



THE DUSTOFFER NEWSLETTER



DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION

JULY 1992

**14th ANNUAL REUNION OF THE DUSTOFF ASSN.
26, 27, 28, FEBRUARY 1993
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**



Presented to the DUSTOFF Association from General Norman Schwarzkopf on the occasion of his retirement from active service. The unsolicited photo was formally given to the Association by Colonel Ben Knisely, the Central Command's Deputy Surgeon, at the 13th Annual Reunion of the Association.

BROTHERS IN BATTLES



It is a scene that was played out many times in many places...it is a view that would soon be blurred by rotor-wash tossing up dust and debris; followed by a few rapid glances back to see that all were onboard and then the whirring turbine...a race toward the sky...

Just another unscheduled flight by DUSTOFF...perhaps forgotten as it was the third one of the day...fifty-second of the month and one of many hundreds for that year...but the passenger will never forget it...you were his freedom bird...an awkward Angel with Rotary Wings who briefly hovered and reached out to steal another from death's grasp...

On a field of infantry blue, a laurel surrounds a rifle testifying that its bearer has survived the battle and now belongs to a small brotherhood of men...he also wears the purple testament that he once flew on DUSTOFF having paid his passage with some measure of sacrifice.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

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Scholarship

Fund 5,157.50

Balance 8,213.65

30 JUNE 92

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIGHTING 45th

Bruce 'Mac' McCartney, a 1969-70 alumnus of the 45th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), dropped this note with some poignant perspective on the up close and personal lives of DUSTOFFers past and present:

Was pleased once again to receive the December 1991 DUSTOFFer Newsletter. As always, when I receive it, everything else stops and I immediately sit down and read it from cover to cover. Of interest was the article on 'Pop' Novosel. Not so much because I knew him but I did fly with young Novosel. I was unsure of his age at the time but now that I know he was 20 years old, he was more than double that in his flying skill.

But junior isn't the only one who comes to immediate memory every time I read the Newsletter. Some of the names that will always be etched in my memory are guys like 'Jock' Rash and 'Cricket, Coconut-Pickin' Dawson. 'Spark Plug' Champion and Mr. Henley who, after coming out of a hot LZ, had a headcount of 25 little people and three coconut tree branches on board in addition to his crew.

And there are always the guys who taught me the ropes...Doc Squires, the only medic I knew who had a CIB, and 'Petey' Perterson, who could stick an IV blindfolded at night in the middle of a monsoon.

Finally, two of the best crews chiefs I've ever had the privilege to work with: Paul Lahey, who was left in a hot LZ once as he was struggling to pull in another US WIA and lost his grip when we pulled pitch...and 'Zip' Pizarek, who used to give our passengers and patients M&Ms, whether they wanted them or not.

It's been 22 years since I've seen any of these guys, but they, as well as others, will never be forgotten. Thank you - DUSTOFF Association.



DUSTOFF THE ENTERTAINMENT BOOM

Latest word from screenwriter Bill Booth is that the first major draft of the script for the screenplay, working title "DUSTOFF", has been completed and is receiving very positive comments from within the film industry. He has promised to let the DUSTOFF Association help with the technical aspects of the script and of the actual filming. Most agree that it would be a very positive step for DUSTOFF to have its story told accurately and with all of the feeling embodied in the mission.

An hour long segment entitled "Combat Medicine" aired on the Arts and Entertainment cable channel on 23 April as a part of the overall series narrated by George C. Scott, addressed the evolution of combat medicine from the World War I period through Operation Desert Storm. Prominently featured were DUSTOFFers Dick Scott, Ed Bradshaw, Joe Kralich, and Jim Truscott. Greg Goldman, the show's producer who conducted in-depth interviews for the tape, penned the following letter to the Association:

Here's the tape I promised you. I just want to thank you again for helping me by picking such incredibly bright, articulate guys for me to interview. They were just perfect, as you will see when you watch it. If I was in the service, I'd pin a medal on you for a job well done.

...I originally budgeted ten minutes of air time to you guys but the time I finished the picture, you had carried off half the show. All of your comments were either bright, touching, or incredibly funny. You guys absolutely stole the show and elevated the project into something really special.

I'm really proud of this little film. I hope you are and I hope I did justice to the great work you guys do. Thanks again.

DESERT STORM SCHOLARSHIPS

The DUSTOFF Association, materially assisted by Colonel Ben

Knisely, was selected in the aftermath of the war in the Arabian Gulf to administer a scholarship program for dependents of Army medics who lost their lives in that conflict. DUSTOFF crewmembers were unfortunately, but not atypically, the most numerous of those killed. The funds are being provided by a private firm motivated by very patriotic reason. The assistance will be administered in the form of payments for books used for continuing the dependents' education.

Currently the Association is going through all of the administrative wickets involved with ascertaining the aspects of the program to surviving spouse as well as the dependents. Needless to say, privacy of information safeguards are involved at every stage of the program's development. Perseverance will doubtless pay off and we'll be able to report positive actions soon.

DUSTOFF'S ARTISTIC CONSULTANT

Kathy Shipley produced the framing and presentation packages that have so enhanced the DUSTOFF memorabilia many of you may have seen at the 13th Annual Reunion. These pictures, patches, illustrations, and drawing had spent years gathering dust and mould in various nooks and crannies, offices, and storage bunkers. Kathy did a superb job and we're in her debt. She also did a memorable Luis Carranza original sketch to be presented to Major General Dave Robinson on the occasion of his visit to the Army Medical Department Center and School at Fort Sam Houston. It's not clear just who'll fill the artistic void with Kathy determined to accompany her husband, Dick, to the Army War College this summer. Incidentally, Dick's a kind of a rarity for AMEDD officers. He originally matriculated at the US Military Academy and, among other exciting experiences, flew Chinooks in Vietnam. He left active service briefly to go to dental school, rejoined the Army, and was promoted to Colonel early this year. Most have observed that this recognition may have had

something to do with his becoming a Life Member of the DUSTOFF Association in February.

ORIGINAL MATERIAL IN THE NEWSLETTER

Several folks have observed that some of the original materials printed in the DUSTOFFer Newsletter contains errors in fact, grammar, and/or syntax. Please understand that material provided by members and other is included based upon an evaluation of potential interest on the part of the membership. No attempt is made to correct the writer and, in fact, it would probably be unethical to do so unless there are errors so gross as to materially distort the story. As well, our editorial staff is small and hard pressed to even produce the Newsletter, much less correct articles and letters, sometimes written many years ago.

EARLY RETURN TO DUTY

The obvious key to being able to fulfill the Army's charter is the continued improvement and modernization of the DUSTOFF medical evacuation system. The AMEDD Center and School is receiving strong support from all levels of the Department of Defense in its initiatives to transition the entire rotary wing fleet to the (UH60Q model airframe, and b) acquire a high capacity air ambulance for the long range, 12-18 litter patient mission profile justified some years ago for the V2 Osprey.

An interesting side note...the US Marine Corps experience in Operation Desert Storm yielded yet another glimpse of the obvious. Major EJ Green, USMC, comments in the *Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1991, that "Desert Storm was the largest military operation since the Vietnam War. One of those noteworthy achievements was the rapid evacuation of casualties from the battlefield. It

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THE NON-MEDEVAC DUSTOFF DISCUSSION CONTINUES...

