of deceased, information about military service, particularly flights school class and years served in Vietnam by unit. Obituaries not sent by e-mail should be typed; handwritten items are discouraged because of the likelihood of error. E-mailed items should be sent to: [swickard@vhpa.org](mailto:swickard@vhpa.org)



# Historian asks for help with 2001 Directory

MIKE SLONIKER  
VHPA HISTORIAN

In 1999, you, the membership provided clear detail of your actions during the Easter Offensive of 1972.

In 2000, there was so much data for the topic "Units North of Danang" we had to put the majority of it on the VHPA CD-ROM.

In the compilation of that data, C/158 rounded up its pilots and crewmembers, and put together its history from their beginning at Fort Riley as the 297th Assault Helicopter Company to the final days in 1972 as the Phoenix at Camp Evans.

A specific group from that company took the initiative,

compiled the data, edited it, sought more detail, edited that, and worked diligently to preserve their history.

You can see their excellence on the CD-ROM. If you want to receive it via e-mail, contact me at [sloniker@vhpa.org](mailto:sloniker@vhpa.org)

We got the same excellence from Varsity B/159th; Ray Knight, D/1-1 Cav; Mike Brokovich and Jack Taber, 4/77 Aerial Rocket Artillery; and many others.

For 2001, I would like to compile the histories of III Corps units with you guys taking the responsibility to gather it up.

Gary Roush, the database chairman is going to put together his data from the 242nd Assault Support Helicopter

See TET 1968, Page 14

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# Tet 1968 history will be compiled

Continued from Page 13

copter Company, the Muleskinners.

Hopefully, others will jump on this effort. A good start point is to go to the website at [www.vhfcn.org](http://www.vhfcn.org). On that page is a list of units.

Some units started in III Corps, changed unit designations and went north like A/501 that became the 71st Assault Helicopter Company.

I would like to be able to trace the movement in country to where they went.

## Time frame is 1961-1972

This will be our first attempt at compiling our history during Tet '68 around Saigon, Bien Hoa, Long Binh, Tay Ninh, Song Be, etc.

One fine Tet '68 account has been published by Bill Meachem in his book "Lest We Forget," which tells the story of the 17th Assault Helicopter Company that became B/101 Assault Helicopter Battalion up north in 1968. I highly recommend Wild Bill's book. The story came from the heart.

What did D/3-4 Cav do during Tet '68 at Tan Son Nhut?

Who were those gunships from the 145th Aviation Battalion that were hosing "unfriendly" on takeoff out of Bien Hoa during Tet '68?

What was it like landing on the "Electric Strawberry" on top of Nui Ba Den?

Who went across the fence into Cambodia in 1970?

What was 1/9 Cav doing in the III Corps AO?

Where was everybody located?

How about the Royal Australian Navy/U.S. Army unit, the 135th Assault Helicopter Company?

In the 2000 history, many of the smaller units, came up to tell their story, i.e. the Sneaky Whites of the 108th Artillery Group, and the aviation detachment for the 1/5 Mech. The size of the unit is unimportant.

Who were those Red Carpet guys at Long Binh? Where was that Razorback gunship flying when the famous picture of the CE standing up on the left side firing? Does anybody have a picture of a CE and gunner running along side a Charlie Model that is trying to stagger into the air?

I have a set of pictures of Quan Loi's French Villa. What was it used for? Who was in FSB Buttons? Tell us about the CCS missions the 195th flew in III Corps.

If you want to participate, please compile a list of your fallen, also.

I look forward to this effort. In my first tour, 1967-68, I was a forward observer in 3rd Brigade, 101st with 10 months in III Corps. I distinctly recall catching rides with the 128th, the 173rd, the 162nd, the 187th, and the 116th because of the paint jobs on the nose.

I was almost hit in Firebase Pershing in the summer of 1968 by 81mm rounds dropped by a UH-1H bomber from the Little Bears from the 25th Infantry Division.

I recall looking at a mess in a Lai Khe revetment caused by a 1st Infantry Division slick tangling with a revetment. The aircraft had a Confederate flag on it. There is a lot of history here that we can record as a team.

I am ready to assist, and we can fine tune in Denver at the history desk that will be adjacent Gary Roush's database load. I have to turn the data in by late August 2001.

# Book explains Vietnam decisions

"A Better War," by Lewis Sorley.  
(Harcourt Brace, 1999, 507 pages,  
\$28)

I doubt I speak for the majority, but I recall a time, specifically 3 p.m. on April 8, 1972, at 2,500 feet over Bu Dop wondering: "Who is responsible for THIS decision?"

There we were, going into the seventh year the 1st Cavalry Division — specifically, the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion — was in Vietnam and we are evacuating Bu Dop because Loc Ninh has fallen to the NVA?

What have we been doing in Vietnam since 1959, if we are going to sit here and just lose the ballgame

## Book review



because the players went home.

I recall that frustration vividly.

It is probably the same frustration felt in C/158 when it lost the third aircraft of a 120-Huey long daisy chain making the initial combat assault into Laos on Feb. 8, 1971.

Go from that date to the 20th of March 1971, put yourself in the 48th Assault Helicopter Company and recall all the Joker guns that used to be in the unit and all the crews that are MIA in Laos.

Who made that decision to go into Laos? Why weren't we allowed to take American troops, American artillery, and put American advisors on the ground with the attacking Vietnamese? In other words, why didn't we make the best effort to win?

The answers are very clearly written in "A Better War."

Sorley explains the decision-making process at the highest levels through the accounts of Gen. Creighton Abrams' tour as COM U.S. MACV from 1968-72.

The accuracy of this book is astounding. Sorley, with the help of many he acknowledges, used the data transcribed from reel-to-reel audio

See BOOK, Page 15



# Book challenges general's actions

Continued from Page 14

tapes of the Saturday morning intelligence briefings at MACV headquarters from 1968 to 1972. When you read that Abrams "said," it is a direct quote from the tape.

The book directly challenges the decisions made by Gen. William Westmoreland and how Abrams turned things around.

It thoroughly covers the murderous assaults in the A Shau by the 1st Cavalry Division in April 1968. We know the details of how the helicopters took radar-directed fire above the clouds.

