



# The VHPA AVIATOR

The Newsletter of The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association



*CW2 Fred McCarthy, 121st AHC (Vikings), Soc Trang, 1968, See Page 10 for the Story*

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

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



The New Normal: Who could have imagined that when we gathered in Kansas City for our reunion last year and said our “See you in Denver” farewells to each other, that the world we knew would soon be so profoundly altered?

When ATC places an airline flight in a routine hold, the aircraft maintains that racetrack pattern, then lands, and about the worst that occurs is an inconvenient delay, and then we are on with our lives.

In this pandemic “holding pattern” however, nothing is routine. Not only is this flight consumed with warning lights that keep coming on, but we find ourselves checking and re-checking emergency procedures and fretting about what’s coming next.

While in the typical holding pattern, everything on the ground usually continues as is. Not this time. Everyone’s career, retirement, travel, family, hobbies, households, assets, and the hundred mundane things we did each week have all been affected – some much more than others.

We are adjusting to the new normal, as uncomfortable, as inconvenient, and as disconcerting as those adjustments have been. And, I’d like to think we’ve quickly learned some lessons (so far) along the way:

1. We took our lifestyle and a lot of other things for granted.
2. We can make tough decisions when we have to, and we will survive.
3. Our country and our economy will rebound.
4. We did not pay enough attention to, nor did we place as much value as we should have, on our family and friends.

Regarding money and investments, it is often said that we have “short memories” when the stock market corrects or dips. There is the initial panic period, things calm down, growth restarts, people feel confident, we revel in the rebound, and we’re back to the same behavior.

Well, I doubt that when this crisis passes, and it most assuredly will, that we will ever view the world in quite the same way. While at the same time we are resilient, we are also more fragile and vulnerable than we realized or wanted to admit.

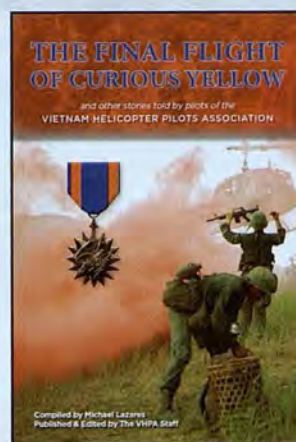
Hopefully this time, during the inevitable recovery, we shall become a more thoughtful, caring, and neighborly society – more willing to look out for each other – a little more courteous, and a little more forgiving. Hopeful-

ly this time we shall live up to what the human spirit is capable of doing and being.

As far as the VHPA is concerned, we are a relatively small and unique group of men – we are a group that has witnessed first-hand not just the horror of what men are capable of doing to each other in war, but the selfless bravery and the best of human nature as we dedicated ourselves to each other, and to the men on the ground.

Going forward, let us cherish each other perhaps more than we ever have. And, when we gather in Charlotte, and each year thereafter, let us remember that our reunions now have more meaning than ever.

Art Jacobs, VHPA President



**SALES TO DATE**

*of the ...*  
**FINAL FLIGHT OF CURIOUS YELLOW**

*have generated over*

**\$6500**

***for the VHPA Scholarship Fund!***

***We thank those who contributed to the book, and those who purchased it!***

**GET YOUR COPY TODAY**

**AVAILABLE AT:** amazon.com  
*in paperback and kindle*



# FROM THE STAFF AT HQ!

We hope everyone is doing well and not going stir crazy staying in. It was disappointing but necessary for the reunion in Denver to be cancelled. Everyone that registered for the Denver Reunion should receive their refund by the end of May. We hope to see you in Charlotte in July 2021!

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

REMAILING ITEMS! If you move, PLEASE go on line to <https://directory.vhpa.org> and log in with your member number, then set up a password. Then on the left side will be a box with red lettering that says, "Other Services". Under "Other Services" will be a box that says, "Update My Information". Click on this button and you can make updates directly to your information. You can also call HQ with an update to your contact information!

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

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

Sherry Rodgers  
VHPA Office Manager

## Combat Helicopter Pilots Association

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

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



Website: [www.chpa-us.org](http://www.chpa-us.org)  
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# UPCOMING REUNIONS

Vinh Long Outlaw Association  
(VLOA) reunion  
62nd AVN CO  
CO A 502 AVN BN  
175 AHC

*And all attached units*

Where: San Antonio TX

**When: September 17 – 21, 2020**

Contact: Bert L. Rice 410-507-3366

bert07@comcast.net or  
www.vihnlongoutlaws.com

132nd "Hercules" and the 178th "Boxcars"  
2020 Reunion

Where: Savannah GA, Hampton Inn and  
Suites, 20 Johnston St. 31405 (912) 721-3700

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

**When: 19 – 23 October, 2020**

Contact: Bill McRae, Hercules 18,  
770-843-3973

Additional Details: [www.132ASHC.org](http://www.132ASHC.org)

192 AHC 2020 Reunion

All former members  
of the Company are welcome

**When: November 6-9**

Where: Crown Plaza Hotel, Charleston SC

Contact: Dennis Javens Dennis-  
javens43@gmail.com 805-903-3967

*As of press run, we have received  
the following cancellations.  
For any not so noted, we advise  
checking with the POC.*

## CANCELLATIONS:

B Troop 7/17 Air Cav  
June 8-12 Branson MO.  
Anzac Day, April 25,  
Ft. Rucker AL - April 24,  
ceremony in Australia.

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. DOUGLAS HILLS JR., US CAVALRY (RET.)

THE  
**AVIATORS**

VIETNAM HELICOPTER COMBAT, 1971-72

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



To: Denver Reunion Registrants  
From: VHPA HQ  
Subject: Room Reservation Cancellations  
Date: 25 March 2020

## CANCELLATION STEPS FOR THE HOTELS:

*To everyone who made a hotel reservation at the Downtown Sheraton or the Courtyard Marriott for the 2020 reunion, YOU will have to cancel your own room reservation. The PassKey system does not have the capability for HQ to batch or group VHPA registrants to do that. This will be no different than for those of you who purchased airline tickets or pre-paid for discounted rental car reservations.*

### *Cancellation steps for the Sheraton:*

1. Go to the VHPA website at [vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org)
2. Go to the VHPA reunion page.
3. Click on the following link:  
<https://book.passkey.com/event/49900388/owner/3130/home>
4. Click on "Manage Existing Reservation."
5. Put your hotel confirmation number and last name in the boxes as requested.
6. Click on "Submit."

If you run into difficulty, their telephone number is: (888)-627-8405.

### *Cancellation steps for the Courtyard:*

1. Call the Marriott Courtyard at (303)-571-1114
2. Identify yourself as a VHPA member.

**REFUNDS:** HQ has begun the refund process for the Denver reunion. You will be receiving a FULL refund (minus dues, donations, and directory orders), and as indicated previously, that will take place over the next 6 weeks or so, but before the original reunion dates.

And, as you may well imagine, the processing of refunds for some 500 individual registrations is a time-consuming administrative task and we ask that you refrain from calling HQ to inquire about your refund or the process.

*Thank you for your cooperation  
during this very unique time.*

## QUILTERS SHOW AND TELL

AH SHUCKS!!! Everyone has probably received word that the 2020 Reunion in Denver has been cancelled. With that in mind, all quilts designated for the 2020 reunion shall be held over for next year's reunion in Charlotte. It doesn't mean that more quilts aren't wanted or needed. Please continue your generosity.

I'd like to have a special thank you to Roselyn Atwood and Shireen Hattan. They have made the quilts pop with their talent. They have been longarm quilting for the VHPA Veterans for many years.

I am also reaching out for anyone who has a longarmer to help with quilting. It would be greatly appreciated. You can forward the block(s) or quilts to me no later than August 15th.

*I shall miss everyone this year,  
hope to see you in Charlotte.*

Kathleen Sherfey  
12420 W 53rd Terr.  
Shawnee, KS 66216  
[klskms@aol.com](mailto:klskms@aol.com)



To: All VHPA Members  
From: Your Executive Council  
Subject: Denver Reunion  
Date: 20 March 2020

# THE VHPA 37<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REUNION IN DENVER IS CANCELED

It is with great sadness and frustration that we formally announce that we will NOT be gathering in Denver this year. It is also with great relief however, that this decision is being made with the welfare of our membership as the priority.

- Your HQ staff will begin the process to automatically refund your reunion money.
- You do NOT need to request a refund.
- You do NOT need to call HQ.

You will receive a refund whether or not you purchased reunion insurance. At present, you should receive a **FULL** refund minus donations you may have made, dues, and Directory orders. We anticipate this process to be completed by the original reunion dates.

Regarding airline tickets you may have purchased, pre-paid rental cars, etc., as you can readily understand, you will have to sort that out with the individual companies on your own. Some airlines may offer a full or partial refund, others merely a credit for future flights without a change fee.

*There is one VHPA organizational announcement of note: In keeping with the VHPA by-laws, and in the absence of an officer election at the Annual Business Meeting in Denver, the present Executive Council will remain intact until the Charlotte reunion in 2021.*

Gentlemen, this has been an unprecedented and hopefully unique situation that has had a profound impact on all of us, and our nation. However, if any group of people can demonstrate a flexibility and resiliency when confronted by unexpected challenges, it is us.

- You cannot change the wind, but you can always adjust your sails.
- 10% of life is what happens to you, 90% of life is how you respond.
- You are not defeated when you lose, you are only defeated when you quit.

Ever since our first reunion in 1984, we have gathered each year to renew our bond of friendship and comradeship, and to remember our lost brothers. That will most assuredly resume in Charlotte. (The "there I was" stories related to 2020 should be very exciting to hear.)

*Our very best goes out to you and your families, and we sincerely thank you for your unwavering support and confidence throughout this trying situation.*

**PLEASE  
STAY SAFE**



## From the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association Board of Directors

*Gentlemen,*

It's official. The 2020 VHCMA reunion scheduled to be held in Bloomington, MN June 2-6, 2020 has been canceled. The risk vs. reward is far too great for people our age. Many of us have compromised immune systems as well as our spouses. The Board of Directors spent many hours working on this before making this first ever decision.

If you have already made your reservation with the Hilton DoubleTree you should have already

received a cancellation #. If not please do so by calling them at 952-835-7800 during normal Business hours M-F 9:00am 5:00pm. Make sure you speak with a person at the hotel and get cancellation #. If you have already registered with the VHCMA we are in the process of refunding your money. If you signed up for one of the tours with Metro Connections 952-767-3606 you must contact them for your refund.

Any readers who belong to both the VHPA and VHCMA, kindly contact your friends in the latter organization to assist us in getting the word out.

*Tom Frankenfield,  
Executive Director VHCMA*

## FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

The cancellation of our VHPA Reunion is a necessary disappointment. On the bright side, no-one will be harassed by my in-person solicitations to "submit a story" for another 14 months. Tom Hirschler, Kay and I will endeavor to continue to produce issues that are as interesting as possible. That of course is an incentive to ask for those stories in my message.

As you know, Mac Liebman, an accomplished author, lends his talent to writing book reviews. Many of these are penned by our members. His ability to do so is, of course, dependent on his own work regarding how soon after a request he produces a review. There is no charge for this. An equally important fact is there is no requirement to place an ad for said book in the Aviator, yet many authors view this as a logical vehicle to target likely readers. When possible, we extend the courtesy of timing the ad to coincide with the review in the same issue.

I have read a majority of the books reviewed in the magazine. They are not provided to me, rather they are purchases. In so doing I had an

idea allowing a benefit for both authors and our own readership. Many of the books contain chapters that will "stand alone" as articles, should they not require the context of the overall book. Ambush, in the current issue is an example of this approach. This is an opportunity for us to invite other authors to take advantage of a mutually beneficial opportunity.

One aspect of our work on the magazine is to accept/reject submissions (or in some cases provide some editing for length). While we do not keep statistics, we publish nearly every suitable article we receive. On more than one occasion, we have received responses such as, "You think my story is good enough for the Aviator?" Nearly all are. The simple reason is we are an organization focused on establishing a legacy. That legacy is the collective experience of thousands of honorable, patriotic, citizens who performed a difficult job and did so with dedication, courage and innovation. Within that common achievement are thousands of unique situations we all keep in our memory - share them.

**Tom Kirk**



## ~ LOOKING FOR ~

I am looking for anyone who has a contact within the family of the late CW2 John R. Hedges. He graduated with Class 71-45 and passed away on March 3, 2013. I served with John, and I'd like to share some wonderful memories and a photo with his family. If you can identify a contact, please supply them with my email if they are interested.

*Thank you.*

Wayne S. De Vore 3/5 Air Cav, devoreshe@aol.com

*Hello,*

I am looking for my only first cousin, William Ernest Johnson who would be about 74 years old. I know he flew a helicopter in Vietnam, although I don't know exactly what year. I know his helicopter went down, he was injured, but he then returned to the US. I know he lived, at least for a while, in Southern California.

I've lost track of my cousin Bill. I'd like to know if he's still alive. I want to reach out to see if he wants contact and/or needs any help.

Thank you. I look forward to any guidance you can give me in my search.

*Sincerely,*

Martha (Marty) Johnson Karlin martykarlin@icloud.com

*The above-named pilot does not appear in our database with the middle name supplied, however Ms. Karlin is not positive regarding same. ~Ed*

*Gentlemen,*

Several months ago, I placed a request for anyone with knowledge of a couple of events I was involved with in III Corps, 1970 and 1971. To those who have replied and assisted me in getting the facts straight, I appreciate it. God Bless Al Gore's Internet! I now am looking for someone knowledgeable in correctly filling out the forms that DA requires in submitting a retroactive request for combat awards. As instructed, I have gone to my Senator's office as well as my Congressman. Neither of whom have in their offices any knowledgeable staff when it comes to correctly completing these forms. We have done our best, even contacted the Department of the Army for guidance. But in every attempt, they discovered some flaw in what we submitted. If anyone out there has experience successfully submitting these forms, please contact me. I have one more attempt left. Then, like pulling the C-Model pitch control for the third time, I am out of luck.

*Thanks.*

Tom Morrissey, CW3, 117th AHC RVN 1970-'71.  
Email me: tomintxk@gmail.com.

## HELP PRESERVE YOUR HISTORY!

Unit specific items: Patches, Uniforms, Headgear, Flight Gear, Calling Cards, Souvenirs AND Captured Bad Guy Items!

# WANTED

## Helicopter Memorabilia from the Vietnam War

Contact: John Conway

**NEW!!! 816-813-3488**

**JPConway@sbcglobal.net**

**NEW!!! Website: museum.vhpa.org**

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

Fair Prices Paid. Not for profit.  
References available.

### Unit Insignia or Logos on:

Coins, Caps, Shirts, Knives, Awards,  
Mugs, Badges & Much More!  
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850-222-7755

Rick@richardyoodmas.graphics



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Richard Yood, MAS  
Vietnam  
67 - 68 & 70 - 71  
Master Army Aviator, Ret

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# A Date With An Old Girl Friend UH1B 13972

A friend of mine, Bob Bogash, has been instrumental in putting teams of what he calls “ghosts” together to acquire and restore iconic aircraft for the Seattle Museum of Flight. The “ghosts” are pilots, mechanics, philanthropists, enthusiasts, flight crew members, and uniquely skilled experts. His motto is “Go big or go home!” Among the aircraft he and his teams have acquired are the first Boeing 727, a British/French Concorde, the “Midnight Express” Vietnam B-52, and a Constellation. He believes (on a stack of bibles) that aircraft have “souls” and can speak to “ghosts.”

I was a CW2 Fire Team Leader in UH-1B gunships with the 121st Assault Helicopter Company stationed at Soc Trang, RVN, from Dec 1967 to Dec 1968. We were in “The World Famous Soc Trang Tigers.” Humility was not considered a virtue in our company. My call sign was Viking 23. A fellow pilot in the 121st, Tom Jameson, texted me and said, “Hey padre, did you know that the aircraft you commanded made it back from our unit in Vietnam, and is on display in South Carolina at Fort Jackson.”

