



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	heloplt@aol.com
Midterm Member	John Powell	rotorpylut@gmail.com
Junior Member	Frosty Price	frostyprice@me.com
Secretary/Treasurer	John Shafer	johnshafercpa@comcast.net
Founder	Larry Clark	



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

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National Committee

Aviator Magazine	Tom Kirk, Managing Editor Tom Hirschler, Editor John Sorensen	aviator@vhpa.org tah44@msn.com jsore65648@gmail.com
Chaplain		
Chapter Liaison	Tom Payne John Sorensen, Asst. Chair	ka5hzd@att.net jsore65648@gmail.com
Elections	Frosty Price, Chairman	frostyprice@me.com
Historical	Mike Sloniker, Chairman Bob Hesselbein, Asst. Chair	mikesloniker@yahoo.com beaner1138@aol.com
Investments	Bob Smith, Chairman	tigersmity@hotmail.com
Legal Advisor	Mike Poindexter, Legal Advisor	poinlaw@aol.com
Legacy Committee	Bob Hesselbein, Chairman	beaner1138@aol.com
Membership	Mike Sheuerman, Chairman Bob Howard, Asst. Chair	msheuerman@tx.rr.com ltcbobhow@tx.rr.com
Membership Directory	Gary Roush, Editor & Chairman Mike Law, Asst. Chair	groush2@earthlink.net mglaw@earthlink.net
National Reunion	John Powell, Chairman Art Jacobs, Asst. Co-Chairman Don LeMaster, Asst. Co-Chairman	rotorpylut@gmail.com art.jacobs.tn@gmail.com heloplt@aol.com
Public Relations	Bob Hesselbein, Chairman	beaner1138@aol.com
Records/Database	Gary Roush, Editor & Chairman Mike Law, Asst. Chair	groush2@earthlink.net mglaw@earthlink.net
Reunion Site Selection	Art Jacobs, Co-Chairman Don LeMaster, Co-Chairman	art.jacobs.tn@gmail.com heloplt@aol.com
Scholarship Program	Tom Payne, Chairman Mike Sheuerman, Asst. Chair	ka5hzd@att.net msheuerman@tx.rr.com
Secretary/Treasurer	John Shafer, Chairman John Powell, Asst. Chair	johnshafercpa@comcast.net rotorpylut@gmail.com
VHPA Calendar Project	Mike Law, Chairman Bennie Koon, Asst. Chair	mglaw@earthlink.net bek082346@gmail.com

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E-mail items to The Aviator at: Aviator@vhpa.org

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



With a Critical Eye to the Future

With a critical eye to the future: From our modest beginning in 1984 as a group of former Vietnam helicopter pilots who wanted to connect and gather under the banner of comradeship, the VHPA has evolved into what is widely acclaimed as one of the finest and well-run military veteran organizations in the country. And, "evolve" is the key word here. The best organizations are continually evolving and improving while at the same time never losing sight of its primary purpose or mission.

The VHPA is proudly a "last man standing" association – there will never be more Vietnam helicopter pilots produced. We are not just finite in number however, but an inexorably dwindling breed. But thanks to some very progressive planning and foresight, when we are gone our history will live on. Years ago, we established a robust scholarship program through AAAA. And thanks to our Legacy Committee and its brilliant and tireless effort, we not only have a permanent and incredible monument in the Arlington National Cemetery, but we have established a fully funded endowment with Texas Tech University and the Center for Vietnam Archives.

It hardly seems possible gentlemen, but in five short years the average Vietnam helicopter pilot will be 81-years-old. We have always had the energy and manpower to seek out viable reunion venues, negotiate contracts, and then plan, organize, and manage all the moving parts behind the curtain that go into our amazing reunions. There will come a day however, when that effort proves to move beyond our physical capacity. That is why your Executive Council is looking at ways to ensure that the VHPA remains as vibrant an organization as possible for as long as possible. That means that more resources will be directed to at least two areas: 1. The AVIATOR Magazine. It is already a first-class publication, but increasingly, more and more of our members will be relying on this as the primary news instrument as our reunions inevitably shrink in size based upon our individual physical limitations. 2. Our VHPA Chapters will begin to take on more and more significance and importance for our members who find it difficult to travel long distances.

We could employ an outside agency to handle our reunions, but there are two negatives: One, they would be vastly more costly than what our HQ staff, Reunion Committee, and VHPA volunteers are able to now handle. Two, despite their avowed devotion to our cause, at the end of the day they are a profit and loss business and just wouldn't "be us in their hearts."

With a keen eye to the future, the Legacy Committee and I are strongly urging the members to earnestly consider a new category of non-voting VHPA membership. A "VHPA Associate Member" would be a small group of very carefully nominated, vetted, and selected individuals with a direct connection to who we are. Not to exclude anyone worthy, but I would guess that we are talking primar-

ily or initially about our family members and children – individuals younger than us who not only have the skills and energy to take over what we do for reunions, but have a special place in their hearts for us, what we did, and for our history – that they will jealously protect.

Gentlemen, looking at or following the model of other venerable last man standing groups like the Doolittle Raiders and the Tuskegee Airman is worthy of merit. This approach contains much value, but it is one of perhaps others that could be pursued. Your Executive Council, as you would expect, has one foot firmly planted in the present to continuing to make our Association and our reunions the best possible. However, the Executive Council, in doing its job properly on behalf of the members, must also have the other foot planted on future ground. Where are we headed, and what's the best way to get there? The best ideas and strategies are out there now with you. I urge you to start making that vision known so that we can discuss and plan the future together.

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 GOOCH
FOREWORD BY LT. COL. THOMAS L. SMITH JR., U.S. CAVALRY (RET.)

THE AVIATORS

VIETNAM HELICOPTER COMBAT, 1971-72

Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

The schedule for the 37th Annual VHPA Reunion in Denver, CO, May 21 thru May 25, 2020 is included further in this issue along with a map for parking at the hotel! At this time, Coors has added VHPA to their schedule on the dates and times listed on the VHPA reunion schedule. If any changes must be made to the schedule, they will be posted on the reunion page of vhpa.org so please continue to check the website for the most up to date information. At this time, May 18 & May 19 are sold out at the hotel due to another group in house before us, our contract does state "based on availability on the 3 days pre and post reunion." The hotel has added a few additional rooms to our block on May 20, please notify HQ if you cannot get a room at the VHPA rate on this date and we will be happy to see what we can do to help. Hope to see you there!

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.vhpa.org>.

Dues can be paid, and a directory can be ordered on line via the On Line Directory at <https://directory.vhpa.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. T-shirts with a photo of the monument on them are also available online at <https://gear.vhpa.org>.

PLEASE HELP US REDUCE THE COSTS OF REMAINING ITEMS! If you move, PLEASE go on line to <https://directory.vhpa.org> and log in with your member number, then set up a password. Then on the left side will be a box with red lettering that says, "Other Services". Under "Other Services" will be a box that says, "Update My Information". Click on this button and you can make

updates directly to your information. You can also call HQ with an update to your contact information.

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

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

Sherry Rodgers
VHPA Office Manager

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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 |
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KOREAN WAR VET SATISFIED CLIENT

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

FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Occasionally, there are some comments/ explanations which I feel it best to announce for clarification. Currently, these are, in no particular order of importance, as follows:

■ Our members continue to submit stories, and they continue to be interesting. Tom Hirschler and I thank you for the effort. This is crucial to the value of the Aviator as a publication provided for our members.

■ The USPS mis-allocated our mailing funds to the wrong account. It took many days for them to unravel the error, resulting in a delay in the receipt of your magazine.

■ VHPA headquarters has a policy regarding the payment of advertising invoices. Should an account be in arrears more than 60 days, we are unable to run a customer's ad in the subsequent issue(s). If you are unsure of the status of your account, please contact Sherry Rodgers at vhpa.org or 800-505-8472.

■ We would appreciate notification from the chapters when there is a new president elected and will take office before the next issue. If someone other than the chapter president handles the report for the Aviator, we need that POC and, of course, any change in the person with said role.

■ We are flexible in the format used for chapter reports. A MS Word document is ideal, yet we are fine with receiving the text in the body of an email. One area, how

ever, which needs to be addressed is the inclusion of photos. Please do not place them in the body of the document file. Simply attach them to the email and provide a caption for each photo at the end of your document/email. Naming your photos 1,2,3 etc. with a description is the simplest way to reconcile the captions with the photos.

■ At times we receive a story rendered in Adobe (PDF) format complete with embedded photos. This simply creates additional work in de-constructing the document and performing (OCR) optical character reading operations to create a Word document. Any story or notice submitted should follow the procedures noted above. The exception is any advertisement that is already rendered in PDF/JPEG format and requires no additional manipulation.

■ All submissions are requested by the following dates for the remainder of this year's issues as noted:

May/June – March 30

July/August – May 30

September/October – July 30

November/December – September 30

As has been our policy, any reasonable delay will be allowed with sufficient prior notice.

*Thank you in advance
for your co-operation.*

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

Patrick Leary, FVSO President and VHPA Life Member



FVSO was founded in 2005 by Veterans who served in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Since then, we have focused on 850 orphaned children who live in 7 Montagnard orphanages in the Kontum and Pleiku areas. Providing education, medicine, food, dental care, and shelter, 100% of all donations support these kids and their caregivers. Tax deductible contributions are greatly appreciated.

The annual Christmas party was a huge hit at Vinh Son.

For more information, please contact us at:

Mail: FVSO, P.O. Box 9322-C, Auburn, California 95604-9322

Web: FriendsofVSO.org **Email:** FriendsofVSO@gmail.com

The A Shau

by Daniel Jones

The A Shau Valley runs generally north and south and is approximately 22-miles long, sitting between two mountain ranges and only about six miles from the Laotian border. Ringed with inter-locking anti-aircraft batteries, it provided safe harbor for around 5000 to 6000 communist troops. Probably containing the largest concentration of enemy troops in South Vietnam, the valley served as a strategic launching point during the Tet Offensive for their deadly excursions into the northern provinces of South Vietnam. It was a natural target for American forces, specifically the 1st Cavalry Division in concert with the 101st Airborne Division as well as several units of South Vietnamese forces. My unit, Bravo Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, would be involved in the initial assault. As a newly arrived and fully qualified UH-1H co-pilot, I was also going to be involved in a way that can best be described as my very own 'baptism by fire' and transformational initiation as an active participant in the Vietnam war.

Unofficial details of the operation started filtering down through the usual informal channels of communication late on the 17th and all day on the 18th of April. We learned the assault was to take place on the morning of the 19th of April 1968. A company briefing was scheduled for the evening of the 18th, and we all gathered to learn what our roles would be in what was to be perhaps the largest and most ambitious combat assault of the Vietnam War since the Battle of Ia Drang. It would be still another practical application of the air-mobile concept of warfare that had evolved since the Korean conflict of the early fifties.

Company old-timers knew about the A Shau and even though assurances were given that the valley had been prepped over the past few days with saturation bombing by B-52s along with intense tactical air strikes by our Air Force brethren, doubt remained. Several outspoken pilots were not certain the enemy positions in the A Shau had been effectively neutralized and that helicopter crews should expect to be greeted by a well equipped, solidly entrenched, and well motivated enemy force. The skeptics among us, however, were not in a position to influence decisions made at the highest levels of command in South Vietnam. After the briefing, we wandered away to our tents and contemplated the day ahead as we all drifted off to a restless and for some sleepless night.

Early next morning, the duty clerk from Operations passed through our tents making sure those assigned to fly were up and preparing for the days mission. I seem to recall that it was a 04:30 hours wake-up, otherwise referred to as o-dark-thirty. I dressed along with my tent mates and mostly listened, hoping to glean some bit of useful information from the nervous bitching and commen-

tary by the experienced pilots. We would soon embark on a reluctant journey into the bowels of mortal combat against an enemy whose strengths were mostly unknown and unchallenged. But no one among us had ever experienced anything of this scale and magnitude. Even the old-timers were left to speculate on how it would all unfold over the next several hours and days to come. What follows is the way it unfolded for me and my crew.

I was assigned to fly with Bill Dimmer in aircraft 66-16709. The names of the crew chief and gunner have faded from my memory. It seemed to me that Bill was a little aggravated that he would have to deal with a new co-pilot while flying probably the most demanding mission of his tour in Vietnam. He told me to just pay attention and do as I was told. I was okay with that.

The flight of ten helicopters from B 229th departed Camp Sharon along with ten more from our sister unit, C 229th, for a total of twenty birds. We flew in separate gaggles of five ships to a staging area southwest of Camp Evans where we landed and shut down. It was still quite early, and the morning air was cool and humid with a thin overcast sky overhead. The weather over the A Shau was even worse and we learned there was a 'weather hold' for the assault until further notice which allowed the crews to engage in more speculation and griping about what lay ahead. Everyone was nervous and anxious to get on with it. The soldiers we were to carry passed time in their own way, smoking cigarettes and napping, mostly segregated from the helicopter crews. I feared for them and was happy that at the end of the day I would be sleeping in relative comfort on a cot in a secured tent while they remained hunkered down inside a foxhole in the A Shau Valley.

Word came to load up and prepare for a launch. A plan had been formulated that would get us out and over the area using directions from air traffic control. After that, we would be on our own as we descended into the valley to offload our troopers. We departed the staging area with aircraft loads (ACLs) of six per aircraft and climbed in a westward direction toward our destination. To get above the overcast it was necessary to climb to as high as 6000 feet where the air was cold, and with the doors of the helicopter open or in some cases removed. The troopers in the back and the crew chief and gunner shivered and pulled back from the rushing air outside and I felt sorry for their plight. Up front, Dimmer and I were somewhat protected and at least able to turn on some heat that warmed our legs and lower body a bit. I pulled out my camera and took some pictures of the flight, now in loose trail formation and nearing our descent point. The clouds were thicker now and formed a near overcast condition over the valley. There was no way we were going to descend in formation through the clouds below, and it became apparent we would have to descend one ship at a time into the overcast below.

Flight lead instructed our formation to take up one-minute separation in preparation for the descent. Each ship, in turn,

began to slow down and the flight was now spread out for a mile or more. Minutes later, lead slipped into a hole in the overcast and disappeared below. I still had my camera in hand, taking more pictures of the flight from my position in the right seat of the helicopter. There didn't seem to be much else to do since Dimmer appeared to be in perfect control of the situation for the moment.

Each aircraft had three communication radios on board: UHF, used mostly for ATC com; VHF, used primarily for air to air com between aircraft; and FM, which served as our link with the units and patrols on the ground. All were now in use with a cacophony of transmissions relevant to the current situation and the chaos generated by men and machines engaged in battle. We listened to those ahead of us in the descent as they broke through the undercast only to be greeted by volleys of anti-aircraft fire from an enemy now under airborne assault. AK-47s, .51 caliber machine guns and 23 millimeter anti-aircraft weapons were collectively being directed at each aircraft as they descended through the clouds and into view of the enemy gunners. Air-to-air frequencies were now filled with the tense and excited voices of pilots giving notice to those following that they were taking fire. When able, they also provided information about gun positions along the inbound route. Many aircraft were hit, while others were going down, some in control and some not.

Keeping track of the aircraft ahead of us became difficult as each maneuvered along the valley walls in an attempt to evade the enemy gunfire. It was difficult to guess where the fire was coming from. Still not fully appreciative of our own situation, I continued to take snapshots with my Kodak as Dimmer strained to follow the Huey ahead of us on approach to LZ Tiger, where we would off-load our seven troopers. I scanned the gauges while Dimmer flew, not wanting to see the tracers coming at us from below, still somewhat disconnected from it all but growing more fearful as we got lower. Finally, I began to sense our absolute vulnerability. Still, thus far, our flight of five remained relatively intact. This was about to change.

Ahead of us in the flight was aircraft serial number 66-16799, crewed by Harrington and Nessel along with gunner Matis and a crew chief whose name I don't recall. On short final into the LZ, their aircraft was hit in the tail boom by a rocket propelled grenade (RPG). Harrington, the aircraft commander, attempted to get airborne again but the tail boom separated from the helicopter as they gained altitude. A trooper standing on a skid was thrown off, falling to his death as the aircraft yawed violently in its vertical axis. Harrington, Nessel and Matis were also killed as they plunged to the hillside out of control. Someone heard Nessel make a final call with the words, "...well, this is it." Just prior to impact, the crew chief apparently jumped clear and lived. He was the only survivor.

Dimmer continued toward LZ Tiger where we managed to safely drop our load of troopers before climbing at maximum rate up and away from the chaos and danger below us. Scared and numb from the shock of combat, I remember very little about dropping our load of soldiers and the subsequent flight back to the staging area near Camp Evans. On arrival there, crews and commanders quickly assessed our losses, including several damaged ships that managed to make it back. Word rapidly spread about the shoot down and crash of Harrington and Nessel in 799 as well as others from the various units involved in the assault. For the moment, though, no one knew for sure how serious our losses were. We could only speculate and hope for the best. The fate of those onboard 799 had not yet been officially verified as crews prepared for the next lift. Because of the rough, high terrain around Tiger, loads were reduced to just five troopers for a total of nine souls aboard each Huey.

Angry and perplexed from our losses and fearful of the obvious strength and resolve of the enemy we were facing, we grudgingly prepared ourselves for the second wave of the assault. I took a few more pictures with my Kodak as our flight lifted off and turned toward the west. The weather had not improved and once again the flight climbed into the cold air at around 6000 feet. Dimmer let me take the controls while he smoked a cigarette in silence. I don't think he was happy to be flying with the new guy at a time like this and I couldn't blame him. Too soon it was time for our gaggle to take up the separation necessary for the single ship descent back into the A Shau. I don't recall our position in the formation but it must have been near the back of the pack as our line of Hueys lengthened to several miles long. Dimmer took back the controls when it was our turn for the descent through the clouds. I picked up my camera for a few more shots.

Once again radios came alive with still more terse transmissions by crews taking fire from enemy gun positions hidden along the slopes and valley floor as they broke through the clouds and made their way toward LZ Tiger. Dimmer guided our ship through the maze of fire around us at near maximum airspeed (not nearly fast enough for me) while zigging and zagging in a way to provide a more difficult target for the enemy gunners who sought to ruin our day. The crew chief and gunner cranked off intermittent bursts of machine gun fire into the jungle below in an effort to discourage them from firing in our direction. The shock wave from their firing M-60s pounded at my entire body and the cordite smell of expended gunpowder permeated the air swirling through our Huey helicopter.

Nearing the summit of the isolated hilltop where LZ Tiger was located, Dimmer searched for a suitable spot to bring the helicopter to a hover and offload our group of troopers. The terrain around Tiger was ragged with bomb craters and shattered trees with jagged stumps that posed a threat to tail rotors and fragile

underbellies housing fuel tanks. The sky was filled with tracer rounds and the radios remained alive with excited voices warning of enemy gun positions and hostile fire being taken from several locations along the valley floor and nearby slopes. I found myself not wanting to look anywhere but straight ahead, fearful of seeing any tracer fire that might be coming our way. The Kodak was now under my seat and I hunkered down in an effort to take advantage of the seat's armor-plated construction. The ship ahead of us had landed, offloaded and departed; now it was our turn in the sequence. Dimmer picked his spot which was sloped and filled with stumps but suitable for a hovering drop of our anxious passengers. He came to a high hover and began to descend the final few feet to an altitude that would allow them to jump safely to the ground from our hovering bird. My mind raced trying to process all that was going on around us as Dimmer struggled at the controls. Over the din of the radios, rotor blades and shrieking of the engine, I felt more than heard a thump from somewhere behind us. Then the engine quit.

