



The VHPPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



Fort Rucker ~ May 2016

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From the President of the VHPA

~ JOHN SHAFER ~

I hope everyone who was able to attend the VHPA's 33rd Reunion in Reno enjoyed it. The 34th Reunion will be in Indianapolis July 2nd through July 5th. Again there will be many things to do and see.

I look forward to serving as your President for the next year. The VHPA has several continuing efforts we will be carrying on: The Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Memorial to be placed in Arlington National Cemetery. Bob Hesselbein has taken the leadership on this project and has done an outstanding job. We are also upgrading our Information Technology system. The Executive Council (EC) has established a grant of \$9,000 for 2016 and 2017 to the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University (TTU) to have a TTU staff person do the work of processing and preserving the massive amount of VHPA materials the university already has. The EC and the Legacy Committee are starting to establish an endowment fund for the Vietnam Center and Archive at TTU to continue the processing and preserving of the VHPA materials they have and will continue to receive. The Endowment is to be a combination of VHPA funds and member donations.

Personally, I have in my will that any of my service and Vietnam related items will be donated to the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University. Despite what Mike Sheuerman says, it will include what remains, if any, of the bottle of Scotch the VHPA has for its last standing member.

I attended the 1st Aviation Brigade 50th Anniversary at Fort Rucker, it was worthwhile attending. Larry Castagneto, the event coordinator, and the rest of the people who put it together did a good job. The Army Aviation Museum was a must see and did not disappoint. Everything at the Anniversary Ball was well put together. There were a good number of current military personnel as well as us more mature (older) members of units in the 1st Aviation Brigade.

We have a strong established association of Mem-



John Shafer: Scalphunter 18, Scouts B Troop 7th/17th Air Cav, Camp Holloway 1971



bers of the Executive Council, National Committee Chairmen, Committee Assistants, and Office staff. All made up

of a variety of different talents and personalities, which makes this association as good as it is. If you have ever thought about being involved with the VHPA - do it!

It is my honor and privilege to serve as the President of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity.

INFORMATION DEADLINE

The deadline for adding or correcting information in the 2016 paper and CD membership directories is August 15th. Please have all changes to HQ by the end of that day. As a reminder, the online membership directory at <https://directory.vhpa.org> is our primary membership directory and it is updated daily. You can make corrections and updates to your contact information on that site.

Thanks,

Gary Roush
Directory editor
webmaster@vhpa.org

Selections from Past Newsletters

This issue's column is from June 1989, Incoming Mail Penetrating Story

On a sultry day in the Delta, we had parked and shut down our lone UH-1D at the pad in My Tho, next to the big canal that feeds into the Mekong. We had about an hour's wait, so of course, we immediately tried to get some sleep. The co-pilot and I unbuckled and slouched in our seats, caps over our eyes, prepared to dream about round-eyed women and hamburgers. We were only occasionally bothered by the ARVN on the other side of the canal who were 'fishing' by tossing grenades in the thick brown water.

We were almost unconscious when an unusual sound, a muffled thud, entered the periphery of our brains. Like almost all helicopter pilots, the Peter P and I were rather deaf, so we looked at one another, wondering if there really had been a noise. After a moment's pause, we decided to get out and investigate. We tried not to disturb the crew chief and the gunner, one asleep on the floor, the other on the ground near the skid.

We walked back along the sides of the ship, each scanning slowly and carefully our respective sides. Nothing. I got back to the tail boom and rubbed my hand along the skin; I found it! On the top of the boom was a small circular hole. I checked the bottom of the boom, but found no exit hole. I called the copilot over and we started opening inspection panels until we found a round, a still perfectly shaped M-16 bullet. Somewhere, far off in the Delta, someone had fired into the air. By the time it got to us it had just enough energy to penetrate one, and only one, layer of sheet metal skin. Or cloth cap, or plastic helmet, or crew cut scalp.

Michael Wegner
68-69 2 SIG Group

FROM THE VHPA STAFF AT HQ!

Well R2016 is over! We hope everyone that attended had a great time! If you didn't attend, maybe R2017 in Indianapolis will be closer for you.

REMEMBER - You can now pay your dues and pre-order your CD or Paper Directory on line thru the On Line Directory at <https://directory.vhpa.org/>!

Don't forget...if you move, you can go on line to <https://directory.vhpa.org> and log in with your member number, then set up a password or use your social security number. Then on the left side will be a box with red lettering that says "Other Services". Under "Other Services" will be a box that says "Update My Information". Click on this button and you can make updates directly to your information. You can also call HQ with an update to your contact information! If we do not have your correct address on file, you will not receive your Aviator!

If you know of anyone who served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and they are not a member of VHPA, give us a call and we will check to see if they are in our database. We would love to send them membership information and a copy of the newsletter for their review. And of course, we would love for them to become a member!

As always, our goal is to make VHPA the best it can be for you, the members! If there is anything that we can do to make that happen, PLEASE LET US KNOW!

Sherry Rodgers, VHPA Office Manager

"WHY DIDN'T YOU TWO FLY THAT PIECE OF S__-T 295?"

On 30 June CW2 James "Ziggy" Siegfried and 1LT Forrest "Fearless" Snyder were returning to Holloway from escorting a bad-weather Chinook resupply mission to Leghorn, a mountain radio-relay site just across the fence in Laos. The rainy season had begun and getting the Chinook in took five tries. Once mission complete, the CH-47 climbed to altitude above the clouds and requested a GCA home to Pleiku. The Cobras, with their limited instrument package headed home with their rotor systems touching the bottoms of clouds.

The Easter Offensive was over by mid-summer of 1972, but the bad guys owned everything except Kontum and Pleiku. The Kontum Pass was closed; .51 cal machine guns were on all the peaks, both east and west sides of the pass. As the Cobras approached Pleiku AFB from the northwest, the clouds were so low the normal practice of crossing mid field at 500' was impossible. Ziggy, the AMC, decided to cross the extended west end of the active and called "Pleiku, Panther 14, two cold Snakes from Plei Mrong to cross your western extended Lima Lima landing Holloway." As their Cobra cleared the west extended at 130 knots, skids in the trees, the world under them exploded with heavy AK-47 fire and both pilots were wounded; Ziggy took rounds in his right ankle, Fearless in his left foot, leg, thigh and shrapnel in his left arm. The pilots were able to get control of the aircraft, get out a MAY DAY call, and land her outside the fence at Artillery Hill. A 57th Huey in the area picked them up and took them to the 94th Evac Hospital in Pleiku for treatment.

The aircraft, 71-21023, was a brand new Cobra, in the 361st for just over a month with a little over 103 flight hours on her and just out of her first 100 hour inspection. She was shot to hell and back. John Debay, the newly appointed Maintenance Officer of the 361st, was informed of the shoot down and the aircraft tail number. He requested a Chinook pick up of 71-21023 to bring her back to the Panther Pit. When she was lowered to the ground and inspected for battle damage it

was obvious she would be going home to be repaired and rebuilt. Captain Teflon was not a Happy Camper.

Later that evening, he went to the 94th to check on his fellow aviators, now out of their initial surgery and recovering in the same room. He opened the door, rushed in glaring at his two friends and said, "If you were going to get your asses shot up why didn't you two fly that piece of s__t 295?" 66-15295 was an old, tired 20MM ship that had been flown long and hard and was on her last skids. As to asking about his two friends health or yelling at them about getting his prized new Cobra shot up, there is some difference of opinion here, but all parties agree both comments happened. Only the order remains in question.

Now to the significance of this story. Two weeks ago, John Woodward, a friend from college and a retired Army aviator, contacted me concerning information he was seeking about an AH-1G aircraft the ARMY AVIATION HERITAGE FOUNDATION had in its inventory. The AAHF was planning to rebuild her as close to a Vietnam era Cobra as possible. The bird had flown in combat in Vietnam, came home and, after being rebuilt as an S Model, served in several National Guard Units. John wanted the history of the aircraft so it could be painted with the colors of the unit it served with in Vietnam. When he told me the tail number it sounded familiar. But it had been 40 something years. I checked Gary Roush's excellent Helicopter Historical CD and there she was. The aircraft was that old "POS" 66-15295. This past Friday, February 12, I flew to Atlanta, met John at the AAHF hangers in Hampton, GA and stood next to 66-15295, a Cobra I flew 43 years ago. She looks old and beaten up but by June of 2018 I will be able to fly in her once more and this time nobody will be shooting at me, I HOPE!

Mike Sheuerman
Panther 15, 5/71-4/72
361 ACE/AWC
"Pink Panthers"

HITS THROUGH THE CHIN BUBBLE

*Tony Spletstoser with Bob Anders, Taipan 14
and Charlie Rex, RANHF/VN, EMU 26*

On this day at the end of May 1969, shortly after a "four star" lunch at the 162nd AHC's Mess hall, I received word I was to catch a ride to Bearcat Army Air Field to check out a Battle Damage incident involving the 135th's Gun-ship platoon, the Taipans.

Bearcat AAF was located on the other side of Saigon near Long Binh. Two assault helicopter companies were based at Bearcat, the 135th and the 335th AHCs; both belonged to the 214th CAB at Dong Tam. The two other companies belonging to the 214th CAB, the 162nd and 191st, were based at Dong Tam.

I collected my camera gear and tape recorder and headed for the Helipad. My route to Bearcat ended up being via Hotel 3 at Tan Son Nhut. This took a little time, because Ash and Trash flights did not run on any kind of schedule.

I arrived at Bearcat in time for evening chow. After chow, I located the Top to make arrangements for an over-night and to find out whom I was supposed to see about the day's incident. Whenever I had to over-night at a base camp that had no BOQ facilities, the 1st SGT would usually find me an empty sack belonging to someone who was on R&R, just rotated, in the hospital, or who had a really bad day in the AO. In this case it was the latter. The final irony being my bed for the night would be of today's unfortunate pilot. It was then I discovered there had been no survivors and very little of the aircraft left to recover, as it had crashed and burned.

The man whom I was to interview regarding the incident was WO Bob Anders, the wingman that day for CPT Phillips. The two were close friends. My inner-thoughts were telling me this was probably going to be a very memorable evening. The rule for Vietnam friendship relationships was, "Don't have any." In spite of this promise, the rule was quite often broken.

The 135th AHC was a mixed unit of US Army and Royal Australian Navy crew members. Their call sign was the EMUs. The Gun-ship platoon's call sign was the Taipans. This came from the name of a deadly Australian out-back snake.

WO Bob Anders flew as wingman for that day's Light Fire Team. CPT Mike Phillips was the AC flying Lead, and WO1 Stephen Martin, had been the Peter

Pilot. Their aircraft were UH-1C Charlie models. As with these fire teams, crews of both aircraft were mentally in tune to support one another.

WO Anders recalled: "As for your room assignment for that night: at Bearcat, the officers lived down-stairs and the WOs lived upstairs. We used to joke it was to protect the "RLOs" from the rockets. Anyway, you probably slept in Mike's bed if it was downstairs. I think we had the interview in Mike's room."

Since there would be no aircraft to photograph, I had to be content to concentrate on the interview. Anders was the burly football player type, the kind of man who you would think could feel no pain. In our room that evening, I learned no man was above feeling the pain of losing a best friend. This pilot would relate to me every facet of the day's tragedy. In the hushed solitude of that barracks room, it wasn't hard to sense Anders' grieving for his lost friends. Several times we had to stop the tape to allow him to shore up his emotions in order to go on.

The day began when Phillips' and Anders' Gun platoon was a part of a 9th Div. "Ball Game." One of those games based on "military intelligence" in which nothing could go wrong.

WO Bob Anders: "At this point in time in the Vietnam war, the 135th AHC flew strictly combat assaults for the ARVN. Every now and then we would get lucky and get scheduled to fly Americans or Australians. However, on that Saturday, May 31, 1969, we were supporting the 9th ARVN with leap-frogging insertions. The slicks had been busy all day, while the guns took two-at-a-time turns covering the insertions. CPT Phillips' crew and mine were at Ben Tre rearming and refueling when we heard the slicks were taking fire while dropping off troops at the PZ. Several ships took rounds."

The AO was located near the city of Cai Lai about 20 km northwest of the 9th Division's Base Camp at Dong Tam across the river from Ben Tre island. There had been two Eagle flight lifts of ARVN grunts and the fire teams were to provide close air support.

WO Anders: "The two gunships on station in the AO at the time came under heavy fire. One of the co-pilots was wounded. The damaged aircraft all headed for Dong Tam including the two gunships. Phillips and I immediately cranked and beat feet to the AO." "It was mass confusion by the time we arrived on

station. The ARVN had mingled with VC and now both were shooting at whatever aircraft they could. (Yes, you are reading this correctly.) As the slicks dropped off the ARVN in the LZ, they would turn and fire at the aircraft. It must have been something about being left in a hot LZ that pissed them off. It was easy to blame the Chopper crews."

"There were no Americans on the ground, yet our C&C aircraft advised us we were to hold our fire and to only provide cover for the slicks on their way out. But by the time we got to the area, we figured out our own rules of engagement. Our slicks were being shot up by the ARVN and we were taking fire from the VC, who were all over the place." Of course, one of the C&C's back-seaters was the local ARVN colonel.

"Mike spotted Charlie first and immediately rolled in. The ground fire was tremendous, so we decided to come in from a different angle on the next run. As we circled to get in position, a large group of VC started running across a semi-open area. Mike broke hard right and dove the ship toward them. By the time Mike was set up on his run, most of the VC were in the tree line firing up at us. However, there was one who appeared determined to take on a Charlie Model gunship all by himself. He stopped, turned and began firing directly at Mike."

"I cannot say if Phillips was hit or not, but the aircraft flew straight into the ground taking out the one standing VC. I can say the aircraft was repeatedly hit by the people in the tree line and very possibly by the lone VC. I did not hear any radio call. The aircraft and door gunners were firing all the way down. No one can ever say for sure, but it would be hard to believe a gifted and seasoned helicopter pilot such as Captain Phillips would fly into the paddy unless mortally wounded."

The ground impact started at the chin bubble, the force then transferring rearward to the skids, legs and fuselage. The aircraft just seemed to crush flat to the ground. No bounce, just sort of crushed in like it was clay.

The sequence of events was almost instantaneous. During a hard landing such as this, the fuel cell behind the rear cargo space bulkhead ruptures; next, inertia of the mass causes fuel to wash up and move forward via the overhead and down as it reaches the pilots' compartment wind screen completely soaking the aircraft's interior and occupants with JP4. The electrical equip-

ment causes the ignition and fire immediately engulfs the entire aircraft. This is a characteristic of all UH-1s of that time period.

"As I orbited the crashed chopper, we watched in disbelief as a figure stood up and walked out through the boiling flames. I rolled around and then giving myself enough space for a "flying approach" we were able to land close to Mike's chopper."

"By the time we landed just moments later, the aircraft and whatever was in it, was a burning black heap in a pile. Like I said, the burning figure, Martin, just walked out of it. He didn't bump into anything or even climb over anything...there was nothing left. I know the gunner and crew chief were burned with Mike in the crash."

"The ammo on Mike's aircraft was cooking off and exploding now, not to mention there were still a lot of bad guys shooting at us from various positions in the tree-line. I was seated in the cockpit on the right as AC, and I had landed my ship next to the crash on my side. I sent my door gunner out on the left to lay down a covering fire. He had the M60 going to town with a 100 round belt draped over his shoulder. While the gunner suppressed, the Crew chief ran out to the burned pilot."

"Martin's Nomex was completely burned away. Nothing was left of his uniform or his boots except a small band around his waist where there had once been a belt and part of his flight helmet. There were no ears, eyes, hair, or facial features left. When the crew chief removed Martin's helmet, he was to find the foam liner had melted to his head. Martin appeared to feel no pain."

"I would pull the collective up under my armpit and pop the cyclic aft then forward to get the skids off the ground for a few moments. Peter Pilot and I continued to fire mini-guns every chance we found targets to keep Charlie's head down. I'd kick pedals and swing to the new target. I even fired off a few rockets from this modified hover. This modified hover consisted of pulling the aircraft off the ground and firing our weapons until the main rotor rpm would bleed off."

"I remember the deafening noise in my helmet even with the radio headsets over my ears. I had all the radios going, the noise of the ammo blowing up, the firing of our weapons and that damned Low RPM Warning buzzer continually going off. I had my hands so full trying to get the aircraft up at a hover, that I

was unable to take the time to reach up and pull the circuit breaker.”