This book cites how poor the intelligence was in that regard and how all were surprised by the sophistication of the NVA AAA that far into South Vietnam.

Hamburger Hill (Dong Ap Bia) and later the fall of FSB Ripcord in the summer of 1970 show many aspects of the reason U.S. forces were

## Book review



committed, via the transcribed audio tapes.

The decisions to attack into Cambodia also are covered with a thorough discussion on how that attack, not supported at home, was so decisive in throwing off the NVA timetable.

Surely, if the United States had success with Cambodia, the run into Laos in February 1971 would be just as easy. Not so.

This book shows in detail the South Vietnam leadership's decision to cut and run. It also shows how that decision damaged the credibility of Vietnamization in the U.S. Congress.

I did not know President Nixon wanted to fire Abrams, and now know why Nixon recanted.

Many of us flew the CIA's Phoenix missions that eliminated local Viet Cong leadership in the many villages.

A high level of detail concerning Phoenix has been discussed in many books about the Phoenix program. None, to date, have used the Abrams audio tapes as a source like Sorley does.

This book details the success of that program and how it also threw off the NVA time schedule to attack the south. The book said, by 1970, more than 90 percent of the South Vietnamese population was under Saigon's control.

As a participant in the Easter Offensive of 1972, I can testify to the incredible chaos that reigned, starting on March 30, 1972.

In my case, we did not know if the NVA would go to come into the south from Tay Ninh, Loc Ninh or any place in between.

See INTELLIGENCE, Page 16

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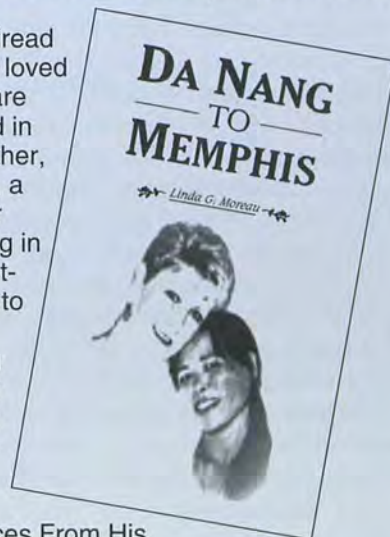
The staff and members of the VHPA made my book possible. I will never be able to thank you enough.

You gave me answers, memories and hope. I found my sister-in-law and I know that Mickey can now rest in peace.

The devastating dread of recognizing that a loved one's whereabouts are uncertain is captured in my tribute to my brother, Mickey Allen Wilson, a U.S. Army helicopter pilot declared missing in action during the Vietnam War. "Da Nang to Memphis" is an earnest and gripping account of my return to the crash site and search for my brother's Vietnamese wife and child.

One chapter "Voices From His Past" is about you, the VHPA. I hope you like it.

Sincerely,  
Linda G. Moreau



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# Intelligence knew of tank assembly

Continued from Page 15

"A Better War" details how the intelligence community knew since November 1971 there were many vehicles, including tanks, assembling in Cambodia.

Why didn't MACV intelligence believe the U.S. Marine Corps advisors to the Vietnamese Marine Corps (VNMC) concerning tank sightings coming straight across the wide open DMZ under the bad weather?

The intelligence breakdown, the

## Book review



impact of having only two brigades of U.S. infantry left in Vietnam, the pressure of getting the troop strength down is accurately documented in this book.

The Wall Street Journal review of this book provides a fitting ending: "Why did the U.S. throw in the towel

when it had won? The answer, Mr. Sorley argues, can be found in the misguided U.S. strategy from 1965 to 1968, which squandered public support for the war. If the Abrams strategy — pacification plus attacks on sanctuaries — had been followed from the beginning, Saigon might still be free."

Or as Neal "Duke" Varner from the 174th aptly said, "We was winning when I left."

— Mike Sloniker, VHPA historian

# Vietnam documentary gets it right

DAVID OWEN  
VHPA MEMBER

If many of you are like me, you have been less than happy with the way Vietnam veterans have been portrayed over the years since that divisive war ended.

Although there undoubtedly have been tragic-but-true stories about veterans who because of that experience went on to lead heartbreaking and even destructive lives, the vast majority returned to normal, productive lives.

Unfortunately, the former veterans have received far more media attention because the latter group's lives do not make interesting copy for a sensation-starved press.

The good news is a new documentary that may balance the picture, at least where Army aviators are concerned.

The documentary is called "Flight Line: The Army Helicopter Pilots of Vietnam." It was created by Flight Line Productions and was released in local PBS markets beginning around Veterans Day.

Bob Mason, former Army aviator and author of "Chickenhawk," served as executive producer for the film, which was produced by Christopher Fetner and Jeremy Wood. The introduction and narration is provided by actor Harrison Ford who, while not a veteran himself, is an aviation enthusiast and private helicopter pilot.

The hour-long documentary, which is based on first-person accounts by former Army aviators, including yours truly, begins by tracing the evolution of Army aviation and the Vietnam War.

But its real focus — and the strength of the production — is the men who volunteered to be Army helicopter pilots and went on to fight in Vietnam.

It provides their perspective, using former pilots' own reminiscences, intermixed with both personal 8mm film and still pictures as well as stock film footage, to follow their story from Fort Wolters, Texas, to the battlefields of Vietnam and Laos.

Noticeably missing from the individual accounts is the late-night Officers Club "there I was at 500 feet with my rpm bleeding off . . ." bravado that has long been the stereotype of the introspective depth of helicopter pilots.

Replacing it are measured but emotionally compelling accounts of pilots' experiences with one another, enemy fire, their strangely engineered flying machines and death.

This is not to say that describing one unit's flaming whiskey shot initiation process that scorched the occasional mustache does not still bring a smile to the storyteller's face.

Rather, these are mature men on the backside of life who have had a chance to think about their flying and Vietnam experiences and put them in some kind of perspective.

They remember the camaraderie, high drama and selfless commitment to "supporting the grunts" on the ground. But they still don't fully understand why some of their comrades died while they came home.

The final few minutes of the documentary are particularly heartwarming in this regard because a couple of the veterans have managed to put into words what many of us have felt about our Vietnam experience but have been unable or maybe unwilling to articulate.

