



December 11, 1994

Dear Phoenix,

I apologize for not writing sooner, but did want to get a letter out before Christmas. The past few months have been rather hectic for me at work, with just too much to do. I work for Eastman Kodak in Windsor, Colorado in an engineering and maintenance department doing mostly planning. We have changed from having weekly equipment shutdowns to just getting one downtime period every five weeks. So, in the last three months I've had to learn new software packages and design new job methods etc. We have had two such successful shutdowns that involve scheduling 275 jobs for over 140 people in a 3 day time period. Anyway, it hasn't left me a lot of time for much else. Enough of the boring stuff.

My family and I attended a couple of reunions this past summer which really turned out nice. I did get to see one old friend and his family - Robert (Frenchy) Vial. You might remember him, he came to the company as a bartender for the officer's club for a short period, then starting flying as a gunner for the second platoon. He became a crewchief about the time I left (Oct. 70). In fact, his first ship was "389", which was my last. "389" replaced one of the original helicopters, and I was her first crewchief. Robert has some good old memories of her also, but passed along some sad news about leaving her in Laos. We didn't have a lot of time together, but did spend some time looking at old pictures and discussing the good old days. We spent some time together at Ft. Campbell, but got separated at the air show they had. He and his wife joined my wife and I for dinner back at the 101st Airborne Reunion in Nashville that evening. Too many things to do and alot of people to talk with and spend time with at these reunions. I've been to seven consecutive reunions with the 101st, and have met some good people who are now like family to us.

The first reunion was in Philadelphia over the fourth of July. The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and the Vietnam Crewmembers Assn. had their reunions at the same time just a couple of blocks from each other. The Phoenix turnout wasn't that great. I would say that about six pilots were in attendance at various points in time, and I was the only crewmember as far as I know. The pilots were Jack Glennon, Don Mears, Bob Kelly, Bruce Updyke, and Bob Sauer. I spent one evening with Jack Glennon over a few beers, and attended a mini-reunion with about 100 former 101st pilots from all the various companies/battalions. We were briefed on current activities in the 101st by one of their assistant division commanders and met several active pilots. They also flew several helicopters up to the reunion and had them displayed at the naval shipyard. They had hueys, cobras, and chinooks amongst several other helicopters. The pilots had a Loach on display in their lobby and a "B" model outside their hotel. We spent more time this reunion with the crewmembers, again nice people! Others in attendance were General Jim Smith (ret.) who was our assistant division commander in Vietnam, Joe Kline (B/101 Kingsman crewchief) an aviation artist that does some fantastic stuff and a good friend, and I met Jesse McLeod the author who wrote "Crewchief". My family and I also saw alot of the sights Philly has to offer while we were there. We did decide we were glad we didn't have to live there.

From Philadelphia, we drove to Nashville for the second reunion. This was the annual 101st Airborne Division Association Reunion. This included several trips out to Ft. Campbell while we were there, and we spent some time with my nephew who is a crewchief on what else, a HUEY. While in Philly, I received a phone call from the executive secretary of the 101st Assn. asking if I would review the troops with the general while at Campbell. I said OK not really knowing what I was getting into. On Thursday we went out to Ft. Campbell for a division review. I was selected to represent the Vietnam soldiers along with WWII and Desert Storm representatives. The three of us had special seating in the review stand, and after being introduced to 17,000 active soldiers and several thousand attendees, we got to ride with General John Keane to review the troops on this huge parade field.. Talk about an honor! This was something I'll never forget. Todays soldiers are impressive, and it brought back alot of memories for me while all this was happening. This was our first trip to Ft. Campbell also, and we were impressed.

On Saturday the division put on a day they called Super Saturday for veterans and active division families. They had displays setup at the airfield of all their equipment, and the Air Force had all their aircraft displayed. The kids spent the whole day climbing on helicopters including the Apaches. They had a heavy air drop right in front of us, had two hundred troops parachute in front of us, and then performed an air assault that was unreal! It started with scout helicopters looking over the area under the protective eye of Cobras. These were followed by five Apaches that had to hover for a good 45 minutes while the rest of the air assault took place. Black Hawks followed with guns a blazing with dummy rounds to drop off 500 troops who established a perimeter while Chinooks and other Black Hawks brought in howitzers that were setup and firing in minutes followed by road graders, jeeps, trucks, and other heavy equipment. This entire exercise would normally take place at night nowadays. This was an awesome display, believe me. My kids are still