“You must remember, I was only able to get the aircraft to hover for a minute or two, because the gunner and crew chief were not on board. Once they were back on board and with the extra weight of Martin, hovering was out of the question. I tried bouncing along trying to pick up airspeed. It was no use; I could see we would not clear the tree line and set it back down. We had a little bit of an open area behind us, but we could see bad guys all over the place.”

“We did consider throwing stuff out in order to get light but then I heard Capt. Nesby come on the air. Capt. Richard Nesby heard one of our calls and came to the rescue. He had been flying a spare slick down to the AO when all hell broke loose. Capt. Nesby landed and we transferred Martin to his empty UH-1H model. We followed him out putting fire underneath him until we both cleared the tree line. Nesby made a bee-line for the Dust-Off pad at the 9th Div. MASH unit at Dong Tam and I returned to the rearm and refuel point.”

Author: In a crash and burn fire such as this one, the burns on the skin of a human body are bad enough, but it's the damage on the inside that will do you in, with the heat from the fire searing the inner tissues of the lungs as the victim tries to breathe. The lung tissues react by generating mucus, which slowly fills the lungs, causing a condition much the same as pneumonia. The medics at the MASH tried their best, but it was not enough and he died.

WO Anders: “I had plenty of fuel but no ammo by this time. I went to Dong Tam and rearmed and went back and dumped the area. I went back and forth to Dong Tam three times before they sent out the MPs to stop us. It seems the ARVN commanders were complaining we were shooting at their men...they were right.”

“If the MPs hadn't stopped us I think we would have flown continuous sorties until we had emptied Dong Tam's ammo bunker.”

“This really doesn't do justice to the story of these men's lives, but you have the idea. Capt. Phillips and WO Steven Martin were both great guys. I know Phillips was a dedicated family man in every way. He had a little over a month before he was going back to the world.”

Author: In this case, the pilot was likely KIA

from ground-fire, the two door-gunners were killed in the crash, but the co-pilot would have lived except for the burst fuel cells. As with all of the Bell helicopters and their stiff skid legs, a hard landing resulted in burst fuel cells. Inertia converted the fuel into a mist. Ignition would come when any of the many electrical devices ripped apart during the crash.

I had made a suggestion to Aberdeen about using practice golf balls (like a small 'whiffle' ball) to fill the fuel cells. They would have had the effect of continuous baffling. Nothing ever came of it. It probably wasn't expensive enough. But, the idea had worked well on the Miami-Bimini open sea race boats. The whiffle balls took up the space of only a few gallons of fuel and the boat racers experienced a safe crossing. Fortunately, by the time the Vietnam War ended, all new Bell helicopters had a cellular plastic foam built into the fuel cell, which worked even better. It's just that the practice golf balls could have been easily dropped into the fuel cells at field maintenance in 1969.

In between then and the end of the war, a lot of chopper crews burned to death.



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Did you know there is an FAA Wright Brothers MASTER PILOT AWARD?

Have you been flying for 50 years (up to 20 years military flying counts)?

Description: The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award is the most prestigious award the FAA issues to pilots certified under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 61. This award is named after the Wright Brothers, the first US pilots, to recognize individuals who have exhibited professionalism, skill, and aviation expertise for at least 50 years while piloting aircraft as "Master Pilots". A distinctive certificate and lapel pin is issued after application review and eligibility requirements have been met. Upon request, a stickpin similar in design to the lapel pin is also provided to the award recipient's spouse in recognition of his or her support to the recipient's aviation career. Once the award has been issued, the recipient's name, city and state will be added to a published "Roll of Honor" located at <https://www.faasafety.gov/content/MasterPilot/RecipientList.aspx>.

Eligibility: To be eligible for the Wright Brothers MPA, nominees must meet the following criteria:

- Hold a U.S. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) pilot certificate.
- Have 50 or more years of civil and military flying experience.
- Up to 20 years of the required 50 years may be U.S. military experience.
- The effective start date for the 50 years is the date of the nominee's first solo flight or military equivalent.
The 50 years may be computed consecutively or non-consecutively.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Have NOT had any airman certificate revoked. Revocation of any airman certificate will disqualify a nominee for this award.

For more details go to this FAA web site:

<http://fsims.faa.gov/PICDetail.aspx?docId=FAA%20FS%20I-8700-2%20Rev%202>



HITCHING A RIDE

We watched the Easter Offensive from the rooftop of our hotel, and finally hit the sack when it subsided. The next day we went to the Qui Nhon military base officers' club for lunch. We had just ordered two steaks, when I noticed a chopper pilot sitting not far from us. They were easy to spot with their army warrant officer uniforms and shoulder holsters. I got up and went over to his table. After a short introduction, I asked him where he might be flying to, and explained our dilemma of being stuck there. He said he was flying south to Nha Trang, adding "if you and your buddy can be on the pad in 5 minutes, I'll give you both a ride there." This was great news and would get us close to our home base at Cam Ranh. His Huey was on a chopper pad sitting right outside the mess hall door. We had a Vietnamese waitress place our steaks, carrots, and peas in plastic bags and we beat the pilot to the chopper pad.

We stood by as the pilot, his crew chief, and door gunner made some pre-flight checks on the Huey. The pilot was a blond surfer type from Los Angeles and couldn't have been more than 20 years old. As he walked around the helicopter with his aviator shades, he was the picture of confidence. There was something inexplicable about him, an aura he had that is hard to describe. He was da'-man and you could tell he knew it. The next thing he said to Chum, and it really surprised me "My door gunner has to fly in the back all the time, and would like to fly up front on this trip. Would one of you like to be door gunner on this trip?" I was kind of taken back by this question, but Chum piped right up, "I'll fly as door gunner." The door gunner gave him some quick instructions on firing the M-60. The M-60 was an automatic 7.62 machine gun, mounted on a sort of swivel pole, in a back side compartment of the Huey. As we boarded the Huey, the warrant officer pilot, LA surfer, told him "If you see something you don't like, shoot it." He really had us on the excitement program. As we lifted off the chopper pad; I wondered what Chum would shoot.

As we flew over the South China Sea, down the coast line on a bright sunny day, suddenly the pilot

banked dramatically to the right, he had avoided hitting a flock of pelicans. I slid over in my seat with my heart in my throat. The crew chief yelled out "it would have been a real bitch to be killed by pelicans in Vietnam." It was a great piece of flying, and good to hear our pilot laughing as he turned around and looked at me. We hadn't been airborne long when we received a radio diverting us to Tuy Hoa, about 65 miles south of Qui Nhon.

We landed in Tuy Hoa on a helicopter pad and exited the chopper. Our pilot explained that John Paul Vann, had diverted our Huey to make an inspection run. John Paul Vann had flown down from his II Corps headquarters in Pleiku to inspect the bridges and other military sites that had been attacked the day before. Evidently, his own chopper was out of service. John Paul Vann was a retired Lieutenant Colonel who was running the war in II Corps as an employee of the Defense Department. He was the first civilian to ever command US troops in combat. He received the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously, and was also the only civilian so honored. The book "A Bright Shining Lie" is about him. They also made an HBO film about him in 1998. It was an honor that Chum and I met him personally. He wore a white short-sleeved shirt and khaki pants, a no-nonsense guy who seemed driven as he ordered military types about. This was April of 1972; he died in a helicopter crash a couple of months later.

Our pilot told us to cool our heels at the officers' club bar, he would be back to continue our trip to Nha Trang. At the end of the bar sat a large Army type field radio. As we sat drinking Heinekens and vodka, the bartender put the radio on the channel of the transmissions from our commandeered helicopter. If anyone ever doubted John Paul Vann was running the war in II Corps, after listening to the radio traffic there was no doubt about it. The one thing that's indelible in my memory, was when I heard him tell a Vietnamese officer, "You tell General - - -, that if those bridges are not back in by noon tomorrow, I'll have his ass on a carpet in Saigon." The Vietnamese General's name escapes me now.

Our pilot (I think his name was Townsend) returned and told us we would be spending the night in Tuy Hoa. We went to a small VN hotel with a bar. This is where I made a very big blunder. As we sat at a table discussing the day's events, I don't know what came over me, but I told Chum I could out drink him. He readily took my challenge. I woke up with a killer of a hangover and Chum looked just fine. That evening is a complete blank to me; no one could out drink him.

We joined our pilot on the base at Tuy Hoa for breakfast before our flight to Nha Trang. He had a couple of stories about his inspection with Vann. To me these two incidents contain dramatic examples of happenings in this war where the hand writing was on the wall, and led to South Vietnam's failure in keeping their sovereignty. He flew Vann to two microwave mountain-top communication sites. On one site an American Major was left alone defending the mountain top when the whole company of ARVNs, Vietnamese Army, ran off, and his Vietnamese officer counterpart cowered in the bunker beside him. He manned the M-60 machine guns and grenade launchers and fought the NVA until they withdrew. Many dead NVA were scattered on the perimeter. At a similar mountain-top installation, the ARVN Company had run off, leaving an old Vietnamese papa san alone to defend this site. The papa san was a civilian whose job it was to maintain the electric generators there. This old man was not a soldier, but manned the M-60s & grenade launchers. He killed quite a few NVA and held the mountain top by himself. So went the war.

I flew as gunner on the Tuy Hoa to Nha Trang leg of our trip. I could make up something here about us shooting the conical hat off of a VC, but I really didn't want to kill anything, nor did Chum. We boarded a C-130 at the Nha Trang airbase, and flew back to Cam Ranh.

I'm attaching a couple of http addresses, that relate to these times.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=14EHqM7pCto&feature=youtu.be

www.youtu.be/F_gJTzRSd38

Hope you save this for his grandchildren,

Jack Johnstone.

Posted by Jack Johnstone

Third Generation Army Aviator Receives His Wings

Third generation Army Aviator 1LT Bryce Thompson, received his Army Aviator wings May 26, 2016. He and 1LT John B Givhan USA (Ret.) stand before a CH-21C "Shawnee" helicopter in the US Army Aviation Museum, Fort Rucker, AL. Robert A (Bo) Thompson, Bryce's grandfather, and 1LT Givhan were flying an identical helicopter on April 12, 1964 when they were shot down while



1LT Bryce Thompson and 1LT (Ret) John Givhan.

flying a combat assault mission in Vietnam. On August 9, 1967, Bo was KIA while flying a 1/9th Cavalry UH-1 Huey.

Also attending the graduation ceremony were Bryce's father COL John Thompson and grandmother Mrs Hilda (Thompson) Withers, and Myron "Banjo" Davis.

LT Givhan: "This photograph was taken at a very hellish place on main Highway 13 bordering the east side of the infamous "Iron Triangle", owned by the Viet Cong. The 120th Aviation Co, 145th Aviation Bn, sent two CH-21 helicopters there to resupply a hamlet, more of a bunker area. Bo and I were flying one of them. We were on the ground less than ten minutes."



"Bo" Thompson and John Givhan, Republic of Vietnam, 1964

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"VHPA Member and author Michael Lazares, who passed away recently, approached the VHPA late in 2015 with an idea to publish a collection of stories which had been submitted to the VHPA and placed on the VHPA website. This would be something entirely new and extraordinary for the VHPA: publishing an anthology of 30 stories written by 28 VHPA members under our own copyright. This is an opportunity for the VHPA to tell the stories of the service and sacrifice of their members all those years ago, maintain the legacy of our service, and use the profits to support the VHPA Scholarship Fund."

~ John L. Penny

*To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator
Reference Issue 35-03 May/June 2016 of The
VHPA Aviator.*

I'd like to send you a note of thanks regarding the war stories you included in the referenced issue. Back in 1969 when I left active service after two RVN tours to return to college I joined the California National Guard to continue flying. I recall I became tired of the multiple war stories we would typically hear on drill weekends. Fast forward 47 years and I find myself eager to receive the next issue of The VHPA Aviator to read the war stories.

*Please continue to try to include
them in future Issues.*

*Gil Snow
Blue Ghost 8 Mike
C/7/17*

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor of the VHPA Aviator,

I realize you have a dedicated book reviewer as well as a dedicated section for same. Recently, however, I read a book titled: *An Idea, and Bullets: A Rice Roots Exploration of Why No French, American, or South Vietnamese General Could Ever Have Brought Victory in Vietnam* by Colonel (Retired) William C. Haponski, Ph.D. The Villages, FL

This book is both a personal memoir and a superbly researched and documented history of the French, American, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese experience in the Vietnam War. I wanted to share my opinion, because I believe many of our members will appreciate the treatment.

As the title indicates, the author asserts and substantiates the Vietnam War was not winnable by any nation external to Vietnam (or any power within Vietnam that was perceived to be controlled by an external nation). His reason was the deep desire for independence and unity that exists within the character of the Vietnamese people. The book is a sweeping historical narrative that concentrates on first the post-World War II period during which France tried and failed to reassert its authority over Vietnam as a French colony. The Americans then continued the fight under its policy of restricting the spread of Communism which morphed into the last sad days when the South Vietnamese were forced by the Americans to 'go it alone' and were unable to do so. The North Vietnamese were able to reunite the country because they had the organization, will, and skills to do so, and they understood the desire in the Vietnamese national character for independence and unification of their nation. Their movement was perceived as a Vietnamese national movement, and unlike the South Vietnamese they were not perceived as being 'puppets' of another nation's government. Colonel Haponski intersperses the historical narrative with personal vignettes of his service as a combat unit commander and staff officer. He expresses the pride he felt for the valor of his troops and for the grief he felt and still feels for the ones who did not come home. He recollects his actions in the same area and in some cases against the same units the French had fought twenty years before. His ability to transition from the historical perspective to the personal perspective and back nearly seamlessly is one of the aspects of this book that makes it an enjoyable and interesting read. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a good historical overview of the Vietnam War at the essential level of where, how, and why it was fought; it is an excellent chronological summary of events, as well as a compelling personal narrative.

If you read only one book about the Vietnam War, this would be the one to read.

Carl Bell

Charlie's .45

An old friend came up to me at a funeral to introduce me to her husband Charlie who flew F100 Super Sabers in Vietnam. In 1965, Charlie was shot down and was rescued by an Army Huey. The first Huey landed on Charlie's parachute, which wrapped itself in the rotor system. Injured, Charlie crawled over to the helicopter and heard the pilot tell the crew chief to crawl up top and untangle the chute. The crew chief's response was: "you go to hell, you want that parachute untangled with all the shooting going on, go do it yourself, sir."

A second Huey medevaced Charlie to a hospital where they asked him about his pistol. Charlie said a Vietnamese on the Huey wanted the pistol to help protect the helicopter. Charlie wasn't in a condition to refuse, so let the Vietnamese have it. Two months later, Charlie's pistol turned up in Clovis, New Mexico! Charlie said the pistol almost beat him home.

by Life Member Jim DeWitt

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The Pigs of Saigon

Life Member Ralph Arnesen

After eight months of flying VIPs around what was known as III Corps, I felt a need to get more involved in the war; the job I was doing was too tame. My unit, the 120th Aviation Company had a gunship platoon at Saigon Heliport and they needed pilots. I had stayed at the platoon's three story Villa on a couple of my days off and preferred the lifestyle to the one I had at Long Binh Headquarters.

For a start, the platoon had its own bar, a crude affair which saw a lot of action, the type only young men left to their own devices could aspire to, sort of a college fraternity house. Booze we got from our very own liquor salesman who rented a container where he could store beer for his other customers: army clubs in Saigon. Music for our parties was supplied by an Australian agent who drank lunch and did his paperwork at our bar as the noise of all the bands practicing at his place was unbearable. Another officer and I shared a room on the top floor overlooking the main street going into Saigon from the airport. So, we had it pretty good.

Our aircraft were parked most of the time at the main heliport at Hotel 3, Tan Son Nhut Airport. Driving out of the heliport after coming in from flying, there were nine of us in the Jeep. We were stopped one time by either General Abrams or Mildren, these were the top 2 generals in Vietnam. He said he would give us two days to clean up the flight line and the slum we called the villa; then he was going to inspect us personally. It took two days just to get the illegal firearms out of the villa and stored over at the liquor man, Dirty Willy's place. He never inspected us, but later the higher ups decided they didn't need a gunship platoon in Saigon.

We had three basic missions; a five-minute reaction team, a lightship mission, and a sniffer mission. The five-minute team of two gunships stood by at a shack between the taxi-way and the runway at Tan Son Nhut Airport. We had beds to rest, a television, and the snack bar was close by across the taxiway. A second team was on 30-minute stand-by at the villa. We worked on a 24 hour on-24 hour off schedule. We flew night, day and all types of weather.



