

502nd Motor Pool

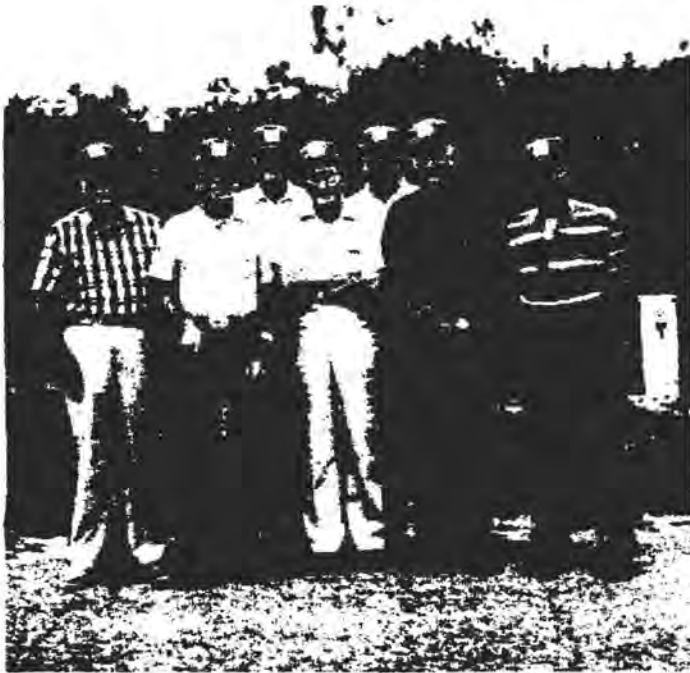


John F. Davenport, 103 Darby Circle, Plymouth, NC 27962 writes about a group of men from Ser. Co. 502 Pcht. Motor Pool and their wives who met at Nags Head, NC (Outer Banks) on October 11th to 14th 1990. One of the men hadn't been seen since we got off the boat in Massachusetts in 1945. John and Myra Davenport were the hosts.

We really had a good time going back to 1942 and all the things that we did together until September 1945 and of course — since. Five of the eight belong to the Division Association. Last year we met in Texas and next year we plan to meet in Wheeling, West Virginia.

There were a lot of interesting things at Nags Head to see — Fort Raleigh, Wilbur Wright Memorial, Cape Hatteras, etc.

Some of us went in by boat, jumped and glider at Normandy and Holland which ever was needed.



Left to right: John Davenport, Aldridge Everett, Cullin Irby, Harold Morgan, Eddy Erchenbrecher, Willis Kennon, Joseph Dickey and Fred Sutherland.



Left to right: Myra Davenport, Viola Irby, Elva Sutherland, Ruth Morgan, Irene Erchenbrecher, Jean Everett, Natalie Kennon and Juanita Dickey.

Aviation News



On October 5th and October 20th, I attended funeral services at Arlington National Cemetery for two 101st helicopter crews that were lost in Laos in March 1971, during LAMSON 719. The Laotian government allowed the excavation of the crash sites in December 1989, where the remains were found.

One crew from C Company, 158th Aviation Battalion, the "Phoenix", was lost on March 5, 1971, when the aircraft exploded at altitude after taking heavy fire on a combat assault into LZ Sophia. The crew on UH-1H #67-17341 was Cpt David Nelson, WO1 Ralph Moreira, SP4 Joel Hatley and SP4 Michael King. The second crew, Cpt Keith Brandt and 1LT Alan Boffman, from D Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, the "Hawks" was lost in AH-1G #68-15077 when it came apart after taking multiple hits when the crew marked a landing zone for a UH-1H flight from the 173rd Aviation Company, the "Robin Hoods".

Both services featured a single casket buried in a single grave. Both services had many similarities, and accordingly many differences. The "Phoenix" services, on October 5th, filled the Old Post Chapel at Ft. Myer, VA, with 10 former pilots from around the US in attendance, 11 high school classmates from Mike King's Calhoun, GA hometown, a large contingent of veterans and friends from Abernethy, NC, honoring Joel Hatley. Joel's mother read the attached poem which she wrote soon after the loss of her

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son, at the beginning of the service. As I watched this mother in her 70's, I could not help but think "there by the grace of God go I". The Phoenix pilots met with the families after the funeral services and, for the first time, the families found out there were eyewitnesses to their loved ones last moments. There is no answer to their question, "How come we did not know about you guys?"