As a participant in the interviews myself, I must confess to having harbored more than a little concern about becoming involved. The last thing that I wanted to do was lend my name to any project that perpetuated the negative image of veterans or somehow tarnished the image of the Army helicopter pilots who fought in Vietnam.

My concerns were partly alleviated when I first met with Bob Mason, Chris Fetner and Jeremy Wood, who described where they were going with this documentary.

Any remaining concerns I had disappeared in October when I sat down in my family room with my wife Susan and watched the pre-release version of the production. They got it right.



# Newsletter statement of publication

## United States Postal Service Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

July / August 2000

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2. Publication No.: 0896-3037

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Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

5530 Birdcage Street, STE 200

Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

Contact Person: Marcia Fritz

Telephone: (800) 505-8472

8. Same Address as Above

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Editor: Jack Swickard

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Managing Editor: Jack Swickard

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13. Publication Title: The VHPA Newsletter

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### 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:

Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	
7,693	6,685

### b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation

1. Paid or Requested Outside-County Mail Subscription Stated on Form 3541:	
7,501	6,550

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1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541:	
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16. Publication of Statement of Ownership  
Publication required. Will be printed in the  
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17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher,  
Business Manager, or Owner:  
Marcia L. Fritz  
Business Manager  
Date: September 11, 2000



## Activities highlight Denver reunion

• **Adam's Mark Hotel:** Please remember you must register for the Reunion with VHPA HQ in order to get the hotel reservation form.

Ground zero for the VHPA Reunion is the second level of the Tower Building. In this huge area you will find: Registration, the Information Center, dedicated space for the VHPA committees, two LZs (a smoking and a non-smoking) that will have cash bars, dedicated space for the photographer, and the Grand Ballroom which will host all the luncheons, all the evening dances, and the business meeting.

Half the mini-reunion rooms are one level above and the vendor area is one level below the second level.

Future newsletters will have details on parking, restaurants, the free 16th Street shuttle, the great Denver Pavilion next door, etc. See the Reunion website for a virtual tour of the hotel.

• **Banners:** We have made arrangements for the hotel to hang any number of unit and chapter banners from the ceiling on the second level.

Contact reunion chairman Mike Law at [law@vhpa.org](mailto:law@vhpa.org) or [REDACTED].

• **Golf:** We can accommodate 144 golfers. Leave the hotel early on Tuesday, July 3, in buses for a course to be reserved in January. Includes all fees plus lunch. Return to hotel about mid-afternoon. Contact Rich Walker [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

• **"Rumble in the Rockies"**

**Motorcycle Ride:** Ride your own or rent a bike. Assemble about 9 a.m. on Tuesday, July 3, at a west Denver location, depart in lifts of 25 bikes escorted by local guides, rest stop and lunch in Estes Park, return to Briar Rose biker bar in Golden about 3 p.m.

Consult website for a list of companies that rent bikes, Colorado rules, helmet requirements, the route, and other details. Contact Fred Lyssy [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

### Order official reunion T-shirts

The official T-shirts for the VHPA National Reunion in Denver will be white cotton with a pocket and the Reunion 2001 logo on them.

They are available in sizes ranging from small through XXXL, with most prices at \$15.

Order now using the VHPA National Reunion Registration Form!

• **Artists Luncheon:** Two or three artists, including Joe Kline, who paint or draw Vietnam-era helicopters will show and tell. If you've ever wanted to paint one or have a custom painting done, attend this.

• **Mini-reunions:** We will have the use of more than a dozen large business rooms. VCRs, slide projectors, photographers will be available.

See mini-reunion reservation form for details and schedules. Contact Brian Foote [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

• **Early Bird Party:** Free to all registered VHPAers, their family and friends. The Hot Tomatoes, a nine-piece ensemble specializing in swing, jazz and big band music, will provide music for three hours starting at 6:30 p.m.

The band's website is [www.hot-tomatoes.com](http://www.hot-tomatoes.com). In addition to cash bars, there will be a non-stop popcorn machine.

• **Authors Luncheon:** Three or four published authors (including Bruce Lake, Bob Mason and Ralph Young) of Vietnam-era helicopter books will show and tell. If you've ever wanted to write one or have

something written, attend this.

• **Welcome Reception:** You will need a ticket to enjoy the food and entertainment. The Nacho Men, a rock 'n' roll "street corner a cappella" dance band, will provide music and entertainment for three hours starting at 6:30 p.m. They are a lot of fun!! The band's website is:

[www.nachomen.com](http://www.nachomen.com)

As at past VHPA reunions, finger food (pizza, sandwiches, fruit, cookies) will be available buffet style. Naturally, there will be cash bars.

• **Colorado Springs Outing:**

About 9 a.m., coaches take you and your family about 90 minutes to Turkey Creek Park, located on Fort Carson.

View much of the front range, the Air Force Academy and the city of Colorado Springs along the way. Barbecue and drinks continuously served from about 10:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Enjoy displays and demonstrations from Army units at Fort Carson. Coors is a primary sponsor for this event.

Contact Terry Sullivan [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

• **Golden Outing:** About 9 a.m., coaches take you and your family about 30 minutes to a park in Golden. Barbecue and drinks continuously served from about 10:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.

You can enjoy the park or take buses to the Coors Brewery tour, to Buffalo Bill's Grave overlooking Denver, or to the Colorado Railroad Museum.

Coors is a primary sponsor for this event. Contact Bill Robie [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

• **Talk and Enjoy:** You will need a ticket to enjoy the entertainment. Cash bars and snacks available.

