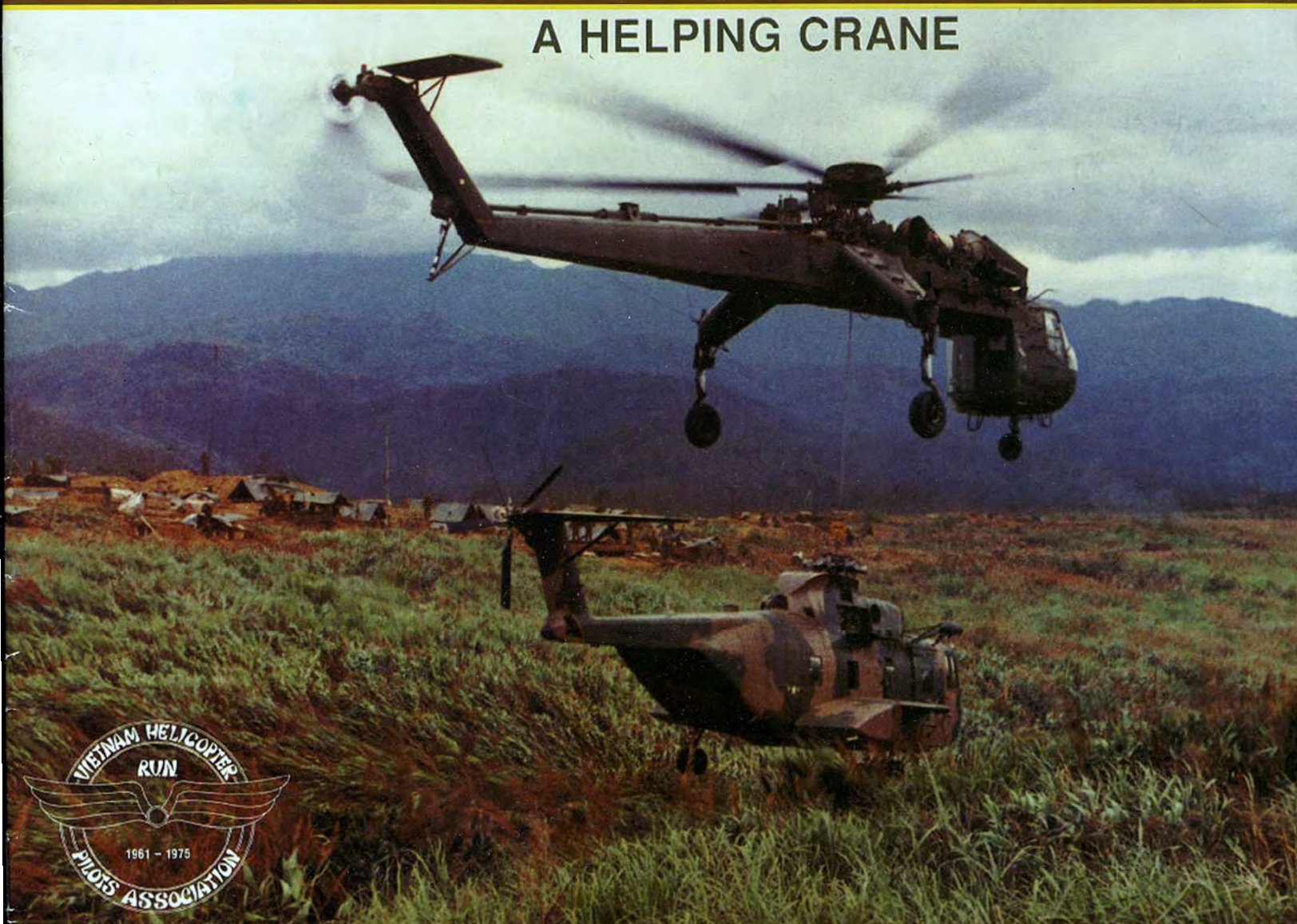




# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

## A HELPING CRANE



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# From the President of the VHPA

To paraphrase an old saying, "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you cannot please all of the people all of the time." So it is with our annual reunions. Some like it over the fourth of July, while others do not. Some like more tours, excursions, or events than you could shake a stick at, while others prefer more free time to socialize with friends. Not everyone likes the chosen venue, or the planned events. One thing is certain - the volunteers who serve on the Executive Council or National Reunion Committee, along with our HQ staff, working countless hours with tireless volunteers (like Mike and Dianna Law) do everything possible to bring you an outstanding reunion year in and year out! I am grateful for their efforts. Hand salute.

Here are two things we can all agree on: (1) We are older now than we've ever been, and (2) We will never again be as young as we are now. As we continue to travel life's journey, we can anticipate smaller numbers at our reunions, due to a myriad of reasons - our health, or that of our spouse; transportation expenses; or numerous other things over which we have no control. If you've attended the reunion's Memorial Service through the years, or even if you have not, you've noticed the ever increasing number of our membership now appearing in the TAPS section of our magazine. We are losing almost one VHPA member with each



passing day, and there's no reason to think this trend will not continue.

Having said all of that, there's an alternative to maintaining the camaraderie we all share with our brother aviators and that is participation in your local VHPA Chapter. Some meet monthly, some bi-monthly or quarterly, while others meet annually. Clearly, travel time to meetings is greatly reduced and chapter events are as varied as the chapters themselves.

During the reunion in Atlanta, I announced that Tom Payne had agreed to become Chapter Liaison Officer. Tom brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position, having served as VHPA President, served a number of years on the Executive Council, and is a Past President of the Oklahoma Chapter of VHPA. If your chapter is looking for new ideas, or if you live in an area not serviced by a local chapter and you have even the slightest interest in starting a chapter in your area, feel free to reach out to Tom. His contact information is found elsewhere in this issue of *The VHPA Aviator*.

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association is 35 years young and still growing in number. We are the premier veterans' organization and each of us can be proud to be part of such a group. Thank you for bringing your experiences and ideas to the VHPA.

*John Sorensen, President*

## FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

HQ now has copies of the Vietnam Helicopter & Crew Members Monument Dedication Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery DVD for purchase. The price is \$15 which includes shipping cost. A copy of the program will be included with each order, while supplies last. Call HQ at 800-505-8472 to place your order. Tshirts with the monument on them can also be purchased online at <https://gear.vhpa.org>.

Be sure to check out the new VHPA Gear store on line. Visit <https://gear.vhpa.org> or <https://www.vhpa.org> and click on the "VHPA Gear" link to view the shirts available now. New items will be coming soon.

Remember - 2018 Directories purchased will be delivered in October 2018. As of September 1 - new orders coming in will be for 2019 directories. The deadline for ordering the 2019 directory is August 15th, 2019. A copy of the paper directories is \$15 and CD copies are \$10. 2019 directories will be delivered in October 2019. The on-line directory is free at <https://directory.vhpa.org>.

You can pay your dues and pre-order your CD or Paper Directory on

line thru the On-Line Directory at <https://directory.vhpa.org/>!

PLEASE HELP US REDUCE THE COSTS OF REMAILING ITEMS! If you move, PLEASE 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 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*



# SELECTIONS FROM PAST NEWSLETTERS

*This issue's column is from February 1995.*

*Photo from June 1995 VHPA calendar.*

## COVER PHOTO

### Flying Cranes in I Corps and Laos

On my second tour, I flew CH-54As for the 478th Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) which at the time was assigned to the 159th Assault Support Aviation Battalion (which included three CH-47 companies) for the 101st Airborne Division. The 478th was based at Red Beach, just north of Da Nang, in a compound erected to support rear echelon activities. Our AO covered all of I Corps and west into Laos. Besides the 101st, we supported the Americal Division, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Air Force, the Vietnamese Army and the Royal Laotian Army.

I'd like to describe two incidents that still stand out in my mind, but a little background information will help.

The Crane had the capability of hydraulically winching 15,000 pounds, and its cargo hook system handled up to a 20,000-pound static load. The high-density altitude conditions we encountered in Vietnam's mountains reduced some loads to 17,000 pounds. Therefore, we removed the armor plating, the cargo hook system that secured the pod, and other extraneous items to obtain what we called "super lifters."

The first incident involved the recovery of a Marine Corps CH-53 Sea Stallion which had a basic weight in excess of 24,000 pounds. It occurred in early 1971 near An Hoa, south of Da Nang. I have never heard of any other instance of a CH-53 being recovered by another helicopter up to that time.

During a monsoon rescue operation, the CH-53 was hovering over a flooded area to pick up some Vietnamese civilians. I guess the crew was distracted by the mission, because they had a tail rotor strike. The aircraft settled into the water and tipped over on its side but suffered relatively minor damage overall.

During some hasty coordination, the Marines assured us they'd remove the rotor system, transmission and some other components to get its weight down to 17,000 pounds. However, when we made the initial pickup hover check, the winch load indicator said we had in excess of 20,000 pounds on the hook.



An Army CH-54 removes an Air Force HH-3, date unknown. This photo belongs to VHPA member Bill Byrd and came to the VHPA via Phillip Chinnery, a good friend of the VHPA, and the author of VIETNAM, The Helicopter War. The CH-54A was powered by two Pratt and Whitney JFTD123A-1 turbine engines, each capable of producing 4,500 take-off horse power. With more powerful engines and without the large fuselage found on the USMC CH-53s and USAF HH-53s, the US Army CH-54 was correctly labeled the Sky Crane. The USAF HH-3, Jolly Green Giant, belonged to the 37th Air rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS).

This picture may have been taken in Laos because the markings on the Crane do not match any of the three CH-54A companies based in Vietnam. However, the 478th Aviation Company which covered I Corps, often sent a bird to Laos to provide heavy lift support. During these missions they were instructed to wear civilian clothes and act like a civilian contractor. Right! To this day we are certain these instructions completely fooled the North Vietnamese!



In any other case we would have put it back down for further lightening, but with daylight fading and the reputation of the Army to uphold, we stayed.

We held at a hover for about 30 minutes to burn off 2,000 pounds of fuel, leaving the absolute minimum needed to get us to the Marine base with the load. The always reliable Crane made it look easy as we lumbered into Marble Mountain and gently deposited the tarnished CH-53 on the maintenance pad.

Some of the other aircraft we recovered were U.S. Air Force CH-3 Jolly Greens, A4s, and C-7 Caribous, Marine OV-10 Broncos, Army OV-1 Mohawks, and all types of helicopters. We also moved air-cushion vehicles, bridges, engineer equipment, railroad cars, ammunition, rations, fuel bladders, and artillery pieces.

Periodically, the 478th was tasked to support U.S. interests in Laos. Many of our missions supported the USAID activities assisting the Lao civilians driven from their home-lands by invading NVA. The U.S. Embassy also gave us missions to assist the Royal Lao forces.

Once we recovered a Royal Lao Air Force CH-34 to Vientiane so Buddhist monks could exorcise it. The Lao pilots had determined the aircraft was not flyable because it had been inhabited by evil spirits!

In June 1971 we were asked to help General Vang Pao's troops by lifting a couple of Chinese 122mm howitzers they had just captured from the NVA in a battle on the Plain of Jars.

My response was the standard one, "What does it weigh?" Well, nobody present had any idea, but we concluded it had to be less than a U.S. 155 mm, since it was a noticeably smaller piece.

I took advantage of an Air America S-58T flight to get a glimpse of the site where the guns were being guarded by the general's troops. We landed briefly just to let off a team of American riggers and then returned to Long Tien where we quickly readied for the mission.

A pair of Royal Lao armed T-28s (each loaded with six 250-pound bombs and two .30-cal. machine guns) escorted us into the PZ. The hook up and flight out were uneventful; the gun weighed somewhere around 8,000 pounds, I seem to recall.

We carried the gun to the airfield at Long Tien where the camo-dressed General Vang Pao personally thanked us. As we had undertaken the flight with minimal fuel, we were delayed while Air America refueled us before going after the second gun.

Before we could get cranked up, a messenger reported the mission was suddenly canceled. Shortly afterward we learned why: The NVA had counter-attacked and took back their lost howitzer!

By Ed Strazzini,  
"Mustang 11" in 1967-68 and "Hurricane 3" in  
1970-71

*PTSD affects are visited not only on the warrior. They are, in many cases, obvious to others. Lydia Miller's grandfather served one tour in South Vietnam in the Infantry and another in the Artillery. Although he has rarely spoken of specifics, his twelve - year old granddaughter wrote the following poem. These words and observations are hers alone.*

I am what I am. I am a sufferer. I am the sad anger the depressed feeling in your body.

I am the pain you feel when you think of the war.

I am the loneliness. I am the wounds you have. I am the memories you keep locked up.

I am the clinic you go to. I am the sounds you hear. I am the nights you stay awake.

I am the anxiety you have. I am the horrible feelings you have. I am the costs you paid.

I am the badges you've won. I am the villages you have burnt. I am the uniform you wore.

I am the friends that died. I am what I am and I'm the affects of the Vietnam War.

Lydia Miller - 2017



# LOACH PILOT RESCUE

I was a medic with Tiger Force in 1968/1969. During that time, as things were slowing down for the winter of '68/'69, we and the men from Recondos were assigned a post on top of Bach Ma, the holy mountain half-way between Hue and Danang. Primarily the territory of 101st, 1st brigade, there were also Air Force, and Marines. It was a shit assignment as there was a distinct down-turn in enemy action. We had been moved there to keep us out of the hair of the brass. Same with the Recondos. Wasn't much of a mission for either of our teams.

The set-up was rife with problems. We had all been inserted one sunny day to the top of the mountain. The CP had been skinned of trees such that no tree extended above the top of the hill. The LZ was in the center of the absolute top, which comprised only about a 1/2 acre. There was a ring of bunkers already there, and we quickly found there were succeeding rings of bunkers at lower levels, every 100 yards or so, down the steep sides of the mountain. The entire base had once belonged to the ARVN, and had never been much use, since it was: 1. Cloudy most of the time (from the flat lands one would see a solid cloud covering the peak almost continually), and 2. The slopes were nearly cliff-like in steepness. The NVA had no use for it, and it didn't work as a place for surveillance.

Of course, the good-idea fairy was hard at work, and one day, as soon as the clouds took a rare break, the sky cleared, and Chinook after Chinook began dropping supplies (we had been there two weeks with a one-week supply, and no water but what we had collected from our ponchos, waiting for the cloud to lift), a water tanker ("buffalo"), and a Company of Infantry. They bunched up at the bunkers, a platoon to each, standing around waiting to leave; BSing with all of us.

Finally, the last Chinook pounded off toward Phu Bai, and we watched as the cloud started reforming, as usual, into a thick soup. The Infantry Company started to form up into a line, a platoon at a time, and descended the steep hillside. Their mission was to make their way down the hill, and recon a pathway all the way to Highway 1, where they would be trucked back to their base. Supposed to take about seven to-ten days. Cake walk, right?

The lead platoon had gotten about half a click down the slope, while the rest of the company was still either at rest on their rucks, or standing in line to head out, when the radios started crackling. Everyone was getting excited. Apparently, someone had tripped a booby trap. Several booby traps! The ARVN had placed booby traps made of GI grenades (pine apple

grenades) using a C rat can open at one end, facing downward, with a trip flare wire stretched across the opening to support the grenade, and across the trail. They had placed hundreds of them around the lowest perimeter, and when they left they had never cleared them. After this event, no one ever went down that hill again, and most of the traps were still down there, hiding in the thick growth and heavy fog.

Turned out that the point man and four others had been severely wounded, with one or two other wounded slightly, but enough to render them ineffective. Several traps had gone off at once or within seconds of each other. Their medics responded forward, and began to bring them back up the hill, while my partner medic and the Recondo medics began to prep the CP bunker for treatment. Five to six people can be a mass casualty situation when the medics have only what Infantry medics carry on their backs. Our initial plan of action was to give IVs, control bleeding, restore and maintain airways, and have these guys out of there on a Medevac bird in half an hour at most. Didn't work out that way.

By the time the wounded were with us, it was now fully dark, and the fog was as thick as ever. A Medevac Huey flew up. We could hear the bird hammering the air as it climbed upslope, but on the radio, he kept saying there was no way to penetrate the fog and come in. We could hear him circling just outside the cloud as he orbited clockwise around the top of the mountain. Wasn't going to work.

During this time, the senior NCOs lit Coleman lanterns inside the CP. We stripped the men and used their poncho liners to cover them. The point man had little square holes all across the back side to his waist, and his left side, from head to toe. His left eye was penetrated. The slack man was head to toe peppered across his entire front, his web gear was shredded, and lying in a pile outside the door of the bunker. The others were in varying states of injury, and levels of consciousness. We started to insert IVs, and to assess conditions. The two worst injured were moaning, and partially unconscious. Two IVs apiece, ensure airways with oral airways. No gagging, and not much pain response. BPs seemed stable, so the other medics continued to work on the lesser wounded. They all got Morphine. I listened with half an ear to the radio chatter.