My first thought as the Low RPM audio and warning lights came on was that if a crash was imminent it was good to be close to the ground so that we didn't have far to fall, thereby increasing our chances of survival. Then, as Dimmer continued fighting for control, the ship spun clockwise. For a moment during the Huey's final turn, I was looking down at the valley floor probably a thousand feet below us. "This is not good," I thought to myself, surmising we were all done for.

But there was just enough energy left in the rotor blades to give us one more half turn back toward the mountain side. Our helicopter crunched into the sloping hillside that had been our intended landing spot, slamming my body forward against the seat belt which worked as advertised but not well enough to keep my knees from making contact with the instrument panel. The dying Huey then rocked rearward onto the tail boom and tail rotor. At some point in the sequence, the main rotor blades contacted the ground, wrenching the transmission from its mounts. In seconds, the half-million-dollar machine thrashed to a grinding, gut wrenching stop. There was momentary silence, then someone yelled, "Get out! Get out now!"

We were all acutely aware of the Huey's propensity to burn once fuel tanks ruptured and I quickly unbuckled the seat belt and reached for the handle of my door but found it to be jammed. Turning back to my left, I then scrambled over the center console and into the now vacated cabin area on my hands and knees, looking up to make certain the rotor blades had stopped. Clearing the wreckage, I followed the others as they ran toward a nearby bomb crater, hunkering down there as we gathered ourselves. We looked back at the crashed Huey expecting it to burn or blow up, but it did neither. We looked around at one another, dazed and apprehensive about our new predicament.

The Huey hadn't caught fire so after several moments I decided to go back to the wreckage and retrieve both my Kodak and, more importantly, the .38 pistol that I had foolishly left hanging on the back of the armored seat. It seemed safe enough since there didn't appear to be anyone shooting at us for the moment. Also, there were plenty of friendly troops just up the ridge above us. Besides, the distance to the crashed helicopter wasn't more than fifty feet or so. Crouching low, I left the bomb crater, walking cautiously towards the Huey. I was almost there when the ground around me suddenly erupted, apparently from rounds fired by the same .51 caliber gun that had knocked out our engine. I scrambled back to the bomb crater and lay low, now very worried about being unarmed with bad guys in the nearby forest who wanted us all dead.

Word that we had crashed was soon relayed to others in our flight and one intrepid crew approached our position with a rescue attempt in mind. Much as we appreciated the effort and wanted to be rescued, we frantically waved them off knowing that the nearby .51 cal crew would relish the opportunity for another kill. For now, we were safe with our own troops nearby who were more than willing to see to our safety since helicopter pilots and crews were regarded with respect and affection by the troopers we served. One of the troopers handed me an M-16, telling me that its previous owner would no longer need it. It was then that we learned of two KIAs (killed in action) from the crash of our Huey. They had jumped to the ground as we spun out of control and been struck by the main rotor blade during the crash sequence. They should have stayed with the helo, but had it been me I might have done the same thing. It had worked for the lone survivor from Harrington's and Nessel's crashing UH-1.

Over the next several hours we simply 'hunkered down' in a secure area near friendly troops, ate C rations and watched the invasion unfold around us. From our vantage point atop LZ Tiger, we experienced the war from the perspective of the 1st Cavalry troopers we carried into battle, watching the assault of the A Shau in relative safety as our airborne brethren came and went.

Toward the end of the day, the crew and I were picked up by a company aircraft and flown back to Camp Sharon. As I sat on the floor of the Huey, doors open, the cold air swirled through the open cabin. During the ride back to Camp Sharon, I reflected on the day's events and it occurred to me that I had been in-country a mere two weeks and had already been shot down while participating in my first combat assault. The thought was sobering.

Back at Camp Sharon, we learned of the fates of our fellow pilots and crew members, Harrington, Nessel, Branaugh, Matis and Wilburn; all were KIA. The mood of the entire unit was somber and subdued. I was not to fly again for several days but others would be required to do it all over again the next day. I felt sympathy for them and was glad to be staying behind.

Operation Delaware continued through May 10 when the 1st Cav began to withdraw and was fully complete by May 17. I have seen several accounts of our losses that first day in the A Shau but my recollection is that the Division lost a total of 12 helicopters including nine UH-1 Hueys, two CH-47 Chinooks and one CH-54 Skycrane. Many others were damaged and rendered non-flyable. My unit, Co. B, 229th Aviation Battalion, left three destroyed Hueys there with the loss of three pilots and two enlisted crew-members. I was now three weeks in-country and had already been shot down. The sobering realization came over me that bad things might lay ahead. Until the A Shau, I felt confident of my ability to manage the risks associated with combat but now my confidence was shaken. It was a sobering moment.

A few weeks later the division commander, Major General Tolson and a small entourage arrived at Camp Sharon carrying impact medals for everyone taking part in the initial assault on April 19. For two sorties into the A Shau during which I mostly sat like a bump on a log in my armored seat, Kodak in hand, I and others from Bravo Company were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

LOOKING FOR

Looking For

I am trying to locate any pilot who flew with C/229th Cavalry out of Bien Hoa, SVN from April to September 1970. I was a clerk from the 15th Admin, and transferred to C/229th to be the Courier and carry classified Intel to the field Commanders. I would like to find out the tail number of the helicopter I might have flown in. I would also appreciate learning the names of the any pilots that I flew with. At times, I became part of the crew to help out when we brought supplies out to the filed.

Thanks.

Larry Agosta

la.ymail48@yahoo.com

Hello

If anyone was in the First of the Ninth Air Cav - any troop, but preferably A, in 1969, would you mind contacting me? My father recently passed and flew OH-6s with that unit out of Tay Ninh.

Thank you.

Kevin Price

kevinjpricemei@aol.com 703-296-5282

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Tough Little OH-6

By Frank Vanatta – Phantom

When discussing the pros and cons of various helicopters used in Vietnam, I have often said the OH-6 would be at the top of the list to be flying when receiving fire, or in the case of a crash. I have seen people get up, dust themselves off and walk away from a crash when the main part of the helicopter has rolled up in a ball.

This view would be justified one evening in 1968 on a last-light recon mission while a member of the HHC, First Brigade, First Cav – the Flying Circus – in the eastern Quang Tri area.

I was flying with Ox (Ed Holmes) on my wing. We were just about to cross a stretch of sandy terrain heading toward the coast when we spotted a lone person walking toward some bushes. That sixth sense that scouts developed urged me to examine those bushes. While I did so, I told Ox to keep that guy in sight. I found a half-dozen men in a hollow area. I told my gunner (I have never been able to track down who he was that day) to throw a smoke grenade into the hollow so we could flush them out. There were no weapons in sight, so we did not engage them right away. As he tossed the grenade, and I lowered the nose to accelerate away from the spot, one guy stood up just below us with what I assume was an AK-47 and let rip.

I knew the aircraft had been hit because it could be felt through the airframe and there were pieces of armor plating in my lap and on the floor. The little bird was quickly accelerating as I started a sharp right-hand turn. I had a very quick look at the gauges, but as we were operating close to the ground, I was primarily relying on that connection a pilot gets with the aircraft he is flying to feel how it is performing. All felt well, so I continued the turn.

Ox saw what happened and asked me if we were OK. I said we were. Some years later he says I told him what to do with the enemy personnel, including the guy he was watching who was now trying to run away from him. I won't quote what he related I said. I told him I don't recall saying that, but I

knew I was "displeased" about the fact someone had just filled my new Cayuse with holes.

I quickly completed the 360 turn and saw the men I'd discovered running like I had disturbed an anthill. I opened up with the mini-gun as I approached the spot while my gunner threw a hand grenade and then reached for his trusty M60. As I completed the pass and was getting ready to make another one, I slightly skidded the helicopter so I could see how successful the first pass was and plan the next one. It was then that I saw fuel coming out from under the machine which confirmed that area had also been hit. The bottom part of the tank is self-sealing, but it does take a bit of time for the process to work.

To make the story short, I will just say that Ox told me he had not had time to get into the fight because my gunner and I had already settled the "disagreement" we had with those who started it.

I told Ox to follow behind me as we headed back to base. I said if there was anything that looked like a fire, I was going to put the bird down right away. He said there was no longer any sign of a fuel leak, which was good news. We completed the trip back without further incident.

As my gunner and I looked over the helicopter after we landed, there were holes in everything. The guy was below us and just to the right, and there were even holes in the upper plexiglass windows. We both figured we must have been up in our helmets at the time of the original shooting that started things as there would have been no other place we could have been not to have been hit. The armor plating had done its work. Later inspections showed that even the center frame had been hit several times, and the helicopter had to be sent back to the factory to be rebuilt.

With all that damage, the tough little OH-6 protected us and kept purring along to get us safely back to base. I don't know where it went after it left Vietnam, but my gunner and I knew that it deserved a medal that day.

Remembrances of a "Donut Dolly"

By Joyce Denke

I had only been in country about two weeks when we were flown out to an LZ out of Danang, maybe hill 54? While we were programming, we got incoming. The guys rallied around us and got us into a bunker. On the way to the bunker, I fell and skinned my shin and got a pretty good scrape. I specifically remember how fast that pilot came in after us to get us off that hill. It was as if he were hovering somewhere just waiting for a call. That next Monday in our weekly staff meeting the girls gave me a little construction paper purple heart. I still have it.

The other thing I remember about the pilots and crew was that they would now and then do an autorotation on us! Scary! Then, there were the times when they buzzed the little Viet-

namese working in the fields below. Really close! I also remember how stunningly beautiful parts of Vietnam were from the air.

I can also remember that many times they would take off a little too soon from the LZs just so they could blow our dresses up! But mostly, I remember that I did and still do have a lot of respect for you guys. You were in danger most of the time, but never let us know it. I salute you for your bravery and dedication to serve your fellow soldiers and



to serve us! I would love to try to make the reunion next year.

Photo courtesy of Joyce Denke.

The term "Donut Dolly" was the common term used in describing a group of 627 amazing young women who represented the American Red Cross program of Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas (SRAO) during the Vietnam war. The nickname was used affectionately for these unusually dedicated volunteers. Several of their number were wounded and Hannah E. Crews, Lucinda J. Richter, and Virginia E. Kirsch lost their lives during their service. ~ Ed.

VHPA


EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

If you plan on running for Junior Member-at Large or Vice President, you must submit your name in writing (email is acceptable) to Mr. Frosty Price, the VHPA Election Chairman at least 30 days in advance of the Denver reunion.
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BY PARKER GOODWIN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Just to clarify, the picture on the cover of the (Nov/Dec) Aviator, Joe Bowen (Centaur 3) is the one standing outside the cargo bay wearing the Cav hat. Dennis Hogan (Centaur 28) is in the left seat. The crew chief, whose name I can't recall, is sitting in the right seat. The story refers to Joe as a CWO when in reality he was a Captain and the troop operations officer.

Dennis Hogan

To the Editor:

In reference Joseph O'Neill's "The Battle of Ap Bac." I led the gunships, three UH-1As and two UH-1Bs. His description of the battle is quite accurate with one exception. When CPT Jimmy Stone and CWO Dick Watlack attempted to rescue the crews of the two CH-21s they did not go in behind the downed 21s but off to the side, probably where the crews were located. They had just come to a hover when struck by enemy fire and the helicopter flipped onto its right side. Jimmy, flying right seat, was knocked unconscious and his head fell into water. Dick reached over and held his head out of the water to keep him from drowning, but then could not exit the helicopter himself. One of the downed H-21 pilots, CW2 Keith Borek, ran through the intensive fire to rescue the Huey crew. That and other similar actions during the firefight earned Borek the Distinguished Service Cross. The crewchief, Sgt. Bill Deal, had been killed in the shoot down."

That night, I wrote my after-action report, telling it like it was. We got our butts kicked. Jump forward to February 1964, Fort Eustis, VA. I was discussing Vietnam with the U.S. Army Transportation Corps historian, who said he had a copy of my after-action report. He produced it and upon reading, I was astonished at what it said. Our "butts getting kicked" had turned into a tie game, and my signature on the report was poorly forged.

Jump forward once more for a further episode, almost three years later, December 1965. I was Squadron Maintenance Officer for the 1/9 Cav, the recon squadron, of the 1st Cav Div. I went down to Saigon to pick up a replacement aircraft for a combat loss. The field maintenance outfit on Tan Son Nhut tossed me a log-book, and said the bird is over there at the end of the ramp. It looked old and dusty with cobwebs inside. The tail number looked familiar. It was 62-01882 that was shot down at Ap Bac. I cranked it up, flew back to the squadron and gave the bird to C troop. A couple of days later they called me and said that they could not get the M-6 system to operate. I went down, sat in the cockpit, and lo and behold, there was a scab patch on the former between the windshields. I told them to take off the former and, sure enough, the wire bundle had been cut by a round. I guess that when the aircraft was recovered from Ap Bac, it was repaired and only used as a lift ship.

Joe Steine LTC USA, Ret.

Sirs,

I am a retired Army MSG and former Huey Crew Chief. I own and I am preserving a UH-1D, 64-13892 as a Vietnam Aviation tribute to honor all of you who served and sacrificed so much for our freedom.

This is a personal project and never will be a commercial operation. She

is located near FT. Campbell KY at my home. I'm just her Crew Chief, she belongs to all of you, and any Vietnam Veteran is welcome to see her.

892 served with A/227 AHB in '66, crashed during Operation Thayer. I have had the honor of meeting one of her pilots who was flying her that day, during 10/66, CPT Cliff Richard who came by to visit us.

Thank You all for your service and Welcome Home!

John Lloyd 270-226-5745

John, I am sure I speak for my fellow members in thanking you for your work and your tribute to other crew members. In our minds, "Just a crewchief" does not fairly reflect the value of the service you rendered for us in both peace and war. I extend our sincere thanks to you for your career of service. ~Ed



During 1967 I was a member of B Co. 227th AHB. I was the Crew Chief of 66-16497. During one of our routine maintenance inspections, I had the idea the Huey should have a couple of bombs hanging underneath it. I walked over to the medical tent at LZ Dog and got the medical people to give me a couple of rolls of the white medical tape that was a couple of inches wide. This was overlapped and applied to the door of an Avionic repair conox box. One of the guys in our company was a pretty talented artist and he drew the outline of the bombs and they were cut out and applied to the belly of 66-16497. If you look closely at the picture you can see one of the bombs on the belly. That was me on the left communicating to the pilot we were about as close as we can get. I was fortunate to fly with professional pilots and crew during my tour who got me home safely and thought that I had a great job compared to the brave infantrymen you see jumping out of the aircraft. According to VHPA records 66-16497 was later lost to combat damage after I had DEROS. Thanks to everyone who served.

Thank you.

SP5 Tom Pleuss B CO 227/1 CAV

December 7, 2019

Dear VHPA Members,

I am the sister of 1LT Gary Frasher, KIA May 8, 1970. As this year ends, it is time to give thanks to those who have been a blessing. At the 2019 VHPA reunion in Kansas City, there were many of you who touched my life. Every kind person who welcomed the Gold Star family members, like me, those who donated to the breakfasts, and especially, those of you who

attend and support us as we celebrate those we lost.

Your willingness to open the doors of your reunion to your brother's families has been a gift beyond measure. This year I was able to meet some of the kind men who have helped on the journey to finding my brother. I have met flight school and OCS classmates, and men of the 25th AVN. Thanks to you, I was able to meet the only survivor of the crash and one of the last people who saw my brother alive, Richard Asher.

I was only seven when Gary died. Years passed before I realized he was never coming home. Our family could not talk of him, so I never knew the man he was or the man he could have been. Until now.

I see him in the heart of every pilot I meet. Everything that I am learning will forever be a part of Gary's legacy.

I was especially honored at this year's reunion when I saw an old friend I met in May of 1970. He had the difficult task of escorting his friend back to the little town of Worthington, IA. Chuck Gant and his wife, Vicki, are as kind and caring now as they were to that confused little girl so long ago. So, you see, I am indebted to all of you for being so gracious in sharing your reunion with the Gold Star families. May the Lord bless you with good health, happiness and a life full of wonderful memories. Know that your brothers that went before you wish that for you also.

*Gary's lil sis,
Joan Drees*

Letter to the Editor, VHPA Members and Customers:

This letter is written to The Aviator to answer some of your questions and concerns about the online store supplying Vietnam Pilot clothing operated by Mike Sheuerman at Hunter Sportswear Inc. Most importantly, we were asked to provide this service to our members. The store is a "for profit" operation.

A portion of the profits, however, is donated to VHPA to be used as the Executive Council sees fit. It is our hope that it be given to the VHPA Scholarship Fund but we understand other needs exist in the Association and the EC will determine the most important need.

We are coordinating with EC to change the URL to avoid confusion with official VHPA functions.

Our ad on the back page discusses some of the details and lead times for ordering. Please refer to same. We have attempted to introduce the change in our online address to coincide with the arrival of the latest Aviator to our members.

Editor's Note: Two members have commented on the photo caption included with the GA Chapter Report referring to the aircraft crash on the USS Hancock. It was not an F-18, which deployed many years later or a Skyhawk (A-4). Rather, it was an F-7U3 Corsair. Our airframe recognition dept. has been encouraged to be more precise.

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Colonel Matt Jackson has catalogued the process of reporting to the Induction Center to earning his Army Aviator wings in a way which reveals the long road (in effort – not time) many will find both entertaining and informative. For those unaware of the journey from young man to combat seasoned veteran it is a fascinating tale.

For those who have made the journey it is a poignant reprise of a time long ago and a proud achievement.



***His brothers in arms
will find it accurate
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PLANNING FOR THE END



Since the incorporation of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) as a non-profit organization in 1989, our organization has fulfilled the established goals: esprit de corps, brotherhood, legacy. We perpetuated the memory of our shared combat service in the skies of Southeast Asia; we created an outstanding scholarship program; constructed a thorough database; generated amazing reunions; produced a worthy publication, the Aviator Magazine; spawned local chapters; established a lasting monument in Arlington National Cemetery; and built ties to Gold Star Families.

We are in the fourth decade of our "last man standing" association, and rightfully proud. But how do we ensure the health and continuation of our organization until the last member redeploys to Fiddler's Green? How do we ensure our organization will survive that long? What modifications to current structure or processes will allow the organization to function in some form until the last man falls? Because we are aviators trained to plan for emergencies and contingencies, it is important we look to the future of our organization and best to prepare for the final decades of the VHPA.

Veterans organizations formed after World War II provide contrasting examples of "last man standing" organizations that failed before the last man succumbed, that functioned to the last member, or continued beyond the deaths of the actual veterans, leaving a living legacy that today inspires generations. Although many organizations were evaluated, the following three will be examined in this article: The U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II, The Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Association, and The Tuskegee Airmen.

The U.S. Submarine Veterans incorporated in 1956 and successfully operated until 2010. A "last man standing" organization, membership was restricted to actual veterans of all ranks and submarine specialties, and some 12,000 members were on the roster at the association's peak. No other form of membership was ever offered. The organization gave many scholarships to member's children and built several meaningful memorials. Eventually the national organization could not find members able to serve as officers or complete the administrative tasks. In their last roster, published in 2002, the pages listing the deceased members outnumbered those listing active members.

Walter "Gus" Kraus, the last national president, said the veterans who wanted to keep the national group going "until the last man is gone" prevailed in a 2007

vote. In 2008, the vote was split. In 2010, many stalwarts had died, or their friends had (at that time, of the 1,100 members, the youngest was 86, the oldest was 102). The U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II did not provide any form of auxiliary/associate/friends' memberships to maintain the structure, and the group disbanded in 2010.

The Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Association organized at the end of World War II. Membership was strictly limited to the surviving crewmembers who attacked Japan on April 18, 1942 with sixteen B-25 bombers. This was a small organization of less than 55 members. The celebrity status of the Doolittle Raiders continued throughout the life of the organization, with family and friends providing support to the aging members. The final reunion was officially held in 2013, but only one member attended what was generally a media event. The last surviving crewmember, Richard Cole, died April 9, 2019 at the age of 103.

In the latter years of the Raiders Association, a handful of individuals—relatives and close friends—were designated as "honorary members" to assist with reunion planning, publication and records keeping. This number eventually exceeded 10 percent of the total membership. (note: The Children of the Doolittle Raiders, a group of admirers and family members, was founded on April 18, 2006. Their mission is to honor, promote and preserve the history of the Doolittle Raid and the Raiders themselves.)

Perhaps the most dynamic World War II veterans organization still functioning today is the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. This organization was originally composed of African-American veterans who maintained and operated both fighters and bombers during the war, with membership open to all ranks and specialties. The organization never designated itself as a "last man standing" entity.

The last surviving member of the original Tuskegee Airmen, Willy Rogers, died at the age of 101 on 18 November 2016. The organization, however, still thrives due to open membership and chapters committed to honoring the service and integrity of the combat servicemen. The organization provides inspiration to children and young adults, supports aviation education, and sponsors scholarships for worthy candidates.

Conclusion. It is only a matter of time. By intent, our

organization wishes to be a “last man standing” association, that when the last Vietnam War helicopter pilot-passes away, the organization will dissolve. But the course to the “last man” destination must be plotted in advance, long before our ranks thin to a handful. We need to use our current strength to plan the future and final days of the VHPA, and we need to start planning it now.

The three examples detailed above describe outcomes based on what the organization’s members chose to do while still young enough to accomplish the needed structuring. Those that stuck to “veteran only” membership models did not survive until the last man; those with a “last man standing” model that incorporated limited/associate/honorary members to assist with the aging veteran members lasted to the end; those that viewed their wartime legacy as important—inspirational, perhaps, to later generations—survived until the last member passed, and their organization remains significant and relevant today.

The future of the VHPA will be decided by the actions of the present. Unchanged, the VHPA will likely disband within 10 years; modified, the organization can remain vibrant until the last man is gone. A considered decision must be made, and soon.

*By Bob Hesselbein,
Chairman Legacy Committee*




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chickenman@a227ahb.org

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

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Where: Radisson Hotel, Branson MO

When: April 22- 25, 2020

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Contact: Bill McCalister, Silver Spur 24

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If we have missed any resident units, please let us know so that we get the word out to join us. We have three time-blocks allocated for our gatherings. We will announce the room number when assigned and post prominently in the HQ and VHPA admin areas.

Where: Annual VHPA Reunion, Denver CO

When: May 20-24

Contact: Ed Zielinski, doctorez67@gmail.com,
(361)463-8667;

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B Troop 7/17th Air Cav

When: June 8-12, 2020

Where: Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, MO

Website: westoodalone.com

Contact: Buddy Harp: 573-470-0395

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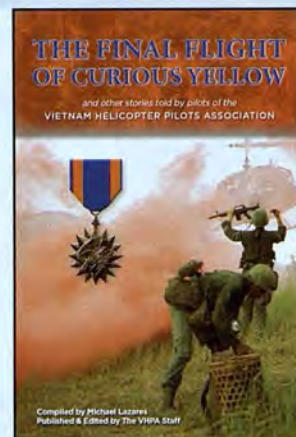
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Call NLT September 18, refer to 178th/132nd ASHC Reunion

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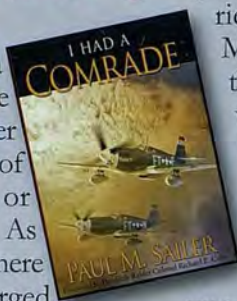
Marc Liebman, a VHPA Life Member, is a retired Navy Captain and Naval Aviator who flew combat search and rescue missions during the Vietnam War. He is also the author of five published novels with more coming.

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I HAD A COMRADE, by Paul Sailer, Loden Books LLC, Wadena, Minnesota 56482, ISBN: 978-0-9852705-1-3, 388 pages, \$34.99 @ www.lodenbooks.com.

This book is proof that we live in a small interconnected world, even before the advent of the Internet. What Paul Sailer did in *I Had a Comrade* is tell the stories of ten people whose lives were changed, or unfortunately ended during World War II. As their families soldiered on after the war, there are links between all of them, some forged before, some during, and some after the war.

One of the more interesting stories was that of Wah Kau Kong, the first Chinese-American fighter pilot in the European Theater. Unfortunately, he was killed in action, but his story is a touching one of patriotism, desire and persistence. In one way or another, all the stories tie back to a small community in Minnesota and Don Beerbower, an ace with 18.5 kills who died in



1944. Not all the tales are about Americans because Paul tells the story of Maria Doess Kochler who grows up in a small village in Bavaria during the war and marries an American. Barely able to speak English, Maria comes to rural New York Mills, MN against the wishes of her family. When her father Felix, a veteran of both World War I and II, came to visit his new grandchildren, he was asked to sing a German song at a community gathering. He chose *I Had a Comrade*, a song first written in 1805 and put to music in 1825. It was sung by the German army in World War I and the Wehrmacht in World War II. The point is that we – everyone one of us who have served in the military, peace or war time – have lost a comrade. This non-fiction work is about remembering and honoring those who went before us – some of whom survived and some who paid the ultimate price. Like his first book, *The Oranges are Sweet*, *I Had a Comrade* is meticulously well researched and fascinating reading.

All I wanted was a buffalo steak and a cold beer!

On Tuesday, January 30, 1968, I was spending the night the great TET offensive kicked off in a hotel room in Vung Tau. Part of two crews who turned in two Hueys the previous evening at Hotel 4 over at Ton Son Nhut, we had picked up a new bird. Due to the late hour, we all agreed we did not want to fly back in the dark, so a hotel room, water buffalo steak, and a cold beer sounded pretty good. The M60s had been stripped off the two old birds and had been left back home. No one wanted to hold our personal weapons overnight, so we had them and a small amount of ammunition.

About 0200, we were awakened by several explosions just outside the entrance to the hotel, and the sky all over Saigon across the river was lit up by tracers and explosions. Not knowing exactly what was going on, we barricaded the door and waited for daylight.

Daylight reduced much of the tracers, but the noise was still deafening. We made our way to the bird and headed north to Duc Pho, home of the 174th AHC, call-signs Dolphins and Sharks. Every camp where we tried to land and get fuel waved us off saying they were under attack. We finally got so far into the “highly” reliable 20-minute fuel light that it was either get fuel or put down on the beach.

The last place we could get fuel was probably LZ English and after we did the ol’ NASCAR splash and dash, we finally got back to home base. That was when we found out the entire country was under simultaneous attack, from the DMZ to the Delta. That new bird was 66-16867, and while the January 30th flight was rather exciting, this bird got me, and another crew, through an even more harrowing mission, one that started off as a routine C&C just two weeks later, but that is another story. So, where were you when TET of ’68 kicked off?

**Jim Cooney
Class 67-7**

innkeeper@hot.rr.com



MARTIN COUNTY VETERAN'S MEMORIAL SITE 507 WINNEBAGO AVENUE, FAIRMONT, MN RECEIVES INTERNATIONALLY FAMOUS BELL COBRA ATTACK HELICOPTER 327

Martin County's Veterans Memorial Site will permanently display an actual Bell Cobra-Rotary Wing Attack Helicopter, AH-1-66-F-15327. U.S. Army records show this very helicopter is internationally famous for serving the US Army in both Vietnam and Laos from 1968 to 1971. Even though five states were vying for the acquisition of this Cobra, due to the hard work of Minnesota State and Local Veterans and Volunteers the Cobra was awarded to Martin County.

Many Veterans remember how the Cobras saved their lives when they were outnumbered by the enemy. Our local Veterans have lived the story. In Vietnam on various dates, Cobra-327 was hit by enemy fire at least twelve times. Bell's armor plating saved the flight crew from mortal inflictions. Missions included: Armed Escort, Recon Missions & Battle Support.

In 1971, Cobra 327 saw service in Laos at the Battle of Lam Son 719, one of the deadliest battles of the war <https://www.businessinsider.com/uncovering-the-story-of-one-of-the-vietnam-wars-bloodiest-battles-2015-1>. Flying this helicopter were Members of the US Army, 7th Squad, 17th Cavalry, C Troop. Cobra 327 was mortally shot, and it was a ride the pilot will never forget. Yes, the pilot made it back alive to this day. The Gunner unfortunately died from Agent Orange at age 37.

When the US Army received new helicopters; the Cobra 327 was retired to public service for the Kern County Fire Department in California to fight night fires because it could see through the smoke with its military infrared scanners and locate people. The Cobra has the nickname THE SNAKE, because of its maneuverability. Burn marks are still visible from the fires where it landed, which shows how close to the fires the Cobra could maneuver.

Martin County's Veteran Memorial Committee is currently restoring this Cobra in Fairmont MN., returning it to the likeness of 1971. This detailed restoration work has been in progress since the fall of 2019. We invite you to visit the restoration process, in all the various stages by contacting any MCVM Committee Members.

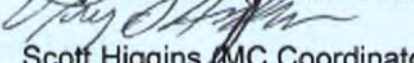
The Dedication Ceremony is set for August 1, 2020 featuring a parade, many VIP's, Military Personnel (both active and retired), and family members of those serving on this very helicopter.

For more information please visit www.MCVM.org or contact any of the following members of the committee.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Steve Chase (Dedication Chairman) Cell: 612-799-3367 Email: sdchase234@q.com

 Terry Anderson (MCVM Chairman) Cell: 507-236-4653 Email: terry@tdanderson.net

 Scott Higgins (MC Coordinator) Cell: 507-236-1497 Email: scott.higgins@co.martin.mn.us

Army Aviation Association of America 2020 Army Aviation Hall of Fame Inductee Lt. Col. Ace Cozzalio

In April, one of our own, Lt. Col. Ace Cozzalio (deceased), will be inducted into the Army Aviation Hall of Fame. This prestigious honor will be bestowed on Lt. Col. Cozzalio at the 2020 AAAA Summit held in Nashville, TN on April 23, 2020. Rex Cozzalio, Ace's brother, will accept the award on his behalf. Additional members of his family, including children and grandchildren, will be attending. And, to honor their fellow cavalry trooper, ten VHPA members who served with Lighthorse Air Cavalry (D Troop, 3rd of the 5th Cavalry) will be in attendance wearing their silver belly color (white) cavalry hats, a tradition started by Cozzalio while serving with D Troop in Vietnam.

Currently, there are 172 members in the Army Aviation hall of Fame and only three new members are inducted each year, plus any Medal of Honor Recipients related to Army Aviation. These exceptional individuals, including

enlisted people, warrant officers, commissioned officers, rated aviators, non-aviators, astronauts, scientists, engineers, logisticians and industrialists have one thing in common: they have made an outstanding contribution over an extended period or accomplished a truly exceptional achievement in Army Aviation. The Hall of Fame, located in the U.S. Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker, Alabama, will display Lt. Col. Cozzalio's portrait, along with a brief descriptive narrative of his accomplishments.



The incredible story of Lt. Col. Ace Cozzalio's life is told in the book titled ACE: The Story of Lt. Col. Ace Cozzalio written by VHPA member Rex Gooch.

For more information about AAAA, the Army Aviation Hall of Fame, or the 2020 AAAA Army Aviation Summit, please go to the AAAA website: www.quad-a.org.

MOC RETURNS TO DENVER FOR A GREAT REUNION



THE MOC



THE PARTY!



THE WORKERS

The first reunion for the VHPA-CCN Mobile Officers Club (MOC) was in JUL 2001 in Denver, so it's especially fitting that we reunite in Denver in 2020 for what may be the last reunion for the MOC. The next three reunions are planned beyond our range, even with ferry tanks.

We have missed some reunions and the MOC suffered some water damage, but we have been renovating it for Denver, so be sure to stop by and enjoy the reunion with us. We'll be parked on the street next to the hotel.

**The MOC will arrive in time for opening on 20 MAY
and will cease ops at the close of the reunion on 24 MAY.**

GENERAL REUNION INFORMATION

Last updated March 1, 2020

Due to the implementation of the new VHPA database,

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 ensuring that you receive the VHPA Group Rate of **\$125 plus tax per night** 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, 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 SHERATON'S CENTRAL RESERVATIONS NUMBERS. You MUST speak to a Passkey Agent.*

Also, the hotel is completely sold out on May 20 so Don has just signed an agreement with the Marriott Courtyard for rooms on May 20 & May 21.

OVERFLOW HOTEL INFO:

Courtyard by Marriott: 934 16th St. Denver, CO 80202
Call Courtyard Direct 303-571-1114

www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1581721205317&key=GRP

(but remember this is Marriott, not PASSKEY.)
Room rate \$189 plus tax - Rooms for May 20 & May 21 only

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. A return trip is the same but from Union Station to Airport Transit Center.

★ **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 a charge. Then add the cab number and company name to the receipt.

Parking: VHPA has negotiated a 50% discounted price of \$20 on self-parking. The adjustment will be made on your final hotel statement.

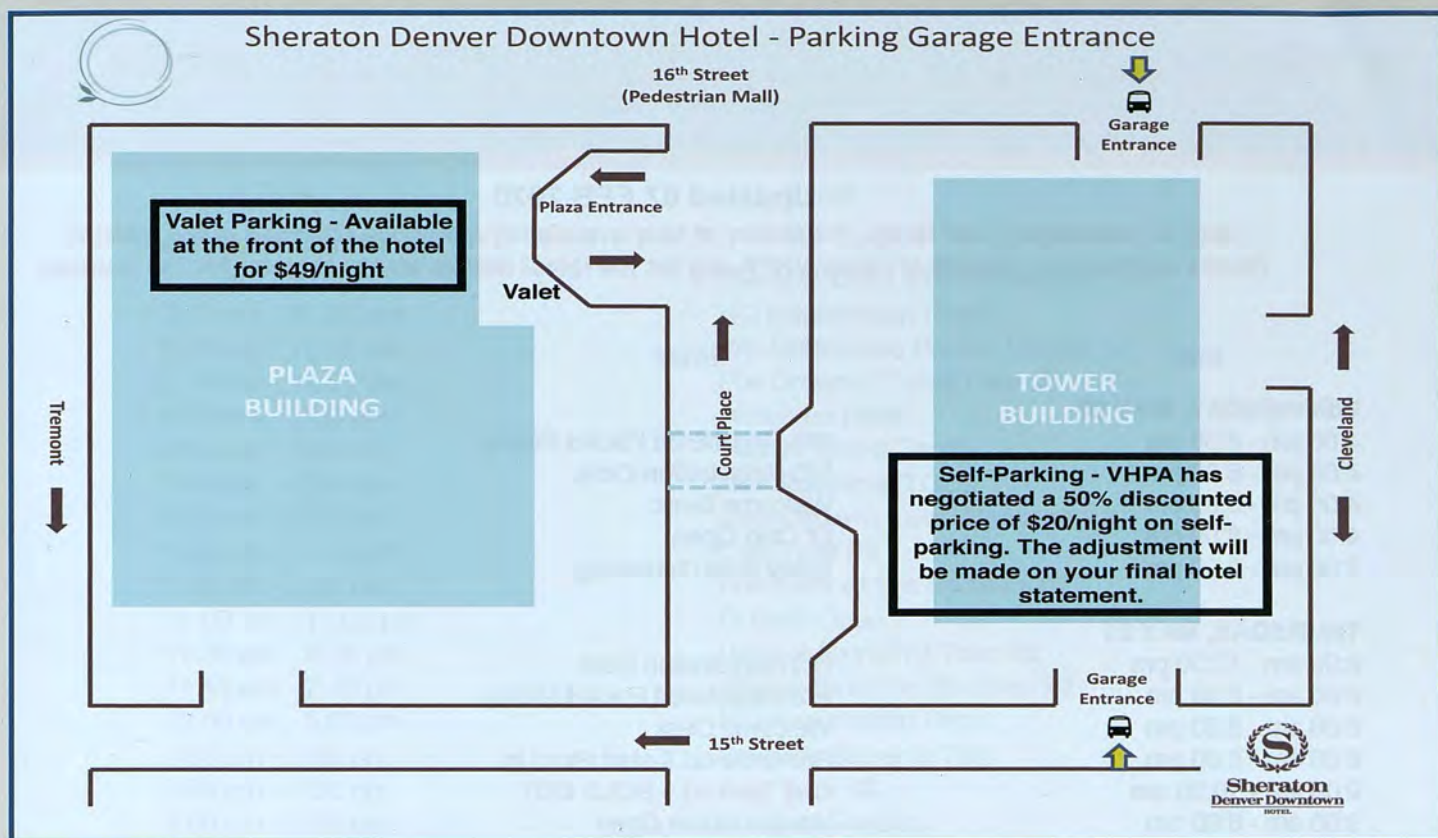
REUNION NOTES

At this time Coors has added VHPA to their schedule on the dates and times listed on the VHPA reunion schedule. If any changes must be made to the schedule, they will be posted on the reunion page of vhpa.org so please continue to check the website for the most up to date information.

At this time May 18 & May 19 is sold out at the hotel due to another group in house before us, our contract does state "based on availability on the 3 days pre and post reunion."

The hotel has added a few additional rooms to our block on May 20, please notify HQ if you can not get a room at the VHPA rate on this date and we will be happy see what we can do to help.

Hope to see you there!



Quilter's Show and Tell

It is a few months before the May Reunion in Denver. At this year's reunion the quilts shall be presented to 10 randomly selected well deserving veterans.

The quilts shall be on display in the vendor's room May 21st and 22nd and in the Quilter's room in the morning May 23rd with the presentations at 2:00 PM. All are welcome to stop by the Quilters Table or the Quilter's Show and Tell room. Would love to meet and speak with you and answer any questions you may have.

There is still time to complete blocks for our Veterans for the 2021 Reunion. There are a few requirements for the blocks.

1. Fabric is to be red, white (or) cream and blue.
2. Prewash all fabric and pre-treat fabric to prevent bleeding.
3. The quilt block(s) is of your own choice. (Ohio Star, Log Cabin, etc.)
4. Blocks are to be 12 and one half inches square, unfinished.
5. Sew with one quarter inch seams.
6. All blocks, quilt tops and/or quilts shall be accepted.

Quilters bring your blocks and use them as your show and tell, or if you are working on or have completed a project,



Flag quilt with winner's ribbon.

would love for you to share with the other quilters.

Any questions contact me.

Kathleen Sherfey

klskms@aol.com

(type VHPA Quilters in the Subject Line)

913-631-6811

OFFICIAL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

See our Website at: www.VHPA.org for the latest details and to register for the Reunion

Due to publication lead times, the status of tour availability may have changed in the interim.
Please consult our website at: www.VHPA.org for the latest details and to register for the reunion.

Updated 07 FEB 2020

Due to publication lead times, the status of tour availability may have changed in the interim
Please consult our website at: www.VHPA.org for the latest details and to register for the reunion.