The Razorbacks



The stand-by pad

We were sometimes called out at night when troops had come in contact with the Viet Cong and needed gunship support. We held off a few miles to circle and get an understanding of the situation which could take some time. We needed to identify where the friendlies were and then get some light on the situation using a flareship, usually a clapped out DC-3 flown by the Vietnamese Air Force. Coordinating all these units, some working through a translator, sometimes two, was a nightmare. The possibility of shooting the wrong troops was always present. All that solved, we could start using rockets, mini-gun, or 40mm grenade. The rockets were not very accurate and had a tendency to wander off. They were not designed for a helicopter but for propeller-driven airplanes in WW 2. The two mini-guns could fire straight ahead at 2,400 rounds a minute each; in three-second bursts. When turning the sight either way, it would reach a stop and the gun not pointing into the helicopter would pick up to 4,000 rounds a minute. However, these mini-guns were notorious for jamming and it was near impossible to fix them in the air, so there you sat. The door gunners with their M60 machine guns were then used to the max and were probably more effective than the rest of the equipment. The 40mm was



40mm turret on the nose & 14 2.75" rockets



The author as a young man in Saigon

gas. The nightly visits finally stopped at the villa, but one hotel used as a brothel got a visit from a disgruntled customer and got the riot gas.

One night we were flying along minding our own business and someone shot at us. We returned the favor with rockets. Coming out of one of the runs we heard and felt a crump in the aircraft; it felt like we had been hit. We decided to land at a nearby airstrip and have a look. On final approach, the pilot flying said the pedals were getting stiff, so we made a running landing to the runway. Then everything still being OK we hovered over to the side and shut down. Using flash lights we looked the aircraft over and found nothing wrong until we looked at

pretty effective in certain situations, but you had to walk the rounds onto the target. The concussion was very powerful.

One night, it took so long to get all the information that we became low on fuel and still had not fired; the flare ship didn't know where to drop. They finally agreed they would drop where the helicopter rotating beacons were. The flare ship illuminated us all the way back to Saigon airport.

We often went out at night with a lightship, a UH-1 with 7 C-130 landing lights arranged together - about a half-million candle power. We flew along the Cambodian border looking for sampans and troops coming into Vietnam, just as they did before TET of 1967 or 68 and attacked Saigon.

We sometimes used the lightship for troops in contact, but the most memorable time was when we were finished with our mission. One of the lieutenants wanted to check out how my roommate was doing with his new girlfriend. John hovered level with the balcony and then hit the lights. The bed sheets flew all over the place and the pair was caught in the act. The next night it was my roommate's turn to fly the lightship and pay a little visit to the villa, this time a smoke grenade came down in the courtyard. The situation got worse with the villa shrouded in smoke every night. We all realized where it would lead: riot

the transmission cowling near the rotor mast, there was a 2 inch gap! We tried to open the engine compartment but had to first take the doors off. Here we found the braces to the firewall ripped off, then noticed the tail was hanging low. The crew chief looked up the hell hole under the transmission, and just about s—t, the main beams were nearly torn in two. A classic case of fatigue just minutes from total failure. Later, we were told the aircraft with the 40mm grenade launchers had to have about 14 pounds of lead put in the tails to get them into the weight and balance window, this might have caused an oil canning effect.

The landing craft that supplied the bases on the canals were always getting hit with rocket propelled grenades, so we had to fly top cover for them while they were between bases. During one period, we spent 14 hours of a 24-hour period with the rotors turning. We did 12 hours from 6 AM to 6 PM landing only to refuel, followed by a dawn recon the next day. You cannot imagine how boring it is to circle for such a long time over a boat doing about six knots. Even with us on top, the VC still managed to pop out of a spider hole to fire off an RPG. On one occasion, we landed and picked up a soldier who had been hit while driving a boat on the canal; unfortunately, he died before we could get him to the hospital.

These were the sad times, but for the most part we had it good.

HMM-161 Reunion

To those who understand what it was like to be in an HMM (Helicopter Marine Medium):

I have just returned from Charleston, S.C, where I attended a reunion of former HMM-161 squadron members. Even though I spent most of my 25 year Marine Corps career in that squadron, I knew I was an outsider at this reunion. The men who organized this affair had made HMM-161 a legend long before I arrived on-board.

This reunion was to celebrate an elite group of men who were the legends of CH-46s. These men received a doctorate degree in survival during the years of 1968-69 in a place called Quang Tri, Viet Nam.

Looking at the roster of attendees, I knew I was in the midst of the royal family of "Phrog Drivers" and I was in awe. These were the men I, and many who came shortly behind them, considered as our heroes. I can't describe how humbling it was to stand in these men's presence. Purple Hearts, DFCs, Silver Stars and Air Medals were everywhere, there was even a Navy Cross amongst the gathered.

On my drive home from Charleston, I began to think about our reunions and what they mean to us as former squadron guys and what they should mean to the young men who put the CH-46 to bed for the last time.

Most of the old squadron guys see each other only at reunions. These gatherings are usually located in some obscure place most likely chosen by one of the surviving wives (though we will never admit it wasn't our idea). Normally, we only make these reluctant migrations every couple of years because most of us enjoy "just being at home". The only thing definite is eventually these reunions will be less frequent as we become less mobile and our numbers dwindle.

We have all accepted that like those great machines we once flew, we are no longer fit for the mission. At our age, we are much better suited to hanging around museums, Legion bars, and airport back lots while we just talk to anyone who will listen, about "what it was like back then."

We normally arrive at these events dressed in clothes more suited for comfort than fashion, but always neat and clean. Some of us might be wearing lapel pins that display both of our beloved flags, or maybe a pin with the likeness of the twin rotor machine that was such an integral part of our youth and which still defines our present. We will all

admit we are no longer young but most of our clan still present that brisk, confident, young-old look of efficiency.

We arrive from our homes carrying suitcases and old memories with the hope we can once again create a memory with some old friends.

We often dredge up the old but not forgotten technical and tactical information once so important to our survival, but now is only something for us to reflect upon. We all remember the nuisances of a night spiral approach and the focus required to land on an unlit ridgeline, or an LPH at night; we remember, but do not relish those night medevac missions and the recon inserts and extracts that claimed so many of our brethren.

We respect places like Marble Mountain, Mutter's Ridge, Hill 881, Phu Bai and Quang Tri. These names might be unknown to the younger guys, but have been replaced with equally enticing names such as: Granada, Anbar Province, Mogadishu, Kuwait City, Fallujah and Ramadi.

"Any clime, any place". That was our destiny. We knew all the bars in WestPac and most in the Med. We could tell you about the Philippines and most places to the South and West.

We understand tight LZs, GAIL lights, Mk 45 flares, and heat tabs in C-ration cans, all of which were used to guide us into an LZ. Yet there is one characteristic we could not and can never consider: Complacency!

We can shut our eyes and still marvel at the memory of the exquisitely good taste of hot coffee in a canteen cup or a cold beer at the end of a long night mission. Some of our clan can still remember the limitations of the A model CH-46 and what an improvement the D and F models were; the trouble with station 410 and what about the "hover Aft" birds. We remember guys like Norm Clark, Larry Midel and John Chicarran, who lived with us and taught us all about our "twin rotor friend". Those of us who were spoiled by the E Models didn't know how good we had it!

All of my brothers speak a language unknown to a commoner. We discuss HIGE, HOGE and an upper dual boost; SAS links and LCTs. BIM Indicators, ISIS, CAT II and composite blades. And, stranger still, such things as main mount and nose wheel landings; SPIE rigs and drooping turns: A PMS that has nothing to do with females and using a tube for relief.

Yet, we are inclined to change the subject when the uninitiated approach. They could never understand and will never know of what we speak; they have not endured the rites of passage!

We have tasted the characteristic feeling of the loneliness of flying at night and being deployed for months on end. Occasionally we experienced the adrenaline of fear or mechanical failure that became an addiction to flying and fright; for without the fright, this would have been just another job.

We respect the unseen things that go bump in the night, yet we do not fear them, just expect them. We know what it means to fight for self-control, to discipline one's senses and emotions, and just do the job at hand.

We buy life insurance, but make no concessions to the possibility of a complete disaster, for we still have an uncommon faith in ourselves and what we are doing. As the old adage goes: "An optimist is a Marine 46 crewmember who thought he was going to die of natural causes!"

We all agree the glamour is gone from flying and what we did so long ago spoiled us forever. Without that machine and the mission that went with it, everything else is a letdown. We deny we are finished as a "real" crewmember. We will only admit we will never be as good as we once were. We have learned to know too many "tomorrows since our yesterdays". We have grown accustomed to too many "following nights". We know that, regardless of how bad things get, something will come along and make "this" better. Things are never so bad they can't get worse, so we learn to live with "IT" and move on. We learned our kind of flying required perseverance and vigilance, just like life. We know life is a series of challenges and we must stay flexible or we will surely grow old and die.

As a group, some of our brothers appear to defy the mortality tables; they are forever young, healthy and spry. Yet, as a whole we will, like all those who came before us, pass on at a steady rate until we are ancient history.

We are individualistic, yet when we meet a brother, we are bonded together. We are mostly family people. Many in today's society say we were overpaid, yet they entrusted us with equipment worth millions and entrusted us with the lives and futures of countless young men. We supported a mission that was not for the frail of mind, spirit or body. God we were young!

We are reverent because we knew

some of the things we had seen could only have been created by God. We have watched the sky turn purple at dusk in the Straits of Malacca and sat in silence while watching the beauty of a sunrise in East Africa. We know the twinkling, jeweled beauty of flying over a city or village at night; we have seen snow on the distant mountains and experienced sights most men can only dream of.

We remember the vast unending mats of green jungles, the twisting silver road that is "Ole Man River" and the beauty of a morning in the desert. Who can forget the first view of a port of call after an extended period at sea? While flying at night with crystal clear skies, we have watched satellites streak across a starry sky, seen the clear, deep blue of the night sky and felt the incalculable force of the heavens. We have marveled at sun-streaked evenings, dappled earth, and velvet stratus; spun silver clouds and sculptured cumulus; and God's weather. I have viewed the Northern Lights, a pilot's halo, a bomber's moon, horizontal rain and St Elmo's Fire. Only a young man could experience all of these miracles with an open mind.

Once, this was our world. Now it is nothing but a faint memory we should not and will not let die. Those days, like our youth will be forever missed, but never regretted. At this point in our lives, we only have each other to help us remember those "yesterdays".

Gentlemen, it's time to get off the sofa and get yourself and your memories down to the reunion. We are not getting any younger!

Ron Gatewood is the writer.
His nickname is Pappy and is a LTC retired...
his email: [REDACTED]

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BATTLE OF MICHELIN RUBBER PLANTATION

27 November 1965

In November 1965, I was assigned as Commander, the 197th Armed Helicopter Company. One of our primary missions was close combat support of ARVN forces in III Corps. Our story is in two parts. Part 1 is by LT Jim Moody, a superb fire team leader in the company's Playboy platoon. Jim was first on the scene arriving about daylight on the 27th. Part 2 is by me. I arrived later in the morning of the 27th.

Regardless of one's perspective, it was a tragic day for the 7th Regiment of the ARVN 5th Infantry Division and assigned American Advisors. Jim tells his story first.

PART 1

ONE OF MY LONGEST DAYS

It all came rushing back to me when I got a phone call from my first company commander in Vietnam, COL James W. "Pete" Booth, US Army retired. He told me of an article in Army magazine describing the battle at the Michelin rubber plantation in November 1965. Pete offered to send me a copy, and reminded me I had included a partial description of that day in the book he had compiled, entitled, *Returning Fire: in the Beginning*.

Talking with Pete brought back many memories of that day, some suppressed, but never forgotten. When I received the magazine and read the article, more memories came flooding back. In the April 2012 article, entitled, *My Longest Day* as told to COL Francis R. Stevens, USA, retired, by LTC William P. Baxter, USA retired, LTC Baxter described what a terrible day it was for him; for me, his description seemed like we were in different battles.

I entered active duty August 28, 1963, and took basic infantry training at Fort Polk, LA. In November 1963, I entered Infantry OCS at Fort Benning, GA, with a bunch of very experienced NCOs many of whom had completed Airborne and Ranger training. I was eventually commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, Armor, in May 1964. Following Armor Officers Basic Training at Fort Knox, KY, I went to Fort Wolters, TX, for primary helicopter school and on to Fort Rucker, AL, to finish my helicopter flight training.

I arrived in Vietnam in August 1965 and a few weeks later



197th AHC Gunship equipped with quad 7.62 machine guns and two rocket pods (7, 2.75 inch rockets per pod)

I was designated a Fire Team leader and took over the second Fire Team of the 1st Platoon of the 197th Armed Helicopter Company, a direct descendent of the UTT, the first armed helicopter company in the world. My call sign was Playboy 13. Initially, I was leading a Fire Team of very experienced Warrant Officers. The Warrant Officers were there to keep me out of trouble. A Fire Team is comprised of two or three armed helicopters, gunships, with each, at that time, having one of three basic weapons configurations.

I loved flying gunships. Flying a gunship gave me control of a highly maneuverable gun platform that could quickly move to the scene of the heaviest fighting and wreak havoc on the enemy. Being the Fire Team leader enabled me to bring two or three gunships to the fighting.

After being seconded to the Marine Corps for about a month flying out of Qui Nhon in II Corps, I returned to III Corps where my Fire Team was either providing close combat support to various units or flying seek and destroy missions. I hadn't yet begun marking Landing Zones for air assaults, but would later. By November 1965, I was an experienced Fire Team Leader. I knew my business and had control of my aircraft, fire team and those around me. I was also training pilots new to Vietnam in our aircraft.

The events that led to the battle in the Michelin Rubber Plantation began earlier in November. Generally, we began our missions by being given a location, frequency, and call



Moody (left) and fire team pilots L-R, Paxton, Kammner & Ratasczak

sign to use to contact the unit we would be supporting for the day. Upon making radio contact, we immediately began offensive operations. That was how I was introduced to the 7th Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). I remember working overhead cover and support for several days.

The Plantation is located northwest of Saigon in Binh Duong Province, almost directly east from Tay Ninh City. At that time the nearest operational airfield was in Tay Ninh. The Michelin Rubber Plantation was the largest rubber plantation in Vietnam and the source of much revenue for the South Vietnamese government. The Plantation is located adjacent to War Zone C, III Corps, with jungle surrounding much of the Plantation and a series of small mountains running basically from southwest to northeast located on the Plantation's northeast corner. The US government was probably reimbursing Michelin for each tree damaged by a bullet. That might explain why there was no readily available artillery support for the ARVN unit.

My flight records indicate on November 26th I flew 5.8 hours supporting the Regiment. We were fairly successful and killed several VC. When the fighting stopped and the opportunity arose, I liked to land and talk to the American advisers. It was then I met the American advisers, including the senior American advisor, Major Guy Hector McCarey, Jr., MACV Advisory Team 70. It was Major McCarey I generally spoke to on the radio while providing support and we already had a friendly working relationship over the radio.

As I landed and during our discussions, the ARVN were accumulating VC bodies and my fire team members were looking over the results (VC KIA) of that day.

From my experience, Major McCarey knew his stuff. He knew what he wanted with regard to my Fire Team and our

capabilities. Major McCarey was a tall, slender man who had a serious demeanor and appeared to me to be very religious. Although he was serious, everyone was happy with the success we had that day. During our discussions, I noticed he did not carry a weapon. I mentioned this to him and he told me if they got into real trouble, he would be able to pick up a weapon on the battlefield. I thought this odd as I do not feel comfortable in a battle zone without being armed. In fact, since being in Vietnam I had flown only one mission where my only duty was to take control of the aircraft if the pilot were shot. At the end of the mission, I asked my Platoon Leader to never put me in the position again; if I was being shot at, I wanted to shoot back.

During our discussions, Major McCarey told me since we had been so successful that day and worked well together - I estimate we killed 25 to 30 VC - he would ask for me personally to provide overhead support for several days while they worked in the area. He also told me he would like me to get there very early the next morning, as they expected to start their operations early.

After we made small talk for a few minutes, I went over to inspect the bodies before returning to our home base. To this day, I criticize myself for not observing the obvious. All the bodies were of young boys in different styles of dress. If I had just analyzed what was before my eyes, I may have been able to alert Major McCarey and the other American advisers that the boys we killed were not hard-core VC but looked like they had been rounded up in the area and forced to attack the Regiment as a probing action which I now know was in preparation for an attack in force.

