The Second Tour
by Mike Sloniker

My first tour in Vietnam was from Dec 67-Nov 68 as a field artillery Lieutenant in Battery C 2d Battalion 319th Field Artillery (2/319 FA), 101st Airborne Division. Towards the end of the tour, I was around a couple of CH-47 company areas (242d Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC) at Cu Chi and B/159 ASHC at Camp Eagle) and noticed how well the aviators lived. In the last month, I flew some artillery air observer missions in OH-6's from Battery A 377th FA at Phu Bai. I was profoundly impressed with the ease the pilots displayed in flying, and with what they taught me to do in the cockpit. The potential of knowing I could fly straight and level, anticipate the pilots needs, and work as a member of a well trained team would influence my next four years.

In late November 1968, I returned to my parent's home in Lawton, Oklahoma. I had been reassigned to adjacent Ft Sill, Oklahoma to be a field artillery gunnery instructor. Seemed like I was never going to get out of Oklahoma. In the fall of 1966, as a senior ROTC cadet at Oklahoma State, I filled out my request for branch assignment: Armor, Ordnance, and Infantry. Field Artillery was not on my request, but Field Artillery was what I was assigned.

I think, basically, I wanted out of Oklahoma, but the needs of the service overcame my desires. The powerful *needs of the service* answer eliminated a reconsideration. In my case, I did know anybody who could help so I went with it. I never considered applying for Army aviation training then. My main concern was short term: graduate from College(the first in my family), get through the basic artillery course, survive jump school at Ft Benning, and get adjusted to the Army as an officer. I had already spent 21 years in the Army as a dependent, so I knew the environment.

I found out quickly that I was having adjustment problems, particularly around Thanksgiving and Christmas 1968. It was particularly apparent while attending the annual Oklahoma State VS Oklahoma University football game at Stillwater, one week after return. 19 months earlier, graduation ceremonies took place in the same stadium. It could have been 19 years. I was deeply tanned from the waist up, extemely thin, and not prepared for the 40 degree temperature and the 20 MPH north wind. The conversations I had that weekend, really sounded like a foreign language. I had different priorities, now.

The one year tour in Vietnam placed me into many friendships that were nonexistant in the states. I kept wondering what everybody in my old unit was doing. In January 1969, I applied to return to the Field Artillery in Vietnam with the Military Personnel assignment people at Ft McNair in Washington DC. In their bureaucratic manner they told me there was no way. Learning that I did not have to go through the formality of a letter, I then called to see if I could go back as an advisor to the Army of the Vietnam (ARVN), and was told no again. Since I was really getting desperate, I almost asked about Special

Forces, when the assignment officer asked if I thought I could pass a flight physical and some aviator test called the FAST test. Not long after that phone call, I passed everything and thought I would be gone in a flash. However, it took a year, but I got to flight school in Mar 70 in Officers Rotary Wing Aviator Course (ORWAC) 70-38, with orders that said "Duty in Vietnam," at the completion of flight school.

The minute I got orders for flight school, while a gunnery instructor, in the Field Artillery School, I was immediately given an administrative job, because my superiors thought I had applied without their permission. It was never my intention to do anything detrimental to their future plans. I was never included in their planning sessions, so I was very surprised by their reaction.

To this day, I vividly remember the anger of my director, who was my ROTC instructor in 1963-65, when he called me to his office. He told me that my decision to go to flight school would reflect on my officer efficiency report(OER). Because his face was red, and he was hollering, I did not ask how it would reflect. When I got the OER in late February 1970, it was neutral, not one that reflected the hard work of teaching gunnery, but one that said I was present, not tardy, and had no absences.

That was a seminal moment in my education that non-rated career field artillery officers definitely didn't like field artillerymen who were aviators. Later in 1974-75, I was back on a ground assignment, commanding an artillery battery, and faced that animosity again. This time I learned that my boss had "busted out" of flight school and was still bitter about it 10 years after the fact.

On October 28th, 1969, Tommy Campbell was killed in a UH-1C from the 192d AHC providing fire for a ranger team from C Company 75th Rangers. My mother saw the death notice in the Lawton newspaper and showed her unspoken concern for my latest decision. Tommy's death hit close to home for me. We both had gone to junior high, high school, junior college, and graduated from Oklahoma State at the same time. We were both honored in May 1967 as Distinguished Military Students at Oklahoma State. Everybody else got theirs in September 1966. Tommy and I were a little deficient in the grades department and had to raise our average in order to get it. He was the 60th from Lawton Oklahoma to die in Vietnam.

Flight school at Ft Wolters Texas, was not easy for me, as I quickly learned I was not a natural helicopter pilot and this was going to be hard work. I never thought I would not graduate, but I was always surprised when the instructor pilot would be highly critical of something I thought I had done pretty well. As a consequence, I never took anything for granted.

The practice of the autorotation manuever challenged the student to control the helicopter to the ground, with the engine at flight idle and not producing power. The instructor pilot (IP) could initiated at altitude, or at a hover. I cannot remember the civilian IP's name whose instructional technique for when to perform critical phases of the autorotation manuever was

his elbow in my ribs with the words, "Initial NOW!, decel NOW!, Level the skids, NOW!" Every check ride from then until my last flight in January 1986, I always had an imaginary elbow in my ribs during the autorotation.

I went to flight school as a captain with a combat tour in Vietnam. There were about 20 of us in that category in a class of over 120 students. The second lieutenants were fresh out of college, fresh out of their officers basic course or officers candidate school, and just beginning marriages, simultaneously beginning the significant stress of going to flight school and doing something we weren't naturally equipped to do: fly.

We survived the primary training at Ft Wolters Texas and transferred to Ft Rucker Alabama for the remaining advanced phase. Ft Rucker was easier for me, except the mysterious way instrument training was taught. The reference material was difficult to work with, and very frustrating. Sometimes I would climb out the the TH-13T trainer, and wonder if I would ever get out of Rucker. Finally, it was over, and I was sitting in the big UH-1H, Huey, where it finally all came together.

I paid close attention to the transition to the Huey. I knew first hand how fast they could crash and burn. On December 19th 1967, I had been in country 18 days when tragedy struck. The 2d and 3d Brigades of the 101st had no training in air assault tactics prior to leaving Ft Campbell, Kentucky on December 1st, because the Hueys were in Vietnam or going to Vietnam. My brigade, the 3d, spent December training in Vietnam with the UH-1's and the CH-47's, much to the consternation of the flight crews.

On the 19th, we were spending a lot of time getting in the Hueys, flying out to an LZ, walk around in the sun, and getting back in the aircraft, when they returned. As an Artillery forward observer, I was required to be as close to the Infantry company commander as possible, and this meant flying on his aircraft during the combat assault. We really got into a mess at the Phouc Vinh airstrip, that day, and we weren't able to maintain unit integrity. It was "just get in one and we will sort it out in the LZ." 4 grunts got into the aircraft I was supposed to get into, and the crew chief told me to get into the one behind us, which I did. A very short time later, everybody in that aircraft from the 162d Assault Helicopter Company, at Phouc Vinh would perish.

Apparently, the ship had an engine failure, and was successfully autorating when the main rotor hit some 100' high trees and flipped over. It crashed inverted and burned immediately. Our Huey landed immediately near the crashed ship and we all ran out to help. The smell was burning fuel, magnesium and flesh that greeted us. I won't forget how we all looked, as we realized there was nothing we could do. Sort of like a daze, as if we really couldn't believe what we had just seen. It was a stare that we perfected over the next 12 months. It was a memory that stayed with me every time, I buckled into the Huey at Rucker. As my confidence grew, the memory faded.

Humor was where you could find it at Ft Rucker, if you paid attention. I remember a break we were taking outside a classroom

building, that had some senior warrant officers attending an advanced warrant officer course. One warrant, who had been a Chinook pilot, had the soft lobe of his ear shot off by a .51 cal. We told one of the lieutenants that his ear was bitten off by a passionate lady in the throes of a fantastic orgasm. The lieutenant bought it and told his wife, who told the other wives, who then wanted to see what the ear looked like. During the graduation dance at the officer's club, I can remember the little wives checking ears.

In October 1970, we anxiously awaited our orders when the decision was made to send only those Field Artillery and Infantry officers who got an AH-1G, Cobra or CH-47, Chinook transition, directly to Vietnam. All the Armor officers went to Vietnam immediately, with or without a transition. The rest were scattered to Ft Hood, Ft Bragg, Ft Riley and Ft Carson. I went to Ft Hood TX, walked in with Army Regulation 95-1(which is an Army Aviation policy guide) and said "I am here to fly." The personnel "flesh peddlers" sent me to 2d Armored Division Artillery, where the Division Artillery Commander said "Welcome to 2 AD, your change of command date for taking command of one of my artillery batteries is in two weeks." It took the aviator losses in Lam Son 719 to get me out of Texas in June 1971 and back to Vietnam. Those six months of artillery battery command would pay off later, but at the time it seemed like something was going on and I was missing it.

My home was in Lawton Oklahoma, so I left my wife there, since her hometown and parents were 20 miles away there. I flew from Oklahoma City to San Francisco on July 23, 1971, and do not remember how I got to Travis or where I stayed. I do remember a lot of C-141's doing a lot of touch and go's, the weather was cooler than Oklahoma and the grass on the sides of the hills was yellow.

I flew from Travis, on a chartered DC-8, at 11:00 AM on the 24th, to Honolulu, then to Kadena Okinawa, arriving at night at Bien Hoa. I sat next to a hard drinking Infantry aviator LT named Parks, who had six drinks in an hour in Honolulu, got back in his seat, invited the flight attendant to a sexual adventure and passed out. Later in October, I would transfer to the same battalion that he was in, the 229 Assault Helicopter Battalion(AHB), 1st Cavalry Division. At Kadena, we were protected by Air Police because of a protest against the war by the people of Okinawa. The wet warm weather and high humidity at Okinawa was a preview of what was to come.

As we approached Bien Hoa, at night, the airplane got very quiet as you could tell the new guys were deep in thought. Upon deplaning at 9:30 PM we were briefed that we were going to the 90th Replacement Battalion at Long Binh. The new guys had many comments about the humidity, heat, screens on the bus, the flares, and the smells. It was odd to feel like an old guy coming home.

I last saw the 90th in November 1968, and remembered the high traffic activity outside the fences. Lambretta three wheeled motor cars with bench seats struggled up and down the road with their heavy loads. The smell of diesel exhaust was

strong, when convoys and buses would pass by. The 90th represented a lot of anxiety. For those leaving, there was the thought, "Am I going to get out of here alive?" For the new arrivals the thought was "Where am I going."

On the 26th, we brushed our teeth with the flouride, got our gear, and found our next assignments. Mine was the 23d Infantry Division (Americal), which I thought was a typing error and was supposed to be the 25th at Cu Chi, northwest of Saigon in III Corps. After being in country for about 48 hours, I was on my way to Chu Lai, way north of Saigon in I Corps. Upon arrival at 2:00 PM on the 28th, we were sent to the Combat Training Center, next to the beach for in-country training, prior to assignment to our unit.

I knew little about the Americal, except that it was the division that Lt Calley and My Lai incident put on the front page of Life, Newsweek and Time. I remembered the names My Lai 4,and Pinkville were associated with the murder of civilians, but not much else. On my first tour, I did not see atrocities, but saw that the environment was ripe for the opportunity, because the way the Viet Cong could melt into the terrain, towns, or population.

Chu Lai was a former Marine airfield built in mid 1965 by the Marines and Seabees, Navy Construction Engineers. It was all bright sand, ocean breezes, beaches, palm trees and low scrub bushes. The Marines/Seabees built 10,000 foot runway and USMC F-4 and A-4 jet fighters for ground support missions. It also had a large helicopter community, not only Marine, but also Army. By July 1971, the Marines were long gone. They declared the war won, left country, and always beleived, "We wuz winning, when I left."