LT Toberman, the Tiger Force commander was working with everyone and anyone who would talk to him about sending a bird up there, since the Medevac had decided he just couldn't come in through that heavy cloud, in the total dark.



Finally, he set down the Mic, and turned to look my way. Seeing I was already turned his way, he stated that a Loach had just finished a mission and had enough fuel to attempt a try. We had already discussed and discarded several alternative scenarios, including carrying the men about a half mile downward in the dark to get below the cloud. We were in a tight spot, since I was sure the men had massive internal injuries that we simply could not see or deal with. Time was of the essence.

I opted to open all the IVs and change the bottles as fast as I could, to give them volume enough to endure the next hour or so, and a flight down to the hospital.

Sooner than I expected, I could hear the drone of the Loach coming closer. I darted outside. He flew around the top of the mountain several times, and once or twice his headlight barely lit the cloud briefly as he passed. I leaned back inside and told the medics to start wrapping the men tightly in the poncho liners, and to get ready to transport them outside on the hand-made litters we had made from scrap engineer stake sand ponchos.

The NCOs piled mortar powder charges (Little yellowish/whitish circular bags of powder that could be slipped onto a mortar tail to change the flight characteristics) about six inches deep at each corner of the LZ. There was a man with a lighter at each corner. One sergeant was standing at the head of the LZ with a strobe. He was holding it above his head and had already been told by the radioman at his feet that the pilot could not see it as he orbited.

The pilot radioed that he was going to try to come in! At the due north position, he started creeping in his engine shrieking, and his blades buzzing with that distinctive Loach sound. Slowly he crept forward, as I followed him with my ears, straining to see his navigation lights or his landing light. Suddenly, one of the men on the LZ shouted above the noise,

"He is right above me!! I see a skid!"

I could barely make out a faint light, and by the sound of him, he was about 15 or 20 feet above us. How he was navigating I had no idea. Why he didn't lose spatial orientation, I will never know.

He kept going until he was south of us, outside the cloud. The radioman on the LZ told him that he was dead-on but about 20 feet high. The pilot asked again, were there any trees above the level of the LZ. We assured him that the top of the mountain was entirely clear of obstructions. He circled once more, then again approached from the north. Slowly the sound of the Loach came closer to the center of the mountain top. I turned my head toward the bunker entrance and shouted, "Now. Bring them out, and line up near the edge of the bunker!" Quickly, the men brought the wounded out, and laid them in a line, side by side, protected by

the edge of the bunker. suddenly I heard the NCOs shout to light the powder. Each corner began to strike their lighters, and the increment bags began to flare up. The strobe was flashing, and in the fitful light, I could see the skids, then the outline of the Loach five feet above the absolute center of the LZ. A ground NCO grabbed the rear door, and opened it, and began to start flagging the men toward the Loach as it settled. I ran to the right-hand door and opened it, slapping the crewman on the shoulder. I could see a leg board on his thigh, the tiny light illuminating a topographic map. Between them I thought I could see another map stretched on a machine, with a pin in the center.

Three of the least wounded sat in the back seat (made for two!), one man was laid on the floor on their feet, and another was laid on their laps. As each man came to load, I looked at the pilot before me, and he kept gesturing "More!" Finally, I shouted, "That's all!" and crossed my hands in front of me several times. "Finished". He nodded, I backed away, and pushed the door shut. The NCO who was loading pushed the passenger door against the booted feet of the soldier lying on the floor, and eventually got it closed. By now, the flames of the increment bags had guttered out, and blown away in sparks. We scattered to a safe distance, and the pilot poured on the coal. His tiny light blazing into the thick mist, he rose slowly above the pad, until his skids and his navigation lights could barely be seen. He slowly crept forward, dead slow, and flat, the engine screaming. Finally, he must have reached clear air, because his sound suddenly dropped below us, then circled clockwise around the top of the mountain and diminished quickly below us toward Danang...Or Phu Bai.

We never heard about the wounded, which wasn't surprising, since they were from another company, and we never learned who the pilot was on that Loach. I have supposed in the intervening years, that perhaps I might run into those men again, somewhere. I haven't. They showed great courage, and coming from a grunt medic, who has seen so much courage from men in tight spots, that is high praise indeed. They deserved some kind of recognition. Perhaps 50 years later a medal wouldn't mean much, but I would like to buy those two guys a beer.

Can you please pass this tale on? I am seeking any info on who they were, and perhaps even contact with the pilots of that Loach. My contact information is below. I am a lifetime member of the 101 Association, and VFW. Thank you.

Hank Ortega,



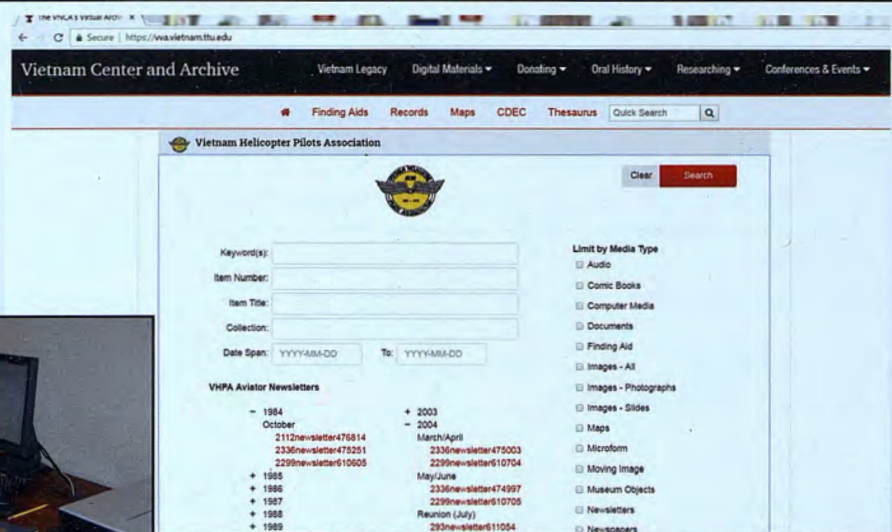
## VHPA Grant is Making a Difference at the Vietnam Center & Archive

The VHPA and the VNCA have what I would call a very successful long-term relationship. For many years, the VHPA has been donating their institutional records to the archive and encouraging their members to donate their personal records, as well. Because of this symbiosis, the VNCA has a truly impressive collection of helicopter related reference materials. The beauty of the VHPA is that it doesn't represent just one unit, one helicopter model, or even one branch of service. The breadth of service, experiences, and personalities represented by VHPA members truly encompasses the history of the Helicopter War, and the VNCA's collections have been greatly enriched because of this relationship.

Over the decades, the VNCA has collected, preserved, and digitized a great many VHPA collections. However, several years ago when VHPA board members Mike Law and Clyde Romero visited the archive to see our operation in person, they noticed we had not digitized all VHPA materials in our collection. The VNCA and VHPA decided to hire a student assistant whose work would be dedicated solely to the digitization of VHPA materials and who would be sponsored by a grant from the association; the first VHPA student assistant was hired in the fall of 2016.



VHPA scanner Jason scanning Hawk magazines.



Andrew Hinton (center) training VHPA processor Ashely and VNCA processor Kevin to handle museum objects.

In the spring of 2017, we noted that we were not spending the grant funds as quickly as we thought, so, with the VHPA board's permission, we hired a second student. This new VHPA student works solely on processing collections so they could be preserved, described, and readied for digitization. And again in 2018, after reassessing the project goals and the funds available, we received approval to hire a second digitization student.

After nearly two years of work, the VHPA grant has made a world of difference at the VNCA. First off, over 16 linear feet of material has been processed and opened for research. What does that mean exactly? It



means that all the VHPA member donations, except for institutional records donated last November, have been processed and opened for research. These materials are now stored in archival preservation enclosures, such as acid-free file folders and acid-free boxes. The material has been described and a finding aid created so that researchers can discover the material and access it for their use. And now they have been added to the scanning queue so they can be digitized and placed online.

The scanners for this project have scanned all the VHPA Newsletter/Aviators. These materials have been scanned in full color, records have been made so they can go into our database, and the full text from the document has been gathered using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and loaded into the database record so the entire newsletter can be discovered using keyword searches in the Virtual Vietnam Archive. In addition to the database record and scanning, the students added a custom table of contents to each record and redacted all personal contact information from the newsletter (a legal requirement for all VNCA records that are released to the public). Now the VHPA Newsletter/Aviator can be seen online in the Virtual Vietnam Archive. In addition to the newsletter, the VHPA students have completed scanning the collections of John Shafer, Michael Sloniker, Jack Swickard, and Ronald P. "Phil" Marshall.

However, the impact of this grant is not measured just in how much stuff ends up online. It also has an impact on the students who are hired. The grant provides them with employment and the money they earn helps them achieve their academic goals. The training and work experience these students receive during their time with the VNCA is also very valuable to their future. Some of the students who have worked for us have expressed an interest in becoming archivists, others have gained valuable computer skills that can be used in other jobs.

Our plans for the future include: digitizing the VHPA calendars and membership rosters; digitizing more individual members' collections; and eventually, adding another student to the project who will be responsi-

ble for image scanning. Image scanning requires specialized training on different equipment, a different database interface, and training on identifying major features within the images so they can be described in the database record and then discovered via keyword searches. Once we have enough images in our scanning queue we will train one of the students in the use of the new equipment, so members' photos and slides can start going online.

The VHPA grant has provided value to the student workers, the VNCA, researchers, and the VHPA members. The grant provides VIP status to VHPA materials and has already had an impact on the backlog of materials. Moving forward into the future, I see many things being added to the Virtual Vietnam Archive and the history of the helicopter pilots being much enriched by the VHPA's generous grant.

Amy K. Mondt, CA  
Associate Director  
The Vietnam Archive

## A MEMBERSHIP FOR THOSE HONORED FEW



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SOCIETY

*"...for heroism or extraordinary achievement  
while participating in an aerial flight."*

**[DFCSociety.org/membership](http://DFCSociety.org/membership)**



# VIETNAM MISSIONS *by Ken Bradley*

As the jet taking us to Vietnam made its approach into Cam Ranh Bay around midnight, we could see flares lighting up the hills. It is real; we are going to be fighting a war very soon. As the plane opened and we exited, the heat hit us, and it was a little difficult to breathe. I couldn't help wondering what was next. Would I get shot as I climbed down the stairs? The bus taking us to pick up field gear and to the quarters had wire over the windows to keep grenades from being tossed in but, if something really happened, the wire would keep us trapped inside.

Before dawn, a rocket blew up a mess hall near us. Everyone said this was the first attack they had since they had been there.

In the morning while I was in the latrine, a young Vietnamese woman walked through. When you had to pee that bad, I did not know you could stop so quick. Later that morning, the new pilots were lined up and pilots were asked to volunteer to transfer to scouts. One said yes. I later heard he was crippled in a crash during that tour. The rest of us were then sent in different directions. I was headed to IV corps, the Delta of Vietnam.

The next night I was at Can Tho. No bedding was provided, and I napped on my field gear. During the night, we had a mortar attack. The assigned personnel said that was unusual as they were only hit once a month. At headquarters, I was given orders to the 121st AHC, the Soc Trang Tigers. This turned out to be good luck as the airfield had buildings and rooms. Many units had tents or worse. As an officer, I was assigned a room to myself. Sand bags were stacked around the outside walls. I was told that if we were attacked I was to report to the sand bag bunker by the latrine. At midnight, the mortars started exploding and I rushed to report at the bunker. The gun platoon was already in the air but most of the rest of the pilots were just milling around. The bunker was dark, and I did not have a flashlight, but I went in anyway. I couldn't see anything, so I backed out to the laughter of all the other pilots. Rumor was that a cobra snake had taken occupancy of the bunker and no one entered it anymore. But it was a great joke to see the FNG report in. It turns out Soc Trang was hit every night at midnight. It was a tradition. The base was small so sometimes the mortars missed the air field. But you could stand outside and watch them explode. During attacks, you would roll off your bed and crawl underneath. If the small arms fire got too loud, you could step outside to see the progress of the VC climbing through the wire.

As I was a commissioned officer, I was told I would be trained as flight lead. Before I could fly combat, I would have to fly a few support missions. Most of those flights were as copilot for the ARVN Commanding General of IV corps. Sometimes, we were fired at by his own troops. At each PX

location I checked to buy a fan and a refrigerator, but no one had any. Warrant officers would "purchase" the room of their predecessor, but I had a bare room. The only items always available at Soc Trang were feminine hygiene products; no US women were on the base! Finally, we had a mission to Saigon and I got to visit the big PX. I could order a car to be delivered to the states. I could buy jewelry, kitchen ware, civilian clothing and all kinds of useless stuff, but no fan or refrigerator. Eventually, I got to the tiny PX at Bac Lieu. The warrant officer manager had everything in that tiny store. Turns out he would have a slick fly him out to the Navy supply ship when it was reachable and he would purchase the items from them. I could now have cold beer and a cooling fan.

Some PX items were rationed and you had to use your ration card to purchase them. Beer was on the list. It cost only ten cents a can, but you were limited in how many you could buy. It turns out there was no limit on beer for unit parties, so I mimeographed a stack of requests for our nightly party.

I was eventually made the flight lead for both platoons and most of my flight time would be combat. At my second unit, I was also made flight lead. I did get to fly a variety of support missions, but I am curious about types of missions and experiences of other pilots. The other day I started listing my types of missions. On support missions you would be told where and when to report but not what you would be doing.

We didn't know how bad Agent Orange would be, but it did kill the foliage, so you could see the ground. The Air Force would spray large areas, but in the U Minh forest the small canals were VC highways and the Air Force never reached this region. I am not sure how we got the spray job. Flying slow above the tree tops spraying a chemical didn't sound so smart. The chemical coated everything inside and out of the aircraft and the crew. Thankfully, the day was uneventful.

Landing in clearings and helping dig holes for sensors also didn't seem smart. If VC were in the area, they could kill us before we got out of there. If they weren't in the area, why did they need to plant those listening devices?

As the 121st AHC stood down, people were gradually reassigned to other units. For the last few weeks of combat missions there were fewer and fewer pilots. I found a VIP unit that would take me, but when I told the unit commander, Major Judson Lucas, I could go to the new unit, he said "NO." I was now the supply officer for closing out the unit and I was still needed for missions. That was a real rotten deal. Instead of flying VIPs around I ended up with the Outlaws at Vinh Long, another assault helicopter unit. Trying to close out the books was worse than combat.

I hated hauling cows; they always managed to shit in the



aircraft. Pigs on the other hand seemed to handle the flight OK. With no refrigeration, the meat had to be delivered live. Sacks of rice and crates of ammo along with other supplies were also delivered.

Navy Seal raids were always exciting. We would land inside the villages; the VC did not have time to escape and had nowhere to go. The battles were very violent, but they were quick.

One of the battalion aircraft crashed near Phung Hiep and I was named the accident investigator. I had been flying all day in the same areas as this crash. They were taking some Navy Seals who had finished their tour and were on their way home. One of the push-pull tubes failed allowing the blade providing lift to force the other blade through the cockpit and then separate from the mast. No one survived and some of the bodies were in pieces. We tried to keep the remains separated in different body bags.

Our attempt to recover a Mohawk pilot who was a POW was not successful. We were not given any information on the mission. Five slicks were lined up on the edge of the runway. For a day, we had to stay at the ready. At times, we were told to stand by at the aircraft. Then, we were instructed to be at the ready in our rooms. Finally, we were told to be ready to fly and we sat in the aircraft ready to start. About an hour later, we were given instructions to take off and given our destination. Four of the five aircraft lifted off in heavy fog. A navy unit had landed by boat and traveled to the POW camp. Our mission was to retrieve them and our pilot. Unfortunately, the VC had moved our pilot. The whole mission was secret and even the Vietnamese government was not informed of the objective. There were some South Vietnamese troops liberated, but I understand the Mohawk pilot was a prisoner until the end of the war.

The South Vietnamese President Thieu wanted to show how well the war was going so he visited a small part of the U Minh forest and made a short trip along a canal. We flew some US brass who accompanied him. The big wigs got out at one location and we picked them up about half a click away. I think a good portion of the Vietnamese division was providing security. When we were to relocate the aircraft to the new location, the President's crew could not start their Huey. We were the only US crew, so their aircraft commander came over to ask us what to do. I was nice and told him to remove a battery from one of the other Vietnamese aircraft, put it in the nose of his and start up. Then, put the battery back in the other aircraft. I don't think they knew there were two places for batteries in the Huey and the nose location is not normally used because of weight and balance.

