

December 1989

In 1988, Lt Col Mike Sloniker, then assigned to the Pentagon, attended his first Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association reunion in Fort Worth, Texas. Mike met former members of one the units he served with on his second tour in 1971, the 174th Assault Helicopter Company, the Dolphins and Sharks. When he joined the unit in July 1971, many of the veterans of Lam Son 719 were still there and passed on their experiences in the cockpit. In the Spring of 1972, he would put their teachings to test when his company from the 229th AHB, 3d Bde 1st Cav Div, supported the ARVN defense of Loc Ninh and An Loc, during the Easter Offensive of 1972. As with many first time attendees to a VHPA reunion, he had a hard time remembering where he knew everyone from, but thoroughly enjoyed seeing how everyone else was aging, quite nicely.

In June 1989, Mike met Colonel Joe Schlatter, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency's POW/MIA office after exercising in the Pentagon Officers Athletic Club (POAC). Mike was invited to come to Schlatter's office and learned they were still working on cases over twenty years old. He was very impressed with the professionalism the civil servants displayed in a totally thankless, highly stressful job. This office was constantly responding to Congressional inquiries, investigations, and allegations. Many times, he thought the Congressional attacks on this office were by members of Congress who would do or say anything to placate the sorrow and indignation of constituents who made an Olympic sport of attacking anything that came from the government. Each case was handled professionally with every source they had.

Mike knew Vietnam Helicopter pilots, still on active duty, or in the VHPA directory, who could help and often solicited their assistance. It quit beening a passing interest in Aug 1989, when the remains of one of the AH-1G crews, MIA since April 5, 1972, were honored at Arlington Cemetary. Cpt Hank Spengler and CW3 Joe Windler, who flew gun cover for Mike from F Battery 79th AFA "Blue Max", 229th AHB, 1st Cav were returned for burial. Spengler's remains were buried at Arlington; Windler's in New York state. After the funeral, Mike attended a reception at the Welcome Center at the cemetary.

Spengler was a 1968 West Point graduate and about 30 of his classmates attended in uniform. When Sloniker was introduced to Spengler's mother, she mentioned she did not remember his name in her son's class. Mike responded that he was not a West Point graduate, but was there paying last respects

representing all those who were protected by Blue Max. It was an unforgettable moment, and she made sure that Sloniker met other family members. All Mike could think was, "There by the grace of God, is my mother."

but

Between December 1989 and March 1990, Jack Glennon's name kept being brought up to Sloniker as a point of reference for the Phoenix. Glennon lives in Virginia Beach, three hours south of Sloniker, and each March Sloniker used to run a 5K race in Va. Beach, so they agreed to meet. Since Sloniker did not know what Glennon looked like and vice versa, a half assed plan was worked out when Sloniker told Glennon what number he would have on and that he would have a Task Force 160, "Night Stalker," baseball cap on. The race was about to start when a rather young looking guy walks up to Sloniker and says, " Number 451, you have been random selected for a drug test and you need to fill this bottle!"

After Sloniker calmed down, Glennon introduced himself, the gun went off and Sloniker took off for the little 3.1 mile run in blustery March winds along Va Beach. Glennon got out of the way and had a smoke.

That day at Glennon's, Sloniker learned that Glennon was the 1969 version of the Phoenix that set the professional standard. The 1968 Phoenix formed the company in Ft Riley Kansas, came over as a unit, and began the process of settling in. Highlights of the visit for Sloniker was to learn that he wasn't the only one being challenged regularly by a teenager, and that he had a lot in common with Glennon.

Sloniker talked to Don Davis on the phone at Glennon's and learned that Davis would be landing at Washington National Airport enroute to FBI training at Quantico, the next month. (Davis flies for the FBI; he resigned his commission in 1976.) They agreed to meet at Skip Butler's the afternoon that Davis arrived, and go over Soyland's loss.

That afternoon was incredible as witnessed by a tape Sloniker made of Davis' and Butler's clear and accurate memories. When one hears the tape now, the rapid fire talking of the highly excited participants contains mountains of history. Little did Sloniker know that he would see Davis again in October at a military funeral.

THIS IS AN INTERIM RESPONSE

IOWE SOME 20 APR 95

TOM

MORE DATA - WHICH WILL BE
ON A DISC.

THE BOOK NEEDS A GLOSSARY
I'LL HELP BY SENDING WHAT I
HAVE SEEN.

WE NEED TO EXPLAIN
THE TERM BABY SANH, ETC.

I am extremely pleased with
your efforts, extremely pleased.

Please get one to Gleason ASAP.
I've been bragging on the book to
Gleason.

While

- ① I AM ALMOST RELUCTANT TO RETURN
THIS BECAUSE I WANT TO KEEP IT.
- ② I HAVE SOME MORE THOUGHTS
ON TIEING UP THE BOOKS LOOSE ENDS.
- ~~THAT~~ ③ I MADE A COPY OF THIS
SO I COULD KEEP WORKING ON IT

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Phoenix Company and hated by others. The 163rd was a rear echelon outfit, according to most rumors. Flying the OH6 was highly similar to the OH58 I had flown before. I looked forward to it, praying that fate might let me go.

January 2, 1971

Got letters of the 24th and 25th of December today. Had to write my wife I didn't mean for my letters to sound "miserable." I'd made the mistake of revealing my feelings to her in a letter. I'd said, "things are going about as well as can be expected." I guess I'll have to be more careful what I say in future letters, so I "won't" be understood. Was officer of the guard last night. Since I had to stay up all night, I listened to the College Football Bowl games live on the radio. Texas and Ohio State really disappointed me. I hated to see Notre Dame win. Glad to see Tennessee win, but they didn't have to romp the Air Force. Expect to be flying again tomorrow. Weather is still fairly bad. A lot of rain and some fog. Am finishing up the Christmas candy. Listened to the Andy Williams tape today. The two hour Christmas music tape broke tonight. I guess Christmas is over.

← PUT IN
SCORES

LISTENING TO THE GAMES LIVE WAS
VERY IMPORTANT. WHEN NEBR PLAYED OKLA
IN NOV 1971, I FLEW THE FLARE MSN ALL
NIGHT FROM I THINK 1 AM TO 4AM. EVERY
TIME WE WENT IN TO REARM FLARES 4/6R REFUEL
THEY WOULD SCORE. RADIO 4MSN CAME FROM
AFUN SAIGON — MSN WAS UNEVENTFUL.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

January 3, 1970

Death visited tonight,
not coming to claim,
~~but~~ to remind,
Standing in my doorway,
cloaked in fog and darkness,
he turned and walked away,
not me,
not this time!
More alive and determined,
not me,
not this war!

just

ACE COZZALVO, DIED
APR 1993, TALKED ABOUT
SEEING "DR DEATH"
WHO WOULD BE AN E-7
THAT WOULD COME INTO
THE D/3-5 CAV CLUB
10 CORPS, & ASK FOR AN
OFFICER. NEXT DAY
THE GUY WOULD DIE.

I awoke startled from the dream.....or was it?

January 5, 1971

Today, Keith and I were flying "ash and trash" re-supply missions in the vicinity of Firebases Barbara and Sally. Towards the end of the day, we had completed our last drop-off and were headed back to Camp Evans. We were just a mile or two east of the mountain ridge line, which ~~denoted an area of hostile activity, on~~ ^{ALWAYS AND} ~~most occasions.~~ Suddenly, the red fire warning light flashed on. Keith immediately elected to put the aircraft down. There was a small, one-lane, dirt road in the middle of "indian country." He gave me the controls to set up the approach and he began mayday calls. We made it on short final to the trail. Keith made the final touchdown and shut the aircraft down. I jumped out with the crewchief and gunner, my pistol drawn. Keith stayed on the radio trying to talk to maintenance personnel back at Camp Evans. Within a couple of minutes, I was situated away from the tail of the aircraft, with a fire extinguisher in one hand and my pistol drawn in the other. The crewchief and gunner had opened

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the engine cowlings looking for fire. There was none.

CAPTAL I suddenly realized I was in the same posture Bruce Finney had been in the river bed at An Khe. We were out in the middle of Indian country and I began to make myself look as small as possible. A few minutes later, a bird circled us and radioed that we were clear of any approaching enemy. About fifteen minutes later, a maintenance bird arrived from Camp Evans with a crew chief on board who had experience with the fire light warning system. It was immobilized. The aircraft was cranked up, inspected for fire damage, which there was none, so we hopped back in and flew it home. At the end of the day, it had been an unsettling experience. A red warning light in an Army helicopter means "land now." We were relieved that it had only been a warning light malfunction.

Since I've been here, I've been trying to get transferred to any unit with OH6's or 58's. I found a slot open in VIP unit at Hue but my company CO tells me I'm too valuable to release. So that ends it. In a way, I'm relieved that there are no more chances of transfer and I can accept this place as home. But my conscience rests easier knowing that I at least tried.

Found out today a friend got killed state side in a car wreck, Bruce Horton, at Fort Bragg. Really shook me to hear that. He had been a crewchief for one tour in Vietnam, then entered the warrant officer program. With all the danger of having survived a tour in a Slick, and then dead in a car accident. Heard it from Richard King. Real little guy. He's in A Company here and they share our mess hall. He also told me that Pete D'Agostino, from Pensacola, is up here in B Company. Have yet to see him.

A/158 "GHOSTRIDERS"

B/158 LANCERS

If you've wondered how Vietnam has changed my tastes, I now

I think you should use A/158 Ghostriders, just to perpetuate the history - Not just here but throughout

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Tom Marshall

January 9, 1971

Today was another CCN mission. Again, it was going to be a hot extraction. There was a ~~studies and observation~~ group team in Laos that was in the middle of North Vietnamese activity. When they had landed, they had unknowingly picked a location where NVA would come and bivouac around them. They were totally encircled and had been on the ground longer than normal. Six days lying motionless, totally encircled by a North Vietnamese unit, moving and sleeping only a few feet from the concealed green berets.

In an effort to draw attention away from the helicopter extraction of the team members, there were going to be a series of explosive simulators dropped off to simulate fire fights going with other teams. It was intended that these types of false fire fight simulators would draw the North Vietnamese attention to that area and away from the actual helicopter extraction.

Prior to the string extraction, Keith and I were designated as one of the two birds to drop off the simulators. We were the bait to attract the NVA's attention. The only problem was, that the area of the simulators needed to be dropped was adjacent to a known 37 millimeter anti-aircraft position on QL9, the two lane road that ran from Quang Tri to Tchepone, Laos. Well, that was unsettling news. A little while later, we were briefed. We were to drop the simulators and then westbound to make left turns away from the highway. They had an Air Force jet bomb the 37 millimeter and it was "believed" to be destroyed. However, it was known that there were active anti-aircraft artillery and heavy machine guns all along QL9, so we were told not to cross the road to the north.

Keith was selected to be the lead for the simulator drop. During our descent into the area, I could see the bombed out 37

I RECOMMEND WE USE S06
INITIALS AFTER WE EXPLAIN
THE TERM. STUDIES + OBSV.
GROUP, SLOWED ME
DOWN.
S06

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Tom Marshall

you!" (It was a lasting joke among the Phoenix.) It was going to be another very drunk night in the club, but this time in Da Nang at the Special Forces Compound.

January 10, 1971

Spent last night with the Green Berets in Da Nang. The Green Berets took us to their NCO Club and bought everything we could eat and drink. Really had a ball. Two pizzas, two cheeseburgers, two hamburgers and a hot dog. Haven't even seen this kind of food since August. Then about ten double rum and cokes. What a night. They kindly reminded us how much they appreciated our extractions. Saw Vanden Akker, the red headed "dutchman" today at Quang Tri. Will be flying a lot more hours when the weather breaks up.

WALTERS

Vanden Akker and I were in flight school together. We sat on the CCN pad at Quang Tri and started discussing casualties among flight school classmates. Carlton Cole, whose wife had been a friend of our wives, had been reported killed. Baer, who had been derosed for wounds, had died in Japan. Mallette had already been buried state side. Stanley Struble had long been buried. And others before him. Of the Class 70-5 that started at Fort Walters Texas, the war was now taking a heavy toll. All this during the supposed "Vietnamization" of the war and withdrawal of American troops. Here we were sitting in assault helicopter companies in Northern I Corps, waiting to ferry green beret teams to God knows where. It was not a particularly good time to be there, but....we were damn good at it.

January 11, 1971

Had a nice day today flying Vietnamese colonels out from Hue. It was a real pretty day. Might have the opportunity to take over the technical supply job in the Phoenix Company. It is a no-

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flying maintenance officer position. It is really a great job. Dave Wolfe, a guy from California, has it now and is derosing shortly. If I get it, I should have it about the middle of February.

Been reading about kids going to Paris to demonstrate against the war. I think it is really ridiculous for them to even go. Sounds like they think it's a good excuse for a free trip or something. Besides, they can't possibly understand what is going on over here anyway.

Just talked to another guy who got back from Hawaii. I can hardly think about meeting my wife there. I'm excited!

January 14, 1971

Paul Stewart returned from state side leave. He had finished eleven months of a one year tour with the Phoenix Company, call sign Phoenix Two-Two (22). He was regarded by the Phoenix pilots as one of the most capable and skilled aircraft commanders in Vietnam. He was the Standardization Instructor Pilot for First Platoon. Stewart was "Mr. Cool" under fire. He had experienced everything that occurred in 1970, including numerous unnamed extractions in hot LZ's, along with the evacuation of Firebases Ripcord and O'Reilley, and countless CCN missions. He had a reputation of being an extremely cool hand. He could make the Huey do things that less skilled pilots dreamed of. If you went down, he'd come get you.

Most importantly,

I'd been on CCN since the first of December and was ~~dammed~~ ^{dammned} happy to have survived unscathed so far. Stewart had "re-upped" for another six months and taken a 30 day stateside leave. The extension was cancelled during his leave. The 101st Airborne was now at 150% of Officer strength. Warrant Officers who weren't voluntary indefinite as me, were being released by the

CONDENN IS
↓
WORD DAMN
CAME FROM -
(CONDENN)
"DAMN YOUR
SOUL TO
HELL

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Tom Marshall

Army after DEROS. Stewart had returned to work off his 30 day leave, ending February 14, 1970. Was I crazy or was he simply "invincible", wanting another six months with the Phoenix!

~~THE XO~~
Captain Hunt asked Stewart, the senior Warrant Officer in First Platoon, to talk with me to see if I would rescind my request for transfer. Stewart came into my hootch space this morning and said, "Marshall, let's have a talk." I said, "Okay, let's go out back." It was a nice, clear sunshiny day, which we were not used to. Behind the back porch of our hootch, I sat down on sandbags.

Stewart stood there, looking at me, and began expounding the virtues of flying a Slick, the joys of completing the missions and how difficult it was to accomplish these jobs, safely. He reminded me how important we were to the "grunts". It's an important mission, not to mention the excitement of "CA's" (combat assaults) and CCN in Laos and "up north". Then he wanted to know why I wasn't satisfied flying Slicks with the Phoenix.

I looked up and said, "Hey, I went 'voluntary indefinite' to fly 58's. I've got three months in-country time in 58's. I pledged myself 'voluntary indefinite' and I feel like that's a contract with the Army. The Army owes me staying in 58's the rest of this tour."

I continued, "I enjoyed single-ship missions. I like flying reconnaissance, artillery spotting. I simply don't like having my ass sitting there (in the right seat of a Huey) like a pigeon in a shooting gallery."

Stewart shook his head. With one leg propped on the sandbags

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and his hands clasped together, he looked at me and said, "I don't understand why you don't appreciate what we do. The grunts can't get along without us. Flying Slicks is one of the most important things happening. It's also the most enjoyable thing I've ever done in my life. I love it. Hell, I'll probably die driving a Slick."

I looked up at him and thought to myself, "This conversation is over". "Well," I said, "I don't share your enthusiasm for it. I want out of this company, into any company with Loaches or 58's. I want my transfer request remaining in effect until I'm transferred out."

Stewart said, "Well, you take care of number one, but I think you're gonna miss a lot."

With that, we parted. No handshakes, no pats on the back. There was a simple, but absolute, disagreement. I didn't tell him the CCN story with Keith and my knowledge of Finn and Baldwin. I withheld it, afraid to expose the magnitude of my fear, in light of my personal revelation. Stewart didn't know he'd be dead in less than four weeks, "driving a slick" into Laos. He would have gone home only six days later, had he survived.

Later, I had twinges of guilt until I reverted to the thoughts of Baldwin and his son, one of the last KIA's in the Phoenix, flying the DMZ. The guilt was placed in a mental compartment. Whatever burden I had to carry mentally, I was leaving the company if the opportunity arose. I now had learned, fear was merely the beast. Like most of the pilots in the company, I could control it and do my duties. ~~But~~, the ultimate foe was clearly "Death". I had to find a greater sense of personal control of my destiny. I could not ignore the sequence of events and the

GREAT
THOUGHTS!

MOLDS

A LOT OF THINGS
IN TO ONE

MEANING

212

I now clearly understand,
death is

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to answer an emergency call anytime, supporting the 101st Airborne Division and green berets anywhere.

I had the experience to understand the risks. I also had seen the pullout (Vietnamization) underway down south.

With wisdom gained during five months "in-country", I'd gone down the very lonely steps of despair, with my only hope of living, ~~that~~ ^{WAS} of changing units. From the depth of that awareness and depression, I had resolved myself to accept whatever fate would hand me, but I would not stop trying to change it.

In that prayer "Guide For A New Year", I came to acceptance of my predicament, knowing death would not be my choice. To now have the horrible premonition lifted, with the first breath of a reprieved man, "Thank you God!" I was now renewed in my personal faith, confident I would end the tour "alive and kicking".

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Stateside

Letter from Angie Franklin in Florence, South Carolina, to my wife, Pat Marshall, in Pensacola, Florida.

January 20, 1971

Dear Pat:

Only a short letter to tell you the sad news if you don't already know. Avon was killed 19th of December and buried 29th December. I found out last Saturday when I read it in the Army Times. I talked with Faye last night but I don't know any of the details. Faye is taking it pretty good. He never even got to see Tammy. I'll tell you more when I find out. Faye may come up and spend a few days with me next month. We had a wonderful R and R. Corky looked great of course and was overwhelmed with Scott. We only have 113 days in this terribly lonely year left. I guess you are trying to stay busy in school. Scott really keeps me happy. He weighs 15 pounds now and is 25 inches tall and has one tooth. Faye said Tammy had eight teeth and she is only two days older than Scott. Hawaii was beautiful and you thoroughly enjoy it. I'm watching Hawaii Five-O now and I enjoy seeing some of the sights I saw in person last month. Send Tommy my regards and write soon.

January 21, 1971

CW-2, Dave Wolfe, flew me down in the maintenance bird. I had just received my box of goods from An Khe the week before and had to physically push the entire box on a dolly from my hootch to the aircraft. At Camp Eagle in the land of REMF's, I

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flying the Ripcord and O'Reilley evacuations. "Baby Sanh" was a conscientious objector, who had flown Cobras at Camp Evans and transferred south. I then remembered Rick Lukens had told me the story of "Baby Sanh" serving as officer of the guard and the GI who was killed in the wire, coming back from a drug run.

