



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



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## VHPA Officers, Members of the Executive Council 2019-2020

President	Art Jacobs	president@vhpa.org
Vice President	Art Price	arp.red22@gmail.com
Past President	John Sorensen	j.h.sorensen@outlook.com
Senior Member	Donald Le Master	helopl@aol.com
Midterm Member	John Powell	rotorpylut@gmail.com
Junior Member	Frosty Price	frostyprice@me.com
Secretary/Treasurer	John Shafer	johnshafercpa@comcast.net
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## National Committee



**VHPA Aviator Newsletter:**  
**Aviator@VHPA.org**

**VHPA WebSite:**  
**VHPA.org**

**VHPA Headquarters  
and Headquarter Staff  
contact Information**

**Phone:**  
**1-800-505-VHPA (8472)**

**E-Mail:**  
**HQ@VHPA.org**

<b>Aviator Magazine</b>	Tom Kirk, Managing Editor Tom Hirschler, Editor	aviator@vhpa.org tah44@msn.com j.h.sorensen@outlook.com
<b>Chaplain</b>	John Sorensen	ka5hzd@att.net j.h.sorensen@outlook.com
<b>Chapter Liaison</b>	Tom Payne John Sorensen, Asst. Chair	ka5hzd@att.net j.h.sorensen@outlook.com
<b>Elections</b>	Frosty Price, Chairman	frostyprice@me.com
<b>Historical</b>	Mike Sloniker, Chairman Bob Hesselbein, Asst. Chair	mikesloniker@yahoo.com beanner1138@aol.com
<b>Investments</b>	Bob Smith, Chairman	tigersmity@hotmail.com
<b>Legal Advisor</b>	Mike Poindexter, Legal Advisor	poinlaw@aol.com
<b>Legacy Committee</b>	Bob Hesselbein, Chairman	beanner1138@aol.com
<b>Membership</b>	Mike Sheuerman, Chairman Bob Howard, Asst. Chair	msheuerman@tx.rr.com ltcbobhow@tx.rr.com
<b>Membership Directory</b>	Gary Roush, Editor & Chairman Mike Law, Asst. Chair	groush2@earthlink.net mglaw@earthlink.net
<b>National Reunion</b>	John Powell, Chairman Art Jacobs, Asst. Co-Chairman Don LeMaster, Asst. Co-Chairman	rotorpylut@gmail.com art.jacobs.tn@gmail.com helopl@aol.com
<b>Public Relations</b>	Bob Hesselbein, Chairman	beanner1138@aol.com
<b>Records/Database</b>	Gary Roush, Editor & Chairman Mike Law, Asst. Chair	groush2@earthlink.net mglaw@earthlink.net
<b>Reunion Site Selection</b>	Art Jacobs, Co-Chairman Don LeMaster, Co-Chairman	art.jacobs.tn@gmail.com helopl@aol.com
<b>Scholarship Program</b>	Tom Payne, Chairman Mike Sheuerman, Asst. Chair	ka5hzd@att.net msheuerman@tx.rr.com
<b>Secretary/Treasurer</b>	John Shafer, Chairman John Powell, Asst. Chair	johnshafercpa@comcast.net rotorpylut@gmail.com
<b>VHPA Calendar Project</b>	Mike Law, Chairman Bennie Koon, Asst. Chair	mglaw@earthlink.net bek082346@gmail.com

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THE VHPA AVIATOR, THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION (ISSN 1930-5737) (USPS 001-497) is published six times yearly ~ January, March, May, July, September & November. The VHPA is organized as a 501 (c ) (19) fraternal military organization and one copy of each newsletter is included in each of our Member's Dues, yearly subscriptions to the Aviator are available to non-members for \$36.00. Published by Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA), headquartered at 2100 N. Highway 360, Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050. Periodicals Publications postage paid at Round Rock, Texas and additional mailing points.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to VHPA HQ, 2100 N. Highway 360, Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050

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# PRESIDENTS CORNER



## *Art Jacobs – President*

To most, both here and abroad, our country has an incredible history and an amazing story. Through Lexington & Concord, Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, Saratoga, and finally to Yorktown; how people in 13 disparate colonies – mostly farmers and tradesmen in the militia – managed something miraculous.

Then our fledgling country fought a foreign invader in the War of 1812. Next, the nation, the union, was preserved in our great Civil War. We fought in World War I (the war to end all wars), and then the Greatest Generation saw us through and prevailed in the global struggle called World War II. We then led the establishment of the United Nations with all the best intentions. The 20th Century saw the United States become the most prosperous and the most powerful nation in the history of the world.

To some, and rightly so, our country also has a history checkered with setbacks, failings, and embarrassments: How we treated and dealt with Native Americans under the umbrella of manifest destiny, to include breaking sovereign treaties and the outright theft of land. Then there is slavery, and the throes of racism and discrimination which persists to this day. The internment of U.S. citizens who happened to be Japanese during World War II was another incidence of straying from the values we cherish, and the principles for which we stand.

That brings me to our Flag: Our country is not perfect. However, the ideals on which our country was founded are. When we stand for, take our hats off for, come to attention for, put our hands over our hearts for, and salute the flag, whether for The Pledge of Allegiance or The National Anthem – we are simply saying (and demonstrating) that we respect and believe in those ideals – even those not yet fully achieved. Men and women have died to preserve and protect those ideals and the flag is consequently, appropriately, and reverently draped over their coffins at burial to honor their sacrifice toward those ideals.

For us veterans, in reflective moments, we proudly



avow that we fought for freedom, and readily admit that in this country that includes the freedom to peacefully protest, and to petition our government for a redress of grievances.

To some, those who see injustice, inequality, and inequities, they feel the urge and the need to protest or demonstrate. And when their motives and principles are honest, they can be and should be admired for their courage, conviction, and their willingness to bring their grievances to the attention of both our elected officials and the citizenry.

I also believe there are individuals who seem more interested in drawing attention to themselves and advancing their personal agenda than in the issues or injustices to which they supposedly believe. Beyond the flash and sound-bites they have little depth.

Their motives may be understandable, but one must question not only their choice of where and how they protest, but also their principles in doing so. They miss or ignore the point altogether regarding how veterans see the symbolism of our flag. I find it ironic that they are demanding respect, but in doing so seem oblivious to the fact that they are showing disrespect to our country's minority of veterans.

Our country is not perfect, but the ideals for which our country and its flag stands for come as close to perfect as you could ever envision. Brothers, I am proud to stand with you.

# FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

General information about the 37th Annual VHPA Reunion in Denver, CO, May 21 thru May 25, 2020 is included further in this issue! Detailed Event/Tour Schedules, descriptions and pricing will be updated on vhp.org by December 31, 2019. Online registration is scheduled to open on January 6, 2020. Registrations can't be accepted before January 6 as events will not be finalized, so please do not call HQ before this date to register early. Please continue to check vhp.org for the most up to date information. Hope we see you there!

Reminder – Directories purchased beginning September 1, 2019 are for the 2020 directory that will be delivered in October 2020. The deadline for ordering the 2020 directory is August 31, 2020. The price for a copy of the paper directory has increased to \$25. The price of a CD copy remains \$10. The on line directory is free at <https://directory.vhp.org>.

Dues can be paid and directory can be ordered on line via the On Line Directory at <https://directory.vhp.org>!

HQ still 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

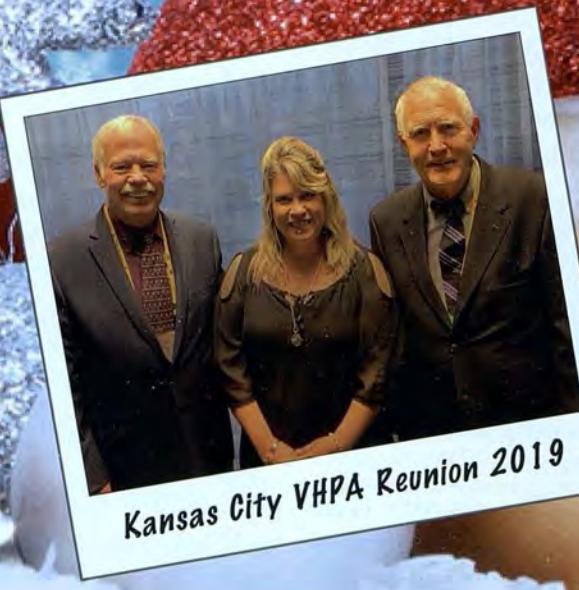
to place your order.

PLEASE HELP US REDUCE THE COSTS OF REMAILING ITEMS! If you move, PLEASE go on line to <https://directory.vhp.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 that 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



Kansas City VHPA Reunion 2019

*The folks at the Aviator  
wish you a  
Happy Thanksgiving,  
Merry Christmas,  
& a Happy Hannakah.*

Tom Kirk, Managing Editor

Tom Hirschler, Editor

Kay Taylor, Graphic Designer

# VHPA-EMU

The sacrifice made by the 37 members of the 135th AHC, EMUs, was commemorated at a Vietnam Veterans Day service at the Old Bar Public School in NSW Australia.

Each year on 18 August, Vietnam Veterans Day in Australia, the students at the Old Bar Public School conduct a service which is well attended by EMUs and the local community as well as people from afar.

As a part of the service the students pin the names of the

fallen onto a honour board as the names are read out. A part of this year's service involved RANHFV members who couldn't attend the formal presentation in Canberra who were presented with their Unit Citation of gallantry by Commodore Chris Smallhorn, former Commander of the Fleet Air Arm.

A mini reunion was held over the weekend with a Meet & Greet on the Friday night, lunch at Valley View Farm and the dinner on Saturday night.

A collect of photos of the service can be viewed at:

[www.dropbox.com/sh/gaouw0wuju6igrz/AABPguYgnbX9\\_NqSpvapaBBNa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gaouw0wuju6igrz/AABPguYgnbX9_NqSpvapaBBNa?dl=0)



Students lead the march.



Two Cav Pilots Terry Shulze and Dan Tyler dropped in.

*HQ has a few  
copies of the  
2020  
CALENDAR  
~ FOR SALE ~*  
Call HQ to order  
a copy now

# ~ BOOK REVIEWS ~



*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.*

**E-mail** - [marc@marcriegel.com](mailto:marc@marcriegel.com)  
**Telephone** - (214) 403-8093  
**Website** - [www.marcriegel.com](http://www.marcriegel.com)



**THE AVIATORS**, by Rex Gooch, Lighthouse Publishing Company, Sioux Falls, SD, ISBN: 978-1-07-729676-3, 316 pages, \$15.95.

This is Rex's second book and it is better than the first. It's the story of Army Aviators flying in the Mekong Delta (IV Corps), with Rex narrating the action-packed events. For members of VHPA, Rex's descriptions of helicopter controls and weapons may not be needed, but to the average non-helicopter pilot reader, they provide great understanding of how Army

Aviators operated. The stories are brought to life by the author's own experience flying in Vietnam and highlights the pilots and crew members he flew with. Rex does something unique in The Aviators. At the end of each chapter, he provides a profile of the individual from his Vietnam service up until the book was published. I found those bios fascinating because what they (we) went through and the horrible way we were treated when we arrived home. The Aviators is well written, easy to read and I highly recommend not only reading this book but also suggest your friends and family read it as well so they might understand and appreciate what we experienced as aviators.



**THE ORANGES ARE SWEET**, Paul Sailer, Loden Books, LLC, Wadena MN, ISBN: 978-0-9852705-2-0, 460 pages, \$39.99

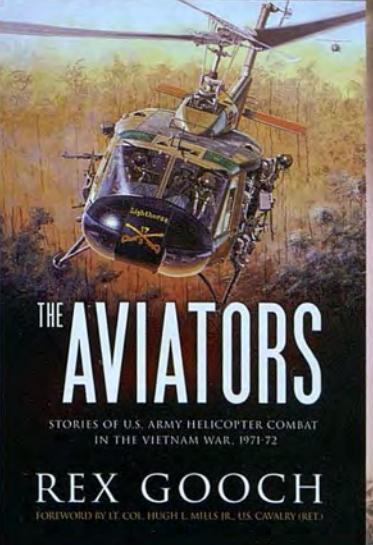
When you first pick up this book, what strikes you is the production quality. The photos, black and white and color, maps, paper et al are all noteworthy of a limited edition book. Paul Sailer is a VHPA Life Member and in The Oranges Are Sweet he tells the story of P-51 pilot Major Don Beerbower. During World War 2 Beerbower shot down 15.5 German airplanes and destroyed another three on the ground. He uses excerpts from letters between Don and his

wife Elayne, his diary, interviews with men who flew with Beerbower, unit histories and other sources to tell the story. The book focuses on the men and their personalities as well as their sacrifices during the last two years of the war. The photos in this meticulously researched, well-written and easy to ready book puts faces to the men. Paul puts you in the cockpit of the P-51B/Cs Mustangs that the 353rd Fighter Squadron, 354th Fighter Group flew as they battled European weather, German fighters, changes in operational tasking and their early model Mustangs. The biggest problem was that one or more of the airplane's .50 caliber machine guns would jam in the midst of a dogfight. This book is simply wonderful. Get a copy, read it and you'll understand why.

HELICOPTER  
COMBAT ACTION

PILOT AND  
CREW STORIES

THEIR LIVES  
AFTER VIETNAM



**THE AVIATORS**  
STORIES OF U.S. ARMY HELICOPTER COMBAT  
IN THE VIETNAM WAR, 1971-72  
REX GOOCHE  
FOREWORD BY LT. COL. HUGH L. MILLS JR., U.S. CAVALRY (RET.)

**THE AVIATORS**  
VIETNAM HELICOPTER COMBAT, 1971-72

Available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

**THIS COULD  
BE WHERE  
YOUR STORY  
STARTS!**

*It was a dark and stormy night, and there I was, guarding the aircraft revetments. I had my three-candle-power flashlight, my .38 revolver, and 20 rounds of ball ammunition. The communist hoards were all about me...*

### Friends of Vinh Son Orphanage – Kontum, Vietnam (FVSO)

Patrick Leary, FVSO President and VHPA Life Member



### Matching Fund Donation Challenge Part 2

Starting in September,  
every dollar donated to  
FVSO will be MATCHED  
up to \$25,995

For donation information, please contact FVSO at:

Mail: FVSO, P.O. Box 9322-C, Auburn, California 95604-9322  
Web: [FriendsofVSO.org](http://FriendsofVSO.org) Email: [friendsofVSO@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofVSO@gmail.com)





## An update from the Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive (VNCA) at Texas Tech University (TTU): Past Successes and Future Plans

by Stephen F. Maxner, Ph.D., Director

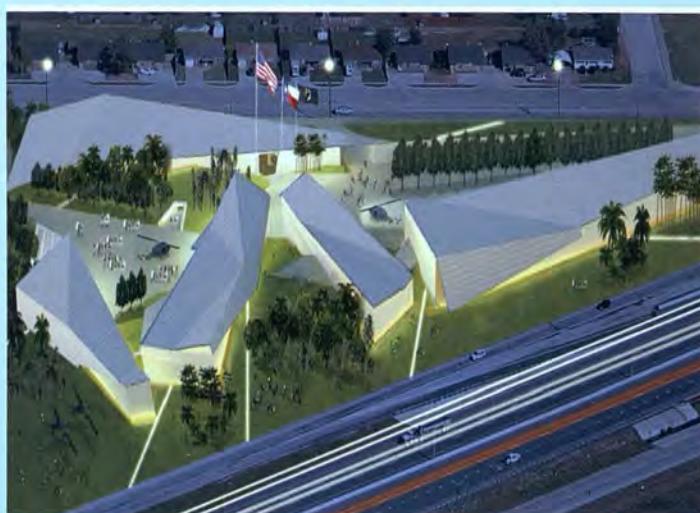
Established in 1989, the VNCA is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and providing access to the history of the Vietnam War and to promoting a better understanding of those events through conferences, educational programs, guest speakers, and other activities. Since then, we have grown into the largest nongovernmental archive of the Vietnam War in the world with more than 30 million pages of material. Most of our collections have been donated by Vietnam Veterans to include many VHPA members. Your personal collections are vital historical treasures as they contain the personal documents and materials that tell an all too often overlooked and forgotten aspect of those historical events; the individual stories of the men and women who fought and sacrificed during the war. When combined with our more than 1,000 oral history interviews, our unique collections provide the human story of that conflict and serve as a critically important reminder to our nation of the human costs of war for our veterans and their families.

In 2001, we created the Virtual Vietnam Archive (VVA) with the goal of digitizing our historical materials in order to provide easier access. Through the generous support of Congressman Sam Johnson of Plano, TX, we received congressional funding to build the infrastructure and hire the staff to create the VVA. Today we provide free online access to more than 10 million pages of digitized material, which are being

used by a much larger audience. Before 2001, we hosted approximately 50 onsite researchers per year. So far this year (2019), we have hosted 300,000 online researchers who have conducted 1.5 million searches and downloaded 1 million historical items. Those researchers are from throughout the U.S. and more than 140 countries. As a result, VNCA collections comprise the most widely accessed and used Vietnam War archive in the world.

Because of that impact, in 2017, we renamed the Vietnam Archive the Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive. In addition to his support for our project, Congressman Johnson is a USAF veteran who served as a pilot in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Shot down in 1966, he was captured and held as a POW in Hanoi for nearly seven years. During his captivity, his wife, Shirley Johnson, became heavily involved in the National League of Families, bringing political pressure on the Department of Defense to provide more information to the families of the MIAs and POWs, most of whom spent years with little or no information regarding the fates of their loved ones. As Sam Johnson approached his retirement from Congress, we worked closely with Congressman Jodey Arrington of Lubbock, TX, and Texas Tech University leadership to honor Congressman Johnson for his decades of service. We could think of no more fitting a tribute than to name the Vietnam Archive in his honor for his brave and selfless service and sacrifice, which is a proud reflection of the bravery, honor, and selfless service and sacrifice of all our nation's Vietnam veterans and their families.