Night security for the Delta was an interesting mission. You responded to requests for assistance from various outposts and you looked for VC using darkness for cover. I asked to fly the mission as co-pilot to see what it was like. It took a special crew to handle this mission. Changing directions 180

degrees while flying 80 knots at tree level in the dark was routine for them. For me, it was to see how airsick they could make me. But I did finish the night and I did not soil their aircraft.

There is an island off the coast that should be a premium tourist spot. It is a beautiful, great sandy beach, with a mild surf and warm ocean water. The mission there was to keep the VC on the north end of the island from becoming too comfortable and to keep them away from the prison camp. I only got to fly there once, and I was not too happy about the over-water part of the mission. If you missed the island you would not see land again. Our first assignment was to locate a lost patrol boat that had reported they were sinking. The people at the island had water wings and we loaded up. It sure would have been nice to have something like that for our flight out to the island. We located the sinking boat and assisted in the rescue of the crew.

On resupply missions for LRRPs we always tried to conceal their location by faking landing at other areas. These guys would be in the boonies for extended periods. Besides supplies we would give them mail and pick up their letters home. Their letters home would be on pieces of C ration cartons and we treated their mail like gold.

When troops were being overrun and their only chance at survival was you, you went to get them. A Vietnamese unit had been inserted by Vietnamese aircrews. The aircrews then left the area to their airfield and club. My package was 5 slicks, the C&C, plus two gun-ships. We knew if we left anyone on the ground they would be killed. The C&C landed with us to help pick up the troops. Everyone was overloaded. I had 21 people on my aircraft and I could not lift off the ground without bleeding power. It was unit policy to assign the weakest aircraft to flight lead. That way any place lead could get into or out of the rest of the flight could also make it. I rocked the D model Huey to get it moving forward and the movement was enough to climb to the top of the rice paddy berm. At the next berm, we slid across the top without stopping and then we were fast enough to get translational lift. We traveled all the way around the clearing and passed by the area used to pick up the troops and still could not get out of ground effect. The next time around, I was able to climb out of ground effect, but not enough to clear the trees. I knew another time around would probably be fatal, so I looked for the lowest trees and told the flight we were going through the trees and they were to do the best they could. Our rotors only clipped a few small branches and were not badly damaged. No one was left behind.

The best mission was Christmas 1970. I was flying for the Outlaws at Vinh Long. The afternoon mission was flying Hollywood starlets to outposts in the southwest portion of the delta.

I am sure many other pilots flew many other types of missions and I am hoping they can write about them.



# UPCOMING REUNIONS

## Charlie Co., 227th Assault Helicopter BN. 2018 Reunion

**When: September 11th - September 13th, 2018**

Where: Peachtree City Hotel and Convention Center,  
Peachtree City, GA

POC: Jim Fink

Also: Dennis Beckler

or Larry Gordon

## Vinh Long Outlaws Associations Biennial Reunion.

### 191st Assault Helicopter Company 2018 Reunion

#### Boomerangs and Bounty Hunters

**When: September 13-16, 2018**

Where: Clarksville, TN

Contact: Bill Janes

Website:

## Vinh Long Outlaws Associations Biennial Reunion.

**When: September 13-17, 2018**

Where: Charleston SC, Charlestown Marriot

The Vinh Long Outlaws Association would like to invite all Outlaws, Mavericks, Bushwhackers and support units to its biennial reunion

September 13 - 17, 2018. Reunion information, itinerary and registration form can be found on our website: [vinhlongoutlaws.com](http://vinhlongoutlaws.com)

Any questions contact Jim Donnelly at:

### HHC 1st BDE 1st Cav "Flying Circus"

**When: 14-16 September, 2018**

Where: Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, MO

Contact: Bill Medsker [bmedsker@grm.net](mailto:bmedsker@grm.net)

**E Battery 82nd Artillery, 1st Cav Div. Vietnam Reunion.**  
All members who served with the unit in Vietnam are invited  
with their guest

**When: September 17 - 21**

Where: Chattanooga Choo Hotel, Chattanooga TN

Contact: Gordon Eatley

with E Battery in Subject line.

Web site

### 119th AHC Fourth Annual Reunion

**When: September 18-20, 2018**

Where: Branson, Missouri Radisson Hotel Branson

Contact: Spencer Gardner at

for details  
and registration info

### 155th AHC (Ban Me Thuot, Camp Coryell) Reunion

**When: October 3-8, 2018**

Where: Atlantis Casino Resort and Spa Reno, NV

Contact: Jim Cunningham,

cell:

## Boxcar and Hercules Chinook Reunion 2018 -Update

**When: October 8-12, 2018**

Where: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
City, OK.

Suggest reserving NLT that September 23

Activities:

Oct (Mon) 8: 4:00 PM: Check in, Meet and Greet

Oct 9 (Tue): 9:00 AM: Golf at Tinker AFB for those interested.

Oct 10 (Wed): 10:00 AM: Guided tour of the National Cowboy and Western  
Heritage Museum (free admission). 178/132 Unit Dinner Night.

Oct 11 (Thurs.): 1:00 PM: Tour of the Oklahoma Air Logistics Complex and  
552 AWACS Wing, Tinker AFB. Reunion Dinner, local restaurant. Reunion  
Speaker and raffle, hotel meeting room

Oct 12 (Fri): Departure Breakfast at hotel

There are: more details available on the website

<https://www.boxcar-hercules.org/>

### A 158 AHC 101 Airborne Division Reunion

**When: October 11, 12, 13, 14; 2018**

Where: Branson Missouri

Contact: Allen Bollem

or

Gary Rossomme

Note: Any soldier from 101 is welcome.

### 187th Assault Helicopter Company 2018 Reunion

**When: November 7-12, 2018**

Where: Sirata Beach Hotel, St. Pete Beach, FL

Contact: Jim Henry (Crusader 16) at or

Additional Information:

### Razorbacks Assault/Attack Helicopter Assn. Reunion

**When: October 18-19-20**

Where: Guntersville, AL

All Razorbacks from 1964 to 2018 are welcome. Come celebrate 54 years of flying excellence from Vietnam to Iraq and beyond! This will be the largest gathering of Razorbacks since Vietnam. All suppers provided for all attendees. Free Razorback reunion pin, t-shirt, other Pig bling, and motor home/camper hook-ups if needed.

Contact for more info.

**D/3/5 & C/3/17**

**When: 2-5 May, 2019**

Where: Daytona Beach Resort, Daytona Beach, FL

Guest of honor & speaker: Joe Galloway

Contact: Rick Roll





THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 18, 2018

I send my warmest greetings to those gathered for the dedication of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument at Arlington National Cemetery.

As Commander in Chief, it is my privilege to honor the brave helicopter pilots and crewmembers who gave their last full measure of devotion to our Nation during the Vietnam War. These selfless warriors carried out critical missions as part of our Armed Forces, and we owe them our greatest respect for their service and sacrifice.

From this day forth, may this monument serve as a solemn tribute to these courageous heroes. Our Nation will never forget all that they gave to defend liberty and protect our American way of life for future generations.

Melania joins me in thanking our Vietnam veterans and all who serve in uniform. May God bless each of you, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

A large, bold, handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Donald Trump".



# Letters to the Editor

*I received this note from Bob Smith regarding my story, shortly after it ran (March/April 2018).*



"I just got latest VHPA Aviator - great article. I was with 20th Trans at Cu Chi Aug 68-69. We were a DS unit and our 520th Trans Bn and other units were at Phu Loi. At some time they had a Company at Long Binh. We had a Huey in need of a T/B to get back to unit and our GS sheet metal shop had just finished one (may have been it's original). I took our D company ship (actually one of our float "loaners" we appropriated). While I only had one boom it only got about 45kts and was hesitant to go very far from ground. None of the flight profiles were conducive to not getting shot or making a successful autorotation or recovery from tail rotor problems.

Years later, while at Electronics Command Flight Test Activity at Lakehurst, I flew one of the early Quick Fix H models with the radomes in place of the small troop doors. I learned that they had crashed one at Edwards doing the H/V curve for autorotations. It turns out the disruptions washed out T/R effectiveness. At least that was the story I was told.

I was pretty far behind you, 67-25/68-501 Apr 68 then AMOC. - retired in 87.

Cheers  
Bob Smith"

*From Pete Frazier, Author of The Tale of Three Tails*

Tom,

Regarding the Utah Chapter report containing the long-awaited Purple Heart for WO Shupe, I have one correction and an additional note for the story:

Scott's injury occurred on October 14, 1971. The earlier date noted was December 14, 1971.

Scott's crew chief, nickname Doc, came to the presentation and gave his account of what happened. They were at tree top level, 80 knots, when WO1 Shupe turned around and told Doc, "I think I've been shot in the foot." Doc stated he told WO1 Shupe "I can't see your foot but you've got blood running down your face, you've been shot in the head." The paperwork did not have the right signatures on it; they could not read the Doctor's signature, so it was not awarded at that time.

Tom Melville

## *To the Aviator Editors:*

The 2018 VHPA Reunion held in Atlanta was the 28th Reunion my wife Dot & I have attended. Every Reunion has been different and a lot of fun. This one however was special. I was selected to receive a beautiful quilt created by the VHPA Quilters and Friends. This is a group of women spread

out across the United States and Canada who lovingly create patriotic quilt sections. They are then assembled and given to members of our Association.

My quilt was assembled by Brenda Kasnic. It was individually presented to me by Kathleen Sherfey as Dot & I had already signed up for a tour and could not attend the general presentation. Surprising to me, it was an emotional moment. When one looks at and holds the quilt, (see attached picture) one can feel the love and dedication put into creating this wonderfully patriotic quilt. Dot & I wish to thank them all. This will be a treasured part of our home.



Ed Newton, Blue Star 77



## From the Editors to all VHPA members:

Other than self-prepared versions, obituaries we receive often omit or misidentify awards and decorations. Few, other than the veteran, are aware of these; their significance; and typically, the proper nomenclature.

The Editors believe these achievements to be an important aspect of one's military service. As glum as it sounds and in the current absence of provisions in our database, we invite you to send a list of your awards and decorations directly to the Aviator@vhpa.org. We will maintain a file and reference the information upon receipt of an obituary. The additional administrative process is well worth the ability to accurately highlight the recognition bestowed on many pilots which would otherwise be unknown.

Please include your retired rank, if applicable, and class number(s), the latter will help ensure your awards are correctly identified in TAPS.

*Tom Kirk, Tom Hirschler*

## The Vietnam Helicopter & Crew Members Monument Dedication Ceremony

was a one of a kind event. The DVD of the day's proceedings is a valuable memento for anyone unable to attend. It portrays the fitting tribute to our fallen brothers and is notable for not only the proceedings, but the professional execution overseen by the VHPA.

Copies of the DVD of the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery can now be purchased from VHPA HQ. A copy of the ceremony's program is an additional keepsake included with each order, while supplies last. *The price is \$15 which includes shipping.*

*For DVD purchases only,*

**Call HQ at 800-505-8472**

Commemorative T-shirts (shown here) displaying the monument, dedication date and location are **ONLY** available online at

**[www.gear.vhpa.org](http://www.gear.vhpa.org)**



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**Ned Crimmin**

**TSgt, USAF, Ret**

USAFSS Intelligence Analyst 1964-74

USAF Admin Supervisor 1974-83

Tours of Duty:

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



### VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION SATISFIED CLIENTS

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| - Dan Fox      | - Bruce Brattain    |
| - John Shafer  | - James Tinney      |
| - John Penny   | - Bill Medsker      |
| - Lenny Julian | - Pete Rzeminski    |
| - Terry Opdahl | - James Oden        |
|                | - William C. Brooks |

### KOREAN WAR VET SATISFIED CLIENT

- Kenny Hames Photos of War Tour
- 1952-53 Heartbreak Ridge & Sugarloaf

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# WANTED

## Helicopter Memorabilia from the Vietnam War

Contact: John Conway

[www.vhpamuseum.org](http://www.vhpamuseum.org)

**ARMY ~ NAVY ~ AIR FORCE ~ MARINE CORPS**  
**Assault - Cavalry - Trans - Medical Rescue etc.**

Fair Prices Paid. Not for profit.  
References available.



# A Perfect Film at the Perfect Time...

*By Colonel Bill Fortier, US Army, Retired*

...That is how Richard Jellerson of Storyteller Original Films, a former Vietnam helicopter pilot and filmmaker, refers to his heartfelt work of love that took four years to complete.

It is a perfect film and it is at a perfect time because presentation of his film, *A Solemn Promise, America's Missing in Action* comes at a time when North Korea has just released 55 boxes carrying the remains of Americans who died as a result of the Korean War. The film is also "just in time" to honor America's fallen warriors who are still missing and unaccounted for on *America's National POW/MIA Recognition Day* (Sep 21, 2018).

The concept for the film began eight years ago when Richard and fellow Vietnam helicopter pilot, Tom Lasser, discussed the fact that, had either of them gone down in Vietnam and still be missing and unaccounted for, America would still be conducting searches to locate their remains. That fact was fascinating to Richard, and it became the seed, which developed into a four-year project to produce *A Solemn Promise*.



The film tells about America's ongoing worldwide efforts to locate, identify and return each of America's fallen warriors to their families for burial with full military honors. The film was produced primarily from his personal funds, although AUSA and American Legion Post 43 in Hollywood, California provided some assistance along the way.

The film will be premiered in California and Georgia for *National POW/MIA Recognition Day*, Sep 21, 2018. In California it will show at the Palm Springs Air Museum and in Georgia at the Central Georgia Technical College in Warner Robbins, Georgia at *The Ride Home*, a major POW and MIA Families 3-day event that is held annually.

**For more information about the two events for Sep 21st:**

**Palm Springs Air Museum**

<https://palmspringsairmuseum.org>

**The Ride Home**

<http://www.theridehome.com/itinerary-2018.html>

For more information about the film, *A Solemn Promise*:

■ Screen Storyteller Original Films at [storytellerfilms.tv](http://storytellerfilms.tv)

■ Richard Jellerson:

Email: [REDACTED]

## Friends of Vinh Son Orphanages (FVSO), Vietnam



FVSO helps support 850 Montagnard children living at 7 orphanages in the Kontum & Pleiku area. Founded in 2005 by servicemen who served in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, we are a small organization, proud that 100% of your donations go directly to the children & caregivers. FVSO is a non-profit organization & all donations are tax deductible. We provide food, medicine, dental care, shelter and education. Please visit our web site where the monthly newsletters tell the story of these special children. Thanks to VHPA for their continuing support!! Please help us help them...THANKS!

**For more information or to make a contribution,  
please see our contact info below**

**Friends of Vinh Son**

**P.O. Box 9322-C, Auburn, Ca 95604-9322**

**Web:** [FriendsofVSO.org](http://FriendsofVSO.org)

**Email:** [REDACTED]

**FB:** [REDACTED]





# 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.

*AVIATOR REPORT completed for 18 New Members and covers the period 6-04-18 to 7-27-18*

Angle Charles F. 'Chuck' \*\*  
Fair Play South Carolina  
Army  
69-19  
C/7/1 CAV in 69-70

Arredondo Michael E.  
Boerne Texas  
Army  
69-50  
176 AHC in 70-71

Boyle James V. \*\*  
Canon City Colorado  
Army  
68-21 68-37  
92 AHC in 69-70

Brown Gary A \*\*  
Sun Prairie Wisconsin  
Army  
61-1  
D/3/4 CAV in 66-67;  
HHC 14 CAB in 69-70; 196 ASHC in 70

Caraker Robert C  
Anna Illinois  
Army  
67-11

Dunagan Larry E.  
Pendergrass Georgia  
Army  
70-17 70-15

Dunn Stephen M. 'Steve'  
Humble Texas  
Army  
69-26  
176 AHC in 69-70

Gillespie William W. 'Doc'  
Newnan Georgia  
Army  
70-3 70-1  
271 ASHC in 70-71

Gray Clarence E 'Ed'  
Marietta Georgia  
Army  
70-30  
D/3/5 CAV in 71; C/3/17 CAV in 71;  
7/1 CAV in 71-72

Hunt James P 'Jim' \*\*  
Williamsburg Virginia  
Army  
61-1  
D/227 AWC 1 CAV in 65-66; 135 AHC  
in 67-; 120 AHC in 68-

Jewett Leo G \*\*  
Fairfield Idaho  
Army  
67-5  
C/227 AHB 1 CAV in 67-68

Lyons Rocklin D. 'Rock'  
Edmond Oklahoma  
Army  
69-45 70-1  
190 AHC in 70; 118 AHC in 71

Martin Ronald S \*\*  
Austin Texas  
Army  
67-9  
147 ASHC in 67-68; C/228 ASHB 1  
CAV in 71

Nguyen Phat Tan 'Sean'  
Savannah Georgia  
Vietnamese Air Force  
70-17  
213 SQDN VNAF in 70-71; 231 SQDN  
VNAF in 71-73; HQ VNAF in 73-75

Oldfather Dave L.  
Newton Alabama  
Army  
70-35

Riley Brian D  
Vonnore Tennessee  
Army  
71-2  
61 AHC in 71-72

Routt Dan E \*\*  
Fort Wayne Indiana  
Army  
69-29  
117 AHC in 70

Sitze Robert G. 'Bob' \*\*  
Enterprise Alabama  
Army  
69-21  
191 AHC in 69-70

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# REUNION

ATLANTA, GEORGIA • JULY 3~7, 2018



# VHPA ATLANTA REUNION VOLUNTEERS

The Atlanta reunion wouldn't have been as fabulous as it was without the hard work of all the volunteers who checked you in at registration, gave you great information at the help desk, or handed you your reunion tee shirts so you can always remember the wonderful time you had in Atlanta. One significant note is regardless of the venue, Jim and Patti Squyres have consistently lent their time, dedication and experience wherever needed.