Oct. 5, 1990 — Pilots from C/158 Avn Bn who attended the funeral services for Cpt Nelson, W01 Morelra, SP4 Hatley and SP4 King, who were lost on March 5, 1971. Back row L to R: Dean Grav, Mike Stoniker, Tom Cullen, Jack Glennon, Chuck Doty and Bruce Updike. Front row: Russell Grav, Dean's son, Ken Mayberry, Rick Scrugham, Don Davis and Tom Marshall.

A PICTURE, A FLAG AND A GOLD STAR PIN IN MEMORY OF SP4 JOEL C. HATLEY CO. C, 158th AVN BN 101st Airborne Div.

A.P.O. San Francisco, CA 96383

That night I kissed my son Goodbye, and watched his plane soar to the sky.

Little did I know as he held my hand, that soon he'd lie in some strange land.

I still can see his smiling face, and feel his arms in last embrace.

His quiet voice and tender touch, his loving ways all meant so much.

He said, "Mother please don't cry tonight". I said, "I won't", I promised with throat so tight.

I held him close; I loved him so, and it hurt so much to see him go.

I'll be alright and I luv ya'll, were his last words going down the hall.

He waved goodbye going to the plane, and suddenly I felt so strange.

I thought - he's going where he's never been, tho 'Nam was his destination again.

I didn't know why - couldn't understand - but "Heaven" flashed through my mind then.

I felt we had really said goodbye, and he truly was gone to the sky.

I felt strange peace and calm within, and I felt I'd never see him again.

I watched his plane go out of sight, as he was lost in the still, dark night.

I love my son. Why must he go? My heart cried out, now it ached so.

He went to 'Nam, but I soon learned, he really was lost, never to return.

MISSING IN ACTION.the telegram read, but inside I knew our Joel was dead.

He'd been shot down, the helicopter lost...Dear Lord! My son! Oh, what a cost!

And then we wait and wait and pray, and hope we'll hear that he's OK.

The time was short, tho it seemed long. The grief was great but love was strong.

Each day seemed like a million years, as time was washed away with tears.

At last word came, and what I knew within my heart, was finally true.

KILLED IN ACTION.....this telegram read, crashed in flames...no survivors it said.

KILLED...NOT MISSING NOW It read, My Joel! My Joel! Our Joel was dead!

Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Oh no, no please! And then I fell on bended knee.

Dear God! I cried in unbelief, my heart exploded then in grief.

The tears then like a river did flow; our Joel! Oh Lord! what a way to go!

In crushed remembrance of his love, I bowed my head to God above;

to thank Him for that life so sweet, and prayed someday again we'd meet.

I felt his hand and tender touch, his last goodbye all meant so much.

Just then I saw his face, his smile, and my heart raced across the miles.

To join his heart in that last breath, to share his fate, to share his death,

To die with him in burning flames, to leave with me only his name.

There's no remains, no grave to be, nothing except sweet memories.

A picture of him is left instead, and a folded flag to show he's dead.

Always I'll look at the smiling face, of the picture I hold here in his place.

Always I'll hold in grief and strife, this flag as if it were my life.

Always a Gold Star Pin I'll wear, in memory of a life so sweet and fair.

A Picture, A Flag, and a Gold Star Pin, I'll always hold in the place of him.

Written by Ms. Evelyn Laton Hatley

The funeral for the "Hawks" was highlighted by the attached article written by Col (Ret) John Klose, former commander of the 158th AVN BN in 76-77, who was one of the air mission commanders for all the flights flying into Laos during that period. The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter from Bellingham, WA, honored Keith Brandt's memory by welding together Keith Brandt MIA bracelets into a wreath and placing it on the casket at the end of the graveside and later placed below panel 5W at the Vietnam Memorial.

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Wreath made of Keith Brandt's MIA bracelets at Oct 20th 1990 funeral services for Cpt Keith Brandt and 1LT Alan Boffman, lost in March 1971 in Laos.

Nobody knew his name

"Military", October 1990

Colonel John A.G. Klose, USA (Ret.)

His call sign was "Music One Six". His voice was very deep, clear and unforgettable. Everyone there knew who "Music One Six" was, but nobody there knew his name. His remains, and those of his copilot First Lieutenant Alan Boffman, came to the United States on 19 July 1990, 19 years, four months and one day after being shot down in Laos, 18 March 1971.