While we continue our primary mission to collect, preserve, and provide access to the history of the Vietnam War and to promote education and understanding about those experiences, we are also pleased to be embarking on some



Initial designs and renderings.



Helicopters donated by VHPA member Chuck Carlock.

newer initiatives. First, we are very proud to be working more closely with the VHPA on your legacy programs. We have had an amazing relationship with VHPA ever since we received the first VHPA collection in 1996, delivered to us by Mike Law. Since then, we have received many generous donations of VHPA collections and materials and, today, our Virtual Archive includes more than 95,000 pages of VHPA documents. To assist you in searching VHPA collections more easily, we created a special portal page: <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/portals/vhpaphp>. When you search using this page, it limits to only VHPA related collections. The portal page also provides easy access to the VHPA Aviator Newsletters from 1984 to 2018. Additionally, we have been working with VHPA leadership and are honored to be the home of a new VHPA Legacy Endowment. This \$250,000 endowment generates spendable income that we will use in perpetuity to hire a part-time student assistant who will process VHPA collection materials, ensuring that your collections remain an ongoing and focused priority for archival processing, digitization, and researcher and family access.

In addition, the VNCA is working with the leadership of Texas Tech on a fundraising program that will support the creation of a new building on our campus that will house the Vietnam Center, Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive, and a new Museum of the Vietnam War. Our Board of Regents designated nine-acres of land on our campus for this project (valued at \$5 Million) and we have retained the architectural firm Voorsanger Mathes (VM) to develop our initial designs and renderings (see page 8), which is the same firm that designed and built the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

When the first phase of this project is completed, our new state-of-the-art facility will include 75,000 sq. ft. of space for archive and museum processing and storage, offices, meeting and teaching spaces, and approximately 25,000 sq. ft. of

museum exhibits. In addition to internal displays, we will incorporate significant external exhibits for aircraft, vehicles, and military equipment, to include the helicopters generously donated by VHPA member, Mr. Chuck Carlock (above). After the first phase, we will work to expand the museum an additional 50,000 sq. ft. for additional internal exhibits and programs.

On behalf of all of us at the VNCA, we want to thank everyone at VHPA for your very generous support for the past 23 years. We are very excited to be working with all of you on these projects and look forward to our ongoing work with VHPA as we continue to preserve your legacy of selfless service to our nation during the Vietnam War. We especially welcome your participation as we continue to develop our exciting new Museum of the Vietnam War at TTU, that will also showcase your legacy and collection materials.

To learn more about our project,  
please visit [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu) or  
contact us at any time by calling  
1-833-862-2688 or email [vnca@ttu.edu](mailto:vnca@ttu.edu).  
To make a tax-deductible donation  
to the VNCA, please visit  
[www.vietnam.ttu.edu/give/](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/give/)  
and indicate if you want your gift  
to be provided in honor of the  
VHPA Legacy Endowment or the  
VNCA/Museum Building Fund.

*Thank you very much!*

# RESCUE OF WOLFMAN 44

BY A. DARRYL JAMES, VHPA # L08838

## COVER STORY

*This story was told to me by my friend Warren Fuller (VHPA # M13995) who flew with me at Americal in his first tour. We drove Loaches with Americal Divarty Air Section out of Chu Lai in I Corps in 1968 and 1969. CPT Fuller's second tour was in 1972 and 1973 flying the Army King Air variant, RU-21D near the DMZ with North Vietnam. He was with the 138th RR Avn. Co. out of Phu Bai and later they moved to Da Nang when the NVA came across the DMZ in October 1972. His mission flying the RU-21D was Airborne Direction Finding. The aircraft used an airborne radio direction finding system called 'Laffing Eagle.'*

The aircraft was configured with radios and electronics positioned along one wall of the passenger compartment with two operators monitoring the electronics for enemy radio activity to get position fixes and targets.

He typically flew these missions simultaneously with an OV-10, forward air controller. The RU21D would find enemy radio positions and the OV-10 would investigate potential targets. He called his OV-10 mission partner his 'sky brother,' as they would only talk and saw each other's aircraft in the air on missions. When their aircraft were in the Area of Operation, they would announce their call signs and altitudes. They would remain at different altitudes for safety. His frequent mission partner was CPT Frank Eagan, USAF, call sign Covey 64 and back-seater, CPT Jon Patterson, USMC, call sign Wolfman 44. CPT Fuller's call sign was Vanguard 969. CPT Fuller received the DFC for his efforts in managing the rescue of the shot-down pilot in hostile territory.

**December 19, 1972**

Warren Fuller climbed out of his bunk and checked the time on the large gold and silver Fossil watch he bought at the ROK PX in Da Nang on his first tour driving the Loach. He



Gail Patterson, Jon Paterson (rescued OV-10 backseater), Warren Fuller, Jane Fuller.

## COVER PHOTO



Joe Bowen who rescued the pilot.



Captain Fuller, U21-D, 1972

jumped out of bed and stretched. It was still dark with no sign of the approaching dawn. He showered, shaved and met up with his co-pilot, CW2 Robert Collins for breakfast at the Officers Club. After breakfast, Warren returned to his hootch and strapped on his M1911 Colt pistol and holster. He draped his chicken plate over his shoulder and grabbed his M16 and threw a bandoleer of M-16 ammunition over his other shoulder. In his first tour, Warren carried the M1921 Thompson machine gun. He longed for that gangster gun but could not get his hands on one this tour. He grunted carrying all that heavy gear and sauntered down to Operations.

He walked in and nodded to CW2 Collins. He no soon set his gear down and was barked at by his CO, Major Charles Simerly who was sitting at his desk, "About time you got here Fuller."

Fuller looked at his watch, "What the hell, Sir. My fancy watch says I am not late. Why are you so grumpy at 'O Dark Thirty' this morning?"

"I am just messing with you. You and Collins are to take 521Z and surveille within Sector IA just south of the DMZ. There you should meet up with your Air Force sky buddy on Fox Mike 75 kHz channel."

"Roger, Boss," replied Fuller."

"And Captain, watch your ass. We lost an F4 there last week."

"Always Boss." Fuller turned to Collins and asked, "Did you get the weather briefing, Bob?"

"Roger, Cap. No weather concerns."

"Good let's go."

They retrieved their flight helmets and walked down to the flight line. They met their crew chief who went over aircraft logs and exterior preflight walk around with them. Inside the cabin, two electronics operators, Intercept Operator, Sp5 Don Munn and Direction-Finding Operator, Sp5 Ed Noltensmeyer

sat at their stations. They looked up as Fuller and Collins climbed in.

Fuller quipped as he hefted his heavy gear on board, "How is it hanging this morning, Gents?"

"Good, Cap," they replied.

"We will be surveilling Sector IA this morning. Keep us out of trouble, you hear?"

"You got it," Sp5 Munn replied.

"Always," replied Sp5 Don Munn.

"Just another dull day in paradise," quipped CW2 Robert Collins.

"Yeah, whatever, let's get this pig in the air," stated CPT Fuller.

Fuller climbed in the left seat and Collins the right. Collins then went through the check list with Fuller as they started the engines on the U21.

Fuller pressed the radio button on his control yoke, "Da Nang Tower this is Vanguard Niner, Six Niner, requesting permission to taxi, over."

"Niner, Six Niner, you are cleared to the active, runway three five right. Winds are from the northwest at 10 knots. Altimeter is two niner zero zero. Information Romeo."

"Roger, information Romeo."

"Da Nang Tower, Vanguard Niner, Six Niner is holding short of runway three five right."

"Vanguard Niner, Six Niner, Da Nang Tower, you are cleared for takeoff."

Fuller pushed the throttles forward and lifted off. Collins pulled up the gear and flaps as Vanguard 969 turned right and climbed to 10,000 feet. Collins tuned the FM radio to 75 kHz. Fuller saw this and keyed the FM and said, Vanguard Niner, Six Niner is approaching Sector I Alpha to work at Angels 10 (10,000 feet MSL).

"Roger, Vanguard Niner, Six, Niner, you got Covey Six, Four with you today ol' buddy. I am at Angels 10 but will slide down to Angles 9."

"Roger, Covey Six Four," replied Fuller.

"The Air Force & Marines have arrived, look out behind your left side ol' buddy."

To Fuller's shock there was an OV-10 just a few feet off his left wing. He replied "What the ...? Are you crazy? Back off you nitwit!"

"Vanguard Niner, Six Niner, Easy does it, wise guy. The Air Force taught us how to fly."

"Yeah, Six Four, but we are not the Blue Angels."

"I just wanted see what you Army pukes looked like. Hey what brown bag lunch did the Air Force give you today?" Asked Covey 64.

"The usual gourmet fare, tuna fish, crackers and a sucker can of peaches that I never eat," replied Vanguard 969.

"Hey, I love those peaches," replied Covey 64.

"Hey, ...this is Wolfman Four Four in the back seat. I too especially like them ol' peaches."

"You both can have them," replied Vanguard 969.

Covey 64 replied, "Okay then, put those peaches on your left wing and I'll come back and get them." He laughed and said, "You know I can get real close to you? Close enough to smell the tuna fish. Hell, I knew you were having tuna fish already."

"This is Wolfman Four Four, tell you what, I'll just open the hatch and grab them off your wing when we come back."

"Hey Vanguard Niner Six Niner, before we leave, let me ask you a question, Now what exactly is it you're doing up here with all those antennas hanging off of your wings?"

"Covey Six Four you ask me this every day. Your shtick does get old ol' buddy. I don't know how many times I have told you these are not antennae. They're cooling fans. You know that ice cream you enjoy at the Officer's Club in Da Nang has to be chilled at a certain altitude temperature and that's why we have these cooling fans."

"That never was funny Niner Six Niner! Silly, actually, your shtick always sucked. Hey ol' buddy did I tell you I am getting pretty short, just thirty short days and a wake up and I am going home."

"You lucky devil you. I have a long way to go." Fuller paused then said, "Be safe, Amigo. Hey, Six Four, are we going to work today or what?"

"Yeah, ol' buddy, find me a target to work."

The OV-10 pilots gave him a thumbs up, did a double squelch break on the radio, then drifted below and eased to the left of the U-21.

Thirty Minutes Later

Sp5 Don Munn poked Sp5 Ed Noltensmeyer seating next to him and said, "Ed, I got something." Ed also picked it up, spun his dials creating a signal null, pushed a button, and a printed slip of paper with the shot direction and aircraft position came out. He pushed his intercom switch and said, "Captain we got something. Come to course two five zero and we will shoot another fix."

"Wilco," replied Captain Fuller.

Ten minutes later, Fuller switched radios and pressed his radio button and said, "Covey Six Four, this is BAMA... I have coordinates."

"This is Covey Six Four. Go ahead BAMA... ready to copy."

"Roger Covey Six Four, Coordinates one six foxtrot lima one three five seven eight niner."

"This is Covey Six Four, I have Coordinates one six foxtrot lima one three five seven eight niner."

"This is Bama. That's a good copy."

Several minutes later, Covey 64 radioed standby fighter bomber support. "Jay Hawk Niner Two, this is Covey Six Four, I have enemy artillery along a tree line, will mark with Willy Pete (white phosphorus rockets), Over."

"Roger, Covey Six Four, the lead fighter replied. Two minutes later, he radioed, "Talley Ho Willy Pete... rolling in hot."

Covey 64 circled the target and keyed his mike, "This is Covey Six, Four." Good shooting Air Force. Thanks for your

help today. You are cleared to base."

"Roger that Covey Six Four, the Air Force is here to please."

Cover 64 double squelched his radio and drifted away south.

Twenty Minutes Later

Fuller and Collins's helmet headsets suddenly came alive over the guard radio, "Mayday, Mayday, This is Covey Six Four, we have been hit with an anti-aircraft rocket east of Dong Ha, turning east."

"Covey Six Four, this is Vanguard Niner Six Niner. We are heading your way. Say altitude and status."

"Vanguard Niner Six Niner, good to hear your voice. We lost the port engine, struggling with control and have a whole panel of caution lights flashing at me. We are at 8,000 feet and descending."

"Roger, ol' buddy hang in there, we see you up ahead. Be there is ten mikes."

"Aircraft on guard, this is Centaur Three."

"Centaur Three, this is Vanguard Niner Six Niner."

"Vanguard Niner Six Niner. We are 'balls to the wall,' and coming your way. What kind of aircraft are you?"

"Uniform two one, Over."

"Roger, Vanguard Niner Six Niner, we are a flight of two Hueys out of Tan My. We are heading your way to assist."

"Roger, Centaur Three."

CWO Joe Bowen, call sign Centaur 3, of F Troop 4th Cav flying the right seat of his Huey headed north. His flight of two UH-1Ds pushed ahead toward the developing drama in the sky near Dong Ha.

"Covey Six Four, this is Vanguard Niner Six Niner. I have you in sight ol' buddy. I am descending toward you from the southeast."

"Roger, Niner Six Niner. I'm descending through two thousand. We will eject at eight hundred feet."

"Roger, Covey Six Four, we are diving through five thousand and will follow you all the way down. Chopper help is on the way!"

"Vanguard Niner Six Niner, we are punching out!"

"Roger, Covey Six Four, we will escort you down, my friend. God speed!"

Fuller said anxiously to Collins on intercom, "Bob, I only see one chute."

"Shit, I only got one chute," he replied.

They saw the stricken OV-10 pass across the shoreline and crash into the South China Sea. Other assets listening on guard to the developing scene came on the radio offering help. A Navy Destroyer turned to assist, jet fighters that were assisting Covey Six Four earlier zoomed overhead making a lot of noise to deter enemy on the ground and a ground commander on the beach offered assistance. The radio became a chaotic jumble of transmissions. CPT Fuller declared himself on-site commander to gain control of the airwaves. From that point on, he coordinated efforts to assist.

Meanwhile, Fuller had his hands full flying as he descended lower.

CWO Collins in the right seat, pointed and yelled over the intercom, "Cap, I see a rocket coming toward us."

Fuller turned and descended to the deck evading the hand-held SA-7 rocket only to be shot at by small arms fire.

Collins said, "Shit, Cap, we were not designed to be down here in the weeds with bad guys shooting at us."

It was reported that at least three SA-7 rockets were fired at them as they flew on the deck.

Jon Paterson now on the ground spoke into his hand-held emergency radio, "Vanguard Niner Six Niner, this is Wolfman Four Four. I am on the ground, unhurt. Some ARVN soldiers showed me where Covey Six Four hit the ground. Dear God, his chute never opened."

"That sucks," replied Vanguard 969 on the radio. "Hueys are in bound for you Four Four."

"Indeed, we are," replied Centaur 3. Vanguard Niner Si, Niner, this is Centaur Three. I see you circling below us. I think I see your guy on the beach waving with some ARVN soldiers. We are coming in."

Vanguard 969 replied, "Roger, we have some fast movers above and friendlies moving in by ground."

"Roger that," replied Centaur 6. "How about climbing out of there and giving me and my buddy some room?"

"Roger, Centaur 6, we are climbing to two grand. Thanks!"

CWO Joe Bowen, call sign Centaur 3, rescued Jon Paterson and the body of Frank Eagan and took them to the closest medical facility ARVN 1st Inf Div HQ. The pilot, CPT Frank Eagan, and his back-seat observer, CPT Jon Paterson, were shot down east of Dong Ha with SA-7 shoulder mounted heat seeking rocket. They punched out at 800 feet at the beach near the village of Trung Nam in northernmost South Vietnam. Frank's chute didn't deploy, and he died on impact. Interestingly, the rescue was facilitated on the ground by what were thought to be deserting NVA recon soldiers, not ARVN soldiers (not confirmed). The deserters apparently were traveling south along the beach to Hue to surrender. They were given food and water by Joe Bowen's Huey crew.

Warren Fuller and his wife, Janie, met up with Jon Peterson and his wife, Gail, in September 2010 at lunch in Winston-Salem, Georgia. When he and Jon talked about the shoot down and rescue, Jon pulled out the ejection seat handle from 38 years ago from a bag by his chair. They remain good friends.

You can read the Army's official description of the DFC award from the following link:

[www.wefpages.com/family/DFC%20Award.pdf](http://www.wefpages.com/family/DFC%20Award.pdf)

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## VHPA 2020 CALENDAR

### Available for Immediate Shipment!

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and Acclaim Press are pleased to present the new VHPA 2020 Calendar, hot off the press and available for immediate shipment. This is the 27th calendar produced by the VHPA.

The goal of the VHPA calendar project is to refresh the memories of all those who flew and worked on helicopters in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War era, and to record, preserve and display the events and activities that were important to veterans of that period.

Each month features photographs depicting the machines and people that flew over Vietnam, plus detailed captions about what is pictured. This VHPA Calendar also commemorates the 2,166 helicopter pilots who died or whose bodies were not returned (BNR) from Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era (1961-1975).