• **Ladies Function:** Coaches take you to a local country club for a continental breakfast and fashions from

See VINTAGE, Page 21





# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Reunion • Denver, CO • July 2-7, 2001

## NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

*Mail completed form to:*

VHPA Headquarters, 5530 Birdcage St., Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7698

*Fax signed credit card authorization to: (916) 966-8743*

Member name:	Member No.:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Flight class:	Chapter:	
1st combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
2nd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
3rd combat unit:	Call sign:	Year(s):
Address:	Address change? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
City:	State:	Zip:
E-mail address:	Telephone: (     )	Fax: (     )
Wife/guest name:	Hometown:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Guest name:	Hometown:	Hotel room? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**A hotel registration form will be sent to you with your registration receipt. The hotel registration form must be completed and mailed to the Adam's Mark Hotel. Telephone and fax requests will not be honored. If requesting a hotel room for a Unit TOC, specify unit. Total rooms needed? \_\_\_\_\_**

### NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION INFORMATION

EVENT	No. of people	Price	Total
Registration before 4/30/2001*		@ \$35.00	
Registration after 4/30/2001*		@ \$45.00	
Total from sidebars	XXXXX	XXXXX	
Golf tournament (July 3)		@ \$90.00	
Motorcycle ride (July 3)		@ \$15.00	
Artists Luncheon (July 3)		@ \$23.00	
Authors Luncheon (July 4)		@ \$23.00	
Welcome Reception (July 4)		@ \$ 6.00	
Colorado Springs Outing (July 5)		@ \$32.00	
Golden Outing (July 5)		@ \$32.00	
Talk and Enjoy Party (July 5)		@ \$ 5.00	
Ladies Function (July 6)		@ \$27.00	
Closing Banquet/Dance (July 6)		@ \$45.00	
VHPA dues (if not dues current)	1 year	@ \$30.00	
Life membership (installments)	1 of 3	@ \$150.00	
Life membership		@ \$450.00	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			

REUNION T-SHIRTS		
QTY.	SIZE	AMT.
	S@\$15.00	
	M@\$15.00	
	L@\$15.00	
	XL@\$15.00	
	XXL@\$16.50	
	XXXL@\$17.50	
<b>SIDEBAR TOTAL:</b>		
QTY.	BANQUET MEAL	
	Prime rib	
	Pork loin	
	Chicken Oscar	

**\*Each person 18 and older must pay registration fee.**

### CREDIT CARD PAYMENT

Credit card No: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### CHECK or MONEY ORDER PAYMENT

In lieu of a credit card, you can mail a check or money order payable to "VHPA Reunion 2001" with form.



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Reunion • Denver, CO • July 2-7, 2001

## NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION/HOTEL RESERVATION REQUEST FORM

### Part 2

### REFUND INFORMATION

**Reunion fees.** No refund will be given for any reunion fees (dinner, event, registration fee, or other activity) unless the member cancels the registration by faxing, e-mailing or calling VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25, 2001. Requests by U.S. Mail must arrive at VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25, 2001. There will be a \$10 cancellation fee charged for each refund request, regardless of the number of items (dinners, events, registration fee, hotel reservations, etc.) included in the request. Each refund request will be assigned a refund request confirmation number on the day the request is received by VHPA Headquarters. Reasons for requests received after June 25, 2001, such as hospital admission, medical emergencies, death in the family, etc., will be considered on an individual basis. Please remember that some events (i.e. the banquet) require the VHPA to commit a firm count to the hotel in advance. If the VHPA is unable to resell the canceled ticket, the registrant might not receive a refund for that event.

**Hotel fees.** Notice of hotel reservation cancellations must be made by June 25 by faxing, e-mailing or calling VHPA Headquarters. Requests by U.S. Mail must arrive at VHPA Headquarters no later than June 25. Each refund request will be assigned a refund request confirmation number on the day the request is received by VHPA Headquarters. VHPA Headquarters will process the cancellation request as quickly as possible. No hotel fee refunds will be made if the hotel does not honor the cancellation due to insufficient time prior to date of arrival.

## DENVER MINI-REUNION REGISTRATION

Send min-reunion registration information to Brian Foote [REDACTED] or mail completed form to: [REDACTED].

Unit or flight class designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit call sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated number attending mini-reunion: \_\_\_\_\_

Point of contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

### SCHEDULING INFORMATION

#### FIRST CHOICE

- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — a.m.
- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — p.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — a.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — p.m.
- ☐ Thursday, July 5 — Evening
- ☐ Friday, July 6 — p.m.

#### SECOND CHOICE

- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — a.m.
- ☐ Tuesday, July 3 — p.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — a.m.
- ☐ Wednesday, July 4 — p.m.
- ☐ Thursday, July 5 — Evening
- ☐ Friday, July 6 — p.m.

### SPECIAL REQUEST INFORMATION

#### AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT

- ☐ TV/VCR
- ☐ 35mm slide projector
- ☐ 35mm slide carousel
- ☐ Projection screen
- ☐ Photographer

#### ROOM FURNISHINGS

- ☐ Podium
- ☐ Microphone and sound system
- ☐ Private unit banquet
- ☐ Extra tables
- ☐ Internet access (limited availability)
- ☐ Hang a banner

We have more than a dozen rooms that can be scheduled for mini-reunions. Three are large enough for small banquets and/or gatherings of more than 200 people, hence they have sound system capability. Unit banners can be hung.

Each room will have one 8-foot table per 15 people attending the mini-reunion. This table can be used for displaying photographs, memorabilia, etc. You can have a 27-inch TV with VCRs. Slide projectors come with a portable projection screen.



# Vintage clothes modeled for ladies

## Continued from Page 18

the trunk of a Colorado Lady show put on by Colorado Historical Society. They wear vintage clothes like a 19th century ball gown and a flapper-era dress to merge style and history with laughs and reminiscing.

Coaches return you to the hotel in the early afternoon.

• **Wheelchair or mobility challenged:** The Adam's Mark Hotel has plenty of ramps and elevators.

The airport shuttles and the public transportation have lifts and other devices.

We will arrange for special buses and restroom facilities for Reunion outings. Contact Ron Magnus

( ) or ( ) if you have any questions or comments on these matters.

## • Closing Banquet and Dance:

The Plaza Ballroom can accommodate 3,000 people for dinner. Everyone will be able to see and hear the proceedings.

The Colorado Army National Guard Honor Guard will present the colors. U.S. Sen.



company in Vietnam and were supporters of The Wall — will be the guest speaker.

Advanced table reservations can be made. Details in future newsletters.

The outstanding 101st Army Band will play in the Grand Ballroom after

the banquet. Contact Ed Fickes

( ) or 1975 28th Ave, Unit 33, Greeley, CO 80634 concerning the banquet.

• **Vendors:** There will be a dedicated area of more than 10,000 square feet — more than twice the area we had in Washington or Nashville — for vendors.