I flew 8.2 hours on November 27th, 8 of those hours during the night. I do not recall who my wingman was that day, but recall my copilot was a brand-new Warrant Officer (WO1) named Rich Ratajczak. This was Mr. Ratajczak's first day in combat and his first mission.

My two-gunship light Fire Team took off well before dawn. Each gunship was armed with an XM-16 gun system of four articulating M-60 machine guns, plus two rocket pods, each carrying seven 2.75 inch folding fin rockets with 6 pound warheads. The 6 pound warheads had little killing power. However, the rockets made a lot of noise and were frightening to those we were firing at. Each aircraft had a 197th Company crew chief and a door gunner seconded to our company from the 25th Infantry Division out of Hawaii. These gunners were all volunteers on TDY assignments. It was a pleasure serving with all of them. Each gunner and crew chief on an aircraft was also armed with an M-60 machine gun hung on a bungee cord allowing

them excellent maneuverability to provide maximum coverage for the aircraft.

A gunship in this configuration allowed the Fire Team leader to initiate attacks with each gun ship firing six M-60 machine guns simultaneously and two rockets at a time, as needed. We could fire a pair of rockets every half second. We did not fire the M-60 machine guns as a trained infantryman would in firing bursts of eight; instead, fire was initiated upon my direction and everyone kept firing until I told them to stop. Firing the M-60 machine guns in this manner kept the XM-16 system from jamming.

Soon after taking off that morning from our base at Tan Son Nhut airfield, we ran into problems. It was toward the end of the rainy season and there was a thick layer of fog on the ground north of the airfield and another layer of clouds above us. As we flew towards the Plantation, the ground cover and clouds begin to converge causing us to execute a 180° turn. None of us new Army aviators were qualified to fly instruments when we graduated from flight school. We knew how to fly visually and had minimal training flying by instruments. Even so, being able to fly via instruments would not have helped that day.

After I completed my first 180° turn, I tried to make contact with Major McCarey. I could immediately tell he and the ARVN Regiment were under attack. I again reversed my flight and began desperately seeking ways to penetrate the cloud cover. Eventually, I was successful in doing so.

Before we arrived overhead, Major McCarey apprised me of his situation: He advised he was under a major attack begun as the ARVN troops were preparing their breakfast. He also said the ARVN troops were breaking and panicking. Based upon his directions, we were able to immediately roll in on a firing pass at the attacking VC/NVA. As we did so, we could see waves of VC/NVA attacking the ARVN positions in an extremely disciplined manner. Both my wingman and I dumped all of our rockets and fired most, if not all, of our M-60 ordinance in just two slow firing passes. We were able to mow down many of the attackers.

Upon rolling out of our second firing pass, I immediately headed towards Tay Ninh while calling ahead requesting immediate assistance on the airfield. At the same time, my wingman and I were calling the ARVN 5th Infantry Division's headquarters and our company Operations Officer requesting immediate assistance. This was a major attack and we, and especially the 7th Regiment and the American advisors, needed help immediately.

As we flew to Tay Ninh, we flew by Nui Ba Dinh (Black Virgin Mountain) on our right side. We were met on Tay

Ninh airfield by Special Forces troops who helped us as we "hot" loaded our aircraft. By "hot" loaded I mean we never shut down our aircraft. The Special Forces troops with the assistance of our crew chiefs, gunners and copilots loaded the rockets and threw M-60 belt ammunition onto the aircraft so our crew chief and gunner could load it into the XM-16 tray system as we flew back to the Plantation. As I think back upon that day, I do not believe I shut down the aircraft at any time during the day. The first time I shut down was when I finally I made it back to Tan Son Nhut airfield at the end of the day.

The round trip flight from the Plantation and Tay Ninh did not take much time and we got back on station in record time. That began the cycle of our support for the ARVN Regiment and MACV Advisors. We made round trip after round trip after round trip, reloading over and over, dumping our ordinance on the VC/NVA and occasionally hot refueling as needed. I have no idea how many round trips to rearm that day.

Unlike the description provided by LTC Baxter, I do not believe there were any mortars, 37 mms or recoilless rifles being fired by the enemy that day. I do not recall any artillery support during the height of the battle, nor do I recall any before I left the area of operation. Nor do I recall any Air Force support until after the major part of the battle was over. I can only assume LTC Baxter heard our rockets being fired and thought they were mortars or some other heavy weapons.

I would have gladly called in artillery that day, and I do not know why it was not available. It is possible, indeed likely, that artillery support was available but was restricted from firing into the Plantation because they did not want to destroy the rubber trees. If that was the case, the ARVN Regiment should never have been directed to sweep through that area without artillery support. No artillery support was a recipe for disaster.

The close combat support we provided was the best we could provide and my Fire Team was all the air support the ARVN Regiment had. During the battle, I ended up violating all of our training and procedures and began hovering on top of the rubber trees as we shot the VC/NVA attackers. I will never understand why we did not get shot down. The VC/NVA attackers were extremely disciplined and their fire was directed primarily at the ARVN troops. Even as we mowed them down, we never slowed their progress.

As the fighting became more desperate, it appeared to me the VC/NVA Regiment had hit the center battalion extremely hard and as it gave way, the battalions on each

side curved around until they surrounded the attacking force. The center (headquarters) battalion with Major McCarey continued to give way because many of the ARVN troops dropped their weapons and ran. The majority of the American advisors were attached to this battalion and took the brunt of the assault. The battalion was almost overrun but somehow managed to bend because some of the ARVN troops did not run but slowly gave way. It was not until I read LTC Baxter's description of the battle that I realized his battalion, the one to the east or right side of the center battalion facing north, the direction from which the initial VC/NVA attack came, had moved out earlier that morning. Major McCarey had not told me of that when I arrived on station.

After we rearmed during one of our trips to Tay Ninh and were approaching the battle area Major McCarey radioed to me he was being overrun. He asked me to put all my fire on top of his position and he would "pop" smoke so I could do so. When I spotted the smoke, where I knew he was from my previous conversations with him and having visited the previous day, I dumped my load of rockets as he requested. Behind me my wingman did the same. Additionally, we continued to fire our M-60 ordinance as rapidly as we could. That was our last radio contact with Major McCarey.

We then returned to Tay Ninh to rearm. Upon our return to the battle area it appeared to me there was a short lull in the ground fighting. Even then, we continued to lay fire upon the VC/NVA. I believe the lull in fighting was to give the enemy's commander time to gain control of his troops and he then directed the attack to the northeast. The enemy thus broke out of the envelopment very easily. Upon breaking out, the VC/NVA broke up into smaller units and began to escape and evade into the jungle to north and northeast.

It was about this time additional support arrived. Major Booth and other Fire Teams from the 197th Armed Helicopter Company arrived on station and began to attack the VC/NVA as the enemy left the area. But the battle was over. The only thing left was a completely demoralized ARVN Regiment and many, many bodies and equipment strewn throughout the area.

Later, Major Booth landed to pick up wounded, but the demoralized and panic-stricken ARVN swamped his aircraft as they tried to climb on to be evacuated. Uninjured troops were pulling off the wounded so they could be evacuated. Fortunately, Major Booth was able to get airborne and ordered the rest of us not to attempt additional

medevacs as we risked losing an aircraft to the panic stricken ARVN. The ARVN troops acted as if they were drowning. They were grabbing for anything that would float in the hope it would get them out of the area.

Until recently, I believed all the American advisors were killed that day. It wasn't until I read LTC Baxter's article that I learned some American advisers survived. I am grateful for that.

All I know is my Fire Team killed more VC/NVA on this day than any other day I served in Vietnam. Even though I say this, I have no idea how many we killed. I know at the end of the day, when I finally made it back to Ton Son Nhut airfield, parked my aircraft and shut it down that I learned Mr. Ratajczak's right index finger, the one he used to pull the trigger for the XM-16 system of four M-60 machine guns, was blistered on the last two joints.

As I shut down the aircraft, the first time it had been shut down since we left our parking area over eight hours earlier, I sat for a moment to take a deep breath and relax. It was then Mr. Ratajczak looked at me and asked, "Is every day going to be like today?" That was a good question.

Several days later, I took the opportunity to fly back to the Plantation to see the devastation. What I found was many ARVN bodies lying where they fell among all their abandoned equipment. The VC/NVA bodies had been carefully picked up and stacked in long rows and they were apparently being taken from the battleground to be buried elsewhere.

The smell of death was overpowering. As we flew down to get a closer look at the area, we penetrated an area of death that hung like a miasmic bubble of oily haze at about 250 feet above the ground - an oily haze I remember to this day. The stench of human bodies rapidly deteriorating in the humid, tropical air was so thick it felt as if a thin sheen of oil of decomposing human covered my uniform and skin. I could not wait to shower.

Overall, November 27th was One of My Longest Days. It was that day I saw firsthand what can happen to a military unit that loses all discipline and panics when attacked. The terror in the ARVN troop's eyes and the way they comported themselves was an ugly, ugly sight I will never forget. I will also never forget the power of a mass attack conducted by well-disciplined infantrymen. The VC/NVA won the day and it is still a bitter pill for me to swallow.

Part 2 continued in the next issue of the Aviator

"With thanks to Hal Moore and Joe Galloway, from their wonderfully poetic book title We Were Soldiers Once, And Young, came the inspiration for this poem. That title always seemed to me to be the perfect first line of a poem that had never been written, but needed to be. I hope I have done it the justice it deserves."

NIGHT JOURNEY

The staccato thunder of an approaching
Helicopter's double-bladed rotor
As it beats against the heavy air
Of a sultry summer evening in suburbia,
Something that is felt as much as heard,
Followed closely by the once-familiar snarl
Of a tail rotor passing directly overhead
Spirits me away to another time and place
So many years and miles removed from this one,
Reminding me that we were soldiers once,
And young, and full of youthful piss and vinegar,
And like every generation gone to war before us
Innocents, ignorant of blood and bullets, death and dying,
At least when first we started down that path;
And like those of our predecessors,
Our minds were full of images
Of the grandeur and the glory
Of the noble task we'd set before ourselves
To do our nation's bidding.
And so our generation also came of age a bit too soon,
And lost its innocence somewhere in the fog of war,
Its youth abbreviated of necessity
As we sweated through the jungles, skies and paddies
Somewhere in Southeast Asia.
The commanders who held our fates in calloused hands
Seemed to us such old men back then,
And though our memories make it seem just yesterday,
The offspring of some of us who made it home alive
Hold similar ranks and roles
In the armed forces of the present,
And are yet another generation's "old men" at the helm,
Though they seem such youngsters to us now.
And by the passing of the years since our time of trial,
We now can scarcely recognize ourselves
In our own old photos from those times,
And find it near impossible
We could have ever been that young.
And while the intervening years
Seem to have flown so swiftly past

The realization has slowly dawned
That for every one of us who fell in battle,
Cut down in the very flower of his youth,
Still others lost their lives to war,
Yet never knew it 'til a generation later:
Those who beat the bullets and the booby traps
Only to come home as "dead men walking",
Victims eventually to every kind of cancer
And disease the mind can conjure;
They and so many others of our comrades
Who made it home alive
Have already now been taken
By this host of silent killers,
While the rest of us are fast approaching
The limits of the pathways paved
By what's coded in our genes;
The dying part has always been what's easy,
But for the experience of a bit of pain;
What's hardest now, as it was back then,
Is to watch your brothers die around you.
But death deferred is death regardless,
And what we once escaped by skill or luck
Awaits us still, though we know not where or when;
Every day our numbers dwindle by another few;
And those of us still standing are wont to wonder
If we've well-used the extra time thus granted,
And who among our shrinking cohort
Will own the claim to "last man standing"?
It seems our honored dead are with us always,
And in the gathering darkness
I can see the faces of my fallen friends
And hear the echoes of their voices
Now, as then, forever young;
I think my own face could have,
Maybe should have, been among them
As I should have twice been dead
But for a little extra luck or else
My guardian angel's intervention;
Then with the fading of the rotor's beat
Into the deepening darkness,
The gentle summer sounds and scents
Return me slowly to the here and now;
And the chorus of the tree frogs and the crickets
Seems to softly whisper "Welcome Home."

-L.D. Smith
Cattlecall 16
HMM-161
RVN '69-'70

Charles Kettles' Distinguished Service Cross to be upgraded to Medal of Honor

American Huey 369, Inc.*, which formed 12 years ago in Peru, IN, has returned two Hueys (369 and 803) to flight, and will soon be flying a UH-1B gunship (049).

On May 20-21, AH369 was in Findlay, OH, participating in the town's annual Armed Forces Day event. A special activity on the 21st was an Honor Flight for Chuck Kettles, who served in Vietnam with the 176th Assault Helicopter Company.

Long ago, for an action on May 15, 1967, Kettles received the Distinguished Service Cross. That award is being upgraded, and he will soon be at the White House, receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor. "USA Today" covered the Saturday event thoroughly - including video from the jump seat of Chuck flying AH369's Huey, 803. Publication will be tied to the date of the White House event. After Chuck's Honor Flight, several of us veterans of the 176th (and a few wives) posed with him in front of AH369's Huey. Chuck is near the nose of the aircraft - flight helmet still on.

*American Huey 369 (AH369) was formed for the purposes of preservation and education, and for paying tribute to all veterans and patriots. <http://www.americanhuey369.com>

The following is extracted from VHPA member Major Kettles' DSC Citation:

Major Kettles distinguished himself by exceptionally valourous actions on 15 May 1967 while serving as aircraft commander of a helicopter supporting infantry operations near Duc Pho. An airborne Infantry unit had come under heavy enemy attack and had suffered casualties. Major Kettles immediately volunteered to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and evacuate their wounded from the battle site. Although friendly artillery had pounded the hostile positions, the enemy was well entrenched and fighting fiercely. Major Kettles led a flight of helicopters into the landing

zone through a savage barrage. Small arms and automatic weapons fire raked the landing zone and inflicted heavy damage to the ships, but Major Kettles refused to leave the ground until all the craft were loaded to capacity. He then led them out of the battle area. He later returned to the battlefield with more reinforcements and landed in the midst of a rain of mortar and automatic weapons fire which wounded his gunner and ruptured his fuel tank. After leading more wounded aboard, he nursed the crippled craft back to his base. He then secured another ship and led a flight of six helicopters to extract the Infantry unit. All but eight men had been loaded when Major Kettles directed the flight to take off. Completely disregarding his safety, he maneuvered his lone craft through a savage enemy fusillade to where the remainder of the Infantrymen waited. Mortar fire blasted out his windshield, but he remained on the ground until the men were aboard. The enemy concentrated massive firepower on his helicopter and another mortar round badly damaged his tail boom, but he once more skillfully guided his heavily damaged ship to safety.



VHPA members of American Huey 369: Glen Veno, Gary Moline, Peter Bales, Bill Flowers, Phil Marshall, Al Michaels, Ted Buisker, and Tom Agness. Chuck Canfield, Ron Clark & Ron Paye.



After Chuck's Honor Flight, several veterans of the 176th, and a few wives posed with him in front of AH 369's Huey 803. Chuck is near the nose of the aircraft -- flight helmet still on.



American Huey 369's aircraft 803, flown by LTC Chuck Kettles

First Aviation Brigade

On May 12 to 15, Ft. Rucker and the First Aviation Brigade hosted events commemorating the formation of the Brigade in 1966. The work of Larry Castagneto CW4 (Ret.) to promote the event and added assistance from AAAA and the VHPA, resulted in an enjoyable reunion for nearly 200 people. Many veterans of the Brigade were joined by a spouse, child or grandchild in various combinations. The event was favored with seasonably warm, clear and dry days. I personally recall spending July months twice at Ft. Rucker and appreciated the difference.

The first evening's activity consisted of a casual get-together. On the following day, guests registered at the Army Aviation Museum and thereafter toured the various Simulator Training facilities and static displays of several rotary wing aircraft both current and restored. Yano Hall was the site of the Saturday afternoon picnic. Brigade members donated their Saturday to display and inform visitors about the various mobile airfield/ATC equipment and vehicles. The evening dinner was enjoyed at the post club, The Landing. On Sunday morning, a memorial service was conducted at Veterans' Park, which adjoins the Aviation Museum property.

I am sure I speak for all who attended by thanking the First Aviation Brigade for their hospitality and fellowship during our visit.

The accompanying photos are arranged according to the above chronology. (Top to bottom, left to right) Photo credit for the cover of the Aviator is to Carolyn Kirk.