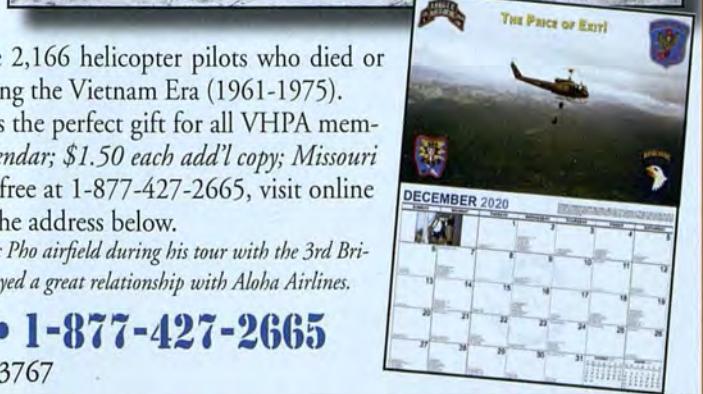
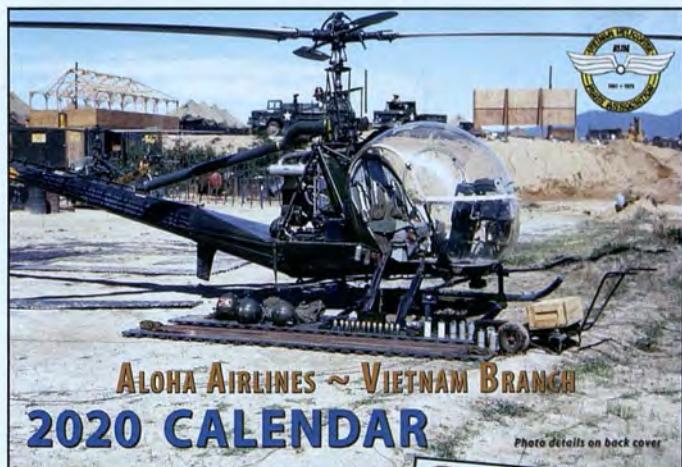
Printed in full-color, this 17x11-inch (BIG) wall calendar is the perfect gift for all VHPA members and their families. **Only \$14.95** - plus shipping (\$5 first calendar; \$1.50 each add'l copy; Missouri residents add 6.225% sales tax). To order, call the publisher toll-free at 1-877-427-2665, visit online at [www.acclaimpress.com](http://www.acclaimpress.com), or send your check/money order to the address below.

*On the cover: VHPA Member Wes Sims took this photo about July 1967 at the Duc Pho airfield during his tour with the 3rd Brigade, 25th Inf. Div. This Brigade deployed to Vietnam from Hawaii, where it enjoyed a great relationship with Aloha Airlines.*



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# Short Story on Relationships and Places

by Jack Baumgarten

## ODE TO THE O. P. D. C. (Old Pilots Drinking Coffee)

Have you ever noticed that in every city or town you go to, there seems to be a coffee shop or café or club on or near the local airport where old men, mostly pilots or crew members, go early every morning to drink coffee together?

It is not in every airport café or coffee shop however, but only the select few places where the severe criteria for an OPDC official location can be met. It must be off the beaten path and without tourists. The tables should be Formica topped, and the cups large with big handles. There should be a view of the shop entrance from the table, but little notice of the table for those entering. It must have sound qualities that keep comments from floating out to the main body of the shop. Napkins, cream, and sugar should be close by so coffee refills can be customized without leaving one's chair.

These old men gather each morning for the sheer joy of being together to share comments on the news of the day, to tell audacious lies, make each other laugh with silly comments about flying, aircraft, politics, religions, races, occupations, or any other topic worthy of sarcasm between any two or more of the group.

The rules are simple: What is said here stays here; and there are no other rules – except for the unwritten rule that one should never fail to take a cheap shot at one of the others. They all know everything they need to know about each other anyway: no more, no less. Each of them has a whole storehouse of memories waiting to be described one at a time when needed to make a point. These things are religiously guarded until the most effective moment to make a point, win an argument, or make everyone laugh. Once told, they cannot be used again for fear of severe retribution for repeating one's self.

Prejudices are rampant – built carefully over lifetimes of work and play and stress and joy. But most times reasonable if one knows the history of that particular OPDC. If one of them is a bigot, and there are some, everyone knows it and simply waits for the snide, disrespectful, yet colorful names that he spews forth to describe certain people, races, colors, or nationalities at the appointed point in the conversation. There is no malice toward the bigot. They know that he only says those things to make his contribution to the banter and maybe earn a smile or a scowl. Either way, that is how he is heard – and that is OK because they know that he needs to play that role for his own sake.

When you enter the coffee shop or café, you will see them at a corner table positioned well out of the ebb and flow of the shop. You can see one leaning forward on his elbows on the table. Another sits back with legs crossed or askew. Most have baseball caps and worn jackets emblazoned with the name of some air-

craft or firm that he is retired from. Most wear glasses and a few have canes or walkers. Some faces bear two to three days of beard growth because shaving each day has become an unnecessary chore. Crow's feet along sides of eyes, sagging jowls, turkey waddle necks, and eye bags abound. Each face bears its personality: the happy go lucky, the grouchy, the angry, and some with the yellowness of chemotherapy. But all with an interest and love of that hour of joy and sharing with the other OPDC that morning.

They always meet before 7 am because old men cannot sleep in the morning – either because they retire too early, or a lifetime of rising to be at work before dawn. Their minds are alert and sharp, especially when the banter turns into a heated exchange of views, or an argument. (It is important to note that this is not so after lunch or at nap time.) Choice colloquial expressions abound at that point in the morning, far too colorful to share here. Each is delivered pointedly and sharply to discredit the recipient. The beauty of it is that those barbs are delivered and received without malice on either side and with smiles and laughter. The more back and forth, the faster the return, the better it is for the jury around that table.

A sarcastic yet loving waitress is a requirement. She tops off coffee cups to those in favor regularly, and for those not in good graces, a smart or critical remark about manliness, or the lack of social graces is proffered. No matter what though, she is part of the magic.

The OPDCs are faithful to their club. They are sad when the hour ends and they drive away to their retired lives of and chores and duties. They work hard each day to thoroughly explore the nonsense of life around them, and either curse it, wonder at it, or laugh at it.

The OPDC have never attempted to combine or organize beyond the limits of their own coffee shop. If they did, they would have the potential to become a powerful social and economic force in the life and fabric of our nation or its airports. They could bring down a government when it errs, solve the international crises, decrease taxes, make race and religion at peace, and give everyone cause to be a little nicer to each other.

The beauty of it all is that none of the kidding or cursing leaves that coffee shop that morning. Each respects the other's privacy and looks ahead to a new morning session of OPDC 23 hours later. The interesting thing is that when one is missing and his coffee cup is retired, there is no sadness for they all know that there is an OPDC group in that new place and they will all join him there soon.

# LOOKING FOR

## *Help, Please:*

I am Larry Garst and I am after some pictures and any report from a Huey Test Flight crash outside of Phu Loi in the time frame of Nov '68 and Feb '69.

Pilots were W/O McIntosh and W/O Butters. Crew were Buble, Stackey and Garst.

We were mechanics picked to go on the test flight. We filled the Huey up in our company area from a fuel truck and it was 90% water. We flew about 15 minutes before the engine shut down. The pilots did a great job autorotating down but in trees and the Huey was totaled.

We took pictures but the film was taken and never returned. Accident Investigators.

It has been 50 years, August 28th since I came home. Stuckey has passed away and Ruble and I are writing a story for our kids and grandkids. We would love to have pictures and will pay for them if available.

## *Please help.*

Larry J Garst

38 Huntington Rd, Augusta, KS 7235

## *Looking For Crews*

I was a LRRP and am looking for the 4th Aviation (An Khe) people I rode with. Specifically, the crews who flew

Blackjack 29 (slick) and Gambler 26 (guns) in 1970. I did manage to find the pilot of Gambler 26, but he rotated home about the time I joined the Ranger Company. Any advice you can provide will be appreciated. They, especially Gambler 26, saved my butt on more than one occasion.

**Darryl Beals (Romeo 9) K Co, 75th Airborne Rangers**  
**bealsdl@att.net**

## *Crew A/C information*

We at the Martin County Veterans Memorial are building a Veterans Park to recognize our Veterans and the crew(s) of helicopter AH-1-66-15327. To that objective we acquired this 1966 Cobra that will be placed on a stick for public display. This aircraft was used in 1967 in Vietnam to 1971 in Laos. I do have the gold report to show information including dates.

The records show a casualty report on Feb. 12, 1971, in Laos for 7SQ 17CAV.

**Seeking information for:** Crew of AH-1-66-15327:

Casualty Report Information  
Parts - Tail Rotor and armament  
War Incident History

Any and ALL information is appreciated as we try to bring this memorial to life.

*Warmest Regards,*  
**Steve Chase, Liaisons Official MCVM**  
**sdchase234@q.com 612-799-3367**

## Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

If you were a US military helicopter pilot or crew in combat or imminent danger area – in any conflict - you should be a member of CHPA.

Invitation to VHPA members:  
Come to our annual conference  
Sep 12-15 Huntsville, AL  
Details soon at [www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org)



Website: [www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org)  
Email: [hq@chpa-us.org](mailto:hq@chpa-us.org)  
Phone: 800-832-5144 messages  
Membership assistance:  
Terry Garlock 770-630-6064 cell  
(life member VHPA & CHPA)



# 2019 AAAA/VHPA Scholarship Recipients.



VHPA Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 year)  
Jenna M. Russell  
Grandchild of MAJ A Russell,  
Sandpoint, ID  
Attending Univ. of Montana



VHPA Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 year)  
Christina F. Chauffe  
Grandchild of Mr. Gerald Meador,  
Gulfport, MS  
Attending Univ of Louisiana  
at Lafayette



VHPA Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 year)  
Reagan T. Leandro  
Grandchild of CPT John Leandro,  
Raeford, NC  
Attending Furman University.



VHPA Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 year)  
John (Jack) F. Mallon  
Grandchild of COL Danny Cox,  
Smyrna, GA  
Attending University of Georgia



VHPA-in Honor of the VHPA and  
Crewmember Monument/ANC  
Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 yr.)  
Michael C. Kariher, Durham, NC.  
Attending Davidson College



VHPA-in Honor of Anonymous  
donor Heritage Scholarship (\$2,500  
for 1 year)  
Lindsey M. Jendrusch  
Grandchild of COL Edward Taylor,  
San Antonio, TX  
Attending: Texas A&M University



VHPA Heritage Scholarship  
(\$2,500 for 1 year)  
Samantha E. Black  
Grandchild of COL Henry Ruth,  
Springfield, TN  
Attending Univ. of Tennessee at  
Chattanooga



361st Ave Co. "Pink Panthers"  
Heritage Scholarship.  
Marc C. Hudson  
Grandchild of  
COL Ronald Hudson, Katy, TX  
Attending Chapman University.

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# GENERAL REUNION INFORMATION

Detailed event/tour schedules, descriptions and pricing will be updated on [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org) in December and will be in the Jan/Feb issue of the Aviator.

Continue checking [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org) for the most up to date info.

**ONLINE REGISTRATION (ORRA) WILL BE OPEN  
AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR**

**Who Can Attend the Reunion:** As a general rule anyone who is “dues current” in the VHPA can register, order tickets, etc. simply by paying the Reunion Registration Fee. All who served in the Vietnam War as helicopter pilots must not only be a member of the VHPA but also be current with respect to their annual membership dues as of the first day of the Reunion to register. Anyone who was not a pilot is also welcome to attend as long as they are a “dues current” subscriber to the VHPA Aviator magazine. Exceptions are vendors, specifically invited performers/speakers, Gold Star Family guests and Non-Registered Banquet Guests; these people do not have to be a subscriber to attend. Anyone wishing to purchase a ticket for any of our events must pay the Reunion Registration Fee.

As a general rule, since VHPA Membership and Subscriber dues expire on the last day of the month, someone who is dues current when they register, could be non dues current on the 1st day of the Reunion (21 May 2020). Because of this, the VHPA Reunion Registration software is “forward looking” with respect to the dues status.

Please understand, all Reunion Attendees (anyone who pays the Registration Fee) are treated as equals. A VHPA Life Member, a former enlisted man, the widow of a deceased Vietnam Vet, a good friend – are treated equally once they pay the Registration Fee. The one exception is that only VHPA members can attend the Annual Business Meeting.

The bottom line – Who Can Attend This VHPA Reunion? Answer – anyone who pays the Registration Fee and is “dues current” as outlined above and their invited guests.

-----  
**Reunion hotel:** Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, 1550 Court Place, Denver, CO 80202.

**Reunion hotel reservations:** There are at least three ways to make your hotel reservations while insuring that you receive the VHPA Group Rate of **\$125 plus tax** over the dates of **19 May 2020 thru 25 May 2020 (based on availability)**. **Cutoff date for the hotel rate is 16 April, 2020.**

Please consider the following:

- Via the Reunion’s personalized website, go to: <https://book.passkey.com/e/49900388>
- Via [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org), then Reunion Information and use the reserve your hotel room link.
- By calling the hotel’s reservation line at **(888) 627-8405**. You need to mention “**VHPA 37th Annual Reunion 2020**”. **PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE HOTEL DIRECTLY or MARRIOTT’S CENTRAL RESERVATIONS NUMBERS.** You MUST speak to a Passkey Agent.

-----  
**Transportation from the Airport:** The hotel does not offer a shuttle to/from the airport. There are several options for going to and from Denver International Airport:

- A Line Train – The A Line Train travels to and from the airport every 15 minutes throughout the day and costs \$10.50 or \$5.25, with a discount of 65+ years of age, in each direction. Travel time is 45 minutes. The train is accessed from the airport transit center which is down an escalator and below the Westin Hotel. Follow RTD Train to City signs located at the airport. Ticket machines are on the platform at both locations and cash or credit can be used. When traveling from the airport on the train, the train will end at Union Station. When exiting the train at Union Station, follow signs to 16th street which is on the west side of Union Station. Once on 16th St.,

stand at the corner in front of Office Depot. You'll see a red and blue city bus called Free Mall Ride. Take it to Court Place where our hotel is located. Return trip is the same but from Union Station to Airport Transit Center.

■ **Super Shuttle** - Super Shuttle is a shared ride service that will take anywhere up to 40 minutes to an hour between the hotel and the airport. Cost is \$31 for one person and \$8 for each additional person on the same reservation. Rides can be scheduled online at [www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com)

■ **Uber/Lyft** - Depending on the time of day and weather conditions the ride between the airport and downtown is usually around \$40 and will take 40 to 50 minutes. Rides are booked via either company's smartphone app. Rides from the airport should be scheduled once you have your luggage, and they pick up passengers on level 6 at the airport. Your ride confirmation will indicate which exit door to meet your ride.

■ **Taxi** - Taxis are available outside the airport terminal on level 5, and for return to the airport outside the hotel front entrance. It is a flat fare of \$56 to get downtown and \$51 back to the airport. Let the cab driver know you want the "flat" fare as they do tend to overcharge. Ask for a receipt upfront just in case you need to dispute charge. Then add the cab number and company name to the receipt.

-----  
**Parking:** VHPA has negotiated a 50% discount on self parking. The hotel rate for 2019 was \$41 and the 2020 pricing is not set yet. We will have more info after the first of the year but the pricing should be around \$20-\$21 per night.

-----  
**Internet Access:** VHPA has negotiated free internet for attendees in their sleeping rooms. The hotel will provide a special code to access the internet when you check in.

-----  
**Dress Code:** The dress code is casual for this Reunion, with the following reminders and suggestions:

■ It is a good idea to wear your Reunion lanyard so other attendees can recognize that you are with VHPA.  
■ At the Closing Banquet, many men wear a suit and tie with the ladies wearing a nice dress. You will even see Dress Blues.

-----  
**Vendor Area:** The Vendor Area has been a huge success for the past several years! If you are interested in becoming a Vendor for R2020 please go to [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org) and download the Vendor/ Book Seller/ Exhibitor Contract, Waiver and Vendor/Book Seller/Exhibitor Policy Rules & Regulations. Complete the forms and mail, fax or email to VHPA HQ. If you know of anyone that you think would be an asset to the Reunion Vendor Area be sure to let them know or contact VHPA HQ to give us the info and we will be happy to give them a call.

This will be the seventh year Witness to War (WTW) has sent at least one Interviewer to record and collect Oral Histories. As we have done in past years, we will be signing attendees up for 90-minute slots ahead of time. Please contact VHPA HQ or visit [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org) for details about how to sign up prior to coming to Denver so you fit this history preserving events into your Reunion schedule.

-----  
**Volunteers:** The Rocky Mountain Chapter is this reunion's Host Chapter and as such will organize the volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are organized around stations and then shifts with the number of volunteers needed for that shift. Sounds like a Duty Roster! We've found that 3-hour shifts will not take up much of your time or make you too tired. Additionally we can guarantee everyone is trained on their duties. Needless to say but WE GREATLY APPRECIATE having volunteers! Not only do we avoid the cost of hiring local convention bureau temps but we get a chance to interact with each other while performing the tasks EXACTLY as a VHPAer would have it done. As is our tradition, the Host Chapter, Rocky Mountain Chapter, gets "first shot" at the Duty Roster. If you are interested in volunteering you can contact Dale House of the Rocky Mountain Chapter at 818-825-7003 or [dehouse4@yahoo.com](mailto:dehouse4@yahoo.com) or contact HQ at 800-505-8472. In February the Duty Roster is loaded onto the Reunion Information page at VHPA.ORG for the rest of us to "join in on the fun"! Instructions for how to volunteer at that point will be posted on the website. BTW, husband and wife teams are welcome to volunteer.

**Reunion T-Shirts:** T-shirts will be offered in two colors this year, black and gray. Please know it is possible to order Reunion T-shirts even if you do not plan to attend the Reunion. Simply contact VHPA HQ and tell them you only want a "Reunion T-shirt order". The shirts will be mailed to you after the Reunion.