While undergoing in-country training, the Officer In Charge(OIC), a Field Artillery Captain, made the comment that he could not understand why we were being sent to the Americal, since everyone knows the division will stand down soon. That was one of the stupidest things I have ever heard verbalized. Never once, did anyone make any attempt to welcome us. We were the ones who would replace those who would be going home. Maybe the Captain attitude and demeanor was why he was down there and not out on the firebases where he should have been with Artillery units. This was the beginning of the development of my bad attitude towards the Americal Division. It was the only division, I served in, that I did not sew the divisional patch on my left shoulder, and no one in the chain of command made any comment about it. I had just finished 6 months of battery command in the 2d Armored Division, Ft Hood, prior to coming to RVN and knew the rules. I witnessed an extremely bad attitude, low morale, lack of attention by the leadership, failure to comply with basics, among others, in most officers I met in the division, who been there for almost a full tour.

I saw Carl Flemer, in the PX on July 31st, prior to being assigned to the 174th Assault Helicopter Company. Carl was in my flight class, 70-38. It was reassuring to finally know someone at Chu Lai. Soon, I was assigned to the 174th, and picked up on Monday, August 2d at the 14th Aviation Battalion by the Company

executive officer (XO), Captain (CPT)Denny Dorsch. I stayed in his hootch, until CPT Don Peterson, the Company Operationss Officer returned from R&R. In the meantime, I met the Company Commander, Maj Dale Spratt, and the first sergeant, 1SG McClure, an artillerymen. McClure was in the 1/321st FA 101st FA on his first tour, and we would talk about artillery units, when we talked at all. Through Dorsch, I learned that Spratt wanted me to fly every other day, and help with administrative paperwork to prepare the company for standdown. Sounded fair to me. Little did I know, I would get the education of a lifetime.

Dorch had a 90 minute audio tape made by Don Peterson, when Peterson was flying in Laos during Lam Son 719. I made a copy while staying in Peterson's room. Lam Son 719 was an incursion into Laos by the South Vietnamese Army between February 8th and April 8th 1971. The 174th was a participant throughout the entire period. There was an awards and decorations matrix chart in flight operations that showed the status of the awards. I noticed that a lot of the aircraft commanders I flew with were awarded silver Stars for flights into Laos. The same could be said about the Distinguished Flying Cross awards, and air medals for Valor. The AC's rarely talked about Lam Son 719.

The 174th was broken down into a headquarters section, three flight platoons and a maintenance platoon. The two UH-1H flight platoons were called the Dolphins which had the numbers 174 in black on the front doors the tailboom had a blue stripe in the middle of a white band. The gun platoon had UH-1M with large white sharks teeth on a red background all across the the aircraft from door to door. Naturally they were called the Sharks, and at times displayed the unpredicable demeanor of a shark. CPT Tyrus Manning was the maintenance platoon leader whose call sign was Witchdoctor 6. His job was to keep the aircraft flying, which, at times, was extremely demanding.

The company came to Vietnam in 1966 from Ft Benning Georgia. Their first home was in II Corps west of Nha Trang. In 1967, the unit moved just over the II Corps boundary to Duc Pho, which was at the southern tip of I Corps, the most northern Corps. The Corps, I through IV, were Vietnamese boundaries. In my 24 months in Vietnam, I Corps had the toughest terrain, worst weather, and a lot of hostile North Vietnamese. Everyone will have their own opinion, based on their experience. Mine is based on the violence of the combat activity, and difficulty in closing with and engaging the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

On the Lam Son audio tape was an episode about Witchdoctor 5 going down, and attempts to rescue him and his crew. The company commander, Major Dale Spratt, can be heard breaking off from his position as flight leader, giving command of the flight to the second aircraft, Chalk 2, and rushing to try to rescue Witch Doctor 5, Lt Butch Elliot and his crew. Spratt couldn't get there because of the heavy ground fire, but he did try.

Lam Son 719 was a good indicator to Army Aviation about where it was with company commander leadership. Some lead from the front of the flight, which was either an indicator of great airmanship, or an indicator of that is where he thought he should be, even though not well qualified, or the place to get the

glory. Some recognized their limitations and flew back in the flight. Some never left the orderly room, and in doing so never made a big effort of getting awards and decorations through for their pilots and crews who risked their lives daily, nor had any appreciation of the strain on the maintenance crews to keep the aircraft flyable. Spratt lead by example, and regardless of anything else he did, he did make every attempt to rescue his downed crew, supported the recognition of the flight crews and stayed on top of the maintenance.

By the time I arrived Spratt was nearing the end of his six month command. My first impression was that he was extremely tired and showed signs of burnout. To him, I was just another new guy, so we never talked much except in some official function of a task I was trying to complete. To me, he would always serve as a role model, either when he did something right, or when he got a verbal lashing from the 14th Aviation Battalion commander for doing something wrong or the wrongdoings of his troops.

I was assigned on paper as the assistant Platoon leader to Jim Hipp, 1st Platoon Leader. Hipp was on his second tour also, and his second tour in the 174th. In spending 23 years on active duty, I learned a lot from many different sources. From Hipp, I would see my best example of natual leadership by example. Jim had an exciting flight in his first tour on an IFR flight to Duc Pho that was published in Aviation Digest as a lessons learned. If a peter pilot was listening, he was getting constant positive instruction.

Flying became the center of my universe. I was privately amazed at how easy it became each day to hover, manuever in and out of the revetment, navigate, fly formation and keep position with the collective, and sort out talking on the radio. In two weeks, from August 2d to 16th, I flew 60 hours. This was in 8 total days, because I did additional duties, took a flight physical, conducted an Article 32 investigation, etc.

I was assigned to begin an Article 32 investigation that was wild. The purpose of the Article 32 is to determine the next course of action to take. A maintenance test pilot (CW2) in the 178th Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC), a CH-47 Chinook unit nicknamed Box Cars, was being counseled on his Officer Effeciency Report(OER) by his company commander in the unit messhall, which was down next to the beach.

The OER was a bad one, the CW2 took exception to the rating, pulled his .38 and started shooting across the table at the CO. When the gun came out the CO hauled ass out the back door and ran like hell. The only victim was the table in the mess hall and the door frame that the CO ran out of. I hoped the CW2's maintenance test flights were better than his aim. At my recommendation, the CW2 was supposed to go back to the states, early. I never knew the end result, but carefully, mentally, recorded the moment.

As the flying progressed and I felt more at ease, I became more confident. My personality type allowed me to be comfortable with the situation at hand. Even though I outranked everybody, being a captain, I flew with, I never felt that I outranked anybody, anywhere in the cockpit. This helped me immensely when

assigned as the peter pilot (co-pilot) to a WO1 aircraft commander. All, but one, were extremely professional. All the veterans of Lam Son 719 were absolutely no-nonsense in the cockpit. They were constantly instructing.

On one flight, I learned up close and personal, how the alcohol affected the aircraft commanders. This one young stud, that I flew with only one time, was totally unable to maturely give instruction, and was still feeling the effects from the night before. I had been making the pickups at the logistics (log) pad across from the USO and taking them to Firebase 411 all day long. About 1:00 PM, the "aircraft commander" started making comments about the stair step approaches, and how long it was taking to land the aircraft on the pinnacle at 411. WO1 Guy "Cowboy" Martin, who was right up there at the top of the list of best aircraft commanders I ever flew with, had told me to start the descent with pushing the collective down, and once it was established, start pulling the collective up. By now the density altitude was getting high. So my "aircraft commander" from Hell, does the approach that begins with the collective being dumped to the floor, and we are going down fast. At 100 feet, he starts pulling pitch, but good old Dolphin 423 just keeps coming down. After a mighty flare, we bounced on the pad. The grunts unloaded the Ballatine beer and the C rations. The slick had a good vibration in her after that, but only when empty. He took my hard landing writeup out the logbook. I told CPT Ty Manning, company maintenance officer, the aircraft had been bounced, he looked at the saddle mounts, said something to the maintenance guys, and they got the vibration out. I had a feeling that in time this guy would crash and he did during August.

In August 1971, the 16th Combat Aviation Group at Chu Lai was averaging 6 days between accidents. The Group Commander decided that the whole group was to go to a hangar one night and listen him say, "knock that shit off." He did, we didn't. The accidents ranged from slicks spreading skids on autorotation after being shot up, crashing on the side of LZ Center and almost rolling down the hill, crashing on 411, ending up inverted and watching the Group Commander walk over and turn off the fuel, and raising nine kinds of hell with the aircraft commander. It went on and on.

Because of the distance from the hooches to the flight line, we would sometimes pull flight line standby with crews for 5 slicks and 2 guns. This was always hot and boring. Always. Sometimes missions would be sought to just get some flight time. At 1:00 PM August 29, 1971, I distinctly remember the Sharks getting bounced and WO Al Harris running, sleepily to the aircraft. About an hour later the aircraft returned without Big Al and was parked down by the Warlords, B company 123d Aviation Battalion, where a water truck washed out the insides. Big Al had bled and died in the gunship.

Big Al from Ettwanda CA, born on 12 Dec 48, was the only casualty in a UH-1M that was bounced midday to cover an extraction NW of LZ Professional. Aircraft commander was CW3 Chuck Blake. All deaths are tragic and sometimes senseless. This one was hard because the Americal was standing down, and

everybody's thoughts were of going home or being reassigned to another unit. The pilots that flew in LAMSON 719 were very noticably quiet and reserved after the loss of Big Al. Bill Wilder was the CE.

In September, the 23d Infantry Division started standing down in earnest. One day you are working a firebase and next day it is gone with Vietnamese all over it like ants on a piece of chocolate cake. The old guys would always like to fly over the abandoned firebase and impress us with their command of the English language. Neat stuff like, "I used to take a dump right over their on that side of San Juan hill, or "remember the hard rain storm and we almost couldn't find Charlie Brown."

Some things really got dicey. The Sharks had to cover the self propelled 8 inch Artillery howitzers as they left the Special Forces bases. Covering them was a piece a cake, compared to the demonstrations the Artillerymen faced in Quang Ngai. I never knew if they were demonstrating because the Americans were leaving, or if they were demonstrating in honor of the Americans leaving, or just out in the streets raising hell. Urban warfare is not a good place to be running around with a gunship.

For some reason, I had two occasions to fly all day, eat supper and go back and fly flare missions all night. I never quite understood why we didn't get the day down so that we would be alert. I was really surprised the first time I fell asleep at the controls. I caught myself before the AC found out. He was probably sleeping, too. Raising Hell with the flight crews really was the answer the Group Commander should have taken, he should have flown the area of operations (AO) and looked a policies as stupid as this one.

In late September and early October 1971, the Chu Lai PX started to have some glaring shortages. Because of the impending stand down, the shirt-stacking, no-concern-for-the-troops, low rent, logisticians decided we needed to use everything up; Fresca everywhere, but not a Coke to drink.

We got some combat assault's(CA's)up near Da Nang and at the end of the mission made a run on the PX at Freedom Hill. During my first tour, I heard about this Marine paradise, but never saw it. Enroute to the PX we flew by a huge statue of Buddha, which allowed me to take numerous picture. We landed at a penaprime pad at the base of the mountain, near two Chinooks, one from the 159th ASHB, 101st Abn Div, the other from the 178th ASHB, "Boxcars," 23d Inf Div (Americal) from Chu Lai.

First thing I didn't understand was you couldn't walk from the helipad to the PX. You were supposed to get a ride, and not walk along the road. Then, I thought I was buying a taco from the Donut Dolly at the USO there, until I ate it. She was nice to look at, but didn't know the first thing about putting a taco together. Not a multidimensional lass.

There were also aviators from the 101st at the USO present and sitting at the tables. I was sitting near two WO1's, apparently Chinook pilots, from the two CH-47's, and had attended either flight school or the Ch-47 transition course together who had not seen each other in quite a while. The one from the 101st mentioned how pilots in their unit were damned if they do and

damned if they don't. The discussion was about a CH-47 aircraft commander who responded immediately to an emergency he heard on the survival radio ("Beeper, Beeper come up voice"). Apparently, he was the first one on the scene and knowing he was flying a big target and wanting to get an American out of a hazardous area, used the aircraft to extract a downed OH-6 pilot by directing the flight engineer to secure a rope to the aircraft and throw it down through the hole in the center of the Chinook. As they were lifting the CH-47 to clear the pilot out of the trees, the rope broke and he fell to his death.