Both Carolyn and Captain

Robert J. Ferrainolo Asst. S3 of the First Aviation Brigade provided photos of the multi-day event and are not specifically attributed for a less cluttered presentation.

Tom Kirk



BDE Commander Col Hoskins
and son Grayson



Celebrates its Fiftieth Year



CONVOY ESCORT MISSION TO PHNOM PENH



Approaching Phnom Penh



Presidential Palace



Cobra over Phnom Penh

In the spring of 1972, my unit C Troop 3/17 Air Cavalry, call sign Lighthouse was given the mission to escort a convoy of ships up the Mekong River to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Phnom Penh was under intermittent siege by Khmer Rouge forces, and highway travel from the port of Sihanoukville was unreliable. So, supplies for the capitol were delivered using the river. At that time, C Troop was attached to 7/1 Air Cavalry, and we were all based at Vinh Long airfield in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam. The gun platoon call sign was Crusader.

The plan was to send four Crusader AH-1G Cobra gunships, and a UH-1H Huey from Troop HQ as the C&C (Command and Control) aircraft. We were to orbit the convoy from the time it entered the Cambodian portion of the Mekong River until it arrived at Phnom Penh. Two of the gunships stayed near the head of the convoy, the other two were near the rear. I don't recall how long the convoy was, but it stretched several kilometers. The C&C orbited the middle of the convoy and could direct the gunships when/if contact was made. The operation took several hours; we had a refuel point midway up the river between South Vietnam and Phnom Penh at a place called Neak Long, which was also a ferry boat crossing site.

When we refueled, we did it hot; that is, we did not shut down the aircraft. The hot refuel process in the Crusaders was for the aircraft commander to exit his position and do the refueling using the fuel port on the right side of the aircraft while the gunner remained in his position and monitored the aircraft controls. I was newly assigned to the unit and flying in the gunner's position on that mission. The refuel pads at Neak Long were located on the side of what appeared to be a soccer field. Across the field from the refuel pads were some open-sided warehouses. I noticed the warehouse closest to the soccer field was stacked from bottom to top with pallets of Coca-Cola! I thought to myself, "Here we are in the middle of nowhere, and you could still get a Coke here!" Amazing.

The trip up the Mekong River was relatively uneventful. There was one incident where an RPG was fired at one of the ships and one of the gunships

went in and put fire down on the area from which the RPG was launched. Results of the engagement were unknown. It was an interesting day from the perspective of going into Cambodia, and even though we did not get to land there, being able to see Phnom Penh.

We were told not to overfly the Presidential Palace, which we avoided. From the air, Phnom Penh looked in many ways like a large, sophisticated European city with wide boulevards, large buildings, parks, etc. When I heard several years later what the Khmer Rouge did to the city and its inhabitants (the killing fields) I was saddened. What a waste.

The trip to Phnom Penh with the Air Cavalry Troop opened the door to another opportunity to visit Cambodia later on that same tour. After the Air Cavalry Troop rotated back to the States to become D Troop, 3/4 Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii, I transferred to the 18th Corps General Support Aviation Company in Can Tho. That unit had a mission to supply two aircraft to the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh once or twice a month. I was given the opportunity to go because of my previous trip to Phnom Penh with the Air Cavalry Troop. But that's another story.

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USAFSS Intelligence Analyst 1964-74

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1963-64 Basic Lackland AFB, Tx

1964-68 RAF Chicksands, England

1968-71 NSA Ft. Meade, Md.

1971-74 Osan AB, ROK

1974-83 Vandenberg AFB, Ca

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**VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS
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- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
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| - John Shafer | - James Tinney |
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Notice to all Members of the VHPA

For a limited time, liaison between the National HQ of the VHPA and the Independent Chapters has reverted to John Sorensen of the Chapter Liaison National Committee. John can be reached at 417-759-7487 or via E-Mail at: jsorensen7106@gmail.com. Feel free to contact John concerning any details on opening your own local Chapter of the VHPA and/or for seeing what assistance is available from HQ to support your efforts.

The VHPA and Chapters share information and guidance with one another for the mutual benefit of each other. All of our Chapters are separate and independently managed organizations not under control of the VHPA. The VHPA is not authorized to act as an agent or a representative for any of the Chapters nor are any of the Chapters authorized to act as agent or representative for any of the other Chapters or the VHPA as a whole.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

ALASKA CHAPTER

On May 20th the Alaska Chapter was pleased and honored to assist the Alaska Chapter of the Quilts of Valor with welcoming home 23 WWII and Korea Vets returning from Washington DC on the Honor Flight. With the Governor and Mayor present, each Veteran was given a quilt and received an amazing welcome from the very large crowd on hand for their return. With the Bag Pipes, City orchestra, ROTC, Motorcycle clubs and active military in attendance, it was a moving and wonderful experience.

The Alaska Chapter completed the end of May with a trip to the Byers Lake Veterans Memorial at mile 144 of the Parks highway. Some of the members met early Saturday the 28th at the Denali Restaurant just out of Wasilla for breakfast on the way to the Memorial. At breakfast, consensus of some of the group was to stop at the town of Talkeetna on the way to Byers Lake. This is a major stop for many tourists who come to Alaska, and is a fun town to check out. Our next stop was the Mount McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge at mile 133 of the Parks highway. One of the Princess Lodges, the Lodge was kind enough to give the AK-VHPA group a special rate for our function. The Lodge is a true wilderness retreat with a host of recreational activities and an awesome view of Denali (the Mountain) from the deck where we spent time visiting and reminiscing our war stories. We had a great supper together and finished off the day at the fire pit continuing the war stories along with "refreshments." The morning of Sunday, May 29, we all met again for a great breakfast, then checked out and headed to the memorial ceremony at 2:00 PM. For over 25 years, the memorial function has been coordinated by the Alaska Veterans Motorcycle Club as a tribute to all fallen service members. Emcee for the group was Redial, (bike call sign.) There were over 200 bikes at the ceremony with people coming from all over the state. Dave



Reminiscing in view of the Mountain.



Dave Buirge and Tim Kavanaugh present the AK Chapter wreath.



Vic Micol's gave a speech honoring the veterans.

Buirge and Tim Kavanaugh presented our Chapter wreath, and Vic Micol gave a speech on behalf of the AK-VHPA honoring the veterans. After the ceremony, there was a small picnic by our Chapter and a great day came to an end. We were graced to have two beautiful days for this tribute with the Mountain (Denali/McKinley) overseeing the memorial and trip home. Next activity is halibut fishing in June; stay tuned for the "biggest fish stories."

Terrance Vraniak

ALAMO CHAPTER

Our men met for lunch on April 12th at Stone Werks Big Rock Grill and on May 10th at Zio's, both in San Antonio. Both were well-attended. Our ladies also met, at Maggiano's on April 8th and at PF Chang's on May 13th.

Our quarterly meeting, with wives and guests, was for dinner at the Barn Door Restaurant on June 23rd, and also was well-attended, as usual. We will meet there again in September or October.

The American Veterans Traveling Tribute (AVTT) Traveling Wall was in New Braunfels, TX, from 25 May until 5 June, set up at the Tree of Life Church, which sponsored The Wall. Our Chapter provided all "Locator" volunteers on Friday, 27 May, and Saturday, 28 May, the first two full days of The Wall's appearance. It was very gratifying to help visitors find names and make rubbings, and sometimes to educate them about our war. We thank the Tree of Life Church

for allowing us to honor our fallen buddies in this way, and in showing us every courtesy. The Alamo Chapter directors thank each and every member who volunteered his time to help.

A number of our members plan to attend the VHPA Reunion in Reno, which may be in progress or history when you read this. For the first time, the Alamo Chapter has arranged its own banquet tables for members, thanks to the efforts of Vice President Jim Boykin and member Mike Law. Thanks, guys.

Our Christmas party is scheduled for the evening of Friday, December 9th, 2016, at the Army Residence Community (ARC) in San Antonio.

Members should watch for e-mails and check our Chapter website www.vhpa-alamo.org for details of future luncheons and other scheduled events.

By Chuck Oualline

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH (VHPA-CCN)

APR-MAY 2016 Chapter Report

Our chapter has been staying busy with at least one event per month this Spring. On April 30, 2016, we displayed our Huey at the annual Rio Linda, CA American Legion Poker Run. Thanks to Ken Fritz, Curt Knapp, and Greg Hutson for getting on the road for this event at 06:30. Also, thanks to the Rio Linda American Legion for a nice donation to help us continue to maintain old 563.

On 7 May, we displayed our "Machine" at "Meet the Machines" at the Mather Sports Park in Rancho Cordova, CA. This event is sponsored by the Rancho Cordova Parks and Recreation Department. This is our third year at this event and even the May rain did not dampen the crowds with lots of kids and parents wanting to climb onto a real helicopter. The National Guard sent an Armored Support Vehicle and a Humvee. Lots of other big machines were also shown. Thanks to Curt Knapp, Al Doucette, Mike Whitten, Jim Stein, and Dave Anderson for showing off our Huey.

We will next display our Huey on Memorial Day at the "Vettes for Vets" car show sponsored by the California Auto-



Rio Linda Pirates fire the cannon to start the motorcycle run



Ken Fritz, Curt Knapp, and Greg Hutson at the Poker Run



Al Doucette (L) and Jim Stein (R) managing the crowd



Mike Whitten giving instruction to a prospective future aviator

mobile Museum and again the following Saturday in Antelope, CA, before the Annual Reunion in Reno, NV. We are actively looking for new covered hangar space in the Sacramento area and hope to schedule some maintenance days to get ready for the reunion as soon as we find a new storage space. In the meantime, we are storing the MOC and Huey outside at the Western Trucking School in West Sacramento, CA.

Dave Anderson, VHPA-CCN webmaster

FLORIDA CHAPTER

From April 19-24, 2016, we participated in the 29th Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion at Wickham Park in Melbourne, FL. It's one of the largest All Veterans Reunions in the State. Average daily attendance easily exceeded 10,000. The Vietnam Memorial Traveling Wall always triggers intense emotional responses. We supported this event with our LOACH static display, little LOACH (kiddie ride), Sales Tent, and COBRA (AH-1G) which flew in and landed to the delight of all. As usual, it was a big hit and the 'talk of the town' among the attendees, especially the Vietnam veterans. Upon its departure, the Cobra made several low-level passes over the area as part of its aerial 'exhibition' and 'saluted' the Wall as it left the Event. We received numerous very positive comments and words of gratitude for our service from both veterans and non-veterans.

Remember 'Bobbie the Weathergirl' (AFVN TV Saigon) whose nightly broadcast ("weather-wise and



Cobra Static isplay



LOACH static display

other-wise") was a welcomed relief from the horrors of war?! As a volunteer weather broadcaster in Vietnam, she often traveled to the field as a morale booster. Since returning from Vietnam, Bobbie now lives in Florida and has become a volunteer at many Veterans Day events including this one.

Submitted by Dr. Joe Ponds, President



Dr. Joe Ponds and 'Bobbie the Weather Girl'

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

GEORGIA CHAPTER

Our bi-monthly breakfast meeting was conducted at our GA Chapter VHPA home base, the Rib Ranch (LZ Romeo Romeo) in Marietta, GA, on May 21, 2016.

Our speaker for this meeting was Jim Torbert, one of our own members. For the past eight years, Jim has volunteered at local metro Atlanta high schools and universities to speak about Vietnam. He delivered a typical presentation he uses to inform students about how and why we got into the Vietnam War and what we did while there. It is no wonder that his speaking service is popular among local educators. During Jim's Vietnam duty, he flew for the 281st Assault Helicopter Company (Intruders) which supported Special Forces operations in Vietnam. The 281st will be recognized and honored by the 5th Special Forces at a ceremony at Ft. Bragg during October 2016 where it will concurrently conduct its annual Intruder Reunion.

Our next meeting will again be conducted at our home

base, LZ Romeo Romeo, on July 21, 2016. Our guest speaker for this meeting will be Georgia State Senator Mike Dugan. Senator Dugan retired from the US Army in 2008 as a LTC after 20 years of active duty. He is a Ranger and a Master Paratrooper. During his career he was deployed to more than 32 countries, including hostile fire deployments in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Senator Dugan was selected to serve as one of Governor Nathan Deal's Senate floor leaders. Today he serves as Secretary on the Veterans, Military and Homeland Security, and Public Safety committees.

Former Vietnam helicopter pilots interested in joining our Chapter, please view our website at www.ga.vhpa.org for a schedule of future meeting dates. For questions regarding our organization and/or directions to our meeting location, please contact me at [REDACTED]

Bob Lanzotti, President

MICHIGAN CHAPTER



The Michigan Chapter's Spring meeting was held on May 14 at the Log Jam Restaurant in Grand Ledge. We had a good turnout including 15 members, 3 spouses and our guest speaker. On arrival the participants renewed acquaintances and made new ones. The socializing included embellished war stories and individual updates. The Log Jam provided excellent service and fine food.

Following the luncheon, the business meeting covered three events the chapter plans to attend this year: Lest We Forget in Benton Harbor June 24-26. It includes a wide range of activities that will occur such as simulated assaults and other military displays including the American Huey 369 group.

Operation LZ Michigan in Oscoda at the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base July 8-10. Some of the events there will include Lynn Roberts impersonating Bob Hope, Red Skelton, and Jack Benny; America's Bombshell Duo in Letters from Home; and American Huey 369.

The Veterans Memorial in Fowlerville September 10-11. It will include a fly-in and tribute to veterans with a special 9-11 tribute.

Thunder Over Michigan at the Willow Run Airport in Ypsilanti August 20-21. We will not have a booth there, but it is a great activity to attend.

Past president Charlie Martin was announced as one of



May 14 meeting attendees L-R: Bob Rich, Dave Sauter, Becky Sauter, Lee Luck, Larry Bush, Carol Luck, Mike Wyman, Dave James, Mark Benjamin, Tim Delong, Rod Offhaus, Jeff Butler, Randy Maltby, Pam Brinn, Joe Brinn, guest speaker LTC Todd Fitzpatrick, Rich Deer, Glen Veno. Not pictured Bob Staake.

the winners of a VHPA quilt this year. He follows chapter member Bob Rich who was a recipient last year.

Election of officers, treasurers report and presentation of membership roster was conducted. Unofficially there are 66 listed members, associate members, and interested parties.

The March/April Aviator was noted for the article "Sustaining the VHPA Until The Last Man Stands." The reality of our aging membership and passing of comrades was acknowledged as inevitable. Recruiting of younger associate members to carry on our legacy is the goal.

Displays at this meeting included two custom Joe Kline paintings and a .45 commemorative pistol.

The guest speaker was LTC Todd Fitzpatrick of the Michigan Army National Guard. LTC Fitzpatrick gave a detailed and informative talk about the status of Army Aviation in the Guard and active components. He covered multiple areas of interest to the chapter members present including links between the current and Vietnam era conditions and status. Q&A was continuous through his pre-

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

presentation which was an outstanding account.

For any VHPA members living in Michigan (or nearby) who are not currently on our email list, please feel free to email me at richdeer@att.net to be added. If you were previously on our list but not receiving chapter emails, contact me with your current email address - a few names

were dropped when emails were no longer current. You do not have to be a chapter member to be listed as an "interested party." Who knows, you might just want to join us at a function or two. Spouses, non-aviator crewmembers, and any interested parties are welcome.

Rich Deer, President Michigan Chapter VHPA

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

The North Alabama Chapter (NAVHPA) has not slackened our Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) since our last report. In fact, it is increasing!



The NAVHPA leadership is always amazed at the dedication, engagement and spirit of our more than 60 members and their spouses.

We met in April and May in our usual restaurant and VHPA hangout, the Schnitzel Ranch in Huntsville. These business and social events allow our members to eat a good German meal, hang out with their brothers and provide a time for our spouses to socialize. War stories are usually front and center. Since the last report, the NAVHPA members decided they were not busy enough. The members decided to take on another restoration challenge. The Huntsville Veterans Memorial Museum had several groups of OH-6A Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) parts that might be assembled into a displayable Loach. To say they were in rough shape would be kind.

On the day we picked up the LOH, the first order was to find a trailer to carry the hulk and spare parts. Then we could take them to the Huntsville Executive Airport where we have hangar space provided by our partners in the Saving Our Flying Heritage (SOFH) and Yulista Aviation Inc. (YAI). Next we could begin to disassemble the hulk so the YAI sheet metal crews could begin fixing some of the external holes and tears. We expect restoration will take some time due to our other obligations to display Buc-3 and serve our community.