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**Mini-Reunions:** Keeping in mind that one of the primary reasons for our Reunion is to reconnect with past compatriots from your RVN unit and flight school. The best way to meet up with unit members is to schedule your own Mini-Reunion. If your unit does not have a Mini-Reunion, why not take the initiative to start one up, or you could combine with other sister units you are familiar with if you wish. In addition to specific units and flight classes, we've had Mini-Reunions for such subjects as tandem rotor, Dust-off, Operation Lam Son 719, anyone who was stationed at Soc Trang, VHPA chapters, anyone interested in radio controlled aircraft models. Really there are no rules! Mini-Reunions are typically scheduled in 4-hour blocks and are available for booking on most days during the Reunion. You can also request a second four-hour block. However, this second block will be granted on a space available basis with priority for the particular space given to units requesting only one block. Due to decreased usage and increased expenses, the Reunion no longer provides AV equipment for Mini-Reunions. Once your Mini-Reunion is scheduled the details will appear on the webpage. You still should make an effort to get the word out to your buds. Use your directory to contact members (encourage them to re-up with the VHPA if they are not dues current), write a short article for the VHPA Aviator, and schedule early so we can list your unit in articles such as this.

**Unit TOC (Tactical Operation Center):** If you have a big group that you know is coming (say approximately 20 registrants), then we invite you to schedule a TOC. A TOC is a specific Mini-Reunion room given to your group for all day or for several days. This is like a super Mini-Reunion. Since the group is going to "hang out" in the same room for several days, they can bring almost anything into the room (AV stuff, displays, etc.).

**Mini Reunion space is limited this year and will be allotted on a first come, first serve basis. Be sure to send your request in early to insure a space for your group!**

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**O'Club:** In the tradition of a Vietnam unit's Officer's Club you can get a beer and shoot the breeze with your buddies. The O' Club will again be part of 'ground zero' – meaning the Vendor Area, Ballrooms, Registration and Pre-registration, and the O' Club are all within hand grenade range.

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**Early Bird Gathering: 20 May –** This social gathering continues the long standing tradition of having an appointed place and time for everyone who comes "early" to the reunion to meet and greet others.

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**Welcome / First Time Attendee Reception: 21 May – 7:30pm – 10:00pm** - Traditionally this reception was the first official event for everyone to get together FOR SURE at a Reunion. Now it is just a "get together" at an appointed place and time for everyone who attends the Reunion. During the reception you will be entertained by the College of the Ozarks Chorale. They are known for their patriotic songs, and the college itself is a great supporter of veterans. This will be a highlight of the reunion that you will surely remember.

-----

**Breakfast w/Speaker Thanh Boyer: 22 May – 7:30am – 9:00am** – This is the first of three breakfasts offered at this Reunion. Thanh Du'ong Boyer was born in the Mekong Delta, South Vietnam, in May 1967. She is the oldest of six children, born in a wealthy family, according to Vietnamese standards. Then, as a young child, she saw her family struggle to survive after the North Vietnamese takeover. At twelve years old, her parents put Thanh and one sister on a boat, during the night-time hours in an effort to escape Vietnam and its suppressive government.

Fifteen months later, she finally arrived in the United States as a refugee. Although unable to speak English, she worked hard, learning the language, becoming a U.S. citizen, and committing herself to bringing her parents and siblings to the states. She married and succeeded in having her family join her stateside. Thanh has two children who are examples of achieving The American Dream; her daughter is in medical school and her son is an electrical engineer. Her brother and three sisters also achieved success and are electrical engineers.

Today Thanh gives inspirational talks to groups and she and her husband, John, live in Madison, Alabama.

**KIA/MIA Gold Star Breakfast:** 23 May - 7:30am – 9:00am - Gold Star Family Breakfast is a traditional VHPA reunion event organized by Julie Kink. This is an opportunity to recognize our Gold Star families. All are welcome to attend. These families are extremely appreciative of the fact that their loved ones did not die alone and that we care about them and remember them like a brother.

**Quilter's Show & Tell:** 23 May – 2:00pm – 4:00pm – This special meeting continues the tradition started at least eight years ago to present wonderful hand-made, American flag themed quilts to VHPAers and possibly local area veterans.

**Pre-Memorial Service Breakfast:** 24 May – 7:30am – 8:45am - This is the third and final breakfast offered at this Reunion. The Memorial Service, scheduled to begin at 9am is primarily a time to honor the several hundred VHPA members and potential members who passed away since the 2019 Reunion in Kansas City.

**Memorial Service:** 24 May – 9:00am – 9:30am - The Memorial Service has been part of the “Reunion’s Fabric” for at least ten years. It has evolved into the perfect setting / opportunity to reflect and remember our fallen brothers and friends. Since the KIA/MIA Gold Star Family Breakfast is dedicated to our KIA/MIA brothers, this Memorial Service is dedicated to *those who passed away after their service in Southeast Asia with SPECIAL EMPHASIS on those who have passed SINCE THE LAST VHPA REUNION*. The VHPA often uses the term DAT (Died After Tour) to refer to those who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War era, survived the War, and then passed away.

**Annual Business Meeting:** 24 May – 10:00am – 12:30pm - The Annual Business Meeting (ABM) is when we conduct the official business of the association. On Friday morning you will hear committee chairmen give reports on their activities over the past year and you will have the opportunity to vote on administrative issues plus elect our next two Executive Council members. This is a good time to learn about the workings of the VHPA behind the scenes and to influence the future direction of our association.

Only VHPA Members in good standing (meaning the former pilot is dues current and HQ has a valid mailing address for him in the database) may attend. You must present your ticket at the door. VHPA Members in good standing who are not attending the Reunion can also attend the ABM but must obtain a ticket from the Registration Desk.

**Closing Banquet:** 24 May – 5:45pm – 10:30pm - The highlight for most reunion attendees is our closing banquet. This is the only “dress up” occasion of the reunion. It is a celebration of our time together opening with a tribute to our missing men and closing with the change of command from our current president, Art Jacobs to the new one, Art Price after the meal.

For those who just want to visit after the closing remarks, please know you can stay at your table until 11 pm. Cash bars remain open until they are no longer needed.

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Our staff Graphic Designer will help design your Aviator ad at no cost, other price discounts are available.

Full Details available at: [Aviator@VHPA.org](mailto:Aviator@VHPA.org) or [HPilot1963@aol.com](mailto:HPilot1963@aol.com)

# TOUR INFORMATION

Last updated 10 OCT 2019

Tour schedule is not finalized at this time.

Final tour dates, times and pricing should be released on [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org) in December and will also be listed in the Jan/Feb issue of the Aviator.

Most tours are capacity controlled so registering early is highly recommended to get on your preferred tours

**Banjo Billy's History City Tour:** The history of Colorado and Denver is full of interesting characters and great stories. Enjoy this tour on a one of a kind funky bus as your tour guide entertains you with tales of scoundrels, scandals, murders, and rivalry that made Denver what it is today. Beware, there will be a few jokes thrown in as well, but the stories are all true! This city tour is unique, fun and VHPA guests will learn something new, even if you grew up in the area. Sign up for this 90-minute Denver tour to learn about Denver's corrupt past, promising future, and the ghosts and criminals who still form Denver's identity today. A few things this tour will cover are how Denver got its name for the price of a barrel of whiskey, the real story of Molly Brown, before and after the Titanic incident, fascinating stories of oil, corruption, and a mysterious death.

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**Banjo Billy's Brewery Tour:** Take a ride on an old school bus tricked out to look like a traveling hillbilly shack for a Brewery Tour with Banjo Billy's. This Denver Brew Tour will be the craziest ride you have ever taken as you'll be sitting on a couch, recliner or saddle on the bus as it rolls through the Mile-High City. Banjo Billy's Brewery Tour includes three brewery stops, Renegade Brewing, Prost Brewing and Black Shirt Brewing Co, with a full pint at each stop and a tour of each location. Call it a Brewery Tour, a Brew Bus, a Brew Hop, a Beer Bus....by any name, this Brewery Tour will be lots of fun!

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**Foothills of the Rockies:** Board a coach bus with your tour guide and head into the mountains for breathtaking views and visit top tourist sites. Enjoy a beautiful walk while witnessing the majesty of Red Rocks Park and Amphitheater and explore the historic western Town of Golden where there will be a set amount of time to check out the local shops or sample some craft beer at one of the many local Tap Houses (purchases not included). Travel 2000 feet up to the top of Lookout Mountain while viewing a breathtaking 200-mile panorama of the city and, have time to visit the Buffalo Bill Museum (included in price of tour) and Grave at Lookout Mountain.

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**Adams Mystery Playhouse:** Fun starts the minute you walk into this unique, whimsical and inviting mansion. No matter what age, VHPA guests can expect to enjoy several types of theatre during the night with this hilariously fun murder mystery dinner. Participate in as much or as little as you like. The five hilarious and professional actors weave together a story that you will never forget! Enjoy a lunch and/or dinner buffet with tea and soda included. Cash bar at dinner only.

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**Forney Transportation Museum:** The Forney Museum of Transportation is a one-of-a-kind collection of over 600 artifacts relating to historical transportation. It began 60 years ago with a single 1921 Kissel, but soon expanded to include vehicles of all kinds. Today it includes not just vehicles, but also buggies, motorcycles, steam locomotives, aircraft, carriages, rail equipment, fire apparatus, public transportation, sleighs, bicycles, toys and diecast models, vintage apparel and much, much more! Also view Amelia Earhart's Kissel Car! Some collection highlights include: Union Pacific 'Big Boy' Steam Locomotive #4005, Amelia Earhart's 1923 Kissel 'Gold Bug', Forney Locomotive, Colorado & Southern Caboose, 1923 Hispano-Suiza, 1913-53 Indian Motorcycle Collection, Denver & Rio Grande Dining Car, Stutz Fire Engine, 1888 Denver Cable Car, 1923 Case Steam Tractor, 1817 Draisenne Bicycle, 500 Piece Matchbox Collection, and more!

**Molly Brown Museum:** Explore the home of Titanic heroine Margaret "Molly" Brown, an outspoken Western woman whose activism and charity impacted the lives of many around the world, in a short private tour. This antique-filled Victorian house was the home of Molly Brown, not only a famous survivor of the Titanic, but so much more. This Museum is the premier place to explore Denver's history. On this Museum tour, learn the stories of the many individuals and groups that shaped the world and the Denver community. Interact with knowledgeable docents who share the Progressive Era changes Margaret and mining engineer husband J.J. saw in their lifetime and learn their role in shaping Denver. From the front porch of the home, see the State Capitol's gold dome and the spires of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to connect the economic activities of mining to Denver's built environment and civic gathering places. Once inside, make connections between how families lived 100 years ago compared to today. Discover the rich history of immigration to Denver by hearing about the Tobin and Brown families as well as their servants.

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**Georgetown Loop Railroad:** Climb aboard one of Colorado's famous historic narrow-gauge railroads. The thriving mining towns of Georgetown and Silver Plume lie two miles apart in a steep and narrow mountain canyon. Ride this historic loop railroad roundtrip from Georgetown and Silver Plume, CO. Guests will travel 3.1 miles, up 640 feet, around 2 loops and across 4 bridges, including the impressive Devil's Gate High Bridge. The train ride will start at the Silver Plume location, stop at the Georgetown depot and give guests 30 minutes to explore and then head back to Silver Plume. Once the roundtrip is complete, enjoy a BBQ buffet inside the museum located at the Silver Plume depot.

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**Wings over the Rockies:** The Wings over the Rockies Air and Space Museum is located on the former Lowry Air Force Base in Denver. The museum preserves the history of Lowry AFB's operations from 1938 to 1994 in its collections. With over fifty iconic aircraft and the most realistic flight simulators in Colorado, Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum has something for everyone. With more than 182,000 square feet of hangar space full of iconic aircraft, space vehicles, artifacts, military uniforms and much more, VHPA guests will walk alongside majestic former warbirds, a scale X-Wing Starfighter, Vietnam era fighter jets and One Bell Huey UH1-C completely restored and owned by one of VHPA's Chapter Members.

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**Spouse/Guest Event – The Craftsman & Apprentice:** Named "Best Place to Learn Your Craft" in the Best of Denver 2016, VHPA Ladies will tap into their creative side with a craft class with Craftsman and Apprentice at the Sheraton. Whether you're interested in baking, wood carving, knot tying or hand lettering, this creative factory has you covered. It's a great place to acquire a new skill or just have fun with friends. Either way, it's never too late to learn something new. We love a good party and there's no better way to spend time with folks you really like than to get together and make things. All materials, instruction and know how are provided. Specific details of class are still being worked out.

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**Coors Brewery Tour:** See and taste traditional brewing at the foot of the Rocky Mountains in the largest single-site brewery in the world! The Coors Brewery Tour will showcase their history and passion for brewing. Get a look at malting, brewing and packaging processes. Enjoy a look at old photos, neon signs, historical beer cans, bottles and memorabilia from the archives. After the tour, enjoy beer samples in their hospitality lounge.

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**Rockies Baseball Game:** Enjoy a night out with VHPA Guests at the beautiful Coors Field while cheering on the MLB team Colorado Rockies as they take on the Philadelphia Phillies. VHPA will have designated seating for this event.

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**Golf:** Legacy Ridge Golf Course at Westminster is a links-style course designed by renowned golf course designer Arthur Hills. The municipal course has 18 holes and covers 7,102 yards, playing to a par of 72. The course is reputably well-kept and possesses interesting and challenging holes. The location of the golf course is a protected wetlands area and it also offers picturesque views of Pikes Peak, which is very nearby. Although some consider the back nine to be more scenic than the front, the entire course still provides a challenging and enjoyable game. Golf Digest even ranked Legacy Ridge Golf Course at Westminster the 16th of "America's Top 75 Affordable Courses" in 1996.

# 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 15 New Members and covers the period 8.08.19 to 9.23.19

Billings Robert A \*\*  
Petaluma California  
Navy  
HS-4 in 65

Braham Ronald L. 'Ron' \*\*  
Springfield Illinois  
Army  
70-3  
61 AHC in 70-71  
Cooper Clarence C \*\*  
University Place Washington  
Army  
67-16  
15 MED 1 CAV in 68;  
498 MED CO in 69

Dubose William W. 'Bill' \*\*  
Arvada Colorado  
Marine Corps  
16-61  
HMM-163 in 65;  
HMM-364 in 65;  
HMM-164 in 68-69

Gay John J  
Saint Augustine Florida  
Army  
69-32  
92 AHC in 70-71

Gulledge Billy R  
Chesterfield Missouri  
Army  
68-5 68-1  
227 AHB 1 CAV in 68-69;  
11 GS in 69;  
335 AHC in 71-72

Holton F Michael 'Mike' \*\*  
Notre Dame Indiana  
Civilian  
1958 F 1969 H  
520 TC BN in 69;  
128 AHC in 69-70;  
605 TC CO in 69-71;  
57 MED DET in 69-71;  
173 AHC in 70;  
227 AHB 1 CAV in 70-71;  
604 TC CO in 71;  
AFAT 2-2 in 71-72

Jeffries Gerald Everett 'Jeff' \*\*  
Olathe Kansas  
Army  
65-11  
119 AHC in 65-66;  
116 AHC in 68

Luck Gary Edward \*\*  
Suffolk Virginia  
Army  
66-18  
B/3/17 CAV in 67-68

Mattie Vernon C  
Thomson Illinois  
Army  
93 TC CO;  
179 ASHC in 67

Nagy Roger D.  
Arlee Montana  
Army  
71-13  
129 AHC in 71-72

Powell Bruce A.  
Yuma Arizona  
Army  
66-22  
D/3/4 CAV 25 INF in 67-68

Schneider Robert A.  
Georgetown Kentucky  
Army  
68-14 68-22

Seger Charles F. 'Chuck'  
Saint Louis Missouri  
Army  
68-522 68-40  
A/123 AVN 23 INF in 69-70

Zaber Edmund C. \*\*  
Kingston Oklahoma  
Army  
66-11  
205 ASHC in 67;  
147 ASHC in 67-68

# THE EARLY DAYS, THE BATTLE OF AP BAC

On January 2, 1963, I was a Captain assigned as pilot of an O-1D (a former instrument trainer with the back panel removed), from our base, Soc Trang, down in the Delta. The mission was to accompany a flight of our CH-21s for a series of combat assaults out of Tan Hiep, a strip about 30 minutes SW of Saigon.

As you can imagine, keeping those CH-21s operational was difficult. Parts were at the end of a long supply line that was just getting established. I was assigned to a unit in support of the 93rd Trans. Co., which later became the 121st AHC. Each of the CH-21 units was issued a couple of O-1s to assist since the flyable CH-21s were desperately needed for hauling troops. The O-1s mainly performed as commo and vectoring platforms.

My specific job that day was to carry LTC John Paul Vann, the Senior Advisor of the 7th ARVN Division. His Division was to conduct a series of assaults reacting to some intelligence indicating the presence of a main-force VC battalion in the area. Along with the 93rd, there were also aircraft from the 57th Trans. Co. and the UTT Hel Co., both based at Tan Son Nhut.

The first couple of lifts from Tan Hiep were relatively uneventful, the usual walk in the sun. As the morning progressed, a blanket of ground fog rolled in and pretty much shut down airmobile ops for a while. The first time I tried to land at Tan Hiep, I had to call the people on the ground to make sure the runway was clear; it took three passes to find the runway, even then I could only make it out because of the helicopters parked on both sides.

After refueling and taking off again, we flew back over the Operations Area, only about ten minutes from Tan Hiep. LTC Vann talked to some advisors on the ground. We couldn't see them; it was totally socked in for a while. This was at the north end of the area. What we didn't know at the time was some units to the south, without advisors, had made contact near the village of Bae (Ap Bac) and a firefight of modest proportions had begun. Finally, LTC Vann received a request through advisor channels to help deploy units being loaded at Tan Hiep and insert them near Ap Bac. The fog was beginning to dissipate, and we called for the aircraft to proceed. I gave the helicopters some heading guidance on UHF and made a quick low-level pass across the LZ to check for "rotor bumpers", the VC would sometimes put tall sticks of bamboo in the paddies to damage rotor blades. I remember looking under the trees into

the village and seeing no sign of life, this wasn't too unusual, the locals tried to make themselves scarce if anything was going on.