Stephan Cobb was also flying Loaches. He had been a co-pilot in a Ghostriders bird involved in a mid-air collision. On my first flight with Keith, when we had joined up in formation, with another Phoenix bird, a bird colonel had objected to the formation flying. Keith cussed and then backed off into a loose trail formation. He then told me about the Ghostriders midair. In my eyes, Cobb was a well known survivor of a near fatal crash.

Cobb had been the co-pilot of the lead bird in a formation of two that meshed rotor blades. He flew the aircraft to the ground at high speed with no pitch control. In an effort to maintain the integrity of the cabin in crash, he kept a high forward rate of speed and slid into a rice patty. Without the benefit of collective or pitch force to reduce the impact, he, in a sense, glided it on and it slid to a muddy stop. His quick thinking has saved their lives. The colonels on board both aircraft were uninjured but entirely pissed. That became the end of formation flying in the 101st Aviation Group and, consequently, with the 158th Aviation Battalion, unless it was a troop move (a tactical need).

Cobb was a white headed kid from California. He had been employed at Andrew's Air Force Base as a civilian technical rep repairing aircraft before he was drafted into the Army. When he was drafted, he decided it better to go ahead and fly Army helicopters than to walk through the jungles as a draftee.

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mountain ridgeline, immediately began a climb away from the mountains, calling GCA for radar vectors back to Camp Evans Airfield. In the ascending turn, Mears developed a condition known as "vertigo", where the inner ear deceives the mind and provides incorrect balance and sensitivity information. The senses contradicted what the eyes report to the brain from the aircraft instrumentation and the feel of the aircraft in the "seat of the pants". He feared he was entering a catastrophic climb or roll and he immediately told Davis, "Get on, take over on instruments!"

Don Davis had little actual instrument experience and was on one of his first night instrument missions. He was surprised by the call to take over. He reflexively took over the aircraft, brought it to what he thought a level attitude was, and was also in vertigo, believing that the aircraft was diving. He instinctively pulled collective (increased pitch and power of the main rotor system) and unknowingly entered a roll or loop.

Mears, in the next three or four seconds, regained his senses and realized they were now going through an inverted roll. To his horror, he knew that inverting the Huey could result in destruction of the rotor system with negative G's. He immediately took the aircraft back from Davis and in an incomprehensible few seconds later, found himself crashed, sitting in a rice patty, ~~destroying~~ ^{1-1A 50} the aircraft, but amazingly, all four crewmembers living through it. Mears had a severe compression of the spine. Davis was amazingly uninjured as were the crewchief and doorgunner. It had been a remarkably unbelievable series of events. The ultimate catastrophe, death, had been averted by Mears in milliseconds. It would take a while for the recovery bird and Medevac to ~~reach them~~.

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Davis, who'd only been in-country less than three weeks, was in a state of shock, slowly assimilating what he had survived. This would be chalked up to experience. The nighthawk mission had nearly ended as tragically as I had feared it would, in my incident with Keith in the preceding month. They were damn lucky to be alive! The crewchief, Specialist-4 Charles Bobo, was also thankful to have survived, not knowing he'd be dead with CW2 Paul Stewart, in eleven short days.

January 29, 1971

Camp Eagle

Today I was awakened early and told I would be the co-pilot for General Phu. We flew to Dong Ha and I was amazed at the number of news reporters there. TV cameramen and reporters from all networks around the world were in our way!. There was international news coverage of the 101st move towards the Laos border. They reoccupied Khe Sahn and Vandergriff that used to be really bad areas. I saw CBS and ABC camera teams. Even got my picture taken in some of the movies when we took off in a Huey behind General Berry. Never saw so many helicopters in one place before. About fifty Hueys, ten Chinooks, ten Skycranes, six Marine Jolly Green Giants. It was an impressive sight. We are all hoping that the ARVN's will cross into Laos as was done in Cambodia, ~~and~~ the hell with public opinion. I've been there and have seen what politics and public protest (or opinion) has allowed the NVA to stock. If we invaded Laos, it would probably have a greater effect on the NVA than Cambodia did.

Hope to get up this afternoon with the instructor pilot and do some auto-rotations. The Loaches are really easy to fly. It has really surprised me. They are not as sensitive on the controls as a "58." Read An Affair of Honor by Robert Wilder. It is a real

THIS IS WHY
← YOUR EFFORT
IS SO IMPORTANT
YOU HAVE
TIED SO
MANY LOOSE
ENDS
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TELL WHO
BRIEFED
GENERAL
BERRY
ASST DIV
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MANUEVER
101ST
ABN
DIV
IS.

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interesting book on the development of the Bahamas. Still dreaming of R and R in my spare time.

Guess my folks getting this letter will hear of a U.S. offensive, either reopening the Khe Sahn air field or the A Shau Valley. Something is really cooking. All indications are it is Khe Sahn. Glad I'm in the VIP flights now. It certainly is no time to be in an assault helicopter company.

One of the most enjoyable missions I have is flying down to Da Nang. It is really a big city with a beautiful bay. It is really great to be flying out of the same air base that I'll be riding a jet to Hawaii and the states.

January 30, 1971

Unknown to me or the others in the company, the invasion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail area in Laos had begun. The operation named Lam Son 719 had commenced. It was to be the largest airborne invasion since 1944, against an equally well prepared foe, with superior intelligence. The first phase of the operation was an American operation known as Dewey Cannon II, which was designed to make QL9, the 2-lane dirt road, usable for military traffic from Quang Tri to Laos.

In the pre-dawn darkness on January 30th, the Mechanized 1st Brigade of 5th Infantry Division from Quang Tri moved an armored cavalry and engineer task force on the road to Khe Sanh. Simultaneously, the operation to lift equipment and materials, along with necessary men was beginning. I was a last minute substitute co-pilot in the command and control aircraft, coordinating CH54 Skycranes and CH47 Chinooks, carrying men and materials to the reactivated Firebase Vandergriff, south of the Rockpile, midway between Khe Sanh and Quang Tri. A

THIS TIME IT
WOULD BE
WITH HELICOPTERS,
NOT PARACHUTES

CONFUSING
ABN INVASION
TO ME
IS SICILY
FRANCE + HOLLAND
PARACHUTES
SEE

UH-1H.

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major combat assault was underway. Although we suspected it, we did not know that an invasion of Laos was imminent.

At first light, simultaneous combat assaults were conducted by combat engineers to the abandoned Khe Sanh airfield and a critical river crossing named Bridge 34. Two engineer platoons with two dozers, four 3/4 ton trucks and a radio jeep lifted by helicopter to Bridge 34.

The Hueys combat assaulting the security troops onto Khe Sahn were pleasantly surprised to find a "Welcome to Khe Sanh" sign awaiting them. Warrant Officer John Michaelson, and his crew placed it there the night before.

FROM C/18
PHOENIX

Simultaneously, an Armored Vehicle Launch Bridge was prepared for one crossing at Bridge 33.

CH-47 and CH-54 helicopters lifted 38 foot M-4 bridge spans for Bridge 34.

In an effort to further reduce the time to completion, a third engineer platoon began minesweep operations from Khe Sanh eastward to Bridge 36. With them, a D-5 Dozer removed the top 5 inches of old road surface to increase the speed of mine clearing.

DOZER

Bridge 36 required a massive amount of fill, which was created from the overhanging cliffs using shaped charge explosives. Due to the massive fill and compaction needed, it would be the final engineering obstacle crossed at 12:30 the following day.

97 medium and heavy helicopter sorties were flown by Army and Marine helicopters from Mai Loc to road positions along Riviere

THIS
NEEDS
A
MAP

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De Quang Tri Valley and the Khe Sanh plateau.

From the moment engineers landed at Khe Sanh, a round the clock effort continued to construct a 3,200 foot C-130 cargo strip.

I enjoyed flying as co-pilot in the command and control Huey, with the Air Mission Commander of the heavy lift helicopter battalion as our passenger. The Chinooks and Sky Cranes were carrying bridge pieces from Mai Loc to former bridge points along the QL9 Highway from Vandergrift to Khe Sanh. It was an amazing feat to have an armed convoy heading westward, having bridges placed in front of them by Chinooks and Sky cranes, barely slowing the march westward to the Khe Sanh plateau. The Aircraft Commander I was flying for was an Hawaiian airlines jet pilot who had been drafted and was nearing the end of his tour. Unlike a Phoenix mission, he was relaxed, even happy, and had me do most of the flying, which was essentially circling at 2,500 feet while the Colonels and Majors in the back observed the progress of the bridge installations on QL9. It was a very interesting day to observe the operation and know the magnitude of what was going on. It was exciting to be a part of something bigger.

Although we suspected it, we did not know that an invasion of Laos was eminent.

January 31, 1971

Flew another eight hours today in a Slick as C&C for the move at Vandergriff. Believe they used nearly every bird the 101st had and then some. Lucky for me, when I do have to fly Hueys now, they are all new and in excellent condition and are generally command and control at 3,000 feet (and climbing). Will finish my Loach transition on the 6th and start missions on the 7th or

DID YOU
EVERY WONDER
IF HE WAS
THE AC ON
THAT 737
THAT HAD IT'S
ROOF COME
OFF +
LAND
SAFELY
IN THE
80'S?

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

8th.

I was again flying the UH1 as co-pilot ^{WITH TH} ~~for~~ a former Hawaiian airline's pilot. I enjoyed talking with him about places to go during R and R. We flew Command and Control at Vandergriff in the morning. In the afternoon, I continued flying as a student with Bill Gordy, completing the Loach transition. I would continue to fly Huey missions in the morning and then fly as a Loach student in the afternoon.

I've been guaranteed my R and R to start some time between the 14th and 16th of March. Am really excited about the new missions, the new aircraft and the new company.

Our generator went out and we are without electricity. We have 60 kilowatt generators without voltage regulators. The varying current blows a lot of light bulbs. I'll be in Slicks again tomorrow as the colonel's taxi around Da Nang. What a way to fight the war.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

FEBRUARY, 1971

February 1, 1971

Things are really moving now. It seems they started the whole war all over. We are still hoping the ARVN's go into Laos. Got today off. Going to Phu Bai and get paid. Get \$100 raise due to two years time in service. Am expecting an R and R date in two or three days. Talked to a CW-2 from Hawaii who said the Hanalei Plantation was a must. I had been his co-pilot during the opening of Fire Base Vandergrift. Has been cold and rainy the past few days. It doesn't seem to affect us too badly as it did at Evans'. (We have been without power for two and a half days now.) Flying most of the time so it hasn't bothered us. Some guys who were using the electric blankets are really hurting now, though.

EXPLAIN
USE OF
CANDLES
FLASHLIGHTS
ETC.

February 2, 1971

Had the day off. Everyone else was flying. Got twenty hours in a Huey the past three days. Went to the PX but it was closed because of the power failure. Saw Glenn Moulten. He's doing ok. Not working too hard. I'm going to do some black and white film work with him in the photo lab. Checked on my indefinite status with the Department of the Army. They didn't know anything about it.

Warrant Officer a flight school buddy-

WHO IS
GLENN
MOULTEN?

Tried something new today. Heated a can of peaches. Was good in the cold weather. Has been in the low 60's and damp, which is cold to the bone. Been drinking lots of coffee, also.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

The big thing here now is all the movement out to Khe Sahn. It is going to be bigger than ever before. They've even rebuilt the runway. They've made a control tower and are installing GCA radar. It is unbelievable, it really makes you kind of proud to be involved in something of such a big scale. There are rumors of the ARVN going into Laos. Just hope it is true.

February 3, 1971

R and R dates came down. Ours is 19th of March. We will be arriving between 2:00 and 4:30 pm. Have to depart on the morning of the 25th. Had guard inspection last night and start ground school day after tomorrow. I am looking forward to flying missions again. The time really passes faster.

Got a letter from my wife, Pat, asking if I knew about Avon Mallette's death. I replied in a letter I did know and then told her what I knew of Strubble's death. He was shot down the day after I left An Khe. In Flight School, Strubble, Smith and two others rode with us into Fort Worth on weekend leave.

Start Loach ground school tomorrow. Will finish the next day and have my check ride the next.

Flew as General Phu's co-pilot today in a Slick. He went to college in the United States and has virtually no accent in his English. Was up at Dong Ha and Quang Tri. There are more aircraft up there now than I've ever seen at one place before. They say that Quang Tri is now the busiest airport in the hemisphere. I believe it.

February 4, 1971

The engineers had worked nonstop since January 31, when they

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

(USE)
KHE SANH
THE OTHER
LOOKS
REDUNDANT

CA'ed into Khe Sanh. In spite of rain, fog, mud and 55° nights, they cleared the bunkers and minefields left by the Marines in 1968. The ~~C-130 combat~~ airfield, consisting of a native red clay base, XM-19 matting and aluminum mat overlay, received it's first four engine transport, an Air Force C-130. It was now an active assault airfield.

Four D-7E bulldozers were destroyed in mine field clearing operations.

The engineers also completed construction of a helicopter tactical refueling area, capable of fueling 38 helicopters at ~~one~~ time, ~~the~~ with ^a 260,000 gallon capacity.

The heavy helicopter lift which permitted engineers to reopen both the road and airfield at Khe Sanh was overwhelmingly successful. 425 tons of equipment and supplies were moved without accident, injury, damage or loss on January 31. It was the most ambitious engineer airlift to that date in the war history.

New records would continue to be set by the pilots and crews operating out of Khe Sanh. Not all would be set by choice or design.

February 5, 1971

Went to ground school this afternoon. Finish it tomorrow afternoon. Sounds like everyone in the press and news are really building up this operation (Dewey Canyon II). It really is bigger than it sounds. Had Air Force C-130's landing in Khe Sahn yesterday. It is now an operational air field. I will be flying there just about every day, starting in a couple of days. I am still happy I'm here instead of Evans, especially since I'll be in my very own Loach.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Quang Tri and to Khe Sahn area. Actually it is a mail run, nothing special. Get my check ride sometime tomorrow. Won't start flying regular missions until the ninth. Saw a little sunshine today for the first time in 10 days. Finished reading Short Stories by John O'Hara. Will start The Minister by Charles Mercer.

Camp Evans

A company meeting for the Phoenix officers had been called. "Word was" it would be a very serious meeting of the highest magnitude.

Major Jim Lloyd had only become the company commander two weeks earlier. He'd flown all types of airplanes in a near twenty year career. He'd only finished the Rotary Wing Qualification Course for fixed wing aviators in recent months.

At forty years of age, in his stateside home, only a few ^{months} ~~weeks~~ earlier, he'd received a call from a superior, notifying him of his assignment to Vietnam. Lloyd knew it was a receding war effort with enormous uncertainties for those "in-country" over the next two or three years.

The officer then surprised Lloyd with the details of his assignment. He would become the Commanding Officer of the highly reputed (and dangerous) Phoenix Company, of the 158th Aviation Battalion at Camp Evans Combat Base. The officer explained the location and nature of the Phoenix ~~Company~~ personnel and experience.

They were favored by CCN teams, through experience in numerous hot extractions in North Vietnam and Laos. They'd maintained the best safety record, for the longest time, in the most difficult mission environment. They would be given the

Redskins, and later the

Redskin and

checked this
out.
I thought he
went to
the Redskins
first
then
to Phoenix

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

well dug in, and highly

101ST 2030N,
The aircav units were wide ranging and inflicting massive damage on staging depots, anti-aircraft sites and troop columns. The North Vietnamese had a sophisticated, radar guided, anti-aircraft system, which was ~~mobile and~~ accurate. By the end of the day, the 17th Cavalry was fighting so many tanks that it was running out of ammunition before it could strike them all.

24 AL FISHER FROM B/101ST AHB
That afternoon, a "Kingsman" ~~crewchief, Joe Kline~~, had a cassette recorder ~~sitting in his lap~~. They were Chalk 26 (two-six) in a 30 ship (Chalk 30) formation into Laos. Captain David Nelson, the 2nd Platoon leader, was with Major Jim Lloyd, the Commanding Officer. They were the lead, "Chalk One".
RECORDING IN HIS AIRCRAFT

CW2 Paul Stewart was in his final month of his tour with the Phoenix, Company C, Assault Helicopter Company, 158th Aviation Battalion 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The afternoon combat assault was the third major move they had been involved in today. The third major Combat Assault (CA) in a single day. Major Lloyd and Captain David Nelson were the lead aircraft, "Chalk-one" with a call sign, "Auction-65". Stewart was piloting Chalk-3, the third aircraft in line of 30 helicopters involved in the troop move. As they passed over a wide section of Highway QL9, which ran from Quang Tri to Tchepone, Laos, Stewart's aircraft lurched with violent explosions around the tail boom.

A North Vietnamese 23 millimeter anti-aircraft gun crew had patiently waited for the first two aircraft to pass over. Then they laced the tail boom of Stewart's Huey with 23 millimeter explosive shells. The shells fragmented the tail boom and severed the drive shaft of the tail rotor, leaving the Huey without tail rotor control and in danger of a fatal, out of balance condition. If any portion of the tail boom fell off, the out of balance rotorcraft

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

would tumble to the ground with no hope of survival. Stewart and Doody, along with the other pilots were instantly aware of the mortal danger.

Paul Stewart called on radio, "Chalk 2 going down."

Major Jim Lloyd, recognizing Stewart's voice, knowing Stewart was Chalk Three today, instinctively knew it was critical. "Chalk 3, going down, where you going?, attention, aircraft going down, Chalk 3."

Stewart, "Chalk 3, Be advised, I'm going down. I'm shot down. I'm hit, have no left pedal. I'll try and get this thing back (to Khe Sanh)."

CHAIN - 158 BN CDR
"Jane 65, Auction 65...OK, this is Auction 65, he's hit. He's got a stuck left pedal. He's turned back in down to Khe Sanh." *Jane CHAIN*
65, "Let's get the guns back out on station." Gunships weren't even with them at that point, waiting on standby at Khe Sanh. Things had gone easy in the morning missions.

HE
"Auction 65, ~~one-two~~, was hit by anti-aircraft fire?" called the mission command and control officer.

Another Phoenix in line behind Lloyd and Nelson called, "Lead, increase your air speed, please." "Auction 65, Chalk-2, turning on final." "Chalk 2 has thrown smoke out." (marking a North Vietnamese antiaircraft position for the gunships to attack.)

"(Redskin) 14 is in hot on the smoke." The Cobra dove to the target, firing 2.75" folding fin rockets, each with the explosive capability of a 105mm howitzer shell.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Lloyd, "Chalk 3, did you get hit by anti-aircraft fire?"

"Chalk 3, Chalk 3, lead....." Lloyd called again, amid numerous calls of "taking fire".

Stewart, "I don't know what I was hit by. My tail,my drive shaft, ~~my tail boom~~ is gone. It was pretty heavy. I don't think it was 51 cal. It must have been pretty heavy stuff." Stewart had been hit several times with AK rounds and 51 calibre during his first twelve month tour. He had the personal experience to quantify the type of hits to his bird, as well as how serious a predicament he and Doody were in.

Lloyd, "Okay, roger."

Stewart, "If you want to put something on it, its that big road intersection. That big road inter-section is where I took fire straight up from below. It came right straight up underneath me."

CHAIN

~~Jan~~ 65, "All lift birds, get more altitude, get more altitude. Let's make it a steep approach in there." Everyone climbed up to 3,500 feet. "Okay, lift birds, get all the altitude you can get."