Not only do we expect more vendors than at previous reunions, but we will be able to give them more display space. Contact Ken Fritz

( ) or ( ) if you want to be a vendor or have vendor questions.

• **Raffle:** We decided not to have a raffle this year.

Colorado's legal statutes did not play well against the VHPA's unique requirements.

## VHPA LOGO ITEMS

(DAVE GRIEGER, L-66)

**THEY'RE BACK!! THESE ITEMS ARE STOCK ITEMS AGAIN**

VHPA JACKETS (L,XL) — \$59.95 (XXL,XXXL — \$64.95) BLK

CALL SIGN, NAME, UNIT, LOCATION, DATE, ETC. — FREE (3 LINES)

ALSO AVAILABLE: WINGS (ALL SERVICES), CIB, CMB, ABN, PATHFINDER, MORE — \$12.00 EACH

VHPA BIG BACK PATCH (10")	\$29.95
VHPA EMBL'D HAT (WHT)	\$12.00
VHPA HAT WITH PATCH	\$11.95 (BK, N, WH)
VHPA HAT W/"EGGS" & PATCH	\$12.95 (BK, N, WH)
VHPA EMBL'D GOLF SHIRT	\$25.00 (L,XL) WHITE
	\$30.00 (XXL, XXXL)
VHPA PATCH	\$ 4.50
VHPA PIN (HUNDREDS AVAILABLE)	\$ 3.95 (WOPA, RLO, ETC.)
VHPA WINDOW STICKER ('W')	\$ 2.00
VHPA BUMPER STICKER ('B')	\$ 3.00
VHPA LICENSE PLATE	\$9.00 VSR SUPERIMPOSED
	WITH VHPA LOGO

VHPA ADDRESS LABELS (100 EA.) \$8.50 LOGO ON DAY-GLOW

VIDEOS — 30-MIN. REAL FOOTAGE, SHOT BY AUTHOR — \$19.95

"GUNSLINGERS" — 128TH AHC, CPT JAMES POWELL (1968-72)

VHPA COIN (NEW) — \$12.95 (PLUS 1ST CAV, 3RD MAR, DOZ'S OF OTHERS)

AND OTHER MILITARY DOD/NOVELTY ITEMS:  
MEDALS, PINS, PATCHES, KEY RINGS, CAPS, FLAGS,  
VN MAP — MORE

28-PAGE COLOR CATALOG — \$ 2.00  
SHIPPING & HANDLING — \$ 4.45 (MC/VISA)

**D&G ENTERPRISES**

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SALEM, AL 36874-0180

Mon.-Sat. (7 a.m.-noon EST) — (334) 749-9222/Fax: (334) 749-1818  
Website: [www.DandGEnterprises.com](http://www.DandGEnterprises.com) Screen name: DLG555@aol.com

## VHPA briefs

### Members to elect three officers

At our Denver reunion, we will elect three new officers to the VHPA Executive Council: Vice president, junior member at large, and midterm member at large.

What the council does impacts the present and future of our association. We enjoy our comradeship, but our work is necessary for the success of the organization.

Members of the EC conduct their business by phone, e-mail, fax and snail-mail. We devote several hours a week to the association.

We need dedicated members who are willing to devote their time, energies and talents to the association.

If you are interested in running for office, please contact me at ( )

All candidates must meet the provisions of Chapter 3, Constitution of the VHPA, Page 4 of the VHPA 2000 Membership Directory.

— Mike Hurley, junior member at large

### Calendar needs photographs

VHPA Calendar 2002 is in the works, so send photos to Ken Fritz, ( )

Include your name, unit, call sign, in-country tour dates, flight school class and a caption for the photo.

Everything known about the photo subject is needed.

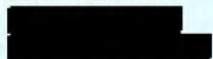


Greetings:

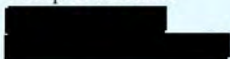
# New Members Corner



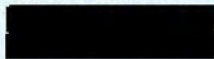
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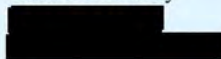
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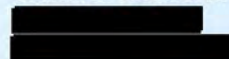
Richard C. Brunell



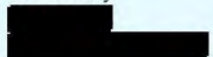
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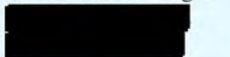
Charles E. Richardson



Ed Massey



Robert Siebenmorgan



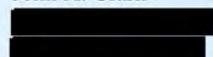
Jerry L. Elliott



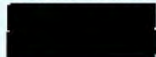
Wallin Haber



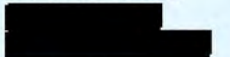
John A. Clark



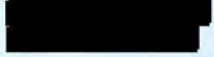
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Duane A. Caswell



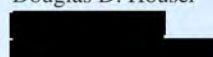
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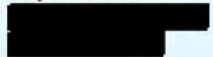
John D. Johns



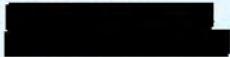
Douglas D. Houser



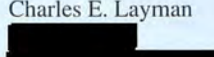
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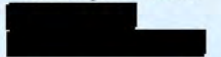
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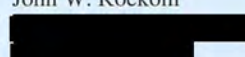
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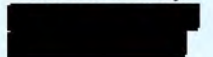
John Stephens Scott



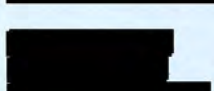
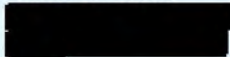
John W. Rockom



Edward L. Landry



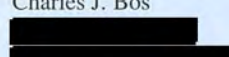
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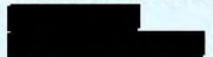
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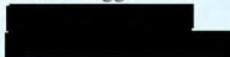
Charles J. Bos



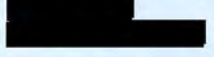
Russell Edward McCoy



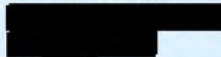
Elbert Staggs



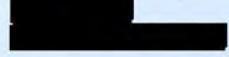
Richard A. Parr



Curtis L. Cornell



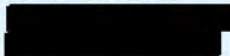
Steven M. White



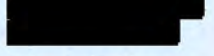
John Hansen



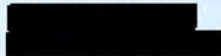
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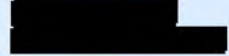
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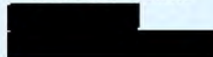
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Daniel T. Fox



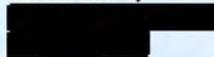
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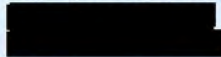
Richard H. Olsen



John D. Ruhly



Seamon J. Molkenbuhr



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The calendar features more unit logos than previous calendars, plus 27 photos — 8 showing Air America helicopters, 4 showing a Guns-a-go-go AH-47A, 2 USMC CH-46s, 2 CH-47As, 2 OH-13s from the 1st Cavalry Division, 2 OH-6As, 2 UH-1Hs from the 101st Airborne Division, 1 CH-54A, and 5 AH-1Gs from various Air Cavalry units.