Hopefully CW4 Ron Wells' very well-written letter to the editor of the *Aviation Digest*, March/April 1992 issue, will put in the proper perspective a discussion which threatened to become emotional quibbling had it persisted:

I am one of those "well-intended" Vietnam-era pilots who transported casualties but in a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) aircraft.

Though obviously incountry during a period of time that wasn't classified as "the bad ol' days," Dustoff was available everywhere during my time incountry; therefore, "self-transport" of casualties was not required.

I am not offended by CW4 Tuttle's statement in his "Views from Readers" letter in the September/October 1991 issue of the *U.S. Army Aviation Digest*. (Note: CW4 Tuttle's letter responded to two other "Views from Readers" letters; i.e., Lieutenant Colonels Huether's and Geiger's in the May/June 1991 issue. Their letters were in response to the article, "Armed OH-58D Kiowa Warrior—The Multi-purpose Light Helicopter," in the November/December 1990 issue.) However, I do offer some Dustoff/MEDEVAC history that states why some units transported casualties without calling Dustoff.

During the first 3 years or so of the Vietnam conflict, there were few MEDEVAC aircraft incountry, much less located near the action. Dustoff existed, but out of place, from early 1962 until sometime in 1965.

Early efforts by Captain (CPT) John Temperelli (commander, 1st Air Ambulance Detachment in Vietnam), Major (MAJ) Lloyd Spencer, MAJ Charles Kelly, and MAJ Patrick Brady, to name a few, were stifled by senior commanders. Commander Temperelli tried at every doorstep to bring MEDEVAC to the very location of hostilities and/or assaults. On several occasions, he volunteered to accompany assaults and was told "No."

On several occasions, other Army aviators argued against dedicating aircraft for MEDEVAC, and suggested putting removal red crosses on the MEDEVAC aircraft, which would allow them to be used for other missions. At one point, MEDEVAC aircraft were cannibalized and parts used

for slicks and guns. Fortunately, CPT Temperelli prevailed in his attempts to keep MEDEVAC a pure mission.

When the 57th Medical Detachment (MedDet) arrived incountry in 1962, it had five UH-1A Huey aircraft. Continued efforts failed in distributing these 5 aircraft to just the right location to provide MEDEVAC. On one occasion, during a mission in the Delta, events turned sour. Four CH-21 Shawnee and one UH-1B were shot down. Repeated efforts by "slicks" to extract the wounded and downed aircrew were unsuccessful. The 57th MedDet was sitting in its assigned area at Nha Trang, Vietnam, far to the north. However, as the conflict widened and more troops arrived in country, senior commanders requested and received more MEDEVAC units.

In 1964, five more MedDets received orders for Vietnam. In August 1965, an air ambulance platoon with 12 aircraft was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. They took the call sign "MEDEVAC," rather than Dustoff. In 1965 there were two more detachments assigned to Vietnam, each with six aircraft. The 498th Medical Company with 25 aircraft also arrived in Vietnam in 1965. The 45th Medical Company arrived in 1967 with 25 aircraft assigned.

The MEDEVAC operated, if that is appropriate to say, from 1962 to 1965 with little assets and literally no mission statement. During this period of time, CW4 Tuttle is absolutely correct. Self-transportation of casualties probably was a necessity. It was better to try and get the injured to medical attention by any means. Without MEDEVAC assets available, no other choice was available.

However, after 1967, MEDEVAC had grown into a single, dedicated business, dedicated to the ultimate mission of trying to save lives anywhere, anytime. Procedures, mission statements, call signs, and full support from senior commanders were in place. From that time to the present, the mis-

sion of medical aircraft has continued to improve and grow.

MEDEVAC aircraft were not allowed to go into certain areas without "Cobras," to protect assets. As for that statement, "hot" areas were established with protective rules. That meant that some of these areas were so "hot" that sending in an unarmed helicopter alone was disastrous. Depending on the nature of the areas, guidance would dictate how the MEDEVAC helicopter crews reacted. For a short period of time, the 45th Medical Company had a 10-grid square area that was off limits without gun cover. The 45th Medical Company had literally over 20 aircraft, in 20 days, shot up in this "hot" area. As conditions improved, this restriction was lifted. During another period of time, the 45th Medical Company would not allow hoist missions to be performed without gun cover, for obvious reasons. The aircraft is extremely vulnerable during hoist missions. This restriction, too, was lifted.

Naturally, some officers and even commanders may be disgruntled at the policies and doctrine of MEDEVAC. But, we must never forget the early years, "the bad ol' days," and regress to some form of operation that has proved to be less than satisfactory. Less than satisfactory means loss of life or limb for somebody.

Take offense? No. Learn something? Yes. Let the guns do gun work. Let the observation aircraft do observation. Let the MEDEVAC aircraft do MEDEVACs. Can some of these be combined? Probably. Doctrine will dictate this. Obviously, troop transportation, observation, and even some aircraft. However, the UH-60 Black Hawk can't do what the AH-64 Apache can, nor vice-versa.

Ask those who were lifted by us. And there were several lifted. Between May 1962 and March 1973, an estimated 850,000 to 900,000 casualties were transported by MEDEVAC.

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HELICOPTER HEROISM AWARD PROGRAM

The Aviation/Space Writers Association and Textron Lycoming award is an annual Helicopter Heroism Award given to the most deserving helicopter crewmembers involved in such actions as search, rescue, medical evacuation, and disaster relief. It's a good bet that many DUSTOFF crews would be very competitive each year for the award which includes: an expense paid trip to the ceremony, the award itself, and an honorarium. Little exposure to civilian aviation publications, however, has contributed to few DUSTOFF units having any information on the program.

The DUSTOFF Association can help with information on the nominating process, the authenticating requirements, and documentation. There are no restriction as to the occupation of the recipient(s) or the type of helicopter involved. Joint and posthumous awards may also be made. The deadline for each year's award is 31 January. DUSTOFF units should write for information now, maintain a file on the program, and be prepared for the inevitable...that one of the unit's crews will distinguish themselves with selfless, dedicated, and professional acts of DUSTOFF derring-do.



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Especially after 1967, in most areas, standby crews ensured that literally no one was over 12 to 15 minutes from a MEDEVAC aircraft. Leave MEDEVAC to MEDEVAC. Given the opportunity, we would be there.

Credit for the statistics must be given to Mr. (formerly Major) Pete Dorlan and Mr. James Nanney and their book titled, **Dustoff, Army Aeromedical Evacuation in Vietnam.**

CW4 Ronald H. Wells
1255th Medical Company (formerly 45th Medical Company)
Mississippi Army National Guard

NOT SO FAINT PRAISE FROM AN OFT UNHEARD

Commentary from Morris E. Flater, Executive Director, American Helicopter Society, in the lead article of the March/April 1992 issue.

February 1, 1968. Today is an anniversary, as important to me as any other day in the calendar. Twenty-four years have passed since I was extracted by a helicopter rescue team from the green floor of Happy Valley, and certain death, just nine miles west of Hai Van Pass and the South China Sea. It is a day I will never forget.