Nelson, "Chalk 1's on and off the LZ. LZ is cold." Those were reassuring words to the 28 crews in line for the LZ. "How're you doing Chalk 3?"

Stewart, "Not bad, heading back Khe Sanh" "Is gonna be good.....right pedal", which meant the possibility of a violent spin at a hover, so it would have to be flown down to the ground without a hover.

IF YOU
SAY TAIL
BOOM IS
GONE, IT'S
CONFUSING
WITH
DATA ON
Page 243

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

"Chalk 12, coming out."

Lloyd had to order two Phoenix birds back into formation. They had departed the LZ after dropping their troops and headed straight for Stewart's wreckage, hoping against hope, they could help.

The Recovery Bird pilot called, "there's nothing but burning wreckage. I can't see anyone to help, we're continuing on." Charlie Oscar, continuing on, chilling words understood by the pilots. Despite the losses, the mission continued, regardless.

The Phoenix birds resumed trail formation behind Nelson, heading back to Khe Sanh. There, they refueled, loaded more troops and did it all over again, slowly assimilating the shock of Stewart, Doody, Bobo and Robertson's deaths.

(AND THE SUNSET)

The pilots and crews knew it would continue, daily, until God knows when.

No one knows for sure, but apparently a portion of Stewart's tail boom fell off, causing a fatal out-of-balance condition, which flipped them inverted and exploding. There was also speculation that it could have been a hydraulic "hard over" caused by the battle damage. In either case, he had three minutes to put it on the ground and didn't. Now they're dead.

All pilots took note, and from that point forward, when they took obvious, serious battle damage, they put the aircraft on the ground, and waited for a chase ship to pick them up. With the next three days of combat assaults, twelve Phoenix birds out of twenty took major hits. There was so much battle damage to the Phoenix Company, they were "combat ineffective" in Army

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE

Tom Marshall

~~parlayance~~

Shot to hell in other words. And they weren't the only ones. All units participating in the operation suffered hits and eventually losses.

* * * * *

Tonight, I'm listening to the news on Armed Forces Radio and they said that a tornado hit Gulf Breeze, Florida, and injured 45 persons. Guess it must have been a bad one.

Talks are still going on of drops and early outs. A couple of W-1's I know that are indefinite have orders for Fort Benning. Last night was steak night and another going away party.

Guess the word is out, the Vietnamese are now in Laos. It is the best thing they could have done. They are determined to win this war to spite American opinion and politics. It is really a defensive measure. They are too many caches and NVA sitting there, in what they did consider relative safety. The NVA have controlled those areas for years.

Getting my check ride this afternoon. Although the weather is pretty bad, I expect to be through with it.

My first solo Loach mission was courier to Da Nang today. Beginning tomorrow, I'll be carrying officers from headquarters to Quang Tri and other fire bases along the DMZ. Then I'll be assigned to do whatever is needed for a major at Vandergriff. I'll spend the day there providing a loach for whatever need they had. Now I was doing the same type of general support missions I had done at An Kie. I loved it!

* * * * *

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

stood by and watched from a half mile away as he absolutely ripped the top of the mountain west of Vandergrift, from one end to the other.

After that, we returned to the Vandergrift pad. I watched the mortars prep the mountain top. I was going to drop smoke for the Slicks taking in a two-platoon drop, which would walk down the mountain back to Vandergrift in an attempt to flush out any would-be attackers.

The mortar preparation lasted about a half hour. I took off with the major in my aircraft. He popped the smoke and we dropped it on the mountain top. As I backed off, I climbed up 1,000 feet above and took movies of the combat assault underway. Hueys came in, one at a time, dropping their men doing a vertical departure with a 180 degree turn. It was a helicopter ballet with the timing down to only a few seconds between aircraft. The insertion was cold and the troops made it down that night without contact. I took movies of the entire operation.

Late that afternoon, Warrant Officer Robert Gentry with the 174th Assault Helicopter Company of the 14th Combat Assault Battalion, call sign Dolphins, was departing LZ Hotel in Laos. Heavy machine gun fire stitched the aircraft, knocking out radios in front of the pilots and destroying the hydraulic systems in the floor beneath the cargo bay. ~~Gentry was killed in the fusillade.~~ The co-pilot, Warrant Officer Burch, flew the aircraft back. Another 70-3/70-5 casualty.

February 9, 1971

There are rumors that they are holding up our mail due to the Duey Canyon II Operation. I flew C&C for the Chinooks and Sky Cranes when Vandergrift was opened. I was lucky to be

249

GENTRY WAS PULLED
FROM THE FRONT
SEAT AND TENDED
TO BY THE CE
+ GNR. BURCH
NOT AN AC YET
FLEW ACFT TO
KHESANH WITH
HYDRAULICS GONE
+ MADE RUNNING
LANDING. GENTRY
WAS DYING +
ENROUTE
DIED AT QUANG TRI
IN MEDEVAC.
CE RELATED HE
SAW THE LIFE
LOOSE BOBBY GENTRY'S
EYES + HE HEARD HIM

CE WROTE A POEM, WHICH I LEAVE
ON VN MEMORIAL, LET DAY + MEM DAY.

(I will send full account to you)

I know
this death.
I have on
174th DISC
WILL
SEND

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

We landed and I walked out next to the runway under construction. Graders had been out grading the old runway and clearing the debris from the 1968 runway. Colonel Rodolph's engineering company was hurriedly piecing together the metal runway, which was assembled like a honeycomb on top of the graded dirt surface. Things were really moving at a fast clip now. Bulldozers had dug trenches for Command and Communication units, prefabricated into Conex containers.

I went to POL and while I was being re-fueled, I watched a critical emergency in progress. A Slick was landing with stuck pedals, which meant he had to fly it to the ground without coming to a hover or he would enter a spin. He had reported loss of fuel due to hits throughout the aircraft and had two badly wounded crewmen on board. He made a beautiful landing to a stop and then within three seconds, a Medevac Huey landed a rotor blade away off his nose. The medics rushed around and loaded the wounded crewmen. In less than a minute they were on their way to the hospital. Another battle damaged company aircraft landed behind him. Another smoking aircraft landed short of them. It was an impressive sight.

IN FLIGHT SCHOOL WAS BEING PUT TO FULL USE

I sat at POL and watched Cobras, Chinooks and Hueys come and go. C-130's were being quickly unloaded on the ramp and activity was constant. It was quite amazing to watch C-130's landing then flights of Hueys in between the C-130's flying north, crossing over the runways and continuing on flight paths to the re-supply pads and into Laos.

It is the most impressive thing we and the ARVN's have done together. The "little people" are really working. We have a lot of the VNAF Air Force gun ships, and they are pretty good. Well, it was sunshine and blue skies today. First time in a while.

WHO IS HE?

GIVE BACKGROUND

sounds like
GENTLY
the Sooty
episode

THE MANY MONTHS OF HARD TRAINING

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

It was a beautiful day for flying in a Loach. I only flew three and a half hours and spent most of the time sitting at Quang Tri, so it was a nice day. Tried on my TW's tonight and am proud to say they're only slightly tight. R and R is less than six weeks away!

February 11, 1971

Got the Valentine's package today from my wife. It was a great surprise. Flew convoy cover between Quang Tri and Khe Sahn today. Was pretty interesting and got 7 1/2 hours flight time.

With only an unarmed major in my front seat with me, I heard a May Day from an F4. An O2 Skymaster, a forward air controller called: "May Day! May Day! Requesting any helicopters in the area of Mai Loc to respond." I told the major what was going on. He did not have a weapon and I only had my 38 pistol. So I handed him the pistol and said we'll hop over their ridge line and see if we can pick up the pilot.

The F4 Phantom was shot down by a 12.7 millimeter machine gun during an air strike just south of the convoy route I flew morning cover for between Mai Loc and Vandergrift.

As I hopped over the ridge line, I could see the smoking hole where an F4 Phantom had gone into the ground. The pilot's orange and white parachute was spread out, draped over trees, and he was on the ground. A Huey was hovering about twenty-five yards from him with the crew chief running through chest high elephant grass to get him. I was amazed. In the fortyfive seconds it took for me to hop over the ridge line from a mile away, there were quickly at least eight helicopters on the spot.

I was third, but as I looked around, it got real crowded, quickly.

P.
SEE 253
IF THEY
WANTED
TO TAKE
HIM TO
CARRIERS
HG'S
NAVY

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Navy F-4 would have
been WHITE (CREAM) DEBRIS
BUT SMOKING HOLE WOULD HAVE
MADE THAT DIFFICULT.

Within two minutes, there was a virtual air show of the Army
helicopter inventory along with Marine CH53's.

SYSTEMS IN THE BACK SEAT

RIO IF NAVY
↓

We think the weapons officer failed to eject and was killed in the crash. I was on the scene about 45 seconds after the May Day call and there were already two Slicks there, one hovering over the chute. I know it must have made that guy feel good to have so much attention.

The Marine's CH53 pilots wanted the Huey to land and let them take the pilot. The Huey pilot did not want to land because of the possibility of enemy troops in the area. So he flew him to Quang Tri Medevac Pad where the pilot was taken to the hospital and then flown back to the carrier. The weapons officer in the back seat of the jet never ejected and died in the crash.

IF NAVY PILOT?
CHANGE TO
RADAR
INTERCEPT
OFFICER
(RIO)

I can hardly describe the things going on at Khe Sahn. It looks as if about ten square miles is nothing but artillery, armor, and helicopters. I'm really happy to be involved in it.

Will have an easy day tomorrow. Will be courier to Quang Tri and Khe Sahn. Will only get about three hours all day long.

* * * * *

Over the next three days, several armored moves and combat assaults would be completed. The ARVN 1st Regiment, 1st Infantry Division inserted two battalions on LZ Don and one battalion on LZ Delta I. A Ranger battalion was air assaulted onto Ranger North LZ, just southwest of the DMZ.

* * * * *

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

February 12, 1971

I had what was an "easy" mission today. I had Spec-5 Jackson, who was the security-cleared courier, carrying printed orders from headquarters at Camp Eagle to designated locations along the DMZ and now out to Khe Sanh.

We went up to the DMZ and made a landing at Alpha-2 where you are permitted thirty seconds on the pad or receive mortar fire. I dropped Specialist 5 Jackson off, circled around, dashed up around the DMZ just to look around, and came back, all at 100 knots at about three feet altitude. That was just for fun. Everyone wanted to take a look at the North Vietnamese flag on the north side of the DMZ. I had seen it before with Cataldo. You could barely make it out from a distance. When the courier business was completed, I was called back to pick up Jackson. I picked him up, and then we dropped off more papers at Camp Carrol, further to the southwest. Then, I had to fly him down QL9, south of Vandergrift and westward to Khe Sanh.

The clouds were barely above the mountain tops. It was a totally overcast and cold day. The mountain tops north of Khe Sanh are 3,330 feet. Along the Song Thach Han River, which parallels QL9, is a large mountain, Dong Ca Lu, just east of the Khe Sanh plain. The flight to Khe Sanh was uneventful.

After Jackson had dropped his papers, he hopped back in and we headed back. I gained altitude to the point that I was just below the overcast cloud level, which was coincidentally about level with the mountain tops. As we passed a major bend in the river at Dong Ca Lu, heading northeastward, things looked pretty calm.

In the next second, neon green softballs were floating through my cockpit. I then fully understood the term "being lit up". In

VP
CLOSE

I HAVE
AN PICTURE
FOR THE
BOOK
TAKEN
BY

RICK FREEMAN

C 4/77

FROM
EVANS

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

cried, "That was you!" realizing it was Gordy and Jackson who came in during the rocket attack that barely missed my hootch at Camp Evans. So much for flying in I Corps. We laughed til we cried.

Gordy then told me about his "REMF" mission today. A convoy was mortared he was flying cover for. He called the FAC for TAC Air and was told it was too close to freindlies. He then called Division Artillery, to request a "fire mission". They also refused. Gordy could see the smoke from the mortar tube. It was in a bunker opening, less than a mile from QL9. Frustrated, but not willing to ignore it, he landed and asked a ground unit for a volunteer and a case of fragmentation grenades. A Specialist-4 quickly volunteered. Flying in the back seat of a Loach, tossing grenades was much more fun than sitting in a defensive position.

Gordy returned to the mortar tube. With an M-16 clip emptied into the opening to get their heads down, two frag grenades dropped in. The war quickly ended for one NVA 82mm mortar crew. To Gordy, it was just another successful kill. He'd had many more his first tour of duty. Other similar actions would be fought along QL9 over the following days.

* * * * *

Laos

CW2 Arthur McLeod of Charlie ~~Company~~, second of the 17th Cavalry 101st Airborne Division, was flying guns covering another troop move in an AH1G Cobra. The aircraft was at altitude, took anti-aircraft artillery fire, exploded and crashed in flames. Another Worwac Class 70-3 member died.

* * * * *

THIS 604 + THIS CP/6NR ARE
MIA.

KEEP IT SAME
2/17
20 OF 17 TH
OR
SECOND OF
SEVENTEENTH
I RECOMMEND

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Camp Eagle
February 14, 1971

Today, I flew again to Vandergrift to carry a major around on a perimeter recon and possible artillery adjustment.

However, the seriousness of the mission changed dramatically. After witnessing the F-4 Phantom being shot down to the east of Vandergrift, I realized that I needed to carry an M-16 in addition to my 38 pistol. Several pilots began discussing personal weapons. We then realized we'd better get serious. Gordy had asked the CO to arm us with mini-guns. The CO refused. We then decided to carry M-16's for each pilot, along with our crew chief carrying an M-60 machine gun over and under (M-16 with 40 millimeter grenade launcher). I opted for a crew chief with an M-60 machine gun along with a case of frag grenades and CS (tear gas) grenades.

Our mission had now expanded from carrying battalion and company commanders around their areas of operation; to convoy escort along the highway between Dong Ha and Khe Sanh. We were now providing direct support and reconnaissance in the form of "white teams" all along QL9, ranging from the DMZ south to the river below QL9. A white team consisted of two Loaches. We had an O-2 Skymaster piloted by a Forward Air Controller above us, who stayed on station most of the day. Gunships were available if needed. We were to request air strikes on suspected sources of artillery fire or any threat to ground forces and convoys.

The ground forces were being hit hard at night by infantry sapper (commando) attacks, as well as 122 millimeter rockets and 82 millimeter mortar raids. No one was attacked while I was overhead, and the waves and peace signs of the GIs on the

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

February 15, 1971

Flew courier today. Went out to Khe Sahn this morning but didn't make it this afternoon. The sunshine ended today. We had typical monsoon weather. Low ceilings, poor visibility and rain. Guess we'll have it for another week. March should bring us beautiful weather. Especially in Hawaii. Moved into my new room and had a lot of cleaning to do. It is a lot better than anything I had at Evans but I guess it'll never beat An Khe.

From the news reports we have been hearing over here, it sounds like everyone is trying to play down the Laos invasion as ineffectual and not as effective as the one in Cambodia. It is really just the opposite. Only thing is, we did it just a few years late.

Carried a Major from the Division Pad to Quang Tri this afternoon. Said the ARVN in Laos captured a 137 millimeter anti-aircraft weapon, effective to 50,000 feet.

I've just about ruled out any chance of a direct commission now. The cut backs are starting state side. Time in Grade from 1st lieutenant to captain is jumping from 12 months to 30. A similar jump in W-1 to CW-2 but not until after I'm promoted.

37MM or
137M
we need to
look this up

February 16, 1971

Warrant Officer, Stephen Cobb, my wing man, and I were assigned convoy escort duties between Vandergriff and Camp Carrol. We had a O2 Skymaster overhead to coordinate air strikes if needed. We immediately flew along the mountain ridge lines south of the Rock Pile and saw no activity above the south side of the road. We then flew north of the Rock Pile and wanted to see "Baby Sanh's" wreckage. We found his wreckage and then hopped over to another hill and saw American troops

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

lounging on "Purple Heart Ridge," just south of "Baby Sanh's" wreckage.

We then scouted a little further east and I observed a hilltop bunker in clear view of the American position. At first, I thought it might be an American position because it was so obvious. I flew to it and slowed in a circling hover. To my amazement, there were circular Chinese claymore mines with wires running from the bunker set up in a circular defensive perimeter. I observed that none were pointing skyward. Had they been, my war would have ended there.

There was, unbelievably, a 30 caliber Czech machine gun on an anti-aircraft mount just outside the bunker in clear view. I hovered down to the bunker and saw the green fabric of a uniform and movement. I told my door gunner "shoot, damn, shoot!!!" He fired the M60 directly into the opening from less than ten feet and saw blood. We threw in a CS grenade and hovered away. Cobb was circling in his Loach 50 feet above me.

Before the grenade exploded, another North Vietnamese in green fatigues came running out of the bunker. I tried to follow him thinking we could get him to stop and capture him. He appeared unarmed as he ran wildly down the hill with me hovering a few feet above. He was dressed in green fatigues like the ARVN's, which startled me. I'd expected to see them in Khakis, which were more common.

Cobb was circling above me and in amazement called out, "One-three, what the hell are you doing?" The NVA ran down the hill and disappeared into a hole, obviously a bunker complex. I told Cobb the guy was unarmed and I wasn't really sure whether or not to open up on him.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

I'd found the personal encounter that I had searched for. I'd been drawn inexorably to it like a moth to a light. I'd hunted the enemy, found, engaged and killed him. I had personally achieved everything I had ultimately expected. The exhilaration subsided to an intense sense of accomplishment, but not joy or happiness. Whatever inner hunger it is that compels men to combat, I'd satisfied. I'd met and clearly defeated them, for that day.

The celebration continued on. There was a great deal of drinking and patting each other on the back and celebrating like we had a high school football victory. We had directly accounted for the deaths of at least 9 NVA and probably several more that were not observed in the bunkers as they collapsed. We were also at least partly responsible for the deaths of two GI's by virtue of my finding the enemy. A sobering thought.

CHAPLAIN

Towards the end of the evening, the Battalion ~~Chaplin~~ walked in. As he congratulated me upon my safe return, I became aware of an inner conflict over what I had accomplished. I was absolutely exhausted, mentally fatigued. I'd spent nine and a half hours solo flight in near constant enemy contact, coordinating airstrikes with the FAC and Cobra Gunship runs, machinegunning enemy troops, and arranging medevacs of wounded GI's. I felt more alive and had more sense of the immediate moment in that day than I would ever experience again.

I'd been taught the death of one individual was awesome. I'd been directly involved in eleven or more deaths today, including two GI's. My mind reeled from the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" to the opposite taught in my military training to follow orders, unquestioningly, and killing the enemy by any means possible. This was a morally acceptable deed for my morally acceptable government, for the greater good. I had been very

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Tom Marshall

box of candy that Aunt Aila sent. Everyone else is having the same problem, after Valentine's. Too much sweets. Spent the evening cleaning my room. It was a worth while project. It is now clean and comfortable. Kind of compares to the storage room in the carport at home, except it does not have the luxury of plumbing. Mail is now running slower since all the C-130's are busy at Khe Sahn.

Au Shau Valley

The Comanchero flight of Hueys from Camp Eagle was attempting a hot extraction of special forces troops on the west side of the Au Shau Valley near the Laotian border. CW2 Phillip Berg was piloting a Huey coming to a hover and dropping ropes for a string extraction. When they came to a hover, a 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft machinegun riddled the aircraft, stopping the engine. The aircraft lost rotor rpm and instantly rolled over, crashed, killing Berg. Another Worwac 70-3 class member dead. NVA fire, during a hovering CCN extraction, claimed another.