My older son, Michael, a businessman and regional supervisor for “Springfree Trampolines” does business in Texas and Georgia and loves visiting historic Charleston, SC. He invited his mother and me to accompany his family there on an epic four-day vacation just before Christmas 2019. I didn’t want to hijack the trip over an old girl-friend, but since I had found out that Fort Jackson was only a two-hour drive away, I thought, “What the hell!! Why don’t we add a little romantic side trip?” I found a picture of the “old girl” on Google Maps using a web site entitled the Tour of Honor. It is a list, data, and coordinates of all displayed Vietnam helicopters. I made a few calls to the Fort’s public information office, and was tickled

with their enthusiasm for facilitating such a reunion.

Our visit occurred on December 23, 2019. There was a monsoon rain falling over South Carolina, the wind was howling, and there was a powerful storm front in the whole area.

I brought my old class A uniform I hadn’t worn in 50 years, my treasured Viking beret, a black Viking T shirt we wore back then, and my tail rotor chain wrist-

band, and wore my flight school class ring to be dressed appropriately for the reunion pictures we planned to take with our cell phones. Three ladies from the public information office went out of their way to welcome us to the base. Their names were Veran, Darcie, Julie, and Leslie Ann

Our arrival was delayed by a car fire on the interstate highway. As we were delayed a few minutes in traffic on approach, we notified our hosts who mentioned that the three TV news teams and two radio station reporters were waiting. This, of course, was quite an unexpected surprise; I was glad I had written out and rehearsed a few thoughts ahead of time. My

family said, “Hey, this is more than we expected!” “Papa, are you going to introduce us?” “Yes of course!” My granddaughter, Lizah, 8 years old, piped up, “Tell them I like animals!” “OK I’ll tell them you sing in the Seattle Girls Choir, and if I get a chance I’ll mention you like animals.”

We arrived at Gate #2 and were escorted by L.A. to the museum passing the aircraft with its distinctive Viking logo in a menacing, raked climb out attitude perched in a fitting display for the old girl from Vietnam. I was breathless at seeing her restored in all her splendid glory but noticed right away she was not wearing a few of the defining attributes I remembered her for: the 2.75 rocket pods on each side, the mini guns, the call sign, and cherries logo on the doors.





We stepped into the high-quality museum and I disappeared into the restroom to transform from retired educator and politician to Warrant Officer. When I emerged, they put three microphones on me, and we took off. The brief talk and interview went very well. I looked over some printed memorabilia they had spread out such as photographs after Vietnam, an original checklist, and data sheets they had for the aircraft. Then we adjourned to look at her in the pouring rain and take some more pictures.

The millennial-aged news crews were real troopers despite the rains and made me feel important by asking for individual selfies with me afterwards. I thought to myself, "Boy, we never got this response when we came back from Nam." A young Marine Corps vet called me sir, smiled, and said he was deeply honored to meet me. I told everyone how impressive the display was.

I remember at least one song written in the 60s about meeting up with an old girl-friend and realizing the magic wasn't there anymore. Well, for the benefit of my former fellow gun drivers in the "Vikings," I can truly say, she looked even better than ever with age. And you too should go down and see her.

Our unit has at least one other display, a Vietnam helicopter gunship survivor that is at a memorial site in Angel Fire, NM. It was flown on a memorable Easter Sunday mission in 1967 as a smoke ship by Father Jerry Daly, then CWO Daley, one of the most decorated helicopter pilots in the Vietnam War, and our version of WWII's Pappy Boyington of the Black Sheep Squadron. After he made 13 runs and laid down smoke to cover the saving of survivors of multiple crews who were shot down in the landing zone, the ship was so full of bullet holes, it had to be taken out of service, "red Xed" as we used to say.

I was very fortunate to be in a company with this kind of history and that kind of men. We were berated

by Hanoi Hanna over the airwaves out of radio North Vietnam as those "Blue Diamond Devils of the Delta." I can't think of a more exciting and fitting tribute to a bunch of young twenty-something helicopter pilots from the Vietnam War.

Interspersed with the Pledge of Allegiance I read the names of nine of our friends who were lost as flight crew members in 1968, out of the 30 total who gave their lives for their friends and the mission from the Tigers and Vikings with our unit during the war. We must never forget them.

I do believe that UH-1B 73972 has a "soul" and I am so honored to have earned the title of a "ghost" from my friend Bob.

The last interview question was the most difficult

to answer. "Did this helicopter have a name when you flew her?" "Yes," I responded "but it was sort of politically incorrect and a surprise that my crew chief thought up and told me about later after he had already painted it on. It probably became one of the most well-known helicopters by its name in our unit and in the IV Corps Area of the

Mekong Delta. Are you sure you want to know?" "Of course, we do!" replied the news crews. "Well," I said hesitating a moment. "It was called the Cherry Buster and it had two big red cherries and Viking 23 painted on each door! I notice they are not there now and that's OK. Those of us who know her, know her name. All I can say is we were soldiers once and we were so young. We were 'Above the Best.'" The best were down in the jungles and rice paddies and we did everything we could to support them. We are all proud of being Vietnam Veterans and helicopter flight crew members. For many of us it changed our lives forever.

*Respectfully,*

**CW2 Fred McCarthy,  
Viking 23, 1,300 hours,  
Soc Trang, RVN, 1967-68**

*Photos courtesy of the author.*





# Let's Talk Pocket Patches



Redskins, from a D/158 AHB Cobra Crew Chief.



Brandy, 2nd Bde 101 ABN Crew Member on 477.



Checkmate, VHPA Member Howard Ford 330 TC Company.



I'd like the VHPA to meet one of the Calendar Project's new best friends, John Jones. John introduces himself as a researcher based in the United Kingdom and readily admits he did not serve in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. He is a little younger than even the VHPA's youngest members. He 'came to' the VHPA when he teamed with VHPA Subscriber Scott Drew to co-author the 100+page *The CH-37 "Mojave"* in Viet Nam published as the History Section in the 2019 VHPA Directory. After that project 'went to press,' I started 'troubling' John to learn more about his true passion – collecting patches. In John's own words: "Part of my interest in the Vietnam War, is recording some of the many unique unauthorized unit patches, worn in that conflict and for the purposes of the VHPA, those of Army Aviation units." Well, let me share with you some of John's collection of "unique unauthorized unit patches!"

Stepping back in time ~ about 20 years ago we started putting one or two unit patches in the VHPA Calendars. Now, all but two photos in the 2021

Calendar have patches. Indeed, John helped us realize patches by themselves can tell a powerful story about a unit.

This is a page from the 2021 VHPA Calendar built as a tribute to everyone who served in the 158th Combat Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam from mostly digital images of patches provided by John. Over the years we've been publishing Calendars and Directory, we managed to collect some 300 odd digital images of Vietnam Era unit patches. As a general rule, we add a dozen or so for each year's effort to publish a Calendar or Directory. In the last half a year, John provided the VHPA with just under 400! He usually sends them in batches of ten as an email attachment. Many are dupes of what we already have, but I often reply to him with WOW!! Look at that Laotian Expeditionary Force patch ~ only a few B/158th guys wore it! Completely new to me! Absolutely wonderful piece of history! Thank you, John!

But wait! It gets better! John sent these two photos:

Thanks to Barry Beard, here is who has been ID'ed in the '17 Lancers' photo: "Not sure about guy in the maroon shorts, after that is Charles Thompson, Rowdy Yates, maybe Lt. Roberts, Lanny Ruck, Barry Beard, Charlie Farmer, I think CPT Flagg is standing on a chair, CPT Seiker, Gary Roselle, Tony Beyer, Dana Lane, not sure about the person on the end, seated may be Mr. Bulmer, not sure, not sure, Mr. Eslick." Barry adds that this was a 'going away party' for two of the guys. If you can help Barry out, contact him at <barrycbeard@yahoo.com>.



Wings of the Eagle.



... by Mike Law,  
VHPA Calendar Editor

Most of us Army guys 'think' the Air Force and Navy guys have 'a corner on' the Party Suit concept ~ well, not so fast going there! I certainly recall Larry Brown and his D/3/5 Cav friends at VHPA Reunions wearing Laotian Highway Patrol custom-made flight suits. They always make me smile!

Because John is a dues current Subscriber, he has access to the Online Directory Application (ODA) in the restricted sections of [www.VHPA.org](http://www.VHPA.org). He searched for those having the radio call sign LANCER and being in Vietnam about 1971 with an email address. Then he sent several dozen unsolicited emails. After addressing them by name and briefly introducing himself as a VHPA Subscriber conducting historical research to be shared with the VHPA and attaching some photos of patches or the 17 Lancer party shown above, he asks an open-ended question or two. Of late John has shared with me almost a dozen replies he received from VHPAers.

By way of example, here is what VHPA Life Member Mike Jacobi replied to John: "My first tour was 67-68 with the 1st Bde, 101st (Separate) before the Division came over and before it went Airmobile. The patches we wore then are attached, but the interesting one was the result of a language problem. My crew chief, John Hotz, sent me the photos."

So, we've published several photos of 1st Bde 101st Separate Hueys in previous VHPA Calendars, but we never had the "Wings of the Eagle" patch until now. Thanks to John and Mike, we have a little more history to add to the VHPA's Legacy Collection at The Vietnam Archive and Center at Texas Tech in Lubbock.



ACTIVATED 25 JULY 1968

2021 bonus.



VHPA Member Mike, "Jake", Jacobi, 'Party Suit.'



"17 Lancers", taken Sept 1971 at Camp Evans.



# SELECTIONS FROM PAST NEWSLETTERS

## Mission draws chopper into Laos

(Marine gunship didn't give location)

By Harry R. 'Rat' Nevling DAT

A Co, 159th ASHB

From July August 1998 Newsletter

February 28, 1969, was a normal day in northern I Corps. "Normal" at that time of year means marginal weather. Cloud cover from broken to solid overcast. Flying conditions were questionable.

The 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division was assigned support for the Marines during Operation Dewey Canyon. The Marines had moved west from Dong Ha to the area of LZ Vandegrift. This operation took them south to the northern edge of the A Shau Valley and west to Laos.

They moved past the closed base at Khe Sanh, the scene of so much activity the previous year. They moved southeast toward the upper end of the A Shau. Just northwest of the head of the valley they set up two fire support bases: Erskine and Cunningham. Erskine was the smaller of the two, situated on a low ridge south-west of Cunningham.

Cunningham sat on a ridge that sloped to the west and dropped off sharply to the east. Both bases were there to provide interdiction and support for activity along the Laotian border. The border in this area runs generally from the north-west to the southeast. South of the two FSBs it turns to the east before continuing its southeast meander.

Erskine and Cunningham were continually firing to the west and southwest. They were to cut "Charlie's" supply line into the north end of the A Shau along Route 922. This route paralleled the Laotian border on the Laos side until crossing into Vietnam below Tiger Mountain directly

into the A Shau.

We didn't know Route 922 existed on the morning of the 28th.

Capt. William "Bill" Ailes, aircraft commander, and WO1 Harry "The Rat" Nevling of A Company, 159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, ("Pachyderm") were assigned to fly support in this area again.

Bill and Harry had been flying a lot together, most of it in support of the Marines. Although an RLO, Bill was a great pilot, a terrific teacher, and a real "good guy." Harry had transitioned into "Hooks" at Fort Sill, OK, after completing flight school in April 1968. While Harry had a fair amount of flight time while forming up at Fort Sill with what became C Company, he still had a lot to learn.

Early that morning they had pre-flighted their CH-47C Chinook at "Pachyderm Beach" their "home" at Phu Bai. This was actually a C minus - the C model with three hours' fuel endurance, but lacking the engines designed to power the full C model.

After flying up to Camp Evans to pick up their first load of the day, they found the resupply pad was not ready. They decided to put the delay time to good use and make a weather check over the mountains to the area of Cunningham. The Marines were way out there in "Indian Country" and the only possible way to them was helicopter.



Pachyderm CH-47 at Khe Sanh Photo courtesy of Dean Resch,  
A Co (Pachyderm) 159th ASHB 101st Abn, '71-'72.



The weather over the coastal plain was broken clouds. However, experience and visual inspection told another story. Flying over the first ridge line showed a mass of cloud cover extending far back into the mountains.

They continued on to see if there were any holes they could use to drop down through, rather than trying to fly out in the valleys. Common at that time, the choice was whether to go out under the cloud cover by flying the valleys or go on top and try to find a "sucker hole" that looked like it would be there to come back up through.

The "sucker holes" were preferable because you could get the sorties accomplished faster, and "Chuck" couldn't shoot at you from the valley sides like he did if you were under the clouds.

This morning we found a large hole just to the east of Cunningham - and it looked like a "keeper." This was going to be there for a while. We radioed back to tell the other ships to get a load and come out; they could get in from above the clouds.

We then radioed the pathfinder at Cunningham and told him what was going on. He asked if we had a load and we told him no; there hadn't been any ready and we were empty. He asked if we could help out by picking up some wounded Marines and take them back to "Charlie Med," the marine Evacuation Hospital at Vandergrift.

We said, "Sure, we'll be right down." He told us they were not at his location. There were a pair of Marine gunships that would take us to them.

We asked for the location of the wounded and again were told the "guns" would take us. He gave us their call sign and told us they were on his "push." We contacted the Marine guns and again asked for the location of the wounded Marines. They told us they were south of Cunningham and they'd come and get us and lead us in.

We again asked for the location as we headed south. Once again, we were told the guns would lead us. By this time, we probably should have been a bit suspicious. However, we had a great deal of respect for the Marine gunship pilots. They would do about anything to help the "grunts."

We spotted each other and fell in behind one of the ships, with the other following.

He led us around several cloud formations in what became an obviously circuitous route.

We discussed on the intercom whether he didn't know where he was going, unlikely, or if he was trying to get us lost, likely. Harry got out his map to try to find a landmark, but with the cloud cover, this was impossible. So, we followed the gunship, not knowing where we were or where we were going, but convinced we were "lost" intentionally.

Soon the gun pilot called and pointed out a small "sucker hole" off to our right front. He said he'd drop down through and go west along a road. We were to follow.

We both knew there were no roads south of Cunningham.



**Varsity CH-47 at Da Nang.  
B Co, 159th ASHB, 101st Abn**

We followed the gunship down through the hole and were right over the road. We contacted the ground commander on the FM radio and hovered under the low, really-low, cloud cover to a small hill just north of the road. There was a small clearing with red smoke.

The Marines liked to use red smoke, while the Army used it as a "do not land" warning. We called the smoke and it was confirmed.

We proceeded up to the clearing from the southeast but couldn't fit in the opening to land.

We hovered around the hill to see if there was a different access. We were going around the hill counter-clockwise and had gotten southwest of the opening when the ground told us not to go north or west of the hill, that's where "Charlie" was. Oops, too late! We had not taken fire and can only credit this to the two Marine guns with us.

We finally found an access from the south and eased into the small clearing and set our ship down. While the Marines were getting their wounded on board, a major appeared under the right front with his hand up and together as if praying or begging and pointed to four body bags right under the chin bubble.

We told the flight engineer and said we really wanted to take them out. If any leaked, we'd help him clean the ship.

He went out and got the Marines to bring their dead on board with the wounded. We had picked up four dead and about a dozen wounded.

The flight engineer pulled up the ramp and cleared us to leave.



We pulled up and backed off the hill. A right pedal turn headed us back down the road and then up through the hole. We were off and headed for "Charlie Med."

The Marine guns called and asked where we were. We told them we'd picked up the wounded and were getting them to "Charlie Med" as fast as we could. They said there were more. When asked where, they told us back on the same road, but about a half "click" to the east. We headed back.

After dropping down through the same hole, we hovered up the road to the east, calling the Marines on FM again.

We had just come around a curve to the right in the road. There was a burned-out enemy truck on the left side of the road.

We were approaching the truck when a whole bunch of things happened. The guns called and asked where we were. We told them on the road headed east. They replied to come back up and let them escort us.

We were about to turn when an NVA soldier with an AK-47 holding a 30-round "banana" clip jumped up from behind the truck and started firing at us. This guy was so close you could tell he needed a shave! Harry grabbed for his .38 to shoot through Bill's chin bubble, but thought better of it. This was not the time for loud noises in the cockpit. We were scared enough.