Time	Event
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20	
4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Pre-Registered Packet Pickup
4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Welcome Desk
4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	O' Club Open
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Early Bird Gathering
THURSDAY, MAY 21	
8:00 am - 12:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Pre-Registered Packet Pickup
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Welcome Desk
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Pre-Ordered T-shirt Pick Up
9:00 am - 10:30 am	City Tour #1 - SOLD OUT
9:00 am - 8:00 pm	Vendor Room Open
9:00 am - 10:00 pm	Mini-Reunions/TOCs
10:10 am - 12:15 pm	Molly Brown Museum #1 - SOLD OUT
11:00 am - 11:00 pm	O' Club Open
11:10 am - 3:00 pm	Adam's Mystery Playhouse Lunch - Non Refundable
12:00pm - 5:00 pm	Foothills of the Rockies #1 - SOLD OUT
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	City Tour #2 - SOLD OUT
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
1:25 pm - 3:45 pm	Forney Museum of Transportation #1
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Symposium of Speakers
3:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Denver Brewery Tour #1 - SOLD OUT
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Welcome Reception w/College of the Ozarks Chapel Choir
FRIDAY, MAY 22	
7:15 am - 4:00 pm	Golf
7:30 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast w/speaker Thanh Boyer
8:00 am - 11:30 am	HQ Registration Desk
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Pre-Registered Packet Pickup
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Welcome Desk
8:00 am - 8:00 pm	Pre-Ordered T-shirt Pick Up
9:00 am - 8:00 pm	Vendor Room Open
9:00 am - 10:00 pm	Mini Reunions / TOCs
9:05 am - 2:00 pm	Georgetown Loop Railroad #1 - SOLD OUT
9:20 am - 12:15 pm	Cours Tour #1 - SOLD OUT
9:30 am - 11:00 am	City Tour #3 - SOLD OUT
10:55 am - 1:45 pm	Coors Tour #2
11:00 am - 11:00 pm	O' Club Open
12:30 pm - 5:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm	City Tour #4
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Wings Over the Rockies #1 - SOLD OUT
2:30 pm - 4:30 pm	Molly Brown Museum #2 - SOLD OUT
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Banquet Seating
5:40 pm - 9:45 pm	Adam's Mystery Playhouse Dinner - SOLD OUT
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk

Time	Event
SATURDAY, MAY 23	
7:30 am - 9:00 am	KIA/MIA Gold Star Breakfast
8:00 am - 11:00 am	HQ Registration Desk
8:00 am - 12:00 pm	Pre-Registered Packet Pickup
8:00 am - 12:00 pm	Pre-Ordered T-shirt Pick Up
8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Welcome Desk
9:00 am - 5:00 pm	Vendor Room Open
9:00 am - 10:00 pm	Mini-Reunions/TOCs
9:05 am - 2:00 pm	Georgetown Loop Railroad #2
9:30 am - 11:00 am	City Tour #5
9:30 am - 2:30 pm	Foothills of the Rockies #2
11:00 am - 11:00 pm	O' Club Open
11:30 am - 2:30 pm	Denver Brewery Tour #2
11:45 am - 2:45 pm	Wings Over the Rockies #2
12:00 pm - 5:00 pm	HQ Registration Desk
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Quilters Show & Tell
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm	City Tour #6
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Banquet Seating
3:10 pm - 5:30 pm	Forney Museum of Transportation #2
6:00 pm - 11:00 pm	Rockies Baseball Game
SUNDAY, MAY 24	
7:30 am - 8:45 am	Pre-Memorial Breakfast
8:00 am - 11:00 am	Consolidated HQ Reg, Pre-Reg & T-Shirts
8:00 am - 1:00 pm	Welcome Desk
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Memorial Service
10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Spouse Event
10:00 am - 12:30 pm	Annual Business Meeting
12:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Consolidated Reg, Pre-Reg & T-Shirts
12:30 pm - 10:00 pm	Vendor Room Open
12:30 pm - 11:00 pm	O' Club Open
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Mini-Reunions / TOCs
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Banquet Seating
5:45 pm - 10:30 pm	Closing Banquet w/Entertainment - TBD

TWO ADDITIONAL TOURS HAVE BEEN ADDED FOR R2020:

Foothills of the Rockies #3:
22 May - 9:00am - 2:00pm - \$56
Note: Dressing warm and a jacket recommended!
Capacity: This event is limited to 54 participants.

Banjo Billy's History City Tour #7:
24 May - 1:00pm - 2:30pm - \$25
Capacity: This event is limited to 25 participants.

If you have already registered for the reunion and are interested in one of these tours, you will need to call HQ to be added to the event.

Please call HQ to be placed on a wait list if there are any tours that you are interested in that are sold out. If a cancellation is received we will call members on the wait list as soon as possible in the order that they were received.



OVER RUN!

Disclaimer:

I'm writing this 52 years after it happened. I remember it vividly, but if I remember it incorrectly or misspell someone's name, I apologize.

by John W. Lowe Jr.

North Alabama Chapter,
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

My initial orders out of flight school to the 120th Aviation Company (Deans) got me as far as the 90th Replacement Detachment in Long Binh on 9 February 1967 where I was reassigned to the 25th Infantry Division. After a short Huey ride a couple of days later, I arrived at the division airfield with another aviator and a couple of infantry officers. We were greeted at the airfield by the division G-1 who welcomed us and introduced himself by saying, "I'm the 1."

"Wow", I thought. "He's the one!" As a W-1 with 30 days in grade and 14 months in the Army I had no idea what that meant.

I was assigned to the 1st Brigade Aviation Section to fly the four OH-23Gs assigned to the brigade HQ. Since I flew TH-55s at Ft. Wolters, my first task after in-processing was a one-week OH-23 transition with an IP from the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment (3/4 Cav) at the division airfield after which I doubted I had enough left arm to fly that thing all day. I later figured out that if you flew it right, you didn't need a lot of left arm.

Next, my new boss, an infantry/aviator who was the Brigade Aviation Officer, flew me around to familiarize me with the local flying area, including a couple of confined area landings at some infantry field locations. After flying with some excellent IPs for over nine months, I was impressed with the major's flying skills, but not favorably. At one company location about six clicks (km) north of the division base camp, he said I would be spending some time there. When we returned, he told me, since I was new in the Army and new in country, he was sending me to live in the field with A Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry "Manchus" for a week. He said I would be sleeping on the ground just like the troops and could only take what I could carry on my back. I was to stay close to the Company Commander and not participate in any patrols. The company (actually two platoons) was providing security for a platoon from the 65th Engineer Battalion who were using a couple of dozers and an M48 tank with a blade on the front to clear brush to prevent close ambushes from the sides of the road (trail) leading north from the division base to the village of Phu Hoa Dong.

OK, fine. I'm up for this. I'm a 22-year-old W-1 with a well-earned reputation for being a little wild and crazy. I was a Boy Scout. I lived in the field in Basic Training at Ft. Polk and at Tac 1 at Ft. Rucker. Not my favorite thing, but no big deal. Send me in, Coach.

Oh, but wait. I hadn't been issued a weapon yet – not even a .45 pistol. I had to wait for the guy I was replacing to leave so I could get his – so I had to borrow an M-14 from one of our crew chiefs. The rear echelon troops had not yet been issued M-16s. OK, fine. It's long and heavy but we had M-14s in Boot Camp and I could disassemble and reassemble one blind-folded so I figured I could still do it with my eyes open if I had to. I loaded two standard 20-round magazines and dropped them in the pocket of my brand-new jungle fatigues and jumped in one of our Hillers for the five-minute ride out to Manchu Alpha. It was Monday morning, 20 February 1967.

The first thing I noticed was that some of the troops had air mattresses and stuff they obviously didn't carry out there on their backs. OK, fine. It's the dry season and I have a poncho to keep the dew off. I'll scrape a little hollow place in the ground. It's only for a week. The Company Commander was Captain Ted Yamashita and the First Sergeant was Maximo Yabes. 1LT Jessie Pierce was the only platoon leader in the field. The other two were back in garrison with illness or injury. We numbered about 85 troops including the engineers.

The battalion S-4 sent out hot chow each evening in mer-mite cans. I immediately noticed that CPT Yamashita, LT Pierce, and First Sergeant Yabes didn't eat until all the troops were fed. As a straphanger, I fell in behind them. One day we drove into the village of Phu Hoa Dong in the C.O.'s jeep to meet the Village Chief. I had been told that you couldn't tell the good guys from the V.C. so my pucker meter was off the scale. It was weird. Little kids running around playing in the street (dirt road) in the middle of a combat zone. Where's the war? (The war was coming.) The week went along routinely...for a while.

It was full daylight. I don't remember if it was morning or afternoon. There was a lot of excited radio traffic in the company Command Post (CP), which was a 10 X 15 ft hole in the

ground with timbers and sandbags on top. CPT Yamashita was under control but obviously very concerned about something. I could hear rifle fire and an explosion in the distance. Sometime later, Jesse Pierce rolled up in the company compound driving the engineers' M48 with the blade on the front. Jesse was an OCS graduate who had been an enlisted tanker. There was a ragged hole in the tank about 1.5 inches in diameter – entrance hole for an RPG hit. I don't remember a Dustoff being called. Jesse wouldn't let me climb up on the tank to look inside.

The engineers' security detail had been in a fire fight. The Brigade Commander ordered one of our pilots, Jim Moore, to land him in the middle of the fight. The brigade C.O. was a gentleman, a good leader, and a good man, but he had no damn business inserting himself in the middle of a platoon fire fight. Jim went in and out of there a couple more times hauling in ammo and hauling out ambulatory wounded. On one landing, he had his chin bubble blown out by a VC rifle grenade. The colonel was awarded a Silver Star for running around making life complicated for Jesse Pierce. Jim got an Air Medal with V device.

Damn!! This is suddenly really serious!!

We had ARVN troops imbedded with us. I was nervous about those guys but wrote it off to newbie jitters. Patrols were sent out every night, usually with ARVN troops embedded. A couple of days later, a night patrol was established in an ambush position when they heard this huge rustling noise coming through the jungle. As they watched with their hearts in their throats, a VC battalion – about 300 strong – augmented with some NVA and Chinese advisors walked past them. As the battalion was passing by, one of the ARVN troops sneezed. The whole battalion stopped. One of the Manchus very quietly did whatever was necessary to make sure that ARVN didn't sneeze again. Seconds ticked by like hours. Finally, the battalion continued on. That wasn't the last we would see of them.

In spite of all this, Manchu Alpha's location was considered relatively secure, being so close to the division base and with a relatively routine security mission. The new Brigade Asst. S-2, CPT (Promotable) "Monk" Coats came out and spent a couple of days as part of his in-country orientation. In spite of the difference in our ranks, Monk and I became good friends very quickly. A little over three months later on 1 June, Monk, and one of our pilots, my buddy Jim Simpson, were killed when one of our OH-23s crashed and burned after a piece of the rotor system broke off in flight.

My week with Manchu Alpha was drawing to a close. It had been a sobering and educational experience. I was glad I

did it. I made some good friends. I laid down under my poncho, which was propped up with a few sticks, on Sunday night, 26 February 1967, looking forward to getting back to a bunk, a hot shower (we had a homemade hot water heater), and a sit-down outhouse instead of a community slit trench. The mortar platoon was popping out a few 81mm harassment and interdiction (H&I) rounds but somehow, I had learned to sleep through that. Earlier, we had hunkered down in bunkers while our artillery Forward Observer, 1LT Gary Meek, called in his preplanned 105mm artillery defensive fires. He would, by radio, adjust the artillery fire into several locations around us as close to the perimeter as CPT Yamashita would let him. Each final location would be assigned a target number and the artillery tube settings would be recorded by the firing battery. He did this every night. If we were attacked, Gary could get immediate artillery fire around our perimeter by just calling in those target numbers.

Around midnight I awoke to an explosion that definitely wasn't the outgoing "thump" of one of our mortar tubes. Somebody was yelling, "INCOMING." Then, another crash of an impacting mortar round. As is usually the case in life-threatening situations, my world went into slow motion. I grabbed the M-14. I had the loaded magazines in my pocket. I sprinted to the company CP, about 20 yards away. Another mortar round impacted before I could get there, but not close enough to get me.

The CP had been gouged out by the engineers with a bulldozer. Each end was a slanted ramp that ended in a flat area about four feet deep. The removed dirt was piled up at the top of the ramp on the west side. Imagine two boat ramps back to back with a flat spot in between with heavy timbers and sandbags over the flat area. We normally went in and out of the east end. I dove onto the east ramp and rolled down into the CP. Interesting what you think about under those circumstances. I was conscious of the fact that I had rolled over the M-14 and that it was covered in dirt, but because of my Boot Camp experience with the weapon, I knew it would fire anyway.

Gary Meek was already on his radio calling in the preplanned defensive fires. Of the five 105mm guns in the firing battery, four were shooting high explosive (HE) rounds and one was firing illumination rounds (flares) so we had some dim light. CPT Yamashita was on the radio talking to his platoons and requesting air support from battalion HQ. ISG Yabes, Gary's recon sergeant, and the company radio operator (RTO), Specialist Pongrantz, were also in the CP. I could hear automatic weapons fire all around the company perimeter. Some I recognized as M-16 – others (AK-47) I had not yet

learned to recognize. I could also hear heavy automatic weapons fire – our .50 caliber machine guns swapping licks with a .51 cal. (12.75mm). The war had arrived.

The recon sergeant had taken up a firing position on the south side of the CP facing east. Following his lead, I took up a firing position on the north side. Gary was right behind me on his radio. 1SG Yabes said, "I'm going to the second platoon" and sprinted out of the CP. I later saw him moving around the battle firing and yelling at our troops. He didn't survive. I was one of several who later wrote a recommendation for his Medal of Honor.

I suddenly heard an automatic weapon very close, almost like it was inside the CP. Looking over my right shoulder, I could see little puffs of dirt kicking up as the rounds "walked" up between me and the recon sergeant. Then someone yelled, "Grenade!!" I was scrambling up the base of the ramp when the grenade detonated. My right forearm and right thigh suddenly felt very hot, but I don't remember any pain. That came later. I crawled up the ramp out of the CP and lay down on my belly next to the CP overhead sandbags. Gary was right beside me. He said, "You're wounded. Give me your weapon." He was a 1LT, I was a W-1. I gave him the M-14. We could hear bullets whizzing over our heads. The bad guys were inside our perimeter. We were overrun.

As we were lying there, above the din of battle, I heard the pin fly off a hand grenade and heard the thud as it landed near us. Gary was between me and the edge of the ramp. I really wanted to get away from that grenade, so I jumped on Gary and tried, unsuccessfully, to push both of us over the edge. This is where my memory and Gary's differ. He later said the grenade detonated and I saved his life. I don't remember it detonating and I didn't have any additional wounds.

From our position on the edge of the ramp, we could see down into the east end of the CP. As we looked down in the dim light of the flares, we saw an Asian man crawling toward the ramp. Gary raised the M-14. Suddenly I yelled "Don't shoot!! It's the CO!" Ted Yamashita is of Japanese descent.

We quickly crawled down into the CP. CPT Yamashita was hit in both legs, but he was on the radio talking to the platoons and trying to direct air support. I could only hear his end of the conversations. A "Spooky" USAF AC-47 was on station hosing down the whole area around us with several on-board miniguns and dropping much brighter flares. The CO suddenly yelled "What's a light fire team?" To an infantryman, a light fire team is two soldiers. To an Army Aviator, it's a pair of helicopter gunships. I quickly told him what he had and suggested how to employ the gunships to supplement what Spooky was doing for us. I didn't know it at the time, but USAF FAC Major "Bo" Harrison, call-sign "Issue 11", was also overhead in an O-1 Bird Dog and it wasn't long before F-100s showed up with napalm.

Meanwhile, the VC were still throwing hand grenades on the east ramp of the CP, but by the grace of God, no more of them detonated. When it was over, there were about a dozen dud hand

grenades in front of the recon sergeant and me. The attack broke and there were fewer and fewer gunshots until the only sounds were the groans of the wounded. I received firsthand accounts of the ARVN troops inside our perimeter joining the VC in attacking our troops.

Finally, CPT Yamashita said to pass the word that B Company was approaching the perimeter from the south. It was still dark. I thought the fight lasted several hours. The official account said it was over at 0115. Apparently, the Division was reluctant to commit a relief force fearing a larger attack on the Division base camp. Eventually, Manchu Bravo, augmented with some tanks, was released to come to our assistance. The enemy anticipated the reaction and ambushed the relief force a click or two north of the Division base but CPT "Wattie" Smith and his Machu warriors broke the ambush and pushed through to rescue A Company.

Later at the 12th Evacuation Hospital at the Division base, I was appropriately triaged at the end of the line with only fragmentation wounds in my right arm and right thigh (about 8 inches to the left and I would have been singing soprano!). It still didn't hurt much. I guess it was the adrenaline. When it was my turn in surgery, they had run short of local anesthetic. It seemed like they shot about the same amount in my leg as in my forearm. It worked on the arm. Not so much on the leg. The Doc told me that's all I was getting. He brought over four guys – one for each arm and each leg. They rolled up a wash cloth, put it in my mouth, and told me to bite it as they held me down while the Doc dug the shrapnel out of my leg. I refer to that as my "John Wayne" moment.

Days later, Major General (MG) Fred Weyand (later Army Chief of Staff) came into our non-air-conditioned tin Quonset Hut hospital ward. He walked down the other side to CPT Yamashita's cot, spoke to him a few minutes, and then pinned a Silver Star on his pajama shirt. MG Weyand then turned to the recon sergeant in the next cot, spoke with him and pinned a Bronze Star for Valor on his shirt. Then, directed by another officer, he walked straight over to my cot where I had been enjoying the show with the help of generous amounts of Demerol. "Everybody in Division Headquarters has heard about you," he said.

Uh Oh (or words to that effect).

"You're the first Aviation Warrant Officer in the 25th Division to be wounded and decorated in a ground action," said the General as he pinned a medal on my chest that I most assuredly did not deserve.

Manchu Alfa, lost 19 soldiers in the fight. The 65th Engineers lost five. The casualty numbers reported to me included another 29 wounded. Wattie Smith told me they found about 100 VC bodies (the official count was 92) and lots of blood trails. A B-52 strike was called in on the retreating enemy battalion. It shook stuff off the shelves at the nurses' station in our ward. In addition to 1SG Yabes' Medal of Honor, six Silver Stars and Seven Bronze Stars were awarded for valor during the fight.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

ALAMO CHAPTER

Mike Law
830-730-0950
mglaw@earthlink.net

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

Position Open

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

Gary Harrell, President
4149 Gevella Drive
Brooksville FL 34604
352-586-2562

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

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 Alleger
Phone: 614-905-9705
Email: Warlord_24@msn.com
www.ohrivlz.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

Steve Jackson
armyav8r11@msn.com
801-647-5532

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



ALAMO CHAPTER

With the arrival of 2020, new opportunities will be available for our members to become involved in special events and continue to enjoy getting together for luncheons. Our 2019 Christmas Party was a great deal of fun and was well attended. We learned a great deal from the "mass mailing" of Christmas Party Post Cards to some 400 plus individuals on our roster in the San Antonio area. With the response from those post cards, we were able to update our membership roster with new information. We were surprised and pleased to learn that at least five of the guys worked in San Antonio on a part-time basis, but lived outside the San Antonio area. They wanted to ensure we had them on the email list for our luncheons, so they would be able to attend when possible to enjoy the opportunity to visit with old friends during the luncheon. We will have the Christmas Party again in 2020.