It was during Lam Son 709. "Music One Six" was the leader of an attack helicopter section from "D" Company, 101st Aviation Battalion. He and his section were assisting in the extraction of 1st ARVN Infantry Division's 4/1 Battalion after six weeks of heavy combat in Laos.

The 4/1 Battalion had a strength of 420 when they had been inserted 40 kilometers into Laos by helicopter combat assault. After six weeks of continuous contact with North Vietnamese Regulars, the battalion had been reduced in strength to 88, 61 of which were wounded. An English-speaking sergeant whose call sign was "Whiskey" was in command and had the only operable radio. They were surrounded in a bomb crater at the base of a 1,500 foot escarpment near the Xe Pon River. The enemy had loudspeakers and was calling for the unit to surrender.

Sixty-eight U.S. Air Force airstrikes were used to keep the enemy forces from overrunning the 4/1 Battalion's final positions. U.S. Army Cobra gunships fired in direct support of the unit. Often, the effects of their fire were on the perimeter of the bomb crater.

"Music One Six" and his section had refueled, rearmed a number of times, returning to the battle and expended their ammunition throughout the afternoon in support of "Whiskey" and his unit. The last smoke grenade to mark the friendly position had long since been used. "Music One Six" knew exactly where the 4/1 survivors were. It was he who volunteered to lead the troop carrying helicopters into the bomb crater to extract the unit. He said "Spasm Two Two (Operations Officer of the 173 Combat Aviation Company), this is Music One Six, follow me and I will lead you to the friendlies".

On final approach to the bomb crater, "Music One Six's" Cobra came under intense enemy ground fire. He aborted the approach

and told the other helicopters to follow him around for another approach. His aircraft was on fire and he had lost his hydraulic controls. He brought his gunship into a slow 360-degree turn back toward the friendly unit. He calmly stated, "My mast is on fire and I've lost my hydraulics. There they are Twelve O'clock. 100 meters, I'm going to try to make it to the river."

Smoke and flames could be seen trailing from his gunship as it turned toward the river. His rotor RPM was decaying as the rotors noticeably began to slow down. "I've lost my engine and my transmission is breaking up. Good-bye. Give my love to my wife and family", were "Music One Six's" last words as his helicopter crashed and became a ball of fire.

Everyone in the air over the bomb crater knew that they had witnessed an unparalleled act of courage and selfless devotion to duty; that one aircrew had given their lives so that 88 other soldiers might live. Everyone there will always remember "Music One Six". But nobody there that day knew his name. The urgency of a situation involving fellow soldiers on the ground, had everyone together that day.

To paraphrase General MacArthur, "I know not of the dignity of their births, but I can attest to the dignity of their deaths..." No heroes ever died more courageous deaths. I was proud to be with them on the field of battle that day. I was privileged to be at Travis Air Force Base on 18 July 1990 when "Music One Six" Captain Keith Brandt (age 31 at death) and his copilot 1/Lt. Alan Boffman (age 24 at death) came home. I was proud to salute their caskets on behalf of their many comrades who served with them that day in Laos. None of us will ever forget them.

Editor's note ("Military"): Col. Klose, witness to the fatal crash of "Music One Six", was on his third tour as an Army helicopter pilot at the time.

I learned a lot from these services:

The sons look alarmingly like their fathers.

Mothers never forget and celebrate their sons brief lives, reminding us of things that are important to mothers.

We, the survivors, owe the families the responsibility to seek them out and share our experiences with their loved ones during their final months, days and final moments.

Don Davis, one of the Phoenix pilots, took the latter to heart and sought out the family of Phoenix 22, WO1 David Soyland, who was lost during a Combat Control North extraction mission in May 71. Those of us who came home owe it to the families of those who did not. If the families don't want to make contact, then so be it. We have to take the first step.

My greatest regret is that I do not remember the names of many of the people I served with in my first tour in 67-68 with C Btry 2/319th FA, 101 ABN and my second tour in 71-72 with the 174th Avn Co, 23d Inf Div, and A Co 229th Avn Bn, 1st Cav. Fortunately for me, I have met many of the former members of the Phoenix, the Redskins (D Co 158th Avn Bn) and the Kingsmen (B Co 101 Avn Bn) through reunions and veteran organizations like the 101st Avn Div Assn. I would have missed the strong personal experiences at the funerals if I had not joined these organizations. It has been another testimonial to me that you can make things happen, watch things happen, or wonder what happened.

Michael E. Sloniker
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