Minutes before I had been leading a section of two CH-46A helicopter aircraft as part of a 10-man Marine reconnaissance team insertion. Up to then, almost everything about the mission had been routine. I remember the green and black painted faces of heavily armed Marines boarding our aircraft, the rush of warm, moist air of early morning as we lifted off. While our 46's stayed high at 1,500 feet, a pair of VMO-2 gunships inspected the landing area. Following a steep spiraling descent, we rolled out on short final at 100 feet, slowing to 60 knots. Our landing zone — an area of deep elephant grass — just ahead, 500 yards away.

The rest is a confused blur of events. First, we took a burst of automatic weapons fire through the plexiglass cockpit, destroying the instrument panel before us and splintering the circuit breaker panels just above our heads. Then, .50 caliber machine guns — their incendiary rounds clearly visible from just below — raked our sides and undercarriage; I could hear the surprised shouts of the Marines just behind me, and the sound of our own .50's responding. From the left, in slow motion, a ball of fire rose from the valley in our direction, and then the aircraft yawed sharply left as an RPG-7 rocket impacted near the #1 engine. I looked back and saw a solid wall of fire where the engine compartment had been.

Escape was now impossible with fully loaded aircraft and a single engine. With power from the remaining engine, we flared, set a landing attitude and

settled into the jungle canopy just below. Miraculously, many of us survived. Evacuating the aircraft, we assembled those who remained, and moved in the direction of a cleared hillside nearby. All the while — eons it seemed — the gunships cleared a path for us with rocketfire and machine guns. Two flights of A4's dropped a combination of bombs and napalm on NVA positions to either side of us.

Just as we reached the top of the hill, our wingman — braving what must have been devastating ground fire — landed next to us, hovering on just the main wheel mounts, while we rushed aboard with our wounded. Within six minutes we arrived at the hospital in Danang. It was over, for that day at least.

Now, many year later, I reflect on this and realize there was nothing unique about February 1, 1968. Helicopter rescues in Vietnam happened everyday, sometimes many, many times. But to those of us in battle, exposed to enemy fire, they made a terrific difference in our morale and the knowledge that most of us would survive.

I was just one of more than 3.3 million Americans who served in Vietnam. Of these, 303,700 were wounded and 57,605 were killed. Many who were wounded during Vietnam fighting survived because of the helicopter and the quality of medical care they received in field hospitals. Only 2.6 percent of those who survived long enough to reach field hospitals died, compared to the Second World War when almost twice that many wounded died — 4.5 percent.

During the 11 years of combat in Vietnam, medical evacuation helicopters transported between 850,000 and 900,000 casualties of war — Vietnamese, Americans, Koreans and Australians. The stories of helicopter

Continues

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN ARMY PILOT!

Sometimes it almost gets to be embarrassing that virtually all writers on Army Aviation subjects enhance their products with examples about DUSTOFF crews and their exploits. Little doubt that the praise is more than deserved and appropriate, and the rest of Phillips Handerman's article published in the December 1991 Air Progress was interesting as well, especially for many of you old guys who've not visited 'Mother Rucker' in many years.

Blacktopped rural roads, teeming with the vapor of the mid-afternoon sun, wind through the lush, sub-tropical countryside of southeast Alabama, etching a circuitous path around peanut farms and cattle ranches to a remote Army post whose presence is revealed by the forceful clatter of helicopter rotor blades. Most first-time visitors, including warrant officer candidates who want to learn to master the intricacies of rotary wing flight, approach Fort Rucker's main base traveling north through the quiet town of Daleville, often unaware when they cross from the civilian to the military side, Daleville Avenue becomes Novosel Street. The significance of the name change may go unheeded by the vendors delivering beverages to the commissary or golf balls to the clubhouse, but for those young trainees itching to get their hands on the cyclic and collective (the control levers) of helicopter, the meaning will be conveyed before they ever obtain their Army aviator wings.

Michael J. Novosel wanted to be a military pilot during World War Two. He enlisted just in time to get some B-29 bomber missions under his belt before the war with Japan ended in 1945. A few years later he left the regular Air Force, retaining a commission as a major in the reserves. When the Korean War broke out, he tried to get into the thick of combat, but the bureaucracy was unaccommodating. An airline career ensued until the Vietnam War escalated. Faced with the Air Force's denial of his request for an active duty assignment, Mike Novosel, by now a lieutenant colonel in the reserves, turned to the Army.

Commissioned a warrant officer in his adopted service, Mike Novosel was now, at 42 years of age, flying military helicopters. After twelve months of medivac missions in Vietnam, he became a helicopter instructor pilot,

for two years passing on tips from his real world experience to the expanding corps of warrant officer candidates, who upon completion of the training course would receive assignments to the very crucible where he had served.

As American involvement was peaking, he returned to Vietnam for a second stint. Thankfully, for the badly mauled South Vietnamese soldiers in the Plain of Reeds near the Cambodian border on 2 October 1969, Mike Novosel was at the controls of his chopper not far away. He had already been flying for 7-1/2 hours when he got the call for help. Descending into the combat zone, the chopper's crew chief and medic plucked the wounded from the brush as Mike Novosel hovered precariously in the midst of heavy enemy fire. Undeterred he even landed his ship so more wounded could be pulled aboard.

When the helicopter was full, he transported his cargo of tattered humanity to a relatively safe haven where medical attention was provided. This journey into hell and back, Mike Novosel made three times in 2-1/2 hours. On the last trip, with casualties aboard and darkness setting in, he was about to depart the killing fields when a wounded South Vietnamese soldier stood up in the foliage and began waving. In an incredible feat of airmanship, Mike Novosel maneuvered his chopper backward, allowing for the straggler's extraction while minimizing the helicopter's exposure to enemy gunfire. Yet the aircraft took a hit with fragments piercing Mike Novosel's right leg. Nearly passing out, he garnered what strength he had left and pulled the chopper out of danger.

In all, Mike Novosel rescued over 7700 people during his time in Vietnam. Among his saves was his son, Michael, Jr., who, interestingly, as a helicopter pilot in his father's unit, had

once actually rescued his famous father.

In addition to his Purple Heart, Mike Novosel received an Air Medal with 60 Oak Leaf Clusters, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and the Medal of Honor. Moreover, he won the lasting gratitude of so many of his comrades in arms whose very survival depended on his heroism. After his war service, he became the pilot for the Army's prestigious Golden Knights parachute team. He found his way back to Fort Rucker where he instructed until retirement in 1985. In tribute, the Army at that time named the post's main thoroughfare after its most illustrious warrant officer. He still resides in the area where, no doubt, the continuous reverberations of helicopters aloft, with warrant officer candidates aboard learning the coordination skills and control inputs peculiar to rotary wing flight, are welcome and reassuring sounds.

Six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army, in a rush to compensate for its ill-preparedness, opened what it called the Ozark Triangular Division Camp to train inductees as infantrymen for the looming combat. A year later, the training facility was rechristened Camp Rucker in memory of Colonel Edmund Winchester Rucker, a stalwart of the Confederacy who settled in Alabama after the Civil War. In 1895, the post was redesignated Fort Rucker. By then the post's mission had changed; Fort Rucker had become the home of the Army's Aviation School.