Harry then called on the intercom for the left gunner to shoot. No outgoing rounds were heard. Bill wisely pulled pitch and we disappeared into the clouds. We knew the cloud cover was only about 100 feet thick and fairly even above us.

As we came up through the clouds Harry asked why the gunner hadn't fired. The response was his gun wouldn't traverse back that far. Harry asked what he was talking about, the guy was just off the left front. The gunner responded he was trying to shoot at the .51-caliber machine gun firing from the ridge behind us. He hadn't seen the man with the AK-47.

We contacted the gunships and related where we had taken fire and what type. They asked if we'd be willing to go back down with them as escort and try for the other wounded.

Now there's a decision for you.

You've got a helicopter the size of a boxcar that makes enough noise to wake the dead and is armed with only two 7.62mm (.308-caliber) machine guns. You know there's at least one man with an AK-47 right in the middle of where you have to go and a .51-caliber machine gun with an open field of fire for your route.

You've got wounded Marines on board and a crew of five.

Yeah, we were stupid, too. We said, "Sure, lead on." We followed the gunship down through the hole, with his wingman following. We hovered up the road without incident and found the Marine element.

After we picked up another eight or so wounded, we headed back toward the hole to get back to "Charlie Med." The Marine pathfinder thanked us.

The flight engineer said there were four cases of C-rations on

board. We asked the pathfinder if we dropped them on the road could they get them. He said affirmative and we dropped them near the truck.

As we were pulling up through the hole, we told them we'd get the resupply people at Vandegrift to get them food and water. Their only other request was for small arms ammo and grenades.

Bill had been in-country more than six months, Harry about two. Neither had ever heard a Marine ask for any-thing but ammo. Three days out there without resupply, or medevac, is a very long time.

We called the gunships and told them we were headed for "Charlie Med."

They thanked us profusely and wished us well.

We thanked them for their cover that made the difference. (We do not know who these Marine gunship pilots are, but I'd like to buy them a beer!)

We called Cunningham and told them we had the wounded and were on our way in.

We also told them the guys in the bush needed food and water along with small arms ammo. Then we called "Charlie Med" and advised them we were coming in with wounded.

We also notified resupply at Vandegrift of the requests for food, water and small arms ammo.

It's interesting to note the food and water weren't delivered until about 4 p.m.

It was delivered by an Army Chinook, commanded by CWO Harold "Weird Harold" Eckert of B Co, 159th who had landed at Vandegrift and physically threatened the resupply people if they didn't get a load together for their Marine "grunts."

It's also interesting to note it wasn't until our flight back to the evac hospital that we had time to look at the map and find where we had been. By then it wasn't much of a surprise to learn the reason we didn't know that road was there was because it was in Laos, not South Vietnam!

Most amazing was when we shut down the aircraft to check for damage, there were no bullet holes. The guy with the AK-47 had missed us completely. He was close enough that had he thrown his weapon up in the air, he surely would have gotten a rotor blade. So, with the fire from the AK and the .51 caliber, we didn't even have a skin patch to show for it! In reflection, that's OK.

Had the man with the AK been a better shot, he would have hosed the cockpit.

Had the .51 caliber hit us, it would have been in No. 1 engine or the aft transmission. It's really OK they both missed!

As no good deed shall go unpunished, Bill and Harry, as a direct result of this mission, were sent into northern Laos in March to assist with relocation of Hmong natives from the edge of the Plain of Jars. But that's another story.



# Pilots rewarded with Laos mission

*Harry R. 'Rat' Nevling (DAT)*

*William E. Ailes*

*A Co, 159th ASHB*

*From November/December 1998 Newsletter*

It was a fine spring day at the end of March 1969 in wonderful downtown Phu Bai. Capt. William "Bill" Ailes and WO Harry "Rat" Nevling were on their way from A/159th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (affectionately known as "Pachyderm Beach") to XXIV Corps Headquarters.

We had been summoned for a briefing on a special operations mission. Bill and Harry had been flying together frequently. Bill was the aircraft commander and Harry the pilot on a rather interesting mission earlier that spring. Our reward for that good deed was this call.

Upon arrival at the headquarters, Bill and Harry were taken into a briefing room. They were told a Chinook was needed in northern Laos. There was a U.S.-backed effort to relocate Hmong tribe members from the Plain of Jars area to a more secure area farther south. The Hook was needed to move some construction equipment for Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E).

The operation would stage out of Luang Prabang, site of the Laotian Imperial Summer Palace. This was about 135 miles north-east of Vientiane, about 250 miles west-southwest of Hanoi, and 110 miles west-southwest of Dien Bien Phu.

The mission was to move the equipment from an existing stronghold and haven for civilians to a new area, further from harm's way. The Pathet Lao, the North Vietnamese and the Chinese were putting increasing pressure on the area at the edge of the Plain of Jars.

An airstrip was required at the new area. This necessitated the relocation of construction equipment to have the new runway support up to C-123 aircraft.

The mission would require us to fly the Hook from Da Nang, across the panhandle of Laos to Ubon, Thailand, about 230 miles west-southwest of Da Nang, receive additional briefing information, and then go on to Luang Prabang, another 365 miles to the northwest.

We would have a CH-54 Flying Crane accompany us to relocate equipment too heavy for the Hook. I wonder what good deed they were being rewarded for.

From there, we would make daily missions to a pickup zone, to be identified later, to pick up the equipment for transport to the drop-off zone, also to be identified later.

We were shown the intelligence map displaying the antiaircraft weaponry along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its branches that

would be crossed. There was an impressive array of colored pins showing the various calibers of weapons ranging from quad .51s up to 122 mm cannons.

The weapons on the trail were there to shoot at tactical air bombers, all jets. Here we are considering going across in a Hook that has a top speed of around 175 miles per hour and a ceiling of 13,500 feet pressure altitude. We gotta be nuts!

The briefing officer said the comforting thought was Charlie was up at night to shoot at the jets, so he'd be asleep during the day.

We were offered the additional comfort of knowing we'd be escorted by two OV-1 Mohawks. Yeah, that's right, observation aircraft - no guns!

We were given the location of a safe zone on an escarpment in Laos. If something went wrong and we could make it there, we'd be OK. Yeah, like when it hits the fan, you've got a lot of choices where that flying brick is going to go down! Well, we were nuts. We said we'd do it.

Bright and early the next day, we left Pachyderm Beach for Da Nang. After topping off the fuel tanks, we headed west on the 2.5-hour flight to Ubon. We rendezvoused with the Crane outside Da Nang and the Mohawks over the southern end of the A Shau Valley. We all continued into Laos.

Looking down at the tracks of bomb craters that clearly marked the main route and branches of the trail, we couldn't help thinking how slow the Hook was traveling. Even the Mohawks couldn't go that slow. They were flying slow circuits around the lumbering helicopters.

We were sitting ducks for anyone wanting to take a potshot at us. Fortunately, the briefing officer appeared to be correct: Charlie must have been asleep. No tracers, flak bursts, or other nastys were sent up to greet us.

Our arrival in Ubon was a relief. The security of a Royal Thai air base with U.S. Air Force personnel seemed a very safe haven.

We were taken to a briefing room where we were greeted by men dressed in civilian clothes. We were asked why we had insignia and patches on our flight suits. The response was no one told us any different.

The aircraft also had "U.S. Army" stenciled on its side. When asked if we had any civilian clothes with us, the response was "no." Again, no one had said anything about that either.

We told them we could cut the identification off the uniforms and, if they had any OD paint, we'd cover the markings on the aircraft. After some discussion among themselves, they decided that would not be necessary.

The bad news was that without civilian clothes, they wouldn't be able to take us into Vientiane. So, we stayed in our Nomex flight suits with the insignia and patches. The formal briefing began.

They told us more details of the mission.

We would fly directly to Luang Prabang and were given the frequency for an NDB at that location. There was an airstrip in the town used by Air America for resupplying the Loyalist forces in



northern Laos. We would be staying there with Air America personnel in their compound.

The pickup area was located at Moun Soui, a village with an airstrip about 85 miles southeast of Luang Prabang and 180 miles north of Vientiane. The drop-off was in the area of Muang Kasi on the Nam Lik river about 55-60 miles west of Moun Soui, 60 miles south of Luang Prabang, and 150 miles north of Vientiane.

We were provided with the names and grid coordinates for the pickup and drop zones, radio frequencies, call-signs and maps for the pickup and drop-off locations. Secure areas, enemy activity and defense forces also were described.

We were told that if we went down in an unsecured area, the aircraft would have to be destroyed and they'd try to get us out. We were not to take any type of photographic equipment with us. Overall, it was fairly dismal information.

The briefing also contained information regarding the Hmong tribe. These are the aboriginal people indigenous to the area. The Hmong had actually migrated south from China several centuries earlier and inhabited the mountainous regions of what is now Laos. This was now their homeland. They were very interested in protecting it. They are cousins of the Montagnards of Vietnam.

During World War II, the Hmong had fought the Japanese invaders with flint-lock rifles. Some were still using these weapons

against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. Unusual looking, they have no stock. The handle is more like the head of a golf club and was held in the hand rather than against the shoulder. The Hmong were deadly with their use of this antique weapon.

They are very family- and tribal-orientated. Their loyalties are to their tribal family and its leader. This was and is Gen. Vang Pao. The general was not only the chief of the Hmong, he was the leader of the Loyalist forces in Laos.

The Hmong are quite industrious people. We were told to watch for their trails enroute. When they wanted to go someplace, they simply took the straightest line. Most of these straight lines involved significant vertical changes.

Informed by the flight crew that the fuel control unit for our No. 2 engine was leaking, Bill made arrangements for another unit to be flown in by Mohawk. We had lunch and waited for the replacement part to arrive. When the unit finally arrived, we found the Mohawk that brought it over wasn't as fortunate as we had been. The aircraft had taken several hits flying over the trail. Charlie must have been awake!

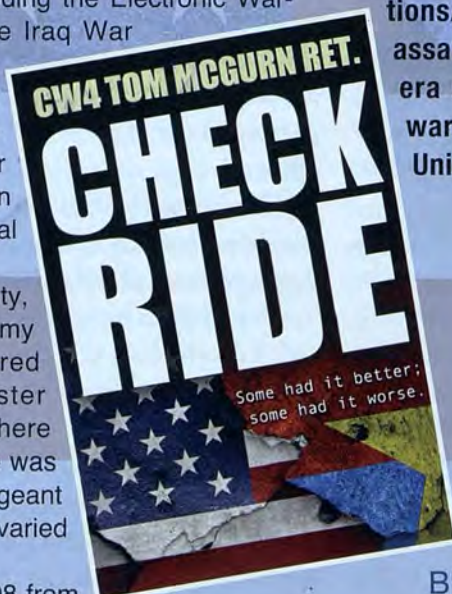
Our crew quickly installed the fuel control unit so we could be on our way to Luang Prabang. The flight was uneventful, which was wonderful. The scenery was spectacular. The mountains in the area were quite rugged. Many of the ridge lines were nearly vertical,

Tom McGurn was born and raised in Yonkers New York and attended Sacred Heart High School.

He is a combat veteran of two wars and has served his nation for forty years as an Army Aviator. Tom served in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. After arriving home from Vietnam, Tom attended and graduated the US Army flight instructor pilot course and immediately started to train young pilots. He attended numerous US Army sponsored courses including the Electronic Warfare course. He served in the Iraq War (2004-2005) where he was assigned to the G3 Air section of the Division TOC to coordinate the 42nd Divisions air movement assets. Based on his training, he was the Tactical Operation Officer.

In addition to his active duty, Tom was in the New York Army National Guard. He is a retired supervisor of the Westchester County Police Department where during this dual career path he was a Detective, and Detective Sergeant in Narcotics along with many varied police assignments.

Chief McGurn retired in 2008 from the United States Army as a Chief Warrant Officer Four.



**CHECK RIDE** is the raw, true story of one Army Aviator's time in Vietnam from 1969-1970. While Tom McGurn was only one young pilot, thousands shared his experiences in the Army. In **Check Ride**, he recounts previously undisclosed details of flight missions, giving the reader a taste of the everyday flavor of life during those times. From ranger insertions/extractions to shipborne operations, combat assaults, SEALS, and the usual WTF! missions, this era created a new generation of mobile warfare warriors who were fine-tuned by the needs of the United States Army.

***Some had it better.  
Some had it worse.***

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BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY / Military  
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much like the mountains south of Hue.

Here was the evidence of the Hmong trails. As we had been told, they were straight lines; even if that happened to go over a 2,000-foot high ridge, they went straight up the ridge and straight down the other side.

In this area, there was not the obvious evidence of the conflict. No large bomb craters, no defoliation and no roads. Just the trails going from village to village. The vegetation was much like that around the A Chau Valley and Khe Sanh. Deep jungle with open areas the Hmong had cleared for their slash-and-burn agriculture. Spectacular scenery in an almost pristine area.

But, back to reality. Coming over yet one more ridge line, Luang Prabang appeared below. The summer palace of the Lao royal family nestled into the ridge on the west edge of the town.

To the east, another ridge, more like a cliff. The small valley in between also held an airstrip - right in the middle of the town. The road, the first we'd seen since leaving Ubon, came up the valley and crossed the middle of the airstrip. Next to this crossing was an observation tower for control of the traffic on the road and the airstrip.

The control method was simple: When the observer, an American, spotted an approaching aircraft, he would fire his .30-caliber carbine into the air. The ground traffic cleared the strip and the aircraft landed. The signal for departure was the revving of an aircraft engine or, in our case, picking up to a hover. The movie "Air America" must have used this airfield as its model for the film.

After landing, we were directed to a parking/loading area. The larger aircraft, like C-123s, seemed to be in and out traffic, not actually based there. Our Hook and the Crane took up a significant part of their loading area.

We were taken to the Air America compound, actually a home in the town with a fence and a gate. After stowing our gear, we had a beer with the other pilots at home there. They provided us with more information about the AO we were heading into.

More dismal information. If we were to go down for some reason and the Hmong were to get to us first, we'd be OK. The alternative was not pleasant.

During our chat with these men, another man in civvies came in. We could tell by the reactions of the others: a.) He wasn't a pilot; and b.) he was someone important.



**Pachyderm Beach**  
Photo courtesy of Dean Resch.

He informed us we were to have dinner with Gen. Vang Pao that evening. He told us this was quite an honor. The murmurs of the others in the room confirmed this. It appeared none of the regular pilots had been invited to dinner with the general.

We talked with the other pilots more and then got ready for the evening. This meant a shower and a clean Nomex flight suit - with patches and insignia.

About 6:30 p.m., we were picked up by the man who had informed us of the dinner and taken someplace in or near the summer palace compound. Upon entering the dining room, we were introduced to several Laotian officers by our escort.

The room was very pleasant, quite comfortable, and well-decorated without being ornate. The table, with seating for 16-20, was set with linen, china, and real silverware. For a couple of GIs from 'Nam, this was impressive.

Gen. Vang Pao entered the room and all were called to attention. We didn't speak any Lao, but didn't need to for an understanding of this command.

We were introduced to the general by our escort. The general, through an interpreter, welcomed us to Laos and thanked us for our assistance. He then called for an aide with a small box. The box contained rings. Our escort displayed a look of surprise at seeing the box and its contents.

The general removed a ring from the box and presented it to Bill. He repeated this with Harry.

He then said these were symbols of the appreciation he and his people had for what we were doing for them. He understood this



was a voluntary mission and we did not have to be there to help his people with this problem. We thanked the general for his gift and said we were glad we could be of some assistance.

Our escort went on to explain these rings were Hmong tribal rings. In effect, the general had adopted us into the Hmong tribe. These rings were a tribal symbol, made of almost pure silver, with a wound silver frame on the front, forming four rows of triangles. Each of these triangles was filled with a colored substance that looked like enamel. Very simple, very beautiful. He said we should be impressed. We were.

Harry was probably more impressed than Bill. On his first tour, Harry had been a grunt with the 4th Infantry Division. He'd been adopted by a Montagnard tribe outside Pleiku. A bit different process, but that's another story.

