

The Legend of the Naked Air Crew

From Jim Bracewell

A POSTING ON FACEBOOK LAST SEPTEMBER

I've been looking over some anecdotes I jotted down over a span of fifty-plus years. Here's a short one I had almost forgotten. There actually was a little humor to be found in Vietnam. I hope you find it amusing.

Disclaimer: The following episode was reported to me as factual. Of course, being the straight-laced officer and gentleman that I was, I have no first-hand knowledge of the incident.

I do know first-hand that we occasionally flew our helicopters to a conveniently located river sand bar where the two pilots would assist the crew chief and gunner in giving the aircraft a much-needed bath. While there, we they usually took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy a few minutes of skinny-dipping.

Let me emphasize that I have no first-hand knowledge, but it was related to me that a certain crew finished washing the aircraft, and proceeded with the skinny-dipping phase of the procedure. As they frolicked in the cool water, some inconsiderate person (or persons) of the enemy persuasion decided it would be a good idea to blow up the helicopter. Fortunately, their marksmanship was somewhat lacking, and they missed.

The bad guys did, however, succeed in getting the immediate and complete attention of the swimmers. They made extraordinary haste to the aircraft, got it cranked, and flew back to camp. In their haste, the crew did not take the time to dress. They wore only their flight helmets, so they could communicate.

One version of the story has it that the crew chief and gunner put on their skivvies once they were airborne. The pilots did not!

Once they landed and shut down the engine, the crew emerged from the helicopter and quickly got dressed but not before they were seen by several hysterical on-lookers.

Thus, the birth of a legend.