The 101st WO1 was particularly upset because of the discussion that the AC would be court-martialed for his decision. My first reaction was, I was glad I wasn't back in the chicken-shit 101st, then I starting thinking about the heavy responsibility of being an aircraft commander in combat. Damned if you do and damned if you don't. But I knew that having spent 360 days on the ground and its fantastic life experience, that I would always respond to a call for help, damn the rules, and sort out the mess later.

In 1994, while assisting Mike Law with the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association directory, I learned more about rules, regulations and standing operating procedures (SOP) of the 101st. Mike wanted to dedicate the 1994 to the Army and Marine Corps aviation support to the Laotian invasion in Feb-Apr 1971, called LAM SON 719. Mike's data concerning Medevac units revealed the Dustoff pilot's in their intensity to get the wounded ARVN's in Laos, would sometimes blast off without gunship support. This led to some significant losses of heroic crews. A directive accredited to BG Sidney Berry, the Assistant Division Commander for Manuever, directed they only go with gunship support. Due to the heavy tasking of the AH-1G, and UH-1C's sometimes this was not possible. On one audio tape made during the campaign, a Dustoff pilot can be heard that he was going without guns, and Berry's voice can be heard telling him to wait for support on one radio, and on another Berry was telling the guns to hurry up. Some units had distinct rules that they enforced, some units did not. It all depended on the leadership.

The PX at Chu Lai was really short the basic items. The hootch maid said I needed to get soo folly and soof. Lt Jerry Coffman, who lived in the same hootch and understood what the hootch maids were saying, translated it to shoe polish and soap. The Vietnamese really butchered the English language. Pizza at the Officer's Club was feeesa. They butchered a lot of other things too. The only way you could get to the PX was to ride an old former Navy grey International bus driven by a Vietnamese who did not understand that you had to have momentum in each gear before you shifted. He would just shift for the hell of it. It pained me to feel the way he was lunching the bus's transmission.

On the way back from the Freedom Hill PX at DaNang, we made the obligatory low level run past the big white Buddha statue. As we cleared Marble Mountain to the south and gained altitude, we had a crew chief, SP4 Jarrett, shoot the moon so we could take pictures. He was bitching because he said was cold. We were bitching when we got the pictures back because he was not very

photogenic. Fortunately, the sight wasn't too well in focus. I still have the pictures. Still is an ugly sight.

The flight was in formation off Hawk Hill when someone told told CW2 Jim Story he had smoke coming out of the left rear of his aircraft. We landed near a Korean Marine Compound, and found out the right rear of the aircraft was loaded with cigarette cartons and one of them got hot back there leaning next to something(Thought it was a heater, or something).

On one flight, in this area, as the peter pilot for Carl Flemer, I learned about how poorly the Huey tries to fly at 6200 RPM. We were on a firebase, supporting the ARVNs out of Hawk Hill, when our flight landed for a briefing. Five UH-1H's from the 101st were already there. Carl ran from the aircraft for the AC briefing and told me to roll the throttle back to conserve fuel, which I did. As I think back now, over 20 years, I remember being personally proud of seeing how Carl had turned out from a whining 2LT in my flight class to a very efficient aircraft commander. He got to Vietnam 6 months ahead of me because the Armor officers, all CH-47 and AH-1G transitions went over immediately.

Carl came running back, full of details, and said "I have the controls," instead of letting me do it. When he pulled in the power, the aircraft started to settle. Being the culprit, I immediately beeped up the engine. Carl, the 1LT AC, gave me the the CPT, peter pilot, the dumb shit look, and we were off and running. Being that dumb was humiliating enough, and Carl, now in the 90's prefering to be called "Fletch," never said another word about it. I never made that mistake again, and flew my last Huey in Jan 1986. Sometimes the threat of death or injury is the best teacher.

During this same period the stand down began in phases and it was called Keystone Robin or Keystone something. The commander of the 132d ASHC, the "Hercules," was cleaning the mud off the inside of his jeep with a steam cleaner when he found out that the mud was holding the jeep together. The more mud he removed the bigger the holes got. The inspection criteria was obviously written by some REMF logistics puke at Long Binh sitting underneath an airconditioner. People starting hiding things, dumping equipment out in the bay. Somehow the generals got wind of it and they started showing up unannounced. The following story was told to me, so it could be somewhat not completely true.

One of the Brigadier Generals was standing in the open area on the airfield between Chu Lai East and Chu Lai West when he started sinking in the sand. He was hollering as he fell out of sight. His aide ran over and saw that he had fallen into a big hole. The big hole had a Marine Corps mighty Mite jeep, some F-4 Phanthom engines, and other big stuff conveniently stashed in this big underground room. The PSP that was used for the roof corroded through and that is what caused the general to fall through. I remember some off shore Marines being flown in to look at the stuff and trace the serial numbers. In fact, I now remember distinctly seeing a crane out there pulling items up out of the hole.

In September, Maj Spratt and WO1 Chick Luther had a run in. Spratt's actions as a company commander, showed that he really cared about his people, however by september he was really burned out. I felt bad for him, because the battalion commander was on him constantly. In one instance, I knew I was right about his burnout was when he took Chick Luther's AC orders away. Chick was flying the 11th Bde Cdr all day, and the COL's S-3 was an aviator getting a ground tour in. I remember Chick had to make some downwind approaches into a firebase because of the tactical situation. When Chick landed that night, Spratt was waiting for him. Spratt had been called earlier by the S-3 who said that Luther was unsafe and trying to kill everyone in the aircraft with his approaches. As in every story there are two sides. Unfortunately, Luther lost his AC orders. Luther is still upset to this day. I will never forget Chick. He was, and still is, BIG. Tall with a thick strong upper body, he looked like a linebacker and never wore a hat. I have always appreciated his no nonsense professional demeanor.

The night WO1 Chuck Miller made AC, the other AC's got him drunk and made him walk the bridge railing on the bridge that crossed over the pond near the officers club. His pilot technique (PT) wasn't good and he fell into the pond that we all urinated in when we left the club. His clothes smelled so bad, the hootch maid couldn't get the smell out. Still he was a good AC and a good teacher.

WO1 Mark Samuelson was mature beyond his years. I really enjoyed flying with him, because of the way he taught you to fly the mission and the aircraft, and his great patience. He was with me the night I got made an honorary warrant. It wasn't until 1992 that I found out why I was made an honorary warrant. I had been in a flight of 5 slicks and two guns that had warrant officers in every seat but mine. P.J. Roths said the flight was almost perfect if it had not been for the real live officer (RLO) pollution in one aircraft.

CW2 Guy "Cowboy" Martin was the best AC in the company that I flew with. He took great pains to explain everything to me. What stuck the most was the survival gear. He said "once you auger in, all you will have is what you have on your body." All the things we would hang over the seat would stay in the aircraft, because we would be moving fast to get out. From April to June 1972 in and out of An Loc, his words came back to me many times. I had the best stocked survival vest and best chicken plates in the company. Ironically, in October 1993, I watched a very young WO1 climb into an Apache at Ft Bragg, and check his survival vest before strapping in. Memories of Cowboy came flooding back.

CW2 Duke Varner, Shark One-niner, was the only person I ever knew in Vietnam that could fly all day, take off his helmet and not have a hair our of place. I did not know him well in the unit, but do remember the great respect he had from the AC's I flew with. When they heard one-niners voice on the VHF, there was always some respectful comment.

WO1 Jim Mitchell was a free spirit and an easy laid back guy. I enjoyed flying with him, but got real annoyed with him

when he got close to his DEROS. Jim started finding reasons to not fly, and the other ACs would make comment about it. At the time, I thought it was really dumb thing to try to pull. In June 1972, when I had my 24th out of 24 months in Vietnam, it was all I could do to strap on the Huey and fly missions towards the danger at An Loc. If the missions up there were really predicted to be bad, I would throw up behind the aircraft before take off. Only then did I have an appreciation for what was mentally affecting Jim Mitchell.

One of the deaths in the 174th that you could just see coming was poor skinny PFC Emil "Max" Miltovich from Rock Springs WY. He was born on January 24th 1953, so at the time of his death September 26th, he was 18 1/2 years old. Max was the gunner on Cpt Keith Deans aircraft, UH-1H #522. We all remember how Max stepped through the greenhouse on a preflight. He was an operations clerk and should not have been flying, but he felt that he would always regret not flying with the people he had known in combat. Max was the last death in the 174th and was killed by hostile fire while the aircraft was at a hover over a single ship hover hole southeast of LZ Professional. The weather was rainy, overcast and extremely windy. Because of an approaching monsoon the winds were high and we were forced to make the same approach and departure path in and out of the LZ. The aircraft took multiple hits with only one KIA, Max. Numerous other Dolphin aircraft had made landings and takeoffs out of that hover hole prior to the incident. This attack caused the launch of four more Shark guns to assist the two already on station.

When the unit stood down in mid-October, #522 went from Chu Lai to Can Tho in the southern IV Corps. Then it went from there to Bien Hoa in Mar 72. I was working in the flight operations bunker of A Company 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion (AHB) when the flight announced they were inbound and called off the tail numbers. I had an enormous chill when I heard 522, and went out to the flight line to look at it when it arrived. It was the same one with sheet metal work under where Max sat. I made absolutely sure I never flew that aircraft, and I didn't. In 1990 Bill Wilder, one of the Shark crew chiefs, made contact with Miltovich's dad, and it was the first contact made by anyone from the unit.

On Veteran's day 1992, at the 10th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial, the names of all 58,000 were read aloud. It took from a Sunday to Wednesday, reading the names 24 hours a day. President Bush showed up at midnight Tuesday, told the people running the show that he would like to read some names and did. No fanfare, just wearing a leather flight jacket with his name tag on it and reading the names. It was an emotional moment and a great one because there was no announcement to the media maggots so that couldn't ruin the moment.

I was there daily with my video camera recording the events and I was there at 8:20 AM on the 11th when Max's name was read. I got the same chill I got when I heard 522 was inbound. I still am taken aback when I watch the tape. Max's death is one of the 58,000 reasons we must always know the President's intent before

we commit the 18 year olds of America to a conflict that has no objective.

On October 7th, I was the peter pilot in flight lead, flown by LT Moran from Nebraska. Moran was extremely good in the aircraft, but not much on personality. In all the years since, I have sorted his personality out as the after affects of Lam Son 719, sick of being in Viet Nam and burnout. In other words, absolutely normal. I enjoyed flying with him and appreciated all the things he taught me, but he was not someone I sought out when we weren't flying. In this flight, we were making a single ship approach to a hilltop to drop off grunts and were about 5 feet off the ground when the gunner, SP4 Godbolt, told me to pick it up, then he hollered **"pick it up, don't land!"**. He saw a wire stretched out from a grenade. According to what he saw, when the skid would have pushed down on the wire it would have pulled the pin loose, the spoon would fly off and explode. I have this episode on an audio tape, and it is amazing how fast everything happened. Just another day in the Nam.

On the second week in October, we turned the aircraft in after a fly-by. The Sharks were stripped of weapons and flown to Red Beach. The Dolphins had to meet some half baked VNAF selection criteria at Pleiku, that was put together by our own Air Force. You wondered whose side the Blue Suiters were on when they said we had to get rid of the aircraft communication Y-cords and put in the the single station units. The Y-cord allowed the crew chief and/or gunner to share his intercom system without disconnecting. I guess the US Air Force got their expertise from all the combat assaults they made. Just one more reason to wonder what the Air Force's agenda really was.

My attitude towards the Air Force stemmed from my first tour where I began to first wonder just whose side they were on. I was an artillery forward observer with an infantry company during TET 68. Our mission was to chase down the VC units northwest of Saigon in the 25th and 1st Inf Div AOs. I went into the month of January 1968 as green as a lieutenant can get. By the end of January, I had fire support coordination down cold. Adjusting 105mm howitzer fire while in triple canopy was difficult and inaccurate because adjustments were made on sound. Same for 155's. 8 inch rounds were tricky to adjust because they came singly and were so loud. Adjusting an Air Force air strike is a totally different proposition.