The calendar also has an updated roster of pilot KIA, commemorated on the day each died.



# Kistler shares memories with Lurps

*Continued from previous issue*

BOB JOHNSON

To this day, Dennis Kistler marvels at his own accomplishment of "almost defying the laws of physics."

For a long, full day Dennis and the Lurps shared stories and talked about the good times, as well as the bad. He found that contact with men who understood and were grateful for the role he played was food for his soul.

And as quickly as it had started, it was over. He was back home this time, though, with bubbled-up memories, and with books written by and about Lurps, and with a significant shift in attitude. He was tired of the stigma. Tired of the silence. Tired of the awkwardness. Tired of the closet. No more.

He now knew, in the marrow of his bones, that he was proud of how he'd served, of how he'd performed, of the extraordinary courage he'd had. He

knew that, without question, he'd served his country with style and grace.

And he knew that if anybody didn't understand, it was not his problem, it was theirs.

The Vietnam War was piped into everybody's living room. People at home ate their TV dinners while watching live coverage nightly.

TV news, always hungry for sensationalism, went out of its way to emphasize the most negative imagery it could find. Quickly, it established a stereotype of the Vietnam veteran that the country bought into without even trying.

According to the stereotype, at best veterans were children, most of them drafted. They were portrayed as victims of a political system, most of them hooked on drugs. They were supposed to be ill trained. Most of them fought under the influence of hallucinogens. When their tour was over they continued to wear camouflage fatigues or jeans with military patches. They had very long hair and beards. They all suffered from post

traumatic stress disorder, and suffered from ungodly nightmares. They were all lost and drank themselves senseless. They couldn't hold families together. They were ready to attack gasoline stations at a moment's notice. A good deal of them were homeless.

They told incredible horror stories. Almost all of them somehow mysteriously belonged to elite fighting forces that worked behind enemy lines. They were all involved in covert operations. They had hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. They were snipers. They all ate strange things from the jungles just to survive.

At their very worst they were killers of old women and babies.

And this was the stereotype. And, for the most part, the country bought it hook line and sinker.

And, of course, it left absolutely no room at all for the bright, young man interested in serving his country, for the efficient, well-trained soldier performing selflessly and professionally, for the veteran who, while feeling

See **VETERAN**, Page 24

## Part 2

# U.S. radar 'spots' NVA helicopters

MIKE LAW

Dick Arnold, historian for the Cacti Association, which includes the 1/35 and 2/35 Infantry battalions who served with the 4th Infantry Division, contacted the 7/17th Cav Association in October. He wrote:

You guys frequently supported us in the Highlands.

The 1/35th S-3 journals in late September through mid-November 1968 are rife with examples of radar spottings of unidentified aircraft, thought to be helicopters.

These radar pickups, and some audio/visual sightings, were west of FSB Jean, Joan and Vera.

(These American bases were immediately west of Duc Co over-

looking the Ia Krel Valley which flows into Cambodia and QL19 the highway between QL14, basically the Catecka Tea Plantation, and Duc Co. This area is basically on the north side of the larger Ia Drang Valley. The area near QL19 in Cambodia was a major NVA logistic complex and would be the primary 4th Infantry Division objective during the May 1970 Cambodian Incursion.)

The following are extracts from the S-3 journals of Oct. 30:

- 4:15 a.m. — The radar at our location spotted three unidentified birds north of LZ Jean on an azimuth of 4300 mils. Informed Brigade.
- 4:25 a.m. — Brigade is going to get gunships to work with the 1/35th and its radar.
- 4:45 a.m. — Radar had three

ships low on their screen flying low to the ground at grids 8231212106, 818519285, and 814185, four ships in this area. Brigade informs ETA 10 minutes.

• 4:56 a.m. — The gunships for enemy copters are on push 58.70, Gambler 4 (B Company, 4th Aviation Battalion, 4th Infantry Division) is the call sign. They hit one ship possibly. Radar plots the fallen ship at a range of 6,000 meters on an azimuth of 3400 mils from radar location.

• 5:05 a.m. — Spooky (USAF AC-47 gunship) came north to northwest at 4,400 feet. Informed Gambler 4 of this.

• 5:30 a.m. — More enemy chop-pers are located at grid 823223, at 1,800 meters high also 822217,

See **U.S. GUNSHIPS**, Page 24



# Veteran feels force of stereotyping

Continued from Page 23

real pride in the way he served his country, returns home, manages the memories, and gets on with life. This image simply didn't make very interesting television.

Like thousands of other real Vietnam combat veterans, Dennis has felt the full force of the TV stereotype for 30 years, from the moment he stepped off the plane in the United States when his tour of duty was over.

For 30 years, he has felt the awkwardness and the rejection of being a veteran of an unpopular war.

Every war has its phonies. For some reason, a sizable percentage of veterans tend to exaggerate their war experiences. Some just simply make them up.

And a lot of these veterans are naively awarded medals.

World War II — the "good" war — had its percentage of phonies. But the stories veterans told were about good American boys saving good American boys, and about good American boys dying in each other's arms.

Vietnam was different. Here, the made-up stories were about covert operations, vicious jungle fighting and all manner of atrocities.

The truth is that most real Vietnam war heroes, like Dennis, are, for the most part, anonymous.

And most of them have had their valor stolen by thousands of the phonies celebrated by television looking for a good story.

Dennis Kistler has no medals. He has no Medal of Honor. No Distinguished Service Cross. No Bronze Star. Nothing symbolic of his bravery. He just flew his missions several times a day while being shot at a good part of the time. There was nobody there to write him up, to put him in for a medal.