We all sat down to a thoroughly enjoyable meal. One item of local custom is the only glasses on the table were for whiskey. The silverware included a large spoon at each place. This was used to dip liquid from the vegetable bowl and sipped from the spoon. The whiskey was served straight and at room temperature.

After dinner and a bit more conversation, we gave our thanks and farewell and were taken back to the compound for a night's rest.

The next morning, we joined our flight crew at the aircraft. We performed a very thorough preflight check for the day's mission and departed for Moun Soui.

Another beautiful flight over spectacular mountain scenery. Moun Soui turned out to be a small dirt airstrip at about 4,200 feet altitude for C-123 and Aero Porter traffic. This wasn't as nasty as the dirt strip in "Air America," but there was a definite slope to it.

The strip had a small loading area beside it near the middle. This contained fuel bladders and 55-gallon drums of fuel. Just above this, on a small hill, was a compound. The strip was outside any defensive perimeter for the compound.

We had been talking to Special Forces by radio before seeing the airstrip or the compound. After shutting down the aircraft, we were greeted by a sergeant first class and taken up the hill to Special Forces headquarters in the compound.

As we went into the compound, we noticed a wide array of weaponry, including many Uzis. There we were introduced to a Special Forces captain, the officer in charge of the compound and the senior adviser for the AO.

We had a nice conversation with this officer. While he was pleasant, he had very hard eyes. He looked as if he had nails for breakfast - hold the milk and sugar!

He said the fuel in the bladders was contaminated, and he suspected sabotage. What this meant to us was hand pump refueling from 55-gallon drums. A Hook burns about 2,000 pounds of fuel an hour. Boy, were we ever glad we had topped off the tanks at Luang Pra-bang.

We listened intently to the briefing by the Special Forces captain on local operations and activity. This included the story of his

complaint about not having any mobile artillery, as large weapons were restricted to 4.2-inch mounted mor-tars, so the sergeant went out with a patrol and took a tank away from the North Vietnamese/Pathet Lao.

Now the captain had his mobile artillery. However, the sergeant told him he was on his own for any additional ammo he needed. He also told us the officer in charge of the airfield had been killed a few nights before. Someone had penetrated the camp and tossed a frag into the bunker where he was sleeping.

We went back down to the ship and helped the crew pump fuel. After getting a full load, we talked to the PA&E people about their loads.

The first item out was a small grader. While we had hauled "baby bulls" in 'Nam for making landing zones and fire support bases, as well as a variety of other construction equipment, this was the first grader either of us had hauled.

The second item was a rubber-wheeled packer. This piece of equipment used dirt for ballast and was lightened significantly by the removal of this ballast material.

This was the Crane's first load. We had a second load of a large generator. We checked the rigging on both of our items, as these were our only flights scheduled for the morning.

We cranked up the Hook, picked up the load and headed off for Nam Lik, about 60 miles away. We departed to the south along a beautiful valley of rice paddies. The west side was a low ridge about 100 feet above the valley floor. The east side was a cliff of more than 200 feet.

About a half mile from the airstrip, the valley abruptly ended with the hill to the west becoming a ridge turning sharply to join the cliff on the east. Beyond this ridge the land dropped away sharply in a series of ridge lines of lower elevation. This would become very important later.

We were able to make a fairly straight line to our destination. Radio contact was established with the drop-off point. A smoke grenade was popped, and we put the grader on it. Whew! One down and no one shooting at us. What a relief!

We were a bit, just a bit, relaxed on the way back to Moun Soui, and talked about the spectacular scenery and the immense difficulty of trying to transport equipment through this rugged terrain.

We had moved supplies, equipment, and troops for the building of the road from Phu Bai to the A Shau Valley. That terrain had its challenges, but it was nothing compared to this.

We made another run with the packer. This trip also was uneventful, other than getting to see more of the spectacular scenery of northern Laos.

Upon our return to Moun Soui, we shut down for lunch. We talked to the PA&E people about how many loads they had for the afternoon. They only wanted to move two more loads that day. Both were cargo net loads of miscellaneous equipment.

We thought that was great! An easy day and, more importantly, we had plenty of fuel to take both loads and get back to Luang



Prabang without having to hand-pump any more fuel!

The fun began when we cranked up after lunch. When we took the engines from flight idle (about 37 percent power) to flight (about 92 percent power) the No. 2 engine went up to 42 percent and hung there. Cycling the engine control lever had no effect. We couldn't get more than 42 percent out of No. 2.

After trying everything we could think of, with no effect, we shut down to check the engine.

The flight engineer opened the No. 2 engine nacelle and went over the engine, especially the fuel control unit. This is a highly complex piece of equipment that receives the demand asked of the engine, measures the pressure altitude, and meters the appropriate amount of fuel into the engine.

Close examination of this piece of equipment revealed the fuel drain had clogged. This prevented the fuel from in the unit from draining upon shutdown. The relatively cool fuel in the engine from flight was trapped upon shutdown.

The expansion resulting from the heat increase blew out an internal "o-ring" seal. This prevented the fuel control unit from performing its essential function.

We talked with the local cadre about getting a part flown in. They informed us if our aircraft sat on that loading area overnight, it probably would be destroyed by morning. Not an acceptable situation.

We cranked up the ship to see if we could get it to a hover on one engine at that altitude and temperature. We were unsuccessful. We shut down again to make arrangements for any excess weight we could shed.

An Air America pilot told us he'd take our crew and equipment to Luang Prabang for us after he dropped off his load.

We took out the guns and ammo, along with the toolbox and anything else heavy we could get by without. This was going with our crew chief and gunner on an Air America plane.

While we were waiting, we witnessed an interesting accident. Another Air America pilot, flying an Aero Porter, was chafing at the bit to get out, but was told to wait for an incoming C-123. This seemed to upset him.

He stomped around for a bit, then got in and started up his plane. He taxied into the parking area facing toward the strip. As the loaded C-123 landed, he gunned it and pulled onto the strip immediately behind it with the throttle to the firewall.

The turbulence got him. His hurry put him up on one wing and the other into the strip. Oops! Not going very far now! The pilot jumped out of his aircraft, hollering about the turbulence and that the accident wasn't his fault. We tried real hard to ignore him.

Bill, Harry and the flight engineer cranked up again for the flight. We pulled another hover check and, although we couldn't get a hover, we could feel it was light on the landing gear. Both engines were running, but No. 2 was at flight idle.

We discussed trying a running takeoff. If we left the ship there,

it would be destroyed. It was worth the try.

We taxied to the far east end of the strip. We couldn't take off to the east, which was open plain and slightly downhill, as we had been told that if we tried to go in that direction, we would be headed into Russian .51-caliber machine guns. We wanted to avoid that problem.

So, we headed west, which was uphill and toward a ridge line. Bill had practiced this running takeoff procedure at Da Nang on several occasions. He eased the stick forward and we moved up the strip. He got the ship up on the main (front) gear and increased the airspeed as we moved down the strip.

All the instruments looked good. We were moving along at about 80 knots when Bill eased the nose off the ground. We came up slowly and settled back in, although we were well above what should have been flying speed. One bounce and we were off the end of the runway. We were in a slow climb, rotor rpm was steady and airspeed was increasing. All right! This was going to work!

Well, almost. We cleared the end of the strip and everything went to hell. The rotor rpm started bleeding off along with our climb and airspeed.

Bill told the flight engineer to get buckled in quick. We looked out at the ridge at the end of the valley. It was approaching fast. The extra 150 feet of altitude needed to clear that ridge was nowhere to be found.

Bill was trying to get us back to the strip. He headed to the right and the ground dropped away below us. Bill eased back on the stick, but she still wouldn't climb.

Harry said, "Let me try this," and flipped No. 2 to its flight position. The engine picked up to about 42 per-cent, as it had before, and hung there. The good news was this seemed to lessen the drag on the system enough for us to start regaining our rotor rpm.

Bill had been bleeding off airspeed as we didn't want to go in at that speed. He had been trading the speed to maintain the low rotor rpm and altitude.

Bill eased back on the stick again and we began a shallow climb. As we approached the ridge, he found a break in the trees at the far end. He pulled back more and we slid over the top. He leveled off and traded the climb rate to get the rotor rpm back in the green.

Carefully monitoring the instruments, we limped around and landed back at the airstrip. Another whew!

We shut down the aircraft and made the decision to switch out the fuel control units back to the leaky unit. Again, we couldn't leave the aircraft at the strip overnight. The flight engineer made some unauthorized repairs and rebuilt the leaky unit with parts from the disabled unit. This was depot level repair, not field repair!

The flight engineer changed out the fuel control units and we were ready to try again. This time things worked. The leaky unit



no longer leaked, and it got us to Luang Pra-bang.

Upon our arrival, we were taken back to the Air America compound. As we got out of the vehicle, we witnessed a very strange occurrence. At the entrance to the compound, a group of Laotians had assembled. This was not unusual, as helicopters and their pilots quite often attracted groups of the curious.

What was strange was one of the men had a camera and was taking pictures of us. We had never experienced a local taking pictures of GIs. It was always the GIs taking the pictures.

When we got inside the building, we mentioned this to the Air America men. They all jumped up, asked us what he looked like and how he was dressed, grabbed their weapons and ran out looking for the man. When they couldn't find him, they returned to tell us if we ever saw someone taking our picture, we should shoot him.

It seems the photographer was probably a spy for the Pathet Lao and our pictures were for their "wanted posters" of "American agents in Laos." Oops!

We checked out the situation with the PA&E people. They determined we had moved the essential equipment. The remaining equipment could be transported by the Crane and an Air America Huey. We were released from the mission.

We got our gear together and headed south to Udorn, Thailand. The fuel control unit worked fine, and we made an uneventful flight south and landed at Udorn airport. This was a joint military-civilian airport used by the U.S. Air Force, the Royal Thai Air Force, and Royal Thai Airways, a commercial carrier.

A "Follow Me" truck escorted us to a parking ramp and handed us off to a ground handler. He guided us into a parking slot - and a light pole. Yup, he guided us right into a steel pole holding lights for the parking ramp.

The flight engineer was yelling, "We're too close!" We thought he was talking about the edge of the ramp and we were about to go off the concrete onto the grass. Wrong!

The rear blades took down the pole with little effort. We shut down and examined all three aft blades. One was damaged, with a large dent in the leading edge. All three had tears in the lower side. Hook blades come in sets of three, they are very heavy, and the aft rotor head is about 25 feet off the ground. They have to be replaced in sets, even if only one is damaged.

For the really important things going so well, the disabling small things were getting real old. To top off the situation, the Air Force came over and told us we couldn't leave the aircraft on that ramp overnight. We had to move it to the far side of the airfield.

We went into flight operations and contacted our headquarters with the bad news. They would arrange to get us a new set of blades and a means to get the old blades off and the new ones hung on the aft rotor head. We next arranged with the Air Force for billets for our crew and ourselves. They wound up putting us up in Udorn at the Hotel Sharon. This was nice. A real hotel

with real restaurants.

We were expecting a quonset hut with cots at the air base. This made the accident seem almost worthwhile. We had another nice dinner. This one in a rooftop restaurant at the hotel. Even after all these years, I remember the real tomato soup! Ah, what a wonderful evening.

The only thing that spoiled it was that peculiar odor of Nomex. We were still wearing flight suits. These were the only clothes we had.

The following morning brought more bad news. Harry developed a major case of gastro-enteritis. Sweat, chills, and stomach cramps. At the airbase, the flight surgeon made the diagnosis and provided the appropriate medications. It took a long four-five hours to overcome the symptoms.

Bill and Harry tossed their caps on the seats in the back of the aircraft when they were filling out the log book after the mishap with the light pole. They couldn't check the blades until they wound down and stopped. They went outside the ship with the flight crew and checked the blade damage. Upon their return to recover their caps to leave the flight line, they discovered the caps were gone. Neat disappearing act on the part of the caps. After arranging for the replacement blades and billets, we went looking for the BX to get new headgear.

An Air Force colonel was walking along the other side of the street. He called Bill over and read him the riot act for being outside without head-gear. Bill didn't have the opportunity to explain the situation.

We found the BX and removed any opportunity for further ass-chewings with Air Force caps.

The replacement blades finally arrived. With the help of the Air Force, the old blades were removed, and the new ones were slung on the aft rotor head. We tracked the blades and got the ship ready for the return flight to Vietnam.

With a new set of rear blades, a full load of fuel and a flight plan filed with the Air Force, we cranked up the ship and headed for home.

Another extremely apprehensive flight across the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this time without an escort. We thought we'd be as safe or safer without an unarmed escort. We felt removing two additional targets might further dissuade any interest from the gunners along the trail.

This flight route was a bit different, as we went straight to Phu Bai instead of to Da Nang. The scenery was strangely familiar. The main track of bomb craters clearly showed where the trail went. We were very glad to pass the eastern edge of the A Shau Valley and the sight of Hue and Phu Bai in the distance. We descended out of our nose-bleed altitude and made a long approach to Pachyderm Beach.

*It was great to be home!*



# SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANT REVIEWERS NEEDED

The VHPA is expecting a larger number of applicants than usual for our ten \$2,500 scholarships this year. In January, HQ sent out an email blast reminding our members and their descendants of this great opportunity. We have received a huge number of phone calls and emails requesting information. The Scholarship Committee is thrilled.

As many of you know, Quad-A handles VHPA Scholarships. This is done for three reasons; to handle the selection process of VHPA applicants independently, our applicants are also eligible for Quad-A if they don't receive one of our ten scholarships, and Quad-A allows at least 3.5% interest each December 31 on the money in our VHPA Scholarship account. Currently we have in excess of \$335,000 in the corpus. You do the math, that's a great return. Please understand the 3.5% is spend rate on the money only, many years we actually earn a higher interest rate with the additional monies added to our corpus.

Last year Quad-A received over 700 applicants for the approximately 300 awards given out. The VHPA had 53 applicants and 38 of them received awards or 72% of our descendants. That also means our applicants received approximately 15% of all Quad-A awards given out – AN OUTSTANDING ROI!

We need volunteers to help Quad-A review applicants. Last year over 20 VHPA members volunteered to help. Here's what happens: in late June - early July a volunteer will receive 50 applications electronically to review. The applications fall into three categories; Freshmen, Upperclassmen, and Graduate, you can request which you prefer. We ask that if you know of an applicant in any of these three categories, you let Sue Stokes, the Quad-A Scholarship Administrator, know so she can make sure you are not rating that category. The volunteer rates the applicant on 10-1 scale with 10 being the highest. You rate each applicant individually and not against each other. You can use a .5 if you wish, for example 8.5.

Over the last three years I have volunteered and really



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enjoyed the process. The essays these students submit are, for the most part, really fun to read. I will be doing it again this year, it takes about 5-10 minutes per applicant and is time well spent. You will have two weeks from receipt to get it done. And, if you finish your first 50 and wish to do more, let Sue know and she will send you another fifty. If a couple wishes to both be raters, that is great. We ask that each rater work separately and review independently. The goal is to have applicants reviewed by as many volunteers as possible.

## IF INTERESTED PLEASE CONTACT:

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# Christmas Drop ~ What a Trip Home

*By Phil Manuel*

Getting to Vietnam was no problem. Getting home was a different story.

I had been in the Army for over 16 months and I never remembered hearing the term "DEROS" until November 1971 when I received my Vietnam port call. I then learned that DEROS stood for Date Estimated Return Over Seas. Little did I know how my DEROS would impact my return home.

After completing the Transportation Officer's Basic Course in October 1970, I received TDY orders to Rotary Wing Flight School enroute to Vietnam. My orders were later amended so I could attend the Aviation Maintenance Officer's Course (AMOC) after flight school. Just before AMOC graduation in November 1971, I received my Vietnam port call. I was ordered to report to McGuire Air Force Base, Delaware on December 24th, Christmas Eve, by 1700 hours.