The helicopter flight, eight or ten CH-21s accompanied by two armed UH-1As, approached immediately behind me. All hell broke loose in the LZ. The radios went crazy with reports of "Receiving Fire," just as the aircraft were in their landing flare. As soon as they were unloaded, the aircraft were leaving the LZ. I had swung back overhead and could see two CH-21s still in the LZ with their blades turning slowly to a stop. With my helmet on and the front windows closed, the volume of ground fire was very evident, some of it directed at us but most of it at the aircraft in the paddy. I made a couple of more low passes over the village; it was a lot safer to be low over the trees than out in the paddy at that altitude. It was hard to pick out the exact area the fire was coming from, but it obviously was all through the paddy side of the village. Shortly after this, attempting to pick up the wounded one of the UH-1s made an approach at a 90-degree angle towards the village, using the downed aircraft for cover. The aircraft was about 30 or 40 feet in the air when it began to disintegrate, a bullet had severed about three or four feet off one main rotor blade. I think the CP and one door gunner died in the crash. We now had three aircraft, at least two KIA, and several wounded in the LZ.

LTC Vann was going nuts in my back seat. He was screaming over the radio to the advisor staff members on the ground at Tan Hiep and at the Div HQ in My Tho and telling me to make more low passes over the paddy, so he could assess the situation. My assessment of the situation was if we kept screwing around low-level out in front of that village, they would have an O-1 there to add to their collection. We flew low (and fast) a couple of more times over the village and then climbed to altitude overhead. On a few occasions during all of this, I noted LTC Vann heaving his guts out the back window, but he never complained. As anyone can imagine, I was yanking the aircraft around pretty hard avoiding ground fire. He was either the most fearless passenger or the craziest I ever flew, maybe both. Through-out the day, the only hit we took was in the trailing edge of the elevator, looked like it had been done with a rat-tail file.

Back at Tan Hiep, the CH-21s were pretty cheesy-looking. The force had gone from about 16 flyable to



## FIRST IN VIETNAM

Three CH-21 C Shawnees from the 57th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter) Circa 1962. This photo is owned by Philip Chinnery, the author of VIETNAM, The Helicopter War, and a good friend of the VHPA.

maybe four or five, due to combat damage and the usual maintenance problems. Several were leaking from hits in fuel cells and the pilots were trying to decide if they would hold enough fuel to get home.

It's hard to imagine how short we were of assets in 1963. There wasn't a whole lot of help available if you got in a jam. I was back in the Delta in 1967 as the XO of an Assault Helicopter Co. when things were a lot different. If we needed help, we had three other companies available (31 A/C each) and we didn't have to go through Saigon to get them.

In 1963, most assets were controlled by joint ARVN/US HQ in Saigon, not too far away in miles, but in a whole different world. By the time they figured out something serious was going on, it was getting near dark and the VC were getting ready to pull their disappearing act.

Meanwhile, in the northern sector, Captain Kenneth Good, who I believe I met early that morning, took a round in the neck while advising his unit, which had been inserted on one of the first lifts. He had sent his NCO with another company and thus was the only American with the unit. There was no one on the advisor frequency who knew of the situation. All we heard

on the advisor frequency was a Vietnamese hollering over and over "Dai We, Dai-We" (Captain, Captain). LTC Vann thought a VC had gotten hold of a radio and was trying to jam the frequency. By the time we found out through ARVN channels what happened, and I was able to vector a medevac in, he had lost too much blood and they were unable to save him. I still remember that Vietnamese hollering on the radio trying to save his advisor and we were too stupid to know what had happened.

The rest of the day was a constant stream of radio traffic; a lot of noise, but little was accomplished. We still had three aircraft and all the wounded and KIAs on ground in the LZ. LTC Vann tried, without success, to get the ARVN Cav unit, with armored personnel carriers to move to the LZ; they were only a couple of miles away, but they wouldn't move without word from Saigon, which never came. No wonder they lost the war.

The LZ was too hot with no hope of any realistic way to protect a rescue aircraft, although there were pilots at Tan Hiep who were willing to give it a try. Eventually, a pair of VNAF Skyraiders appeared overhead, they dropped about four bombs in the trees, too far from the village to do any good. One of the problems in

those days was the VNAF and USAF aircraft were old and communicated only on VHF, all the Army aircraft had UHF and FM radios only. Shortly before dark, reinforcements arrived. I looked out at my altitude to see a flight of about six C-123s coming straight at me at my altitude (about 800 feet), I went into a full-throttle climb and looked under us to see ARVN paratroops streaming out the doors. LTC Vann had no idea they were coming and, of course, was hollering on the radio again. The paratroops landed well behind the immobile ARVs already on the ground, as well as our downed aircraft and crews. This, of course, left the back door open so the VC could escape as soon as the sun went down.

We flew back to Tan Hiep, where we refueled for the fourth or fifth time. Another aviator from our unit, Will Womack, flew us back to Soc Trang, I logged 12.2 hours; it was a long day.

A few years later North Vietnam published a memorial postage stamp celebrating the great victory at Ap Bac. For more about this story, see A BRIGHT SHINING LIE; start on page 203.

Joseph O'Neill

## UPCOMING REUNIONS

### 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion Reunion

**When: April 21- 24, 2020**

Where: Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center, Nashville, Tennessee.

All members, guests and friends of the 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion are invited to attend.

**Contact: Howard Burbank**

[chickenman@a227ahb.org](mailto:chickenman@a227ahb.org)

Additional details: <http://reunion.227ahb.org>

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

**When: 4/30/20-5/3/20**

Where: Daytona Beach Resort, FL

Speaker/Guest of Honor: Joe Galloway

**Contact: H.H. (Rick) Roll – rroll@comcast.net**

### REUNION Ft Knox OCS 1965-1968

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at the following Web Sites:

Facebook: OCS at Fort Knox : 1965 – 1968

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# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## ALAMO CHAPTER

Michael Clark  
61 Winding River Lane  
Spring Branch TX, 78070  
Home: 830-885-7615  
Cell: 602-510-9431  
Email: clarkmb2@gmail.com

## ALASKA CHAPTER

Lynn Kile, President  
12243 W Skyline Dr.  
Eagle River, AK 99577  
Phone: 907-696-5453  
Email: llkile@aol.com

## AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

Chuck Canfield, President  
3225 Selkirk Bush Rd. SW  
Warren, OH 44481  
Cell: (330) 984-0889  
Email: muskets176@gmail.com

## ARIZONA CHAPTER

Bill Sorenson, President  
1049 S. 81st Way  
Mesa, AZ 85208  
Phone: 480-204-1417  
Email: chopperpilot@cox.net

## CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

Ken Fritz  
5341 W Riego Rd.  
Sacramento, CA 95837  
Phone: 916-768-1675

## CENTRAL NEW YORK CHAPTER

Tom Mc Millen, President  
17 Broad St.  
Morris, NY 13808  
Phone: 607-263-2551  
Email: tomgenevamcmillen@yahoo.com

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

Don Welch  
214 Edgewood Ave.  
Clearwater, FL 33755  
Phone: 727-667-0644  
Email: slkdrv@gmail.com

## FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

Richard Gaurkee, President  
1917 E. Henderson  
Cleburne TX 76031  
Phone: 817-556-2598  
Email: president@fwcvhpa.org

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

Chuck Stoudt, President  
Phone: 770-846-4413  
Email: chuckgavhpa@gmail.com

## HAWAII CHAPTER – Provisional

Ken DeHoff - POC  
Email: khdehoff@gmail.com  
808-754-6871

## LOUISIANA GULF COAST CHAPTER

Victor Lent, President  
P.O. Box 111  
Arabi, LA 70032  
Phone: 504-201-9070  
Email: VHPA-NewOrleans@earthlink.net

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Richard Deer, President  
308 W 4th St  
Charlotte, MI 48813-2186  
Phone: 517-543-2962  
Email: richdeer@att.net

## MONTANA CHAPTER

Todd Brandoff, President  
Box 790, Lolo, MT 59847  
Phone: 406-273-2511  
Email: tbrandoff@hotmail.com

## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

Marshall Eubanks, President  
217 Golden Harvest, New Market, AL 35761  
Phone: 256-527-5900  
Email: usandmel@mchsi.com

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

Gerald Phelps, President  
118 South Pine Cove Lane  
Macon, NC 27551  
Phone: 252-257-2544  
Email: s22comet@centurylink.net

## OHIO RIVER LZ CHAPTER

Keith Allegre  
Phone: 614-905-9705  
Email: Warlord\_24@msn.com  
www.ohrvlz.org

## OKLAHOMA CHAPTER

Mike Sloniker, President  
3909 Creek Bank Rd,  
Edmond, OK 73003  
Home: 703-690-5856  
Cell: 703-395-5147  
Email: mikesloniker@yahoo.com  
www.okvhpa.org

## OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

Don Agren, President  
13712 Sandy Oak Rd.  
Chester, VA 23831  
804-691-3002  
Email: dnaagren@comcast.net  
Facebook: Old Dominion Chapter VHPA

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

Dale E House, President  
14520 Akron St.  
Brighton, CO, 80602  
Phone: 303-659-8754  
Email: RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com

## SOUTH DAKOTA CHAPTER

Jim Miles, President  
610 N. Summit Ave.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104  
Phone: 605-338-8288  
Email: DustOff1525@Yahoo.com

## SOUTH MISSOURI CHAPTER

Ron Clifton  
cliftonron@yahoo.com  
417-462-7837

## SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

*(Celebrate Freedom) Chapter*  
Larry Russell, President  
254 Bear Creek Rd.  
Little Mountain, SC 29075  
Phone: 803-553-0113  
Email: larry@esad.net

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

Jim Davidson, President  
PO Box 3219  
Crestline, CA 92325-3219  
Home: 909-338-0907  
Cell: 909-633-4427  
Email: jimdavidson007@hotmail.com

## UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

Tim C. Callister, President  
Email: tim\_callister@comcast.net

## UTAH CHAPTER

Thomas Melville  
Email: Thomas.Melville@uvu.edu

## WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

David Swanson, President  
Email: desch47@hotmail.com

## 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 918-813-5132 (cell) or 918-298-5132 (home) or via E-mail at ka5hzd@att.net. 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

## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

As usually happens in the late summer and fall, the North Alabama Chapter (NAVHPA) has been even more active than ever.

At our 13 August meeting Chapter President, Marshall Eubanks, explained to the membership the tremendous help of John Monaghan, a local construction contractor, to obtain final approvals and building permit items that were needed to get the Buc-3 shelter constructed. (See the last issue of the VHPA Aviator for more.) NAVHPA spent nearly two years looking for a location, planning and fund raising for this 24'x60' building. In the last minute of the last hour, the City of Huntsville threw down a huge obstacle - one that was going to take time and money to overcome. John heard of our predicament and immediately volunteered to help by becoming our general contractor, destroying the obstacle like a combat engineer on the battlefield! John saved us much time and additional expenses. NAVHPA honored and thanked him by presenting him with our shirt, coin and a Certificate of Appreciation.

Later in August, we had a "gathering of friends" to remember our fallen comrade, Steve Pflanczer. All NAVHPA members and spouses were special to Steve. His wife Linda thought Steve would have liked us to remember him by sharing our favorite stories and memories of him. NAVHPA members, spouses and Steve's family gathered and talked about how we met Steve through different assignments, or just getting to know him through the chapter. We shared many great memories and stories of Steve that evening. We are sure Steve would have appreciated all of them. Some were funny and some were poignant. But all reflected the profes-

sionalism and kindness that made Steve beloved. When Steve was healthy, we could always count on him supporting the chapter activities right along with Linda. One of the things we will miss is that great big smile he had whenever he greeted you. Although Steve is gone, he did leave us with one wonderful gift, Linda. We can't even begin to thank her for all the support, time and effort she has given to the chapter. Steve Pflanczer was "one of the good ones" and he is very much missed. Later, at our 10 Sep meeting, Linda was presented with the Vietnam War Commemoration Certificate of Honor and the Deceased Vietnam Veteran's Surviving Spouse Lapel Pin.

On 30 and 31 August, NAVHPA supported the Decatur, AL port visit of LST 325, the last remaining, fully operational, WW II U.S. Navy ship, by displaying our Vietnam UH-1C/M gunship, Buc-3, nearby. Since this event was primarily about the Navy, we had a lot of Navy veterans visit our aircraft. Many Vietnam veterans have never spoken to anyone about their combat service and sometimes just seeing a Vietnam helicopter helps them open up about their experiences with our NAVHPA docents, who they know will understand. Such was the case with a former Navy medic.

A man who looked to be about our age walked up and asked about the helicopter. One of the docents, John Lowe, told him about the combat service of the aircraft and its two-year restoration and mentioned that he had flown the same type in Vietnam. John asked if he served in Vietnam. "Yes" he said. "I was a combat medic with the Marines. When I arrived in country, I was sent to Khe Sanh. It was a slaughter." Tears started rolling down



Marshall Eubanks presents a Certificate of Appreciation to John Monaghan.



NAVHPA members, spouse and friends remember Steve Pflanczer.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



his cheeks. John put his arm around, squeezed his shoulder, and said "Welcome Home." John kept his arm on his shoulder as they stood in silence as the tears streamed down his face. Finally, he reached up and patted John on the back and said "Thanks" and walked away. It only takes one guy to make years of docent duty worth it. We conducted a half dozen small ceremonies giving Vietnam veterans a 50th Commemoration Vietnam Veterans Lapel Pin.

During the LST 325 display, we had a special visit by Thanh Boyer, author of the book *The Ground Kiss*. This is the story of 12-year-old Thanh and her little sister's escape from Vietnam after the communists had taken over. Her parents paid for passage for their two oldest children on a river-boat headed into the South China Sea. It is a powerful story of "strength, courage and perseverance." Thanh's visit with us was a true inspiration, not only her story, but her accomplishments after she settled in Huntsville, AL with her husband John Boyer. We highly recommend this book for anyone, especially our young people who are curious about what happened to the people of Vietnam after our war.

Later John talked a little about his service in Vietnam. He

NAVHPA and CHPA members gather around BUC-3.

related this story.

Vietnam. 1968. 334th Armed Helicopter Company (UH-1C "Charlie Model") gunships with XM-21 systems' miniguns and rockets in support of Royal Australian Navy (RAN) UH-H "Slicks" somewhere near Nui Dat in III Corps. The Aussie slicks were dispatched to extract a recon team. It was a Hot extraction winching up the troops out of the jungle. The C&C callsign was "Number 1". The lift ship was "Number 2". Number 2 was hovering in the tree tops steady as a rock, winching the troops out one at a time while calmly saying "taking fire" and describing direction and distance. We were laying the rockets and miniguns in as close as we dare, being ever mindful of not hitting the Aussie troops. Another very calm radio transmission from Number 2 as he held that slick rock steady with his skids in the trees: "Right, Number 1. Number 2. Could you ask the Yanks to back off a bit? They're poking 'oles in the Queen's 'elicopter."

The Combat Helicopter Pilots Association (CHPA) held their annual conference in Huntsville, AL from 12-15 Sep. On Friday, 13 Sep, NAVHPA displayed BUC-3, our



Buc-3 wows the crowd while Bob Monette check clearance at the Cullman County Fair Parade.



John Lowe  
"supervises"  
Bob Monette  
changing a tire  
along the  
Interstate.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

UH-1C/M, for the CHPA conference attendees. Former helicopter pilots from previous conflicts enjoyed BUC-3 as well as many Vietnam helicopter vets. We were invited to attend the CHPA evening reception and many stories were shared and two members who served together in Vietnam reconnected. NAVHPA Honorary member Julie Kink was the CHPA Tredway Award recipient.

NAVHPA pulled BUC-3 in the Cullman County Fair Parade on 28 Sep. This annual parade kicks off the Cullman County Fair - thousands turned out along the streets of Cullman, AL to see the many parade entries, including BUC-3, which was a big hit with parade goers. A large sign was hung from the front rotor blade of BUC-3 advertising the Cullman Veterans Celebration to be held on 2 Nov. In years past, BUC-3 drew large crowds at this event. NAVHPA members rode in BUC-3 and waved to the cheering crowd. We always

enjoy the enthusiastic crowds when BUC-3 is in a parade or being displayed.

On the way home, the team of Ernie Megli, John Lowe, John McDaniel, Bob Stewart, Bob Monette and Marshall Eubanks had to deal with a blown and shredded tire on BUC-3's trailer. The tire was changed on the side of I-565 and the team was on their way home.

The North Alabama Chapter meets in Huntsville, on the 2nd Monday of most months at 6:00 PM (1800). Stop in when you get a chance. If you live in the North Alabama and Middle Tennessee areas, we want you to join our chapter. You can contact us at [navhpa@gmail.com](mailto:navhpa@gmail.com). Our web site is <http://www.na-vhpa.org>. Come on out!! We know all those war stories need to get out of your system. We have each heard all of ours. We need new ones.

**Ralph Weber**



## ALAMO CHAPTER

We elected two new board members during our 20 September annual business meeting at the Barn Door restaurant in San Antonio: Ray Vaske as Vice President and Jim Boykin, returning to the board, as Junior Member at Large. President Mike Clark [clarkmb2@gmail.com](mailto:clarkmb2@gmail.com) conducted the meeting attended by about 56.

This year's "world (well at least San Antonio and the surrounding area) famous" Chapter Christmas Party is scheduled for 7 December at our traditional venue, the Army Residence Community (ARC), 7400 Crestway. Contact Jim Boykin [blackcat221972@gmail.com](mailto:blackcat221972@gmail.com) or 210-401-6559 for details and to RSVP. While the ticket price is to be set by the board in early October, it is important for all VHPA members, friends, families members, potential members to know

and remember: YOU ARE WELCOME! Maybe correct Texan speak is, "Y'all come now. Ya Hear?"