The title of fort is misleading, for it connotes a walled installation whose dimensions are easily discerned. Fort Rucker is, however, more a sprawling mixture of heliports, stage fields, and landing zones that encompasses more than 64,000 acres of mostly woods and pastures. The post's World War Two origins are apparent in the form of

ARMY PILOT *Continued*

myriad rectangular white frame buildings dotting the gently rolling landscape of the main base. Juxtaposed against the old barracks-styled buildings are numerous newer red brick building that exude a not-unexpected sensation of regimentation. Today, propitiously referred to as the home of Army aviation, Fort Rucker is the US military's leading helicopter facility.

Since its first widely visible role in medical evacuation during the Korean War, the helicopter has taken on increasing importance in the pursuit of battle. By the time of the Vietnam buildup, helicopters expanded their application by hauling troops to combat zones. The vertical ascent/descent capability paricular to the helicopter made for an ideal troop transport in the inhospitable terrain of Southeast Asia's jungle countryside. Like the evolution of the airplane during World War One from innocuous observer to deadly participant, the helicopter emerged from Vietnam in its ultimate military role — aerial gunship.

These new components of air mobility and airborne attack gave the Army, traditionally a land force, a far-reaching power that forever changed the dynamics of the battlefield. In a word, the helicopter added the third dimension to the chess board of combat. Following Vietnam, major armed conflicts would be combination air/land battles. The customary hardware of armies, the tanks and artillery pieces, were no longer destined to dominate the battlefield.

Everyone wishing to fly Army helicopters must come to Fort Rucker, for it is only here that the service provide primary helicopter flight training. In a course titled Initial Entry Rotary Wing, the Army introduces the student to the fundamentals of piloting helicopters. In the span of 40 weeks the students progress from pre-flight academics to flying time in the Bell UH-1H Iroquois (more commonly known as the Huey), an old chopper that was the main stay of Army aviation in Vietnam. Emphasis is placed on instrument flying skills with the help of flight simulators. Then the student is channeled in the Army's multitrack program to one of four front-line

helicopter types in the utility, scout or attack categories. With this kind of combat skills training, the Army ensures that its newly graduated aviators will enter field units at a higher level of readiness that if their first exposure to the cockpit of frontline helicopters were upon arrival at the field units.

All primary phase helicopter flying is done from Lowe Army Heliport, a wide open field that dips into a shallow gulley where a verdant and tenacious form of wild grass decorates the landscape, interrupted by the frequent asphalt strips that serve as taxi lanes and landing pads for the fleet of aged Hueys. It is here that fledgling Army aviators get their first taste of helicopter flight. During the early morning before flight operations commence, when the air is still, Hueys populate the heliport on a scale imaginable only by Pentagon grandiosity. Shortly after the first rays of sun burn off the thick morning dew, the gulley come to life with helicopters wobbling tentatively aloft. The assemblage of so many Vietnam-era copters, the tips of their swirling rotor blades emitting that trademark "whoomp, whoomp" sound, could, except for the bright orange markings emblazoned on the fuselage sides as mandated by the Aviation Training Brigade, easily spark flashbacks for virtually any Vietnam veteran.

Indeed, many of the Hueys hail from harrowing combat missions in Vietnam. The years of war coupled with the excruciating abuse of primary flight instruction have taken their toll on the old workhorses. Helicopters are, as a rule, maintenance prone to begin with because of vibration-induced fatigue as well as the multitude of critical moving parts. In the case of Fort Rucker's Hueys, it is a near miracle that the civilian maintenance contractors have kept them airworthy this long. The Army is actively pursuing a brand-new helicopter designed for the primary training role as a replacement for the hand-me-down Hueys.

The Army, which prides itself on an adherence to a merit system and an absence of class distinction, apparently has among the student at Fort Rucker an anomalous pecking order. Those

who arrive via West Point or college ROTC programs enter as commissioned officers, fresh second lieutenants; whereas the gung-ho high school graduates or the enlisted mechanics enter as warrant officer candidates (WOCs for short). The early stages of the Fort Rucker experience are not as grueling for the young second lieutenants due to the theory that they have already paid their dues achieving officer rank. The WOCs, on the other hand, are plunged into a kind of boot camp where they come under the harsh, unrelenting control of a black-hatted TAC (Training-Advising-Counseling) officer who resembles the much-caricatured merciless drill instructor.

WOCs are exposed to a hellish frenzy designed, so the Army says, to instill the cornerstones of self-discipline, attention to detail, and time management. A WOC can be humiliated in front of his roommates for failing to stow his saving materials according to regulations or for leaving a smudge on polished shoes. The tiniest infraction is severely rebuked by an uninhibited and, some terrified WOCs would suggest, sadistic TAC officer. One senses, however, that the real value of this overpowering exercise of authority, which spills over into outright intimidation, is in the resilience it fosters for the real possibility of involvement in war with all its attendant ugliness, including the prospect of being captured by a less than humane enemy.

A typical day's routine begins well before sunrise, as WOC classes bolt from their clapboard barracks to run several miles. As the classes scrisscross the post at double time in the pre-dawn darkness, a strong member of each class is at the lead carrying the class' guidon or flag. While on the move, the class, though its members may be panting for breath, recites rhythmic cadences that can be heard piercing the morning calm and interfering with the steady chirping of unseen crickets.

The young people who proceed through this program must be superbly motivated to complete it. As one senior officer says Army flying "must not be a job, but a devotion, a calling, a career". In fact, the consensus among longtime instructor pilots is that the current crop of aviation candidates is

better than that from the time of the draft. Competition to get into the flight program is stiff, with only one out of every 15 WOC applicants being accepted. With an average cost of over \$211,000 to train each Army aviator, it is no surprise that the service expects a six-year commitment following graduation.

The student's first flight in a helicopter is called a "nickel ride." As part of the labyrinthine customs at the Aviation School, shortly after all students in a class get that first hop, the class is expected to present its superior officers with a specially devised memento with an actual five-cent piece somehow incorporated into the artwork. As the students progress through flight training, they are, in Pavlovian fashion, assigned different color hats every two weeks, rewarding their constantly improving status.

One of the key hurdles for anyone learning to fly is the first solo flight. Unable to afford a dunking party for each student returning for his or her first solo as is military tradition, the Aviation School instead allows each class a single symbolic dunking. After retreat is sounded at 1630 hours (4:30 p.m.) all WOC classes form a human wall on both sides of a long street. The WOCs are armed with buckets of water. The last WOC to solo in a given class is mounted on a child's trainer bicycle, dubbed the solo cycle, that has been painted the night before in the color of his class by the class' first student to solo. The bike sports a toy like rotor blade attached to a makeshift shaft. The poor soul who was last to solo must present himself attired in his class color with a motorcycle crash helmet. He is to pedal the gauntlet, futilely trying to avoid getting soaked. Of course, by the time he reaches the end of the street, he is utterly drenched. On the return course retracing his route, his fellow students stand at attention and salute. The unusual lightheartedness is followed by a tug-of-war between classes. Importantly, after solo the WOC obtains a symbol which is pinned to his hat, designating him as a warrant officer candidate.