In April, the NAVHPA members started the month with a trip to a facility that changes waste products into energy. It was an interesting tour topped off with lunch in a brewery. Even the members who were not very interested in the environment were ready for lunch and beer.

April also allowed the NAVHPA to display Buc-3 to more than 800 Junior ROTC Cadets at Redstone Army Airfield, near Huntsville and to reprise our display at the annual Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home celebration at the Huntsville Veterans Memorial. Reconnecting veterans and their families to the UH-1 can be an emotional



Loading the next NAVHPA Project

encounter for some.

In May, we displayed Buc-3 at the University Elementary School in Huntsville, New Market Elementary in Madison County and at an Altoona Day celebration in the area. More than 600 children were able to see, feel, and touch Buc-3 as a living piece of history. We believe these events allow our members to bring the Vietnam experience to life for folks for whom our war is increasingly distant history. This is one of our core missions.

Also in May NAVHPA members supported our Schnitzel Ranch sponsor by helping staff their booth at the Huntsville Brewfest. As you might expect, given aviators' love for beer, finding volunteers was not too hard. A good time was had by all and it was a successful outing for the Schnitzel Ranch.

The NAVHPA's summer will be busy. The dates below show our activities through July:

- 5-10 July - VHPA Reunion - Reno
- 8-9 July - Moving Wall Display - Fultondale
- 9 July - Aircraft Workday (change due to holiday)
- 11 July - Membership Meeting

If you live in the North Alabama and Southern Middle Tennessee area, we want you to join our chapter. You can find out more about us at <http://www.navhpa.org>. You can contact us at navhpa@gmail.com. Come on out!! We'll give you a chance to get all those good old war stories out of your system.



Beginning restoration with demolition



Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home 2016

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER

The 2016 annual reunion is over and was a great success. We again visited with our fellow aviators and enjoyed the comradeship you can only get with individuals with like experiences. Now, we are making plans for the 2017 annual reunion which looks like it will be in Indianapolis, IN. The 2017 reunion will be the 30th anniversary of the Ohio River LZ Chapter of the VHPA which makes a very special reunion.

During our business meeting we elected new officers who are: President - Pete Norman, Vice President - Dan and Christie Gulley, and Treasurer David and Joanne Garner. We all give a special thanks to the officers who are leaving these offices for their dedication and hard work. Bob Hamilton is leaving office after years of holding the positions of Treasurer and as President. He will be just as active, I am sure, for the coming years.

During our banquet on Saturday night a special award was given to Bob Blair. Cheri Montgomery (my lovely



Group picture of the members at the Grand Ole Opry

daughter) and Bob Hamilton arranged to have a replacement Purple Heart to be awarded to me. The original was buried with my Granddaughter Blair Shannon Jesus when she died of heart complications at the age of 2 months. Cheri gave an emotional presentation explaining she at the time did not know I had placed one of my Purple Hearts with Blair. By the end of the presentation we were both crying with the memory, but it was one of those moments I will cherish and not forget.

By Robert Blair

VIRGINIA CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

Insert Old Dominion Chapter Log
30 APRIL 2016 past



Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society Al Orgain Annual Spring Party and Fundraising Auction @ Virginia Aviation Museum 05:30 PM to 9:00 PM. Tickets just \$35.00 Each. "The Best Aviation Party of the Year!" Call 804-222-8690 to Register.

23 MAY 2016 past

07:45 hours Cosby High School 10th Annual Tribute to Veterans. Must RSVP to anne_canipe@ccpsnet.net before 1 May if you plan to march in with the Chapter.

30 May 2016 past

Dedication Ceremony of our two Bricks at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA.

5 - 10 JULY 2016 past

33rd Annual VHPA Reunion, Peppermill Resort, Reno, Nevada.

We had a Great turnout Friday in Charlottesville for the Dogwood Vietnam Memorial 50th Rededication and Saturday for the visit to the Vietnam War Foundation Museum & lunch at the Blue Ridge Cafe. Also a good time was had wine tasting at the King Family Vineyards and Polo Fields in Crozet, VA. Thank you so much Rich Severin for



Friday afternoon Happy Hour.



Blue Ridge Cafe for lunch.

making all the arrangements. Many thanks to all who joined us.

Our deepest appreciation to John, Leah, James and Emily Burger for a Fantastic Happy Hour Friday afternoon at their beautiful home.

The Packard Road Club was staying at the Holiday Inn and Visited the Vietnam War Foundation Museum and were also at the Blue Ridge Café for lunch. It was interesting and fun to see the antique cars & talk to their owners.

Website: VHPAVirginia.org

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER

As previously reported, the VHPA South Missouri Chapter participated in a "Spirit Tour" at Whiteman Air Force Base on March 25, 2016, which was the first quarterly meeting of the chapter for 2016. The pictures had not come back before the last submission deadline, but have since been received. The group pictures are included, as well as a stock photo of one of the original test aircraft that was upgraded to a B2 and named the "Spirit of America."



VHPA SMO at the Whiteman AFB Flight Line with B2 in the background.

The second quarterly meeting of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, South Missouri Chapter, was held on June 11, 2016, at the Hampton Inn & Suites, 5 McBride & Son Drive, Chesterfield, Missouri, near Boone's Crossing and Interstate 64. The meeting began at 11:00 a.m. For those members wanting to make a weekend of it, the Hampton Inn made rooms available at discounted pricing Friday and/or Saturday nights. The program was a look at technological advances and enhancements in Army aircraft design and employment in the current combat environment. There were also guests from other Vietnam veterans' organizations, including Vietnam Veterans of America, represented by members of the Gary Hutchison Memorial Chapter, VVA 1028, in the St. Louis area, and the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association. They were represented by Bill Harding. Bill served in the Air Force from 1964 - 1968, as a door gunner/crew chief/flight mechanic. He was with the 20th

Special Operations Squadron known as the "Green Hornets," which participated in projects Sigma and Omega. Other operations included: Daniel Boone, Prairie Fire, and Shining Brass. The Green Hornets also supported Army Special Forces recon teams in the Central Highlands, Laos, and Cambodia. After the presentations, a continental lunch buffet was catered by Callier's Catering. I appreciate all who came to the second quarter meeting, and look forward to seeing everyone on September 10.

The third quarter meeting will be held in central Missouri in the Columbia/Jefferson City/Rolla area on September 10, 2016. A guest speaker has been arranged, and will be announced when finalized. The fourth quarter meeting will be held at the Keeter Center, College of the Ozarks, on November 5, 2016.

John Wilkinson, President 2015-2017,
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, South Missouri Chapter

UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

Our Upper Midwest Chapter of VHPA met on May 17th of 2016. It was a beautiful, clear 65 degree day. We were very fortunate to have scheduled a special event. We met in a hangar at the New Richmond, WI airport. After a short business meeting we enjoyed the sound of Huey rotor blades, the smell of burnt JP4 and the opportunity to ride in the Huey of one of our VHPA members. Needless to say, there was plenty of talk about memories and many stories shared. Two new members joined the group at this meeting.

We have decided to partner with the Veterans' Organization in Stillwater for our annual boat cruise on the St. Croix River in Stillwater, Minnesota. This is a dinner/social meeting scheduled for August 15.

Our web-site is under development and construction by Jim Bankston and several contributing members. Look for more information concerning this.



Several upcoming veterans' events are being discussed. Some members of our group have already taken the flyable Huey and a trailerable Huey to veterans' events and are planning to continue these presentations during the summer and fall.

Some of our members plan to attend the gathering in Reno this summer. They look forward to meeting and sharing your comradeship.

Respectfully, Richard Anderson, Secretary

A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

The following vignette is authored by NAVHPA member Bob Stewart, a retired BG and Astronaut. This event happened while he was flying gunships in RVN.

One of the most famous lines from the movie "Cool Hand Luke" sums up the situation, "What we've got here is a failure to communicate."

It was a clear and moonless night when my platoon leader began beating on the door to my "hooch". "Bob, we've got an emergency mission. Get in the air and head toward Can Tho. Contact Cougar 3 on this frequency (he handed me a sheet of paper). His outpost is under attack. He'll tell you the situation." So with this detailed briefing, Tbird 1 and his wingman Tbird 3 headed into the void.

Dialing in the frequency, I called Cougar 3, "Cougar 3, Tbird 1 is enroute with a light fire team. What is your location and situation."

"Tbird 1, this is Cougar 3. We are under attack by an unknown sized force. We are at location, I shackle

" - indicating he was going to give me his location as encoded map coordinates

Due to the circumstances of my departure from Soc Trang, I had not taken the time to walk to company ops to check out an SOI (Signal Operating Instruction). These were held in a safe at our ops room because they were not only classified, but contained a small pouch with five morphine syrettes). I could not decode his coordinates.

"Cougar, just tell me where you are."

"Yes sir, I shackle..."

"Wait a minute, Cougar 3, do you know where you are?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well Charlie knows where you are because he's attacking you. The only one who doesn't know where you are is me! So where are you?"

"15 clicks south west of Phung Hiep"

Now we were communicating! "Roger that, We'll see you in five minutes. Light your fire arrow."

That poor young soldier probably figured he had violated every rule he had been taught about Com-Sec. On the other hand, a Tbird fire team turned off the attack and he didn't have to die that night. I'd say that was a pretty good trade.

Tom Payne, chairman VHPA Scholarship Program provided the following communication:

Our Grandson, Kevin Oden, was the recipient of the first scholarship award given by VHPA. I thought perhaps as chairman, then and now, you would like to know how that helped him achieve his goal and perhaps encourage other eligible students to apply for scholarship help.

Kevin received his BSIE at the University of Arkansas in December 2007 and an MBA in 2012. He and his partners have formed an engineering company and are on their way to future success.

Kevin was recently presented with the Alumni award as described below:

The early Career Alumni Award is presented to College of Engineering Graduates who are achieving distinction in their fields of endeavor and show significant promise for their professional leadership in state,

national and internal activities. These individuals have served in their industries for 20 years or less.

Kevin told us that the VHPA scholarship really helped him focus not only on his core classes, but also, he was able to spend time researching for professors and participating in case studies instead of having to work and pay for school. Many of the extracurricular activities helped him develop his skills that led him to start and grow his business.

Needless to say, we are so proud of him and thankful that the VHPA scholarship committee elected to help him in his endeavors. Thanks to the committee for the time and effort and also to those members that contribute to the fund.

James R and Rae A Oden

WELCOME TO THE VHPA!

Look the list over and if you recognize anyone, give them a call, drop them a line or send them an e-mail welcoming them into our Association. Full contact information is available either on-line in the Member Services section of our website, or through our staff at HQ by calling 1-800-505-VHPA.

Line 1, Last, first, MI and/or nickname of new member; double asterisks (**) ID new life members. Line 2, current city and state. Line 3, branch of service. Lines 4 to 6, flight class and Vietnam units and served with, if that info is available.

We welcome these 9 new Members to the VHPA!

All have joined our Association during the period from March 29, 2016 - May 31, 2016.

Albert, Hans J.
Mandeville, Louisiana
Army
66-17
170 AHC in 66-67; 189 AHC in 66-67; 187 AHC in 69

Ballew, Nelson E. 'Kat' **
Odenville, Alabama
Army
69-37 69-33
199 AVN in 70

Garity, Rudolph E. 'Rudy' **
Lansing, Kansas
Army
67-7
E/82 ARTY 1 CAV in 67-68; 3/17 CAV in 71-72

Heinze, Carl **
Mesa, Arizona
Army
68-1 67-25
B/101 AVN 101 ABN in 68-69; A/4/77 ARA in 71-72; 388 TC CO in 72

Jones, Donald V. 'Don'
Roseville, California
Army
71-29 71-35
62 AVN in 72-73

Mctasney, John B. 'Jack' **
Carmichael, California
Air Force
64-1
37 ARRS in 67-68

Nelson, Wayne T.
Brainerd, Minnesota
Army
67-11
C/227 AHB 1 CAV in 60-61; 114 AHC in 67-68

Wargi, Donald L. **
San Isidro, Lima PERU
Army
69-1 68-39
D/1/1 CAV in 69-70

Webster, William R. 'Rick' **
Charlotte, North Carolina
Marine Corps
69-40
HMM-165 in 70-71



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Above Left: A Cobra Gunship receives some roadside maintenance. Right: - I have it on very good authority she was quite a looker back in 1966!

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TAPS

Correction: The obituary on page 40 of the May/June Aviator Taps section contains the military data for William Hutchinson, who assures us he is still around. The rest of the section does contain the obituary for William Hutchison, the intended subject. Please note, however, that his Flight Class was 64-6W and his RVN service consisted of the years 64-74 flying for Air America.

Artley, John C. USAF MAJ (Ret.)
Flight Class: 55-0, RVN: 61-62 H-21

John was born on June 19, 1934 and died on February 3, 2016, surrounded by family. A superb pilot of many aircraft, John treasured his time in the military and at the FAA.

Burks, William R. USA
Flight Class: 64-3W,
RVN: 65-66 C/1/9
CAV 1 CAV



William Richard Burks, 77, passed away in his home in Bonney Lake on May 10, 2016.

He is survived by his wife, Mimi, and three children. Bill served in the US Air Force and the US Army. He proudly served three tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot with the 1st Air Cavalry. Bill had a 28 year career with General Electric Aircraft Engines and retired as the Manager of the Eastern Hemisphere. He received the Gerhard Neumann Field Service Award for outstanding accomplishments in aircraft engineering.

Gruver, John C. USAF
COL (Ret.) RVN: 66-67
20 / 69 20 SOS, Callsign:
Green Hornet 1234



John Carlton Gruver passed away on Sunday, April 17, 2016 after a brave battle with cancer.

John lived a life filled with love and respect from all who knew him. John Gruver was born in Oakland, CA on September 6, 1932 to Leona Boeck and John William Gruver. He graduated from Acalanes High School in

1950. He graduated from San Francisco State University where he was commissioned through the Air Force ROTC program in 1954. He received his Air Force Pilot wings in 1955 and completed Helicopter Pilot training in 1956. He served the Air Force, honorably over the next 30 years. His service included duties in Guam, California, Montana, Thailand, Vietnam, Florida, Utah, Ohio, Louisiana, Missouri, and Georgia. During his final assignment, he served from 1980-1984 as Commander of the 86th Security Police Squadron and as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Security Police Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe at Ramstein Air Base in West Germany. Among his many medals and honors, John was awarded two Purple Hearts and the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism in military operations as aircraft commander of a UH-1F helicopter in Vietnam. John C. Gruver retired as a Colonel after 30 dedicated years of service in the U.S. Air Force. After retiring, John enjoyed 24 years as a long-time resident of Albuquerque, NM. He recently moved to Loveland, CO to be closer to family.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years Frances, a son, three daughters, and six grandchildren.

John's honesty, integrity, hard work ethic, sense of humor and heartfelt devotion to family will be remembered, always.

A military service was held at Ft. Logan National Cemetery at 3698 S. Sheridan Blvd., Denver, CO on Friday, May 13, 2016.

Hodges, William M. USA Flight
Classes: 69-33 / 69-35, RVN: 70-71
187 AHC, Callsign: Rat Pack 38

William Michael Hodges, Jr., 66, entered into rest on Saturday, May 7, 2016 at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center.

Interment was performed at Bellevue Memorial Gardens with military honors. William was a native of Mem-

phis, TN but had lived in Columbia County for 40 years. He was a veteran of the U. S. Army, proudly serving in Vietnam as a Cobra Assault Helicopter Pilot and was a flight instructor. Mr. Hodges was a member of the Catholic Faith and attended St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church. He was an avid fisherman and camper but mostly enjoyed spending time with his family.

He was preceded in death by his parents, William Michael Hodges, Sr. and Marie Aldret Hodges, two brothers, Robert Allen Hodges and Donald Howard Hodges and by his son, Matthew J. Hodges.

Survivors include his wife, Lorraine Hodges of Martinez, GA, four sons, a brother and five sisters, eleven grandchildren, three great grandchildren and his step-mother.

Horan, George B.
USA CW4 (Ret.),
RVN: 64-65 1 CAV
DIV / 67-68 132
ASHC



George B. Horan, Sr., 83 of Columbus, Georgia passed away on May 13, 2016. He was born on December 18, 1932 in Nashville, TN to the late William A. Horan, M.D. and Vera Ann Horan. He faithfully served his country in the U.S. Army as a helicopter pilot and instructor, serving two tours during the Vietnam Conflict and retiring after almost 30 years. After retiring from the U. S. Army he volunteered at Ft. Benning's Martin Army Hospital shuttling people to and from the parking lot. George was a pillar in his community helping those less fortunate and for his service to his community he became one of WTVM's Nine Special Friends. He was a loving, gentle, kind and big hearted soul, with a sense of humor that will be greatly missed by all who knew and especially loved him.