Air strikes I recieved almost always consisted of F-100's that dropped snake(usually 250 lb bombs), nape (napalm), and guns (20mm). When an F-4 got diverted, there was no telling what was on the fighter. On two occasions I was told they had 250's and they dropped 500's. We got casualties from those drops and not from shrapnel, but from the concussions that literally raised us up off the ground then slammed us back down. It was the first time I thought the Air Force didn't know what was hanging underneath the aircraft. On one occasion, I would have really liked to have that smart ass forward air controller(FAC) down here on the recieving end. The infantry company commanders never hesitated to get all over my ass when they perceived the company had not been properly briefed and was surprised by the blast.

The worst part was having to shut down the artillery for the airstrike. This is an open announcement to the bad guys that something big was coming. That's when they would get closer and hug our positions. On one occasion, the FAC left because he needed to refuel. We were in contact, the FAC said he could see his replacement FAC coming up, and left. No FAC showed up, so we had to jump on the lull in the noise to get the Artilley cranked up. When the FAC finally came back and wanted to shut down the artillery, I said I need something more reliable than the Air Force, and got an ass chewing from the 3d Bde commander on the fire control net. In my three months(January to March 1968) out in the bush as a forward observer, it seemed we couldn't get fire support coordination down. We never had the helicopter gunships, artillery and air strikes all taking place at once.

Back at Chu Lai death never took a break. On October 18th 1971 tragedy struck the **176 AHC's (The Minutemen)** when one of their crews, flying that ridiculous all night perimeter flight, crashed off shore at night. The sole survivor, a WO1, said all he remembered was hearing a thump then everything went black. That night **UH-1H, 68-15237**, made her last flight as she went in taking **1lt Robert Barton, Sp4 Patrick J. Breslin, and SP4 Wesley S. Shelton** Typhoon Hester's heavy monsoonal rains had hit Chu Lai in advance of the Typhoon, which reduced visibility. The WO1 was found clinging to the fuel cell.

The next day, October 19th, I left 174th and the Americal Division, but as usual, nothing at Chu Lai was easy. I was sent to a tin Butler building at 8AM that was next to the aerial port. There I received all my records that were in huge files inside the building. I sat there until 4PM when the last possible C-130 took a load of us to Saigon. For entertainment, the Americal provided us the enjoyment of watching My Fair Lady, which is about an English aristocrat who made a bet that he could teach elegance and grace to any poor lady. When the words "The rain in Spain occurs mostly on the Plain," were said, it was raining like hell outside. One of the grunts threw his boot at the screen. That was the most excitement we had until the C-130 arrived.

Two days later, I opened a Pacific Stars and Stripes and read that Chu Lai was blown away by Typhoon Hester. LT Coffman came down after me and related the story. Everybody just sat the storm out in their hooches as the hooches were blown off their foundations. Nobody counted noses for two days, so people had no idea what to do. The messhalls were blown away, so everyone stole food from the refrigerators instead of letting it rot. He said the smell of cooking steaks was everywhere. Water was scarce and there was no electricity. By the way, all those personnel, finance , flight, medical and dental records at the airfield were blown across the runway and up the the distant mountains. Some of the hangars blew down on the aircraft that were being prepared for turn-in.

Daily Record

August	Flt time	Total time	Aircraft Commander	MSN
2	arrived 174th			
3	In processing and flight physical			
4	Hearing test			
5	2+45			
6	7+30	10+15	Kinsey	AMC
7	10+15	20+30	Mitchell	RS
8	grounded cold			
9	3+25	23+55	Blake	MACV
10	9+20	33+15	McGaffrick	C+C
11	6+00	39+15	Luther	MACV
12	nf			
13	9+40	48+55	Boston	RS
14	6+20	55+15		MACV
15	NF Company standdown-			
16	5+25	60+40	McGarrick	C+C
17	6+30	67+10	Early	CA
18	9+45	76+55	Hipp	RS
19	3+40(N)	80+35	Johnston	FLARE
20	NF			
21	4+25	85+00	Hipp	AMC
22	8+30	93+30	McGarrick	C+C
23	5+30	99+00	Martin	CA
24	1+30	100+15	Aron	Mnt
25	8+30	108+45	Miller	RS
26	3+15	112+00	Mitchell	RS
27	6+00	118+00	Story	CA
28	9+15	127+15	Story	CA
29	1+00	128+15	Story	RS
30	11+00	139+35	Martin	CA
31	1+00	140+35	Young	Mnt
September				
1	5+00	145+35	Boston	CA
2	5+30	151+05	Flemer	C+C
3	NF down high time			
5	2+15	153+20	Aron	Mnt
7	11+30	165+00	Kinsey	AMC
10	3+30	168+30	Flemer	C+C
12	1+45	170+15	McMahon	RS
13	5+00	175+15	McMahon	Flare
14	4+15	179+30	Boston	RS
15	6+15	186+15	McMahon	MACV
16	5+45	192+00	Waller	CA
17	7+00	199+00	Miller	RS
18	6+00	205+00	Martin	RS
19	7+45	212+45	Martin	MACV
23	2+00	214+45	Martin	MACV
24	7+45	222+00		CA
	Miltovitch shot in the head			
26	1+30	223+30		
27	5+00	228+30		CA
28	7+40	236+10		
30	8+30	244+40		

October

2	10+30	255+10
3	6+35	261+45
4	5+00	266+45
5	5+15	272+00
6	8+15	280+15
7	10+15	290+30
8	2+50	293+20
9	5+40	299+00
11	1+20	300+20
12	2+10	302+30 last flight in 174th flyby
19	left 174th for reassignment to A/229 AHB 1st Cav III Corps(Bien Hoa)	

I had 53 days of flying out of 77 days assigned to the 174th. I really was glad to get out of Chu Lai and didn't think much about being in the 174th.

It is odd what one remembers. Until 1988, my Vietnam service in the 174th was just something I did for three months. Then in July 1988, Carl Flemer told me to look up Fred Thompson, Shark 7, in 1970-71, at the VHPA reunion in Ft Worth, which I did. Five minutes after meeting him for the first time, I felt like I had known him all my life. At that point, he and I started piecing together a list of all the known losses in the 174th. Our initial list was about 13 names. Today, we have traced and verified 55. I was fortunate in finding many names by getting into the Defense Intelligence Agency's South East Asia Casualty (SECAS) list. It was a tough task finding the names and asking those who were in the unit at the time to verify that we had found the correct person. It dredged up a lot of bad memories, but necessary, because if we didn't remember them, nobody else would.

Four died in 1966, one, a recently promoted lieutenant colonel of a heart attack after outprocessing from the unit and waiting in Nha Trang to return to the states. Three were lost in 1967, and seven in 1968. One of the 1968 deaths occurred when a rated warrant officer maintenance technician decided to do a one time flight back to Duc Pho with a UH-1D with a known transmission problem. The transmission siezed in flight and brought the aircraft down. He was alone in the aircraft. In September 1995, the remains of one pilot lost in June 1968 were returned to the United States after being in "storage" by the current Vietnames government. 1969 was the worst year with 21 being lost. Twelve were in three seperate aircraft, and their names are in a row on the Vietnam Memorial, sequentially by date lost. Seeing their names together is very touching. Fifteen were lost in 1970. One pilot was killed when the infantry were offloading their weapons and a M-60 machine gun fired a single round, killing him. The last year, 1971, two were killed in Laos during Lam Son 719. One was killed, as his aircraft was leaving a mountainous firebase with a chaplain on board who was conducting Easter services. Two died in the military hospital in Japan as a result of severe burns. And sadly 2 of the 55 committed suicide while in the company, both as a result of failed or ended relationships with women.

Going to the 174th first was the best thing that could have happened to me in 1971, because although there were a lot of problems in the unit, I got my best flight training, learning to fly formation, making approaches into mountain top pinnacles, and hover holes that were barely large enough for the aircraft to fit in. I can now reflect on how fast I made AC in my second unit, because of the thoroughly professional one-on-one training I got in the cockpits of the Dolphin slicks.

The 174th was organized into two flight platoons of 10 UH-1H utility helicopters and one flight platoon of 6 UH-1C/M helicopter gunships. The unit went through 163 aircraft from 1966 to stand down in October 1971. 39 were the UH-1B/C/M gunships; 124 were slicks.

I was absolutely thrilled to be assigned out of the Americal Division to the 1st Cavalry Division at Bien Hoa, in III Corps. Near the end of my first tour in late October 1968, I left III Corps for I Corps. The 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division had been in III Corps since arrival in Dec 1967, and now the brigade was joining the 1st and 2nd Brigades making the Division complete for the first time. The entire 1st Cavalry Division moved from I Corps to III Corps and put their Division Headquarters at Phouc Vinh. I was very familiar with the flat terrain in III Corps.

I was assigned to Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion (A/229 AHB) as the company executive officer. My date of rank of promotion to captain was very senior, so logically it was the only place to go. I got to fly frequently, but at the end of the day or days that I didn't have to fly, I had to deal with company administration. It wasn't a difficult job, because of my six months of command at Ft Hood, I knew what to do and make the company commanders job easier.

However, I never got so full of myself that I thought I was doing it all myself. The reason was 1SG Marion J.D. Lomax, the company first sergeant, who I remember as being 6'4" and 250 pounds. He looked just like the African dictator Idi Amin from Uganda, but had an absolute heart of gold under that extremely imposing exterior. He was on his third Vietnam tour, and his very first in an aviation unit. The previous two were in infantry units.

He would absolutely run officers and warrant officers out of the orderly room for being out of uniform. One of them came to me, rather indignantly, to complain that he outranked the first sergeant. I told him to put on a shirt and wear a hat in the orderly room, and he wouldn't have a problem. He looked at me as if I desecrated his grandmother's grave and left. The next time he came to the orderly room, he was in uniform.

The orderly room was very important, because it controlled the administrative process for going on leave, going on R + R, going home, etc. So it was a place that couldn't be ignored. I was in there from October to January 1972, when a more senior captain, Paul Pressley came in and demanded he be the XO, which was fine with me, because I moved on to be the company flight operations officer.

The 229th was formed from the 1st Cavalry divisional assets when the majority of the division returned to the United States

in April 1971. It was a formidable force that supported the four infantry and one artillery battalions in the 3d Brigade. The 229th consisted of:

A/229 Assault Helicopter Company(UH-1H's)
B/229 Assault Helicopter Company(UH-1H's)
D/229 Air Cavalry Troop(OH-6's, UH-1H's and AH-1G's)
F/9 Air Cavalry Troop(OH-6's, UH-1H's and AH-1G's)
F/79 Aerial Rocket Battery(12 AH-1G's and 1 UH-1H)
362d Assault Support Helicopter Company(16 CH-47A's)
GS General Support Company (UH-1H's and 1 JUH-1H)
Medical Platoon (Medevac)(UH-1H's)

The 3d Brigade(Separate) 1st Cavalry Division had wide ranging firebases in 1971. Some were next to Cambodia, NW of Tay Ninh, others were East of Saigon, near Xuan Loc. Missions were tame for the two lift companies, A and B 229th, however the two Cav troops, D/229 and F/9 were still losing scout crews and "blues."

By January 1972, A, B, D 229th and F/9 were at Lassiter Pad at Bien Hoa. The GS Platoon was in a grassy area behind the brigade headquarters and the medical platoon was near "Sandy Pad" and separate, by distance, from us. F/79 ARA and 362d ASHC were south of Bien Hoa at Long Thanh North that had a decent runway. Long Thanh North had some fixed wings prima donna's on it that flew Radio Research missions in RU-8's and RU-21's.

Flying in III Corps was like being in flying club compared to the flying I left in I Corps. A and B company traded missions every other week. When one was flying combat assaults, the other was assigned logistics (log) missions, then we would swap. The firebases were easy to find, so navigation was not difficult. One was northeast of Xuan Loc, and called Fire Base Mace. It was beneath the highest mountain in that direction, Nui Ba Ray, so you just flew to the mountain and made the approach on the east side. In October to December, I spent a lot of time flying in and out of Mace and learned a lot about the makeup of the 3d Bridage and the 229th.