Those students who are commissioned officers may, later in their careers, have other soldiers under their command. They are not merely to fly, but

to lead. By contrast, warrant officers are not viewed as a part of the echelon that gives orders, but as technicians. In many cases, warrant officers have accumulated more flight time and combat experience than the commissioned officers with whom they fly. Perhaps ironically, in these situations, the commissioned officer often defers wisely to the judgment of his warrant officers.

Once the student has mastered hover flight and other basic flying skills that include the autorotation procedures for dealing with a dreaded engine failure, a final phase of combat skills training is conducted. Typically, the curriculum at this point includes heart-pounding, nap-of-the-earth (NOE) flying, during which the student, in accordance with current Army warfare doctrine that calls for masking the helicopter from the enemy, is supposed to hug the ground in cruise flight at a mere five feet above the treetops. Because of the slim margin for error, NOE training flights do not get above 40 knots, although the instructor pilots, with their level of experience, can fly faster on NOE missions.

The IP reminds the intensely concentrating students (one is flying the craft in a seat next to the IP while another student observes in a jump seat) in a reassuring voice through the bulging enclosed earphones of the standard issue Army aviator helmet, that they must always remember to keep their ship headed straight when so low to the trees, for a swing of the tail could result in a catastrophic collision. Just when the flying student thinks he is in control and starts to ease up, the IP's voice crackles over the intercom, "I see an enemy heat-seeking missile launcher on that ridge at ten o'clock. What are you going to do to avoid an incoming missile?" These imaginary scenarios almost always fluster the student. As he hems and haws, the IP may say the enemy missile is getting closer. The student must juggle several demanding tasks at once. This inflight pressure-cooker type of training is highly effective as an introduction to combat skills and is built upon later in training with field units. If and when the student, at a later date as an Army aviator, finds himself in a real scenario as that professed for training, he will know to turn the engine exhaust, which is the main

heat source, away from the onrushing missile and to mask his helo behind the cover of trees or natural berms.

While the Army places heavy emphasis on instrument flight, there is also much practical instruction in classic pilotage based on the use of detailed navigational charts. One of the primary students' major accomplishments is just being able to navigate around Fort Rucker's voluminous airspace at low altitude over Alabama's notoriously unchanging landscape that is remarkably devoid of prominent landmarks. Recognizing the probabilities of students getting lost, as well as of some mechanical failure causing a forced landing, there is, as a matter of policy, a flight-following service provided either by ground radars or, when the training missions go too low for radar observation, an overhead helicopter flying a safety cover mission called a *prima* flight.

The ultimate reward, of course, is the attainment of the coveted Army aviator wings. After accumulating about 170 flight hours during the nine months and upon successful course completion, the candidate and his family participate in a graduation sequence that includes a tour of the Warrant Officer Hall of Fame, an inauspicious building, one of those white frame barracks-style holdovers from an earlier era. There upon an ominous black wall are nearly 1600 gold plaques, each bearing the name of Army warrant officers killed in Vietnam. In a corner is another reminder of that searing conflict—a mannequin attired in gray prisoner of war pajamas. But there is also an exhibit telling the inspiring story of Mike Novosel, Army helicopter pilot and warrant officer.

Fort Rucker is such a big place and so spread out, its missions so inclusive and far-reaching, it is a mystery if anyone can grasp all the post's activity let alone command and direct it. The Army, in its infamous way, buries everything in a maze of officialdom and a web of acronyms. Most of the enlisted personnel, the students, the junior officers, the civilian contractors, those who perform the demanding and time-consuming daily chores that

Continues on next page

THERE I WAS

For posterity and perhaps just for giggles, share with the members of the DUSTOFF Association your most memorable moment(s) having something to do with aeromedical evacuation. The narrative doesn't have to involve combat or even medical evacuation missions but should be of the nature that you might have started the telling of the experience with a 'There I was...'. The moment might involve high drama, a particularly poignant moment, a comic aside, dark humor, or blatant heroism and selflessness. The telling should take no more than a single-spaced page. There may even be a prize of sorts for the most noteworthy submission.



ARMY PILOT

Continued

leave so little time for reflection and that make Fort Rucker click with an incredible efficiency, seem to think that the post runs as well as it does because way at the top there is a highly experienced and eminently wise leadership that knows about and can assimilate the many operations going on in the post's countless nooks and crannies.

In the late afternoon, the billowing cumulus clouds beginning to dissipate like clockwork and the magnolia trees on the main base casting long shadows, a few WOCs soon to receive their wings stride across Novosel Street in their nondescript olive uniforms. They have made it through this rugged proving ground where it is easy for the individual to get lost and be forgotten. In their pride, as they face the future as Army aviators, they will share with many of their colleagues in Army aviation, and those who guide them through the odyssey of Fort Rucker, a commitment to their country and a love for flying.

EARLY ON IN THE DUSTOFF EXPERIENCE

SSG Jerry Grubs wrote the following article entitled "DUSTOFF Means Hope" which appeared in the Pacific Stars and Stripes in mid-1965:

To the Vietnamese fighting man, two American words — "Dust Off" — are the call sign for hope, relief from suffering and a renewed chance for life. Spoken over a radio, they bring the US Army's 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) with experienced medical help.

During the past two years, the 57th Medical Detachment has evacuated over 3,000 wounded Vietnamese and American soldiers. Evacuation records have been broken the last two consecutive months with 448 patients and 68 night missions for March, 507 patients and 77 night missions for April.

The men of the unit fly night and day, seven days a week, armed only with the familiar Red Cross, asking only — is someone hurt?

Often their work is dangerous, for the Red Cross emblem serves as little more than a target for the Viet Cong rifleman. The hours are sometimes long, as was demonstrated when a routine medical evacuation request pyramided into a chain of evacuations which kept the 57th's UH-1B helicopters flying for 39 hours, 16½ of which were at night.

During this mission maintenance crews from the 57th Transportation Detachment were continuously alert to keep the helicopters in the air and to be available for any unseen emergency. Because of their presence, the 57th was able to accomplish the mission in which they evacuated 73 wounded men.

Though the majority of the patients evacuated by the 57th are battle casualties, a great many have been innocent women and children who have been injured by terrorist activities of the Viet Cong. On various occasions this unit has adided a town or New Life hamlet that has been the target of mortar fire or has been completely overrun by the Viet Cong insurgents, who leave death and destruction behind them.

Missions of this type often require on-the-spot medical treatment as well

as enroute treatment by the "Dust Off" medics. The unit also responds to calls that are of a humane nature transferring tuberculosis and malaria patients as well as an occasional race with the stork.

One particular night last month, a request was received to evacuate a victim of a miscarriage who was given six hours to live if she did not receive surgery. At 11:00 P.M. the 57th Medical Helicopter Ambulance was on its way.

Approaching its destination, the helicopter was greeted by searching automatic weapons fire.

Undaunted, the pilot changed course and approached from another direction and picked up the patient. At 11:45 P.M. delivery was made at Cong Hoa Hospital with a gracious patient and noticeably relieved husband.

The missions may be long and varied, always dangerous, but each one is rewarding. In Vietnam, the efforts of the doctors and crews have not only helped restore the wounded to combat fitness, but have been influential in the "battle for men's minds" by demonstrating that their concern for the wounded knows no national boundaries.