The Georgia chapter of the VHPA really stepped it up in the volunteer department this year. The Georgia volunteers filled most of the available slots at the reunion. This was made possible due to the great leadership of Chapter President Bob Lanzotti. Those hardworking volunteers were: Dick Butler, Glenn Carr, Gary Earls, Steve Masak, Woody and Lee McFarlin, Bill and Debbie McRae, George and Yonnie Murray, Cliff and Linda Penrose, Randy Ramsden, Bill Stanley, Roger Fox, Bob Noland, Wes Wittich, Jim and Marilyn Torbert, Danny Cox, Alan Porter, Ross Ivey, Steven Smith, Ed Gerot, Dick and Janet Dyer, and Steve Crimm, Doug Lackey. This fabulous Georgia crew really made the reunion flow.

In addition to our Georgia crew, we had some returning volunteers from the Reno and Indianapolis reunions who had so much fun before they decided to return and help out in Atlanta. They were our old pros who helped the new volunteers make a smooth transition into the system. They were: Joe and Cindi Bell, Bruce Brattain, Dick Kretschman, Patty Jones, Bill and Joan Baker, Trecia Shrode, and Mary Sebastian, who unfortunately passed away at the end of the reunion. Two long-time VHPA members and former executive officers of VHPA stepped in wherever they saw the need and helped immensely. They were Larry Wintz and John Powell. These two epitomize what service to the



## RIDERS ON THE STORM

Full color. 18" x 25" **second printing** of my signature print first published in 1994. Standard version as shown, \$80.00 ea. **Customized** version with markings of your choice, \$125.00 including postage. D or H model available. Satisfaction Guaranteed.

See my other available prints, and place orders, at [www.joeklineart.com](http://www.joeklineart.com)






**Joe Kline Aviation Art**






VHPA is all about. The final volunteer who deserves special recognition is Nathaniel Reuter, Gold Star Grandson of CPT Neil George Reuter, A/502 AVN, who was lost 7/5/1966. Nathaniel also volunteered last year in Indianapolis. He volunteers in recognition of his grandfather's service and sacrifice and to better come to know the brave men who, like his grandfather, were willing to put it all on the line in the service to their country. Again, thanks to all the volunteers who made the Atlanta reunion so special. If I have inadvertently missed any volunteers who were not mentioned, my sincerest apologies. Please consider volunteering for the Kansas City Reunion, next year. You will find the schedule when the information is published for the reunion. Signup early to get the "best" slots. Volunteers, thanks again for a fantastic reunion; see you in Kansas City.

**Gary Jones, Reunion Volunteer Coordinator**



# Army Aviation Heritage Foundation Activities in Atlanta

During the Annual VHPA Reunion the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation (AAHF) Sky Soldiers supported the members/ families in Atlanta, GA.

We provided a bus for the Veterans and their families to come from the reunion hotel in Atlanta to our hangar every day and gave them the opportunity to buy a ride in a Huey or a Cobra. It was quite a popular event, and while the percentage that came down from the hotel by bus or drove down themselves was not as large as we anticipated, everybody who did come down totally enjoyed themselves. These testimonials are from the AAHF Facebook page and the AAHF Web page:

"Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed my ride in the Huey on July 7, 2018. I have always wanted to fly in a helicopter but found the prices way too high for my pocket-book. Yesterday I saw the cost of the Huey and decided to cross an item off my bucket list! I was scared, but it was wonderful!! Thanks to everyone involved for letting this old lady have a wonderful experience! Gail Rollin"

"I signed my wife (Sally) up for a Cobra ride during the 35th VHPA reunion in Atlanta. What a smooth and professional operation. As I walked her to Cobra 826 with our ground guide, the thump of the big blade and my heart were in rhythm once more and there was a tear in my eye. I watched from the ground as pilot Bruce Whitley gave Sally a ride of a lifetime. Thank you, Bruce. Sally had the biggest smile I had ever seen on her face when she got out of 826. It was the best gift I had ever given her. Sincerely, Al DeMailo"

"I waited 46 years for the opportunity to go up in a Cobra. It was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had. I have been a military wife for nearly 50 years, and been associated with Army Aviation since I was 18. I wish I had the courage at that age to serve as a helicopter pilot, as my husbands did. I am so proud to have been part of the wonderful Army Aviation family. This is an experience that I would recommend for anyone that wants to find out just a fraction of what our aviation Veterans face. These brave service members are still defending us today. We owe our freedom to them.

Thank You for Your Service. Linda"

"At the recent VHPA reunion, my brother, CW2 Frank M. Beckham IV, HHT, 2/17 Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division, and I both got to fly in Cobra tail # 826 that had been in his unit in Vietnam in 1970. I was impressed in that these

guys are a brotherhood that understands the demons each have dealt with over the long years since they rode their bladed steeds over the rice paddies and jungles of that far off land. I've always felt closeness to Frank and was jealous of him when he told me he would be flying choppers. Then learning what those guys went through, I was no longer jealous, but instead feared I would never see him again as he departed for that far off land. But God brought him back to us on Christmas Day 1970. I had never told him until this week that though it was not my favorite song, my theme for him over the years became, "He ain't heavy, and He's my brother." I didn't get shot at, but as I rode in the front seat of the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter, the pilot, Tom McNamara, did several demonstration gun-runs and explained our part in the fire fight as protecting the troops on the ground from an overwhelming enemy force of NVA and/or Vietcong. Frank went back in time on his flight and on their third roll over back into another gun run a movie started to play in his head again after many years."

"That same day, we sat side by side in a Huey as we took the Crew Chief's outside position. I could see Frank, in his mind, in the front seat flipping switches and gauges starting the blades and running the RPM's up before hitting the fuel and getting the aircraft off the ground. During that flight I could see Frank was having additional flashbacks as he closed his eyes and lowered his head. I put my arm around him, told him I loved him, thanked him for inviting me, and telling him I was thankful God brought him back home to us. One of the other Huey's they are rebuilding had also been in Frank's unit in Vietnam.

Later, he told me, LTC (Ret) Glenn Carr, in charge of the flight arrangements, and others, that it had been good therapy for him. He slept like a baby that night. No demons bothered him at all during those hours of sleep and I was truly thankful. The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation is a top notch, professionally run organization that helps civilians better understand their loved ones and truly helps veterans have a better perspective on their service and the lives they now live. Air Cavalry Soldiers are truly special guys. John Beckham"

After the first day, more people heard of the opportunity and we got people to sign up because of the word of mouth of those that had been there that first day.

I'm in the group of Vietnam helicopter pilots in the Sky Soldiers who have aged out and no longer can fly as pilot or copilot when we have paying passengers, so my job, along with two or three other folks, was to ensure people got down to the hangar and back, and in one case be the bus commander.

There were five of us at the hotel directing traffic each day, and at the airfield there were nearly 30 personnel each



day scheduled to perform various duties and other members came out to help. Over the course of the five days, 86 people flew in our Huey and 84 flew in one or another of our four Cobras we had available. MG (Retired) Carl McNair flew in our Huey and BG (Ret) Myrna Williamson flew in one of our Cobras.

The day I went down on the bus was the 5th of July. On that day we had four Cobras and one Huey busy giving rides. As I thought, and it was mentioned by several of the attendees, it looked like a Viet Nam LZ with all the activity.

In addition to the rides, there was an opportunity to visit our hangar and see our operation. Tours were given as requested.

Two of the most interesting things to see were the progress the AAHF is making on the restoration/conversion of

Cobra 295 from an F Model back to an original G Model. This Cobra, the 50th one off the Bell Helicopter production line, served with the 361st Aviation Company (Escort). The 361st is a group of aviators who have a big contingent each year at the VHPA Reunions. Several members of the Pink Panthers got a chance to see the aircraft and have their picture taken with it.

In addition, there was a great display of Viet Nam Era uniforms and equipment. This was done by member Marvin West, who is for sure our number one Huey rider. Not sure the total number of rides, but it is approaching 75. That's well over \$5 grand worth of rides he has taken. That is Impressive.

The following slideshow and other links are pictures of the various portions of the event.

### Gold Star Family Breakfast and Memorial:

[smg.photobucket.com/user/Mellickpictures/slideshow/2018/VHPA%20REUNION%20ATLANTA%202018/GOLD%20STAR%20FAMILIES?sort=2](http://smg.photobucket.com/user/Mellickpictures/slideshow/2018/VHPA%20REUNION%20ATLANTA%202018/GOLD%20STAR%20FAMILIES?sort=2)

### AAHF Flight Operations at our Hangar:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gtdt3Bqt6xQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gtdt3Bqt6xQ)

In addition, since I've been a bit busy, here is a very good video of the support the AAHF Sky Soldiers provided at Jackson, MS in May. This is a very long effort with a lot of Sky Soldier volunteers over about eight days.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgIuzfCl\\_J0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgIuzfCl_J0&feature=youtu.be)

# Gear Up!





VHPA Logo  
Also available: Air Force Pilot, Air Force Senior Pilot, Air Force Command Pilot, VNAF Aviator, VNAF Senior Aviator



Army Aviator



Army Senior Aviator



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Marine/Naval Aviator

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Member of Sportswear World

**Order online:** [gear.vhpa.org](http://gear.vhpa.org) (24/7)

**Order by phone:** [Redacted] (11:00am-4:00pm CT)

\* Must be a dues current member for your order to be processed



Checks accepted

A portion of all sales benefit the VHPA.



# QUILTERS SHOW & TELL

At this year's Quilters Show and Tell the VHPA quilters and our friends were honored to present 11 quilts to our Veterans. I'd like to thank everyone who helped make the "Quilts for our Veterans" the rewarding program it is. Thanks to everyone who attended the presentations.

In order for this program to continue its robust growth, more donated blocks are needed! With the Reunion scheduled in Kansas City for the end of May the deadline for block submission is September 15th.

Several quilts were on display in the vendor's room during the reunion. It was such a pleasure talking with everyone who stopped to inquire about the quilts, our presentation program, and just chat.

With the Reunion in Kansas City next year, plans are in the making for a day trip to Hamilton, MO., which is the hometown of Missouri Star Quilt Company and Jenny Doan. There are 12 fabric shops, and there is even a Man's Cave for the gentlemen who wish to join the quilters. Also, it is J. C. Penney's boyhood Home town.



Quilts in the Vendors Room.



Recipients left to right: CW 2 William L Engels, 1LT Thomas M Watson, CW3 James M White, COL Chester C Davis, LTC Robert L Janes, CW2 Stephen L Howard, CPT Gary Winsett, CW4 William Stanley.

## THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BLOCKS

1. Color Scheme: Red, White and Blue (may use light cream or tone on tone instead of white)
2. Fabric is to be of quilt quality fabric
3. Prewash all fabrics as some are apt to bleed
4. The block is the choice of the quilter
5. Blocks are to measure 12 1/2 inches X 12 1/2 inches square, unfinished

*Deadline for receiving the blocks for 2019 reunion is September 15th.*

*Please mail them to:*  
Kathleen Sherfey

*If you have any questions, you can contact me at*

**The Cub Inn** is a 5,000-square-foot log cabin that offers unique charm that blends our love of aviation with the great outdoors. Located in California's Sierra Nevada mountains just 25 miles from Yosemite National Park, our five guest rooms sleep either two or four people, and they all feature a private bath.

Our guests start each day with a hearty country breakfast and are also invited to join us in the living room each evening to enjoy a glass of wine and a light snack. The Cub Inn is the life-long dream of husband and wife team, Piper Cub owner and pilot Charleen Beam and VHPA Life Member Joe Riley.

**Come see Yosemite's Waterfalls!**

Full details and booking information are available on our website: **TheCubInn.com**

or call us at [redacted] to book



# Gold Star Family Breakfast Attendees:

## "We are not alone"



Some of the Gold Star family members who attended the 2018 Gold Star Family Breakfast:

Front: Danielle Ebbrecht; Anne Long; Dorothy Latimer Johnson; Pamela Grotzky; Jeanette Ide; Debbie Irene Ide; Wanda Ide-Wilburn.

Second Row: John Thompson; Louise, David and Alex Wells; Richard Cleve; Ralph Bosley; Jeff Thatcher; Patricia Blassie; Susan Clotfelter Jimison.

Back Row: Allison Messina; Robin Dawson; Donna Wyatt; Chris and Nathaniel Reuter; Julie Kink.

It began with a knock at the door from a man in a uniform. Suddenly, the war that had once seemed so distant invaded our homes and our hearts, changing us forever. We became Gold Star families.

Most of us knew little about our loved one's last days. Stories of their time in Vietnam, shared by the men who flew with them, are precious gifts.

The Gold Star Family Breakfast during the VHPA Reunion is for families of helicopter pilots and crewmen who were killed in combat, AND VHPA MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. This year, 27 Gold Star family members and 140 VHPA members and their families attended. I hope everyone who came will come again.

Richard Cleve, brother of WO Reginald Cleve, 176th AHC MIA March 22, 1971, visited with several men who served with his brother. He wrote, "Most important to me was the opportunity to talk with two of them who had their eyes on my brother's helicopter when it was hit and they watched it until it disappeared into the clouds below. Their accounts are very much the same. For me, I have all the information we wanted years ago but were never able to access. I have begun to write a tribute to my brother beginning with our growing up together and the pathway he took which led to Viet Nam and then the details of his final mission."

I want to thank the generous donors whose contributions paid for the Gold Star families' breakfasts and supported the event; also, VHPA Office Manager Sherry Rodgers, Reunion Chairman John Powell, Past President Mike Sheuerman and current Presi-

dent John Sorensen; Jim McLaughlin who creates maps every year for each Gold Star family showing their loved one's loss location; and Gary Rossomme for sharing the poem, "A Picture, A Flag and a Gold Star Pin" by Gold Star Mother Evelyn Hatley.

Families of the following attended: 1LT Michael J. Blassie, WO James G. Bosley, WO Reginald D. Cleve, CWO Mark D. Clotfelter, WO Ben H. Ide, WO David R. Kink, CPT Wilbur D. Latimer, WO Johnny F. Long, CPT Neil G. Reuter, 2LT Kenneth R. Rushing, CW2 Arvid O. Silverberg, WO Gary D. Thatcher, CPT Robert A. Thompson, SP4 Kenneth W. Wells, 1LT Charles R. Wyatt.

A Gold Star Family Sign-In notebook was placed near the VHPA Member Attendee Sign-In. Please check the notebook at future reunions to connect with the families who attend.

Because there is no comprehensive database of Gold Star families, there are many who are not on our "radar." Let me know about them! Gold Star families have no official status with the VHPA; they may become Subscribers to the Aviator by purchasing an annual subscription. Everyone who attends the reunion is welcome to attend the Gold Star Family Breakfast. The presence of VHPA members supports families more than you know.

Thank you for remembering the loved ones we lost. We know that you loved them, too. See you in 2019!

By Julie Kink,  
sister of WO David Kink C Troop 1/9th CAV  
KIA 8-3-1969



The 35th VHPA Annual Reunion was held in Atlanta GA from July 3- 7 at the Peachtree Center Marriott Marquis, a comfortable venue in all respects. Typically, high temperatures and humidity characterize the height of summer in Atlanta. In this case, however, neither was excessive. There were sufficient nearby restaurants limiting the exposure to those unaccustomed to this type weather. Welcome conveniences were air-conditioned elevated walkways to shops and restaurants accessible from the hotel.

In addition to a variety of interesting scheduled activities, self-guided exploration of this historic city offered many attractions. The photos selected are just a small sample of the activities.

The AAHF has provided a separate report of their helicopter ride activities in this issue.

As is always the case, I met many members for the first time (the most enjoyable aspect of my attendance). Most of them will recall my solicitation for articles after speaking with them – a trademark behavior of mine. Both Tom Hirschler and I appreciate the many members who took the time to thank us for our work on the Aviator

On behalf of the attendees and myself, I extend thanks to the Annual Reunion Committee members, the Georgia Chapter of the VHPA and the many additional volunteers whose combined efforts created an enjoyable several days of bonding and tales which grow taller with each year.