Our monthly luncheons for the guys and the chapter ladies continued during the fall. On 20 Aug we ate lunch at the Salt Grass Steak House and on 3 Sep at Luciano Ristorante. Save the dates: 15 Oct for a joint (ladies and guys) luncheon at Ristorante Paezanos and 6 Nov for the guys, location TBD.

Questions or to RSVP for an event, Jim Boykin [blackcat221972@gmail.com](mailto:blackcat221972@gmail.com) or 210-401-6559 (no text messages please) or the Chapter secretary, Mike Patterson [dpatterson9@satx.rr.com](mailto:dpatterson9@satx.rr.com) or 210-827-3881. Now if you want to order Chapter shirts or gear, Tim Worley [rew4844@live.com](mailto:rew4844@live.com) or 210-573-3121.

**Submitted by Mike Law**



23 of the chapter members.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



## CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

A quiet couple of months over the summer. No events, but we are planning an interesting October. We have scheduled a BBQ at LZ Fritz on 9 OCT. A former Navy A1E pilot, "Napalm John", will be our featured speaker.

UH-1C 66-00563 was donated to the Army Aviation Heritage Foundation in Mesa, AZ in April 2019. Since then, they have put in over 2000 man-hours and many \$\$\$ into the restoration. It was recently completed and featured at the Miss Saigon theater presentation at Arizona State University. 563 will be shown at an AAHF sponsored picnic at Falcon Field in Mesa, AZ on 26 OCT. So far, 14 CCN members and wives have signed up to attend. We also plan to visit the Commemorative Air Force Museum on 25 OCT.

To our members - please keep the ideas coming!

Please check our website [www.vhpaccn.org](http://www.vhpaccn.org) for more info.

Dave Anderson  
VHPA-CCN Secretary



563 now is painted as a "Stinger" for the 116th AH COMPANY.

Note: 563 went to the 116th on its 3rd RVN tour! It was previously assigned to the 175th AHC before returning to the US for a complete rebuild

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

The 27th annual reunion of the VHPAF, September 26-28, 2019, was undoubtedly the Best Ever. It was very well attended and absolutely outstanding! It will definitely be long remembered.

**The Best Ever Location:** The Villages, Florida is the largest and most well known over-55 community in the world (more than 150,000 residents) and one of the best places to retire in Florida. It is the home to more than 28,000 military veterans including the largest VFW in the world with over 8,000 members which makes The Villages the home of the largest veteran population anywhere in the United States that doesn't have a military base.

**The Best Ever Lodging:** Our Reunion was held at The

Waterfront Inn which overlooks shimmering Lake Sumter and next door to the Market Square shopping and dining district in The Villages.

**The Best Ever Food:** There are more than 350 restaurants in The Villages. With so many options, selecting your favorite meal at your favorite restaurant was a 'slam dunk'! Need I say more?!

**The Best Ever Entertainment:** The VHPAF enjoyed its own live entertainment performed by The Amazing Steel Drum Ensemble from Hernando, FL. The 'drummers' ranged in age from just under 10 to just over 70. Some of the students took a day off from school not only to honor us with their presence, but also to 'interview' Vietnam War veterans in person. The 'poolside' concert was absolutely amazing! Everyone



MG (Ret.) Hennies, our banquet speaker, with VHPAF members he commanded in Vietnam.



MG (Ret.) Hennies (standing), greeting VHPAF members he commanded in Vietnam.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



MG (Ret.) Hennies, our banquet speaker, with VHPAF Chairman of the Board, Dr. Joe Ponds.

thoroughly enjoyed the diverse selection and quality of music which included songs from the Vietnam era, some popular 'island' favorites such as Yellow Bird, Jamaica Farewell, and Banana Boat, along with some classic love songs like Unchained Melody, I Can't Help Falling in Love, and Love Me Tender. One of the most spectacular and emotional highlights of their performance to honor all military veterans was to play a 'Patriotic Medley' that included several patriotic songs and the official Service Songs from each of the five branches of the Military (Semper Paratus, The U.S. Air Force Song, Anchors Aweigh, Marines' Hymn, and The Army Goes Rolling Along). Attendees were asked to stand when they heard their Service song being played or if they wanted to honor someone from that branch of service. If you have never heard your branch of Service song played on steel drums, then I would very strongly recommend that you include this on your 'bucket list'!

**The Best Ever Banquet Speaker:** In brief, MG (Ret.) C. A. "Lou" Hennies is a 41 year veteran of both the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army where he rose in ranks from enlisted status to that of a commissioned officer, retiring as a Major General.



Another example of the creative and customized golf carts in The Villages.

He served a total of 37 months in combat in the Republic of South Vietnam as a commander of five different Infantry and Aviation company/troop units and as a battalion, squadron and Corps staff officer in the 4/23 Infantry, 25th Infantry Division in III Corps, the 7/17th Air Cavalry Squadron in II Corps, and II Corps Aviation officer.

In 1985 he became the 4th commander of the famed TF 160 Night Stalkers where he was instrumental in establishing



VHPAF Ladies board The Villages "Trolley" for a sight-seeing and informational tour of the area.



The "Pilot" of this extraordinary "gunship" golf cart is William "Bill" Shawn, LTC (Ret.).



Members of the Amazing Steel Drum Ensemble taking notes from VHPAF member "Lee" LaGrelius on the role of the LOACH during the Vietnam War.

## VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



VHPAF members pose for a group photo with "Donut Dolly" Susan Mclean seated in the center.



Once again, it's "food time" at The Villages. It is a very tough habit to break!



Members of the Amazing Steel Drum Ensemble get a "mini-gun lesson" from Tom Tomlinson, VHPAF Treasurer.



Members of the Amazing Steel Drum Ensemble (in tie-dye shirts) pose with VHPAF members.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

the technological and organizational basis for the foundation of the current 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). He also served two tours in the Pentagon, first as the scheduling officer in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for the Blue Angels, Thunderbirds, and Golden Knights aerial demonstration teams and later on the Army Staff as the Deputy Chief of Army Public Affairs.

He is a Master Army Aviator, a Master Parachutist, a Ranger, and a Combat Infantryman. He's also an inductee into the Infantry Officer Candidate School (OCS) Hall of Fame, the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, and the USAF "Gathering of Eagles" Class of 2000.

The essence of his outstanding message to the VHPAF attendees recognized both past sacrifices and successes of Vietnam helicopter pilots, and the tremendous responsibility we now have to impart our knowledge and experiences to the next generation, especially since many of us are in "the 4th



Members of the Amazing Steel Drum Ensemble perform poolside at The Waterfront Inn.

quarter of life" or are perhaps in "overtime"! Giving thanks to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, MG (Ret.) 'Lou' Hennies left us with a tremendous blessing! What a GREAT way to end our Best Ever reunion!!!

Submitted by Dr. Joe Ponds,  
Chairman of the Board, VHPAF.

## FORT WOLTERS CHAPTER

Chapter member John Grow arranged a tour of the local Bell Training Academy. Bell Helicopter is now only Bell, since their focus now has outgrown just helicopters as the company looks to the future. The Academy had several procedural trainers including a couple of six axis motion platforms. Sadly, they weren't available during our tours. Anyone who remembers training in the Link SFTS UH-1 Instrument trainer (2B24) remembers that it was a great trainer for instruments and emergency procedures training with a full motion platform, but alas, no visual system. Things have improved greatly! Bell did, however, provide access to anyone interested in trying their skills in a non-motion visual trainer. The cockpits had the latest glass displays and electronics, which replaced the old mechanical and dedicated gages of the helicopters we flew in Vietnam or after.



One of the attendees enjoying the thrill of "flight" with all the new cockpit technology, and information overload.

A tour of the mechanics training area was also provided. After all, without the dedicated maintenance crews, our time in the air would be short-lived. The tour highlighted the vast improvements in materials, construction, and maintenance of the latest fleet of helicopters. There were still some items that have remained relatively unchanged, which put a smile on this aviator's face.

Our next quarterly chapter meeting will be Saturday, December 7th at Logan's Roadhouse in Hurst. This will be an important meeting concerning the viability of the Chapter and all active members should consider attending. The Executive Council will meet at 11 AM with General Membership meeting at 11:30 (or whenever the EC finishes its meeting). Lunch, which includes coffee, tea, or a soft drink, is \$20 per person. The beer is on you. Guests eat if you or someone pays. Peanuts are free and you can throw the shells on the floor. Address is 948 NE Loop 820, Hurst, TX. Phone is 817-590-0261. GPS data: N 32°49'32.43": W 97°2'03.69".

Herb Koenig and Adam Stezcko

## GEORGIA CHAPTER

On 21 September 2019, the Georgia VHPA Chapter mustered its bi-monthly breakfast meeting. We changed venues for this meeting to a former tactical CP, J. Christopher's Restaurant (LZ 'Juliet Charlie' in Marietta, GA). We moved back to LZ Juliet



Charlie because the breakfast and service was overwhelmingly better than our former LZ (The way to a chopper pilot's heart is through his stomach). It's a tighter LZ (less space), but the food and service make up for it.

The undersigned subbed for our president, Chuck Stoudt, who was attending the DFC Society Convention in Dayton,

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Guest Speaker Cliff Judkins.

OH. Our guest speaker for this meeting was Cliff Judkins, a retired Delta Captain with 30 years of service (his son is currently a Delta Captain). Before his career with Delta, Cliff was a Marine Corps Aviator who served in Vietnam back in '65 and '66. He flew F-8 Crusaders out of Da Nang and Chu Lai.

His presentation was not about his exploits as Marine Corps fighter pilot, but focused on a lonesome flight in a F-8 Crusader from our West Coast to Japan. At 20,000 he met a C-130 tanker en route for refueling. As he disengaged from refueling he heard a large bang, his engine failed, and he temporarily lost his radios. In his attempt to restart the engine his radios came back. He was advised that he was on fire and should exit the aircraft. Cliff tried the emergency ejection, but it failed. So, he tried the secondary emergency ejection and it too failed. Trapped in the cockpit with no ejection mechanism to propel him out of the cockpit, Cliff was able to manually jettison the canopy, and prepared to exit the aircraft at high speed on his own. None of this had successfully been done before. He leveled the aircraft and put it into a slip/crab to the left, to improve his chances for survival. He then exited the aircraft to the right and

managed, through the grace of God, to miss both the main wing and the rear horizontal stabilizer. When clear of the aircraft, he pulled his parachute. It failed to open properly and never fully deployed. He fell 15,000 feet into the Pacific and survived. Cliff was in the water for two- hours before he was rescued. His injuries were many (16 broken bones including a total of nine fractures to both legs, fractures to three back and two neck vertebrae, as well as a fractured hip). His recovery time from all sustained injuries was seven months. Over the years, his story appeared in 20 different magazines and he also appeared as guest on the TV program, To Tell the Truth. The story in itself was captivating, but Cliff's humor made it most enjoyable.

The Georgia Chapter is continuing its welfare raffle instituted at our last chapter meeting. Proceeds from the raffle are given to an organization that assists homeless veterans in and around Atlanta.

As usual, our GI DJ, Bill McRae continued to get our motors runnin' with his Vietnam era music and action videos of those Army fling wingers in their magnificent flying machines.

Former Vietnam helicopter pilots interested in joining and/or learning more about our Chapter may contact our president, Chuck Stoudt at [chuckstoudt@charter.net](mailto:chuckstoudt@charter.net) or 770-846-4413. For scheduled meeting dates during 2019 go to our website, [ga-vhpa.org](http://ga-vhpa.org).

Bob Lanzotti



## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Michigan Chapter had a wide variety of activities in the past couple of months.

On July 31st, several chapter members attended the funeral of Bob Potvin. Bob was respected and remembered by many in his military career and a large number came to show their respects. Included was a large contingent of retired National Guard members who served with him as well as family, friends and other military veterans.

Joe Meredith acted as MC for those who shared their stories of Bob, and Don Pond spoke on behalf of the VHPA. The key remembrance and message was from Bob's brother, Joe. Brother Joe talked about how he and Bob were going into the Army, someone said, "never volunteer." Joe talked about how they got to Fort Wolters and despite the advice, they both volunteered for the WOC choir. Joe said it was a great deal. The Base CO loved the choir as they performed all over the place and represented Fort Wolters really well. So—they got out of all kinds of unpleasant things that all other WOCs were required to do. Joe used that experience to outline all the things Bob always volunteered to do for others. It was really nice.

Since my contact information is available as a chapter presi-



Maple Grove L-R Rich Deer, Jerry Wright, Dave James, Bob Carusi, Brian Lipieci

dent in the VHPA Aviator, I've received a number of contacts from other VHPA members about Bob's passing, including VHPA Chapter Liaison Tom Payne. And Tom Arner who said he was in flight school class 67-15 with Bob and Joe. And from John MacIlroy, who made a donation to the Michigan Chapter as a tribute to Bob. Bob was obviously well liked and respected by many who knew him.

August 1 @ Brady's: The first Thursday of August saw a large

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

turnout at Brady's in Traverse City for Mark Benjamin's lunch gathering. Fifteen people came and the conversation flowed. Besides Mark, those attending were Lee & Carol Luck, Joe Meredith, John Johnson, Peter and Marian Fabien, Rich Deer, Pat Mullen, Scott Labarre, Dennis Klein, Fritz Barratt, Bart Halliday, Bob Matlis, & Sandy McLeod.

Besides renewing old acquaintances, making new ones, and sharing stories. Mark advised he has made arrangements with the new owner of Brady's to continue the gatherings on the first Thursday of each month. This is very good news as the location, service, food, and atmosphere have been perfect for the gatherings.

Conversations continued as our meals arrived, causing a very brief pause as the food disappeared. Members and associates are encouraged to join Mark at future gatherings on the first Thursday of each month.

August 3 - Mural: I want to give a big shout-out to chapter member Joe Brinn. Along with lots of others, he was very instrumental in adding many monuments, lighting and other features at the Veterans Memorial Park of Northeast Michigan at Oscoda. The latest is a magnificent mural that was dedicated on August 3rd. It measures 7 feet high and 21 feet long, depicting a combat scene during the Vietnam War including Hueys. It is backlit so it displays the scene at night as well. Members At Large Lee Luck and Mark Benjamin joined Joe at the dedication ceremony. To all who made this happen we give you our thanks and a big Well Done!

August 17 - Mason Aviation Day - AAR by Dave James: Mark Benjamin and Dave James were up and running by 08:30 the weather was warm with a breeze. Later John Akley joined us. About 60 aircraft flew in, and the crowd was moderate. We talked with many people and recruited two new members. All told we had a very successful day.

Mark's Photos - side story of Chinese girls. Three little Chinese girls were so cute and so curious about the helicopter that I could not resist. I tried to get a picture of the entire family but that was a no. I ran into them again later. Only one spoke Eng-



Brady's on August 1st

lish and all she would tell me is "at Michigan State for 9 months" and reluctantly that they are all from Shanghai. It was so special. Beautiful young ladies.

The fellow Mark photographed with Dave is the pilot, new member Bill Cody. He served with the 129th AHC. The other new associate member, Jim Watkins, was a crew chief/door gunner with the 174th AHC. He had a 174th AHC hat on. He was shot down during Lam Son 719 ops and spent three days on the ground before being picked up by a Huey flown by someone named Esposito. Jim said he'd love to have contact with him. (Later information was found and sent to Jim. He confirmed that Frank Esposito is the one he's looking for. He plans to travel to South Carolina to meet him.)

August 30-Sept 2 - The Moving Wall came to Hamburg along with many veteran related groups including the American Huey 369, War Dogs, Vietnam War re-enactors and more. Mark Benjamin led the charge and set up our chapter display on Friday. He was joined by Bob Rich to meet and greet the public and fellow veterans. Saturday, Mark and Bob manned the display again and were joined by Jim Hunt and Rich Deer. Glen Veno paid a visit on break from duties with the AH 369



Bob Potvin.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

operation. A new member was recruited along the way who served as a Navy Seawolf. But Mark wasn't done with that. He relocated the display from the veterans village to the AH369 operation for the last two days of the event and recruited two more new members.

September 8 – The Maple Grove Fly-In near Fowlerville drew lots of aircraft and lots of people. Dave James set up and manned our MI VHPA display with help from Brian Lipiec, Jerry Wright, Bob Carusi, and Rich Deer. Brian's wife Marya listened to our war stories for a while but was rescued when friends stopped by. Brian flew Cobras in Iraq so he had a much more recent set of war stories to share. Lots of veterans stopped by to chat with us and a new associate member was recruited. When the main events of the Fly-In – pancake breakfasts and raffle drawings – wrapped up, the aircraft started to leave and the crowd thinned out. Dave, Jerry, & Rich adjourned to the Great Lakes Family Restaurant and enjoyed lunch to close out our day.

For any VHPA members in or near Michigan who would



The Moving Wall L-R Mark Benjamin, Jim Hunt, Rich Deer, Bob Rich.



Mason Aviation Day



Mural at Veterans Memorial Park of Northeast Michigan at Oscoda.

like to be added to our email list for updates on our activities, contact me at [richdeer@att.net](mailto:richdeer@att.net). We have several non-Michigan residents on our roster so don't let that stop you from joining us.

More information on our chapter can be found online at [vhpami.wordpress.com](http://vhpami.wordpress.com) and on Facebook at Michigan Chapter of the VHPA.

**Submitted by Rich Deer, President**



## OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

Old Dominion Chapter was busy in April and May with a series of interviews conducted by High School Students at Cosby High School. The School adopted our Chapter and we were front and center at their very large 13th annual Memorial and Veteran Tribute on Monday May 20th, 2019. Mrs. Anne Canipe is the Program Coordinator and Mr. Benjamin Snyder is the

Principal. The guest speaker was U.S. Air Force COL Norman McDaniel, Retired, Vietnam POW 1966-1973.