EARLY RETURN TO DUTY

Continued

was fortunate that massive numbers of friendly casualties did not occur in the desert of Kuwait because the evacuation of those relatively few wounded Marines was not nearly as efficient as the Vietnam War." Of course, DUSTOFF WAS A PRIMARY CARRIER OF WOUNDED Marines in Vietnam and the smart money is on assignment to the Army of the battlefield aeromedical evacuation mission for all of the services. With joint services' operations de riguer in future contingencies, such a dedicated arrangement makes good sense.

DUSTOFFers DO IT WITH DELTA AIRLINES

The Executive Council has approved the offer of Delta Airlines to act as the Official Airlines of the DUSTOFF Association and to provide special rates to DUSTOFFers traveling within

the United States to and from the Annual Reunion. Details are provided in this mailing announcing the 14th Annual Reunion in 1993.

In a related story, this letter, written

DUSTOFFers JUST ALWAYS DO THINGS BETTER

When helicopter crew chief SSgt. David Lee Ast, Jr. suggested the Army increase the life of its flight helmets by



replacing a metal bracket with a simple rubber spacer, he earned himself \$7,460.

Ast, of the 54th Medical Detachment at Fort Lewis, Wash., came up with the idea while stationed in Korea. Helmets there lasted less than a year, Ast remembered, because each time a crew member lifted his visor, a retaining bracket scraped the helmet and wore it down.

Ast reconditioned 20 old helmets, placing his rubber spacer on 10 of them, to prove that helmets could indeed have a longer life.

He submitted his idea through his post suggestion program, and his invention was soon adopted by the Army.

Officials estimate that in its first year of use, the simple rubber addition has saved the Army \$858,300 in helmet replacement cost.

REUNION PRAISE FROM FLORIDA

March 1992 letter from DUSTOFFer Craig Honaman in Jacksonville commented on the 13th Annual Reunion: Just a word of thanks and appreciation to you and the others who spent many hours this past year as officers of the Dustoff Association. The products of the volunteerism that was devoted to the association were enjoyed by folks like myself who bust into town once a year, soak up the hospitality, booze and fun; then leave all the "clean up" in the capable hands of the "permanent party." The hours which you personally took away from your family and other career responsibilities to devote to the association were not only

commendable, but sincerely appreciated. For all your leadership and dedication, THANKS. Not only to you but to those who have shared with us.

You may wish to suggest to the new officers that in the next newsletter, a tear out questionnaire be included for an "after action" suggestions of how the conference might be more effective, particularly to those who did not attend. For those who did attend, what was good and areas of opportunity of improvement.

Thanks again Jim for all your hard work. Keep in touch.

to Specialist Fred Inman, 326th Medical Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, certainly reflects the spirit and compassion that is characteristic of DUSTOFF:

Dear Specialist Inman;

On behalf of DUSTOFF Association Life Members Dick Shipley and Jim Ramsey and in honor of DUSTOFFer Tom Scofield, it is my pleasure to present you with the enclosed certificate for two roundtrip Delta Airline tickets.

Obviously, this award and its circumstances are worthy of some explanation. These tickets were provided by Delta Airlines for participation in the DUSTOFF Association gold tournament this past month. The winner of the tickets, Dick Shipley, mentioned to Jim Ramsey, a former DUSTOFF combat medic in Vietnam, that it might be appropriate that a deserving combat medic of more recent vintage receive this prize. The two agreed and returned the tickets to the Association with the request that the gift be proffered in the name of Tom Scofield, an aviator of superb credentials with the original Air Assault aeromedical evacuation unit in the 1st Cavalry Division. As the 1st Cavalry Division is now reorganized and has no organic air ambulances, the 101st Airborne Division seemed appropriate for finding a worthy candidate for the tickets. We consulted with your battalion commander, LTC Tommy Wayne Mayes, who instituted an informal selection board. He has informed us that your deportment and performance best exemplified the ideals of the DUSTOFF family and of one of real heroes.

Our congratulations to you, Specialist Inman. We wish you the very best of good fortune in the future and enjoy your trip on Delta Airlines.

Sincerely,

Roger M. Opio
LTC, MS, USA
President, DUSTOFF Assn.

MAYES' FIGHTING AIR ASSAULT MEDICS FEATURED

The 6 February 1992 issue of the Fort Campbell Courier highlighted the 326th Medical Battalion, its leaders and soldiers, in an article and interviews written and conducted by Specialist Alicia Borlik.

A quick glance shows ribbons and medals meticulously placed on dress greens. Move closer and see these soldiers' extraordinary unit pride. Talk to soldiers of 326th Medical Battalion to learn why they exhibit so much pride.

The battalion's most recent accomplishment began 20 Aug. 1990, with the first soldiers departing to Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Shield.

Companies B and D deployed in support of 2nd Brigade while remaining companies prepared for deployment, conducting intensive nuclear, biological and chemical and marksmanship training. By 16 Sept. 1990, all companies had settled in Saudi Arabia at Camp Eagle II, the division's base camp.

Soldiers quickly set up camp, establishing health care at base camp as well as two forward operating bases (FOB).

Bravo Company was the first to move forward to FOB Bastogne in support of the division as it established a defensive line close to the Kuwaiti border.

Given the attachment to the division of both 3rd Armored Cavalry and 12th Aviation Bde., a new approach to health services was required to medically support this force of three infantry brigades, two aviation brigades and one armored cavalry regiment.

The support concept of FOBs was expanded to include logistics assault bases (LAB) to each of these combat units. LABs provided minimal patient holding, advanced trauma life support and ground evacuation.

The battalion continued with new personnel arriving in anticipation of combat operations. Individual brigade surgeons took charge of the companies 2 Nov. 1990, according to doctrine re-

quiring medical units in combat to be commanded by medical corps office.

Another major accomplishment was organization of a division-level patient decontamination plan. Personnel and equipment requirements to decontaminate and treat chemical casualties were developed.

A corps mass casualty exercise provided the medics capability to communicate and transport casualties through the area of operation (AO).

As the prospect of war was realized, 326th prepared to move to tactical Assembly Area (TAA) Campbell. They departed 18 Jan. 1991, one day after the air war began, on a 700-mile trek via ground convoy, organic aircraft and C-130 aircraft.

Planning for the inevitable ground offensive continued through February 1991. When the division executed an air assault — the first phase of the ground offensive — Alpha, Delta and Headquarters and Service companies were there to help establish FOB Cobra in Iraq. Charlie Co. supported the air assault of 3rd Bde. 25 Feb. 1991, as they established themselves in the Euphrates River Valley and began to disrupt the Iraqi's main supply route.

The 326th was supporting the offensive campaign from four locations when temporary cease fire began at 8 a.m., 28 Feb. Casualties across the division were miraculously light and not one 326th soldier was wounded during the 100-hour ground war.

It took about three weeks to get the battalion out of Iraq, but by 28 March, the battalion settled back at Camp Eagle II to pack equipment. They returned to the states 12 April with the division's colors.

"We revalidated the importance of aeromedical evacuation assets and their role in the total medical system," said Lt. Col. Tommy W. Mayes, commander, 326th Med. Bn. "We gained confidence in our ability to treat soldiers wounded in a chemical/environment, and our first test of our newly-equipped forward surgical squad was to perform emergency surgery to save the life of an Iraqi prisoner of war," he continued.