Our men's luncheon was January 14th, 11:30 am at the Golden Corral. While the turnout was not as great as usual, everyone had a great time visiting. Some discussion has started about allowing other aviation individuals to join our chapter even though they were never stationed in Vietnam. We understand that other chapters are now allowing those individuals to be part of their chapters. Our ladies' luncheon was January 15th, 11:30 am at The La Cantera Mall Cheesecake Factory. The ladies had a very enjoyable time together, and are looking forward to special events and luncheons during 2020. Our schedule for luncheons in February can be seen



January Ladies Luncheon.

on our website's Schedule of Events.

The "reinvented" Chapter Website created by Jim Boykin and Chic Carter is really great, and traffic on the website is growing rapidly. We extend our appreciation to Jim and Chic for their dedication to building an outstanding website. If you desire to know what is happening within the Alamo Chapter then the website is the place to visit.

Several chapter members have already registered for the Denver VHPA Reunion in May and plan to meet together at the Alamo Chapter Table during the Closing Banquet. We are looking forward to meeting and visiting our old and new friends during the Reunion.

Mike Patterson-Secretary



ALASKA CHAPTER

During our Fall dinner, our Chapter donated funds to the Wreaths Across America Project. Then on December 14th a small group of us participated in the actual laying of the wreaths at the Fort Richardson National Cemetery. What a wonderful experience to honor Veterans as over 6000 wreaths were laid. The surprising thing was the large number of families and children there to participate, and all with enthusiasm. We certainly plan to do this again next December.

We have also recently asked to be placed on the Fort Richardson National Cemetery list for notification when veterans with no or very small family dies, in order

to participate in their funeral. This has become rewarding as the full Military Honors are a reminder to us, and our presence as well as other military groups attending, make the event more inspiring for surviving family members. I am sure that other National Cemetery also have similar programs, so check it out in your area! It is a great way to honor our passing brothers.

As of now, we are in the deep freeze and slow to move but are enjoying a very beautiful winter wonderland.

Until Spring, There is Pride in Knowing We Flew.

By Lynn Kile



VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

On January 6, 2020, CCN held its annual Holiday Party. We were all just too busy in retirement to get together in December!

The party was a success with 27 in attendance at Teal Bend Golf Club in Sacramento, CA for prime rib, salmon, eggplant parmesan, and all the tasty side dishes.

Teal Bend has a few unusual restrictions for its operation. Local NIMBYs forced an agreement on the owner/builder of the club: no outdoor lights, no big conventions or parties at night, specific quiet hours, etc. This put us all in the dark in the parking lot and when going to the restrooms, but we managed. Thank goodness for the flashlight app on our cell phones! The Teal Bend manager was pleased with our group and has invited us to have more events there. If we're there after dark, we'll figure out some lighting, even if only car headlights when the party breaks up.

We had a short meeting after dinner and the annual election of officers was a surprise to some, but not to all members, and in our usual manner, it was a bit unorthodox. Thanks to everyone who "volunteered" to be nominated to the council. Additionally, we discussed the CCN Mobile Officer Club (MOC) plans for Denver. We will have a few work parties in the next few months to get it ready for the reunion. The MOC was last seen

at the Reno Reunion. We just could not get our act together to make it to Kansas City! The MOC will be at the Denver reunion. This may be its last big outing, since the next few reunions are



Ken Fritz Greeting.



Curt Knapp's Jacket (he took most of the pics).



Good times being had by ALL.



MOC in San Francisco - 2005.

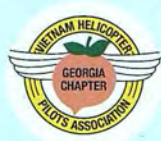
planned for the East Coast. This is especially appropriate because the inaugural outing for the MOC was in Denver in 2001. Mike Nord is spearheading the MOC work and the transport of the MOC to Denver and back. Ken Fritz is handling arrangements with the Denver VHPA and the hotel. We will need volunteers to man the MOC while in Denver. Mike Nord will accept your help.

Please come on by and support the MOC in Denver.

Hope you all are having a Happy New Year!

To our members - please keep the ideas coming for future events. Please check our website www.vhpaccn.org for more info.

By Dave Anderson, Secy.



GEORGIA CHAPTER

On the scheduled third Saturday of every other month, the first of the year being January 18th, the Georgia VHPA Chapter gathered for the first meeting of the year. The gathering was held at the J. Christopher's Restaurant. Our attendance is increasing a little every gathering, so since we have maxed out the seating capacity in our present location, we will be moving to a larger meeting location, but the breakfast menu is terrific, (a couple of us have previewed it).

Some last-minute scheduling conflicts caused the guest speaker to have to reschedule for the next meeting, so we had a good

ole fashioned "get to know your fellow members" day. Some good stories from the members and some of them were probably true!

The Chapter continued the recently initiated raffle for the area homeless Vietnam Veterans with the lucky drawee, George Murry, donating his half brought the donation to \$60.00.

Vietnam helicopter pilots who would like to join our Chapter can locate an application on our Chapter Web Site-www.ga-vhpa.org click on the application, fill it out and bring to a meeting or email it to the chapter email address chuckgavhpa@gmail.com. The dues are a mind boggling

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

\$20.00 for a whole year, but you do get a cool name tag with it. (see attachment) You can call me at 770.846.4413, and if it goes to voice mail, leave a message. (A lot of robo calls)

The next meeting will be: March 21 at the "Come-N -Get-It Restaurant, 1409 Church St EXT, Marietta, GA 30060

<http://www.yallcomengetit.com/how-to-find-us.html>

Other new business discussed was the addition of an associate



membership for Helicopter Air Crews who served in Vietnam. It is a segment that seems to be left out of the loop.



CHUCK STOUDT
GA-VHPA PRESIDENT

www.ga-vhpa.org

770.846.4413

chuckgavhpa@gmail.com

VN 1966 335TH AHC COWBOYS: FALCONS: CASPER

Looking forward to the warmer weather for the next meeting, so come on out and enjoy the company of our fellow pilots.

Chuck Stoudt
President



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

The Michigan Chapter's activities slow a bit as winter settles in, but monthly gatherings in Traverse City continue with good participation. Meanwhile, planning for 2020 activities is underway. Chapter members and associates should check their emails for news including details for our annual spring meeting in May. On December 5th, Member At Large Mark Benjamin hosted another gathering at Brady's in Traverse City and filed this short and sweet AAR:

In attendance were: Mark Benjamin, Bob Matlis, Dennis Klein, Scott LaBarre, Walter Topp, Ed Canright, and John Lefler. Walter Topp is our Representative to the Grand Traverse Veterans Coalition. He passed out a flyer for a fund-raising effort to purchase a van large enough to carry the local VFW/American legion color guard. This group travels all over northern Michigan rendering honors at veteran funerals. At times, this group provides honors at up to six funerals a day. Yes, SIX! John Lefler, President of the Veterans Coalition outlined plans for the grand opening of a new VA clinic here in Traverse City.

On January 2nd, Mark hosted a day-after-New Year's gathering at Brady's in Traverse City. He had a great turnout and filed this AAR:

Great time was had on Thursday the 2nd. In attendance were Clay Maxwell, John Johnson, Barry Witt, Bruce Whipple, Fritz Barratt, Paul Fitzsimons, Bob Matlis, Mark Benjamin, Linda Johnson, Linda Maxwell, and Walter Topp (who didn't make the photo). Still no pool!

Clay Maxwell related the accuracy of the navigation system on



January 2nd Gathering at Bradys, Traverse City.

his tractor. The tractor is on auto pilot and steers itself, makes turns, and aligns itself for the next pass down the field. This of course led to a hilarious discussion on some of our nav skills flying the Bell helicopters of our day. Bob Matlis told of a very dearly loved CO he once had who led his flight of helos on a long mission. Turns out one of the helos in the flight had one of those new

fancy Doppler set ups that drags a pen over a chart and shows the actual track of the aircraft. Well everyone had a great laugh as the chart revealed they'd been to entirely different places besides the turn points the "favorite" CO thought they'd crossed. But Bob also pointed out that the Doppler told us where we'd been, not where we were going. Who cares about that anyway?

Fritz Barratt talked about crossing the Atlantic years ago flying a Corporate Jet and they thought the over-ocean nav accuracy was pretty good if they were within ten or twelve miles when they got to France! And clay Maxwell has a tractor with a nav system that is reliable within about 4 inches. Well, I guess you had to be there, but it was lots of laughs.

For any VHPA members in or near Michigan who would like to be added to our email list for updates on our activities, contact me at 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 vhpa-mi.wordpress.com and on Facebook at Michigan Chapter of the VHPA.

Submitted by Rich Deer, President

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

In October, 95-year-old Karl Maki of Middlefield, OH made one of his frequent visits to the grave of his bride of 69

years, Virginia. Karl enlisted in the Army in January 1943 and was assigned to the Coastal Artillery. He applied for and was accepted to flight school. After primary flight training at Ocala, FL, Bainbridge, GA, and Mariana, FL, he received his wings on March 12, 1944. Karl was assigned to the 364th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force. As a 20-year-old 2nd lieutenant, he flew P-51 Mustangs out of England supporting the bombing campaign over Germany and other enemy occupied countries. He flew heavy bomber escort missions as well as strafing missions ahead of invading US forces. He is a true American hero and this picture of him at her grave captures the moment more than any words can express. Karl is the father of VHPA member and NAVHPA Secretary Sam Maki.

The winter activities for the North Alabama Chapter began on December 10th with our annual Christmas dinner and gift giveaway. More than 85 members, spouses, and guests attended this party at the Huntsville Country Club. We shared a very good dinner and heard from our Guest Speaker, USAF LTC (Ret.) Ed Yeilding. Ed was a pilot, IP, and XP of the SR-71 spy plane for the years leading up to its retirement. When the SR-71 fleet was retired in 1990, Ed and his Reconnaissance Systems Officer, JT Vida, enroute to the Smithsonian Institution, cruising at 2190 miles per hour, reaching an altitude of 83,000 feet and set an official coast-to-coast aircraft speed record of 67 minute 54 seconds. The record still stands, and that SR-71 is on display at the Smithsonian's Udvar-Hazy Center where many of you might have seen it at the dinner during the last reunion in Washington DC. All the assembled audience enjoyed hearing about Ed's experiences. At the close of the festivities 12 lucky members were chosen by lottery to receive one of the gifts baskets



USAF LTC (Ret.) Ed Yeilding is presented a certificate of Appreciation by NAVHPA President Marshall Eubanks at the Christmas party.



NAVHPA member Bob Stewart teaching a young man about Buc-3 at the Sequel TSI School.



Former P-51 fighter pilot Karl Maki visits with his late wife Virginia.



After his war story at the January meeting, USAF LTC (Ret.) Charlie Summers and spouse pose with NAVHPA members Bob Stewart, Marshall Eubanks and Les Haas.

created by a dozen members' spouses.

On December 12th, Gil Fluhr, Les Haas, Rich Hudgens and Marshall Eubanks worked on our newly acquired 8'x8'x20' metal storage container to be used to store BUC-3 materials and parts. The container had water leaks in the roof, significant condensation problems and a completely deteriorated floor. They repaired the holes in the roof and put down a vapor barrier under the new marine plywood floor. To help with condensation, they cut four large holes in the sides and placed vents over the holes. Additional repairs are required on the doors and a protective coating will be "painted" on the roof. Before moving materials, we will be sure our repairs have stopped water leaks and prevented condensation.

The annual Wreaths for Veterans wreath laying ceremony took place at Valhalla Cemetery on 14 Dec at 1100 hours. This wreath laying is conducted at the same time that the worldwide Wreaths Across America ceremonies take place. Wreaths were laid by local Junior ROTC cadets representing those serving and those who have served in the Army, Navy, Marines, USAF, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine and for all POWs and MIAs. NAVHPA members Gil Fluhr, Les Haas, Marshall Eubanks, Jim White and Bob Monette represented the 30 NAVHPA members and spouses who support

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Wreaths for Veterans every year.

Our last Buc-3 event of the year brought us about 40 miles west of Huntsville to the facility at Sequel TSI Courtland. This is a secure residential treatment facility that serves males placed by the Alabama Department of Human Resources and Alabama courts. Their therapeutic services include: individual, group and family counseling, social and life skills, activities/experiential therapy and after care services. The program teaches residents how to develop responsible thinking, behavior, teamwork, and support of peers. The NAVHPA provided a 45-minute presentation to these young Americans (ages 12-18), explaining who we are, what we do, Vietnam then and now, and opportunities in the US Army. After a lunch provided by the school, we rotated students in groups of 10 on the BUC-3 display and answered many questions - especially about the M-60s and the mini-guns on BUC-3's armament system.

The new year started off strong. January 7th found 10 members and spouses supporting the picking up and boxing nearly 1000 wreaths from Veterans graves in Huntsville's Valhalla Cemetery. The next day, January 8th about 12 members and spouses supported the retrieval and packing about 2700 wreaths from Huntsville's Maple Hill Cemetery. This culminates our support to Wreaths for Veterans until October 2020, when the un-packing, cleaning, fluffing and re-packing of all wreaths in preparation for the 2020 Christmas season will take place.

We received a letter from Joy Parker, President of Wreaths for Veterans, stating in part:

"Your fantastic group of guys and gals has really taken 'ownership' in our program and words don't really convey how appreciative we are. From the time we start cleaning and preparing the wreaths in the fall, to placing them on our veteran's graves near



Marshall Eubanks making cuts for vents



Rich Hudgens laying floor



Gil Fluhr burning out holes for vents



Les Haas preparing to cut vent holes

NAVHPA members shown above refurbishing a storage container for Buc-3 supplies.

Thanksgiving, to recovering them after the holidays, we can always count on a large turnout from the NAVHPA...we can't say this enough, but thank you."

At our January meeting, we had a special guest. USAF LTC (Ret.) Charlie Summers flew F-100D fighters in Vietnam. On November 13, 1965, during a mission with a flight of 3 F100's, Charlie got shot down and had to parachute. That's where his story begins. He was eventually picked up by a Huey and taken to a hospital. Charlie had the greatest sense of humor telling this story of how he crawled to the Huey, but his parachute blew up into the first Huey's rotor, they all left that one for a second one, going between trees on takeoff. Just a great story-teller and a heck of a story. Charlie's remarks again brought home that we cannot know the impact of what, at the time, seemed a routine mission.

The North Alabama Chapter meets in Huntsville, on the second Tuesday 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. Our web site is <http://www.navhpa.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



OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

October 22nd found our chapter meeting with VHPA members who live in Maryland and flew together with the Maryland National Guard at the Brewers Alley in downtown Frederick, MD. The meeting was organized by our member Craig Bond who lives in Leesburg, VA. There is no VHPA Chapter in Maryland, so we invite all who live there to join our meetings anytime. Send us your e-mail address so we can send you our meeting agenda.

Another great gathering took place at the Roar and Soar on 26 October at the New Kent County airport in Quinton, VA. There were many antique and experimental airplanes and lots of antique cars and hot rods on display.

On December 14, we were at the Richmond National Cemetery laying wreaths with other groups and Wreaths Across America. Out of the 6000 plus graves in the cemetery we were able to place 4100 wreaths. Many of the headstones were of unknown soldiers and many had up to three buried under that one stone.

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Brewers Alley in Frederick MD.



Richmond National Cemetery.



Sibley and Son BBQ - Colonial Heights, VA.



Roar and Soar- New Kent County Airport, VA.

Our January meeting was held January 11th at Sibley and Son BBQ Restaurant at the Keystone Tractor Museum in Colonial Heights, VA.

For up-coming events, we are planning to attend the Free Vietnam Veterans Luncheon at James Madison University on Valentine's Day, then rendezvous at the Blackburn Inn in Staunton. On Saturday, February 15, we plan to visit the Stonewall Brigade

Museum in Verona, home of the 116th Infantry Regiment of which the "Bedford Boys" were members during the D-Day attack at Normandy. We are also planning to gather at vineyards of two of our members for the Spring Oyster Crawl on April 17 and 18: Ingleside Plantation Winery in Oak Grove and General's Ridge Winery in Hague.

By Don Agren, President

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

We held the first meeting of the New Year at Post #1 of the American Legion in Denver. We had a really good turnout and many, unlike last meeting, stayed for lunch as the meeting lasted long enough for everyone to get really hungry. The Chapter has filled the Secretary position. Bill Bates, after returning from his vacation has acquiesced to stay another term. Thank you, Bill.

Upcoming Activities: The Reunion is Coming! The Reunion is

Coming!

We have been busy encouraging all our Chapter Members to volunteer for the several event activities we've been asked to host by Headquarter. As of this writing we have approximately 20 volunteers for the event desks. We also have seven volunteers for the Helicopter War Museum which will be stationed outside the hotel on May 21, 2020, and it will be at the Wings Over the Rockies for two days, May 22nd, and 23rd. Additional chapter activities will continue to be announced on our Web site:

VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

www.RMCVHPA.com

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, so contact us at the address below to verify dates, times and location. We do not meet in December but have our annual Xmas party. The Museum committee will meet periodically to contin-

ue categorizing inventory, developing additional displays, and conducting Museum maintenance. Visit our Web site at 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

Dale House



UTAH CHAPTER

Members of the Utah Chapter of the VHPA participated in a pinning ceremony to honor Vietnam Veterans on Saturday, 18 January 2020 at the Columbia Center in Salt Lake City, UT. It was hosted by Utah's 4th Congressional District Congressman, Ben McAdams. UT VHPA members Leon Thurgood, George Sumner and Doug Drury and other Vietnam Veterans received 50th Anniversary Vietnam Commemorative pins and US flags that had been flown over the US Capitol Building. Additional UT VHPA members were also recognized but could not attend the ceremony.

Congressman

McAdams' remarks reflected on the honor that has been long denied to Vietnam Veterans as he addressed the disrespectful actions and attitudes they received from their fellow Americans on returning home. Although the Congressman was not born until 1974 and has no memories of the conflict, he promotes respect for veterans' service. He hopes with this recognition and his continued support of veterans' benefits and services, veterans can be properly recognized for the service they render in the cause of freedom guaranteed by our US Constitution.

Each of the 20 honorees received a Commemorative pin and a flag from the Congressman to honor their service in Vietnam.

An opportunity to speak with the congressman and fellow veterans after the ceremony was afforded so veterans could reminisce with each other about their ser-



Utah Congressman Ben McAdams.



George Sumner receives recognition from Congressman McAdams.



Doug Drury receives recognition from Congressman McAdams.

vice in Vietnam. Three members of the Utah Chapter of the VHPA posed with the Congressman with their chapter banner which is used at various presentations on 'Helicopters in Vietnam' to civic groups, schools, and youth military units throughout Utah.

The chapter continues its efforts to promote education and knowledge about the Vietnam War through presentations to various organizations and groups of our fellow citizens to influence their perception about military involvement in conflicts around the world.

The chapter members and the other Vietnam Veterans thank Congressman McAdams for hosting this ceremony and providing Vietnam veterans recognition for their service.

By Steve Jackson, President



Leon Thurgood, George Sumner, Congressman McAdams, Doug Drury.

SELECTIONS FROM PAST NEWSLETTERS

This issue's column is from November/December 1996, January/February, March/April, and May/June 97.

Whispered Warning Set Tone for Missions

by Stanley C. Marcieski, Dustoff 97

It was just a whisper over the tac push, "This is 'Two-Zero Foxtrot.' There's 15 more of them coming up the trail toward you." The whisper was strained, taut. It was sweaty and tight with fear as it rose up to us from the eastern ridgeline of the A Shau Valley. That whisper was all we needed to tell us this mission was not going to be a piece of cake.