After receiving my port call, all I could think about was how I was going to tell my wife, Shay, that I was leaving for Vietnam on Christmas Eve. I talked to a couple of my AMOC classmates and they told me they received their Christmas Eve port call a few days earlier. They went to the personnel office and a Chief Warrant Officer there changed their port call date. I immediately drove to the personnel office and met with the Warrant Officer they told me about. I asked him to change my port call to any date after Christmas and he told me he couldn't do it. After I told him that I knew he had changed the date for two of my AMOC classmates, he agreed to change my port call so long as I promised not to tell anyone else. He changed my port call to 1 January 1972 giving me a DEROS of 31 December 1972. At that time, the thought of a Christmas drop after 12 months in Viet Nam never crossed my mind.

I celebrated Christmas and New Years with family and friends. On New Year's Day 1972, Shay drove me to the Columbus Ohio Airport where I took a commercial flight to Pittsburg, PA and then on to Philadelphia. A shuttle bus took me the short distance from the Philadelphia Airport

to McGuire Air Force Base. A couple of hours after arriving at McGuire, I boarded a commercial aircraft for the flight to Ton Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam with short refueling stops in Anchorage, Alaska and Yakota, Japan. My travel to Vietnam occurred without problems or delays.

My first assignment in Vietnam was with the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company, Robin Hoods, at Marble Mountain Army Airfield just outside of Da Nang. I was with the 173rd from January until the Robin Hoods stood down in March. Everyone in the 173rd with at least six months in country got to go home. I had only three months in country, so I was transferred to the 48th Assault Helicopter Company, Blue Stars, which was also stationed at Marble Mountain. I was with the Blue Stars from April until they stood down in August. Similar to what happened with the 173rd, everyone in the 48th with nine months in country got to go home. I had only been in Vietnam for eight months, so I was transferred to Head and Headquarters Company (HHC), 11th Combat Aviation Group (CAG) stationed at the Da Nang Air Force Base. My duties in the 11th CAG included HHC Executive Officer (XO), Unit Supply Officer, and Officer in Charge of the Military Region I Central Issue Facility.

My time as the HHC XO went by quickly. Before I knew it, it was the first of December and I was really looking forward to going home. Rumors of a cease fire had been common since early October. My company commander, Captain (CPT) Jimmy Minchew, told me that if the cease fire was signed before my DEROS, I would be extended until the property books were cleared. No one mentioned anything about Christmas drops.

Unexpectedly, on 9 December CPT Minchew brought me the good news that everyone with a DEROS of 31 December or earlier would get a Christmas drop. I was going to be home for Christmas! That night I wrote Shay telling her the exciting news. Two days later, CPT Minchew delivered bad news. The Christmas drops only applied to enlisted men. I called Shay that night on the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS) line and told her to disregard my letter about the Christmas drop.





I was working in the supply room on 13 December when CPT Minchew told me the Christmas drop days later, CPT Minchew delivered bad news. The Christmas drops only applied to enlisted men. I called Shay that night on the Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS) line and told her to disregard my letter about the Christmas drop.

I was working in the supply room on 13 December when CPT Minchew told me the Christmas drop could apply to officers if their commander authorized them to leave. He asked me what I wanted to do and I told him that when you get a chance to go home, you go home. Thankfully, he authorized me to leave. I then spent the next three days transferring the property books from me to CPT Minchew.

A friend of mine, First Lieutenant (1LT) Raymond Hicks, worked in the 11th CAG S-2 Office. He, too, was authorized the Christmas drop so we started coordinating our transportation arrangements from Da Nang to Saigon.

Our orders were to report to Camp Alpha, Saigon by 1700 hours on December 18th. There was a C-130 departing Da Nang late afternoon on the 17th and we

planned to be on it. We told CPT Minchew our departure plans and he told us we could not leave on the 17th because the 11th CAG Commander was planning a farewell party for us that evening. The Group Operations had us manifested on a U-21 the afternoon of 18th. Dejectedly, on the 17th, Ray and I watched the C130 take off without us. That evening we went to our farewell party wishing we were at Camp Alpha. Missing that C-130 was just the start of my challenging trip home.

The next day, the U-21 showed up and we learned it was a courier flight with several stops between Da Nang and Saigon. After taking off from Da Nang, we made stops at a couple of locations along the coast without any problems. I kept looking at my watch thinking we were not going to make it to Camp Alpha by 1700 hours. We finally landed at our last stop prior to Saigon and the crew exchanged whatever distribution they were supposed to before we could depart. When we finally departed everything seemed fine during takeoff and initial climb out. We were still climbing when I looked across the aisle out Ray's window and noticed the propeller on his side of the plane was not turning very fast!



About that time the pilots initiated a 180 degree turn and we landed safely back at the airfield on one engine. We asked the pilots what was wrong, and they said they didn't know and couldn't tell us how long we were going to be stuck there. The pilots told us to get our duffle bags off the plane and wait. While I waited, I kept thinking about the C-130 I could have been on yesterday.

We had been waiting about 15 minutes when another U-21 landed. The pilots told us they were going to Saigon and we could go with them after they refueled. Things were looking up! While the second U-21 refueled, the first one we had been on cranked both engines and took off without us. I was starting to get anxious about what was going to happen if we arrived at Camp Alpha after 1700 hours. Shortly after the first U-21 departed, the second was refueled and we boarded for our last leg of the flight to Saigon.

Ray and I arrived at Camp Alpha about an hour late, but being late didn't seem to matter. The Camp Alpha administrative personnel checked our orders and assigned us bunks. They told us flight manifests to the states would be posted in the morning and that all flights home would be going to SEATAC near Seattle, Washington, meaning when I got to Seattle, I would have to pay for a ticket to Columbus, Ohio.

After storing our duffle bags and locking my Simonov SKS war trophy rifle in the arms room, Ray and I went to the Officer's Club to get something to eat and drink. I got up the next morning, 19 December, and checked the manifests. Manifests were posted for flights through the 22nd of December. Neither Ray nor I was on them. The military had not coordinated any additional flights to handle the Christmas drops. My hopes of being home for Christmas were crushed! I went back to the barracks, put on my swimming suit and decided to spend a little time at the swimming pool since I wasn't going home any time soon. I was walking to the pool when I heard over the loud-speaker, "We have a C-5A going to Dover, Delaware, departing in two hours. Report immediately to the admin office if you want to volunteer for this flight." I ran to admin office, and the Sergeant there told me it was a volunteer-only flight to the Dover Delaware Air Force Base. There would be stops in Okinawa and Anchorage, Alaska. I told him I wanted to volunteer and to put 1LT Raymond Hicks down as a volunteer also.

I went back to the billets, changed clothes, grabbed my duffle bag, and swung by the arms room to pick up my SKS rifle. Unfortunately, I could not find Ray before I had to board the bus that took me from Camp Alpha to Ton Son Nhut Air Base where that beautiful, big C-5A was parked.

We waited about an hour before we were allowed to board while the crew loaded cargo into the C-5A's cargo compartment. There were about 40 newly painted, porcelain Big Ugly Elephants (BUFEs) in crates lined up behind the aircraft. I remember watching the crew carefully load all those BUFEs and tie them down in the cargo compartment. I assumed the BUFEs were Christmas presents for the crew's families and friends or maybe for resale once the crew got home.

I felt a sense of relief when I finally reached the passenger compartment. I was going home. During the crew chief's standard safety briefing, we learned that the Okinawa stop was a scheduled eighteen-hour layover and the Anchorage stop was a six-hour layover. I had not anticipated spending eighteen hours in Okinawa, but I had money and figured during the layover I could do a little sightseeing and get a nice meal.

The flight from Vietnam to Okinawa was about three hours. After landing, we were herded into the air terminal where we were told that Okinawa had been turned back over to the Japanese. Since we didn't have passports or orders to Okinawa, we were confined to the air terminal. Air Policemen were placed at the terminal entrances to make sure we didn't leave. Those eighteen hours in Okinawa are the longest eighteen hours I have ever spent in my life! Our only food came from the vending machines. The chairs were uncomfortable and when we tried to sit in one chair and use a second one as a footstool, we were told to take our feet off the chairs. There was no way to get comfortable or to sleep. After what seemed like an eternity, we re-boarded the C-5A for our flight to Anchorage. By this time, I had been without a shower and was wearing the same tropical worsted (TW) uniform, underwear, and socks for over 24 hours.

Our flight to Anchorage was about 11 hours. The seats were comfortable and faced the rear of the plane. The only time I noticed that I was flying backward was during takeoffs and landings. I have never had a problem sleeping on an airplane, and had no problems getting several hours sleep on the way to Anchorage. We



landed at Elmendorf AFB at 0600 hours on 21 December. Many of the C-5A passengers with me were in short sleeved shirts. I was wearing TWs, but at least I had a lightweight flight jacket. I don't know what the outside temperature was, but it was cold when we got off the plane and walked the short distance to a waiting bus. The crew said they were going to try to reduce the scheduled six-hour layover to four. I guess the C-5A crew wanted to get home as much as we did. We were bussed to an Air Force mess hall where lots of Airmen were eating bacon, eggs, pancakes, and other breakfast food. Those of us returning from Vietnam ordered pizzas and hamburgers. I had pizza and it may be the best pizza I have ever eaten.

Four hours later, we departed Anchorage for our final leg of the trip to Dover, Delaware. During the layovers in Okinawa and Anchorage I met three other Vietnam returnees who lived in Ohio and western Pennsylvania. After landing at Dover, we planned to go to the Philadelphia airport and buy plane tickets home. If we couldn't get plane tickets, our backup plan was to rent a car and take turns driving the eight hours to Columbus, Ohio.

The flight from Anchorage to Dover AFB was about seven hours. We arrived at Dover somewhere around 2200 hours and found a shuttle bus that held about 50 people waiting to take us to the Philadelphia Airport. The shuttle bus did not have enough seats for all of us, so some of us sat in the aisle on our duffle bags. We thought the shuttle was free until we got about five miles from the Philadelphia Airport. Without warning, the driver stopped the bus and told us he wasn't going any farther until we each paid him five dollars. Everyone paid him!

We arrived at the airport around 2300 hours. Four of us were able to book seats on a 0700 TWA flight to Columbus, Ohio. I called Shay from a pay phone and gave her my flight number and arrival time. We were both excited that I would be home the next morning, 22 December! It had been three days since I had left Vietnam. I slept on the planes, but was still tired. I was afraid to go to sleep at the airport that night for fear of missing my flight the next morning, so the three other guys and I found the USO and stayed up all night drinking coffee, playing cards, and shooting pool. That night seemed to drag on forever.

Around 0530 we lined up in the TWA boarding

area. It didn't take us long to realize the line was not moving. Around 0630, I went to the ticket counter to see what the problem was. The ticket agent told me the airplane we were supposed to fly to Columbus on had run off the runway at Chicago the night before and they didn't have a replacement plane. I asked them when and how they were going to get us to Columbus and was told they didn't know because all their flights were booked through Christmas Day. I asked the ticket agent if he knew of any flights going anywhere in Ohio. He said there was a United Airline flight departing to Dayton at 0730. The four of us ran to the United boarding area only to find it packed with travelers.

As I walked up to the ticket agent in the boarding area, I noticed the walls were lined with young, long-haired people wearing hippy clothes, beads, and peace symbols. I asked the lady at the ticket counter if we could get on the flight and she said it was standby only. She pointed to the people along the wall and said they were all flying standby. I asked if we could get some preferential treatment since we were just returning from a tour in Vietnam and our TWA flight had been cancelled. I was thinking that all those people waiting standby along the wall had months to get their airline tickets and I was doing mine at the last minute because of my Christmas drop. She said, "No preferential treatment. You are no better than anyone else." After muttering a few choice words, I stomped to the back of the boarding area. I was tired, stressed and mad. I had been carrying my SKS rifle with folded bayonet out in the open for everyone to see the entire trip home. When I reached the back of the boarding area, I grabbed the rifle by the barrel and threw it into a chair. I then ripped off my flight jacket and threw it in the chair, too. A second later I felt a hand on my shoulder. A middle-aged man in a nice suit asked me, "Lieutenant, what's your problem?" I told him we were coming home from tours in Vietnam, we had been up all night long, our flight to Columbus was cancelled, and the United ticket agent just told me we were no better than anyone else trying to fly stand-by to Dayton. He told me and the three other guys to give our tickets to the ticket agent. He then told me to run to the American Airlines counter to get a box for my rifle because United wouldn't let me on the plane without the rifle being in a box. I ran to the American counter and found out they were out of boxes. I ran back to the



United boarding area and they were boarding the aircraft. The man in the suit motioned for me to join him at the boarding ramp. He gave me a boarding pass and told me that a soldier returning from Germany was carrying a hunting rifle and squeezed my rifle in his gun case.

The gentleman in the suit turned out to be the Philadelphia Airport Manager. He saw my temper tantrum and wanted to know what was going on. My being in uniform may not have hurt. Of the four of us trying to get to Ohio, he got three of us on the flight. The fourth probably would have gotten on the flight also if he had given the agent his ticket when the rest of us did.

Our plan, once we arrived at Dayton, was to rent a car and drive to the Columbus Airport. We landed at Dayton in near zero, zero conditions. It was a typical Ohio winter day: rainy, foggy, and overcast. The three of us went to the car rental counter where the rental agent asked me for my credit card. I explained I didn't have one with me because you didn't carry credit cards in Vietnam! He told me, "No credit card, no car." I overheard the woman next to me say she needed to rent a car to Columbus. I introduced myself and explained my car rental predicament. I told her if she rented the car and allowed us to travel with her, we would reimburse her the rental expense and I would drive the car since I was from Ohio and familiar with the area. She agreed to let us share the car with her.

The ninety-minute drive to Columbus went by quickly. We learned the lady had been booked on the same TWA flight as us and had scrambled to switch to the United flight. She told us she worked for the US Ambassador to Malta and was home for the Christmas Holidays. We told her several times how much we appreciated her sharing the car with us. When we arrived at the Columbus Airport, we turned in the rental car, reimbursed our new-found friend, and everyone went their separate ways.

Things had happened so rapidly that morning I had not had time to call Shay to tell her about the airline change. I tried to call her as soon as I found a pay phone after arriving at the Columbus Airport. I called several times and each time her line was busy. After about 30 minutes, I finally got through. As soon as she heard my voice she wanted to know

where I was. I gave her a quick summary of the morning events and asked her to come and get me.

Turns out she had driven to the airport earlier that morning and found out the TWA flight had been cancelled. No one at the TWA counter could tell her where I was or how I was getting home. She had gone back to her apartment and had been on the phone with TWA trying to get more information when I tried to call her and that's why I kept getting the busy signal. She told the TWA representative that if TWA didn't find me soon, she was going to call every television and radio station in Columbus and give them a Christmas human interest story concerning a Vietnam helicopter pilot trying to get home for Christmas.

Shay's apartment was about 20 minutes from the airport. While I waited for her to pick me up, I sat on my duffle bag on the sidewalk outside the airport terminal because I wanted her to see me when she drove up. I had not shaved, showered or changed clothes in over three days. I looked scruffy and am sure I didn't smell good. As I sat on my duffle bag, I placed the rifle butt on the sidewalk and cradled the barrel between my shoulder and neck. People walked by me, but none spoke. My stare dared anyone to say anything bad to me. At this point, I was ready to fight anyone, and I didn't care if I won or lost as long as it relieved the frustration and anger I had built up during the trip home! As I watched Shay drive up all that frustration and anger vanished. It was three days before Christmas and I finally made it home!

After a good night's sleep, the next day we drove about a hundred miles to my small hometown in rural Ohio where my parents and two sisters lived so we could spend Christmas with them.

The things I remember most about that Christmas are all the things that happened after leaving Da Nang and how good it felt to be home. I remember attending worship service on Sunday morning, December 24th, at our local church where our family had been members for years. During that service the preacher announced I was home and the congregation's prayers had been answered. The congregation had been praying for me during my Vietnam tour. I had returned home safely!



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

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### 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

What a difference a few days can make in our lives as changes can take place that will alter our lives forever. We experienced those changes in Vietnam, and now we are experiencing what can happen in nature that is all around us. Only time will tell how our lives will be changed from this point on. Those changes can be outstandingly positive, neutral, or extremely negative. We should all focus on the positive.