"We have to be prepared to go anywhere, anytime and provide quality medical support. Our great soldiers deserve the best. We have to be trained and ready to take care of them," he added.

But if there was one thing his soldiers learned in Saudi, it was the importance of their mission to division.

The 326th Med. Bn. has always been ready to support the division, even as early as July 1918, the unit did not go overseas.

In 1921 the unit was reorganized as 326th Med. Regiment, and was an element of the 101st Division in the Organized Reserves. In 1942, when the unit received its present name, it was withdrawn from reserves, renamed 326th Airborne Med. Co., and activated at Camp Claiborne, La., as one of 101st Airborne Division's assets.

During World War II, 326th saw combat in the Normandy invasion, Rhineland campaign, Ardennes-Alsace region and Central Europe. Following the war, the unit was inactivated 30 Nov. 1945.

The unit was renamed Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 501st Abn. Med. Bn. and was augmented with the 907th Glider Field Artillery Bn. and 595th Motor Ambulance Co. before being designated a regular Army unit 25 June 1948.

The battalion went through many activations and reactivations until April 1964 when they were reorganized as Headquarters and Co. A, 326th Med. Bn.

At this time companies B, C, and D were given streamers with arrowhead for Normandy, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe.

Other awards and decorations the unit carries are two Distinguished Unit Citations for Normandy and Bastogne, the French Croix de Guerre with palm for Normandy, the Belgium Fourragier, and Netherland Organ Lanyard.

The unit was twice cited in the Order of the Day of the Belgium Army for action in France and Belgium and again for action in Bastogne.

UNHEARD VOICE

Continued

rescue pilot heroism abound. In Vietnam, air ambulances lost to enemy fire were three times that of other air missions and one and one-half that of combat missions. Of seven Medals of Honor awarded to Army aviators, two were UH-1 Dustoff pilots and three more were related to medical evacuation missions. Most acts of daily heroism went unrecognized, officially, except by those — like me — to whom it made the difference between life and death.

The tradition continues. During the past year alone, two remarkable helicopter rescues come to mind. While most of us were focused on preparations for Operation Desert Storm a team of Marine CH-43E aircraft launched from a carrier seven hours at sea offshore Somalia, refueled at night during adverse weather conditions, and made an opposed landing with Navy Seal forces at the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu. Within a short time, they lifted off carrying the entire 40-person Embassy garrison to safety, including the ambassadors of five nations.

More recently, the South African Air Force, flying Aerospatiale Alouette IIIs and Pumas, (with support from a privately operated Sikorsky S-61) evacuated 220 persons during a dawn rescue from the SS Oceanus, more than 100 miles at sea off the treacherous southeast coast of South Africa. It was reported that the last survivor was winched aboard minutes before the ship sank beneath the surface.

At an early meeting of the American Helicopter Society Igor Sikorsky remarked that he believed the finest application of the helicopter technology would be as a saver of human lives. Certainly his dream has been fulfilled many times over. Many thousands owe their lives to those who shared the vision to design, build, and test new helicopter aircraft, and particularly to those courageous pilots who made often dangerous aeromedical evacuations a routine event.

As I observe this anniversary of February 1, 1968, I thank every one of them.

THE AVIATION CAREERS OF IGOR SIKORSKY

Throughout his long career Igor Sikorsky was at the leading edge of aviation development. Sikorsky contributed to "the conquest of the air" in the same tradition that Thomas Edison and Henry Ford contributed to their fields. All were inventors with bold vision, strong beliefs in technology, and outstanding practical skill. Sikorsky's career as an active designer spanned a half century and included contributions to both Russian and American aviation.

Now his story is told in a beautifully-produced book, *The Aviation Careers of Igor Sikorsky*, published for the National Air and Space Museum. Full of colorful illustrations and dramatic historic photographs, this 8½ x 11" paperback is the ideal gift for any vertical flight enthusiast or as an addition to your personal library.

The Aviation Careers of Igor Sikorsky is now available to AHS members for the discounted price of only \$17.95 or to non-members for \$19.50.

To order, send payment to:

The American Helicopter Society, Publications Department
217 North Washing Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Furnish the AHS your mailing address and a daytime phone.



Sikorsky and U.S. Army Air Corps Capt. H. Gregory.

GEORGIA DUSTOFFER REMEMBERS

Letter from Life Member Jerry L. Rhodes.

I was delighted and surprised to see an article in the December 1991 issue titled "Heroic Last Flutter of Plucked MEDEVAC Bird". I was the fifth member of the crew (not named in the article) and was the pilot on that mission. I was a Captain at that time.

The mission occurred on 5 January 1970, at 1530 hours. We were shot down at 1730 hours and continued to receive ground enemy fire for approximately 4 more hours. We were attempting to extract 4 wounded soldiers when we went down. I received multiple fragment wounds to the left side of my face and head, laceration of the left cornea, and a fractured spine (T12, L1, L2, L3) with paralysis. These injuries

resulted in my medical transfer back to the states. I have since recovered from these injuries. SP5 Keller, the medic on the crew, remained by my side after he determined that my injuries were more severe than the other wounded.

At approximately 2230 hours, we were moved on the ground about 100 meters to another landing zone. At this point, I consider the act that WO Richard Leonard performed to be truly heroic. He stood in the middle of the landing zone with a hand held strobe light so the Medevac aircraft piloted by Captain Michael Hagerty and CWO Raymond Zeep could extract all of the wounded. CPT Hagerty was the Medevac Platoon Commander. This article brought back a flood of memories I had long forgotten.

WHITE HELICOPTER NOTION CLEARED UP?

Danny McKinney, Clearfield, Kentucky, writes:

In regards to 'Whose Bright (White) Idea Was This Anyway?' in December's issue of the DUSTOFF Newsletter...the answer to this trivia question, according to the source, is Roy Johnson. Roy has boasted of this to me.

Roy is employed with Serv-Air Division of E-Systems, at the Richmond, Kentucky Army Depot.

Then LTC Dick Scott, as Aviation Consultant to the Chief, Medical Service Corps, wrote the following in the Spring 1972 US Army Medical Department Newsletter:

Change in concepts or operational procedures is usually met by various responses, some emotional, some rational, and a few embodying both. Such is the feeling surrounding the current test program of the white air ambulance. This article is not designed to "sell" a product, but to provide some background on the overall rationale for white air ambulances and perhaps clear the air of inaccurate rumors.

History of the Air Ambulance

The history of the air ambulance is a story of dedication, bravery, and unfortunately, sometimes of death. MSC aviators flying Dustoff missions in Vietnam represent the large majority of the AMEDDs combat losses. To spend a year flying Dustoff missions in combat is roughly comparable to volunteering to be point man in a combat patrol for a year. The odds given being killed or wounded are heavily against you.

Many efforts were made to offset these inherent dangers. Armor plated seats and body armor helped. However this assisted the individual but did little for the entire crew when the helicopter was hit and crashed. During the buildup years of 1965, a machine gun carrying patient protector was added to the crew to return enemy fire and keep the enemy down until the air am-

bulance could depart the area. This concept was finally discarded since the additional crewman occupied space needed for patients and was of questionable use due to his inability to fire without wounding friendly troops on the ground. Use of accompanying gun ship support followed and proved to be the best deterrent. Enemy troops were hesitant to fire when they knew that the gunships overhead would seek swift reprisals. This procedure waned as permission to return enemy fire became harder to obtain.