*By Tom Kirk*

# Annual Reunion, Atlanta GA



Photos courtesy of Atlanta Movie Tours

Photo courtesy of Atlanta Movie Tours



Atlanta architecture

Photos by Carolyn Kirk



Looking up from the hotel



Gone with the Wind Tour

Photo courtesy of Atlanta Movie Tours



Photo by Carolyn Kirk



Oldies music for the age appropriate

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



An Atlanta icon

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



The Georgia Militia posting the colors

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



Member Dave O'Sullivan flying an age appropriate airplane

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



Wive's enjoying the Delta Airlines Museum

Photo by Tom Kirk



Husbands enjoying the Delta Airlines Museum

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



Period costumed guide on the Margaret Mitchell tour

Photo by Carolyn Kirk



VHPA President speaking with Mike Perott  
RAN (EMU) 68-69 contingent.

Photo by Denny Holmes



Boots on the Ground art display vendor room

Photo by Denny Holmes



Some of the many patches available in the vendor roo

Photo by Denny Holmes



AAHF members L-R Jerry Mellik, Cliff Mckethan and William Rainey,

Photo by Denny Holmes



VietnamWar  
Commemoration Booth

Photo by Denny Holmes

Photo by Denny Holmes



Barbara and 'Rat' Gaddy with author Lew Jennings signing his book, 19 Minutes to Live - please italicize title of book

Photo by Denny Holmes



L-R John Soltero, Ross Ivey, and Bill Stanley at the Welcome Desk.

Nathaniel Reuter,  
Grandson of  
Cpt. Neil G. Reuter, KIA.





*The following letter appeared in Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, but was provided to the paper by the author who has given his permission for publication in the Aviator.*

# Filling a Gold Star Void

*By Jeff Thatcher*

It's July 3rd and I'm on a Delta Airlines flight to Atlanta. I'm headed to a reunion of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA). On July 4th, Independence Day, I will attend their Gold Star breakfast honoring family members of pilots killed in action.

I'm hoping the breakfast can provide me with some freedom from a burden that has weighed on me since I was a freshman in high school – a moment in my life when my teenage façade of “normalcy” was cracked like the shell of a broken egg.

My journey to this gathering has been precipitated by coincidences resulting in actions that I can only attribute to divine providence.

Months earlier, in March, while doing online research on the helicopter crash that killed my older brother, U.S. Army Warrant Officer Gary David Thatcher, on Feb. 6, 1970 I came across a link to the VHPA.

For years, I had been searching for my brother's crash coordinates. But I'd never been able to find either the coordinates or the official cause of the crash. For some reason, though, this time I saw the VHPA link at the bottom of the crash report and decided to click on it.

After searching the VHPA website, I came across the name and e-mail address of Julie Kink, identified as the surviving sibling of a helicopter pilot killed in action in Vietnam. I subsequently reached out to her by e-mail and introduced myself.

Julie responded and told me about her brother's crash. She was 8 when her 19-year-old brother, Warrant Officer David R. Kink, died after his scout heli-

copter crashed on July 21, 1969. I was 14 when my 20-year-old brother, a Medevac pilot, was killed.

We share a loss – a void we've been trying to fill ever since – a crushing blow you can't fathom unless you've experienced it; a blow made especially difficult because it hit both of us so early in our lives.

According to the VHPA, 2,197 helicopter pilots and 2,704 crewmembers lost their lives during the Vietnam War, including my brother, Gary, and Julie's brother, David. Of the 11,827 helicopters that were deployed, 5,086 were destroyed in combat or accidents.

The use of the helicopter in wartime came of age during Vietnam in various applications – troop transport, armed gunship, attack craft, light utility/observation, search and rescue, Medevac and others. The “whop-whop-whop” of the whirring chopper blades became synonymous with the sounds of the war much like some of the rock music of that period.

The most common helicopter to fly in Vietnam, the Bell UH-1 Iroquois, better known by its nickname “Huey,” was the craft my brother was aboard when it crashed into a hillside adjacent to a white church. All four crew members perished.

Julie told me she had two friends in the VHPA, Rob Weeks and Jim McLaughlin, who researched helicopter pilots killed in Vietnam on behalf of their survivors. She said they might be willing to try and find my brother's crash coordinates. She also invited me to attend the July VHPA Gold Star breakfast, which she would be coordinating.

In late April, Jim McLaughlin e-mailed me. He said Rob had recently gone to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and researched my brother's crash. Jim said he believed he and Rob had found my brother's crash coordinates, which Jim shared with me along with two small maps of Vietnam showing the crash location.

In May, Julie provided me with names and contact information of several former helicopter pilots who would be attending the VHPA reunion in Atlanta. They had gone through flight training with my brother stateside or served in Vietnam while he was there. I reached out to some of them and they willingly answered my questions.

My brother was listed as the “pilot” in the crash report. For a long time, I had wondered if he was flying the craft at the time of the crash. I had also wondered if he was at fault.



WO1 Gary David Thatcher, Medevac Dustoff pilot with the 326th Medical Battalion, 101st Airborne



One of the pilots I had been corresponding with, Don Beelart, who had been in flight training with my brother, told me he had survived seven helicopter crashes in Vietnam. He reassured me about my concerns, saying my brother was probably not flying the aircraft when it crashed. He said the senior pilot/aircraft commander (AC) was likely in charge.

Since Gary had been in Vietnam less than two months at the time of his death, Don said he was certain Gary was still flying as second in command or co-pilot. He said it took 3 to 4 months to get the experience to become an AC.

My other question regarding possible operator error by my brother was answered in late May when I received Gary's military records; I had requested those three months earlier in February from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis.

Among the records was a letter from Gary's commanding officer, Col. Joseph F. Powers, dated Feb. 19, 1970 that had been written to my parents. The letter stated that "on the night of Feb. 6, 1970, Gary was the co-pilot of a medical evacuation helicopter attempting to evacuate a patient from near the Song Troui River, Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam. The helicopter developed engine failure on final approach to the pick-up site and crashed. There is every indication that both pilots and crew members died instantly."

In my research, I also learned that darkness, low altitude and possible spatial disorientation were contributing factors to the crash.

Within the packet containing my brother's records were also copies of letters to my parents from Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, U.S. Army Chief of Staff General William C. Westmoreland and President Richard M. Nixon.

Of my brother, Resor said: "We are proud of his military accomplishments and grateful to him for his contribution to our nation's strength."

Westmoreland wrote: "I know that the loss of a loved one is one of the most difficult things a person has to face, but perhaps you may find some measure of comfort in knowing that he served his nation with courage and honor at a time of great need."

Nixon wrote: "Of all the hardships of war, the cruelest are the losses of men such as your son.

The only consolation I can offer is the profound respect of the nation he died to serve, and the humble recognition of a sacrifice no man can measure, and no words can describe."

Although the Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975, a passage of 43 years, anger still simmers among many of the survivors. Don Beelart said he was spat upon by passersby while walking through a California airport in uniform the day he got home.

"You might find there are some real hard feelings from this group (VHPA)," he said. "Ten percent of the fatalities of the war were helicopter crewmen. I always felt my job, no matter what, was to do everything possible to save and support the troops on the ground. Gary was doing it that night, but engine failure caught up with that crew."

On July 4th, I attended the Gold Star breakfast at the VHPA reunion, where I was given the opportunity to stand up and say a few words about my brother.

I told the people in the room that my brother enlisted at age 19, despite his opposition to the war. He was not sure what he wanted to do with his life. But he did not like college and did not feel right taking a deferment and barely passing while others in his generation were over in Vietnam.

Gary wanted to fulfill his service commitment and move forward instead of fleeing to Canada or waiting for the uncertainty of the draft. When given the opportunity, he chose to be a Medevac pilot because he did not want to kill anyone.

Several other Gold Star family members also stood up and spoke that morning at the gathering, providing emotional tributes to their fallen family members.

Our voids were not filled that day – they never will be. Once one's soul is cracked, there's no way to ever fully repair the fissure. But at least for a few moments, we were comforted in knowing that we were not alone. The other Gold Star family members in that room had all experienced similar losses – just like me.

*Jeff Thatcher is a professional communicator and long-time resident of Little Rock.*



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

2100 N. Highway 360, Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050

(800) 505-VHPA (8472)(voice) • (817) 200-7309(fax) • HQ@vhpa.org (e-mail) • www.vhpa.org (website)

## Membership application/change of address

☐ New application

☐ Address change

☐ Directory correction

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Information about each Vietnam unit:

Dates in units		Unit	Location	Call sign
From:	To:			
1st				
2nd				
3rd				
4th				

Information about you: Helicopters flown, medals/awards, talents, hobbies, and anything else:

How did you learn about the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association? Referred by? Was membership a gift? From whom?

\*NOTE: Lifetime Membership and/or Subscriber Dues are based on the applicants' age - please provide your date of birth.

\*\* NOTE: Membership Directories are not available to Aviator-only subscribers.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

ALAMO CHAPTER  
Charles 'Chic' Carter

ALASKA CHAPTER  
Lynn Kile, President

ARIZONA CHAPTER  
Bill Sorenson, President

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NORTH  
Ken Fritz

CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER  
Tom Mc Millen, President

FLORIDA CHAPTER  
Don Welch

FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER  
Herb Koenig, President

GEORGIA CHAPTER  
Bob Lanzotti, President

LOUISIANA GULF COAST CHAPTER  
Victor Lent, President

MICHIGAN CHAPTER  
Richard Deer, President

UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER  
Bruce Hunter, President

MONTANA CHAPTER  
Todd Brandoff, President

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER  
Marshall Eubanks, President

NEW JERSEY CHAPTER  
(currently inactive, seeking members)

NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER  
Ed Hughes

OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER  
Keith Alleger

OKLAHOMA CHAPTER  
Mike Sloniker, President

OLD DOMINION CHAPTER  
Don Agren, President

SOUTH DAKOTA CHAPTER  
Jim Miles, President

SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER  
Dr. Dick Elgin

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER  
Dale E House, President

SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER  
(Celebrate Freedom) Chapter  
Larry Russell, President

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER  
Jim Davidson, President

UTAH CHAPTER  
Doug Drury, President

WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER  
Mel Latham, President

HAWAII CHAPTER – Provisional  
Ken DeHoff - POC

## Notice to all Members of the VHPA

The liaison between the national HQ of the VHPA and the independent Chapters has reverted to Tom Payne of the Chapter Liaison National Committee. Tom can be reached at [redacted] (cell) or [redacted] (home) or via E-mail at [redacted]. Feel free to contact Tom 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



## ALAMO CHAPTER

On the 8th of May, we met as couples for lunch at The Grill in Leon Springs, named for a nearby town. The Alamo Chapter ladies met for lunch on June 13th at Pompeii Italian Grill.

Our quarterly meeting at the Barn Door Restaurant on June 19th saw our largest attendance ever, 58 warm bodies. We like that place. And we were treated to a very special singing performance by Tilly Gnam, a young lady who is the granddaughter of Member-at-Large Jim Martinson. She is a sophomore at Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio. She sang our national anthem beautifully.

A number of us attended the national VHPA Reunion in Atlanta, and consequently there were no local luncheon meetings in July. The Alamo Chapter enjoyed its own set of tables at the final VHPA banquet, close to the outstanding band. They played our music from our time, including the theme song. Many of us are still able to dance and did.

As always, members should watch for e-mails and check our Chapter website [www.vhpa-alamo.org](http://www.vhpa-alamo.org) for scheduled events and details.

By Chuck Oualline



Tilly Gnam performs the National Anthem



Alamo Chapter members and their ladies render respect to the flag during singing of the National Anthem.



Alamo Chapter members enjoy dinner during their quarterly meeting at the historic Barn Door Restaurant in San Antonio.



Alamo Chapter members enjoy dinner during their quarterly meeting at the historic Barn Door Restaurant in San Antonio.

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# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

VHPA-CCN was represented at the Atlanta reunion by Ken & Marcia Fritz, Jim & Barbara Barger, and Curt Knapp, who worked the AAHF flight line. Ken met up with two pilots he hadn't seen since 1969 and that made the reunion special for him. They are planning for KC next year as this is written.

Curt as usual snuck into a picture, this time with the AAHF volunteers. He is the guy on the left in the back row, in the photo on the right.

On 24 SEP we are taking the Huey to the Salute to Valor fundraiser at Serrano Country Club. This

is an officially recognized event honoring Vietnam vets this year with our Huey as the centerpiece attraction.

11 NOV, Veterans Day this year will find us with the Huey for a BBQ and flyover at The Village Barber Shop in Stockton. Last year over 1,000 civilians enjoyed our participation at this veterans' benefit fund raiser.

Check our website [www.vhpacn.org](http://www.vhpacn.org) for more info and to volunteer for the free lunches and a chance to educate more folks about the Huey and our history.

**Dave Anderson, VHPA-CCN webmaster**



## GEORGIA CHAPTER

During the May 2018 chapter meeting our members voted to alter its bi-monthly meeting schedule in lieu of the forthcoming 35th Annual VHPA Reunion in Atlanta. We agreed to forgo the July meeting and meet on the 23rd of June, just a few days before Atlanta VHPA Reunion, so we could discuss our support responsibilities for the reunion. We will resume our scheduled bimonthly meetings after the Atlanta Reunion, beginning with our 22 September meeting.

With the 35th Annual VHPA Reunion in the rear-

view mirror, it's time for some praise and a few pats on the back. First, you certainly can tell that the VHPA HQ Staff has had years of experience in preparing and organizing for reunions. Sherry Rogers and her staff were indeed magnificent in detail, readiness, and performance.

As the host chapter for the 35th Annual Reunion, many thanks to our chapter members and to those in other chapters who filled our volunteer schedule of 111 duty positions. Our mentors for our volunteers throughout the reunion, namely Gary Jones, Jim Squyres and his wife Patti, were magnificent - many



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

thanks to them for their superb guidance and leadership. A special thanks to Doug Lackey who saved many members money in finding alternative parking for those staying at the Marriott. And to Gary Earls who provided a long list of restaurants and attractions within walking distance from the hotel. And lest I forget, those Georgia based speakers, John Thompson, Bob Babcock, and Andy Zimmerman, who performed magnificently at the speakers' symposium session. We did it guys (GA VHPA gals), GA leads the way!

By the way, one of our GA Chapter members left the reunion with more than just memories. Bill Stanley was one of the lucky recipients of a beautiful quilt presented to him at the Quilters Show and Tell. We extend our gratitude and appreciation to the quilters who contribute so much of their time, skill, and effort to make our reunions above the best.

Our guest speaker for the June meeting was Colonel Patricia Blassie. Col. Blassie is currently serving on active duty at Robbins AFB in Georgia. Her presentation addressed her brother, 1LT Michael Blassie, an Air Force Academy graduate, who was shot down and killed in Vietnam while providing close air support in his A-37 aircraft. Unbeknownst to the Blassie family, Lt. Blassie was interred as the Vietnam Unknown Soldier, Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery, VA. He was interred with artifacts found in the recovered aircraft. At the time of his recovery, a positive identification of the remains could not be made. After learning of his internment and through the strong perseverance of his family, he was finally disinterred from the Tomb of the Unknowns in May of 1989, identified by DNA testing, and brought home to his final resting place at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis MO on July 11, 1998 where he received a military burial with honors. Colonel Blassie was a first time VHPA honored attendee at the Gold Star breakfast this year.

Our guest speaker for our September meeting will be one of our own members, Tom Anderson. Tom's career in the Army is rather unusual to say the least. You might say he's one of a kind! He was commissioned as



Col Blassie

a 2LT Artillery Officer, graduated from both Airborne and Ranger Schools, followed by attendance and graduation from the Army Aviation School where he earned his wings as a helicopter pilot. He flew Scout helicopters in Vietnam; then tried something different. He went to school and learned to be a medical physician! Lo and behold he even became a Flight Surgeon! In his unusual military career, Tom climbed up to the rank of

COL, the rank in which he left the Army in retirement after 29 years of active duty. Following his military retirement Tom practiced for 17 years as a radiologist in the civilian world of medicine. Tom is now a fully retired doctor dude living in Buckhead, Atlanta.

If you got this far in this Chapter report, then it's time for a little humor. Recently, one of our most loyal chapter members, Buck Wade, moved to a new duty station. Q - Has Buck Wade ever missed a Chapter meeting? A - No, I don't think so! So, last month, just before our June meeting, we got this email message from Buck. It read:

*Buck Wade, Dual Rated gunship/U-21 driver has moved to assisted living in Oxford MS., home of the three greatest men, William Faulkner, Jesus, and me. You guys keep up the tradition that every soldier and all women know, "Chopper pilots are the best."*

*HOTTY TODDY*

*Buck Wade.*

We're going to miss you Buck, but I hear there's a lot more single women in those assisted living places than men. So Buck, just let the ladies know you're a Vietnam helicopter pilot...I'm sure you'll get that 'Welcome Home' that bypassed all of us chopper pilots in the last millennium.