Survivors include his loving wife of 31 years, Nancy E. Horan; a daughter, five stepdaughters, a stepson and two grandchildren.

TAPS

**Hoskins, Owen L. USA
CPT (Ret.) Flight
Class: 69-16, RVN: 69
D/1/4 CAV 1 INF / 70
C/16 CAV**



Owen Lee Hoskins, age 77, of Madison, IN entered this life on June 5, 1938 in Madison, IN. He was the son of the late Walter Raymond and Ora Frances Barnes Hoskins. He was a 1956 graduate of Madison High School in Madison, IN. He attended University of Southern California and received a degree as an electrical engineer. Owen Lee was inducted into the United States Army during the Korean War and served in the Signal Division and Missile Command. On January 22, 1966 Owen Lee was united in marriage to Nedra Joy Turner in Pendleton, IN. He served for the next twenty years, seven months and twelve days and rose to the rank of Captain. He was a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War where he encountered Agent Orange. Owen Lee was honorably discharged on November 25, 1975 from Fort Gordon, GA receiving the National Defense Service Medal, Army Aviator Badge, Vietnam Service Medal with Three Bronze Service Stars, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 14th OLC, Silver Star Medal, Purple Heart, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Bronze Star Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with X Device. After his service to his country he began working with the Office of Personnel Management at the Jefferson Proving Ground serving as Provost Marshal and Director of Law Enforcement and then with the Department of Economic Social Affairs in Albuquerque, NM as a Special U.S. Marshal. He resided in New Mexico until 2000 and then moved to Bonita Springs, FL moving back to Madison 11 years ago. In his spare

time, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, playing golf, and being with his grandchildren. Owen Lee was a member of the Madison VFW Post 1969, Jefferson Post 9 of the American Legion, Solomon Lodge No. 1 F. & A.M. in Savannah, GA and the Macedonia Baptist Church. Some of Owen Lee's proudest moments were at Flight School at Fort Wolters, TX, Kirtland Air Force Base and Hunter Army Airfield. Owen Lee was a proud Veteran, devoted husband, loving dad and grandpa. Owen Lee died on Friday, May 6, 2016, at 7:09 p.m. at the King's Daughters' Hospital in Madison, IN from exposure to Agent Orange.

Owen Lee will be missed by his loving wife of 50 years, Nedra Joy Turner Hoskins of Madison, IN; his four sons, seven grandchildren a great-grandson and three sisters.

**Johnson, Monte D. USA (Ret.) Flight
Classes: 69-47/69-45, RVN: 70-71
A/1/9 CAV 1 CAV, Callsign:
Apache 38 / 21**

Monte David Johnson was born to Herman and Mildred (Wilson) Johnson on December 26, 1940, at Winner, SD, and passed away on Thursday, May 19, 2016 at his home in Milligan, NE at the age of 75. He was one of five children born in the family.

Monte joined the Navy Reserves while still in high school and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1958. The following year he married Karen Dittenber. While in the Navy, he was stationed in Norfolk, VA and San Diego, CA. After leaving the Navy in 1966, Monte policed the City of Littleton, CO. In 1969, he continued his service to his country and joined the Army. While in the Army, he performed tours in Vietnam from 1970-1971, Korea from 1975-1976 and 1980-1981. He was a member of the 1st Cavalry Division where he first flew a Huey Helicopter and then moved to a Cobra Attack Helicopter.

He was awarded the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross three times, and Bronze Star. On June 30, 1984, he retired from the Army and later settled outside of Waverly, NE. He met Mary (Marshall) Haneline and they were married on June 25, 1994. They made their home in Waverly, where Monte flew Life Flight for St. Joseph's Hospital and worked for Concrete Industries. Upon his retirement from there, he and Mary moved to Milligan, NE where he worked on the farm with his son-in-law.

Monte was baptized and confirmed in the Trinity Lutheran Church in Winner, SD. After moving to Milligan, he joined the Milligan United Methodist Church. He also had membership in the Milligan American Legion HSSK Post 240, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, VFW, National Rifle Association, the 1st Cavalry Division, US Army, and the Milligan Community Club.

Monte was military service-oriented through and through; he was structured, a true gentleman, respectful, and well organized. He loved spending time with his wife, Mary and also cherished the relationships he made with friends in the community of Milligan. Attending Vietnam reunions and reconnecting with his brothers in arms were great memories for him.

Monte was preceded in death by his grandparents David & Anna Johnson; Carl Wilson and Sophie Wilson; parents Herman & Mildred Johnson; nephew Jeffrey Johnson; and parents-in-law Melvin & Mildred Marshall.

He is survived by his wife Mary Johnson of Milligan, NE; two sons, two daughters, nine grandchildren a sister and three brothers.

WO1 Monte Johnson joined Apache Troop, 1st Squadron 9th Cavalry in May 1970, just in time to take part in the "Cambodian Incursion" ordered by President Nixon. He was assigned to the Lift platoon, and soon qualified as an Aircraft Commander

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in the UH-1 Huey with call sign "Apache 38." Monte wanted to fly Cobras, so he somehow finagled a transition, and soon earned his second call sign, "Apache 21," as an AC in the aero-weapons platoon.

Monte was an exceptionally good shot with the 2.75-inch Folding Fin Aerial Rockets that were the main armament of the Cobra. VHPA member Jim Kurtz of Fairfax, VA, remembers one mission where Monte demonstrated his prowess. Jim was Monte's co-pilot on a Pink Team mission during "Second Cambodia," another incursion that took place in February to May 1971. The second time around, the forces on the ground were the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, with US air cavalry in support. According to Jim: The Low Bird reported a Toyota pickup truck hidden under a stand of palm trees just outside a village. There were no people in sight, but the Scout crew observed some sort of boxes in the back of the truck, so I called the spot report into the Apache Troop operations center, which passed it up the chain. Soon the order came to "fire it up."

Monte pulled the Low Bird back up to altitude, so we wouldn't have to worry about someone taking a shot at it, and then he set us up for a pass, with him firing the rockets from the back seat and me in the front seat on the turret. Monte fired a single pair of rockets that went straight to the target. The result was dramatic: he hit the pickup truck square on, and pieces of it flew through the air. But they weren't just any pieces. Monte Johnson literally "blew the doors off" that truck!

**Kolb, Harold R. USA
Flight Classes: 71-
31/71-25, RVN: 72-73
C/16 CAV, Callsign:
Dark Horse 15.**



Harold Kolb
"Hal," 68, born April 29, 1947 in

Coburg, Germany, passed away unexpectedly on April 19, 2016. A highly decorated Vietnam helicopter pilot who was awarded the DFC and Purple Heart, he had a long career flying for the Washington National Guard and was one of the first pilots to rescue survivors of the Mt. St. Helens eruption. He was always passionate about flying, pheasant hunting and, more recently, woodworking, while tending to life on his mini farm. He is survived by his wife, Judy; two sons, and seven grandchildren.

**Lunsford, William T.
USMC LTC (Ret.)
Flight Class: 54-F,
RVN: 67 HMM-163,
68 HML-367.**



It is with deep sadness that we report the death of William Thomas Lunsford, on April 12, 2016. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ellen, his two children, and seven grandchildren; He was preceded in death by his parents, Dr. William F. Lunsford and Inez Lunsford Silberg.

William was a graduate of Wentworth Military Academy, and Oklahoma City University. He was Vice President of his senior class, President of Kappa Alpha order, and a member of Blue Key Honor Society. Bill, as a Fighter pilot and Helicopter pilot, was the recipient of the Bronze Star with valor, Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Selected Medical Reserve Medal, Purple Heart, Republic Vietnam Service Medal with 3 stars, Republic Vietnam Campaign Medal, Single Mission Air Medal, National Defense Medal with Star, and numerous other awards during his 27 years of service. He was on the Allocations Committee of United Way, Pastor Parish Committee of Thalia Methodist Church, Past Master of Indian River Masonic Lodge, Area Representative of National Sojourners, and recipient of the John Dove Award

Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia and the Knight York Rite Cross of Honor - a life well lived.

Consider donations to the Alzheimer's Association, PO Box 96011, Washington DC 20090-6011, and website: alzheimers.org.



**Middleton, John L.
USA Flight Class: 56-9,
RVN: 62-63 UTT, Call-
sign: Grease Pit 6**

John Lovell Middleton, 84, of Ponte Vedra Beach, FL died Thursday, April 7, 2016 after several weeks of hospitalization following open heart surgery.

Mr. Middleton was the owner and founder of Carolina Material Handling, Inc., a material handling corporation, headquartered in Greensboro, NC.

After graduating from Charleston High School, Charleston, WV, where he was All-State in basketball and football, Mr. Middleton attended Greenbrier Military School, Lewisburg, WV and after a year was offered a basketball scholarship to the University of Virginia in 1950. At UVA, he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity, Eli Banana Society and ROTC. He played in the first ACC Basketball Tournament in 1954. Forced to take his deferred commission early, he entered the military as an Army Second Lieutenant in 1954 and later completed his graduation degree in Education under the Bootstrap Program, graduating from Kansas State University in 1961.

During his nine years of military service, he became a helicopter pilot and had various tours in the states, Germany, Okinawa, and Thailand eventually entering the Vietnam War with the Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company, the first armed Helicopter Company. Mr. Middleton made the decision to leave the military and return to civilian life in 1962. In Charleston, WV, he joined Jefferds, a

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material handling company, as Parts and Service Manager and eventually as a salesman. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to Greensboro, NC where he began his own company.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Susan; his son, four granddaughters and a sister.

Miller, Wayne C. USA
Flight Class: 67-1/66-23, RVN: 67-68 A/7/17 CAV, Callsign: Ruthless Red 17



Wayne C. Miller, 69, of Milford, NJ, passed away in his son's arms at Hackensack University Medical Center on January 28, 2016 after over a year's battle against AML (Acute Myeloid Leukemia). He was born on July 13, 1946 to the late Elizabeth Catherine O'Hara Miller and Wayne C. Miller in Conshohocken, PA. He leaves behind his wife Ellen, his two children and two grandchildren. He also leaves behind four sisters, and a brother.

Wayne volunteered to join the Army in 1965. While at Ft. Rucker he and some of his classmates started a band to play in the Officers Club to get out of KP duty. He was deployed to Vietnam in '67. He started out as a lift helicopter pilot and later volunteered to become a Scout pilot. He performed the Air Cavalry Scout Mission above and beyond the call of duty. Such dedication to duty would be his guiding light for the rest of his life. He was honorably discharged with a Purple Heart. He became the Senior Vice-Commander and a life member of Milford/Frenchtown VFW Post 7857. He was also a member of the Frenchtown/Milford American Legion Post 113.

Wayne was a musician, dynamic community leader and organizer, EMS and military helicopter pilot, Vietnam Veteran, painter, entrepreneur, fixed wing pilot, writer, film producer, builder, visionary... etc.

Wayne was always committed to the intelligent and intentional development and beautification of his environments. He was an inspiration to his family and friends. He is leaving behind a legacy of community activism and pride. To paraphrase a quote I keep hearing from his buddies, "He was just such a fun time. You always knew that when you were with Wayne, you were going to get into something great!"

The Wayne C. Miller Memorial Celebration was held on May 7, 2016 at Van Sant Airport in Erwinna, PA. He was honored by a Missing Man flyover of vintage aircraft.

Nagel, Herbert W. USA
Flight Classes: 70-5/70-3, RVN: 70-71 B/227 AVN 1 CAV, Callsign: Masher 49



Herbert W. Nagel, 67, of Brandon, died on May 19, 2016. Herb was born in Germany, raised in New York City, and Brandon was his home for the past 30 years. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Herb proudly served his country in the United States Army and was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. He retired from the FAA after 19 years as an Air Traffic Controller. An avid sports fan, Herb enjoyed watching the Bucs, Rays and Lightning. He is survived by his wife Cathy, a son, a sister, and three grandchildren.

Ulrich, Jimmie D. USA
Flight Class: 67-24, RVN: 68-69 A/7/1 CAV, Callsign: Apache 36 / 5



Jim was born on December 7, 1941 and died on May 23, 2016. He graduated from Reagan High School in Houston, and attended The University of Texas. He served in the U.S. Army as a Cobra helicopter pilot during the

Vietnam War, and received many medals for valor. Jim was the owner of Jim Ulrich Motors in Crockett for many years. Always a community leader, he served as a Rotary President and as President of Spring Creek Country Club. Jim was an avid hunter and golfer. Six years ago, he moved to Lufkin and worked at Wright Buick and GMC.

Survivors include his two stepsons, four grandchildren, and a sister.

Valouche, Leslie L. USA
MAJ (Ret.) Flight Class- es: 61-7/62QC, RVN: 63-64 118 AVN / 70 HHC/25 AVN 25 INF / 70-71 C/16 CAV, Callsign: Bandit / Dark Horse 6



Les was born in Texline, TX and served as a Major in the U.S. Army for 20 years. He had one tour in Korea and two tours in Vietnam, where he was the Commander of the Dark Horse Troop. During this time he received many medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross and two Bronze Stars.

After retiring from the U.S. Army, Les ran the Aero Club at Randolph Brooks AFB for 10 years. He then entered the real estate business as Broker/Manager of two real estate offices at World Wide Realty and Keller Williams Realty, before owning his own company Valouche Properties.

He loved hunting and the outdoors, vacationing on the beach in Destin, FL, and traveling in his motorhome. Les was a humble man who showed great honor, courage and leadership throughout his life. He will be greatly missed! Les is survived by his wife of 64 years, Marilyn Valouche; a brother, three sisters, three children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Interment was conducted at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

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**Winters, James L. USA
Flight Class: 69-10,
RVN: 69 B/1/9 CAV 1
CAV / 69-70 B/227
AVN 1 CAV, Callsign:
Masher 3**



James Larry Winters of Lenoir City died at his home on May 26th following his very courageous battle with a lengthy illness. Born March 15, 1943 to James and Mary Alice Winters, in Florence, AL, Larry is survived by his loving wife of 48 years Patricia Anderson Winters; two sons, and two grandchildren.

His family was closest to his heart and Larry could often be overheard saying he derived his greatest joys from his two sons. He was known for

his deep faith, quick wit, infectious laughter, unselfishness, and optimistic spirit.

Larry graduated from the University of Tennessee where he found true brotherhood in the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, in particular the "Melrose Group" and "Brothers Bill". Larry had a thirst for learning which led to his receiving advanced degrees from the University of Southern California and Vanderbilt University.

He was a Captain in the U. S. Army, serving as a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War, and was the recipient of numerous recognitions for his courage in combat, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Bronze Stars, one Bronze Star with Valor, the

Purple Heart, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and numerous air medals of which he was quietly very proud. He loved his Country and served it valiantly.

Larry was a manufacturing operations manager for several large corporations throughout the country. Upon his retirement in 2004 he undertook another career in real estate.

A faithful member of Church Street UMC, Larry belonged to the Pathfinders Sunday School Class, served as an usher and was a valued volunteer in the Soup Kitchen.

Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Records of the recent deaths of the following twenty-five potential members of the VHPA were gleaned from internet searches within these last two months. All information that the VHPA has for these men may be found at VHPA.org or by calling 1-800-505-VHPA. If any of our members have more information, please report it to: HQ@VHPA.org or call 1-800-505-VHPA (8472).

Albright, Thomas E. USMC (Ret.) died on May 5, 2016 (no other data).

Beckman, Randall M. USA LTC (Ret.) Flight Classes: 68-1/68-501 died on May 9, 2016 (no other data).

Burdick, Gary W. USA (Ret.) Flight Class: 69-47 died on May 19, 2016 (no other data).

Burless, David B. Flight Classes: 68-1/68-501 died on May 10, 2016 (no other data).

Cloar Clyde R. USAF LTC (Ret.) died on April 10, 2016 (no other data).

Culbreth, James R. USMC died on April 13, 2016 (no other data).

Franklin Edward J. USA MAJ (Ret.) Flight Classes: 68-19/68-511 died on April 6, 2016 (no other data).

Funk, Howard E. USAF LTC (Ret.) died on April 4, 2016 (no other data).

Harris, James D. USAF died on April 3, 2016 (no other data).