Helicopters are Hard to Hide

Subdued red crosses on the helicopters were tried by some units while others tried to enlarge the red cross. During all of these experiments, the same facts came to the surface:

- Due to size and sound, it is virtually impossible to "hide" an air ambulance in a combat environment.
- The visible red cross is a must, if for no other reason than the tremendous impact that it has on the morale of the wounded soldier who feels that he "has it made" once he sees the Dustoff coming in for him.
- Continuous and sometimes frequent reports from Dustoff pilots of enemy soldiers (especially NVA) not firing on a Dustoff ship while raking devastating fire on resupply ships or gunships in the same area.
- There was a distinct lack of news coverage when air ambulances were hit despite the acknowledged fact that the NVA and Viet Cong were susceptible to world opinion and the shooting down of unarmed air ambulances was a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention. Nothing would have focused more attention or pressure than a front page picture of an air ambulance crashed due to the enemy action, yet the only mention was a small comment buried in the depths of secondary news.
- There was growing evidence that the NVA did recognize the Geneva

Convention and adhered to its principles as they interpreted them. This was confirmed many times through analysis of POW interrogation comments.

Why a White Helicopter?

The rationale for a white helicopter is almost too simple for words. If recognition of a white helicopter marked by large red crosses would preclude one enemy round being fired in its direction, then the program is a success. Any program that would reduce enemy action directed against air ambulances and save one life would be most significant action initiated in recent years.

One of the deepest fears in proposing the white air ambulance was that the military and civilian communities would expect miraculous results and thereby be discouraged when the inevitable happened and a white helicopter was hit by enemy fire. The other major reservation was the Dustoff pilots would react emotionally against the concept and not allow an objective test. The results have been exceptionally good. Enemy hits have been few and the pilots acceptance and enthusiasm is remarkable.

World-Wide Conversion

During the Jordanian internal conflict, the United States provided medical support under the auspices of the International Red Cross. One of the first requests from the hospital commander was for air ambulance support. This, in turn, had to be evaluated on the basis of recognition of the noncombatant status of the Dustoff choppers and the reluctance that they might be mistaken for Jordanian military helicopters and fired on. A white air ambulance would have removed many of these reservations.

Moving to the "conventional battlefield of Europe, where the Dustoff helicopters would return to a role of operating primarily behind friendly lines, the greatest danger emerges as the

Continues on next page

THE LATEST FROM NAVASOTA

CW2 John Konek (USA-Ret.), Senior DUSTOFF Representative with the Texas Department of Criminal

White Helicopter from page 14

proble air parity or even air superiority of opposing forces. The question is, would the enemy risk a high cost, high performance aircraft to penetrate the friendly missile umbrella and destroy a clearly marked air ambulance on a single ship mission? The answer seems evident.

World opinion regarding shooting down of unarmed mercy aircraft plus the high risk/low return situation provide the best protection for Dustoff and the best in for the white air ambulance.

Everything to Gain

The conclusions presented here represent one prevalent thought: We—the U.S. Army, the Army Medical Department and Dustoff—have everything to gain and nothing to lose in the conversion to white air ambulances.

White Medevac Leaflets

Leaflets were dropped in Vietnam to inform the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army of the mercy mission of the white ambulances. The front of the leaflet reads in Vietnamese, "White medical helicopter with Red Cross markings are not armed. They are used only to save endangered lives." A silhouette of a helicopter is shown. The back has the wordless pictures shown above. Another leaflet read, "All medical helicopters have the red cross markings. Some new medical helicopters are painted white so they can be better recognized by your ranks and should not be fired at."

The backs pictures a helicopter. It read, "This is a new white medical helicopter. Just like other medical helicopters it is unarmed and has no other mission than saving the wounded, be they friend or foe. DO NOT SHOOT AT THESE MEDICAL HELICOPTERS."

Justice in Novasota, has again been hard at work trying to round up more wayward members and to advance the cause of AMEDD Aviation through a variety of venues. Extracts of several Konek-Grams includes:

(To Jim Ramsey) - Just received a letter that mentioned you again had been kind enough to pay my 1992 dues renewal. I must say that I was quite surprised and, at the same time, grateful.

Jim, since I have put pen to paper, there is something I want to "get off my chest" and, since you are a fellow 1st Cav DUSTOFFer, I feel you would know where I am coming from.

In the September 1990 ISSUE OF THE DUSTOFF er Newsletter, I see we have a 'Memorial Board'. I am against the term 'memorial' and would like to think of those young men and women as 'The DUSTOFF Board of Life'. My reason for that is simple. Each name on that board represents an average of 200 lives saved. Each DUSTOFFer on that board lives today through the countless men who now have families of their own...wives, children, grandchildren, and so forth. A DUSTOFFer never dies, he just goes home. I guess what I am saying is to say "memorial" is to forget. A man hath no better friend than he who gives his life for a friend. That's DUSTOFF.

TO THE ASSOCIATION

Good news for DUSTOFF Association: Turner Publishing Company has signed a contract with the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association to publish the history and biography of the helicopter pilots of the Vietnam Era to be called "Vietnam Helicopter Pilot History". This publication will be out this year with personal stories and hundreds of never before-published photos.

I wrote of my medevac missions and this, along with my military biography, will be part of the book. I would hope that I have done DUSTOFF true justice with my story. It is not a glory story, but one that represents all DUSTOFFers everywhere.

Also, at this time, I am attempting to get some TV and movie producers together with the help and advice of

General Colin Powell to do a TV series called 'The DUSTOFFers'. The TV series will have the same format as the well know series 'Cops' but will film with Active Army DUSTOFF units and National Guard units as they perform their day to day duties. The comments, advice, support, or ideas from all DUSTOFFers from support personnel to the unit commanders is critical in this attempt to bring our story, our lives, our deaths, and our victories to the general public. The more input I receive from DUSTOFFers from all levels, the more I have to show General Powell and our writers and producers.

TONY WESTBROOK REMEMBERED

Chief Warrant Officer Roy Anthony (Tony) Westbrook, formerly of the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), flew his final dustoff mission July 22, 1989. He was killed while at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

In his memory, a Dustoff Helipad was dedicated at Brooke Army Medical Center Feb. 28.

Westbrook's surviving family — wife, Vicki; daughters, Tracey and Stephanie; and son Glenn, joined with Col. James J. Truscott, president, Dustoff Association, to do the honors in a formal ceremony.

The unveiling of a plaque installed at the helipad site states, "...A soldier and consummate aviator who dedicated his life to saving others and who lost his life on a training mission."

Westbrook spent 17 years on flight status, saving lives with the 377th Medical Company in South Korea, the 421st Medical Company in Germany and the 507th.

His last assignment was his only flying position outside of the Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) — with the 1st Battalion, 6th Cavalry Regiment. He also served as an instructor pilot and instrument flight examiner.

Westbrook was born in Poteet, Texas, on Oct. 2, 1946. Later he attended high school in Lubbock and McMurry College in Abilene, where he received a bachelor of science degree in education. He joined the Army in 1969.