*Former Vietnam Helicopter Pilots interested in joining and/or learning more about our chapter may contact*

*or mobile*

*For our scheduled meeting dates for the remainder of 2018 go to our website, GA VHPA.*

**By Bob Lanzotti, President**



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The Michigan Chapter has a busy June and July with more pending as this is being submitted.

**Member At Large Mark Benjamin continues hosting his monthly lunch gatherings at Brady's in Traverse City. For his June 14th gathering he reported:**

Turn out today really blew me away. What great people. There were lots of non-stop laughter and good stories all around; and still no time for pool! His July 12th gathering had four chapter members attending. Plan to join him on the 2nd Thursday of each month.

Vice President Dave James was the OIC again this year for our chapter's participation at "Lest We Forget" June 22-24 in St Joe and filed this AAR:

St. Joe, "Lest We Forget" 2018.

Mark Benjamin and I completed our deployment by 0900 both Saturday and Sunday mornings. We were positioned so we could ambush the people who were attracted by the sound and fury of an operating UH-1. It worked; they mistakenly came to us first. Also, most of the Huey 369 pilots and crew shared time with us. The weather was cool and except for a Sunday morning fog, the aircraft



July VHPA Reunion L-R Carol & Lee Luck, Bob Rich.

still had many paying flights.

The event also featured a topless PC and a "Duck" selling river rides and re-enactors in WWII uniforms, shooting blanks, and burning brush with a flame thrower. There was a very nice traveling museum from WWI through RVN. Everyone complained about the food trucks though, and we will prepare for options in the future. With Mark's salesmanship we recruited one new member and three associate members, so in the end we were very successful.



June Lest We Forget L-R Dave James, Art Fantroy, Pat Fantroy, Mark Benjamin.



June Lest We Forget L-R John Akley, Dave James, Mark Benjamin, Gary Moline.



June 29 Ramp Night Michigan VHPA canopy next to Coast Guard Aviation Association.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Member At Large Mark Benjamin headed up our participation with the U.S. Coast Guard in Traverse City on Ramp Night June 29th. He filed this AAR:

It was really busy here with the Cherry festival week. It just never ends! There was a great crowd for the Ramp Night events at the Coast Guard Air Station in Traverse City. Temperature was oppressively hot with extreme humidity and rather high winds. The B-17 "Yankee Lady" was a big hit. There was lots of activity at our booth during the entire event. Large group of MI VHPA folks in attendance including Jerry Wright, Peter and Miriam Fabian, Charley Eliason, Hugh "Sandy" McLeod, Walter Topp, Ed Canright, Clay and Linda Maxwell, & Mark Benjamin.

**Member At Large Bob Rich was one of six Michigan chapter members who attended the VHPA National Reunion in Atlanta which ran from July 3-7. Besides his other activities at the reunion, Bob attended the chapter presidents meeting on my behalf and the general membership meeting. He submitted a detailed report with excerpts following:**

The VHPA Presidents Meeting held Friday night July 6 was about an hour of discussion on plans for the year from VHPA leadership. Tom Payne spoke first then introduced the former chairman of the State President group, John Sorenson; who talked about past activities. Then Managing Editor Tom Kirk spoke about the Aviator Magazine.

## **Other issues and ideas that came up were:**

Try to get a short bio of each state chapter member's life history to keep on file for the Aviator Magazine's use. A standard member "bioform" will be supplied shortly for this purpose.

The Texas Tech online archive is now available to all members; it includes the Aviator Magazine in digital form, along with other VHPA historical data files.

Start an Individual State Chapter VHPA scholarship funds. Tom Payne is very knowledgeable on the subject and can help with a local effort.

Stage State Chapter sponsored Oral History events.



June 14 Traverse City Lunch L-R Bob Potvin, Bob Matlis, Carol Luck, Lee Luck, Walter Topp, Bart Halliday, Hugh iSandy! McLeod, Linda Maxwell, Clay Maxwell, Scott LaBarre, Mark Benjamin

The Oral History foundation will come to our state and pay much of the event expense.

Other ideas included Chapter sponsored VHPA monuments like the one placed in Arlington Cemetery, 3 million people will walk by this monument each year. Michigan has the Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, MI. where a VHPA memorial for fallen Vietnam era aviation servicemen could be placed.

The only other Michigan member that my wife and I met up with was Lee Luck and his wife. Other Michigan members did attend (six chapter members from Michigan according to the VHPA's reunion morning report).

Bob Rich also attended the General Membership meeting on Saturday morning July 7, the VHPA national president and the executive committee spoke mainly about financial matters. A selection of officers was held, and quite a bit of information on the VHPA Scholarship Fund was given out. Reunion attendance has dropped for this year. Next year's reunion will be held at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown, Kansas City, MO May 29 - June 1, 2019.

For any VHPA members in or near Michigan who would like to be added to our email list for updates on our activities, contact me at [REDACTED] We have several non-Michigan residents on our roster so don't let that stop you from joining us.

**Submitted by Rich Deer, President**



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

The North Carolina Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association has had a very quiet summer. In June Jerry Seago took one aircraft to Lowe's in support of their local military appreciation day. In July, we supported three 4th of July Parades: one in Hillsboro, NC, (Jerry Seago); one in Wise, NC, (Jerry Phelps, Joe Armstrong and Al Coon); and one in Riverbend, NC (Ed Hughes), each with one aircraft.

On the 13th of July, Ed Hughes took the OH-6 to the Havelock Tourist and Event Center in support of the Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation. This year's summer camp was titled,

"The Sky's the Limit" where 50 children were taught Aviation related theory and skills. The program is supported by Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station and provided five engineers, five assistants, and five volunteers to teach.

We are looking forward to our trip to Wise, VA in September, the Mum Festival in New Bern, NC in October and a return trip to Washington DC for Veterans Day.

We are also planning our trip to Kansas City for the 2019 Reunion.

**Ed Hughes, President**

## THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER AND THE HELICOPTER WAR MUSEUM (HWM)

The June Chapter meeting was held at the American Legion Post #1. Elections were held for the Chapter Officers. Dale House was elected President, Doug Neil Vice President, Jim McNamee Treasurer, and Bill Bates Secretary. Congratulations to all.

In June, the Helicopter War Museum visited Longmont Vance Brand Airport. The event was a huge success. One of the highlights of this event was a "Pinning Ceremony" conducted by the American Legion Post 32. It was held for the many Vietnam Veterans who were in attendance that day, including Astronaut Vance Brand, (the airport's name sake). After receiving a Vietnam Service Pin himself, Astronaut Brand presented pins to over 25 veterans from all services. "Rosie the Riveter" impersonator was also there to greet the pin recipients. The Helicopter War Museum estimated that 800 visitors experienced the museum during the one-day event. Docents for this event were Doug Neil, Rick Beaver, Bill Bates, Dale House, Phil Lanphier, Ben Prieb, and Cliff Lawson, photographer.

In July, the Museum attended the Warbird and Classic Auto show at the Front Range Airport in Watkins, CO. The Museum was well attended. Our docents greeted and talked about our exhibits and

shared our experiences. The "PinUp Girl Friends" helped with our recruiting drive for both additional docents and member attendance. I think it will work don't you? Anyway, the photo op did result in calendars being sold to our members. Docents attending the Front Range event were; Terry Olson, Al Harinck and wife, Ben Prieb, Doug Niel, Rick Overstake, George Mayl, Bill Bates, Rick Beaver, and Cliff Lawson, photographer.

We reported last issue that we were in discussions with Texas Tech University, Vietnam Archive Department for end of life options for our traveling Helicopter War Museum. Texas Tech was very positive regarding those discussions and have provided some options for us. Stay tuned for further developments on this subject.

Several members attended the 7th Squadron 17th Cavalry Reunion in Branson, MO. It was really great to get reacquainted with other "Ruthless Riders" whom I've not seen since days long ago.

### Other Chapter and Upcoming Activities:

Our Museum event coming up very soon is the Adams County Fair in Denver, CO. The event will be reported in the next Aviator. Next Chapter meeting will be held at the American Legion Post #1 on Wednesday, August 15, 2018. Other chapter activities will continue to be announced on our Web site.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Astronaut Vance Brand and Dale House.



Vietnam Veterans with Astronaut Brand.



Al Harinck assisting Veterans with the Vietnam Map.



Doug Neil explaining the exhibit.



Telling the Story.

*Photographs  
provided by  
Clifford Lawson.*



Bill Bates with Rosie.



7/17th Reunion. A Troop members rear row LR Tom Wells, Jerry Trembath, front row LR-member not ID'd, and Tony Morton.



George Mayl adjusting helmet on junior aviator.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## Meeting Schedule and other Information:

We normally hold meetings once a month, on the third Wednesday of the month, at 10:00 hours at the American Legion Post #1, I-25 and Yale Avenue. We occasionally change venues, so contact us at the address below to verify dates, times and location. We do not meet in December or July, but normally have a holiday get together in December. The Museum committee will meet periodically to continue categorizing inventory and developing additional displays. Visit our Web site at [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com)

We continue to look for artifacts for the Museum. Please contact our Chapter President and Museum Curator, Dale House with anything you'd like to donate or loan to the museum. We can be contacted through our mailbox at:  



Recruiting for Membership.



Group Picture of the Veterans at the Corona del Mar High School 2018 Living History luncheon.

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

VHPA members; Sven Akesson, Jim Davidson, James Grimm and 86 other local veterans have been actively working with the Freedom Committee of Orange County and the Newport Beach Corona de Mar High School's Living History Project, where all the sophomore students interviewed veterans from all services and past wars of their experiences and individual services during those wars and conflicts as part of the school's United States History curriculum.

Other news: members of the local VHPA SoCal chapter continue working with the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation's Arizona Chapter and the Southern California Detachment providing the opportunity for veterans and their families to purchase a ride in the front seat of an AH-1F Cobra and fly a simulated re-enactment combat mission in the local foothills. As they did last year, the group comprised of local SoCal VHPA members, Quad-A members, AAHF members and others are flying out of the Yanks Museum at the Chino Airport.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Left to right current SoCal President Jim Davidson, past SoCal President Sven Akesson and SoCal Chapter founder / past President Carl Cortez

This year's get-together and BBQ is currently planned for September 29, 2018 at the Yank's Museum, 7000 Merrill Avenue, Chino Airport, Chino, CA. If you are free, come on down and enjoy the party.

A VFW chili contest earlier this year brought out the best of the best chili cooks this year including three of the Southern California Presidents - who teamed up to try their hand at cooking chili - actually one of the Southern California Chapter founders & past



The Army Aviation Heritage Foundation AH-1F Cobra on departure from the Yanks Museum front lawn, Chino Airport, Chino, California.

President Carl Cortez led the way, with past President Sven Akesson and newly elected President Jim Davidson assisting with the preparation.

**Jim Davidson, President – VHPA SoCal Chapter**

## Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

If you flew helicopters in combat – in any US service, any conflict – you should be a member of CHPA.



501(c)19 Veterans Org, non-profit, tax exempt  
[www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org)

If personal assistance needed  
call Terry Garlock, Treasurer  
(life member VHPA and CHPA)  
cell [redacted]



"Passing the Torch"  
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[www.joeklineart.com](http://www.joeklineart.com)



# ~ LOOKING FOR ~

*To All,*

My Father (Ricardo Robert Tejano) died June 9th, 1968. I worked for a company and the HR lady that worked there gave me this website. I think it is a good thing you all do and I wish my Father would have survived to join.

My question; is there a way to find out about his history while he was in country and maybe about his last mission and the men on his chopper?

I was hoping maybe someone there would know how or maybe know him?

*Thank You for your service,*

**Dick Tejano,** [REDACTED]

Database information:

Name: WO1 Ricardo Robert Tejano

Killed in Action from an incident on 06/05/1968 while performing the duty of Aircraft Commander.

Unit: 191 AHC

Flight class: 67-19/67-17

Aircraft: UH-1D tail number 65-10019

Started Tour: 01/01/1968

Location: Dinh Tuong Province IV Corps.Ed.

*Hello,*

My name is Rich Angelini, Co-Chair, Restoration and Conservation Committee, Battleship Cove Museum, located in Fall River, MA. We have obtained UH1-C '609, an aircraft assigned to both the Muskets and Taipan Gun platoons in her five-year RVN service. In addition to help in locating the parts listed below, we would appreciate any photos or anecdotal information from either platoon regarding her time in-country.

Parts we are searching for:

(1) AN/APX Transponder

(2) Wind diverters

(1) White navigation light lens

(2) M 134 miniguns

(L/R) Roof greenhouse glass windows

(2) M 60 replicas

(2) 7-tube XM158 rocket launcher

(2) M 60 bungee cords (original ones as we can purchase some that look like vintage photos if needed)

(2) Ground handling wheels

(1) RPM Warning Box

*Any leads would be greatly appreciated. I can be reached at*

*Thank you for your service.*

The family of Thomas T. Collins is looking for information regarding his death; caused by walking into a tail rotor of an AH-1G Chu Lai Airfield on June 11, 1971. He was a crew chief with D Troop, 1st Sqdn. 1st Cav. They are hoping to contact for anyone who was in the unit at the time.

I'm also looking for anyone who was in the 240 AHC in late 1968 who might be able to explain why 20mm ammunition was found at the crash site of UH-1C #66-15154. All four crew members Fernan, Fowler, Hastings, Russell were lost. Fernan was recovered in 1971 the rest are still missing, DPAA is investigating this one.

*Any help for one or both queries*

*would be greatly appreciated.*

**POC: Jim McLaughlin** [REDACTED]

Barry H. Dunnivant is looking to contact anyone who knew his cousin: James (Jim, Jimmy, Jungle) M. Dunnivant. He served with 176TH AHC in 1970. He was WIA on July 11, 1970 and died on July 18, 1970.

*Thank you.*

My name is Guy Hansen and I shared a tent with William "Rick" Apblett in Vietnam with 163rd Aviation Company, 101st Airborne in 1969. I just learned of his helicopter crash in 1978 and I would love to reach out to Rick's family to share pictures and stories of our year together in Vietnam. I also learned his father passed away back in 2013.

Rick was an amazingly talented and funny individual and helped me through difficult times in Vietnam. RIP my friend and I apologize we lost touch after returning from Vietnam.

Would anyone who knows Rick's family, please pass along my contact information? I can be reached at either of the following: Email: [REDACTED] / Phone: [REDACTED]



# From Revival To Survival

My memories of the time I spent in Vietnam are reflections of long ago. But sometimes, it seems like only yesterday. Memories of days past give pause to daily flashbacks of what might have been.

Vietnam in many respects was a beautiful country as seen from the air; lush and green as far as the eye could see. We flew from our home base at Vinh Long to our area of operation each day. It was easy to get lost in the solitude of the moment considering how peaceful and cool it was up in the air. Yet, just a few thousand feet below lurked death and destruction. I found solace in the words of the poem, "High Flight" by John Gillespie McGee Junior as he penned; "Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth, And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings; Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things You have not dreamed of." Just a few moments to be lost in thought away from the war.

January 4, 1969 dawned the same as many other countless mornings. Awake before daylight ready to face another day, not knowing what might be in store for any of us.

We went to the mess hall for a quick breakfast, then went down to the flight line in the dark. After making sure all personnel were present and accounted for, we checked our equipment and did our preflight inspections of the aircraft. At the designated time we started our engines, did our radio checks, and announced, "Flight up, everyone ready for takeoff."

We departed Vinh Long at 0 dark thirty and climbed to cruise altitude, proceeding south into the heart of the Mekong Delta. The area was mostly flat, consisting of scattered rice paddies bordered by thick jungle that followed winding drainage canals. Hidden among the dense undergrowth of the fifty-foot tall trees were small villages scattered throughout the area. There were few roads and the only forms of transportation were by foot, small boats, or aircraft. January is the dry season in Vietnam, and the area we were working was a hotbed for the Viet Cong.

The flight was not very long. After landing at a South Vietnamese airfield called Vi Thanh, we refueled and waited for the flight leader to be briefed on our mission for the day. At approximately 7:30 a.m., we took off for the first mission to scout an area southwest of the airfield.

Our "Hunter Killer" teams consisted of two OH-6A Scout helicopters called Loaches, two AH-1G Cobra gunships, and one UH-1H Command and Control (C&C) helicopter. The Huey was flown by MAJ David Thompson. His crew chief was Mike Thompson. I can't remember who his co-pilot or gunner was.

I flew the lead Scout Loach with my observer SP4 Gary David Falk. Warrant Officer James Hilton flew my wing and James L. French was his observer. Dick Federowicz and Joe Klesen flew one Cobra and CPT Ed Hinderks flew the other one.