Melton, Burnum E. USA MAJ (Ret.) died on May 13, 2016 (no other data).

Palmer, Marvin L. USAF died on April 5, 2016 (no other data).

Palmertree, Tommy R. USA COL (Ret.) died on March 23, 2016 (no other data).

Pyeatt, Robert J. USAF COL (Ret.) died on March 19, 2016 (no other data).

McGee, Robert D. USA (Ret.) Flight Classes: 70-5/70-7 died on April 7, 2016 (no other data).

Shennum, Alan R. USA Flight Classes: 68-17/68-511 died on April 4, 2016 (no other data).

Shobert, Edwin L. USAF MAJ (Ret.) died on April 4, 2016 (no other data).

Shrader, Cecil L. USA COL (Ret.) Flight Classes: 59/61QC, RVN: 66-67 C/1/9 CAV 1 CAV -69 C/1/9 CAV 1 CAV.

Steadman, Henry W. USMC COL (Ret.) died on April 24, 2016 (no other data).

Watters, Duane A. USA Flight Classes: 70-7/70-9 died on May 27, 2016 (no other data).

Zook, James K. USA Flight Class: 66-21 died on April 22, 2016 (no other data).

Home For a Helicopter



UH-1C 65-09513

Hello,

I am contacting the VHPA Aviator upon recommendation from the president of the Green County Veterans Memorial Park, a Vietnam veteran pilot and subscriber, Larry Ayres. My name is Melody Pope, I am a senior from Brodhead High School, and I am currently serving as media director for this park and project.

Mr. Ayres encouraged me to contact you about our Home for a Huey project, as something you might be interested in. The park serves not only as a memorial to veterans, it is also a sanctuary and healing tool. The park committee has recently purchased a Huey helicopter. They are trying to raise enough funds to refurbish and mount the helicopter at the park, as it is an extremely important artifact to the veterans who visit this park.

Below I have included links to the GoFundMe page I've created for this project (which helps tell the story a little more in-depth), and to the YouTube upload of my short video project.

The GoFundMe page has already raised \$1,425 in the span of less than two weeks. The video, "Home For a Helicopter," was recently shown at a dinner and dance fundraiser for the cause - it features a vocal rendition of the national anthem by rising young vocalist Josie Picard, interview with Vietnam veteran Orson "Junior" Robertson who takes other vets to the park for counseling, and park president Larry Ayres talking about the importance and connotations surrounding the Huey.

GoFundMe Page:

<https://www.gofundme.com/ydwb4tus>

"Home For a Helicopter" Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gut-itEOide>

Thank you for your time,

Melody Pope

Media Director, Green County Veterans Memorial Park



♪ Come Fly With Us! ♪

- Want Some Stick Time?
- Can you still hover this trainer?
- Call Us for special VHPA Member reduced rate

Great idea for a summer vacation stop!!

If you live near Mt. Pocono, PA or Elkin, NC or may be passing through,
Call us at **(570) 839-0550** in PA or **(336) 366-3563** in NC.
Logged Time with rated IP in fully insured aircraft

Email: Info@HiTechHelicopters.net

UPCOMING REUNIONS

Army Aviation Reunion 7/1 BLACKHAWKS

Sept. 21-25, 2016 ~ San Antonio, Texas

Contact Fred Young ~ [REDACTED]

229 AHB REUNION

The pilots, crews, and members of A company 229th AHB are planning a reunion of those individuals associated with us from 1966 through 1968. The get together will be informal and centered around this year's Air Venture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin between **July 25th and the 28th**. Anyone interested can contact Chris Laskey at [REDACTED]

191 AHC REUNION

September 8 - 11, 2016

Location: Las Vegas, Nevada

Reunion Webpage: <http://www.191ahc.org/reunion5h1.htm>

BOX CAR / HERCULES REUNION

Dates: 14 - 18 September 2016 (Arrive 14th depart 18th)

Location: Double Tree by Hilton,

6000 Memorial Parkway SW, Huntsville, AL 35802

Reservation Phone Number: (256) 882-9400 (Direct) or 800-445-8667

King or Double Queen Rooms are \$94 per night (Plus Tax \$13.22) (King Rooms have a shower only while Doubles have a tub & shower). Extra days will be at the same rate. Specify "178th/132nd Reunion" when making reservations. The last day to register is 31 August 2016.

Hotel amenities include: Free Buffet Breakfast, Free Parking, Free Wi-Fi, and Free Airport Shuttle service.

We will be having our dinner on Thursday night the 15th at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. The 2015 food and drink menus are examples of what to expect. The Biergarten is open to the public, but they will reserve a table area for our group.

The CH-47 Program Manager's Office will provide a briefing for us on the latest information for the Chinook (date to be determined). They have also offered to set up a CH-47F static display for us to tour. The aircraft will be at Redstone Army Airfield. For us to gain access to the installation will require those that do not have a Military/DoD ID to be prescreened. This means that you and any other visitors provide the Reunion Host with the following information:

- Full Name with Middle Initial
- Social Security Number
- US Citizen (Yes/No)

Reunion Host: Monte McDonald

Phone: [REDACTED]

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Visit the Huntsville/Madison County Visitors Bureau web site for things to see and do in the area: www.huntsville.org

NOTE: Please provide Name and Unit Affiliation of all attendees to Reunion Host, so name tags can be preprinted.

VINH LONG OUTLAWS ASSOCIATION

The Vinh Long Outlaws Association will be holding its biennial reunion in Branson, Missouri **September 15-19, 2016**. The reunion is open to all former Outlaws, Mavericks, Bushwhackers, legacy units and support elements. Complete details can be found on the VLOA website www.vinhlongoutlaws.com (Click: "Reunions") or contact Jim Donnelly, [REDACTED]

Reunion for Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (Vietnam)

Date: August 24 August 28, 2016

Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel Jacksonville, FL

POC/information: Rich "Hip" Hippner hipexec@yahoo.com

Reunion for C company 227 ASHB 1 CAV Water Buffalo and Ghostriders

Date: 13-16 September 2016

Location: DoubleTree Resort North Redington Beach, FL

POC: [REDACTED]

281st AHC REUNION

October 6 - 8, 2016

The 281st Assault Helicopter Company Association announces its 2016 Annual Reunion to be held in Fayetteville, North Carolina! On Friday morning at Ft. Bragg, there will be the dedication ceremony of the plaque recognizing the 281st AHC as the U.S. Army's first special operations helicopter company. The plaque is dedicated to all those who served in the 281st regardless of rank or job description. Bus transportation to and from the hotel and Ft. Bragg will be provided. Later Friday we have planned a fun filled evening with a buffet style dinner. Our Saturday evening awards banquet is always the highlight of the weekend. Don't forget the "Hospitality Room" that will be fully stocked with beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) and providing lunches and late night socializing on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. There will be a book signing for "Above the Best" by Will McCollum and a famous guest speaker on Saturday night. We also have something special planned for the ladies on Saturday morning. All of this is covered by your registration fee of \$125/person.

The Doubletree Hotel has guaranteed us a special 281st room rate of \$99 per night which includes a free breakfast for two people per room, each morning. They will also provide shuttle service to and from the airport at no additional cost.

For reunion Info and registration forms visit: 281st.com

Want to see your Reunion listed here? Send details to: Aviator@VHPA.org



"Looking For"

Looking for contact information for the widow of Benny C. Parker

Bill Williams is trying to contact Becky Parker, whose husband Benny served with D/1/4 CAV in 1969. Benny died in 1970. Contact Bill Williams (former pledge with Benny at Phi Delta Theta at UT Knoxville). 451 East Drive, Oak Ridge, TN 37830 Ph. 865 659-4109, email: [REDACTED]

Looking for the crew that medevaced me from Dat Do

At 21:30 on March 18, 1967 a few clicks from Dat Do (Bai Ra, Vung Tau area), I received a gunshot wound during an ambush by the recon platoon of the Royal Australian 5th Battalion. Our Platoon Commander was 2nd Lt. Michael Deak MC. Our AO was Phuoc Tuy Province.

Michael decided to use two zippo lighters because of the low glow they would give off and not make it easy for the enemy. This was all happening about 2130 hours and the chopper crew did see the lighters. He was standing in an open paddy field with his arms outstretched and as the chopper got close it turned on its lights. He was silhouetted under the lights and expected to be killed straight away.

We didn't know whether it would be a RAAF chopper or a US crew. One of the boys later told me I said "You RAAF blokes took your time." The reply was We are not the RAAF!!! I don't know whether I said that or not. Anyway, I was picked up safely and was admitted to 36 Evac hospital, Vung Tau about 2200 hours. I received great care from doctors and nurse the week or so I was at 36 Evac.

We had a Canadian war photographer, Daryl Henry with us on some ops. He said he has worked with US Army and Navy chopper crews and might be able to help me find out the names of the crew that picked me up in the darkness. I know it's a long shot but it would be great if I could find out their names.

Tony Twatts: [REDACTED]

Looking for...Army helicopter nose art & names.

Dear helicopter veterans, my next Vietnam War helicopter book is 50% complete. The other half needs your help. I am an Army aviation veteran in search of in-country photos & historical data pertaining to personalized artwork & names (e.g. Good Vibrations, Proud Mary) painted on Army helicopters during 1962-73. Help me document this often overlooked chapter of our aviation history. Thank you gentlemen.

Respectfully yours, John Brennan, former SP5, 114 AHC, 1970-71, Vinh Long AAF, Mekong Delta, [REDACTED]

Looking for members of the 175 AHC, "Outlaws" involved in March 26, 1967 Easter Sunday battle.

I am putting together a pamphlet about the Battle of Easter Sunday, containing stories of the survivors.

In March 2017, the 175th AHC 'Outlaws,' will be hosting a mini-reunion in the DFW area, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of The Battle of Easter Sunday that was fought on 26 March 1967. Prior to the event, I would like participants to please send me a short one or two page synopsis of what they did during the battle. I plan to put those stories together in a pamphlet, tentatively titled VALOR in the DELTA. A publisher in CA has expressed an interest in turning it into a book.

In addition to the narratives, I'd like those veterans to also send me a recent photo of themselves; one taken in RVN, a short bio, and any relevant photographs they may have. Everyone involved that day has a story to tell. This project is a way to preserve those unique stories and, above all, to honor the brave men who fought and sacrificed so very much, so long ago. Thanks, guys.

Jon F. Myhre, Outlaw 17 [REDACTED]

Looking for friends/unit members who knew my brother.

I am the younger brother of Jim Dexheimer, a 135 AHC Taipan pilot member during 69-70 at Bearcat and Dong Tam.

As the VHPA site states he died in 1975 while flying in the Black Hills. The correct date of death was 8/5/1975. He is buried at Fort Snelling in Minnesota. He flew for tours that summer and had been in community college the prior year and planned to come back to St. Paul. I flew some flights for fun with him, and with his need for adrenaline rushes he had taken up parachute jumping. He was intending to take me on jumps that fall.

I would very much like to hear from any members that knew Jim and would be willing to share any short stories or comments. We have very little in the way of records on Jim, just a few family photos. I'd very much like to be able to get some insight into Jim for myself, as well as for our kids, my wife and my older sister and brother. I found several great photos of him on the Emu/Taipan site; some solo, some with others unnamed and a few named ones (among them Cooper, McGough, Russo, Ralph and Pritchard).

Knowing Jim, I can imagine some of the stories and comments might best be left off of printed records. So, below are multiple ways to reach me.

My email is either [REDACTED]

Sincerely and with the highest regards, John Dexheimer

Looking for

The Medevac pilots/crew who rescued my cousin, SP4 Richard Siever, on the night of March 19-20 1969. He was wounded while serving with C/2BN/12INF. In that action, his colleague, PFC Richard D. Satterhwaite was KIA in the province of Hua Nghia.

http://www.212warriors.com/1969_1.html (Scroll to Mar. 19.) If you can assist in this search, please contact me at: [REDACTED]

Paul A Lawrence, Retired USAF Air Traffic Controller)

Looking for fellow amateur radio operators

I am a new Amateur Radio operator. I know we have other chopper pilots out there who need to have a mike in their hand. I wonder if we could have a VHPA net call on D STAR? Please contact me if interested: [REDACTED]

Looking for anyone who served with my father.

Edrick Kenneth Stevens 173 ABN was killed in Dak To on November 6, 1967. I was eight months old at the time.

I've poked around a bit, been to a 173rd reunion, but I have yet to run into anyone who can say they remember serving with him. All six guys on point that day were killed. And he had been transferred from one company to another only about a week before he was killed, so it is not surprising it has been difficult to find anyone who knew him.

After his death, family and friends gave my grandparents a little over \$50,000 in his memory. This was when their home in Simi Valley, CA was worth about \$31,000! They used the money to have two churches prefabricated, airlifted, and erected; one in the Philippines and one in Vung Tao, Viet Nam. Being a 47 driver, it would be great if you could drum up the guys who flew that church into Vung Tao!

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of his death. I'm considering going to Dak To and Vung Tao for the anniversary. Just thought I'd drop you a line to see if you might be able to stumble into anyone who knew him or anyone who might be interested in this little project.

Incidentally, my callsign was Dustoff 88 in Desert Shield/Storm, 82nd Med Det. I've been flying Hueys ever since, most recently on fire contracts for USFS and CalFire. Thanks,

Chad Stevens Jonathan.C.Stevens@cbp.dhs.gov
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BOOK REVIEWS

By VHPA Life Member: JOHN PENNY



THE FINAL FLIGHT OF CURIOUS YELLOW is an anthology of stories by VHPA members under the VHPA copyright. It is the legacy of our fellow VHPA member Michael Lazares who passed away recently. He worked hard to put these stories together.

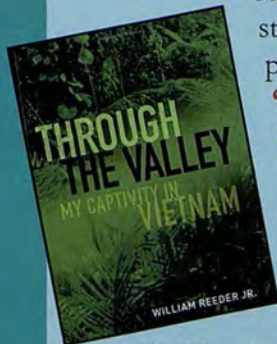
All stories are of individual contributors' Vietnam flight experiences. Stories range from humorous to loneliness and give a comprehensive view of a pilot's life while serving in Vietnam.

I hope that members will support VHPA and Quad-A by purchasing this book.

~ John Penny

Available at Amazon and at

<https://www.createpace.com/6100390>



Every life compels a worthy story, undiminished by others. Then, there are those personal stories that we can all agree are simply extraordinary, this is true for **"THROUGH THE VALLEY: MY CAPTIVITY IN VIETNAM"** by VHPA life member William Reeder Jr, 361st Pink Panthers, 1971-1972, supporting MACV-SOG operations from Camp Holloway.

On May 9, 1972 Reeder's Cobra was shot down at Ben Het in intense firepower. He was injured but

managed to evade the enemy at first, but was captured. Despite suffering physical injury and sickness, Reeder keeps a keen mind that is able to appreciate the beauty and grandeur of the jungle and the alertness to assess the tactical organization and value of enemy encampments he witnesses on his imposed march to Hanoi.

Reeder humbly shares his story, emphasizing the shared stories of courage and human resiliency under adversity also suffered by his fellow captives. He never loses hope. One understands every day is beautiful, we always have something to appreciate even when we don't think so. This is a must read.



THANKS BE TO GOD, THIS "PHANTOM RAIDER" SURVIVED! by Life Member Julian B. Johnston who served with C Troop, 1/9th Cav, 1st Cav in II Corp in 67 and I Corps in 68. Commissioned in the Armor branch from Army ROTC at Northeast Louisiana State College, Johnston went the standard route through Fort Wolters and Fort Rucker. In June 1967 he boarded a

Boeing 707 at Travis AFB headed for Pleiku via Manila.

After the usual in-processing, he headed on to An Khe. Buying a camera from the PX, Johnston began taking the excellent color photos and writing the captions that make up the core of his book. As C Troop moved north from An Khe to Camp Evans, then to

Dong Ha, Johnston continued photographing and commenting on the bases, units, men he served with, and the local Vietnamese.

Johnston's tour of duty ended abruptly in March 1968 when he was injured when his OH-6 crashed on a combat search and destroy mission near Quang Tri. He was initially taken to the USS Repose then to the states via Japan, Alaska, Illinois, and Andrews AFB Maryland.

The photos make Johnston's memoir of his service and those men he served with a unique reading experience.

Thanks be to God, this "Phantom Raider" Survived! (185 pages, \$46.00, 286 color photos) by Julian B. Johnson, ISBN: 978-0996924245 is available from Amazon or other book suppliers.

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