I witnessed some real nonhostile tragedies at Mace

Prior to April 5th, there were crews in A/229th that had not been shot and hit and still retained their "cherry." By late July, the late hours put in by the maintenance crews, especially sheet metal, bore witness that there weren't any more "cheeries," in the company.

Under the Hurricane

From December 1st 1967 to March 3d 1968, as a third string replacement forward observer with the infantry in the 3d Brigade. 101st Airborne Division, I visited scenic Phouc Vinh, Song Be, the Phu Tho race track in Saigon when it had low grazing automatic weapons fire, instead of horses on it, the Ho Bo and Bo Loi woods, and lots of trees and bamboo on a line from Ben Cat, west to Dau Tieng. I was able to start the Tet Offensive of 1968 with A Troop 2/17 Cav at Song Be. A and B Troops were then ground cav units; A Trp had M-60 machine gun jeeps, and 106mm jeeps, and B Trp had M-113's. During my time with them, they were dismounted infantry knocking around in the bush. That entire period I viewed the Chinook from afar.

In March 1968, I got to see this leaking, windy, noisy trash hauler up close, in fact, I couldn't get away from it until November when I left. As the fire direction officer (FDO) of C Battery 2d Bn/319th FA, my remaining eight months in country would consist of moving 45 times, averaging a move about every seven days, all by the CH-47.

I was moved by Geronimo's, Black Cats, Mule Skinners, in III Corps, Shrimpboats in II Corps, and Varsity and Playtex in I Corps. All I knew, as an artilleryman, was call signs, and which unit dropped one of guns from altitude(Shrimpboats in May 1968 enroute Dak To from Dak Pek).

Either the Geronimo's or Black Cat's blew over the battery latrine at Phouc Vinh in April 1968 with our artillery battalion commander in it. The 47's had to fly into our gun positions in the northwest corner of Phouc Vinh and lift the 105mm (M-102) howitzer directly out of the pit. The flight path put the aircraft over the battery latrine, which started moving around after the first sortie out. The Bn Cdr was in the area watching the move, when his last meal kicked in and he headed for the crapper. The chief of firing battery, SFC Arthur A. Radiconi, mentioned the "Old Man is in for a surprise." A CH-47 blew the latrine over on its door, so he had to climb out the little flap doors in the back where Papa San slid the cut off 55 gal drums in and out. He was covered in diesel fuel and excretment. The troops loved it.

We made at night assault under the Mule Skinners from Cu

Chi in April 1968 somewhere east of Dau Tieng. The LZ was illuminated by 155mm and the 47's flew under it. The sight of theMuleskinner's mule on the Chinook's forward pylon, illuminated by the flares was ghost like. A few months later, I got night "tactical emergency" (Tac-E) resupply from the Mule Skinners in early September 1968, firing support for Fire Support Base Buell II, north of Tay Ninh. Gary Roush was flying the aircraft that night, and absoultely put the load on the light. I was under that light.

We exceeded the rate of fire for our guns that night and had tubes glowing red in the dark. At first light, the firebase, which I think was called "Sheridan" looked like it had been the target of the ground attack. Empty boxes, fibers, and shell casings, caused us to spend about 3 hours getting the mess cleaned up for backhaul when the Chinooks came in the morning with a full water trailer (water buffalo). The routine with the Chinook was never ending and we took for granted that it was our lifeline.

In May '68, we were told to cover up our division patch, and all vehicle bumper markings with green tape. We moved quickly from Phouc Vinh, III Corps, to Dak To, II Corps, by C-130. Upon off loading the 130's we were trucked over to a helicopter pad, near the airstrip and slung loaded out by the Shrimpboats to Dak Pek.

Something caused a delay, and I was sent to Dak Pek in a Huey. For some reason, we were put on the ground at the airstrip next to the SF camp at Dak Pek. While we sat there and waited, a Caribou, flown by a USAF crew, tore a wing off on landing and crashed. All 38 souls on board got out. The crash closed down the fixed wing traffic into that camp. After the excitement of the crash, the afternoon rain fell, turned everything to mud, then the Chinooks arrived.

The Fire Direction Center (FDC) equipment was transloaded from the back of the 3/4 to a jeep trailer at Dak Pek airstrip. Then we were told the trailer had to go internally to our mountain top firebase, so we began the "great push the trailer into the Chinook adventure."

The ramp was too steep and the mud on the ground and on the ramp eliminated traction. So we were then told they would winch in the load. As the trailer cleared the ramp, the cable broke, and whipped up to the front of the aircraft. It missed the crew members, but scared the hell out of the pilots, who immediately took off after they insured the trailer was clear. I have a memory of the center post on that Chinook's window being knocked out, but cannot find anyone to verify. A Huey came along, and took the trailer up to the mountain externally on slings. Should have done that in the first place.

The razorback mountain top we were on was exciting. This was our first exposure to mountain tops that were shaped as sharp as the back on a razorback. In 1990, I read in, " The Rise and Fall of an American Army", by Shelby Stanton that we were near the Laotian border and south of Kham Duc, which was overrun at the same time. We were required to fire most of our missions high angle with the tubes pointing near vertical during the fire

missions. When the guns traversed, they could not do so, simultaneously, because of the narrowness of the mountaintop.

I couldn't get off that mountain and out of II Corps soon enough. We were only up there two weeks, but it was an eternity. At night, the top of the mountain would be in a cloud, and would be cold. Naturally, all we had to keep warm was poncho liners. The red and green lights shining on the aiming posts at night was the only illumination up there. The cannoneers always were quiet at night, except for the tedious harassment and interdiction (H&I) fires that were shot intermittently all night long. They seemed to be whispering the commands at night in the clouds, as they received their instructions from the fire direction center.

The days we weren't moving were very tedious, long, and boring. In the morning, base piece, gun number 3, would get registered. This was usually done by an air observer, who would observe the gun fire at a known point, i.e., the intersection of a trail and a creek. Once the corrections had been applied in the FDC, we would shoot a battery one round(one round per all six guns) and ask the AO to check the sheaf(the impact pattern of the battery in the target area). This was our way of seeing if anyone was fire short or long and make appropriate adjustments. Then the Chinook would come with a full water trailer and an externally slung food resupply. He would backhaul expended 105 brass. Sometimes you got a fire mission-a lot of times we would just sit around. Everything came in spurts. The next time we would see the Chinook, would be around 4PM with ammunition resupply, and the orange mail bags.

On the days we would move, it would take 8 sorties to move 6 howitzers, one 3/4 ton truck and the battery commander's (BC) jeep(which would be moved internally). Sequence of movement was for the advance party(me, two chart operators, the FDC chief, and 2 or 3 cannoneers) to go to the next position in a Huey, followed by the externally slung, Ch-47 transported, FDC 3/4 ton truck, then the guns, followed by the BC's jeep. The CH-47 would land, the gun crew would run in and sit on the floor-no seat belts ever!, then the Chinook would hover over the load. We would usually give the finger, from inside the Chinook through the hole in the floor, to a battery mate who was under the Chinook hooking up the load. The last gun out would be hooked by the Chinook guy hanging out of the hole using a "shepard's hook," to grab the doughnut and put it on the hook.

The slings were always treated with great care in my battery. SFC Radiconi would smoke a gun chief (an E-6) if he found the sling gear laying out in the rain. The M-102 howitzer was the foundation for the load. It had three sling points on it; one on the barrel, and two opposite each other on the trails. Each point would secure one sling, which would be joined at an iron horse-shaped clevis, which also had the doughnut(concentric circle, lift device, if you ever had to re-order one). Also attached to the clevis was the sling attached to the A-22 bag, which carried a basic load of HE, Illum, beehive, WP, and Improved Conventional Munition(ICM) called "firecracker." We traveled light, so hour howitzers did not have duffel bags hanging off them, making the unit look like a bunch of ragbag

gypsies. Sometimes we would be on firebases with 1st Div or 25th 105mm batteries that had the split trail M101's. THEY carried the world draped over their tubes.

I could never tell if the 101st did it better, or the 101st delighted in hassling the troops. We were always "soldiering," so we didn't know better. We would have loaded like gypsies if we could have gotten away with it.

I can only remember fat guys being on the Chinook crews. We always thought they made the fattest guy the one who had to lay on the floor for the whole flight looking through the hole at our gun. On one flight, I was on the last flight out when our aircraft took fire. I was so tired that I can remember being fascinated at how the floor looked after bullets went through an area between my legs . I was not fascinated with the descent, which I would learn later was an autorotation.

In October we moved from Phouc Vinh to Camp Evans and then to the mountains out West. We left Phouc Vinh and the "we were winning when I left" 1st Cav came in and pacified III Corps. In my second tour, first tour as an aviator in 71-72, I would benefit from the 1st Cav's efforts until the roof fell in during the Easter Offensive.

I went up to I Corps by myself, because we had a supply sergeant killed, I had to identify the body, inventory his gear, ship it home, and write a draft letter to the parents for the battery commander. He was killed near Cu Chi, so all the admin work was done there. Some how, during that period, I got invited to go over to the "Muleskinner's " club in Cu Chi. I remember looking at polariod pictures of the pilots on a wall and one guy having magnet ass under his name. What I remember most was the nurses that showed up. Don't remember what they looked like, all I remember was that they were round eyes, they were around aviators, the aviators were in an air conditioned building, and they didn't sleep on the ground.

When I got up to Phu Bai, I went initially to Camp Eagle. My battery was traveling to Phu Bai via a Korean Navy operated LST, which would provide endless stories about who threw up and was sick, once they got to the firebase. There I ran into Roy Lowery and Gary Jones, who were retread warrants, and now captains flying for the "Varsity," in the 101st. They lived in very nice hooches, that had a Seabee built and supplied water heater heated hot water shower. I had probably 5 or 6 hot showers in 67-68, in fact, probably only had 5-6 showers in 67-68. I met Jones and Lowery(VHPA members) at Ft Sill OK in Aug 67 in the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course. On Saturday's they would fly Chinooks, finishing up a Chinook transition at Ft Sill. Sometimes, I would fly in the jump seat. Afterwards, when I would drive home, I would notice how my 65 Mustang would have less rattles after a Chinook ride. After a couple hours, my hearing would come back, and so would the rattles in that ragged Mustang.

Once we got the battery into Eagle, the "Varsity" took us to FB Bastogne. The ONLY purpose we could have been sent there for was to acclimate us to deep mud, high angle fire, sniper fire in the firebase, and overcast. Fortunately, that did not last too

long, and we were "rescued" by the "Pacyderms" and taken up to Camp Evans externally. My RTO told me that a Chinook called "Pack of Worms" was inbound, which I thought was an original thought was an original thought, coming from him.

After a few days at Evans, we went to an old 1st Cav firebase named LZ Miquel. It was in the wrong place for the 101st, so we built FSB Rakkasan further up the mountain. Probably did it just to keep us busy. I would deros off that mountain, not knowing C Battery would be destroyed at 0310 May 13, 1969 at FB Airborne, while supporting the 3/187 Inf at Dong Ap Bia(Hamburger Hill). I almost extended six months to stay in the battery back in June 68, but the something happened to the paperwork it did not happen, and I did not ask why. I will not forget them and I this memorial on Panel 25W, every Memorial day and Veteran's day at the Viet Nam Memorial in Washington DC.

May 13, 1969, Firebase Airborne, A Shau Valley

At 0310, the firebase was attacked by sappers. When the battle was finished, 1 1/2 hours later, 26 Americans were lost, with 62 wounded. 21 of those lost were from Charlie Battery 2nd Battalion 319th Field Artillery, 101st Airborne Division.