Even at 1700 feet above ground level the A Shau Valley was not a sight to inspire thoughts of comfort or welcome. The valley had a haunting beauty that disguised mortal danger under brilliant green foliage. Like most of I Corps, it too was pock-marked from arc-light strikes and the impact of uncountable artillery rounds. Unlike the rest of I Corps, however, this Valley of Death had other scars that held a peculiar fascination for me as a pilot.

The floor of this valley was littered with the remains of too many birds of war that found there a final resting place. These crumpled metal toys rested far away from most prying eyes in the AO. Those eyes that could see these toys did not want to be reminded of the frailty of the aircraft they flew night and day through Southeast Asia's skies.

It was, I imagined as I stared at it for the first time, the fabled elephant graveyard. Tarzan was right, the graveyard existed. The lost graveyard of elephants was there on the valley floor snug between the jungle shrouded ridge lines. Unlike Tarzan in his movies, I knew these elephants did not struggle to this graveyard driven by some overpowering instinct to bare their metal bones to our eyes. What I knew for a fact was that the myth of invincible John Wayne killed these beasts.

Odd thoughts have a habit of racing across your brain when the pucker factor begins to climb. Some of those thoughts and sensory inputs sear into the brain and remain there, burned scar tissue. Scar tissue that refuses to heal even after two decades of trying. It's like an old war movie I saw once with the singular difference that I had a big part in the action. The slightest familiar odor or sound can bring those memories racing back.

A jog in the memory can make me hear the slap of the rotor blades and feel their thump vibrate my insides. My memory can hear three radios squawking and the crew all talking at once over my headset. I marvel now at how I could possibly understand them all and continue to function. But it's the odors that come haunting. In Vietnam, I worked low in the air and my sense of smell was subjected to odors which it permanently catalogued.

The smell of burnt gunpowder or fireworks today can quickly make my pulse rise and transport me far away in place and time. Long, rainy days bring to my nostrils the heavy wetness of the jungle perfumed with tropical blossoms mixed with rotting vegetation. The scent of garlic browning in oil takes me back to flying over Saigon where your nose was struck in alternate waves with the wonderful bouquet of flowers, the stench of garbage and frying garlic.

A blast of black exhaust from a diesel engine brings to mind early morning pre-flights swathed in smoke created from burning human excrement in JP4 or diesel fuel.

Movies of Vietnam portraying authentic-looking grunts can flood my mind with the odor of their animal sweat mingled with the rot of the jungle clinging to them after days in the field. It can make me smell wounded grunts as they hop or are carried, pulled, hoisted or half-thrown in deadly urgency aboard our Dustoff Huey. And I swear I can smell their blood, too. It was a smell that came too often.

Some impressions I want to remember. Some I do not. But I have got them all, burned somewhere deep in my mind. And right there among them is that haunting whisper.

Just a few days earlier, my two roommates, Lt. J.D. Lawson and CW2 Bill Yancey, and I had been transferred to the Air Ambulance Platoon, 326th Medical Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), from the 45th Medical Company in Long Binh, with flush toilets, hot showers and nurses.

It was near the end of the Lam Son 719 incursion into Laos and close to my 24th birthday, a day I have since considered I was lucky to see.

To reach Camp Eagle that day, we hopped flights up the coast from Vung Tau, where we had been enjoying a bogarted three-day in-country R&R. That R&R we felt entitled to for having ferried a Huey from Long Binh to the 237th Medical Detachment at Phu Bai and as one last fling before joining the Screaming Eagles.

Our route to Phu Bai followed the coastline the entire trip. We were captured by the incredible beauty of nearly deserted, wide, white beaches sliding into water that graduated from pale blue-green to almost purple as it deepened. It was a gorgeous sight that makes me believe to this day a tourist boom in Nam will rival any beach resort in the world. This ferry trip also gave us an opportunity to fly our baggage to and briefly inspect our new home.

Finding Phu Bai, the nearest oasis of civilization for the 101st from the air was not a problem. However, we had some difficulty in locating or in believing we had found Camp Eagle even when Phu Bai Approach said we were right over it.

Baffled by not being able to find it, one of us replied to Approach the only thing below us was a huge fire support base!

"Welcome to Camp Eagle," came the sarcastic reply.

It did look like the biggest fire support base we had ever seen. Scat-

tered over the red-yellow colored earth was an amazing sight. It was unlike the disorganized order of Long Binh where the roads were paved and the clubs, swimming pools and tennis courts provided easily identifiable landmarks.

One very identifiable landmark nearby Camp Eagle that could be seen clearly only from the air was a huge peace symbol some GI with a bulldozer carved into the earth outside of the compound. That sucker must have been at least big enough to fit perfectly inside of a football field.

Camp Eagle gave one the impression that at one time the entire 101st Airborne Division had been loaded aboard a gigantic C-130, the tailgate had been dropped and the entire division had simply been dumped out and left to scatter among the hills outside of Hue-Phu Bai.

Since we were allotted seven days to accomplish the in-country ferry flight from Long Binh and had not yet signed in to the 101st, our plan was to drop off our worldly belongings at Eagle Dustoff, deliver the aircraft to Phu Bai Dustoff and beat feet for Vung Tau for a couple of days before signing in to the 326th Medical Battalion.

Once we found Camp Eagle and introductions were made at the 326th head shed, we delivered the aircraft to Phu Bai Dustoff and set out to follow our plan to the letter.

At Phu Bai we caught a hop to Da Nang, where we spent the night. We ate dinner that night at the real China Beach which, as a TV serial, became pure Hollywood BS hardly resembling reality.

The next day, we caught a ride to Saigon on a C-130 jammed with about 130 ARVNs who had been in action in Laos. Getting a hop to Vung Tau out of Saigon was no sweat and, after three memorable days savoring the delights of Vung Tau, we hopped our way on a variety of aircraft back to the virtual doorstep of Eagle Dustoff.

We signed into our new unit, gathered our previously stored gear and were shown to our new quarters, a tin roofed, non-insulated, typical hooch with mesh screens covering the walls from about the waist up.

Due to this ventilated construction and the building's proximity to the flight line, it filled with a certain amount of dust as each aircraft hovered in and out of Eagle Dustoff's flight line. Only time, ingenuity, and lots of sweat was to improve what we were given as quarters. Even with the dust considered, it was a hell of lot better than a poncho in the boonies.

As night came on, we had barely started to settle into our new hooch when the Ops officer stuck his head in the door and said he needed a pilot for a mission. Yancey was drinking a beer and JD, for what I believe was one of only two alcoholic drinks JD had in Nam, also was sipping on a beer.

That, of course, left only me to go fly into the night sky with stranger still a very unfamiliar and decidedly unfriendly night sky.

Having a dumb attack or a surge of John Wayne fever, I forgot the first rule of being a member of a military force in a combat zone or anywhere for that matter - never volunteer.

I had most recently been flying Dustoff across the fence into Cambodia from Tay Ninh to support the latest ARVN attempt to kick Chuck out of his sanctuary, where, according to then-President Richard Nixon, there were no American troops on the ground.

Pitch-black Cambodia at night in bad weather with people shooting at you was not fun, but that episode in my tour itself is another story.

However, at this moment, I felt I was an experienced combat pilot with enough night time to no longer sweat bullets overnight approaches to the jungle. I had landed at night in hover holes without lights, guided, unbelievably, by Zippo lighters (I know, I thought those were BS stories in flight school, too, but a lot of that BS became too true later, except for the "black syph." I guess.). strobes and, on unfortunate occasions, muzzle flashes.

I was nearly an AC in my old unit, so thought what can be so bad about a night mission in northern I Corps? Not to my credit, I was rather ignorant of the fact that in my recent past the guy trying to waste us was generally VC, but now that guy was NVA. This guy no longer carried only an AK-47 or an SKS rifle. He carried an enhanced set of armament that could really make you see flaming green basketballs. Flaming green basketballs coming at you night or day was a sight that made you desperately long to be somewhere safe to see if you really did need a hammer to drive a pin up your seriously constricted nether region.

Another fact that slipped by at that moment was that down south, because of the flat terrain, we infrequently pulled hoist missions, while up north almost every mission was a hoist mission.

Hoist missions were dangerous under the best of conditions. During a hoist mission, your helicopter was halted not above, but nestled in, the treetops, often well over 150 feet high as you tried to keep it rock steady to avoid hitting those trees with your main rotor or your tail rotor.

You listened to your medic and crew chief on hot mike as they stood on the skids, fully exposed, giving you instructions. They told you where the jungle penetrator (JP) was at all times, how many feet right, left or up and down you had to move to avoid striking something.

They told you how the grunts were doing with the wounded and when to break ground with the patient on the JP and when to leave. They also told you where the fire was coming from when the bad guys decided you were just too easy of a target to resist.

After I became an AC, I never required any crew member to stand on the skids because of the danger involved, but they all did it, anyway. Not smart maybe, but the guys who did their job in the back of the aircraft will always be admired by me as real life heroes.

Hoist missions were always a little nerve-racking, never more so than at night, with the grunts in contact and half the helicopters in RVN flying around your head as you tried to get the wounded out.

Those simple, overlooked facts served to make that night one of the most memorable of my tour.

Having committed myself, I gathered my gear: Helmet and my security blanket, a very large chicken plate I had swiped from a Cobra revetment at Xuan Loc somewhat earlier in my tour.

(If the owner of that chicken plate is reading this, I hope you did not need that protection as much as I did. The original chicken plate issued to me at the 45th was an extra small and it rapidly shrank before my eyes as I sat in my first hot LZ. Later, when I spied that extra-large chicken plate sitting all by its lonesome in a revetment, my survival instincts took over and I merely did a one-for-one exchange.)

Outside our hooch that night, the Ops officer introduced me to CW2 Fred Behrens, who was to be the AC for the mission. Fred asked if I had a weapon. As I shook my head "no," he said, "come on" and we ran to his hooch, which housed a small, personal armory. He grabbed a

holstered .45, tossed it to me and we hustled off to the flight line.

I asked what the mission was. Fred said he was not sure other than it was a hot hoist with multiple urgents. Translated, that meant there were wounded grunts in the LZ who would die shortly if we did not get them back to the 85th Evac in Phu Bai.

It also meant the bad guys who had just wounded them were still there and trying their best to finish the job. At that news, my pucker factor started to climb.

Two days prior to my arrival at Camp Eagle, Jim Zwit, a 20-year-old grunt with D Company 3/501st 101st, and 77 other grunts had been airlifted to a location southwest of Bastogne.

Their mission documented to be the last offensive mission by U.S. ground forces in Vietnam, was first a search-and-attack mission with the additional mission of recovering a U.S. KIA. Company A was unable to recover after a firefight on April 12.

Around 1800 hours on the 15th, Company D began preparation for night defensive positions. The commander directed the first platoon leader, Lt. McKenzie, to search to the south with his platoon to assure the area was secure.

McKenzie's platoon members dropped their rucks and moved out down the trail. They replaced Zwit's third platoon as point element. At point were Jerry Sterns and Lt. McKenzie.

Around 1848 hours, the unit after action report reads, "...the second platoon made contact with the enemy in the vicinity of YD581010. The enemy opened up with small arms fire when five or six individuals crossed the fallen log."

Contact in this specific moment in the war was the death of Sterns and the severe wounding of Lt. McKenzie when the small arms fire, RPGs and mortars started raining on the grunts. As happens in combat initially, confusion reigned.

Far back in the column, Jim Zwit heard the firefight start. He heard the screams of the wounded, plus Lt. McKenzie yelling for help. McKenzie was well respected by the men of the entire company and particularly by Zwit.

Realizing nobody was going to their immediate aid and without a thought for his safety, Jim Zwit jumped up, dashed past his platoon and the second platoon toward the firing and Lt. McKenzie's cries for help.

Reaching point under enemy fire, Zwit dived to the ground near Sterns. He found Sterns had been killed in the first burst of gunfire. Zwit then rolled over and sprayed a clip from his M16 and tossed a couple of grenades in the direction of the enemy fire.

What had been a crescendo of battle noise just seconds before instantly became a dead silence. In that brief lull of only seconds, Jim reached Lt. McKenzie, heaved him over his right shoulder and began a beeline for the friendlies.

This race to friendly lines was halted by the bright flash of an explosion just off to his right side. The explosion blasted both Zwit and his human cargo into the air and off to the other side of the trail. The explosion killed McKenzie whose body, slung over Jim's right shoulder, probably saved Zwit from instant death.

The blast still ripped shards of shrapnel deep into Zwit's exposed right side. Zwit lay on his back stunned and watched as tracers slashed in both directions above his face. He was caught between

lines in the middle of a deepening firefight.

Seventy-eight grunts of D company had stumbled into 1,500 well-disciplined NVA regulars who were waiting in well-prepared, fortified positions. Casualties began to mount as movement was hindered by the tangled masses of timbers that had been felled by previous artillery and airstrikes. D Company was in a fight for its life.

Running after Fred on the way to the flight line, I noticed we had accumulated a small entourage that later blossomed into our crew.

One of the group, Danny McFadden, was hobbling along on crutches because, as I later found out, of a stab wound in the leg. The wound was inflicted when he unexpectedly opened a door that was being used for knife-throwing target practice by Spec. McGuigan. McGuigan, our self-proclaimed registered psychopath was also a medic, a most unusual medic, since he carried a sawed-off M-60 machine gun strapped to his back.

That night, McFadden also was carrying a Thompson submachine gun, which is a weapon I had only seen previously in the movies. Pickens, the crew chief, and Flores, an OJT medic, rounded out our crew.

Fred ran up to one aircraft, opened the door, grabbed the log book, flipped it open, said it was red X'd and ran to another one. At the next Huey he did the same, except for saying this one was "OK" and for me to get in and crank her up.

"What about preflight?" I asked, knowing nobody in his right mind ever flew an aircraft without a pre-flight. Fred yelled, "We don't have time!" I jumped in and cranked her up. Curse you, John Wayne.

From this distance I sometimes wonder what over and above the bleeding and dying grunts had compelled me to climb into that bird and yell, "Clear! Coming hot!!"

It does no good to wonder anymore. It is certainly evident we who flew Dustoff had a very special mission in that war. It was a job that will probably never be duplicated because of all the diverse facets of that war and the new weaponry of today.

We saved lives which in any occupation is a noble pursuit, but in Nam, in a war I doubt if anyone considered it a particularly noble pursuit. It was pulling bleeding, torn apart, hurting people out of the most unimaginable circumstances.

ARVN's, RPF's, civilians, the enemy, GIs, pilots and even babies. We picked them all up - night and day, rain or shine. Sometimes the wounded evacuee, after being hauled safely on board, would, if able, hug the nearest crew member in a show of gratitude for being pulled out of a tight spot still breathing.

At other times, gratitude would be expressed in bars, on those rare occasions when you were not on duty and you could get to a bar. If the grunts discovered you flew Dustoff, you could not pay for another drink.

There were reasons beyond counting for flying Dustoff, but they all boiled down to a personal feeling that if it were me lying out there bleeding, could I count on someone flying in to get my butt out? We did our damndest, especially when it came to getting U.S. troops out and to a hospital.

Dustoff built a helluva reputation, some said at too great a cost to our own crews' lives, for hanging it out and doing the job. I think not one of us will ever have a regret for what we did as

as Dustoff crews and most probably would do it again.

That night, though, none of us in the crew of Dustoff 913 was thinking about free drinks as I cranked 460 and backed her out of the revetment. With the .45 covering my family jewels and Fred talking on the radios while pointing out directions to me, we were on our way into the night skies.

Shortly after takeoff, Fred tuned in to the tactical push and we heard the urgent mixed-chatter between Dustoff 93, the command-and-control bird and the grunts on the ground.

The grunts were in heavy contact. They reported two KIAs and 20 WIAs, several of whom were seriously wounded. From the rapidly closing distance, you could see flare after flare being dropped on the site that was to be our LZ.

From his position on the trail, Jim Zwit tried to slide on his back toward friendly lines. It was a useless effort because of the pain.

Out of nowhere, somebody crawled up and tried to bandage his wounds. It was Staff Sgt. Kron, a slow-talking, slow-moving buddy from Tennessee. Kron did his best to patch the wounds, but met with little success. While trying to pull Zwit to safety, a bullet slammed into Kron. Unable to pull Jim back and wounded, Kron crawled back to his lines.

Moments later, someone else crawled to Zwit, grabbed him by the shoulders and tried to drag him back. It was Phil Brummett, a fellow platoon member who Jim hated and who hated Jim in return because of a run-in earlier in their tour of duty.

Although in pain and shock, Zwit remembers being surprised by Brummett of all people coming to his aid. Brummett's attempted rescue was short-lived.

A mortar round landed near Jim's legs, wounding his left leg as its explosion tossed him and Brummett. That explosion, followed by another, signaled to both men death was certain if they did not move fast.

From somewhere deep inside, Zwit found the strength to leap to his feet with Brummett at his side and run to the cover of the friendly lines. They both dived over a fallen log and hit the ground as bullets impacted into the other side of the log.

As we flew closer, the LZ grew into a living nightmare vision in a glass bowl that was surrounded by darkness. Low-hanging clouds and smoke from the flares being dropped eerily reflected the orange-white burning magnesium glare and the bright lights of explosions. Bursts of red and green tracers were piercing the night sky in stitches and erratic ricochets bounced in every direction. Silhouettes of blacked-out helicopters weaved in and out of this bizarre scene planted in the treetops of a hill not far from FSB Bastogne.

I flew us in close to the LZ, then Fred transferred the controls from me, the peter pilot in the next seat, who a few minutes before was a total stranger. Now my job would be to talk to the guns, monitor the engine and trans instruments and stay ever so lightly on the controls.

In any Dustoff LZ, the pilot not actually flying was always light on the controls in order to immediately take over if the other pilot took a round. If Fred got hit that night and lost consciousness, his instructions

to me were to climb, fly north and call Phu Bai Approach.

Sounded simple, but in those surreal moments I just listened and never really considered the area was a strange mountainous AO. It was night, I had never flown here before and to get a combat-damaged aircraft out of this mess might not be that easy.

We were almost on top of the LZ now and we could see Dustoff 93 at a hover trying to complete a hoist as tracers continued to flash all around his Huey. He was having a difficult time and taking hits that forced him to break off.

Dustoff 93 had one wounded on board as he was forced from the site. We watched 93 begin to depart the LZ. Then Fred slipped 460 down the hillside a little and quickly popped her back up to take 93's vacated spot almost on 93's tail. We were then at a stationary hover in the middle of the nightmare.

The crew in the back had flipped to hot mike. They were now transmitting every breath and word, plus the sound of the battle outside the aircraft. These sounds, mingled with the staccato blasts of automatic weapons and explosions, became the back-ground music for this movie.

The medic started the JP down while constantly informing us of the JP's progress. "The JP's on the way down 10-20 . . . two feet to the right . . . 40-20 from the ground . . . almost there . . . it's on the ground."

For a split second, it seemed the bad guys did not know we had arrived. Then, "We're taking fire at six-thirty!" "Taking fire at nine!" "Taking fire at 11!"

"At 1910 hrs, the enemy commenced firing 60mm mortars on friendly positions. Rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons fire and satchel charges also were employed by the enemy. Most of the casualties were the result of mortar fire tree bursts. The machine gun fire was employed in well-controlled bursts and was used primarily against medevac ships when they attempted an extraction. The volume of fire that was directed against the medevac ships made evacuation of casualties extremely difficult," read the Company D/501st unit after-action report.