Our first meeting of the fall was held Saturday September 7th at Legend Brewing Co. We had a great turnout, the weather was superb, so the wives sat on the patio.

We are planning a social event at the New Kent County Airport for SAT Oct 26th from 10 to 3PM. It is called Roar and Soar Car and Aircraft Show. Free Admission. Beer Truck,

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



First fall meeting.

Ladies on the patio.

Wine Tasting, Food Trucks, Halloween Costume contest, etc.

Friday December 6th is the Christmas Gala at Meadowbrook Country Club Cogbill Rd Richmond, VA at 18:00 hours with the Richmond Area Chapter of the MOAA.

Saturday December 14th we are helping with Wreaths Across America at 12:00 Noon at Richmond National Cemetery 1701 Williamsburg Road Richmond, VA 23231.

Respectfully submitted,  
Don Agren, President



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

We had our Chapter elections in July. Although yours truly is still President along with Doug Neil as Vice President, and Jim McNamee as Treasurer; the Chapter has not yet filled the Secretary position. In October, we will hold our chapter meeting at the American Legion Post 32 in Longmont, CO. It was successful last time so we will continue to hold meetings at different locations. We will report on that in the next issue.

Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport: We attended The Collector Car Council of Colorado (CCC), Car and Swap meet at the Rocky Mountain Regional Airport on August 3, 2019. We had about 250 visitors at the show and made some new friends. There were about 350 classic and antique cars. We had enough docents, so we were able to join in on some of the unique opportunities this show had to offer. Providing docent duty were Doug Neil, Bill Bates, Bill Robie, Rick Beaver, and new member Ken Hamburger who flew with Rick in Vietnam. Trish Flaherty, who works with Dale, also came to help out in our merchandise pavilion. Doug's daughter came by for a visit with Doug's Grandchildren Emery and Amia. That's them taking a spin in our Huey inside the Museum.



Car Show Event.



Emery and Amia, Doug Neil's Grand children.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

High Plains Honor Flight: Honor Flight "Welcome Home" reception was held at Signature flight support located at the Denver International Airport on September 16, 2019. Four different eras of conflict were represented at this event. WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan. Helping to "Welcome" the Veterans back from their tours in Washington D.C. were Carl Cavalluzzi, Bill Bates, Rick Beaver, Terry Olson, Ben Prieb, John Mitchell, Robert Simms, Dale House, and Cliff Lawson who provided photography duty. In the words of that famous veteran philosopher, Forrest Gump, attending these events, "...is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." I met Richard Schmittou, a WWII veteran from Fillmore, CA. He was part of the Liberation force in 1945 with the 101 Airborne Division in Germany. He was reassigned to Paris, France where the Army was assembling troops for redeployment to the Pacific Theater as part of the invasion force of Japan. Interestingly, he was not one of the returning veterans from DC being honored that day. He was there "Welcoming" back the other returning veterans.

Chapter Pick Nick and BBQ: Burgers, Brats, and Beer! It was a wonderful Day at the Lanphier's. Those who attended were Phil Lanphier, Jim McNamee, Doug Neil, Richard Overstake, Carl Cavalluzzi, Dale House, Gregg Mann, and all wives were on hand. Unfortunately, we were having such a good time we forgot to take pictures. (Maybe that was a good thing.)

Veterans Project: One of our members, Cliff Lawson, has been doing portraits of our members and other veterans free of charge, and was given accolades recently on Channel 9 News on their "Story Tellers" news segment. Cliff says that this has been a three-year project so far. Cliff says, "The only thing I would like to emphasize is that these images are not so much for the veteran as they are for their families. The thanks I get are not just from the veterans but from their spouses and their kids. THAT is who these portraits are for." I will put an Internet link on our web site so anyone may view the TV news segment.

CHPA BBQ: Bill Bates comments on the meeting: "Sever-



Members serving refreshments.



Richard Schmittou and Dale House.



CHPA BBQ Attendees.



Honor Flight Hosts.

al of the members living in the central Colorado area had a get together at my house on August 19. Knowing that all aviators enjoy burgers and beer, that's what was served. Those attending (L. to R.) are Jerry Smith, Bill Bates, Dale House, Richard



Cliff Lawson and Mike Silva Veteran Portrait sitting.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Overstake, Hugh Brown and Rick Beaver. We all shared some memories and commented on current affairs. We didn't pitch horseshoes or hand grenades but, we did numerous 12 oz. curls. Everyone enjoyed the immediate comradeship due to our common experiences. Each shared our current life activities which helped us be comfortable about bringing up more topics. There are no current plans for another soiree but another couple of months down the road – probably."

**Other Chapter and Upcoming Activities:** In November, we will be at Altitude Middle School in Aurora, CO., and The Denver Civic Plaza for Veterans Day celebrations. Other chapter activities will continue to be announced on our Web site: [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com)

We continue to make plans for the 2020 reunion here in Denver.

**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 as noted above, so contact us at the address below to verify dates, times and location. We do not meet in December, but instead have our annual Xmas party. The Museum committee will meet periodically to continue categorizing inventory, developing additional displays, and conducting Museum maintenance. 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: [RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com](mailto:RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com)

**Dale House, President**

## UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

On Saturday, August 10th, the Upper Midwest Chapter joined the Vietnam Veterans of America at their annual "China Beach" picnic in Trimbelle, WI. Chapter member Dave Schmidt brought his H model Huey as an added bonus to the event. The Chapter had a short business meeting and heard a short presentation on oral history interviews by the Helicopter Conservancy. It is hoped these experiences can be shared with the public through the Wisconsin Veterans Memorial (WVM) via interactive kiosks, at a future helicopter museum, and at additional venues as interest dictates. It was a great day and the weather cooperated for most of the event.

The September business meeting was held at the St. Paul Park, MN, American Legion club. A discussion of upcoming events included the Chapter's participation in the New Richmond, WI, Middle School Veterans Day celebration on November 8th. This has become an annual event for our chapter



Chapter members at September meeting. First row from left: Bob Rohlfsen, Ron Smith, Dale Dobesh, Bert Leach, Dave Larson. Second row from left: Wendell Pieper, Mike Rynerson, Mike Nelson, Dean Lind, Jim Bankston, Ed Luck, Bruce Hunter, Rick Koehnen, Neal Powell.



China Beach - attending chapter members lined up for a photo.

# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

and is a great opportunity for us to tell our story to some great kids. We also scheduled our holiday get-together for November 21; location to be determined. Finally, our chapter has grown to 50 members, which we believe is outstanding. New members are always welcome!

Article and Photos by Don Abrams



China Beach - chapter members and significant others listening to chapter president Tim Callister during our short business meeting.



## WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

It's been a wonderful summer up here in Washington State. In September, we held our annual Eastern Washington meeting in Spokane. Members present were evenly divided between Western and Eastern Washington members. Our chapter treasurer and National Executive Committee Member, John Shafer, brought us up to date on our financials and reported out that the chapter is in good fiscal shape with \$19K in the bank and \$3K in inventory on hand. John reported that we currently have 68 life members and 56 regular members on our chapter rolls. There will be a pamphlet going out shortly with information on the next meeting during the Auburn Veterans Day Parade that will include dues renewal information. President Dave Swanson informed the members that we are looking into inviting VHPA members to join our chapter from Oregon and Idaho, which do not currently have a state chapter.

As this issue of the Aviator goes to press our chapter is preparing to participate in the 54th Annual Auburn Veterans' Day Parade on November 9th. This event is the largest veterans' parade west of the Mississippi River and is designated by

the Veterans Day National Committee and the US Department of Veterans Affairs as a Regional Site for celebration of Veterans Day 2019. This year, the City of Auburn estimates there will be in excess of 6,000 participants and over 25 marching bands participating. The parade has become a very special event for our chapter, affording us the opportunity to interact with the spectators and other parade participants. We've seen many older veterans and their families rise from their wheelchairs as we pass by with our "Huey" and chapter banner, to salute and thank us for our service. If you have a friend you would like to see join our chapter, invite him to march with us during the parade. I think we can all agree it is an experience that should be shared with our brother veterans. And if you haven't yet marched with us, mark your calendar and join us this year! You'll be glad you did.

As always, we welcome all VHPA members to any and all of our functions and events. We anticipate that after the Auburn event, our next chapter meeting will be in February. Look for exact dates and times by visiting our website at [vhpawa.org](http://vhpawa.org).

**Dave Swanson, President**  
Submitted by: Steve Lodwig



Washington State VHPA members enjoying some time together during our fall meeting in Spokane.

# TAPS

## 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.*

**Caples, Robert W. USA;**  
Flight Classes: 68-3/68-1;  
RVN: 68-69 B/7/17 CAV;  
PH; Callsign: Scalhunter  
14.

Robert Woodrow 'Bob' Caples of French Village, MO passed away September 8, 2019 at Missouri Baptist Medical Center. He was born July 11, 1948, in Pocahontas, AR.

After leaving the Army, Bob worked as a civilian for the US Air Force. See full obituary written by a colleague on VHPA website.

Bob is survived by his wife of 38 years, Cynthia.

**Cinotto, Richard M. USA;**  
Flight Class: 70-16; RVN:  
70-71 116 AHC; Callsign:  
Hornet 30.

Rick passed on too soon with his wife and close friends at his side on April 3, 2016 in Fort Myers, FL.

Rick will be incredibly missed for his quick wit and dry humor by all the people he touched, including the community members of his neighborhood, his tennis club, his election colleagues, and countless others.

Rick is survived by his wife, Therese.

**Cnota, William D. USA; Flight Classes: 68-521/68-15; RVN: 69-70 281 AHC; BS; Callsigns: Intruder/Bandit.**

William "Bill" Cnota, a 41-year resident of Naperville, IL, passed away peacefully on August 3, 2019 at his home, surrounded by the love of his family. He was born on July 31, 1945 in Chicago, IL.

Bill was a graduate of St. Patrick's High School, Chicago.

After he was honorably discharged, Bill served as a Chicago Police Officer from 1970 until 1973. He then began his career as an Air Traffic Controller with the F.A.A. and served over 30 years in the Aurora Center. He was proud to continue his involvement in the industry as a trainer at the center after his retire-



ment. Bill was also a longtime member of the Judd Kendall V.F.W. Post 3873, Naperville.

Bill is survived by his beloved wife of 48 years, Linda

**Crone, Forrest W. USMC,**  
LTC Ret.; RVN: 67-68  
HMM-361, 71 HML-367;  
Callsigns: Starch/Scarface 5.

Forrest Crone passed away on August 14, 2019 after a short illness.

Forrest was born in Belvidere IL, April 18, 1932. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD in 1956. Forrest served his country from 1956 through 1978. After retirement, Forrest was a consultant in the aviation industry.

He and his wife loved traveling and took several trips abroad. Forrest was proud to claim that he traveled to all 50 states and 41 countries.

Forrest is survived by his wife, Anne.

**Griggs, Ronnie D. USA;**  
MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 65-  
3W; RVN: 66 129 AHC;  
SS, DFC, SM, BS (V), PH  
(4), MSM, ACM (V).

Ronnie Dale Griggs passed away on August 26, 2019, at the age of 76. He served in the military from 1961 to 1981.

Griggs was active in the community, working to help improve veteran-related programs and entities, such as raising money for the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum.

Ronnie is survived by his significant other, Becky Chesney.

**Herring, Robert S. USA;**  
Flight Classes: 66-9W/66-7;  
RVN: 67-68 242 ASHC, 69-  
70 271 ASHC; BS, PH; Callsigns:  
Muleskinner/Innkeeper.

Robert S. Herring, or "Stan," passed away Aug. 2, 2019, after a short illness with his family by



his side. Stan graduated from French Camp Academy, class of 1954 and joined the Marine Corps at age 17. After 10 years of Marine service, he went into the U.S. Army to fly helicopters. He retired from the service in 1974.

After retiring, he started flying for Anchorage Helicopters of Alaska, and then flew for Air Logistics, where he was a manager. He finished his flying career with ERA Helicopters of Alaska at age 65. In Alaska he flew from the Aleutian Islands to Prudhoe Bay, then retired to his birthplace in McCool, MS.

Robert is survived by his wife of 62 years, Cathy.

**Howze, William G. USA;**  
LTC Ret. Flight Class: 70-42;  
RVN: 71-72 IFFV ARTY.



William Gray Howze, known affectionately as "Bill," "Pops," and "Rip," to the many who loved him, lived a beautiful life. He passed away October 4, 2018. Along with his brother, Guy R. Howze, Bill was adopted shortly after birth by Gen. Hamilton H. Howze and Mary Henry, his beloved parents. Over the next 72 years, Bill wore many hats. He was a soldier; retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel after serving in the Army and Army National Guard for 20-plus years. He was a teacher, helping high school students learn algebra and geometry for a decade after retiring. Bill was generous, and he was genuine. To know him was to love him. He was a True Gentleman.

**Langley, Edward T. USMC;**  
Flight Class: 52; RVN: 62  
HMM-362, 67-68 HMM-  
164.



Edward was born on December 24, 1927 in Jackson, MS and passed away on Friday, August 2, 2019. Edward was a resident of California at the time of passing.

He attended Forest Hills High School prior to joining the Navy in September 1945.

# TAPS

**Lewis, Mose E. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Classes: 44/58QC; RVN: 71 HHC/165 CAG; DFC; Callsign: Six.**

Mose Lewis, 96, passed on June 28, 2019. No obituary was submitted. We know, however, he was one of the early members of AAAA and belonged to the "Cub Club". The Aviation Branch Chief later dubbed this group "The Originals".



**Moreno, Charles A. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 70-21/70-19; RVN: 70-71 114 AHC, 73-75 336 AHC; DFC, BS; Callsign: Knight 13.**

Charles Anthony Moreno of Moorpark, CA passed away on September 28, 2019 at home after a five-year battle with cancer.

Tony was born in Los Angeles, CA on March 16, 1948. He attended Mount San Antonio College majoring in Commercial Flight. Tony joined the Army soon after.

Tony started his career with LA County Fire Department in 1982. He became a Senior Pilot for the department and when he retired after 32 years, he was the most tenured pilot in the history of the department.

Tony is survived by his wife, Debbie.

**Murphy, John C. USA; Flight Classes: 68-503/68-4; RVN: 68-69 A/1 AVN 1 INF; DFC (OLC); Callsign: Bulldog 35.**

John C. "Jack" Murphy, 75, of Elizabethtown, KY passed away on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at Hardin Memorial Hospital, Elizabethtown, KY.

Mr. Murphy was born and raised in New Jersey and settled in Kentucky after his service in the Army. He was retired from Civil Service at Fort Knox, KY. His memberships included American Legion Post #113, Elizabethtown, KY, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

John is survived by his wife of forty-seven years, Stella.



**Peay, Earl G. USA, CW5 Ret.; Flight Class: 69-30; RVN: 70-71 A/159 AVN 101 ABN; Callsign: Pachyderm 13.**

Earl Gene Peay, age 74 of Huntsville passed away February 25, 2019.



Mr. Peay retired from the U.S. Army after 34

years. He served in Vietnam and was a Chinook Pilot. He was a member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association and an avid Mississippi State Bulldog Alumni.

Earl is survived by his wife of 53 years, Sandra.

**Pflanczer, Steve USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-7/66-5; RVN: 66-67 68 AVN, 69-70 HHT 3/17 CAV; DFC, ACM w V; BS, MSM; Callsigns: Top Tiger 25/Red Horse 8A.**

Stephen Pflanczer, 79, passed away at his home June 27, 2019.

Steve was born in 1940 in Balatonszentgyorgy, Hungary. He came to this country in 1956 as a Hungarian refugee who spoke no English. As a registered alien (with Green Card), he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1963. He became a citizen in 1964 while stationed with C Co, 2/14 INF at Schofield Barracks, HI.

Steve served as an instructor pilot at Ft. Wolters between Vietnam tours and afterward he was assigned to the 3rd AC MNT BN at Hunter AAF. After 2 years at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Steve had assignments with the Redstone Readiness Group, Redstone Arsenal, AL, the 5th Trans BN, Ft Campbell, KY, the 7th Signal BDE, FRG, and the 1st AVN BN at Ft Riley, KS. Steve retired in 1985 as a Master Aviator after 23 years of faithful service to his adopted country – one he loved dearly.

Steve always thought it was an honor and privilege to be a member of VHPA and his chapter, the North Alabama Chapter. He and Linda fully participated in and enjoyed all chapter activities. Patriotism and freedom were something that wasn't just words to Steve, but a standard to be lived by.

Steve is survived by his wife of 51 years and 10 months, Linda.

**Powell, Benjamin B. Jr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Classes: 61-6Q/58-16; RVN: 63-64 1 AVN CO, 64 61 AVN, 67 128 AHC, 67-68 173 AHC, 71-72 HHT/7/1 CAV; LM, BS (2); Callsigns: Tomahawk 26/Robinhood 5/Blackhawk 5/Blackhawk 6.**

Benjamin Bond Powell, Jr., a resident of Wakulla Springs, FL passed away on September 23, 2019 in Tallahassee after a years-long battle with pulmonary fibrosis. Ben was born and raised in Tallahassee. He graduated with a bachelor's in accounting from Florida State



University where he was a member of the Scabbard and Blade Society of the Theta Chi fraternity, ROTC and served in the National Guard. After graduation he worked as an accountant for six weeks. The firm closed and Ben went to work, operating a camera for the TV station in Tallahassee. He heard the call and joined the Army soon after. Lt. Colonel Powell started in an armor unit but discovered very quickly that he wanted to fly.

Before serving his third tour, he attended Navy Test Pilot School at NAS Patuxent River, MD; an honor for an Army Aviator.

LTC Powell assumed command of the U.S. Army Aviation Precision Demonstration Team (the Silver Eagles) in 1975.