39 North Vietnamese bodies were found on FB Airborne, which would account for a US victory.

The cannoneers lost were:

CPL	Edward A. Clarke	Mar 22, 1948	Downington PA
SP4	Thomas M. Connell	Dec 23, 1947	Ft Wayne IN
SSG	Kenneth T. Cruise Jr.	Jan 8, 1946	San Francisco
PFC	Thomas W. Davis	Jan 12, 1944	Garner NC
CPT	Moulton L. Freeman	Sep 4, 1933	Port St.Joe FL
SP5	James R. Gohagin	Oct 31, 1947	Atmore AL
CPL	Gary J. Greiner	Jul 7, 1949	Polson MT
SGT	James C. Harper Jr.	Mar 11, 1948	Nicholls GA
SP4	Eric B. Johnson	Mar 13, 1945	Laurens IA
SP4	Richard R. Kelley	Jul 18, 1949	Weymouth MA
SSG	Donald R. Kraft	Dec 15, 1946	Sappho WA
SGT	Bobby G. Lawrence	Feb 2, 1948	Sacramento CA
SP4	James A. Margro	Feb 12, 1949	New York, NY
SP4	Arlen J. Miller	Jun 8, 1948	Emmaus PA
PFC	Warren P. Nix	Dec 12, 1942	Los Angeles CA
SP4	Roger D. Ross	May 11, 1950	Haywood CA
CPL	Thomas W. Sadler	Oct 30, 1948	Oakland CA
CPL	William F. Silver	Dec 18, 1947	Vinton VA
SGT	Francis A. Souza	Sep 26, 1946	Orange CA
PFC	Wesley W. Stevens	Oct 28, 1950	Peterson MN
PFC	Lynn J. Wieser	Nov 1, 1949	Gothenburg NE

For those of us who came with the unit from Ft Campbell KY on Dec 1, 1967, this day, May 13, 1969 ended the unit as we knew it. Althought we had returned by Dec 1968, we knew many of those listed above because of the influx of replacements in May-June 1968. We trained them, we served side by side; we won't forget.

On my second tour, which was a flying one from 71-72, I was

again deeply affected by the Chinook. On May 10, 1972, at a distance of about 2 miles, same altitude, I saw a CH-47A go down near Long Thanh North. It was CH-47A, 64-13157, from the 362d ASHC, 229th AHB 3d Bde 1st Cav(SEP) and went down at YT 168 032. The aircraft commander was CPT Tomlin and the copilot was 1LT Harrell.

"United 157" was a flight of four Chinooks that picked up infantry troops at the Sandy Pad at Bien Hoa Army Base. The troops were being taken to Vung Tau. As 157 neared Long Thanh North airfield, other Chinooks in the flight described 157 as exploding like a lightbulb flash. Since there had been an increase in NVA activity at An Loc, the aircraft was thought to have been shot down. The remaining CH-47's sped from the area. It was learned later that the Chinook had a material failure of a blade retaining pin. 5 crewmen and 27 soldiers were lost. I also leave this memorial in their memory at the Vietnam Memorial:

ON MAY 10, 1972, THE CREW OF UNITED 157, A CH-47A FROM THE 362D ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER COMPANY, 229TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION, 3D BDE (SEP) 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION PICKED UP SOME OF THE BRIGADE INFANTRYMEN AT THE SANDY PAD AT BIEN HOA TO TAKE THEM FOR A WELL DESERVED BREAK AT THE SEASIDE CITY OF VUNG TAU. ENROUTE, ONE OF THE BLADE RETAINING PINS FAILED, THROWING A BLADE,

CAUSING UNITED 157 TO FALL FROM THE SKY. ALL WERE LOST, FOREVER GONE, NEVER FORGOTTEN.

THE FLIGHT CREW OF UNITED 157

CPT BARRY C. TOMLIN
1LT SAMUEL HARRELL
SPR ALVIN R. ELENBURG
SP5 LARRY S. MUSTIN
SP4 TERRY D. NEISS

THE INFANTRYMEN

SGT MIKE J. AGUILAR
SP4 OSCAR AGUILAR
SGT WILLIAM A. BOATRIGHT
PFC STEVEN E. BOWERSOCK
PFC CLINT E. CARR
SP4 DENNIS G. DUNNING
SP4 DAVID CRUZ FLORES
SGT DIETER K FREITAG
PV2 JAMES D. GROVES
PFC DALE L. HAYES
SP4 WILLIAM F. HENAGHAN
SP4 FRANK T. HENSON
SP4 DONALD E. HOWELL
SP4 FREDDIE JACKSON
SGT JAMES C. JENSEN
SP4 THOMAS A. LYDIC
SP4 GARY R. MONTELONE
PFC DEAN A. PHILLIPS
PV2 JACKIE RAY
SP4 RICHARD RIDGEWAY
PV2 AGOSTO E. RIVERA
CPT KENNETH ROSENBERG
PFC JOHN T. SABLAN
SP4 CLARENCE L. SAULSBERRY
SP4 RAYMOND J. SHIKO
SP4 DAVID W. SULSER
PFC THOMAS E. WOOD

THEIR NAMES ARE NEAR 01W20

The Chinook was our link to the world in those firebases. We found out how important they were when we got weathered in and got no resupply for days on end. Without the Chinook, the field artillery would not have been able to function. Odd as it may sound, sometimes the best sound of the day was the sound of a CH-47, and the voice of a pilot who sounded like he was talking out of a bucket.

Chu Lai to Saigon

Saigon to Bien Hoa

Assigned to A/229th as XO

Aircraft Commander
Oil sample runs
Maj Robert D Evans

Christmas leave
Jan Schwertfeger
Presley

Opns Off

R+R

Are we standing down?

The following information concerns the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion(AHB) that was assigned to the 3d Brigade(Separate) 1st Cavalry Division. The period is from April 5th to June 24th 1972, while the 229th was heavily supporting the South Vietnamese defense of An Loc in III Corps, during the Easter 72 Offensive.

Chronologically, here's how it happened:

5 Apr, 1530 hrs
F/79 AFA AH-1G, 67-15594 XU 746054(Loc Ninh)
***CW2 Charles Carl Windeler Jr./CPT Henry Merso Spengler III* KIA**

Wing ship was flown by Cpt Bill Leach/WO1 Jet Jackson. Section was launched from Song Be. NVA wire team was seen in the open laying wire. On climbout the AH-1G was hit by ground fire and caught fire. Windeler asked Leach to check where the aircraft was hit. Leach told him he was on fire and to land immediately. On approach to the ground, the AH-1G took fire again, Windeler extended his approach as the fire got worse. As the aircraft descended to 100', Leach encouraged Windeler to expedite; by then the fire was in the cockpit behind Windeler. Spengler, in the front seat, had his radio selector on UHF, intended to be on intercom, and could be heard by Leech to be hollering at Windeler to get the aircraft down. The aircraft exploded at 50'; the crew was lost. The crash site was in NVA control and could not be searched to recover the bodies. The crew was designated KIA-bodies not returned (BNR) The remains were returned to US control in 1989, and funeral services were done in Aug 1989, with Spengler being buried at Arlington Cemetary and Windeler in NY state.

8 April 1972

F/9 CAV OH-6A #67-16078

CPT Joseph Richard Harris

Harris was killed just east of the Bu Dop Special Forces camp by NVA automatic weapons fire. He was flying reconnaissance missions around Bu Dop in support of the ARVN evacuation mission by the Chinooks from 362 ASHC "Fly United", 229th AHB, 1st CAV. Harris was known for his blue freckles, which he got as the result of an accident as a teenager when he was loading shotgun shells. He had not put the pellets in the shell, when the powder went off and inbedded in his face. He was 6'2" and weighed 220. As this was occurring, a CH-47A took a load of 108 Vietnamese out and was hit in the main rotor blades on departure. Since Bu Dop was not secure, and surrounded by NVA, the CH-47 lumbered to Song Be and passengers offloaded. An immediate postflight inspection revealed that the blades had to be changed before the aircraft could be flown any further. CPT Tom Wallace was the CH-47A aircraft commander. Blades were flown up and the flight crews, maintenance personnel and anybody else standing around helped the crews manually change the blades. The task took about 5 hours and was completed in time to return to the 362d's homebase at Long Thanh North in the dark.

Cpt Mike Sloniker and WO1 Joe Layman, A/229th, were over the OH-6 crash site when the crew chief was being brought up the hoist by a 1st Cav Dustoff. The Dustoff pilot received a Silver Star for the rescue that was conducted under heavy fire. The A/229th crew was flying the overall commander of the evacuation effort, LTC Keaton, at Bu Dop. Keaton, a master Army aviator, was commanding the 1/21st Field Artillery Battalion, at the time. When he DEROS'ed, he was replaced by LTC Ira Jones. Jones was the commander of the 229th AHB, prior to taking command of the 1/21st FA. Jones replacement was LTC Lewis McConnell, who was one of the very few Transportation Corps officers who commanded combat aviation battalions.

8 Apr

Possibly the single most heroic act of the entire Loc Ninh/AnLoc optration occured mid-morning when Cpt John Whitehead, *D/229*, flying an OH-6, rescued 9 personnel evading south from Loc Ninh to An Loc. Responding to a radioed SOS from four American advisors, CPT Whitehead landed under withering enemy fire only to have his aircraft swamped by desperate ARVN soldiers seeking to escape the surrounded town of Loc Ninh. CPT Bill Leach, Blue Max 26 from F/79 AFA remembers thinking the little bird was lost in a cloud of dust and intense ground fire. However, with 9 people clinging to the aircraft and enemy fire increasing, Whitehead skipped, bounced and forced the OH-6 into the air. The aircraft was out of the center of gravity(CG) limits and would not fly level. Once clear of the fire, Whitehead landed the aircraft, and the 9 were placed on larger aircraft and evacuated. The mission was flown with M-24 gas masks, because a preceding B-52 strike had mixed CS with HE, and the gas was floating over the PZ. Nobody's mask fit and it was the first time, any of the majority of the pilots and crews had ever put the protective gear on. Whitehead's crew chief, SGT Ray Waite had been thrown out of the OH-6 by the ARVN and was hanging on to the skids. He hung on to the skids until the aircraft landed. The crewchief was having

intense difficulty breathing while hanging under the aircraft, but could not adjust the gas mask, because both hands were required to hold on to the skids. In 1993, John Whitehead reflected that if he had flown on to Lai Khe, the crew chief would have perished, but he would not have known about it because of the chaos of having 9 in an aircraft built for 4. Whitehead was nominated for the Medal of Honor, and received the Distinguished Service Cross. The CE also received the Distinguished Service Cross.

19 April 1972

AH-1G XT 67-15343 XT 510 494
D/229 CPT Arnold Rahm/1LT George K Barsom

Aircraft was shot down near Dau Tieng and made successful emergency landing. Crew was killed by small arms fire before they could egress the cockpit

10 May 1972

CH-47A 64-13157 YT 168 032
362 ASHC CPT Barry Coley Tomlin/1LT Samuel Harrell

United 157 was a flight of four Chinooks that picked up the 3d Bde(1st Cav) infantry troops at the Sandy Pad at Bien Hoa Army Base. The troops were being taken to Vung Tau for a three day incountry R&R.. As 157 neared Long Thanh North airfield, other Chinooks in the flight described 157 as exploding like a lightbulb flash. Since there had been an increase in NVA activity at An Loc, the aircraft was thought to have been shot down. The remaining CH-47's sped from the area. It was learned later that the Chinook had a material failure of a blade retaining pin. 5 crewmen and 27 soldiers were lost.

11 May 1972 1205 hours

AH-1G F/79 AFA 68-15009 XT 755 872(An Loc)
CPT Rodney Lynn Strobridge/CPT Robert John Williams
Shot down by an SA-7 missile in AH-1G #68-15009, 1233 hours, over An Loc at XT 755 872

Might have been a survivable tail boom loss, several thought they may have gotten out. Aircraft landed upright and didn't burn. Aircraft wasn't there when ARVNs later secured the area. Williams was a high time, multi-tour Cobra pilot with over 2000 hours of rotary wing time. He was assigned to HHC 229th as the Battalion AH-1G Standardization Instructor Pilot (SIP). Previous assignment was with the 5th Aviation Detachment at Vung Tau, where he taught in-country AH-1G transitions.