Ranger North
Laos

On February 19, the northern flank of LZ Ranger North came under massed human wave attacks, supported by field artillery and tank fire. Resupply to Ranger North, Ranger South and Hill 31 had been cancelled for three days. The few birds attempting resupply were shot up before even reaching the LZ's.

Specialist - 5 Denis Fujii, stranded on Ranger North, after his helicopter had been shot down, was directing tactical air strikes for the ARVN's. If he hadn't been so effective, they would have been overrun the previous day. Plans were under way to extract him, regardless of the enemy fire.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

February 22, 1971

Got today off. First time since about the 4th of this month as a scheduled day off. Actually, with the kind of missions we have, there is no pressing need for a day off. We've gotten some new guys in and time off should be more frequent in the future.

Watched the movie, Kelly's Heroes last night. It was real funny. Got to sleep until 10:00 this morning. Finally made it over to the laundry. Had three pairs of jungle fatigues that needed starching. Spent an hour cleaning my room again. Washed the tiles with Ajax and cleaned my refrigerator and did the same with the woodwork. Also washed clothes and went to the library. It's in two mobile trailers.

I read the latest Time and Newsweek magazines. I think I'll have to subscribe to Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report when I return. They have proven to me since I've been over here that they are the only ones with truly objective news. It is really interesting to read an international magazine with pictures and maps while being personally involved, knowing the background events. Newsweek really had a good estimate of the situation now while Time still offered its doubting, almost hopeless view of the situation. I'm glad I'm here and know what the hell is going on, and it is not the least disappointing either.

GOOD POINT!

Laos has turned out better than Cambodia already. They are finding the NVA themselves instead of caches. Now we will find out how good the ARVNS are. And we won't have any doubts left by May. You can expect to see the ARVNS lose a few battles, but overall they should come out pretty well. I'm sure TV news will play up their losses more so than their victories.

* * * * *

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

MARCH, 1971

March 1, 1971

Today, at lunch, I came out of the division mess hall and was walking back to the company. I noticed a Slick on the division pad and saw Ralph Moreira from the Phoenix Company. He yelled at me jokingly, "You REMF, what are you doing?" I went over and we talked about the people we knew and what had been going on. He told me that day about Nelson's silver star flight with Major Lloyd. It seems that a Spec-5 Fujji had been stuck on an ARVN base for four or five days and could not be extracted. Nelson finally made it in to pick him up and get him out, as the firebase was being overrun by the NVA.

Upon leaving, they took so much anti-aircraft fire that they were losing their hydraulics and their fire warning light came on. Major Lloyd reached over to turn the fuel flow off because of the fire warning light, which was the response taught in flight school. Nelson had to slap his hand to keep him from it so they could continue flying. Otherwise, they would have crashed right in the middle of the North Vietnamese. Lloyd had many years of airplane experience, but had only recently qualified in helicopters. His response was that he'd been trained to do by reflex. But Nelson knew there would be no gliding in a Huey.

They did crash a mile away on another firebase. It was also under heavy mortar and machine gun fire. When they crashed, Warrant Officer Butch Doan, who was flying overhead with

- YOU SAID THIS
ALREADY ON
P. 280
✓

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Warrant Officer Pat McKeaney, then dove through the fire to pick them up.

As he touched down, mortars were landing everywhere and bullets were whizzing. Nelson jumped in the back of Doan's aircraft, and as they took off through a hail of fire and mortar shell explosions, in a calm and detached manner, Nelson, shaking his head, pointed down to his spit polished tanker boots, which had a gash on one of the toes. With bullets whizzing, he could make a joke about his shoe shine. He was one cool man.

Doan flew them out, taking hits all over his aircraft. He and McKeaney ended up crashing two miles away at another firebase, also under attack! The crews were picked up by a third Phoenix bird, which also sustained battle damage but made it back to Khe Sanh. Spec-5 Fujji had to spend one more night in Laos, but he was in a safer location. Doan had already been shot down four times, three times on CCN and a few weeks earlier. Moreira and I laughed about the attempt to shut off the fuel. Only a "real live officer" would attempt that. We shook hands and I wished him well, not knowing it was the last time I'd shake hands with a "Phoenix" in Vietnam.

March 2, 1971

Still not much going on at Eagle. Still flying low-time missions. Rick Lukens is down here from the Redskins at Evans for the Instrument I.P. course. Said he hit a couple of tanks on Hill 31. Said the rockets didn't do much good against them. So, the ARVNS really are in deep shit over there. It seems they did find the NVA. Rick was more than glad to come down to Eagle for a few days. Said Laos is like World War II with all sorts of anti-aircraft fire, flak and even surface to air missiles. Rick said it was scary as hell doing cartwheels in his Cobra at 10,000 feet to

SEE BACK OF
JBO
DAVIS
TOLD
ME HE
GOT
NELSON
OUT

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

I'D LIKE TO
SOFTEN THIS UP.

In the briefing of pilots the night before the assault of LZ LoLo, the pilots were ~~informed~~ ^{THEY WERE INFORMED} that a B-52 strike that night would prep the LZ. They were also told that because of the preparations of the LZ, that gunships would not be ~~on station~~ ^{IMMEDIATELY}. The crews from the 71st Assault Helicopter Company ~~had little to no~~ ^{VERY} experience in Laos. They ~~didn't know better and~~ ^{THEY DIDN'T KNOW BETTER} even discussed the possibility of not wearing chicken plates, the armored chest protectors worn by all pilots active in I-Corps. I-Corps pilots "never left home without it". They would learn the briefing was horrifyingly "b~~ogus~~" ^{NEAR INACCURATE}. They would also learn they were the lead element because they were the largest single unit available. All the other companies, due to combat damage, had their available aircraft reduced from 20 slicks per company to 8 to 12 per company.

WEARING

BE USED TO
PREPARE THE
LZ AND WOULD
BE USED TO ESORT.

NECESSITY OF

DESIGNATED

CHALK
CHALK ONE

Captain Dan Grigsby, Rattler 2-6, was the lead ship into the LZ. On approach, all the aircraft took fire for at least two minutes prior to reaching the LZ. One aircraft near the end of the trail formation was shot down over LZ Brown a few miles behind the lead elements. Before Chalk-One even reached Lolo, aircraft were taking hits and two Charlie-model gunships were shot down east of the LZ. Once in the LZ, Grigsby took all kinds of hits all over his aircraft from a variety of weapons. Predominantly small arms, but also including anti-aircraft 12.7 millimeter slugs. He took off in a fusillade of fire and headed back to Khe Sanh. On departing the landing zone, Grigsby noticed NVA running in a crouch position to the left front of the aircraft. He also watched his co-pilot's head bobbing and weaving as if he were dodging bullets. He called Red Oak, Dragon 2-0 and told him the LZ was surrounded and under heavy fire. The LZ was compromised and it should either be moved elsewhere or cancel the assault. Red Oak Dragon responded, "Negative, negative, keep putting 'em in, keep putting 'em in". All hell continued to break loose.

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Tom Marshall

sign, Rattler 2-5. He made his approach to LZ Lolo and also encountered the intense fire. He became low and slow in his final approach while waiting for Chalk-one to clear the LZ, making an attractive target, ~~low and slow~~. Then Chalk-two had his tail rotor and hydraulics system shot out. The ship began spinning and three ARVN passengers fell 200 feet from the cargo bay to their deaths as other helicopter pilots watched in horror. The crewchief and door gunner frantically wrapped their microphone cords around the three ARVN soldiers, to stop them from falling to their deaths.

IN A HAIL OF
WITHERING
FIRE,

Arne would depart the LZ without dropping off his three remaining troops. But his engine was then shot out at 100 feet above the ground. He watched in the time expansion slow motion of combat as his windshield exploded and he took three rounds in his chest protector from an AK-47. There were additional rounds impacting on the sliding armored plate on the side of his seat. They crashed back into the LZ, evacuated the aircraft, and hid by a log until things stabilized a few hours later.

Warrant Officer Doug Womack, Chalk Three, saw the ARVNs falling from Arne's Huey, looking like rag dolls falling from the sky. Grigsby was on the radio telling C and C to call off the combat assault. Womack, who was Chalk-three, did a 360-degree turn and the other aircraft behind him also commenced turns.

The command and control ship again denied the request to call off the combat assault. Womack, without hesitating, continued his turn and went directly into the LZ. Having witnessed the carnage underway, when asked by a fellow pilot if he was going in, Womack replied, "Yeah, I'm going in." He took hits all over the aircraft on the run in, short final, on the ground, and during the climb out. The gun-mount post stopped a round that would

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

have killed his door gunner. Several rounds went past Womack's head and some went past the head of the crew chief into the main rotor transmission. There was fragmentation from ~~B-40 rockets~~ and mortars along the sides of the aircraft while in the LZ, and both main rotor blades took hits.

Womack, ~~in the LZ~~, entered the twilight zone of time expansion in combat, when you are faced with death. To an Army pilot, a defined risk is acceptable exposure to the enemy, and may be well planned as part of mission. However, risk without constraints, as in LZ LoLo, is the ultimate, terrifying reality of control lost, naked exposure to enemy fire. Those who entered the twilight zone of time expansion would later talk of time slowing to an unlikelike quality. With every revolution of the rotor blade they could count the nicks and dents in the blades, while the enemy tracers slowly floated skyward, at 900 feet per second. Words were spoken in syrupy slow voices. The question already understood, "Is this it, when time stops?"

Luck, in the heat of battle, smiled on Chalk-Four.

On climbing out, Womack observed his transmission pressure gauge was fluctuating wildly. He made a straight line for Khe Sanh and on final approach, lowered his collective to reduce power for decent. The transmission pressure went to zero which illuminated the red warning light, "land now"!! He barely made it safely back to Khe Sanh. The aircraft and his young co-pilot had been rendered unflyable by the experience. Womack would return to Khe Sanh. The young co-pilot, suffering from shock, was replaced with another co-pilot and another Huey. They would fly several more hours that day as support of the ARVN's continued.

RPG's,

REDUNDANT
USED ON
297.

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

Despite the fire and losses, and regardless of the Huey's crashing in flames on the LZ, the procession of assault helicopters continued. Chalks 1 through 19 got their troops on the ground, but many were wounded. It was a combat assault like none other in helicopter air warfare history. Despite the Cooper-Church Amendment, there were now ground combatants, U.S. forces on the ground in Laos. Six Army helicopter air crews! Then, the air mission commander called the C.A. off, to get more air strikes in the south side of the L.Z.

With the assault temporarily halted, everyone returned to Khe Sanh to refuel and check out their aircraft. Some aircraft were swapped for undamaged aircraft. Major Bob Clewell, "Commanchero 6", was one of several aircraft commanders from the four companies involved in the initial assault that assembled at Khe Sanh. An ashen faced crowd of pilots assembled. The Commancheros had last lost an entire crew on the 18th of February in a CCN mission. They were determined not to lose anyone else as the war was now obviously ending, except in I-Corps. ~~More arguments~~ ^{There we are} on what to do next. What would be the best way to go back and how can we put more ARVN in and get our people out? They compared notes and estimated how many ARVN were on LoLo and how many Americans were there. Chalk-20 and higher still had the ARVN soldiers on the aircraft. Clewell and the Commancheros were determined to go after their crew. ~~Americans were on the ground, their comrades. They were going back and asked how many would go with them. Everyone~~ was scared shitless, but they all knew they had to do something. If they left the guys alone for very long, the NVA would have them. It was the routine case in the Vietnam War, Americans were on the ground and those with the ability to get them would do it, or die trying. Everyone in the group raised their hands. That was all 15 ships left flyable out of the flight of 44 ships.

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Tom Marshall

For them, it was a turning point in that particular battle. There were no more "northern units" with more combat experience from I-Corps and guys from "the south" or the other southern portions of Vietnam, where the war was "over". No one company and no one battalion could simply do it all themselves. There were only "pieces" of flight platoons, companies and battalions left. Everyone needed to help each other to make it. The crews from "down south" quickly absorbed the experiences, and casualties. The northern based units were now matched, loss for loss.

They organized themselves, reloaded the ARVNs, met up with the Cobras and proceeded back to LoLo. All of these events took less than two hours from the initial assault. The next wave would mercifully drop their ARVN's off and get the American crews out without additional losses. The airstrikes had helped. However, they still took anti-aircraft fire from entrenched positions. It began going into Laos at the border and wouldn't stop until they reentered South Vietnam, west of Khe Sanh.

Two Charlie Model gunships had been shot down just outside the LZ. A total of ~~eleven~~ ^{five} hueys were shot down on LZ Lolo. One was shot down over LZ Brown, miles from LZ LoLo. 44 helicopters took serious hits by anti-aircraft fire. Chinooks bringing in two D-4 bulldozers dropped their loads at altitudes under anti-aircraft fire, destroying the bulldozers. It was not until the following day that the first regiment and second Battalion had a battery of 105 millimeter howitzers brought onto landing zone Lolo. At the end of the second day, fire support base Lolo was established. A simultaneous operation would continue to create landing zone Liz six kilometers west/northwest of Lolo near Tchepone. Next after Liz would be landing zone Sophia, which was 4 kilometers northeast of Tchepone, less than two miles from the objective.

with six others nearby
ALREADY BEEN
SAID.
ONLY 5
WERE DOWN
ON LOLO,
THE OTHER
SIX WERE
ALL OVER
THE PLACE
NEAR LOLO.
TWO WERE
ON THE WAY
AND WERE
OUT LATER

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

The helicopter crews were taking a beating. Everybody was taking hits and it wasn't just one trip a day, it was 8 to 12 trips daily into Laos for the lift birds, all under fire from twenty entrenched NVA Anti-aircraft Battalions. Between March 3rd and 4th in the area around LZ Lolo in Laos, the Hueys continued taking hits. In a three day period, 122 UH1's took serious battle damage, many would be "derosed" as salvage. An additional twenty were destroyed.

EXPLAIN

DATE
EXPECTED
RETURN
OVER
SEAS

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

shoot at you but I think everything's gonna be alright. You know, you just gotta maintain one's cool. And, you know, that's what I'm trying to tell you mom, just don't get worried, I mean, hell, I mean, you know, this life's just a real sucker, you know, I mean, you're gonna have the green machine on you and sometimes you want to know what it'll finally evolve in to. This is no more than a little economical conquest for some fools who want to make a lot of money or have their name put in the paper. It's got me where I think as much I love my county, but I hate my government with a hell of a passion, that's all I got to say about it. And, uh, if you could've seen Firebase 30 and Firebase 31, you might have a little understanding of what I mean. People think war is good. Hell, people think it's good when they're not in it. You'd get it in it a while, and you see how good the war is.

THIS WAS SO
SIMPLE, BUT
SO VERY
TRUE

Yesterday on Firebase 31, we hauled off enough damn dead people. They had 'em lined up out there like a zoo or something. I've never seen anything like it. It's just stupidity. The ARVN's don't even know what they're doing. You CA 'em out into an area, and they're so damn scared, they won't even move. That's the reason they're all getting killed. They won't even move. And when we come to pick up, they hang on the damn skids to try to get out of there. They're like a human wave attack on your damn helicopter. You've got to kick 'em in the mouth, kick 'em in the head, kick 'em everywhere to keep 'em off. A Huey Slick won't carry but about nine ARVN's and hell, we have carried as many as 20 out of there, hanging on the Slicks, grabbing 'em by the head and pulling them there to try to keep 'em from getting killed. But you still can't help but feel sorry for those people cause they really didn't want this thing to happen anyway. Just minding their own business.

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Tom Marshall

pleasure in. If it is nothing more than just being yourself, you know. And I guess that's just what I take pleasure in, is being myself. I don't know, hell, even what I'm gonna do when I get out of the Army. I'm thinking about going back to school. I might take a, I don't know, computers. I'll take up something. I'm really not worried about it right now.....War puts people in strange moods and makes 'em think completely different. You know, everybody has their own little world and they just kind of live in it. And there are so many different worlds in the whole world, that it's really strange, you know. Like I say, two or three years ago, I was going to college, and I had it made, real nice, and then I'm over here, but, now I believe I'm a better person, maybe then when I was just going to college having it easy.

I tell ya, it's a great pleasure just to be able to have a place like the United States to come home to. Have a mother like you, Mother. You're one of the finest people I guess even if you are my mother and I knew you, I'd have to say you were one of the finest people I know. Sure did a good job raising me and keeping my brother up.

Time to finish this tape up. I don't have too far to go. And like I told you, just send me that \$150 out of the bank and if you need any money go ahead and get it and uh, if you need any money to buy a tape player with, just buy you a cheap one. You can take it out of my money at home. Certainly won't cost you anything. And I'll be sending.....(end of tape).

* * * * *

34RSOF

Mike King had ~~been in~~ college, and like many his age, sought the adventure and honor of service to his country, just as his brother and friends had. As a volunteer, he'd asked for the long hours of

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was pandemonium on the radios. Constant calls of "Taking fire! Taking fire!." The lush green landscape was dotted with clouds of red smoke grenades, thrown to mark enemy anti-aircraft locations. Heavy fire was coming from the roadways and the creek beds and heavily bunkered, concealed positions. Anti-aircraft fire ranged from 12.7 millimeter to 23 millimeter, 37 millimeter and 57 millimeter. Even the C and C ship at altitude was taking flak. The Slicks were taking fire even though they were four minutes (twelve miles) out of the hot landing zone. It was continuous anti-aircraft fire from just inside Laos, continuing into the LZ and leaving it. Several helicopters were shot down with their ARVN passengers. Others were shot up so badly, their passengers were wounded or killed. With forty helicopters in the formation, nearly everyone took hits. Fifteen more aircraft would be shot down today.

The R.P. (^{RELEASE} report point) all helicopters would turn to final approach over, was a hill occupied by an NVA company of 23mm anti-aircraft guns. They were nicknamed the "golden hoses" for their golden tracers and high rate of fire.

Captain Don Peterson, flying with the 174th Assault Helicopter Company, put a 90-minute cassette tape into his cockpit and wired it to the radios. The cassette recorder picked up FM, VHF and UHF radio traffic. It was a complex aviation environment where pilots would monitor two or three simultaneous conversations. The 174th Aviation Company was assigned the honor of being the lead platoon, in the first wave of the second day, into LZ Sophia. The assault was to reinforce Fire Support Base Sophia. Late in the previous afternoon, troops had occupied the firebase with little opposition and Chinooks were able to land the 105mm howitzers. However, the North Vietnamese had regrouped and orders were issued creating a heavy intensity anti-

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aircraft environment surrounding the flight path from the pickup zone near the Laotian/Vietnam border to Sophia, just northeast of Tchepone.

Peterson and his crew were in a Huey. They were in the procession of the first ten birds making the combat assault reinforcement. The approach called for a flight path from the pickup zone, across Alouette, Firebase Lolo, Landing Zone Liz to LZ Sophia. The ~~report point (RP)~~ for the helicopters, requiring a turn from a north bound heading westward for a two mile final approach into the landing zone, was located to the east of Sophia. Chalks one and three made it into the LZ despite taking fire and hits over the R.P.

Chalk two elected to make a go-around because of hits to the tailboom and fixed tailrotor pedals.