February was a normal month with the men's luncheon being held at BJ's Restaurant at the Rim. No major topics were being discussed, but members were visiting with each other to catch-up with everyone since the last luncheon. Everyone had an enjoyable time together. On March 03, the luncheon for members and potential members was held at Muck & Fuss in New Braunfels, TX. A larger number of members and potential members were at this luncheon with much more discussion about the functions of the Alamo Chapter. The ladies' luncheon was held on March 11 at Bourbon Street Seafood Kitchen. Everyone had an enjoyable time.

On March 12, 2020 at 1722 hours, we held our quarterly business meeting at the Barn Door Restaurant. Chapter Board members present at the meeting were as follows: Mike Law, Mike Clark, Ray Vaske, Chic Carter, Jim Talley, Mike Patterson, Tim Worley, Fred Lyssy and Jim Boykin. Board members accepted Jim Talley's resignation from the Board as Junior Member at Large. Tim Worley was appointed to the position of Junior Member at Large. The Treasurer provided the current financial status report plus the status report for 2019. Information was provided about the filing of the IRS Form 990-N by Ben Treadaway on February 20, 2020 which satisfied the Chapter's Tax Filing obligations. A brief discussion was conducted on the business of memberships being offered to individuals such as crew chiefs, gunners and other



February Men's Luncheon.



March Quarterly Business Meeting.

pilots who never flew in Vietnam, and would join the chapter as Associate members. No final decisions were made at this time. The subject of Chapter's Governing Documents was introduced to the Board members. Everyone agreed that a sub-committee consisting of Ray Vaske, Fred Lyssy and Jim Boykin be formed to review the subject and report back to the Board at the next quarterly meeting. No changes were going to be made to the Membership Dues during 2020. With no other business to be discussed, Mike Law, President, adjourned the meeting at 1820 hours. After the board meeting, board members joined their wives and several other member couples for dinner at the Barn Door. The large gathering for dinner were well entertained by all the subjects being discussed between the attendees.

**Mike Patterson**

## ALASKA CHAPTER

As I write today, we are finding ourselves in a crazy time. Since our last letter, 14 members had the opportunity to meet for a luncheon, nothing like a margarita and some nachos to create lively conversation! It was a pleasure to learn that one of our associate members, Pier Phinaih, a member of the Hmong community, has recently become a citizen of the United States! Congrats to him on becoming a US Citizen and for his Vietnam service supporting our soldiers. You have to love it when these guys get together. Sadly, we have since learned



that Maurice Hendrickson passed March 1st. Prayers for his family.

Our attempt to get a dedicated landmark is making progress. It has cleared both the State House and Senate Committees and the House finance committee. We continue to monitor and testify as necessary and hope to get a full floor vote before the end of this session. Hope we have good news in our next article. I want to thank our associate member, Laddie Shaw and local Representative Cathy Tilton, for taking on this project at the state level and making a wonderful difference. Thanks, Representative Shaw and Tilton.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

As we watch the CONVID-19 virus modify our lifestyles, I recognize that our Denver Reunion is in jeopardy (Ed: Denver Reunion has been cancelled) and other local events here in Alaska have already been canceled. I encourage safe, practical, and common sense approach as we are in the age group that the virus is most deadly. We will all get through this, after all, we got through Vietnam.

*There is pride in knowing WE FLEW.*

Lynn Kile  
President, Alaska Chapter  
[www.Vhpa-Alaska.org](http://www.Vhpa-Alaska.org)



## AMERICAN HUEY CHAPTER

Each year, we enjoy two seasons:

- (a) summer flying (April-October) - with 15-18 scheduled events in five states, where we are an adjunct activity at various veteran/civic/patriotic events in five states, and
- (b) winter - chapter members help with annual maintenance on the flying Hueys: H-model slicks (369 and 803) and B-model Gunship 049; moving aircraft in and out for exercise, and miscellaneous tasks.

This winter, activities included: New Year flag raising at the future museum site; unloading new aircraft; and for 369:

- (a) removing her T/R drive shafts, hangar assemblies, her 204 style 42- and 90-degree gearboxes and her T/R assembly, then the tail boom; and helping install a newly overhauled "212 style" 42-degree gearbox
- (b) removing the swash plate and support in order to ship out for overhaul.

### Other winter news:

- Chapter members Kae Walker and Mark Hopkins (website designer and manager) worked a lot on AH369's website, [www.americanhuey369.com](http://www.americanhuey369.com), entering event photos from 2019 on the Gallery Page and working on the new Merchandise Page to include shirts, sweatshirts, hats, caps, etc.
- Three of our younger members completed their pilot training and obtained their FAA Airman Certificates - Airplane SEL. Congratulations to Katie Baber, Tommy Victor, and Joey Victor
- Gary Sinise (Forest Gump's Lieutenant Dan) produced a PSA video, endorsing our goal to build the National American Huey History Museum!



New Year flag raising at the future museum site.



369 preparation for overhaul shipment.

### Our truck and helicopter trailer:

- 2002 F-350 V10 gas-powered, 4x4, crew-cab, short-bed truck, with 329,000 miles on it, having passed beyond warranty at 323,000 miles.
- 44-foot gooseneck helicopter trailer, built for AH369 in 2006 and its deck modified (by a supportive welding vendor) as a drop deck, allowing the transport of several aircraft from all over the country.

The truck and trailer were once again put to good use, traveling to Georgia and California to pick up two exciting additions to our fleet of aircraft - another slick and a Cobra.



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



●●●●●● AH-1 69-16435 ●●●●●●

Built as an AH-1G; later updated to an AH-1S (Mod), and finally to an AH-1F. Not yet is much known of its Army history, other than she served in Vietnam.

She later flew in the Tennessee Army National Guard, and was transferred in 2001 to the Kern County Fire Rescue service in Tehachapi, California.

Government restrictions will not let her fly, but we will make her look like she can!

●●●●●● UH-1 63-12959 ●●●●●●

A UH-1D, purchased by the Army in September 1964 and served with the 227th Avn (1st Cav), Jan 66 - Jul 67.

After Vietnam, she flew 108 hours in one month (Jul 68) at Ft. Belvoir AMC, and then moved south to Ft. Stewart's Aviation Training Center, Aug 68 - May 69.

She then served in Korea with 377th Med Co, 8th Army, Mar 70 - Nov 73, flying 1200+ hours with the 377th and remained in Korea, Dec 73 - Dec 75, assigned to 45th TC Co.

We are unsure of her remaining service in the Army before becoming surplus.

Her civilian résumé includes service in Panama City, FL., with Coastal Helicopter, Inc., until 2003 when she was purchased by Lockheed Martin and relocated to their New York facility where she served as a test bed for development of various electronic equipment (glass cockpit stuff) until 2016. On Sep 16, her last flight was from New York to a Lockheed Martin facility in Marietta, GA. where she was parked in a temperature-controlled hangar for three years.

Lockheed Martin donated UH-1 959 to AH369, as well as six large crates of support equipment, ground handling wheels, tow bar, and spare parts for 959.

We are humbled by their generous donation.

## Storage Building & Drive

Over 16 years, AH369 has accumulated 14 aircraft, several trailers, extra parts, and heavy equipment. Most are stored in two buildings in downtown Peru (with the exception the three flying Hueys & two static displays at the temporary hangar/museum at Grissom ARB, and one stored in a supporter's barn). The heavy equipment has been sitting outside.



AH-1 69-16435.

It has come time to get it all in one place - on our 34-acre parcel: future home of the National American Huey History Museum.

On the northeast side of the parcel, we will soon erect a 60'x120' Aircraft & Equipment Storage Building.

Its 200' gravel drive was recently completed. Chapter members helped strip topsoil from the site, and - along with supporting vendors that donated time, equipment, personnel and materials - helped construct the drive and place the base



UH-1 63-12959.

course for the foundation of the storage building

The building permit has been obtained; erection is about to begin.

FLASH ! ... our steady, years-long fundraising for the Huey Museum is being stepped up this year, and construction will begin in 2021!



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



Two hundred foot gravel drive under construction.



## American Huey Chapter - VHPA > PUBLIC GROUP · 566 MEMBERS

Chapter Facebook page.

### Miscellaneous:

- Membership - now approximately 140 dues paid members.
- Chapter Facebook page (566 members) - remains a steady tool for spreading the Huey gospel.
- New event trailer - acquired last year. Used to transport support materials to/from events.
- Four events are scheduled for May/Jun



New event trailer.

### Upcomming Events:

- May 24th & 25th - South Bend Cubs Military Appreciation Days - Four Winds Field - static display only - South Bend, IN
- June 12th & 13th - 23rd Annual Veterans Memorial Park Porkind Festival - membership flights available, weather permitting - Harrod, OH
- June 20th - Down Syndrome Indiana Benefit - First Wing Jet Center (formerly Montgomery Aviation) - membership flights available, weather permitting - Zionsville, IN

## CALIFORNIA NORTH CHAPTER

VHPA-CCN had no events in February or March 2020. We did welcome two new members to the chapter: Michael Evans and John McTasney. We hoped to meet our new members at our planned MOC work-days and lunches in April. We all know by now that the May Reunion in Denver is canceled and work on our MOC has been suspended. By the time this



report is published, I hope the COVID-19 Pandemic is under control and we can all get on with our lives. In the meantime, all future meetings are on hold.

Stay Well!

Please check our website [www.vhpacn.org](http://www.vhpacn.org) for more info and photos of past events.

**Dave Anderson, VHPA-CCN Secretary**



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## CELEBRATE FREEDOM CHAPTER

Celebrate Freedom Chapter will hopefully be back in full swing by the time this issue comes out.

We have been a quiet little chapter here in SC and now going to try and dig out some more of VHPA people that live in SC and Columbia area.

We have five F model Cobras, one H model Huey, one Kiowa A/C, and a Bell 47J2.

We work closely with Celebrate Freedom Foundation which does extensive work in the STEM program.

The five Cobras we have: two are on trailers that are pulled to schools, parades, and airshows. One of our Stem birds was pretty much totaled in a parking lot by a drunk driver. We have one flying Cobra, one at about 80% complete, one parts bird. The Huey has been hovered around and needs to finish FAA paperwork to get registered. The 58 is getting ready for paint and reassembly.

You can view our helicopters and operation at [www.gocff.org](http://www.gocff.org) and also on Facebook Celebrate Freedom Foundation.



Extremely sorry that I am going to miss all my fellow VHPAers at Denver this year with this ugly Corona virus. We pray that our members stay healthy throughout this pandemic.

*God Bless to all.*

**Roger Lone, snake driver C troop 7/17 and H 10**

## OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

We had a fantastic gathering over Valentine's Day Weekend with many members, wives, and friends attending. First, we were invited by the ROTC Cadre at James Madison University in Harrisonburg VA to attend their 6th Annual Vietnam Veterans Luncheon with guest speaker LTC (Ret) Robert E. Leien-decker, a US Army EOD Officer who did two tours of Vietnam. He was in charge of the disposal of the April 27, 1969 ammunition explosion of 20,000 tons at the Da Nang Air Base.

Many thanks to Greg Lawson of JMU for organizing and inviting us to this event.

Friday night we went to dinner at the authentic German restaurant Edelweiss in Staunton, VA and had over 19 in attendance.

That night we converged on the Historic Blackburn Inn, built in 1828, as the Western State Hospital Administration Building by Thomas R. Blackburn, a respected protégé of Thomas Jefferson.



**Eighteen Old Dominion Chapter Wives & Friends enjoying Valentines Day Dinner @ Edelweiss German Restaurant Staunton, VA.**



**ROTC James Madison University Vietnam Veterans Luncheon with 19 Pilots and Crew Members present.**



**Blackburn Inn.**



# VHPA CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Saturday 15 February, we met at the 116th Infantry Regiment Stonewall Brigade Museum in Verona, VA and were given a great tour by Docent Major General (Ret.) Carroll D. Childers. This Brigade, founded in 1741 originally as part of the Virginia Militia, fought in the Normandy Landings on Omaha Beach. They also fought in the French & Indian War, The American Revolution, Siege of Yorktown, Manassas Campaign, Spanish American War, Operation Iraqi Freedom and many more too numerous to mention.

*Respectfully submitted*  
**Don Agren**



Stonewall 116 Brigade.

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

We were unable to hold our March and April meetings at the American Legion Post #1 due to the Pandemic. We canceled the March meeting just days before VHPA Headquarters canceled the May Reunion in Denver. We will cancel subsequent chapter meetings pending the outcome of the corona virus pandemic. We were all very disappointed that the Reunion was canceled as we have put so much work into the planning, but we've all experienced that emotion many times before. That is nothing new to us. At this writing we are all safe and practicing physical distancing. One thing that has perplexed us and we've asked the question many times over, "Who has all the toilet paper?"

By the time you read this a treatment and vaccine for the corona virus will have been developed. Stay Hopeful, Stay Safe, and above all Stay Healthy.

Upcoming Activities: We do not have any activities scheduled for the rest of the year pending the outcome of the pan-

demic. Hopefully, we will have pictures and stories by the next Aviator Publication. Any upcoming activities will be announced on our Web site: [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://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 continue categorizing inventory, developing additional displays, and conducting Museum maintenance. Visit our Web site at [www.RMCVHPA.com](http://www.RMCVHPA.com). We continue to look for artifacts for the Museum. Please contact our Chapter President and Museum Curator, Dale House with anything you'd like to donate or loan to the museum. We can be contacted through our mailbox at: [RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com](mailto:RMC.mailbox@yahoo.com)

**Dale House**

## UPPER MIDWEST CHAPTER

The Upper Midwest Chapter was forced to cancel our March meeting due to the current pandemic. We were also scheduled to participate in the Vietnam Veterans Day in late March at the Forest Lake MN, American Legion. That too, was cancelled. We are hopeful we can have a May meeting after our snowbirds return. July is usually our evening adventure with our spouses. In the past, we have done dinner cruises, but we are always open to new ideas.

We were disappointed that the Denver reunion was cancelled, but since we are the target age group for more severe complications, it was the right decision. Kudos to our execu-

tive council for their work on this important issue.

At the present time, the next event on our schedule is August 1, in Fairmont MN. There will be a dedication of a Cav Cobra at a currently under-construction veterans memorial. From what we have heard, the memorial will be impressive and will also include a 2/3 scale replica "Wall". Fairmont is in southern Minnesota along Interstate 90, so it has good access to those of you in Iowa and eastern South Dakota. We will keep you updated on this event on our Facebook page, Upper Midwest Chapter Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

**Article by Don Abrams**



# Chapter 7. AMBUSH (CHECK RIDE)

*By Tom McGurn*

Flying CC (Command & Control) ship with Jim Lynch as my PC was always an early start, late finishes, and lots of neck pain, literally. Flying Command and Control requires many hours of left-hand circles while the Brigade Commander Blackhawk 06 continuously looks down and critiques his units from his aerial observations. As the co-pilot, I sat in a fixed armored seat on the right side of our aircraft for hours upon hours, only seeing high sky. That takes its toll, with headaches and stiff necks while I prayed for a fuel break, or anything to fly straight and level. Maybe that was why other co-pilots politicized the Platoon Commander to avoid this daily mission. I should have been more social, I'm a slow learner.

This date we were flying north of Titty mountain, directly over Highway One. That road is the main coastal highway which runs north and south through the entire country, all the way to Hanoi in the north. I would fly over this highway almost every day I was in Vietnam. The road is a museum of war with old Japanese tanks and French tanks sitting on the side like a ghost signpost saying, "beware of this road." Ambushes were the norm there and many soldiers have been killed or injured. Unfortunately, it was still the main supply route for our military to support the numerous bases like LZ Betty. One of Blackhawk 06's missions as Brigade Commander was to have his troops protect and patrol this road on a daily basis. As convoys of supplies moved, they were escorted by APC (armored personnel carriers) and in some cases tanks. Vietnam is a country that has been in some kind of conflict its entire history and this road has seen its share of conquerors and the defeated, we were just the current contestants.

We were on station ten miles north of Titty Mountain, with Highway One directly below as our left turn orbits began. Beneath was a convoy moving slowly northward with troops and supplies for someone. The first indication something was happening was that the radio chatter quickly became panicky with stress, which was immediately injected into the ground radio operator's voice. The convoy was under attack directly below us, in daylight. How long have they been waiting, hiding for this opportunity, intensely focused on causing concentrated damage to their foe?