24 May 1972, 1425 hours

AH-1G 67-15836 F/79 AFA XT 768 786
CW2 Isaac Yoshiro Hosaka/CW2 John Robert Henn Jr.
Shot down by an SA-7 missile in AH-1G #67-15836, south of An Loc near the village of Tan Khai at XT 768 786

13 June 1972,0905 hours

UH-1H 69-15095 XT 763 790
A/229 AHB WO1 Josh Dunigan/CPT F.John Bowers

Dunigan was "White 2" in a flight of 5 UH-1H's. Flight was inserting troops in the vicinity of Tan Khai and took fire in and out of the LZ. White 1 WO1 Bill Nuess/CPT Jim Orahood flared hard into the LZ because of the speed needed to outwit the NVA gunners. After dropping the ARVNs the flight made a left turn out of the LZ for a southerly departure. The aircraft were in a loose 120 knot treetop gaggle when White 2 was hit. With the aircraft losing power, the cockpit filling with smoke, Josh Dunigan initiated a high speed low level autoration, which was successful to a point 3 feet above the ground. Because Josh could not tell the depth of the elephant grass he had pulled all available pitch at an altitude of 3 feet. 095 slammed hard vertically and spread the skids, with the only injury being the door gunner's back. Josh immediately informed lead that "White 2's down in the LZ." Dunigan and his crew were immediately rescued by "White 5," CW2 Vickery. Within minutes Comet 67, the OPS officer for F troop was in the vicintiy of the crash site with a pink team, and the "Browns,"* ready to initiate aircraft recovery. However, the intensity of the ground fire and the condition of 095, made recovery too dangerous for the slow lumbering procedure required when the Chinook hovers over the downed aircraft for recovery. 095 was abandoned, but her crew survived.

* The "Blues" from the Air Cav Troops normally provided security for aircraft recovery. Other than the aircrews and the advisors, no other Americans were allowed to be on the ground during this battle, so ARVN were used in place of the "Blues" and were called the "Browns."

20 June 1972 0825

AH-1G 67-15718 XT 769 770
F/79 AFA 1LT Shields/CPT Northrup

1LT Stephen Edward Shields/Cpt Edwin Gilbert Northrup
Shot down by heavy anti-aircraft fire in AH-1G #67-15718, 0955 hours, at XT 769 770, also in the vicinity of Tan Khai.

LTC Lew McConnell, Bn Cdr-229th,went to extract the pathfinders south of a creek bed. Pink team was covering McConnell, when a puff of white smoke went off under his aircraft. Three Blue Max aircraft were in the area; Causey and Funk were lead, Shields and Northrup were in the second aircraft, and Leach was in three. All Cobras were flying low level at high speed, when Shields and Northrup were hit by .51 cal fire. Shields, the aircraft commander successfully landed the aircraft, but could have been wounded. Jim Jackson remembers Northrup was killed after getting out of the aircraft, and attempting to help Shields out. Causey/Funk were also in the area and took 12.7 hits aft of the cockpit. Also an RPG went through all rocket pads and damaged primary hydraulic and nitrogen accumulator. Crew successfully landed the aircraft.

20 June 1972

AH-1G #67-15670 from F/9 CAV XT 776 768.
1LT Animal Breuer/CW2 Burnette Townsend were hit by an SA-7 missile at 100' while on recon of an LZ. This is the only SA-7 missile loss in F/9.

21 June 1972

F/79 AFA CPT Mike Brown/CPT Marco Cordon

Hit by SA-7 missile at 4000 feet, tailboom separated, aircraft crashed into trees. This was the first Cobra crew to survive a SA-7 missile hit and survive.(see following statement by Brown)Cordon was on second aviator tour. He was wounded and returned to the states on his first tour, and his back injury in this one would return him to the states early again. Brown was a second VN tour, first aviator tour. His first tour was in an artillery battery in the 4th Inf Div.

24 June 1972

AH-1G #68-15206 developed flight control problems during a night maintenance flight, 2340 hours, and crashed into a river west of Long Binh at YS 048 915

5 Apr AH-1G 67-15594 XU 746054
F/79 AFA CW2 William Windeler/CPT Henry Spengler KIA

On April 5, 1972 Blue Max 26 CPT Bill Leach with his copilot gunner WO1 Jim "Jet" Jackson.was flying wing on Blue Max 34, CW2 Bill Windler aircraft commander and CPT Hank Spengler was in the front seat co-pilot/gunner, over the town of Loc Ninh. They had been assigned the mission of , in support of a request of the Third Regional Assistance Command, commanded by MG Hollingsworth. NVA activity had increased dramatically since the end of March, and the sightings of NVA in the open were becoming more common.

The AFA section spotted NVA laying wire near the road in the town itself. They rolled in and fired up the target. On climbout, Blue Max was trailing smoke because of hits from ground fire. As Leach looked over the AH-1G, he saw flames inside the engine cowling and told Windler to land immediately. As Windler made his approach to the ground, he again took hostile fire and diverted his flight path, which extended his time in the air. Simultaneously, the fire was spreading forward towards the cockpit, and the aircraft continued its descent to landing. Leach pleaded with Windler to get the aircraft down, now, because Leach could now see flames behind Windler in the cockpit. CPT Spengler's radio selector switch was on UHF instead of intercom and he could be heard hollering at Windler to get the aircraft down. One hundred feet above the ground, AH-1G # 67-15594 , tail boom separated from the aircraft as the aircraft exploded and fell to the ground. Leach and flew to Song Be to refuel in stunned silence, not wanting to believe what they had just seen. Spengler was Leach's roomate in the officer's hootch back

at Long Thanh North. It would take until 1989 to get the remains of Windler and Spengler returned to the United States, and on August 19, 1989, CPT Hank Spengler was buried at Arlington Cemetary. Many of his 1968 West Point classmates were in attendance as was one lone former member of A/229th, "Black Bandits." When the A/229th pilot met Spengler's mother in the receiving line at the chapel at Arlington Cemetary, she asked if he was a member of Hank's West Point Class. He replied, "No Ma'am, I was just one of the many protected by Blue Max, and came to pay my respects."

Ironically, as the bugler was playing tapes at the cemetary, a flight of 5 UH-1H's from Davison Army Airfield flew near the cemetary sight to land at Ft Myer VA to pickup members of the 3d Infantry, "the Old Guard" for air assault training. Although it had not been planned as part of the funeral ceremony, it happened at the most appropriate time, and appeared to be Army Aviation's salute to one its flight crews, who finally came home. More Blue Max crews would be lost between Apr to Jun, and the majority would be MIA.

Blue Max was the call sign of F Battery, 79th Aerial Rocket Artillery, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion 3d Brigade (Separate) 1st Cavalry Division. Prior to the majority of the 1st Cavalry Division returning to the United States in May 1972, Blue Max was B Battery 2/20th Aerial Field Artillery, and assigned to Division Artillery (DIVARTY). Also in May the aerial weapons company, D/229th " Top Tigers" was converted to an air cavalry troop and Blue Max assumed the additional mission of aerial escort.

From May 71 to late March 1972, activity in III Corps slowed down dramatically. During this time frame many units in III Corps stood down; Air Troop 11th ACR, 334th AWC,128th AHC, to name a few.

It seemed like everytime someone made a parts run to the maintenance facility at Vung Tau, they would see aircraft being prepared for shipment home by sea. In March, you could stroll down the flight line a see the fancy nose jobs on the nose covers-the old granny cartoon character from Playboy magazine on the nose of a CH-54 to a vulture sitting on a perch on a aircraft from the 162d AHC "Vultures." At the bottom of the paint job were the initials "STS", which we all thought was "slicker than shit," but were informed by a 162d maintenance officer that it stood for "Set the Standard." Right!

It was unnerving to see the Cobras from the 334th taped up and ready for shipment, knowing that things were heating up. However in Feb/Mar rumors were raging that the Cav would be out by Apr/May, so we knew that we would be going soon.

8 April 1972
CPT Joseph Richard Harris F/9 CAV OH-6A
Harris was killed just east of the Bu Dop Special Forces camp by NVA automatic weapons fire. F/9 was flying reconnaissance missions around Bu Dop so that the ARVN could be evacuated by the Chinooks from 362 ASHC "Fly United", 229th AHB, 1st CAV. One CH-47A took a load of 108 Vietnamese out and was hit in the main

rotor blades on departure. Since Bu Dop was not secure, and surrounded by NVA, the CH-47 lumbered to Song Be and passengers offloaded. An immediate postflight inspection revealed that the blades had to be changed before the aircraft could be flown. Blades were flown up and the flight crews, maintenance personnel and anybody else standing around helped the crews manually change the blades. The task took about 5 hours and was completed in time to return to homebase at Long Thanh North in the dark. Harris had blue freckles as the result of an accident as a teenager when he was loading shotgun shells. He had not put the pellets in the shell, when the powder went off and inbedded in his face. He was a big guy at 6'2'' and weighed 220.

10 May
CH-47A 64-13157 YT 168 032
362 ASHC CPT Tomlin/1LT Harrell

United 157 was a flight of four Chinooks that picked up infantry troops at the Sandy Pad at Bien Hoa Army Base. The troops were being taken to Vung Tau. As 157 neared Long Thanh North airfield, other Chinooks in the flight described 157 as exploding like a lightbulb flash. Since there had been an increase in NVA activity at An Loc, the aircraft was thought to have been shot down. The remaining CH-47's sped from the area. It was learned later that the Chinook had a material failure of a blade retaining pin. 5 crewmen and 27 soldiers were lost.

11 May
AH-1G 68-15009 XT 755 872
F/79 AFA CPT Strobridge/CPT Williams

Might have been a survivable tail boom loss, several thought they may have gotten out landed upright, didn't burn Aircraft wasn't there when ARVNs searched the area. Crew is carried KIA/BNR.

24 May 67-15836 XT 768 786
F/79 AFA CW2 Hosaka/CW2 Henn

Missile hit and blew up BNR they were part of ready section never sent less than 3 CW2 White/MAJ Funk AC wouldn't start no igniters clicking they went off with the section White/Funk "Oh, Shit" broadcast by high bird high bird 21st ARVN north of Chon Thanh Ross Franklin called one of the pilots a coward the day before Crew is carried KIA/BNR.

13 June 69-15095 XT 763 790
A/229 AHB WO1 Dunigan/CPT Bowers

Dunigan was "White 2" in a flight of 5 UH-1H's. Flight was inserting troops in the vicinity of Tan Khai and took fire in and out of the LZ. White 1 WO1Nuess/CPT Orahood flared hard into the LZ because of the speed needed to outwit the NVA gunners. After

dropping the ARVNs the flight made a left turn out of the LZ for a southerly departure. The aircraft were in a loose 120 knot treetop gaggle when White 2 was hit. With the aircraft losing power, the cockpit filling with smoke, Josh Dunigan initiated a high speed low level autoration, which was successful to a point 3 feet above the ground. Because Josh could not tell the depth of the elephant grass he had pulled all available pitch at an altitude of 3 feet. 095 slammed hard vertically and spread the skids, with the only injury being the door gunner's back. Josh immediately informed lead that "White 2's down in the LZ." Dunigan and his crew were immediately rescued by "White 5," CW2 Vickery. Within minutes Comet 67, the OPS officer for F troop was in the vicintiy of the crash site with a pink team, and the "Browns,"* ready to initiate aircraft recovery. However, the intensity of the ground fire and the condition of 095, made recovery too dangerous for the slow lumbering procedure required when the Chinook hovers over the downed aircraft for recovery. 095 was abandoned, but her crew survived.

* The "Blues" from the Air Cav Troops normally provided security for aircraft recovery. Other than the aircrews and the advisors, no other Americans were allowed to be on the ground during this battle, so ARVN were used in place of the "Blues" and were called the "Browns."

20 June 67-15718 XT 769 770
F/79 AFA 1LT Stephen E. Shields/CPT Edwin G. Northrup
AH-1G destroyed in a .51 cal triangular ambush near AN Loc. June 20th was a very bad day for Cobra's. Shields was #2 in a flight of three Cobra's; Bill Leech was #3 and CPT Billy Causey and the the battery commander, MAJ Dave Funk were lead. Everybody was los level high speed. The aircraft took heavy fire in the cockpit and hit the ground at a high speed that threw both crew members out of the aircraft. The impact was nonsurvivable. When the "Browns" recovered the bodies, Shields camera was not among the personal effects, nor was Northrup's "Gott Mit Uns" belt buckle.