Chalks four and five were shot down by 23mm anti-aircraft fire. 23mm fire created explosive airbursts which could easily destroy a Huey. It was the same type of weapon which had laced Paul Stewart's tailboom, causing his fatality.

It turned out, the entire ridgeline at the RP (~~report point~~) was covered with 23mm anti-aircraft weapons. ~~Dragon lead~~ called, "Move your RP and flight path to the south. Move south of the RP." Chalks four and five, shot down, were now crashed on a hill between the RP and the landing zone. One aircraft was burning on fire, the other crashed next to it, but was not on fire.

RED DRAGON
DO
THE AIR
MISSION
CDR

With consternation and calm, Peterson and his co-pilot continued their approach. There was a loud "pop...pop...pop". Peterson spoke to his crewchief in a calm voice, "Uh, uh, I'm supposed to

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tell you guys not to shoot until you see something definite to shoot at."

The crewchief screamed into the intercom in a very high pitched, stress-filled voice, "That wasn't me. That was them shooting at us! I just looked down and saw these huge, big red things coming at us. I didn't even have time to fire back!"

The co-pilot said, "Holy shit!"

Peterson calmly said, "I've gotta get a camera for this". Peterson then asked, "What was it?"

Crewchief, "I dunno! But these huge red things went by our tailboom!"

Peterson then calmly spoke to his co-pilot, "I noticed a fluctuation in the fuel pressure, sort of like the bump you get when the engine quits. But, we're stable now. I guess we'll have to check this out." Other aircraft were now calling out that they were taking hits. A well concealed NVA 37mm anti-aircraft weapon had fired at them from such close range they could hear it. The huge tracers had just missed them! They continued on into the LZ, depositing their troops and returning for another run.

A short while later, the second wave was underway to Sophia. The ~~report point~~ ^{RP} for helicopters to turn on to a final approach had now been moved to the west/southwest of Sophia. The danger in this was that flying any further west would put you in the heart of the most intense NVA anti-aircraft capability. Hazards to the west included heavier ant-aircraft fire, but there were also reports of enemy helicopters and fighter aircraft operating in the area. There was a force cap of Air Force F-4's above the operation,

1
COMBAT 313
AIR
BATROL (CAP)

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

just in case.

Captain David Nelson was Auction Lead, heading up a flight of 10 Phoenix Hueys, with ARVN troops on board inbound for Sophia.

Dragon Lead called, "Auction Lead, what's your position?"

Captain David Nelson replied, "Auction Lead, I'm about three minutes out at this time, I'm just coming down between the road and the river."

Dragon Lead, "Keep me posted".

Nelson, "Lead, Roger, just abeam Liz." Within seconds, David Nelson had his Huey ripped by airburst and direct hits from 23mm anti-aircraft fire. The fuel cell was riddled, causing smoking leaks. The metal floor of the cargo bay in the Huey erupted in shrapnel, taking a toll on the ARVN passengers. The door gunner on the right side of the aircraft, Mike King, was mortally wounded. The aircraft had been hit very hard. Fuel was being lost, ~~despite the self sealing fuel tank~~. The danger of a catastrophic explosion was now real. A crewman was badly wounded and the stability of the flight controls was now in question.

DIDN'T
HAVE
SELF
SEALING

Nelson did not commence his right hand turn at the RP for the "fish-hook turn" to approach Sophia from the southwest. He continued westward into the area of greatest danger. Whether distracted or incapable of turning the battle damaged Huey (due to loss of control function), he continued his flight path westward. Chalk two began the turn to final in accordance with procedures. Nelson had already handed over the flight lead to Chalk two.

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Tom Marshall

and sister, "it looked a lot like the Challenger explosion." Ralph Moreira, the co-pilot, Joel Hatley, the crewchief, and Mike King, the door-gunner, also died in the crash. King, who'd sent the taped letter home yesterday, was shot in the head just prior to the crash.

Probably — The ARVN troops on board the Hueys were loaded with all types of explosives, including plastic explosives in addition to normal grenades, Law rockets and armament. Although the H Model Huey had a self sealing fuel tank, which apparently worked for a short while ~~on Nelson~~, it was not fire proof. It can only be speculated what caused the explosion, whether there was more antiaircraft fire, an SA-7 missile, an onboard fire, equipment among the ARVN's exploding, or the fuel cell exploding. In seconds, they were another smoking hole in Laos. As the day went on, smoking holes mushroomed in Laos. But the Hueys kept coming.

On final, the lead, Chalk two, took hits to the tail and fuel cell and made a go-around. Mike Cataldo was Chalk - Three in the Phoenix formation, suddenly, found himself the lead ship. He couldn't see the landing zone, which was obscured by smoke, dust and the debris of shell fire. Then he observed a heavy volume of golden tracers and green 51 cal. tracers coming right at him. He reflectively made an evasive hard turn and through luck, found the landing zone in front of him. Turning on final, decelerating to the landing zone, he took very heavy hits. With rounds stitching his aircraft, he lost power and made an autorotation to the perimeter of the landing zone, but not to the top of the hill. In his powerless descent, he hit a tree and then stabilized the aircraft, crashing on the skirts with a 20 degree slope downward from the rear of the aircraft.

— CHECK
THIS
WITH PHOENIX
WE DID NOT HAVE
THE IN EASTER
OFFENSIVE
APR-JUN
1972

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

LAOS

March 20, 1971

A heavy toll had been taken on the aircraft in the original units involved in the Laotian invasion. So many aircraft had been damaged and were in the process of being repaired that the lack of aircraft availability, once again, required additional assets of the 116th and the 176th Aviation Companies brought up from the lower part of South Vietnam. These groups arrived on the 20th at Quang Tri and would fly for three tragedy filled days in the evacuation of Pickup Zone Brown, deep in Laos.

Fortunes had turned so badly against the ARVNs that evacuation of the troops had begun in earnest. Pickup Zone Brown was the last major pickup zone still in ARVN hands. It was located several miles west of the Laos/Quang Tri province border. Brown was south of QL-9, southwest of Aloui and east/southeast of LoLo. LoLo had been the site of the most devastating losses involved in a combat assault insertion. The area west of ~~Aloui~~ was still claiming aircraft shot down on a daily basis.

ALOU

Pickup Zone Brown would earn its place in history as the most costly pickup zone for extracting troops from the battle. It was a "retrograde operation," withdrawing from battle, under continuous enemy fire. Polite military terminology of a "rout under fire".

The aircraft from the 116th and 176th would participate in the

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extractions from LZ Brown with the 101st Aviation Battalion. There were seven aircraft from the Kingsmen (Bravo Company) and three crews from Charlie Company (~~Comancheros~~). The emergency extraction was to move an ARVN Battalion in imminent contact and in danger of being overrun by Fire Support Base Brown. For three days, the South Vietnamese forces had been under heavy contact with the enemy making repeated assaults. It was decided to extract all the forces left in the area. The remnants of four ARVN Battalions located in and around Fire Support Base Brown would be taken out.

BLACK
WINDOWS

On the first attempt to enter the pickup zone, six of ten aircraft were shot down prior to arriving at the pickup zone. This required a temporary cancellation of the assault. At least some small thing had been learned at LZ Lolo.

After regrouping a while later, a second attempt into the PZ was made. The lead aircraft again received heavy automatic weapons fire, which hit in and around the cockpit. This caused the lead to go around.

Chalk - two also received the same intense fire hitting his aircraft in the same cockpit area destroying most critical engine instruments. This caused him to break off the approach and return to Khe Sanh. On climb-out, his aircraft was hit again with airbursts (flak) which caused him to make an emergency landing on Fire Support Base Delta-I, about three miles to the east of Pickup Zone Brown. However, Delta-I was also in danger of being overrun, receiving continuous incoming fire.

Chalks Three and Four on final into Pickup Zone Brown, received numerous hits on short final, but elected to take the aircraft into the pickup zone. They each loaded troops but

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even while sitting in the landing zone. After getting the downed crew on board, they departed the firebase with mortars landing on both sides of his departure path. Chalks Three and Four had deposited their troops on the LZ near Khe Sanh and went back to Pickup Zone Brown for another Sortie. On short final, they experienced even more ground fire than before. They also observed heavy mortar fire impacting on the pickup zone. Both pilots tried to maneuver their aircraft into the pickup zone, but were hit so extensively by ground fire, that they had to go around and return to Khe Sanh. Their aircraft, like so many others, would later be slung back to Phu Bai.

MAJOR JACK BARKER
The /commander of the Kingsmen (Bravo Company) then switched aircraft and attempted a third Sortie into the same area. He'd had two aircraft shot up (unflyable condition) and chose to go back in the third time. It was a desperate attempt to extract one of his crews.

The Americans on the ground were one of his crews.

He would keep the rule, do it or die trying.

On short final to the pickup zone, his aircraft was struck by a rocket propelled grenade causing it to explode in the air and crash into the trees in a ball of flames. All aboard were killed.

* * * * *

On the following day, the attempts to lift out ARVNs would continue. They would swamp the aircraft that approached the LZ, packing 20 to 30 men into a Huey designed to carry no more than 10. This horrified the pilots and crewmembers, who knew the load limits of the aircraft. However, an unqualified retreat was

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Tom Marshall

Lai for standdown and eventual departure from Vietnam. They would never forget the week of March 21, 1971.

* * * * *

I was on Waikiki Beach with my lovely blonde wife and damned happy to be there.

* * * * *

March 22, 1971
Laos

A "Minuteman" UH1H was flying at 5,000 feet over Laos. At what would have been a very safe altitude in South Vietnam, the aircraft took heavy anti-aircraft artillery fire, blew up. The pieces fell to the ground in flames. Another Worwac Class 70-3/70-5 member, Reginald Cleve died. Our wives were good friends.

* * * * *

On March 23, daily artillery raids continued at Khe Sanh. Each time the first rounds hit, sirens wailed and aircraft scrambled into the air. At 2:30 am on March 23, Troop D received a ground attack by commandos (Sappers) of the 2nd Company, 15th NVA Engineer Battalion. A 40-man attack infiltrated to the perimeter. Under cover of 60mm mortar fire and RPG's, they penetrated the 3rd Platoon night position in an attempt to reach the helicopter, refuel and re-arm points.

80 SQDN
17TH CAVALRY

The fighting, including some hand to hand, lasted until 6:45 am. 14 NVA died in the attack. One prisoner of war was taken along with nine AK-47's, three RPG launchers and one officer's 9mm pistol.

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Tom Marshall

U.S. losses were three killed in action, five with major wounds and 123 minor wounded. Four days later, D Troop would return to their much more secure base at Quang Tri.

* * * * *

March 24, 1971

In Vietnam, Echo Troop, 1st of the 9th Cavalry Division supporting the 25th Infantry Division had a normal daily operation of visual reconnaissance in an OH6. The pilot, Steve Larrabee was a Warrant Officer in Class 70-5. Ground fire claimed his life.

1ST CAVALRY

* * * * *

On the morning of March 26, we left the hotel for the Honolulu International Airport. She would return to the States alone, and I would return to my unit in Vietnam. Looking around us, there were many other couples in a similar predicament. There were few dry eyes in the room. Having endured seven months, the coming five months seemed as if it would be five years. I could not imagine how difficult it would have felt to have taken a two week leave, gone home to the States and then have to return to Vietnam. That was simply unfathomable.

On the evening of March 27, I returned to my hootch, dropping my bags. I then walked over to our company Officer's Club. I was amazed to see everyone enjoying themselves, sitting around, "B.S.'ing". Only a few people had been around the club during the past two months due to the high levels of flying and constant long mission days.

I then learned that Mumby had been shot down carrying a

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Vietnamese General, but without injuries. Fitzgerald had hit a tree, narrowly avoiding a mid-air, and nearly lost his transmission/rotor system as a result. He barely made it back safely, but his aircraft derosed. Several other aircraft in the company had taken serious hits during the past week (but Khe Sahn had been closed.) The missions in Laos had mercifully ended.

The demands and pressure had eased up dramatically. I sat down with Jim Saunders and others, laughing about all that had transpired in the previous two weeks. Saunders said, "You should have seen it. On the 19th, we had an artillery shelling at Khe Sanh. 400 aircraft on the ground and then the 122 and 155 millimeter artillery started hitting. It was obvious it wasn't rockets because it was slow, constant firing. The kid in the tower told all aircraft to evacuate the base and he was evacuating the tower. His last words were, "This is fucking ridiculous!!!" Seconds later, the orange and white control tower exploded.

SAUNDERS
CASE

Saunders continued, "I took off and headed out, and as I left, I saw the control tower exploding." It turned out, that of the approximately 400+ aircraft on the ground at Khe Sanh, all left during the beginning of the artillery bombardment with no damage from the bombardment and more amazingly, no accidents in the Melee to escape the bombardment. We joked about how we had all seen movies of C130's being blown up in Khe Sanh during 1968. The only reason there wasn't one there to be blown up this time was the fact that a C130 had ripped up the steel planking runway in a hard landing about March 9th. The runway was not back in service. Although it was being repaired, there were no C130's going in and out to make big targets.

For Saunders, the convoy escort duty was the last of high risk

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Tom Marshall

WHAT
BATTALION

B Company, 2nd Battalion Airmobile, 502nd Infantry, was inserted to assist in locating the downed UH-1. The Company met fierce resistance from the NVA. Then A Company, 1st Battalion (Airmobile) was air assaulted in for additional strength. The aircraft was found. The wounded were recovered at a high cost, 10 U.S. killed, 20 U.S. wounded and three missing in action.

April 25, 1971

Flew to Da Nang this morning. That makes five times in three days. It is really a rough tour now. Talked to some of my old friends in the Phoenix at Evans. They find it hard to believe that anyone can have it as good as we do at Eagle and actually enjoy it. Coming here was the wisest, most important decision I've ever made. It kept my young ass alive. Am not doing much today. It is too hot to breathe. It is a 110 degrees and no breeze. My fan is working overtime. I've been flying all day, most days. I should get the G3 mission when the next guy is through with it in 28 days and then I'll keep that til I deros. The trouble is, is that it is such a low time mission, I don't want to keep it. I need to return state side with at least 1,000 hours.

April 27, 1971

Flew to Da Nang three times today. I am getting spoiled with all the little trips. It is pretty scenery though.

We still have been having power failures recently. You can't realize how much you take electricity for granted until you have it about only four hours a day. That's usually around lunch and we're usually gone.

Slept til 10:30 today and cleaned my room. I can't believe how much trash accumulates in a week. Did manage to wash clothes

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

for the first time in a week. It has started getting hotter now. We still haven't had any electricity, so there are no fans. Five rockets hit last night just inside the western perimeter. No damage or anyone hurt, but the news, including Paul Harvey, really made a big, dramatic thing of it. They don't realize how little effort it takes to launch rockets. Anyway, news reporters and congressman like McClosky greatly irritate (me). They are all instant experts. As of this date, I now have ninety flying days left in the Nam. Much better than when you start the tour with ~~320~~ ³¹⁶ days. SHORT!!!! Went to the doctor today and he looked at the moles on my foot. Said they didn't look bad, wouldn't advise taking them off. Yes, I'm healthy as a bear and just as heavy.

Had a standby mission for Division Intelligence (G-2) today. Been thinking a lot about getting a beach cottage the week home. I would really prefer a sound side cottage with a screened porch. Saw the movie, The Baby Maker last night. It was pretty good. Even had popcorn to eat.

* * * * *

April 29, 1971

CW2 Ronald Evans, serving with Bravo Troop ~~seventh~~ ^{NT4} of 17th Cavalry became the next casualty by enemy fire for Warrant Officer Rotary Wing Aviator Class 70-5.

* * * * *

CW2 William Hasselman was working with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company at Da Nang. During a maintenance post flight inspection, he walked into the tail rotor of a Huey and was killed. Another Worwac 70-3/70-5 class member was dead.

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

MAY, 1971

May 1, 1971

The mail has been messed up. Some letters are arriving before ones sent earlier. Have really been surprised at how many married warrant officers are staying in the Army and going indefinite. Indefinite status is considered the same as lifer. But don't go calling me names. Warrant Officers happen to be the biggest pain for lifer's right now as warrant officers. Expect to be grounded tomorrow because of a typhoon. Had our first heavy rains in over a month all morning long. Am going to see the dentist, which I really dread.

I DON'T
GET THE
THOUGHT

Didn't get any mail yesterday because of the typhoon. Got a church bulletin in the mail from Pensacola today dated November 9. Kind of slow. Got back three rolls of movie film. The rolls were great. Had some artillery fire and a helicopter combat assault. It should be interesting film to have stateside. Have some beautiful scenery.

The next day, I went to the dentist about a filling, but he wouldn't give me one. Said he had too many extractions planned. Watched the movie, Gaily, Gaily. Really funny. About a country boy rescued in a big city by a group of prostitutes. Just what one hundred horny soldiers needed to watch over here.

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Tom Marshall

flying day. As a platoon leader in the Phoenix Company, he was monitoring the flying assignments scheduled for his platoon. This morning, one pilot was sick and unable to fly. Davis took his mission to logistically support one of the brigades in the field. The aircraft commander was Warrant Officer - 1, David P. Soyland. He was also the platoon's standardization instructor pilot (SIP). Soyland was disturbed that the originally assigned pilot, Warrant Officer - 1, Dale Pearce, was unable to fly.

Due to a shortage of pilots, Pearce was to be loaned for the day to supplement the Phoenix crews. It was, however, supposed to be a routine day of "ash and trash" resupply, a piece of cake. In the tragic irony of war, the easiest of missions through circumstances beyond their imagination, would evolve to a travesty of fate, not to ever be forgotten by those who survived.

Due to the mission report time and change in crews, Soyland had to wait and learn the reason. So, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 3:30 in the afternoon, Soyland and Davis flew several resupply missions in the flatlands east of the mountains between Camp Eagle and Camp Evans.

Butler, in the meantime, had been monitoring the efforts of a green beret team which had been inserted west of the A Shau Valley along the Laotian border. The team had reported numerous NVA in the area. Butler suspected that the team would be compromised (discovered by the enemy). That afternoon, upon return from the resupply missions, Soyland's aircraft was put on standby and the crew waited in their hootches at the Phoenix nest at Camp Evans. In the meantime, Soyland met with Pearce who said he would be able to fly if the aircraft was recalled. Davis agreed and proceeded with administrative paperwork to finish. Unknown to them, simultaneously events

LOANED FROM
WITHERE
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9/158

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Tom Marshall

volume of enemy fire hit the ship. It wounded two crewmembers. He aborted the approach, dumping the aircraft nose to gain speed quickly and exited the area.

The second Comanchero Huey, 30 seconds behind him circled for gunships 3 and 4 to put heavy preparation in on the enemy fire. The second Comanchero then commenced his approach and quickly aborted his approach after several hits by enemy fire. His hydraulics system was shot out, along with critical instruments in the cockpit destroyed. He now had two wounded crewmen on board. He would proceed to Quang Tri where he would make a successful running landing. At this point the gunships were out of ammunition and needed to re-arm and refuel. They would also rethink how they would attempt to get the reconnaissance team "Alaska" out. (CRT)

It was obvious the team was in "deep shit". They'd been unknowingly deposited near the NVA 66th Regiment Base Area. It was a heavily developed area of supplies and underground living facilities. The NVA troops in the area had been further strengthened by a Binh Trams, Logistical Unit, comprised of 1,200 combat engineers, with their own 12.7mm anti-aircraft company. The odds were beyond comprehension.