I can't remember who Ed's co-pilot was.

The beginning of the mission went smoothly and we located very little activity. As I scouted a small stream surrounded by thick trees and banana palms, I came upon a village consisting of approximately twelve to fifteen thatched huts. The village had a sewage canal dug around the outside with a small clearing in the center. I didn't see anyone in the village.

At first, everything appeared normal except for the absence of people. Then I saw enemy bunkers and firing positions hidden among the trees. After I reported my sightings to MAJ Thompson in the C&C ship, I saw several individuals dressed in black VC pajamas and carrying weapons running through the undergrowth toward the bunkers.

I quickly flew away from the village. The Cobra gunships rolled in firing rockets and mini guns at the bunkers. When they finished their gun run, we came back in to do a damage report. As I came around the edge of the village at tree-top level and slow speed, all hell broke loose. I received heavy automatic weapons fire as rounds penetrated my Loach. I radioed, "Taking fire, taking fire."

Jim Hilton was right behind me and later told me the engine cowlings blew open and the engine was blown right out of my helicopter. He believes an RPG hit me. I didn't have much time to react as we nosedived into the trees. The last thing I remember was tree-limbs flashing by as we crashed to the ground. I was knocked unconscious on impact.

While I was unconscious, James Hilton tried to rescue me. As soon as he arrived at my downed helicopter, a VC jumped up with an AK-47 and opened fire on him. James was shot through both legs and his finger was shot off. A round penetrated his helmet, nicking the side of his face and shattering his face shield. The round sprayed blood and plexiglass in his eyes temporarily blinding him.

Hilton would have crashed too if it hadn't been for his observer, James French. "Frenchy," as we called him, hadn't been in the Scouts long enough to fly the helicopter by himself. He directed Hilton toward a large field and talked him to the ground with a perfect landing.

As soon as Hilton's Loach was clear of the area, Richard Federowicz and Joe Klesen came in and hovered above me in their Cobra. They fired rockets and mini-guns into the tree line where I had taken fire.

I don't know how long I was unconscious. When I came to, my neck and face on the left side were burning. I believe the heat from the flames is probably what woke me. Everything was hazy at first, as if I were in a twilight zone. The helicopter was burning and filled with smoke. My helmet and the glove from my left hand were missing. The cockpit was completely smashed.

I looked over at my observer, Gary Falk, who had been killed on impact. Gary was a good man, a good soldier, and totally fearless. At twenty-one years of age, he had three sisters, and a younger brother. My heart filled with grief.

For some strange reason that is still a mystery, I couldn't move. I felt at peace and resigned myself to die.



My first thoughts were, you're not going to get out of this mess. You've lived a good life, but this is the end for you.

I've heard it said that when a person is facing certain death, their entire life flashes before their eyes, but that was not the case for me. After a few seconds of contemplating my fate, I heard a voice speak to me as clear as a bell. "You have a son you haven't yet seen. Get out of there, get out of there." Upon hearing that voice I regained my senses and somehow scrambled out of the wreckage. By then, I was badly burned and had lacerations on my leg from the crash.

I made it out of the helicopter and stumbled toward a drainage canal a short distance away. I waded through chest-deep water and scrambled up the other side trying to make it to a rice paddy. It was tough going with a wounded leg and the heavy chest protector still strapped on. Luckily, the rice paddy was dry. As I ran, I heard gunfire behind me, and a round tore through my right forearm. It felt like I was struck with a baseball bat as I went down. I was totally exhausted from the ordeal but continued crawling out into the rice paddy.

Dick Fedorowicz and Joe Klesen saw me running from the wreckage and someone chasing me. At first, they thought it was my observer, Gary Falk. When they got a better view, they realized it was a VC shooting at me with an AK-47. They rolled in and killed him, Hilton later told me he was sure it was the same VC who had shot him.

While the first Cobra put down protective fire, the other Cobra gunship flown by CPT Hinderks landed in the rice paddy next to me. His front seat pilot climbed out and opened the ammo bay door on the side of the helicopter. This door is about four feet long and eighteen inches wide. It was supported by cables at both ends. The co-pilot helped me up onto the door, then climbed on beside me. I don't remember who was holding me on to that Cobra, but I will be forever indebted to him and CPT Hinderks for saving my life.

We both hung on for dear life while CPT Hinderks flew us to another area a short distance away where we landed. I was transferred to the C&C helicopter and MAJ Thompson flew me to the hospital at Can Tho. CPT Hinderk's Cobra escorted us to the hospital.

After arriving at the hospital, I was rushed in for treatment. I remember the doctor asking me if I was allergic to anything. My face felt like it was on fire. My arm and leg were also hurting. The pain was almost unbearable.

The next thing I remembered was waking up. The doctor had told me I needed to go to surgery right away. I reached over and felt my arm and realized I had already been to surgery. I was taken to the ward where I went into shock. I started shivering. I kept telling the nurses, "I'm cold, I'm so cold." I couldn't stop shivering. This wasn't normal because it was always hot in Vietnam plus the hospital wasn't air-conditioned. The nurses brought me some blankets, and after a while I was all right.

When MAJ Thompson and Hinderks left the area, Dick Fedorowicz couldn't find James Hilton's helicopter. Fedorowicz couldn't make radio contact with MAJ Thompson or Hinderks to determine where the other Loach had gone. The talk channel

on the C&C ship had been shut off or switched to another channel. Fedorowicz and Klesen searched the area and located Hilton's Loach setting in a rice paddy about a thousand meters from the village with the rotors blades still spinning. Frenchy had dragged Hilton free of the aircraft. Dick Fedorowicz landed his Cobra next to the Loach. Joe Klesen got out of the front seat and helped Hilton onto their ammo bay door. Frenchy got in the front seat of the Cobra. Joe sat beside Hilton to help hold him on to the helicopter.

As they took off, Klesen's mouthpiece was blown off his helmet by the downdraft. He held on by bracing his feet on the skids while holding on to the cables and ammo box to keep Hilton and himself from falling off. Hilton held on to one cable with his good hand and grabbed the back of Klesen's collar with his injured hand.

There were no other Huey helicopters in the area to transport Hilton to the hospital. Fedorowicz flew the helicopter at an angle to keep his passengers from falling off while he transported them to the hospital at Can Tho. With his low fuel light on most of the way, he landed on fumes and had to be re-fueled before they could take off again.

When the medics put Hilton on a stretcher, they attempted to put Joe Klesen on another one believing he was also wounded. He was covered in Hilton's blood and so cramped from holding on that he couldn't move.

Klesen finally convinced the medics and nurses that he wasn't injured. He and Fedorowicz followed Hilton into the hospital where they saw me lying on a table talking to the doctor. They heard the doctor ask me if I was allergic to anything and my reply, "Yes, pain!" I didn't know they were there, but they knew I would make it after hearing me talking to the doctor.

I spent a week in the hospital in Vietnam being treated for the gunshot wound in my arm, second and third-degree burns to the left side of my forehead, and deep lacerations to my left thigh. Because of the concussion, I went temporarily blind, but my eyesight came back after a couple of days.

After a week in the hospital in Vietnam, I was evacuated to Japan where I spent a week. They did a closed reduction on my right arm and treated my burns. I was then returned stateside via Andrews Air Force Base and completed my recovery at Fort Jackson. While at Fort Jackson, I underwent more surgeries to set the bones and to have a metal plate put in my right arm.

I petitioned to remain on active duty and my request was granted. After spending several months at Fort Jackson, I was transferred to Fort Knox. During my career, I served at several other bases, including two years in Korea, before retiring from the Army in 1978.

I will always be grateful to the brave men with whom I served with in Vietnam, especially those who saved my life. The Blackhawks will forever be my brothers and I love seeing them at the reunions.

**Jerry M. Free, B Troop 67-69**



## AWARDS LEGEND

**MOH** = Medal of Honor; **DSC** = Army Distinguished Service Cross; **NC** = Navy Cross; **AFC** = Air Force Cross; **DSM** = Distinguished Service Medal; **SS** = Silver Star; **DSSM** = Defense Superior Service Medal; **LM** = Legion of Merit; **DFC** = Distinguished Flying Cross; **SM** = Soldier's Medal; **NMC** = Navy and Marine Corps Medal; **CGM** = Coast Guard Medal; **BS** = Bronze Star Medal; **PH** = Purple Heart; **MSM** = Meritorious Service Medal; **AM** = Air Medal; **CM** = respective service Commendation Medal

*Due to limitations of space, most of the obituaries in Taps have been reduced in size; some slightly, some considerably. Often there are extensive details of more interest to a neighbor or other acquaintance. If you wish to obtain more information it is available on [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org).*

**Berry, Thomas P. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 55-E.**

Thomas Preston Berry, of Lynn Haven, FL died on June 3, 2018. He was born in Brea, CA, May 17, 1931 and grew up in the mountains of Northwest Arkansas. He was a graduate of the University of Arkansas.

He served in the Signal Corps for 20 years. He was a fixed wing and helicopter pilot and he established the first Air Traffic Controller course for the U.S. Army at Fort Rucker, AL. After retirement he was employed by ARINC Research Corporation in Annapolis, MD where his duties included certification of the first airborne Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) on a commercial airplane in regular service.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Donna Berry.

**Boostrom, David A. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 71-38; RVN: 72 361 AVN, 129 AHC; Callsign: Panther 24.**

David Boostrom was born October 20, 1945 in Altadena, CA and died peacefully at home on March 9, 2018 in Ventura, CA. He loved the Army and especially the Field Artillery, the King of Battle.

After serving 28 years in the military, he worked as an ROTC instructor at Santiago High School in Garden Grove, CA.

He is survived by his wife, Jana, of 51 years. He will be missed dearly.

**Clark, Robert L. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 69-17; RVN: 69-70 3/11 ACR; Callsign: Bandit 21.**

Robert Clark died April 28, 2016.



**Christensen, Leo D. USA; Flight Class: 67-24; RVN: 68-69 11 GS 1 CAV; BS; Callsign: Jaguar 10.**

Leo Drew Christensen, passed away on July 24, 2018 at home of pancreatic cancer. He was born August 23, 1944 in Provo, UT. He grew up in Murray, UT and graduated from Murray High.

Drew served in the Great Lakes Mission and faithfully fulfilled service in numerous ward and stake callings over the years including service in the Manti, Logan and Jordan River Temples baptistry for a total of 11 years.

He enlisted in the United States Army after returning from his mission and served in Vietnam and in Germany as a helicopter pilot and commanded many units.

Drew attended Snow College and graduated from Utah State University with a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Accounting.

**Cromwell, Robert W. USA; Flight Class: 70-14; RVN: 67-68 198 LIB, 70-71 187 AHC; Callsign: Mung 6.**

Robert W. Cromwell, 75, passed away June 26, 2018. He served in the US Army as a helicopter pilot for over 10 years.

**Davenport, Thomas E. USA; Flight Class: 68-9; RVN: 68-69 MEDEVAC.**

Thomas "Tex" Davenport, 68, a U.S. Army Vietnam War veteran and a former sales executive, died April 23, 2018 after a decade-long battle with a rare neurological disease, Corticobasal Degeneration.

Thomas was born in North Carolina; raised in Kenansville, NC. He attended Duplin High School and then Roanoke College in Roanoke, VA., where he earned a bachelor's degree.



Thomas thrived in a long career in the private sector as a sales executive in the construction and flooring industry. He worked for Tate Access Flooring and Irvine Access Flooring Inc.

He is survived by his wife, Linda Davenport of Millersville, MD.

**Freeman, Roger D. USA; Flight Class: 67-7; RVN: 67-68 11 GS 1 CAV, 67-68 371 ASA 1 CAV; Callsign: Left Bank.**

We lost member R. David Freeman on March 28, 2018. Sorry we were never able to put together a history of the Left Bank operation with the 1st Cav.

David was born on October 8, 1945. After supporting the 371st Radio Research Company, David was assigned to Hunter Army Airfield, GA, where he spent the remainder of his Army career with the Helicopter Accident Investigation Board. Dave accepted an early January release to fly helicopters for a Utah company.

He is survived by his wife Linley.

**Frier, James J. II USMC; Flight Class: 03-67.**

James "J.J." Frier, II, passed away on Friday, July 6, 2018 after a lengthy illness.

J.J. was born on February 1, 1943 in Newberry, SC. He graduated from Byrnes High School at Duncan, SC, and the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. J.J. also obtained a Master of Business Administration and Master of Science in Administration from Georgia College.

With pride and honor, J.J. served as an Officer in the United States Marine Corps. After his military career, he came to Robins Air Force Base as a Civil Service employee working as a Procurement Specialist and Contracting Officer. He retired in 2008 after forty-three years of government service.





**Hanson, Donald L. USA;**  
**Flight Classes: 65-13W/65-**  
**13; RVN: 65-66 254 MED**  
**DET; DFC, DFC (V);**  
**Callsign: Dustoff 100.**



Donald Lee Hanson of Hot Springs Village passed away July 8, 2018. He was born on September 5, 1946 in Seattle.

Don's profession was in aviation as a helicopter pilot for over forty years with the U.S. Army and Petroleum Helicopters, Inc. Don flew as a Captain for Petroleum Helicopters, Inc. based in Lafayette, LA with assignments including Europe, Australia, West Area New Guinea, and many areas of the U.S. One area included Children's Hospital in Little Rock, AR for approximately eight years, which was a highlight of his life.

He is survived by his wife Kathy.

**Hunter, Carl M. USA,**  
**CW3 Ret.; Flight Class: 57-**  
**6; RVN: 65-66 B/228**  
**AVN 1 CAV, 68 765 TC**  
**BN.**



Carl Merwyn Hunter passed away on June 5, 2018 after a long illness. He was born August 5, 1929 in Albany, MO. He lived on the family farm until he joined the Army out of high school.

After retiring from the Army, he moved the family to Springfield, MO. He retired a second time after a career as an Insurance Agent. Through the years he volunteered for many charities such as Meals on Wheels, Crosslines, and the Childhood Reading Program at a local school. He was very active in his church serving as both a Deacon and Elder.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Barbara Hunter.

**Jones, Eugene F. USA; Flight Class: 57-8;**  
**RVN: 65-66 B/15 TC 1 CAV, 68-69 17**  
**AHC; Callsign: Super Chief.**

It is with profound sadness that I am writing to tell you of Frank's death. We have lost a Life Member. Frank Jones was at our Olympia Airshow meeting Saturday.

He was on the top-side of 90 and began flying before I was born. Frank flew in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

It was a grand last day: attending a

VHPA meeting, looking at aircraft, watching helicopters fly and spending time with his family. It could not have been a better last day for him...or us.

**Kenney, Michael T. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight**  
**Classes: 68-524/68-44; RVN: 69-70 61**  
**AHC; Callsign: Lucky 11.**

Michael Terence Kenney, of Lower Paxton Township, PA and formerly of Grantville, passed away Wednesday, June 6, 2018. He was born March 6, 1947 in Williamsport, PA.

Michael received an associate degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Maine in 1981. In 1985 he completed the US Army Engineer Officer Advanced Course, and in 1994 received his baccalaureate degree in history from the State University of New York.

He retired with over 27 years of service as a helicopter pilot and instructor with the US Army and National Guard, and later worked for Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

He is survived by his wife Susan Bates Kenney.

**Kollstedt, Stephen L.**  
**USA; Flight Class: 68-6;**  
**RVN: 68-69 C/227 AHB**  
**1 CAV, 69 E/82 ARTY 1**  
**CAV; Callsigns: Water**  
**Buffalo/Woodpecker.**



Stephen Kollstedt L. devoted husband of Paula L. Kollstedt passed away in May of 2014. He was an engineer at GE Aviation. He was also a pilot in the United States Army and the Ohio National Guard.

**Lyden, Allen G. USA, Ret.;**  
**Flight Classes: 67-501/67-**  
**23; RVN: 68-69 611 TC**  
**DET, 68-69 7/1 CAV;**  
**Callsigns: Dutchmas-**  
**ter/Tailboard.**



Allen George "Lenny" Lyden passed away on June 24, 2018 at Sacred Heart Providence Medical Center in Spokane, WA. He was born on December 19, 1942 in Spokane where he grew up and attended school at Saint Aloysius and Gonzaga Prep.

Following high school Lenny enlisted in the United States Army, retiring in 1987.

While in the Army, he was able to obtain

college credits, attending several universities along the way including Georgetown University. He achieved his bachelor's degree in 1974 from St. Martin's College in Lacey, WA. Lenny is survived by his wife, Cindy.