McFadden, sitting in the hell-hole was screaming, "I can see them running on the ground shooting at us!!" and blasting away with the Thompson. Pickens was clearing the bird and firing his weapon. The medic was guiding the hoist.

All three crewmembers in the back were reporting fire and I could see tracers blazing over the nose of our Huey.

Fred, amid the pandemonium, was keeping the bird as steady as possible.

I tried to remain calm but could not remember the call sign of the Cobra gunships that were covering us. When we started taking fire, I simply called them "guns" and gave them the contact in clock headings off our nose.

As the reports of fire came in from the back of the bird, I quickly covered most of the clock and told the guns we were targeted from 360, which, as it turned out, was fact. The Cobras opened up, tossing in rockets as they skimmed and circled us in the flare light.

Expecting at any second to see the engine gauges start unwinding, indicating something vital had been hit, my eyes were everywhere - in and out of the cockpit. "He's on the JP, break ground. Comin' up . . . 10 feet . . . 20 . . ."

I kept thinking, why was it taking so long? It was almost as if time had

slowed and everything was moving in slow motion. We could not leave until we had the patient close enough to the helicopter to at least have him clear the treetops when we left the LZ.

To just sit there and wait while you were silhouetted against the flares as the target of opportunity for the bad guys was not easy, but it sure was an adrenaline rush. There was too much noise and commotion to tell how many hits we were taking.

"Twenty feet from the bird . . . 10 feet. Got him! GO! GO! GO!" Fred grabbed an armful of collective and nosed 460 over as I called out max power and radioed to the guns our departure heading. In an instant, we bolted out of there and were on the way to Phu Bai with a grunt who had a gunshot wound through the chest. It was not Jim Zwit.

Once out of any hot LZ after a pickup, it was always the same. The break in tension was an explosion of relief for the crew. Clear of danger, we all jabbered loudly about what we had just survived.

It was amazing how, despite the fact that after flying into LZs in one of the noisiest machines known to warfare, unless taking fire we would all whisper in hushed voices over the intercom during the extraction as if talking in even a normal voice would alert the bad guys to our presence in their AO.

Then, after departing the LZ and in the relative safety of the air, our voices would rise a dozen decibel levels because Chuck could not hear us now.

The flight to the 85th Evac was uneventful, but it provided me with an opportunity to see more of the AO. Our patient was unloaded at the hospital pad; then we repositioned to POL to refuel and check for combat damage.

Inspection revealed one round had entered a little too close to the 42-degree gearbox. Fortunately, it did not cause any serious damage. The left side, as well as the under-side of the bird, had tiny pock marks covering large areas. It was as if they were trying to bring us down with a shotgun.

Since 460 appeared to be in one flyable piece, we had a quick vote about going back out to the hilltop to make another attempt at pulling out wounded. The outcome was a foregone conclusion and before I knew it, we were again communicating in hushed voices as we closed for a second time on that boiling man-made thundercloud on the hill.

On the ground, Jim Zwit waited his turn to be hoisted out of the nightmare. His best friend, Bob Hein of 1/501, helped drag Jim further to safety.

Jim recalls Hein kept saying, "Don't worry about it, you're going to be all right." Jim was real thirsty and asked, "Get me some water." Hein went to get it and never came back.

The second trip into the site was more of the same, only more violent, as we started taking fire the instant the aircraft dropped into position. It was a wilder ride, with the volume cranked up to the max. How we got that JP to the ground through that fire and how the grunts managed to strap their wounded buddy on is a tribute to the bird, her crew and the grunts - with more than a good measure of luck thrown in.

This time it was Jim Zwit's turn to take a helicopter ride. Helping Zwit onto the swaying jungle penetrator was Bob Gervaci. Gervaci said it was something of a relief when the DUSTOFF birds came in

because the NVA then directed all their fire at the hovering helicopters.

His eyes followed Zwit as he ascended on the cable toward our aircraft and he watched in fascination as a cone of green tracers seemed to envelope our bird. Again, at the height of this tension, slow motion seemed to envelop everything as my eyes burned into the gauges and my whole being willed them not to move.

I could swear there were things floating through the cockpit, but before I had a chance to think about that, the aircraft bolted nose down and forward. The force of the forward movement and the natural tendency for a pilot to keep his eyes on the horizon jerked my head up.

I was not looking up at the green house window, I was looking through it, level with the horizon. What I saw froze in my memory as my mind screamed that I was about to die.

Something had exploded close behind and below us. The force of the explosion thrust the tail of 460 upward and caused such a nose-down attitude Fred had no choice but to pull pitch in an attempt to recover control or crash. The helicopter was headed out of its hover at a high rate of speed without a second to warn anybody.

As the aircraft blasted up and forward, the sight that greeted my bulging eyeballs through the greenhouse window was a blacked-out Cobra charging out of the smoke, fog and low-hanging clouds directly at us from the left.

We were about to have a mid-air collision with that Cobra and it flashed in my brain that there was no way we were going to avoid tangling our blades with his skids. Seemingly only feet apart, I braced for the imminent impact. It never came.

To this day, I never will know why we missed that Cobra and plunged into the clouds, escaping the pickup site once more, but we did.

On that trip, we brought out with us another wounded Grunt (Jim Zwit) who, dangling 20 feet below the aircraft, had a wild ride through the treetops and gunfire. He picked up a few bruises and bruises before the crew hauled him aboard.

His injuries from ploughing through treetops at our speed were minor compared to the holes in his chest. The crew of DUSTOFF 460 delivered him safely to the 85th Evac and I believe his only comment was, "Why'd you drag me through the trees?"

Poor guy did have leaves and branches stuck in him. Less than two weeks later, two blacked-out Cobras had a mid-air over T-Hawk and all four pilots died.

Having been more than lucky so far and with the Huey having no serious combat damage, we decided to go back and give it another try.

The third time was the charm because the groundfire was so intense and conditions so bad it was impossible to make further extractions and C&C canceled further ops until first light.

Four Eagle DUSTOFF birds, including us, received combat damage and one pilot was wounded at that site. We each received the Distinguished Flying Cross for our work that night. (The battalion Awards officer said later that we, the crew of 460, had been put in for the Silver Star, but it had been downgraded by battalion headquarters because we should not have flown red X'd 460)

When General Tarply, the division commander, presented the DFCs, he said why things had been so hot that night. We were extracting wounded on top of an NVA regiment's underground bunker complex.

The 101st had been looking for that regiment during the previous six weeks. D Company found them and lost eight KIA and 14 WIA.

Tarply presented my DFC, moved to the next guy in formation, then came back to me. While passing a coin to me he said, "I forgot your Brave Eagle coin. This and 10 ... no, 50 cents will buy you a cup of coffee in the 'World'."

--

We never saw Madison again. The information passed on to us was that the remaining members of 913's crew were badly wounded. Then later, through the grapevine, the word came down that both Fred and the medic were dead.

The next day, Sunday, found me on third-up duty, this time with CW2 Bill Whittiker. About midday, we were buzzed for a mission.

As I cranked up, Whittiker phoned ops for the mission information. When Bill gave me the coordinates, I recognized them as being the site where DUSTOFF 913 had been shot down.

The weather was clear and bright, not at all like my most recent visit to the A Shau.

Arriving on station was like plunging into the middle of a flying circus. C&C orbited on station directing the show, with Cobras, slicks and fast movers and the ground pounders under his control. We were briefed and gave the supporting guns our intended route in and out.

Whittiker had the controls as we dropped out of the sky making a beeline for the LZ. 'To keep the bad guys occupied we had Cobras laying down rockets on our sides. A Phantom was dropping heavy ordnance just on the backside of the LZ and the grunts actually in the LZ had formed a perimeter and were laying down a constant stream of fire outward as we touched down.

True to Fred's assessment, we could put only one skid down. Sitting there in that Huey, my insides bounced and shook from the concussions of the explosions.

Fred's aircraft lay in the LZ, riddled with holes. The thought flashed through my brain that I needed to take a picture of all this. My little Instamatic camera (I had not yet been to Hong Kong!) was setting on the radio console, well within easy reach.

About the same instant, another thought crossed my brain just as fast. If I were to take my hands off the controls, Whittiker just might take a round and we would then become the second pile of junk in the LZ.

In seconds my eyes sucked in the scene and for some reason I happened to glance down through the chin bubble. To my shock, I saw Fred's grimy dust-covered face through the curved plexiglas! I thought, "Good God, we've landed on Fred's body!"

Next thing I knew, his eyes opened, and he broke out in a big grin.

I yelled over the intercom for the crew to drag Fred out of there and get him on board.

Somehow, with the help of the grunts, they flung Fred and the other wounded on board. When the crewchief gave us the "Go," Whittiker pulled pitch, kicked a pedal and nosed the Huey over and dived into the Valley leaving the sounds of battle behind us.

Somebody in the back said, "Fred said he just wants a Coke!" He

was wounded in quite a few places, but was alive after crawling around for almost three days on the ground with no food or water.

He had been the target of several of the NVA and was too often on the wrong end of U.S. ordnance being hurled toward the LZ.

We dropped Fred at the 85th Evac in Phu Bai and that was the last I heard about him, other than rumors he had lost a leg and possibly other body parts.

One of the other patients we pulled out of there that day was Fred's medic who, sadly, did not survive his wounds after his struggle on the ground.

There were eight more nerve-wracking months for me in Nam and somewhere, somehow it got to the point that I knew if I lived through this tour it would be my personal miracle. Nam was like that. After being there awhile and being subjected to the experience of flying DUSTOFF, it seemed as if no other world had ever existed.

The nightmare conviction developed that I had always been in Vietnam and that had always been flying DUSTOFF. I had never been anywhere else. The "World" was a totally foreign land you read about in Stars & Stripes or magazines. You never lived there, but someday maybe you would visit.

With those feelings, along about September, I submitted paperwork for an extension based on the promise of a Contact IP course. When we lost 460 with Tony Luc and his entire crew one very ugly night, a friend talked me out of extending and I pulled my paperwork. Eventually I went back to the "World."

I found with a shock that the "World" was a foreign land and I didn't know anybody and they sure as hell didn't know me. That is maybe except for one old guy. A WW II vet who somehow could see or feel my confusion at a welcome home party.

What we talked about, I cannot remember, but he knew what I felt. What was to celebrate? There were still guys crawling through the paddies and jungle ... humping the boonies.

They were still getting shot, still stepping on 1nines, still walking into booby traps that blew them to hell. They were OD'ing in the field, getting stung by bees, breaking arms and legs in falls and I was no longer there to get them out of their mess and back to safety. I was good at flying DUSTOFF and I left them there to get out of their mess somehow or die.

So, how could these people yuck it up and swill booze while talking about a place that was in another universe and people I could save were dying. All I wanted to do was go back to Nam and do my job.

Col. Don Retzlaff at MSC aviation assignments finally got tired of my calls requesting to go back and asked, "Tell me the truth, did you leave a wife or a kid back there?" No, but I guess I did leave family there. I never did go back.

I harbored guilt over the years and blamed myself for not going in to get Fred that night even though I knew we simply could not have found that LZ once that storm hit.

And we were lucky to get out of that weather ourselves.

Nobody else could get in there for two days until Whittiker and I made it that Sunday, so I should know better.

I also cannot help thinking that if Fred had not volunteered to go

back in, that it would have been us instead of his crew who died and bled in that LZ.

Almost 20 years later, after my military retirement and while living in Northern Virginia, I received a copy of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) newsletter.

A notice in the letters section got my eye. It was an announcement about a reunion of the Air Amb Platoon of the 326th Med. The letter was signed - "Fred Behrens."

I was a little stunned, but called information for the town in Virginia indicated as the address of the sender.

I dialed the number, not really knowing what to expect. It did seem to me that after being badly wounded in a war that our country was trying to forget, Fred might just be one very bitter SOB. He was not and is not.

We talked for two hours and I learned more about the mission he and I shared my first night with Eagle DUSTOFF.

I knew I was very lucky to have survived Vietnam and I discovered later how lucky we were to have survived that particular mission.

The explosion that virtually blew our aircraft out of the LZ that night was caused by an RPG round.

Bob Gervaci, who helped Jim Zwit onto the JP the night of his rescue, said an RPG flashed up and glanced off the bottom of our aircraft. Gervaci said today that round glanced off one of our skids. The RPG is a point-detonating round. That round had to just

glance off the skid a split second before exploding.

As so often happens in war and other tragedies, a fraction of an inch or a second in time meant the difference between life and death. It made such a difference that night not just for me, but a lot of people.

When we dropped Jim Zwit off at the 85th Evac the docs there did not expect him to live.

They pumped 25 units of blood into him. Eighteen months and 20 operations later, Jim left the hospitals. Today he is a former Chicago police officer turned private investigator with four children.

In nearly 700 hours of logged combat flight, I may have rescued as many as 700 people, probably more. My memories can picture a lot of them.

The situations that brought us together were not all dramatic and combat did not fill each of my 366 days in Vietnam.

Those days had ample shares of boredom punctuated with blood red excitement, a lot of laughter and a good measure of sadness, friendships that were real alongside the unreality of the totality and madness of the war in Vietnam.

I suppose we acted on whatever helped to forget and hide the underlying but not overwhelming fear.

Today, if certain odors evoke memories and I hear the whisper now and then, it simply tells me what I felt long ago ... flying DUSTOFF was a very special mission.

CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF IRISH/IRISH-AMERICAN HELICOPTER PILOTS IN VIETNAM

Patrick Brady, MG Ret. and a Medal of Honor recipient has lent his name and support to a project to celebrate the legacy of Irish/Irish-American helicopter pilots who served in Vietnam. Padraig Nolan, a relative of one of

those men who served, has undertaken to tour various venues and to conduct fly-ins throughout Ireland to share with its citizens a refurbished UH-1, an iconic symbol of the war.

General Brady relates the contribution of the Irish in American combat: "A civil war general said the only reason the North won was because they had more Irish". Approximately two-thirds of all Medals of Honor have been awarded to Irish-Americans. More than one-half of the MOH awarded to foreign

born recipients were born in Ireland.

Over 2,500 Irish citizens served in Vietnam. Of that number, John O'Sullivan was one of the most decorated pilots to serve. He was recognized with a DSC, three SSs, six DFCs, three BSs, and 5 PHs. He was shot down 19 times! His actions inspired Mr. Nolan to conduct the tour.

For those with an ethnic connection to Ireland (and certainly anyone else) interested in lending their support, a "Go Fund Me" link is provided below to direct donations for this endeavor, as well as further details of this historic mission.



www.gofundme.com/f/174th-huey-irl-project?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet

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.

Brownell, Steven M. USA;
Flight Class: 67-26; RVN:
68-69 B/3/17 CAV; Call-
sign: Stogie 15.



Steven Brownell passed away on November 19, 2016 due to complications from Agent Orange. He was born in Council Bluffs IA in 1946.

After his service in Vietnam, Steven became a firefighter in La Mesa CA. He would serve for 29 years, retiring as a Division Chief.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Shirley.

Caldwell, Harold M. USA, LTC Ret.;
Flight Class: 68-2; RVN: 68 48 AHC, 68-
69 92 AHC.

Harold Michael Caldwell of Lexington SC passed away December 13, 2019 after a brief illness. He was born August 8, 1942 in Greenville SC.

He attended Tennessee Military Institute and later received a degree from Lander University and an MBA from Webster University. He enlisted in the Army in 1966 and bravely served his country domestically and in Vietnam and Korea. He attended Advanced Individual Training and Officer Candidate School in Fort Sill OK in 1967.

Following his RVN tour, he served another year in Korea as a member of the 289th attack helicopter company from 1971 to 1972. Upon leaving the Army, he joined the South Carolina National Guard from 1972 until his retirement in 1989. He was the commander of the Camden Guard Armory from 1980 to 1989 and captained the 251st Medical Company in St. Matthews SC. He then had a second career at Michelin Plant Number 5 in Lexington until his retirement in 2007.

He is survived by the love of his life of 37 years, Margaret Miller Koon.

Clark, Gerald E. USA; Flight Classes: 68-
521/68-37; RVN: 69-70 119 ASHC;
Callsigns: Crocodile 2/Pappy.

Gerald Clark passed away on November 28, 2019.

Day, Dennis L. USA; Flight Class: 67-13;
RVN: 67-68 68 AHC; Callsign: Top
Tiger 12.

Dennis Day of Sacramento CA died on August 12, 2019.

Fishburn, Ronald M.
USA; Flight Class: 61-6Q;
RVN: 63 57 MED, 64 119
AHC, 67-68 221 AVN,
72-73 1/7 CAV.



Ronald Fishburn was born in Norman OK on July 3, 1933 and died on December 11, 2019.

Fite, Burges B. USA, LTC
Ret.; RVN: 68 347 AVN
DET; BS, MSM, ACM.



Burges Fite Jr. of Irmo SC, passed away January 2, 2020 surrounded by close family and friends. Burges was born October 13, 1930 in Dickson TN. He graduated from North Georgia College in 1951, majoring in history and was a member of Sigma Theta Fraternity. He received a military commission as a 2nd Lt. in the US Army Infantry and 30 days after graduation, reported to Fort Benning GA. He was deployed to Korea, receiving his promotion to 1st Lt. while fighting in that country. On his return to the US, he received his Parachute Wings after completing the Airborne Course at Ft. Benning.

In 1971, Burges retired from service. After leaving the service, Burges was employed with the Hartford Insurance Group in Hartford CT, retiring in 1991.

He is survived by his wife, Sara Maureen Baird.

Fowler, Robert M. USA;
Flight Classes: 53-J, 56-17;
RVN: 67 390 TC DET,
67-68 17 CAG.



Robert Fowler was born on October 14, 1928. He died in Cookeville County TN on December 27, 2019.

Gannon, Francis J. Jr.
USA; Flight Classes: 62-6,
66-2QC; RVN: 66-67
484 TC DET, 66-67 282
AHC, 68-69 406 TC
DET, 69 16 TC DET.



Francis "Frank" Gannon, Jr., 81, died on December 14, 2019. He was born in Rock Island IL. After eight years of active duty, Frank became a business owner where his honesty and integrity earned him a reputation in the food service industry. He was a humble man who did great things.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Emme.

Goldsberry, James O.
Sr. USA, CW4 Ret.;
Flight Class: 57-9;
RVN: 66 HHT/1/9
CAV 1 CAV, 68-69 1
SIG BDE; DFC; Call-
sign: Bull Whip 6.



James Goldsberry Sr. passed away on November 27, 2019. He was born on April 28, in Newman IL. James served in Korea and Vietnam.

While convalescing from the injury in an action resulting in his DFC, James was assigned to Bell Helicopter as an acceptance pilot for the Army. He served as a test pilot during his second tour. He was a Mason, Shriner, and a VHPA life member.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Peggy.

Hageman, Dwight C. USAF, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 57-D; RVN: 68-69 38 ARRS; Callsign: Pedro.



Dwight Hageman, PHD, passed away on December 4, 2019. He was born on July 25, 1933 at Women's Hospital, New York City.

Dwight's earthly travels took him through Bronxville High School and Alleghany College in Pennsylvania. Dwight earned a bachelor's degree from Alleghany College; a master's degree from Southwest Texas State Teachers College; and a Doctor of Education from University of North Texas. From there, ROTC led Dwight to his professional life as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force.