In Quang Tri, they met up with the two remaining Comanchero Slicks. Additional Slicks were called in, along with two more gunships. On the third attempts, the second set of guns made two passes on the enemy location as the Huey began his approach. With four remaining guns ready for heavy suppression, it did no good.

The NVA then shot up the next Slick, wounded the co-pilot and badly damaged the aircraft. The Comanchero's thought they

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Tom Marshall

were having a bad day, but it would get worse for the Phoenix. As the Commanchero Huey was climbing out, there was white smoke pouring out of the belly. Captain Steve Cook flew beside it in his Cobra and saw that it was fuel. Although there was an immediate danger of a catastrophic explosion and fire, the pilot elected to continue flying it back to Firebase Mai Loc, where he could at least land in the safety of friendly troops.

The forward air controller then called in jets into the area dropping snake eye bombs and napalm. Then the gunships continued putting rockets in the vicinity of the team as close as they could. One of the team members on the ground called, "Some of the stuff is exploding at the top of the trees, falling on us, but keep it coming!" While the fast movers were working over the area, the helicopters returned for fuel. At Quang Tri, Butler requested another fire team of two Cobras from the Redskins to be released to aid them. A call was made by the Redskins for any available "Slicks" to assist in a "prairie fire" (hot extraction). WO1 David Soyland of the Phoenix, with WO1 Dale Pearce as his co-pilot, responded. The Redskins now had a total of eight Cobras. They re-armed and headed back for the area. They were also joined by still another set of guns from the Redskins and three Slicks from Charlie Company, 158th. WO1 David Soyland was in the lead Phoenix with co-pilot, WO1 Dale Pearce. What had been a long day of ash and trash now turned into a "prairie fire" hot extraction of green berets in a running battle. It had been a long day already, yet Soyland was in the lead. Americans were on the ground and they were coming to get them, no matter what.

With the airstrikes ending, Soyland called, "^{I think}~~Think~~ I can get in there!" It would be his next to last radio transmission.

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12.7mm anti-aircraft machine guns was located on the hillside above them. They had at least two heavy machine guns shooting the hell out of the helicopter. At the instant it came to a hover just above the green berets, the 12.7mm rounds were destroying the aircraft. The canopies were exploding, the engine cowlings were shot off, the rotor blades were disintegrating.

Rounds flashed through the cockpit windshield and door. The doorgunner, Specialist Gary Alcorn, saw Pearce's hands jerk upward to the skylight as he was hit. At the same instant, a B-40 rocket impacted the tailboom, folding it alongside the doorgunner's well. The aircraft shuddered and died. In the slow motion ~~of time expansion~~, multiple events occurred in two or three seconds. All concisely and vividly remembered. The door gunner was ejected as the Huey rolled violently on its side to the right, rolling, bouncing and grinding down a steep hill. In that tangled mass of metal, Dale Pearce was crushed to death. ~~The door gunner was thrown from the crashing wreckage.~~ The crewchief had been knocked unconscious, within the wreckage. ~~HE WAS HELD~~

IN BY HIS SEAT BOLT.

Steve Cook, Redskin 16, Butler's Cobra wingman, watched as it happened, with the wisdom of his second tour, already knew what was unfolding.

Cook observed enemy rounds impacting and pieces of the aircraft being torn off. As the aircraft yawed violently to the right, the entire tail boom separating from the fuselage, hit by a B-40 rocket. The aircraft then inverted, rolling to its right, impacting on the side of the ridge. It then slid and bumped down 100 feet of ridgeline and came to rest in a deeply vegetated area. Two Redskin gunships dove into the target area. They reported that the aircraft was immersed in thick vegetation and couldn't be

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Tom Marshall

seen. Due to critically low fuel, all of the gunships expended their ordinance and returned to Quang Tri for fuel and re-arming.

While the gunships and other Phoenix birds returned to refuel, another green beret team, known as a "bright light team" was inserted nearby in an attempt to link up with the reconnaissance team and reinforce them in their ground fight. Contact with NVA was suddenly made by the "bright light" response team. The Redskins had departed the area to refuel and rearm. Gunships from the 101st Aviation Battalion ~~now~~ supported the team. ~~With~~ ^A a kilometer (.45 mile) separating them from the pinned down team, the Cobras were called.

I can't follow this.

The Cobras began working out, placing rockets as close as possible to the team. Butler and Cook quickly returned, observing the other Cobras working out. Suddenly screams on the radio "checkfire! checkfire!", "You're hitting us!" The Cobras then broke off. The report from the ground was one U.S. killed by "friendly fire". The link up did not occur due to darkness. A first light extraction was scheduled for the following morning.

David Soyland had been stunned by the crash and wandered semiconscious out of it. Special Forces officers with multiple tours on CCN, would later speculate on events they believed to happen. Soyland was believed captured shortly afterwards by the North Vietnamese as they swarmed over their conquest. He was marched up the hill and told if he tried to escape, he would be hunted down and executed. They then took his boots and socks off, along with his green nomex shirt, leaving him barefoot in his Nomex green pants and white T-shirt. The T-shirt made him an excellent target. ~~The NVA hoped he'd try to escape.~~

DON'T SPECULATE THIS.

Some time later, just before darkness, Specialist Gary Alcorn

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

him up and flew to the Quang Tri Hospital.

More Phoenix casualties, when the "war was over". Again, the casualties were in the Phoenix First Platoon, where I'd been. Including Stewart and Doody in February, Nelson and Moreira, all preceded by Finn and Baldwin in the preceding September, eight Phoenix pilots (seven in first platoon), had died in nine months. The worst imaginable events which I'd feared in December, 1970, culminated in a series of horrifying accidents and combat actions. Soyland and Pearce would be the last Phoenix combat casualties. Every nightmarish travesty of fate I'd feared in December had now beset the Phoenix.

During the night before, the rescue force, which had been inserted late the previous evening was struck by enemy B-40 rocket propelled grenades. One ~~U.S. casualty~~^{solider} was killed and several others were wounded. Shortly thereafter, they found the remains of the original ground force, which had been in contact and overrun by enemy forces.

GREEN Beret > Sergeant Dale Dehnke, who had reconned Son Tay Camp outside Hanoi six months earlier (to the day) died coming to the aid of his comrades. Just as Army pilots kept the covenant, coming when Americans were in need, the Green Berets responded, too. *COVENANT*
One of the most veteran, most experienced, gave his life coming to the aid of a Phoenix crew he'd depended upon. Worsening the tragedy, friendly fire had killed him.

Later that day at 12:45, there were three different airstrikes and a second rescue team was inserted to sweep through the area of the contact in crash. Although receiving sporadic enemy fire, the second rescue force succeeded in locating two survivors of the aircraft. Specialist - 5 Parker, the crewchief, and Specialist - 4

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

May 24, 1971

We had a steak cookout last night. Saw the movie Five Easy Pieces. Wasn't good or bad. Had today off. Slept until 11:00 and washed clothes. We're having quite a few guys leaving during the next few weeks. Makes for a lot of parties. Can't hardly wait until I have mine.

I ran into Rick Scrugham today at the division pad. It was good to see him. He had survived everything in Laos. We briefly discussed those that were killed. I'm still finding it hard to believe that Nelson had been killed. He then told me of Soyland and Pearce being shot down near the Laotian border. I didn't know Pearce, but I knew Soyland. I couldn't believe that the Phoenix were still having aircrew casualties in combat. The damn war was over in Camp Eagle. I wished Ricky well. He was a quietly courageous man who'd endured the worst. Again, he was a Phoenix and I would not shake his hand. He is derosing shortly. He was short, and I simply didn't want to jinx him. Of the six First Platoon members sharing the hootch in January, four were dead or missing. Ricky and I were the survivors. Every tragedy I'd feared in December, 1970, had visited upon the "Phoenix". The incredibly dangerous Nighthawk mission at 100 feet in fog had claimed injuries. The combat assaults in Laos claimed two helicopter crews, all KIA. A hovering string extraction on CCN claimed two more pilots. I could only shake my head.

May 26, 1971

Only two regular paydays left in the Nam. Flew six hours today. Most enjoyable flight in a while. Sometimes it is hard to believe how much fun it can be to be an Army pilot over here. The jobs I've had have really been great. At times, it seems like a night out with the boys. Along with everything else, I have some

— WASN'T
THIS
A/101
COMA UCHERAS

Draft: March 22, 1995
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Tom Marshall

U.S. tactical airstrikes, and aircover Sorties were scheduled every 10 minutes during the assault phase of the operation. Elements of the 2nd/17th U.S. Air Cavalry reconned targets and prepared landing zones and covered the assaults. The enemy attack by artillery fire on Khe Sanh had screwed things up, forcing the assemblage of U.S. helicopters to depart 90 minutes earlier than planned. The assault would continue, with slightly less disastrous results than Lolo.

* * * * *

Twelve days and a wake-up to Hawaii and I'm about to go nuts. Flew Lt. Colonel Rodolph, an engineer colonel, around today. Only 4 1/2 hours, so it turned out real well. Flew most of it this afternoon along the A Shau Valley. I'm back to really enjoying flying again. It just feels so good to get up in the air everyday. I don't understand why but it is different from Hueys. Guess the mission has a lot to do with it.

Have division stand by tomorrow. We will probably carry the general's barber to Quang Tri or something similar. Guess it is the most enjoyable way to fight the war. 10:00 am take-off, watched the movie The Walking Stick. It was a good way to kill time.

March 7, 1971

Quang Tri

A Blue Ghost AH-1G Cobra with Warrant Officer Barry Port on board was operating five kilometers south of Quang Tri. The aircraft took fire climbing out of a gun run and the main rotor separated. The Blue Ghost gunship fell to a fiery explosion on the valley floor. Another Worwac 70-5 class member died.

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

* * * * *

June 19, 1971

III Corps

This morning, Warrant Officer Randy Hines, an O-1 Bird-dog pilot, was riding a jeep to the flightline, anticipating another day flying "the Nam". A careless ARVN truck driver came speeding along the flightline perimeter, smashing his deuce and a half (2 1/2 ton) truck into the jeep, killing Hines instantly.

* * * * *

Camp Evans

I Corps

Warrant Officer Dean Grau had been thinking of his friend, Warrant Officer Randy Hines. Grau had the day "down" from flying. He wanted to call his Basic Training buddy, who was also a friend of Tom Doody, killed in February. (It was a call.)

DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

Grau went to Phoenix Headquarters and had the call placed. After a couple of hours passed, with mixed up land-line connections, a duty sergeant answered the phone at 221st Aviation Company. Grau identified himself and asked to speak to Warrant Officer Randy Hines.

The NCO responded, "Sir, Shotgun One-Two died this morning in a jeep wreck, on the flight line." Grau was hammered with emotion, in disbelief, said, "What?"

The NCO repeated himself. Continuing with "an ARVN duece and a half (2 1/2 ton military truck) hit his jeep on the flight line."

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WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

desperate attempt to extract him, a rope was thrown from a Chinook. He tried to hold on as he was lifted from the jungle. The rope broke and Steve fell to his death. She then asked if I'd serve as a pallbearer.

I replied, "I'd be happy to help in any way possible." Moments later, I put the phone down, I cursed myself for the unthinking use of "happy". Why couldn't I have used a more appropriate word! I'd had no training or experience for this!

* * * * *

Five days later, I would serve as a pallbearer. Mike Goodman came back on emergency leave, escorting Steve's body home. The funeral parlor was located in Dothan, Alabama. The Methodist church, a short distance down the street was where the funeral ceremony was held. It was a place and a time I didn't want to experience. As a pallbearer, I sat next to Mike Goodman. A girl sang a beautiful version of "To Dream the Impossible Dream," the theme music from the opera A Man from La Mancha. My mind kept bouncing back to the day I'd met Steve at lunch in the Division Mess Hall at Camp Eagle. It had been less than two months. Mike was holding back tears as I was. Then he absolutely broke down crying. This was not the acceptable thing to do at that time. I gripped his knee in an effort to help him restrain the tears,....but they were rolling off my cheeks, too. The words of the Minister passed into eternity, us not wanting to hear them.

The burial ceremony, with military honors was completed at a small cemetery, several miles north of Dothan. He was buried in an area reserved for military veterans who would not be joined by their wives. Everyone knew at the time that eventually, Eleanor

MORE IRONY.
I WAS AT
RED BEACH ON
A MAINT
Rvw WHEN
I HEARD ABOUT
THIS. THE
101ST TRIED
TO COURT
MARTIAL ME
AC.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

an early Phoenix in 1969. The base was being evacuated in days. No one knew what to do with the emblem. They did know it wouldn't be turned over to the ARVN's. Warrant Officer Phil Rutledge and several others began discussing what to do. Some of the officers wanted to keep it and were booed down. In short order, one of the "ROTC" trained Lieutenants recommended the mythological answer.....flames!

Rutledge and the others decided a slight change was appropriate. The Warrant Officers began writing the names of all Phoenix pilots they could remember. When they ran out of names, they continued by writing on it the Phoenix callsigns. "Phoenix-6" and others were added in succession. There were more drinks, REmembrances of those lost, peppered with stories of actions unbelievably survived. The plaque was then carried outside for the ceremony.

The group included WO Rutledge, Lt. Brea, Lt. Eddie Stafire and several others. They reverently offered a toast, as the "Phoenix" emblem was set ablaze with lighter fluid.

Mythology blended with reality in the twilight landscape of Camp Evans Combat Base.

The Phoenix ascended,

resurrected in a swirling ascension,

flames, ash and smoke,

freed from the tribulation of I-Corps....the rite completed.

So ended the Phoenix presence in Camp Evans and the Republic

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

of Vietnam.

Unknown at the time, Phoenix Commanding Officers and a Platoon leader would earn their places in history.

Larry Karjala 69-70 - Retired as a Colonel
Gerald Lord 70-71 - Retired as a Colonel
Jim Lloyd 71 - Retired as a Colonel at Fort Benning, GA.
Teddy Allen 1971 - Became the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division 5/87 - 8/89.
Major Head 1971 - ?
Captain Randy House became the Commanding General of the First ~~Armored Cavalry~~ Division, ^{DEFEND} distinguishing himself again, in "Desert Storm".

* * * * *

Fort Rucker

In 1972, I continued taking college courses. The fact that I was not home until late at night and leaving early in the mornings took a drastic toll on my marriage. I began recognizing my marriage was in danger of falling apart. I desperately did not want that to happen. I had constantly been seeking a sense of "normalcy" after my return from Vietnam. My predicament was not much different from others I was flying with. In late 1972, the Army required all aviators to have a standard instrument ticket. In addition to flying as an instructor pilot, I had to fly as a student pilot in the afternoon taking my standard instrument ticket while finishing college at night. I was, however, obsessed with finishing college as quickly as possible and getting out of the Army.

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

JOURNEY TO COMPTON

July 5, 1987

In January, 1987, any remaining desire to stay married disintegrated with the phone call of a private investigator I'd hired. There would be no more denials or lies. There would be no more games played "getting even". I decided to move on to whatever fate held, but not without imposing a certain level of pain for my soon to be ex-wife.

For most of my business life, there was never quite enough money or free time. I'd been totally committed to a professional career that required absolute commitment. I had attained a degree of success and standard of living that obviously meant little or nothing to my wife. As I mentally reviewed the comments, innuendoes and double entendres, I'd listened to over the years, I decided to part with a couple of my own.

On a prior vacation to London, she had commented how she wished we could have afforded "Claridges" Hotel in London during the last vacation. It was where Queen Victoria had once stayed. As a parting shot, a permanent reminder of what she had with me, I set up a memorable "last trip" to London over the Fourth of July weekend. We took Delta Airlines through Atlanta to Heathrow Airport, outside London. It was an enjoyable flight in Business Class. Upon arrival, we took a cab to the hotel, after wishing the British Customs Inspector a "Happy Fourth of July!" He'd dourly replied, "we don't celebrate that here."

THIS IS
TOO PERSONAL
I'D JUST
MENTION
I WENT TO
ENGLAND +
LEAVE HER
OUT. BEING
TOTALLY
FORGOTTEN
IS THE
BEST
REVENGE.

In fact, I would mention, the marriage unfortunately
ended in divorce + drop it. Act like
— "IT DON'T MEAN NOTHING!"

Draft: March 22, 1995
WOODSTOCK ONE-THREE
Tom Marshall

We filed out of the chapel afterwards and watched as the coffin was placed back on the caisson. With a horse drawn caisson, formal honor guard and military band, we walked behind the coffin as it was drawn approximately a mile and a quarter down the hill to the burial site. Ken Mayberry was in his wheelchair. Halfway down the hill, he had a flat tire due to a National Defense Service Medal falling off one of the soldiers in the procession. It punctured his inner tube. People kept taking turns pushing Mayberry along, who now endured M.S.

Down the hill at the grave site, complete military honors were given. Don Davis ~~brought a pair of highly polished boots and placed them~~ ^{placed a pair} at the edge of the grave, the infantry symbol of one who had fallen in battle. With TV cameras rolling and some family members present and a large crowd of onlookers, Nelson, Moreira, Hatley and King were finally laid to rest, having some bones recovered from Laos 19 years later. All were interred in the one coffin.

Afterwards, we were permitted to briefly meet the families at the reception hall, where they had stayed the night before. David Nelson's younger sister and brother were there. They were in awe that we had been the ones who had been with their brother. We were in awe that they were such nice, normal, American people. Ralph Moreira's mother, Patsy, and her new husband were there, along with Ralph, Jr. I was in such a state of shock seeing Ralph, Jr., I couldn't even speak to him. He was a much taller and heavier version of his dad. I did discuss my memories of Ralph in the few minutes with Patsy and gave her a picture of Ralph in the deer hunt south of Khe Sanh. She instantly picked him out in the unfocused photograph.

I silently listened as Rick Scrugham explained to Karla Carter,

THE BOOTS
WERE MINE
I JUMPED IN
THEM ON MY
1ST JUMP IN
OCT 1967, I
BROUGHT THEM
BECAUSE OF OUR
SYMBOL OF
REMEMBERING
THOSE WHO
HAD FALLEN.
DO NOT
MENTION THEY
WERE MINE,
IT DISRUPTS
THE FLOW.

I WASN'T A PHOENIX

I kept thinking
But
"THERE, BY
— THE GRACE
OF GOD GOD
MY MOTHER!"

Changes From Mike Stomiles

Do first

then do

my

changes

and

tap

gunship had also nearly attacked them while under close combat. The cobra diving on them was the ultimate terror. Luckily, he broke off at the last second, recognizing "Friendlies".

Having survived these encounters, the five other team members were listening to the action reports of the line companies below Ripcord. The news was bad and kept getting worse. Hill 1000, the Recon team's next day objective, was the apparent source of enemy attacks and mortar fire.

The team members sat together at lunch, overlooking the hilltop "saddle", a narrow ridge which connected Hill 1000 and Ripcord. Tomorrow they would cross it in daylight and search for the NVA positions. With their common experiences and awareness of situation reports from companies on patrol, they began joking about the need for a "sky pilot", a chaplain. The grim humor, common among those in deadly environments, included jokes of a need for "last rites".