20 June 67-15670 XT 776 768
F/9 CAV 1LT Breuer/CW2 Townsend
Hit by missile

21 June 67-15725 XT 761 769
F/79 AFA CPT Brown/CPT Cordonne
This crew was hit by an SA-7 missile and survived with a tailboom blown off the aircraft. This was the first crew to survive during the Easter Offensive; the aircraft commander Mike Brown made an audio tape. The transcript of the tape follows:

"On 21 June 1972 I was working on a mission in support of an Arvn airborne brigade in the vicinity of the village of Tan Khai on

highway 13 approximately 6 miles south of An Loc. We were escorting a US slick unit that was tasked with extracting the ARVN airborne brigade from Tan Khai for redeployment.

In support of this, we had a heavy fire team, 3 AH-1G's Cobras. I was the AC of chalk 3. The method of support was to put one ship low with the lift flight and two ships high to provide overall area coverage. Chalk 2 and 3 in the heavy team were the high birds. I was chalk 3

On my second gun run into the area, in which I was providing suppressive fires, I broke to the right and made a pass from SE to NW breaking right over Highway 13 and was in the proocess of rejoining chalk 2 and taking his wing position, when I was struck by a SA 7 missile.

So far as I know, no one else has survived in a helicopter, anyway, this type of anti aircraft fire. I think there was a combination of things that accounts for the fact that I am alive and my pilot are alive. And I don't want to underestimate the importance of luck which was the most significant contributer to our good fortune was luck. I do feel, however, there are some things that we did, that we had not done, the luck we had would not have been able to save us. In describing the impact of the SA-7, but first let me back track a little bit, I think the single most important thing that happened was the fact that other personnel in the area, other aircraft in the area, were able to observe the missile being fired.
As they observed it, they yelled, "missile, missile, missile!, over the VHF radio. I think the fact that I knew what I was hit by, and what the aircraft should do was the single most important contributing factor, outside of luck, in my survival.

I feel every unit, or every task force, that is operating in an area where SA 7's are known to be, should have an SOP on alerting aircraft when a missile is fired. They should also have posted in such position as to advise or observe 360 degrees around the flight as possible, so that these can be seen.

After hearing the words, "missile, missile!, I looked over my left shoulder, I saw the signature of the missile, I thought it was heading for my aircraft. Just as I saw the missile, I saw it hit the aircraft. Probably at the same time as it was hitting my aircraft, I was rolling off my throttle, and bottoming my collective pitch.

The impact of the missile on my aircraft did not seem to be that severe. There was concussion, but there was not as much as one might expect. I would say judging on the way it felt to me, as far as concussion was concerned, there was probably not more HE charge in the warhead of the SA 7 than there was in a 40MM grenade.

What happened to the aircraft as it hit, is the tailboom was total severed, completely severed in the vicinity of the battery compartment, which on the Cobra is directly below the exhaust stack. The aircraft, as soon as it was hit, jostled slightly, it seemed to pitch up and pitch down and from side to side. This was followed by, during the autoration, the aircraft began to spin about its mast to the right at a nose low attitude. As the aircraft descended, it spiraled, making a spiraling descent, continuing to spin slowly about the mast. The speed of the spin was, I would say, about the same angular velocity as one would experience in a normal rate pedal turn.

I did not look at any of my instruments after being hit. Shortly after I was hit, as soon as I was hit, I lost all radio communication. I had no radio communication what so ever. I did however have intercom with my front seat. Using the intercom, I instructed my pilot, CPT Cordoan, to empty the his turret weapons system, fire it out. He attempted to do so, but was unable to do it. My control movements, during the descent, were very few. Having been aware, for some time, that this could happen, I had thought, pretty well thought it through, what I would do, if I were hit by a SA-7, and my tailboom were severed. It seems to be characteristic of the missile that it does severe the tailboom, if it strikes you from the side. I felt the biggest problem that I would have with no tailboom would be the CG shift. That it would be most difficult to prevent the nose from becoming extremely low particularly in a loaded helicopter. And this would have to be the biggest problem I would have to cope with. As it worked out, that was exactly the case. I told my self, that if this were case, and prior to the crash, I told my self, that my action would be to pull complete aft cyclic and attempt to correct for the CG shift. This I did, it did not prevent a nose low attitude. Those who observed my descent said I appeared to be descending a skids level attitude, however I felt that I was nose low. I attempted to experiment with the cyclic enroute to the ground. I tried slight left and right cyclic movements which did little for me, and as far as I am concerned, were a waste of time. I feel that anybody that has the same misfortune, that I had in flight, should attempt to only pull aft cyclic. Their only concern should be CG. As far as cyclic movement should be, I bottomed the pitch and I left it that way. I made no attempt to control RPM. I made not attempt whatsoever to select a forced landing area. There was no way I could have controlled the aircraft to bring it to a forced landing area. Probably if I had selected a forced landing area, I probably would have not made anyway, even if I could have guided the aircraft to it. I'll explain the reasons for this later on.

During the descent, RPM built, as it built, I felt feedback forces in the cyclic and the collective. The cyclic tried to pull itself forward, I pulled it back and I was able to keep it against the rear stop during the entire descent. The collective attempted to push it self up, I was able to keep it on the bottom, until my pitch pull.

Also during the descent, a couple things I tried to do, were trying to fire out my turret, I was able to see that I was not able to adjust my CG. I attempted to jettison my wing stores, my wing store jettison did not function. I suspected, as I thought about this prior to my accident that it would not, since the wing store jettison circuit breakers and your electrical power is largely located in the forward portion of the tailboom.

So my wing store jettison capability was lost, having determined this, I attempted to fire out the remainder of my ordnance. I was 50% expended at the time. My ordnance, my 2.75 inch rockets, could not be fired. With these three unsuccessful attempts, the turret, the wing store jettison, the rocket firing, all these failing, I abandoned all further hope of slowing my rate of descent, by getting rid of extra weight or by shifting my CG by getting rid of extra weight in the wrong places.

As I said before, the only control movement that I made, cyclic-wise, was to pull complete aft cyclic and held it there and bottomed my collective pitch and held it there.

At about 30 feet above the trees, was where I pulled my pitch. I pulled pitch at about the same rate that I would in a normal autoration, except I pulled every bit of pitch that I had. The collective was full up. As I reached the ground. This significantly slowed my descent also assisted in my CG problems. I wouldn't say that I recovered from the nose low attitude, but it recovered somewhat. It also begun a violent spin. At this point, I can't remember if the spin went to the right or the left. I do know it was violent, I do know that it was stopped by my landing in the trees.

The second most significant thing that saved me, was the fact that I did land in trees. I had no choice over I was going to land in trees or land in an open area. It was something that fate alone could determine. As I said, there was no directional control, there was no selecting a forced landing area. But luck was with me and I did land in trees, which helped me in two ways. One, they stopped the spin of the aircraft, two they assisted in cushioning my fall.

On impact there was no fire, the engine had continued to run. I had rolled of the throttle to the flight idle position initially, however I did not attempt to make further attempts to shut the engine down. If I had it to do over again, I would probably do that. I would probably attempt to shut the engine down, if I would have had time to do so.

My concerns were, fire and my ordnance exploding, however my impact was soft enough that the fuel cell, I do not believe the fuel cells were broken, and therefore the fire was not a factor, as it had been in other cases where people come down as a result of a SA 7 strike.

As far as what I did on the ground, I was on the ground for approximately 10 or 15 minutes. And I don't believe what I did on the ground is of that much assistance to anyone else. Suffice it to say, that I did land in a bunker complex; my front seat and I both made attempts to conceal ourselves until friendly aircraft got in the area, my survival radio would not operate, so we moved into a clear area and waved until we were spotted by friendly aircraft. At this point we concealed ourselves again to await pickup.

Other significant things, I think that contributed to the success here were, number one I had only had 600 pounds of fuel on board the aircraft at the time of the crash, and I was 50% expended. I had fired all of my outboard pod, and I beleive, a few of my inboard rounds.

As far as feelings, I think the psychology is as important as anything else, as how you survive this thing. There was no question, having been around SA 7 environment, for the last two months, there was no question in my mind, that I was dead on the way down. However, I never gave up. I had enough control over the aircraft to do something for myself. I still had a good rotor, I still had two controls, my aft cylic and my pitch control, and in the end, the things I was able to do, assisted in saving my life.

I think, probably, the most critical point, is when you come to the altitude where you should pull pitch, the 30 feet or so, you know in your mind, or I knew, in my mind, that I had it, that I was dead at this point on or be dead in a very short span of time. However, I did what I thought I should do anyway, and fortunately for me, it worked out to the best. I hope that by putting these things on a tape and putting them in a place where other people operating in the same environment can have access to what i say, I hope that it will save other lives. I feel however that all the elements must be working in ones favor, because they were with me. I feel that, as I said initially in the tape, luck was the biggest factor in saving my life. The aircraft did go to a place, i.e. the trees, where ground conditions assisted in bringing the descent to a favorable conclusion.

There is no question in my mind, that I had I gone to an open area, that the outcome would have been much different. As I said, also,
whether I would have wanted to or not, I would have had no control over the aircraft. I will not say it's impossible to survive this type of crash by landing in an open area, I feel now that an important thing is as long as you continue to fly the aircraft, no
matter what your situation is, that you use every available control that you have. Every control you have is an asset, you have some chance. I do feel , however, in my case, that the violence of spin after pitch pull, and probably that fairly high rate of descent, I don't beleive we would have made out of the

aircraft it had not been for the trees.

Other things that were beyond my control, were the situation factors were the fact that I was 50% expended and that I only had 600 pounds of fuel, Had I had 100% ordnance on board, and a 1200 pound load of fuel, the situation would have been far different.

So again I conclude and say that it is my hope that this tape will do some good, and the right combination of luck and knowing what to do with the aircraft, in the event that this happens to anyone else, that it will result in saving somebody's life. Thank you."

June 24, 1972

CW2 John L. Diallo

Cylic locked up in AH-1G #68-15206 during night maintenance test flight after departing Long Thanh North. CW2 Diallo was talking to flight operations about controls beginning to stiffen up, prior to aircraft crashing into the Saigon River (Dong Sai Gon). Body was recovered on June 27,1972 in the river. AH-1G was never found.

June 24, 1972

CW2 John L. Diallo
24 June 68-15206 YS 048 915
F/79 AFA Cylic locked up in AH-1G #68-15206 during night maintenance test flight after departing Long Thanh North. CW2 Diallo was talking to flight operations about controls beginning to stiffen up, prior to aircraft crashing into the Saigon River (Dong Sai Gon). Body was recovered on June 27,1972 in the river. AH-1G was never found.

The attached unit roster from Funk shows that Northrup and Shields were members of F/79. Page 129 of the directory shows no unit for Northrup and Page 136 has Shields unit wrong and his cause of death incorrect.

Funk is joining VHPA and will go to the reunion at Atlanta. Also Bill Leach, number 10 on the battery roster, from St Louis

has joined and will attend at Atlanta. Leach is the source for more information on Spengler/Windeler. They were Leach's wing, and he was hollering at them to get the aircraft down, as he flew close to the aircraft. They almost made it, but when very close to the ground and slowing down, the entire aircraft from the cockpit back turned into a ball of fire.

On April 24, 1972, Funk was supposed fly with CW2 John White (after #26 on the battery roster) but the aircraft would not crank. They were replaced by Hosaka/Henn. By the time maintenance had fixed the unscheduled maintenance, (within 30 minutes) Funk heard Hosaka or Henn say, "Oh, Shit!" on the radio, as the aircraft took its hit from the surface to air missile.

More to follow. I am going to write a history about "Blue Max from April to August 1972. They were the cover birds for me when I was in A/229 at the same time period.

As of this date, I hope the 17 guys who took the VHPA enrollment form from me, have joined.

casuey funk 12.7 hits aft of the cocpit rpg right ob wnet through all rocket pads primary hyd and nitrogen accumulator exploded force of explosian went thru the whole thing browns on the ground gott mit uns camera with motordrive ac looked intact and crushed against the ground