Following his retirement from the Army, LTC Powell returned to his native Tallahassee, FL where he worked for the State of Florida Department of Education and the Legislature for than 25 years.

Ben is survived by his wife of nearly 21 years, Barbara.

**Roche, William V. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 66-8; RVN: 66 282 AVN, 66-67 B/4 AVN 4 INF, 69-70 18 AVN; Callsigns: Black Cat/Ace High.**



William V. "Bill" Roche, a resident of Rockland and formerly of Townsend, Boston Nantasket and Winthrop, entered into eternal life on August 18, 2019 at his home in Rockland.

Bill was born in Boston on May 20, 1938. He grew up in different sections of Boston, as well as Nantasket and Winthrop. He graduated from Cathedral High School in Boston in 1955. Bill enlisted into the United States Air Force on June 13, 1955 and later joined the United States Army and served his country with pride and honor as a helicopter pilot for 22 years. During his employment he also taught fellow servicemen how to fly helicopters. He was a dedicated instructor whose efforts positively affected many pilots. He was honorably discharged from active duty on June 2, 1977 and then joined the U.S. Army Reserves. He was honorably discharged and retired from the Army Reserves on January 29, 1991.

He was a member of the Rockland VFW, Post, the Rockland Knights of Columbus Council and former member and Past Commander of The Townsend VFW Post.

Bill is survived by his wife, Theresa.

Smith, William E. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-23/66-21; RVN: 67-68 191 AHC, 70-71 5 AVN; BS, MSM; Callsigns: Boomerang/Bounty Hunter.

William E. "Bill" Smith passed away February 16, 2019. Bill was born November 1, 1937 in Menard, TX.

Bill was raised in Menard and graduated from Menard high school in 1955. Following high school, he went to SAC (San Angelo College) for a year and worked for GTE for a year. In 1958, he joined the United States Army. After Vietnam he was a flight instructor until he was deployed again to Vietnam for a second time. Bill would NEVER brag about any of his accomplishments and would say, "I was just doing my job." After retiring from the military, he moved to be closer to his parents to help with their needs. He found a new talent making custom boots for a while and then worked as a manager of Bollman Hat Company in San Angelo, TX.

Thill, David C. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 68-23/68-41; RVN: 69 229 AVN 1 CAV, 72 361 AVN, 72-73 129 AHC; DFC, BS, MSM (OLC), ACM (OLC); Callsigns: Tiger/Panther.

David Charles Thill, a resident of Enterprise, AL, passed away September 16, 2019 at his home following a brave battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 71.

Mr. Thill entered the service in 1967. After Vietnam, he returned to Ft. Rucker, AL, for additional professional training and the Army Fixed Wing Qualification Course. He was then deployed with the 235th Attack Helicopter Company to Germany, followed by several combined assignments in both Ft. Rucker and Germany. He retired in 1989 and then held various positions with several defense contractors at Ft. Rucker.

David is survived by his wife, Pauli.



Vanik, Carroll E. USA; Flight Classes: 70-8/69-26; RVN: 70-71 35 ENG GRP; Callsign: Fat Albert.



Carroll Edward Vanik of Carefree, AZ, passed away unexpectedly, but peacefully on 9/12/2019.

Carroll was born on December 2, 1945 in Baltimore, MD. He graduated from Towson Catholic High School in 1963 and from the University of Maryland in 1968. After leaving the Army in 1972, Carroll enjoyed a long and successful career in Sales Management, retiring from Dial in 2006.

Carroll is survived by wife, Susan.

**Wollins, Wayne A. USA;**  
**Flight Class: 69-9; RVN: 69**  
**117 AHC; Callsign: Warlord.**



Wayne Wollins died on August 3, 2019.

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.

Barker, John L. USA; Flight Class: 69-46; BS; died August 24, 2019.

Bellehumeur, David J. USA; Flight Classes: 69-35/69-33; RVN: 70-71 187 AHC; DFC, BS; died September 6, 2019.

Boelter, Richard USA; PH; died August 14, 2019.

Bush, William A. USA; Flight Class: 62-6; died September 7, 2019.

Cleveland, Charles M. USA; Flight Classes: 70-15/70-13; BS; died; August 30, 2019.

Danhof, Gary W. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 70-29; died August 17, 2019.

Doht, Gerald W. USA; Flight Class: 67-16; died July 1, 2019.

Ecrette, Joe D. USA, LTC Ret.; RVN: 66 1 CAV; died June 24, 2019.

Hartley, Jack H. USN, CMD Ret.; RVN: 68-69 HC-2; Callsign: Seawolf; died July 26, 2019.

Hunziker, Billy L. USA; Flight Class: 69-21; DFC; died August 2, 2019.

Jadrosich, John F. USAF; RVN: 70-71 37 ARRS; died September 9, 2019.

Jones, Michael R. USA; Flight Class: 69-5; DFC, BS, ACM; died July 26, 2019.

Keck, Roy E. USAF, LTC Ret.; RVN: 66-67 ARRS; DFC; died September 7, 2019.

Krier, Rene J. USA; Flight Class: 70-34; died February 22, 2019.

Mannschreck, Charles C. USMC; died August 21, 2019.

Parker, Pasco USAF; died September 4, 2019.

Rist, Frederick G. USA; Flight Classes: 67-19/67-17; RVN: 68 HHC 15 MED 1 CAV, 68 B/2/20 ARA 1 CAV; SS; Callsigns: Medevac 19/Blue Max 49L; died July 19, 2019.

Rolls, Karl R. USN; RVN: 70-73 HC-7; died August 2, 2019.

Sapp, Charles S. USN, CMD Ret.; RVN: 66-67 HA (L)-3; DFC (OLC), PH; died August 23, 2019.

Stewart, Michael R. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 71-26; BS, MSM; died August 15, 2019.

Waddell, Bill D. USMC, COL Ret.; died August 8, 2019.

Welsh, Donald M. USAF; RVN: 65 PAC ARC DET 5; SS; died August 25, 2019.

Note: Donald Welsh performed the first downed aircrew helicopter rescue in Vietnam-Ed.

Wilson, Ronald D. USMC; died September 8, 2019.

## OBITUARY SUBMISSIONS

Individuals wishing to supply a notice of death and/or information such as online link(s) may do so by email to [aviator@vhpao.org](mailto:aviator@vhpao.org). Those wishing to write their own obituaries may submit same to that email address as well. Space constraints may limit the amount of text allowed. For self-produced versions, any edited narrative will be provided to its author for review as soon as feasible.

Pilots meeting VHPA membership criteria, but have never been a member, will have a one line entry. Regardless of whether or not an obituary is abridged, an unedited version (full text) of all submitted obituaries will be posted on our web site at <https://www.vhpao.org>.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## *Hi Tom,*

Well I guess Robert was telling his story to me! I am a life member of the VHPA. I started reading Robert's story and didn't even get through two paragraphs before I had this eerie feeling that he was talking about my friend. I flipped to the last page and saw my friend's name. It was quite a shock.

Wayne and I went to North Carolina State College. We became pledge brothers in Sigma Phi Epsilon in 1961. I was in the class of 67-25 and Wayne was in 67-1, I knew Wayne was in flight school when I was, but he left Wolters and Rucker before I got there. I arrived in VN in March '68 a little over 1 month before Wayne was killed.

Please tell Robert's son Adam that I passed his story to Wayne's widow (remarried) and she sent it to Wayne's brother. I also sent the story to a large group of fraternity brothers. We all were very grateful that Adam allowed his father's story to be published.

Reg Harris CW4 USA Ret.

## *Tom,*

As a former member of the 135 AHC, you are likely familiar with this situation. I need some help from any of your members who may be in a position to do so.

My name is Ray Godfrey. I was a pilot with the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam attached to the 135 AHC EMUs 67/68. This unit was a fully integrated US/Australian company, with the Australian CO being the units Executive Officer.

After the 135th arrived in country the usual transfer of personnel occurred resulting in a major shortage of door gunners. To help alleviate this shortage the 2i/c of the HFV arranged with the CO of B Company 2RAR (Australian Battalion at Nui Dat) for an unofficial secondment of nine machine gunners to fly as door gunners for a period of two to three weeks each from Nov 67 to Feb 68. No official paperwork was raised. This secondment was very successful allowing the 135th to achieve its full daily complement of 'slicks'.

Each soldier was given a Certificate of Achievement by the 135 AHC Commanding Officer LTC Cory stating that all had acquired the necessary number of combat hours to make them eligible for the award of the US Army Air Medal. Unfortunately, due to the Australian regulations in force at that time, none of these soldiers were permitted to apply for this award.

It was not until 2014 that it was brought to my attention that eight of these soldiers had not applied for their awards. Since then I have unsuccessfully been trying to assist these soldiers to obtain the Air Medal. The application forwarded by the US Military Attaché Canberra has the support of the Australian Defence Force but is still not acceptable to the Awards and Decorations Department. The reason given is that the soldiers cannot produce evidence that they were attached to the 135AHC even though the 1st Platoon Commander has provided a statement that they were indeed attached for the period stated and that their efforts were very welcome at a time of intense activity. Additionally, a

statement issued by the 135 AHC Executive Officer (now a Rear Admiral Ret.), was not considered as he was a foreign officer and not allowed to recommend awards under US Army regulations.

In 2003 Private Ralph Hoger applied for and was granted his 1st thru 3rd Air Medal. Even though a copy of the order awarding the Air Medal has been supplied it is not considered as supporting the application as the original file has now been archived and the A & D Branch state that they cannot access it.

As is currently being espoused by our respective leaders the USA and Australia have been combat allies for over a century and a spirit of cooperation exists between our two countries. Awards have been given and received with the latest being the award to the 135 AHC of the Australian 'Unit Citation for Gallantry' received by 135th members at the Anzac Day Ceremony at Fort Rucker on the 25 April 2019. In writing this letter I am hoping that someone in the VHPA Community may be able to assist these soldiers to obtain the Air Medal to which they are entitled given the fact that one member has already been granted his award.

The story of the soldiers, time with the 135 AHC can be found at: <https://www.faaaa.asn.au/the-machine-gunners-of-b-company-2-rar-and-the-135ahc-emas/>

The story of the 135AHC/RANHFV can be found by googling the units named.

If anyone can assist, they may contact me [ray.godfrey5@bigpond.com](mailto:ray.godfrey5@bigpond.com).

Thank you, Ray Godfrey  
LCDR RAN Ret., RANHFV Det 1 67/68

## *Dear Editor,*

*Please consider sharing this story.*

## *My Wife Passed Away and it May Have Been Prevented*

My 69-year old wife of 49 years had knee replacement surgery this July, a fairly common procedure for people our age. Fourteen days later, she was getting ready for a follow-up appointment to remove her staples, when she suffered a clot-induced pulmonary embolism and died five hours later. She was the most vibrant person in our circle of friends and her passing stunned a lot of people, especially our family. She was active, she had never complained openly of problems, and she was seeing a primary care physician regularly. However, she has never seen a cardiologist, despite my urging her to do so as her family has a history and I go to mine at least annually. She had an EKG prior to surgery; no one has been able to tell me what good that did.

Blood clots are a frequent occurrence for we older folks and surgery increases the risk. After surgery she complained of a localized pain behind her knee which the hospital and physical training staff dismissed as normal. It may have been her clot. I keep asking myself why we never asked for a sonogram of her legs. And I really ask myself why I never insisted she get under the care of a cardiologist. Save your loved ones the pain of dealing with your passing way before it is time. Talk to your doctors.

*Although this is not typical of the letters submitted to this section, it may prove helpful to one of us in the future. At our age, even simple procedures can become complicated or as related-fatal.*

*In early August I spent over a week in the hospital due to pneumonia. My wife, a retired ICU nurse, examined every note and asked to be informed about any and all procedures or medications and queried each physician about their contribution to my plan of care. ~ Tom Kirk*

**To the Editor of the Aviator,**

I wish to share what I call the: **Kansas City Gold Star Miracle**

One of the most important events at any VHPA reunion is the Gold Star breakfast. Lindi and I have been attending these breakfast sessions for many years and the Gold Star Breakfast at the reunion in Kansas City was again on our Must Do list. Julie Kink, whose brother was KIA in Vietnam, is the force behind the breakfast and has been the action person doing an incredible job researching VHPA Gold Star Families in the region surrounding each reunion city and sending personal invitations for the families to join us as honored guests.

The breakfast at Kansas City was the largest yet with in excess of 250 attendees, VHPA members and families plus the honored guests. Three of the Gold Star Family members joined Ed and Diana White and Lindi and me at our table that morning. I noticed their family name and looked at the program listing of honorees and didn't see that name. We welcomed them to the table and extended the VHPA welcome and courtesies...Introductions around, where we were from, the normal meet and greet; they were the Hursts: Jeff and Loretta, and their adult son Quentin. Those of us at the table were still trying to correlate the guest program with the family at our table. That is when the goosebumps started!

At the last minute, the Hursts decided to attend the Gold Star Breakfast. It was too late for Julie to reprint the Order of Service bulletin for the breakfast, but God took care of nudging circumstances involving what happened next. When the Hurst family arrived, they walked past a number of intervening tables, back to second to the last table at the rear of the room where likely the only person in Kansas City who knew their lost family member was seated.

Ed White was sitting closest to Quentin. I saw Ed trying to read one of the badges that identified who this Gold Star Family was. Ed, who knew where I had been in Vietnam, said "Stan, he was a Jayhawk!" Out of all the tables the Hurst family could have selected, they chose to sit at the only table in the building that had someone at the table that knew their brother/brother-in-law/uncle. Lt. Quentin Hurst had been assigned to Company A, 9th Aviation Battalion, 9th Infantry Division at Dong Tam in August 1968, my unit, until the UH-1 he was piloting was shot down in the Mekong River near My Tho. Quentin lost his life along with

the other flight crew members in UH-1 67-17164 on September 27th 1968.

I knew Quentin. I flew with Quentin. I slept in the same GP Medium tent with shrapnel holes in it as the Hurst family's lost relative. When I recovered my senses and realized what an unbelievable turn of events we were involved in that morning, I was able to relate stories about Quentin that they had never heard before. Jeff Hurst, brother of Quentin, told me that the family almost did not respond to the Gold Star Breakfast invitation. The message was that the US Army did not handle the loss of Quentin at all well from the family's perspective and those wounds were still raw even after 50 years.

Jeff, Lt. Hurst's brother, told us that his son, Quentin was named for his lost brother. Nephew Quentin told me he had never seen Jeff, his dad, as emotional as he was during our visit and reliving some of the episodes of 1Lt Quentin Hurst's experiences in our unit. The emotions were so near the surface, and there was some healing occurring on both sides of the table. I am certain there was some divine intervention in this encounter. It is my hope that the VHPA Gold Star Breakfast in Kansas City continues to serve as an example of the awesome responsibilities we have for each other, our brothers and their solid Gold Star Families. Since that breakfast, we keep in touch with the Hurst family and will continue to do so.

The mission of the Gold Star Breakfast continues to be accomplished. Julie Kink, we are all so tremendously proud of your massive personal contribution to VHPA and our Gold Star Families.

**Stan Wiley**  
Co A, 9th Aviation Battalion  
9th Infantry Division 68-69

**Dear Sir,**

I don't have a question, but just wanted to post a big Thank You. I want to thank all of you who served honorably in the Viet Nam war, especially those who flew helicopters.

As a kid growing up in Ohio in the late-60 to early-70's, I idolized all of the troops who were fighting in Viet Nam. Your courage under fire and your professionalism were awe-inspiring to this little 10 year old kid! As an adult, I was disgusted how many of you were treated upon your return from serving this country.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your service!

**Tim Shanahan tshan17@aol.com**

*Tim received a reply thanking him for sharing his thoughts and will receive a copy of this issue of the Aviator ~Ed.*

**To the Aviator Editor:**

Regarding "Another First" In issue 38-05, Sep/Oct of the Aviator the VHPA Aviator, Issue 38-05, September/October 2019, there is as Paul Harvey says – "Now for the rest of the story".

The pilot in this story and I became good friends while assigned to the 271st ASHC. The pilot left the Army, enrolled at Embry Riddle University, and upon graduation, joined the Air Force. He flew F-16s Fighting Falcons and later became a member of the Air Force Demonstration Team (Thunder Birds). He flew the #7 aircraft of the Thunder Birds. Not bad for a young warrant officer.

**Donald Hoover, Col, USAF (Ret)**

*Tom,*

I have (I hope) the final word on the disputed gunship configuration:

Around September of 1967, my platoon leader Cpt. Mel Utley came to me and told me the platoon got a rebuilt B model in and did I want it. I excitedly said yes, and he asked how I want it armed. "Forty mm grenade launcher", I answered. The ship, 053, would be crewed by the best in the second platoon, CE Mike Tarsi and DG Jim Engle.

Let's cut to the chase. Mike got two 40mm ammo cans off of Guns-A-Go-Go. The Go-Go cans are rectangular and held approximately 200 rds. per can and the cans were strapped in line against the firewall. Drive motors were installed between the cans and at the ammo chute. To top it off we usually put extra 50 rd. boxes of 40mm on the floor. That way you could clip on more ammo without or

before expending the chute. The chute had approximately 100rds. We only carried 14 rockets which we fired one at a time. Zero Five Three was an exceptionally strong ship.

The accompanying picture is an exact model of 053 made by the famous aviation artist Joe Kline. I can't find the original pictures I sent Joe, you know, I'll put them right here so I won't forget where they are. If you enlarge the picture it's a great shot of the system.

*Thanks,  
Al DeMailo,  
Life member*



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**Ned Crimmin**

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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

**1.509.523.4213**

**email:**

**KHABT114@FRONTIER.COM**

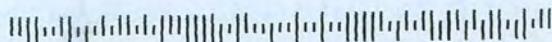


**VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS  
ASSOCIATION SATISFIED CLIENTS**

- 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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