**Marshall, William T. Jr.**  
**USA; Flight Classes: 70-**  
**5/70-3; RVN: 70 4 INF, 70-**  
**71 C/158 AVN 101, 71**  
**163 GS 101 ABN; BS; Call-**  
**sign: Woodstock 13.**



William Thomas (Tom) Marshall, Jr., died unexpectedly at his home in Apopka, FL on May 20. Tom was born on July 28, 1949 in Martinsville, VA. The family relocated to Pensacola, FL, where Tom spent the majority of his life.

Tom's service in Vietnam was a defining period in his life and a source of tremendous pride. In 1998, he wrote a highly-acclaimed book, *The Price of Exit*, chronicling his experiences there. He was an active member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association since 1990, treasuring the relationships he shared with his fellow pilots. He also served on the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument Committee.

Tom's passion for flying was life-long, and he was a licensed private pilot for many years. After his military service ended, Tom went back to school, graduating from Troy State University and spending the next 40 years as a professional commercial real estate appraiser in Pensacola and throughout the state of Florida, holding the prestigious MAI designation.

He is survived by his former wife, Patricia Marshall of Devon, PA.

**Mathews, Paul C. USAF,**  
**LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 57-B**  
**US; RVN: 71-72 21 SOS;**  
**DFC; Callsign: Knife.**



Paul Carlton Mathews of Montgomery, AL, passed into Heaven on Friday, July 20, 2018.

He was born in Palatka, FL, on February 15, 1933. In 1955, he graduated from The Citadel in Charleston, SC, and in 1968, he acquired his Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling.

Upon retiring from the Air Force, Colonel Mathews served Baylor University



as an academic advisor, pilot, and admissions counselor. He retired from Baylor and then completed a third career as a counselor at Navarro College in Corsicana, TX. He was an active member of Trinity Presbyterian Church where he served as a Ruling Elder.

He is survived by his wife Margaret Harbor Gracey Mathews.

**Martin, Daniel W. USA; Flight Classes: 68-516/68-28; RVN: 69-70 B/158 AVN 101 ABN; Callsign: Lancer 26.**

Daniel was a resident of East Helena, MT at the time of passing on July 4, 2018.

**McLaughlin, Clayton E. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 56-10; RVN: 66-67 334 AHC, 69-70 273 AVN; DFC; Callsigns: Play-boy 12/Saber 8.**



Clayton Edward McLaughlin went to heaven on the 9th of June 2018 due to complications from Parkinson's disease; which he fought for 25 years, he was 88. He proudly served in the United States Army for 23 years as a helicopter and a fixed wing pilot. After the military, he served as a public servant for the Flathead County and a volunteer pilot for Search and Rescue.

Clayton's devotion to his country, his community and St. Richards Catholic Church was surpassed only by his devotion to his family. Clayton's love for his wife, Joanne, their eight children and twelve grandchildren was illustrated through his devotion and commitment to caring and providing for them.

**Reaves, Eugene W. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 69-37/69-35; RVN: 69-70 192 AHC; Callsign: Chip.**

Eugene William Reaves IV passed on March 19, 2017.

He is survived by Lori Reaves, his wife of 29 years.

**Rice, Charles M. USA; Flight Class: 67-20; RVN: 68-69 D/3/4 CAV 25 INF; Callsign: Centaur 11.**



Charles "Charlie" Rice passed away peacefully in his home in Napa, CA surrounded by his loving family on March 28, 2018. Charlie was born on August 2, 1946 in Oakland, CA. He was a military brat and graduated from

Kalamazoo Central High School in Kalamazoo, MI in 1964. He returned to San Jose, CA to attend college.

Charlie enlisted in the U.S. Army in December 1965. He trained as a 67 W20 crew chief and mechanic at Ft. Eustis, VA. He subsequently moved on to become a CH-47 crew chief and mechanic then attended OCS at Ft. Knox, KY. He served in the Vietnam War as a Scout Platoon Leader from '68-'69, then in Ansbach, Germany as Operations Officer from '69-'71.

Charlie served his community admirably through his career as a Public Safety Officer (Police/Fire) for the City of Sunnyvale from 1971 to 2002, retiring as a Lieutenant.

He is survived by his loving wife of 25 years, Shellie Rice.

**Rochelle, David N. USA; Flight Classes: 68-24/68-20; RVN: 65-66 1 BDE 101 ABN, 71-72 F/8 CAV 23 INF; DFC, BS, PH w/OLC, AM w/OLC; Callsign: Blue Ghost.**

David Rochelle, 75, died May 21, 2018, in Florence, SC from complications of prostate cancer. He was born and raised in Wilmington, NC. He spent 15 years in the Army, and served a previous tour in Vietnam as a weapons platoon leader in 1965/1966 with the 101st ABN DIV. Upon leaving the Army in 1976, he worked for several civilian companies in human resources. Eventually, he joined the US Department of State as a human resource officer in the Foreign Service department, and served in several overseas posts. He last worked in Washington, DC until he retired and relocated to Florence.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce.

**Roesel, Albert J. USA; Flight Class: 70-10; RVN: 70-71 134 AHC; BS.**

Ab Roesel left this earth on Wednesday, July 11th, 2018. Albert Julius Roesel Jr., (Ab, as he was known by loved ones) was born on November 29, 1942, in Wilmington, NC, while his father was stationed there during World War II.

His early childhood was spent in Augusta and Savannah, GA. During high school, the family relocated to Statesboro, GA. There he finished high school and graduated from Georgia Southern College in 1967 with a bachelor's in sociology and psychology. Later in life he returned to Georgia Southern, where he earned a masters of mathematics education.

He joined the family business, the H.A. Sack Company, serving in multiple roles until 1985.

He and his wife Cindy played a pivotal role in stopping the expansion of coal fire-powered by the Snapping Shoals EMC, and made an immeasurable positive impact in their community of Conyers, GA.

He leaves behind his beloved wife of 25 years, Cindy Roesel.

**Rudzek, Sheldon L. USA Ret.; Flight Classes: 70-3/70-1; RVN: 70 B/101 AVN 101 ABN, 70 163 AVN 101 ABN, 71 C/101 AVN 101 ABN.**



Sheldon Lee Rudzek passed away July 5, 2018 at his residence. He was born September 23, 1949 in Burlington, CO. He retired from the United States Army and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

He is survived by his wife, Betty (Morris) Rudzek.

**Sands, Larry J. USA; Flight Class: 66-20; RVN: 67-68 191 AHC, 68 116 AHC; BS, ACM; Callsigns: Bounty Hunter/Wasp.**



Lawrence Jay Sands, (Larry), was born in Pennsylvania on November 19, 1942. He died in Salt Lake City, UT on April 23, 2018, where he was receiving treatment for cancer.

Larry served in the U.S. military for 10 years. Following his honorable discharge, Larry built homes in Pierce County, Washington State, then changed careers and became the owner of a successful advertising agency, L.J. Sands & Associates, for over two decades.

After relocating to Mexico, he again became a builder and contractor for new homes and a remodeler of Mexican colonial-style homes with artisanal craftsmanship as he kept a crew gainfully employed for a decade. He helped form the English-speaking Rotary Club and was instrumental in the formation and growth of the inter-denominational Community Church of San Miguel. He acted as a marketing consultant for many charities, always sharing his expertise and empathy for "the cause."

He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Camile.



# TAPS

**Shulze, Terry W. USA; Flight Classes: 67-503/67-23; RVN: 68 D/227 AVN 1 CAV, 69-70 A/3/17 CAV; Callsigns: Lobo 33/Spur 14.**

Terry Wayne Shulze died at home after an extended illness on March 29, 2009 with his wife of 30 years by his side. He was born in Tucson, AZ on August 8, 1947. Terry was a hard-working family man with a big heart. One of his proudest accomplishments was earning a business degree from Michigan Technological University in 1974. Terry worked in the lumber industry for over 30 years and had recently retired from PROBuild.

Terry is survived by wife Debra of Puyallup.

**Sturgis, Howard O. Jr. USA; RVN: 66-67 116 AHC; DFC; Callsign: Hornet 31.**

Howard O. Sturgis, Jr., 79, of Waycross died Monday evening at Baptist Village Nursing Home after an extended illness. Mr. Sturgis was born in Boston, MA, but had made Waycross, GA his home since 1977.

He graduated college with a master's degree from NorthStar College in Alaska and taught locally before becoming the popular "Plant Doctor" at Ace Hardware in Blackshear.

**Truitt, Robert E. USA CW5 Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-13, 68-21; RVN: 68-69 235 AWC; BS, MSM; Callsign: Devil 44.**

Robert E. "Bob" Truitt, age 69, of Greenfield, passed away on



Thursday, July 5, 2018 at his residence. He was born on March 18, 1949 in Greenfield. He graduated from Eastern Hancock in 1967 and received his bachelor's from Indiana University. He was a helicopter pilot, and instructor, at the Shelbyville National Guard Armory, retiring with 33 years of service. Bob was a member of Masonic Lodge #217 in Waldron.

He is survived by his wife, Kimberly Vanarsdale Truitt.

**Vissers, Martin R. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 57-15; RVN: 63 MAAG, 70-71 123 AVN; LM, MSM, DFC, BS (OLC); Callsign: Griffin 6.**



Martin Richard Vissers died May 26, 2018 at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital - Plano, TX, from injuries sustained earlier that day in an accidental fall while walking home from an errand.

Martin was born June 28, 1935 in New York City. He was admitted by competitive examination to the Bronx High School of Science, an extremely selective academy of the New York Public School System, graduating in 1953. He studied at Cornell University for a year and then the less expensive Long Island Agricultural and Technical Institute for another year, until his funds ran out.

During his 22 years of active duty, Martin accumulated over 5,000 flight hours, a significant amount of it in combat during his tours in Vietnam. After some years in the Army, he was finally able to take leave to finish his Bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He was also a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff

College at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Following his retirement from the Army, Martin and his family moved to Carrollton, TX where he established a new Dunkin' Donuts franchise restaurant, which he and Marjorie operated together for about eight years before selling the business as a going concern.

Martin devoted countless hours in his retirement to civic duty, serving on the Dallas County Grand Jury, serving as an election judge, serving on countless Veterans boards and committees, and on a military academy candidate selection advisory committee. His awards and honors for civic and charitable services are too numerous to mention.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Marjorie.

**Wadginski, Francis A. USA; Flight Class: 70-46; RVN: 132 ASHC, 178 ASHC; Callsign: Hercules 13.**



Francis Wadginski, known by most as "Ski," passed away June 23, 2018.

He was born in Quantico, VA, March 9, 1947 to a military family. Ski spent time in places including: China, California, and Maryland. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the Army.

Following the war, he pursued a degree at The University of New Mexico Albuquerque in criminal justice. He later moved to California where he became a Parole agent, married his wife, and served in Redding until he retired in 2005.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Sharon.

*The message below was received before we printed the July/August issue. A requirement to readjust several pages late in the preparation resulted in its omission.*

**I have just now viewed the May/June edition of The VHPA Aviator. FYI, there are two names that were interchanged:**

**Kenneth Newcom and Don Newton's photos were exchanged for each other.**

**Thanks for your very fine volunteer efforts to our organization.**

**Lanny Julian**



# TAPS

Records of the recent deaths of the following potential members of the VHPA were gleaned from internet searches within the last two months. All the information VHPA has for these pilots may be found at VHPA.org or by calling 1-800-505-VHPA. If you knew any of the pilots listed, please help VHPA by sending any information you know about the person to HQ@VHPA.org or call 1-800-505-VHPA (8472) so it can be added to our database.

Bailey, Melvin L. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 67-501/67-15; RVN: 68-69 134 AHC; Callsign: Demon 67; died July 23, 2018.

Bakke, Karlton I. USAF; RVN: 71-72 37 ARRS; died July 18, 2018.

Brake, John W. USA, LTC Ret.; died June 17, 2018.

Brown, Harry E. USA; died June 13, 2018.

Christy, Edwin J. USAF, MAJ Ret.; died June 16, 2018.

Dolloff, Theodore J. USA, LTC Ret.; LM, DFC (OLC), BS, PH, ACM; died January 11, 2018.

Ennis, Richard A. USA; Flight Class: 69-13; RVN: 69 240 AHC; DFC; Callsign: Greyhound 17; died June 8, 2018.

Freihofer, Robert D. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 68-22; died June 14, 2018.

Goin, Willoughby S. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 66-67 335 AHC, 69-70 A/501 AVN; Callsigns: Falcon 82/ Pachyderm; died March 10, 2018.

Harding, William L. USA; Flight Class: 63-2; RVN: 71 AHC; SS, DFC (OLC), BS; died June 16, 2018.

Hoffman, Gary USA; Flight Class: 67-17; DFC, BS; died June 3 2002.

McCallister, Larry H. USAF; DFC, PH, AFCM; died June 24, 2018.

McDonald Danny O. USA, USN, LCDR Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-12/68-18; died June 9, 2018.

Mulderick, Edward J. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 71-24; died June 29, 2018.

Lewis, Charles H. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 67-22; RVN: 50 MED DET, 326 MED 101 ABN; died July 5, 2018.

Martin, Donald R. USA, COL Ret.; died June 21, 2018.

Schwarz, Henry E.; RVN: 66-67 174 AHC; died July 9, 2018.

Sims, Richard A. USA; Flight Class: 71-1; died October 10, 2000.

Shirley, Thomas E. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 66-9W; RVN: 66 162 AHC; died June 20, 2018.

Valcourt, John J. III USA, MAJ Ret.; died June 10, 2018.

Weiss, Edward A. USMC; RVN: 69-70 HMM-163; died March 25, 2018.

Wilson, Charles D. USA, CPT; Flight Class: 71-17; died June 13, 2018.

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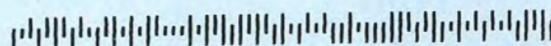
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## ~ BOOK REVIEWS ~



*By Tom Kirk, Life Member, Managing Editor, VHPA Aviator*

Recently, the Aviator's book reviewer, **Marc Liebman**, asked me about obtaining a review in this section for his own book, **MOSCOW AIRLIFT**. I volunteered to write the review. In the interest of full disclosure, this is my first "rodeo" as it pertains to the task. We have all read many reviews, so the format isn't complicated.

In addition, I am not a fan of clichés such as: "A real page turner" or "Couldn't put it down", so there's that.

This book is the sixth in a series in which Josh Haman, a decorated Naval Aviator, is the central character. One need not read any or all of the prior books to appreciate this stand-alone release (although the experience will likely create interest in the rest of the series).

As a work of fiction, the author is not limited by facts or

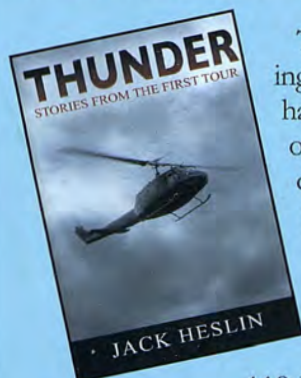
reality in telling the story. He has, however, related it in a way that reflects or closely resembles actual events for the time line(s) pertaining to the United States, Russia, other countries or elements therein, which I found more interesting. The failing Soviet economy and illegal arms trade near the collapse of the USSR provides the background.

There are a few sub-plots as well as a wide array of characters. All are logically blended into the overall narrative.

There are, of course, a number of books with military/para-military or clandestine elements and a leading character. I mention this only because in the case of one author, every bit of technology, order of battle, weapon system or military conveyance is described in tedious, lengthy detail; adding word count but not much else. Marc avoids this style, despite his extensive background in such things.

To appreciate *Moscow Airlift* it is not necessary to be a either a "guy" or a military veteran. It is a well-executed and entertaining story.

**Review of Thunder –  
Stories from the First Tour By Jack  
Heslin, published by Outskirts  
Press, Parker, Colorado, 263 pages.**



Thunder is a really interesting book about Vietnam. While it has all the hairy flying experiences one can expect, Heslin provides a different perspective. Jack wasn't just another lieutenant, fresh out of flight school when he arrived in country. He was a father with two children with one on the way when he arrived at the

119th Assault Helicopter Company based at Camp Holloway. One would think Jack's experience and perspective from a year plus with the 82nd Airborne Division, would have prepared him for his first tour, but like many of us, what we think flying in combat will be like and the reality are often very different. Thunder

*By Marc Liebman, Author & Life Member*

*Marc Liebman, a VHPA Life Member, is a retired Navy Captain and Naval Aviator who flew combat search and rescue missions during the Vietnam War. He is also the author of five published novels with more coming.*



is extremely well documented and gives kudos to those who deserved them. In this book which covers his first tour, he goes from FNG (if that needs to be translated, you shouldn't be reading The Aviator) to platoon commander and company operations officer. The matter of fact way Jack tells his experience makes it easy to follow and for those of us over fifty, the fourteen point type is easy on the eyes.

For those of you who want to read about what it is like to fly a helicopter in Vietnam, supporting the Special Forces Top Secret SOG mission into Laos and Cambodia, Thunder: Stories From the First Tour, is one of those books you have to read.