Granberry recognized the underlying concerns, imbedded in the words. Each man was dependable and experienced. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, he polled his team members. They all agreed, they'd appreciate a chaplain holding a short "prayer meeting" that evening. There was a short, somber offering of prayers later that afternoon, officiated by a Chaplain, on behalf of the Recon Platoon. Afterwards, jokes continued about "last rites".

After a restless night, punctuated by NVA harassment of the firebase and troops below, morning came. Recon team, only 6 members strong, including Granberry, moved across the hilltop ridge towards Hill 1000.

In mid-afternoon, they'd entered the base of Hill 1000 and began hearing metallic noises of NVA troops moving munitions and mortar pieces. Granberry knew the NVA protected their artillery pieces. The NVA had carried them too far to risk them casually.

There was obviously a company defending them, if not more.

He called in the observation to a 2nd Lieutenant atop Ripcord and asked for instructions. A few minutes later, the reply came, "engage the enemy position." Granberry couldn't believe it! Including himself, there was a radioman, a medic, and four soldiers. Astonished, he informed the Lieutenant he was only a recon team, and asked him to reconsider. The Lieutenant, obviously obeying a superior, repeated, "this is a direct, lawful order. Engage the enemy!"

Granberry informed his team members of the order. With his men, he carefully reviewed the options; refuse the order in mutiny and face a court martial. They could attack the position and get killed or wounded (if very lucky). With anger and trepidation, they agreed to proceed with the attack. Greatly outnumbered, under-manned and without the cover of darkness, they silently moved forward.

They quietly moved up the hill, utilizing as much natural cover as possible. The sounds were now louder, mixed with NVA voices. They were getting close, but could not see the enemy defensive positions. In the next blinding instant, three rocket propelled grenades exploded above them. A series of deafening roars showered shrapnel from above, badly wounding all six men hugging the ground.

The PRC-25 radio on the back of "Dixie" Gaskins disintegrated in the explosion, saving his life. Granberry awoke in pain to the moans of others, his M-16 melted to the shape of a "C", useless. Shrapnel had hit all over his back and legs. He drew his 45 caliber pistol, awaiting the charge of NVA soldiers to finish them off. Thankfully, it never came. Instead, a soldier from Company D led the rescue from behind them. They were carried out of the firezone and medevaced.

They had followed orders, which they knew were simply stupid.

the extraction and evacuation. Colonel Harrison immediately told him he needed an aircav squadron, an aerial rocket artillery battalion, and unlimited close air support sorties, all planned well in advance. On the following day, July 22nd, the major commanders met at Camp Evans. This included the Marine Air Wing General from Marble Mountain, Air Force and Navy carrier air wing representatives. He told the Marine General that he needed four sets of air every hour, for 12 continuous hours, starting at 0600 hours on July 23. The Marine General said it would be impossible to designate and control that many strikes--48 sets of two to four aircraft each. Colonel Harrison's air liaison officer with the Air Force assured him he could do it. He had no intention of spending nights on Ripcord. The S-3 Air, Captain Stallings on Colonel Harrison's staff, would spend his daylight hours in a light observation helicopter (Loach) controlling a number of the air strikes. They set in motion 42 sets of Marine, Navy and Air Force aircraft bombing carefully selected targets in the perimeter and foothills surrounding Ripcord.

* * * * *

On the morning of July 21, fresh troops were inserted to strengthen A Company, 2nd of the 506th just prior to extraction. They were involved in a running battle with large numbers of NVA. The birds of the 158th Aviation Battalion and 101st Aviation Battalion were bringing in new troops with water and ammunition. Some exhausted troops were being rotated back to Camp Evans. The LZ's were hover holes, just large enough for one Huey to hover down into. During short final and the hover down, all were subjected to NVA 12.7mm machine guns and even heavier volumes of AK-47 fire.

Warrant Officer Don Mears and his "peter pilot" were in a string of Phoenix Hueys, assigned to extract troops from one of the hover holes in the jungle valleys below Ripcord.

Mears piloted the aircraft to a hover in a valley southeast of

Ripcord, flying through a visual display of anti-aircraft tracers. Green 12.7mm rounds were visible in all sectors of the operation, as well as some intended solely for his Phoenix Huey.

Six heavily laden infantrymen scrambled aboard amid the cacophony of incoming and outgoing fire. The Huey hovered with one skid touching a fallen log. With outgoing troops aboard, the crewchief shouted on the intercom, "clear!"

Mears steadily pulled in collective power, the Phoenix Huey ascending through the same anti-aircraft fire found on the way in. The co-pilot was reading out critical instruments for Mears, who had to keep his eyes on the rotor blades and encircling trees, warning him, "you're gonna overtorque...redline...there it goes!"

redline ...

Mears replied, "Fuck it, we gotta get out!" The ascension continued, carrying very thankful troops to safety. It was no surprise that a very popular chorus in the Phoenix Officers Club was a ~~Rolling Stones~~ song with the refrain, "We gotta get outta this place!"

Animals

The flight of his Phoenix Huey would be repeated many times today.

* * * * *

On the morning of July 22, after the TAC Air Strikes (jets), artillery bombardment, while Cobra's shot up the area, the Hueys returned to extract other troops below Ripcord.

During the night of July 22nd and the early morning of July 23rd, over 2,200 rounds of artillery pounded the surrounding area. Navy, Air Force and Marine fighter bombers began flying continuous strikes commencing at daybreak on July 23rd.

* * * * *

One by one, the Huey helicopters of the 101st Airborne Division touched down. The small pads were big enough for one Huey to land, pick up five or six passengers and depart. All of this under continuous 51 calibre anti-aircraft fire and hundreds of AK-47's. The main pad was under continuous fire with 120mm mortar, and 82mm mortar fire. The NVA had, however, not targeted one of the upper pads as closely. "Light" 82mm fire and 75mm recoilless rifle fire was being received. But it was intermittent, not the consistent, continuous fire being received at the lower pad level.

* * * * *

In that olive drab, "green line" of Hueys, the only hope of salvation for soldiers on that mountain top were "birds" of the "Phoenix" and other 101st Airborne Division units..

The final evacuation of Firebase Ripcord commenced. Chief Warrant Officer-2 Ken Mayberry was a Phoenix Company aircraft commander (A.C.) with Warrant Officer-1 David Rayburn as co-pilot. There were small groups of men left on the mountain top. Artillery bombardment was coming in in the form of 120 millimeter mortars, 82 millimeter mortars and recoilless rifle fire. Luckily, the heavier stuff had tapered off, but the mortars were continuous, exploding blackish grey clouds of fragmentation everywhere on the firebase. A single mortar shell could easily destroy a Huey, killing all on board. As they approached the landing zone, Rayburn was dismayed by the ferocity of the mortar fire. Both pilots were experienced combat veterans and had "taken hits" on multiple prior occasions. The scene was familiar to them, but the intensity was far greater than Rayburn had experienced. Mayberry had already experienced one equally hot combat environment near LZ Kelley, south of Ripcord. He'd flown through a wall of tracers, and was rocked by an airburst on the way out. Whether it was a satchel charge mine in the trees or a fused RPG-7 didn't matter. It had been terrifyingly close. Of 20 Phoenix Huey's, only four aircraft remained flyable after

which nearly nosed him into the mountain.

that extraction. Despite having the experience to know what was unfolding, Mayberry continued on the approach.

Rayburn looked over at CW-2 Mayberry and said, "Ken, (are) you sure you want to do this?" Mayberry kept looking ahead, flying the aircraft, and watching the LZ. Ken said, "We're their only way out, and if we don't get them...., (the NVA will)." It was the resolve demonstrated by many warrant officers, flying Army helicopters in Vietnam. Americans were on the ground. They were coming to get them, no matter what.

In the Phoenix Company, it was the unspoken, solemn vow, lived, not uttered, Americans were on the ground. The Phoenix would come, no matter what!

(one foot mile)

As they came on short final, the fire got heavier. Mayberry slammed the Huey down amid the exploding mortar bombs, and a group of five heavily laden soldiers rushed for the helicopter. A mortar round hit in front of the soldiers and another simultaneously just behind them. The group was thrown to the ground, all badly wounded. Mayberry shouted to the crew chief, Specialist-5 John Ackerman, and door-gunner, Specialist-4 Wayne Wasilk, "(go) get them!" They rushed twenty yards through the mortar fire to pick the men up and carried them toward the helicopter bay. The firing continued, landing all around the helicopter. Rayburn could feel AK-47 rounds impacting and fragmentation from the mortars peppering the Huey, as if the Huey's skin was his.

The crew chief and doorgunner struggled to get the men into the cargo bay. Mayberry lifted off in black-grey clouds of fragmentation. A second Phoenix bird came in and picked up another group of six with amazingly minor damage and no wounds to the crew or the passengers. CW-2 David Wolfe flew behind Mayberry and called him on the Aviation Net VHF in a state of shock and disbelief. He disregarded all normal radio procedures, which typically involved using call signs and waiting

Wolfe

* * * * *

Above Ripcord, another flight was concluding the mountaintop evacuation of troops. Warrant Officer-1, Jim Saunders was a Navy admiral's son, piloting a Huey in. On short final, they were shot out of the sky by 12.7 millimeter heavy machine guns and crashed just down hill of the lower landing pad. As they crashed through the lower barbed wire at the perimeter, there were North Vietnamese assaulting the fire base all around them.

the mountain slope

the Huey slid down
in the midst
of North Vietnamese
soldiers.

They evacuated the burning wreckage, and immediately started climbing the steep hill to another pickup zone, where another aircraft could pick them up, assuming it didn't get shot down while trying. Saunders looked over his shoulder and saw North Vietnamese crawling through the concertina wire at the perimeter. They were less than twenty-five yards from him. They were so busy getting through the wire, they had not tried to shoot him yet. The crew immediately ran like hell up the steep hill, throwing off their chicken plate (armor) and flight helmets as they went, anything to lighten the load, to run as fast as they could away from death.

well trained,
one thing at a
time.

The NVA had been

They made it up to the top of the next hill. On the other side of the hill was another group of North Vietnamese. Other Hueys were now circling with machine guns firing and waved them on to another pad at a slightly lower level. They began running down hill again between two more columns of North Vietnamese, who were tangled in the concertina (razor) wire so close that they didn't fire for fear of hitting other NVA! Saunders and his crew made it onto another ~~bird~~ and escaped in a hail of small arms fire.

Huey

A short while later, the last helicopter off also sustained major damage and heavy casualties. The troop withdrawals from the valley floor below would end within two hours. Thus ended the Firebase Ripcord saga. All the pilots had truly earned Distinguished Flying Crosses, as well as the crewchiefs and

doorgunners who received AirMedals with "V" for valor.

By early afternoon, all known living soldiers on Ripcord had been carried back to Camp Evans. Several shell shocked men, hiding in their bunkers would not run the gauntlet of mortars to the Huey's. They would even hide from the men searching the bunkers to assure everyone got out. They would die by flamethrowers or bayoneted in their bunkers that night. NVA swarmed their conquest until air strikes ended their celebration. *Several* ~~Some~~ American soldiers' remains would be recovered six weeks later.

* * * * *

The last fighting men off the mountain were members of B Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry. They'd also been the first ones out there in April.

* * * * *

The day after Ripcord was evacuated, on the 24th, Colonel Harrison conducted a press conference at Camp Evans. Between 25 and 30 members of the media, mostly from Saigon news offices, showed up to hear the story of Ripcord. Some newsmen were obviously disappointed that it wasn't a major U.S. disaster. Unknown to the newsmen, Captain House's decisive action avoided major problems. Colonel Harrison's communication with House and others had been denied by enemy jamming and mechanical failures.

Colonel Harrison would extol the virtues of the Chinook pilots who'd worked the mountaintop under continuous fire, until one was shot down blocking the largest landing pad. They deserved the praise they'd received.

Virtually no mention was made of the Phoenix, Ghostriders, Lancers, Kingsmen, Comancheros, Black Widows and others who

Have been living out of my laundry bag for the past three weeks or so since I've been here. It has been well worth it though.

Finished ground school yesterday and have my check ride in the next two days. I'll be very happy to start flying again. Time is more enjoyable over here when you stay busy. Found out one nice thing about income tax today, everything I make in Vietnam is tax free.

I think the ARVN's are going into Laos, finally. Been making us all sign rules of engagement sheets. We will be allowed to fly over there. Even get refueled by Vietnamese on the ground as long as we don't leave the aircraft. You know the rules, no "ground" troops in Laos or Cambodia. The Cooper-Church Amendment of June, 1970, precluded that. It is really not being fair to us though. The NVA have taken over all of Laos along the Vietnam border. And if we do go there, we wouldn't be violating "Laotian neutrality" since it hasn't been neutral for 20 years. Sometimes the reasoning behind certain Senators and groups stateside is beyond my comprehension. It's stupid.

February 7, 1971

Flew three hours in a Loach mission today. Courier mission to Quang Tri and to Khe Sahn area. Actually it is a mail run, nothing special. Get my check ride sometime tomorrow. Won't start flying regular missions until the ninth. Saw a little sunshine today for the first time in 10 days. Finished reading Short Stories by John O'Hara. Will start The Minister by Charles Mercer.

Camp Evans

A company meeting for the Phoenix officers had been called. "Word was" it would be a very serious meeting of the highest magnitude.

Major Jim Lloyd had only become the company commander two weeks earlier. He'd flown all types of airplanes in a near twenty year career. He'd only finished the Rotary Wing Qualification

Course for fixed wing aviators in recent months.

At forty years of age, in his stateside home, only a few months earlier, he'd received a call from a superior, notifying him of his assignment to Vietnam. Lloyd knew it was a receding war effort with enormous uncertainties for those "in-country" over the next two or three years.

The officer then surprised Lloyd with the details of his assignment. He would become the Commanding Officer of the Redskins, and shortly afterwards, the highly reputed (and dangerous) Phoenix Company, of the 158th Aviation Battalion at Camp Evans Combat Base. The officer explained the location and nature of the Redskin and Phoenix personnel and experience.

They were favored by CCN teams, through experience in numerous hot extractions in North Vietnam and Laos. They'd maintained the best safety record, for the longest time, in the most difficult mission environment. They would be given the honor of flying as the lead lift company in a top secret, pending invasion of Laos. Major Lloyd had been selected to lead the Phoenix, the spear's tip, in the largest airborne invasion since Normandy, in 1944.

*WHO SAID THIS?
WHAT IS SOURCE*
In the evening of February 7,
Tonight, in words worthy of military leaders of other eras, Jim Lloyd told his story to the officers of the Phoenix. Concluding, he said, "I'll be there, with you all the way, in the right front seat of the lead aircraft!"

*WHAT STORY?
IS HE TELLING?*
RESPECTED
The Phoenix ~~present~~, *accepted* their company commander, ~~as their leader~~. *BUT SAVED* Shudders of awareness of the risk, rippled through ~~these~~ *THE COMPANY* ~~present~~. The order of battle had been issued, and the Phoenix would lead!

February 8, 1971

At 7 am on a foggy morning, after massive B-52 strikes and artillery bombardment, the assault "across the fence" into Laos

began. The South Vietnamese Armored Division utilized the old road heading westward. American helicopters had scout teams and gunship teams destroying anything in sight on the ground in Laos. Because of the special forces operations with CCN, the 101st Aviation group birds, including gunships from the Redskins and others at Eagle and Phu Bai knew what to look for. The initial assault by the Air cavalry elements was an overwhelming success.

LEAD BY THE
Helicopters of the 158th Aviation Battalion, ~~with the Phoenix in lead~~, carried paratroopers of the ARVN Airborne Division to their landing zones. The second wave of flights shortly after noon continued. There had been little anti-aircraft fire and no losses during the initial phase in the morning hours. Things dramatically changed in the second wave of combat assaults.

AIR CAU
The ~~aircav~~ units were wide ranging and inflicting massive damage on staging depots, anti-aircraft sites and troop columns. The North Vietnamese had a sophisticated, radar guided, anti-aircraft system, which was mobile and accurate. By the end of the day, the ~~17th~~ Cavalry was fighting so many tanks that it was running out of ammunition before it could strike them all.

101ST'S
20 SPON →
17TH
That afternoon, a "Kingsman 24", Al Fisher (B/101st AHB) had a cassette recorder in his aircraft. They were Chalk ~~26~~ (two-six) 22 in a 30 ship (Chalk 30) formation into Laos. Captain David Nelson, the 2nd Platoon leader, was with Major Jim Lloyd, the Commanding Officer. They were the lead, "Chalk One".
GOING IN
RANGER NO. 101

CW2 Paul Stewart was in his final month of his tour with the Phoenix, Company C, Assault Helicopter Company, 158th Aviation Battalion 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). The afternoon combat assault was the third major move they had been involved in today. ~~The third major Combat Assault (CA) in a single day.~~ Major Lloyd and Captain David Nelson were the lead aircraft, "Chalk-one" with a call sign, "Auction-65". Stewart was piloting Chalk-3, the third aircraft in line of 30 helicopters

involved in the troop move. As they passed over a wide section of Highway QL9, which ran from Quang Tri to Tchepone, Laos, Stewart's aircraft lurched with violent explosions around the tail boom.

A North Vietnamese 23 millimeter anti-aircraft gun crew had patiently waited for the first two aircraft to pass over. Then they laced the tail boom of Stewart's Huey with 23 millimeter explosive shells. The shells fragmented the tail boom and severed the drive shaft of the tail rotor, leaving the Huey without tail rotor control and in danger of a fatal, out of balance condition. If any portion of the tail boom fell off, the out of balance rotorcraft would tumble to the ground with no hope of survival. Stewart and Doody, along with the other pilots were instantly aware of the mortal danger.

Paul Stewart called on radio, "Chalk 2 going down."

Major Jim Lloyd, recognizing Stewart's voice, knowing Stewart was Chalk Three today, instinctively knew it was critical. "Chalk 3, going down, where you going?, attention, aircraft going down, Chalk 3."

Stewart, "Chalk 3, Be advised, I'm going down. I'm shot down. I'm hit, have no left pedal. I'll try and get this thing back (to Khe Sanh)."

"Chain 65, Auction 65...OK, this is Auction 65, he's hit. He's got a stuck left pedal. He's turned back in down to Khe Sanh." Chain 65, "Let's get the guns back out on station." Gunships weren't even with them at that point, waiting on standby at Khe Sanh. Things had gone easy in the morning missions.

"Auction 65, ~~one two~~, was ^{HE} hit by anti-aircraft fire?" called the mission command and control officer.

Another Phoenix in line behind Lloyd and Nelson called, "Lead,

51C
~~increase your air speed, please.~~ "Auction 65, Chalk-2, turning on final." "Chalk 2 has thrown smoke out." (marking a North Vietnamese antiaircraft position for the gunships to attack.)

"(Redskin) 14 is in hot on the smoke." The Cobra dove to the target, firing 2.75" folding fin rockets, each with the explosive capability of a 105mm howitzer shell.

Lloyd, "Chalk 3, did you get hit by anti-aircraft fire?"

"Chalk 3, Chalk 3, lead....." Lloyd called again, amid numerous calls of "taking fire".

Stewart, "I don't know what I was hit by. My tail,my drive shaft,.....my tail boom is gone. It was pretty heavy. I don't think it was 51 cal. It must have been pretty heavy stuff." Stewart had been hit several times with AK rounds and 51 calibre during his first twelve month tour. He had the personal experience to quantify the type of hits to his bird, as well as how serious a predicament he and Doody were in.