He flew the C-124, the KB50 air refueling aircraft, and finally the HH-43. Upon military retirement, Dwight wrote air crew manuals for American Airlines; served as director of curriculum for Hallmark Institute of Aeronautics; and was employed by several other companies. He also served as a Professor of Air Science at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor.

Hinkle, William C. USA; Flight Class: 64-7W; RVN: 65-66 A/227 AVN 1 CAV, 68-69 205 ASHC.



William Hinkle was born December 10, 1929 in Pennsylvania. He passed away December 12, 2019 after completing an amazing journey in this world full of adventure and accomplishment.

Bill joined the Air Force at 19 years old and became a crew chief on B-52s. He was a civilian pilot in his 20s and when the Vietnam War heated up, he seized the opportunity to change to the Army and become a military helicopter pilot. He served two tours in Vietnam, one year in Hueys and one year in Chinooks.

His first retirement at 40 years old was followed by a second career flying Hueys for the EPA at first, and then flying fixed wing aircraft for the Department of Interior. Bill and Norma moved to Boise in 1978 for work with the office of Aircraft Services.

The third and final career Bill had was to start a small flight school at the Caldwell airport. His business, 'Hinkle Aviation', has turned out 100s of pilots in the Treasure Valley since he started it in 1998. Bill lived and breathed for aviation; it defined who he was.

Huber, Ronald L. USA; Flight Class: 68-25; RVN: 68-69 C/1/9 CAV 1 CAV, 68-69 240 AHC, 69 HHC/12 CAG, 69 HHC/11 CAB; Callsign: Mad Dog 21.



Ronald (Ron) Huber of Ankeny IA, passed away January 1, 2020. He was born on December 19, 1947, in Rapid City SD. He grew up in Rapid City, Aberdeen and Mitchell SD. In 1965, Ron graduated from high school in Clinton IA. He started working and later became a Liberal Arts major.

After Vietnam, he went back to college. He received an Associate of Arts degree from Ellsworth Community College in 1972. In 1974, he earned degrees from the University of Northern Iowa with a double major in Speech and Radio & Television Broadcasting, just short of a third in Theatre.

Ron taught Ankeny Community School District from 1975 to 2005. Subjects that he covered included Language Arts, Theatre, and Forensics.

James, John T. USA; Flight Class: 64-6W; RVN: 64-65 155 AHC, 65 52 AL PLATOON.



John Thomas James, born in Sennybridge, Wales, UK, February 27, 1940, passed away on January 8, 2020 in Port St Lucie. He became a naturalized citizen with his parents.

John Graduated from Chichester High School in Boothwyn PA. In 1958, he worked at Boeing Aircraft Company as a final assembly mechanic building Chinook helicopters. He graduated from Middlesex College with an AAS in Business Administration. He also graduated from Wilmington College DE with a BS in Aviation Mgt. He joined the Army reserves in Upland PA and served six years before volunteering for Army helicopter training.

Upon release from the Army, he acquired a chief pilot position, flying a helicopter for Public Service Electric & Gas Company of Newark NJ where he set up and managed the air operation. He had acquired his Airline Transport Rating, single-engine and multi-engine helicopter and airplane ratings, instrument rating, and flight instructor in these ratings. Upon his retirement in

1996, he had accumulated 17,000 helicopter flight hours.

He was the assistant fire chief in North Brunswick NJ. Upon retiring, he moved to Port St Lucie in 1999 and lived in PGA Village.

He is survived by his loving wife, Judy.

LaCourse, John D. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 64-2FW; RVN: 65-66 161 AHC, 67-68 A/7/1 CAV; DFC, BS, PH; Callsigns: Scorpion 19, Apache 16.



John LaCourse passed away on December 8, 2019 in San Antonio TX. He was born December 2, 1936 in Brunswick ME. John was a decorated Army veteran and spent two tours in Vietnam flying helicopters to defend our country and fellow troops. It was on his second tour in Vietnam that he was wounded while flying a mission which resulted in the eventual loss of his right leg. John and his family relocated to San Antonio in 1967 where he has lived since that time.

After retiring from the military, he began his personal career, which included returning to school and graduating with honors from Trinity University with a BS Degree, running a Real Estate office. John officially retired in 1996 and returned to the three passions he had developed in his life: song writing/singing, oil painting, and his real passion of playing golf. Golf is where he affectionately received the nickname "One Legged Bandit" for taking the money of all his friends and acquaintances that he has made over the years on the golf courses of San Antonio. John also stayed very active assisting other war veterans who had been injured in other battles and sent to Fort Sam Houston to cope with the injuries they had received defending their country. He actively participated in Amputee Golf Tournaments and won many awards during his time with the group.

Laskey, Christopher J. USA; Flight Classes: 66-19, 66-17; RVN: 67-68 A/229 AHB 1 CAV; Callsign: Serpent.



Christopher Laskey, of Pleasant Prairie WI passed away November 27, 2019, at Froedtert Pleasant Prairie Hospital. He was born on January 3, 1947, in Chicago IL.

He worked as an Air Traffic Controller,

later retired from Exelon Corporation, and was currently Chief Pilot for Midwestern Helicopter.

He is survived by his loving wife of 33 years, Donna.

Long, Gerald L. USMC, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 68-36; RVN: 69-70 HMM-161; Callsign: Cattle Call 43.



Gerald "Joe" Long, 77, went to heaven December 8, 2019. He was a 1960 Sandia High Graduate, 1968 & 1978 UNM Graduate. He served as a Medevac and US Presidential helicopter pilot, physical educator and TVI educator, esteemed Post-Tension Ironworker Foreman- (Ironworkers 495), and Intel Trainer.

McKay, Donald USA; Flight Classes: 66-17, 66-15; RVN: 66-67 129 AHC, 68-69 178 ASHC, 71-74; Callsign: 71-74 AIR AMERICA

Donald McKay, of East Sandwich MA, passed away unexpectedly at home on January 22, 2020. He was born on September 27, 1944 in Weymouth MA.

Donald grew up in Hingham MA. He spent two tours in Vietnam as an Army helicopter pilot, then as a pilot in Thailand, and in The United Arab Emirates until his retirement.

Oatfield, James P. USA; Flight Classes 68-503, 68-3; RVN: 68-69 A/377 ART 101 ABN, 69 A/4/77 ARA 101 ABN, 71 3 BDE 101 ABN, 71-72, B/3/17 CAV; DFC, BS, PH (2OLC), ACM; Callsigns: Gunner 89, Dragon 21.

James Oatley died on August 1, 2017 from surgical complications. He was born on August 8, 1943 in Alberta Canada. He was raised in San Pedro CA and graduated high school in that city. Later in life, he earned a bachelor's degree from Chaminade University and master's degree from Boston University in Political Science.

He flew Kiowas (206B) in New Guinea for Air Fast Helicopter Company, and flew Kiowas for five years with the World Health Organization in Western Africa. He also worked with Cubic Corporation at Fort Irwin CA for three years as an Aviation Training Analyst.

He is survived by his wife, Hilary.

Phillips, Samuel H. Jr. USA; Flight Class: 68-6; RVN: 68-69 B/227 AVN 1 CAV; SS, DFC, BS, ACM; Callsigns: Masher/Yellow 1.



Samuel Phillips, Jr. of Van Buren, passed away December 25, 2019 at his home. He was born April 23, 1943 in Birmingham AL.

He was a graduate of Ole Miss. He was a retired co-owner of PFP Life Insurance Company in Fort Smith, and was a member of the American Legion Post 31; the Military Hall of Fame; the Quiet Birdmen; the Military Officer's Association of America (MOAA); past President of the United Way of Fort Smith; former Board Member of Sparks Hospital; Life Member of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA); the Combat Helicopter Pilots Association (CHPA); a member of the UAMS Chancellor Circle; and the UAMS Foundation Fund Board.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy.

Reynolds, William M. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 66-3; RVN: 66-67 173 ABN BDE, 69-70 A /3/17 CAV; SS, DFC (OLC), BS (V), PH, ACM (V); Callsigns: Casper/Silver Spur 16.



William Reynolds of Salado passed away on December 28, 2019 at home with his loving family by his side. He was born on July 13, 1943 in Baxley GA.

As a child, he grew up in Macon GA and entered the United States Army in 1961 at the age of 18 after graduating from Lanier High school. He served three years as an enlisted soldier from 1961 to 1964. A year later, he re-enlisted for the warrant officer flight candidate program. During his Army career, he served in many locations throughout the United States and overseas. He graduated from Embry Riddle University with a degree in aeronautical technology. After 20 years, he retired from the Army and continued to work for the United States Army as a civilian for another 20 years. He retired from government service in 2004.

He is survived by his loving wife, Julie.

Riley, John A. Dr. USA; Flight Classes: 68-21, 68-35; RVN: 69-70 25 AVN; PH; Callsign: Diamond Head 10.



Dr. John A. Riley passed away in his home in Templeton, surrounded by his loving family on January 8th, 2020, after a battle with lung cancer. John was born in 1947 in Findlay OH. He graduated from Findlay High School in 1966. He proudly served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. After the war he received a Bachelor of Arts from Toledo University in 1975, and a Master of Arts, 1978 and Doctorate in Philosophy in Psychology, 1980 from the University of Southern Mississippi. He worked as a psychologist at the Atascadero State Hospital for many years and had two private practices where he counseled veterans. In his work he gained trusted friends and never turned down anyone who needed his help.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara.

Sadler, Peter L. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Classes: 67-23, 67-25; RVN: 68-69 A/7/17 CAV; Callsign: White 23.



Peter L. Sadler, age 72, passed away on October 19, 2019 following a several year battle with cancer. Born in Yreka CA, he grew up in Blythe CA graduating high school in 1964.

After his active duty tour, he attended and graduated from Brigham Young University with a B.S. in 1973. Shortly afterward he moved to Arizona and continued his military service with the Arizona National Guard until retirement in 1994.

In October 1976, Pete joined the Arizona Highway Patrol serving as an officer, and eventually promoting to Rotary Wing Pilot with the newly formed Tucson Air Rescue Section in 1978. In 1989, he and his wife Roberta transferred to the Flagstaff unit where he served until his retirement in December 2007. He continued flying at the Grand Canyon giving aerial tours until his final retirement in 2012.

Sanford, Steven D. USA, CPT Ret.; Flight Class: 66-22; RVN: 67 D/3/4 CAV, 67-68 B/25 AVN 25 INF, 71-72 162 AHC; Callsigns: Centaur 22, Diamondhead 20, Vulture 3.



Steven Sanford was born on February 22, 1942 in Barberton. He died at the Pleasant View Health Care Center on January 20, 2020.

He was a graduate of Barberton High School and retired from the U.S. Army after 26 years of service.

He is survived by his loving wife, Ursula.

Small, Harry C. Jr. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 67-14; RVN: 68-69 361 AVN, 69 HHC/52 CAB, 71-72 HHC/229 AVN 1 CAV, 72 12 AVN GP; DFC (OLC), BS V (2 OLC), SM; Callsigns: Pink Panther 26, Dragon 3A, Stacked Deck 3A.



Harry Small Jr. passed away at home surrounded by his family on January 8, 2020. He was born in Cameron TX on September 24, 1944.

In 1964, Harry entered the U.S. Army and became a highly decorated combat aviator during his two tours in Vietnam. He retired in 1986 after 23 years of service to the country he loved. He was a lifetime member of the Viet-

nam Helicopter Pilots Association; past president of the Perry Kiwanis Club; an avid golfer and Dallas Cowboys fan; and a member of Andrew United Methodist Church. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska and a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma.

Left to cherish his memory is his loving wife of 50 years, Karan.

Souders, Roscoe V. USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Classes: 66-5W/66-5; RVN: 66-67 4 TC CMND, 66-67 98, 69-70 E/723 MNT 23 INF TC DET; Callsigns: Hereafter/Dean/Roadrunner.

Roscoe Souders was born on March 5, 1934 and passed away on December 9, 2019. He was a resident of Dothan AL at the time of passing.

Stevens, Paul L. USA; Flight Class: 67-17; RVN: 67-68 57 AHC; DFC, BS, PH; Callsign: Cougar 19.

Paul Stevens of Chestertown MD died on November 19, 2019 at University of Maryland Shore Medical Center at Chestertown. He was born on May 25, 1941 in Rock Hall MD. He graduated from Rock Hall High School, class of 1959. He worked on the water until 1962 when he enlisted in the United States Army.

His post-military career was with FAA from

1970 until he retired in 2003. He also worked with a trucking company based out of Atlanta GA, the service department at Rosenthal Honda, and with Intelsat (International Telecommunications Satellites). Mr. Stevens was a member of the Chester Lodge #115; Olive Branch Masonic Lodge #114 in Leesburg, VA; Chestertown Elks Lodge # 2474; Sgt. Preston Ashley American Legion #228 in Rock Hall; and the VFW.

He is survived by his wife, Ann.

Warwick, Earl G. USA; Flight Classes: 68-503/68-1; RVN: 68-69 3/17 CAV; Callsign: Bagger 25.



Earl Warwick, Jr of Princess Anne, died December 8, 2019, at Genesis in Salisbury MD. He was born on November 29, 1947 in Salisbury MD.

Following his RVN tour, he later began a career as a correctional officer at Eastern Correctional Institution. Earl taught at the Criminal Justice Academy, Salisbury. Active in the Manokin Masonic Lodge in Princess Anne, he served as Worshipful Master. He was also a member of American Legion Post 94. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Earl will be remembered for being very patriotic with an unmatched love for our country.

He is survived by his ex-wife, Elaine.

The following article was reprinted with permission from the Rush County Gazette.

Story by Linda Kenyon, staff reporter.

Warrant Officer Eisenhower honored

Family members, friends and some Vietnam Veterans from the 240th Assault Helicopter Company met to remember and honor Warrant Officer James Doyle Eisenhower on Saturday, August 17. He was killed in action in Vietnam on August 18, 1968. He was a graduate of La Crosse High School in 1963.

The group met at the La Crosse High School at 3:00 p.m. to view the memorial located inside the school and then place a marker on the school grounds where a tree will be planted later this fall. They met at the Ransom Cemetery following the school visit for a brief ceremony and to salute WO



The tree memorial marker. (photo by Morris Miller)

Eisenhour. The group was presented a flag flown in Afghanistan on the 50th anniversary of Eisenhower's death. The flag was presented by Jerry Molstad, who recently returned from deployment to Afghanistan.

Eisenhour was flying a Huey helicopter on a resupply mission when he responded to a call for help from a landing zone under fire. A long-range reconnaissance patrol had been retrieved from a landing zone, but a body was seen lying in the landing zone and Eisen-



Tara Eisenhour, daughter of James Eisenhower, Steve Beckner, Morris Miller, Ridge Smith and Richard Toops, military veterans, and Mark Eisenhour, brother of James Eisenhower, are some of those gathered at the memorial to James Eisenhower located in La Crosse High School.

(photo by Linda Kenyon)

hour volunteered to retrieve it. The helicopter was immediately fired upon and Eisenhower was killed instantly. His co-pilot was able to fly the damaged helicopter a mile away where a helicopter picked up Eisenhower and his injured crew chief.

TAPS

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

Arnold, John W. USMC; died on January 10, 2020.

Austin, Sydney C. USA; Flight Class: 67-7; RVN: 70-71 D/1/1 CAV; Callsign: Saber 17; died on December 13, 2019.

Campbell, Richard E. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 70-32; died on December 20, 2019.

Ebeltoft, William C. USA; Flight Classes: 67-503/67-23; died on December 15, 2019.

Ellis, George F. III USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Class 56-7; RVN: 65-66 339 TC CO, 68 478 HHC; died on December 7, 2019.

Farley, William P. USA; Flight Class: 71-5; died on December 14, 2019.

Fisher, Grady F. USAF, COL Ret.; Flight Class 55; RVN: 68-69 20 SOS; Callsign: Green Hornet; died on January 18, 2019.

Gouge, Royce D. USA, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 70-2; BS, MSM; died on January 12, 2020.

Harkness, Delbert W. USAF; RVN: 69-70 20 SOS; Callsign Pony Express; died on December 30, 2019.

Hobgood, Wells S. USA; Flight Classes: 68-19, 68-31; died on December 25, 2019.

Keehn, Richard C. USA; Flight Class: 58-2; RVN: 62-63 33 TCO; SS, PH; died on December 20, 2019.

Kennemer, James D. USA; Flight Classes: 70-11, 70-9; died on November 1, 2019.

Lape, Douglas G. USA; Flight Class: 66-15; RVN: 66-67 336 AHC; Callsign: T-Bird; died on January 2, 2020.

Law, Harold E. USA; Flight Class: 67-6; died on December 28, 2019.

Lockwood, Duane R. USA; Flight Class: 70-18; PH (3); died on December 5, 2019.

Mann, Paul E. USA; Flight Classes: 69-37, 69-35; BS, ACM; died on December 8, 2019.

March, Robert USA; Flight Class: 69-40; RVN: 70-71 192 AHC; died on October 19, 2017.

Mixner, Frank L. USN, CMDR Ret.; RVN: 71-72 HA(L)-3 DET; MSM, NCM; died on January 4, 2020.

Moran, James D. USA; died on November 16, 2019.

Perez, David L. USA; Flight Classes: 68-501, 67-25; died on January 8, 2020.

Petersen, Kent G. USMC; died on January 17, 2020.

Pressey, William W. USN; Flight Class: 66; RVN: 66-67 HA(L) - 3 DET 4; SS, DFC (2), NCM (V); died on June 26, 2019.

Schultz, France A. USA; Flight Class: 69-21; died January 18, 2020.

Schaefer Ervin L. USAF, MAJ Ret.; Flight Class: 51-D; RVN: 65 38 ARRS DET 10; Callsign: Pedro; died on January 5, 2020.

Thorpe, Paul M. USN; RVN: 66-67 HS-6; died circa December 6, 2019.



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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 14 New Members and covers the period 12.09.19 to 1.31.19

Burnette Lester E. 'Les'
Maryville Tennessee
Army
68-517 68-31
123 CAB 23 INF in 68-69

Conklin Austin C. 'Chuck' **
North Richland Hills Texas
Army
71-38
120 AHC in 72; 59 CAC in 72-73

Crane Gary D
Walkerton Indiana
Army
70-15 70-11
C/16 CAV in 70-71

Crosby Huey A. **
Summerville South Carolina
Army
69-21
229 AHB 1 CAV in 69-70

Drewry Harry G
Cheney Washington
Army
70-50 70-44
7/1 CAV in 71-72

Durr George W.
Clinton Mississippi
Army
67-15
1 CAV DIV in 68-69; 243 ASHC in 69-70

Lester Lionel Grant **
Evanston Wyoming
Army
71-1 70-47
189 AHC in 67-68; 335 AHC in 71; 114 AHC in 72

Mergen Thomas S. **
Fischer Texas
Army
69-7
7/17 CAV in 69-70

Mitchell Clayton C.
Frazier Park California
Army
69-24

Newell Robert J.
Drummond Island Michigan
Army
69-47

Pinkerton Danny C. 'Dan'
Ventura California
Army
70-44

Randolph Christopher J.
Ballston Lake New York
Army
68-514 68-24
A/7/17 CAV in 69

Rousey Morris L. 'Bud' **
Pensacola Florida
Army
70-6

Winover Jack W.
Prescott Valley Arizona
Army

Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

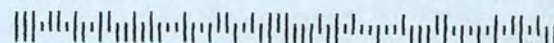
If you were a US military helicopter pilot or crew in combat or imminent danger area – in any conflict - you should be a member of CHPA.

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



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





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