Attacking a road from the dense forest brush on each side was common, effective, and the surprise of the attack accelerated in triggering confusion. With enemy rounds coming from all directions the convoy commander had to first coordinate a defense, then if possible, follow his chosen course of action by an immediate counter-attack plan. When being engaged by a well-prepared enemy ambush, you don't immediately know the size of the enemy force, and in a convoy the

commander's location could possibly be at the front or rear, now trying to relay his commands over a burdened FM radio system from stressed out unit radio operators.

Blackhawk 06, the Brigade Commander sitting in back, jumped in on the frequency. Wearing his headset and microphone, he was requesting updates. You could now see the intensity of the firefight with green enemy tracers and red friendly tracers ricocheting into the sky. Our troops have very powerful weapons, including the M2, 50 caliber machine gun with a large caliber round cutting deeply into the low forest. These rounds have so much inertia they will sometimes strike the earth and ricochet skyward, still burning their tracer brightly red a thousand feet into the sky after the initial ground contact. The roadway below turned to dust as vehicles and gunfire continued to erupt in every direction.

We were an airborne audience flying in a fifteen-hundred-foot pattern to the tragedy below; soldiers had been wounded, seriously wounded.

The convoy called for help, and back at LZ Betty, the Tiger Sharks of the 192nd gunships were scrambled and would be on station within fifteen to twenty minutes, but by then the enemy would have dissolved deep into the low forest brush. They would be too shy when the gunships arrived, knowing that their presence can be observed quickly from the sky.

The convoy commander updated Blackhawk 06 of his wounded. Some were so serious they needed immediate evacuations. Medevac was called. Medevac are UH-1H helicopters with a specially trained crew, which includes medics, to start treatment the second the wounded are placed onboard. These special aircraft are the direct descendants of those early trials of helicopters during the Korean War and are the prevailing reason why only 58,000 soldiers died during the Vietnam conflict, instead of maybe 100,000. Many consider them Angels from the sky, and I would agree. Their helicopters are unarmed and the enemy sees them as easy targets, no rules, no mercy.

Blackhawk 06 believed Medevac would be too slow for his boys and requested that we land on the highway to try and get these soldiers/boys, someone's son, father, and brother, to the aid station at LZ Betty in the shortest amount of time. Now Blackhawk 06's rank is a full bird colonel, next step-up would be brigadier general, but this decision was the PCs, as commander of this machine, Warrant Officer Jimmy Lynch, who was in charge of our ship. It was a no brainer, we GO! Our approach was to the front of the convoy, the ground troops had already deployed smoke to help us judge the wind, always a factor if properly used, a tool/edge when heavily load aircraft need to take off.



We landed in a puff of dust and this would take some time. Now sitting there on the highway, a prime target, but it was the job we accepted, and probably one of few times we truly feel needed. Convoy soldiers arrived with their wounded, one soldier could climb onboard by himself, he was bleeding from a badly mangled hand, the blood had exceeded his bandage and he was strapped into a seat by the crew chief, enduring the pain. Next, a soldier was carried and placed on the cargo floor, bleeding from his neck, conscious, he was shirtless, which was probably removed by his comrades to apply first aid. The final soldier was almost thrown into the nylon seat, urgency reflected from the soldiers carrying their comrade.

This seat which had been set up ran the width of the helicopter. Blackhawk 06 sat next to this young soldier, talking to him with his hand on his shirtless chest, this soldier's skin color was like a light wax. There was a wound to the left of his breastbone (sternum), the size was shaped like that of a fingernail on your pinky finger, a deep wound. This young man was dying. As I looked back, you could see he was gone or going. Nothing further could be done as Blackhawk 06 touched his chest to comfort and give solace to this hero. A connection from a commander at his zenith to his soldier at the far end of the US Army rank structure, a young sergeant or corporal, a boy under his command mortally wounded as our helicopter took off toward LZ Betty. That soldier's Family's life had changed, they would not know for maybe twenty-four hours before this pain reaches them that this young man was gone.

We were airborne, flying at maximum speed, gauges to the max VNE (speed never to exceed). Jim was on the radio alert-

ing the control tower that we were inbound with seriously wounded, clear the way. The UH-1 has a very large wind-screen, made of very thick Plexiglas, a fixture we as pilot's love. The more you can see, the more reference you have, greatly appreciated, "Thank you, Mr. Bell Helicopter." I stared straight ahead, watching our course when I noticed something on the inside of the wind screen. I was wearing nomex aviator gloves which have a pig leather underside designed for a more sensitive feel, which I now used to take my left index finger and gently wipe the inside of this glass, surprised by what I now discovered. These wounded soldiers' blood had now atomized because of our open doors circulating airflow through the ship, causing a thin film onto the inside of our wind screen. I could draw a line in the human blood residue, blood of these unfortunate victims of war, one whose future was forever ended on that ghost highway with all those ancient warriors.

Landing at the medical pad at Phan Thiet (LZ Betty), the pad was surrounded by medical attendants and doctors geared up to give these soldiers their best chance of surviving. Our job was not done, we were off to hot refuel, then back to pick up Blackhawk 06 from the medical pad to continue Command and Control.

It was too easy remembering this mission, and I often will say a prayer for these soldiers and their families, mostly when I would be driving alone early in those morning hours when the sky is painted with God's own palette, those quiet times you can be thankful for what you have, knowing what others have sacrificed.

## 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 the 850 children living in seven Vinh Son orphanages located in the Kontum/Pleiku area. FVSO provides dental care, food, shelter, medicine, and education. Your generous donation will support these children, especially during times of uncertainty. The kids, along with their caregivers, must live with this terrible virus, just like everyone else. PLEASE HELP...THANK-YOU

April newsletter tells how the Coronavirus has affected the kids

**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



# A Long Time Coming

## 'POW/MIA Lilly's name added to memorial'

Article from November 22, 2018 reprinted with the permission of the Alexandria Gazette Packet

*Story and photos by Jeanne Theismann*

As snow blanketed the Captain Rocky Versace Plaza, the newly chiseled name of 1st Lt. Lawrence Lilly was unveiled Nov. 15, bringing to 68 the number of Alexandrians fallen during the Vietnam War and honored with a Gold Star at the city's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Del Ray.

"This was a long time coming," said Jim Kurtz, who served with Lilly in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. "On behalf of his comrades, I am so thankful to the City of Alexandria for keeping his memory alive."

Lilly's 93-year-old mother, Jeannette Lilly, unveiled the Gold Star tribute to her son on the outdoor plaza. Lilly's sister, Susan Lilly Harvey, then placed a POW bracelet bearing her brother's name inside the Capt. Rocky Versace Vietnam Memorial display case, which is a permanent exhibit inside the entrance to the Mount Vernon Recreation Center.

"Larry was a special guy in our platoon," said Kurtz, who spoke about the circumstances that led to Lilly being shot down over Cambodia in March of 1971. "He was a college graduate who enlisted in the Army and worked his way up. He was respected and loved by everyone who knew him."

Lilly graduated from Catholic University in 1968 and enlisted in the Army at Alexandria's recruiting station.

"In 1968, the nation was in turmoil," Kurtz said. "Yet



1st Lt. Lawrence Lilly, shown in an undated photo, was shot down over Cambodia in March of 1971 and is one of seven Alexandrians still considered a POW/MIA from the Vietnam War. The Friends of Rocky Versace held a ceremony Nov. 15 to add Lilly's name to the memorial plaza in Del Ray.



Gold Star mother Jeanette Lilly, 93, stands near the newly unveiled memorial to her son, 1st Lt. Lawrence Lilly, at the Capt. Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans Memorial Nov. 15 in Del Ray. To Jeanette's left is Jim Kurtz.



Master Sergeant Todd Taylor of the U.S. Army Band plays Taps following a ceremony unveiling the name of Lawrence Lilly at the Capt. Rocky Versace Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Del Ray.

as the son of Air Force Colonel Bob Lilly, who was part of 'the Greatest Generation,' Larry wanted to serve his country as his father did."

When he was shot down on March 17, 1971, Lilly was a member of Troop A, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, flying as co-pilot of a Cobra helicopter gunship on a secret visual-reconnaissance mission over Cambodia.

The incident report states that as the aircraft was near a landing zone, it was hit by enemy fire and forced to the ground deep inside Cambodia in the Snuol District of Kracheh province, near Seang village. The pilot,



Capt. David P. Schweitzer, was rescued, but heavy enemy fire forced the rescue helicopter to leave the area before Lilly could be extracted.

Lilly, who was 26 years old, was last seen by U.S. personnel lying on his back with his shirt partially open and blood on his chest and neck. "He was being fired on by Viet Cong forces," Kurtz said, "and is considered KIA/BNR, or Killed in Action-Body Not recovered."

Kevin Rue, a West Point graduate and organizer of the ceremony on behalf of The Friends of Rocky Versace organization, said that the delay in adding Lilly's name to the memorial was due to a common practice of military families listing an alternate hometown in Department of Defense records.

Lilly was raised in Alexandria, where his mother and sister still reside. But as a "military brat," his hometown of record at the time of his death was listed as Los Angeles, where his father was stationed at the time. When friends and family members contacted Rue, he moved quickly to seek approval from the city to add a Gold Star and Lilly's name to the memorial honoring Alexandria's fallen from the Vietnam War.

"The Lilly family waited more than 47 years to have their son and brother honored here today," Rue said. "His service and sacrifice will never be forgotten."

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# Jan Howard at The Grand Ole Opry

When the VHPA met in Nashville, TN for the reunion in 1999, I was the President. It was our first time to Nashville, and everyone was excited to be there. The numbers for our reunions were growing at the time. While in Nashville, several wonderful events were arranged, including an outdoor BBQ at a local airport hangar, a visit to the Jack Daniels Distillery in Lynchburg, TN and, of course, a fabulous night at the famous, Grand Ole Opry! There were approximately 500-600 VHPA helicopter pilots in attendance that night, and it was definitely GRAND! We were introduced in mass and the crowd was fantastic in greeting us.

During the performances at the Opry, a dear lady named Jan Howard was introduced to the crowd. Jan was a long, long time singer and performer for the Grand Ole Opry. Jan had written many songs and she sang one which was a very heartfelt song she had written herself titled, "My Son". It was also in honor of our attendance that night. There was a complete silence in the crowd, a sober and respectful silence by everyone as Jan sang. Tears were evident and tissues and hankies were appearing over the entire audience. You see, Jan Howard was singing her song, the song she had written about her own son! Jan's son, Corporal James Van "Jimmy" Howard, was KIA in Quang Nam, Vietnam on 30 Oct 1968. His death was shortly after Jan had written and released the song titled "My Son". There was extreme silence across the crowd that night at The Grand Ole Opry and it will be remembered by all who were in attendance as one of the best VHPA reunions ever. It was evident to all that Jan Howard was not only singing her son's song to his memory, she was also singing it to all of us there that night.



Jan Howard passed away at the age of 91 on March 28, 2020. At her death, she was the longest performing artist on the Opry at nearly 50 years! We who remember Jan that night offer our condolences to her family and we fondly treasure our memories of that night nearly 21 years ago at our 1999 VHPA reunion in Nashville, TN. Thank you, Jan Howard for

writing "My Son" in honor of your son and all of us who served proudly in Vietnam.

Tom Payne  
VHPA President

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## *To the Editor:*

In the March / April issue of my President's Message, I talked about the future possibility of creating an "Associate Member" category to primarily assist us with reunion planning and managing as we continue to age. I neglected to mention that these individuals would be strictly "non-voting" members. All of the major decisions about our association, its mission, contracts, how it operates, our scholarship program, and our assets, would remain exclusively in our hands.

**Art Jacobs**

## *Gentlemen,*

In our present situation and considering the cancelled reunion, I suggest we perform a COMMO CHECK – by Voice, Text or Email.

My Favorite Cousin Wayne (FCW) called me yesterday from Dubois, WY just to check on me and my family. We hadn't talked for a while. FCW and I have always been more like brothers than cousins. When I was born, I had RH factor blood and needed a blood transfusion. My Aunt Iva, his Mom, was the donor. She literally saved my life so I would someday learn to fly helicopters, serve in Vietnam, marry Melanie and have a son like Hunter. FCW and I had a good visit, really enjoyed it.

During the chat he mentioned he had tried to contact a mutual friend in Georgia, Mike Harsh, with no success. FCW asked if I knew or had heard anything about him. Mike owned a small ranch near Athens, GA where FCW used to live. Mike and I were College classmates at North Georgia College and flew Cobras in the same Unit in Vietnam. The last time I had seen or heard from Mike was during the VHPA Reunion in Atlanta in 2017 when he and his son, Luke, had come down to Hampton for a Cobra ride. A little concerned, I told FCW I'd call the number I had for Mike and see what was up.

Mike answered after the first ring, "Hello Hunter", his nickname for me. I asked if he was OK, told him about FCW's concern and got permission

to give out his phone #. We had a great talk. Asked about each other's families, what we were doing and so forth. Again, really enjoyed the time. Called FCW as soon as Mike and I hung up and gave him Mike's number.

Last night I decided to write this article. Each of us has some or a few someones we need to reach out to and say hello. In this uncertain time, we, each of us, need to let our old friends know we are thinking about them. A phone call, text or email will do just that. Here's what I'm going to do every day from this day forward and I ask each of you reading this article to do the same - call, text or email one friend you served with and see how they are doing. Find out what's going on in his life and remember old times. I can guarantee you both will enjoy it.

*Thanks*

**Mike Sheuerman, Panther 15,  
Cell 214-802-4244**

## *To the Editor,*

Thank you for the thoughtful, thought-provoking pieces about our future in the March/April edition.

1. Having a recent experience with an organization transitioning to an outside agency to conduct their reunion, costs went up 30%-50% year over year. Yes, it's hard work for the HQ staff but we should remember many of us are retired (or will be) and reunion costs are important.

2. I support the creating of the VHPA Associate Members (non-voting, at least for now).

VHPA has always been forward looking, thank you for continuing that policy.

**William F. (Bill) Allen  
MG, USA, Ret.**

**D/227th, 1st Calvary Division,  
B/9th Aviation Bn, 9th Infantry Division**

*General, we appreciate the feedback concerning the position(s). Of course, the credit is owing to the gentlemen who crafted their positions and provided same for publishing.*

~Ed.



## AWARDS LEGEND

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

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

You may notice that our TAPS section is a little light this issue. The reason is that our main volunteer who provides us with obituaries has been under the weather for the past two months. Her name is Sammie Williams, the wife of a VHPA member. Sammie has been providing us with obituaries for almost 10 years which has been an enormous help. She also provides photos and information about our fallen to Find A Grave Memorials and other obituary web sites to help honor our fallen. She is truly a wonderful person and a great American patriot. We thank her for all of her help, and we wish her a rapid recovery.

To help fill this TAPS gap, another volunteer has stepped forward to help. He is VHPA member

Barry Geller. Barry has been quietly working in the background for several years filling in gaps in information for our fallen. The result of his work is that our online obituaries have gotten more complete and accurate as he works through our DAT list. He has volunteered to fill in for Sammie until she gets back on her feet. So, another big thank you to Barry.

Also, thanks to all of you who have provided us with obituaries over the years. Please continue to do that by sending links to obituaries to [HQ@vhpa.org](mailto:HQ@vhpa.org) and [aviator@vhpa.org](mailto:aviator@vhpa.org)

Gary Roush  
[webmaster@vhpa.org](mailto:webmaster@vhpa.org)

**Futch, Frank W. USA; Flight Class: 70-44; RVN: 71-72 A/158 AVN 101 ABN, 72 142 TC CO; Callsign: Ghost Rider 35.**

Frank William Futch, age 72, native of Lakeland, FL passed away on September 26, 2019.

He is survived by his wife Laverne.

**Gimbert, Richard D. USA; Flight Classes: 68-512/68-20; RVN: 69-70 101 AVN 101 ABN, 71-72 2/17 CAV 101 ABN.**



Richard was born on January 19, 1949 and passed away on January 21, 2020. Following his service to the Army, Rick became an accomplished and highly regarded international tax expert and mentor to many in his profession.