His unit was just too busy for all that. They had a job to do, and the focus was on doing it, not on awarding itself medals.

For 10 months out of his life, at the most tender of ages, he was in harm's way, risking life and limb . . . because "that's what my country

asked me to do." There was no more to it than that.

Come winter, the story of the "Lurps" and the helicopter pilots who got them in and out of the jungle, will be told on television, on PBS or the History Channel.

It is most likely going to be titled, "Men with Painted Faces." (The North Vietnamese Army was terrified of the Lurps. Their leaders were always warning them to "watch out for the men with painted faces.")

Dennis has no real explanation as to how he came back alive and with all his parts. Being a very good pilot had something to do with, he acknowledges. But that wasn't all.

"I was very lucky," he says, and he leans back in his chair, folds his arms across his chest. His body tightens, and he looks at a corner of the room. "The day I arrived in Vietnam, most of the helicopters there had been shot down," he says. "The odds were not with me."

He's quiet for a moment. Then his eyes fill up.

# U.S. gunships check for choppers

Continued from Page 23

827214, one enemy chopper at each of these locations and two choppers at grid 827214, one more sighting at grid 833203. The ones listed above are individual sightings.

• 5:36 a.m. — Brigade informs us that the gunships from the 7/17 Cav are en route to this location.

• 5:37 a.m. — The Gambler ships expended fuel. Ruthless will be on station in place of Gambler. 850212 another sighting on chopper (enemy or unidentified).

(Not extracted from the log are references to a U.S. Army dustoff helicopter extracting three WIAs caused by friendly artillery fire. The radar and the S-3 tracked the dustoff ship.)

• 5:55 a.m. — Another sighting at grid 825196.

• 5:56 a.m. — More sighting:

802266 and 815196.

• 6:03 a.m. — Two unidentified choppers at grid 810284. At 803278 also a UFO and at grid 782282, three

*• 6:58 a.m.  
— At grid  
820193 there  
is a possible  
downed  
enemy  
aircraft.*

station.

• 6:15 a.m. — Grid 792253 is the general area where the enemy ships are moving.

unidentified aircraft at 811269, at this grid 5 unidentified 795269, 500-700 meters altitude of these sightings or unidentified objects.

• 6:10 a.m. — White 22 from the 7/17 Cav is now on

• 6:16 a.m. — White 22 is now on the Command B push.

• 6:18 a.m. — White 22 is now in the enemy location.

• 6:18 a.m. — New enemy location grid 800231.

• 6:30 a.m. — At grid 806223 sighted five enemy aircraft. Also unidentified aircraft at grid 848298, spotted again at grid 850292.

• 6:43 a.m. — Radar requests that White 22 go north-northeast from our location.

• 6:58 a.m. — At grid 820193 there is a possible downed enemy aircraft.

• 7 a.m. — Headhunter 41 (219th UAC from Holloway) is now on station.

• 7:20 a.m. — Headhunters 40 and 60 now on station.

See NVA SOLDIER, Page 25



# NVA soldier found just west of LZ

Continued from Page 24

8:50 a.m. — Headhunters 40 and 60 will be leaving to our AO to work other Brigade areas.

• 10 a.m. — The 7/17 Cav at LZ Vera had both of their Jeeps torn up. They want us to contact D Troop at Pleiku and get the S-3 to send out a mechanic to fix them.

One has a universal out and the other has a clutch out. (The rest of the journal includes details about two heavy artillery warnings (B-52 strikes) starting at 10:30 a.m., plus normal infantry unit relocations, resupplies, commander arriving and departing, etc.)

• 1:25 p.m. — White 28 came on station, they will be supporting B Company while they make their move.

• 1:26 p.m. — There will be two guns and two scouts.

• 1:40 p.m. — B Company has begun their sweep to the northwest and they do have air cover.

• 2 p.m. — Bikini 23 (170th AHC) came on station. He will be Lt. Col. Buckner's C&C bird.

• 2:50 p.m. — Redbirds spotted one NVA 600 meters to the west of B Company LZ. Snoopy device picks up the smell of a few others.

• 3:08 p.m. — Gunships are being employed on the enemy locations.

• 3:10 p.m. — The gunships are canceled artillery will be employed.

• 3:30 p.m. — Artillery checked second gunships being employed.

• 3:54 p.m. — Next gunships are on station another air strike will be called in.

• 3:55 p.m. — B Co is now mov-

ing west.

• 4:05 p.m. — The 7/17 Cav element was inserted at FSB (assumed to be LZ Joan since that is where the S-3 was located when the log was written. The rest of the log reports details of a priority Dustoff and each infantry unit's night locations until 9:19 p.m.) The sensor device on LZ Jean picked up movement southwest of the perimeter. C Co threw frags and ILL light organics, the movement stopped, then it started up again, continuing to throw frags.

• 9:30 p.m. — Movement has stopped, they are on 100 percent alert.

• 10:45 p.m. — Radar sighting one unidentified bird at grid 814216.

• 10:55 p.m. — At grid 808223 they spotted one more bird.

• 11:09 p.m. — Radar informs us that the choppers on his scope are going towards Cambodia, but he does not know where they are coming from.

• 11:10 p.m. — Radar reports two unidentified objects flying into Cambodia.

• 11:15 p.m. — D Co SRPs (short range patrols) 10, 11 and 13 spotted the aircraft headed towards the west.

11:20 p.m. — SRPs 11, 12, and 13 hear what appears to be jets flying high.

• 11:30 p.m. — One more chopper at grid 813232, about 600-700 meters above the ground headed west. Radar scanning grids 813226, 813221, 813219. Radar followings.

*From 4:15 to 6:40 a.m., the radar sections at LZs Jean and Joan picked up five unidentified flying aircraft flying low to the ground.*

• 11:46 p.m. — Radar spotted two birds at grid 820223, one at grid 821215, three flying in a "V" shaped formation at grid

823217, 825205, 826213, 828210. Altitude 600-800 meters.

• 11:46 p.m. — D Co SRP 11 hears high flying craft possibly jets.

• 11:50 p.m. — C Co informs us that an aircraft of unknown origin flying from 2500 meters or higher. He is flying south southeast at 90 knots or less.