Lloyd, "Okay, roger."

Stewart, "If you want to put something on it, its that big road intersection. That big road inter-section is where I took fire straight up from below. It came right straight up underneath me."

LTC PEACHEY
Chain 65, "All lift birds, get more altitude, get more altitude. Let's make it a steep approach in there." Everyone climbed up to 3,500 feet. "Okay, lift birds, get all the altitude you can get."

Nelson, "Chalk 1's on and off the LZ. LZ is cold." Those were reassuring words to the 28 crews in line for the LZ. "How're you doing Chalk 3?"

OK Stewart, "Not bad, heading back Khe Sanh" "Is gonna be good.....right pedal", which meant the possibility of a violent spin at a hover, so it would have to be flown down to the ground without a hover.

The AIRCRAFT WOULD HAVE TO MAKE A RUNNING LANDING ON ITS SKIDS.

SKIDS.
Lloyd, "They got the strip." "Just take it on back to Khe Sanh. They got the strip laid out, run it on in."

Two minutes later, Warrant Officer Darryl Keith called, "Chalk 4 coming off."

Stewart, in his last words, called, "Chalk 3, Chalk 3, I'm upside down, get on.....!".

With that last radio call, Paul Stewart and Tom Doody fell inverted to the ground, crashing in flames,.....a smoking hole. 23 millimeter anti-aircraft fire had lacerated the tail boom to the point that a portion eventually fell off. The drive shaft, powering the tail rotor, had been damaged to the point ^{that} a fatal out of balance condition sent it flipping inverted, exploding. ^{The} First Platoon of the Phoenix lost another crew. ON IMPACT.

Several pilots watched as Stewart's Huey crashed. The radios became chaos.

"What was that!?"

"Who was that?"

"Did he still have his troops on board?"

The recovery ship pilot, "Break, I got the burning aircraft in sight, I'll be going down to see what I can do."

Lloyd, in a voice filled with resignation to the losses, but determination to carry on, called, "OK, mighty fine, rest of you birds join back up on this flight. The recovery bird is on the way

ending the Phoenix presence in Camp Evans and the Republic of South Vietnam.

Unknown at the time, Phoenix Commanding Officers and a Platoon leader would earn their places in history.

Larry Karjala 69-70 - Retired as a Colonel

Gerald Lord 70-71 - Retired as a Colonel

Jim Lloyd 71 - Retired as a Colonel at Fort Benning, GA.

Teddy Allen 1971 - Became the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division 5/87 - 8/89.

Major Head 1971 - ?

Captain Randy House became the Commanding General of the First Infantry Division, distinguishing himself again, in "Desert Storm".

* * * * *

Fort Rucker

In 1972, I continued taking college courses. The fact that I was not home until late at night and leaving early in the mornings was a strain on my marriage. I began recognizing my marriage was in danger of falling apart. I desperately did not want that to happen. I had constantly been seeking a sense of "normalcy" after my return from Vietnam. In late 1972, the Army required all aviators to have a standard instrument ticket. In addition to flying as an instructor pilot, I had to fly as a student pilot in the afternoon taking my standard instrument ticket while finishing college at night. I was, however, obsessed with finishing college as quickly as possible and getting out of the Army.

I successfully completed the Army's standard helicopter instrument ticket and then continued flying as an airplane student in civilian aircraft using my VA benefits. I finished a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration at Troy State University on the Army tuition assistance plan. While on active duty, the Army paid 75% of tuition and I paid the rest. By 1973, I'd completed a fixed wing, commercial multi-engine instrument rating using VA benefits, as well as a college degree. I'd tried to obtain the maximum educational benefits from my enlistment.

* * * * *

March 1, 1972

Bob Gentry was mortally wounded during the combat assault into LZ Hotel on the first day of Lam Son 719. His copilot was WO1 Burch, crewchief Pat Wade and the Gunner, Lee Fairchild. As the aircraft lifted off the LZ, a two man NVA machine gun team at the left front of the aircraft fired several rounds into the nose section near Gentry. The automatic weapons that hit Gentry, destroyed his cyclic, the radios and several hydraulic lines. Pat Wade killed the two NVA and Burch was able to gain control of the ship that almost crashed. Luckily the aircraft was over a very steep incline and took no more fire. Wade and Fairchild lowered Gentry's seat back and administered first aid. Fairchild stayed

severed the

WADE
with Gentry, while Burch crawled back into Gentry's seat to assist Burch with the pedals. Gentry lost a lot of blood during the short flight back to Khe Sahn. Due to the destroyed radio, Burch had no contact with the ground. After avoiding several mid-air collisions over Khe Sahn, Burch was able to put the aircraft down at POL. Gentry was placed on another aircraft, barely alive. After the crew secured their damaged aircraft, they were flown to Quang Tri, where they learned that Bob had died. The young doorgunner, Lee Gentry, could not forget Warrant Officer Bobby Gentry, who'd died in his arms.

FAIRCHILD

to
One year after the Laotian Invasion, the former doorgunner, who'd held Warrant Officer Bobby Gentry, dying cradled in his lap, was still disturbed. The event haunted him, always hovering in the back of his mind. On his personal trek, to sort some meaning from the event, Lee Fairchild reached that waypoint in life. He sat down with pen and paper, the anguish and frustration flowed from him into a poem of loving memory. It would not be until the summer of 1989 that Lee Fairchild would meet Bobby Gentry's father, sharing the poem with him. A federal building had been named after Gentry, in his hometown of Orlando, Florida.

allowing

A SONG FOR MR. GENTRY
by Lee Fairchild
1972

*The wind screamed loud,
that one fatefully day.
When your Bobby Gentry
went walking away.
Young flying
Warrior of the sky
Strong as the lion's roar
quiet like the snowfall.
Flew in from the west
to that green grass valley,
to a flowery field landing
in a strange foreign battle.
Then the lightning flashed
and God had his say
as the flowers turned red
and the valley went grey
and young Bobby Gentry
went walking away.
Like a warrior of the skies
he was too proud to cry
as he looked to the heavens
and quietly slipped away
to the land where slain warriors
of battles do play*

*Oh, I heard his mother cry
and his father drop to his knees,
his brothers and sisters
all screamed toward the sky
cursing the wind
that one fateful day*

October 2, 1990

In late 1989, the remains of a Phoenix crew lost on March 5, 1971 were returned to the United States for the tedious task of identification. It was definitely a C/158th aircraft because the wedding band of the co-pilot, WO1 Ralph Moreira, was found with his name on the inside. Pictures of the crash site showed the exactness of the excavation. The area was cleared of brush, the dirt was sifted and the bone fragment, and teeth were returned. Then the remains were reviewed by numerous agencies so that multiple sources could provide their opinions. This process almost took a year.

Sloniker retired from 23 years of active duty on October 1st, 1990. He continued to use the POAC, and on October 2d, he ran into Schlatter, who had returned from a lengthy trip. Schlatter told Mike that a Phoenix crew was going to be buried on Friday, the 5th. Sloniker immediately called Jack Glennon in Virginia Beach, VA. The call took place at 4:00 PM. Glennon called as many Phoenix he could, and ironically Sloniker got a call from one of them that night.

At 4:00 p.m. on October 2, 1990, Mike Sloniker discovered there would be a funeral service at 10:00 a.m on October 5th for a C/158 AHB "Phoenix" flight crew, shot down during LAMSON 719 east of LZ Sophia on March 5, 1971. "Auction Lead" and crew (CPT David Nelson AC (Aircraft Commander), WO1 Ralph Moreira P (Pilot), SP4 Joel Hatley CE (Crewchief), and AP4 Michael King G (Gunner) were finally coming home.

His first exposure to the Phoenix, helicopter pilot veterans of 101st Ariborne Division was at the 1989 Chicago VHPA reunion. After registering, he entered a darkened meeting room where a bunch of rowdy beer drinkers were looking at Vietnam slides. He stayed a while and listened to the outbursts; "Who let him sit in the left side, the slide must be in backwards, we never let him be an AC (Aircraft Commander)".

Then they became quiet, reverent voices spoke, sharing the images of those who didn't return. He then felt like he was imposing on something very personal and quietly left.

A strong impression had been made. Having gotten to know Phoenix veterans in Chicago and New Orleans, Mike had a couple of phone calls to make.

He immediately called Phoenix members, Jack Glennon in Virginia Beach and Don Davis in Chicago. Their phone chain was so thorough that by 9:00 p.m. that evening, Mike had been called by at least two Phoenix to tell him about the pending services. Never having been a Phoenix, he appreciated being included.

October 4, 1990 *AT 2:00 PM*
~~The afternoon of~~ October 4, 1990, Jack Glennon called from Norfolk, Virginia, ~~at 2:00 that afternoon and asked~~ *ASKING* me if I knew David Nelson and Ralph Moreira. I instantly responded, "Yes. My first CCN mission was with Nelson." He then told me of the burial ceremony scheduled at Arlington the next morning for Nelson, Moreira, Hatley and King. The chill hit. It hammered my body, my mind reeling back to the string extraction in North Vietnam with Nelson. Without a moment's hesitation, I told Glennon I would be there. I immediately called my travel agent to get an airline ticket to Washington.

Mike Sloniker had remembered. With his two phone calls, Phoenix from across America assembled to honor one of their crews. He met them at 9:00 p.m. on October 4th at the Sheraton Hotel in Arlington, VA. Within 48 hours of notification, Dean Grau and family from Minnesota, Ken Mayberry, from Nebraska, Bruce Updyke from Indiana, Chuck Doty from Maryland, myself, from Florida (notified at 2 p.m. that day) and Rick Scrugham, from Tennessee (who was notified at 10:00 a.m. that day). Don Davis from Chicago and Jack Glennon from Virginia were present, drinking light beer, eating chips and telling airline war

Marshall or Compton family reunion (my families) in Virginia. Ralph's son had a pony-tail. Ralph's son didn't know my two sons also had equally long hair and probably enjoyed the same music he did.

The family members were definitely surprised at our presence, some wondering if the Department of the Army had set it up. There was still a great deal of resentment over the treatment of the missing in action held by the families. The news media, in their investigative efforts had certainly not uncovered any additional facts, but continued printing suspicious stories, all carefully unconfirmed.

AND

OK

WRITTEN IN HASTE

The Department of the Army, in historical, bureaucratic indifference, had not put any of the families in touch with the other families or those of us who suddenly appeared at the ceremony. We were there, through the efforts of past Phoenix, who'd organized and kept in communication over the years, coupled with Mike Sloniker informing Phoenix pilots Jack Glennon and Ken Mayberry of the pending ceremony, with only two days notice.

But clearly, Mike Sloniker's interest in helping resolve their case, through the interpretation of Don Peterson's tapes, in 1989, added understanding to their story. The VHPA was the framework which made our attendance possible, not the U.S. Army.

Sloniker's personal devotion to clearing up the unanswered questions was the effort of one caring individual, who recognized and understood our need as veterans to be there.

Unfortunately, weeks after the ceremony, some families would mistakenly accuse him of being part of an Army plot, to keep the families "in the dark". Their resentment and anger was understandable. Their conclusions were simply in error, and to be forgiven. It was an unhappy aftermath for Mike, but at least he shared and understood their anger over the losses. He also

made several very appreciative new friends, including me.

After the meeting with the families ended, we convoyed back to the Sheraton Hotel and agreed to meet for lunch. We met in the lobby and ordered sandwiches and drinks. There was a distinct feeling of camaraderie that I had not felt in recent memory. Tom Cullen, who had been a lieutenant and maintenance officer, had only been with the Phoenix about two months when he was badly wounded by mortars while extracting a Huey shot down in Laos. He was the first to leave after the lunch. Ken Mayberry made the comment, "I don't think we'll see him back today." Glennon agreed. The first meeting of a veteran with the Phoenix group typically left them in stunned silence, bewildered or disoriented, as they tried to rearrange the memories, match the mental pieces and the faces. Cullen was no exception, just as I had been at the meeting in the Hyatt at Chicago a year and a half earlier. He had joined the "Phoenix" 19 years earlier to fill the position of an officer who'd died by apparent suicide.

I was amazed to learn that Rick Scrugham was still flying as an army standardization instructor pilot in Apache gunships. The one guy who had lived through the worst of it had ended up making the Army a career, when warrant officers in Camp Evans forswore lifers back in 1971. Dean Grau had returned and finished law school. He married an anti-war activist and they were obviously a perfect match. Tom Cullen had also finished law school. We talked of John Michaelson, who was not there, but was also an attorney in up state New York.

Pat McKeany was not physically there, but was in spirit. He was involved in commercial real estate in California. He couldn't get a flight in time to attend the ceremony. Don Davis was still flying, now as a pilot for the FBI. Bruce Updike had returned to college to start a new career. Chuck Doty was busy in a computer systems company in the East. Ken Mayberry was a true inspiration, ~~having travelled with the "moving Vietnam Wall" and attending numerous veterans functions nationally.~~

~~FROM NEBRASKA, ANCHORED TO A WHEELCHAIR,~~

444

~~BUT HE WAS IN SPIRIT~~

Mayberry was, however, unsurpassed
in spirit and empathy, unsurpassed.

← ~~WOUND~~ ~~BY~~ ~~ED.~~

FLYING ALONE
~~TRAVELLING~~

~~SALES~~ ~~AT~~
Jack Glennon was in the ~~insurance business~~ in Norfolk, Virginia. Even though he had not known Nelson and Moreira, he was instrumental in getting me and the others there. Mike Sloniker, who worked with Jack Glennon in getting everyone there, was retiring from a distinguished career in the Army. At lunch, he shared with us the declassified story of Pearce and Soyland. He was still researching the end to stories of MIA's and those reported killed in action, Body Not Recovered (BNR). Veterans hated the term BNR, knowing what it meant to the families.

They remain one hell of a group of men who served with dignity and honor, during a period of American history, filled with dishonor and spiritual emptiness. Mentally and emotionally, the pieces were beginning to assemble, revealing a collage of events, actions, people and emotions. ~~I now had~~ an awareness, a hope that eventually I could focus this into some personal meaning, that would strip away the ~~sense~~ of futile losses and anger over those sacrifices.

perception

I finally sensed

Newspaper report in the Charlotte, N.C. Observer

*"QUESTIONS LINGER FOR MIA KIN
Government ID of Remains in Laos Doesn't Satisfy Some"*

By: Nicole Weisensee, States News Service

WASHINGTON - They are the forgotten ones.

For years, people like Lawrence Hatley of Albermarle, N.C., have fought reams of bureaucratic red tape to learn the fate of loved ones declared missing in action during the Vietnam War.

They are tired. And so, when the government tells them their son's, their husband's, their brother's remains have been found, they believe.

Three weeks ago, Hatley was told the remains of his son Joel, found at an excavation site in Laos, had been positively identified.

Pat Matsey of Beaver, Pa., was told the same thing about her son Ralph Moreira, Jr. So were Elsie King of Calhoun, Ga., about her son Michael and Karla Carter of Monroe, Wash., about her half brother David Nelson.

"There were questions I had," said Matsey. "But you're alone. You don't talk to other families. You just feel you almost have to accept it."

But now some are questioning the information, prompting Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., to criticize federal officials Friday on the floor of the Senate.

Helms, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, condemned the U.S. government for saying Nelson and Hatley have been accounted for.

forward in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War now serve to remind us that there were lessons learned. Teheran, Lebanon and Somalia remind us lessons could be forgotten.

There is no way we can erase the losses in Vietnam, but there is time to honor the memories of those who served and the families of those lost. We must also acknowledge with understanding and compassion, those in service of our country today. For those who served and the families of those lost, it is those names on "The Wall", that elicits the heart wrenching grief of those who remember, and miss them terribly.

To the sons, daughters, wives, parents, brothers and sisters of those lost, I can attest, they did not want to die. Most believed they would return to you. It is only through the stark reality of war's experience, that a combat veteran understands the mortal risk.

Even the best trained, the most experienced and capable; the one in the eyes of his peers, least likely to die in combat, were lost. Whether it is destiny or ill providence, does not matter, it happened. The tragedy of those losses is deeply personal with those who served with them. With them, we also participated in acts of courage, selflessness and loyalty to others, while knowing our own vulnerability. The quest of those virtues was heroic in both the epic and mythical essence.

It was in the reality of those experiences, that we were consecrated as warriors and patriots.

That spirit is found today in the ^{Commanders} personal bonds of Phoenix, Kingsmen, Ghostriders, Redskins and many other smaller units, which comprised our helicopter units in Vietnam.

Paraphrasing the words of Phoenix pilot Mike Cataldo, twenty-four years after his tour with the Phoenix, summed our feelings over those lost. "I can still picture the face of each one who died,

each with a smile. They are the reasons I can never forget Vietnam."

The families should know, we lost them, too.

12/1

12/1

* * * * *

In 1991, a Vietnam era draft dodger, serving as the Republican Secretary of Defense, would prosecute the most successful war in American history.

In 1994, another Vietnam era draft dodger, then President, would legalize capitalist trade with the people of Vietnam.

In the same year, the Russian Red Army Chorus would sing, "Sweet Home Alabama" on the MTV Music Awards.

One-fourth of tourists visiting Vietnam in 1994 were American college students. Nearly one-half of business travelers to Vietnam were Americans.

At Khe Sanh, people searching for scrap metal to sell, died at a rate of one per week from mines and unexploded ordinance.

The Vietnam Era "Phoenix" alighted on the nose of UH-1H Huey at the Army Transportation Museum, in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

A Phoenix Platoon Leader in 1970, had become Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division.

In 1995, Robert S. McNamara was still confused, unable to differentiate between the ethics and morality of a political science decision, whether or not to go to war, and the applied military science of conducting and prosecuting an unrestricted war to victory.

* * * * *

IN MEMORIUM		
C/158 "THE PHOENIX"		
	DATE	VIETNAM WALL LOCATION
WO1 Jerome J. Warnick	15APR69	27W92
WO1 Terry J. Mortenson	15APR69	27W85
SP4 Doyle D. Dunbar	15QPR69	27W86
SFC James R. Pappy Couch	20JUL69	27W24
WO1 Alan C. Maness	03SEP69	18W28
CPT Arthur R. Herndon	21DEC69	15W78
WO1 Thomas L. Forsythe	21DEC69	15W78
SP4 David L. Eggleston	21DEC69	15W77
CPT Donald L. Swanson	31JAN70	14W87
SP4 Mahlon R. Arnett	08FEB70	14W114
WO1 Phillippe Las Hermes	14FEB70	13W10
CW2 Clifford E. Poe	06MAY70	11W115
WO1 Roger B. Baxter	06MAY70	11W108
SP5 Allen Kinne	06MAY70	11W114
PFC Steven E. Wasson	06MAY70	11W
WO1 Nicholas G. Saunders	18MAY70	10W62
WO1 Robert K. Cole	18MAY70	10W60
SP4 Carlton C. Gray	18MAY70	10W61
WO1 Johns S. Wilson	12JUN70	09W49
1LT Albert M. Finn	20SEP70	07W77
WO1 Larry G. Baldwin	20SEP70	07W76
SP4 Dan O. Felts	20SEP70	07W76
SP4 William T. Dotson	20SEP70	07W76
CPT Clifford K. Baade	07DEC70	06W111