He was living in Roswell, GA at the time of his passing.

**Hill, James T. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 65-16; RVN: 66-67 282 AHC, 67 52 CAB; DFC; Callsign: Dragon/Black Cat.**

James Thomas Hill "Tom", age 78, of Northport, AL., went to be with his Heavenly Father on September 19, 2019 at UAB Hospital.

Tom was a Chemical Engineer at McMillian and Boise Cascade. He was a faithful member of the Gideons International and served with the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and President of The Auxiliary of Volunteers at DCH Regional Medical Center and volunteered at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

He was a faithful member of

Harvest Church, where he served as Chairman of the Deacons, Sunday school teacher, and witness for the Homeless Ministry and served the youth as a devoted bus driver.

He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Judy.

**Hood, Charles H. USA; Flight Classes: 70-15/70-13; RVN: 70-71 C/227 AHB 1 CAV; DFC, BS; Callsign: Ghost Rider 14.**



Charles Henry Hood of Clarksville, TN passed away February 5, 2020, at Tennova Healthcare. Charles was born February 14, 1943 in Hemet. He was a retired US Army and US Air Force veteran, having served for



20 years. He was a Master Gardener, artist, and skilled craftsman.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Shirley.

**Nichols, Loren W.**  
USA; Flight Class:  
67-20; RVN: 68-69  
D/1/1 CAV; DFC,  
ACM; Callsign:  
Sword 16.



Loren Nichols, a Scout Pilot, passed away peacefully in his home in Granbury on December 31, 2019 surrounded by his family, with a full and joyful heart.

Loren was born in 1943 in El Paso, TX. He earned his BA in English from Texas Western and went on to study Public Administration in graduate school.

Captain Nichols left the army in 1969, returning to El Paso. In 1972 he began working for the U.S. Border Patrol, retiring as Deputy Chief of Air Operations in 1999 after 29 years of service. Loren resided in Pecan Plantation since 2005. He wished for no grief, but joy and gratitude.

**Parker, Ellis D.**  
USA, LTG Ret.;  
Flight Class: 58-  
12FW.



Ellis Parker passed away on March 26, 2020. His education consisted of a BS Degree in Psychology, a MS Degree in Public Administration and Honorary Doctorate of Law. In addition, he graduated from both the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

General Parker's service to Army Aviation was significant, notably

as the Commanding General of the Army Aviation Center. He served as the Aviation Branch Chief and Commandant for the unprecedented period of five and one-half years. This tenure and his innate skill led the fledgling Aviation Branch into its important and rightful place in the Army.

His promotion to LTG led to his appointment to Director of the Army Staff where he continued to excel in leadership. He was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame in 1995.

Don Parker knew Army Aviation inside and out, and left his lasting, indelible imprint on this branch he loved and served so well.

**Perkins, Richard R.**  
USA; Flight Class:  
71-4; RVN: 71-72  
C/3/17 CAV; Call-  
sign: Longknife 25.



Richard Perkins passed away on March 26, 2019 at his home in Richland, OR. Ray was born June 8, 1947 in Silverton, OR. He graduated from Lebanon, OR high school in 1965. After graduation, he spent the first five years as an enlisted man up to the rank of E6. The next five years was as a commissioned infantry officer by way of OCS at Fort Benning, GA. He flew in Vietnam with rank of 1st LT. Ray was proud of his military career and his time in Vietnam. He said, 'not bad for someone with just a high school diploma.' Ray also served in Korea 66-67 on the DMZ.

**Phillips, Reed R.**  
USA; Flight Class-  
es: 66-19/66-17;  
RVN: 67-68 188  
AHC, 68 128  
AHC; Callsign:  
Tomahawk 14.



Reed Phillis was born on June 30, 1945, died on December 29, 2019.

**Rodgers, Donald T.**  
USA; Flight Class:  
68-9/68-11; RVN:  
68-69 A/25 AVN 25  
INF; SS, DFC, BS,  
MSM, ACM (V)  
(2OLC); Callsign:  
Little Bear.



Donald T. Rodgers, passed away March 6, 2020 at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson, AZ. Don was born on February 19, 1945 in Memphis, TN. He attended Central High School and Memphis State University.

He served in the United States Army from 1967 to 1987 as an Army Aviator, operating several types of helicopter. After leaving the Army, he lived in the Tidewater area of Virginia where he worked in the financial services industry. He retired to Tucson, AZ and said the open vistas reminded him of flying.

Don joined the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 2007 and was an active member until his passing. He was also a member of Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, Combat Helicopter Pilots Association, Military Officers Association, and the Infantry Officers Association.

He is survived by his wife of 15 years, Ann Elizabeth.



**Steele, Larry L. USA; Flight Class: 67-15; RVN: 67-68 3 BDE 1 CAV; Callsign: Snoopy Scout 1, 2.**

Larry Steele was born on January 7, 1944 and died on September 4, 2019.

**Top, John J. USA, COL Ret.; Flight Class: 56-7; RVN: 65-66 HHC/12 CAG, 68-69 HHC 214 CAB, 69 HHC/145 AVN, 69 HHC/12 CAG; LM (OLC), DFC (OLC), BS V (2 OLC) MSM; Callsign: Old Warrior 6.**

John Top was born in Olympia, WA.; October 15, 1932. After graduating Texas, A&M's class of '54, John began a distinguished career with the United States Army. He was one of the pioneers of armed helicopters, and was the first pilot to qualify with the SS-11 wire guided anti-tank missile. Subsequently, the young officer traveled the country demonstrating the new weaponized capability of a YH-40 Huey prototype. John was also one of four officers selected to develop the original armed helicopter-training program at Fort Rucker, and helped write much of its doctrine.

While in Vietnam, he was honored to support President Nixon and staff on his historic visit to Vietnam during the summer of 1969.

Returning to the states, John Top was assigned to the Army Staff, in charge of aircraft missile and rockets programs in the Office of the Chief of Research & Development. It was here that



John was originally responsible for the development of the Cobra TOW program and made the initial briefing to the General Staff that led to the development of the Hellfire Missile. He also served briefly at the Pentagon as the Executive for Army Aviation in the office of the Secretary of the Army for Research and Development; overseeing all Army Aviation R & D programs. While there, John chaired the initial tri-service meeting that led to the development of the tilt-rotor V-22 Osprey; still widely used in service today.

Colonel Top retired from his duties in the fall of 1978. Taking from his experience as an Army program manager, combined with a recent Masters-of-Science from USC, John started his own consulting business in Southern California where he served such clients as the Cubic Corp, the US Army Missile Command (AMCOM), Parks Jagers, Litton Industries, and Lockheed Martin. While at Lockheed, John successfully reversed an internal no-bid decision, which led to their winning the contract to develop and produce the THAAD anti-ballistic missile defense system. His impact on LMT will persist however, as THAAD is still to this day a legitimate regional defense strategy around the globe.

**Tucker, Max E. USA, CW3 Ret.; Flight Class: 68-1; RVN: 50 MED DET; BS; Callsign: Dustoff.**

Max Edward Tucker passed peacefully in his sleep in the early morning hours on Sunday,

February 23, 2020. After battling late stage pancreatic cancer, he was fortunate to live out the remainder of his life in his own home with the help of hospice care and his loving family. Mr. Tucker was born on August 24, 1937 in Warrensburg, NC. He served honorably in the U.S Army for 28 years. His service included multiple tours in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

**Zuccaro, Matthew S. USA; Flight Class: 69-13; RVN: 69-70 HHT/7/17 CAV; DFC (2 OLC) BS (3 OLC); Callsign: Head Beagle.**

Matthew Zuccaro, longtime resident of Chappaqua, NY, passed away surrounded by his family on February 25, 2020. He was born in New York City and grew up in Westchester County.

Matt always had a love of flying, beginning with his involvement with Civil Air Patrol as a teenager. Over the next 50 years he had a distinguished career in aviation, highlights of which included being one of only two pilots to land on top of the World Trade Center heliport, being a founding member of the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council culminating his career serving as president and CEO of the Helicopter Association International for the past 15 years. Throughout his career, Matt was a dedicated advocate for the global promotion of rotorcraft safety on behalf of all members, operators, and maintainers alike.

He is survived by his wife of fifty years, Doreen.



# 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](http://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](mailto:HQ@VHPA.org) or call 1-800-505-VHPA (8472) so it can be added to our database.

Bartlett, Frederick R. Sr. USN, CPT Ret.; RVN: 68-69 HA(L)-3 DET 6; died on March 2, 2020.

Carson, Roger M. USA; Flight Class: 66-17; RVN: 116 AHC; died on September 6, 2012.

Dowler Gary K. USAF, Ret.; Flight Classes; 66-5W/66-5; RVN 67 121 AHC; died on September 9, 2016.

Jones, John C. USMC; RVN: 67-68 HMM-165; DFC, BS (V); died on March 3, 2020.

Lukshin, Nikolai A. USA, CW4 Ret.; Flight Class: 66-23; died on March 8, 2020.

Pitman, Charles H. USMC, LTG Ret.; SS, DFC, PH; died on February 13, 2020.

Stancil, Charles M. USA, LTC Ret.; Flight Class: 69-42; died on August 20, 2014.

Uptagrafft, Thomas E. USA; Flight Classes 68-16/68-26; RVN: 68-69 F/8 CAV; Callsign: Blue Ghost 35; died on February 2, 2019.

Wescott, Gary R. USAF, LTC Ret.; MSM (3OLC), AFCM; died on March 10, 2020.

## OBITUARY SUBMISSIONS

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

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

# WELCOME TO THE VHPA!

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

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

## AVIATOR REPORT completed for 10 New Members and covers the period 2.10.20 to 3.31.20

Cooper Wayne R \*\*  
Prattville Alabama  
Army  
66-13 66-15  
117 AHC in 66; D/3/4 CAV in 66-67;  
HHC 3 BDE 101 ABN in 69-70

Hunter Robert L.  
Lees Summit Missouri  
Army  
70-37  
173 AHC in 71-72

Kaup James J 'Jim'  
Salem Alabama  
Army  
66-9W 66-9  
1 BDE 25 INF in 66; 199 LIB in 67; 7/1  
CAV in 69; 173 ABN BDE

Metzger Richard J. \*\*  
Soldotna Alaska  
Army  
69-49  
158 AVN 101 ABN in 70-71

Morgan James R. 'Jim'  
Cedaredge Colorado  
Army  
69-39  
54 MED DET in 70-71

Oatman Dudley B \*\*  
Spring Valley California  
Army  
67-19 67-23  
D/229 AVN 1 CAV in 68; C/3/17 CAV  
in 71-72

Shawn William W. \*\*  
The Villages Florida  
Army  
66-6  
B/9 AVN 9 INF in 67; 1 BDE 9 INF in  
66-67; 610 TC CO in 70-71

Smith Timothy C. 'Tim' \*\*  
Westminster Colorado  
Army  
69-49  
21 SIG GRP in 70-71

Victory Alan D. \*\*  
Trinity Texas  
Army  
B/7/1 CAV 101 ABN in 69-70

Wyks Edward E. \*\*  
The Villages Florida  
Army  
70-32  
235 AWC in 71; 162 AHC in 71-72



# VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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

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

## Membership application/change of address

☐ New application

☐ Address change

☐ Directory correction

NAME

DATE OF BIRTH:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

HOME PHONE: ( )

WORK PHONE: ( )

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

Membership Dues: ☐ Annual \$36 ☐ Three year \$99 ☐ Lifetime (based on applicants' age\*) Total: \$

\*age 59 and below (\$450), 60-64 (\$350), 65-69 (\$250), 70-74 (\$150), 75-79 (\$100) 80 and above (\$75)

☐ Add \$25 for printed Membership Directory \*\* ☐ Add \$10 for Membership Directory on CD \*\*

☐ Add for Membership Fund Contribution ☐ Add for Scholarship Fund Contribution

Aviator Subscription only ☐ Annual \$36 ☐ Three Year ☐ Lifetime- see above membership rates\*

☐ Charge my MasterCard/Visa C/Card ☐ Personal check/money order enclosed

Credit card No.:

Expiration date:

SIGNATURE:

FLIGHT SCHOOL CLASS:

SERVICE BRANCH:

COMBAT FLIGHT HOURS:

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.:

Information about each Vietnam unit:

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

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

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

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

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



# ~ BOOK REVIEWS ~



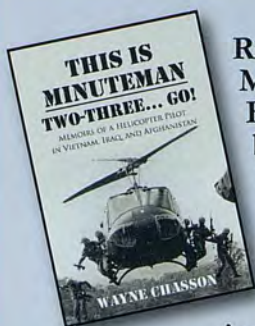
*Marc Liebman, a VHPA Life Member, is a retired Navy Captain and Naval Aviator who flew combat search and rescue missions during the Vietnam War. He is also the author of five published novels with more coming.*



Review of **CHECK RIDE** by Thomas McGurn, published by Deeds Publishing, 345 Hancock, Athens, GA 30601, ISBN 978-1-950794-07-2, 284 pages, hardcover - \$31.95...Also available in paperback and eBook.

McGurn's sub-head for his book – some had it better, some had it worse - says it all about his tour and probably for the rest of us who spent time in Vietnam. Those of us on ships slept in a bed, hopefully in air-conditioned comfort. Then there were those who slept in hooches made of whatever scrap material could be found

and enjoyed the cooling Mother Nature provided. During the Vietnam war, Army helicopter pilots flew variations of the same sub-set of missions – air assault, medical evacuation, re-supply, gunship. Yet, the stories never get old, particularly when they are well told. Check Ride is full of great stories, interesting pictures and diagrams, including one of the head of a parachute flare. It was needed to help tell a sad story involving a device that for a few seconds turned night into a plethora of harsh black and white shadows. Check Ride is a great read for those of us who were there, as well as for those of us who weren't. The stories are easy to digest history told by one of the men who made it. Well done ,Tom McGurn!



Review of **THIS IS MINUTEMAN TWO-THREE ... GO!** By Wayne Chasson, published by Huey Books, ISBN 978-1-946875-50-1, 248 pages, hardcover - \$29.99 paperback - \$17.99, Kindle - \$4.99

One would think that reading memoirs of Army helicopter pilots describing their time in Vietnam would get boring. Trust me, they don't when they're as well done as This is Minuteman Two Three ... Go! This book is fast moving, fun to read and in places funny as well as sad. For those who were there, this book will rekindle

memories and bring you back to the good times and the bad. For some odd reason, I find the stories about how men like Chasson wound up in the cockpit of a helicopter in Vietnam as interesting as their experience during their tour in Vietnam. His descriptions of flying and learning to fly a chopper are easy to follow even for one who never pushed and pulled a collective and cyclic. Chasson's flying career started in Vietnam and ended with Erickson Helicopters in Afghanistan. If I have a complaint about the book, it is that he didn't spend as much time on his post-Vietnam career. There's got to be more stories worth telling. Wayne, maybe there's a book in there too!

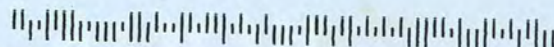
## INTERESTING WEBSITES

This is a very moving video and an extremely powerful song. It was written by a Canadian to honor his country's armed forces.  
[https://www.youtube.com/embed/Wq0X0bwMprQ?feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/embed/Wq0X0bwMprQ?feature=player_embedded)  
[https://www.youtube.com/embed/Wq0X0bwMprQ?feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/embed/Wq0X0bwMprQ?feature=player_embedded)

This video was forwarded by VHPA founder Larry Clark. It is the story of "gun trucks" in Vietnam.  
<https://www.sho.com/pr/smithsonian/sp/title/gun-trucks-of-vietnam?c=711c2p4u2a6u3l2i7v4o7r18290d5i2u>

A quiet helicopter to infiltrate North Vietnam  
<https://medium.com/war-is-boring/the-cia-built-a-special-helicopter-to-sneak-into-north-vietnam-b1bb0ea35a7b>





\*\*\*\*\*FIRM 79409

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# VIETNAM



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