• 11:58 p.m. — A Co 1/14 Inf heard fixed wing aircraft at 5,000 feet, going southwest, not a chopper.

The following is an extract for the Summary section of the S-3 log for Oct. 30:

• From 4:15 to 6:40 a.m., the radar sections at LZs Jean and Joan picked up five unidentified flying aircraft flying low to the ground. The aircraft were working west to east and back to west.

A check at brigade was made to see if there were any friendly aircraft in the area. Brigade informed the S-3 there were no friendly aircraft in the area. Acting upon this information, the S-3 requested gunships be sent to this location.

The unidentified aircraft were working

in the vicinity of grids YA8221 and 8027 when the gunships came on station. A dogfight resulted, with one of the unidentified aircraft and the gunship. The enemy aircraft was believed to be shot down at grid YA820193.

The vegetation is very thick in this area and the radar and the gunships lost sight of the aircraft.

No more sightings were reported until 10:45 p.m., when radar picked up another aircraft at grid 814216 and continued to have sightings until 11:58 p.m. Most of the movement was toward the Cambodian border.

See WAS, Page 26

*A dogfight resulted, with one of the unidentified aircraft and the gunship. The enemy aircraft was believed to be shot down.*



# Was search conducted on ground?

Continued from Page 25

However, no action was taken.

Dick concludes by saying, "I would have suspected that if this actually happened, an intense search would have been mounted at first light for the downed craft. No mention of such a search is mentioned in our logs, though, of course, another infantry unit may have been used or even the 7/17 ground assets.

"Another possibility of course was that the shutdown actually occurred cross-border and was just left at that. Just curious if you have ever heard of any of this."

Now, from an historical point of view, the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* often carried articles quoting senior Army, Marine, and Air Force officers commenting on the "enemy helicopter sightings," all played down naturally.

One of the VHPA's very good researchers has learned of details about a few North Vietnamese helicopters that were used near the end of the

war, mostly to move senior officers around in North Vietnam, but nothing of any substance in the 1968 period.

*We also know a lot about the U.S. Air Force, SOG and Air America helicopter operations from other countries.*

We also know a lot about the U.S. Air Force, SOG and Air America helicopter operations from other countries such as Laos and Thailand. They don't square with these radar sightings.

After reviewing a draft version of this article VHPA historian Mike Sloniker commented that many times, the 21st SOS (based in Thailand with the primary job of helping SOG, watching the Trail, and helping with SARs) CH-3, which were painted black, were mistaken for NVA helos by folks on the ground when, in fact, the Pony Express guys were in dropping the igloo white sensors in that AO.

The SOG guys, especially CCN and CCS, often had a lot to say on this subject.

Back in 1997, I assisted the SF with the false statements in the Tailwind matter.

I found instances where many of the SF I talked to thought the Jolly Greens sounded the same as what some of the CCN folks heard at night.

James DeWitt, who was a 7/17th Cav pilot, commented that during this period, there were nightly reports of a generator starting up in the vicinity of Duc Co and VC valley.

The Air Force would report in the same general time frame unidentified, slow-moving aircraft coming across the border.

The word was the generators provided a homing beacon for the aircraft.

One day, some "Saigon warriors" showed up at Pleiku to review radar tapes and the word was this was reciprocal engine noise, not turbine.

*Now, our A and C troop guys wanted to take a stripped Cobra (no rockets just miniguns).*

The speed of the mystery aircraft was said to be max for an empty UH-1C.

In the meantime, the 4th ID was getting a couple of their C models ready (fully loaded)

to intercept the enemy.

Anyone who ever flew a Charlie knows a fully loaded C model at Henschel Field struggles and these guys were getting the call to launch, scrambling to the aircraft, starting up, then get out to the AO.

We didn't think they had much of a chance for success.

Now, our A and C troop guys wanted to take a stripped Cobra (no rockets just miniguns) and, as I remember, had volunteers to sit in the cockpit, combat cocked to launch from a forward point, maybe The Oasis.

Unfortunately, the famous 4th would not agree. We believed they wanted the glory for their pilots to catch the bad guys.

But, hey, that was a long time ago. We are one big happy family now!

## Museum hosts chopper pilot film premiere

The National Vietnam War Museum hosted a benefit premier on Oct. 29 of the documentary "Flight Line: The Army Helicopter Pilots of Vietnam."

The film is based on personal experiences of Army aviators in the Vietnam War.

"This was an historic occasion for us and Fort Worth," said Charles Bogle, museum president.

More than 200 people attended the event, held at the Scott Theatre in the Fort Worth Cultural District.

The showing raised almost \$10,000 for the museum, which will be located in Mineral Wells.

"We had a lot more going on that day," Bogle said. "The program for the day began at noon, with helicopter and memorabilia displays, provided by Rattler/Firebird Association.

"That part of the program was free and many families came out to see the displays," he said.

Authors of books about the Vietnam-era were on hand to sign their works and talk with the attendees.

The authors included B.G. Burkett, author of *Stolen Valor*, and Bob Mason who wrote *Chickenhawk*.

Mason was the film's executive producer.



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association?

*\*NOTE: Life memberships may be purchased with three bi-monthly payments of \$150 each.*





George Larson (left), VHPA-CCN president, has a drink with chapter vice president Mike Nord in the chapter's Mobile O'Club at the Rio Vista Striped Bass Derby Parade Oct. 1. Joining Larson and Nord at the bar in the converted refrigeration trailer are Marcia Fritz and Mary Larson (right). The chapter's Mobile O'Club and towed Huey have been regular first-place winners on the California parade circuit.

## VHPA-CCN wins in parades

RIO VISTA, CA — The first-place trophy was won by the VHPA-CCN for its entry of a Huey and Mobile O' Club in the 53rd Annual Striped Bass Derby Parade on Oct. 1.

This veteran-friendly town on the banks of the Sacramento River cheered the chapter as members and guests rode in the Huey and the Club in this parade.

A big thanks to Mike Nord and his Western Truck School for towing the Huey and providing the Club at all of events.

The Huey and Mobile O' Club also won first place in the Nicolas, CA, annual parade.

Beer was served in the club by Nord, Ken Kinne and other members.

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